



**PRESS RELEASE
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**Alaska National Guard
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By Tech. Sgt. N. Alicia Halla

More than 100 Alaska Air Guard operators, maintainers return from Middle East
Likely last C-130 deployment for airlift squadron

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — More than 100 of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing members returned from a four-month deployment in the Middle East last week in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

Based in Kuwait, their focus was to support the C-130H "Hercules" tactical-airlift mission, contributing to the operation aimed at militarily defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria. They worked alongside more than 60 partners as part of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve.

"We did what we went there to do," said Lt. Col. Michael Cummings, the deployment commander and commander of the 144th Airlift Squadron. "We delivered food, water, ammo, whatever [the U.S. Army and coalition partners] needed. Basically, those guys were on the front lines against ISIL, and we were providing everything they needed to get the job done. We contributed directly to [the mission]."

The returning Airmen were attached to either the 737th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron or the 386th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. While deployed, these Air Guardsmen adapted skills from home station to overcome the challenges of older aircraft, extreme climates with temperatures up to 140 degrees, and separation from loved ones.

"Just knowing he's home and safe is such a relief," said Chelsey Brown, spouse of Staff Sgt. Nigel Brown, a Composite Tool Kit technician of the 176th Maintenance Squadron.

The majority of the group operates or maintains the C-130H – an aircraft which may soon be divested from the 176th Wing.

Tactical airlift has been one of the 176th Wing's core missions since 1957, when the Air Guard's emphasis shifted from air combat to airlift. A current proposal at the national level was put forth to divest the 176th Wing of its C-130H tactical-airlift aircraft.

The current proposal was recommended by retired Lt. Gen. Stanley Clarke III, Director of the Air National Guard, to the Total Force Continuum – a board of Active, Reserve, and Guard members tasked to balance requirements, capabilities, risk and cost of strategic plans and programs. The Total Force Continuum is taking action to push forward Lt. Gen. Clarke's proposal. As such, this deployment could conceivably be the last for the 144th Airlift Squadron, at least in its current form.

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"I'm really proud of everybody," Cummings said. "They did a fantastic job. We missed the families, and it's really a good feeling coming back."

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Flickr link** includes complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Flickr may not be accessible from .mil computers. Flickr app available on smart devices.) (<https://flic.kr/s/aHskEht73X>)
3. **DVIDS link** includes story selected full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) (<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/203889/more-than-100-alaska-air-guard-operators-maintainers-return-possible-last-c-130-deployment>)



160706-Z-DU133-030

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska -- More than 100 Alaska Air Guard members from the 144th Airlift Squadron, 176th Maintenance Group and support units returned here July 5 and 6, 2016, from a four-month deployment in Kuwait in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Their focus was to support the C-130H "Hercules" tactical-airlift mission. Due to a proposal at the national level to divest the 176th Wing of its C-130H aircraft, this may be the last deployment for the 144th Airlift Squadron in its current form. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. N. Alicia Halla/Released)

- Next page, more photos -



160705-Z-DU133-018

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — More than 100 Alaska Air Guard members from the 144th Airlift Squadron, 176th Maintenance Group and support units returned here July 5 and 6, 2016, from a four-month deployment in Kuwait in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Their focus was to support the C-130H "Hercules" tactical-airlift mission. Due to a proposal at the national level to divest the 176th Wing of its C-130H aircraft, this may be the last deployment for the 144th Airlift Squadron in its current form. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. N. Alicia Halla/Released)



160706-Z-DU133-049

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — More than 100 Alaska Air Guard members from the 144th Airlift Squadron, 176th Maintenance Group and support units returned here July 5 and 6, 2016, from a four-month deployment in Kuwait in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Their focus was to support the C-130H "Hercules" tactical-airlift mission. Due to a proposal at the national level to divest the 176th Wing of its C-130H aircraft, this may be the last deployment for the 144th Airlift Squadron in its current form. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. N. Alicia Halla/Released)