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National Guard to honor retired Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer

Kotzebue ceremony will dedicate aircraft hangar

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska —The Alaska National Guard will formally name its Kotzebue aircraft hangar for long-time Alaska leader John W. Schaeffer, Jr., who served as the adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard from 1986 to 1991.

Brig. Gen. Laurie Hummel, the current adjutant general, will host a naming ceremony Tuesday, August 9 at 3 p.m. at the National Guard hangar, south of the Ralph Wien Memorial Airport main runway in Kotzebue.

The ceremony will include local singers, dancers and speakers, including members of Schaeffer's family, his friends, and colleagues.

"This will be a community celebration and public recognition of Major General Schaeffer's remarkable career and lifetime of leadership," Hummel said. "We're looking forward to seeing people from around the state to share this special occasion with General Schaeffer and his family."

All are welcome to the ceremony and the community potluck reception, which will begin at 5 p.m. at the Kotzebue fairgrounds. The National Guard armory is the secondary location in case of inclement weather.

A brief biography of retired Maj. Gen. Schaeffer is attached.

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Details:

What: Hangar dedication ceremony honoring retired Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer

When: Tuesday, August 9, 2016, 3 p.m.

Where: Kotzebue National Guard Army Aviation Operations Facility

Note: Media interested in attending the ceremony must call 428-6030 to RSVP for coordination by Friday, August 5. Please leave a message with name, affiliation, and contact number. Military aircraft transportation will not be available.

Major General John W. Schaeffer, Jr. (Ret.)



Born and raised in Kotzebue, John W. Schaeffer, Jr. enlisted in the Alaska Army National Guard in 1957 when he joined the Eskimo Scouts. He rose through the ranks to become the nation's first Iñupiaq two-star general and served as the adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard from 1986 to 1991. In that position, Maj. Gen. Schaeffer was a key leader in the State of Alaska's response to the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, brokered a first-ever collaboration with the Russian military to locate and rescue a group of Alaska walrus hunters stranded on the sea ice, and was instrumental in freeing gray whales trapped in the ice, an event that attracted worldwide attention. He retired from military service in 1991.

The Northwest Alaska Native Association, established in 1966 in the Schaeffer home, was the predecessor to both NANA Regional Corporation and Maniilaq Association. Schaeffer served as the president of the association, working with local and statewide Alaska Native leaders to settle land claims. After the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 passed, he became the first president and CEO of NANA Regional Corporation, a post he held for 14 years.

Schaeffer was elected and served as mayor of the Northwest Arctic Borough in 1986 and served briefly before being appointed by Governor Steve Cowper as Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. An active volunteer dedicated to preserving and fostering Iñupiaq culture and the Iñupiaq language, he served on the first Alaska Natives Commission and was a long-time member of Northwest Alaska's Regional Elder Council. He and his wife, Mary, live in Kotzebue.