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Alaska National Guard prepares for Arctic Eagle 2018

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The Alaska National Guard participated in Arctic Eagle 2017, a command post and tabletop exercise, Feb. 22 – 26. Decision makers and supporting players practiced the logistics and coordination required to respond to a state emergency. The Alaska National Guard and other agencies assessed their ability to conduct effective and sustained operations in Arctic conditions.

This year's exercise was in preparation for Arctic Eagle 2018, a major emergency response exercise that will occur next year, which will test the capabilities and effectiveness of a multi-national, multi-agency response to a major incident in the state.

Arctic Eagle 2017 provided a platform for participants to practice operations in a collaborative environment and integrate new and emerging capabilities for responding to a state emergency in the harsh terrain and weather conditions of northern environments and challenging geographical locations.

The countries of Denmark and Canada partnered with the Alaska National Guard, the Alaska State Defense Force and other agencies, in collaboration with U.S. Northern Command's Alaskan Command, to apply and respond to scenarios that will prepare them for the 2018 exercise.

"It's important that we are proficient, equipped and effective at providing support to civil authorities as requested," said Col. Tony Stratton, Alaska National Guard joint staff director of operations, training and exercises. "We are the first military responders to domestic emergencies, and we must be ready to help Alaskans in times of need."

The command post exercise, commonly referred to as a "CPX," employed the scenario of a failing satellite—powered by a nuclear reactor—in a deteriorating orbit, which reentered the earth's atmosphere and broke apart, scattering radioactive debris on parts of Alaska.

"Arctic Eagle 2017 included two tabletop exercises [or "TTX"] as well, which rehearsed the stand-up of a dual status command and explored the role of the National Guard during a homeland defense scenario," said Stratton.

Dual status command is an important and necessary function during defense support to civil authority response, as it enables simultaneous command and control of both federal and state military forces by one commander. Dual status command is an authority that is requested by the state's governor for approval by the Secretary of Defense.

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“It is an important process to get accomplished quickly and correctly so that operations are not slowed or negatively impacted during a time that expediency is needed most,” said Stratton.

The Alaska National Guard’s joint staff hosted the exercise, which occurred primarily in the Guard’s joint operations center. The AKNG’s JOC is the joint force commander’s headquarters established for planning, monitoring and guiding the execution of the commander’s decisions, and is where command and control is carried out during major incidents requiring the National Guard’s assistance.

Theoretical response during AE17 included providing support by the AKNG’s 103rd Civil Support Team strike team to test radiation levels after debris from the notional satellite was found in areas of Alaska. There were additional plans built into the exercise that included CST strike teams to test an Alaskan port, assess potential radiation at a hatchery, decontaminate personnel in the vicinity and secure the area to avoid further contamination.

The 103rd CST’s primary function is to respond to a suspected weapons of mass destruction attack, which may include chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or other explosives.

“The exercise was a success, in that we were able to meet our objectives and identify courses of action for improvement,” said Stratton. “As a new staff, learning was exponential and we will apply that to Arctic Eagle 2018.”

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PHOTOS:

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **DVIDS** link includes story and selected full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <http://dvidshub.net/r/q9rzhz>



Maj. Michael Meelby Vibholm from the Territorial Defense Danish Home Guard gives an overview of the Danish Home Guard during Exercise Arctic Eagle 2017 at the National Guard Armory on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Feb. 23, 2017. The unclassified joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational exercise is based on the Arctic Strategy of the U.S. DoD as well as Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda Dresel)



Lt. Col. Aaron Kelsey, deputy director of operations for the Alaska National Guard, briefs exercise participants in the Joint Operations Center during Exercise Arctic Eagle 2017 at the National Guard Armory on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Feb. 24, 2017. The unclassified joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational exercise is based on the Arctic Strategy of the U.S. DoD as well as Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark. (U.S. Army National Guard photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Jack Androski)