



PRESS RELEASE

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Alaska Guardsmen bring home gold from National Guard biathlon championships

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The Alaska National Guard Biathlon Team brought home several gold medals from the 2017 Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., held March 5-9.

Seven Guardsmen participated in the event, hosted by the Vermont National Guard, which combined cross-country skiing with precision marksmanship.

The year's competition boasted 120 athletes from 23 different states competing in sprint, pursuit, team relay and patrol races. Alaska National Guard Pvt. Everett Darrow, Pfc. Travis Cooper, Spc. Tadhg Nakada, Staff. Sgt. Jack Androski, 1st Sgt. Travis Kulp, 2nd Lt. Eric Gorman, and Maj. David Cunningham represented Alaska under the guidance of Capt. Mariano Barajas.

"The team performed exceptionally well; five of our seven athletes present at the championships made it onto the National Guard Biathlon Team," explained Barajas, who has been coaching the team comprised of members from across the last frontier. "They were highly motivated and excited to be attending the championships."

The Alaska Guardsmen received a first place trophy for winning every team event and had the opportunity to meet Chief of the National Guard Bureau Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel as he presented the winning racers and teams with their medals.

Nakada received first in the men's sprint and second in men's pursuit races. Darrow, the newest member of the team, took first in the junior men's sprint race and second in the junior men's pursuit race behind Cooper who claimed first.

"Our expectations for next year is to keep our first place trophy," declared Barajas, who hopes to use it to promote awareness of the program. "We plan to recruit within and develop the highest levels of Soldiers' physical fitness and rifle marksmanship necessary to improve the combat ability of Soldiers in order to become valuable leader assets to the units."

Barajas plans to promote awareness to high school and college skiers by attending skiing events and explaining the opportunities they have to extend their athletic careers through the National Guard Biathlon program.

"This year we only had men competing," said Barajas. "Next year we would like to compete in the regional and national biathlon events with a men's and women's team."

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Nakada and Cooper, who train year-round as part of the National Guard biathlon development team, are currently in Italy participating in the CaSTA – Alpini Troops Ski Championships, an annual international military ski competition, held in Pusteria Vally of the Dobbiaco-Candido ski resort, March 10-18.

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PHOTOS:

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (May not be accessible from all military computers.)
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157678070133024>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <http://dvidshub.net/r/vc96mn>



Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, congratulates Alaska National Guard Spc. Tadhg Nakada before presenting him with his medal during an awards ceremony at the 2017 Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., March 9, 2017. (Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michelle Gonzalez)



From the left, Spc. Tadhg Nakada, Pvt. Everett Darrow, 2nd Lt. Eric Gorman, 1st Sgt. Travis Kulp, Maj. David Cunningham, Pfc. Travis Cooper, and Staff. Sgt. Jack Androski proudly display Alaska flags during the 2017 Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., held March 5-9, 2017. Alaska received first place in the relay and patrol events and five of the seven athletes were chosen for the National Guard Biathlon Team. (DoD photo by Devon Suits)



Members of the Alaska National Guard Biathlon Team participate in the 2017 Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., held March 5-9. Alaska received first place in the relay and patrol events and five of the seven athletes were chosen for the National Guard Biathlon Team. (DoD photo by Devon Suits)