



PRESS RELEASE
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Alaska National Guard
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Alaska Army National Guard deploys to U.S. Virgin Islands in humanitarian aid mission

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska –Alaska Army National Guard members are deploying to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, in order to provide operational and sustainment support in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

More than fifty members assigned to the 297th Forward Support Company received word of their impending support of the humanitarian mission last week and were ready to depart within 72 hours.

“We received the mission on Wednesday, and by Saturday had a full roster of personnel with bags packed and ready to serve,” stated Capt. Danny Canlas, commander of the 297th Forward Support Company. “It’s truly humbling to see so many Soldiers selflessly volunteer to help those in need, leaving their families and commitments back home, to serve the greater good.”

The Soldiers are travelling in teams to the U.S. Virgin Islands with small contingents departing sporadically over the next three days.

Once the Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers touch ground, operating as a forward logistics element, the Guardsmen expect to collaborate with the Virgin Islands National Guard, National Guard units from other states and federal personnel in an effort to provide logistical relief and to help build the island’s infrastructure.

“I am honored to be able to have a direct positive impact in an area so harshly affected,” said Spc. Michael Notti, a paralegal specialist with the 297th Infantry Battalion. “At the end of the day, we want to assist our fellow Americans and ensure their well-being—that is what we strive for, that is what we signed up for.”

Within the U.S. Virgin Islands chain, St. Croix is the largest and is home to more than 50,000 people. Hurricanes Irma and Maria, category five hurricanes with winds that reached up to 175 miles per hour, both struck St. Croix within 14 days of each other in September. Nearly one-month since the storms, St. Croix’s power grid availability remains at 12 percent with collapsed infrastructure throughout the island.

The Alaska Army National Guard will continue to synchronize efforts with the Virgin Islands National Guard and Federal Emergency Management Agency and are expected to turn their mission back to the VING by mid-November.

In the last two months, the Alaska National Guard Airmen and Soldiers have deployed to support Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, after Hurricanes Irma and Maria; Florida, after Hurricane Irma; and to Texas, during the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

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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 photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/252227/alaska-army-national-guard-deploys-us-virgin-islands-humanitarian-aid-mission>
3. **Flickr Link** for additional photos <https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/>



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Members of the Alaska Army National Guard attend a readiness briefing in preparation for their humanitarian deployment in support of the U.S. Virgin Islands disaster relief effort at the Alaska National Guard armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Oct 17, 2017. Once the Guardsmen arrive, they will provide operational and sustainment support in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. (Alaska Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jack Androski/released)



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Members of the Alaska National Guard's Joint Operations Center, led by Col. Kimberely DeRouen (2nd from left), meet to finalize details for the deployment of more than 50 Soldiers to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands at the Alaska National Guard armory, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Oct. 17, 2017. Once the Guardsmen arrive, they will provide operational and sustainment support in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. (Alaska Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Marisa Lindsay/released)



181017-Z-QK839-1012

Spc. Michael Notti, a paralegal specialist assigned to the 297th Infantry Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard, speaks with Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott prior to departing for a humanitarian mission in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, at Ted Stevens International Airport, Anchorage, on Oct. 18, 2017. More than 50 Soldiers assigned to the AKARNG are deploying to St. Croix in order to provide operational and sustainment support in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. (Alaska Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Marisa Lindsay/released)



181017-Z-QK839-1009

Alaska Army National Guard members are greeted by Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott prior to departing for a humanitarian mission in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, at Ted Stevens International Airport, Anchorage, on Oct. 18, 2017. More than 50 Soldiers assigned to the AKARNG are deploying to St. Croix in order to provide operational and sustainment support in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. (Alaska Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Marisa Lindsay/released)