



PRESS RELEASE

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Alaska State Defense Force Soldiers make history and deploy out of state

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska –After their historical first-time activation for duty outside of Alaska, four Alaska State Defense Force Soldiers are expected to return next week from a Puerto Rico deployment where they assisted with relief efforts on the hurricane-ravaged island.

The ASDF team have worked in tandem with Alaska Army and Air National Guard members to operate one of 15 Joint Incident Site Communications Capability systems on the island. The JISCC, a transportable 20-foot mobile system developed in the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, is essential for effective communication during relief efforts. It bridges the communications gap between military and civilian agencies by providing shared non-secure Department of Defense and civilian network capabilities.

“Our leadership within the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has been incredibly supportive of this opportunity for our team,” said Col. (AK) John James, commander of the ASDF. “We sent Soldiers who are knowledgeable in signal and communications support to help directly with the mission we’ve been tasked with.”

The ASDF is an all-volunteer state militia comprised of approximately 120 Soldiers throughout the state. Since its establishment in 1984, their primary role and mission is to augment and logistically support the Alaska National Guard and other state agencies in response to major emergencies. The Soldiers meet monthly and are trained in communications, logistics and emergency shelter management. They were last activated in response to the 2015 Card Street fire on the Kenai Peninsula.

The ASDF members hail from Bethel, Fairbanks, Kenai, and Wasilla.

“We are so very thankful we had this opportunity to help contribute and perhaps relieve some of the discomfort and suffering of the people of Puerto Rico,” stated James. “We are proud of our Soldiers’ willingness to serve at a moment’s notice, for their professionalism and for the technical expertise that they brought to the efforts.”

In the last two months, nearly 100 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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Sgt. (AK) John Bell, assigned to the Alaska State Defense Force, prepares palletized commodities during a humanitarian relief deployment to Puerto Rico, Nov. 17. The ASDF made history with their first-ever deployment outside of Alaska for this mission. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Herbert Avellaneda/Released)



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Members of the Alaska State Defense Force disassemble equipment during a humanitarian relief mission to Puerto Rico, Nov. 17. The ASDF made history with their first-ever deployment outside of Alaska for this mission. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Herbert Avellaneda/Released)