



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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By 2nd Lt. Marisa Lindsay

## **Alaska Army National Guard infantry Soldiers shoot, move and communicate on skis**

**Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska** — The biathlon, a winter sporting event, originated in the 1800's by the arctic-based Norwegian Army who used the activity of long-distance cross-country skiing and rifle shooting as an alternative for training. It's only fitting that nearly two centuries later, infantry Soldiers in the Alaska Army National Guard, belonging to the United States' sole Arctic state, would train and serve as biathletes on the Alaska National Guard's biathlon team.

On a team of 11 biathletes, four of them are infantry Soldiers belonging to Adak Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry.

"The biathlon has a lot in common with what's important in small-unit tactics, and that's to shoot, move and communicate," said 2nd Lt. Matthew Maxey, a platoon leader for Adak Company an athlete on the biathlon team. "We live and work in an environment that has winter-like conditions for a large portion of the year, so, being comfortable in this setting is important."

As infantry Soldiers who live and train in Alaska, the ability to operate and thrive in an arctic environment is crucial and invaluable. According the company's commander, Capt. James Tollefson, the biathlon develops the core skills of movement and marksmanship in a way that no other sport can, and does so in a winter environment which provides unique significance to his arctic infantry unit.

"Bounding through any terrain wearing 50 pounds of body armor while carrying a weapon requires both speed of movement and precision in the application of fire power," explained Tollefson. "A good infantry Soldier moves quickly, both over extended periods of time and short bursts as needed, and arrives at the objective able to shoot accurately and perform whatever other duties are required of him or her."

Biathlon preparation does exactly this, as the athlete is exposed to metabolic conditioning, shooting under duress and increasing their over-snow mobility.

The specialized training has also prepared the infantry Soldiers for the upcoming multinational, interagency exercise, Arctic Eagle 2018. The exercise, which begins on Feb. 20, tests state and federal arctic response and strategy. Specifically, the exercise intends to build upon the infantry effort of maneuvering and operating in extreme cold-weather conditions.

"Our biathlon training is exactly what I would hope Soldiers are doing to train as an infantry platoon;

such as improving fitness, practicing marksmanship, and working as a team,” said Maxey. “Heading into Arctic Eagle next month, this has prepared us as arctic warriors to confidently complete our exercise evaluations.”

Recently, the biathlon team returned home to Alaska with a gold medal after competing against 25 other states in the Western Regional Championships in Jericho, Vermont, Jan. 25-27. Their next biathlon event will take place in Soldier Hollow, Utah, at the end of February.

“I don’t think it’s a coincidence that some of my best Soldiers are those leading the charge in my company by participating in these events,” stated Tollefson. “They are my best and brightest for exactly the same reason that they see value in competing in the biathlon — they fundamentally understand what it takes to be a great infantry Soldier and they are committed to their profession.”

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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/sets/72157669117414009>

3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/264344/alaska-army-national-guard-infantry-soldiers-shoot-move-and-communicate-skis>



### **180227-Z-ZZ999-0001**

Alaska National Guard members participate in the 2018 Western Regional Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Vermont, Jan. 27, 2018. Approximately 175 athletes from 26 different states competed in the championship, with the Alaska National Guard team earning the gold medal finish. (Courtesy photo by Sgt. 1st Class Adam Schwartz)



### **180227-Z-ZZ999-0002**

Alaska National Guard members participate in the 2018 Western Regional Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Vermont, Jan. 27, 2018. Approximately 175 athletes from 26 different states competed in the championship, with the Alaska National Guard team earning the gold medal finish. (Courtesy photo by Sgt. 1st Class Adam Schwartz)



**180227-Z-ZZ999-0003**

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Kalarchik, platoon sergeant for Adak Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, prepares to fire at the Western Regional Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Vermont, Jan. 27, 2018. Approximately 175 athletes from 26 different states competed in the championship, with the Alaska National Guard team earning the gold medal finish. (Courtesy photo by Sgt. 1st Class Adam Schwartz)



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Staff Sgt. Jack Androski, mortar section sergeant for the Alaska Army National Guard, pushes hard into the firing line at the 2018 Western Regional Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Vermont, Jan. 27, 2018. Approximately 175 athletes from 26 different states competed in the championship, with the Alaska National Guard team earning the gold medal finish. (Courtesy photo by Sgt. 1st Class Adam Schwartz)