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## **Alaska National Guard advances, fortifies arctic emergency response Guard's Soldiers, Airmen wrap up exercise Arctic Eagle 2018**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — A foreign, radioactive satellite falls to earth, smashing through the airspace above Valdez, Alaska. Toxic Chemicals release from the satellite debris while compromised networks lead to cyber-attacks and panic ensues throughout the local communities.

The scenario above is fictional. But what if it actually happened? Who would respond? What capabilities does the military have to combat it?

These questions were explored and unmasked by National Guard units from 10 different states and multiple state and federal agencies during Arctic Eagle 2018, which consisted of scenario-based events at multiple locations throughout Alaska. The scenarios included hazardous material detection and response, security and protection of critical infrastructure, triage, domain awareness patrol, communication and transportation support.

The exercise was managed by the Alaska National Guard in order to test and validate arctic capabilities and practice emergency response in support of civil authorities.

The operation launched here Feb. 20 as Guard unit leadership and other agencies involved in Homeland Security began the command post exercise. The CPX aimed at ensuring the pace of the exercise would fully engage all participants and capitalize on gathering personnel to address known knowledge gaps on discrete topics like chemical and radiological decontamination or cyber defense vulnerabilities.

The CPX also established a joint task force, responsible for command and control and the exercise battle rhythm, a warfare concept at the heart of military operational management that efficiently processes input and intent to enable the commander to make decisive choices in controlling each moving piece of the exercise.

As operational pieces of the exercise were put in place for oversight, Alaska, Colorado, Washington, and Utah National Guardsmen specializing in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threat scenarios, medical specialties, decontamination, and security were activated to Valdez to respond to the simulated

satellite crash. The U.S. Coast Guard, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and several other agencies participated as well.

Homeland Response Forces from National Guard units in Washington and Utah were important players in this year's exercise due to their substantial command and control and chemical and radiological response capabilities.

The HRF bridges coordination between National Guard response and federal capabilities. It is designed to be activated by the governor and within 6-12 hours, it deploys and conducts command and control and works alongside first responders in casualty assistance, search and extraction, decontamination, and medical triage and stabilization. These capabilities are crucial in timely disaster response.

Typically, most states' climates would allow decontamination to be engaged through liquid agents. Due to the colder environment, there was an emphasis on dry decontamination measures, which challenged the exercise participants to employ tactics they rarely use.

After arriving in Valdez, Guardsmen from the 103rd Civil Support Team, Alaska National Guard, 14<sup>th</sup> Civil Support Team, Connecticut National Guard, and Washington National Guard HRF were called to the scene of a real-life diesel fuel tanker truck that crashed near a water way. Because these units specialize in detection and decontamination, they were prepared to immediately provide hazardous material containment.

The tanker truck exited the roadway and crashed, rupturing its tank, which began to spill diesel fuel. Teams were called to dig trenches and lay down chemical quick dry to avert the fuel from reaching a fresh water stream that is used for fishing. Water samples were tested and no chemical substance was detected. The coincidence of timing and location allowed Guardsmen to help resolve the situation quickly.

"We were proud to serve our neighbors here in Alaska and welcome every opportunity to engage in extending a helping hand to mitigate potential hazards and safeguard the safety of all citizens," said 1st Lt. Shawnta DiFalco, commander, 792nd Chemical Company, Washington National Guard.

While in Valdez, Soldiers trained in multiple decontamination and hazard training missions simulating what they would encounter in a real-world satellite crash scenario. Colorado National Guard Soldiers from the 220th Military Police Company performed real-world security around exercise areas to ensure no injuries occurred or hazards existed for participating units. The 220th MPC was successful in meeting 100 percent of their combat training objectives during the exercise, an impressive feat for a component that had more than 400 Soldiers participating.

In addition to operating under the scenario of a fallen satellite, other conditions were put in place to challenge the Guard's domain awareness and cyber security around the Canadian and Alaskan border, like an attack on the Trans Alaskan Pipeline System or enemy movement along the coast.

"We want to know if the message is getting out, so as one attack happens, then another, then another, the other organizations are warned because communication is critical when it comes to getting in front of mysterious disrupters," said Scott Moreland, one of the exercise planners for Arctic Eagle 2018. "One

of the goals of Arctic Eagle 2018 was to have scenarios that included security and protection of critical infrastructure, and we feel that including cyber in the exercise meets the state's intent."

At the Alaska and Canadian border, the Alaska State Defense Force trained with the Canadian Ranger Patrol Group in a combined domain awareness capacity. The ASDF and CRPG operate in a very similar capacity in conducting patrols, reporting unusual activities or sightings, assisting in search and rescue missions, and assisting with natural disasters.

The two domain patrol entities were joined by the 220th MPC, but prior to their arrival, Airmen with the 168<sup>th</sup> WG prepared the site overcoming several blown hydraulic lines during the effort. Airmen with the 176<sup>th</sup> WG provided critical transport of the Small Unit Support Vehicles enabling effective transportation along the border.

In the situational and arctic cold weather training realm of the operation, Alaska and Wyoming National Guardsmen assigned to the 297th Infantry Regiment, Vermont National Guardsmen from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Colorado Guardsmen from the 220th MPC combined efforts with the 39th Canadian Brigade Group at the Donnelly Training Area, 107 miles southeast of Fairbanks.

The 39th CBG is a Canadian Army Reserve Brigade with units across British Columbia and maintains reserve Combat Arms, Combat Engineer, and Combat Service Support capabilities. Arctic Eagle 2018 marked the first time units from the brigade have ever trained in the state of Alaska.

"In the Canadian Armed Forces we have our arctic winter training that is indoctrination and from there on out we perfect the art," said Pvt. Ajai Chhina, 39th CBG, Royal Westminister Regiment. "Training in Alaska is very similar to how we do things in Canada. We make sure that we are passing our arctic knowledge on to our peers back home because we do this stuff on a semi-annual basis," he said. "Any knowledge that we can impart to help them helps us."

While at DTA, approximately 600 Soldiers participated in arctic skills training, live fire exercises, mounted crew gunnery and critical infrastructure protection in a cold weather and high latitude environment.

"Extreme cold weather conditions create limiting factors and challenges that must be overcome so the Soldiers can survive and thrive as they execute mission," said exercise director Col. Tony Stratton, Alaska Air National Guard.

A major challenge exercise planners and participants encountered was transportation across Alaska's arctic landscape, due to adverse weather conditions and climate.

"Logistics Readiness Squadron personnel from the 168th and 176th Wings played a crucial role in battling these conditions to get Soldiers, Airmen, vehicles, and equipment to their designated sites safely and in a timely manner," said Stratton.

Air and Army National Guard aircraft provided transportation from other states to Alaska and within the state throughout the exercise. HC-130J Combat King II, C-17 Globemaster III, and KC-135 Stratotanker fixed wing aircraft and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters navigated through arctic skies in support of ongoing operations.

“Alaska’s air assets did a lot of heavy lifting and stayed busy,” said Stratton. “The Illinois and Wyoming Air National Guard assisted with transportation as well,” he said. “But one of Alaska’s goals for future exercises is to have equal distribution for air and ground transportation assets among the states,” said Stratton.

The goals of Arctic Eagle 2018 were for participating forces to operate in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment; assess ability to conduct sustained operations in arctic conditions, and integrate new and emerging capabilities.

“This took a lot of planning and the troops were engaged and persistent in their efforts here,” said Stratton. “In the true spirit of Alaska, they executed this mission with tenacity and character, and I want to thank them for that.”

The Alaska National Guard has successfully operated in the Arctic and defended Alaska for more than 75 years.

Stories and imagery from the Alaska National Guard’s Exercise Arctic Eagle 2018 may be accessed via the Defense Video Imagery Distribution System at [www.dvidshub.net/feature/ArcticEagle](http://www.dvidshub.net/feature/ArcticEagle).

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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/72157692971310344>

3. **DVIDS link includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.)** : <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/268693/alaska-national-guard-advances-fortifies-arctic-emergency-response>

**Photos, next page**



Members of the decontamination team assigned to the 103rd Civil Support Team, Alaska Army National Guard, prepare to conduct radiological reconnaissance during exercise Arctic Eagle 2018 in Valdez, Alaska, Feb. 23, 2018. The goals of AE18 are for participating forces to operate in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment; assess ability to conduct sustained operations in arctic conditions, and integrate new and emerging capabilities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Marisa)



Coast Guard members assigned to the U.S. Coast Guard Station Valdez prepare to board a civilian vessel suspected of carrying radiological material from a satellite crash at the Port of Valdez, Alaska, during exercise Arctic Eagle 2018, Feb. 24. Arctic Eagle 2018 is a homeland security and emergency response exercise operating throughout the state of Alaska, hosted by the Alaska National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Marisa Lindsay)



Canadian Soldiers of the Royal Westminster Regiment and Seaforth Highlanders of Canada participate in cold weather and arctic skills training during Arctic Eagle 2018 at the Donnelly Training Area outside of Fort Greely, Alaska, Mar. 1, 2018. Realistic training in cold weather conditions challenges participants to test field-craft skills, remote communications capability, and validate arctic transportation capabilities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Risinger/Released)



Guardsmen of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry out of Wyoming participate in cold weather and arctic skills training during Arctic Eagle 2018 at the Donnelly Training Area outside of Fort Greely, Alaska, Mar. 1, 2018. Realistic training in cold weather conditions challenges participants to test field-craft skills, remote communications capability, and validate arctic transportation capabilities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Risinger/Released)



Airmen assigned to the Alaska and Washington Air National Guard prepare a C-17 Globemaster III loading ramp in the cargo hold of the aircraft to transport equipment in support of exercise Arctic Eagle at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, Feb. 20, 2018. Arctic Eagle 18 is an Alaska-based exercise involving national, state, and local agencies designed to provide opportunities for participants to conduct sustained operations in arctic conditions and test chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response missions. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Marisa Lindsay/released)