



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Sgt. Melissa Martens, Marine Forces Reserve

Combating the cold: IRT Arctic Care 2018 kicks off

KOTZEBUE, Alaska — The Deep within the Northwest Arctic Borough, where snow and ice blanket the surface and winds send piercing chills through the body, service members gather in Kotzebue, Alaska, for the kick off of Innovative Readiness Training Arctic Care 2018.

Innovative Readiness Training is a Department of Defense sponsored program that aims to produce mission-ready forces through military training opportunities that provide key services for underserved communities throughout the United States.

“Innovative Readiness Training is a very unique training program where our primary mission is to train service members through real world situations,” said Maj. Lisbeth M. Andriessen, the IRT program manager for Marine Forces Reserve. “A lot of the missions we conduct take place in austere conditions in extremely remote communities of the United States. It’s a great program because the service members get the training and the community gets the byproduct of having these services brought to them.”

From April 13-27, service members from the Marine Corps Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Army Reserve, Alaska Army National Guard, Coast Guard and Canadian Forces will be deployed to provide medical, dental, optometry and veterinary care to 12 remote villages throughout the Northwest Arctic Borough.

For this iteration of IRT Arctic Care, Marine Forces Reserve is the lead service. Personnel from 4th Dental Battalion and 4th Medical Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group, will be coordinating and conducting critical mission training and logistical movements with the other military branches in order to simulate military/civilian humanitarian operations and health care delivery in time of crisis, conflict, or disaster.

“The lead service is chosen based off the needs of the mission and the personnel requested,” said Air Force Capt. Laura B. Delgado, assistant officer in charge of IRT Arctic Care 2018, 176th Medical Group, Alaska Air National Guard. “The communities we are training in don’t have access to health care services that more heavily populated areas have. With Marine Forces Reserve taking the lead, the different military branches will be learning from each other and working together to enhance their skills, while providing specialty services to the local villages.”

One of the key goals of the IRT program is to strengthen and build new partnerships with culturally complex populations, including remote areas. By conducting hands-on training to service members, IRT Arctic Care aims to meet this goal by providing direct and lasting benefits to residents of each village served.

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“A lot of service members will come out of an IRT and say ‘I joined the service to help my community and this is one place where I had the opportunity to do that,’” Andriessen said. “When they have community members coming up to them, shaking their hands and thanking them for their hard work, it really strengthens the bond between the civilians and the military.”

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached Word document** 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/72157693940226891>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://dvidshub.net/r/5ce62o>
4. **DVIDS video link** includes b-roll. <https://dvidshub.net/r/92xui9>



180413-Z-ZZ999-0004

Alaska Air National Guard Capt. Laura Delgado, right, assistant officer in charge of IRT Arctic Care 2018, 176th Medical Group, assists with the inprocess of U.S. Servicemembers in the Alaska National Guard Armory in support of Innovative Readiness Training Exercise, Arctic Care, in Kotzebue, Alaska, April 13, 2018. (Department of Defense courtesy photo).



180413-M-YF952-015

A U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter loaded with gear and supplies prepares to depart Kotzebue, Alaska, and travel to outlying villages, April 13, 2018. IRT Arctic Care 2018 is comprised of a joint and multi-national force providing medical, dental, optometry and veterinary care for underserved villages in the Maniilaq Service Area, April 16-24. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Ricardo Davila)



180413-Z-ZZ999-0005

Alaska Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Eddie Perez, left, and Senior Airman Khue Heard, both with the 176th Medical Group, assist with the inprocessing of U.S. Servicemembers in the Alaska National Guard Armory in support of Innovative Readiness Training Exercise, Arctic Care, in Kotzebue, Alaska, April 13, 2018. (Department of Defense courtesy photo)



180414-F-IN700-0107

U.S. service members load an Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk with cargo April 14, 2018, at the Ralph Wien Memorial Airport, in Kotzebue, Alaska, in support of exercise Arctic Care 2018. Military personnel accomplished critical mission training to maintain currency needed to support future contingency and humanitarian operations. (U.S. Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Rashard Coaxum)



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Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy personnel inprocess in the Alaska National Guard Armory, Kotzebue, Alaska, in support of an Innovated Readiness Training Exercise, April 13, 2018. Arctic Care 2018 is comprised of a joint and multi-national force providing medical, dental, optometry and veterinary care for underserved villages in the Maniillaq Service Area April 16-24. (Department of Defense courtesy photo)