



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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By David Bedard/176th Wing Public Affairs

## **Midnight Sun Guardians deploy to Iraq**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — Approximately 20 Alaska Air National Guardsmen of the 176th Wing are deploying to Iraq at the end of September in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

According to the operation's Web site, the mission of Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve is to defeat the Islamic State group in designated areas of Iraq and Syria and set conditions for follow-on operations to increase regional stability.

The Airmen deploying are mainly combat rescue officers, pararescuemen, and survival, evasion, resistance and escape (SERE) specialists of the wing's 212th Rescue Squadron and key support personnel from other wing units.

"Our main job there will be to provide combat search and rescue for American aviators, and Soldiers and Airmen who might find themselves in harm's way," said Maj. John Romspert, 212th RQS director of operations. "Our job is to go rescue them and bring them back."

Romspert said it isn't unusual for the wing to support overseas contingency operations in locations such as Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, though the squadron hasn't previously deployed to Iraq.

"This is the first time the 212th is heading that way, but this unit and this wing have supported Afghanistan (and) the Philippines," he said. "Our Airmen have been all over the world."

Pararescueman Staff Sgt. Adam Brister said he expects to be on a 12-hour alert schedule. A typical day consists of exercising and eating breakfast before getting an alert brief. After the brief, pararescuemen and the flight crews they work with wait for radio requests for help.

"It can be Armageddon, or it can be Groundhog Day," Romspert said.

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Romspert said the deploying Airmen have rigorously trained for the past year, sharpening their skills at scuba diving, rock climbing, marksmanship, parachuting and other combat skills.

“We cover the whole gamut,” he said. “That way, we are prepared to rescue anybody at any location.

“Our mission here in Alaska supporting fighter flying across the state and also doing all the civil search and rescue that we do really prepares us to do this anywhere in the world,” Romspert continued. “We just do it a little different in a little different uniform – body armor and gun instead.”

Brister said service in the state is what drew him to the Alaska Air National Guard.

“I love this place because we're given the opportunity to really practice the motto: That others may live,” he said.

Romspert said this is his 14th deployment. Brister said this is his third time. For Senior Airman Jeff Eisberg, a 212th RQS SERE specialist, this is his first time supporting overseas contingency operations.

As a junior Airman, Eisberg attended Basic Military Training and SERE technical school before several months of on-the-job training to prepare for the mission.

“I've taken the last two-and-a-half years to train for this moment,” he said. “My father has two deployments. My brother has a deployment. I've always wanted to be deployed; it's part of the reason I joined the Guard.”

Romspert said every member of the team raised a hand for the mission.

“Everyone volunteered,” he said. “They want to serve not only their country, but their state – to do all of their friends and families here proud.”

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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** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/176wg/albums/72157698550882072>
3. **DVIDS link** <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/294531/midnight-sun-guardians-deploy-iraq>

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Alaska Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Adam Brister, a pararescueman with the 212th Rescue Squadron, takes an inventory of equipment he needs for deployment Sept. 25, 2018 at a 673d Logistics Readiness Squadron warehouse on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Airmen of 212th RQS and other 176th Wing units deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



Alaska Gov. Bill Walker greets Alaska Air National Guard Senior Airman Aaron Hamilton, an aircrew flight equipment Airman with the 176th Operations Support Squadron, Sept. 25, 2018, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, before Hamilton and other Airmen deploy with the 212th Rescue Squadron to Iraq. The Airmen are supporting Operation Inherent Resolve. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)