



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 13, 2018

018-092

By Lt. Col. Candis Olmstead

Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs partners with AFN, state agencies to help ensure safety and security of Alaskans

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Public safety is a significant priority in Alaska. For the past year, state agencies have focused on ways to connect and collaborate in order to improve safety for citizens throughout the state. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is contributing to Alaska's Public Safety Action Plan in a number of ways.

The Alaska State Defense Force is a state-only, volunteer militia that is always under the governor as commander-in-chief. ASDF members train without pay and are put on state active duty status for pay when they are activated to perform missions for the state.

"The ASDF supplements the Alaska National Guard during disaster emergency response and they perform other missions and activities to assist communities with safety, security and resilience as appropriate," said Maj. Gen. Laurie Hummel, DMVA commissioner and adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard.

Specific to the State of Alaska's Public Safety Action Plan, a new program is being implemented that will allow specially trained ASDF members to assist Department of Corrections probation officers and provide mentorship to probationers. This will allow probationers from rural areas to return to their home communities more quickly and begin productive lives, instead of prolonging their time away from home in one of our major cities.

"The department is grateful to the Alaska Federation of Natives and state legislature, which have shown support for ASDF progress and future plans," said Hummel.

AFN provided a grant to help accelerate ASDF growth and increase rural community emergency preparedness and resilience. The grant allowed ASDF to hire a program director who is working with communities to roll out aggressive recruiting and training plans.

"DMVA is increasing the size of the ASDF and growing presence in communities throughout Alaska," said Hummel. "ASDF is hiring part-time staff in Bethel and Kotzebue to stand up detachments, which they are able to do with the assistance of a legislative appropriation."

Additional plans for the defense force include training on the Incident Command System; suicide and violence awareness and prevention; first aid, health and wellness. More about specific programs in the ASDF rural growth plan will be shared at the AFN convention in Anchorage next week.

As part of the PSAP's efforts to reduce the long-term challenges for children who end up in the juvenile justice and foster care systems, DMVA is launching a pilot five-month, in-resident vocational program for graduates of DMVA's Alaska Military Youth Academy. AMYA is a 22-week residential program in a quasi-military environment for 16-to 18-year old at-risk youth. Possible options for the program include health care services, small engine repair, building maintenance and repair, carpentry, labor, iron workers/welders, plumbers, and electrical.

DMVA's Office of Veterans Affairs has developed a protocol to identify and reach out to incarcerated veterans six months prior to release to initiate the process for federal VA benefits such as medical, disability, education, and housing. OVA and the Department of Corrections are working on a plan that will enable Veterans Service Officers to work with veterans while they are still incarcerated, so there is no gap in services when they are released.

DMVA has certified the Village Public Safety Officer Academy as eligible for VA education benefits, which also provides a housing stipend. The first veteran hired using these benefits is now in the VPSO Academy.

DMVA is also partnering with the Department of Public Safety to share the Army Guard aviation hangar in Nome. The Alaska State Troopers will have space in the Alaska Army National Guard hangar to allow one of their aircraft to be readily available for law enforcement, search and rescue and other needs in the Norton Sound Region.

As the Alaska Army National Guard divests specifically selected armories in rural villages, DMVA is ensuring local authorities are apprised of these efforts, allowing them opportunity to request to obtain them from the United States Army Corps of Engineers. These armories may then may be used for Village Public Safety Officer housing or offices.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' divisions—from Veterans Affairs and the Alaska Military Youth Academy to Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the State Defense Force, and the National Guard—are committed to and actively engaged in the state's priority for ensuring public safety.

"We will continue to partner with other agencies and find continuous improvement opportunities that will ultimately benefit all Alaskans by increasing safety and security for all Alaskans," said Hummel. "Helping local citizens is what we do every day; it's why we joined to serve and it's what we love to do."

###

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.) *Photos are of Aug. 18, 2018 Klawock totem pole raising ceremony, which includes National Guard, Alaska State Defense Force, veterans and Alaska Natives in a rural community, which relates to a number of topics included in the article about DMVA's commitment to safe Alaskan communities.*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157700167875494>

2. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) *Videos are of Aug. 18, 2018 Klawock totem pole raising ceremony, which includes National Guard, Alaska State Defense Force, veterans and Alaska Natives in a rural community, which relates to a number of topics included in the article about DMVA's commitment to safe Alaskan communities.*

Video A&B Roll:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/621645/totem-pole-honors-alaska-veterans-capt-walter-hotch-hill>

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/621639/totem-pole-honors-alaska-veterans-klawock-elder-aaron-isaacs>

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/621637/totem-pole-honors-alaska-veterans-klawock-carver-john-rowan>

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/621679/klawock-hosts-celebration-totem-pole-honors-alaska-veterans>

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/621742/new-totem-pole-prince-wales-island-honors-alaskas-veterans>

The Klawock totem pole article: <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/290700/new-totem-pole-prince-wales-island-honors-alaskas-veterans>



An Alaska Organized Militia color guard comprised of members of the Alaska Air and Army National Guard and Alaska State Defense Force march ahead of Guardsmen, veterans and community members carrying a 37-foot Veterans Totem Pole to its resting place in the newly constructed Veterans Totem Park in the city of Klawock on Prince of Wales Island, Aug. 18, 2018. The AOM participated in a three-day celebration honoring Alaska's veterans and culminating with a Veterans Totem Pole raising ceremony.



Participants take a much needed break while packing a 37foot Veterans Totem Pole from the local carvers shed to Klawock's newly constructed Veterans Totem Park during a raising ceremony on Prince of Wales Island, Aug. 18, 2018. Members of the Alaska Organized Militia, including the Alaska Air and Army National Guard and Alaska State Defense Force, join veterans, community members and people from across the state and nation to participate in the three-day event honoring all Alaska veterans. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel)