

Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe

Commissioner & Adjutant General

www.DMVA.Alaska.Gov



Alaska National Guard

*Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs*

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

019-038

May 28, 2019

By 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek

Alaska Army National Guard aviation prepares for future operations

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Alaska National Guard Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment conducted their final annual training as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter air assault unit earlier this month ahead of their pending transition to becoming part of a larger general aviation support battalion, expected to finalize this year. At the same time, air crew and maintainers are training in two new types of helicopter recently added to the unit's inventory.

In order to train junior Black Hawk pilots for the rigors of cross-country flights, the 1-207th began their annual training with a five-hour flight from Anchorage to Juneau.

"The training allows for junior pilots to get cross-country experience in outlying areas of Alaska flying through mountain passes," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Justin Lindell, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment. "This also provides them with valuable experience in the planning and execution of long flights with multiple refueling stops, while negotiating challenging terrain and ever-changing weather conditions."

In its current form, Army National Guard aviation in Alaska has medium lift capabilities with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, and primarily focuses on transporting Soldiers with their C-12 Huron twin-engine turboprop aircraft. With the transition to general aviation support, the scope of capabilities and missions will greatly increase.

"This training is important to prepare pilots for changes happening in the 207th," said Lindell. "The transformation will entail learning new mission requirements and creating brand new companies."

In addition to the battalion's UH-60s and C-12s, the Alaska Army National Guard received CH-47 Chinook and UH-72 Lakota helicopters late last year. Maintenance on the aircraft and training for aircrews and maintainers will ensure the new companies are fully operational this year. The 1-207th will be postured and ready to respond with increased capabilities to meet the needs of the state and effectively support federal missions.

"The benefit of going through the transformation is increased abilities for the state," said Lt. Col. Michele Edwards, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment. "We will be gaining heavy lift capabilities, increasing medevac along with surveillance and reconnaissance, all while retaining medium lift capabilities. This is going to allow for a better response to events like natural disasters. For example, with a Chinook helicopter we will be able to evacuate 40 people at a time instead of 11 with a Blackhawk."

In order to get the new airframes operational, members of the Montana Army National Guard's 1-189th General Support Aviation Battalion are mentoring the 207th on the maintenance and operation of the CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

- more -

“Maintenance is the backbone of aviation, and the 1-207th already has a lot of maintenance experience with the Black Hawk platform,” said Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Johnson, 1-189th General Support Aviation Battalion. “We are here to help teach the specifics of the Chinook and help set them up for success.”

Among aviation in the military it is common for units to share knowledge and train with each other. The transition to general aviation support is being made easier with support from units with relevant experience.

“We have already had pilots from Alaska come down following their aircraft transition course in order to gain experience and pilot in command status,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jacob Wiegand, 1-189th GSAB. “The CH-47 community is very tight knit and it’s common to have relationships across state lines within the National Guard. Whether it is for flight instruction, maintenance, or general questions, we capitalize on the strengths of other states.”

Support from other units is critical in the interim as personnel from Alaska attend schools to get qualified for CH-47 Chinook-related jobs and the unit seeks out new personnel to join aviation.

“There is a lot going on with the transformation and that means there are a lot of new opportunities and missions,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Kent Connolly, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment. “With the additional airframes, we have a demand to fill new roles on top of the current UH-60 related jobs. Nothing can be accomplished in aviation without the supporting roles, and it takes a large team to get any airframe off the ground,” he said.

“Alaska National Guard aviation operations exist to meet ongoing real-world missions that are critical for supporting the state of Alaska and the nation,” continued Connolly. “The future is bright for aviation in the Alaska Army Guard, and there are excellent opportunities here for people with an interest in joining us.”

###

PHOTOS

1. **See below** for a small selection of low-resolution photos.
2. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.)
3. **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/72157691419930673>



U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3, Jeshua McMaster, instructor pilot, and 2nd Lt. Rayanna Reffitt, 2nd platoon leader, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, fly a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Anchorage to Juneau, Alaska, April 26, 2019. Soldiers with the Alaska National Guard from 1-207th conduct cross-country training flights during their final annual training as an air assault unit ahead of their pending transition to becoming a part of a larger general aviation support battalion, expected to finalize this year. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek)



U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Franklin Bithos, battalion standardization pilot, and Capt. Anthony Rivas, commander, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, fly a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Anchorage to Juneau, Alaska, April 26, 2019. Soldiers with the Alaska National Guard from 1-207th conduct cross-country training flights during their final annual training as an air assault unit ahead of their pending transition to becoming a part of a larger general aviation support battalion, expected to finalize this year. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek)



National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek)

U.S. Army pilots from 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard and 1st Battalion, 189th General Support Aviation Battalion, Montana Army National Guard conduct a pre-flight check on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Bryant Army Airfield on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, May 7, 2019. Soldiers with the Alaska National Guard from 1-207th conduct cross-country training flights during their final annual training as an air assault unit ahead of their pending transition to becoming a part of a larger general aviation support battalion, expected to finalize this year. (U.S. Army



A U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook piloted by members of 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard and 1st Battalion, 189th General Support Aviation Battalion, Montana Army National Guard conduct a training flight in at Bryant Army Airfield on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, May 7, 2019. Soldiers with the Alaska National Guard from 1-207th conduct cross-country training flights during their final annual training as an air

assault unit ahead of their pending transition to becoming a part of a larger general aviation support battalion, expected to finalize this year. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek)