

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

19-041

May 30, 2019

Commentary by David Bedard

176th Wing Public Affairs

The wonders of military service

JROTC cadets visit Alaska Air National Guard wing

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — For almost 200 Junior ROTC cadets representing high schools across Southcentral and Western Alaska, 176th Wing C-17 Globemaster III and HC-130J Combat King II aircraft served as magic carpet rides soaring over the Chugach Mountain Range during a May 28 orientation flight out of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

When 144th Airlift Squadron aircrew switched white lights illuminating the hold of the C-17 to tactical red lights, East High School Army JROTC Cadet Seraiah Calogero quickly produced her smartphone and began meticulously documenting the experience. A simple flick of a switch proved to be a wonder to Calogero and dozens of her friends as they strained to see a world bathed in monochromatic crimson light.

The experience was part of the weeklong JROTC Cadet Leadership Challenge camp hosted by Anchorage School District and Bethel Regional High School JROTC programs, which included tours of the 210th Rescue Squadron's HH-60G Pave Hawk combat search-and-rescue helicopter and facilities of the 176th Maintenance Group.

I attended JCLC at JBER in 1994 before anyone had any kind of inkling of what a smartphone would look like or do. I was filled with wonder as I met no-kidding Soldiers and Airmen and got up close and personal with the incredible gear they used every day. I have to admit, I have become jaded over the years, and an F-22 Raptor thundering overhead has become as routine to me as a passing city bus.

Fortunately, many of the veterans who teach JROTC haven't lost that sense of wonder.

"It's exciting," said retired Army Maj. Daniel Erskine, East High School senior Army instructor and JCLC commandant. "For an old Soldier, an old Airman, Sailor or Marine, we do that stuff our whole career, and we get desensitized to it.

"For the cadets, seeing the officers and Airmen doing their jobs, smelling the jet fuel, hearing the airplanes, it becomes very real," the major concluded.

Perhaps the C-17's closest civilian counterpart is the 747 Jumbo Jet cargo plane, except the 747 can't land on a short dirt airfield, shoot missile-confusing flares, or swallow a 70-ton M-1A2 Abrams tank whole. For their part, the cadets were thrilled to cycle into the cockpit where they saw a panoramic view of Alaska's glory, far more immersive than peering out of a jetliner's tiny window.

- more -

“It was a cool experience,” Calogero said. “I can say not too many people get to do it.”

Her counterparts from other schools boarded an HC-130J Combat King II operated by Alaska Air National Guardsmen of 211th Rescue Squadron. Superficially similar to the C-130 Hercules cargo variant, the HC-130 is specially configured for search-and-rescue missions and is outfitted with wing-mounted pods, which can refuel 210th RQS Pave Hawks in flight.

During their tour of the HH-60, cadets crawled into the cockpit – a little more snug than the C-17 flight deck – and marveled at the rows of gauges and foot pedals that control who knows what. They also got hands on with the M134 minigun and M2 .50-caliber machine gun.

East High School Cadet Emily Parks palmed the charging handle of the window-mounted M2 and struggled to rack it back. Turns out it wasn't as easy as she imagined, but she got the hang of it.

The cadets also toured the 176th Maintenance Squadron Propulsion Flight, where they began to blindly disassemble an HC-130 demo engine. Later, they saw the 176th MXS machine shop where metal parts are fabricated from billets, and composite parts can be 3D printed.

At the conclusion of the tour, after seeing the cadets' smiling faces as they met with Airmen and got a taste of what it is aircrew and maintenance professionals do every day, I couldn't help but recapture a youthful appreciation for how amazing service members are. The wonder is back.

###

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/176wg/albums/72157708846716837>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/324701/junior-rotc-cadets-fly-with-alaska-air-national-guards-176th-wing>



East High School Junior ROTC Cadet Emily Parks gets hands on with a 210th Rescue Squadron HH-60G Pave Hawk May 28, 2019, during an orientation with the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing. The mission of JROTC is to teach citizenship and leadership to high school students. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/released

- more photos -



East High School Junior ROTC Cadet Seraiah Calogero photographs under tactical lights aboard a 144th Airlift Squadron C-17 Globemaster III May 28, 2019, during an orientation flight with the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing. The mission of JROTC is to teach citizenship and leadership to high school students. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/released)



Alaska Air National Guard Airman 1st Class Bailey Milani, a loadmaster with 144th Airlift Squadron, supervises the boarding of Army and Navy Junior ROTC cadets from across the state aboard a 144th AS C-17 Globemaster III May 28, 2019, for an orientation flight with the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing. The mission of JROTC is to teach citizenship and leadership to high school students. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/released)