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Alaska Army Guard medevacs two men from Haines for emergency medical care

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Aircrew with the Alaska Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment provided medical evacuation for two men in Haines yesterday, ensuring they were able to get the emergency care needed as quickly as possible.

A civilian medevac unit was unable to reach Haines due to inclement weather, and the United States Coast Guard Sector Juneau—the primary military search and rescue asset for Southeast Alaska—was already conducting a SAR mission.

“The Coast Guard contacted the Rescue Coordination Center to request a medevac in Haines, and the RCC requested that we conduct the mission because Coast Guard was engaged in a SAR at the time,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joshua Claeys, pilot in command of the Army Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter on the mission.

The Black Hawk and crew, with two civilian medevac flight nurses onboard, flew to Haines to pick up two men experiencing unrelated emergency medical conditions, each needing immediate care.

“The RCC contacted us at about 2:15 p.m. and we departed by 2:45 p.m.,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeshua McMaster, co-pilot on the mission. “We picked the patients up from the Haines Volunteer Fire Department at the airport,” he said.

McMaster said that the weather was a paramount factor in why civilian medevac was unable to provide services in Haines, with low cloud ceiling, heavy rain and wind at about 35 miles per hour.

“The flight nurses flew with us and provided medical care en route,” said Claeys. “They had ventilators, IVs, a triage system and other items.”

Both Claeys and McMaster said they were glad for the opportunity to help people in need, and this kind of mission is a reason they appreciate the work they do.

“Being able to help save a life, well it's great to be able to make an impact like that,” said McMaster. “It was more urgent and impactful than a training mission, and we hope to be able to provide more of this level of support in the future.”

One Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 and aircrew are stationed full-time at the Army Aviation Operating Facility in Juneau. The 1-207th Aviation Battalion was awarded two saves for this mission.

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