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## **—ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD NEWS—**

### **1. Air National Guard rescues three hikers stranded on cliff**

*KTUU by KTUU News/June 12*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - On Wednesday night, Alaska Air National Guard was called in by troopers to rescue hikers in Eagle River. Three hikers were stranded on a cliff with one having fallen off the cliff.

Fortunately, the hikers had an Inreach locator beacon which was able to send an emergency request for help to the Alaska State Troopers.

The hikers were about 2,500 feet up a mountain just east of the Eagle River Nature Center but were not on an established trail, the National Guard said.

"They had basically put themselves onto a cliff in which they could not get out of," Senior Master Sgt. Evan Budd, superintendent of the Alaska Air Rescue Squadrons said in a prepared statement. "The third person had fallen off the cliff and was no longer with the rest of the party."

When the rescue squadron was called to help, they were told one of the hikers could be injured, but when they got to the location they only saw two hikers.

"We flew to the area of the coordinates that we received for their location and spotted two hikers," Lt. Col. Jeremy Groat, the pilot for the mission, said.

Pararescuemen were able to lift the hikers out from where they were stranded but could not locate the third, potentially injured hiker.

After searching the area, rescuers found a hiker who matched the description of the third hiker and was able to transport all three back to JBER.

The Air National Guard said all hikers were uninjured and released.

**Link:** <https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/Air-National-Guard-rescues-three-hikers-stranded-on-cliff-571209021.html>

**Also at:** <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/anchorage/2020/06/11/3-hikers-rescued-after-getting-stranded-on-cliff-in-eagle-river-valley/#:~:text=Three%20hikers%20stranded%20on%20a,2%2C500%20feet%20up%20a%20mountain%20side>  
<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2217766/alaska-air-national-guard-rescues-3-hikers-in-eagle-river/>

## **2. Soto assumes command of 176th Maintenance Group**

*DVIDS by David Bedard/June 11*

Alaska Air National Guard Col. Edward Soto took command of 176th Maintenance Group during a June 11 ceremony here.

The 176th MXG Airmen maintain C-17A Globemaster III cargo aircraft, HC-130J Combat King II combat search and rescue fixed-wing aircraft, and HH-60G Pave Hawk combat search and rescue helicopters. The group supports in-place and deployed contingency operations for airlift, 24-hour search and rescue and full-spectrum operations worldwide.

Presiding officer and commander of 176th Wing Col. Anthony Stratton said the ceremony was an assumption of command because Stratton was the unit's last commander before taking over the wing in December.

Stratton said Soto brings a unique range of experience owing to his prior civilian job working for the Alaska Division of Forestry and his military background as a traditional weekend-drilling Air National Guardsman.

Stratton said the wing has leveraged Soto's engineering skills for years, with the majority of buildings on the old Kulis Air National Guard base bearing his signature in some form.

"What are my expectations of Ed?" Stratton asked the crowd before explaining Soto's engineer expertise could help the continued process of bedding down maintenance operations at the base. "He is going to help us settle down here at JBER."

Soto hailed the massive efforts Airmen of the 176th MXG have taken fielding the new HC-130J and newly recapitalized Operational Loss Replacement HH-60s during the past few years.

The new commander challenged the group to reach new heights, noting when it comes to getting better as a unit, there are no prescribed limits.

**Link:** <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/372174/soto-assumes-command-176th-maintenance-group>

### **3. Komatsu takes command of 176th Mission Support Group**

*DVIDS by David Bedard/June 11*

Alaska Air National Guard Col. Matthew Komatsu succeeded Col. Keolani Bailey as 176th Mission Support Group commander during a June 11 ceremony here.

The group provides wartime and peacetime mission support of deployment operations, construction, facility maintenance, security, contracting, communications and information services, supply, transportation, personnel support and services for 176th Wing.

Bailey, a career engineer, will attend the resident Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Presented with the Legion of Merit during the ceremony, the award citation highlighted the 176th MSG's efforts under Bailey's command including support of response efforts for hurricanes Florence and Maria, catastrophic 2019 Alaska wildfires and the Nov. 30, 2018, Alaska earthquake.

Bailey credited the group's Airmen for successes attributed to his command.

"Thank you for serving valiantly every day," he said. "Thank you for being wingmen, warriors and leaders. You are mission-ready, Airman-focused, innovative warriors."

Komatsu most recently served in the Alaska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters J-5 Joint Planning office. Previously, he was the 212th Rescue Squadron commander and is a career combat rescue officer experienced in combat search and rescue operations.

Komatsu lauded Airmen of 176th MSG for their recent work in ably supporting deployment operations and the COVID-19 pandemic response.

"The MSG is the best I've seen it in nearly a decade," he said. "And, like Robert Frost said in a poem based on his experience as a postal worker in the rural Northwest, we're carrying the mail."

**Link:** <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/372175/komatsu-takes-command-176th-mission-support-group>

### **4. Inside the Gates: Alaska Air National Guard members deployed to Africa**

*KTVA by Dave Leval/June 8*

As they boarded their flight Monday morning, several dozen Alaska Air National Guard members got ready to deploy to Africa.

They are members of the 210th and 212th rescue squadrons, as well as mechanics and other support airmen of 176th Wing.

"This time I was really excited to go because we know the people we're supporting, the mission in Africa and who it actually benefits, is greatly needed on the ground there." said Tech. Sgt. James Jones, who said he also served with the 176th Wing in Africa in 2015. "It's actually a real difference you see."

According to a release from the guard, 210th Rescue Squadron members operate the HH-60G Pave Hawk combat search and rescue helicopter and members of the 212th Rescue Squadron include combat rescue officers and pararescuemen.

Airmen with the 176th Wing maintain the helicopters used by the squadrons and provide other support. The deployment is just the latest for the wing.

"We have at least 50 personnel deployed around the world almost every day," said 176th Wing Commander Col. Tony Stratton. "Over the last 15 years we actually had only about a 14-day break where our wing had no personnel deployed."

Getting service members to Africa takes a lot more than just boarding a military flight. Stratton said one of the biggest challenges is passports.

"Working together between the Department of Defense and the Department of State to get passports so our personnel can be in-processed and out-processed smoothly and so that they have the diplomatic protections," he said.

The helicopters that will be used during the deployment and additional members left over the weekend. Many had to say goodbye to loved ones.

"It never gets easier," Jones said. "It's gotten harder to leave my family, but I've come to realize that I'm going with my family."

They are expected to return to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in about four and half months.

**Link:** <https://www.ktva.com/story/42223725/inside-the-gates-alaska-air-national-guard-members-deploy-to-africa>

—ALASKA NEWS OF INTEREST—

### **5. 9 new COVID-19 cases reported day after largest spike in Alaska**

*ADN by Tess Williams/June 15*

Alaska saw nine new COVID-19 infections Sunday and three cases in seafood industry workers, according to the Department of Health and Social Services. The active number of cases reached 238 Sunday, the highest the state has seen since the pandemic began.

The new confirmed cases were in four communities, including four in Anchorage, two each in Fairbanks and North Pole and one in Palmer.

Three non-resident seafood workers also tested positive for COVID-19. Two of the employees are in the Anchorage Municipality and one is in the combined Bristol Bay and Lake and Peninsula boroughs, the department said. There have been 75 cases confirmed in non-residents.

In total, Alaska has had 661 COVID-19 cases. There have been 411 Alaskans to recover from the virus. On Saturday, the state announced the largest single-day increase with 29 new COVID-19 cases, although two cases were reclassified Sunday and placed into the non-resident category when it was discovered that the people had traveled to the Kenai Peninsula Borough from Outside.

Twelve Alaskans have died of the virus and the state reported Sunday that 12 people were currently hospitalized because of the virus or who potentially have COVID-19. Two people recently died after

contracting the virus at a transitional care center in Anchorage. No new deaths or hospitalizations were reported Sunday.

The state had administered 73,467 COVID-19 tests as of Sunday.

**Link:** <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2020/06/14/9-new-covid-19-cases-reported-day-after-largest-spike-in-alaska/>

## **6. Gov. Dunleavy thanks Alaskans, those who organized protests**

*KTVA by Makayla Clark/June 10*

Wednesday evening, Gov. Mike Dunleavy addressed the unrest around the country following the killing of George Floyd.

He acknowledged the rallies across Alaska.

"A protest is not a bad thing, especially when there's an injustice. A riot, looting, hurting people, is," Dunleavy said.

He also thanked every Alaskan and the young people who put the protests together.

"I want to thank them because protesting and voicing your opinion, especially when you've seen injustice, is America. It's Alaskan; it's American too. There aren't going to be any changes for the good unless we have that dialogue," Dunleavy said. "But I really want to thank the people of Alaska. I want to thank those young people that put the protests together because they were protests. They weren't riots."

Dunleavy said that is how it should be. "We should have a dialogue with each other if we think there's something wrong. We should try and understand the perspective of each other."

Speaking about making America a better place, Dunleavy said we can do a lot better. "But we've done pretty good in the past 240-some years of trying to become better and better every day."

Dunleavy said the way to get there is by listening to others and hearing different perspectives before thinking through what individuals and the government can do differently.

Dunleavy said he hopes "out of that tragedy comes something better."

He said this situation is a chance to have the dialogue so that what is happening makes a positive difference.

"We need to work at doing a lot better and not just hope something better happens," Dunleavy said. Dunleavy said he supports law enforcement officers but does not support anyone in any profession who hurts or has disregard for others. He said he doesn't support defunding police.

**Link:** <https://www.ktva.com/story/42235733/gov-dunleavy-thanks-alaskans-those-who-organized-protests>

## **7. Patient at Anchorage transitional care center is Alaska's latest coronavirus death**

*Alaska Public Media by Tegan Hanlon/June 9*

Another Alaskan has died from COVID-19 after more than a month of no fatalities linked to the disease among residents.

The person was a patient at the Providence Transitional Care Center in East Anchorage — the site of the state’s largest coronavirus outbreak.

The patient tested positive for the virus and then was hospitalized, said Mikal Canfield, a spokesman for Providence Health & Services Alaska, which operates the transitional center. The patient died at the Providence Alaska Medical Center on Sunday, he said.

“This resident was a cherished member of the PTCC family, and we are deeply saddened,” Canfield said in a statement. “We extend our sympathies to their family and loved ones in their time of loss.”

Canfield declined to provide the patient’s age or information on any underlying medical conditions, citing patient privacy.

The patient is the 11th Alaskan to die with the virus. The state reported the death on Tuesday, along with another double-digit, daily increase in coronavirus cases. By the end of the day Monday, 11 more Alaskans had tested positive for the disease. So had two more seafood workers from out of state.

Six of the newly-diagnosed Alaskans are from Anchorage, two are from the Kenai Peninsula Borough, one is from Nome, one is from Kotzebue and one is from Haines, which the borough reported on Monday. It’s the first case in the Southeast Alaska community.

Also, the health department said Tuesday that it had reclassified a previously reported case after further investigation. A case described as an Alaskan in the Kenai Peninsula Borough is actually a nonresident seafood worker.

It wasn’t immediately clear how many of the new cases are linked to the ongoing outbreak at Providence’s East Anchorage campus.

Health officials confirmed the first case on the campus on May 29. A patient at the transitional care center had developed a cough and fever, and tested positive for the infectious disease. Providence then tested the hundreds of patients, residents and caregivers on the campus. It recently completed a second round of testing.

By Tuesday, 17 patients and 26 caregivers had tested positive for COVID-19 at the transitional center, Canfield said. That’s about a third of the center’s patients and nearly 20% of its staff. Patients typically spend weeks at the center as they recover from injury, surgery or illness before heading home or to assisted living.

Also, a caregiver at Providence Extended Care has tested positive for the disease and is quarantining at home, Canfield said. The extended care facility serves mostly older people who live there for years. It shares a campus with the transitional center.

Canfield said Tuesday that Providence was still waiting on some results from its second round of testing. It planned for a third round at the end of the week.

Canfield said caregivers are using N95 masks and face shields, and patients are directed to stay in their rooms. The campus is closed to visitors, unless they're seeing someone at the end of their life, he said.

Health officials continue to investigate how exactly the first patient became infected with the virus, Canfield said. They believe the patient acquired it in the facility.

The coronavirus has been shown to spread in similar settings across the country, where people live in a confined space. The virus is particularly deadly among older people and those with underlying medical conditions. The New York Times reported last month that one-third of all U.S. coronavirus deaths were tied to long-term care facilities for older adults.

The number of new coronavirus cases reported in Alaska each day has reached the double-digits several times over the past two weeks, after more than a month of small, daily increases. The state started to lift coronavirus-related limitations on businesses in late April and removed them completely in late May.

By the end of the day Monday, the state had recorded 573 coronavirus cases among Alaskans: 389 of them are considered recovered, 173 of them are active cases and there are 11 deaths. Two of the Alaskans died out of state.

The last coronavirus-related death before Sunday's was reported in early May. A man from Anchor Point who was older than 80 and had pre-existing conditions died at a Kenai Peninsula hospital. Before that, a 33-year-old woman from Wasilla died in April. She also had pre-existing conditions, state health officials said.

State health officials say a death is included in its coronavirus data if the person was confirmed to have COVID-19 through a lab result and then died during the course of having the disease or through complications related to the disease. It is also included if the medical examiner conducts a death investigation which results in a positive COVID-19 lab test.

The health department on Tuesday also reported another person has been hospitalized with the disease in Alaska, bringing that total to 49 since the state started tracking the coronavirus in March. As of Monday, 12 people were currently in the hospital who either tested positive for the virus or were awaiting results.

The total number of tests administered in the state has reached 66,890, up nearly 1,000 from a day earlier. The total number of nonresidents who have tested positive for the disease is now 49.

Also Tuesday, the state transportation department announced another six Alaska Marine Highway employees from the Tustumena ferry have tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total number of cases to seven. The seven crew members will remain in isolation on the Tustumena. Health-care workers are monitoring them, the department says.

Those six new cases will be included in the state's case count on Wednesday. The state's daily data update is based on the prior day's numbers.

**Link:** <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/06/09/tuesday-coronavirus-count-state-reports-an-11th-death-14-more-cases/>

—NATION/NATIONAL GUARD NEWS OF INTEREST—

**8. National Guard COVID-19 Response**

Michigan Guard engineers balance COVID-19 risk, readiness; COVID-19: Guam National Guard mother, son in this together; Nevada Guard helps fight COVID-19 in historic response

**Latest news articles:** <https://www.nationalguard.mil/coronavirus/>

**9. Coronavirus: Dexamethasone proves first life-saving drug**

*BBC News by Michelle Roberts/June 16*

A cheap and widely available drug can help save the lives of patients seriously ill with coronavirus.

The low-dose steroid treatment dexamethasone is a major breakthrough in the fight against the deadly virus, UK experts say.

The drug is part of the world's biggest trial testing existing treatments to see if they also work for coronavirus.

It cut the risk of death by a third for patients on ventilators. For those on oxygen, it cut deaths by a fifth.

Had the drug had been used to treat patients in the UK from the start of the pandemic, up to 5,000 lives could have been saved, researchers say.

And it could be of huge benefit in poorer countries with high numbers of Covid-19 patients.

The UK government has 200,000 courses of the drug in its stockpile and says the NHS will make dexamethasone available to patients.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said there was a genuine case to celebrate "a remarkable British scientific achievement", adding: "We have taken steps to ensure we have enough supplies, even in the event of a second peak."

Chief Medical Officer for England Prof Chris Whitty said it would save lives around the world.

About 19 out of 20 patients with coronavirus recover without being admitted to hospital.

Of those who are admitted, most also recover but some may need oxygen or mechanical ventilation.

And these are the high-risk patients dexamethasone appears to help.

The drug is already used to reduce inflammation in a range of other conditions, including arthritis, asthma and skin some conditions.

And it appears to help stop some of the damage that can happen when the body's immune system goes into overdrive as it tries to fight off coronavirus.

This over-reaction, a cytokine storm, can be deadly.

In the trial, led by a team from Oxford University, about 2,000 hospital patients were given dexamethasone and compared with more than 4,000 who were not.

For patients on ventilators, it cut the risk of death from 40% to 28%.

For patients needing oxygen, it cut the risk of death from 25% to 20%.

Chief investigator Prof Peter Horby said: "This is the only drug so far that has been shown to reduce mortality - and it reduces it significantly. It's a major breakthrough."

Lead researcher Prof Martin Landray said the findings suggested one life could be saved for:

- every eight patients on a ventilator
- every 20-25 treated with oxygen

"There is a clear, clear benefit," he said.

"The treatment is up to 10 days of dexamethasone and it costs about £5 per patient.

"So essentially it costs £35 to save a life.

"This is a drug that is globally available."

When appropriate, hospital patients should now be given it without delay, Prof Landray said.

But people should not go out and buy it to take at home.

Dexamethasone does not appear to help people with milder symptoms of coronavirus who do not need help with their breathing.

The Recovery Trial, running since March, also looked at the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine, which has subsequently been ditched amid concerns it increases fatalities and heart problems.

The antiviral drug remdesivir, meanwhile, which appears to shorten recovery time for people with coronavirus, is already being made available on the NHS.

The first drug proven to cut deaths from Covid-19 is not some new, expensive medicine but an old, cheap-as-chips steroid.

That is something to celebrate because it means patients across the world could benefit immediately.

And that is why the top-line results of this trial have been rushed out - because the implications are so huge globally.

Dexamethasone has been used since the early 1960s to treat a wide range of conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis and asthma.

Half of all Covid patients who require a ventilator do not survive, so cutting that risk by a third would have a huge impact.

The drug is given intravenously in intensive care and in tablet form for less seriously ill patients.

So far, the only other drug proven to benefit Covid patients is remdesivir, which has been used for Ebola.

That has been shown to reduce the duration of coronavirus symptoms from 15 days to 11.

But the evidence was not strong enough to show whether it reduced mortality.

Unlike dexamethasone, remdesivir is a new drug with limited supplies and a price has yet to be announced.

**Link:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/health-53061281>

## **10. National Guard Members Responding To D.C. Protests Have Tested Positive For Coronavirus**

*Forbes by Jemima McEvoy/June 9*

A spokeswoman said on Tuesday that National Guard members, who were sent to D.C. to respond to riots starting on May 31 and have since been among hundreds of thousands of protestors in the nation's capital, have tested positive for COVID-19, bolstering concerns over a protest-induced spike in coronavirus cases.

### KEY FACTS

- D.C. National Guard spokeswoman Brooke Davis told McClatchy DC on Tuesday that members of the 1,300-person D.C. National Guard sent to respond to protests in the nation's capital have tested positive for the virus, but did not disclose the number of positive tests recorded.
- "We can confirm that we have had COVID-19 positive tests with the DCNG," Davis said. "The safety and security of our personnel is always a concern, especially in light of the COVID-19 era."
- The D.C. National Guard was called to respond to rioting on May 31 and was expected to leave the city early this week, according to Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy.
- Davis said that any National Guard members who tested positive will be held back until they are no longer sick or contagious.
- "All Guardsmen who are suspected to be at high risk of infection or have tested positive for COVID-19 during demobilization will not be released from Title 32 orders until risk of infection or illness has passed," Davis said. "Members of the Air and Army National Guard with no, or low risk of exposure, who present symptoms of infection one to 14 days after release from orders will contact their unit."
- The Nebraska National Guard also reported Guardsmen testing positive on Monday after responding to protests in Lincoln, Nebraska.

#### KEY BACKGROUND

Public health officials have warned of possible spikes in the number of coronavirus cases as a result of the massive crowds gathering to protest across the U.S. Two weeks after George Floyd's death, thousands are still gathering in major cities and suburbs alike. McClatchy DC reported that on Saturday, in the largest protest in D.C. to date, participants were packed tightly together, with many not wearing masks. Authorities estimated that around 200,000 attended the protest.

**Link:** <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2020/06/09/national-guard-members-responding-to-dc-protests-have-tested-positive-for-coronavirus/#3e71479e422c>

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