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By David Bedard

176th Wing Public Affairs

Soto assumes command of 176th Maintenance Group

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — 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.

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.



Alaska Air National Guard Col. Edward Soto (right) salutes Col. Anthony Stratton, 176th Wing commander, signifying Soto's assumption of command of 176th Maintenance Group during a June 11 ceremony at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Normally, assumption of command is signified by passing of the unit guidon, but COVID-19 measures precluded the tradition. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



Alaska Air National Guard Col. Edward Soto salutes family during a June 11 176th Maintenance Group assumption of command ceremony at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Soto succeeded Col. Anthony Stratton, 176th Wing commander, who relinquished command of the group several months ago to take command of the wing. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)