

**Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe**

*Commissioner & Adjutant General*

[www.DMVA.Alaska.Gov](http://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**

020-081

**September 2, 2020**

By Sgt. Seth LaCount

*Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs*

## **211th Rescue Squadron captures top individual awards for 2019**

Alaska Air Guard's junior officer and NCO of the year awardees from same squadron

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — Alaska Air National Guardsmen Capt. Natasha Sanders and Tech Sgt. Christopher Luther, both assigned to the 211th Rescue Squadron, achieved top honors for 2019 and were awarded with a plaque and coin Aug. 28 for their accomplishments.

Both Airmen were evaluated based on leadership and job performance in their primary duty and whole Airman concepts.

The awards were presented on behalf of Brig. Gen. Scott Howard, commander of the Alaska Air National Guard.

"Supervisors who take time to recognize their Airmen codify the excellence of everyday Airmen for the rest of their career," said Col. John Oberst, the Alaska Air National Guard director of Staff. "It matters."

Sanders, an HC-130 Combat King II pilot, was nominated for company-grade officer of the year and Luther was nominated for noncommissioned officer of the year, competing against approximately 500 members from their respective rank peer groups and about a thousand members at the wing level before they were judged at the state level for the air component.

A few of Sanders' individual accomplishments for 2019 included participating in a rescue effort where three Alaska citizens were successfully located and saved. She flew 43 combat sorties that airdropped 21 personnel and planned 82 combat sorties with no air traffic control delays. She maximized wing training opportunities for her Airmen, and enabled swift Combat Search and Rescue Task Force response.

Luther, an instructor/evaluator loadmaster, braved five search and rescue missions, flying more than 10 hours in adverse weather and saving three lives. He was a key volunteer for squadron programs and stepped forward to become the unit fitness program manager, responsible for squadron readiness. He graduated No. 1 out of 79 of his peers at the Air Force Noncommissioned Officer Academy and garnered the highly coveted Levitow award.

Members of the 211th RQS attended the award ceremony to celebrate their fellow Airmen. The award presentation was followed by Squadron Roll Call, a tradition that dates back to World War I. The Airmen

-more-

told personal stories, toasted the fallen, and talked about the 211th RQS' proud heritage. It's a heritage that's demonstrated today, by the hard work of men and women like Sanders and Luther.

###

## PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Story link** <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/377180/211th-rescue-squadron-captures-top-individual-awards-2019>



Alaska Air National Guard Capt. Natasha Sanders, an HC-130 Combat King II pilot with the 211th Rescue Squadron, receives the Company Grade Officer of the Year award from Director of Staff Col. John Oberst at Hangar 18 on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 28, 2020. She was recognized for her 2019 accomplishments that included a successful rescue operation that saved the lives of three Alaska citizens. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



Alaska Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Christopher Luther, an instructor/evaluator loadmaster with the 211th Rescue Squadron, is given the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year award from State Command Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Wilson at Hangar 18 on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 28, 2020. Luther was recognized for his accomplishments in 2019 that included graduating first out of 79 students in his Noncommissioned Officer's Academy class and taking home the coveted Levitow Award. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)