

Image: 090313-N-6043G-008.jpg

Description: Hospital Corpsman Derek Gaudin conducts a quality assurance test on a pair of glasses.



090313-N-6043G-008 BETHEL, Alaska (March 13, 2009) Hospital Corpsman Derek Gaudin, from Baton Rouge, La., an optical laboratory specialist with the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity (NOSTRA), conducts a quality assurance test on a pair of glasses. A NOSTRA team has produced about 400 pairs of eyeglasses for Operation Arctic Care, a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care to underserved Alaskan residents, including dental, optometry and veterinary support. This year's Navy-led mission has teams in 14 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Matt Grills/Released)



Quote:

BETHEL, Alaska (March 7, 2009) Sgt. Shirley Grant, left, of Beaufort, S.C., and Capt. Amy Clark of Anchorage, Alaska, both from the Army's Southern California District Veterinary Command, locate the village of Alakanuk on a map for an Operation Arctic Care veterinary exercise. Arctic Care is a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care, including dental, optometry and veterinary support, to underserved Alaskan residents. This year's Navy-led mission has teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Christopher Griffin/Released)

Navy-Led Arctic Care Returns to Western Alaska

Story Number: NNS090309-07

Release Date: 3/9/2009 4:14:00 PM

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Matt Grills

BETHEL, Alaska (NNS) -- Joint teams of Navy, Army and Air Force medical and dental personnel are deploying to 11 of Western Alaska's most remote villages March 6-15, bringing no-cost health care and veterinary support to underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region as part of the 15th annual Operation Arctic Care.

Led by the Navy, this year's medical readiness exercise is based in Bethel, Alaska, where the military is providing colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams to augment services at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Hospital. In addition, an audiologist, mental-health clinicians, a physical therapist, an emergency-room physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist will support the project.

"The operational health support unit headquarters staff at Camp Pendleton has been engaged with this exercise for over a year, and we are excited to get it off the ground," said Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer, lead planner for Operation Arctic Care 2009. "All the branches of the military are present, and people are motivated for this mission. It's so rewarding to be here doing medical outreach for people who really need it."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 is conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Teams of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and Army veterinary personnel will provide care in the delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Reserve and active components of the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provide the personnel and equipment for Arctic Care. Uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service are also participating.

Harsh weather conditions occasionally pose a challenge in getting flights out to villages via Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk

helicopters. But that's all part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military-civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster.

"Our chief sent out an e-mail about a year ago looking for people who were interested in coming up here, and I volunteered right away," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Hermann Schieder, an optometry technician attached to the 43rd Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. He's spending the week conducting eye exams for the people of Toksook Bay, population 549.

"This is the farthest north I've ever been. Besides all the cold wind, Alaska is a beautiful place, and I'm looking forward to being out in the community and doing something good for others."

This year's Arctic Care mission made a footprint months before medical teams began deploying. In September, the Navy's leadership team conducted a site survey to assess each village's needs, and in January two Marine Corps electricians and an Air Force biomedical technician installed wiring connections for villages to communicate with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation via video teleconferencing. A total of 33 villages benefited from the work.

The people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta appreciate the opportunity to receive health services through Arctic Care.

"During the site visit, I went to a grocery store, and one of the natives asked where I was from," Reisdorfer said. "I explained that I was with Arctic Care, and he said, 'I am so happy you are here. We have been waiting for you.'"

Veterinary care is a critical component of this year's Arctic Care. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Every year, bites and mauling cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations – sometimes even death. Children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"Animal health and human health go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Angie Parham of Athens, Ga. "Our goal is to get all the animals we can vaccinated. Rabies is our main concern since it can be transmitted to humans. But we'll deworm and vaccinate for other dog diseases as well to try to keep the animals healthy."

Teams from the Army Veterinary Command will also spay and neuter

at pet owners' request and teach courses on animal husbandry.

Rotating to different areas of rural Alaska each year, Arctic Care has been to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta three times – in 1997, 1998 and 2001. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. During a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Covering an area the size of North Dakota and South Dakota combined, the 2009 exercise will serve even greater numbers of native Alaskans.

"Many of these people aren't fortunate enough to have the amenities we take for granted in the lower 48 states," said Hospital Corpsman Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La. Sent by the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, his job at Arctic Care is grinding lens for eyeglasses that will be delivered to the villages.

"We've been told to expect to do double what we did last year."

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

For more news from the Bureau of Navy Medicine, visit www.navy.mil/local/bumed.

Navy-led Arctic Care returns to Western Alaska



Navy Capt. Doug Henschel, a dentist assigned to the 14th Dental Company, inserts a filling for Dylan Sergie, 2, at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska, on March 10, 2009. A

by Airman 1st Class Rachelle
Coleman
354th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

3/19/2009 - **EIELSON AIR FORCE
BASE, Alaska** -- Personnel here

were part of a team that participated
in a joint Air Force, Army and Navy
medical and dental exercise in 11 of Western Alaska's most remote villages
March 6 through 15.

joint military medical team is deployed to
Kwethluk, a small village in Western Alaska,
in support of Operation Arctic Care. This
year's Navy-led mission has teams in 11
villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta
region providing medical, dental and
veterinary support at no cost to Alaskan
natives. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior
Airman Christopher Griffin)

The exercise purpose was to bring no-cost health care and veterinary support to
underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region as part of the 15th
annual Operation Arctic Care.

Led by the Navy, this year's medical readiness exercise was based in Bethel,
Alaska, where the military provided colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams
to augment services at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Hospital, along with an
audiologist, mental-health clinicians, a physical therapist, an emergency-room
physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist.

"The mission provides team members a chance to interact as a joint team in a
unique environment," said Master Sgt. Carmen Cate, Arctic Care Team
coordinator, "For this year's mission to Bethel, I assisted in selecting the
optometry team members consisting of 14 optometrists and 14 ophthalmic
technicians-- including five from Eielson."

The exercise was a success and participants were eager to be a part of it.

"The Operational Health Support Unit Headquarters staff at Camp Pendleton
(San Diego) has been engaged with this exercise for over a year, and we are
excited to get it off the ground," said Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer, lead planner
for Operation Arctic Care 2009. "All the branches of the military are present, and
people are motivated for this mission. It's so rewarding to be here doing medical
outreach for people who really need it."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 is conducted in cooperation with and under the
supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Teams of medical, dental,
optometry, nursing and Army veterinary personnel will provide care in the delta
villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk,
Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Reserve and active components of the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air
Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provide the personnel and equipment for
the operation. Uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service are also
participating.

Harsh weather conditions occasionally pose a challenge in getting flights out to villages via Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. But that's all part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military and civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster.

"Our chief sent out an e-mail about a year ago looking for people who were interested in coming up here, and I volunteered right away," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Hermann Schieder, an optometry technician attached to the 43rd Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron at Pope AFB, N.C. He's spending the week conducting eye exams for the people of Toksook Bay, population 549.

"This is the farthest north I've ever been. Besides all the cold wind, Alaska is a beautiful place, and I'm looking forward to being out in the community and doing something good for others," he said.

This year's mission made a footprint months before medical teams began deploying. In September, the Navy's leadership team conducted a site survey to assess each village's needs, and in January two Marine Corps electricians and an Air Force biomedical technician installed wiring connections for villages to communicate with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation via video teleconferencing. A total of 33 villages benefited from the work.

The people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta appreciate the opportunity to receive health services through Arctic Care.

"During the site visit, I went to a grocery store, and one of the natives asked where I was from," Captain Reisdorfer said. "I explained that I was with Arctic Care, and he said, 'I am so happy you are here. We have been waiting for you.'"

Veterinary care is a critical component of this year's operation. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Every year, bites and mauling cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations - sometimes even death. Children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"Animal health and human health go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Angie Parham of Athens, Ga. "Our goal is to get all the animals we can vaccinated. Rabies is our main concern, since it can be transmitted to humans. But we'll deworm and vaccinate for other dog diseases as well to try to keep the animals healthy."

Teams from the Army Veterinary Command will also spay and neuter at a pet owner's request, and teach courses on animal husbandry and the importance of hand washing.

Rotating to different areas of rural Alaska each year, Arctic Care has been to the

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta three times - in 1997, 1998 and 2001. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Covering an area the size of North Dakota and South Dakota combined, the 2009 exercise will serve even greater numbers of native Alaskans.

"Many of these people aren't fortunate enough to have the amenities we take for granted in the lower 48 states," said Hospital Corpsman Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La. Sent by the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, his job at Arctic Care is grinding lens for eyeglasses that will be delivered to the villages.

"We've been told to expect to do double what we did last year. We have got enough lens stock to make enough glasses for everybody in Alaska, probably."

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

Editor's note: Information in this article was supplied by Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Matt Grills, Operation Arctic Care Public Affairs



[View All Photos](#)



090309-F-3646G-159
BETHEL, Alaska (March 9, 2009) Maj. Lawrence Ngeryen, a staff dental officer at Travis Air Force Base, from Rocklin, Calif., explains to a young patient the reason for wearing a protective visor while performing dental surgery at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation clinic. Ngeryen is in the village participating in Operation Arctic Care, a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care to underserved Alaskan residents, including dental, optometry and veterinary support. This year's Navy-led mission has teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Christopher Griffin/Released)

Yukon Delta Villages Welcomes Military Medical Teams

Story Number: NNS090315-03

Release Date: 3/15/2009 4:26:00 PM

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Matt Grills

BETHEL, Alaska (NNS) -- Teams of Navy, Air Force and Army health care providers treated hundreds of villagers, and their pets, in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of Western Alaska March 6-15 as part of Operation Arctic Care.

"We've received very positive reports of the work happening in the villages, and they've truly welcomed our people," said Navy Capt. Elizabeth Reiser, Arctic Care 2009 officer in charge. "In fact, there's been disappointment when a team has had to leave early or couldn't arrive as planned. There's been plenty to do, and our providers have been busy the entire week."

With more than 200 participants, this year's Navy-led medical readiness exercise began March 6, deploying mixed teams of doctors, dentists, optometrists and Army veterinarians from Bethel, Alaska, to 11 villages: Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay. Three other villages – Kotlik, Russian Mission and St. Mary's – also requested and received service.

With a population of 730, Kwethluk – whose name comes from the Yupik word "kwikli," meaning "river" – was among the first villages to receive an Arctic Care team. Arriving March 6 on an Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter, Navy and Air Force personnel immediately set up shop at the local health clinic and began seeing waiting patients.

"I first read about Arctic Care in the newspaper, and I was very interested," said Elia Sergie, a resident of Kwethluk. "As soon as they came, I called and made a dental appointment for my son."

Dylon Sergie, 2, sat calmly as Navy Capt. Doug Henschel of Reading, Pa., a dentist attached to the 14th Dental Company, gave him two fillings.

"This is the first time he's had this stuff done," Sergie said. "I heard a team is going to Kalskag, which is where I'm originally from. I hope to hear good things out of there. A lot of people don't have access to this type of health care. It's in Bethel, but you have to have transportation, room and board, and a lot of people don't have money for that."

Arctic Care 2009 is conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC). Reserve and active components of the

Army, Alaska Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provide Arctic Care's personnel and equipment, with uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service also participating.

"This is my first Arctic Care, and it's great training," said Navy Capt. Cynthia Heins, commanding officer of Operational Health Support Unit Headquarters Camp Pendleton, the exercise's host. "I had to literally dust off a lot of my cold-weather gear, but this is a chance to make sure it's all in good working order."

In Kwethluk, Heins practiced adult medicine, treating a broken finger and a bilateral ear infection. She also saw more serious cases, including hypertension and congestive heart failure. Air Force Tech Sgt. LeTroy Mays of the 445th Aerospace Medical Squadron assisted by doing lab draws, double-checking vital signs and clarifying doctor's orders for patients. He also spoke to school classes about preventative health care the dangers of bullying.

"I believe this is one of the best operations I've been a part of," Mays said. "I'm working with different branches of the service, and everybody knows his or her job. We don't have any weak links."

When Kwethluk team members arrived, children were standing at the edge of the runway to grab their hands and walk them to makeshift quarters at their school, said the village's operations officer, Navy Capt. Elaine Walker of Operational Health Support Unit San Diego Detachment C.

"The people welcomed us with open arms," Walker said. "One night they even fed us spaghetti in someone's home. I couldn't make it because I was seeing patients, and they brought some to the school so I could have something to eat. This is a very trusting, open community."

The village, though, isn't like most she's seen, Walker said. "This is a unique part of the country. These people don't have running water, yet they are United States citizens. So I have special feelings toward them."

Mountain Village, population 757, received five Arctic Care health-care providers: a family-practice physician, a critical-care nurse, a nurse practitioner and an emergency medical technician/CPR instructor, all Navy, and an Army dental technician. The physician, Cmdr. Nancy Moya, saw up to 30 patients a day. A visiting YKHC dentist saw 10 patients a day.

"It's been hectic," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Chris Lutton of 4th Marine Division, Weapons Company 223. "We've seen a lot of patients who don't normally get a chance to see a doctor for foot problems, back pain, whatever. If it's something they'd need to see a doctor about in Bethel or Anchorage, they can come in and get a

referral or hopefully have the problem taken care of here. The clinic staff has been wonderful, opening up several rooms for us."

Outside the clinic, Lutton taught a CPR course, talked to students about the importance of staying in school, and carved out time to attend a youth basketball game.

Edna Apatiki, principal of Ignatius Beans School, praised the Arctic Care team for taking an interest in Mountain Village's children.

"The teachers love to invite them into their classrooms to talk about health care and military careers," Apatiki said.

Military members slept in the school at night, on wrestling mats, and ate breakfast each morning with students.

"They swarmed around us, asking questions," said Capt. Elisabeth Wolfe of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, who served as Mountain Village's operations officer. "They're very curious, very excited to have us here. We took pictures with them and showed them what MREs are and how to work them; everybody got to try a little bit of chocolate peanut butter and jalapeno cheese."

As military doctors and dentists treated adults and children, Army Staff Sgt. Christiana Ramos and her colleagues of the Western Region Veterinary Command traveled village to village offering animal care and teaching bite prevention. A veterinary technician, Ramos participated in two previous Arctic Care missions: Nome in 2006, and Kotzebue in 2007.

"Everybody owns animals," Ramos said. "We need to make sure they are vaccinated, and we try to encourage them to spay and neuter their animals so they don't have too many pets running around. Some do; others are not too keen on it. But they definitely want to have the vaccinations."

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

For more news from the Bureau of Navy Medicine, visit www.navy.mil/local/bumed.

Villages Welcomes Military Medical Teams

[Read more stories >>](#)

By 1st Class Matt Grills

BETHEL, Alaska, March 16, 2009 - Teams of Navy, Air Force and Army health care providers treated hundreds of villagers, and their pets, in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of Western Alaska March 6-15 as part of Operation Arctic Care.

"We've received very positive reports of the work happening in the villages, and they've truly welcomed our people," said Navy Capt. Elizabeth Reiser, Arctic Care 2009 officer in charge. "In fact, there's been disappointment when a team has had to leave early or couldn't arrive as planned. There's been plenty to do, and our providers have been busy the entire week."

With more than 200 participants, this year's Navy-led medical readiness exercise began March 6, deploying mixed teams of doctors, dentists, optometrists and Army veterinarians from Bethel, Alaska, to 11 villages: Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay. Three other villages – Kotlik, Russian Mission and St. Mary's – also requested and received service.

With a population of 730, Kwethluk – whose name comes from the Yupik word "kwikli," meaning "river" – was among the first villages to receive an Arctic Care team. Arriving March 6 on an Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter, Navy and Air Force personnel immediately set up shop at the local health clinic and began seeing waiting patients.

"I first read about Arctic Care in the newspaper, and I was very interested," said Elia Sergie, a resident of Kwethluk. "As soon as they came, I called and made a dental appointment for my son."

Dylon Sergie, 2, sat calmly as Navy Capt. Doug Henschel of Reading, Pa., a dentist attached to the 14th Dental Company, gave him two fillings.

"This is the first time he's had this stuff done," Sergie said. "I heard a team is going to Kalskag, which is where I'm originally from. I hope to hear good things out of there. A lot of people don't have access to this type of health care. It's in Bethel, but you have to have transportation, room and board, and a lot of people don't have money for that."

Arctic Care 2009 is conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC). Reserve and active components of the Army, Alaska Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provide Arctic Care's personnel and equipment, with uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service also participating.

"This is my first Arctic Care, and it's great training," said Navy Capt. Cynthia Heins, commanding officer of Operational Health Support Unit Headquarters Camp Pendleton, the exercise's host. "I had to literally dust off a lot of my cold-weather gear, but this is a chance to make sure it's all in good working order."

In Kwethluk, Heins practiced adult medicine, treating a broken finger and a bilateral ear infection. She also saw more serious cases, including hypertension and congestive heart failure. Air Force Tech Sgt. LeTroy Mays of the 445th Aerospace Medical Squadron assisted by doing lab draws, double-checking vital signs and clarifying doctor's orders for patients. He also spoke to school classes about preventative health care the dangers of bullying.

"I believe this is one of the best operations I've been a part of," Mays said. "I'm working with different branches of the service, and everybody knows his or her job. We don't have any weak links."

When Kwethluk team members arrived, children were standing at the edge of the runway to grab their hands and walk them to makeshift quarters at their school, said the village's operations officer, Navy Capt. Elaine Walker of Operational Health Support Unit San Diego Detachment C.

"The people welcomed us with open arms," Walker said. "One night they even fed us spaghetti in someone's home. I couldn't make it because I was seeing patients, and they brought some to the school so I could have something to eat. This is a very trusting, open community."

The village, though, isn't like most she's seen, Walker said. "This is a unique part of the country. These people don't have running water, yet they are United States citizens. So I have special feelings toward them."

Mountain Village, population 757, received five Arctic Care health-care providers: a family-practice physician, a critical-care nurse, a nurse practitioner and an emergency medical technician/CPR instructor, all Navy, and an Army dental technician. The physician, Cmdr. Nancy Moya, saw up to 30 patients a day. A visiting YKHC dentist saw 10 patients a day.

"It's been hectic," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Chris Lutton of 4th Marine Division, Weapons Company 223. "We've seen a lot of patients who don't normally get a chance to see a doctor for foot problems, back pain, whatever. If it's something they'd need to see a doctor about in Bethel or Anchorage, they can come in and get a referral or hopefully have the problem taken care of here. The clinic staff has been wonderful, opening up several rooms for us."

Outside the clinic, Lutton taught a CPR course, talked to students about the importance of staying in school, and carved out time to attend a youth basketball game.

Edna Apatiki, principal of Ignatius Beans School, praised the Arctic Care team for taking an interest in Mountain Village's children.

"The teachers love to invite them into their classrooms to talk about health care and military careers," Apatiki said.

Military members slept in the school at night, on wrestling mats, and ate breakfast each morning with students.

"They swarmed around us, asking questions," said Capt. Elisabeth Wolfe of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, who served as Mountain Village's operations officer. "They're very curious, very excited to have us here. We took pictures with them and showed them what MREs are and how to work them; everybody got to try a little bit of chocolate peanut butter and jalapeno cheese."

As military doctors and dentists treated adults and children, Army Staff Sgt. Christiana Ramos and her colleagues of the Western Region Veterinary Command traveled village to village offering animal care and teaching bite prevention. A veterinary technician, Ramos participated in two previous Arctic Care missions: Nome in 2006, and Kotzebue in 2007.

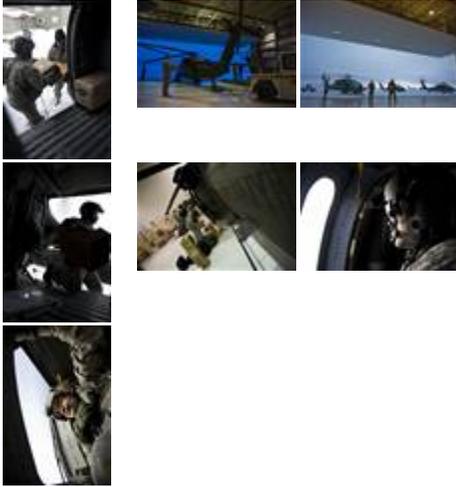
"Everybody owns animals," Ramos said. "We need to make sure they are vaccinated, and we try to encourage them to spay and neuter their animals so they don't have too many pets running around. Some do; others are not too keen on it. But they definitely want to have the vaccinations."

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

Media associated with Story

[Never short on supplies during Operation Arctic Care](#)

Total Images: 7



Sgt. Robert Pike of the Alaska Army National Guard's 1st 207 Aviation Regiment unloads medical supplies from a Black Hawk in a Western Alaska village March 12. The 1st 207 Aviation Regiment is responsible for transporting all medical teams and supplies during Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led readiness exercise providing no-cost health care to 14 villages in Western Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim region. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)

AF's Alaska Brass delight students of Mountain Village

3/13/2009 - Tech. Sgt. Sam Cliff, left, and Senior Airman Rich McMaster of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass play their trumpets during a performance at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble was part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Media associated with Story

[AF's Alaska Brass delight students of Mountain Village](#)

Total Images: 8



Tech. Sgt. Sam Cliff, left, and Senior Airman Rich McMaster of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass play their trumpets during a performance at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble was part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Members of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass board a plane in Bethel, Alaska, to travel to a performance in Mountain Village March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble was part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Staff Sgt. Troy Griffin of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass speaks with schoolchildren after a performance at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble was part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Members of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass perform for students at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble is part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Tech. Sgt. Bill Granger of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass straps on his tuba harness to play for students at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble was part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Students and faculty at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, applaud the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble was part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



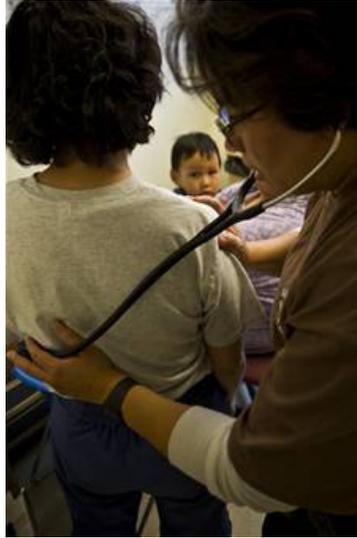
Members of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass perform for students at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble is part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Senior Airman George Father of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific's Alaska Brass prepares his trombone before playing for students at Ignatius Beans Sr. School in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. The concert of the five-piece brass and percussion ensemble was part of Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led medical readiness exercise providing no-cost health care and veterinary support to 12 villages in Western Alaska. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)

Operation Arctic Care visits Mountain Village

3/13/2009 - Navy Cmdr. Nancy Moya of Pueblo, Colo., attached to Operational Health Support Unit Bremerton Detachment P, checks Carole Alexie's heartbeat during a health physical in Mountain Village, Alaska, March 11. A joint military medical team is deployed to Mountain Village in support of Operation Arctic Care. This year's Navy-led mission has teams in 14 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region providing medical, dental and veterinary support at no cost to Alaskan natives. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Operation Arctic Care benefits residents, care- providers

3/10/2009 - Maj. Lawrence Ngeryen of Rocklin, Calif., a staff dental officer at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., explains to a young patient the reason for wearing a protective visor while performing dental surgery at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation clinic in Bethel, Alaska, March 9.

Operation Arctic Care is a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care to underserved Alaskan residents, including dental, optometry and veterinary support. This year's Navy-led mission has teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. (U.S. Air Force photo/senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Medical Airmen return from 'Arctic' mission

by Tech. Sgt. Jason Schaap
931st Air Refueling Group Public
Affairs

4/6/2009 - **MCCONNELL AIR FORCE BASE, Kan.** -- Technically, they were still within the United States. But to Lt. Col. Cheryl Hooper and Lt. Col. (Dr.) James Clark, it seemed like another world.

The two Airmen from the 931st Aerospace Medicine Flight returned in late March from a two-week deployment supporting Operation Arctic Care, a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care to underserved residents of rural Alaska. Conditions during the two-week deployment were, as Colonel Hooper put it, "austere."

"It's like the last frontier," she said.

The staging point of the mission was Bethel, Alaska, a city 340 miles west of Anchorage only accessible by air and river. From there, Arctic Care personnel were sent to 11 villages in the remotest regions of Western Alaska.

Colonel Hooper was part of a joint-service team sent to Alakanuk, a small village of about 600 people. It took about an hour and a half in an Army [Black Hawk](#) helicopter to get there from Bethel, she said.

Her team lodged and worked inside a village school still in session. It was an appropriate setting for Colonel Hooper, a nurse practitioner and commander of her 931st medicine flight. She spent much of her time as a public health instructor to the school's students. In a place where there is no doctor or dentist, topics included basic CPR, nutrition, suicide prevention and anti-bullying education.

Many of the health problems her team encountered were nutrition related, she said. Food that the villagers don't hunt has to be flown in. Vegetables and dairy products are almost non-existent.



Lt. Col. Cheryl Hooper stands next to a charter plane that flew her to Bethel, Alaska, the staging point of a mission she returned from in late March. She went to Alaska in support of Operation Arctic Care, an annual military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care to underserved residents of rural Alaska. Colonel Hooper is the commander of the 931st Aerospace Medicine Flight, an Air Force Reserve unit at McConnell Air Force Base, Kan. (Courtesy photo)

"All they eat is meat," Colonel Hooper said. "They don't get enough calcium ... (and) they're hungry most of the time."

The lack of meal options also meant her team usually dined on military Meals, Ready-To-Eat, she said, "and maybe school lunches if it didn't look too bad--I always ate with the kids."

In many ways, the Arctic Care team members were students as much as they were instructors at the school. They learned about the obvious, that life there is cold and harsh, and the not so obvious, that basketball is so popular villagers will travel four hours by snowmobile to attend a game.

They learned that the Alakanuks are fighting to preserve their culture and language. They learned that proper methods in seal hunting are taught in elementary school and that all parts of a seal, to include the head, are consumed.

"They really immersed us into their culture," Colonel Hooper said.

Dr. Clark said he left Alaska with a deep appreciation for any culture that can survive in remote Alaska. His Arctic Care team stayed in Bethel, the supply hub for villages like Alakanuk. The central location, with its own population of around 6,300 people, allowed for a steady stream of patients.

Bethel had few more amenities than the outlying villages, to include a Subway restaurant that servicemembers tired of MREs were happy to see when they returned from the villages.

But conditions in Bethel were, by most U.S. mainlander standards, still very cold and very barren.

"I couldn't live up there in that environment," Dr. Clark, an Oklahoma native, said.

Dr. Clark treated 82 patients and performed 244 dental procedures in support of Arctic Care. Cavities from the plenty of sugar-filled sodas and junk foods in the area were "rampant," he said. Colonel Hooper said he later described to her how many of the children's teeth were so decayed that he could easily "rocker" them back and forth to pull them out.

Both officers also talked about the benefits of working alongside medical personnel from other military branches. A main reason Arctic Care, an annual exercise, was started 15 years ago was to enable medical personnel to operate in a joint environment. The Navy led the 2009 exercise.

"Those Navy guys were just fantastic," Dr. Clark said. "Everyone worked together

great. There was a lot of camaraderie between the services."

Each branch of the U.S. military takes turns leading Arctic Care. The Army led in 2008. The Air Force is scheduled to lead the exercise in 2010.

Military News

Joint Air Force, Army & Navy Led Arctic Care Team Returns to Western Alaska

By Airman 1st Class Rachelle Coleman
Air Force Link

March 20, 2009 - Personnel here were part of a team that participated in a joint Air Force, Army and Navy medical and dental exercise in 11 of Western Alaska's most remote villages March 6 through 15.

The purpose of the exercise, the 15th annual Operation Arctic Care, was to enable medical personnel to operate in a joint environment while also bringing health care and veterinary support to underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

Led by the Navy, this year's medical readiness exercise was based in Bethel, Alaska, where the military provided colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams to augment services at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Hospital, along with an audiologist, mental-health clinicians, a physical therapist, an emergency-room physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist. Other medical exercise participants traveled to 11 villages in the region.

"The mission provides team members a chance to interact as a joint team in a unique environment," said Master Sgt. Carmen Cate, Arctic Care Team coordinator, "For this year's mission to Bethel, I assisted in selecting the optometry team members consisting of 14 optometrists and 14 ophthalmic technicians, including five from Eielson."

The exercise was a success and participants were glad to have been part of it.

"The Operational Health Support Unit headquarters staff at Camp Pendleton (near San Diego) has been engaged with this exercise for over a year, and we are excited to get it off the ground," said Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer, lead planner for Operation Arctic Care 2009. "All the branches of the military are present, and people are motivated for this mission. It's so rewarding to be here doing medical outreach for people who really need it."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 was conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Teams of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and Army veterinary personnel provided care in the delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Reserve and active components of the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force,

Marine Corps and Coast Guard provided the personnel and equipment for the operation. Uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service also participated.

Harsh weather conditions occasionally posed a challenge in getting flights out to villages via Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. But that was all part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military and civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster, exercise officials said.

"Our chief sent out an e-mail about a year ago looking for people who were interested in coming up here, and I volunteered right away," said Tech. Sgt. Hermann Schieder, an optometry technician attached to the 43rd Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. He spent the week conducting eye exams for the people of Toksook Bay, population 549.

This year's mission made a footprint months before medical teams began deploying. In September, the Navy's leadership team conducted a site survey to assess each village's needs, and in January two Marine Corps electricians and an Air Force biomedical technician installed wiring connections for villages to communicate with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation via video teleconferencing. A total of 33 villages benefited from the work.

The people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta appreciate the opportunity to receive health services through Arctic Care.

"During the site visit, I went to a grocery store, and one of the natives asked where I was from," Captain Reisdorfer said. "I explained that I was with Arctic Care, and he said, 'I am so happy you are here. We have been waiting for you.'"

Veterinary care was a critical component of this year's operation. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Every year, bites and mauling cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations, sometimes even death. Children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"Animal health and human health go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Angie Parham of Athens, Ga. "Our goal is to get all the animals we can vaccinated. Rabies is our main concern, since it can be transmitted to humans. But we'll deworm and vaccinate for other dog diseases as well to try to keep the animals healthy."

Teams from the Army Veterinary Command spayed and neutered pets and taught courses on animal husbandry and the importance of hand washing.

Rotating to different areas of rural Alaska each year, Arctic Care has been to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta three times: in 1997, 1998 and 2001. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Covering an area the size of North Dakota and South Dakota combined, the 2009 exercise served even greater numbers of native Alaskans.

"Many of these people aren't fortunate enough to have the amenities we take for granted in the lower 48 states," said hospital corpsman Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La. Sent by the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, his job during Arctic Care was grinding lens for eyeglasses that were delivered to people in the villages.

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.



Military to provide free medical care to Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region



by Jennifer Castro
Sunday, March 8, 2009

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- Nearly 1,000 residents in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta will be getting free medical and animal care checkups this month.

The U.S. military will provide free medical care to Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta residents.
(Courtesy photo)

Specialists from the Marines, Navy, Army and Air Force will take part in Operation Arctic Care, giving no-cost medical, dental and veterinary services to residents in nearby rural

communities.

The operation is based in Bethel, and teams plan to visit 11 other villages in the area.

The Arctic team says it's a gratifying experience to help under-served Alaskans in remote areas of the state.

"It's just a great exercise," Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer said. "My advanced team came out, and we've been working on this exercise for over a year, so we're really excited to get this off the ground and all the planning is finally coming together and working well."

About 200 military personnel are part of the operation.

Contact Jennifer Castro at jcastro@ktuu.com

445th Airlift Wing members travel to Alaska for Arctic Care 2009

by Stacy Vaughn
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

3/13/2009 - **WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, Ohio** -- Five members representing both the 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron and the 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron deployed with 200 other service members from across the nation to Bethel, Alaska, March 6 as part of a 10-day Joint Forces medical readiness and logistics initiative called Operation Arctic Care.

Sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training Program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, the focus of Operation Arctic Care is to provide much needed no-cost health care, health education and veterinary services to underserved populations within Alaska's Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta region.

Upon arriving in Alaska, members from the wing will fall into their respected teams with the other service members. Each team, a total of 11 altogether, will be comprised of a support staff and the following health care specialties; medical, dental, optometry, nursing, and veterinary care. Additional manning available to support the teams includes mental health, audiology and physical therapy support.

After arriving in Alaska, the teams were forward deployed via Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters with equipment and supplies to provide health care and veterinary services in the following 11 villages on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta: Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay. Residents of nearby villages will have the opportunity to travel to one of the sites to receive services.

Technical Sgt. Letroy Mays, 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, is the lead enlisted member representing the wing. He said his team's function will be to set up an outpatient clinic to conduct well-care check-ups. As a medical technician, his role in Alaska is to help out the doctor on his team. "My team will be setting up a full-



WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, Ohio – Col. Karen Nagafuchi and Maj. Margaret Myslinski, both from the 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, inventory their cold weather gear in preparation of their Mar. 6 deployment to Bethel, Alaska. (Air Force photo/Stacy Vaughn)

fledged medical clinic in Quinhaga to provide medical service to those who do not have the opportunity to visit a clinic because of the remoteness of the area where they live."

While in Quinhaga, Sergeant Mays will conduct audiograms, draw blood for lab work and help the doctor with anything else needed. He said if further testing and evaluations are needed, the individual will need to travel to Bethel, Alaska. With Arctic Care, the individual will have the chance to have their overall health assessed, an opportunity they may never have had before.

The Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta region consists of remote and relatively sparse populations, separated by great distances from essential medical services. The result is a profoundly underserved population. "I'm looking forward to participating in this event because it's a chance to help the Native Americans with medical needs and we'll be working and living in field conditions that bring back memories of when I was on active duty," Sergeant Mays said prior to leaving.

Col. Karen Nagafuchi, 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, said that she's looking forward to the deployment and to provide help to those who have not had the opportunity to seek any type of health care.

"Some of the remote villages we'll be assigned to will resemble working in conditions associated with Third World nations. Some of the areas are so remote that, for example, this may be the only time some of these individuals will have ever had any dental care," she said.

Because of the limited amount of space on the helicopter, Col. Nagafuchi said she was told she could only take one duffel bag and one backpack. "The limited amount of space is going to be a challenge because you need to pack for weather that ranges from 45 degrees to 15 below zero," she said.

Members from both AMDS and ASTS look forward to sharing their stories about their trip to Alaska when they return.

December 15, 2008



Specialist Freddie Ballesteros with new friends in Tununak during the 2001 Arctic Care training exercise. (YKHC file photo by Dana Hall).

Arctic Care exercise returns to Western Alaska

By Tiffany Zulkosky, Public Relations

Arctic Care, also known as the Innovative Readiness Training exercise, will return to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta March 3-15, 2009, to provide no-cost veterinary and medical services to local residents.

This exercise allows military reserves personnel to perform two weeks of training within the country, in sometimes extreme conditions, serving Americans. The Navy will be leading the 2009 exercise, but all branches of the military will be involved.

Medical teams will be in place for 10 days in 11 Delta communities: Hooper Bay, Chevak, Toksook Bay, Alakanuk, Mtn. Village, Atmauthluak, Quinhagak, Kwigillingok, Kalskag, Kwethluk, and Newtok. Residents of nearby villages can travel to one of the 11 sites to receive services.

At YKHC's request, Arctic Care will be providing veterinary services such as dog vaccinations and spay/neuter procedures for village pets. "Because rabies is so endemic, we want to make sure we protect animals and the

humans around them," said Dr. Joseph Klejka, Corporate Medical Director for YKHC.

Expected medical personnel will include dentists, optometrists, physicians or mid-levels, and veterinarians. Specialists will also be at the Bethel hospital providing colonoscopies, dental procedures requiring anesthesia, and women's health services.

Arctic Care has been to the YK Delta three times previously-in 1997, 1998, and 2001. Each operation resulted in memorable experiences for those serving as well as those who were served. Because of the success of the previous operations YKHC welcomes all the military personnel to the region with appreciation and high expectations.

The appreciation has worked both ways, as Cpl. Zachary A. Bathon wrote following the 2001 exercises: "More than 180 servicemembers participated in the exercise and were able to complete their mission, help the local residents and maybe learned a little bit about their culture as well."

February 15, 2009



Dogs of the Delta will also benefit from the Arctic Care exercise.

Arctic Care military teams bring health services to YK Delta

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Matt Grills, Operation Arctic Care Public Affairs

Medical and dental personnel from the U.S. military will begin arriving in Western Alaska on March 3 for Operation Arctic Care, a medical outreach mission that brings health care and veterinary services to the state's most remote villages.

During this year's deployment, March 6 through 18, nearly 200 members of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, National Guard and reserve components will test their ability to work as a joint team while providing health care and health education to 11 communities that have limited access to both.

"Arctic Care '09 will be exciting, challenging and rewarding for all those participating," said Navy Capt. Patty Reisdorfer, lead planner. "Members are anxiously waiting to bring their medical expertise to this exercise. Hopefully, Mother Nature will cooperate with the weather, and air transportation with the Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawks will be a success."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 will happen in cooperation with and under the supervision of YKHC. Teams comprised of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and veterinary personnel will be deployed to the YK Delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay. Additional services will include mental health, audiology, and physical therapy support.

Civilian medical services within Bethel will also include pediatric oral surgery, gynecology, and colonoscopy teams operating at the YKHC hospital.

By the military providing on-site care, the need is reduced for individuals to travel to Bethel for treatment. Travel is extremely limited for residents living in communities that fall below the poverty level. At the same time, the military strengthens its medical readiness and logistics capability by traveling to these villages-in this case, planning and executing localized deployments by Black Hawk helicopters.

While in Bethel, military personnel who deploy will be housed at the Alaska National Guard Armory.

Operation Arctic Care rotates to different areas of rural Alaska each year. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals

Operation Arctic Care is an annual training event sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

Veterinary Teams join Arctic Care

Veterinarian Teams working with Operation Arctic Care next month will provide rabies, parvo, and distemper vaccinations, de-worming medication, spay and neuter operations, and school courses on animal husbandry and the importance of hand washing-all free of charge.

Operation Arctic Care is a joint medical readiness and logistics training exercise conducted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense of Reserve Affairs Innovative Readiness Training Program. This joint exercise includes personnel from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, The United States Public Health Service, Active and Reservists from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines.

WHY IS VETERINARY CARE A PART OF OPERATION ARCTIC CARE?

Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the YK Delta. Every year dog bites and mauling cause over a hundred injuries, dozens of hospitalizations, and even deaths. Sadly, children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"We firmly believe these injuries and deaths are preventable," said Field Environmental Health Officer Brek Steele of YKHC's Office of Environmental Health. "By giving pets proper care, educating children in animal husbandry, and helping the City or Tribe pass and enforce animal care standards, we hope to reduce the number of dog related injuries and deaths in our region."

Steele said YKHC's Office of Environmental Health is very excited about Operation Arctic Care and appreciates your support to its visiting members.

Every attempt will be made to provide these services to your village-weather, time, and transportation permitting. Please see the Operation Arctic Care map to determine if there is a participating village near you if yours is not already highlighted on the map. Your village clinic will have information about where and how you can connect with the Arctic Care Veterinarian Team.

If you have any question regarding the Veterinary portion of Operation Arctic Care, please call the Office of Environmental Health at 1-800-478-6599.

March 15, 2009



YKHC professional trainers provided cultural orientation to Arctic Care personnel. The Bethel Armory served as sleeping quarters.

Navy-led Arctic Care returns to Western Alaska

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Matt Grills, Operation Arctic Care Public Affairs

Bethel, ALASKA – Joint teams of Navy, Army and Air Force medical and dental personnel began deploying to 11 of Western Alaska's most remote villages March 6, bringing no-cost health care and veterinary support to underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region as part of the 15th annual Operation Arctic Care.

Led by the Navy, this year's medical readiness exercise is based in Bethel, Alaska, where the military is providing colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams to augment services at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Hospital, along with an audiologist, mental-health clinicians, a physical therapist, an emergency-room physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist.

"The Operational Health Support Unit Headquarters staff at Camp Pendleton has been engaged with this exercise for over a year, and we are excited to get it off the ground," said Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer, lead planner for Operation Arctic Care 2009. "All the branches of the military are present, and people are motivated for this mission. It's so rewarding to be here doing medical outreach for people who really need it."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 is conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Teams of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and Army veterinary personnel will provide care in the delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmautluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay,

Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Reserve and active components of the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provide the personnel and equipment for Arctic Care. Uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service are also participating.

Harsh weather conditions occasionally pose a challenge in getting flights out to villages via Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. But that's all part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military/civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster.

"Our chief sent out an e-mail about a year ago looking for people who were interested in coming up here, and I volunteered right away," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Hermann Schieder, an optometry technician attached to the 43rd Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. He's spending the week conducting eye exams for the people of Toksook Bay, population 549.

"This is the farthest north I've ever been. Besides all the cold wind, Alaska is a beautiful place, and I'm looking forward to being out in the community and doing something good for others."

This year's Arctic Care mission made a footprint months before medical teams began deploying. In September, the Navy's leadership team conducted a site survey to assess each village's needs, and in January two Marine Corps electricians and an Air Force biomedical technician installed wiring connections for villages to communicate with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation via video teleconferencing. A total of 33 villages benefited from the work.

The people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta appreciate the opportunity to receive health services through Arctic Care.

"During the site visit, I went to a grocery store, and one of the natives asked where I was from," Reisdorfer said. "I explained that I was with Arctic Care, and he said, 'I am so happy you are here. We have been waiting for you.'"

Veterinary care is a critical component of this year's Arctic Care. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Every year, bites and mauling cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations – sometimes even death. Children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"Animal health and human health go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Angie Parham of Athens, Ga. "Our goal is to get all the animals we can vaccinated. Rabies is our main concern, since it can be transmitted to humans. But we'll deworm and vaccinate for other dog diseases as well to try to keep the animals healthy."

Teams from the Army Veterinary Command will also spay and neuter at a pet owner's request, and teach courses on animal husbandry and the importance of handwashing.

Rotating to different areas of rural Alaska each year, Arctic Care has been to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta three times – in 1997, 1998 and 2001. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Covering an area the size of North Dakota and South Dakota combined, the 2009 exercise will serve even greater numbers of native Alaskans.

"Many of these people aren't fortunate enough to have the amenities we take for granted in the lower 48 states," said Hospital Corpsman Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La. Sent by the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, his job at Arctic Care is grinding lens for eyeglasses that will be delivered to the villages.

"We've been told to expect to do double what we did last year. We have got enough lens stock to make enough glasses for everybody in Alaska, probably."

Photos

◀ 1 of 5 ▶



Senior Airman Samantha Reed, an optometry technician from McConnell Air Force Base, Kan., tests a patient's peripheral vision March 10 at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska. A joint military medical team deployed to Kwethluk, a small village in Western Alaska, in support of Operation Arctic Care 2009. This year's Navy-led mission had teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region providing medical, dental and veterinary support at no cost to Alaskan natives. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Senior Airman Samantha Reed, an optometry technician from McConnell Air Force Base, Kan., conducts an eye examination on a patient March 10 at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska. A joint military medical team deployed to Kwethluk, a small village in Western Alaska, in support of Operation Arctic Care 2009. This year's Navy-led mission had teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region providing medical, dental and veterinary support at no cost to Alaskan natives. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Tech. Sgt. Kristie Subieta, a dental hygienist from Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., adjusts protective eye glasses on Dylon Sergie, 2, March 10 at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska. A joint military medical team deployed to Kwethluk, a small village in Western Alaska, in support of Operation Arctic Care 2009. This year's Navy-led mission had teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region providing medical, dental and veterinary support at no cost to Alaskan natives. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Navy Capt. Doug Henschel, a dentist from Fort Dix, N.J., inserts a filling for Dylon Sergie, 2, March 10 at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska. A joint military medical team deployed to Kwethluk, a small village in Western Alaska, in support of Operation Arctic Care 2009. This year's Navy-led mission had teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region providing medical, dental and veterinary support at no cost to Alaskan natives. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)



Capt. Justin Sandholmes, an optometrist from MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., examines a patient's cornea for abnormalities March 10 at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska. A joint military medical team deployed to Kwethluk, a small village in Western Alaska, in support of Operation Arctic Care 2009. This year's Navy-led mission had teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region providing medical, dental and veterinary support at no cost to Alaskan natives. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)

Navy-led Arctic Care team returns to Western Alaska

Posted 3/20/2009

[Email story](#) [Print story](#)



***by Airman 1st Class Rachelle Coleman
354th Fighter Wing Public Affairs***

3/20/2009 - EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska (AFNS) -- Personnel here were part of a team that participated in a joint Air Force, Army and Navy medical and dental exercise in 11 of Western Alaska's most remote villages March 6 through 15.

The purpose of the exercise, the 15th annual Operation Arctic Care, was to enable medical personnel to operate in a joint environment while also bringing health care and veterinary support to underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwin Delta region.

Led by the Navy, this year's medical readiness exercise was based in

Bethel, Alaska, where the military provided colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams to augment services at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Hospital, along with an audiologist, mental-health clinicians, a physical therapist, an emergency-room physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist. Other medical exercise participants traveled to 11 villages in the region.

"The mission provides team members a chance to interact as a joint team in a unique environment," said Master Sgt. Carmen Cate, Arctic Care Team coordinator, "For this year's mission to Bethel, I assisted in selecting the optometry team members consisting of 14 optometrists and 14 ophthalmic technicians, including five from Eielson."

The exercise was a success and participants were glad to have been part of it.

"The Operational Health Support Unit headquarters staff at Camp Pendleton (near San Diego) has been engaged with this exercise for over a year, and we are excited to get it off the ground," said Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer, lead planner for Operation Arctic Care 2009. "All the branches of the military are present, and people are motivated for this mission. It's so rewarding to be here doing medical outreach for people who really need it."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 was conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Teams of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and Army veterinary personnel provided care in the delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Reserve and active components of the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provided the personnel and equipment for the operation. Uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service also participated.

Harsh weather conditions occasionally posed a challenge in getting flights out to villages via Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. But that was all part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military and civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster, exercise officials said.

"Our chief sent out an e-mail about a year ago looking for people who were interested in coming up here, and I volunteered right away," said Tech. Sgt. Hermann Schieder, an optometry technician attached to the 43rd Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. He spent

the week conducting eye exams for the people of Toksook Bay, population 549.

This year's mission made a footprint months before medical teams began deploying. In September, the Navy's leadership team conducted a site survey to assess each village's needs, and in January two Marine Corps electricians and an Air Force biomedical technician installed wiring connections for villages to communicate with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation via video teleconferencing. A total of 33 villages benefited from the work.

The people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta appreciate the opportunity to receive health services through Arctic Care.

"During the site visit, I went to a grocery store, and one of the natives asked where I was from," Captain Reisdorfer said. "I explained that I was with Arctic Care, and he said, 'I am so happy you are here. We have been waiting for you.'"

Veterinary care was a critical component of this year's operation. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Every year, bites and mauling cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations, sometimes even death. Children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"Animal health and human health go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Angie Parham of Athens, Ga. "Our goal is to get all the animals we can vaccinated. Rabies is our main concern, since it can be transmitted to humans. But we'll deworm and vaccinate for other dog diseases as well to try to keep the animals healthy."

Teams from the Army Veterinary Command spayed and neutered pets and taught courses on animal husbandry and the importance of hand washing.

Rotating to different areas of rural Alaska each year, Arctic Care has been to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta three times: in 1997, 1998 and 2001. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Covering an area the size of North Dakota and South Dakota combined, the 2009 exercise served even greater numbers of native Alaskans.

"Many of these people aren't fortunate enough to have the amenities we

take for granted in the lower 48 states," said hospital corpsman Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La. Sent by the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, his job during Arctic Care was grinding lens for eyeglasses that were delivered to people in the villages.

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

(Navy Petty Officer Matt Grills, Operation Arctic Care Public Affairs, contributed to this article)

Operation Arctic Care heals through Western Alaska

MATT GRILLS

March 19, 2009 at 3:09PM AKST

Joint teams of Navy, Army and Air Force medical and dental personnel deployed to 11 of Western Alaska's most-remote villages March 6-15, bringing no-cost health care and veterinary support to underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region as part of the 15th annual Operation Arctic Care.

Led by the Navy, this year's medical readiness exercise is based in Bethel, where the military is providing colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams to augment services at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corp., along with an audiologist, mental health clinicians, a physical therapist, an emergency room physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist.

"The Operational Health Support Unit headquarters staff at Camp Pendleton has been engaged with this exercise for over a year, and we are excited to get it off the ground," said Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer, lead planner for Operation Arctic Care. "All the branches of the military are present, and people are motivated for this mission. It's so rewarding to be here doing medical outreach for people who really need it."

Operation Arctic Care is conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of YKHC. Teams of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and Army veterinary personnel provided care in the Delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Turning out in force

Reserve and active components of the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provided the personnel and equipment for Arctic Care. Uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service are also participating.

Harsh weather conditions occasionally pose a challenge in getting flights out to villages via Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. But that's all part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military/civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster.

"Our chief sent out an e-mail about a year ago looking for people who were interested in coming up here, and I volunteered right away," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Hermann Schieder, an optometry technician attached to the 43rd Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C.

Schieder spent a week conducting eye exams for the people of Toksook Bay, population 549.

"This is the farthest north I've ever been. Besides all the cold wind, Alaska is a beautiful place, and I'm looking forward to being out in the community and doing something good for others," he said.

This year's Arctic Care mission made a footprint months before medical teams began deploying. In September, the Navy's leadership team conducted a site survey to assess each village's needs, and in January two Marine Corps electricians and an Air Force biomedical technician installed wiring connections for villages to communicate with the YKHC via video teleconferencing. A total of 33 villages benefited from the work.

The people of the Yukon-Kuskokwin Delta appreciated the opportunity to receive health services through Arctic Care.

"During the site visit, I went to a grocery store, and one of the Natives asked where I was from," Reisdorfer said. "I explained that I was with Arctic Care, and he said, 'I am so happy you are here. We have been waiting for you.'"

Dealing with dog bites

Veterinary care is a critical component of this year's Arctic Care. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Y-K Delta. Every year, bites and mauling cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations — sometimes even death. Children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"Animal health and human health go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Angie Parham of Athens, Ga. "Our goal is to get all the animals we can vaccinated. Rabies is our main concern, since it can be transmitted to humans. But we'll deworm and vaccinate for other dog diseases as well to try to keep the animals healthy."

Teams from the Army Veterinary Command spayed and neutered at a pet owner's request, and teach courses on animal husbandry and the importance of hand washing.

Rotating to different areas of rural Alaska each year, Arctic Care has been to the Y-K Delta three times — in 1997, 1998 and 2001. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Covering an area the size of North Dakota and South Dakota combined, the 2009 exercise will serve even greater numbers of Alaska Natives.

"Many of these people aren't fortunate enough to have the amenities we take for granted in the Lower 48," said hospital Corpsman Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La.

Sent by the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, Gaudin's job at Arctic Care was grinding lens for eyeglasses that will be delivered to the villages.

"We've been told to expect to do double what we did last year," he said. "We have got enough lens stock to make enough glasses for everybody in Alaska, probably."

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

Spc. 1st Class Matt Grills works with Operation Arctic Care public affairs.



Operation Arctic Care deploys veterinary teams

DRUMS STAFF

February 12, 2009 at 10:28AM AKST

Veterinarian teams working with Operation Arctic Care next month will provide vaccinations for rabies, parvo and distemper as well as offering deworming medication, spaying and neuter operations free of charge.

The teams will also offer courses on animal husbandry and the importance of hand-washing at no cost.

Operation Arctic Care is a joint medical readiness and logistics training exercise conducted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense of Reserve Affairs Innovative Readiness Training Program. This joint exercise includes personnel from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, the United States Public Health Service, Active and Reservists from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines.

For the 2009 Arctic Care exercise, teams are scheduled to travel to 11 Y-K Delta communities, including: Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Why is veterinary care a part of Operation Arctic Care?

Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Y-K Delta. Every year dog bites and mauling cause over a hundred injuries, dozens of hospitalizations, and even deaths.

Sadly, children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"We firmly believe these injuries and deaths are preventable," said YKHC Field Environmental Health Officer Brek Steele. "By giving pets proper care, educating children in animal husbandry, and helping cities

or tribes pass and enforce animal care standards, we hope to reduce the number of dog-related injuries and deaths in our region.”

Steele said YKHC’s Office of Environmental Health is very excited about Operation Arctic Care and appreciates your support to its visiting members. Every attempt will be made to provide these services in each of the 11 villages Operation Arctic Care will be deployed to – weather, time, and transportation permitting.

Village clinics will soon have information about where and how residents of each village, and citizens of surrounding communities, can connect with the Arctic Care Veterinarian Team.

For more information regarding Operation Arctic Care’s veterinary services, call the Office of Environmental Health at 1-800-478-6599.

Military medical outreach coming to Western Alaska

MATT GRILLS

February 05, 2009 at 10:03AM AKST

Medical and dental personnel from the U.S. military will begin arriving in Western Alaska on March 3 for Operation Arctic Care, a medical outreach mission that brings health care and veterinary services to the state's most remote villages.

During this year's deployment, March 6-18, nearly 200 members of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, National Guard and reserve components will test their ability to work as a joint team while providing health care and health education to 11 communities that have limited access to both.

"Arctic Care '09 will be exciting, challenging and rewarding for all those participating," said Navy Capt. Patty Reisdorfer, lead planner. "Members are anxiously waiting to bring their medical expertise to this exercise. Hopefully, Mother Nature will cooperate with the weather, and air transportation with the Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawks will be a success."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 will happen in cooperation with and under the supervision of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corp. Teams comprised of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and veterinary personnel will be deployed to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay. Additional services will include mental health, audiology, and physical therapy support.

Civilian medical services within Bethel will also include pediatric oral surgery, gynecology, and colonoscopy teams operating at the YKHC hospital.

By the military providing on-site care, the need is reduced for individuals to travel to Bethel for treatment. Travel is extremely limited for residents living in communities that fall below the poverty level. At the same time, the military strengthens its medical readiness and logistics capability by traveling to these villages — in this case,

planning and executing localized deployments by Black Hawk helicopters.

While in Bethel, military personnel who deploy will be housed at the Alaska National Guard Armory.

Operation Arctic Care rotates to different areas of rural Alaska each year. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Operation Arctic Care is an annual training event sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the office of the assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

For more information, contact Tiffany Zulkosky at 907-543-6037 or Tiffany_Zulkosky@ykhc.org.

Spc. 1st Class Matt Grills works with Operation Arctic Care public affairs.

Military to help Newtok move

Alex DeMarban
alex@alaskanewspapers.com

October 28, 2008 at 9:54AM AKST

A few good men and women will help an imperiled village in Western Alaska move to higher ground.

U.S. Marines, Navy Seabees and soldiers from other branches will provide manpower, engineering and heavy equipment to assist Newtok residents as they build a new village not far from the old one, officials at the Pentagon said.

The military effort is scheduled to get under way next summer when Marines establish a base camp at the new site. Later, the soldiers will turn their attention toward constructing roads, an airstrip and an evacuation shelter that will eventually serve as a community center, the officials said.

The five-year commitment of troops is a win-win for everyone, said Capt. Karen Trueblood, deputy director for the Department of Defense program that will provide the soldiers.

The military will gain valuable construction and logistical experience, while the community saves money on labor, shipping and other costs, she said.

The assistance will speed up construction and help the village meet its goal of moving to the new site beginning in four years, said Stanley Tom, who has led the village's relocation effort.

"It will be a big help," he said.

Newtok is a Yup'ik community of 325. It's one of three Alaska villages with fast-eroding shorelines that may have less than eight years left at their current location, according to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. The others are Shishmaref and Kivalina, also in Western Alaska.

Global warming, which has left shorelines frozen for shorter periods, is commonly blamed for the erosion in those villages and several others in Alaska that are losing land more slowly.

Moving the villages won't be easy. The Corps of Engineers estimated in 2006 that efforts to build new villages will cost tens of millions of dollars, raising doubts about whether such undertakings are possible.

In Newtok's case, the Ninglick River has encroached by more than half a mile in the last 54 years, destroying the landfill and barge landing not long ago. Another 40 feet or so vanished during a flood this summer, leaving the river 200 feet from the village, Tom said.

Mertarvik, the Yup'ik name for the proposed village nine miles from Newtok, sits above the flood plain on Nelson Island. Plans include installing more than 60 homes and constructing a new power plant and water and sewer system.

Newtok's move will cost \$130 million, the Corps of Engineers estimated in 2006. That's about \$400,000 per resident.

That soaring estimate left Newtok leaders — and state and federal officials who formed a planning group to help them — scrambling to find cheaper options.

The soldiers will save the village millions of dollars and may provide a template that other eroding villages can follow, said Jamilia George, the state co-chair representative on the Denali Commission, who sought the military's help for Newtok.

"These guys bring their own food, their own housing," she said. "They'll get materials and their own heavy equipment to Mertarvik."

Construction is tremendously expensive in rural Alaska, she said. Labor costs are high and shipping materials isn't easy — barges and aircraft must haul items because no roads link to the state highway system.

The Marines will transport lumber, windows and other materials from the hub community of Bethel to Mertarvik in a landing craft, she said. The state and Newtok must get the stuff to Bethel.

The military won't help until the state Department of Transportation, using a combination of state and federal dollars, builds a \$1 million barge landing at Mertarvik, Trueblood said.

That will be finished next summer, George said.

The soldiers — including active duty and reserves — will spend the rest of the summer establishing the base camp and making other preparations. They plan to begin building in the summer of 2010, Trueblood said.

The military support comes courtesy of the Defense Department's Innovative Readiness Training Program. Founded in 1993 at the urging of former President Bill Clinton, the program has helped communities across the nation build everything from roads to houses to youth centers.

In Alaska, soldiers in the program recently helped the village of Metlakatla build a road in Southeast. They also provide annual medical help in remote locations as part of Operation Arctic Care.

The Marines helping in Newtok will come from the 4th Marines Logistics Group, headquartered in New Orleans, Trueblood said. The Seabees, the construction crew for the U.S. Navy, will be taken from sites across the country.

The Alaska Army National Guard will provide transportation support, ferrying the soldiers from helicopters located in Bethel.

"It's a great opportunity for everyone," Trueblood said.

Military Medical Outreach Coming to Alaska

February 23, 2009

Military Health System | by Spc. 1st Class Matt Grills

Medical and dental personnel from the U.S. military will begin arriving in Western Alaska on March 3 for Operation Arctic Care, a medical outreach mission that brings health care and veterinary services to the state's most remote villages.

During this year's deployment, March 6-18, nearly 200 members of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, National Guard and reserve components will test their ability to work as a joint team while providing health care and health education to 11 communities that have limited access to both.

"Arctic Care '09 will be exciting, challenging and rewarding for all those participating," said Navy Capt. Patty Reisdorfer, lead planner.

"Members are anxiously waiting to bring their medical expertise to this exercise. Hopefully, Mother Nature will cooperate with the weather, and air transportation with the Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawks will be a success."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 will happen in cooperation with and under the supervision of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corp. Teams comprised of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and veterinary personnel will be deployed to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Additional services will include mental health, audiology, and physical therapy support.

Civilian medical services within Bethel will also include pediatric oral surgery, gynecology, and colonoscopy teams operating at the YKHC hospital.

By the military providing on-site care, the need is reduced for individuals to travel to Bethel for treatment. Travel is extremely limited for residents living in communities that fall below the poverty level. At the same time, the military strengthens its medical readiness and logistics capability by traveling to these villages - in this case, planning and executing localized deployments by Black Hawk helicopters.

While in Bethel, military personnel who deploy will be housed at the Alaska National Guard Armory.

Operation Arctic Care rotates to different areas of rural Alaska each year. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Operation Arctic Care is an annual training event sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the office of the assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

Spc. 1st Class Matt Grills works with Operation Arctic Care public affairs.

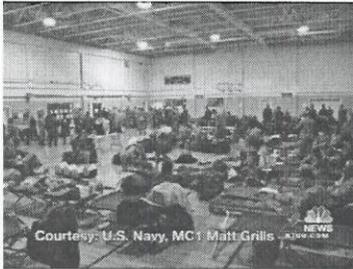
© Copyright 2009 Military Health System. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Digg | del.icio.us

<<Back



Military to provide free medical care to Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region



The U.S. military will provide free medical care to Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta residents. (Courtesy photo)

by Jennifer Castro
Sunday, March 8, 2009

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- Nearly 1,000 residents in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta will be getting free medical and animal care checkups this month.

Specialists from the Marines, Navy, Army and Air Force will take part in Operation Arctic Care, giving no-cost medical, dental and veterinary services to residents in nearby rural communities.

The operation is based in Bethel, and teams plan to visit 11 other villages in the area.

The Arctic team says it's a gratifying experience to help under-served Alaskans in remote areas of the state.

"It's just a great exercise," Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer said. "My advanced team came out, and we've been working on this exercise for over a year, so we're really excited to get this off the ground and all the planning is finally coming together and working well."

About 200 military personnel are part of the operation.

Contact Jennifer Castro at jcastro@ktuu.com



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2009 WorldNow and KTUU. All Rights Reserved.
Anchorage Winter Skyline Copyright 2008 by Edward Bennett / [Bennett Images](#).

For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#), [Terms of Service](#), [Meet the News Team](#), [Employment Opportunities](#), [Contact Us](#) and [Public Filings](#).

Air Force

Print News Today

Air Force news from around the world

Reservists help bring medical care to remote Alaska

4/10/2009 - **BETHEL, Alaska** -- Twenty-three Air Force reservists delivered medical care in remote Alaska during a two-week training deployment in March.

Operation Arctic Care is a joint-military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care, health education and veterinary services to underserved people in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

More than 200 service members from throughout the Lower 48 and Hawaii traveled to Bethel, Alaska, for the exercise.

The reservists joined joint-service teams - a mix of doctors, dentists, optometrists and Army veterinarians. The teams then dispersed to 11 different villages carrying equipment and supplies.

Lt. Col. Cheryl Hooper, a nurse practitioner and 931st Aerospace Medicine Flight commander from McConnell Air Force Base, Kan., was part of a team sent to Alakanuk, a small village of about 600 people.

Her team lodged and worked inside a village school, where there is no doctor or dentist. The reservist spent much of her time as a public health instructor to the school's students.

Many of the health problems her team encountered were nutrition related, she said. Food that the villagers do not hunt has to be flown in. Vegetables and dairy products are almost non-existent.

"All they eat is meat," Colonel Hooper said. "They don't get enough calcium ... (and) they're hungry most of the time."

Some reservists could only reach remote villages by air and river.

Tech. Sgt. Letroy Mays, a medical technician in the 445th Aeromedical Medicine Squadron, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, said his team set up a full-fledged medical clinic in Kwethluk and provided wellness check-ups to those who normally did not have the opportunity to visit a clinic because of the remoteness of the area where they live.

"We were primary-care physicians and provided care to 260 patients, out of a population of more than 600 that live in and around Quinhaqak," said Maj. Margaret Myslinsky, a reservist in the 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron at Wright-Patterson.

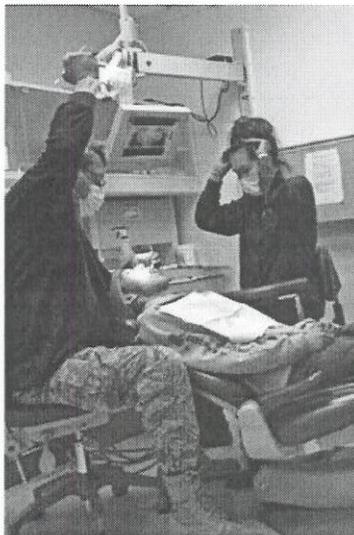
"Our team taught classes on nutrition and bullying. The Navy seamen taught basic life support to the teachers," she said.

One reason for establishing Arctic Care 15 years ago was to enable medical personnel to operate in a joint environment.

"Those Navy guys were just fantastic," said Lt. Col. (Dr.) James Clark, a reservist from McConnell. "Everyone worked together great. There was a lot of camaraderie between the services."

Each branch of the U.S. military takes turns leading the annual training. The Army was in charge last year, and the Navy led this year's training. The Air Force is slated to lead the exercise in 2010.

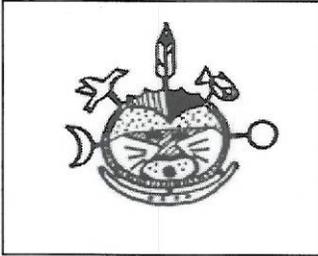
In addition to Wright-Patterson and McConnell AFBs., other Air Force reservists this year came from Travis AFB, Calif.; Hill AFB, Utah; Scott AFB, Ill.; Hickam AFB, Hawaii; Minneapolis-St. Paul Air Reserve Station, Minn.; Westover Air Reserve Base, Mass.; Tinker AFB, Okla.; and Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort



Lt. Col. (Dr.) James Clark, a dentist with the 931st Air Refueling Group, McConnell Air Force Base, Kan., and an assistant prepare a patient for a tooth removal at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation clinic in Bethel, Alaska, on March 9, 2009. Colonel Clark performed 244 procedures in support of Operation Arctic Care, a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost health care to underserved Alaskan residents. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Christopher Griffin)

Worth, Texas. (Air Force Reserve Command News Service)

The Delta Discovery



IN OUR NATIVE LAND

Deluxe Alaska Lodge

Fantastic Fishing, Amazing Wildlife
Complete Wilderness Lodge
Service
www.whalerscovelodge.com

Wedding Photos Alaska

Gorgeous Wedding Photography
Proven Artistic Reliable
www.alaskaimagedesign.com

Alaska 50th Anniversary

Alaska Railroad special offers to
celebrate Alaska's Anniversary
www.alaskarailroad.com/specials

"Deadliest Catch" -

All New Season of De
Tues at 9e/p - Discov
discovery.com/Deadli

V V

f

Donlin Creek, LLC hosts Open H in Bethel

4-14-09

by K.J. Lincoln

Mining experts and consultants working for Donlin Creek, LLC hosted an open house event for the cc Bethel to answer any questions about the proposed mine. The informational meeting was coordinated with the Orutsararmiut Native Council last Wednesday. To give people from villagers a chance to atte Creek also offered to pay for the travel of two people from each village.

Engineers and scientists positioned at their stations with large displays were on hand to talk about buil powering the mine, the reclamation process after the mine is done, the gold extraction process, acid ro increased barge traffic, and tailings impoundment, among other topics.

The gold at Donlin Creek is microscopic and is found in the rocks. The Calista Corporation owns the : rights to the land where the proposed mine is located, so they own the gold. The Donlin Creek, LLC o the terms of a lease with Calista said James Feug, the Technical Manager for the project. Under the te lease, a percentage goes to the LLC, and some goes to Calista where it would be distributed to other c under the 7(i) agreement of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

To extract the gold would require many steps involving water, heat, chemicals, and much power.

The mine would require 127 megawatts of energy. In comparison, Bethel uses about 5 megawatts, acc Richard Ridley, the Electrical Engineer who is responsible for the mine's power. The majority of the i would come from diesel.

Chris Wooley, an archaeologist working for the Donlin Creek mine project said that there are plans fo

calls we figured out which parts were needed,” said Chris Haraldsen of Northern Power. “They were s and the turbine got running again.”

Future Plans

With the assistance of funding partners like the Denali Commission, Rural Utilities Service, Coastal V Fund and others, AVEC has developed a successful wind program that will provide benefits to our me environment for many years. As future funding becomes available, AVEC will continue to build on th foundation to expand our successful wind program into other communities with feasible wind resource

Arctic Care team brings free hea care to Y-K Delta

3-11-09

BETHEL, ALASKA -- Nearly 1,000 residents of the remote Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta -- and even so -- will get free medical checkups this month thanks to a team of military health specialists visiting the The medical team members will spend about two weeks in the region as part of Operation Arctic Care 1994, the Department of Defense-funded Arctic Care has sent a multi-service group of military health out into rural Alaska to practice their respective trades. Like other military personnel, these specialists perform their skills regularly to meet their training requirements. Arctic Care gives them the opportun these services in an area where they are desperately needed.

Typically, Arctic Care efforts focus on one region of the state each year. Organizers partner with the r Native Health corporation and the U.S. Public Health Service to determine which services are in the g and how they will be delivered.

The 2009 operation is based in Bethel, with visits scheduled to 11 smaller villages around the region. ' specialists -- approximately 200 in all -- will offer services in five categories:

Medical. The Arctic Care team will offer free basic physicals, sport physicals, physical therapy and tr minor conditions. Area residents found to have significant medical conditions will be referred to medi with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation.

Mental health. Trained counselors will be available to any village resident who wishes to consult with **Dental.** Military dentists will offer free dental exams to patients. They will also offer procedures rangi simple cleaning and checkups to extractions and fillings.

Optometry. The visiting optometrists not only offer free vision screenings, they can create prescription get them to their patients within a day or two.

Veterinary medicine. The military employs veterinarians who provide care to military working dogs. I unique importance of dogs in many remote areas of Alaska, their services are in great demand there.

“Arctic Care is one of the most gratifying operations the military does in Alaska,” said Army Lt. Colo Elliott, medical operations officer for Alaskan Command. “These are areas typically underserved by tl community; so to be able to go in there and deliver these badly needed services is immensely satisfyin Arctic Care team members.”

The Arctic Care team will be in the Y-K region through March 19. Over the next three years Arctic C support the Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation, Tanana Chiefs Conference and the Maniilaq Health (respectively.

**New: Seal Hunting
and Safety Student Guide**

week of February 9th we will be hearing HB 74, the Coastal Management Plan, which I will discuss in a later newsletter.

FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

Finance Subcommittees have begun to convene; I am looking forward to the work to be done. There are interpretations of the budget, but Legislative Finance says the Governor's request increases the Operating Budget by \$132.2 million. The Legislature's Finance Subcommittees will be taking a very close look at the Governor's additional funding requests. Please make sure that all capital and operating budget requests are in to the Legislature as soon as possible.

Joint Military Team gears up for Operation Arctic Care

by Matt Grills

Medical and dental personnel from the U.S. military will begin arriving in Western Alaska on March 6 for Operation Arctic Care, a medical outreach mission that brings health care and veterinary services to the state's rural villages.

During this year's deployment, March 6 through 18, nearly 200 members of the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, National Guard and reserve components will test their ability to work as a joint team while providing care and health education to 11 communities that have limited access to both.

"Arctic Care '09 will be exciting, challenging and rewarding for all those participating," said Navy Capt. Robert Reisdorfer, lead planner. "Members are anxiously waiting to bring their medical expertise to this exercise. Hopefully, Mother Nature will cooperate with the weather, and air transportation with the Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawks will be a success."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 will happen in cooperation with and under the supervision of the Yukon-Interior Health Corporation. Teams comprised of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and veterinary personnel are deployed to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmoutluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay. Additional services include mental health, audiology, and physical therapy support.

Civilian medical services within Bethel will also include pediatric oral surgery, gynecology, and color vision testing operating at the YKHC hospital.

By the military providing on-site care, the need is reduced for individuals to travel to Bethel for treatment, which is extremely limited for residents living in communities that fall below the poverty level. At the same time, the military strengthens its medical readiness and logistics capability by traveling to these villages – in this case, providing localized deployments by Black Hawk helicopters.

While in Bethel, military personnel who deploy will be housed at the Alaska National Guard Armory. Operation Arctic Care rotates to different areas of rural Alaska each year. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. Over a period of 10 days, military health-care providers provided care to 188 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR, and vaccinated 422 animals.

Operation Arctic Care is an annual training event sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

1st Class Matt Grills is the Mass Communication Specialist for Operation Arctic Care Public Affairs.

Bethel musher continues



April 22, 2009

MAXWELL-GUNTER NEWS

42nd Medical Group supports Alaska Arctic Care exercise

Two members of the 42nd Medical Group participated in a joint Air Force, Army and Navy medical and dental exercise in 11 of Western Alaska's most remote villages March 6-15.

Dr. (Maj.) Weilun Hsu and Tech. Sgt. Michael Rountree, both of the Maxwell Optometry Clinic, were among a team of medical personnel that participated in the 15th annual Operation Arctic Care, which brought health care and veterinary support to underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

The mission was based in Bethel, Alaska and augmented by pediatric oral surgery, gynecology, and colonoscopy teams operating at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation hospital. Teams comprised of medical, dental, optometry, nursing, and veterinary personnel, to include support staff, were forward deployed to provide healthcare services in thirteen villages on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Additional manning included mental health, audiology, and physical therapy support.

Due to dramatic and unexpected changes in weather conditions, flexibility and patience during this mission were imperative and were the keys to mission success as the teams braved harsh winter weather and temperatures up to 41 degrees below zero, Sergeant Rountree said.

Medical team members were transported by Blackhawk helicopters, he said. Several teams had to be turned away halfway into their flight to their respective villages due to extreme winter storms, which often blanketed some of the mountain villages with inches of snow in several hours.

"Our location changed twice and took two days longer to get to before we reached our destination, which ultimately became Russian Mission, a tiny Alaskan village bordering the Yukon River," Sergeant Rountree said.

With 50 people away to Anchorage for the annual festival, Sergeant Rountree said 196 out of 250 remaining Russian Mission residents he and Major Hsu examined were primarily school-age children with myopia and astigmatism.



Transportation was arduous in remote areas of Alaska as shown by this Blackhawk helicopter during Operation Arctic Care. Despite the weather, helicopters was used by two members of 42nd Medical Group who participated in the exercise.

-- Courtesy photo

Advertisement

Related news from the Web

Latest headlines by topic:

- **Weather**
- **Medicine**
- **Nursing**

Powered by **Topix.net**

One group of patients had extremely high astigmatism; however, the other group had an average amount of astigmatism, Sergeant Rountree said. Because of the advanced, portable optometric kits and lens fabricating capability, the turnaround time for a pair of glasses was 24 hours.

He added that many of the villagers received their glasses before the medical team had departed. One of the eighth graders received her glasses and, for the first time, was able to see without squinting anymore.

Recounting the young girl's reaction to clear sight, Sergeant Rountree said the girl was very happy. "Thank you so much for coming here," he recalled her saying. "You not only bring happiness to our village, but life to my sight!"

Sergeant Rountree said instant gratification is so rewarding that it has made Major Hsu, a six-time humanitarian-mission veteran in the past four years, strive to do missions like Arctic Care again and again.

Article courtesy of the 42nd Medical Group.

Other articles:

BACK TO NEWS PAGE

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service

Air Force

Print News Today

Air Force news from around the world

445th Airlift Wing reservists participate in Operation Arctic Care

by Stacy Vaughn
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

4/7/2009 - **WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, Ohio** -- Two reservists from the 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron and the 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron deployed with 200 other servicemembers from across the nation to Bethel, Alaska, in March as part of a Joint Forces medical readiness and logistics initiative called Operation Arctic Care.

Sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training Program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Operation Arctic Care provided much needed no-cost health care, health education and veterinary services to underserved populations within Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

The reservists fell into their respected teams with the other servicemembers. Each team, a total of 11, included a mix of doctors, dentists, optometrists and Army veterinarians.

After arriving in Alaska, the teams were forward deployed via Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters with equipment and supplies to the following villages on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta: Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region consists of remote and relatively sparse populations, separated by great distances from essential medical services. The result is a profoundly underserved population.

Tech. Sgt. Letroy Mays, 445th AMDS, said his team set up a full-fledged medical clinic in Kwethluk and provided wellness check-ups to those who normally did not have the opportunity to visit a clinic because of the remoteness of the area where they live. As a medical technician, his role was to assist the doctor on his team.

"We worked 12-hour shifts in order to accommodate all of the villagers. Of the 689 villagers in Kwethluk, we provided medical support to 325," Sergeant Mays said. "My medical technical skills were taken to a new level with this experience because I also did infant and childcare immunizations."

Sergeant Mays said the most rewarding experience of the entire operation was the career day and education briefs that they gave to the local school for grades K-1 to 12th. He had the opportunity to speak to the students about preventive health care and the dangers of bullying.

"Speaking about service to our Nation and leading a healthy lifestyle afforded us a forum to get many of the children to realize opportunities exist when you lead a healthy productive life," he said.

Maj. Margaret Myslinsky, 445th ASTS, also had the opportunity to talk with the local school children in Quinhagak. "Our team taught classes on nutrition and bullying. The Navy seamen taught basic life support to the teachers," Major Myslinsky said. She said while her team was at the school, they did fluoridation on the 216 school children and gave them eye exams.

"We were primary care physicians and provided care to 260 patients, out of a population of more than 600 that live in and around Quinhagak.

Both Major Myslinsky and Sergeant Mays agreed that Operation Arctic Care was an important learning experience that they'll never forget.

"Operation Arctic Care is a positive experience to interact with Native Alaskans and deliver the best medical service for those who do not ordinarily seek traditional healthcare. Getting people to trust you, and building relationships with the village leaders, and other healthcare providers was a critical factor for generating



WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, Ohio – Tech. Sgt. LeTroy Mays, far left, and his Operation Arctic Care team, take a break while they wait for the arrival of their patients to their clinic in Kwethluk. Eleven teams altogether provided Native Alaskans living in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area no-cost health care and health education services. (Courtesy photo)

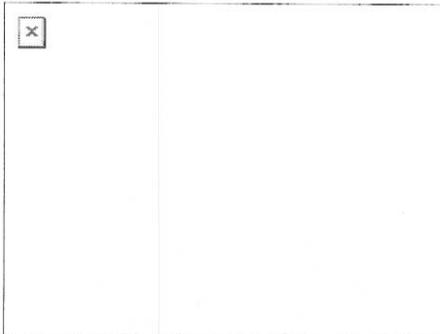
appointments for the dental, optometry and ambulatory care clinics," Sergeant Mays said. "I recommend that all healthcare providers give one tour of service to Arctic Care and give to communities which are expanding and equipping themselves for the future."

"Operation Arctic Care was a wonderful experience and brought new insight into cold weather training, life in austere conditions, and the healthcare system in Alaska, which is very unique for the Native Alaskans," Major Myslinsky said.

- Arctic Focus - <http://arcticfocus.com> -

Arctic villages get animal care

Posted By [Colleen](#) On February 13, 2009 @ 11:56 am In [Environment](#) | [No Comments](#)



Operation Arctic Care, along with veterinarians, will be visiting Arctic villages in March. The teams will be providing vaccinations for rabies, parvo and distemper as well as offering deworming medication, spaying and neuter operations free of charge. Along with these services, they will also be putting on free courses on animal husbandry and hygiene issues such as hand washing.

Operation Arctic Care is a joint medical readiness and logistics training exercise conducted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense of Reserve Affairs Innovative Readiness Training Program. OAC is comprised of the United States Public Health Service, Navy, Air Force, Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, Active and Reservists from the Army, and Marines. Beginning in March, the 2009 mission for OAC will be to provide their service in the following 11 villages: Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Alakanuk, Mountain Village, Newtok, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

OAC believes that of the over 100 cases of dog bites a year in the Y-K Delta almost all are preventable. Most of these injuries result in grievous injuries or even death. The saddest thing about these preventable injuries is, most are happening to children.

"We firmly believe these injuries and deaths are preventable," said YKHC Field Environmental Health Officer Brek Steele. "By giving pets proper care, educating children in animal husbandry, and helping cities or tribes pass and enforce animal care standards, we hope to reduce the number of dog-related injuries and deaths in our region."

Steele told reporters every attempt would be made to reach all 11 villages on their list as long as weather and time cooperated with their efforts. "YKHC is very excited about Operation Arctic Care and appreciates your support to its visiting members."

The phone number to get more information on the Operation Arctic Care service is 1-800-478-6599.

This page will not be linked by Arkayne.

You need a valid account token.

[Get Arkayne Token](#)

Share and Enjoy:

- [1] 
- [2] 
- [3] 
- [4] 
- [5] 
- [6] 

Article printed from Arctic Focus: <http://arcticfocus.com>

URL to article: <http://arcticfocus.com/2009/02/13/arctic-villages-get-animal-care/>

URLs in this post:

[1] Image: <http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=http%3A%2F%2Farcticfocus.com%2F2009%2F02%2F13%2Farctic-villages-get-animal-care%2F&title=Arctic%20villages%20get%20animal%20care>

[2] Image: <http://sphinn.com/submit.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Farcticfocus.com%2F2009%2F02%2F13%2Farctic-villages-get-animal-care%2F&title=Arctic%20villages%20get%20animal%20care>

[3] Image: <http://del.icio.us/post?url=http%3A%2F%2Farcticfocus.com%2F2009%2F02%2F13%2Farctic-villages-get-animal-care%2F&title=Arctic%20villages%20get%20animal%20care>

[4] Image: <http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Farcticfocus.com%2F2009%2F02%2F13%2Farctic-villages-get-animal-care%2F&t=Arctic%20villages%20get%20animal%20care>

[5] Image: http://www.mixx.com/submit?page_url=http%3A%2F%2Farcticfocus.com%2F2009%2F02%2F13%2Farctic-villages-get-animal-care%2F&title=Arctic%20villages%20get%20animal%20care

[6] Image: <http://www.google.com/bookmarks/mark?op=edit&bkmk=http%3A%2F%2Farcticfocus.com%2F2009%2F02%2F13%2Farctic-villages-get-animal-care%2F&title=Arctic%20villages%20get%20animal%20care>

Copyright © 2008 Arctic Focus. All rights reserved.

SEARCH BLOG

FLAG BLOG

Next Blog»

Create Blog | Sign In

nastasia's window to rural living

Keeping in touch with my classmates and instructor this fall as I plow through my assignments

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Arctic Care Arrives at Russian Mission



On a warm afternoon of March 10th as I was getting Nicholas ready for our walk to the clinic I heard something very unusual, the sound of choppers. Puzzled I looked outside my living room window to see two military helicopters circling the village. Not knowing what was going on I called Jim. "It is the Arctic Care," he replied. As we talked I noticed something very alarming. One of the helicopters was descending right

between the clinic and post office! "Oh My God! What are they doing!" Images of broken power lines tangling the people inside filled my mind such that I could not talk for a few seconds. I could not understand why they would land there when we have a big airfield with plenty of room on the apron. I watched as the second helicopter tried to find a landing spot within the village, hovering over various places before returning back to the area of the first helicopter. The one that landed eventually took off and they parked on the apron of the airport. What an adventurous and unexpected entrance! This is one day I will not soon forget. Later when talking to my daughters and niece about our exciting afternoon I heard that there were some other more dramatic conclusions to seeing the copters hover over the village. Apparently one of the young girls on the road next to my grandpa's house where they were exclaimed, "They are going to kill us! Its the end of the world!" These do make very good conversations. There is now personnel here to help see to the health of our people until the 18th, a dentist, a physical therapist, an optometrist, an audiologist, and two main doctors. We are blessed.

Posted by Rural teacher in Training -stalling out at 3:31 PM

bear on the Yukon



Taken by my youngest daughter during camping trip upriver

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2009 (4)
 - ▼ March (2)
 - Arctic Care Arrives at Russian Mission
 - Daylight Savings Time, and updates of the family
 - February (1)
 - January (1)
- 2008 (30)
- 2007 (29)

About Me



Rural teacher in Trainir stalling out Russian Mission, Alask United States

Single mother and grandmother striving toward my teaching degree while trying to balance rural Alaskan life, responsibility and/or favors associated with my family

previous job connection...:P just living lif
the fullest

6 comments:

[View my complete profile](#)

Andrew said...

Hi Nastasia,

Stumbled on your blog.

My wife, Susan Donlon, is one of the Navy Nurses who arrived in Russian Mission today with the Arctic Care group. Introduce yourself to her.....she's the best! We've been married for 35 years and she's the love of my life. If you get a chance to see her, mention that I dropped this note.

God bless,

Andrew Donlon

March 11, 2009 10:54 PM

Rural teacher in Training -stalling out said...

Hi Andrew,

I will look for your wife, she and everyone are doing a wonderful job helping us medically. Thank you.

God Bless,
Nastasia

March 12, 2009 12:51 AM

KendraKrenz said...

Hi Nastasia,

Isn't it great when we get health providers out to the villages. If I remember correctly, before I moved out here they send them out to Kongiganak a few years ago. Now I heard these health care providers are in Kwigillingok, our neighbor. I guess they rotate to different villages every so often. Some people from Kong have traveled on their snow-machines to Kwig to take advantage of the opportunity and get seen.

March 12, 2009 11:30 AM

Rural teacher in Training -stalling out said...

It is great to have such a variety here at once. This is the first time for Russian Mission. I do hope they come again.

March 12, 2009 11:46 PM

skipvia said...

Great story, and a wonderful photo. Good thing you had your

camera with you!

March 14, 2009 11:29 PM

noelstrick said...

Thank you for your condolences. Your blog is great. I enjoyed reading it. The medical care is such a blessing! That is awesome. Thanks again.

March 22, 2009 8:18 PM

Post a Comment

Home

Older Post

Subscribe to: **Post Comments (Atom)**

[Education](#)[Jobs](#)[Travel](#)[White Papers](#)[Magazines](#)[Books](#)[Reports](#)[Online Store](#)[Clothing](#) [Footwear](#) [Field Equipment](#) [ABU](#) [ACU](#) [Bags & Luggage](#) [Headwear](#) [Tools](#) [Watches](#) [And more }}](#)Secure Store
powered by[Home](#) :: [Military](#) :: [Library](#) :: [News](#) :: [2009](#) :: [March](#) ::

MILITARY



Navy-Led Arctic Care Returns to Western Alaska

[Navy NewsStand](#)

Story Number: NNS090309-07

Release Date: 3/9/2009 4:14:00 PM

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Matt Grills

BETHEL, Alaska (NNS) -- Joint teams of Navy, Army and Air Force medical and dental personnel are deploying to 11 of Western Alaska's most remote villages March 6-15, bringing no-cost health care and veterinary support to underserved populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region as part of the 15th annual Operation Arctic Care.

Led by the Navy, this year's medical readiness exercise is based in Bethel, Alaska, where the military is providing colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams to augment services at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Hospital. In addition, an audiologist, mental-health clinicians, a physical therapist, an emergency-room physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist will support the project.

"The operational health support unit headquarters staff at Camp Pendleton has been engaged with this exercise for over a year, and we are excited to get it off the ground," said Navy Capt. Patricia Reisdorfer, lead planner for Operation Arctic Care 2009. "All the branches of the military are present, and people are motivated for this mission. It's so rewarding to be here doing medical outreach for people who really need it."

Operation Arctic Care 2009 is conducted in cooperation with and under the supervision of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Teams of medical, dental, optometry, nursing and Army veterinary personnel will provide care in the delta villages of Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Reserve and active components of the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard provide the personnel and equipment for Arctic Care. Uniformed officers from the U.S. Public Health Service are also participating.

Harsh weather conditions occasionally pose a challenge in getting flights out to villages via Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. But that's all part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military-civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster.

"Our chief sent out an e-mail about a year ago looking for people who were interested in coming up here, and I volunteered right away," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Hermann Schieder, an optometry technician attached to the 43rd Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. He's spending the week conducting eye exams for the people of Toksook Bay, population 549.

"This is the farthest north I've ever been. Besides all the cold wind, Alaska is a beautiful place, and I'm looking forward to being out in the community and doing something good for others."

This year's Arctic Care mission made a footprint months before medical teams began deploying. In September, the Navy's leadership team conducted a site survey to assess each village's needs, and in January two Marine Corps electricians and an Air Force biomedical technician installed wiring connections for villages to communicate with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation via video teleconferencing. A total of 33 villages benefited from the work.

The people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta appreciate the opportunity to receive health services through Arctic Care.

"During the site visit, I went to a grocery store, and one of the natives asked where I was from," Reisdorfer said. "I explained that I was with Arctic Care, and he said, 'I am so happy you are here. We have been waiting for you.'"

Veterinary care is a critical component of this year's Arctic Care. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Every year, bites and mauling cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations – sometimes even death. Children are usually the victims of these attacks.

"Animal health and human health go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Angie Parham of Athens, Ga. "Our goal is to get all the animals we can vaccinated. Rabies is our main concern since it can be transmitted to humans. But we'll deworm and vaccinate for other dog diseases as well to try to keep the animals healthy."

Teams from the Army Veterinary Command will also spay and neuter at pet owners' request and teach courses on animal husbandry.

Rotating to different areas of rural Alaska each year, Arctic Care has been to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta three times – in 1997, 1998 and 2001. Last year's mission was performed in Kodiak and six of the island borough's villages. During a period of 10 days, military health-care providers treated 127 medical patients and 188 dental patients, made 232 pairs of glasses on site, certified 42 students in CPR and vaccinated 422 animals.

Covering an area the size of North Dakota and South Dakota combined, the 2009 exercise will serve even greater numbers of native Alaskans.

"Many of these people aren't fortunate enough to have the amenities we take for granted in the lower 48 states," said Hospital Corpsman Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La. Sent by the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, his job at Arctic Care is grinding lens for eyeglasses that will be delivered to the villages.

"We've been told to expect to do double what we did last year."

Operation Arctic Care is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

For more news from the Bureau of Navy Medicine, visit www.navy.mil/local/bumed.

[Advertise with Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [GlobalSecurity.org In the News](#) | [Internships](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy](#)

Copyright © 2000-2009 GlobalSecurity.org All rights reserved.
Site maintained by: [John Pike](#)



For Immediate Release
By: Spc. Margaret J. Moonin

March 12, 2009

Alaska Army National Guardsmen Assist with Arctic Care *Aviators battle weather conditions to transport doctors and supplies to villages*

BETHEL, Alaska—A thick, wet blanket of snow covers the rotors of three Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, as winter storm clouds move in, threatening to compromise the day's mission of Operation Arctic Care 2009.

As part of Operation Arctic Care 2009, the Alaska Army National Guard's 1/207th Aviation Soldiers have been tasked with transporting teams of military health care professionals, supplies and equipment to remote villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta from March 6-18. The annual joint forces medical readiness training exercise is designed to simulate military and civilian joint medical outreach operations in times of crisis, conflict or disaster.

Poised outside the Alaska Army National Guard hanger in Bethel, the pilots once again re-evaluate the day's mission. With quickly changing weather, Guard aviators discuss any possible shift in plans with U.S. Navy Capt. Patty Reisdorfer, Operation Arctic Care 2009 lead planner.

"The weather has been our biggest hurdle but even that has made this mission a success," said Capt. Todd Miller, B Company, 1/207th Aviation company commander. "With the weather forcing our crews to move things around, my pilots and crew chiefs have had to think on their feet to get the job done and meet the needs of Arctic Care."

More than 200 active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel from the Army, Alaska Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and uniformed officers with the U.S. Public Health Service have come together in conjunction with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation to provide no-cost health care, health care education and veterinary services to residents of 11 remote and under-served Alaska Native villages throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area.

The villages taking part in this year's Arctic Care are Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay. Because of the remoteness of their locations, some of these villages regularly face extreme and challenging weather conditions.

“We have a good crew of people out here doing their darndest to do the right thing and get these doctors and supplies into these villages as safe and timely as possible under adverse snow storms in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta,” said Sgt. 1st Class James Morris, B Company, 1/207th Aviation platoon sergeant.

Morris, who is also a standardization instructor for UH-60 Black Hawk crew chiefs, has been working with crew chiefs and mechanics to accommodate the last-minute schedule changes by quickly moving personnel, equipment and supplies from one Black Hawk to another.

“The amount of cargo our Black Hawks can carry in one trip is more than double what a civilian helicopter can carry,” Morris said. “Our crews are doing an amazing job of moving the cargo on and off the aircraft and helping to ensure this mission is a success. The communication skills and the handling of difficult weather conditions in a safely maintained field environment will help us in the future with evasive maneuvers in war time environments.”

According to Warrant Officer Nyles Harrison, B Company, 1/207th Aviation, UH-60 Black Hawk instructor, pilot and instrument flight examiner, the most important thing that Soldiers are learning from their involvement in Operation Arctic Care 2009 is crew coordination.

“Our crews need to be able to communicate with each other on the best possible solution to any problems they may face while flying,” Harrison said. “They have had to rethink and problem solve because of short-notice missions and weather conditions, making crew coordination essential to the smooth execution of each mission.

Though the crews of 1/207th Aviation have faced many obstacles during Operation Arctic Care 2009, they have faced each with tenacity and team work, helping them to successfully complete their missions.

“All the credit for any success we have had goes to our all of our crews,” Morris said. “They work their hearts out to make sure this mission is a success and everything is running smoothly.”

Alaska Army Guard Mechanics Ensure Operation Arctic Care Success Guard Soldiers dedicated to keeping Black Hawks on schedule

BETHEL, Alaska (3/23/09) - Less than one week after Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers with the 1-207th Aviation arrived in Bethel, they were in full-swing, keeping five UH-60 Black Hawks running smoothly in support of Operation Arctic Care 2009.

Operation Arctic Care is an annual joint force medical readiness training exercise designed to simulate military and civilian joint medical outreach operations in times of crisis, conflict or disaster while providing no-cost veterinary and medical services to local residents.

Facing extreme and challenging conditions, pilots and crew chiefs show up at the Alaska Army National Guard Armory in Bethel at 7 a.m., to begin transporting supplies, personnel and equipment to one of 11 remote villages, while mechanics and crew chiefs in training arrive in the afternoon to work late into the night completing required maintenance and repairs to Black Hawks.

With a damaged rotary blade in need of repair on one Black Hawk and a worn-out filter in another, the crew chiefs and mechanics are learning first-hand how to deal with multiple obstacles at once and how to be successful in stressful situations.

Skills that will help them prepare for real world scenarios. "One of the great things they will get the chance to do is change a rotary blade," said Capt. Todd Miller, company commander of B Company, 1-207th Aviation. "In my seven years of flying I have only seen it done twice.

So the crew that is getting to work on that is going to get an experience that they would normally never see as a traditional Guard Soldier."

Safety is paramount in the military, so each of the five Black Hawks receive in-depth inspections, maintenance and repairs to prepare it for the next day missions.

"You don't get this much time over a drill weekend or this kind of real-world experience to prepare new Soldiers for future deployments and real world missions," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Nunnally, 1-207th Aviation, platoon sergeant.

"This is an excellent experience for everyone involved." Every Black Hawk is inspected daily, every 10 hours, every 14 days, every 40 hours, and every 120 hours, with each inspection more detailed and in-depth than the previous.

"The crew has the opportunity to get some unique training that they might not have had the chance to receive if they hadn't been participating in Arctic Care," Nunnally said.

"Because of the increased amount of flying time during Arctic Care, the exercise has given many of the new Soldiers the opportunity to do some of the more in-depth inspections that they don't normally get to."

With every flight the helicopter runs the potential of something going wrong, so it's the maintenance crew's job to go over the entire aircraft to find any debris, cracks, damages, oil leaks and normal wear and tear prior to the pilots going up again.

"Our Mission is to safely transport teams and supplies to villages in the Yukon- Kuskokwim Delta," said Miller. "Safety is my main priority because if just one aircraft goes down, the mission has failed. The Soldiers working on the maintenance of these Black Hawks work extremely hard to ensure that safety.

" During Operation Arctic Care, the Soldiers of the 1-207th Aviation are working diligently and skillfully to ensure the safe and successful transportation of more than 200 uniformed service members, supplies, and equipment between Bethel and 11 villages; Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and

"One of the biggest pieces of this mission is not just the pilots and the crew chiefs but it's the maintenance crew," Miller said. "They are getting some of the best training possible while they are here and putting everything they have into the success of this mission."



Search

[Home](#)[News](#)[About the Guard](#)[Leadership](#)[Joint Staff](#)[For the Media](#)[News Archive](#)[Today in Guard History](#)[The On Guard](#)[State Publications](#)[RSS News Feeds](#)

Alaska Army Guardsmen assist with Arctic Care 2009

By Spc. Margaret J. Moonin
Alaska National Guard

BETHEL, Alaska (3/19/09) - A thick, wet blanket of snow covers the rotors of three Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, as winter storm clouds move in, threatening to compromise the day's mission of Operation Arctic Care 2009.

As part of Operation Arctic Care 2009, the Alaska Army National Guard's 1/207th Aviation Soldiers have been tasked with transporting teams of military health care professionals, supplies and equipment to remote villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta from March 6-18. The annual joint forces medical readiness training exercise is designed to simulate military and civilian joint medical outreach operations in times of crisis, conflict or disaster.

Poised outside the Alaska Army National Guard hanger in Bethel, the pilots once again re-evaluate the day's mission. With quickly changing weather, Guard aviators discuss any possible shift in plans with U.S. Navy Capt. Patty Reisdorfer, Operation Arctic Care 2009 lead planner.

"The weather has been our biggest hurdle but even that has made this mission a success," said Capt. Todd Miller, B Company, 1/207th Aviation company commander. "With the weather forcing our crews to move things around, my pilots and crew chiefs have had to think on their feet to get the job done and meet the needs of Arctic Care."

More than 200 active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel from the Army, Alaska Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and uniformed officers with the U.S. Public Health Service have come together in conjunction with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation to provide no-cost health care, health care education and veterinary services to residents of 11 remote and under-served Alaska Native villages throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area.

The villages taking part in this year's Arctic Care are Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Because of the remoteness of their locations, some of these villages regularly face extreme and challenging weather conditions.

"We have a good crew of people out here doing their darndest to do the right thing and get these doctors and supplies into these villages as safe and timely as possible under adverse snow storms in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta," said Sgt. 1st Class James Morris, B Company, 1/207th Aviation platoon sergeant.

Morris, who is also a standardization instructor for UH-60 Black Hawk crew chiefs, has been working with crew chiefs and mechanics to accommodate the last-minute schedule changes by quickly moving personnel, equipment and supplies from one Black Hawk to another.



Soldiers from the Alaska Army National Guard's 1st 207 Aviation Regiment guide a Black Hawk onto the flight line in Bethel, Alaska, March 12, 2009. The 1st 207 Aviation Regiment is responsible for transporting all medical teams and supplies during Operation Arctic Care, a Navy-led readiness exercise providing no-cost health care to 14 villages in Western Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim region. Photo by Senior Airman Christopher Griffin

[download hi-res photo](#)

NEWS ARCH

- [April 2009](#)
- [March 2009](#)
- [February](#)
- [January](#)
- [December](#)
- [November](#)
- [October](#)
- [September](#)
- [August 2009](#)
- [July 2009](#)
- [June 2009](#)
- [May 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)
- [March 2009](#)
- [February](#)
- [January](#)
- [December](#)
- [More Arc](#)

text size: [A](#)

Printer Frien

[SHARE](#)

helicopter can carry," Morris said. "Our crews are doing an amazing job of moving the cargo on and off the aircraft and helping to ensure this mission is a success. The communication skills and the handling of difficult weather conditions in a safely maintained field environment will help us in the future with evasive maneuvers in war time environments."

According to Warrant Officer Nyles Harrison, B Company, 1/207th Aviation, UH-60 Black Hawk instructor, pilot and instrument flight examiner, the most important thing that Soldiers are learning from their involvement in Operation Arctic Care 2009 is crew coordination.

"Our crews need to be able to communicate with each other on the best possible solution to any problems they may face while flying," Harrison said. "They have had to rethink and problem solve because of short-notice missions and weather conditions, making crew coordination essential to the smooth execution of each mission.

Though the crews of 1/207th Aviation have faced many obstacles during Operation Arctic Care 2009, they have faced each with tenacity and team work, helping them to successfully complete their missions.

"All the credit for any success we have had goes to our all of our crews," Morris said. "They work their hearts out to make sure this mission is a success and everything is running smoothly."

Related Stories

Alaska Army Guard Mechanics Ensure Operation Arctic Care Success Guard Soldiers dedicated to keeping Black Hawks on schedule

[Home](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [External Link Disclaimer](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Contact Us](#)

2009 National Guard Bureau



Search

Last Update: February 12, 2009 at 10:37AM

- [Home](#)
- [Calendar of Events](#)
- [Inside News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Matter of Record](#)
- [Births & Obituaries](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Contact Us](#)



[Click here for photos of the Emmonak Village Aid](#)

Operation Arctic Care deploys veterinary teams

DRUMS STAFF

February 12, 2009 at 10:28AM AKST

Veterinarian teams working with Operation Arctic Care next month will provide vaccinations for rabies,

parvo and distemper as well as offering deworming medication, spaying and neuter operations free of charge.

The teams will also offer courses on animal husbandry and the importance of hand-washing at no cost.

Operation Arctic Care is a joint medical readiness and logistics training exercise conducted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense of Reserve Affairs Innovative Readiness Training Program. This joint exercise includes personnel from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, the United States Public Health Service, Active and Reservists from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines.

For the 2009 Arctic Care exercise, teams are scheduled to travel to 11 Y-K Delta communities, including: Alakanuk, Atmauthluak, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Mountain Village, Newtok, Quinhagak and Toksook Bay.

Why is veterinary care a part of Operation Arctic Care?

Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Y-K Delta. Every year dog bites and mauling cause over a hundred injuries, dozens of hospitalizations, and even deaths.

Sadly, children are usually the victims of these attacks.

“We firmly believe these injuries and deaths are preventable,” said YKHC Field Environmental Health Officer Brek Steele. “By giving pets proper care, educating children in animal husbandry, and helping cities or tribes pass and enforce animal care standards, we hope to reduce the number of dog-related injuries and deaths in our region.”

Steele said YKHC’s Office of Environmental Health is very excited about Operation Arctic Care and appreciates your support to its visiting members. Every attempt will be made to provide these services in each of the 11 villages Operation Arctic Care will be deployed to – weather, time, and transportation permitting.

Village clinics will soon have information about where and how residents of each village, and citizens of surrounding communities, can connect with the Arctic Care Veterinarian Team.

For more information regarding Operation Arctic Care’s veterinary services, call the Office of Environmental Health at 1-800-478-6599.

This article was written by the YKHC Office of Environmental Health staff.

[Back](#)

 [Digg This](#)  [Seed Newsvine](#)

Advertisements

Sub-Zero Sailors

Operation

Medical Outreach

Story by MC1 Matt Grills, photos by Grills and Air Force Senior Airman Christopher Griffin

Western Alaska boasts some of the world's most difficult terrain, remote and rugged. Moose, caribou, brown bears, black bears, wolves and musk ox roam a vast wilderness, where the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers slowly wind their way through the tundra and empty into the frigid waters of the Bering Sea.



Sgt. 1st Class James Morris of the 1st/207 Aviation Regiment prepares to tow a *Black Hawk* helicopter that will transport an Army Veterinary Corps team to the village of Alakanuk, Alaska.

Arctic Care '09

in America's Last Frontier



The region has almost no roads. For the 25,000 Yup'ik Eskimos and other people living in the port city of Bethel, Alaska, and 55 distant villages, travel is limited to bush planes, boats, and in the winter, snowmobiles. During the coldest months of the year, rapidly changing weather conditions include freezing rain, ice and subzero temperatures as low as -25 degrees F. Winds can get as high as 60 miles per hour.

In this challenging environment, military members conducted Operation *Arctic Care '09*, a joint exercise that, since 1995, has tested the ability of Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and Army National Guard members – both active duty and Reserve – to deploy and operate as one team in a harsh environment. *Arctic Care* is meant to simulate medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster.

“*Arctic Care '09* was a tremendous learning experience for all of us, working side by side with the other service branches to provide the best care possible to the region,” said Capt. Patty Reisdorfer, the exercise’s lead planner.

The exercise is also a medical outreach, offering no-cost health care and veterinary support to underserved native communities across Alaska. Villages do have health clinics, but getting an appointment with a doctor, dentist or other specialist often requires flying to the nearest large city or even into Anchorage. Veterinary services are practically nonexistent.

Each year, *Arctic Care* rotates to a different area of the state; Bristol Bay, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Nome and the interior are among the cities and regions that have benefited from it.



▲ Cmdr. Nancy Moya of Pueblo, Colo., attached to Operational Health Support Unit Bremerton Det. P, checks Carole Alexie's heartbeat at a health clinic in Mountain Village, Alaska.

This year, the Navy took the lead in planning and execution of *Arctic Care*, which is sponsored by the Innovative Readiness Training program under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. Nearly 200 military health-care providers volunteered for the operation, bringing their equipment and expertise to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

In little more than a week, *Arctic Care '09* teams saw 3,503 patients in 10 villages and Bethel.



▲ Army Sgt. Shirley Grant, left, of Beaufort, S.C., and Army Capt. Amy Clark of Anchorage, Alaska, both from the Army's Southern California District Veterinary Command, locate the village of Alakanuk on a map as they prepare for this year's Operation *Arctic Care*.

▲ HM2 Chris Lutton of Simi Valley, Calif., attached to the 4th Marine Division, Weapons Company 223, checks Martha Wasky's blood pressure at a health clinic in Mountain Village, Alaska.

The mission "footprint" actually began in January, when two Marine Corps electricians and one Air Force biomedical technician traveled to Western Alaska and installed wiring connections for video conferencing at local clinics, Reisdorfer said. The hook-ups made it possible for the exercise's 11 designated villages to communicate with the *Arctic Care* '09 command cell at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation in Bethel. The advance team didn't stop there, and wired clinics in additional villages for a total of 33.

By March, mixed teams of doctors, dentists and optometrists began deploying to 15 villages, where they treated patients during the day and slept in schools at night.

"We sleep together; we eat together, so we've gotten to know each other well," said Marine Corps Capt. Cynthia Heins, commanding officer of Operational Health Support Unit Headquarters Camp Pendleton, Calif., the exercise's host. She spent a week practicing medicine in Kwethluk, a village of 730.

At the local clinic, she treated an assortment of cases, ranging from a broken finger and an ear infection to hypertension and congestive heart failure. Down the hall, an Air Force optometrist and optometry technician conducted eye exams. In the next room, a Navy dentist and an Air Force dental tech did teeth cleanings, fillings and extractions.

"I love being part of joint exercises because I

like getting to know the other services," Heins said. "These types of experiences teach us how to work as a well-oiled machine in the event that we have to go someplace quickly."

The Kwethluk team also connected with the villagers they came to help. From the minute Heins' team arrived via helicopter, they felt welcome, she said.

"All the kids were waiting at the edge of the runway. They came up and grabbed my hands, wanting to show us to the school. Everyone was waving as they went by on their snowmobiles. The local priest came out to greet us, and said thanks for helping. The teachers got together and threw us a spaghetti dinner. Folks greeted us with open arms."

In Mountain Village, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Chris Lutton of the 4th Marine Division made fast friends with the school's kindergarten through 12th-grade students, sharing breakfast and lunch with them every day. They had all kinds of questions: "Why are you in the military?" "What's it like?" "How does an MRE taste?"

"We talked with them about career paths, what we do in the Navy, what we do in our civilian jobs and emphasized staying in school," said Lutton, a paramedic and firefighter from Southern California.

Besides CPR classes, Lutton and other medics taught topics such as nutrition and healthy eating; hygiene and infection control,

self esteem and suicide prevention.

"We all took a briefing we're familiar with," explained Air Force Tech Sgt. LeTroy Mays of the 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, who said *Arctic Care* taught him quite a bit, too. "I set broken bones, did lab draws, helped people with preventative care – this is one of the best trainings I've done."

Villagers were especially eager to see veterinarians. Dog bites are a leading cause of injury in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Every year, bites and maulings cause dozens of injuries and hospitalizations – sometimes even death. Children are usually victims of these attacks.

Teams from the Army's Alaska District Veterinary Command at Fort Wainwright visited nine villages and vaccinated 2,991 animals, mostly dogs. They also spayed and neutered 77 animals at pet owners' requests.

"We encourage people to have their animals spayed or neutered," Staff Sgt. Christiana Ramos said. "Some do; others are not too keen on it, but they definitely want to have the vaccinations."

The exercise's "heartbeat," Reisdorfer said, is the Alaska Army National Guard, which transports teams by UH-60 *Black Hawk* helicopters. Poor visibility plagued the start of this year's mission, making it a challenge to get the first few flights out on time, but adding to the realism of the exercise.

Arctic Care '09 covered an area the size of



▲ A dentist rinses out the mouth of Dylan Sergie, a 2-year-old Alaskan native, after he had two cavities filled at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska.

North Dakota and South Dakota combined. Army Capt. Todd Miller, commander of Bravo Company 1/207th Aviation, said the challenge for his pilots was a winter landscape without much contrast.

“When the snow moves in, it’s all tundra,” Miller said. “There’s not much to look at, and that’s what you’re dependent on. The brush is what tells you where you are over the ground. If you end up navigating your way over a good-sized lake and hit nothing but white snow, you can’t tell if you’re at 10 feet or 100 feet.”

The weather forced Miller’s crews to think on their feet, occasionally scrubbing a mission and hastily rescheduling others when conditions cleared up.

“They practiced safety every step of the way,” Reisdorfer said.

Not every *Arctic Care* ’09 team traveled to villages. In Bethel, the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity produced 610 pairs of eyeglasses. From the villages, optometrists called in patients’ prescriptions, and Hospitalman Derek Gaudin and Army Spc. Thomas Cochran ground lenses and fit them to frames.

“Many of these people aren’t fortunate enough to have the amenities we take for granted,” Gaudin said. “It’s cool to know we’re able to help them in this way.”

As lead service, the Navy also provided colonoscopy and pediatric oral surgery teams to augment staff at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Hospital in Bethel, along with an audiologist, a mental-health clinician, a physical therapist, an emergency-room physician and an obstetrician/gynecologist.

Cmdr. Sandra Bierling, an obstetrician/gynecologist assigned to Operational Health Support Unit Bremerton Detachment P, spent weekends covering labor and delivery. She

delivered some babies, and was able to relieve, for a few days, Bethel’s only two doctors to carry a high-risk pregnancy pager.

At the walk-in Yukon-Kuskokwim Dental Clinic, Cmdr. David Greenman extracted impacted wisdom teeth and removed tissue lesions. An oral surgeon assigned to Operational Health Support Unit Portsmouth Detachment A, Norfolk, he said many patients had waited years for the procedures rather than fly to Anchorage.

“Each year *Arctic Care* just gets better and better, because we bring in new resources,” said Navy Capt. Karen Trueblood, who oversees the Innovative Readiness Training program at the Pentagon. She considers it great preparation for overseas deployments.

“Everyone here knows their medical profession quite well,” Trueblood said. “What they don’t know, really, is how to go into a strange location with no prior experience, learn to get along with the community, what to do when you’re not in a hospital clinic like in the lower 48. You have to improvise here. Weather becomes a factor. Logistics become a factor. You’re not in your comfort zone.

“The Office of the Secretary of Defense where *Arctic Care* resides says it’s one of their best programs running. This is the first time the Navy’s been involved to this extent, and it’s just done a great job. This is how we go to war now; we fight as one,” she said. 🇺🇸

Grills is assigned to Navy Public Affairs Support Element, East Reserve.



◀ HN Derek Gaudin of Baton Rouge, La., an optical laboratory specialist with the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity, conducts a quality assurance test on a pair of glasses in Bethel, Alaska.

Bethel, AK. CAPT Mark Rongone, assigned to the Reserve Pacific Flight Dental Office, explains how to fill a tooth to a patient at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation clinic. Rongone is in the village participating in Operation Arctic Care, a joint military medical readiness exercise that brings no-cost healthcare to underserved Alaskan residents, including dental, optometry and veterinary support. This year's Navy-led mission has teams in 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. Photo by SAMN Christopher Griffin, USAF

