



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Alaska National Guardsmen, Naval Militia and State Defense Force deploy across Western Alaska for Operation Merbok Response**

**Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska** -- More than 100 members of Joint Task Force Alaska deployed to the hub communities of Bethel and Nome today, as part of Operation Merbok Response, to support recovery efforts across Western Alaska. The task force includes members of the Alaska Air and Army National Guard, the Alaska Naval Militia and the Alaska State Defense Force.

Today, Alaska Air National Guard HC-130 and C-17 cargo planes transported task force members and mission sustainment supplies from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Eielson Air Force Base to the hub communities of Bethel and Nome. Task force teams will then deploy out to affected communities. In total, JTF - Alaska comprises more than 120 Alaskan service members, with approximately 20 living in the affected region.

The Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, activated JTF - Alaska after Governor Dunleavy's emergency declaration Saturday. Since then, JTF- Alaska has been conducting pre-mobilization preparations and mission planning leading up to today's deployment.

The JTF's mission is to assist with recovery efforts across the affected areas of Western Alaska as directed by the Alaska State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Anticipated missions include debris removal, flood-recovery operations, and movement of critical supplies and equipment. The SEOC receives requests for assistance from affected communities and assigns various state resources to assist.

Task Force members with the Alaska State Defense Force living in Western Alaska mobilized earlier this week and have been assisting with planning and damage

assessments. This morning, a ASDF team deployed to Golovin and another team will deploy to Hooper Bay later today.

The Alaska Army National Guard has two UH-60 Black Hawks and one CH-47 Chinook operating out of Nome and one UH-60 Black Hawk operating out of Bethel. They will provide transportation, delivery of critical supplies and equipment, and search and rescue/medevac support. As of today, there have been no reports of injuries or deaths related to the storm. Alaska Air National Guard HC-130 and C-17 cargo aircraft will provide support throughout the operation.

JTF-Alaska will remain activated until it is no longer needed by the state for recovery operations.