

# ALASKA POST

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Fort Wainwright, Alaska

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## AutoBears Assemble: Operating at thirty below

**1st Lt. Austen Bouska**  
Brigade Headquarters and  
Headquarters Company,  
1st Stryker Brigade Combat  
Team

In the early morning hours of Feb. 28th, 2020, Soldiers and Marines gathered in the historic shell of Hangar 1 on Ladd Army Air Field, Fort Wainwright, Alaska for the final test of their capabilities in Arctic Edge 20. Their mission: to conduct an air movement from Fort Wainwright and conduct an assault on a simulated enemy, in the mountainous training areas located many miles from post. This was their culminating training event for AE20. AE20 is a joint force and international training exercise and is the largest joint exercise scheduled in Alaska this year with approximately 1,000 US military personnel working alongside members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Soldiers and Marines inside Hangar 1 began conducting their final inspections of their sleds and rucks prior to their air movement. Their flights were still tentative as extreme cold temperatures threatened to cancel the mission. "We've been told that they are going to call it off if it gets to -30 degrees," U.S. Army Capt. Wesley Hine from 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division stated. Continuous checks on weather apps showed the temperature continuing to drop...-27°F.

Despite their doubts, leadership continued to conduct checks on their subordinates and their equipment. In such severe conditions, wearing the



70th BEB Soldiers boarding Chinooks

proper uniform ensemble and bringing the proper equipment can be a matter of life or death. Soldiers sported their white extreme cold weather boots affectionately called "bunny boots." They also donned white pant covers and OCP camouflaged tops to properly blend in to the sub-Arctic environment they were about to find themselves in. Akio sleds were loaded down with Arctic Meals Ready to Eat, water, tents and stoves. Everything they would need in order to survive for an extended period of time in the extreme conditions. Another look at the weather app... -28°F.

After receiving a call on his phone, Capt. Hine walked in front of the formation, "Alright, we are a go for today's mission. Everyone stay organized in your chalks, the aircraft will be arriving shortly." As soon as he finished speaking the hangar door slowly raised. As the bitter cold blew in, bands and ripples of heat escaping from the building became clearly visible and the once warm hangar quickly began to chill.

The vibration of the thumps of rotor blades began to be heard. Four CH-47 Chinook Helicopters with their dual rotors

arrived from the other side of the air field. Tinted with the light of the pink sunrise and the deep blue backdrop of the clear sky, the Chinooks slowly lowered onto the airfield. As the CH-47s taxied towards the hangar, huge waves of snow and ice billowed in every direction and soon the rotor wash blocked the aircraft from view. The noise slowly softened and the aircraft became visible again. All four helicopters, uniformly lined up and were ready to receive the Soldiers and Marines waiting in anticipation.

One by one the chalks made their way to their

respective aircraft. The Soldiers and Marines made quick work pulling and hauling hundreds of pounds of equipment on the sleds over the icy airfield and into the aircraft. After the final headcounts were confirmed, the doors were shut and the engines of the CH-47's began to roar again. As the rotors increased their rotations, snowy clouds concealed the Chinooks once again, until one by one they would pop up over the clouds and appear floating over the tarmac. As they headed for the mountains, one last look at the temperature... -29°F.

## New incentive pay encourages Soldiers to serve in Alaska

**Sean Kimmons**  
Army News Service

Soldiers being stationed in Alaska can now receive up to \$4,000 to help offset the initial cost of items needed to live in the "Last Frontier" state.

The one-time, lump-sum payments – called Remote and Austere Conditions Assignment Incentive Pay, or RAC-AIP – will be given to incoming Soldiers and those who arrived in Alaska after Dec. 1. The payment amount depends on the duty station and if the Soldier has dependents.

Single Soldiers heading to Forts Wainwright and Greely will receive a \$2,000 payment, while those with dependents will get \$4,000. For those heading to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, the payments will be \$1,000 and \$2,000, respectively.

The payments, which are taxable, are intended to help Soldiers and their fam-



Pvt. Drew Olson, an infantryman assigned to 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, rehearses Stryker dismount techniques with his company during exercise Arctic Edge 2018 near Fort Greely, Alaska. Soldiers being stationed in Alaska can now receive up to \$4,000 to help offset the initial cost of items needed to live in the "Last Frontier" state. (Photo by Capt. Richard Packer)

ilies buy cold-weather clothing and prep their vehicles for the harsh Alaskan environment.

"Preparation for the arctic winter includes car winterization, subzero-rated outdoor clothing, and insulated winter boots," Maj. Gen. Peter Andrysiak, commander of U.S.

Army Alaska, said in a news release. "These necessities are critical, but expensive.

"The required winter gear and car winterization will facilitate outdoor activities, increasing the emotional and physical well-being of our assigned Soldiers and families."

and the Department of the Army – spoke with leaders and Soldiers at each of the installations in October.

One of the challenges frequently brought up was paying for those essential items, which may also include car engine-block heaters, new tires and emergency kits.

"When we went up there, we sat and listened to commanders, we listened to Soldiers," said J.D. Riley, deputy chief of the Army G-1's Compensation and Entitlements Division. "We dug into it a little bit deeper and we clearly found an issue that needed to be addressed."

During the visits, some Soldiers told him they had to use their credit card or advance payments to cover the costs of the winter items.

The incentive pay will help prevent Soldiers from using those payment options that would otherwise cut into their future pay-

checks or compound interest.

"Those are the things you have to pay back. Obviously that's going to lower their monthly income," Riley said in an interview on Monday. "But if you [place] them in a high-cost area like Alaska, we want to make sure that we're not putting them in that position."

There are currently more than 11,000 Soldiers assigned to USARAK.

Andrysiak said the pay "will drastically improve the quality of life" for Soldiers and their families. It could also encourage other Soldiers to volunteer for difficult-to-fill assignments in the state, the release said.

### Eligibility criteria

To qualify for the incentive pay, Soldiers must meet the following criteria:

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### WEEKEND WEATHER

Friday



Snow and areas of freezing fog. High: 36F.

Saturday



Snow likely then rain/snow and areas of fog. High: 37F.

Sunday



Snow. High: 38F.

### IN BRIEF

Taking advantage of a break in the winter weather at the beginning of March, Charlie "Lightning" Company took a trip down to Castner Glacier to partake in a day of team building activities.

Read more on page 5.



# Nutrition Corner: Nutrition 101

Food Safety at Home – These days it may seem too cold for anything to grow anywhere in Alaska, but microscopic bacteria on our food needs only a short period of time with the right combination of heat and moisture in order to multiply and potentially cause illness to you or your loved ones. Because of this, it is important that we remain vigilant in taking measures to promote food safety during the winter, especially when we are often indoors more than out, and enjoying gatherings that involve food.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that foodborne ill-

ness directly impacts about one in six Americans each year, leading in some cases to hospitalizations and, in rare cases, even death.

The most common culprits of foodborne illnesses include:

Salmonella: Most often found in beef, poultry, milk and eggs. Less commonly found in produce.

Campylobacter: Found in poultry, meat, eggs, unpasteurized dairy, raw produce.

Listeria: Found in raw and/or unpasteurized dairy, cold cuts/pre-cooked meats and raw produce.

E. coli: Found in undercooked meat, unpasteurized dairy and raw

produce.

Foods can be contaminated with these microbes because of improper refrigeration or storage, poor personal hygiene, cross-contamination, food source contamination, undercooking, or other time/temperature mistakes.

If the body’s immune defenses are overwhelmed by a large number of these microbes, infection and illness can occur. Common symptoms of FI are nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and diarrhea. Individuals with previously compromised immune systems, very young children, the elderly and pregnant women are at particularly

higher risk for infection.

The most important steps to take to maintain optimal food safety in your home are the following:

- Wash hands often – it is estimated that effective handwashing can prevent half of all FI cases.
- Kitchen surface safety – ensure cleanliness of all countertops, tables, appliances, tools, sponges/dish towels, reusable grocery bags.
- Prevent cross contamination – separate raw and ready-to-eat foods by using predesignated areas in the refrigerator, freezer and other storage; use separate storage containers, prep tools and cutting boards

and properly sanitize all surfaces; develop a plan that can be upheld by the whole family.

- Cook foods to proper temperatures – use a calibrated food thermometer; if you are unsure about appropriate temperatures, sanitation or other details on safe food handling, ask your local dietitian for more information. And remember, when in doubt throw it out!

For more great strategies and resources regarding food safety, check out this page from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: <http://www.eat-right.org/resources/home-foodsafety>

# Temporary changes to retention, promotion, as COVID-19 persists

Thomas Brading  
Army News Service

Army leaders announced new reenlistment and promotion policies that will last until Sept. 30, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change how the military operates.

“In response to COVID-19, we've made some important changes to enlisted promotion and retention policies to take care of our people and keep our Army ready,” Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston said. “We are taking unprecedented and immediate action to keep the right people in the right rank when we need them most.”

The initiatives include short-term reenlistment opportunities, virtual promotion boards, and halting certain qualifications that are all intended to “protect the force and preserve readiness,” said Sgt. Maj. Stuart Morgan, the Army’s career counselor.

“It’s unknown if the COVID-19 outbreak is going to end two weeks from now or six months from now – or even longer,” Morgan continued. “It’s a constant analysis we go through; we are reevaluating the environment and identifying the operational environment that we’re in.”

To date, the Army has at least 288 confirmed cases of COVID-19, which include 100 Soldiers, 64 civilian employees, 65 dependents, nine cadets and 50 Army contractors.

**Short-term reenlistments**  
Roughly 9,000 Soldiers are within six months of leaving the Army and now eligible



Capt. Ryan King, Delta Company Commander, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division administers the oath of enlistment to Spc. JaQuan Jenkins, quartermaster and chemical equipment repairer, also from the regiment March 14, 2020 at Camp Bhan Dan Lan Hoi, Kingdom of Thailand. (Photo by Pfc. Lawrence Broadnax)

for short-term reenlistment, Morgan said, with extension options available from three to 11 months.

Interested Soldiers must get approval from their commander. The initiative was sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic, Morgan said, and intended to bridge the gap between separating Soldiers and those who committed to 12-month reenlistments or longer.

“We learned Soldiers wanted to continue their service,” Morgan said, “but some were unable to commit to an entire year or longer.”

Previous reenlistment options for Soldiers start at 12 months or longer, with some contracts that include bonuses worth up to \$80,000. There are no bonuses included with these new, short-term reenlistments.

The benefit of these reenlistments, however, is to give Soldiers finan-

cial stability during an uncertain time.

“Many Soldiers were preparing to transition out, but their civilian job opportunities disappeared,” Morgan said, while the COVID-19 outbreak has slowed the economy. Last week, more than 3 million Americans filed for unemployment.

“The Army understands the [economic] environment right now,” Morgan said. “We’re not just going to push a Soldier out to the front gate and say ‘good luck.’ A job that may have been available two weeks ago has now disappeared.”

This initiative is a chance for the Army to take care of its people, he said.

**Virtual promotions**  
Another way to ensure force readiness is to continue promot-

ing troops, said Sgt. Maj. Mark Clark, the Army G-1 directorate of military personnel management sergeant major.

But with travel restrictions in place, conducting these critical promotion boards can be challenging, he said. However, Army leaders have empowered battalion commanders to assess these risks, and adopt virtual promotion boards “as a means to mitigate that risk,” Clark said.

In other words, for the next six months, battalion commanders are empowered to conduct virtual personnel boards instead of meeting troops in-person. These commanders will also have the liberty to choose how their boards are conducted.

Battalion command sergeants major can also make promotion recommendations to

the commanders based on one-on-one interactions with eligible Soldiers, Clark said.

“Commanders can either do a normal monthly promotion board or if their command is decentralized, they’ll do the virtual boards,” Clark said. “Battalions may have Soldiers located in different states or different areas where traveling would be required to attend.”

**Qualifications halted**  
In addition to virtual promotion boards, Professional Military Education, or PME, requirements have been halted for Soldiers in the Advanced Leader Course and Senior Leader Course. Those affected will enroll on a later date.

“We don’t want Soldiers to leave

their homes and be in a mass population in an attempt to get trained,” Clark said. “So again, this is another opportunity to mitigate the risk.”

Some Soldiers will complete their requirements through distance learning, like troops enrolled in Basic Leader, Master Leader, and Sergeants Major courses.

Although Soldiers must still pass their Army Physical Fitness Test, or APFT, to rank up, they can use their last APFT score for these purposes, he said. This interim change is also applied to their weapons qualifications.

“Soldiers with an expired APFT would normally lose their promotable status, but we’ve taken those expiration dates and extended them so their commands don’t have to worry about putting their Soldiers at risk,” Clark said.

If troops are fully qualified to promote, except for their PME requirements, he said, they will receive a full promotion and will have until their next rank to complete their required schooling.

Army leaders are taking care of their Soldiers, Clark said. “It’s in line with the chief of staff of the Army’s top priority. We are developing policies to help commanders protect our people.

“We have some of the greatest weapon systems the world has ever seen,” he continued. “But those weapon systems don’t mean anything without the people. We have to make sure we keep people first because people are our key to win as a team.”

# ALASKA: Pay incentive

Continued from page 1

Must be serving on active duty  
Must be in the grade of colonel or below  
Must be permanently assigned to Alaska from a previous duty station outside of the state  
Must be within the first 90 days of arrival to Alaska  
Must agree to serve the prescribed tour length (36, 24, or 12 months)

Must have not previously received RAC-AIP during the current tour or a previous tour within the last six years (Soldiers who extend their tour or agree to serve a consecutive overseas tour in a subsequent RAC-AIP assignment are not eligible)  
Must be in good standing and not under the Uniformed Code of Military

Justice process (to include Article 15 or courts-martial proceedings), investigations, and must meet Army standards for retention (to include Army Physical Fitness Test and Army Body Composition Program) at the time of approval and must remain in good standing throughout the AIP tour; and  
Must not be permanently non-deployable.

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The Interior Military News Connection

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April 3, 2020

# The Chaplain’s Corner

**Chaplain Paul Fritts**  
U.S. Army Garrison  
Alaska, Fort Greely

“Ok campers, rise and shine! — and don’t forget your booties cause it’s cooooooold out there today.” Many of us will recognize this quote as a line from the 1993 movie “Groundhog Day” starring Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell. In case you missed it, here is a plot summary posted to IMDb by Rob Hartill (no spoilers shared!): “A weatherman is reluctantly sent to cover a story about a weather forecasting ‘rat’ (as he calls it). This is his fourth year on the story, and he makes no effort to hide his frustration. On awaking the ‘following’ day he discovers that it’s Groundhog Day again, and again, and again. First he uses this to his advantage, then comes the realization that he is doomed to spend the rest of eternity in the same place, seeing the same people do the same thing EVERY

day.” The enduring popularity of the movie has even made its way into our contemporary lexicon with the Oxford Dictionary defining the phrase “Groundhog Day” as “a situation in which a series of unwelcome or tedious events appear to be recurring in exactly the same way.” During my combat tours to Iraq in 2003 and 2005, my fellow Soldiers frequently described our deployment as “Groundhog Day.” The experience of all veterans of any war can probably be summed up with the adage “War is long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror,” and “Groundhog Day,” which accurately describes the boredom. President Trump has portrayed the current fight against the coronavirus pandemic as a war. It is not a stretch, then, to describe every American - every HUMAN - as a Soldier in this war. Our weapon is social distancing and we have been deployed to our living

rooms to fight it. As deployments go in my experience, this one is different in that it is relatively comfortable (so far). But similar to past deployments, boredom has begun to impact morale among the troops. It is Groundhog Day again. And again. All the usual suggestions that I might advise someone do in order to counter the tedium of deployment are excluded in this fight. The weapon most effective against the fear and anxiety that grow in the fertile soil of boredom is to get out and help someone else. We must still help our neighbors, but under the current conditions we must reimagine how to “get out” in order to do so. And the act of reimagining new possibilities for our problems brings us to the story of Abraham and Sarah. After being told by God that he and Sarah would have a son, “Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself,

‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?’” Scholar, author, and pastor Walter Brueggemann envisions this passage from Genesis 17:17 as the beginning of a dialogue about faith. He writes, “One voice says, ‘Can you imagine!’ The other voice answers, ‘Yes, but.’” When we think about Abraham and Sarah being pregnant and giving birth at impossibly old ages, a voice in our head wonders, “Can you imagine?” And just as quickly, another voice in our head brushes the possibility aside. Humanity jumps quickly from imagine to execute as a result of our need to control. God invites us to imagine what does not yet exist, but we struggle because we unconsciously assume that our human efforts must make it so. Addressing this need to control against the backdrop of Abraham and Sarah’s initial unbelief, Bruegge-



mann continues, “Can you imagine a new son born right then? ... Not: can you implement it, can you plan it, can you achieve it? - only: can you entrust possibilities to God that go beyond your own capacity for control...” (Brueggemann, “A Way other than Our Own: Devotions for Lent”). All God asks of us is to imagine - to believe in divine possibility, not to make it happen. God will execute. Releasing our need to control in order to imagine the

mysterious and holy possibilities of God in a “Groundhog Day” world that is not yet without pandemic is the faith we use to fight our own fear and anxiety. For God and Country! The Fort Greely Chapel community is a traditional, protestant Army chapel service meeting on Sundays at 10 a.m. with a weekly Communion observance. Interested? Please call 907-873-4397 or “Like” our chapel Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/FGAChapel](http://www.facebook.com/FGAChapel).

# 3D steel printing at forefront of modernization, readiness

**Thomas Brading**  
Army News Service

Army vehicles, like infantry carriers and tanks, have numerous functions that need to be maintained, and a damaged part may leave a vehicle rooted for months waiting for a replacement part. Scientists at the Army Research Laboratory are responding to this by exploring new ways to print durable steel parts on-demand, with feedstock more than 50 percent stronger than what’s commercially available, said Brandon McWilliams, ARL manufacturing and technology branch team lead. For McWilliams, the Army’s 3D printing strategy is twofold: sustainment or how to supply Soldiers parts for legacy systems, and the ability to print parts for future systems.

Regarding the Army’s future systems, long-range precision fires is at the forefront, he said, as ARL is developing new materials and technologies that work well with those priorities. Additive manufacturing cuts back the weight of certain parts, he said, and can beef up the range, blast size, and guidance technology of future munitions. ARL researchers are currently turning out parts to new LRPF rocket, missile, and artillery rounds that fire at longer distances. These new, lighter-weight printed parts, based on computer designs, can open the door for industry developers to rearrange the explosive components of a missile and increase overall lethality,



A table holds metal parts created by a 3d printer at the Army Research Laboratory in Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland Feb. 10, 2020. (DOD photo by EJ Hersom)

McWilliams said. In the short term, ARL’s technology is also working to revolutionize how battlefield logistics works, he said, by rapidly getting parts to the warfighter to decrease lengthy wait times. These additive manufacturing advancements have fundamentally changed the scope of what the Army can design and build. A key element to ARL’s enhanced 3D printing capabilities is a specialized steel alloy powder called AF-96, he said. The alloy was originally developed by the U.S. Air Force for bunker-busting bomb applications. When printing metal 3D parts, a method called powder bed fusion is used. During

this process, the printer’s laser carefully melts the powder into a pattern. Then the printer overlays the powder onto the build plate and repeats the process until the part is complete. Last spring, a model system was initially developed so scientists could understand how the metals work, he said. This has helped develop the micro-structure so they can create more alloys that will work better and have a lower cost. Previous steel alloys often contained cobalt and tungsten elements, making them more costly. AF-96 is an economical, high-strength steel material intended for military-unique applications. It will enable ARL to help get

Army vehicles up and running with parts on demand, McWilliams said. “In a desert environment, sand can wear down a vehicle and leave it sitting idle, and in some cases, it will take more than a year to get a spare part,” he said. “From a sustainment point of view, getting parts to Soldiers directly impacts readiness.” For example, the M1 Abrams tank runs on a gas turbine engine and once sand gets sucked in and grinds down the blades, it can leave the tank unable to run. The ARL team

successfully printed a replacement propeller fan for the battle tank. “This means providing replacement parts for our legacy systems, many of which are very old,” he said. “It can be very difficult and a logistical challenge to get new parts

for them. So we're able to print replacement parts on the fly.” Moving forward, the lab will continue working with industry and academic partners to develop new alloy designs as well as other ways to get parts to Soldiers faster, he said.





# Protecting Our



# PEOPLE

# Protects Our



# MISSION

Each of us has a role to ensure we live and work without the threat of sexual assault



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## U.S. Army medical research institute continues work on coronavirus

### U.S. Army Public Affairs

Researchers at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases continue to work on medical countermeasures for the novel coronavirus as part of the DOD's COVID-19 research effort.

"U.S. Army researchers were critical during the SARS epidemic, the Zika virus and the Ebola outbreak as they helped develop antivirals and vaccines," said Ryan McCarthy, Secretary of the Army. "They've done it before and they will do it again."

"The true heroes in this fight are the medical professionals – people like the scientists and researchers at USAMRIID," said Gen. James McConville, Chief of Staff of the Army. "They're working on vaccinations, treatments and better ways to conduct tests that will ultimately help the nation defeat the virus."

While some of USAMRIID's programs were temporarily suspended due to potential safety issues, their ongoing work with SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus, was never affected.

The institute resumed full operational capability – for all of its programs – after a recent site visit by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which was followed by a CDC letter dated March 27, 2020, that fully restored the institute's registration under the Federal Select Agent Program.





Charlie Company arriving to the entrance of Castner Glacier. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Francesca Cervone, Charlie Company, 70th Brigade Engineer Battalion)

# Snowshoeing with a View

Taking advantage of a break in the winter weather at the beginning of March, Charlie “Lightning” Company took a trip down to Castner Glacier to partake in a day of team building activities. Charlie Company left Fort Wainwright during the early morning hours to get a head start on their day. The Soldiers caravanned together down to the glacier, making a quick stop in Delta Junction for some essential snacks to get them through the two and a half hour drive.

Upon arriving to their destination, Soldiers donned their snowshoes and geared up for a walk of a little over a mile to the hidden entrance of the glacier. At the entrance, Charlie Company was wowed by the wonder and awe of the iced over ground entrance and walls. The roof of the glacier was lined with delicately hanging snow crystals that extended as far back as the eye could see. Luckily for Charlie Company, they arrived early enough that they had the whole glacier to themselves to explore. Soldiers slide their way from the entrance of the glacier all the way to the very far back, where the tempera-



Charlie “Lightning” Company. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Francesca Cervone, Charlie Company, 70th Brigade Engineer Battalion)

ture was warm enough that they could hear the water in the far back running. After an hour or so of exploring the cave, Soldiers sat together, ate lunch and took their final pictures before putting their snowshoes back on to return back to their cars. Castner Glacier is one of the many places that Alaska has to offer for exploring opportunities. Luckily for Charlie Company, our Soldiers were able to take advantage of this unique experience to not only see more of their home away from home, but to continue to develop as a unit.

# Army leaders detail efforts against Coronavirus

**Jim Garamone**  
Defense.gov

Army leaders detailed how the service is deploying field hospitals to New York and Seattle, and what the Army is doing to ensure its missions continue.

Army Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville and others briefed reporters at the Pentagon yesterday on steps the service is taking in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. They spoke about force health protection, coronavirus testing and how the service maintains its combat effectiveness.

The Army has also reached out to retired personnel who have

the qualifications to help in the fight against COVID-19.

The Army has 288 confirmed cases of COVID-19 — 100 are soldiers, 64 are civilian employees, 65 are dependents, nine are cadets and 50 are Army contractors.

McConville said that the service is rushing two field hospitals to the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City.

The 531st Army Hospital from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and the 9th Army Hospital from Fort Hood, Texas, received orders to deploy to New York City on March 23.

"The advance party is on the ground as I speak. The main body will arrive at Joint

Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst, tomorrow," the chief said. They will set up at the Javits Center in New York this weekend, and they will be operational for non-COVID-19 patients beginning March 30.

This means around 600 soldiers will be deploying to New York. They bring enough equipment for 284 beds, but since the facilities are being provided by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the number of beds will be much greater. About 300 soldiers from the 627th Army Hospital from Fort Carson, Colorado, will deploy to Seattle. Soldiers are coordinating with state

and local authorities and conducting a site survey of the CenturyLink Field and a state fairground. A location decision is pending, the general said.

The Army Corps of Engineers is operating in all states, territories and possessions, McConville said. The Corps is assisting FEMA and state authorities. The engineers are on the ground conducting site assessments for alternate care facilities.

More than 10,000 National Guard soldiers are supporting COVID-19 pandemic response efforts in communities in every state across the nation, the Army chief of staff said. Their missions are purely humanitarian and disaster relief —

not policing.

"When we look at our soldiers across the 54 states, territories and District of Columbia, we are there to really protect our communities, not to police them, and we have no forecast or any planning taking place and we are not aware of any mission set to go down that way," said Army Lt. Gen. Dan Hoskinson, the chief of the Army National Guard.

The Army directed commanders around the world to raise the health protection condition from Bravo to Charlie. This move gives commanders more authority to control access to bases. For immediate response forces, the health protection level was raised

to Delta.

The Army also has to be ready to respond to global situations, even in the middle of a pandemic. "We're continuing to train mission essential personnel," McConville said. "But really, what we're trying to do is we're trying to balance protecting the force so we can protect the nation."

Each Army commander is looking at their critical missions to determine what training they need, the chief said. "There are soldiers that need to perform critical functions around the world, and they will continue to do that based on the commander's assessment of the threat to the force and the threat to the mission," he said.





1st Lt. Hanna Rozzi, a platoon leader assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division preps a fuel line before loading during port operations at Kaiser Hafen port in Bremerhaven, Germany, Feb. 2, 2019. After graduating from West Point’s Class of 2016, Rozzi became one of the Army’s first female officers. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Jordan)

# Soldier focuses on setting example for future female combat troops

**Joseph Lacdan**  
Army News Service

Before 1st Lt. Hanna Rozzi climbed into a Bradley Fighting Vehicle as one of the first female armor officers in the Army, the soccer field dominated her life. She had competed in the sport from an early age while growing up in Redlands, California. She never imagined herself in an Army uniform until she visited the U.S. Military Academy’s West Point campus and marveled at the institution’s dedication to service. After graduation from West Point in 2016 and four years competing for the Army women’s soccer team, Rozzi saw that the Army was changing and granting more opportunities to women

following the opening of combat career fields to women in December 2015. She had set her sights on applying to the Army’s Ranger School. But an ankle surgery sidelined her after graduation, limiting her in any strenuous physical activity. She later received an assignment as an armor officer and served as a platoon leader for the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. It didn’t take Rozzi long to acclimate to her Bradley crew, whom Rozzi said welcomed her to the squad. “I had a really good platoon sergeant,” Rozzi said. “He was a huge fan of having me (in the platoon).” Still, Rozzi felt the

pressure of being a pioneer for female Soldiers. When she commissioned into the Army in 2016, she became one of only 23 female armor officers at the time. That number has since climbed to 137 as of October 2019. “There aren’t a lot of women in my field,” Rozzi said. “So trying to be a good example for the Soldiers ... I think that’s something that’s usually in the back of my mind. Everything that I do is going to directly change how people view women doing my job in the future.” While women have made significant strides in Army combat arms in recent years, the number of women in those jobs still lags significantly behind males, though growing. Enlisted female infantry troops increased from just two in fiscal year 2016 to 365 in 2019. Enlisted women in armor rose from 147 during the first year the career field opened to females and steadily climbed to 333 in 2019. Female infantry officers went from 18 in 2016 to 76 in fiscal 2019. Maj. Melissa Comiskey, chief of command policy for the Army’s G-1 office, said that



multiple factors have contributed to the full integration of women into combat career fields. More mentorship opportunities have become available for women interested in applying, she said. The Army’s marketing strategy also aims at attracting Soldiers from diverse back-

grounds regardless of gender, race or ethnicity. Overall the Army has gone from just 2 percent females in the service in the early 1970s, to its current peak of 15 percent. Last month, officials confirmed that female Soldiers were currently enrolled in the Green

Beret’s qualification course. “It’s a steady progress,” Comiskey said. “It doesn’t happen overnight and takes time to grow leaders. These are junior Soldiers and lieutenants that are coming into the career fields and as their experience grows, they will become leaders and begin to influence additional women down the road.” As of October, 38 women had graduated from the Army’s Ranger School and 25 of those currently serve in combat arms specialties. Rozzi deployed to Germany last year in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, an annual readiness exercise with partner European nations that builds interoperability. She recently served as the military aide to Maj. Gen. Scott Efflandt, a deputy commanding general of III Corps at Fort Hood, Texas. Rozzi also competed with the U.S. Armed Forces Women’s Soccer team at the World Military Games in Wuhan, China, in October.



# Army engineers now eyeing 100-plus sites for COVID-19 response

Sean Kimmons  
Army News Service

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has identified over 110 sites across the country it could retrofit to help local hospitals deal with patient overflow amid the COVID-19 outbreak, its commander said Friday.

Army engineers have already assessed the majority of the 114 facilities – a total number that will steadily increase as the virus spreads nationwide.

“We want to be able to tailor a solution that works best for a given city or a given state,” Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite said during a Pentagon press briefing.

## Convention center model

In New York, Army engineers are planning to help build nearly 3,000 rooms for non-COVID-19 patients by Monday inside the Javits Conference Center in Manhattan.

While the center was to hold initially 1,000 patients, Army engineers, along with officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Department of Health and Human Services, were able to maximize the center’s capacity to expand the mission, he said.

Unlike constructing a makeshift hospital on a parking lot, the general said a convention center is a permanent facility that already has electricity, water, fire protection, driveways, partitions, and other features available.

A facility like this also does not require as many contractors to install those features. It can even keep current employees at the center employed during this



A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers technical survey team conduct a site assessment of the Honolulu Convention Center in Hawaii, March 23, 2020. USACE has identified over 110 sites across the country it could retrofit to help local hospitals deal with patient overflow amid the COVID-19 outbreak. (Photo by Dino Buchanan)

uncertain time.

“The convention center model is a pretty good model,” he said. “We can probably get a little bit more bang for the buck by going into the larger facilities.”

He plans to replicate it in other parts of the country, and even retrofit centers to handle patients with COVID-19. A major challenge in such a large building, though, is developing negative-pressure rooms to seal off the virus from other parts of it.

In Chicago, for instance, Army engineers have started to work with their partners to place about 3,000 rooms inside the McCormick Place Convention Center for patients with the virus.

The \$75 million project

will include self-contained halls that separate patients by the severity of their symptoms. The project is slated to be completed by April 24.

“I did not think we could meet the COVID standard in a massive building, but my engineers are telling me we think we’ve got the capability to do that,” Semonite said.

Since patients will be in open areas inside each hall, medical personnel will be required to wear 100 percent of personal protective equipment, he added.

## Other hotspots

Army engineers have also targeted other hotspots, such as locations on the West Coast.

In Washington, engineers are in talks to secure a large facility in Seattle after the Army ordered the 627th Army Hospital from Fort Carson, Colorado, to deploy there.

In California, the general said they are looking to build nearly 400 rooms in a large facility to possibly handle a mix of non-COVID patients and those with the virus.

Throughout the country, engineers are working with state and city officials to develop the best solution for them as they prepare for a potential uptick in cases.

“We have a very, very narrow window of opportunity,” he said. “If we don’t leverage that opportunity, we’re going to miss it.”

Other solutions may involve repurposing vacant hotels and dormitories.

“It’s not just the big cities. The small cities are going to have the same exact problem. It’s just scale,” he said. “It goes back to what is that individual requirement and how do we continue to support them?”

Last week, the general said that USACE had developed a standard design to retrofit facilities into alternate care sites that alleviate bed shortages at nearby hospitals.

“This is when everybody is at max capacity,” he said. “We’re trying to come in to be able to make sure we build that augmentation capacity to take the stress off.”