



176th Wing • Alaska Air National Guard

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Commander's Intent

New logo, motto part of wing branding rollout

Editorial by Brig. Gen. Anthony Stratton | 176th Wing commander

With the founding of the 8144th Air Base Squadron in 1952, Col. Lars Johnson founded the Alaska Air National Guard with a pioneering team of 11 enlisted Airmen and five officers, including himself.

With zero aircraft and nothing but a small office nestled atop the bus depot in downtown Anchorage, the group met in a nearby corrugated-metal Quonset hut to make room for the small gang of would-be aviators who embodied the frontier mentality that would steer the Alaska Air National Guard and 176th Wing to become aerial masters of the Arctic.

This frontier ethos was no more evident than it was Feb. 10 when I looked out at the frozen landscape surrounding the white fields of JBER's Malamute Drop Zone while flying in a 210th Rescue Squadron HH-60G Pave Hawk, waiting to step out into crisp 5-degree air during a tandem jump with 212th Rescue Squadron pararescueman Tech. Sgt. Jason Hughes.

It was a special event designed to mark a transition of leadership in the 212th that showcased the vision, ingenuity, inter-agency cooperation, drive and grit to thrive and dominate in one of the most challenging environments in the world.

While serving as a combat pilot during World War II in New Guinea and the Philippines, Colonel Johnson emblazoned his plane with an arctic wolf and the words, "King of the Tundra."

That arctic wolf would become the emblem and the defining brand for what would later become the 144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron and what is today the 144th Airlift Squadron because Colonel Johnson understood the value of a strong brand that undergirds a strong organization's ethos and esprit de corps.

This month, the wing is unveiling a new logo and a new motto.

At the center of the logo is a radial engine with a propeller assembly representing the 211th Rescue Squadron as well as the wing's historic C-47 Skytrain and C-

123 Provider aircraft, the three propellers representing the Rescue Triad, the feathers of the wings shaped like stator blades representing the 144th Airlift Squadron, and the strutted skis representing the 210th Rescue Squadron.

The circle encompassing the central motif resembles a radar screen representing air control provided by 176th Air Defense Squadron.

The four stars surrounding the North Star, Polaris, at the top represent the wing's four groups comprising the mission-critical roles of operations, maintenance, mission support, and medical support. The eight feathers on the wings represent the seven stars of the Big Dipper in addition Polaris as represented on the state flag.

The motto of "Defend, Lift, Save, Serve" defines the wing's ethos, and snow-capped "Arctic Guardians" script summarizes who we are.

As Arctic Guardians, we stand sentry for a region that is becoming increasingly important to our allies and adversaries alike as the polar ice melts and opens up sea lanes to commerce and military activity. To operate successfully in the Arctic and to meet peer and near-peer threats requires a special type of Airman who is mentally agile and tough.

As Lt. Col. Matthew Kirby, former 212th Rescue Squadron commander and our new executive officer, said in a rotor blade swept clearing in the middle of Malamute Drop Zone, we stand on the strong shoulders of those Arctic Guardians who came before us and who built the unit brick-by-brick from a squadron smaller than a flight to the busiest wing in the Air National Guard.

Though we lean on the wisdom of our forebears, it is our stewardship responsibility to provide today's strong shoulders for the next generation of Arctic Guardians who will carry the torch into an exciting and uncertain future. As such, we will continue to develop a culture of innovation that empowers every Airman to find and implement ways to fight leaner and smarter to meet the defense and civil-support requirements of our governor and our president.

In the weeks and months to come, you will see more of the logo and motto as they permeate our unit areas and our web presence. The two are the visual embodiment of our culture and ethos.

I invite you to reflect on our heritage as depicted in the logo. I ask you to meditate on our ethos as defined in "Defend, Lift, Save, Serve." I am charging you with a challenge to find innovation in your work and to share your ideas with your peers and supervisors.

I am mindful of the wise proverb from Ecclesiastes 4:12, "And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him — a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

We will continue to build on our strength as a team of teams. I need every Arctic Guardian to put your wings in the jet stream as we drive forward to a challenging and promising future together.