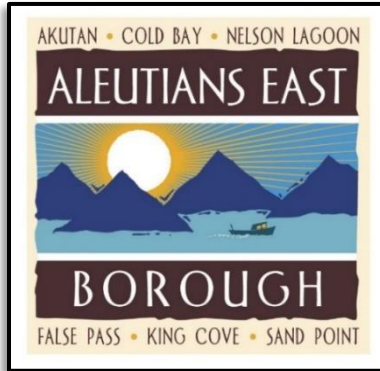


In the Loop



Military Conducts Successful Northern Edge Joint Training Exercise in Cold Bay

Marines and Local DOT Crews Respond to Actual Plane Crash during Drills

Cold Bay was buzzing with activity from the air, ground and sea during the first two weeks of this month as military forces descended on the community in support of Northern Edge 21, a U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Exercise. The massive joint exercise provides high-end, realistic war fighter training and enhances the combat readiness of joint participating forces. Northern Edge was designed to increase interoperability between the Marine Corps, Navy, Army and Air Force.



The MV-22B 22 Ospreys were among the aircraft that took part in Northern Edge 21. Photo courtesy: Hap Kremer.

“Overall, it was some of the best training we’ve done during the entire deployment,” said Captain Stephanie Leguizamon, with the U.S. Marine Corps, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), Communications Strategy and Operations.

Everything was planned out months ahead of time, but as luck would have it, Mother Nature had a few surprises in store right at the start.

“On Monday, May 3rd, we woke up with snow on the runway,” said Cold Bay Airport Manager Harold “Hap” Kremer. DOT crews quickly got to work and cleared the runway.



Military forces experienced snow, rain, wind and sun while participating in Northern Edge 21 in Cold Bay. Photo courtesy: Aaron Mercurielief.

“After the snow, we had rain, wind, and nice weather. They got to experience a little bit of everything while they were here,” he said.



U.S. Marines with the 15th MEU in Cold Bay during Northern Edge 21. Photo by USMC Sgt. Sarah Stegall.

Overnight, the small community ballooned from a population of about 35 to nearly 300.

“It was very busy,” said Cold Bay City Councilwoman and Aleutians East Borough Assembly Member Dailey Schaack. “There was a lot of traffic with airplanes, helicopters, trucks, hovercrafts, people everywhere in uniforms -- all kinds of action.”

A variety of aircraft and equipment arrived, including Offspreys, CH-53Es, C-17s and F16

Fighting Falcons.

Forces with the 15th MEU operated nearby aboard the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) in the bay. The Makin Island ARG executed various air and amphibious operations. The forces established a forward army and a refueling point in Cold Bay.

“Essentially, it was a point at which we were able to provide fuel to different types of aircraft to give them greater range,” said Captain Leguizamon.

The airport’s 10,000-foot-long runway provided exceptional training for the forces. In addition, the environment also provided challenges to military personnel, who recently spent time in Guam in 100 degree temperatures with high humidity.



The USS Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group (ARG)

“So, coming to Cold Bay, it was definitely a different test, not only for the Marines, but for the equipment as well, and ensured that we were able to operate that equipment in a cold weather environment,” said Captain Leguizamon.

Another bonus included training together with local DOT crews and expeditionary firefighting and rescue Marines from the 15th MEU.

“Having the opportunity to do cross training with the Marines was phenomenal,” said Kremer, who is also the Cold Bay Airport Manager.

Crews and marine personnel conducted drills, including Cold Bay’s tri-annual exercise. An unexpected challenge occurred on May 7th, when they were working with a simulated aircraft crash. In the midst of the drill response, DOT crews and the marines were hit with a dose of reality.

“It was confusing at first because I was by the simulated incident before realizing a minute later that there was a real crash,” Kremer said. “I was thinking, what the heck? So, I jumped into the truck and drove over and found the actual crash.”



Cold Bay DOT crew members and Marines responded to a Super Cub crash on Runway 15/33 during Northern Edge 21. Photo courtesy: Hap Kremer.

Russell Ruta and Dave Hotchkiss, had the situation under control,” Kremer said. “It went very smoothly. Having those extra set of hands (from the Marines) really helped out.”

Training was also conducted out of the school building, in the areas east of the airport toward the shoreline and over the water in the bay. This was the first time that an amphibious-ready group of three navy warships and the marine expeditionary unit participated in Northern Edge.



Cold Bay DOT crew members conducted drills with expeditionary firefighting and rescue Marines from the 15th MEU during Northern Edge 21. Photo courtesy: Hap Kremer.

U.S. Navy Lt. Joe Pfaff, Public Affairs Officer for the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group, said the exercises provided for a remarkable training experience.

“It’s affords us the opportunity to take away some learning lessons based on what worked and what didn’t,” he said.

Military personnel put all their skills to the test as they worked through a variety of different challenges, including the sea states, wind and temperatures.



The Nielsen family (Scout, Brooke, Candace, Wilder and Matt Nielsen) pose for a photo during Northern Edge 21’s open house. Courtesy: Candace Nielsen.



Wilder, Brooke and Matt Nielsen check out the inside of a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter during Northern Edge 21. Photo courtesy: Candace Nielsen.

“All those takeaways, from a ship perspective, of how we can make sure that we are adequately positioned to support the operations, helped us to glean more knowledge,” he said.

Those takeaways included decisions at sea about the speeds at which they could move through the water to achieve the optimum conditions to launch aircraft.

“We can take that information, and apply that to future iterations of Northern Edge, and possibly real-world operations, should they ever happen,” Lt. Pfaff said.

On May 8th, an Open House at the North Apron of the Cold Bay Airport provided for interaction with the community. Cold Bay residents and visitors were invited to talk with Marines and

sailors. In addition, they were given a tour of a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System along with AH-1Z Viper, UH-1Y Venom and CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters. The day also included a military working dog demonstration.

“They performed a display in which the dogs can sniff out bombs and take down a bad guy,” Kremer said. “I think that was my wife’s favorite part because she absolutely adores animals and dogs.”

City public officials say hosting the military during Northern Edge 21 was an amazing opportunity.

“It was an honor to host them,” said Cold Bay City Council Member Candace Nielsen. “To be able to serve them was such



Hap Kremer and Paige Wakefield Kremer enjoy the dog demonstration during the Northern Edge open house. Photo courtesy: Hap Kremer.

an incredible experience. They were all the kindest, most respectful people and such wonderful service men and women.”

The feeling seems to be mutual.

“The people in Cold Bay are fantastic,” Leguizamon said.

“She told us she appreciated how accepting, open and nice everybody is here,” Schaack said. “They were very thankful and happy with the City of Cold Bay.”

The community was also grateful for the boost to the economy during the military’s presence.



Bill and Lillian Sager and Dailey Schaack cook up a variety of meals in the food truck. Photo courtesy: Lillian Sager.

Cold Bay’s grocery store was bustling with activity, as people formed lines while waiting to get in the door. Lillian Sager’s newly opened food truck was also a big hit with the military.

The food truck was set up on her property across from the Cold Bay library. Moments after posting her food permit in the window, military personnel formed a line and asked if they were open. So, Lillian and Bill Sager, with help from Dailey Schaack, rolled up their sleeves to make chicken strips, patties, fries, burgers, sandwiches and pizza.

“We were going 100 miles an hour,” she said. “It was pretty funny.”

Business was going so well, Sager was running out of stock. She relied on her brother-in-law, Edgar Smith, to pick up more food and supplies in Anchorage and send it via ACE and USPS. The work days at the food truck ended up being much longer than anticipated.

“But we didn’t want to say no,” Sager said. “I mean, they were still in line.”



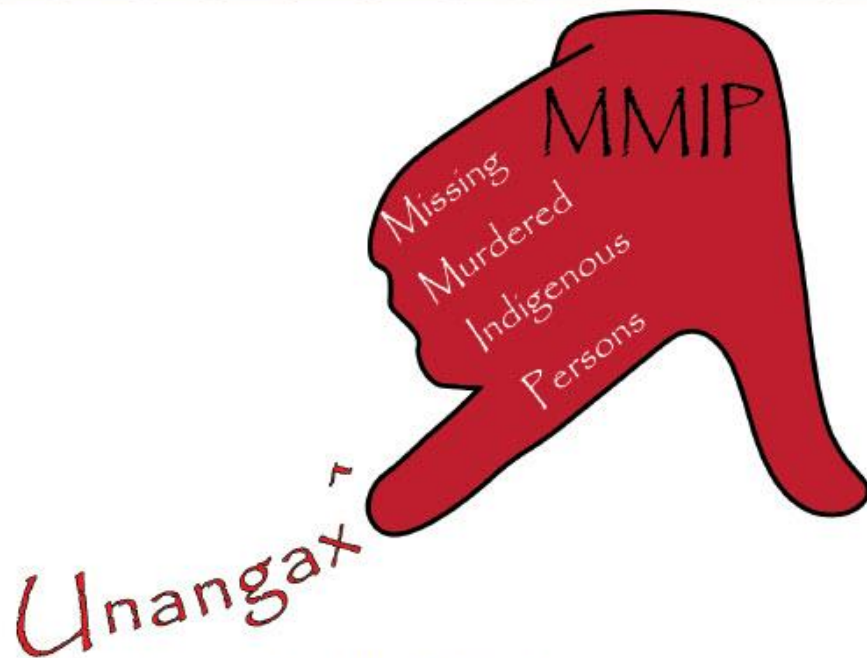
Lillian Sager said they served about 100 people every day from the food truck. “They were super nice people,” she said. Photo courtesy: Lillian Sager.

Nielsen said she’s hopeful the military will keep Cold Bay on their radar for future training. That’s an option the military may consider.

“At one point, I had three lieutenant colonels in my office talking to me about possibly conducting another exercise next year (Arctic Edge) at the end of February and the beginning of March,” Kremer said.

“If they do, we’ll be prepared for that,” Sager said.

“I wish we could be doing this all the time,” Nielsen said. “It was an amazing experience.”



Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association
is hosting the first virtual
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP)
Tribal Consultation and Listening Session
in the Aleutian and Pribilof Region
May 20th, Thursday, from 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm
with

MMIP Coordinator
AK-MMIP Working Group & Pilot Sites
E. Ingrid Cumberlandidge
US Attorney's Office – District of Alaska



<https://apiai.zoom.us/j/85759332794?pwd=ZllKUHdWYTE4VHpYQXAyNUh4ZHB5UT09>

If you have any questions, please contact Reign Galovin (reigng@apiai.org), Jessie Kitamura (jessiek@apiai.org), or Michael Livingston (mikel@apiai.org) at 907-276-2700.



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