

ARCTIC WARRIOR

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON'S SOURCE FOR NEWS

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WHY YOU SHOULD ‘DOUBLE TAP’

Transition Assistance Program packs a lot of information in a short time

Commentary by **SENIOR AIRMAN RICHY HAYES JR.**
JBER Public Affairs

For me, separation is just around the corner. I’ve been stressing about the lengthy checklist in my Virtual Military Personnel Flight, what household goods I need to sell and what I want Travel Management Office to take to my home of record, and if I should fly my cats to the Lower 48 or subject them (and myself) to the torture of a 50-hour drive to Denver, Colorado.

However, I haven’t been stressing about employment, my resume, what health insurance I’ll use when my time with Tricare runs out, or how to use my Veterans Affairs loan – I’ve had plenty of time to think about these things in the Transition Assistance Program.

TAP is congressionally mandated, and nothing required can ever be enjoyable, right? It was a pleasant surprise to be proven wrong, even if it was a tough hit to my pride.

TAP is a five-day program with a three-part curriculum: transition planning and budgeting, workforce knowledge, and VA day.

Monday is an overview of the program with intensive transition planning, job, salary and location research, long-term budgeting and

financial education – kind of a primer for the following four days.

Tuesday through Thursday, a Department of Labor representative will load you with labor market statistics and vital workforce knowledge, plus resume and cover letter tips, peppered with some seriously effective motivational verbiage. This was my favorite part, and the most productive and positive I’ve felt about my transition so far. It was nice to hear someone reassure me I wasn’t going to catch aflame upon my date of separation. I can’t list in detail the extensive curriculum, but the tip on inserting job announcement keywords in my resume and cover letter continues to feel like cheating.

The final day is all VA, all day, covering the GI Bill, VA home loans, the disability compensation process, Vocational Rehabilitation, government employment and much more.

It’s a lot of information, but the DOL and VA representatives provide thick workbooks to take notes in, reference after the class, and add weight to your household goods shipment, so don’t fret if you forget some of the material.

Like me, you may show up on your first day of TAP wearing the one pair of non-camouflage pants you own and a cheap T-shirt – what’s the point of civilian clothes if they’re not comfortable or functional? This is OK. Discerning appropriate office attire is actually built into the curriculum. I now own a suit that isn’t blue and

littered with cumbersome accoutrements.

By the end of the rigorous five days, my LinkedIn profile looked like some business-savvy CEO, and I was ready to apply for my position as chief of public relations at SpaceX – too bad I still had a year of military service left.

During the course, I regularly found myself working hard, writing out detailed documents with transition timelines and plans and budgets, past close of business – a rare thing for me to do. Homework isn’t required per se, but one must be highly effective during the day to accomplish all the things you will need to finish for the capstone appointment.

At the TAP capstone meeting, you show one of the TAP employees all the required documents: E-benefits registration and logon, an individual transition plan, a 12-month post-separation budget, military service opportunity counseling, the “Gap Analysis” worksheet, a *mynextmove.org* interest profiler, job application package (including resume, references, and submitted two job applications or proof of employment) and finally a DOL Gold Card. This may seem like a lot of work – and it is. No one said transitioning from the military was easy.

Service members are required to go through TAP once, but twice is recommended. I took vigorous notes the first time and thought I was good to go.

A supervisor recommended I go through a second

time, so with reluctance I did.

It was staggering how many holes in my knowledge the second iteration filled in. Besides, it wasn’t like I had stopped working from June 2018 to June 2019; my resume was missing some of the most important items I had accomplished during my service.

Getting one week off work is a headache, but two? Impossible.

However, I think going through TAP two times was one of the best decisions I’d ever made. But why take my advice? Ideally, each service member will only separate once, so how can one really be an “expert” on getting out the military?

The team at the TAP office oversees all the installation separatees and facilitates the capstone meetings. They see so many separation plans that they are experts on separating.

“We often have service members who show up to TAP feeling obligated to be here,” said Lisa Foster, a TAP community readiness specialist. “Typically, by the end of the experience they are telling us that we addressed topics, concerns, and areas of their life that they really never expected us to. More often than not, the service members finish TAP saying they wish they had done it sooner, and could do it twice. There is so much information covered in the curriculum, it can be overwhelming to soak it all in the first time.”

Verbose plug aside, TAP is a vital resource that, if taken seriously, can bring

astounding results.


Employing the tactics the Department of Labor teacher presents will assuredly melt away some job-search stress, and possibly lead to a job offer.

The full day with the VA representative unveils a goldmine of resources you may not have even known about. I urge anyone separating or retiring from the military, whether you served 20 years or four, to space it out so that you take it the first time a year or two out from your date of separation, then again within six months of your separation. This will ensure you’re employment-ready, and your resume reflects you most recent accomplishments.

It’s common to hear about the instability of employment in the coveted civilian land, but these things are just hearsay from people just as nervous about their transition as everyone else.

At the end of your service, you will be as employable as a civilian counterpart who shares a similar job title; TAP just helps you believe it. The military has a unique culture of its own and you’ll need help making the transition out of it.

Don’t take it lightly or do it alone. Use the various resources you have available to you. TAP consolidates a large chunk of what you need to know before you separate, so bring plenty of questions and participate actively.

If you miss anything, reach out to someone at the TAP office. After all, they are the experts. To contact them, call 384-3501. 

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ARCTIC WARRIOR

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To advertise in the *Arctic Warrior*, call (907) 352-2250 or email advertising@frontiersman.com. Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the *Arctic Warrior* staff.

Editorial office and mailing address: JBER Public Affairs, 10480 Sijan Ave., Suite 123, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK 99506; telephone (907) 552-2549.

Send emails about news stories and story submissions to arcticwarrioreditor@gmail.com. Deadline for article and photos is 4:30 p.m., Monday, for the week of publication. Articles and photos will be published on a space-available basis and are subject to editing by the *Arctic Warrior* staff. Submission does not guarantee publication.

JBER Public Affairs Chief
Lt. Col. John Ross (USAF)

Public Affairs Operations Chief
Dana Rosso

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Biathlon teams shine in Guard Bureau event

By **2ND LT. BALINDA O'NEAL DRESEL**
AKNG Public Affairs

The Alaska National Guard biathlon team arrived home with medals in tow after competing in the 2019 Chief, National Guard Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vermont, from Feb. 23 through 28.

While the Alaska National Guard's men's team has competed and placed in previous championships, this was the first time the women's team participated in the team events. It also began their legacy, with a second place finish in the relay race.

"The women's team exceeded expectations with all team members racing in the masters division," said Capt. Julie Kane, a nurse practitioner with the Alaska Army National Guard's Medical Detachment and second

year competitor, who explained that most of her team members were beginners at the sport. "It felt amazing being part of the women's team [after competing alone the previous year] and representing the great state of Alaska at the national level."

The men's team continued with their history of success with Pfc. Everett Darrow placing second in the pursuit race and along with Maj. David Cunningham, both were awarded All Guard Team honors.

Missing from the men's team was Army Guard Spc. Travis Cooper, as he was racing in Europe at

the time of the Guard championships.

"Spc. Cooper was picked up by the U.S. Biathlon Association and was racing at the world cup events in Minsk, Belarus and Otepaeae, Estonia," said Staff Sgt. Jack Androski, the team coach and a mortarman with 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment. "He would have

contributed greatly to the AKNG team's success, but we are excited to have him represent our team and state at numerous world cup events."

Despite missing one of their signature biathletes and facing difficult conditions including high winds and extremely cold temperatures, Androski said

that all the competitors performed commendably.


"Wind gusts reached 35 mph, making safety a concern for offhand shooting," said Androski, a second-year competitor at the national level event. "Elements can make the sport more challenging and even cause races to be altered to ensure the safety of all participants."

Biathlon is an event that

pairs cross-country skiing with marksmanship and winning is dependent upon speed on skis and rifle accuracy. Missed targets can result in time added to the competitor's time or a requirement to ski around a penalty loop. The winner is the competitor with the shortest overall time, including any penalties.

"As the Army aims to increase combat readiness, I cannot think of a better way than promoting biathlon as a means to achieve this goal," said Kane, who has been a member of the AKARNG for five years. "The Army's shoot, move, and communicate parallels biathlon."

Androski says that biathlon training improves both athletic ability and marksmanship – by having to hit a target with your heart racing at 130 beats per minute.

More than 125 National Guardsmen from 18 states competed in the week-long national event. 



Air Force Assistance Fund campaign begins

By **AIRMAN 1ST CLASS
ADRIANA BARRIENTOS**
JBER Public Affairs

The 2019 Air Force Assistance Fund campaign kicked off March 18 and will run through April 26 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

The AFAF campaign is an annual fundraising effort among Air Force personnel for the benefit of Air Force personnel and their families.

Contributions raise money for four non-profit AFAF charities that provide financial support for Airmen, National Guardsmen, and Reservists, as well as spouses, immediate family members and veterans.

“It’s one of those situations where you pay it forward,” said Allen Gardner, the Air Force Aid Society officer at the Military Family Readiness Center. “You commit yourself to helping everyone as a collective.”

The charities which benefit from the AFAF are the Air Force Aid Society, Air Force Enlisted Village, Air Force Villages Charitable

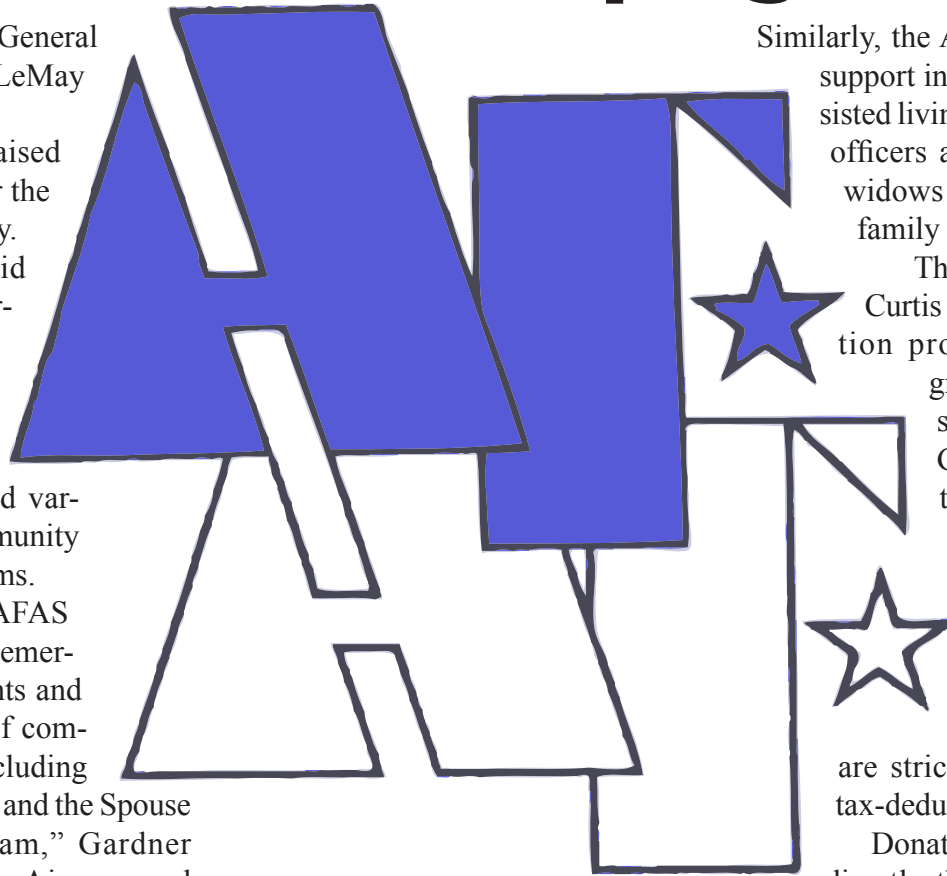
Foundation and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation.

In 2018, JBER raised a total of \$60,156 for the Air Force Aid Society.

The Air Force Aid Society provides Airmen and their families worldwide with emergency financial assistance, educational support and various base-level community enhancement programs.

“In 2018 JBER AFAS disbursed \$62,558 in emergency loans and grants and \$15,593 in support of community programs, including “Bundles for Babies” and the Spouse Employment Program,” Gardner said. “Additionally, Airmen and their families received \$54,700 in education aid.

“These would have not been possible without the AFAF contributions designated to AFAS.”



Similarly, the Air Force Villages support independent and assisted living needs for retired officers and their spouses, widows or widowers and family members.


The General and Mrs. Curtis E. Lemay Foundation provides monetary grants for surviving spouses of retirees. Grants include one-time payments to help alleviate unexpected expenses and monthly assistance.

Contributions to the AFAF are strictly voluntary and tax-deductible.

Donations can be made directly through the AFAF

website. The Air Force Enlisted Village provides financial assistance and homes for retired enlisted, and their spouses, widowed or widowers who are 55 and older.

website.

For more information on the AFAF campaign, visit www.afassistancefund.org, or contact your unit campaign representative. 

MORTAR MANIA



ABOVE: Army indirect-fire infantrymen assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, U.S. Army Alaska, operate the M252 81 mm mortar system during live-fire training at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson March 14. (U.S. Air Force photos/Alejandro Peña)

RIGHT: A mortarman with the 3rd Battalion, 509th PIR launches an 81mm mortar March 14.

ON THE COVER: Paratroopers of the 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment hone their skills with the M252 81 mm mortar system during live-fire training at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson March 14. Mortars can be carried and launched from almost anywhere, providing explosive indirect fire against enemy positions. They can also fire illumination rounds, lighting up the battlefield, or smoke rounds to block the enemy's vision.



Empty 120 mm mortar packaging is staged for disposal at Malemute Drop Zone on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson March 14, after Army paratroopers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, U.S. Army Alaska, honed their crew-served weapon skills by conducting fire missions utilizing the M224 60 mm, M252 81 mm, and M121 120 mm mortar systems.



Friday

Free movie night

Head to the Frontier Theater for a free showing of Ralph Breaks the Internet. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the show starts at 6; concessions are cash-only. For information, call 552-8529.

Used furniture sale

Need a utilitarian table? Extra dining chair? Check out this sale of gently-used furniture at the NAF warehouse at 8515 Sharp Ave. Pay grades E-1 to E-4 only from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.; open to all from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For information, call 552-2207.

Saturday

Tug of Oar

Watch teams try to row the opposing boat across the halfway mark of the Buckner Physical Fitness Center pool from 1 to 4 p.m. For information, call 384-1301.

SKAN24

Got the Nordic skiing bug? Ski Kincaid Park all night solo or as a relay with this 24-hour lap-format race. If that's too daunting, try a 12- or 6-hour version. The race starts at 10 a.m. Saturday; for information, visit anchorage.nordicski.com.

Sunday

Nike Site Summit

Learn about the human and natural history on Mount Gordon Lyon – including the former Cold War missile base with this class at the Eagle River Nature Center starting at 2 p.m. For information, visit ernc.org.

**Tuesday - Wednesday
Entrepreneurship shop**

Considering owning your own business? Check out

this two-day workshop at Building 600 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Small Business Association is on hand to discuss financial resources and more. For more information, call 552-4943.

March 30

Mushrooms of spring

Spring's on its way – learn about the choicest spring mushroom, the morel, including how to tell real from false morels and where to find them. The class is free at the Eagle River Nature Center at 2 p.m.

For more information, visit ernc.org.

Earth Hour at the Zoo

Join the Alaska Zoo and millions around the world in Earth Hour. Bring a beeswax or soy candle and enjoy a candlelit walk through the zoo. For information, visit alaskazoo.org and earthhour.org.

April 13 and 14

Alyeska Slush Cup

Even Alyeska's season must come to an end. Check out the spring carnival with long lift operations, great conditions, and the slush cup – skimming a 90-foot pond in a zany costume. For information, visit alyeskaresort.com.

Ongoing

Night at the Fights

The Egan Center hosts Thursday night boxing and mixed martial arts fights at 7:30 p.m. For more, visit thursdaynightfights.com.

Evening hikes

Alaska Outdoors hosts weekly hikes Monday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Monday hikes are easy, 3.5 to 4.5 miles

and perfect for beginners or families with kids. Thursday hikes are moderate difficulty. For information, visit alaska-outdoors.org.

Winter reading challenge

Adults can register to win prizes in this JBER Library challenge through March 15. For information, call 384-1640.

Fit to Fight skiing

Cross-country skiing at Eagleleglen Fitness Park is open every day except federal holidays. Bring your own gear or check out free equipment from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, call 552-2023.

Civil Air Patrol

Adult members of the Civil Air Patrol meet at the Aero Club Hangar the first and third Tuesdays of each month; cadets meet Saturdays. For more information or to join, call 350-7951.

Thursday science club

Youth are invited to the JBER Library to experiment and think about science from 6:30 to 7 p.m. For information, call 384-1640.

Library story times

The JBER Library hosts preschool story times Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 to 11 a.m.; Toddler Tales Wednesdays from 10 to 10:30 a.m., and all-ages story time Tuesdays from 6:30 to 7 p.m. For more information, call 384-1640.

Model railroading

The Military Society of Model Railroad Engineers meets at 7 p.m. Tuesdays and 1 p.m. Saturdays in the basement of Matanuska Hall. They host an open house every third Saturday through April.

For more information, call 552-5234, e-mail msmrre@gmail.com or visit facebook.com/msmrre.

Chapel services

Catholic Mass

Sunday
9 a.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel
Monday and Wednesday
11:40 a.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel
Tuesday
Noon – JBER Hospital Chapel
Friday
Noon – JBER Hospital Chapel

Confession

Confessions are available anytime by appointment or after any mass. Call 552-5762.

Protestant Sunday worship services

Gospel
9:30 a.m. – Midnight Sun Chapel
Contemporary
11 a.m. – Arctic Warrior Chapel
Traditional
11 a.m. – Heritage Chapel

Religious Education

For schedules, call the Religious Operations Center at 552-5762.

Exercise, exercise, exercise



Simulated evacuees present their identification bracelets at the noncombatant reception control center at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Education Center during an evacuation in-processing line at JBER March 20. The mock evacuation was part of an exercise to maintain proficiency. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Crystal Jenkins)

Making time for a ‘tactical pause’ in life

By **ARMY CHAPLAIN (MAJ.) JAMES WARD**
Operations/Training Chaplain

In his book “Soul Keeping,” John Ortberg tells the story of a town in the Alps built along the bank of a stream fed by springs high up in the mountain.

It was tended by a man whose sole job was to keep the stream clear of brush and debris, to keep the water flowing freely.

Yet one year, the town council determined that there were more pressing matters that needed funding so they would no longer employ the keeper of the stream.

High in the mountains, the springs that fed the stream were bogged down by mud and silt.

Farm waste and foliage cause the water to turn brackish and dirty. The townspeople did not notice at first, but the birds no longer found refuge in its stream.

Eventually, the sight and the smell of the water made it clear that something had gone very wrong.

The town needed the water and

the water needed the keeper of the stream.

The town council met once more to rehire the keeper who would once again pay attention to the flow of the stream that kept the little town alive.

The thing that seemed of such little importance was actually a critical need. The stream is your well-being and the keeper of that stream is you. Take time to pause with purpose.

I have a critical flaw. I tend to get in a hurry for a variety of reasons and then I stop paying attention to the details – to the things that matter most.

That is when I mess things up. Neglect, oversight, or carelessness are frequent experiences because I

rush to the next thing without pausing to think strategically about the next step in my journey.

So I have learned that I need a periodic “tactical pause.”

Writing on the subject to leadership, Christopher Levy defined this intentional break as a momentary stoppage to look, listen and think at those critical times of uncertainty or when making decisions that shape the future.

Most of us struggle to pause. We press to sustain the fight and push to the point of exhaustion.

For that reason, nothing is more critical to our long-term wellbeing than a periodic tactical pause.

That is truly the beauty of the upcoming liturgical calendar and the cycles of sacred time such as

Lent, Laylat Al-Miraj, Purim or Holy Week.


Maybe you have a variation of your own but it is a phase on the calendar that calls you to do something different and renewing.

If we are to get the most out of each day, we must heed the call to live in the moment and do what Kenneth Pargament described as “hoping in the sacred potential that exists in each minute.”

Time invites us to form the cadence of life that keeps us in the formation, keeps us in the fight. Time is what brings dynamic to musical notes.

It is like oxygen to the soul during days when you are emotionally spent.

Time calls us back to ourselves, to appreciate the moment we are in, to honor the path we walked, and to see the promise of a preferred future because things can be different if we so choose.

And good choices, well, those are the product of a tactical pause. Plan your next tactical pause with intentionality. Make it count, because it matters. 



Hospital Family Day hours

The 673d Medical Group is open on Pacific Air Forces family days to ensure patients have access to acute care and several other services. Specialty care, surgical services, the laboratory, pharmacy and radiology will be open on a limited basis. For information, call 580-2778.

Firewood permits

Firewood is \$35 per cord or \$17.50 per half-cord. To receive a permit, an iSportsman permit is required. For information, visit <https://jber.isportsman.net>.

Main Pharmacy hours

The main JBER pharmacy, on the first floor of the JBER hospital, is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The pharmacy at the Exchange is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Fridays for civilian prescriptions and refills, and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for refills only.

iSportsman enrollment

Anyone choosing to rec-

reate in JBER training areas must obtain an iSportsman permit and sign in and out using the iSportsman system prior to recreating. A pass costs \$10; \$5 for those 60 and older and disabled persons. Passholders may also need an installation access pass. For information, visit [isportsman.jber.net](https://jber.isportsman.net) or call 552-8609 or 384-6224.

Reserve ‘Scroll’

Officers wanting to transition to the Air Force Reserve must have their commission transferred to a list called “the Scroll” and approved by the Secretary of Defense.

The process averages 120 days, but can take longer, and must be approved before participating in the Reserve, which may mean a break in service. Even if you’re unsure about transitioning to the Air Force Reserve, the process can be initiated. For information, call 552-3595.

Pothole repair

The 773d Civil Engineer Squadron encourages all

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson personnel to report potholes. For holes in housing areas, contact Aurora Housing at 753-1051. Other requests are tracked by 773d CES. Note the location, including cross-streets or building numbers. Then email 773ces.ceoh.potholerepair@us.af.mil or call 552-2994 or 552-2995. Include contact information for crews.

U-Fix-It Store

The U-Fix-It stores, open to all Aurora Military Housing tenants, issue home maintenance items. Availability is subject to change and limits; some items may have a cost. The JBER-E location, at 6350 Arctic Warrior Drive, is open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, closed from 1 to 1:30 p.m. for lunch, and Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m.

The JBER-R office is at 338 Hoonah Ave., open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and closed from 1 to 1:30 p.m. A blind-cleaning machine is

available at the JBER-E location; priority goes to those PCSing. For information, call 375-5540.

DLA Document Services

Defense Logistics Agency Document Services duplicates and prints documents, including color, large-format photos, engineering drawings, sensitive materials, manuals and training materials. They design, print and distribute business cards, letterhead, invitations and programs, and provide devices to print, scan, copy and fax, and provides maintenance and ink cartridges. They offer document automation and content services for building digital libraries. To register, go to <https://www.dso.documentservices.dla.mil>. For information, visit [document-services.dla.mil](https://documentservices.dla.mil) or call (808) 473-1699 or (315) 473-1699.

OTC pharmacy counter

The pharmacy at the JBER hospital has over-the-counter medication for DoD beneficiaries from 7:30 to

10:30 a.m., Monday through Friday. Flyers and those on personnel reliability program status, pregnant, or under the age of 2 are not eligible.

The clinic offers pain relievers; cough, cold and allergy medications; ointments; constipation and diarrhea medications, and others.

For information, visit JBERPharmacy on Facebook.

ASYMCA Bargain shop

The ASYMCA Bargain Shop, 8515 Saville Ave. on JBER-E, is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the first Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For information, call 753-6134.

Richardson Thrift Shop

The JBER-Richardson Thrift Shop, Building 724 Quartermaster Drive, is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesday from noon to 6 p.m., and first and third Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. For information, call 384-7000.

JBER neighborhood mayors link residents, help

By **AIRMAN 1ST CLASS
CAITLIN RUSSELL**
JBER Public Affairs

For service members and families who reside on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, knowing who to contact about specific housing questions can be helpful.

“As a neighborhood mayor, we provide the link of communication between the command and the community,” said Alex Hegg, JBER mayor coordinator.

Mayors handle everything from fielding complaints and directing residents to authorities who can help, to addressing issues with command leadership. They serve as filters, managing smaller issues so leadership can focus on bigger ones. Mayors also review policies and help guide new programs that serve the community.

“The mayor’s council, command leadership and community representatives meet every six to eight weeks

to discuss community issues,” said Cordula Kline, 673d Civil Engineer Squadron government housing representative. “However, if there are pressing or urgent matters, they can be addressed outside the meetings.”

Members of the 673d Security Forces Squadron, Anchorage School District, JBER fish and wildlife management, and the command chief of the 673d Air Base Wing are all normally present during the meetings.

While the mayors’ council primarily address living conditions, they also provide input on quality-of-life initiatives such as recreational areas, park cleanliness and overflow parking.

Recently, discussions have included earthquake impacts, and snow and ice conditions.

“We are here to help make the neighborhoods we live in better places by addressing comments and concerns to



Residents of JBER housing areas have neighborhood mayors – residents who field complaints, direct people to authorities or agencies who can help, and liaise with command and leadership to make housing better and more pleasant for everyone. Three neighborhoods currently need mayors. (Courtesy photo)

leadership and Aurora Military Housing that they otherwise might not be informed of,” Hegg said. “A lot of the questions are related to housing rules and regulations, and are easily answered using the Aurora handbook.”

Mayors are elected through an application process and are selected based

on suitability. The program is completely voluntary.

With 13 neighborhoods and 10 mayors currently serving, the mayors’ council is looking for volunteers for Silver Run, Sunflower and Fireweed neighborhoods.

Personnel looking to volunteer can contact the JBER mayor coordinator.

“The mayor gives a voice to the residents and provides them with an avenue to get answers they may need,” Kline said. “They enable leadership to see community issues from a resident standpoint.”

To contact the coordinator, email jbermayorcoordinator@gmail.com.

F-35 conference sets stage in Indo-Pacific

By **AIR FORCE STAFF**
SGT. HAILEY HAUX
PACAF Public Affairs

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — F-35 subject matter experts from the United States, Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea met to improve 5th and 4th generation aircraft theater interoperability during the second Pacific F-35 User Group Conference, here, March 12 through 14.

More than 80 personnel from the four nations discussed bed down and strategic concepts, operations, logistics and sustainment topics, all building on the success of the March 2017 F-35 Symposium.

“This conference provides a great opportunity to work with our allies to strengthen our interoperability with 5th and 4th generation aircraft as these airframes start to become more prominent in the region,” said U.S. Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., Pacific Air Forces commander. “Improving interoperabil-

ity between our forces and helping allies increase their capabilities works to deter aggression, maintain stability and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

This year’s theme “operational integration in the Indo-Pacific” focused on security, interoperability, training, simulators and logistics information systems.

As the presence of the F-35 increases in the Indo-Pacific, future multilateral exercises will enhance 5th generation aircraft interoperability and integration, as well as agile command and control across the full spectrum of combined warfighter operations.

“It’s how we take advantage of all the capabilities we have in the region,” said Brown. “The F-35 will bring a full spectrum of capabilities to us and will be a critical part of joint and coalition efforts.”

The U.S. Marine Corps currently has F-35Bs based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, and Eielson Air Force Base is projected to house future F-35A squad-



Royal Australian Air Force Air Commodore Darren Boldie, Director General Air Combat Capability, flies in an F-35 simulator during the Pacific F-35 Users Group Conference at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, March 12. F-35 subject matter experts from the United States, Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea met to increase 5th and 4th generation aircraft theater interoperability. More than 80 personnel from the four nations discussed bed down and strategic concepts, operations, logistics, and sustainment topics, all building on the success of the March 2017 F-35 Symposium. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Daniel Robles)


rons starting in 2020.

The U.S. Air Force last deployed F-35As to the region in 2017, with the 34th Fighter Squadron from Hill Air Force Base, Utah, going to Kadena Air Base, Japan, for a six-month deployment.

The F-35’s advanced technologies and sensors, in con-

junction with other multi-domain systems to collect, fuse, and distribute information will lead to unprecedented battlespace awareness, survivability, and lethality in future highly contested environments.

“Right now we have all the right people in the right

place at the right time,” Brown said. “With that we can address change, identify areas that require additional work, and initiate measurable progress to close gaps. As we posture for the future, remember that we’re stronger and more effective when we work together.” 

Army athlete rises from homelessness to Olympics

By **JOE LACDAN**

Fort Meade Public Affairs

FORT MEADE, Md. — As the two-time national middleweight champion, she has fought some of the world's best boxers to earn a No. 3 international ranking.

But for a long time, Army athlete Naomi Graham had to fight her toughest opponent — herself.

Before the staff sergeant rose to the top of USA boxing, she had to overcome a mindset that began well before she ever set foot in a ring.

Tough love

She was too nice, a coach had told her when Graham began training in 2014.

"You would never know that she's a boxer," said USA boxing assistant Joe Guzman, a former Army heavyweight competitor.

To become competitive in the ring, especially for the Olympics, she needed to be tougher, Guzman would say.

Graham speaks courteously and answers questions politely. In middle school, she allowed bullies to taunt her and get in her face. She never flinched, as her mother told her to avoid physical altercations, and instead tell a teacher or administrator when confronted by other children.

But one day Graham had enough. Another student threatened to fight her. Graham responded by hoisting her up and tossing her over a table.

"People started to leave me alone after that," she said.

As a teen growing up in the outskirts of Fayetteville, North Carolina, Graham admittedly followed the wrong path after her graduation from Pine Forest High School in 2007. Instead of attending college courses or finding work, she enjoyed going out and spending time with friends.

Her mother, Bertha Clark, decided to show her some tough love and told her to move out of the family home. With no plan and no car, she found herself homeless in 2012, walking the suburban streets with a blanket and a few belongings.

She went to her friends' homes asking for help and a place to stay.

Finally she decided to take matters into her own hands. While walking through a neighborhood southwest of Fayetteville, she noticed an abandoned one-story house. Graham entered the backyard and found the backdoor unlocked.

She spent almost a year sneaking into the abandoned home and sleeping in the back bedroom at night. She ate with friends when invited, but she used food stamps to get by.

One winter evening, she shuddered under her blanket in deep thought. Sitting in the darkness beneath the winter cold, she made a silent promise to herself.

"I was crying and saying, 'this can't be it for me,'" Graham said. "I know there is more to me than this."

She had already committed to joining the Army, but at that moment she vowed to use her Army enlistment to make a better life for herself.

She thought about her family's struggle and how some of her siblings and friends failed to graduate high school.

She left for basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, in 2013 the following February, following her family's footsteps. Her sisters and her mother all served in the Army.

The Army assigned her to Fort Carson, Colorado, home of the Army's World Class Athlete Program. But to qualify for acceptance, she needed to build her boxing resume.

While attending an All-Army camp in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, she met Guzman. A veteran fighter at heavyweight, injuries forced Guzman into an early retirement.

Guzman took Graham under his wing. He saw Graham's raw power in training sessions. He marveled at her incredible reach.

With her combination of length and strength, Guzman realized he had a budding prodigy.

Most noticeably, Graham's reach gave her a devastating jab. In her first competitive match at a Fort Carson gym, she won using only that punch.

"I could tie her right hand behind her back and (she) just beat people with her jab, that's how good it is," Guzman said.

During one bout early in her career, Graham fell to the mat, physically and mentally drained. She didn't have the energy to throw a punch. Coaches rushed to her side, giving her water and energy drinks. A blood test revealed an iron deficiency.

She struggled with her endurance and keeping her defenses up. But she gained confidence from her natural physical ability.

"She had the potential," Guzman said. "One of the biggest things that she battled was just the mental part, you know? Any sport — especially a combat sport -- a lot of times frustra-

tions and emotions can take over you and affect your performance."

At 5 feet, 10 inches, Graham's uniquely proportioned frame and lanky arms enabled her to overpower her opponents from a distance.

As she learned under Guzman and the USA boxing coaching staff, she began to dominate opponents competing for the All-Army boxing team. She took the national spotlight after she joined the WCAP program.

Grinding her way

Graham had a quiet confidence as she approached her boxing training years later. She knew she had the strength to become a competitive fighter.

But Guzman and her other coaches noticed some weaknesses. She struggled with defense and often took unnecessary hits. She lacked aggression, fighting tentatively instead of attacking in a flurry.

"The mindset, that's something she had to control," Guzman said. "That's something you can't teach."

As a teenager, she attended the professional fights of her older sister, Rachel. She sat ringside analyzing her sister's technique and studying her opponents.

Though she struggled with aggressiveness and defense, Guzman never had to question her work ethic. She attacked her drills relentlessly, and willingly responding to Guzman's harsh criticisms.

Guzman's coaching style clicked with Graham. He used a disciplinarian style and held Graham to rigorous military standards.

Guzman had learned under the tutelage of legendary boxing coach Al Mitchell and four-time Olympic coach Basheer Abdullah.

"These are kind of godfathers to me in the amateur game when I was coming up," Guzman said. "I kind of built my philosophy off them. I was always strictly about military. You're a Soldier first, athlete second. Remember that, don't forget that."

Guzman overcame the odds as an undersized heavyweight fighter. He said he once competed for nearly a year with two torn ligaments in 2008. He finished third in nationals that year, the same year he qualified for the Olympic trials. But his body could no longer take the physical toll and he had to retire at 29.

Perhaps Guzman's style rubbed off on his new pupil. Graham often will spend hours perfecting and honing one technique, whether

keeping up her hands while punching, or working on her quickness and footwork. She attacked training vigorously, running hard in the mornings and sparring in the afternoons. She pounded her fists until she succumbed to exhaustion.

"She tried everything," Guzman said. "The physical part — she never quit; she trained her butt off. She worked hard — really pushed herself to her limits; really tried to get the best out of everything."

With the 2020 Tokyo Olympics approaching in, Graham has tightened her training regimen. She prepares most of her meals, eating steak or baked chicken with mixed vegetables for sustained energy. She strictly monitors her rest to recover properly. She takes iron supplements, too.

Last November, Graham's rise in the sport earned her recognition at the international stage. She faced Olympic-level competition at the 2018 World Championships in New Delhi, India.

In the first round, Graham defeated her Russian opponent easily and officials called the match early after her opponent suffered a cut lip. She rolled past a German competitor in the second round and then faced No. 2 seed Qian Li of China.

Graham admittedly didn't have her best fight. She didn't start strong and lost the first round. She won the second, but fought Qian evenly in the third. Judges awarded the final round, and the match to Qian.


"I really felt like I didn't win the fight because of me," Graham said. "I didn't start off fast enough like I did in my other fights, which of course is a mistake I won't make again."

Still, her efforts earned her a bronze medal and her highest finish at the world championships.

In February, Graham won a gold medal at the 2019 Stranda International Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria.

If she can medal at the world championships again this fall, she will achieve another milestone: an automatic berth to the Olympics.

"[Going to the Olympics] means so many things to me," Graham said. "I'd be proving a lot of things to myself, that anything you put your mind to, you can do it."

"The Army saved me," Graham said. "[It] gave me reason, discipline, dedication, and leadership. The Army gave me purpose; I felt important and like I am a part of a bigger picture." 

Military Police ready for CENTCOM deployment

By **2ND LT. BALINDA O'NEAL DRESEL**
AKNG Public Affairs

A deployment ceremony was held for approximately 80 Alaska Army National Guardsmen assigned to the 297th Regional Support Group's 297th Military Police Company at the Alaska National Guard Armory at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson March 13.

The Guardsmen are deploying to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility this month in support of Operation Spartan Shield for about nine months.

"We have been trained, tested and validated to execute our mission as military police officers," said Capt. Kevin Fulmer, 297th Military Police Company commander, as he addressed his troops. "Today marks the last day of the 297th Military Police Company's post-mobiliza-

tion training."

The MPs transitioned from Title 32 National Guard status and became Title 10 active duty Soldiers in February. While Army units typically displace to another active duty station to conduct post-mobilization training, the MPs completed their training here.

According to the Association of the United States Army, the Army recognizes future actions against near-peer adversaries could require a much larger mobilization effort and is looking to increase the number of primary and contingency Mobilization Force Generation Installations.

"The mobilization of the 297th MP Company on JBER served as a "proof of principle" for the joint base as a Mobilization Force Generation Installation under United States Army Pacific," said Brig. Gen. Charles Lee

Knowles, Alaska Army National Guard commander. "This was the first Army home-station mobilization on JBER since it became a joint base."

The completion of the MPs' post mobilization training here signifies a successful total force effort from the Army Reserve's 3301st Mobilization Support Battalion, United States Army Pacific's 2nd Battalion, 196th Infantry Brigade, Training Support Battalion, and the 673rd Air Base Wing.

"This was a collective effort by service members and civilians from active duty, National Guard, and Reserves of the Army and Air Force to exercise a new model of mobilizing forces," said Knowles. "It was the first unified effort to synergize and leverage the Department of Defense resources here at JBER to maximum efficiency and effect."

Typically, mobilized Soldiers are sent to training out of state for 30 to 50 days before deploying overseas. Staying at JBER provided more efficient and effective communication with the home unit and allowed the bonus benefit of fewer months away from families.

"Right now, Soldiers are able to see their families for a small amount of time," said Fulmer, which might not have been possible if the unit was at another training location. "That definitely helps morale out a lot for the American Soldier."

During his speech, Knowles said that he saw confident warriors, comfortable with what lies ahead – ready to go forward and defend our nation's and allies' security interests standing before him.

The Soldiers deploying are military policemen and are trained to protect lives

and property on military installations by enforcing military laws and regulations. They also control traffic, respond to emergencies, and provide crime prevention measures.

"I cannot thank the families enough for your strength, courage and support of the Alaska Army National Guard and the mission the United States Army has given them," Fulmer said. "I have both husbands and wives in my unit and it's the greatest responsibility I have been given yet. I have full intent to bring them home safely."

While in the CENTCOM area of responsibility, the 297th Military Police Company will provide law enforcement and personnel security details through OSS's mission to build partner capacity in the Middle East to promote regional self-reliance and increase area security. 

