

# Holy Cross defenders remain alert

by Barbara Crane  
for the Tundra Times

**HOLY CROSS** — The soldiers crouched in wet spring snow, trying to conceal themselves in a thicket of leafless willows. They strained to hear the snap of a twig or see some movement that would signal the enemy's approach.

The defenders were alert — they knew the invasion was about to begin.

Suddenly, rifle fire broke the morning's stillness. One by one the invaders fell, and the village of Holy Cross was safe.

Safe for at least the next half hour, anyway. Then the soldiers would switch sides and another battle would begin.

This invasion was just part of a nine-day training exercise for D Company of the 1st Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard.

The 49 men and women who camped out in tents near the Holy Cross runway were from Huslia, Grayling, Koyukuk, Nulato, Kaltag, Galena and Holy Cross.

"Because we're the only Indian Scout unit in our battalion, we have a lot of pride, and we try a little harder," said Sgt. 1st Class Greg Patsey, leader of this training exercise.

Patsey and some of his soldiers visited the Holy Cross school, showed the students how their equipment worked and talked about careers in the National Guard.

"I tell them education is important," Patsey said. "With their parents' permission, they could join the Guard at age 17, but I tell them to finish school first."

The people of Holy Cross made the soldiers welcome. There was usually a group of young people watching the maneuvers and asking questions, and the soldiers were invited to a potluck dinner. Construction will begin this summer on an armory in Holy Cross, and the Guard hopes to increase its



Sgt. 1st Class Greg Patsey of Nulato, left, makes a report to Col. Joseph P. Beans, center, and Lt. Col. Jack Hopstad.



Pfc. Larry Esmailka of Grayling takes time out for a break.

strength in the area.

Col. Joseph P. Beans, 207th Infantry Group commander, watched the soldiers training and presented four of them with awards.

Patsey, from Nulato, was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for "outstanding performance of duty as a first sergeant during this training year."

Spec. Richard Peters of Holy Cross earned an Army Achievement Award for being the team leader of the "most improved team since the last training year."

An Army Achievement Award went to Spec. Clarence Brush of Nulato for "excellent maintenance on Company D equipment."

Beans also presented Spec. Norman George of Nulato with the Army Achievement Award for, among other things, "helping others when they needed it."



Col. Joseph P. Beans, left, presents Army Achievement Awards to, from left, Specs. Richard Peters, Clarence Brush and Norman George.

Photos by Barbara Crane