

# *Training: Biting winds, Army food*

by Barbara Crane

Tundra Times reporter

BETHEL — For many Alaskans, the tail end of winter brings dreams of warmth and sunshine.

But for members of the Alaska Army National Guard, 2nd Battalion, "spring vacation" means giving up two weeks of personal time to camp

out in sub-zero temperatures, enduring biting winds and Army food, to complete annual training exercises.

These exercises are designed to increase their readiness to serve their communities, state and nation in case of emergency.

The 614 men and women trained for two weeks at either the 2nd Battalion's

headquarters in Bethel or at armories in the six company locations. Part of the second week was spent camping out at sites near Kwethluk, Chevak, Emmonak, Quinhagak, Tuntutuliak and Toksook Bay.

"This year, we are primarily concentrating on the five-man teams"

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ability to do their mission of intelligence collection," said 2nd Battalion commander Lt. Col. Moses Owen.

In case of war, the Scouts' mission as the Eyes and Ears of the North, would be to locate the enemy and report back on its strength, equipment and movements — without the enemy being aware of its presence.

"We don't treat this as just a training exercise," Owen said. "We take it very seriously, we go all out, because we are protecting our homes and our families."

As part of the training exercise, each of the six companies was given the mission of patrolling an area, roughly 25 square miles, and told to radio back if they spotted something unusual.

Capt. Noah Attie, of C Company, was camped out near Tuntutuliak when his Scout teams were told to go out looking.

"First, we had to assemble all the teams into one location," Attie said. The teams continued on together, carrying emergency equipment in case of bad weather or injuries.

"We were prepared to camp out all night on the tundra if we had to," Attie said.



Sgt. Frank Temple of Napakiak is guarding the Company B command tent, shown at top. Moving clockwise is Pfc. Louise Donahuk from Quinhagak using a field telephone. Andrew Hoffman, who is saluting at the beginning of the 2nd Battalion's awards ceremony, is the three-year-old son of Maj. Robert Hoffman. He wants to be a helicopter pilot when he grows up. Above, Spec. Pauline Mark of Quinhagak. This was her first annual training exercise. 1st Sgt. James Sipary, of Toksook Bay, starts a snow machine.

C Company was looking for a tripod and metal box, previously hidden in a thicket of willow trees.

"Finding the tripod was like finding a needle in a haystack," said Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Martin, leader of the team which located the items first. "We circled around it and radioed our command post with its description before we touched it, just in case it was booby trapped."

In all, it took under 11 hours for the C Company Scout teams to assemble, plan their mission, travel about 50 miles on snowmachines, find the tripod, radio a description back to headquarters, and then return to camp with the tripod and box.

As an extra, unplanned training exercise, C Company teams also helped search for a civilian reported lost while traveling from one village to another.

Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer, who observed the training exercises, commented that this search operation emphasized Alaska's need for a strong and highly trained National Guard even though the likelihood of war seems to be diminishing.

"I want to assure you that although a world at peace is a good goal, we haven't achieved it yet," Schaeffer said. "We must be trained and ready in case we're called to duty, but that's only part of our job."

Throughout the exercise, Scout teams were rated by Army evaluators from Ft. Richardson's 6th Infantry Division (Light).

The highest score was earned by a Scout team from C Company composed of Staff Sgt. Christopher Alexie, Sgt. Harberg Paul, Spec. Carl Amik, Spec. Sammy Dock and Spec. Kenneth Dock, all from Kipnuk.

Eleven soldiers also earned Army Achievement Medals for "attaining a high state of technical skill in their field of operations, training and communications administration."

Receiving the medal were Pvt. 1st Class Diane Tinker, Kasigluk; Pvt. 1st Class Eva Hunter, Scammon Bay; Pvt. 1st Class Bernadette Jimmy, Cheforak; Spec. Henry Stone, Atmautluak; and Staff Sgt. Stanley Gwizdak, Bethel.

Also receiving it were Sgt. Ellen Friday, Bethel; Sgt. Lela Lane, Bethel; Staff Sgt. John Kinegak, Bethel; Pvt. 1st Class Alice Kusayak, Napakiak; Spec. Mildred Nicholas, Kasigluk; and Sgt. Rich Felix, Toksook Bay.

photos by Barbara Crane