

# Army Guard post planned for St. Paul

by **Barbara Crane**  
Tundra Times reporter

ST. PAUL — It seemed like an invasion, but it was an extremely friendly one.

A huge C-130 cargo plane broke through the clouds and touched down at the St. Paul airport May 19. The 20 soldiers it carried spread out through the village on their two-day mission — recruiting members for the new unit the Alaska Army Guard plans to open in St. Paul later this year.

“We’re hoping to get applications from about 20 people here to join the Army Guard,” said Lt. Col. Milt Simmons, recruiting and retention manager. “We need at least ten for this unit to get federal recognition.”

Federal recognition is vital since the federal government pays the members’ salaries and the cost of constructing the armory.

The village is excited about having the Guard return. There had been a unit in St. Paul in the past but it was shut down in 1964. At that time the problems and expense of keeping it supported and transporting its members off their remote, often stormy and always windy island for meetings and training seemed too great.

But the village corporation, Tanadgusix, had hoped the Guard would return someday and they set aside land for building an armory.

The children of St. Paul were delighted by the Guard’s visit.

They followed the soldiers around, played with their equipment, tried on uniforms and were invited to look around inside the cargo plane. Orange



*Left, Sgt. 1st Class Frank Conrad recruits Mark Rukovishnikoff.*



*Richard Warner, 6, plays army.*

photos by Barbara Crane

and white frisbees with Guard advertising printed on them filled the skies overhead.

Members of the old unit had a chance to show off their medals, tell stories and find out about re-enlisting.

When the new Guard unit opens up it will provide an economic shot in the arm for St. Paul. Part-time members earn about \$3,000 a year, receive training and are eligible for educational and retirement benefits. Construction of the armory also means jobs for some local residents.

The Army Guard had also planned to recruit for a new unit on St. George Island but bad weather kept their plane from landing there.