

Brim Frost '89 wraps up coldest ever exercises

**by Holly Reimer
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Tundra Times reporters

Despite record-breaking cold temperatures and a plane crash that took the lives of eight people, the military's 1989 Brim Frost continued through Feb. 1, as scheduled.

Eight Canadian soldiers heading to the exercises died when their Hercules C-130 crashed just short of the runway at Fort Wainwright's airfield. The plane was carrying

eight crewmen and 10 special service paratroopers from Edmonton, Alberta.

Canadian forces pulled out of the exercises after the crash.

Capt. Carolyn Hodge, Air Force spokeswoman for Brim Frost, said this year's exercises were the coldest ever. The exercise started in 1975 as Jack Frost.

The extremely cold temperatures forced changes in the plans of the \$15 million war games, which are

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the largest ever this year, involving 26,000 servicemen, she said.

Another spokesman said the force-on-force land battle — the bad guys try to sneak up on the good guys — moved closer to Fort Wainwright because of the cold temperatures.

Chuck Canterbury, from the Fort Richardson public affairs office, said that troops were staying no more than a two-hour journey away from shelter. And he said other troops were moved to the southern end of the state where it's warmer.

Also because of weather conditions a security exercise at the port of Whittier was cut short.

The Coast Guard on Kodiak Island received a Mayday signal 30 miles off Trinity Island. It was from the 98 foot Vestfjord crabber.

Lt. Ed Wieliczkiwicz, a spokesman for the Coast Guard in Juneau, said the word was that it was cold in Kodiak.

"On Kodiak they were doing force-on-force operations and they were also doing security checks," Wieliczkiwicz said.

"Conditions were bad and there was no Brim Frost activity. But the Coast Guard and Air Force conducted a search — to locate the crabber. So we were there when it counted," Wieliczkiwicz added.

Hodge said the exercises took place at Eielson Air Force Base, Fort Wainwright, Elmendorf Air Force Base, selected radar and early warning sites throughout Alaska and Kodiak.

Also, forces participating at Tanana Flats near Clear Creek were moved to Fort Wainwright because of the extreme cold.

"Besides the Eskimo Scouts, the only forces actually remaining outside during the exercises are from one battalion — about 500 people — from the 6th Infantry Division (Light) from Fort Richardson," Hodge said.

Hodge said there were 31 injuries directly related to the cold weather so far during Brim Frost.

Wind chills in some areas in Alaska were as low as 100 degrees below zero and more during the cold snap.

Reporters from throughout Alaska were to be flown to Interior to view Brim Frost, but the flight was cancelled because of the cold weather.

The Army National Guard's Eskimo Scouts Brim Frost participation was also delayed and deleted in some parts of the state because of the weather.

Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer said Scouts from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions were conducting patrols and reporting intelligence information at their home quarters because the weather did not permit them to travel elsewhere.

And Schaeffer added that because of the weather these battalions could not conduct an early warning exercise which was originally scheduled to be part of the Brim Frost exercise.

"Brim Frost probably would have been a very good exercise if we could have done the things that we planned on doing," Schaeffer said. "As far as

the Guard goes it was difficult to get maximum training value in the time that we had."

Even through all the Guard troops couldn't get to where they were going for the Brim Frost exercise, Schaeffer said they had quality training right at home.

Safety is a main concern during cold weather training exercises, and Schaeffer said the Guard reported no casualties. But he did say there were a couple cases of minor frostbite.

Besides Brim Frost, there is the Arctic Survival School which is a course the Guard conducts on how to survive in the Arctic climate during the winter.

Schaeffer went up to validate the course so it can continue next year.

"The school is a great course. In my class they said it was the best course they have ever attended," Schaeffer said.

Schaeffer said the knowledge of the instructors on cold weather survival was passed on to those who attended.