



Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA

HOLIDAY

The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner wishes our readers a Merry Christmas.

GOOD MORNING



The weather.

Partly cloudy. Highs around 2 below, except in the teens above in the hills. Light winds. Tonight: Mostly cloudy. A slight chance of snow after midnight.

High today -1
Low tonight -8

WEATHER » A9

Aurora forecast.

Auroral activity will be low. Weather permitting, low-level displays will be visible overhead from Utqiagvik to Fairbanks and visible low on the northern horizon from as far south as Anchorage and Juneau.

This information is provided by aurora forecasters at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For more information about the aurora, visit <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast>

...



TEACHING LIFE SKILLS

Roxie Dinstel has been working at the Cooperative Extension Service for 41 years.

**INTERIOR
Page A4**

...



CLOSE CALLS

Rams beat Titans, clinch NFC West title.

**SPORTS
Page B1**

...

SOURDOUGH JACK:

"A good meal can make me feel better on any day."



Christmas caring



Pvt. Jason Walker receives a takeout Christmas Eve dinner at the Red Cross dinner for new Fort Wainwright soldiers at the Red Cross warehouse. SAM FRIEDMAN/NEWS-MINER

Red Cross prepares dinner for new soldiers

By Sam Friedman
SFRIEDMAN
@NEWSMINER.COM

The Red Cross warehouse on Van Horn Road became a temporary dining room for about 50 Fort Wainwright soldiers on Sunday.

One week ago, leadership at Fort Wainwright approached the non-profit organization about an opportunity to help soldiers. The base has a large number of soldiers who were recently stationed here, said Misty Bruce, the regional Red Cross Services to the Armed Forces specialist in Fairbanks. She volunteered her organization to prepare and serve a home-cooked Christmas Eve dinner.

"It's hard when you get shipped here from basic training because you can't bring a car," she said.

Her initial thought was to host a dinner at her house, but that wasn't practical with the number of soldiers they invited. So, instead, they transformed the warehouse behind the Red Cross offices.

"We wanted to take some of the cafeteria feel out of it for them. We brought our families with us so that our families could sit and mingle with them and kind of welcome them to the community," Bruce said.

Normally, the Red Cross warehouse holds an emergency response vehicle, and dozens of boxes of training and emergency materials. To make it a Christmas Eve dining room, they brought in a Christmas tree, set up rows of tables and a projector showing the Dallas Cowboys versus Seattle Seahawks NFL game. The Red



Volunteers serve Christmas Eve dinner to new Fort Wainwright soldiers at the Red Cross warehouse.



A Christmas tree is seen at a Red Cross dinner for new Fort Wainwright soldiers at the Red Cross warehouse.

Cross crew cooked eight hams and lots of side dishes at their homes.

People often associate the American Red Cross with natural disaster relief, but helping U.S. service members has also been part of the organization's mission since its founding by Civil War nurse Clara Barton in 1861, Bruce said.

Much of the work is done by volunteers.

There are three staff members in the Service to the Armed Forces program in Fairbanks, who work with a network of about 60 volunteers. This week, 10 volunteers helped cook and serve Sunday's feast.

This is the first time the Red Cross has held a Christmas Eve event for soldiers, but they're hoping it will become an annual tradition,

Bruce said.

Most of the incoming soldiers are in two main battalions within Fort Wainwright's First Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division: the 1st Battalion 5th Infantry Regiment (the Bobcats) and the 3rd Battalion 21st Infantry Regiment (the Gimlets).

Pvt. Adam Valencia, a 3-21 cavalry scout from Strathmore, California, said he appreciated having the community Christmas Eve event on a year when he's not able to be home for Christmas. He's saving his leave time in order to attend his brother's wedding next year.

Like many of the other soldiers, Valencia recently completed basic training on the other side of the country at Fort Benning, Georgia, a base that hit a humidity record while he was there, Valencia said.

MEAL » A3

Trump sends Christmas greetings to US troops

By Darlene Superville
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PALM BEACH, FLA. — President Donald Trump opened his first Christmas Eve in office by offering season's greetings to U.S. troops stationed around the world and chatting up children who called into a Defense Department program that tracks Santa Claus' flight path.

"Today and every day, we're incredibly thankful for you and for your families," Trump told the troops via a video hook-up from his Florida estate, where he is spending the holidays with his family. "Your families have been tremendous. Always underappreciated, the military families. The greatest people on Earth."

Trump briefly addressed members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard stationed in Qatar, Kuwait, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and patrolling the Strait of Hormuz in the Middle East.

Vice President Mike Pence rallied U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan during a surprise visit last week.

Trump complimented each branch of the armed forces, starting with the Army's "Iron Brigade" combat team in Kuwait, which he said is performing a "vital mission" by partnering with the Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Saudi Arabian and Jordanian armies, and providing force protection in Syria and Iraq.

He said a Kuwait-based, Marine air-ground task force has provided more than 4,000 flight hours of close air support in the campaign against the Islamic State group, and he thanked sailors aboard the USS Sampson for defending "high-value assets" in the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump also singled out the Air Force's 69th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron in Qatar for engaging more than 700 IS and Taliban targets in five separate countries and winning two trophies in an Air Force bomb competition.

But he showered the most praise on the Coast Guard, which impressed the president with its rescue operations during a devastating hurricane season.

"You've done such an incredible job in Texas and Florida and Puerto Rico," Trump said. "Many Republicans are very happy but, I have to tell you, the people of Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico and lots of other states are even more happy. What a job you've done ... saved thousands and thousands of lives."

