Press Release

Release Nr:  2203-03

March 16, 2022

Fort Drum Public Affairs

10th Mountain Division to support U.S. Coast Guard in area overwater search-and-rescue operations

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (March 16, 2022) – Officials signed a memorandum of understanding today at Fort Drum to solidify the combined efforts and resources of the 10th Mountain Division (LI) and U.S. Coast Guard for the betterment of the North Country.

Maj. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., 10th Mountain Division (LI) and Fort Drum commander, and Rear Admiral Michael Johnston, 9th District U.S. Coast Guard commander, signed the MOU, which formalizes the procedures and guidelines that will allow 10th Combat Aviation Brigade to provide overwater air support during search-and-rescue (SAR) operations.

“It’s great when our community can see what we do as services together, and through that partnership, what we can do for our community,” Beagle said. “It’s great that we can provide a service to the community that has never really been there before, in terms of how we can leverage our capabilities between the two of us.”

Johnston said that the partnership originated when an engineer officer and aviator – two next-door neighbors – discussed the idea of joint rescue operations.

“They just started talking,” he said. “Started talking about what we could do together. Then it started rising up the chain (of command), and as soon as I heard about it, I thought ‘That sounds great.’”

Johnston said that Beagle had the same reaction.

“As soon as he got on the videoconference, he said, ‘We’re all in,’” Johnston said.

Two Coast Guard stations within Fort Drum’s area of operations – Station Alexandria Bay and Station Oswego – are responsible for providing search-and-rescue (SAR) support to mayday calls, missing divers and swimmers, capsized vessels and otherwise stranded individuals along the St. Lawrence Seaway and on Lake Ontario.

Johnston said that the Coast Guard covers a massive area and it relies on partnerships at times to accomplish the mission.

“Together we’re just better,” he said. “And I think that’s how we’re successful as an organization.”

While both Coast Guard stations have SAR capabilities, the closest Coast Guard air asset is located at USCG Station Detroit in Michigan – a straight line distance of 324 nautical miles away.

Beagle said that every minute matters in a SAR operation, and the 10th CAB has the personnel and equipment well-suited to assist with timely response to area SAR missions.

The aviators of C Company, 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion – known as Mountain DUSTOFF – can use forward looking infrared (FLIR) systems in HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters to locate missing persons or vessels and relay the locations to USCG assets in the water via FM, VHF or UHF radio.

“Fort Drum’s location provides the potential for timelier rescue efforts and enhances the training and readiness of both organizations,” said Col. Travis L. McIntosh, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade commander. “We are excited to partner with the U.S. Coast Guard’s 9th District to be able to support the North Country that has supported us so well over the years.”

###

Photo caption: Maj. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., 10th Mountain Division (LI) and Fort Drum commander, and Rear Admiral Michael Johnston, 9th District U.S. Coast Guard commander, sign a memorandum of understanding, which formalizes the procedures and guidelines that will allow the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade to provide air support for search-and-rescue operations in the North Country. *(Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)*

For further information regarding this release, contact Fort Drum Public Affairs at 315-783-5825 or katherine.e.wright12.civ@army.mil