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MEDIA ALERT

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Arkansas, New Mexico Nat'l Guard note 80th anniversary of coin flip ~ *Decision sent 200th Coastal Artillery to Philippines, 206th Coastal Artillery to Aleutians*

- WHO:** Maj. Gen. Kendall Penn, Arkansas' adjutant general, and Maj. Gen. Kenneth Nava, New Mexico's adjutant general,
- WHAT:** Will commemorate the 80th anniversary of a coin flip that New Mexico won and sent its 200th Coastal Artillery to the Philippines and Arkansas' 206th Coastal Artillery to the Aleutian Islands prior to America's entrance into World War II.
- WHEN:** Interested media **must RSVP by 10 a.m. Friday, June 18, 2021, and meet the media escort at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, June 18, 2021, at the visitor center, Robinson Maneuver Training Center.**
- WHERE:** An escort will meet news media in the visitor center parking lot at the Robinson Maneuver Center Main Gate, 348 Military Road, North Little Rock. The event will take place on the grounds of the Arkansas National Guard Museum on post.
- WHY:** Both units were training together in 1941 when their respective regimental commanders decided to settle where each would go with the flip of a coin. Arkansas' Sgt. Maj. Max Love presented a 1907 nickel, which was then flipped. New Mexico won the toss and chose the Philippines, securing the Arkansas unit's fate with a trip to Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands, an island chain off the southwest coast of Alaska. Arkansas' 206th was joined in Alaska by another Arkansas unit, the 153rd Infantry Regiment in August 1941.

Shortly after arriving in the Philippines in September 1941, the New Mexico Guard's artillery unit was directed to provide air defenses for Clark Field. The Japanese Army attacked the Philippines on Dec. 8, 1941. The 200th enjoyed early success against Japanese air attacks, shooting down five enemy planes while only losing two Soldiers. After Japanese reinforcements arrived in the Philippines, the tide turned. In April 1942, the 200th surrendered to Japan's 14th Army, with the surviving Soldiers forced to participate in the Bataan Death March, a brutal five-day, 65-mile march where 75,000 Filipino and American forces were marched to a prisoner of war camp. As many as 10,000 are believed to have died during the march due to starvation and brutal treatment by their captors.

Arkansas' 206th would face off with the Japanese at Dutch Harbor on May 3, 1942, laying down anti-aircraft fire and downing one Japanese Zero aircraft while losing 25

Soldiers. The Japanese would attack again on June 3-4, damaging a hospital and oil storage facilities, also killing more defenders. That would be the last attack on the Aleutians by the Japanese. The 206th later deployed to Europe in 1944. The 153rd returned to Camp Shelby, Miss., in March 1944 and was inactivated June 30, 1944.