

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**JOINT MEETING**  
**HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS**  
January 23, 2001  
8:05 a.m.

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

Overview of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs

**TAPES**

[The recording begins approximately 35 minutes into Tape 01-5, Side B.]

TAPE 01-5, Side B [House STA tapes]

TAPE 01-6, Side A

**CALL TO ORDER**

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN COGHILL, Chair, convened the joint meeting between the House State Affairs Standing Committee and the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs at 8:05 a.m.

**PRESENT**

Committee members present were Representatives Coghill, James, Hayes, Fate, Stevens, and Wilson.

**SUMMARY OF INFORMATION**

MAJOR GENERAL PHILLIP E. OATES, Adjutant General/Commissioner, Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs introduced himself. He explained that he had been commissioned as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army from Infantry Officer Candidate School in February 1970 and graduated from the U.S. Army War College in 1991. He concluded his active Army career as the Chief of Staff for the Alaskan Command at Elmendorf Air Force Base. He was appointed as the Adjutant General on February 1, 1999.

He said that the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs is divided into several divisions that include the Office of Veterans' Affairs, the Public Affairs Office, Alaska Army National Guard, Alaska Air National Guard, Alaska Division of Emergency Services, Alaska State Defense Force, Alaska Naval Militia, Alaska Military Youth Academy, and the Division of Administrative Services.

GENERAL OATES talked about the Alaska Air National Guard (ANG), the different squadrons within the unit, and the important roles they play in Pacific Air Forces of the U.S. Armed Forces. He explained that the missions of the ANG are to (a) participate in local, state and national programs that add value to America; (b) protect life and property, and preserve peace, order and public safety, and (c) support U.S. national security objectives. He said there are 641 full-time members and 1,261 part-time members of the ANG. General Oates pointed out in the Committee members' packets the fall issue of the "National Guard Review," which featured an interview with General Oates about Alaska's strategic significance in national security, and the needs of ANG to fulfill those responsibilities.

GENERAL OATES then discussed then discussed the Air Force Space Command proposal to transfer the Space Surveillance & Ballistic Missile Warning System at Clear Air Force Base to the Alaska National Guard. He said this transferred would require no additional state funding and would bring 90 federally funded Air Guard positions to Interior Alaska. He said the proposal is under review by the Air Force and the 4-year transition is expected to begin later this year.

GENERAL OATES mentioned that the Department had recently created a staff position to monitor federal development on the National Defense System that could result in Alaska being the sight of the National Defense Ballistic Missile System. He said that he had recently hired a former legislative staff member, Chris Nelson for the position. He said Alaska could play a significant role as the sight for the system because Alaska is the only location that could provide protection to all fifty states from incoming missile attacks.

GENERAL OATES introduced Dave Liebersach, Director of the Division of Emergency Services and asked him to give an overview of the division.

DAVE LIEBERSBACH said he became director of the division in February of 1999. Prior to this assignment, he had been the Chief of Staff for the Division since October of 1996. He explained that the Alaska Division of Emergency Services is responsible for coordinating all phases of emergency management in the State of Alaska. This can range from disaster coordination for victims of floods, forest fires, and the Western Alaska fisheries disasters. He said the most recent activities of the division were the Y2K monitoring of the State

during the recent turn of the calendar from 1999 to 2000. He said while the transition was pretty uneventful, the Division was ready for any emergencies that might have occurred.

MR. LIEBERSBACH also mentioned that the old Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) method of alerting the public of disasters was replaced in January of 1998 by an EBS that consists of a network of broadcast stations, across the Nation and across the State equipped to allow the automatic transmission and broadcasting of emergency messages. Alerts pass from station to station and on to the air automatically, without human intervention. The State Division of Emergency Services activates the alerts and the system is designed to alert only the affected areas that could be affected, so as not to alarm locations not affected.

TIM JONES, Director of the Alaska Military Youth Academy, explained that in 1993, Congress passed legislation that established 10 pilot programs to give a second chance to 16-18 year-old "at risk" youth who were not going to secondary school and had not completed secondary school. A pilot program was funded for Alaska and in January of 1994 43 young men and women started the program. As of September of 2000, 900 Alaskan youth have graduated from the Academy. In December of 1997, the academy received its secondary school accreditation from the Northwest Association of Schools & Colleges and in January of 1998, the Academy became a Microsoft Authorized Academic Training Program site.

MR. JONES said the mission of the Academy is to help young Alaskans who are headed for a grim and perhaps criminal future get the second chance to gain self-confidence and become solid citizens contributing positively to their state and local communities.

MR. JONES said the criteria for an applicant is that he or she is 16 to 18 years old, is out of school and has not earned a high school diploma or completion certificate, is not involved in any legal entanglements, is committed to being drug, alcohol and tobacco free will enrolled, and can physically and mentally handle a military-style training program similar to boot camp. The military youth academy is located on Fort Richardson the Army training facilities are used including obstacle courses.

MR. JONES said the program is a tremendous asset to Alaska. He said that 55 percent of the program graduates are now paying their way in society by holding down permanent jobs. He said that of those people in Alaskan prisons today, 85 percent have

no high school diploma. About 25 percent of those youth accepted at the Academy have been involved with the juvenile system. He believes the state can save millions of dollars in incarceration costs by educating youth that could have become future inmates in the Alaskan prison system.

MR. JONES said that the federal government fully funded the program during its pilot stage but now the Academy is looking for funding to keep the program going. He said there is a non-profit corporation being formed to raise money for the Academy, which needs about \$4 million a year for operating expenses.

GENERAL OATES summarized by thanking the committee for their time and by discussing the project that his department and the Department of Administration is working on in the establishment of a Veterans' wing of the Pioneers' Home. He said that they are working with the Veterans' Administration in acquiring funding to utilize the empty beds in the Pioneers' Home facilities for Alaskan Veterans'. He asked the Committee's help in supporting legislation that will be introduced by the Governor tomorrow which changes the name of the Alaska Pioneers' Home to the Alaska Pioneers' and Veterans' Home and changes the Alaska Pioneers' Home Advisory Board to the Alaska Pioneers' and Veterans' Home Advisory Board. It also revises statutes to accommodate the establishment of a veterans' preference for filling unoccupied beds in the Pioneers' Home's facilities.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

#### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

The committee took no action.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

CHAIR COGHILL adjourned the joint meeting between the House State Affairs Standing Committee and the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs at 9:45 a.m.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Second

Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.