

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 26, 2004

9:09 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bruce Weyhrauch, Chair
Representative Jim Holm, Vice Chair
Representative John Coghill
Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Paul Seaton

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Ethan Berkowitz
Representative Max Gruenberg

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

TAPES

04-48, SIDE(S) A

CHAIR BRUCE WEYHRAUCH convened the meeting of the House State Affairs Standing Committee at 9:09 a.m.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

CHAIR WEYHRAUCH called the hearing to order at 9:09 a.m. He explained the purpose of the overview was to update the committee on the activities of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs and the Division of Homeland Security.

JOHN CRAMER, Director, Administrative Services Division, Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, reviewed the accomplishments of the department for calendar year 2003 and explained how those changes affect the fiscal year (FY) 2005 budget. Notable accomplishments were: establishment of a joint headquarters of the Army [National Guard] and Air [National Guard]; deletion of the assistant commissioner position for the Office of Homeland Security; reduction of administrative staff by six positions; development of the Aerospace Defense Organization; and development of a strategic plan and annual report.

MR. CRAMER told the committee that the Division of Homeland Security and the Division of Emergency Services have been combined and are now called the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The governor's Homeland Security Task Force and the U.S. Attorneys' Anti-terrorism Task Force were also combined. Homeland security threat procedures have been established and plans are in place to protect the critical infrastructure assets in the state. Grants for first responders will be disseminated to communities throughout Alaska. In response to comments, Mr. Cramer explained the Division of Homeland Security works with communities throughout the state to develop plans. Each community determines its own number of first responders. Mr. Cramer agreed it would be helpful if the department knew the number of first responders statewide.

MR. CRAMER then directed his comments to Emergency Management. The Homeland Security Division had six emergencies and events in 2003. Mr. Cramer elaborated on the changes that were physically made to the division during 2003, such as consolidating the State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC) with Trooper Dispatch resulting in reduced operations and expenses.

COLONEL RICHARD THOMAS, Deputy Commander, Alaska Army National Guard (AANG), spoke of the highlights of that Command during 2003 and noted that military personnel were deployed to various Alaska locations, to Kosovo, and to Colorado. In response to a question from Chair Weyhrauch, Colonel Thomas replied that Alaskan soldiers are deployed based on availability, their proven ability, and readiness. He told the committee the mission at Fort Greeley will be active by September 1, 2004. Another possible mission for the Alaska Command is in conjunction with the U.S. Force, Korea, and Joint Task Force Alaska. In regard to military construction, he informed the committee that the new Juneau Armory is in progress; land is secured in Nome for an armory that will utilize the same design plan as the Bethel Armory. Funding is being sought for Junior ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) programs at Kotzebue and Barrow. The Nome ROTC program is an example of a successful program, he related.

BRIGADIER GENERAL TIM SCOTT, Assistant Alaska Air Guard Director, Alaska Air National Guard, spoke to the deployment of Alaska Air Guard members within Alaska and worldwide during 2003. He stated that 85 full-time Alaska Air National Guardsmen will be on active duty at Clear Air Force Station when that facility is fully manned in 2008. General Scott reported that

the Regional Air Operations Center located at Elmendorf Air Force Base assures air sovereignty over the State of Alaska, along with the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) Mission. He noted that there is a National Guard tanker at Eielson Air Force Base to support active duty F-15 fighter aircraft, flown by Alaska Air National Guardsmen.

GENERAL SCOTT, in response to a question from Representative Lynn regarding the National Guard Family Assistance Center in Anchorage, explained how it relates to the mission of the National Guard and Air National Guard. The program is federally funded by the Department of Defense, he noted.

MR. CRAMER highlighted activities of the State Veterans' Affairs Unit. He related that stand-down 2004 was successfully accomplished, as well as, celebrations for Memorial Day, Veteran's Day and Independence Day. There are presently 71,000 veterans being served in the State of Alaska. He noted that Alaska Territorial Guard personnel, who served from World War II through the Cold War, were presented with official discharge papers. The Military Youth Academy received the Volunteer Services for Education Award as the top performing facility in the country, and graduated 204 cadets. He spoke of Science, Technology and Academics Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration (Starbase), a federally funded program; over 1,000 students [third through eighth grade] attend basic science classes in this program at the facility in Anchorage. He then turned attention to the Alaska Counter Drug Program that assists law enforcement agencies in seizure of marijuana plants, processed marijuana, and cocaine. Over 25,000 community members were familiarized with drug awareness programs and the National Guard's drug testing program.

MR. CRAMER moved on to discuss the Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF), a volunteer organization with over 250 members. This organization activated over 80 soldiers for force protection and military police service in Juneau, Valdez, and along the Dalton Highway in late December 2003 and early January 2004. The ASDF field trains with the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) and augments ARRC's limited security forces.

COLONEL THOMAS spoke to objectives of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs: activation of ground missile defenses at Fort Greeley; bringing peacekeepers back from Kosovo; enhancement of the Alaska National Guard Member Support Program; and a Joint-Force Headquarters initiative; exploring the feasibility of 2005 maintenance contracts for repairs to the

individual armories and facilities; development of a stronger organization by incorporating the Mountain Battalions from New England states along with the Eskimo Scouts, to strengthen both non-commissioned units.

COLONEL SCOTT discussed the Air National Guard transformation plan, affecting both Kulis Air National Guard Base and the 168th (indisc.) at Eielson Air Force Base. Base Operating Support (BOS) and lighter functions of the base will be combined with active duty counterparts to increase efficiency and decrease costs.

MR. CRAMER related the Alaska State Defense Force objective is to establish a mobile communications support cell utilizing an existing satellite communications system, expanding operations to include waterfront protection in Seward, and establishing additional operation plans at critical infrastructures as assigned. He related Homeland Security objectives: complete the distribution of \$42 million in federal grants; conduct major response exercises in conjunction with other state/federal agencies; completion of an emergency management assessment program; increase the local jurisdiction outreach program; and perform additional critical infrastructure vulnerability assessments. He also related emergency management [objectives]: review the Local Emergency Planning Committee's (LEPC) purpose and process; establish a closeout of 75 percent of federally declared disasters within four years of occurrence; pursue an alternate emergency coordination center and possible joint operational center with the state and federal agencies.

MR. CRAMER highlighted budget projections for 2005, including decreases to staff and budget by eliminating positions, reducing overtime, incorporating like departments, and reducing some grant funding. Budget additions are for Junior ROTC startup programs, an increase to the National Guard State Retirement System funding, and the addition of funds for a Fairbanks Youth Academy.

MR. CRAMER responded to Representative Holm's question regarding the additional funds for the National Guard State Retirement System by saying that Representative Holm is correct in his understanding that the additional funding was needed due to the fact that the state did not invest in the retirement fund as it should have.

MR. CRAMER was asked by Representative Seaton if Alaska has an Incident Command System structure in Southeast [Alaska]

involving the Alaska Marine Highway System. Mr. Cramer explained that the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities is a member of the governor's Homeland Security Task Force and "they" participate in exercises offered by the Homeland Security Division. He couldn't say if there is an ongoing plan for Southeast Alaska. However, the U.S. Coast Guard has an ongoing system for this area and would play an active role in an Incident Command System should it become necessary. In response to Representative Seaton, Mr. Cramer confirmed there is a document that specifies the set up of such a command, including who is in charge and what is taking place.

CHAIR WEYHRAUCH took an at ease at 9:55 a.m., reconvened at 9:58 for the purpose of Executive Session on the topic of homeland security.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR WEYHRAUCH adjourned the meeting at 10:16 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-Third Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.