

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

February 8, 2011

9:05 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Dan Saddler, Co-Chair  
Senator Bill Wielechowski, Co-Chair  
Representative Eric Feige  
Representative Carl Gatto  
Representative Bob Lynn  
Representative Pete Petersen  
Senator Bettye Davis  
Senator Joe Paskvan  
Senator Joe Thomas  
Senator Charlie Huggins

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Craig Johnson (alternate)

**PUBLIC MEMBERS**

Brigadier General George Cannelos (retired)  
Lieutenant General Bill Brophy (retired) (via teleconference)  
Chick Wallace (via teleconference)  
Lieutenant General Tom Case (retired) (via teleconference)

**PUBLIC MEMBERS ABSENT**

Joel Casto  
Major General Jake Lestenkof (retired)

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Representative Steve Thompson  
Senator John Coghill  
Senator Catherine Giessel

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW: UPDATE ON ALASKA'S MILITARY

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DANA ATKINS, Commander, Alaska Command;  
Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region;  
Joint Task Force Alaska  
Eleventh Air Force  
Department of the Air Force  
Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a briefing of military actions in Alaska.

ADJUTANT GENERAL THOMAS KATKUS, Commissioner  
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs  
Fort Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a briefing on the Alaska National Guard and answered questions.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:05:46 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR DAN SADDLER** called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Representatives Feige, Gatto, Lynn, Petersen, and Saddler and Senators Davis, Paskvan, Thomas, Huggins, and Wielechowski were present at the call to order. Present were public members Brigadier General George Canelos (retired) and via teleconference public members Lieutenant General Bill Brophy (retired), Chick Wallace, and Lieutenant General Tom Case (retired). Also in attendance were Representative Thompson and Senators Coghill and Giessel.

**Overview: Update on Alaska's Military**

[9:07:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SADDLER announced that the first order of business would be a briefing of military exploits in Alaska.

[9:07:15 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DANA ATKINS, Commander, Alaska Command; Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region; Joint Task Force Alaska, Eleventh Air Force, Department of the Air Force, referring to the presentation entitled "Alaska Joint

Armed Services Committee Briefing," informed the committee that last year Elmendorf Air Force Base received the Commander In Chief's Installation Excellence Award. The U.S. Secretary of Defense recognized Elmendorf Air Force Base as being the outstanding Air Force installation in the entire globe. Much of that he attributed to what Alaska does to support the military in terms of developing the infrastructure it has in Alaska. The award highlights the excellent infrastructure as well as the services and quality of life provided at Elmendorf Air Force Base. He attributed part of the recognition to the relationship the military shares with the host community. In terms of the U.S., the relationship between Elmendorf Air Force Base and the community is benchmark. The prize for this award was \$1 million for discretionary spending and was used almost entirely for quality of life initiatives.

GENERAL ATKINS, moving on to slide 4, opined that the largest effort has been developing a joint base infrastructure for Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson Army Base under a 2005 mandated Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision. Although Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson is one of 12 joint bases in the U.S., he characterized it as the benchmark for joint bases. Since there has been a relationship with Fort Richardson and U.S. Army Alaska, there were already joint efforts occurring. Certainly, many of the emergency first responders from Elmendorf and Fort Richardson have worked together. With this joint base, 60,000 acres of real property was transferred from the Department of the Army to the Department of the Air Force and about 1,100 employees were transitioned of which most were Department of the Army employees. Furthermore, about \$5 billion in real property assets were transferred to the U.S. Air Force. The U.S. Air Force is the executive agent for Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, and thus it provides the infrastructure support for both the Air Force and the Army. The transition generated additional workforce, in the amount of 180 additional manpower positions. Those additional positions equate to about \$50 million of economic impact to the local community. General Atkins acknowledged that joint basing has experienced some difficulties, the major of which is the funding profile of 2010. Although the budget [of the joint base] is higher, the spending is at the 2010 budgetary rates. Additionally, the services have implemented some hiring freezes until the continuing resolution is resolved, which impacts filling the additional 180 jobs created.

[9:13:03 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS then moved on to slide 6 entitled "Ongoing Development." He related pride in bringing together the active duty force, Title 10 forces, together with the Title 32 forces in the U.S. National Guard and the Reserves. The aforementioned was done at Elmendorf Air Force Base with two different weapon systems. With the C-17 weapon system, the active duty force partners with the Alaska National Guard. With the F-22 weapon system, the active duty force partners with the Air Force Reserves. There is a third initiative scheduled for this coming spring when the Alaska Air National Guard C-130s will partner with the active force and bring an active duty structure along as well as four additional aircraft. He noted that the active duty pilots as well as the maintenance teams will be involved. The aforementioned partnership will come together this April. As many may know, Kulis is moving from its present location to Elmendorf Air Force Base. Therefore, this initiative helps leverage, with the active duty contribution, the C-130 assets the Alaska Air National Guard possesses.

GENERAL ATKINS turned attention to slide 8 entitled "Privatizing JBER Housing." He noted that military housing has been under privatization for a couple of years and has been hugely successful. Privatization allows the military to build new housing initiatives both in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas. With privatization also comes the long-term sustainment of the military infrastructure. Therefore, the private company that receives this contract will maintain these homes for fifty-some years under the initial contract. When the JBER was established, the housing at Fort Richardson was done through Army sustainment and maintenance activities, which is now performed with a private contract. The contract was awarded to Aurora, which is the same company that is performing the privatization work at Elmendorf Air Force Base, and with which they are very happy. An issue with privatization that is of concern for the community is the fairly expensive cost of vacating homes. The cost of cleaning homes to the level the private contractor desires amounts to \$1,500-\$2,000. Negotiations with the contractor have resulted in a \$350 clean/sweep vacating effort. He noted that although the military member could do the cleaning on his/her own, sometimes the assignment cycles occur quickly.

[9:17:28 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS moved on to slide 9 entitled "Ongoing Work At Fort Greely." He reminded the committee that Fort Greely is

probably one of the capstones for the nation's ballistic missile defense architecture. Although much of the ongoing work at Fort Greely has to do with billing out an additional missile field, it doesn't mean that Fort Greely will receive additional interceptor missiles. However, Fort Greely will have additional silo capacity should the nation decide more interceptors are necessary. Additionally, the new missile field replaces the first missile field constructed. Some additional power production capability is also being constructed at Fort Greely.

[9:18:36 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, referring to slide 10, informed the committee that there is a \$280 million initiative at Clear Air Station, which is split between Air Force Space Command and the Missile Defense Agency. The largest part of that initiative, about \$200 million, is to install an upgraded early warning radar. The radar has advanced capability and capacity. Additionally, Air Force Space Command will spend another \$65-\$70 million to build redundancy in their power production capability at Clear Air Station and to harden Clear Air Station. He clarified that "harden" refers to electromagnetic hardening in case there is an attempt by any adversaries in the future to deny. Most of the construction will begin in 2013 and will take two years to build out the radar system at Clear.

[9:19:33 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS continued with slide 11 entitled "Tanana River Bridge." He noted that the bridge project is also referred to as the Northern Rail Extension. The Tanana River Bridge will allow the military additional access, particularly for the Stryker Brigade at Fort Wainwright to move down into the Donnelley Training Areas that are located in the Delta Junction vicinity. Approximately \$144 million has been garnered for the bridge project and recent estimates project the total costs to be \$190-\$200 million. Recent meetings with the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) have [discussed] an ongoing effort to try to scale the project within the \$144 million appropriation. The issue with the bridge is the environmental piece in which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has to work 404 permitting, which is any type of construction performed in wetlands or navigable waters. General Atkins related that he has been told that the likelihood of obtaining the permit is high, but the administrative process takes time.

[9:21:32 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, referring to slide 12 entitled "C-17 Mishap Report," remarked that he was sure that everyone is aware of the C-17 mishap that occurred late last summer. The crew was a composite of the Alaska Air National Guard and an active duty airman. The flight profile was a practice air demonstration. The aircraft impacted one minute and one second after liftoff. The Accident Investigation Board attributed the cause to pilot error. He then highlighted the remarkable outreach that was received from the community when this tragedy occurred. Since the tragedy, all of the families have been taken care of, which he attributed to the community. In fact, all of the children have education endowment funds, which were achieved by community donations. On behalf of the families, he thanked the community. General Atkins moved on to the F-22 mishap, slide 13, which occurred late last year. The mishap was the first of flying the F-22 in an operational environment. The [investigation of the Accident] Investigation Board is ongoing, and therefore he couldn't report the cause of the mishap. Again, there was remarkable community support. The [Accident Investigation Board] will likely resume the investigation when the area clears of snow and ice, which he predicted would be in April or May.

[9:24:12 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS moved on to the topic of exercises and training. He informed the committee that Arctic Edge is an exercise that is performed every other year. Recently, the military partnered with many local, state, and federal agencies to address the natural disaster of an earthquake in Alaska. In most cases, the Title 32 forces, the Alaska National Guard forces, will take the lead in providing any type of military response to a natural disaster and then the Title 10 forces would basically "chop" to the Title 32 commander. The Arctic Edge was a very complex exercise that sets a benchmark. He opined that Alaska leads the 50 states in regard to how aggressively they train in defense support of civil authorities. Therefore, he said that he was proud of [the Arctic Edge] training. The next training will be in 2012 when, he predicted, the training would be ratcheted up to increase the complexity of the exercise.

[9:26:17 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, referring to slide 16 entitled "Arctic Care 2010/2011," informed the committee that Arctic Care is an annual exercise in which he firmly believes. Furthermore, the exercise gives back to Alaska communities, particularly rural

communities. He explained that this is an exercise under which medical, dental, and optometry services are provided. He related that last year he went to the Kotzebue area and observed the team in action. The U.S. Navy brought optometry services to the rural communities and made prescription glasses with modern frames on site. This year [Arctic Care] will go to the Tanana Chiefs region during which there will be a DV [distinguished visitor] visit on April 22-23 that is open to anyone interested.

[9:28:01 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS moved on to slide 17 entitled "Red Flag Alaska 2011." He relayed that Red Flag Alaska has become a centerpiece for military training and exercising in Alaska. There will be four Red Flag exercises in Alaska this calendar year. These exercises bring air forces from other Asian Pacific nations. In fact, the Netherlands will be involved in the first exercise in April. He explained that these exercises introduce "Distant Frontier," by which participating nation's air forces are allowed to arrive early and stay late to train in Alaska. The aforementioned has become very beneficial. Over the last fiscal year, the Red Flag program faced scrutiny regarding whether it would continue to receive investment. The determination was that it would receive investment as it's important to the U.S. Air Force as well as the military in Alaska. Therefore, the Red Flag program made the budget cut as did the Aggressor Squadron at Eielson Air Force Base, 11th Air Force, and the 611th AOC. Everything that is part and parcel to what is done to command and control in Alaska made the budget cut, which he credited to senior Air Force leadership that has familiarity with Alaska.

[9:30:28 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS highlighted the "Executive Observer Program," which is gaining significant notoriety because of its success. The program is one in which the commander of the Pacific Air Forces invites about 25 air chiefs to Alaska for introduction to Alaska and its training environment. The Alaska Railroad partners with the military for one of the cultural events in Fairbanks.

[9:32:10 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, referring to slide 19 entitled "Northern Edge," informed the committee that Northern Edge is the largest exercise in the joint chiefs' of staff portfolio. This exercise occurs every other year and will be held this year at the end of

June. He noted that the exercise brings a significant number of participants to Alaska; the entire exercise involves about 9,000 people. Of the 9,000 participants, about 2,000 will come to Alaska and the others will participate from deployed locations while others will participate from virtual locations in which people operate simulators, which is referred to as "Live Virtual Constructive." Similar to the past, there will be an entire Naval Strike group will be present, and thus there will be a big deck carrier with additional combatants in the Gulf of Alaska. As was the case in 2009, there will be a significant distinguished visitor access. During the 2009 distinguished visitor access, the governor was taken out to the carrier. The hope is to do the same type of scenario as in 2009 in which visitors stayed overnight.

[9:34:20 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, referring to slide 20 entitled "JPARC EIS," explained that he inherited an initiative to review the exercise, testing, and training environment in Alaska regarding possible improvements. The determination was that improvements could be made, which resulted in the development of the 20-year road map. This road map for the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) brought all of the military team together to determine the requirements of the best training, testing, and exercise environment for each military branch. The requirements became the foundation for the 20-year road map and the vision for JPARC. The JPARC has been the catalyst for a series of proposals, 10 proposals at this time. Within each proposal are various options, including no change at all. The environmental impact statement (EIS) is a very dictated federal process. In fact, the EIS goes beyond the letter of the law as the public comment period was just extended to February 18th. He opined that he and his team need to do a better job of educating the public with regard to the proposal. Unfortunately, there has been misinformation which has been the stimulus for disappointment. He emphasized that all the rumors that the military is going to bomb Lake Louise and all recreational cabins and deny access to certain hunting preserves is untrue. In fact, he clarified that [JPARC] isn't taking any land and the only land extensions are existing restricted areas that are the air-to-ground and ground-to-ground gunnery areas, which would broaden the range boundaries so that fifth generation weapons can be employed. Fifth generation weapons are weapons that are employed around the world today. Most of these fifth generation weapons are beyond visual range and global positioning systems (GPS) guided precision munitions. Therefore, the proposal

includes the expansion of certain areas of the restricted ranges.

[9:38:17 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS explained that the will take about three years, including the public scoping. The public scoping was achieved by going to nine communities and establishing a website and venues for public comment. The next part of the process entails drafting the EIS, which is provided to the public during the public hearing process. Upon completion of the public process, the EIS is moved forward for a decision. The under secretary of the services recommends a decision. General Atkins stated that his intent is to achieve a win-win solution, which could result in the premiere exercise and training environment for all of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). Since he arrived in Alaska, he has been asked what Alaska can do to ensure a long and enduring military presence in Alaska. He opined that developing something unique and inaccessible elsewhere would be a contributing factor of the military wanting to be present.

GENERAL ATKINS relayed that he has marketed Alaska very aggressively and the JPARC proposals are an extension of that. In almost every venue, he has said that Alaska is probably the only place in the U.S. that allows for all five domains of warfare: land, air, sea, cyber, and space, to exist side-by-side. Furthermore, the military in Alaska isn't faced with the same sorts of pressures related to encroachment at training venues. Alaska has the expanse that allows some uniquely different situations that no other state can offer.

[9:42:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked whether the property at Kulis is Anchorage airport property that is being leased or will the military maintain ownership.

[9:42:44 AM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL THOMAS KATKUS, Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs, answered that the property will revert back to the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF).

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO, referring to slide 9, inquired as to the fuel the power plant at Fort Greely would use.

GENERAL ATKINS responded that it's a diesel power plant. In further response to Representative Gatto, General Atkins clarified that the quotations on slide 23 were taken from the cited newspapers in which citizens expressed their concerns.

9:44:48 AM

SENATOR HUGGINS noted that there is a Senate resolution to extend the comment period to 90 days.

GENERAL ATKINS acknowledged the resolution, but related his belief that the public comment period [for the EIS] that has been extended to February 18th likely won't be extended further. He pointed out that everything JPARC is doing is via contract. An initial appropriation of \$4 million was received to perform the EIS and he said that he doesn't have the resources to extend beyond the existing process and timeline. Furthermore, when the draft EIS is available, there will be another venue for public comment.

SENATOR HUGGINS then posed a scenario in which natural gas reaches Fairbanks and thus Eielson Air Force Base receives it as well. He inquired as to the positive impact of such for the community and the environment as well as dollar savings for the military installation.

GENERAL ATKINS informed the committee that presently, a major power plant program replacement is occurring at Eielson Air Force Base, which amounts to \$135 million. This power plant will use coal fire, which he related is the most cost efficient way to produce power.

9:47:59 AM

SENATOR THOMAS encouraged review of the resolution to extend the comment period because having public comments upfront is extremely important in building the EIS and responding to the comments. He then expressed appreciation for General Atkins efforts to keep the military in Alaska, including the Red Flag and Executive Observer programs. With regard to the Tanana River Bridge, Senator Thomas remarked that the sooner an accurate estimate is available the better, particularly since the project has increased substantially since last year's appropriation. He recalled being told recently that the development of the design was only at about 30 percent. Referring then to the concept of power plants at various [installments], he acknowledged that coal is the most efficient

energy source at this time. However, he recalled that there is funding available for the construction of a new plant at Fort Wainwright, which he hoped would be able to use natural gas. He then turned to the issue of the corridors for JPARC, which is of concern for some of the local private pilots in terms of the length and the connections of the corridors. The aforementioned is of particular concern in the Tanana Flats training area.

GENERAL ATKINS echoed his earlier comment that his intent is to find a win-win solution. He noted that there's an executive pamphlet that he could provide to members in order to provide more explanation of the proposals. Referring to slide 22 entitled "JPARC EIS Timeline," he reminded members that it's about a three-year process to move through the scoping, EIS, public hearings, and reach a record of decision. He, again, mentioned the misinformation that has been related about JPARC and pledged to educate the public better.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER interjected that the executive summary pamphlet provides good information.

[9:53:27 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI noted that he continues to support the Tanana River Bridge project, and expressed his hope that the project can be done without more significant appropriation. He then inquired as to General Atkins' view of the Senate resolution to extend the public comment period for [JPARC]. He also inquired as to whether the resolution would impact the existing process.

GENERAL ATKINS said that he supports the political process, but the resolution wouldn't change anything other than it will be a matter of record. He said that the resources to stop the train aren't available. Certainly, the federal appropriation for \$4 million to perform the study was beneficial. He pointed out that it's a contract workforce that he doesn't control. When work stoppages occur, there's a significant financial penalty. He noted his agreement with the notion that upfront comments probably make a draft EIS better, but he didn't believe the continuing comments are changing much. He pointed out that many of the comments are somewhat emotional and not necessarily factual. In further response to Co-Chair Wielechowski, General Atkins said the resolution would cause a financial impact that he could calculate for the committee later.

[9:56:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI, referring to slide 21, inquired as to the ramifications of the proposed Fox 3 Military Operations Area (MOA) Expansion or the proposed Paxon MOA Addition, specifically to the recreating in those areas.

GENERAL ATKINS related his belief that the military MOAs wouldn't be activated in the high recreation months, which has been the case in other areas. He clarified that these MOAs aren't taking any land mass. Furthermore, these proposals aren't stopping any development of resources or access, rather this is simply an air space proposal that would help facilitate large force employment exercises in the proximity of the origin, Elmendorf Air Force Base. Therefore, when all the resources are put forward, tankers don't have to be deployed to keep them airborne for the duration of that particular training. Moreover, these large force employment exercises aren't done every day. Usually they are performed on an annual basis. Even if these proposals are enforced, they won't occur until 2013 or 2014, at which time activation timelines would be available.

[9:59:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE noted that those in the aviation community are concerned with the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) corridors that cross the Richardson Highway in the vicinity of Fairbanks, Eielson Air Force Base, and Delta Junction. The aviation community understood that the plan would be to have observers on the ground looking for other traffic when the UAVs are in operation. He offered his understanding that UAVs, as they are currently configured, don't have transponders. Therefore, he asked if it's possible to temporarily mount transponders on the UAVs in order to make them more visible to the air traffic control system.

GENERAL ATKINS explained that the entire protocol for flying UAVs is a federal decision. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) may mandate that the UAVs have transponders or particular altitude corridor restrictions. He told the committee that the UAV [proposal] came from his discussions with the university regarding advancing remotely piloted vehicles, the training for which is mandated. The university wanted to partner with the military. The FAA hasn't ruled on UAV operations in the federal airspace structure.

[10:01:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE, regarding the issue of the proposed Fox 3 MOA expansion and Paxon MOA addition, noted that it appears to be a fairly sizable expansion. He asked whether the expansion is intended to accommodate fast movers or slower moving helicopters.

GENERAL ATKINS answered that it's to include the entire family [of aircraft]. He reminded the committee that much of what is done today in the real world execution of the mission is beyond visual range and that platforms and on-board systems allow the aforementioned. However, the constraints of the air space don't allow going beyond the visual range. He said that he could imagine the altitude sanctuary would incorporate the entire family of the military inventory.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE related, from his experience, that most private pilots aren't flying too high, but 500 above ground level (AGL) will place them in conflict. Furthermore, there's a reasonable amount of [air] traffic in the area.

GENERAL ATKINS clarified that 500 AGL isn't an everyday occurrence, but rather would be established to facilitate a particular exercise evolution.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE pointed out that several villages receive air service based out of Fairbanks. Therefore, he inquired as to whether the boundary of that MOA could be moved south to accommodate IFR [instrument flight rules] operation traffic.

GENERAL ATKINS stated that contact range control is always available to communicate with those using the MOA for an exercise and cap their air space. He noted that he has been informed of the need to have additional repeater stations so that in the remote locations a pilot can actually talk to someone. Therefore, the military may, in fact, need to make a capital investment in order to communicate with participating traffic in the area.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE related his understanding from an air taxi operator in the aforementioned [MOA] area that he wasn't able to file for those villages because there isn't an existing IFR airway.

GENERAL ATKINS highlighted that there are a lot of restrictions in the air space for various reasons and the military is willing to do everything reasonable to accommodate what's necessary in the future.

[10:05:39 AM](#)

BILL BROPHY, Colonel (Retired), applauded General Atkins for his efforts to train and lead the soldiers and airmen in Alaska such that they're properly equipped to fight.

[10:06:42 AM](#)

TOM CASE, Lieutenant General (Retired), President/Chief Operating Officer, Alaska Aerospace Corporation, concurred with Colonel Brophy's comments and highlighted the continued positive momentum the military presence in Alaska brings. He opined that everything that can be done to help General Atkins succeed is in the interest of the state.

[10:07:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SADDLER inquired as to the qualitative assessment of the value of this training of the JPARC to the mission in Alaska and worldwide.

GENERAL ATKINS said that one of the military's mantras is to "train the way you're going to fight." Unfortunately, from a national perspective that's not possible, he remarked. He relayed that he recently attended the weapons and tactics conference that the U.S. Air Force hosts annually. At the conference, the four stars in the U.S. Air Force come together and buy weapon systems. The particular weapon system briefs the four stars in terms of what the weapons need. Almost all the [weapon systems] said that they are missing a training environment that provides the anti-access, realistic environment faced in war. At the end of the briefings, General North informed everyone of what's going on in Alaska with regard to training. General Atkins then related that at a recent presentation he made on Alaska at a NorthCon hosted conference, there was more interest in JPARC and training in Alaska in general. One of the proposals is to perform precision drops, which is being performed in Afghanistan. The head of the U.S. Special Operations Command has been invited to Alaska in order to show him what Alaska can offer for training Special Operations Forces. He reiterated his hope that Alaska will become the premier exercise, training, and test environment for all of the U.S., all of the U.S. Department of Defense.

[10:12:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SADDLER inquired as to the economic benefit with regard to the investment of defense dollars in Alaska should JPARC proceed.

GENERAL ATKINS said that currently millions of dollars are spent on the range. In fact, the U.S. Army just concluded an \$86 million capital investment at Delta in the Donnelly Training Area. Furthermore, there are sustainment operations on the range and modernizing the range with the integrated air defense systems. He expressed a preference for returning with more details of the investment that's made in JPARC today.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER inquired as to the opportunities for public comment and input in both the short term and long term.

GENERAL ATKINS reminded the committee that he has already approved the extension through February 18th. He reiterated that there are financial pieces to this that he doesn't control. "I really don't have the financial appropriation to basically go beyond the predicted process that we're following right now," he specified. If the resolution extending the public comment for an additional 90 days were to pass, he indicated that there aren't the funds to keep the contractors for that timeline.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER related his understanding that individual comments can be received throughout the process, beyond the scoping process.

GENERAL ATKINS replied yes, adding that the next step will be public hearings.

[10:14:30 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS expressed interest in having General Atkins and his staff provide a more in depth presentation of JPARC. Although he said he is supportive of JPARC, the training window of April through October is the flying life in Alaska. He expressed further interest in how long pilots could expect 500-foot level restriction corridors. Therefore, he requested hearing more details on JPARC.

GENERAL ATKINS agreed to do so. However, he cautioned that some of today's activities will change in the future. He then informed the committee that the U.S. Secretary of Defense has already mandated a \$100 billion cut to the defense budget, of which there is a proposed \$30 billion cut to the U.S. Air Force.

Therefore, the U.S. Air Force is looking internally with regard to where such cuts will come.

[10:17:51 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, returning to the presentation, directed attention to slide 24 entitled "Arctic COE". He explained that the hope for the military in Alaska is to partner with academia, the private sector, etcetera to develop an Arctic Center of Excellence (COE). This center would perform the tactical, operational kind of view on the Arctic. He clarified that Arctic COE isn't a policy developing venue or forum. This proposal has been presented to the commander of Northern Command, who is excited about the proposal and indicated that he will present it to the U.S. Secretary of Defense. Again, this proposal has the opportunity to capitalize on Alaska due to its proximity to the Arctic.

[10:19:27 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, referring to slide 25, reviewed upcoming deployments some of which have significant economic consequences. For instance, the U.S. Army Alaska Units are in the process of mobilizing and deploying the 1-25th Stryker Brigade out of Fort Wainwright. That deployment will result in roughly 4,000 soldiers being gone for about one year. Deployment places significant turmoil on the service families during deployment as well as upon the return of the service member. He noted that beyond the deployments listed on slide 26 there is the potential for a major deployment of the brigades from Fort Richardson. If the Army continues with its one-to-two dwell, the 425 brigade is timing out.

[10:21:13 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, referring to slide 27, related that the Air Force Units continue to do some major deployments out of Elmendorf and Eielson Air Force Bases. Currently, an F-22 squadron is deployed to Kadena for what's referred to as a theater security package. There are also major Air Expedition Force deployments, which are parts and pieces of the structure that deploy around the clock. Additionally, in the deep winter months the aggressor squadrons are deployed throughout the Pacific theater to provide training to other units assigned to Pacific Air Forces at bases in Japan, Korea, Kadena, and Guam.

[10:22:38 AM](#)

GENERAL ATKINS, moving on to slide 28, opined that the military is doing a good job of taking care of military personnel. Much work has gone into the support functions to address the various disorders resulting from combat. There has also been a focus on education through the post 9/11 GI bill that's very lucrative. He related that he has spoken with the University of Alaska because he wants to ensure that it's as easy as possible for a service member with the aforementioned entitlement to attend a university in Alaska. The governor has even expressed support for making the process simpler. He explained that the entitlement can be "willed" to his/her dependents, spouse or children if the service member doesn't avail him/herself of the entitlement. With regard to employment, the major employment issues are with someone who is departing the service as well as spouses. He attributed some the spouses who have difficulty finding employment to the lack of licensure transferability.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER relayed that legislation has been introduced that would address the licensure issue for military spouses.

GENERAL ATKINS, continuing with how the military takes care of those at home, turned the committee's focus to family support initiatives, much of which resides within the medical community. He pointed out that Alaska is fortunate to have the joint venture hospital with the Veterans' Administration (VA). There are also many new capacities and capabilities within the [services] medical community. The [services] medical community is trying to develop a partnership with Alaska to develop a major trauma center. The training for the military medical group is necessary and trauma care in Alaska needs additional capacity as well. Therefore, it's a win-win situation. General Atkins then informed the committee that the U.S. Coast Guard and the former commandant worked hard on getting the Fisher House built. The Fisher House, a 12-suite single-level unit, will be built adjacent to the hospital at Elmendorf Air Force Base. Those who qualify will be able to stay in the Fisher House at no cost. Referring to slide 29, General Atkins spoke about suicide of service members and their dependents. The U.S. Army is one of the services leading suicide prevention efforts, and thus the other services are trying to follow suit. He then mentioned the Wounded Warrior Program and told the committee that there is an ongoing transition unit. This unit, adjacent to the medical facilities, will host up to 85 warriors at one time.

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GENERAL ATKINS moved on to slide 30 entitled "DoD Fiscal Environment." The existing fiscal environment is very unique, particularly in terms of the forthcoming \$100 billion mandatory cost cut. Through the aforementioned process, the Eleventh Air Force, 611th Air and Space Operations Center, Red Flag aggressors remained in the budget. However, currently Joint Task Force - Alaska is being reviewed. He related his belief that there will be a change in Joint Task Force - Alaska as he has been told there will no longer be any standing joint task forces, which are only for contingency operations. He surmised that the manpower piece will be smaller than it is today.

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GENERAL ATKINS then showed a short video that was produced by U.S. Army Alaska that reviews the evolution of deployment of service members to combat, leaving their families behind, to returning home, and service members reuniting with their families.

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GENERAL ATKINS thanked everyone for the three years he has served as the commander of Alaska Command. He acknowledged that there have been some tragedies, but they have been met with an outpouring of care, love, and support from Alaska and Alaskans.

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REPRESENTATIVE GATTO surmised that the film illustrates the need for room to train. He then turned to the issue of suicide and offered his belief that there is a background suicide rate. He opined that given a certain number of people, there will be a certain number of suicides. He questioned whether the suicide rate is in line with the expected background suicide rate or the same.

GENERAL ATKINS said that although he doesn't know, but emphasized that the suicide rate [among service members] is statistically significant. There has been a [significant] increase in suicide rates in all services over the last couple of years, which he attributed to the uniquely different combat stressors and the fact that the U.S. has been in combat since the early 1990s.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if suicide rates are related to active war zone time or does the rate stay the same.

GENERAL ATKINS said he would compile that information and provide it to the committee.

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SENATOR PASKVAN directed attention to slide 24 regarding the Arctic Center of Excellence. He inquired as to General Atkins' thoughts on U.S. Arctic policies and activities, particularly in terms of jurisdictional limits under the Law of the Seas Treaty.

GENERAL ATKINS explained that the most current policy dates back to 2009; it's Presidential Decision Directive 66 and Homeland Security Decision Directive 25. Both of those decision directives have codified U.S. military mission sets and address Arctic search and rescue. The policy piece is an ongoing debate as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has yet to be ratified. He noted that senior military are on record saying that ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is advantageous to the military. There is no loss of sovereignty, rather there is value-added by that ratification. He reminded the committee that there is no real venue for arbitrating sovereignty claims, which the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would allow for as well as the extension of the state's sovereignty claim from 200 nautical miles out to 350 nautical miles if one can prove a continuous continental shelf that far.

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SENATOR THOMAS inquired as to the timeframe of future BRAC hearings. He also inquired as to General Atkins' thoughts regarding the importance of the increase or loss of training areas to bases and military installations.

GENERAL ATKINS related his personal belief that there will be another round of BRAC, from which the U.S. military can benefit. However, such action isn't typically experienced in an election year. He then noted that many communities outside of Alaska are marketing their situations and contribution to the military much more strongly than Alaska. Therefore, he emphasized his hope that Alaska and what it has to offer the military is "talked up."

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GENERAL CANNELOS interjected that it's imperative to train tomorrow's wars not past wars. He then expressed his support for JPARC. General Cannelos told the committee that this Saturday at Kulis everything will be flown to Elmendorf. He also mentioned the need to realize Alaska's strategic location and the need to market the state. He then asked if the Dutch and Swedish forces that are traveling to Alaska this summer will travel across the pole or the long way.

GENERAL ATKINS said that he didn't know, but added that typically the U.S. has assisted in deployment with tanker support. Therefore, that's likely again.

[10:47:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SADDLER invited Adjutant General Katkus to provide his briefing on the Alaska National Guard.

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ADJUTANT GENERAL KATKUS, referring to the slide entitled "Army Dispersed Locations," pointed out that the dots on the map denote the location of armories throughout Alaska. There are about six that are on the road system. Therefore, there's a great distance people have to travel to get to the drill location. The Air National Guard is more centralized with three primary locations in Alaska. He then informed the committee that the Alaska National Guard brings in about \$308 million, which is a fairly significant amount of funds for roughly 4,000 men and women in uniform. He moved on to the slide entitled "Membership" which illustrates the percentage of the Air and Army National Guard membership that is traditional, active Guard Reserve, and technician. He informed the committee that the total full-time Alaska National Guard in the Air and the Army is about 1,800, which ranks Alaska 5th in per capita membership of the 54 states/territories.

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ADJUTANT GENERAL KATKUS then moved on to the slide entitled "Initiatives." He reminded the committee that the Bethel Armory, now a more robust facility, is in a new location. He then highlighted that billions of dollars has been spent to modernize the Army National Guard in America. In fact, Alaska has received new Humvees and other rolling stock that essentially brings Alaska's rolling stock equal to any in the nation. With regard to Innovative Readiness Training, Adjutant

General Katkus opined that he has never seen a better relationship between the Alaska Command, USARAK, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the National Guard. He noted that the most significant air modernization is the move from Kulis to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Adjutant General Katkus moved on to the slide entitled "Emergency Response" and remarked that the Alaska National Guard has had a great summer in terms of being able to respond with assets that are appropriate for the requirements. Both the Air and Army National Guard have had numerous saves in 2010. Referring to the slide entitled "State Partnership Program," he highlighted that the Alaska National Guard continues to work closely with Mongolia. In fact, Alaska continues to deploy two soldiers with each of their deployments to Afghanistan. Furthermore, [the Alaska National Guard] regularly trains and interacts with Mongolian soldiers. He opined that the Alaska National Guard has one of the most renowned state partnerships in the nation.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KATKUS turned attention to the slide entitled "Army Deployments." He informed the committee that B Company, 1-207th Aviation has 10 helicopters in Iraq for the no fail mission of moving the senior leadership around Iraq. He then informed the committee that Detachment 54, about 12 soldiers and aircraft, will deploy this June to Afghanistan. Adjutant General Katkus pointed out the photo of a Bethel soldier jumping out of a helicopter, which is new as the Bethel soldiers have long been infantry soldiers. The Bethel soldiers, now a company that is affiliated with a Texas battalion, anticipate a November deployment. Moving on to the slide entitled "Air Deployments," Adjutant General Katkus highlighted that aviation continues to provide support primarily through lift, refueling, and rescue assets. Therefore, the para-rescue personnel are utilized at home as well as in the theater of war. General Atkins touched on both of the major areas where soldiers and airmen are located. However, although the facilities are active defense for America, the manpower is full-time duty National Guardsmen. There are a little over 200 soldiers at Fort Greely and a little over 100 at Clear Air Force Station.

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ADJUTANT GENERAL KATKUS continued with the slide entitled "Operation Santa Claus," which has been going on for over 50 years. There have been some new and innovative ways to expand Operation Santa Claus, particularly with the C-17. Most significantly, the Coast Guard, the Air Guard, and the Army Guard mustered to take three separate platforms with the

governor and Santa Claus to Hoonah. This community-centered program is continuing across Alaska, he stated. He then moved on to the slide entitled "Alaska State Defense Force," which he explained is a state force that primarily responds to the governor. Much work has been done to develop what the Alaska State Defense Force can do best to support today's threat environment. As a strategic reserve, they have been provided ready and relevant training and equipment to support those assets and requirements of the National Guard when it's deployed. Therefore, the Alaska State Defense Force provides communication, shelter management, and support to other areas. He characterized this force as a senior group of volunteers who, with great talent, support Alaskans. In conclusion, Adjutant General Katkus commented that Alaska has a National Guard that looks significantly different than when he joined during the Cold War. He characterized the National Guard as "a viable, relevant service and we are hand-in-hand with our brothers and sisters that work in the active duty force here. As we secure the state and defend the nation, we make our mission."

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ADJUTANT GENERAL KATKUS then shared a video in which the Alaska National Guardsmen transition from a rescue of the air crash in Dillingham to a theater of combat.

[11:01:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SADDLER thanked the presenters and their staff.

[11:01:51 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:01 a.m.