

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

February 14, 2012

11:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

PUBLIC MEMBERS

Charles Wallace (via teleconference)
Colonel Bill Brophy - retired (via teleconference)
Lieutenant General Tom Case - retired (via teleconference)
Lieutenant General Joel Casto (via teleconference)
Brigadier General Jake Lestenkof - retired (via teleconference)
Brigadier General George Cannelos - retired (via teleconference)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Joe Paskvan
Representative Craig Johnson

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Steve Thompson
Senator John Coghill

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

BRIEFINGS: ALASKA COMMAND AND ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEPHEN HOOG, Commander
Alaska Command
U.S. Pacific Command

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation regarding the military in Alaska.

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS KATKUS, Adjutant General/Commissioner
Alaska National Guard
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs
Fort Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation regarding the Alaska National Guard.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[11:03:47 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR BILL WIELECHOWSKI called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 11:03 a.m. Representatives Petersen and Gatto and Senators Huggins and Wielechowski were present at the call to order. Representatives Saddler (via teleconference), Feige and Lynn and Senator Davis arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also in attendance were Representative Thompson and Senator Davis. Public members in attendance were Charles Wallace (via teleconference), Civilian Aide, Secretary of the Army; Colonel Bill Brophy - retired (via teleconference); Lieutenant General Tom Case - retired (via teleconference); Lieutenant General Joel Casto (via teleconference); Brigadier General Jake Lestenkof - retired (via teleconference); and Brigadier General George Canelos - retired (via teleconference).

Briefings: Alaskan Command and Alaska Army National Guard

[11:05:07 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI announced that the only order of business would be briefings from Alaskan Command and the Alaska Army National Guard. He then thanked those in the armed forces and the National Guard and Reserve for their service.

[11:05:26 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEPHEN HOOG, Commander, Alaskan Command, began by informing the committee that he has been in Alaska serving as commander since November 2011 and has experienced a

fantastic welcome and support during this time. He then turned the committee's attention to his slide presentation and the first slide entitled "We Honor Our Fallen," which recognizes those Alaska-based military members who died in combat this last year. He then informed the committee that 9,000 soldiers and airmen are still deployed. Referring to the slide entitled "Proposed Structure Changes," Lieutenant General Hoog clarified that it relates the changes proposed for the U.S. Air Force part of the military in Alaska. The most significant change is the proposed relocation of the F-16 Aggressor Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) in fiscal year 2013. There are approximately 900 military/civilian personnel assigned to F-16 operations at Eielson Air Force Base. He noted, however, that the tanker mission, 168th Wing, will still be maintained. "So, for us to draw a one-to-one link between this number and anything that may be happening, I think would be premature," Lieutenant General Hoog cautioned. When the F-16 operation is brought to JBER, efficiencies will be gained by allowing savings in manpower. Therefore, it would likely not be a one-for-one reduction shifting from one location to another as units are combined. Overall the Aggressors will continue to support the Red Flag Alaska training. He then highlighted that another significant impact to the Alaska Air Force is the retirement/transfer of four C-130Hs stationed at JBER. He reminded the committee that several years ago the Air Force established an active associate, the 537th Airlift Squadron to build onto the HC-130Hs the National Guard operates. Therefore, the four C-130Hs will be retired and the active association with the National Guard unit would cease, although the National Guard unit would remain at JBER.

[11:09:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if the tankers will remain at Eielson Air Force Base.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG answered at present the tanker mission remains at Eielson Air Force Base where it will continue to do the alert mission to support the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) mission in order to get tankers airborne to refuel fighters.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO then posed a scenario in which the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) closed Eielson Air Force Base, and asked if the tankers would relocate in Alaska.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG reminded the committee that there is an effort to do another BRAC in 2015, which is separate from this initial action taken by the Air Force for 2013. He opined that it's fair to say that tankers are needed in Alaska because the long-range intercept missions can't be conducted without tanker support. The 25 million gallons of fuel at Eielson Air Force Base and the ability to rapidly stand-up a large air refueling hub in case of a contingency was one of the reasons why tankers were placed there in the first place, he remarked.

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CO-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI observed that the relocation of the F-16 Aggressor Squadron is a proposed structure change, and therefore he asked if the change is final or is there the possibility that it might not happen.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG related his understanding that [the relocation of the F-16 Aggressor Squadron is what the Air Force would like to do in order to meet the \$8.5 billion cost that it faces in fiscal year 2013. The Air Force views this as a smart decision to use the resources available in a manner that is most effective for the taxpayers. In further response to Co-Chair Wielechowski, Lieutenant General Hoog said the relocation would take place the end of September 2013 and he imagined it would be a phased-in approach. There would be a stand-down period for the squadron during which the transfer of airplanes and relocation of maintenance equipment would occur.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG, continuing his presentation, directed the committee's attention to the slide entitled "Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER)." He informed the committee that the 673d Air Base Wing completed its full operational capability October 1, 2010. The real property was transferred from the Army to the Air Force, which was accomplished by bringing in additional civilians that transferred to the Air Force. All in all, he characterized the transition as an overwhelming success. In fact, JBER was categorized as "a model joint base." Upon review, one would find that Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Bases were joint long before it was popular to do so, and thus this just takes it to the next level. During this transition to a joint base, a new incident response command center was constructed and the housing and privatization effort was consolidated. The aforementioned really fosters a joint

community even though the Air Force and the Army have different cultures.

11:16:19 AM

CO-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI inquired as to the concerns, in terms of privacy of information, surrounding the new (indisc.) system.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG offered to obtain and provide the committee with information regarding the privacy concerns. He informed the committee that in the past when someone was banned from the base or was discharged and not allowed to enter the base, lost identification cards from the past would materialize. The aforementioned would result in individuals entering the base that shouldn't be on the base. However, the (indisc.) system works well when someone is banned from entering the base.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG, continuing his presentation, directed attention to the slide entitled "JBER Total Force Integration." He explained that total force integration is when the active and guard or reserve squadrons work together side-by-side, sharing the same facilities and airplanes. This force integration has been done effectively for years in the airlift side and more recently has been practiced on the fighter side. He informed the committee that the F-22 mission is a completely integrated operation at all levels with the 3rd Wing and the 477th Fighter Group. With the C-17s, there is an active duty unit with an associate unit on the National Guard side that augments the air crews. In 2011, 40 percent of the C-17 missions flown out of Alaska were flown with blended crews. Furthermore, over 50 percent of the missions flown by C-130s were flown by blended crews. These blended crews can afford teaching/training opportunities and expand the knowledge base, which he opined is why the Air Force is investing in total force integration units across the board over the next three to five years. Turning to his duties as the Alaskan NORAD Region Commander, he noted that although the mission doesn't intercept as many airplanes as in years past, they are on call every day all day to intercept whoever comes across the northern slope as well as do the airborne sovereignty alert in case of a terrorist attack. He noted that the F-22s [at JBER] are almost fully operational and within the next two to three months he anticipated transitioning the alert missions to them. He also noted that General Jacoby, Northern Command Commander, recently signed a new security relationship agreement with Canada that goes outside the

constructs of NORAD. The aforementioned allows for greater cooperation in the Arctic region for things like search and rescue operations, exercises, and training. This by-lateral agreement provides more flexibility to perform exercises directly with Canada and obtain more Arctic expertise.

11:22:06 AM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG moved on to the slide entitled "2011 Exercises," and highlighted that last summer was exceptional for Red Flag - Alaska. The exercise lasted from April through October and was the busiest exercise season in five years with over 7,000 deployed personnel, 73 units, and 8 foreign countries participating. He then highlighted the Northern Edge exercise, which is characterized as Alaska's premier [air and sea] joint training exercise that occurs every other year. Last year Northern Edge involved over 6,000 joint participants that included U.S. Navy surface combatant ships that exercised off the south coast of Alaska. The Talisman Sabre exercise was a direct insert of a battalion that flew 18 hours nonstop to Australia and tankers were used to refuel along the way. Vigilant Shield is the Alaskan NORAD Region and JTF-AK exercise that is performed in order to ensure that any threats or terrorist attack from over the North Pole can be intercepted. Lieutenant General Hoog then presented a slide entitled "Alaska-Based Forces Currently Deployed," which highlights that Alaska military members are deployed all over the world. Referring to the slide entitled "U.S. Army Alaska Deployments," he related that of the troops in Afghanistan, 11.9 percent are from Alaska. In fact, the 1/25 Stryker Combat Team has been in Afghanistan for over nine months and the 4/25 Airborne Brigade Combat Team was just deployed this last fall. Additionally, the 16th Combat Aviation Brigade (AK), military police, transportation, explosive ordnance disposal, and maintenance are in Afghanistan. Recently, in the USARAK the 3rd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade was transformed into the 2nd Engineer Brigade in order to provide more flexibility in the Pacific area of operations. Moreover, [USARAK] is working on continuing to expand cold weather and mountain training, specifically focusing on Arctic conditions. He then moved on to the slide entitled "11th Air Force Deployments," and explained that airmen usually run bases in areas where there aren't permanent facilities. The airmen operate the towers, fuel trucks, and dining halls. Teams ranging from 2 to 100 are deployed to help run these installations. In 2011, 700-800 airmen have continuously been deployed for various missions [in support of Operation Enduring Freedom]. Outside of Alaska there have been big deployments for

RED FLAG at Nellis Air Force Base and the Air Mobility Command Rodeo, which is a competition for the best air crews. The 18th Aggressor Squadron has been particularly busy since during the winter months they do a lot of deployments to Guam, Japan, and Hawaii to perform dissimilar air combat training, whereas the summer months are spent at Eielson Air Force Base to provide support for RED FLAG Alaska and other [exercises]. He then informed the committee that the 11th Air Force also had two theater security package deployments for which airplanes are deployed to Japan to help reinforce the role of the U.S. forces in the Pacific Asian Theater, as that's becoming more of a high priority. Therefore, there will be more theater security packages in the future as the military continues to forward deploy in the Pacific Asian Theater. Lieutenant General Hoog then directed attention to slide 12 entitled "Operation Tomodachi," which was heavily supported by the JBER C-17 crews, Eielson [Air Force Base] personnel, and USARAK personnel. He reminded the committee that for a while there was contemplation of evacuating of U.S. families and civilian personnel from the Island of Japan proper and staging them at JBER or Eielson Air Force Base. Some airplanes actually landed at the old Eareckson Air Station where they refueled and continued. Moving on to slide 13 entitled "Overview," he informed the committee that the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) is about one-third to 30 percent complete in the initiative to make two ranges truly joint. Referring to slide 14 entitled "JPARC," he told the committee that an environmental impact study on the environmental impact of JPARC itself is being performed. At this point, the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) is being completed and will be available shortly. The goal is to complete the EIS prior to the end of this legislative session, after holding public briefings and hearings throughout the state. Additionally, he offered to provide legislators a pre-brief regarding key issues [for specific areas] prior to briefings in the key public venues. The final draft of the EIS is complete and must be reviewed by headquarters prior to distribution.

[11:31:12 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL commented that what has been done in terms of soliciting public comment has been very well done and most believe they have had significant input that has been heard. For those in the [JPARC] area, there is great interest in not losing private air space. He related his belief that there is consideration of the aforementioned. He then said he would appreciate a pre-brief on the final draft because it covers the

entire area he represents. With regard to the F-16s, he questioned what the legislature could do to convince [the Alaska military] to go up the chain of command to make the case for what has been done in the JPARC as well as the various exercises at Eielson Air Force Base. The value of the aforementioned seems very high, he opined. Therefore, he said he would hate for the pull-out to create an economic burden to both the Air Force and the area he represents. Senator Coghill related that he intends to be as vocal as he can be to help with the Alaska military's vision and the location in Alaska.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG stated that he intends to allow as much time as is required, if not more, to ensure that there are more final comments. He informed the committee that it will observe some changes for the original lay downs and boundaries based on comments received to date. For instance, there have been some border changes for the air space to the south in order to accommodate some (indisc. - coughing) conflict areas.

[11:33:59 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG, continuing his presentation, directed the committee's attention to JPARC handouts that he had provided members. He reminded the committee that there's a very set process for the environmental hearings with specific timelines and a trigger event for each part of the process. The next trigger event is the release of the environmental impact statements, which will reset the clock as the process moves forward. Then he turned attention to slide 15 entitled "The Arctic," which he characterized as a growing area. He related that General Jacoby is seeking to expand the understanding and awareness of his headquarters as well as Alaska's [military] in the current topics of the Arctic. He reminded the committee of the economic competition coming to the North as well as coming oil exploration. For the first time, this last summer cargo ships made transit around the north side of Russia. The Arctic Council was also working to combine search and rescue operations to ensure that [Alaska military] can offer support across countries and bilateral for borders if necessary. Lieutenant General Hoog pointed out that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) hasn't been ratified by the U.S. Congress, although [the military] has signed it and abides by it. He explained that the Arctic Council is a multi-national forum for Arctic issues and by design the military is not part of that council but rather provides support. The Arctic Council meeting in Anchorage will occur in March 2012.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG, referring to the slide entitled "Exercise Strategy," said he would like to share the basic exercise philosophy that is used in Alaska. Funding in the amount of \$3-4 million per year is provided for a series of exercises. The decision has been made to alternate between the Pacific Command (PACOM) exercises and Northern Command (NORCOM) exercises. In the PACOM years, the Northern Edge exercise occurs, which is a very high level/intense exercise that supports Joint Task Commander-519. The Joint Task Commander-519 is the naval commander who has been tasked to support the defense of Taiwan or any other high-end threat in the Pacific. Therefore, for a Northern Edge exercise it's critical to connect JPARC with the airspace off the south coast of Alaska in order to have an air and sea battle. The aforementioned is also the reason this cutting edge exercise receives high levels of funding and cutting edge technologies for both offensive and defensive positions in order to have a realistic training environment. During the NORCOM years, the Arctic Edge exercise occurs. The JTF-Alaska partners with the State of Alaska to provide training. The Arctic Edge exercise is comprised of the Alaska Shield exercise, which is the State of Alaska's exercise for homeland security and natural disaster consequence management. The military attempts to synchronize its efforts for disaster and consequence management with the state's efforts because the consequence management efforts are led by the state government. Therefore, every other year a very large scale exercise is held. During this exercise active duty personnel as well as Guard personnel partner with the state in order to ensure all the various avenues of communication are exercised. Referring to the slide entitled "Future Exercises," he specified that this year is an Arctic Edge year, albeit it's a little smaller exercise due to the larger exercise during which the state and military partnered two years ago. The first element of [Arctic Edge], the Alaska Shield, has already been held. The goal of the exercise was to develop a support element that would help reconstitute the state after a natural disaster. Additionally, Arctic Care, an Alaska National Guard led effort for medical readiness training in the Interior of Alaska, is occurring. The upcoming Ardent Sentry is more direct support for civil authorities. Later this summer Arctic Shield, an Arctic oil spill response scenario, is scheduled. Northern Edge 13 has already been scheduled for next year, but the participation of an aircraft carrier group is being pursued. Arctic Edge 14 is intended to be a major rehearsal integrated across the state to ensure all contingencies are covered. He reminded the committee during all of these exercises RED FLAG will be ongoing. The Eielson Air Force Base F-16s will provide

the aggressor support for that. Although he didn't know what RED FLAG will look like when the Eielson Air Force Base F-16s are at JBER, he expected that the Eielson Air Force Base F-16s will likely send the majority of its aircraft to operate out of Eielson Air Force Base during these exercises.

[11:41:12 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG, referring to the slide entitled "F12 Military Construction," directed the committee's attention to the spreadsheet specifying the base, project, and funding amount for each project name. He pointed out that there are two projects on the Eielson Air Force Base, including an upgraded rail line that would increase the ability to refuel such that it could support a tanker task force. However, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has placed a temporary hold on the Eielson Air Force Base 168-person dormitory pending further analysis as to whether it will be required based on the pending force structure moves. The remainder of the military construction listed on the spreadsheet is going to be executed, he noted.

[11:42:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE, regarding the move of the F-16s to JBER, surmised that Eielson Air Force Base will have to be used as a staging area. He then asked whether there will be any cuts to the civilian workforce at Eielson Air Force Base.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG said that he didn't know the details of the plan, but told the committee that in March there will be a team that will review the second order of consequences of pulling out 300-500 military folks who fly and maintain the airplanes. He related that on average 2.1-3.1 family members accompany every active duty serviceman stationed at Eielson Air Force Base. Therefore, there would be a ripple effect of personnel on the base when pulling out parts. All the analysis will have to be thoroughly reviewed and discussed as the process continues.

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REPRESENTATIVE GATTO inquired as to the reasoning for upgrading the dormitories of existing personnel.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG explained that the Air Force established a standard for a basic single-person room at a military installation. The Air Force is trying to meet the standard in

which there is a centralized room with rooms and a private shower for each personnel. The Air Force was on course to achieve the aforementioned standard, but the project has been placed on hold until the personnel analysis [under restructuring] is complete. The project is a byproduct of last year's planning efforts and remains pending until the vetting process is complete.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO then inquired as to whether all the projects listed on the slide are fluid.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG answered that they are all fluid to a degree, but pointed out that once the military is given funding to execute the project rarely is the project stopped. Therefore, the dormitory project is a rare case in which the project is stopped for more review.

11:45:50 AM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG, returning to his presentation, directed attention to slide 20 entitled "Missile Defense Agency (MDA)," and stated that all aspects of MDA's mission are proceeding at 100 percent. The power plant is scheduled to go on line, missile field 2 will be completed, and the upgrade of the ground-based interceptor fleet continued. Furthermore, the Clear Air Station early warning radar site is receiving upgrades to the security fence, back-up power plant, and radar protection (USAF) as well as to radar (MDA). Those projects are fully funded in the amount of \$346.4 million to MDA. Moving on to the slide entitled "2012 Deployment Forecast," Lieutenant General Hoog highlighted that most of the soldiers from the 1/25 Stryker Combat Team and the 539th Transportation Company will return to Fort Wainwright. Later in the year, the 4/25 Airborne Brigade will return to the state. Departing from JBER this year is the 23rd Engineer Company, the 98th Maintenance Company, and the 793rd Military Police. With regard to the 11th Air Force, it will continue to support the air expeditionary force deployments. Current projections are 600 and 500, respectively. Additionally, the Aggressor Squadron will continue to support a fairly robust exercise schedule. The Cope North training will deploy the 18th Aggressor Squadron to Guam Air Base as well as an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) airplane performing air-to-air control and dissimilar air combat with assets. Cope Tiger is a C-17 airplane that will fly into Thailand and continue on to a mission in Australia. The Valiant Shield exercise will be later this year. He pointed out that thankfully, there will be fewer deployments to Afghanistan,

although the forward presence and exercises will remain fairly robust.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG then moved on to the slide entitled "DOD Personnel Reductions," in order to address the 13,500 reduction in U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) civilian Air Force positions announced for JBER. The Alaska-wide net reduction was 270 out of almost 3,000 positions, which amounted to about a 9 percent reduction. The aforementioned resulted in the net reduction of 222 positions at JBER and 48 civilian positions at Eielson Air Force Base. He informed the committee that early retirement has been offered as has reassignment to vacant positions. Ultimately, he surmised that there will be 40-60 people who won't be able to be placed, given the number of vacancies. He noted they are going through the normal process with the unions and the civilian personnel system in order to ensure everything is done as fair as possible. Recently, the Alaska Army faced a reduction of 62 positions. As a result of these cuts, Alaska officials had discussions with PACAF and the Army Installation Command and brought in 40 experts from the Army and the Air Force to review the impacts the proposed cuts would have on the support, particularly in terms of support to the families. The results of the study will provide the basis for changes and adjustments as the process moves forward. Continuing on to the slide entitled "Taking Care of Those at Home," Lieutenant General Hoog informed the committee of the Air Force's family support initiative Heartlink that helps new spouses transition into the Air Force. Both the Air Force and the Army have the Key Spouse initiative in which there are key spouses located in each unit to coordinate activities for spouses when units are deployed. The Hearts Apart-deployed family program is available to keep people in touch. The Family Readiness Group has lots of programs available for marriage counseling as well as keeping kids prepared for deployments and returns. Another great initiative is the Master Resiliency Training, which provides skills to people to deal with stress in advance to avoid impacts to one's performance and personal life. All of the aforementioned illustrate the benefits of joint basing and the ability to share initiatives. He then highlighted the Soldier and Family Assistance Center (SFAC), which helps with the transition of returning wounded soldiers. In the last year, there has been more emphasis on employment and transition, resulting in the Military Spouse Employment Program, which has, across DoD, helped place 5,000 spouses in jobs.

[11:53:51 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG then directed the committee's attention to the slide entitled "Fisher House of Alaska." The Fisher House is a unique public-private partnership that supports America's military in its time of need. The program recognizes the sacrifices and hardships of military service by meeting a humanitarian need beyond that normally provided by the Department of Defense and Veterans' Affairs. Since members of the military and their families are stationed worldwide and often must travel great distances for specialized military care, the Fisher House Foundation donates "comfort homes" that are constructed on the grounds of major military and medical centers. These homes allow a family member to be near a loved one during the most stressful time, such as during the hospitalization of an unexpected illness, disease, or battlefield injury. He told the committee that annually the Fisher House program serves more than 12,000 families and has made available 3 million days of lodging to family members since the program originated in 1990. Members of the Fisher family will be present at the dedication of the 12-unit facility built next to JBER hospital. The facility was opened in December and folks are already living in it. The facility is open to all branches of military personnel as well as veterans on a space available basis and a priority ranking. He then moved on to the slide entitled "Arctic Thunder 2012," and informed the committee that all the single ship demonstration teams in the Air Force were cut due to funding constraints. The only teams remaining are the F-22s and the Thunderbirds. There will be a couple of shows from the Thunderbirds at JBER, which will be successful due to the support by the Alaska Air Show Association. The funding from the Alaska Air Show Association will provide the ability to have some of the key acts on the civilian side. Moreover, it will be a great open house. In closing, Lieutenant General Hoog thanked the committee/the state for its support.

[11:57:12 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS, on behalf of the Joint Veterans' Caucus, gave Lieutenant General Hoog an Air Force coffee cup.

[11:57:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO opined that it isn't chance that Alaska is very hospitable to the military.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HOOG related that the committee would be surprised at the number of military personnel who do what it takes to have another tour in Alaska.

11:59:36 AM

CO-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI thanked Lieutenant General Hoog for his presentation and encouraged him to relate any suggestions in terms of ways in which the state can improve.

12:00:09 PM

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS KATKUS, Adjutant General/Commissioner, Alaska National Guard, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs, prefaced his comments by clarifying that today he is speaking as the adjutant general not the commissioner of DMVA. He said he will talk about the Alaska National Guard relative to the active component, which equates to roughly 4,000 members, with Air and Army [National Guard] being almost equally represented. The difference is that many of the Alaska National Guard members are constituents who have family members and employers in the state. Alaska National Guardsmen are an important piece of Alaska whether in uniform or not. Major General Katkus reminded the committee of the Alaska National Guards' transformation from a Cold War entity that was closely positioned to a threat nation and designed around the fact that it was forward deployed in a very austere environment to today when the Alaska National Guard membership is able to mobilize, fall in on an active duty unit with comparable equipment and training to perform federal and state missions. Referring to the slide entitled "Army," he related that although Alaska still has many Alaska National Guard armories across the state, many are now in a battlefield surveillance brigade. Major General Katkus clarified that battlefield surveillance brigade is no longer infantry centric, although it is still a combat multiplier that provides intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, and long-range communications through a vast array of technology. Furthermore, a battlefield surveillance brigade is a maneuver source that is lightly, but effectively armed in terms of gathering intelligence and relaying that intelligence to those who can be effectively engaged and employed against the threat. The battlefield surveillance brigade has an incredible array of communication capability, which is one of the state's largest weaknesses. The state is situated low on the horizon and has very limited access to satellite coverage some days. In a state emergency, the battlefield brigade would bring wheeled assets on the road systems, manpower, and the ability to communicate, and bring modernized equipment into communities to assist. With regard to aviation, he informed the committee that there are 10 UH-60Ls in theatre as stay-behind equipment. The

plan is to get those back within the next six months. In the meantime, the National Guard Bureau has been very effective with all states in regard to ensuring that all equipment that states have left behind have equipment from other states. The C-12 unit continues to be a tremendous asset and is currently deployed in Afghanistan. With regard to the C-23 Sherpa unit, he anticipated being able to keep those planes in the state until about 2015. As many may know, the Army has made a corporate decision that fixed-wing aviation isn't a core competency of the Army and transferred it to the U.S. Air Force. Therefore, the Air Force is now performing many of the tactical missions normally performed by the Sherpa aircraft. As is the case with many of the states that have Sherpa aircraft, the states are preparing to divest themselves of [the Sherpa] mission and considering replacement [aircraft]. From a state perspective, states can't just depend on their Air National Guard and its fixed-wing assets. Alaska provides a wide range of requirements for various platforms and the Army has deployed the Sherpas in many different ways than it's deployed by the Air Force. Referring to the 49th missile battalion in the Army, he expressed pride in the over 200 full-time members of the Alaska National Guard that are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. He highlighted the strategic mission of the Alaska National Guard, which is critical to the entire nation. Additionally, within the Alaska National Guard, it's growing its own. For example, a former battalion commander of the Alaska National Guard is now slated to take over the brigade in the Colorado National Guard. There is also the military police, for which the key center is in Juneau. The military police structure now in Alaska allows the recruitment of males and females. He then turned to the airborne infantry in Bethel, where the residents watch them perform parachute training. He highlighted the pride felt by the infantry members. This year a new armory was opened in Bethel and the unit is in its final week of preparation for deployment to Afghanistan.

[12:10:20 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL KATKUS moved on to the slide entitled "Operational Relevance," and highlighted that [the Alaska Army National Guard] has a force structure that is relevant. Furthermore, the deployment requirements of Alaska rank similarly to other states that have been requested to provide forces. Beyond the high-tech command and control and the modern vehicles that the battlefield surveillance brigade and the new force structure provide, two other assets impact what [the Alaska Army National Guard] does in the state. Those assets are a water purification

unit and power generation equipment. The new generators operated by the National Guard synchronize with the state's effort to provide a national stockpile of power generation equipment. Although it would seem that Alaska would have plenty of water, water is critical during a disaster, particularly in terms of purification. Major General Katkus emphasized that the Alaska Army National Guard has not missed a deployment and has remained ready with support from all aspects. He then turned attention to the slide entitled "Space," and referenced the \$220 million [Clear systems upgrade will data link with GMD at Greely]. He opined that the soldiers and airmen [at Greely and Clear] are in a construct that is different from any other National Guard. When the National Guard is "under color of authority doing their job, they're working for the president; when they are off-duty, they are working for the governor." Although the aforementioned would seem to call into question what rules, regulations, disciplines, and constraints one would fall under at any given, it works easily and smoothly. Continuing on to the slide entitled "Air," he related how impressed he is with Alaska's Air National Guard. The access the Alaska Air National Guard has to the world's best assets for rescue in the state that needs it most can't be understated, he said. For example, the pararescue staff is in Alaska due to the requirement to support Lieutenant General Hoog and his missions of interceptions and exercises. As an extension, the National Guard is allowed to use that asset when available to provide support to Alaskans. The pararescue staff had over 79 saves in Alaska and over 25 saves in Afghanistan, where they were under fire and at a great personal risk. He then highlighted the support assets, including the fixed-wing C-130Hs. He then told the committee that the 176th Wing Weapons Systems completed its move from Kulis Air National Guard Base to JBER without any disruption in rescue or deployment. Referring to the slide entitled "Air," Major General Katkus pointed out that the 168th Wing Weapons Systems is required to provide a tanker within an hour of an active duty request; the 168th hasn't failed to meet the aforementioned requirement in the 26 years it has been in existence. Again, the Alaska National Guard is critical to ensuring the entire system works. The 168th operates nine KC-135s that are old, but have been kept in good shape and have been deployed throughout the world.

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REPRESENTATIVE PETERSEN asked if there are plans to replace the aging KC-135s with a newer model.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKUS said that although he can't answer that specifically, he imagined they would be replaced over time. In fact, Boeing has just received a contract. The distribution of those aircraft and how they phase into operation will likely be a deliberate process. He related that currently there is a significant delta between what the 168th in Eielson Air Force Base can produce and the requirements. There is no shortage of fuel requests and [the 168th] provides to the capacity it can for all missions. He opined that if there was a growth industry, fueling in Alaska would be it. He clarified, however, that he merely deploys the assets once they are authorized and distributed to the Alaska National Guard.

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MAJOR GENERAL KATKUS, returning to his presentation, directed attention to the slide entitled "In Summary." He then discussed the Alaska National Guard's community relations in terms of how it integrates and involves the communities. The aforementioned is critical for mentorship and ensuring that the Alaska National Guard fully represents the communities throughout the state, whether it is the Iron Dog, Top Dog Charity Race, or funeral honors that are equivalent to Arlington last honors. Major General Katkus concluded by showing a slide with photos of a helicopter from the Coast Guard, the Alaska Air National Guard, and the Alaska Army National Guard and stated that one of those will provide the rescue for those needing such support. More importantly, in terms of the Arctic, the Coast Guard is the lead agency. The partnership with the Coast Guard, the Air National Guard, and the Army National Guard provide synergy by working together. He noted that all of them are deployed through the Rescue Coordination Center. The synergies are taken a step further by co-locating Sector Anchorage U.S. Coast Guard to JBER with the Alaska National Guard, which is also the location of the state emergency operations center and the command and control of the state. Major General Katkus emphasized that a great job with partnerships is occurring as the [National Guard] moves forward with Arctic requirements. The various military sectors in Alaska have always worked together and the partnerships will continue going forward.

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SENATOR COGHILL inquired as to what the state needs to do in terms of the communication link in the Northern end.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKUS pointed out that more and more technology is available for communication. Alaska Aerospace is now part of the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs and they launch satellites, which have a lot of potential. He related that as unmanned aerial systems and the ability to establish localized communication requirements are reached, the Coast Guard will require all of that as they support drilling operations this summer. However, prior to addressing anything, the requirement must be established and clearly identified. The forces are being moved to the Arctic in order to demonstrate the delta between the requirement and what is available.

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CO-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI remarked that the state asks a lot of its National Guard and Reserve, and thanked everyone for their service. He encouraged Major General Katkus to let the legislature know of any ways it could be of help.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m.