

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Juneau, Alaska  
February 13, 2014  
11:09 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Dan Saddler, Co-Chair  
Senator Pete Kelly, Co-Chair  
Representative Doug Isaacson  
Representative Geran Tarr  
Senator John Coghill  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Representative Eric Feige  
Representative Bob Lynn

**PUBLIC MEMBERS**

Lieutenant General Thomas Case  
Brigadier General George Cannelos  
Colonel Tim Jones - (retired)

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Anna Fairclough  
Senator Fred Dyson

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

Armed Services Update by Lieutenant General Russell Hand, Major General Michael Shields, and Major General Thomas Katkus

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

LIEUTENANT GENERAL RUSSELL HANDY, Commander  
Alaska Command, NORAD Region, 11th Air Force, and Joint Task  
Force Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information relevant to the  
discussion about supporting the military in Alaska.

MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL H. SHIELDS, Commander  
United States Army Alaska (USARAK) - (not including Fort Greely  
or the Army Corps of Engineers)  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information relevant to the  
discussion about supporting the military in Alaska.

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS KATKIS, Adjutant General  
Alaska National Guard  
Commissioner  
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs  
Chugiak, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information relevant to the  
discussion about supporting the military in Alaska.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[11:09:08 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR DAN SADDLER** called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 11:09 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Coghill, Wielechowski, and Co-Chair Kelly; and Representatives Isaacson, Tarr, and Co-Chair Saddler. Representative Feige joined the committee shortly after.

#### **Armed Services Update by Lieutenant General Russell Hand, Major General Michael Shields, and Major General Thomas Katkus**

CO-CHAIR SADDLER said that the Armed Services Committee was established in the 1990s and its mission is to monitor and address potential realignments of military facilities in the state, to advocate for the missile defense system, to seek out ways to attract new missions to Alaska bases, and to support increased joint military training in Alaska's facilities. The mission is especially important as the nation faces tremendous budget pressures. Alaska's military services and agencies are essential to the national defense, our joint training and preparedness, our force projection, the safety of our people and the state's economy.

He said the committee would get an update from three of Alaska's military leaders: Lieutenant General Russell Handy, Commander of the Alaskan Air Command (and others), Major General Michael Shields, General of the U.S. Army Alaska, and Deputy Commander of the United States Alaska Command, and Major General Thomas Katkus, Commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL RUSSELL HANDY, Commander, Alaska Command, NORAD Region, 11th Air Force, and Joint Task Force Alaska, said the quality of our military force has never been better. He introduced Nick "Anchor" Glofthouse, a very accomplished F-22 pilot, the best of his generation. He is a fine example of the people who are serving. He added that not many people are able to fly an F-22 and that he had left his in-laws with his wife and two new babies to come to this meeting.

He said he wanted to update them on what happened in the last year and then what they have to look forward to in the near future. Briefly, he said Alaska military personnel and families make up about 25 percent of the state's population.

LT. GENERAL HANDY said his is the one headquarters for four commands. The 11th Air Force hat involves administrative command management of the five Air Force wings, about 11,500 people in Alaska, Hawaii and Guam, primarily.

He said the Alaska NORAD Region covers national air space defense and that he had just returned from a Colorado Springs conference with NORAD leadership in which the NORAD plans were reviewed. But he said he was going to focus on the Air Force piece and the overarching Alaskan Command, Joint Task Force Alaska. He would let the others talk about their individual components.

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He explained that they work for a few different bosses. From a combat and commander perspective, they really work for several different bosses: USPACOM Commander Locklear for the rebalance to the Pacific, the USNORTHCOM Commander Jacoby (also North American Airspace Defense Command).

Men and women are deployed all over the globe: F22s and E3s are in the Mid-East right now and have had a rotational presence through last year and will be there through the fall. They were very much a part of the humanitarian relief for the operation in the Philippines. About 1350 military are deployed and that number has been fairly stable; it could come down a little, but not a lot.

LT. GENERAL HANDY said the Air Force component underwent a reorganization last year so that all of the wings at the three corners of the strategic triangle now work for the 11th Air Force Commander in Alaska.

He said it was a very interesting year. Men and women were told to continue to execute as if they had a budget and then with seven months remaining they had to get 12 months of savings. It was traumatic. A number of aircraft were grounded to make up those numbers, but it didn't offset sequestrations totally. So the Air Force operations and maintenance funding was reduced by \$654 million. Drastic measures had to be taken. Flying hours were reduced and scores of fighters and bomber squadrons across the U.S. were grounded including the US Air Force Thunderbirds and stopped flying at the US Air Force Weapons School, the "seed corn" of our top end tactical capability that can't be done again. Northern Edge 13 and Red Flag 13 were also lost.

LT. GENERAL HANDY remarked that they lost faith with their civilians in furloughing 5,100 of them in Alaska, when it used to be viewed as "pretty secure" employment. So, some repair work has to be done there. They got to the two, three, or four star general level of reviewing individual trips at the budget level, because of the lack of funds. Now the budget is stable even if it isn't the one they want.

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He reported organizational change within the 11th Air Force units: the 611 Air Support Group (ASG) that runs contracts and maintains things like the Northern Warning System and Wake Island and work contracts was renamed to the PACAF Regional Support Center. The organization looks exactly like it did; numbers were not reduced. It was really a re-designation based on some Air Force administrative rules about how large an organization has to be to be a "group." Now their names are more appropriate as they support a number of facilities all over the Pacific, not just in the 11th Air Force area.

The Air Force shifted corporately in the way they manage environmental restoration accounts, and that would probably be an advantage because the Air Force Civil Engineering Center (AFCEC) has more corporate expertise on how they manage accounts of this nature. Their Pacific Regional Support Center will still be very involved at the local level.

In 2013 the 210th Rescue Squadron made 121 saves, up by about 50 percent from 2012; not good for the people who had to be rescued but it highlights their critical importance.

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REPRESENTATIVE LYNN joined the committee.

LT. GENERAL HANDY said that the 3rd Wing's C-17s were very busy with Operation DAMAYAN in 2013 with 52 sorties, about 2 million pounds of aid and as many passengers as he has seen. They supported three POTUS/VPOTUS trips through the Pacific and about 9,000 USARAK jumpers.

The 3rd Wing's F-22s are now the most capable raptors in the US Air Force. A new modification called "Increment 3.1" gives them the unique ability to do synthetic aperture radar mapping and drop small-diameter bombs, the newest ordinance on that aircraft. That is why they are wanted in the Mid-East.

The automatic backup oxygen system modification was finished, which was the final risk mitigation resulting from their mishaps, and that modification will work its way through the whole Air Force.

They supported CENTCOM Theatre Security Packages (TSP) - a term used to be able to get a finite amount of assets deployed somewhere for a period of time to represent presence in a theatre - as well as deploying throughout the Pacific for various training and strategic messaging purposes. The "Rapid Raptor" is in the proof-of-concept phase, which fits into the PACOM Commander's expeditionary strategy for the Pacific. It was drawn out on a napkin on a briefing room table by a bunch of reservists and active duty pilots who felt they were a little too dependent on fixed facilities and big airfields and way too much stuff. They felt they wanted to be able to pick up their unit on very short notice and rapidly deploy from another location. Put simply, it's the ability to take a small number of F-22s fully loaded, push forward to somewhere and have the potential to employ from that sortie and land at an expeditionary airfield (very short amount of concrete with no support). A C-17 lands behind it with everything on board it needs to take care of those aircraft, such as fuel and weapons that are already assembled on trailers, and very rapidly turn those aircraft and then take off on another mission. Local proof of concept was done and will be integrated with a full wing exercise at JBER last week. It was highly successful.

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He said the 673rd Air Base Wing continues to set the example for joint basing across the country and 85 percent of their performance metrics have been met.

On JBER, General Major Thomas Katkus welcomed US Coast Guard Sector Anchorage into his headquarters building. It brings them in from downtown and links them in operationally with everything else that is going on. The center is about four times the size of the one they had and very well equipped.

JBER will have an open house this year with an air show on July 26th and 27th. It's the only place outside of the Lower 48 the Thunderbirds are going, which instantly makes it attractive to many other performers. It will probably have around a quarter million people and partner with the Alaska Air Show Association and others. Air shows have very strict funding limits this year, but they feel it is still a critically important thing to do.

Eielson Air Force Base has transformed the way it does operational inspections; it was the first one in the Pacific to do a consolidated unit inspection. The big difference is it puts much more of a burden on the wing commander to structure the inspection over what he needs to be ready to do. Each wing is a little different and the wing commander knows better than anyone what those differences are. So, instead of an inspector general developing the scenario independently and bringing it to them, the wing commander is very involved in what the inspection looks like with good quality control by the inspector general. They got an "excellent" on the first one with many identified strengths.

LT. GENERAL HANDY reported that the Aggressors are back flying and were able to participate in the Red Flag; the team went on to Australia to push our partnership with that ally.

Not based in Alaska, but commanded by Mark Kelley is the air support operations groups at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. It would take about a half hour to list the medals for heroism that they have won. They have been in Afghanistan continuously supporting folks on the ground: 5,000 missions and 9,000 troop and contact, and almost 2,000 targets serviced.

A few miscellaneous issues are that the Air Force has formally announced the F-16s aren't moving, which gives stability for their installation. They will start hearing soon about candidate bases for the F-35 and feel that Eielson will compete favorably in that regard. There will be an initial site survey team and ongoing discussions about the potential for Gray Eagle RPV basing. Funding was awarded to their dormitory project and the old dorm will probably be demolished in April.

The Eielson power plant is a strategic asset that is watched closely and continually improved.

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LT. GENERAL HANDY said he thought they would hear something later this month on the candidate bases for the F-35, but that is just a first step. By spring the preferred and reasonable alternatives should be put forward and then the environmental process starts. He expected that Eielson will be a candidate.

He said that Alaska remains the "center of gravity" for the ballistic missile defense system for North America and that Ft. Greely is an amazing facility. The Missile Field 2 construction has been completed. Many other things are going on across the missile defense enterprise and includes a new radar, but where it will go is not known yet.

The Air Force Base Command Headquarters did a heat and power plant analysis in Colorado Springs, and recommended to shut it down and hook the electrical portion of it into downtown power. That has been put on hold for a Government Accounting Office (GAO) study to be completed.

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The F-22s in the ABOS system have returned to fully mission-capable status. This is good, because they continue to respond to Russian activity in the Arctic and with their long range aviation. In the process of that, they are also inspected quite often from NORAD on their Operation Noble Eagle (ONE) mission and response to threat-types of missions and "hit it out of the park" with 13 superior performers and 60 identified strengths on that evaluation.

In a demonstration of their commitment to never leave an airman behind, their recovery operations continued up on Colony Glacier, as a result of the 1952 crash that was recently identified. That debris field is evolving as that glacier moves.

LT. GENERAL HANDY said they also continue to find unexploded ordinance all over the state including the Aleutians; nine in 2013 that are mostly WWII munitions along shorelines. He was also a part of the Alaska Forum on the Environment when it was in Anchorage. It talked a lot about the WWII cleanup sites that are progressing very well. Their relationship is not adversarial as it has been in the past; instead they are talking about how to work together in the future on not harming the environment.

From an exercise perspective, 2013 was challenging because of the five major exercises scheduled, three were cancelled due to budgetary limitations. Northern Edge and two Red Flags were lost. So, only one Red Flag was flown after sequestration. This is when the Korean Air Force and the Japanese Self Defense Force flew for the first time together in an exercise and showed great willingness to work together despite a long history of friction between the two countries. A lot of units from the western Pacific couldn't make it because even though they came off the grounding there weren't enough flying hours in the budget to come to Alaska. Some F-22s, some Marine Corps Air, and some Air Force Reserve and Guard played, and the two major active duty units were the Koreans and the Japanese. It was the most important exercise to keep going.

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hey also flew Vigilant Eagle and Vigilant Shield, responding to a catastrophe working together at the local, state, and federal levels. Vigilant Eagle is an exercise with the Russians, and one of the only things we partner with them in the air domain on. It exercises the ability to share information in responding to the potential for a hijacked aircraft coming across our boundaries so it can be intercepted effectively.

He said 2014 will be a big year for Alaska military exercises. The Army has amazing things on the calendar. For him, it begins with their major exercise in March. It is centered around a complex catastrophe similar to the 1964 Earthquake. A lot of local, state, and federal agencies tried to fuse their training objectives together to effect the exercise while "not stepping all over each other." It involves a quarter of a million people and is going very well. From a Department of Defense (DOD) perspective, Alaska is not close enough to another state to share their training and services for executing a coordinated Title 10 and 32 response to a catastrophe of this level.

LT. GENERAL HANDY related that in 2014 they will execute four Red Flags on the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC). One of the most important risks we bought by cancelling the Red Flags in 2013 had to do with our international partnerships. We had committed to doing exercises with our international partners and some of them had gone to great lengths and cashed in great green stamps with their governments, and then the U.S. pulled out of those exercises at the last minute. That cost them quite a bit and so, they told General Welsh they could plan for just about anything but they need to know and need stability on that. He committed to that week and has funded all of them. So, six

Red Flags are happening in the fiscal year: three on the Nevada Test and Training Range and three in JPARC. FY15 has four Red Flags scheduled. There are a lot of new customers from the Asia Pacific and Europe and he anticipated the international partnership aspect of the JPARC grow.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER asked if that would include India.

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LT. GENERAL HANDY answered yes. He added that large range bases are needed with the right kind of threat replication, and JPARC has that. It also offers the international partners an easier and more economic place to get to than Nellis Air Force Base [in Nevada]. India has committed to push for an alternating construct for the Red Flags between Nellis and JPARC.

He reiterated that 2015 will be a great year, because the budget is stable and the flying hour program is funded for the Northern Edge, the high-end exercise where international participation is restricted because of the level of classification that comes with high fidelity electronic attacks and other things. It is not limited to JPARC but goes out into the Gulf of Alaska where it has a large naval presence. Northern Edge 2015 should have somewhere around 10,000 participants.

He said that JPARC continues to be a centerpiece of their joint and international partner training. In 2013 the Air Force published a record of decision, which completed the environmental analysis they had been doing to expand the range in a couple of key areas. That starts the work, and they are now in the process of socializing that record across the general aviation community and the FAA and the Fish and Wildlife Service, which recommended an unfunded bird study to operate at the altitude regime.

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LT. GENERAL HANDY switched to the subject of the Arctic. People in Washington, D.C. are very excited about it. Prior to a couple of months ago, everyone was excited about it, but weren't sure exactly what they were excited about. Now there is a strategy: a Presidential strategy, a DOD strategy, and an implementation plan for the President's strategy. These are broad strategic-level pieces of guidance, but now a focused combat and command analysis on the Arctic is the number one priority.

He said the DOD strategy was very broad, but what got his attention was that in the short term the Secretary is

comfortable with the level of the existing infrastructure in the state for the Arctic. But in the longer term more fidelity is needed on what the requirements will be. They don't see a threat coming out of the Arctic right now, but the Russian military is up there and as the activity up there increases the DOD needs to look hard at what our presence needs to be to support that activity.

At the Joint Task Force level, their "campaign plan" was divided up into four lines of operation, and the Arctic is one of them. It could go in a couple of directions - as both defense and defense support to civil authorities: things like energy production and distribution in the Arctic. Communications are also very challenged up there; a high frequency antenna in the Barrow area would enhance their communications ability on the North Slope in a huge way (another unfunded requirement).

He explained that the Energy Executive Steering Group was formed to uncover energy strategies. All of the bases consume a large amount of energy and they all have what he called a "homemade wooden shoe" for production and distribution of it. Some are very efficient, like the plant at JBER, and others are very challenging, like the one at Eielson. The President's Arctic Implementation Plan tasks the Department of Energy to look at renewable energy, and he wanted them to help with a holistic study of energy within the state. The Department of Energy has given them some very low level head nods, but they are looking at things like sustainment packages to put in the Arctic to be able to help survivors while executing a recovery operation. He said they are often the only ones to respond in a search and rescue environment because of their unique capabilities. As more activity is seen in the Arctic, either on the North Slope or in the waters, the capacity to respond is being assessed.

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In the laundry list of other activities going on in his command is their partnership with UAF, which has become particularly powerful. President Gamble and Steve Hogue, Lt. General Handy's predecessor, signed an MOU that commits to an enduring DOD (ALCOM) and University of Alaska partnership on Arctic issues. After a visit to the University he was impressed with their Arctic capabilities and knowledge, and enthusiasm. One of the areas of partnering is in the area of Arctic Domain Security Orientation, a small scale course they put together for him. It was focused initially on teaching new members of his staff and new members of the NORTHCOM staff in Colorado about the Arctic, but that project is expanding. It is another unfunded

requirement and they are looking for ways of sustaining that in the future.

In order to develop better Arctic understanding, they host a monthly speaker series on the Arctic and invite a number of experts, other Arctic stakeholders, state and local governments, Alaska Natives, and other leaders. He said the DOD has a habit of examining something sometimes in isolation when sometimes there is a lot of good activity going on at the state, local and corporate levels that can provide solutions and learning; everyone can learn from each other.

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LT. GENERAL HANDY stated that he remains cautiously optimistic for the next two years about the stability of their budget; it's half the battle. Force structure is stable; the Army will draw down in a couple of areas and the Air Force is fairly stable. Increases will be seen at JBER and 381st Intel Squadron, which will become a group in the next year, adding to their airmen for intelligence missions. Some military construction is still ongoing: Ft. Greely got approval for its Missile Field 1 Building and is cleared for the radar upgrade and there are a couple of projects at Ft. Wainwright, in addition to the dorm at Eielson (FY12) he mentioned earlier.

LT. GENERAL HANDY concluded by saying that while chairing the steering group at the Alaska Forum on the Environment he realized that, "It doesn't get any better than Alaska." When he goes to the table with any community leaders or the legislature and talk about JPARC expansion and whether or not F-35s could potentially come to Alaska some day and what sort of activity the F-22s need to do, how many soldiers need to be dropped on the range or firing artillery, in some states the first word out of their mouths may be it would cause a lot of issues with the community or a lot of noise is involved in that, in Alaska he gets, "Okay, how do we make that happen?" They understand the importance of working together with the DOD.

12:00:00 PM

CO-CHAIR KELLY asked about Red Flag and the incident between the Korean and Japanese pilots.

LT. GENERAL HANDY replied that it was an example of "historic baggage"; however, by the end of the exercise the pilots were working together. He added that they were also very interested in debriefing and criticizing their performances as a means for improvement.

CO-CHAIR KELLY inquired about a need for a hanger in Barrow for the defense of the Arctic.

LT. GENERAL HANDY said that is not known yet. He said he asked the Combatant Commander of NORTHCOM to generate the request.

CO-CHAIR KELLY commented that if the need is identified, the legislature can include it in the capital budget.

LT. GENERAL HANDY agreed, especially for things like improving mobility and communications, which could be used in partnerships with the state.

CO-CHAIR KELLY discussed working with the Department of Defense. He urged Lt. General Handy to provide a list of strategic needs.

LT. GENERAL HANDY said he appreciates that offer and he commented on politically driven decisions.

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON noted the existence of the Arctic Policy Commission and suggested Lt. General Handy invite the Co-Chairs, Representative Herron and Senator McGuire to speak.

He drew attention to the Russian build up on islands across from Diomedede and estimates of up to 250,000 people there. He said shipping is a big concern, as well as the lack of icebreakers. He inquired if the Russian issues are being monitored.

LT. GENERAL HANDY stated that they are monitoring the Russian situation. He opined that the Russians are acting in support of economic, or potentially economic opportunities in the Arctic. The Russians are more apt to use their military to facilitate economic development, whereas, the United States would not.

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON supposed that the appearance of missiles would be cause for attention.

LT. GENERAL HANDY agreed.

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON asked about initiatives that include UAS's participation. He wondered if Lt. General Handy viewed state expenditures at a university center as a regional expenditure or as a statewide or national benefit.

LT. GENERAL HANDY replied that it is at a least statewide benefit, but also a national benefit. There have not been any

large expenditures to date. The university is the expert on Arctic issues.

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON asked if the Thunderbirds could make an appearance at Eielson.

LT. GENERAL HANDY didn't know, but offered to find out.

12:11:30 PM

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE inquired about additional opportunities for civil/military cooperation, noting he represents the district that includes Fort Greely. He requested support to establish scheduled air service out of the army airfield. He thought it would be a win for the military as well as for the civilian population.

LT. GENERAL HANDY said he has recently had a conversation with General Shields about that issue. He noted he did not have the command authority to make it happen, but he offered to speak to those who could.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE he asked for assistance in seeking the right person to talk to when he goes to Washington, D.C. in March.

LT. GENERAL HANDY agreed to help.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR recalled a visit to Eielson and learning about the competitive nature of relocation of the F-16's. She said she also toured the power plant and discussed capital upgrade needs. She inquired about legislative opportunities to be a part of the capital upgrades and site selections.

LT.GENERAL HANDY said he would love to find a way to partner with the legislature. He noted that is why he wanted to involve DOE involved.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER asked about China's military capabilities and how that may affect Alaska's planning for Pacific security.

LT. GENERAL HANDY related his previous job history in Hawaii developing strategies. He maintained that no one wants a conflict in the Pacific. There are differing views on how sovereignty is defined. He stressed that the partnership with China needs to be maintained. Issues with China will affect Alaska's military. He stressed the emphasis on partnerships with other countries in today's military.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER thanked Lt. General Handy for his presentation.

12:20:15 PM

CO-CHAIR SADDLER invited Major General Mike Shields to give his presentation.

MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL H. SHIELDS, Commander, United States Army Alaska (USARAK), (not including Fort Greely or the Army Corps of Engineers), Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska said that USARAK includes approximately 12,000 outstanding men and women. Half of the force is on JBER, on the Fort Richardson side with the Airborne Brigade, Engineer Brigade, and NCO Academy. The Stryker Brigade and the Aviation Task Force are up north at Fort Wainwright, along with the Cold Weather Mountaineering Facility out at Black Rapids.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS said it was an exciting time to be in USARAK, transitioning from over 13 years with a focus on counter insurgency with back-to-back deployments of maneuver forces. There are currently soldiers in "harm's way" with the intention of sending more. The focus is now turning to decisive operations in support of the Pacific Commander on mission-essential tasks, as well as to getting back to core competencies of being able to operate at high altitude, in extreme cold weather, and in mountainous terrain. He described a photo of a soldier in a cold weather situation and noted the need for new technology and equipment.

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MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS related the charge to train forces to be more flexible with tailored rapid response and under austere environments. He gave an example of an operation in Australia where the airborne task force flew approximately 17 hours, an incredible demonstration of strategic reach. He stressed the importance of maintaining proficiency in extreme cold weather and becoming the premier cold weather mountaineering capability in the Pacific. The Northern Warfare Training Center (NWTC) is taking on a larger training role in Black Rapids. Foreign partners such as Thailand, Nepal, and Japan are coming to Alaska to train.

He stressed the focus on leader development, especially junior leaders. The goal is "competent, committed leaders with character." Training is done through unit training as well as through the Warrior leader course at JBER. There is heavy investment in expanding leader development.

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MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS described how USARPAC provides training-ready forces in support of USPACOM. He detailed the command relationships under ADCON and OPCON, including ALCOM and JTF-AK. He explained his responsibilities in times of natural disasters and in exercises in Alaska. He added that the pivot to the Pacific is relatively new. Training and readiness is provided by the Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM), as well as with others, such as the Second Division in Korea.

He discussed the rapid response forces for both combatant commands - JBER and Fort Wainwright. There is an emergency deployment readiness exercise program in place.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS related how the force structure is organized under JBER and Fort Wainwright. He noted that two units are getting ready to deploy overseas to Korea and to Afghanistan. This is an example of how USARAK supports combat commands.

He mentioned two key priorities. One is to modernize the NCO Academy and second is to expand the capacity of the Northern Warfare Training Center.

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MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS showed a slide that depicts USARAK's ability to project combat power into the Pacific and its partners, which include India, Mongolia, Nepal, Japan, Korea, Canada, Russia, and Italy. He described how cold weather equipment is tested as it relates to the Pacific command. A priority is to modernize the fleet in the Arctic Region.

He related information about CENTCOM, the support in Afghanistan. Soldiers are currently stationed there and more are being deployed from the Engineer Brigade and from the Aviation Task Force. There are partnerships with brigades from various countries.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER inquired what CRF means.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS said it means Contingency Response Force. He noted the Strykers typically partner with a heavier force. He concluded that it was an exciting time to be in USARAK with the shift to the Pacific and its responsibilities under USARPAC and PACOM.

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MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS described a number of exercises that USARAK would be participating in, such as COBRA GOLD in Thailand, YUDH ABHYAS in India, and combat training centers - the National Training Center and the Joint Training Center. SPARTAN PEGUSUS is an extreme cold weather Arctic jump in Deadhorse, AK. He noted that COBRA GOLD to Thailand involved a 19-hour flight to and from Alaska. He said it was a great example of "tailorable, flexible, scaleable."

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MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS turned to Arctic initiatives with a goal to get one company per maneuver battalion trained to become experts in Arctic mobility. Another goal is to work with partners in other countries on Arctic training. He noted that USARAK recently held a USARPAC Cold Regions Equipment Symposium with 70 different organizations present. USARAK plans to partner with the Department of Defense and academic institutions for support, resources, and equipment.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS highlighted the Ready and Resilient Campaign (R2C), a part of a larger, broader Army campaign that is on-going. He said USARAK is committed to R2C and appreciates community support, such as the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response Program (SHARP) and programs from the university system. He stressed that it is a focus of the commands.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS related news about Fort Wainwright. He said the ROD has been signed for Taku Gardens housing units, noting the housing shortage on base. He described other MILCON projects.

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MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS discussed the USARAK School Partnership Program. He said there were over 4,000 hours of volunteer time spent in the program. Support varied from anti-bullying presentations to mentoring sports teams, and team building. He listed Army structure changes. The active Army will reduce by 80,000 between 2013 and 2017. By the end of the force restructure, Fort Wainwright will add 360 soldiers for a total of 6,000. JBER will lose 800 soldiers for a total of 4,500. There will be a need to look at housing and support for families at Fort Wainwright. There also will be a staff reduction at USARAK which will impact range operations.

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MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS highlighted examples of awards and honors awarded to USARAK soldiers. The 2013 Soldier of the Year from the whole Army was from Alaska. The NCO won the USARPAC NCO of

the Year. He emphasized that USARAK has great soldiers and great leaders.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS restated General Handy's quote, "I remain cautiously optimistic," as it applies to USARAK's budget outlook. The goal is to prioritize needs and research what others are using for equipment.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS closed with the statement that USARAK is ready and relevant and deployed across the Pacific and the CENTCOM AOR, and is incredibly proud of its relationship with the state. He agreed with General Handy about the incredible support USARAK receives in Fairbanks and in Anchorage.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER asked if the committee had any questions.

SENATOR COGHILL inquired whether there were issues the community should be more aware of when there is a change of command.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS said he had experienced a change of command. He noted an improvement in how the reception is done. He said the community outreach is very good for when soldiers return. Brigade commanders need to work on improving the loss of continuity when there is a change in command. The next deployment will take place at the time of reduction and will require additional attention.

He stressed the importance of the Unit Sponsorship Program to identify the incoming team, as well as the outgoing team.

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CO-CHAIR KELLY thanked the presenters

SENATOR COGHILL requested that the presenters inform the communities regarding any issues related to command change.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS voiced appreciation and offered to reach out to the communities.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER noted that the committee attended the Paratrooper presentation at JBER which was very informative. He expressed regret at the reduction in force at JBER. He appreciated the decisions made based on national security.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR inquired whether the 800 soldiers who will be leaving JBER, were living on base or in Anchorage.

MAJOR GENERAL SHIELDS offered to find out.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER thanked Major General Shields for the presentation. He introduced Major General Katkis.

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MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS KATKIS, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard, Commissioner, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Chugiak, Alaska commented that the Alaska National Guard is "ready and relevant," as mentioned by Major General Shields in a reference to USARAK. He said all of the Guard fits into a mission that is either under the ALCOM Commander and/or the USARAK Commander. There are over 4,000 men and women in the Guard, between the Air and the Army.

He continued to explain that the big discussion is between the operational reserve - those who have combat experience - and the strategic reserve. The operational force was visited by General Frank Grass, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to commemorate a national heritage print honoring the Alaska Air Guardsmen who supported rescue efforts in 2010. General Grass came away with a true concept of operational force, remarking that he had never seen another National Guard unit as well integrated into a mission as the one he saw in Alaska.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKIS reported on the status of the Army National Guard. It is authorized for 1,907 members and is currently at 1,899. New equipment is coming on board and there are several structural changes, but overall, nothing significant is changing. Current missions are in Afghanistan with three personnel and in Guantanamo Bay with 82 personnel who report a positive experience. "A" Company Aviators recently returned from Kuwait.

He noted the Air National Guard are world-wide deployable and are at 89 percent of their authorized numbers. He reported a loss of three aircraft to budget cuts.

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MAJOR GENERAL KATKIS discussed the deployments of the Air National Guard, which are "heavier" than the deployments of the Army National Guard due to expertise in combat search and rescue. He noted that the Rescue Coordination Center has completed 5,000 missions and 2,000 saves in 20 years.

CO-CHAIR COGHILL expressed gratitude for the Guard's efforts in disaster relief.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKIS commented that it was rewarding for the members who participated, especially in the Galena area.

CO-CHAIR COGHILL requested more information about community efforts related to deployment.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKIS replied that the National Guard responds to family needs and addresses employment needs. He emphasized that community support in Alaska is exceptional.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER asked for information on recruitment and retention efforts statewide.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKIS said challenges are constant due to the small percentage that qualify for military service. It is a very competitive market for a very small population. Access is also a challenge in rural Alaska regarding recruitment. He said he strives to overcome the obstacles to recruitment and often uses support of the local law enforcement to help recruit and mentor. The Yellow Ribbon Program reaches out to recruit veterans.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER inquired about the state's role as a strategic partner to Mongolia.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKIS said he plans to go to Mongolia in two weeks. The Guard continues to send troops over for exercises, especially for cold weather training. The National Guard Bureau has strong support for state partnership programs. Alaska's partnership with Mongolia is identified as a model program.

CO-CHAIR SADDLER summarized that the Joint Armed Services Committee is a tremendous platform for Alaskans. The meetings help legislators to advocate for Alaska's military bases.

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There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Saddler adjourned the Joint Armed Services Committee at 1:07 p.m.