

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

February 9, 2016

1:05 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator John Coghill, Co-Chair  
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Co-Chair  
Senator Pete Kelly  
Senator Anna MacKinnon  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Representative Wes Keller  
Representative Bob Lynn  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Geran Tarr

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Geran Tarr  
Representative Louise Stutes  
Representative Lora Reinbold

**PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Lieutenant Colonel Tim Jones - retired  
Colonel George Vakalis - retired  
Charles "Chick" Wallace

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

BRIEFINGS: LIEUTENANT GENERAL RUSSEL J. HANDY~ U.S. AIR FORCE~  
COMMANDER~ ALASKA COMMAND U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND;  
MAJOR GENERAL BRYAN OWENS~ U.S. ARMY~ COMMANDING GENERAL~ U.S.  
ARMY ALASKA;  
COMMISSIONER LAURIE HUMMEL~ COL. (R) U.S. ARMY~ ADJUTANT  
GENERAL~ ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD AND COMMISSIONER OF THE ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS;  
REAR ADMIRAL DANIEL B. ABEL~ U.S. COAST GUARD~ COMMANDER~  
SEVENTEENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT.

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

LIEUTENANT GENERAL RUSSEL J. HANDY, Commander  
Alaska Command U.S. Northern Command  
U.S. Air Force

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a briefing on the U.S. Air Force in Alaska.

MAJOR GENERAL BRYAN OWENS, Commanding General  
U.S. Army Alaska

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a briefing on the United States Army Alaska.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL TIM JONES

U.S. Army, Retired

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** During the presentation asked a question of Major General Owens.

ADJUTANT GENERAL LAURIE HUMMEL, Commissioner

Department of Military & Veterans Affairs

Alaska National Guard, Adjutant General

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a briefing related to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT PAUL NELSON

Alaska National Guard

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Discussed the ethical fitness initiative.

COLONEL KAREN MANSFIELD, Commander

Alaska Air National Guard

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented an overview of the Alaska Air National Guard.

COLONEL JOE STREFF, Commander

Alaska Army National Guard

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented an overview of the Alaska Army National Guard.

SERGEANT MAJOR MARC PETERSEN

State Command

Alaska Army National Guard

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented an overview of certain military support in Alaska.

REAR ADMIRAL DANIEL ABEL, Commander

Seventeenth Coast Guard District

United States Coast Guard

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a briefing of the United States Coast Guard in Alaska.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:05:26 PM](#)

**CO-CHAIR JOHN COGHILL** called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. Representatives Keller, Saddler, and LeDoux, and Senators Bishop, MacKinnon, Kelly, Wielechowski, and Coghill, and public members George Vakalis, Dick Wallace, and Lieutenant Colonel Tim Jones were present at the call to order. Representatives Lynn and Tarr arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**^BRIEFINGS: Lieutenant General Russel J. Handy, U.S. Air Force, Commander, Alaska Command U.S. Northern Command;**  
**Major General Bryan Owens, U.S. Army, Commanding General, U.S. Army Alaska;**  
**Commissioner Laurie Hummel, Col. (R) U.S. Army, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard and Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs;**  
**Rear Admiral Daniel B. Abel, U.S. Coast Guard, Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District.**

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**CO-CHAR COGHILL** announced that the only order of business would be briefings by Lieutenant General Russel J. Handy, U.S. Air Force, Commander, Alaska Command U.S. Northern Command; Major General Bryan Owens, U.S. Army, Commanding General, U.S. Army

Alaska; Commissioner Laurie Hummel, Col. (R) U.S. Army, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard and Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs; and Rear Admiral Daniel B. Abel, U.S. Coast Guard, Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District.

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CO-CHAIR COGHILL expressed appreciation for the legislature's involvement with the military, for past co-chairs Senator Kelly and Representative Saddler, and for the men and women who serve in the military.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX thanked all [members of the military present at the meeting] for their service to the United States.

CO-CHAIR COGHILL indicated that additional information the presenters may not have had time to share during the briefing was contained within the committee packet.

[1:09:43 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL RUSSEL J. HANDY, Commander, Alaska Command U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Air Force, offered a briefing on the U.S. Air Force in Alaska, and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to brag about the men and women serving in Alaska and to serve in a state that "feels like home." He explained that those in the military move often, and Alaska welcomes the military with open arms, which he said allows the military to operate and train to "remain ready to do the nation's business."

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CO-CHAIR COGHILL noted that Major General Jacob Lestenkof, USA (Ret) was on line listening to the briefing.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY said he would give an overview and show slides, but wanted to keep the discussion open and offered to produce additional information when requested. He introduced A.J. Pinto, sitting with him at the witness table, whom he said was serving today as a legislative liaison but is normally an air battle manager.

[1:12:00 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY began a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Combined Headquarters: America's finest fighting team, engaged in crises worldwide while securing America's future in the Last Frontier." He stated he would address strategic environment, offer a year in review, and offer a perspective from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). He noted that Secretary Carter has been active with new policies and initiatives. He said he would not discuss U.S. Army Alaska, the Alaska National Guard, or the U.S. Coast Guard, because there are experts to present and address those topics.

[1:13:00 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 3, titled "The Way Most View the World" and said it is the usual projection that is seen - a flat map of the world, with Alaska barely in view. He moved on to slide 4, titled, "Our View of the World," which shows "the way we view the world." He said the image - with the North Pole as the central image - is a much more accurate way to show the challenges of serving in a global environment. He said last year was the warmest on record in the Arctic, with multi-year sea ice is melting, which changes the way [the U.S. Air Force] is thinking about operations [in Alaska]. He opined that for the most part people agree now that climate change exists, but there is still debate about the causes of it. He indicated the focus of the U.S. Air Force is the need to operate in the Arctic as easily as it can off the coast of Southern California. He said people can debate about numbers and timelines, but the U.S. Air Force is seeing an increase in human activity it believes is based upon the combination of "better access and undiscovered wealth in the Arctic." He predicted that increase in human activity would continue. He said, "And certainly the nation, across the Bering, recognizes that, and there's a significant amount of buildup both economic and military buildup going along the Russian Arctic Coast." He added, "And they very much have freedom of action on the Northern Sea route and are going to be able to continue to support that, not only with their economy, but with their military." He said ultimately Arctic understanding is a global issue; it is not just about Alaskan command or Northern Command, but it also includes European Command, Pacific Command, and Strategic Command. He said, "We're on a bit of quest to ensure that the rest of the globe starts to look at our world like this."

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 5, titled "Our Evolving Environment." He referred to the bullet points, which read: Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and ISIL [Islamic States of Iraq and the Levant]. He said "100 years ago" the U.S. Military was focused on [Russia], whereas in the last 20 years, the military has been focused on "support to counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, [and] operations in the Middle East, at great expense to the other priorities." During this time, he indicated the rest of the world has been studying "the American way of war," and "the list of challenges" has grown. He continued as follows:

A combination of strategy, doctrine, demonstrative provocative actions in Europe and an increase in capabilities supported by significant fiscal investment make Russia a different place from a military perspective, and one that we have to pay attention to, not just from a let's-stay-out-of-a-nuclear-war perspective but [in terms of] "comprehensive deterrence across the continuum."

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY said China is literally building islands in the South China Sea, and between the South China Sea and East China Sea sovereignty debates, he said, "We see an opportunity for potential friction there - between not just us and China but our closest allies and partners." He stated that anyone who thinks the next two countries on the list [North Korea and Iran] would not leverage conflict "in any of those areas, with their capabilities, to achieve their objectives" would be naïve. He said organizations, such as ISIL, are not going away. He characterized such organizations as "evil," and he said [ISIL] has recently demonstrated a global power projection capability outside its region. He warned that [the U.S.] cannot turn its back on [ISIL] in the interest of the country and its closest allies and partners. He indicated that although the list [of countries shown on slide 5] has grown, the U.S. Military force has not grown; therefore, he stressed the importance of doing "things a little bit better" and think of things in a "different fashion."

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY addressed information on slide 6, titled "Military Spending." He said many of the aforementioned nations have been supporting their military operations with a significant investment and, after studying "the American way of war," are developing, implementing, and fielding weapons systems specifically to counter [U.S. weapons]. For example, he said the countries are developing long-range ballistic and cruise

missiles "across not just the nuclear end but the continuum of conventional capability, as well." He said this is something that [the U.S. Military as a whole] is studying closely. He said many of these nations lack transparency; therefore, it is difficult to determine the capacity of their weaponry. He said [the U.S. Air Force] thinks the North Korean investment may be "upwards of 25 percent." He said there is major evolution across the globe to which [the U.S. Military] must pay attention.

[1:18:13 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 7, titled "DoD Budget," which he said is between \$500- and \$600-billion. He said there is a significant difference between the U.S. and other countries in terms of the way it spends money, the challenges it faces, and the transparency it provides to its citizens. He stated there are a number of expenditures that are "must pays" and there is a growing personnel and entitlement budget. He mentioned initiatives coming out of the Office of the Secretary of Defense regarding reform of retirement and transformation of medical care. He said, "That line is on an upward vector, and if we don't do anything to arrest it, it will consume the DoD budget." Also including the must-pay category is managing infrastructure, some of which he said is excess, for example, more bases and legacy weapons than necessary. He said in order to make room "to have that modernization trade space" will require action. He emphasized the importance of modernization, and in approximately two months, the average age of U.S. Air Force combat aircraft - a fighter or bomber - will exceed 27 years. He stated [the combat aircraft] operates off of technology like the iPhone, and he asked the committee to imagine how effective a 27-year-old iPhone would be. He said some of the aircraft used by the U.S. Air Force requiring modernization include the F-35, the long-range strike bomber, and the KC-46 tanker. He stated that sandwiched into the middle of must-pays and modernization are operations and maintenance, which include: readiness, investments in the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) training, flying hours and parts and logistics, and other day-to-day business expenses. He mentioned the effort for fiscal year 2016 (FY16), and he spoke of the Presidential budget is rolling out for FY17 today, and on its way to Capitol Hill this week. He predicted it would contain achieving a balance between operations and maintenance and [modernization]. He said Secretary Carter is keen on knowing that some of these challenges require "game changes" and

"we're investing [a] significant amount of ... resources in ... that sort of acquisition and technology research."

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SENATOR BISHOP asked whether any new C-130J Super Hercules models would be coming to Alaska.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY said he does not envision that happening "anywhere in these two budget years" and he has not heard any serious discussion about "more of them coming to Alaska."

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY drew attention to a chart on slide 8, titled "Headquarters Organization." He stated that he "served two primary masters." He pointed to the left side of the chart, [which lists USPACOM], and indicated that under that entity he works for General Lori J. Robinson in Pacific Air Forces in Hawaii as the management headquarters for the airmen in the primary organizations in Hawaii, Guam, and Alaska. In this capacity he takes care of the "organize, train, equip" functions to provide ready forces across the globe. He noted that F-22 Raptor fighter jets from Hawaii are currently in the Middle East leading the way in the fight against ISIL in Iraq and Syria, and F-22s from Alaska will relieve them this spring.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY next drew attention to the right side of the chart on slide 8, [which lists NORAD and USNORTHCOM], and he said he serves under Navy Admiral Bill Gortney who is the commander of NORAD and U.S. Northern Command, and take care of homeland defense, support to civil authorities, mission assurance, and Arctic advocacy across the Alaskan area of responsibility (AOR). He continued as follows:

This organization is formalized. We lost about 19 percent of our headquarters manpower; that was completely consistent with ... an across-the-board DoD cut of 20 percent - really, really small numbers - didn't impact our ability to command and control at all. The synchronization and merger actually helped us, and we are very much taking the walls down between this Alaska NORAD region and Alaskan Command Organization and working ... really like we're one synchronized headquarters.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY acknowledged that [the U.S. Air Force] does not do anything alone; it works with its "primary mission partners," whom he indicated were in the room waiting their turn to speak.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 9, titled "ALCOM Year in Review," which shows what Alaska Command headquarters has been doing. He indicated that the purple boxes indicate that that the U.S. Air Force has been receiving a lot of attention, including from senior United States Department of Defense officials, individuals encouraged by Alaska's U.S. congressional delegates to visit, and media. He indicated that much of that attention centered around President Barack Obama's visit to Alaska.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted there had just been a change in Canadian government where liberals took over and the country was pulling back its CF-18s. He asked, "Has there been any change in the candidate's posture of support for the NORAD Command structure?"

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY answered there had been no change, other than perhaps "a strengthening of that". He mentioned the prime minister [of Canada] and stated, "Although those statements weren't necessarily synchronized, I think you could make the relation that he is thinking seriously about homeland defense and making sure that he's got the right kind of investments at home." He said "we are constantly working" at evolving our plans and doing things better. He said Navy Admiral Gortney has held many conversations with evolving NORAD's relationship with NORTHCOM and the way [the military] defends the U.S. He concluded, "We have total support from the Canadian government." He indicated there is more integration [between the U.S. and Canadian government defense] in training exercises and intercept operations.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY moved on to slide 10, "DoD Arctic Capability Advocacy." He said that from an Arctic advocacy perspective, there has been a lot of activity at NORTHCOM headquarters and in Alaska. He said "we are NORTHCOM's operational Arctic experts," who truly understand what it is

like to operate in the Arctic on a day-to-day basis. He indicated that "we help NORAD become established as the DoD advocate for the Arctic." He relayed that this year NORTHCOM established the Arctic Capability Advocacy Working Group, which is a group of like-minded governmental and community agencies both living and operating in the Arctic and addressing potential contingencies. He added, "And we're working very carefully with them on that."

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY said the two main themes for NORTHCOM in considering capability gaps are: how "we use existing capabilities," because it takes a long time to develop requirements and fund things; and what needs to be done in that regard for the long term. Regarding the latter, he explained that it is first necessary to agree upon what the Arctic will look like in 20, 30, 50 years, and there is not total agreement on that. He said NORTHCOM is working hard to determine "what that means to DoD."

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY named the "four main areas we examine" from a capability perspective: communications, which are limited in the Arctic; domain awareness, primarily air and maritime domain, which requires having the necessary systems and common operating pictures to maintain awareness; infrastructure, which is expensive and time intensive to build in the Arctic, thus requires an effort to understand what infrastructure is necessary in order for the military to be able to respond to contingencies; and then finally, presence, how often do they want to operate in the Arctic and in what kind of environments, and what kind of training. He said there is a lot of local effort on that and mentioned that now there is a little more time to invest in soldiers "increasingly coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan." He talked about working with the U.S. Navy, which has Ice Exercise (ICEX) and repeat with its submarine lab again this year. He said, "This year we've been partnered with them from the very beginning planning stages to ... make that a joint exercise."

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY reminded the committee that last year "we did a replication of the Good Friday Earthquake" as a biennial capstone exercise and the whole nation focused on Alaska and earthquake scenarios. He relayed that this year "the Arctic edge scenario" is focused on a Cascadia earthquake scenario, but with impact that includes Alaska. He said there would be other exercises planned in order to take advantage of

all the attendees. He mentioned there is an Arctic Council indoors search and rescue exercise. He explained that even though the Arctic Council is a diplomatic agency rather than a military one, "we understand that we need to be in support of those things, and we are full participants in that, and that's a multi-national, Arctic-based disaster that we need to help respond to in a search and rescue environment" this coming year.

[1:29:35 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY brought attention to slide 11, titled "OP Colony Glacier," and provided an update on the remains recovery operation pertaining to a 1952 crash of a C-124 Globemaster II on Mt. Gannet. Sixty years later the remains of the aircraft and passengers on board are beginning to merge [because the glacier is receding]. He said each year since the initial discovery [in 2012], the U.S. Air Force has conducted an annual operation spanning three to five weeks, during a small window where the snow has melted down, but before conditions become unstable later in the summer. He said ALCOM is the headquarters that "keeps our arms around everything that's going on" and assists with that operation. He relayed that this year, the job will be transitioned from the Defense Accounting Agency (DAA), which focuses more on overseas loss, such as POWs and MIAs, to the U.S. Air Force Mortuary Affairs because this is the latter's core mission. He reported that the remains of 17 passengers of the 52 passengers that were on board have been repatriated. Last year more remains were recovered and the glacier reveals more each year. He said DNA tests are used to determine whether new remains found belong to another body or belong to a deceased person already identified.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 12, titled "GLACIER Summit & POTUS Visit." As shown on slide 12, GLACIER is an acronym that spells out Global Leadership in the Arctic Cooperation, Innovation, Engagement & Resilience. He said there were many ministerial level events in which the DoD was not directly involved. Notwithstanding that, he said, "We were involved in ... shadowing things that have an interest to DoD, such as the strengthening emergency response ministerial session." He said the [Alaska] National Guard, DoD, and the [Alaska] Coast Guard "will take a very big role in helping with that." He described the military's involvement in ensuring a successful visit from President Obama.

1:32:47 PM

CO-CHAIR COGHILL, in referring to President Obama's visit, surmised that the U.S. Air Force had probably tested Alaska's communication links, and asked Lieutenant General Handy whether improvements needed to be made.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY responded he was very satisfied with the results. He said there are a number of ways of "forward deploying expeditionary communications." He described it as a three-tier operation, and offered further details.

1:34:33 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slides 13-14, titled "Ballistic Missile Defense." He said Alaska is always "the center of gravity for ballistic missile defense in North America." He said other countries are acquiring greater numbers of ballistic missiles with greater capabilities and ranges, and it is a burden for the Missile Defense Agency and United States Department of Defense "to ensure the system keeps up." As shown on slide 14, he said MDA has a sizeable budget and is making strides in meeting the Secretary of Defense's mandate of 44 ground-based interceptors within the inventory by 2017, as well as increasing the performance and reliability of the interceptors that are on the ground. He said the Missile Field 1 refurbishment he said he mentioned last year would be complete in the fourth quarter of FY 16, which will provide ["14 operationally configured silos"].

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY mentioned there are two ongoing radar projects. He said the Clear Air Force Station (AFS) early warning radar upgrade and connection to the ballistic missile defense system is on track, and he offered his understanding that it should be completed by the end of [2016]. He related that "the department" and Missile Defense Agency and NORTHCOM agreed that Clear would be the preferred location for the long-range discriminating radar, which also increases the performance of the system and the ability to discriminate different pieces and parts. For example, what is a threat and what is a piece of the missile body. He said an environmental impact analysis is ongoing for the [long-range discrimination radar] (LRDR), "but so far, again, looking to be included in the budget for '17, at least some of the military construction for Clear." He reported that the commercial power tie-in was successfully completed; a 50-year-old power plant was shut down, and there have been no issues with capacity or liability in terms of that power.

1:37:21 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 15, titled "2015 NORTHERN EDGE." He said Alaska continues to represent a critical training venue for the U.S. Joint Team and allies and partners "across the continuum of operations," everything from very small training scenarios to capstone events such as Northern Edge. Northern Edge is a biennial event and during the last event there were over 7,099 participants, including U.S. Navy ships [in the Gulf of Alaska], and training included large force exercise, joint live fires, search and rescue, with many high end capabilities. Alaska, he said, is a unique environment with the ability to train and test where no one is watching or listening to the exercises, and it brought approximately \$13 million to the economy of Alaska.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 16, titled "2015 RED FLAG Exercises." He said Red Flag continues to be a success. He said, "We got ... the U.S. Air Force to commit to three of these in Alaska per year, in addition to the ... Red Flags that we do down in Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada." He said three Red Flag exercises had taken place in 2015, in April/May, August, and October. During "Red Flag 15-3," six nations participated in the exercise; 15 nations sent senior general flag officer representatives to participate in an Executive Observer Program that Lieutenant General Handy said he hosted at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) in Anchorage and in Interior Alaska. He said some nations had participated before, while others had never done so; each year that the event is held brings in a few more nations to participate.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 17, titled "2015 VIGILANT SHIELD," and advised it is an annual capstone homeland offense command post exercise, which took place in November 2015 hosted by NORAD and NORTHCOM. The exercise focuses not only on offense mechanisms, but also in teaching how to respond to a bad thing happening to the U.S. by practicing consequence management, support to civil authorities, et cetera. He noted that three field training exercises (FTX) are necessary, although unusual for Vigilant Shield. He talked about live exercises. One was a "render safe operation," in which a dangerous device was found in the Port of Anchorage and all the commanding control and operations were utilized for the situation, which required high-level U.S. Government approval.

He said this was a successful event. Another exercise was taking a C-17 with a force Stryker to Deadhorse, Alaska, and conducting an Arctic operation with the U.S. Army Alaska to conduct base patrol operations. He said an infantry unit was self-deployed "from Brian's organization to Fort Greely" to do security operations.

[1:41:06 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 18, titled "Major 2016 Exercises." He said there are literally hundreds of other events and exercises that were conducted in and around Alaska, but slide 18 shows the biggest ones: ICEX 16, in February through March; four Red Flags are on the books; another Vigilant Shield in October; and Arctic Edge 16 that have three associated exercises. The first exercise is Alaska Shield, which he said is focused on response to acts of terrorism and response to a "cyber event." The second exercise is Ardent Sentry, which he described as a NORTHCOM sponsored exercise linked with the aforementioned Cascadian earthquake scenario. The third exercise is Arctic Chinook, which is an Arctic Council search and rescue exercise.

[1:42:10 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 19, "11th Air Force" and said he will shift gears to discuss the units within the 11th Air Force, his responsibility, and some of the things the airmen have been doing for their country in Alaska over the past years. As the committee members are aware, the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Regional Support Center executes operations and maintenance contracts for a number of facilities in Alaska and throughout the Indo-Asia Pacific. He related that if they have a base or facility they do not know what to do with, they give it to Colonel Frank Flores and he determines how to make it work. The Alaskan Command executes the two largest contracts in Pacific Air Force taking care of the 15 long range radars that encircle Alaska and assist with indications of warnings. They have a large installation support contract that takes care of their operation at King Salmon, at Eareckson Air Station located on the island of Shemya, Alaska and also Wake Island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Of note, he commented, those contracts were completely transformed over the last 18 months. The first contract is with ARCTEC Alaska managing the Alaska radar system and is a \$474 million savings based on consolidation and changes to the way it is managed. Chugach runs the ISS support contract with a contract value at

\$184 million for a seven year period of time. A modernization was recently completed of the 15 Long Range Radar, the picture in the upper left corner is of one of their radars. The facility looked exactly like that in 1955 from the outside, but the inside is a modern facility that was previously run by 100 airmen, full squadron for each of those radars. Currently, there are four contractors supporting the entire system to keep it operating at the same level of readiness, and that has happened through a number of upgrades. The Essential Parts Replacement Program was completed last year, \$126 million contract. Notably, he explained, over the 10 year period of that contract, \$170 million was saved by consolidating many of the support activities and bringing some of that back to support in Anchorage.

[1:44:33 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 20, titled "JBER - 673d Air Base Wing" and referred to their ongoing environmental restoration projects in Alaska that "kinda go on under the radar, if you will," and 58 environmental projects will be complete in 2016. He explained the projects are anywhere from a village experiencing erosion on their coastline to some new discovery. Typically what happens, he said, a previous military base site was completely cleaned up - there were thousands throughout the cold war in Alaska, and through a change in the environment, vegetation starts to grow back and environmental issues are rediscovered. At that time, the service or agency that owned and controlled the facility is located and a brand new environmental project is conducted.

[1:45:22 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 21, titled "JBER - 3rd Wing" and stated the 673d Air Base Wing continues to lead the finest joint base in the Department of Defense due to various reasons such as, sharing a common fence line, they have very good synchronization of operational missions between what the Army does on JBER and what the Air Force does. Frankly, he advised, they had decided to go joint long before being told by the Department of Defense. During the early 2000s, they joined fire and rescue, took the gate down between the two installations, had a good start to joining, and are continuing to improve upon that success. Colonel Brian Bruckbauer, during the past year has taken the community relations program to another level in working with the Municipality of Anchorage. They are engaged in a seven step process that brought Air Force

Headquarters into the loop based upon a new law making it easier for them to partner with the local community on projects, and things they could do to benefit the community, and vice versa. He noted that thirteen agreements were started last year and they are looking forward to that continued great partnership.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY pointed to the [JBER Buckner Fitness Center], a \$22 million project, and advised it was completed on January 16, to allow airmen and soldiers living on base to use a state-of-the-art fitness facility and maintain readiness. The \$53 million barracks will be completed in April 2016, and there are 197 other ongoing projects.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY reiterated that joint basing has been a success in a number of ways such that in almost no other installation would a load master live next door to a jump master, and they are proud of the airmen and soldiers and how well they've worked together. Last year, the military men and women from JBER supported the sockeye fire during a horrible fire season. The base played a big part in supporting Northern Edge, the President of the United States (POTUS) visit, and a large success story with regard to its Fisher House last year. Fisher House, he explained, is a place where military men, women, and their families who need medical care can stay without paying the high cost of a hotel room downtown, and Fisher House has been full or overfull for a long time. Another success was working with Army Medical Command wherein an annex was established by taking 13 underutilized rooms from the Warrior Transition Unit, and turned them into Fisher House rooms. The president of the Fisher House Foundation committed to building a second house, he advised, and they look forward to that project in 2017.

1:48:52 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 22, titled "Eielson AFB - 354 FW" and advised the 3d Wing Warriors continue to represent the cutting edge of air dominance global mobility and command and control. He pointed out they are all over the world and it would be an entirely different briefing to advise the committee of everything the 3d Wing and their airmen have done over the past years. He noted there was fairly high attention brought because "we were very involved in both the Ebola response and the Nepal earthquake from a mobility and command and control perspective." The 3d Wing Warriors are

involved all year long in exercises such as, Northern Edge and Red Flag, and engaged across the community of all opportunities listed at the bottom of the slide. He noted the word "Norcom" is not seen on many DoD slides because they do not receive a lot of military construction money. President Barack Obama's budget is coming out today and is expected to include the AWACS facility because, he explained, the 962d Airborne Air Control Squadron has a severely out-of-date building. An updated AWACS facility will address the following problems: a modified aircraft is arriving soon; improving the E-3s requires an expansion in the facility; and the fact they have had no alert facility in that building since its existence even though these airmen sit alert. The airmen have to sit in a quarters where they are closer to their airplane and double up in there, and it still does not offer the necessary response time.

1:50:15 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 23, titled "DoD Wide Initiative" and advised that the ice men of the 354th continue to pioneer an incredible training platform by running their Red Flag series of exercises from [the far] north supporting the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) and its aggressor squadron. As discussed last year, he reiterated they are the preferred alternative to the first overseas base for F-35s, and the environment impact statement (EIS) is ongoing with no significant obstacles. The Record of Decision is expected in April, 2016, at which point they can start saying F-35s are coming, as opposed to "it's the preferred alternative." He advised that many lessons were learned from previous F-35 and F-22 bed down, and are capitalizing on those imperatives. The request for a slightly larger amount of money was granted to build a few newer facilities that were better optimized. Essentially, he related, an approximate \$500 million Milcon Construction and O&N Construction project is about to roll in up there, assuming favorable approval of the EIS.

1:51:31 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY remarked that modernization of the 64 year old treasure, called the "Combined Heat and Power Plant" is ongoing and military construction money is continually put in to replace the boilers, which explains the large hole in the plant as that is the only way to get the old boiler out and the new boiler in. He described them as the cleanest six burner boilers in the state and it continues to be a national asset to keep that base warm, and noted they beat EPA standards by 100 percent

when boiler six was finished. Boiler five is currently being replaced, and boiler four will be replaced in FY2017, he explained.

[1:54:20 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL interjected that not long ago that was on critical status.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY agreed, and commented that it is a large success story. In the event a particular amount of that capacity is lost, the base will be evacuated because when buildings start freezing in Interior Alaska they freeze hard. The Air Force made a cost decision when it installed new housing units in Alaska and put the utilities underground, many without utilidors. Quite frankly, he offered, the Air Force is paying for that now. Infrastructure damage is discovered every year and there is an ongoing seven phase project to replace it with state-of-the-art utility infrastructure during Alaska's short construction season, he said.

[1:53:46 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY reminded the committee of the P-Frost fluorocarbon contamination discovered within the aquifer in the underground water system, possibly due to an old KC-135 crash and the fire retardant used to put it out. The community of Moose Creek is downstream from the crash site, where the majority of the contamination was discovered, and it is believed contaminants sunk into the ground and into the water system. There are no federal EPA standards on what level is too high for P-frost, and it hasn't been classified. He advised that bottled water was immediately delivered to everyone and began putting filtration systems in the wells, which is going very well. He advised there have been discussions of undertaking a North Pole Municipal water connection to Moose Creek and the base, and the cost comparisons are being prepared.

[1:54:55 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY continued discussing successes in the 354th and noted they continue to operate the state-of-the-art Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) adversaries for across the Pacific Air Forces. He advised his aggressors from Eielson Air Force Base are on Okinawa Island at the Kadena Air Base currently training with the 525th Fighter Squadron who was based at JBER, and operate Red Flag.

[1:55:22 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 24, titled "Force and Family" and advised that Secretary of Defense Ashton "Ash" Carter has been very aggressive at tackling "people issues" which can be hard and challenging issues. The "Force of the Future" is a large series of initiatives with much of it contained within the "President's Budget (PB)" PB17 rolling out today. He explained the categories include: taking care of the people they have; and recognizing survey data and feedback information received from the service men and women departing the service. Service members have pointed out that they must leave the service because they can't meet all of their duties as an airman or soldier and also take care of their families. Therefore, he said, the initiatives include: increasing maternity and paternity leave; giving folks the capability to leave the service for a period of time to pursue a civilian education, professional opportunities, or have a family, and without penalty return to the service; addressing transgender issues; defining gender dysphoria; and what is a disqualifying event versus an event that should not disqualify someone from service.

[1:56:55 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY turned to the issue of arming of service members and he advised that the policy is out there and it does allow commanders to augment security forces if necessary. He related that the commanders are taking that very slowly, and commented that certainly the commanders have the capacity and legal authority to do such, but there are challenging use of force issues. He explained their security forces are police officers who go through intense training and certification to understand the mechanics of that, and they are moving carefully and slowly in that regard.

[1:57:31 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY directed attention to slide 25, titled "Thank You for Your Support" and suggested the committee members visit bases and speak with the men and women in uniform and asking the members what is on their minds, such as, how are things in the military, what's keeping them up at night, and what can the committee address for them. He advised that the service members are concerned about retirement, they want to be

certain their family is taken care of, they want to serve but "these big strategic trades that we are having to make," how much money will be spent on modernization versus medical and retirement benefits, and how will all of that fit together and still have an O&M budget to operate. Those questions are on the minds of military men and women across the board. There was an issue with the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) with an unexpected and dramatic drop. They addressed the Department of Defense (DoD) on that and received an immediate re-evaluation and re-survey that brought that COLA back up. Although, not to the level it was, but in many areas it came up almost to that level. The feedback on housing and the privatized housing projects revealed that folks are happy with the housing they are living in. He related they have a close partnership with the Veterans Affairs to ensure that the VA's trauma doesn't impact their men and women, and noted there have been no issues with medical. He related that the PB17 includes the new blended retirement system, and so far the feedback has been good but there is a long way to go for that.

[1:59:13 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY advised that the "Blue Star Families" organization conducted a survey last year, and he compared the concerns of the men and women in uniform in Alaska's to those of the national responses. He remarked that the highest concerns include: uncertainty with military life style; uncertainty about job security due to the force structure adjustments and changes in the types of people the nation need to serve in uniform to meet tomorrow's challenges; retirement and whether they will be financially secure; child care is a concern because military families want to take care of their children's mental, physical, and educational, wellbeing; concern, for the second year in a row, over housing costs being higher than at their previous station; 73 percent of active duty families reported incurring unexpected expenses primarily due to the military lifestyle, such as packing up and moving; and 7 percent of respondents reported home schooling which, he commented, is greater than double the rate in the U.S. general population because folks are concerned about re-establishing in a new school, understanding the curriculum, and to somehow find the way in. He reported that military home schooling has prompted a number of organizations and programs to help home schoolers who are grateful to interact with the public school system.

[2:01:57 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY expressed his appreciation for the committee's time and the ability to discuss what the fantastic men and women in uniform are doing. In the event someone feels a bit discouraged about the future of the nation, he suggested going to one of his flight lines, into a shop, or hanging out with some of Brian's Soldiers, and he guaranteed people will have a new feeling about the nation's future. The men and women of the Air Force today are developing new and innovative ways of taking on the list of challenges with new innovative ways of defending our nation.

[2:02:45 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL noted that the members of the committee appreciate the Air Force's investment in Alaska which it is part of the economy, and that he intends to ensure the legislature keeps that in focus when discussing the economy and that most legislators are trying to make it work. Due to the 24 hour news cycles, the things that go on in the world, the public may have a tendency to be a bit downhearted, and he agreed that America is in good hands.

[2:03:53 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX commented that Lieutenant General Handy said he would be bragging about the men and women in uniform, and she pointed out it is not bragging when a person is just telling the truth.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY responded that he completely agrees.

CO-CHAIR COGHILL asked Lieutenant General Handy to let his superiors know the committee appreciates allowing him to brief the committee as they are joined at the hip with the Pacific Command. The committee needs to continually remind itself that Alaska, both an Arctic State and a Pacific State, is a North American bulwark in many ways. He complimented him on his presentation.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HANDY said he will pass along his message.

[2:04:54 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 2:04 p.m. to 2:10 p.m.

[2:10:40 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL BRYAN OWENS, Commanding General, U.S. Army Alaska, advised his briefing would present the United States Army Alaska (USARAK) "America's Arctic Warriors," but first would present a five minute command video of the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) put together by soldiers as seen through their eyes.

[2:11:15 PM](#)

[Video of the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC).]

[2:16:54 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS remarked that if that video didn't get the members' heart strings tugged or their blood flowing, nothing will. He has been in the Army over 32 years and, he expressed that as a short-timer and first-timer in Alaska he has never seen such support the Alaskan communities offer, and thanked the committee for its support.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 1, titled "Mission Command" of the PowerPoint presentation and advised the picture was taken two weeks ago during their Arctic Winter Games. It is one squad of twenty-one squads that competed to show their skills, commitment, and endurance, throughout the Winter Games which, he pointed out is what Alaskan soldiers do every day. Major General Owens said he is aware this committee fully understands the details and he will go over some of the changes that have occurred since the briefing last year.

[2:18:06 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 2, titled "Mission Command" and the Mission read as follows:

USARAK provides trained and ready forces in support of worldwide unified land operation; supports theater engagement in the Pacific/Arctic and military operations in the AK-JOA, in order to contribute to a stable and secure operational environment.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS explained it is a threefold mission, and the primary mission portion is providing trained and ready forces. General Mark Milley, Chief of Staff of the Army, advised several times that the Army's purpose is to fight and win our nation's wars in a complex environment, and that is what they do. The United States Army Alaska (USARAK) provides trained and ready

forces, supports the theater engagement in the Pacific and Arctic, and military operations in Alaska, including everything from humanitarian assistance disaster relief to any actual other military operation that may occur. Last year, he said he was the Commanding General for the United States Army Alaska, and Deputy Commander for Alaska Command, and advised he is no longer the Deputy Commander for Alaska Command but assured the committee USARAK is on the preferred sourcing solution. Although, USARAK does not have a formal relationship with NORTHCOM and ALCOM, he reiterated they are the preferred sourcing solution, and he remains in close collaboration with Lieutenant General Handy and his staff.

[2:19:37 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS pointed to the left side of slide 2, and advised that his boss is United States Army Pacific Commander General Vincent Brooks who works for Admiral Harry Harris, the PACOM Commander. A relationship was also established with 1st Corps, a training readiness authority's relationship, and he takes guidance and gives semi-annual training briefs to Lieutenant General Stephen Lanza on their readiness. Restructuring has taken place since the last briefing and he does not have any general officers other than himself in the United States Army Alaska (USARAK). He does have two deputy commanders, Canadian Army Colonel Martin Frank on the operations side, who is on loan from Canada and he has performed great work. Colonel Sean Reed is to be the deputy commander for sustainment across the entire United States Army Alaska (USARAK) enterprise as opposed to only watching over Fort Wainwright.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS advised that no changes have been made to the 1st Stryker Brigades, "still 333 hard charging Strykers," with maintenance issues due to the environment, but they are trained and ready and always out and on the go and the committee is aware. There have been several changes within the USARAK Aviation Task Force. He highlighted that they are building an attack reconnaissance battalion of AH-64 Apache helicopters, they have 20 of the 24 helicopters in, and will be fully operational in September.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS advised that the establishment date for Gray Eagle Company is next week, with an upgraded MQ-1 Predator with enhanced capabilities to the Aviation Task Force. Training will begin in April and its first flight should be early April, he said.

[2:22:43 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL pointed out to the general public that it is an unmanned aerial vehicle.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS agreed.

CO-CHAIR COGHILL said he appreciates the work that has been done both there and with the University of Alaska on that very issue.

[2:23:02 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 3, titled "Trained and Ready Forces" and advised that Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) is starting to feel the effects of the 25 percent reduction at headquarters and most of that is on range operations, but they are watching it closely, making adjustments and mitigating that.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS turned to the restructure of the 425 and related that United States Senator Dan Sullivan asked the Chief of Staff of the Army to reconsider the decision announced on the 9th of July, 2015. He remarked, they do not know what that will look like, but one-half of the unit has deployed to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), Fort Polk, Louisiana. They will be training for the next three weeks at Ft. Polk in a validation exercise of the Airborne Task Force. They will provide observations, and it will inform a decision for the Chief of Staff of the Army which is expected within the April timeframe. He explained that the Northern Warfare Training Center (NWTTC) is a United States Army Alaska installation located in Black Rapids, Alaska, and described it as the Active Army's only Cold Region Training Proponent. It provides an opportunity to train the American Arctic Warriors on extreme cold weather, military mountaineering, and partnering by exchanges of instructors, he related.

[2:24:44 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 4, titled "Supporting Unified Land Operations" and advised "our primary function." He advised they have been involved in Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq, with troops in both Kuwait and Afghanistan for Operation Freedom Sentinel. Recently, the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division (425) returned from their Kosovo deployment. The slide points out that they are globally responsive and regionally engaged.

[2:25:33 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 5, "Supporting Unified Land Operations" and advised they support theater engagements through two lenses, Asia-Pacific and the Arctic Lens. They focus on countries with high altitude, military mountaineering, or extreme cold weather regions such as, Japan, Nepal, Chile, India, Mongolia, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. He explained that under the Arctic Lens they work primarily with the Arctic 8, minus Russia and Iceland, who does not have an army. The army maintains strong ties with these countries and partners to deter aggression and ensure peace and stability in the region. Last year, he highlighted, they conducted a cold region military mountaineering collaborative training event at the USARAK Northern Worker Training Center [based at Fort Wainwright] with 12 nations attending. This year 27 nations and other U.S. agencies have been invited to attend in March, 2016.

[2:26:52 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX noted that Chile is included under the Asia-Pacific listing and it appears misplaced.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS explained that Chile has a ski school, high altitude, extreme cold weather, mountainous terrain, and it sees itself Western-looking into the Pacific. Chile asked General Brooks and Admiral Harris to be part of the Pacific equation, and "we have sent some instructors" over to Chile's ski school and it will send instructors to the United States to jointly collaborate on best practices.

[2:28:13 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 6, "Military Ops in the Alaska JOA" and highlighted that the Arctic Anvil is multi-national. The three-fold exercise begins at the end of July 2016, just before Red Flag. The first exercise is a train up for First Stryker Brigade, with a National Training Center (NTC) rotation January 2017, and a Full Operational Capability (FOC) for the operational construct for the Joint Pacific Multi-National Readiness Capability. He described it as basically a Combat Training Center Directorate (CTCD) in a box providing higher control, observer/controller trainers, and providing instrumentation throughout. They are being put to the test in Hawaii with the 25th Infantry Division, and "we will take them

to their final exercise" before they are fully operational in July-August.

[2:29:54 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS explained that is part of Pacific Pathways and; therefore, Arctic Anvil will be part of a trifecta of other exercises ongoing throughout the U.S. Army Pacific. In March, 2015, the Stryker Brigade was sent to Korea, Japan. This year they will be in Alaska. He turned to "Wildfire Suppression" and reminded the committee there were quite a few fires last year, not one fire was set by the U.S. Army or the U.S. military, which was a big deal because they were up in the 700s in July when he took over. He said they worked closely with Alaska Fire Service, the army's L&O team has gone from two to eight, and they provide incredible science behind the art of keeping the fires from occurring as the army continues to increase its training in its training areas. It allows them to train year around and not set fire and mitigate the fires they do set, he remarked.

[2:31:20 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL offered his appreciation of less smoke because the Interior has the Park Training Area, and the Fort Wainwright Bombing Area, and the Interior had enough fires without the army setting fires. Seriously, he noted, the state is grateful that the army's benefit of training is also the state's benefit to fire suppression.

[2:31:58 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS related that they lost 21 training days last year due to smoke in the Interior, and they want to get as far left of fires as possible, whether inside or outside of the training areas. There were eleven search and rescue missions [last year], nine were Alaska State Trooper assists, and two were downed aircraft and, he related they flew approximately 43.2 hours in search and rescue and assisting inside Alaska. As to mutual aid, they responded to the Explosive Safety Guide (EOD) and the fire department's response to Fort Wainwright.

[2:33:02 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 7, "Vision," and advised the new vision statement captures the essence of who they are, which read as follows:

America's Arctic warriors ready to fight and win. Forged in Alaska, ready and resilient, strengthened by Civilians and Families. Strategically located, globally responsive, and regionally engaged.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS related that the army's sole purpose is to fight and win our nation's wars in complex environments.

[2:33:33 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 8, "America's Arctic Warriors Ready to Fight and Win Anywhere" and pointed out that they do not just train in cold weather, they live in cold weather in cold weather regions. America's Arctic Warriors are postured to fight and win anywhere on the globe, and 31 percent of the world are cold climates, with 27 percent considered mountainous, he pointed out.

[2:34:36 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 9, "Arctic Region Relationships" and reiterated they collaborate with the Arctic 8 minus Russia and Iceland, which includes exchanging instructors and, he commented, all of the countries intend to attend the collaborative training event in March, at Black Rapids, Alaska.

[2:35:13 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 10, "Arctic Presence" and the Air Force Pegasus series, and explained it is an operation in Deadhorse, Alaska that will take place next March. The expectation is that along with the maneuver, either Stryker or Airborne, will introduce the Apache Helicopters and "do a FARC operation forward area, arming and resupply position." They will move from there up to Deadhorse, perform a downed aircraft search and rescue with one of those aircraft, and then work through some of the communications pieces [Co-Chair Coghill] mentioned earlier. He pointed to the picture on the right of slide 10, and said they partner with DoD partners in academia, and also have a strong tie with (indisc.) labs and PEO soldiers to improve the survivability of our soldiers in the Arctic region.

[2:36:19 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 11, "Forged in Alaska" and expressed pride in the Joint Pacific-Alaska Range Complex (JPARC). The ground maneuver training area is 2.5 times the size of the National Training Center (NTC), and the relationship between the National Guard and the U.S. Air Force here is extraordinary. He expressed pride that this type of relationship cannot be found in any other area in the world. He noted the training areas are close to the Arctic Circle and Fairbanks is only 120 miles from the Arctic Circle.

[2:37:09 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 12, "Ready and Resilient" and pointed out that they build resiliency into the troops with numerous programs, and they work closely with the communities. He stressed that Lieutenant General Handy and he are amazed and humbled by their soldiers these days and are very proud of them. Alaska builds resiliency just by being here, and Alaska's soldiers are definitely resilient. He said, "We don't just have soldiers in the army; our soldiers are the Army," and it is important to focus on the soldiers.

[2:38:01 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 13, "Strategically Located" and reminded the committee that Lieutenant General Handy discussed the issue of being strategically located. He explained that in order to launch from the East Coast, the flight is over Alaska to get anywhere in the world, and it's only a nine hour flight into Germany. He reiterated Lieutenant General Handy by saying that many people look at the map in a flat fashion rather than the manner in which it is designed, and Alaska is definitely strategically located. He pointed to the bottom on the slide which read as follows: "Alaska is the most strategic place on earth" - Brigadier General Billy Mitchell, Testimony to Congress 1935.

[2:38:46 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 14, "Globally Responsive & Regionally Engaged" and related that he is not going to go through this busy slide. He said his intention was to show they are globally responsive and regionally engaged. The slide depicts the many places they are located, and the many things the soldiers have been doing since FY14, which covers the entire globe, he said.

2:39:16 PM

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slides 15-16, "USARAK is a Community of Excellence" and described the slide as a short list of our soldier's accomplishments, and he discussed a few of the accomplishments listed on the slide.

2:40:56 PM

LIEUTENANT COLONEL TIM JONES, U.S. Army, Retired, referred to the statement that the JRTC rotation is a validation of the Airborne Task Force, and asked whether they are organized and manned at the same level they would be if the reduction in force directive occurs.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS responded no, they are not manned at 1,046, they have manned at 1,600 and the intent is to be able to see possible weaknesses in the formation. He explained they chose 1,600 because they believe the 1,046 is an Airborne Task Force but not joint forcible entry capable. Commanding General Vincent Brooks and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Mark Milley asked them to look at a joint forcible entry capable formation that is autonomous for 72 hours. He explained "you've got to be able to jump in, expand (indisc.), and bring in (indisc.) air land aircraft." In order to accomplish that, 1,600 is the correct level to do the validation, he opined.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS offered that the entire 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division (425), Brigade Combat Team (BCT) will be at JRTC. The first part is a joint forcible entry operation on the evening of February 16, and Senator Dan Sullivan intends to attend and be there for the jump. Subsequent to the joint forcible entry operation, they will reset, introduce the rest of the brigade, and continue the rotation with a defense and offensive operation. Thereby, the entire 425 will be trained and ready coming out of this CTC, and will also be able to provide input to inform the Chief of Staff of the Army's decision on the first portion of this, which is the Airborne Task Force. He opined it could be anything from 1,046 to the entire brigade combat team (BCT) remaining as it is. The decision is unknown, but the Department of the Army staff said the decision was made. He said, "So, 1,046 is the decision." General Mark Milley promised three things to Senator Sullivan, such that he would visit Alaska, he would maintain the BCT at 85 percent strength until he makes his decision, and he would relook at the decision, and he is doing all three of

those. A decision is expected sometime after the JRTC rotation, he said.

[2:44:48 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP noted the Gray Eagles will be first flight in early April, and asked how many aircraft total in that package.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS related that the full package is 12, and they are receiving 6 aircraft due to slowdowns in production. They will maintain 6 until there is a decision to send 3 more, making their total compliment 9 aircraft at Fort Wainwright.

SENATOR BISHOP asked where they will be bedded down.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS reiterated, Fort Wainwright. Currently, it will be in Hanger 1 in Fort Wainwright, but they are hopeful the MILCON piece will be approved for a new hanger, he added.

SENATOR BISHOP commented that Alaska is bragging proud of its military, and opined some people at the table may be army brats. He related a story about his father while in the service.

[2:47:04 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL remarked the Interior sees the Strykers move on a fairly regular basis, and it is to be commended that they move well and allow traffic to flow on some of Alaska's small and congested areas, such as Richardson Highway. The army has set out to move fairly freely between the Fairbanks area and the Black Rapids area. When he sees a convoy moving he tries to make sure he is on a double-lane road, but they have allowed traffic to move fairly well and have kept the complaints low. He asked that Major General Owens pass his appreciation on to the organizer.

[2:48:11 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS extended his appreciation and commented that much thought goes into [moving], such as everything from Moose hunting season to traffic on the roadways. He said they want to be able to train and be prepared to fight and win our nation's wars, and at the same time be good neighbors and good citizens of the communities.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX said she is glad to have Major General Owens here.

[2:48:58 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL advised this briefing was the time to hear from him on his mission and that the committee wants to join in on the mission with America. Geography is a big deal, he related, and the committee wants to be supportive as much as possible but the only way they can be supportive is to get these high level briefings, he advised.

[2:49:50 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 2:49 p.m. to 2:54 p.m.

[2:54:47 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL invited the next presenter to come forward, and noted the committee packet includes the Code of Military Justice [version] the House of Representatives passed, and the Senate has not yet taken it up.

[2:55:38 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL LAURIE HUMMEL, Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, Alaska National Guard, Adjutant General, said she would like to offer the military side of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA) and its accomplishments in the past year, and discuss current initiatives and future plans. She related this is her 36th year in uniform and noted that Lieutenant General Handy said the airmen and soldiers serving in Alaska are happy here because it feels like home. She related that "this is our home and we are Alaskans."

[2:58:09 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 2, "DMVA Mission" and advised it is in statute, which read:

To provide military forces to accomplish military missions in the state or around the world; provide homeland security and defense; emergency preparedness, response, and recovery; veterans services; and youth military style training and education.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 3, "Core Services" and explained they have reinterpreted their DMVA mission into four core services to the state, which read:

Defend and Protect Alaska and the United States  
Disaster Preparedness/Response and Recovery  
Outreach to Veterans and Military Families  
Youth Intervention

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL noted there are strong linkages between the first two. Yet, she explained, linking all four together takes a bit of creative thinking but that is exactly what they are doing within the department to breakdown silos of independent activity and to work together synergistically.

[2:58:07 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 4, "DMVA Vision and Core Values" and offered that to assist with synchronizing the efforts in the department, she did developed departmental vision and core values to help integrate its diverse missions and activities, which read:

Vision: Through constant collaboration internally and with external partners, DMVA implements a viable Arctic strategy, increases emergency management capacity, and expands engagement with Alaskan communities, all while achieving federal mission assurance.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL noted that when reviewing the Vision statement, there are essentially three major objectives. The first is executing viable Arctic strategy. She pointed out, there are 53 other National Guards in 49 other states, but Alaska is the only state that makes the United States an Arctic Nation, and it makes sense to follow the lead of Governor Bill Walker and the legislature to be at the forefront of developing and executing an arctic policy. The second effort is to increase emergency management capacity and, she said, they deliberately chose the words "increase" and "capacity" because words mean things. It is known that the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management within the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is filled with professionals but they can't do it alone. That is where increasing capacity comes in and she commented that they can increase their capacity through refining processes, developing mission partners, or improving their own individual resilience. For example, by

building a seven day emergency kit, available for free on the department's web site. The department knows that in order to increase capacity they must conduct outreach which leads to engagement with Alaskan communities. Typically, the word "community" denotes a geographic area but there are other types of Alaskan communities, such as the community of the military, veterans, emergency managers, and pet owners. The outreach is focused on physical areas and the people living in those areas who come together to create communities of commonality of purpose.

[3:00:51 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL pointed to the words "federal mission assurance" within the vision statement, and advised that all of the divisions within DMVA and especially the National Guard, have federal requirements and federal funding. The Alaska National Guard must maintain appropriate readiness to fight and win our nation's wars, which is why they exist and are funded. The Division of Administrative Services must account and document expenditures accurately to generate federal receipts, and each division within the department has a primary task. She related it is her job to integrate those efforts and stretch [federal] dollars, and to especially stretch the Alaskan dollars, and to best serve Alaskans at the same time. She pointed to the Rural Engagement Initiative on slide 4, and said it alludes to the department-wide outreach efforts to assist rural communities in being stronger and more resilient. On the other hand, the Rural Engagement Initiative is a specific initiative in the governor's budget as an increment aiming to seed detachments of the Alaska State Defense Force throughout rural Alaska. Initially, in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to ultimately set enhanced conditions for establishment and retention in the National Guard and other service components. She then pointed to their Core Values, which includes professionalism, commitment, and teamwork, and how they plan to continue improving the National Guard and the department.

[3:02:34 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 5, "DMVA Commissioner's Goals" and explained these are the goals she developed and presented to Governor Walker fairly early on. While the goals may appear simplistic upon first read, they are actually complex goals requiring the entire department to work together to achieve, she explained. A theme within the department is the breaking down of walls and integration of one

division with the other as, she noted, they are truly in the business of making one plus one equals three.

3:03:04 PM

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 6, "DMVA Strategy" and advised in order to reach those goals, they recently created an integrated strategy with four major lines of effort which lead to the goal of integrated DMVA activities to create a more secure and resilient Alaska. The four lines of effort from the vision statement, and the cross-functional objectives listed across the bottom of the slide, are what helps them to focus and integrate their efforts.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 7, "Kivalina" and advised in January they took an Air Guard C-130 on a training mission with personnel from the National Guard, Homeland Security and Management Division, a couple of staffers from the Office of the Governor, and Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott. They traveled to Kotzebue where they transferred to the Army Guard Black Hawk Helicopters and flew on to Kivalina. While in Kivalina, Lieutenant Governor Mallott and those in uniform visited the local school and met with school children and leadership. They were able to present information to the community on the National Guard, the Alaska Military Youth Academy, and Alaska's veteran's services. While this occurred, Mike O'Hare, Division Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and a team of his emergency managers met with the local emergency planning committee and leadership to update Kivalina's disaster plans. She pointed out that this one trip demonstrates the ability of DMVA to provide all of its core services at a tremendous cost savings to Alaska.

3:04:55 PM

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 8, "State General Fund Dollars Spent - DMVA" and advised it is the "becoming famous DMVA iceberg slide." The slide shows that for a contribution in this year's governor's budget of \$18.4 million of state money the state receives over \$500 [million] in federal receipts, the above-water portion of the iceberg.

3:05:32 PM

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 9, and advised one of her primary jobs as adjutant general is to ensure that the Alaska National Guard is a relevant force for the state

and federal governments. To that end, they have hosted a number of strategic leader engagements this year. She then explained the various events and attendees. She noted she never misses an opportunity to gain more voice for Alaska, and usually when she travels to Washington D.C. meets with the Alaska congressional delegation. She noted she has discussed with Senator Dan Sullivan everything from keeping army active duty force structure in Alaska to the F-35 basing schedule to combat rescue helicopter fielding. Recently, Representative Don Young introduced the "Rural Guard and Reserve Act of 2016" removing a cap on reimbursement for travel to attend training drills. As written in the joint travel regulation now, this cap is a disincentive because when a service member lives off the road network, many soldiers have to pay more just to get to drill than they are paid for drilling. Senator Lisa Murkowski has worked diligently with DMVA to ensure the previous National Guard bad actors have been administratively processed in the most just and expeditious way possible. Working in partnership with the congressional delegation has created new opportunities for the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA) it would not have been able to create on its own. [Slide 9, photographs of: former U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, Piper Campbell; Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter; 38th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army General Ray Odierno; Lieutenant General Timothy J. Kadavy Director, Army National Guard Bureau; Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., Commander, US Pacific Command.]

[3:08:28 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slide 10, "Initiatives" and noted they have created initiatives with some of the people in the room. House Bill 126, the Alaska Code of Military Justice passed the House of Representatives with a 39 to 0 vote, and asked that the Senators at the table assist by moving the bill as swiftly as possible. She pointed out Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Weaver is available to answer questions about the Code of Military Justice, the non-judicial punishment regulation that it will enable, and how it will be implemented within the force.

[3:09:18 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL advised that Command Chief Master Sergeant Paul Nelson recently became the command senior enlisted leader of the Alaska National Guard, and a hand selected team are spearheading an initiative to improve the ethical fitness of the Alaska force. They will be working with the U.S. Department

of Defense (DoD) Office of Military Professionalism Office headed by Navy Rear Admiral Margaret "Peg" Klein, pictured on slide 10, to help design and teach an "exportable living curriculum" on this subject. Adjutant General Hummel offered that she intends to take full advantage of DoD assistance as the next steps are taken to re-boot, re-fit, and reform the National Guard.

[3:10:04 PM](#)

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT PAUL NELSON, Alaska National Guard, said the Alaska National Guard under the direction of Adjutant General Hummel, has begun a grass roots initiative to research, develop, and implement a program of ethical fitness into the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA). This initiative will begin in the National Guard and eventually spread throughout the department led by the non-commissioned officer corps. It will encompass not only ethics but also a re-education in the profession of arms with an emphasis on military corps values to include character, physical courage, moral courage, and selflessness. He listed the members of the team and advised the team is to work directly with the Department of Defense of the Senior Advisor for Military Professionalism. The objective is to build a comprehensive plan to begin implementing the art of ethical fitness into the DMVA, and to first define ethical fitness. Military ethics is a subset of professional ethics and it exists to be of service to professionals who are not themselves specialists in ethics, but have to carry out the task entrusted to the profession as honorably and consciously as possible. Military ethics is to enable and motivate them to act appropriately in the discharge of their professional obligations. Fitness refers to those things the members of the National Guard are to maintain themselves in an active and ready state, they consist of the four pillars of resiliency, such as physical, emotional, social, and spiritual fitness. He related this is an ongoing process that never reaches an end state. For example, a person never reaches a point of physical fitness wherein they no longer need to exercise. It becomes an enduring and positive lifestyle change. Therefore, ethical fitness, following this definition and positive lifestyle example dictates that an attitude of ethical fitness is incorporated into the fiber of both personal and professional lives, and strengthening bonds with each other in the uniform services and civilian divisions of the Alaska DMVA. He explained that the Alaska team is enhancing the professional development programs by incorporating ethical fitness into existing curriculum while also implementing ethical fitness and a review of common

organizational practices in order to educate the professionals and re-enforce ethical fitness in practice. In turn, this will improve the working environment of soldiers, airmen, and civilian workforce, and consequently increase efficiency of the DMVA operations.

[3:13:02 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL described the initiative as exciting to help improve not just the professionalism, but everyone in the force. She advised that Command Sergeant Major Richard Hildreth will be the first ever Alaska National Guard liaison to rural and tribal communities. She related that he will be key for the success of their rural engagement efforts, having grown up in Bethel and being a former recruiter, he is uniquely talented to understand the challenges Alaska's rural population faces to participate in the Alaska National Guard and military service.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL noted that in the interest of time she would skip [slides 11-13] a discussion about the state side of the department, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the Office of Veterans Affairs who serves Alaska's 75,000 veterans and their families, and the Alaska Military Youth Academy.

[3:15:34 PM](#)

COLONEL KAREN MANSFIELD, Commander, Alaska Air National Guard, directed attention to slide 14, "Air National Guard" and said it represents how the Air National Guard has evolved over the nation over the last decade.

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 15, "Air National Guard (ANG)" and advised that air guardsmen represent approximately 30 percent of the total air force and are used as an operational reserve, and the strategic reserve is well established. The Air National Guard is expected to fill approximately 30 percent of the air force deployment taskings for FY16.

[3:16:50 PM](#)

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 16, "Dual Roles of the Alaska Air National Guard" and highlighted that the Air National Guard supports both the federal missions and the state missions. The Alaska Air National Guard has forces continually training, exercise, and deploying for the Commander of Air

Pacific Forces as well as Air Combat Command and Mobility Command, and North Command. Concurrently, it performs state missions on an as-needed or as-requested basis, most notably and frequently in the form of search and rescue.

COLONEL MANSFIELD referred to slide 8, and pointed out that the Alaska Air National Guard executes approximately \$2.9 million in state general funds while bringing into the state over \$166 million in federal dollars for the federal missions it supports.

3:17:48 PM

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 17, "Locations & Primary Missions" and advised the Alaska Air National Guard supports missions with over 2,100 air guard members in three locations. Eielson Air Force Base (Eielson AFB) is the 168th Wing which previously was the 168th Air Fueling Wing. She explained it was officially re-designated to reflect the inclusion of the 213th Space Warning Squadron at Clear Air Force Station (Clear AS). South at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) is the 176th Wing, one of the most complex organizations in the Air Guard, with four primary mission sets to include: strategic and tactical airlift, air defense squadron, and the rescue triad which includes the Guardian Angels, Rescue Helicopters, and HC-130s that provide the refueling capability to those rescue helicopters. Both means also have the standard supporting units typical to an air force wing which includes: civil engineering, security forces, logistics, medical support, and communications squadrons. The diverse primary mission sets, as well as the supporting organizations, can be leveraged for state domestic operational needs.

3:18:54 PM

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 18, "Total Force" said that the Alaska Air Guard performs many federal mission tasks on a day-to-day basis. In keeping with the DoD's focus and prioritizations on total force integration, the Alaska Air Guard is a committed total force participant seamlessly deploying active duty airmen to overseas missions and committed to integrating to high levels here at home. It provides a classic guard association of operators and maintainers to the active duty C-17 strategic air lift mission on JBER through the 249th Air Lift Squadron. The Alaska Air Guard is unique in the number of ongoing federal missions being funded and executed, essentially deployed in place 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and 365 days per year. The Alaska Air Guard tankers sit

alert at Eielson AFB in support of the Alaska NORAD Region (ANR) while the rescue forces provide alert capability to the 11th Air Force [JBER} active duty fighters enabling the NORAD response and extended training capacity. The defense squadron on JBER is on duty 24/7, 365 days per year, maintaining continuous air defense threat watch over the Alaskan area of responsibility. The 213th Space Warning Squadron also executes 24/7, 365 days per year, with air guard providing 90 percent of the space operators and 100 percent of the Clear Defense Forces for the Air Force Space Mission.

[3:20:23 PM](#)

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 19, "At Home" and related that it is also busy at home with its domestic response and community support. The Alaska Air National Guard is manned with a higher percentage of full time guardsmen due to its expanded federal mission set. It gives the Alaska Air Guard the capacity to leverage both skill sets and functional response in support of state needs. For example, in 2015, the 168th Medical Group participated in a Mission of Mercy for the Fairbanks region treating over 886 patients and providing approximately \$850,000 in medical care. Veterans Stand Down, in the same region, assisted 570 veterans with medical services, hygiene supplies, food donations, and clothing. The 176th Wing supported the largest recurring innovative readiness training operation in the nation, Operation Arctic Care, visiting 16 villages, delivering medical and dental care to over 3,000 Alaskans and transporting personnel and over 67 tons of cargo. In conjunction with the Federal Mission Set, Alaska's guardsmen man the rescue coordination center that scrambles the forces that go out to take care of Alaska's civil SAR within the state.

[3:21:46 PM](#)

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 20, "Deployed" and remarked that the deployments keep coming. The Alaska Air National Guard's tankers have one of the highest operational tempos with 67 percent of their missions being operational, not training. In 2015, they deployed over 150 members to Central Command, and off-loaded 2.6 million pounds of fuel and over 328 combat missions. The 176th Wing, the Guardian Angels teams were deployed over 13 months of the last 24 months. The C-17 expeditionary crews support multiple rotations logging almost 4,000 hours while delivering over 29 million pounds of cargo, and moving over 7,000 passengers. The Civilian Engineering and Security Force Warriors only recently returned from their

operation Enduring Freedom commitments. She described the Alaska Air Guardsmen as very busy and "will be just as busy in 2016."

[3:22:38 PM](#)

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 21, "Current and Future" and related that the Air National Guard's eyes are on the future ensuring that it stays vital and relevant to the state and the nation. She reiterated the re-designation of the 168th Wing, while recognizing the inclusion of the Space Mission expanding its organizational construct, the Air National Guard is looking for ways to help meet the total force tanker requirements in Alaska, as there is more refueling need than capacity in this state. The goal is to establish an active duty association placing operators and maintainers against its National Guard tankers in conjunction with its current squadron in helping to find a viable solution to that deficit in tanker capacity, she said.

[3:23:17 PM](#)

COLONEL MANSFIELD directed attention to slide 22, "Health of the Force" and said the professional and personal development of every airman in the Alaska Air National Guard is a top priority of the organization to ensure members have skills necessary to be successful. Towards that goal it has implemented standardized written performance evaluations for its traditional guardsmen to give them the feedback they need for future development. In addition, it developed a chief master sergeant development panel to highlight future senior leaders, enlisted leaders, in the organization and groom them for advanced leadership opportunities. Concurrently, it knows that airmen care is always at the forefront of its mission set and should be one of its primary priorities. To that effort, over the past year it has funded full time chaplain positions in both wings to ensure airmen have immediate access to meet their counseling and spiritual wellness needs. She explained that both wings have hired directors of psychological health professionals that provide short and long term counseling as well as serving as liaisons with other mental health professionals in both military and civilian sectors.

COLONEL MANSFIELD assured the committee that the Alaska Air National Guard is filled with highly trained and motivated airmen. As members of Alaska's communities, they go above and

beyond in their commitment to serve the nation and Alaska, she remarked.

[3:24:52 PM](#)

COLONEL JOE STREFF, Commander, Alaska Army National Guard, turned to slide 25, "AKARNG Vision and Mission" and advised its vision and mission statement is relevant to both federal and state missions, as follows:

**VISION**

A diverse, trusted, and capable organization ready to conduct Unified Land Operations for the federal government and the State of Alaska.

**MISSION**

Maintain ready units and Soldiers who are available to support the Governor and fellow Alaskans for domestic operations while also ready to deploy worldwide in support of the National Military Strategy.

[3:26:06 PM](#)

COLONEL STREFF reminded the committee that the Alaska Army National Guard (AKARNG) and the Alaska Air National Guard (AK ANG) are the state's first responders in cases of emergencies in Alaska, together with the Division of Homeland Security/Emergency Management.

[3:26:26 PM](#)

COLONEL STREFF directed attention to slide 26, "AKARNG Locations" and advised that the Alaska Army National Guard is located in 18 locations around the state, with 17 armories, plus the soldiers located at Fort Greely. Reductions are faced both in federal and state funds causing the AKARNG to assess its stationing plan and, subsequently, where it can afford to place its forces. In the past, it had up to 80 armories around the state, but with the changes being faced it is reducing its footprint to 18 locations. The benefit to Alaska is the reduction in infrastructure costs and the potential to use these armories and be repurposed into local communities.

[3:27:14 PM](#)

COLONEL STREFF directed attention to slide 27, "AKARNG FY15-19 End Strength Authorization" and advised the Army National Guard

mandated a reduction in overall end strength nationally from 358,200 people to 335,000 by FY19. Each state has had to absorb cuts and Alaska's share is approximately 12 percent of its 2015 manning level. Simultaneously, as it was reducing its force structure, it also had to convert from a battlefield surveillance brigade to original support group, which involves two-fifths of its complete force structure. As the army is drawing down, the standards for recruits has gone up which creates challenges in Alaska for those who may consider serving in the armed forces. Currently, 70 percent of the recruit population ages 18-25 years do not qualify to join the military, nationally. This is further exasperating Alaska with some of the unique challenges that Alaska's youth face, and the AKARNG is working with the Alaska State Defense Force to afford as many Alaskans as possible the opportunity to serve this great state.

[3:28:28 PM](#)

COLONEL STREFF directed attention to slide 28, "Alaska Army National Guard 2015 Deployments" and said the Army National Guard continues to deploy soldiers in support of missions and training events around the world. Of note, it continued its deployment relationship with the Country of Mongolia, the AKARNG's state partnership program country and sent soldiers to Mongolia to train with 24 other countries in peacekeeping operations. The AKARNG sent pilots to fly in Afghanistan and soldiers to serve in Kosovo, and its soldiers also trained in South Korea, Cambodia, Australia, and the United States. He advised there are 210 Alaska Army National Guardsmen operating the Missile Defense Mission at Fort Greely on watch 24/7, 365 day a year, operating as the nation's defenders against intercontinental ballistic missile attack, and these guardsmen provide a vital link to the defense of our homeland.

[3:29:35 PM](#)

SERGEANT MAJOR MARC PETERSEN, State Command, Alaska Army National Guard (AKNRNG), directed attention to slide 29, "Defense Support to Civil Authorities" and advised that its state missions include emergency response, caring for and responding to requests by civil authorities for support ranging from flood relief, search and rescue, and emergency housing for citizens in its armories. The Alaska Army National Guard helicopters supported the Department of Forestry with 131 hours on the Mat-Su and Kenai fires last season, and was also involved in Operation Colony Glacier with support and recovery. There is a civil support team with 22 specially trained army and air

guardsmen to assist civil authorities in the case of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive events. The team stands ready to provide non-emergency assistance to local and federal authorities. For example, in support of the Glacier Summit it provided military police support to the Anchorage Police Department and State Troopers, aviation support to the United States Secret Service, and refueling support to the President's helicopter Marine One. He advised the guard has helped deliver medical care, build structures and parks, and supply veterinary care throughout Alaska. The innovative readiness training program combines the efforts and skills of all of the branches of the armed forces to train in their career fields while benefiting citizens throughout the United States, he said.

[3:31:09 PM](#)

SERGEANT MAJOR PETERSEN directed attention to slide 30, "State Partnership Program Alaska - Mongolia" and reiterated that the Alaska State Partnership Program country is Mongolia, and the program links the National Guard with the armed forces of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship. He advised that this program is administered by the National Guard Bureau and guided by the State Department Foreign Policy Goals, and is executed by the Adjutant General in support of the Combatant Commander and U.S. Chief, National Guard Mission Security Cooperation objectives and Department of the Defense Policy Goals. The National Guard conducts military to military engagements and also leverages relationships and capabilities to facilitate broader inter-agency and corollary engagements spanning military, government, economic, educational, and social spheres, he advised. Additionally, an Alaska Army National Guard soldier has served as the bilateral affairs and security operations officer, and he lived in Ulaanbaator, Mongolia for the past two years serving in the United States Embassy, helping facilitate international affairs between the United States and Mongolia.

[3:32:21 PM](#)

SERGEANT MAJOR PETERSEN directed attention to slide 31, "AKARNG Rural Engagement" and explained that the Alaska Army National Guard has invited elements of the Command and staff of the Army National Guard to rural Alaska to witness the challenges faced in Alaska's communities in order to grow its ranks in those areas. He related that some of the initiatives include: changes to the Federal Joint Travel Regulation which allows guardsmen to

be reimbursed for travel to drill; and waivers for Alaskans from its rural areas to allow them to serve in formations. He described the Alaska Army National Guard as filled with highly trained and motivated soldiers who volunteer to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and the State of Alaska. It is united in its resolve to be a diverse, trusted, and capable organization ready to accomplish the mission set before them. They hold true to the army values and uphold the laws of the state, nation, and military, he said.

[3:33:30 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked Colonel Streff whether he said that 70 percent of folk's ages 17-25 years were not qualified to serve in the army.

COLONEL STREFF responded that in the military at large, 70 percent of the population of the United States ages 17-25 [are not qualified to serve in the army].

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX questioned whether the reason was because they are not physically in shape or other reasons.

COLONEL STREFF answered that the major factors include physical fitness, but then there are moral issues associated with that, educational problems, such as drop out problems in various locations. He noted the standards have been raised in the military as its force structure has dropped so things are becoming competitive for the recruiters.

[3:34:31 PM](#)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HUMMEL remarked that not one of the five witnesses today have been in their positions longer than one year, she opined that the committee can share her optimism in their expertise, energy, and leadership, and expressed that the Alaska National Guard is on the rise.

[3:35:07 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL pointed out that the committee gets to work with budgetary issues and the experiential issues, but the partnerships she has built with the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard have been significant. Clearly, he commented, not only from deployment but to the 24/7 operations of Clear Air Force Base or the Missile Defense, Alaska is now full on partners both in fighting on the ground and watching

through these devices. He thanked her for taking on the responsibility, sharing the new command structure, and that the committee is looking forward to rubbing shoulders more with her.

3:36:06 PM

The committee took an at-ease from 3:36 p.m. to \*3:41 p.m.

3:41:47 PM

CO-CHAIR COGHILL called the committee back to order.

3:42:36 PM

REAR ADMIRAL DANIEL ABEL, Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District, United States Coast Guard, said that in 37 years of being in uniform, he has never seen collaboration between the other military services, the Coast Guard, the National Guard, and the state, as efficient as it is in Alaska. He described it as phenomenal. For example, he said, it takes a lot to keep two MH-60s going for four months in the North Slope and he had to get "all that stuff has to go back to Kodiak." He asked the National Guard whether its load masters would like to practice with some odd shaped gear. Adjutant General Hummel agreed, and requested that Lieutenant General Handy submit a memo, of which he did. Thereby, the Coast Guard saved five C-130 trips by using one of the National Guard's C-17s to get the equipment back to Kodiak. He described that as collaboration and noted that the costs for the Coast Guard C-130s, as well as tax payer's money, were saved.

REAR ADMIRAL ABEL offered that some things have not changed for the Coast Guard in Alaska, and its mission remains the same which is: to protect man from the sea - life saving mission; protect the sea from man - environmental stewardship mission; and to deny the sea to anyone who would use it as an avenue to cause harm for the nation. There are 44,000 miles of coastline and over 3.8 million square miles of dangerous and hostile Alaskan waters. He advised that of the Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions, probably the biggest mission it tends to is search and rescue, domestic and international fisheries - making sure it is a fair playing field, aids to navigation, military readiness, environmental response, maritime safety, and homeland security. On an average day, the Alaska Coast Guard will save or assist two people, and those two people will be home with their family due to what the men and women of the Coast Guard are doing in Alaska every single day. On a given month, 150

recreational or commercial boats will be inspected to perform the prevention side; will service 98 aids to navigation; investigate 11 pollution incidents; and will monitor in the safe shipping of 700 million gallons of fuel out of Alaska. He offered that Alaska is blessed with the fact it has a new ocean emerging for the first time in 10,000 years, and the Coast Guard wants to be sure it is done in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.

[3:45:24 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL ABEL stated that since 2007, the number of vessels in the Coast Guard's area of responsibility in the Arctic have doubled, and the number of transits through the Bering Strait have doubled as well. Thankfully, he noted, the Arctic is not new to the Coast Guard, in that since 1967 in the days of Captain "Hell Roaring Mike" Healy the Coast Guard has been in Alaska. The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service (USRCs), the Coast Guard's predecessors were the first federal presence in Alaska after Alaska became a U.S. Territory, and those missions have continued. Since 2008, the Coast Guard has made a push to the Arctic, since 2012 it has been called "Arctic Shield." Arctic Shield pushes a number of assets to the North Slope and the missions for 2015 were to perform Coast Guard mission activities in the Arctic to enhance Arctic domain awareness. He referred to Lieutenant General Handy's discussion of Arctic domain awareness and maritime domain awareness, and noted he is blessed that Lieutenant General Handy views him as his maritime component commander. Rear Admiral Abel's view of the Arctic and view of the maritime is what he provides Lieutenant General Handy, and there is no formal DoD line between them because it is all about partnerships here. He pointed out that "Partnerships" was the third goal of Arctic Shield 15, to enhance their abilities for preparedness, prevention, and response in the Arctic. Last summer they had two helicopters forward deployed to Deadhorse, Alaska, and had major cutters with deployed helicopters on board, and expressed that there is nothing more mobile and reactive than a Coast Guard cutter with an embarked helicopter because it can move where the action is every single summer. He turned to the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy, their medium ice breaker, and pointed out that it performed a parameter patrol all the way around the edge of "our exclusive economic zone." The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy also performed an unescorted lone trip to the North Pole which was historic because this was the first time a U.S. surface vessel made that trip. He advised that a C-130 from Kodiak flew all

the way to the North Pole and returned safely to prove it could be done, testing navigation as well as communication.

3:47:30 PM

REAR ADMIRAL ABEL said their Medium Endurance Cutter (WMEC) USCGC Alex Haley was working in the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea. They conducted maritime patrols and had a buoy tender in the Arctic putting down research buoys. The Coast Guard worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and he related that 5-10 percent of the Arctic is charted to contemporary standards. He asked the committee to imagine getting on an Alaska Airlines flight and the captain announcing that he/she knew where 5-10 percent of the mountains are, and pointed out that this is what a captain does when he takes a ship north of the Bering Strait. The Coast Guard is working closely with NOAA to be certain they can chart and do it safely.

3:48:03 PM

REAR ADMIRAL ABEL explained that mobile, seasonal, and adaptive are the watch words and the strength of the Coast Guard presence in the Arctic. He advised that the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) earned a Center of Excellence grant from the Department of Homeland Security to work on the Arctic Domain Awareness Center (ADAC). They will continue work both fusing science with sensors and satellite imagery with a community based observer network. He explained that the whole idea is to tap into the knowledge of those that have lived on the North Slope, along the Arctic coast for generations to find out that walrus have just shown up for the first time, which is unusual. This is unusual, he said. He continued that the storms are more severe than in the past, there are erosion problems, and to fuse that information so there is traditional knowledge as well as science. The Coast Guard has also teamed with community engagement, and he said not only is a marine inspector qualified to inspect a tank, they are also qualified to teach Kids Don't Float, which is an in school program explaining water safety. He noted that they reached 3,600 children last year with Kids Don't Float and remarked that a child wearing a lifejacket ended up saving the lives of his father and his father's friend. Alaskans can be proud of the fact that the number of teenagers wearing life jackets is much higher than the Lower 48 because, he pointed out, for 10 years they have taught 9-10 year olds they have to wear life jackets when underway on a boat. Those children are now 19-20 year olds and the return on investment is there, he said.

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REAR ADMIRAL ABEL explained that the Coast Guard is doing its best to harmonize all operations in the Arctic Maritime System to be certain they are well synchronized with traditional uses of the Arctic and are cognizant that they do not want to scare away the whale or walrus or caribou. He described it as more about food security and cultural security. A beneficial Arctic Waterway Safety Committee was created, patterned after a Harbor Safety Committee, which fused subsistence hunters with industry and communities, and from each group asked its priorities for the Coast Guard in a maritime transportation system in the Arctic. He noted a Port Access Route Study proposed a route that goes from Unimak Pass up around Little Diomedes, and an exit that goes left to right going either to the Russian side or the U.S. side. The Coast Guard has heavily hydro-graphed it, which is bottom mapping, and is looking to get that approved by the International Maritime Organization to then bring some structure to the extremely narrow pass.

He noted that the distance of the Bering pass is [the same as] between Washington D.C. and Baltimore. It is 44 miles, shallows up to 100-150 feet, with 17,000 Bowhead Whales traveling through there twice per year, and 4 million nesting birds migrating through there. He described that it has always been a wilderness superhighway that is becoming a transportation highway system, and how to harmonize that as well.

[3:51:58 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL ABEL referred to Polar Code, and advised the International Maritime Organization, which dictates rules for all mariners around the world, has passed the Polar Code. He described it as a "game changer" because this is the first time ever there is an international standard for ships that operate in the Arctic." He explained that it will dictate ship construction, training - because the person must be a qualified ice pilot, it will dictate discharge restrictions, carriage requirements, and all of those things. The United States Coast Guard will enforce the Polar Code, and it is making sure it is there and ready to perform inspections and be certain everyone abides by the new rules.

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REAR ADMIRAL ABEL referred to the "lure of the Arctic" in that everyone wants to go to the Arctic. He pointed to the cruise liner, Crystal Serenity, wherein 1,700 people will travel from Seward to Anchorage to New York City across the top, which is the first of its kind. He expressed that the cost will be \$20,000-\$120,000 per person, it sold out in two days, and that this is the wave of the future. Therefore, he noted, the Coast Guard is making sure it is prepared, together with the communities and the state, to respond to 1,700 people which may be in distress in the Arctic. The Coast Guard is also working with Transport Canada, the cruise industry, the Canadian Coast Guard to be certain everyone is harmonized and ready to deal with anything that might occur. Arctic Chinook is a joint U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Northern Command sponsored exercise to conduct a live field training exercise of the Arctic SAR Agreement that will exercise a response construct applicable across the Arctic region.

[3:53:41 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL ABEL noted that closer to home and highly successful is the "Round Turn," focusing on the safety of commercial fishing vessel activities in Alaska, and that over 50 percent of the nation's fish are caught in Alaska's waters. In October 2015, a decal became mandatory, and the decal mandates that certain safety equipment must be on board. [He held up a decal during the briefing.] Rear Admiral Abel then commended the professionalism of the fishermen in Alaska because the equipment was already on board. He stressed that the Coast Guard continues to serve Alaska, safeguard the public, and protect the environment and its resources. He pointed out that on the quality of life side, Alaskan families are proud to live here. He turned to the Alaska Marine Highway System and advised that 80 percent of Coast Guard members use the ferries to get to their assignments distributed all around the state and maritime. Interestingly, he remarked, his challenge is getting the folks, whose tour has ended, to leave Alaska because they want to continue to serve in Alaska. He extended that he has to give other folks the chance to stand watch on the Last Frontier.

[3:55:36 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL ABEL mentioned there was an issue with cancellation fees with regard to the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS). Thanks to Captain Mike Neussl, Deputy Commissioner, Marine Highway System, if a person is military on orders they can book a reservation with no cancellation fee up to 60 days before the

actual move, which will not be a problem for military members. He pointed out that the Alaska Marine Highway System Division was extremely responsive in ascertaining that active duty members are moved in and out of places they need to be this summer.

[3:56:14 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL commented that for all of Alaska's highway systems, whether it be marine or plowing the road between Anchorage and Fairbanks, they are struggling under the economic pressure, but the committee will keep that in mind. He thanked the Coast Guard for keeping Alaska's water safe for fishermen and those traveling in Alaska's waters, and related that it is a new world to him, but he is learning more about the lives the Coast Guard saves and the inspections. He described it as fascinating, from Kids Don't Float all the way to the maritime issues to the Arctic traversing.

[3:57:03 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX commented that as a former resident of Kodiak, she does not think there is anyone in Kodiak who has not been touched by the Coast Guard in some respect. She further commented that legislative time isn't always as prompt as military time, and she congratulated him because the briefing may have started out on legislative time, but he finished on military time.

[3:57:46 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR COGHILL thanked all of the briefing witnesses and asked them to advise those under their command [the committee's] recognition of gratitude. As a salute to the witnesses as commanders and for those under their command, for the whole range of issues the members get to see, there is no doubt it is a partnership that also extends between the people of Alaska, the people of America, the Department of Defense, and the many ways they deal with it, and the committee is grateful. He acknowledged that the economics of Alaska are somewhat shaky due to oil, but the future of Alaska is definitely certain that it has a geographical place in the world. The state does the best it can to be certain the highways and byways stay open, and that the men and women serving in the military services are kept healthy, safe, and productive.

[3:59:23 PM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.