

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS

February 19, 2015

1:04 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bob Herron, Chair
Representative Jim Colver
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Max Gruenberg
Representative Chris Tuck

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Shelley Hughes

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE COLONEL LAUREL J. HUMMEL,
USA, Retired

Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a PowerPoint presentation
entitled, "DMVA in the Arctic," and dated 2/19/15.

BRIGADIER GENERAL LEON M. "MIKE" BRIDGES
Assistant Adjutant General, Army Director
Alaska Army National Guard

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation
by the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs.

COLONEL ROBERT DOEHL, USAF, Retired, Deputy Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General

Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered a question during the presentation by the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR BOB HERRON called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Representatives LeDoux, Colver, Lynn, and Herron were present at the call to order. Representatives Tuck and Gruenberg arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

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CHAIR HERRON announced that the only order of business would be a presentation by Commissioner/Adjutant General Designee Laurel J. Hummel, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA).

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COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE COLONEL LAUREL J. HUMMEL, USA, Retired, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA), said she would share her vision of the Alaska National Guard (AKNG) and DMVA regarding Arctic policy. She expressed her belief that Arctic strategy, operational partnerships, and a focus on emergency management throughout the state are of primary importance in the near-term (slide 2). Regarding Arctic strategy, she said the federal government has provided definitive guiding documents on the needs of the Arctic in the National Strategy for the Arctic Region [The White House, dated May 10, 2013], and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) version of that, the Department of Defense Arctic Strategy [November, 2013]. Commissioner/Adjutant General Designee Hummel informed the committee that DoD's Arctic Strategy is to promote a balanced approach to improving human and environmental security in the region. Improving human and environmental security entails not only defense from aggression, but also activities in support of resource extraction, trade, infrastructure development, and commercial and scientific operations. To execute Arctic strategy, there is a need for force-to-force partnerships with Canada, Finland, Denmark, Mongolia, and Nepal to promote security solutions and to share best practices,

especially regarding safe cold weather operational experience. At the domestic level, Alaska needs to continue its close partnership with DoD through the U.S. Code Title 10 force structure: Alaskan Command (ALCOM), U.S. Army Alaska, U.S. Army Pacific, First Army Corps, Eighth U.S. Army, and the Seventeenth U.S. Coast Guard. Regionally aligned partnerships are necessary to ensure relevance for AKNG in order to preserve its funding and force structure. Commissioner/Adjutant General Designee Hummel pointed out that AKNG has a successful state relationship with Mongolia and has acted in a mentorship role for Mongolian forces in Afghanistan, and seeks a similar relationship with Nepal to expand its training opportunities to another cold-weather, high-altitude environment.

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CHAIR HERRON asked about Russia.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL LEON M. "MIKE" BRIDGES, Assistant Adjutant General, Army Director, Alaska Army National Guard, DMVA, responded that Russian forces have been participants at the observer level in international multi-agency exercises along with Chinese military forces.

COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE HUMMEL returned to critical partnerships such as the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEM&HS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), tribal authorities, cities, boroughs and local emergency centers. The Arctic is changing at an unprecedented speed which requires the commissioner to maintain close contact with policy advisors and scientific research on how change affects environmental and human security. The third part of her vision, emergency management, is vitally important because there must be sound exercise doctrine ready at every level, including communities, so that rural communities are aware of "what the proper linkages are." She stressed that DMVA must always follow an organizational culture: adherence to doctrine always applies in all circumstances; sound processes of techniques, tactics, and procedures (TTP); customer focus on veterans, AKNG members, Alaskans, and federal partners (slide 2).

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REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked for additional benefits from operational partnerships beyond training exercises.

COMMISSIONER/ADJTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE HUMMEL answered that other benefits are cost sharing, best practices, and security solutions to federal levels.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked about the process of sharing costs - such as training exercises in Mongolia - through memorandums of understanding, or other ways to measure the benefits to Alaska.

BRIGADIER GENERAL BRIDGES advised that "the big picture on that" is the strategic partnership international peacekeeping element. The state partnership program was formed post-Cold War by the State Department, Congress, and DoD by pairing former Communist satellites with National Guards of states, the ranks of which are business people, government leaders and employees, and professionals. In this non-threatening manner, the principles of democracy and emergency response capability were introduced to these nations. Mongolia and Alaska have a ten-year partnership, and other nations need strategic-level partners to prevent or reduce conflict. The federal government pays transportation costs using the tenants of military training, cooperation, and engagement.

CHAIR HERRON asked:

Just so, for clarification, if the federal government has placed federal soldiers in the combat zones, then the National Guard is excluded from those national guard-to-national guard relationships? ... When we were in Afghanistan, obviously ... that's at the federal level.

BRIGADIER GENERAL BRIDGES stated that when mobilized with a federal mission, AKNG is part of the Army or Air Force; for those mission periods, a military officer and a noncommissioned officer liaison trainer were sent with the Mongolian contingent, so that the Mongolian forces became part of the coalition that served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

COLONEL ROBERT DOEHL, USAF, Retired, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, added two examples of how international exercises have benefitted Alaskans. Firstly, AKNG has participated in exercises with Russia on how to prosecute in the case of a hijacked aircraft traveling from one country's

airspace to another. Through these exercises, procedures and a common understanding have been developed, reducing risk to Alaskans and other Americans. Secondly, international search and rescue exercises with Canadians and Russians ensure that with the vagaries of time, distance, and weather in the Arctic, the closest rescue forces are available to assist whomever is in distress.

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COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE HUMMEL returned to ongoing Arctic operations, and noted that she will be attending "quad staff talks" with other military forces in Alaska, and a quarterly "general officer/flag officer huddle" with senior military leaders to discuss important issues and cooperative planning. In addition, DMVA has established a partnership with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), and its Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, to develop an Arctic 101 course - to be delivered to all guardsmen - and AKNG experts on Arctic operations and Arctic living will serve as guest lecturers. The National Guard Bureau has begun to acknowledge Alaska as the leader of Arctic strategy amongst all states and the National Guard and, in fact, the National Guard Bureau Arctic Interest Group with representation from New York, Vermont, Maine, and Alaska, recently handed the leadership of Arctic operations over from Maine to Alaska. She expressed her hope that a charter on this matter will be executed at the National Guard Bureau (slide 4).

CHAIR HERRON asked why the charter is unsigned.

COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE HUMMEL surmised this has been an oversight. She will be meeting with other members of the Arctic interest group. In further response to Chair Herron, she said she planned to meet with members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation during a subsequent trip to Washington D.C.

CHAIR HERRON stressed the value of informing the Lower 48 and Hawaii the importance of Alaska, and of the U.S. becoming a true Arctic nation. He encouraged the designee to use her position of advocacy when meeting with her counterparts.

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COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE HUMMEL advised that she has an opportunity to speak when the Adjutants General meet four times per year.

CHAIR HERRON related that the Congressional delegation has asked for more discussion with officials from other states about Alaska's importance.

COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT DESIGNEE HUMMEL directed attention to force readiness training in AKNG, which has emphasized Arctic proficiencies, especially in and consequence management capacity. Consequence management is based on the belief that as the Arctic environment changes, it will be more heavily trafficked, populated, and thus more prone to an emergency. For example, a cruise ship may run aground. She then noted that the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade in the Army Guard will be training in Bethel and nearby villages in April. Returning attention to the issue of emergency management, she said AKNG members are routinely involved in search and rescue activities by the 210th, 211th, and 212th Rescue Squadrons and the Army aviation regiment (slide 5). The Division of Homeland Security & Management is the hub for disaster notification and response; the state emergency operations center operates from the armory, providing outreach and training to local emergency centers, borough, and cities (slide 6). Finally, the Alaska Aerospace Corporation is a partner in the Arctic strategy and is administered by DMVA; however, DMVA does not have control over operations or discussions of privatization. The corporation presents an opportunity to partner with firms to provide high latitude geo-synchronized satellites which are used for enhanced digital imaging. Commissioner/Adjutant General Designee Hummel closed, saying DMVA will engage in an organizational culture of mutual respect, openness, transparency, and customer focus.

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REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked whether DMVA utilized the Alaska Land Mobile Radio system.

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COMMISSIONER/ADJUTANT GENERAL DESIGNEE HUMMEL nodded her head yes.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 1:38 p.m.