

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

March 23, 2017

11:34 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Scott Kawasaki, Co-Chair  
Senator Mia Costello, Co-Chair  
Representative Zach Fansler  
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux  
Representative Geran Tarr  
Representative Lora Reinbold  
Senator John Coghill  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Senator Bill Wielechowski

**PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Nelson N. Angapak, Sr. (via teleconference)  
Brigadier General Julio ("Randy") Bañez - retired  
Jerry Beasley, Chief Warrant Officer, USCG - retired  
Colonel Tim Jones - retired

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Representative Justin Parish  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Dave Talerico

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Pete Kelly

**PUBLIC MEMBERS ABSENT**

Colonel George Vakalis - retired  
Charles ("Chick") Wallace

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

BRIEFINGS: LIEUTENANT GENERAL KENNETH S. WILSBACH~ COMMANDER~  
ALASKAN NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE COMMAND REGION; COMMANDER~  
ALASKAN COMMAND~ U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND; COMMANDER ELEVENTH AIR  
FORCE - MAJOR GENERAL BRYAN R. OWENS~ COMMANDING GENERAL~ U.S.  
ARMY AK - REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL F. MCALLISTER~ COMMANDER~  
SEVENTEENTH U.S. COAST GUARD DISTRICT - MAJOR GENERAL LAUREL J.

HUMMEL~ ADJUTANT GENERAL~ AK NATIONAL GUARD; COMMISSIONER~ AK DEPT. OF MILITARY & VETERANS' AFFAIRS.

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MAJOR GENERAL LAUREL J. HUMMEL, Adjutant General  
Alaska National Guard;  
Commissioner  
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave introductory remarks and offered an update of the activities of the Alaska National Guard.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KENNETH S. WILSBACH, Commander  
Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Region  
Alaskan Command  
Eleventh Air Force

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a briefing on the activities and plans of military branches which he commands.

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a briefing regarding the U.S. Army in Alaska.

REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL F. MCALLISTER, Commander  
Seventeenth U.S. Coast Guard District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a briefing on the U.S. Coast Guard in Alaska.

CHAPLAIN (COLONEL) RICK KOCH  
Alaska National Guard  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Discussed ethics during the briefing on the DMVA and Alaska National Guard.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[11:34:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCOTT KAWASAKI called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 11:34 a.m. Representatives Fansler, LeDoux, Reinbold, Tarr, and Kawasaki and Senators Coghill, Hughes, Wielechowski, and Costello were present at the call to order. Public members present were Nelson N. Angapak, Sr. (via teleconference), Brigadier General Julio ("Randy") Bañez - retired, Jerry Beasley, Chief Warrant Officer, USCG - retired, and Colonel Tim Jones - retired.

**BRIEFINGS: Lieutenant General Kenneth S. Wilsbach, Commander, Alaskan North American Aerospace Command Region; Commander, Alaskan Command, U.S. Northern Command; Commander Eleventh Air Force - Major General Bryan R. Owens, Commanding General, U.S. Army AK - Rear Admiral Michael F. McAllister, Commander, Seventeenth U.S. Coast Guard District - Major General Laurel J. Hummel, Adjutant General, AK National Guard; Commissioner, AK Dept. of Military & Veterans' Affairs.**

[11:35:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR KAWASAKI announced that the only order of business would be briefings from the heads of the military branches in Alaska: Lieutenant General Kenneth S. Wilsbach, Major General Bryan R. Owens, Rear Admiral Michael F. McAllister, and Major General Laurel J. Hummel.

[11:37:08 AM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL LAUREL J. HUMMEL, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard; Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), stated that Alaska Statute directs the adjutant general as the official liaison between the state and active military within the state, which she said gives her the opportunity to work with military service members and leaders of all service branches, while representing the state in military matters. She stated, "Teamwork and a sense of common purpose are the touchstones for the military in Alaska." She proceeded to introduce the other military leaders in the room.

[11:40:03 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KENNETH S. WILSBACH, Commander, Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Region, Alaskan Command, Eleventh Air Force, emphasized the cooperation and compatibility of the military branches and leadership in Alaska and his appreciation of the support received from the State of Alaska. He talked about the unique experience military personnel receive in

Alaska, where Alaskans welcome them to their homes as family members, which he said is why so many military members end up staying in Alaska.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH began a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He directed attention to slide 2, and indicated he would offer an overview of the past year, the present, and the future. He turned to slide 3, entitled "Exercises," and highlighted two of the exercises. The first exercise was called "Arctic Chinook," which involved all factions of the military in a practice of a hypothetical rescue of cruise ship passengers traveling through Arctic regions. He said the impetus for creating this exercise was the cruise ship "Crystal Serenity's" voyage through the Bering Strait, across the northern coast of Canada, to New York, and the desire to be prepared if a voyage such as that resulted in a need for rescue. The second exercise was "RED FLAG-Alaska," which he said involves three to four events a year, based out of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, as well as Eielson Air Force Base, with nations from all over the world that participate - 16 nations in 2016. The area used is the Alaska Range, and the exercise involves "the high end of aerial combat." He said the other nations that participate receive what is often the best training they have had, and they want to come back. Working with other nations provides the training necessary should a situation arise in which nations must integrate with each other. He commented on the space that is necessary to operate fifth generation aircraft and that the range meets that need.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH turned next to slide 4, entitled "Operations and Events," and he brought attention to information highlighted in yellow on the bottom-right of the slide. He said there is a rescue coordination center that works 24/7, in combination with the U.S. Air Force and the National Guard of Alaska, "but often times U.S. Army aircraft are involved with the rescue." He said, "This past year, we had 53 Alaskans that were saved by this rescue force." He said the average is one save per week. Lieutenant General Wilsbach informed the committee that another 24/7 mission, which operates out of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Eielson Air Force Base, is the defense of North America. He continued as follows:

We're partnering up with Canada and we ... have fighters on alert - they are able to launch in a few

minutes - and we also have an [airborne warning and control system] (AWACS) aircraft for not being able to surveil any air space that we might want to surveil in response to any threats that we perceive, as well as a tanker that sits alert up at Eielson, which is able to refuel those assets once we get airborne. And so, in addition to that National Guard squadron that operates 24/7 is [the] monitoring [of] the numerous radar feeds that come in from all over the state that monitor the air space around Alaska.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH pointed to "Operation Colony Glacier" - shown at the top-left of the slide, and noted that in 1952 a C-124 cargo aircraft crashed on Colony Glacier, killing everyone on board, and it was missing for several decades, until a National Guard helicopter spotted wreckage a few years ago. He said recovery of the remains has been conducted "over the last few summers," and the work will continue in the summer of 2017 through National Guard and U.S. Airforce efforts.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH directed attention to slide 5, entitled "Strategic Importance," to the bottom of the slide, to a quote by Brigadier General Billy Mitchell during his testimony to U.S. Congress in 1935, which read as follows: "Alaska is the most strategic place on earth." The map on the slide shows a map with Alaska at the center of an oval, and everything within the oval - including South America and the major cities of the Northern Hemisphere - can be reached in 9 hours or less of flying time. He said that "presents a great force projection capability" and explains why Alaska has military forces to provide humanitarian assistance around the world or to respond to conflict. He reported that currently there are forces in Southwest Asia executing daily missions against ISIS. Further, he related that "the 525 fighter squadron F-22s have been dropping numerous weapons and destroying targets in both Iraq and Syria over the last several months," and he noted that those involved got their training in Alaska.

[11:49:39 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH moved on to slide 6, entitled "Evolving Arctic." He said the bottom-right image shows where the ice used to be in the Arctic and how it is receding, which has opened opportunities for human activity in the Arctic. The top-right image shows transit routes in the Arctic, which save

considerable time in transit. He said other reasons to be in the Arctic include tourism and natural resources. The image in the top-left of the slide shows the claims in the Arctic by many countries. He said while those claims are overlapping, they have been resolved peacefully. The bottom-left image, he noted, shows Russia's claim at the top of the globe, and he said it is concerning, because it overlaps with many other nations. He stated:

We want the Arctic to remain a peaceful place, but one thing that concern me, as a military person, is I look at Russia and what they're building, as far as Arctic-capable combat forces - significantly offensive capability. They have as many as 40 ice breakers, which makes sense, given that much of their country borders the Arctic and they have to keep those sea lanes open; but ... the offensive capability certainly concerns me.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH said one of his responsibilities as Northern Command (NorthCom) commander is to ensure good Arctic strategies. He emphasized a commitment to maintaining peace in the Arctic.

[11:52:04 AM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH showed slide 7, entitled "Eielson F-35." He said the plan is to acquire 54 aircraft, the first of which will arrive in the spring or summer of 2020 and the last of which should arrive on or before the winter of 2022. In the meantime, he stated, there is much building to do: about \$500 million in military construction - several buildings to bring on the new mission. He explained that the military will not be trading something else for the F-35s but are installing them as a new mission, which will bring about 3,500 additional personnel to the base, doubling the population. He highlighted that base housing will be maxed out, and he has been talking to mayors in the areas of Eielson Air Force Base, North Pole, and Fairbanks, to ask them to consider construction for housing to accommodate young families moving to the area.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH turned to slide 8, entitled "FY17 MILCON," which shows military construction (MILCON) information for fiscal year 2017 (FY17). The branches of military are color coded on the slide and he said Alaska is doing well in terms of economic impact through the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), with \$563 million invested in Alaska - number one in the nation

and \$120 million more than any other state. He said the national leadership recognizes the strategic nature of Alaska, and "we have to invest here to be able to be ready to execute our mission."

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH directed attention to the final PowerPoint projection, slide 9, entitled "On Our Scope," and he said homeland defense is the number one priority. He said if there is a significant threat, the number of forces dedicated to homeland security could be increased. He said, "We keep a very close eye toward the threat." All threats have "some sort of implication to us here in Alaska." He named the following countries: Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. He said North Korea has nuclear aspirations, as well as has been developing an intercontinental ballistic missile, which is concerning. He said if Iran were ever to employ intercontinental ballistic missiles against the U.S., those missiles would "go by here," and forces at Ft. Greely would be responsible for intercepting those inbound missiles.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH, regarding international terrorism or violent extremist organizations, stated, "We certainly are fighting that now as we have forces downrange fighting them even today." He asked the committee to think about the families that are left in Alaska while their loved ones are fighting - to "keep them in your thoughts and prayers if you're so inclined." He said all the threats that have been named as the top priorities for DoD have "some sort of implications to us here in Alaska"; therefore, "we are ready to fight tonight." He said one of his boss's objectives is a readiness to "deploy and fight at any time," and he confirmed that is a reality.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH talked about Arctic advocacy, and he said he is frequently in the position of being the Arctic expert because of the amount of time spent operating in the region. He said his colleagues are [experts] in their respective services. He mentioned "Northern Edge," which is an exercise much like RED FLAG-Alaska but with a maritime component added, and he said it would be taking place May 1-12, 2017. He said Alaska Native fisherman, as well as commercial fisherman, have expressed concern about the maritime portion of the exercise, and the military has listened to those concerns and modified the exercise to try to stay as far away from the fishing activities as possible. He said the exercise brings together air and maritime forces to "fight jointly in an exercise environment,

which is how we actually fight in the real world." He expressed appreciation to the State of Alaska for providing both the air and maritime space that make it possible for these exercises to take place.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH drew attention to the last item on slide 9, regarding the care of families. He said many military members come to Alaska and fall in love with it, but they are far away from home. The military wants to take care of them while they are in Alaska, as well as their loved ones while the members are deployed. He indicated that the aim is for retention and to offer military personnel "a good quality of life as they serve their country."

[11:58:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD referred to slide 8 and noted that her father was site manager of the [ballistic missile early warning system] in '60s, at Clear Air Force Station, and she requested an update.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH suggested Major General Hummel could better respond to the question. Notwithstanding that, he offered that there have been upgrades to the radar, which he said is "integral to the defense of North America" and can keep track of spacecraft. He explained that the radar can detect any missile fired [towards Alaska] and feed the coordinates to the missiles at Fort Greely, which would "conduct the intercept." He emphasized the importance of continually updating the radar. He noted that some of the facilities [at Clear Air Force Station] are old; therefore, they are being renovated or new ones are being built. The site is remote, so it is important to the military to create a [comfortable] place for its members there to live.

[12:01:24 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the threat level has "legitimately increased" or is being exaggerated by the press. Further, he inquired whether Alaska, because of its proximity, is a likely target.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH, to the first question, said it depends on the country; however, he said the rhetoric and activity coming from North Korea gives him cause for concern that the threat has increased. To the second question, he said there are facilities in Alaska that could be considered targets,

which is why the military has forces in Alaska that can defend the nation.

[12:02:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX, regarding the previous mention of Russia, asked, "Under what color of international law is it making those claims, and does anybody else claim the Arctic? Do we claim the Arctic?"

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH referred back to [slide 6] and explained how the various colors represent different claims, and he reiterated that the claims overlap. He indicated that [the claims] are connected to international law, many to maritime law. Many countries make the claim based on their historical association with the area. He reemphasized that thus far, all the countries have managed the overlapping claims in a peaceful and diplomatic way, and if that method is continued, then differences regarding economic rights will continue to be solved. He noted that the areas are either water or ice, depending on the time of year. In response to a follow-up question, Lieutenant General Wilsbach said most operations of ours and other countries are done on vessels but occasionally on the ice. He mentioned an operation called, "Ice-X," which is where a submarine is "punched" through the ice and a camp set up on top of the ice, and he said other countries are doing similar things. He indicated that military exercises on international waters are legal and "understandable," and he said, "Up that far north, we're not claiming any territory there." He offered his understanding that everyone has been operating in accordance with international law, and "these claims ... are in ... the international dialogue, and if they continue to be diplomatic in nature, I think we're going to be good."

[12:06:15 PM](#)

COLONEL TIM JONES - retired noted that the House and Senate [of the Alaska State Legislature] are currently considering legislation to enact REAL ID compliant identification, and he offered his understanding that without such legislation, hundreds of Alaskans working as contractors on military installations will be denied entry onto military bases, beginning June [2017]. He referred to the [over] \$500 million spent in MILCON in 2017 and the \$512 million spent to accommodate the F-35s, and over \$400 million for the long-range discrimination radar (LRDR). He stated that the military is a big portion of Interior Alaska's economy. He opined, "I think

it's important that this committee support this legislation in general." He questioned whether additional [MILCON] labor will be possible should [REAL ID-compliant] legislation fail to pass, and he asked Lieutenant General Wilsbach for his thoughts on the impact to the military.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH said according to his briefing of the [federal] law, starting June anyone without REAL ID compliant identification will have to be escorted on a military base. He relayed that REAL ID compliant identification includes: a passport, military identification, or a driver's license from another state that is REAL ID compliant. It would include an Alaska driver's license if Alaska becomes REAL ID compliant. He noted that having to escort those without REAL ID compliant identification on base creates "a little bit of an extra burden." He said he would not have the authority to grant waivers.

[12:08:31 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES offered her understanding, based on something she had read about three years ago, that Russia was planning a \$10 million buildup of unmanned aircraft on its side of the Arctic. She asked Lieutenant General Wilsbach if that plan has proceeded and, if so, if the military situation in Alaska is "balanced" in terms of its capabilities.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH replied that although he cannot confirm "the figure," he knows [Russia] is advancing in terms of its unmanned vehicles and plans to put them in the eastern portion of the country, which would be close to Alaska. He offered to provide additional information later, but said, "We're postured for that."

[12:09:41 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 12:09 p.m.

[12:10:00 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL BRYAN R. OWENS, Commanding General, U.S. Army Alaska, expressed appreciation for the military support from Alaskans, including individuals, business owners, local governments, and the legislature.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS began a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy available in the committee packet] and explained that the photo

[of a soldier dressed in winter gear and walking outside] was taken in Deadhorse, Alaska, with an outside temperature of minus 60 degrees Fahrenheit. He directed attention to slide 2, entitled "Trained and Ready Forces." He said the U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK) has active duty troops stationed primarily in Fort Wainwright and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). Fort Wainwright is the home of the nation's northernmost Stryker brigade combat team (BCT) and USARAK Aviation Task Force. "1st Stryker" just executed a successful National Training Center (NTC) rotation at the NTC at Fort Irwin, California, this past January. He explained, "This rigorous training exercise tested and validated the Arctic Wolves' capabilities across all the war-fighting functions and ensure[s] the brigade's prepared to deploy, fight, and win in a complex environment." He relayed that the general support aviation battalion recently deployed to Afghanistan; the Flying Dragons sent approximately 300 soldiers and aircraft to conduct "heliborne" operations to assist in training Afghan security forces.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS stated JBER is the home of USARAK headquarters, which is primarily responsible for providing "training and readiness authority over the assigned units, as well as provide oversight for the active duty armed forces in the state of Alaska." He said maneuver forces located at JBER include the 4/25 F-trooper (indisc.) combat team, which he said is "the only U.S. Army airborne brigade in the Asia Pacific theater of operations." He said JBER is also the home of the 17th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB), with diverse missions and capabilities. He said both units are busy with exercises "to ensure readiness and deployments in support of worldwide operations." He reported that approximately 160 soldiers from JBER and Fort Wainwright just deployed to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), with the 574th Combat Support Company, which was activated October 14, [2016], under 17th CSSB. He said, "This will be the unit's first deployment since activation, but it's the sixth deployment for the commander." He said 4/25 will head to the Joint Readiness Training Center in June for a "decisive action training environment rotation" at Fort Hope, Louisiana.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS noted that the third location in Alaska is the Norther Warfare Training Center (NWTC), located at Black Rapids, near Fort Greely. He said NWTC is the [USARAK's] center for world-class Arctic and mountain warfare instruction. The training lands allow the leverage of nearly 1.6 million acres of joint Pacific Alaska range complex. For perspective, he noted that the national training center is 2.5 times smaller than the

training area in Alaska. He said troopers are trained to "thrive, not just survive," in extreme cold conditions. He said there are historic examples of times when armies were decimated because they were not prepared to survive and fight in the cold.

[12:14:45 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS turned to slide 3, entitled "Unclassified Operations." He stated, "Our nation depends on its army to help with recovery efforts in the wake of a natural disaster; to defeat enemy forces abroad; and to defend the shores of the homeland." He said professional soldiers work, study, and train to ensure the success of the U.S. Army in meeting the needs of the nation. He said USARAK is at the forefront of protecting America's interest in the Asia Pacific Region, while also providing "ready and relevant forces to overseas contingency operations and homeland defense."

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS said Alaska is one of the U.S. Military's "most centrally located power projection platform[s]" and [USARAK] benefits from joint training opportunities in varied environments that provide ideal training grounds that "prepare our soldiers for the challenges of our times." He stated that Alaska is the only one of the 50 states that borders the Arctic. He said that USARAK's location in the Arctic results in both unique challenges and opportunities. Conditions require Arctic fuel craft and the knowledge and ability to operate sustained operations in an environment where temperatures can "hover" at minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit, storms generate hurricane force winds, and the terrain is impassable with "Lower 48 land mobility systems." He said [USARAK] builds its strength with joint and multinational exercises, which prepares its soldiers for "the challenges that lie ahead."

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS emphasized the importance of developing bilateral and multilateral relationships with international partners with shared goals and mutual interests. He said [USARAK] trains with foreign partners with cold weather experience and invites them to Alaska for the Cold Region Military Mountaineering Collaborative Training Event; the next one is scheduled for February 2018 and will include cold weather experts from around the world. Major General Owens said USARAK also supports Pacific Commanders Theater Engagement Strategy, which involves exercises and engagements with partners in Japan, Canada, Thailand, Nepal, India, and Mongolia. He relayed that in the summer of 2017, the Stryker and airborne brigades will

play a central role in "Pacific pathways ... conducted around the Pacific in Australia, Singapore, Thailand, and Japan."

12:17:33 PM

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS directed attention to slide 4, entitled "Unclassified Arctic Anvil 16," and he said he would highlight two recent exercises that "exemplify the great capabilities of our units and demonstrate the terrific training that we can accomplish here in Alaska." The first, Arctic Anvil, was conducted in the Joint Pacific Alaska Training Complex in the summer of 2016 and provided "a robust home station training force on force combat exercise, primarily to test and prove the readiness of 1st Stryker brigade and the aviation units we had deploying down in advance of their national training center deployment." He relayed that Fort Wainwright's newest aviation units had the opportunity to train in a joint, multinational combined arms exercise - the largest in Alaska since 2001. He reported that over 5,000 soldiers participated, including people from USARAK, the Alaska National Guard, the Iowa National Guard, and the U.S. Air Force. He expressed appreciation for the relationship between the varied forces. He mentioned the 196th Infantry Brigade, the Canadian military, and observers from Singapore and Japan.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS stated that Arctic Anvil was selected by higher headquarters to test the joint Pacific multinational readiness capability. He said, "It's a deployable training system with instrumentation and observer/controller trainers that enhance the ability to conduct our home station training. So, our army is going more and more to home station training." He said Arctic Anvil improved the readiness of the Alaska-based units and was successful in showing training capabilities.

12:20:09 PM

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS turned to slide 5, entitled "Spartan Pegasus 17." He reiterated the extreme cold conditions and expressed pride in the paratrooper participants of the exercise in Deadhorse, who jumped into the area and applied their Arctic mobility training to recover and secure a simulated downed satellite. He said [Spartan Pegasus] was the third large airborne operation conducted near the Arctic Ocean. He said there were generals there from Japan and Canada, as well as senior leaders from the U.S. Army, U.S. National Guard, and U.S. Air Force.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS reported that airborne forces are busy getting ready for a multinational, joint readiness training center event. He reiterated that the Stryker brigade would be participating in Pacific Pathways this summer, and he added that he would be leaving command in July. He expressed gratitude for being given leadership of USARAK, and he announced his successor's name is Major General Mark O'Neil, who is currently the USARAK chief of staff. He expressed confidence in Major General Mark O'Neil's ability to continue the pattern of "great accomplishments."

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS announced that a team of USARAK, German, and Canadian soldiers will attempt to ascend Denali this spring - bad weather last year having prevented the group from summiting. He said the airborne brigade has been invited to participate in "Japan's First Jump" this year, which he explained is an annual event, and he explained that being able to participate is a great honor.

[12:22:00 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS ended his presentation and thanked the legislature for its service to the state. In response to Chair Kawasaki, he explained the reason for his departure from USARAK is to make a transition "the next chapter, whatever that might be." He said he and his family would move to Anchorage, Alaska.

[12:22:57 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO talked about Alaska's recession and the efforts being made to address the issue. She opined that the presence of the military in Alaska is "foundational to ... the success that we're going to be seeing with our economy." She said she had read something regarding the U.S. Army that caused her to have concern. She asked what Alaska could be doing and what the military is doing to prevent the base realignment and closure (BRAC) process from occurring.

MAJOR GENERAL OWENS answered that BRAC is not bad in regard to the ability to "consolidate some pieces." He stated that currently USARAK has no force structure changes. He noted that there are some increases for the U.S. Army - 26,000 overall, but about 16,000 to the active force. He said it is unlikely to see those changes in Alaska, but there won't be force cuts in the near future. He told Senator Costello that he is not hearing anything that shows any kind of reorganization or structure changes in Alaska.

12:24:57 PM

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked for a brief update on environmental impact statement (EIS) process taking place at JBER, which she offered her understanding relates to work on two runways, the noise involved, and a new process that has been initiated.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILSBACH [off microphone] said the question is in the scope of the Air Force and offered to put a response in writing.

12:25:47 PM

SENATOR COGHILL expressed appreciation for [Major General Owens'] work with the University of Alaska on "the gray eagle" and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issues.

12:26:20 PM

REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL F. MCALLISTER, Commander, Seventeenth U.S. Coast Guard District, offered an opening statement, as follows:

The Coast Guard serves and safeguards the public, protects the maritime environment and resources, and defends the nation's interest in Alaska maritime regions. In a state as vast as Alaska, we can't do that alone, so we work very closely with federal, state, local, Alaska Native partners, as well as through transparent engagement with industries and nongovernmental and private organizations to meet the diverse needs of the maritime (indisc.).

REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL F. MCALLISTER began a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy available in the committee packet]. He continued as follows:

The 17th Coast Guard District includes the entire state of Alaska and its 44,000 miles of coastline. Coast Guard units and personnel conduct search and rescue missions in an area responsibility that covers 3.8 million square miles of ocean - an area larger than the landmass of the entire United States, including Alaska - and we're continually reminded of the hazards of the marine environment through such events as the recent tragic sinking of the fishing vessel Destination and the loss of her six crew in

February and the successful rescue of 46 crew members from the fishing vessel Alaska Juris when it sank 690 miles west of Dutch Harbor last July. Coast Guard men and women are at sea and in the air every day to provide emergency response.

Coast Guard missions also include homeland security and military defense, maintenance of aids to navigation, environmental preparedness and response, and marine safety of both recreational and commercial vessels throughout the state of Alaska. As the nation's smallest armed force, the Coast Guard performs these statutory missions throughout Alaska with 2,500 highly professional active duty, reserve, civilian, and auxiliary or volunteer members that I'm honored to represent here today.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER said he would focus his remarks on the Coast Guard's broad security missions, which cover defense and environmental and economic security. He said to protect living marine resources, while ensuring the safety and sustainability of Alaska's \$6 billion fishing industry, the Coast Guard works closely with both federal and state partners to conduct fishing vessel boarding dockside and throughout the exclusive economic zone, which he described as being 200 [nautical] miles offshore. He said Alaska has a sustainable fisheries program, because all the participants follow the rules of actively managing the resource.

[12:29:27 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER, while displaying slide 3, entitled "Illegal Unreported Unregulated Fishing (IUU) Enforcement," said the Coast Guard works closely with Russia, China, Japan, Canada, and South Korea. It controls joint patrols and law enforcement activities to enforce treaties designed to affect highly migratory fisheries, such as salmon, from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activity on the high seas. He said despite global tensions, cooperation among these nations remain strong and the joint efforts have reduced overfishing.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER, displaying slide 4, entitled "Oil Spill Response Coordination," stated that protecting Alaska's valuable marine resources and marine environment also relies on "a robust system to prevent and, when necessary, respond to oil and chemical spills." He noted that the following day - March 24, 2017 - would be the twenty-eighth anniversary of the grounding

of the Exxon Valdez [oil tanker] in Prince William Sound, an incident that resulted in the spilling of 10.1 million gallons of crude oil. He said because of that spill, the Coast Guard has new authorities to be more proactive both in prevention and response to spills.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER continued as follows:

As the nation's lead for commercial vessel safety and the federal lead for spill response in the coastal zones of Alaska, we work together with state and local counterparts to manage this system through activities such as oil spill response planning, training and exercises, training and certification of oil spill response organizations, and on-scene oversight of spill cleanup efforts.

We must focus on continuing to improve our capabilities over time, and the Coast Guard has published draft guidelines for the implementation of vessel response plans, with alternative criteria that allows us to tailor our approaches to the unique challenges of working in remote areas of Alaska.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER talked about coordinated efforts with the Canadian Coast Guard and exercises conducted at the two borders [shown on the slide 4]. He said after a number of years of limited progress, the U.S. Coast Guard has restarted talks with its Russian counterparts to "update and exercise our existing U.S./Russia joint contingency plan for oil spills along our maritime border."

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER indicated that the Coast Guard is focused on maintaining its commitment to excellence and building its capabilities in service to the nation. He expressed excitement that the Coast Guard received two new fast response cutters this spring, because they will allow the Coast Guard to expand its operations, particularly in Southeast, Southcentral, and the Gulf of Alaska. He also noted that the Coast Guard will be receiving C-130 J models in 2018, which will provide extended range and endurance for search and rescue and other missions in Alaska. Further, he relayed that the Coast Guard has recently upgraded its marine communications equipment in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER highlighted that the Coast Guard recently awarded a contract to design and build offshore patrol

cutters, which are tailor made to operate efficiently in rough seas, as are common in Alaska waters. He said the ships should come off the production line in the early 2020s.

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REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER announced that 2018 marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Coast Guard service in Alaska, which began when the "revenue cutter service" transported government officials to Sitka, Alaska, for the land transfer from Russia in 1867. He continued:

During that same trip, the revenue cutter Lincoln went on to conduct its first Alaska patrol to put in coastal surveys, protecting Alaska's natural resources, and serving as an important and often sole U.S. federal presence in this vast territory, and we've been here ever since.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER said he can attest that the Coast Guard men and women are proud to serve in Alaska and are welcome in the state's communities. They are also proud to serve alongside the other factions of the military. He expressed appreciation to the Joint Armed Services Committee for its support.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER talked about the change cause by melting Arctic ice and extensive annual operations conducted in Arctic regions for the past several years, called Arctic Shield. He said in 2016, the Coast Guard had numerous Coast Guard ships deployed across the Arctic region to conduct patrols, visit coastal communities, maintain "ace navigation," support research and development, and conduct exercises. He said shore side teams conducted training with village fire departments and volunteers in the area of oil spill response, cold water survival, and ice rescues. In a continuing partnership with the State of Alaska's [Office of] Boating Safety, the Coast Guard visited 23 communities to provide education through the Kids Don't Float program to over 2,900 children in Alaska.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER talked about the highlights of 2016. One was the Coast Guard's deployment of two MH-60 helicopters, aircrews, and maintenance crew in Kotzebue. The Coast Guard was given the use of the U.S. National Guard's facility, which was instrumental in those operations, he said. Another highlight was the preparation of the historic transit of the cruise ship Crystal Serenity's 1,600 passengers and crew, through careful coordination with the cruise line, the Canadian Coast Guard, and

local villages to ensure a safe and productive outcome. He said there were numerous Coast Guard units working alongside National Guard and DoD counterparts, as well as other state agencies, to conduct exercise Arctic Chinook, which "simulated the forced evacuation of a cruise ship far from major population centers." Rear Admiral McAllister noted that the photographs from that exercise are shown on slide 5. He said this was the first exercise under the new Arctic Council Search and Rescue agreement, with numerous international observers and the opportunity to collaborate with numerous entities and test the Coast Guard's interoperability and ability to deploy.

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REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER moved on to slide 6, entitled "Arctic Shield 2017: Force Lay-Down," and said the Coast Guard plans to build on the events of 2016 and further improve its response capabilities in the Arctic Region. He said the Coast Guard has plans to: deploy two MH-60 helicopters in Kotzebue again; position multiple Coast Guard cutters offshore; conduct ice rescue training in various locations; and conduct oil spill response exercises and training in Dillingham and Barrow. He said the Coast Guard does expect the Crystal Serenity to make another Northwest Passage trip this year, and he said he understands there are additional cruise ships that may be taking similar voyages in the future.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER announced that after working closely with Alaska Native communities, environmental organizations, federal and state partners, and industry, the Coast Guard recently published its Port Access Route Study, which proposes a 700-mile safe shipping route through the Bering Strait to avoid environmentally sensitive and subsistence-critical areas. He said in 2017 the Coast Guard will expand on that work, with the start of a port access route study for the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, and it will coordinate with the Canadian [Coast Guard] as it begins a similar project in the Northwest Passage.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER emphasized the importance of strong partnerships with DoD, federal, and state governments and borough and Native communities. He expressed appreciation for the support of the State of Alaska through its involvement in the events in which the Coast Guard participates. He concluded, "We look forward to continuous and ongoing opportunities to work with our partners to preserve Alaska's natural resources from threats to the environment, sovereignty, and security, and raise the awareness of the strategic importance of Alaska's role as

the nation's sole Arctic state as we start our next 150 years of service in this region."

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SENATOR HUGHES offered her understanding that the federal administration has proposed a 12 percent cut to the Coast Guard's budget, and she asked Rear Admiral McAllister what the impact of that might be. Further, regarding the number of ice breakers that Russia has, she asked if there are plans in the future for the U.S. Coast Guard to acquire more ice breakers in Alaska's waters.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER responded that on Thursday of last week, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security put out a press release, which indicated that Coast Guard funding would be sustained at current levels, which would allow the continuation of day-to-day operations, as well as the Coast Guard's investments in infrastructure and "to recapitalize our fleet." He said the President's FY 17 budget includes \$150 million to begin the design work for the first heavy ice breaker that the Coast Guard has built in over 40 years. The anticipation is that that ice breaker will be completed, with the help of the U.S. Navy, by 2023. He said the Coast Guard has recommended that the nation own three heavy ice breakers capable of breaking ice in both Polar Regions, as well as three medium ice breakers.

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CO-CHAIR COSTELLO asked Rear Admiral McAllister to comment on the absence of the U.S. as a signatory to the "Law of the Sea" treaty and how that may impact the work of the U.S. Coast Guard.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER answered that all military services have recommended that the U.S. become a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which he said is the basis for the claims to the Arctic Region that have been submitted thus far. He said one of the practical impacts is that until the U.S. becomes a signatory, it cannot make a claim for the Arctic Region. Notwithstanding that, the U.S. has agreed to adhere to the stipulations or provisions of UNCLOS without signing it. He explained, "And so, there is no immediate change in the way that we have done business; we continue to interact with other nations around the globe on the high seas under the provisions of UNCLOS, even though we are not a signatory."

CO-CHAIR COSTELLO noted that she had asked that question on behalf of Representative Saddler.

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SENATOR COGHILL noted that the Arctic Council would be meeting to change the gavel from one member to another. He asked if the Coast Guard is involved in the discussion [of that council]. He then asked how the Coast Guard "stacks up" in terms of communication related to navigation and search and rescue.

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER answered that the Coast Guard supports the Arctic Council and has created an Arctic Coast Guard forum under the council to focus on "maritime-related issues amongst the Arctic Council nations." He said the Coast Guard commandant is the current chair of that forum, but the next chair will be from Finland. He said the Coast Guard is involved with both governance bodies. He related that from a local perspective, his job is to localize those things that are agreed to amongst the Arctic Council or the Arctic Coast Guard Forum. For example, he said the Arctic Chinook mass rescue operation that was conducted was done under "the Arctic search and rescue agreement."

REAR ADMIRAL MCALLISTER, regarding communications, said the Coast Guard has improved its communications, which improves all its missions. He said Alaska's size and climate creates challenges working in remote locations, and while improvements have been made, the Coast Guard will try to fill the gaps and continue to make improvements. He said an "appropriate communications capability" is a high priority before the Coast Guard, industry, or communities along the North Slope or Western Alaska will have a "significant maritime presence."

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CO-CHAIR KAWASAKI noted that there is more coastline along the state of Alaska than in the rest of the United States, and he expressed appreciation to the Coast Guard for "keeping us safe."

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL began her briefing, regarding the Alaska National Guard, with a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy available in the committee packet]. She noted that the progenitor of the National Guard - the militia - has been around since 1636, longer than any other military faction in the U.S.

She said that "organized militia" is the statutory term for the four divisions: the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard, the State Defense Force, and the Alaska Naval Militia.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL referred to slide 2, entitled "DMVA Mission," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

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

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL turned to slide 3, entitled "DMVA Vision and Core Values." She expressed her belief in the importance of establishing a shared vision supported by core values. She said the vision statement outlines "the four major lines of effort" throughout the entire department, and they are: federal mission assurance, viable Arctic strategy, emergency management capacity, and engagement with Alaska communities. She said common understanding creates efficiency in terms of people, equipment, and fiscal resources.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL directed attention to slides 4 and 5, entitled "Alaska National Guard in the News." She said the Alaska National Guard divested the legacy C-130 fleet on Elmendorf "as part of a package where we received ownership of the strategic airlift platform - our C-17s." She said the Alaska National Guard is partnering internationally with Mongolia, Canada, and Denmark for training and exercises. She highlighted a biathlon championship team. She said the Alaska National Guard continued its aviation support of the Colony Glacier recovery operations previously described by Lieutenant General Wilsbach. She relayed that the National Guard been actively recognizing soldiers that have been overlooked in the past.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL described the photographs on slide 5: Army Guard military police and Air Guard security police sworn in as special police by the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department to assist in civilian law enforcement for the President's inauguration; a book cover aptly titled "Never Quit," published by a former Air Guard "parajumper"; Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott with a former Sergeant First Class Wesley Aiken, who has served Alaskans for over 70 years, including

currently as tribal representative at age 90; and a gathering of guard members challenged to lead the initiative in what Major General Hummel called, "ethical fitness."

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL introduced Chaplain (Colonel) Rick Koch.

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CHAPLAIN (COLONEL) RICK KOCH, Alaska National Guard, testified as follows:

Following the times of troubles experienced by the ... Alaska National Guard, before the end of 2014, General Hummel devised a plan to ensure the proficiency and effectiveness of the military professionalism and ethical fitness within our organization. Through her contacts at the national level, she met and communicated with Rear Admiral Margaret Klein, who headed the Secretary of Defense Office of Military Professionalism at the Pentagon.

General Hummel charged me to lead a team from our organization to be trained at that office. Four of us, to include our senior listed leader, Chief Master Sergeant Paul Nelson, attended a week-long training at the Secretary of Defense Office of Military Professionalism a year ago. Since that time, we have created military professionalism and ethical fitness curriculum, engaged numerous opportunities to share the material and entertain dialogical interchanges with personnel of all ranks, and one month ago, we conducted a formal, two-day training for all of our E-6 - that's Army Guard staff sergeants and Air Guard technical sergeants - and we also had some guests from the active duty, as well as the [Alaska] Naval Militia.

Noncommissioned officers are the backbone of the organization, and E-6s are in the middle of the pack; they influence everyone from the highest to lowest ranks.

Our objectives were to get them engaged as young leaders to call us all to meet professional and ethical standards, to be the best professional military culture anywhere. So, living and learning a military professionalism never rests. Abiding in

service values, just like exercising for physical fitness, takes daily discipline and effort.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL returned to the PowerPoint, to slide 6, entitled "Federal Mission Assurance." She said the Army and Air National Guard continues to "train, deploy, operate, and ... return, as part of our federal mission sets." She highlighted some of the exercises, operations, and missions listed on the slide: Ice-X, 200 miles north of Prudhoe Bay; training Mongolian forces for peace-keeping operations during "Khaan Quest"; Operation Deep Freeze, which supported National Science Foundation efforts in Antarctica; cargo and aircraft moving 4,000 personnel; deployment of soldiers and airmen in support of "the war fight"; and 24/7 missions conducted.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL turned to slide 7, entitled "Viable Arctic Strategy." She said, "Alaska is what makes the U.S. an Arctic nation." She stated that the Alaska National Guard was underrepresented on DoD working groups charged with crafting policy for operations in the Arctic. Now, she indicated, her joint staff has secured membership on the Office of the Secretary of Defense's working group, as well as having a seat at the table on U.S. Northern Command's Arctic Capabilities Working Group; therefore, [the Alaska National Guard] can ensure that Alaska is recognized as "a stakeholder in the Arctic" and Alaska's interest will be "taken into account when crafting policies and identifying military requirements."

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL said the Alaska National Guard hosted representatives from nine other state National Guards at Fort Wainwright and Utkiavik for the first National Guard Arctic Interest Summit, and a charter for the National Guard was signed. She said, "This organization will be the primary developer for the National Guard Arctic capabilities and policy across the country."

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL continued to slide 8, entitled "Emergency Management Capacity," which she said is the line of effort that makes the National Guard and the rest of the organized militia "special." She explained that the National Guard has both a federal and state mission, and "no other component has this requirement." She said the State Defense Force and Alaska Naval Militia are manned by "Alaskans dedicated to helping Alaskans,

especially in the greatest time of need." She continued as follows:

One of our major accomplishments over the last year was the complete revision and modernizing of the fundamental documents for both the State Defense Force and the [Alaska] Naval Militia. These organizations now have better defined standards and policies to support the execution of their state mission sets. Both of these groups, along with the National Guard counterparts, participated in last year's Wildfire Response and the Homeland Security exercise, Alaska Shield. We also continue assisting our partner nation Mongolia with developing their own emergency management capacity, through the earthquake readiness exercise "GOBI WOLF 2016" and a number of bilateral engagements.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL turned to slide 9, entitled "Engage with Alaska Communities." She stated that community outreach in Alaska is one of the Alaska National Guard's most satisfying missions and honoring Alaska service members is the best part of that. She relayed that in 2017, the Kotzebue Qipqiña Army Aviation Operations Facility was named after "former adjutant general and the army's first Alaska Native, two-star general, John Schaeffer."

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL noted, as shown on slide 9, that volunteers gave over 30,000 hours, which she said does not accurately capture the untold volunteer hours put in by the state militia to serve communities and the state. She talked about "Operation Santa Clause," which is a community effort to visit communities during the holidays. She noted that seating is always limited, but an option to participate is to volunteer to help wrap presents and help Santa, as did Lieutenant Governor Mallott, as depicted in another photo on slide 9.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL highlighted the final slide, entitled "YOUR National Guard," and she described a hypothetical day to demonstrate how Alaska's organized militia, in concert with its organized partners, is "always ready and always there."

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NELSON N. ANGAPAK, SR., via teleconference, expressed appreciation for the work of Major General Hummel, in particular the programs that have impacted rural Alaska. He indicated that in approximately 2006, 160 Alaska Native members of the National Guard were deployed to Kuwait to provide logistical support for U.S. troops in Iraq, while some were deployed to Afghanistan and other battlefield theaters. He said, "Some of them came back with issues dealing with what they experienced out there." He questioned what kind of reintegration program is available to assist those trying to get back to their village life.

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CHAPLAIN (COLONEL) KOCH relayed that there is a "multi-faceted care team" through family programs, as well as chaplains in every battalion. He noted that [the chaplains] have been trained in the matter of intervention. Further, he said there is full-time psychological help through a psychological care team that meets monthly to ensure a "wide net" and "a net that is not torn in any place," so that no one falls "through the cracks." He emphasized that problems need to be shared, because the care team is not clairvoyant; however, once problems are communicated, the team can respond quickly, efficiently, and effectively.

CHAPLAIN (COLONEL) KOCH advised there is a Forget-Me-Not Coalition, which covers all service members, active duty and reserve, in all branches. The coalition provides services throughout the state, with the help of businesses, faith communities, health/mental health communities that have joined the coalition and promised to serve and aid serve members and families. He indicated that much of this is coordinated through the Alaska National Guard, because "we're always here and we can keep the continuity going."

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL thanked Mr. Angapak, Sr., for his advocacy for Alaska veterans and congratulated him on his appointment as a public member of the Joint Armed Services Committee. She acknowledged that there are over 75,000 veterans living in Alaska who have at least 150,000 dependent family members. She said the Office of Veteran Affairs, within DMVA, is headed by Verdie Bowen and works to reach out to all veterans across the state, recognizing that those who are not doing well need extra support. She estimated there are just over 100 tribal veteran representatives trained by the Office of Veteran Affairs to help

veterans negotiate "the labyrinth maze of veterans' programs" for the benefits and entitlements that have been earned, and those representatives are willing to help "every step of the way" so that no one is left behind.

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CO-CHAIR KAWASAKI thanked each of the presenters and, on behalf of the committee, expressed appreciation for their service to the country and Alaska. He noted that the presenters would be available for a press conference in the Speaker's Chambers directly following the meeting.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:08 p.m.