

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

January 19, 2017

1:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Chris Tuck, Chair
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Vice Chair
Representative Justin Parish
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Lora Reinbold
Representative Dan Saddler

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative David Eastman

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW: DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY & VETERANS' AFFAIRS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MAJOR GENERAL LAURIE HUMMEL, Commissioner Adjutant General
Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

BRIGADIER GENERAL KAREN MANSFIELD, Commander
Alaska Air National Guard
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

BRIGADIER GENERAL Joe Streff, Commander
Alaska Army National Guard (AK ARNG)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

MIKE O'HARED, Director
Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHSEM)
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

COLONEL ALASKA JOHN JAMES, Commanding Officer
Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF)
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Wasilla, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

VERDIE BOWEN, Director
Office of Veteran Affairs
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

BOB ROSES, Director
Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA)
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

BRIAN DUFFY, Director
Division of Administrative Services (DAS)
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

ROBERT DOEHL, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,
titled "FY2018 Department Overview."

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR CHRIS TUCK called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Representatives LeDoux, Parish, Spohnholz, Rauscher, Reinbold, and Chair Tuck were present at the call to order. Representative Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also in attendance was Representative Eastman.

Overview: Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs

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CHAIR TUCK announced that the only order of business would be an overview from the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs.

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MAJOR GENERAL LAURIE HUMMEL, Commissioner Adjutant General, Office of the Commissioner/Adjutant General, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), began a PowerPoint presentation, titled "FY2018 Department Overview." She referred to slide 2, titled "Mission," and stated that the constitutional and statutory mission of DMVA is to provide military forces that are properly resourced, trained, equipped, and ready to accomplish military missions within the state or, when deployed, around the world. She noted the department mission of addressing homeland security and matters of homeland defense when activated to do so, and she also mentioned DMVA is the state's force for emergency preparedness response and recovery.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL related that DMVA is the primary link for the 74,000-plus veterans in the state of Alaska to the federally granted services and the entitlements they have earned. She added that DMVA has the Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA) Challenge Program, which provides youth with military-style training and education. She reiterated that these provisions are all required by the state's constitution and statutes.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL referred to slide 3, titled "Alaska GF Budget by Department" and showing a pie chart illustrating the general fund budget by department. She pointed out DVMA's portion of the state budget, which is 0.36 percent, making it the smallest department in state government.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL moved on to slide 4, titled "Operating Budget Impact," and offered that DMVA brings to Alaska a large number of federal dollars. She called slide 4 her "iceberg slide," as it visually depicts the \$16.2 million of current fiscal year state dollars spent, the portion of the iceberg "above the water," and the \$618,569,893 coming into Alaska from the federal government, the portion "under water." The federal funds, she stated, come into Alaska either through the state budget or as direct compensation to Alaskans. She declared the federal dollar return on state operating dollars to be 38 to 1.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL referred to the first part of slide 5, titled "FY2018 Areas of Major Emphasis," and said that when she assumed her position of adjutant general, she created a divisional vision with "four lines of effort." She listed the four lines as follows: to develop and execute a viable Arctic strategy; to increase capacity for emergency management throughout the state; to engage robustly with Alaska's communities; and to do all of these things while achieving federal mission assurance for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). She asserted that these lines of effort really "come together" in the first area of major emphasis, which the department refers to as its "rural engagement initiative." She went on to say the rural engagement initiative "is kind of a sweet spot, because it sits at the intersection of all of those planks of our vision."

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL turned to slide 6, titled "Rural Engagement," and said that the situation for Alaska and for the nation is that there is an increased amount of interest in and traffic around the Arctic regions. She said DoD has major concerns for defense of the nation in regard to four countries "intent to do us harm" and also violent extremist organizations. She specified that three of those four countries, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Russia, and China, are right at Alaska's door, and foreign military operations are of increasing concern to Alaska as "we may soon find ourselves on a new kind of front."

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL related that since [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001], the United States has innumerable dollars and efforts engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. She said the operational expertise that the U.S. military formerly had in the Arctic has waned, as it has concentrated in other areas, and DoD now acknowledges the need to "get back to business of understanding how to survive, how to thrive, how to fight, and how to defend in the Arctic."

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL reminded the committee of the catastrophic earthquake in 1964 and the pictures of the Alaska National Guard coming to the assistance of Anchorage and other Southcentral Alaska communities. She offered that the Alaska National Guard was able to respond in that way because on that particular weekend, Alaska National Guard members from all over the state had converged at Fort Richardson for annual training. She added that although there were a number of Southcentral guardsmen who were victims of the earthquake, there were others from around the state who were able to assist. She asserted that this scenario could not exist today, because the Alaska National Guard no longer has robust participation from around the state. In fact, she inserted, the vast majority of active members come from the urban areas and road system, mainly from Southcentral Alaska.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL concluded that "all these things have come together in our minds to remind us that we need to put effort into pushing the Alaska National Guard back out across Alaska, and we need to vigorously ... recruit and enlist and engage in our rural communities." She further offered, "That's a problem," because the DoD controls everything about the Alaska National Guard and all of the 54 state national guards. It sets the mission essential task list determining how the fore-structure will look in terms of numbers and type of units, and it sets the standards for recruiting, enlisting, and retaining members. She stated that DMVA has engaged very vigorously with leaders in Washington, both within DoD and the U.S. Department of the Army. It has hosted a number of high ranking and influential military personnel and taken them to Bethel and villages in the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta to show them the challenges in recruitment, the vastness of our state, the sparseness of our infrastructure, and the tyranny of our weather and climate.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL disclosed that Alaska has received concessions from the federal government, both through waivers and other additional money, to improve recruitment, but the changes in this area require considerable effort and time. She declared that what DMVA would like to do in the interim, as it builds conditions for more robust participation in the Alaska National Guard across the state, is to concentrate on increasing the participation and footprint of the Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF). The Alaska State Defense Force, she explained, is part of the organized state militia, which cannot be federalized and is not associated with DoD. She drew the committee members' attention to Colonel John James, present in the room, and to his army service uniform, and made the point that his rank is "colonel in parenthesis Alaska." This means he holds the rank of colonel in the Alaska organized militia but does not hold that rank federally. She reiterated that ASDF is an organized militia only for the state of Alaska; therefore, Alaska can control it, determine the standards for enlistment and retention, and determine the mission-essential tasks. The sole commander in chief, she said, is the governor of Alaska. She declared that ASDF can be brought to active duty to help in times of emergencies but can never be deployed out of state for homeland defense.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL maintained that ASDF benefits Alaska by building strong, resilient communities, which is possible through a mission task list that includes training in search and rescue assistance, training in first aid and long wave emergency communications, and assisting local authorities by making door-to-door health and welfare checks. She added that the best thing about ASDF is that it is inexpensive. It not only employs volunteers, but soldiers are only compensated for exercises and for actual assistance rendered when called to active duty in times of state emergency. She concluded by saying that DMVA has asked the legislature this year for a small amount of money, \$200,000, to help the department "grow detachments" of the ASDF across the state. She mentioned recent detachments established - a communications detachment in Bethel and a defense force detachment in Quinhagak.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL moved on to slide 8, titled "Organizational Chart," and addressed the two boxes with dashed lines leading to her position as shown in the chart - the Alaska Aerospace

Corporation (AAC) and the United States Property & Fiscal Office (USPFO). She pointed out that DMVA has administrative oversight of the AAC, which was moved over from the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED) a number of years ago. She then explained that USPFO is not a state organization but the management and compliance office that administers the National Guard grant coming to Alaska from DoD. She added that this office works for the Chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., not her.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL KAREN MANSFIELD, Commander, Alaska Air National Guard, continued the PowerPoint presentation with slide 9, titled "Alaska Air National Guard." She began her testimony as follows:

I am very honored to be here today, but it's the 2,120 Alaska Air guardsmen and the 35 state employees who support my organization that are really important, and I'm excited to tell you about their contributions. They represent an amazing military and state support capacity for Alaska. The federal government pays to man, train, and equip the Alaska Air National Guard to support the nation's warfighting and defense needs, as we know.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD referred to "the iceberg slide" (slide 4) and related that the Alaska Air National Guard (AK ANG) spends about \$2.4 million in state funds and concurrently executes over \$197 million in federal money for federal missions supported. She added that the 35 state employees perform facility maintenance at AK ANG primary locations. They are 75 percent federally funded, with a 25 percent state match. She asserted, "It's a very small vital footprint that is necessary for our federal mission assurance."

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD went on to detail the locations and missions of AK ANG. Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) in Fairbanks is the 168th Wing, which serves as the parent wing to both the air refueling squadron located at Eielson and to the space and warning squadron at Clear Air Station in Anderson. She stated the 176th Wing is located at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) and is one of the most complex organizations in the Air National Guard nationwide. She relayed that JBER has four primary mission sets and some smaller mission sets. She added

that "both wings also have the standard supporting units typical for an Air Force Wing in their mission support groups."

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BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD cited that the refueling mission at the 168th is comprised of KC-135 Stratotankers, which are unit owned, maintained, and operated by the Guard. She explained, "That's relevant because some of the missions we do, we are not what you would call unit equipped." She added, "For example, [the 168th] is the parent wing for the space warning and surveillance squad up there as well, that's Air Force owned, but we are the force provider. We provide the manpower that actually executes the mission from the Air Guard."

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD paraphrased from her written testimony, which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Several of our missions are in transition during 2017, the AK ANG will take ownership of the C-17 strategic (long-range) aircraft and will convert from a classic association to an active association with the Air Force - our strong total force partnership continues, as the active duty continues to maintain a squadron and flies our aircraft. Our venerable, legacy C-130s (tactical, short-range airlift) are being divested, with the last aircraft leaving the state this spring - we retain all the manning from that squadron, correcting some historical deficits in other areas, retraining and retaining our members.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if divestiture of the C-130s was part of an U.S. Air Force wide phase out of C-130s or "is somebody getting our good, but well-worn, aircraft?"

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD responded yes, it was a senior leader U.S. Air Force corporate planning choice made in 2014. She stated there was an overall corporate draw down of C-130s, and the C-130s were not transferred anywhere else.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there were plans to "beef up" the C-17 force.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD said that the action was a concurrent action. AK ANG didn't lose any number of airframes, because as the eight C130s were divested, it gained the eight C-17s.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD, continuing her testimony, stated that the Rescue Coordination Center on JBER is manned solely by AK ANG guardsmen with the vital mission of allocating any available state asset to respond to an emergency. She asserted that the AK ANG rescue triad is a very visible asset, as it is often seen "on the news." The rescue triad consists of unit-owned HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters, with long-range response capacity over water, HC-130 refuelers, and Guardian Angel PJs trained for high altitude extraction. She concluded that AK ANG is the resource of last resort for state response and can respond in ways that other assets in the state cannot. She added that the Air Defense Squadron represents another mission that is manned totally by AK ANG operators, and the equipment there, while owned by the U.S. Air Force, is maintained by guardsmen as well.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD referred to slide 10, also titled "Alaska Air National Guard," and asked, "So what's keeping us busy?" In answer, she paraphrased from her written testimony, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

In terms of federal relevance and in keeping with the DoD's focus and prioritization on total force integration, your Alaska Air Guard seamlessly deploys with active duty to overseas missions, and just as notably, integrates to a high level here at home.

In 2016, the 168th wing deployed over 350 tanker crew/maintainers to Central and Pacific Command, where they flew 301 combat hours and offloaded 2.9 mil pdns of fuel in the combat AOR. For the 176th wing, over 140 members were deployed to overseas providing airlift, airdrop and civil engineering capacity.

Your Alaska Air Guard is also unique in the number of on-going federal missions being funded/executed, essentially deployed in-place, 24/7, 365 days a year. Our tankers sit alert at Eielson in support of the

Alaska NORAD Region, while the Rescue forces provide alert capability to the 11th Air Force active duty fighters, enabling their NORAD response and expanded training capacity. The AIR Defense squadron on JBER is on duty 24/7, 365, maintaining continuous air surveillance and defense over the Alaskan area of responsibility. The 213th Space Warning Squadron also executes the space surveillance and warning mission, 24/7, 365 - with the Air Guard providing 90% of the space operators and 100% of the clear AFS defense forces for the Air Force Space mission.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD referred to slide 11, the third slide titled "Alaska Air National Guard," and continued paraphrasing from her written testimony, which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

In support of state relevance, due to our expanded federal mission set, the AKANG is over 50% fulltime manned, which gives us capacity to leverage skill sets and capability for state needs. In 2016, we were able to augment fire fighters for the Moss Creek fire. For the Veteran's Stand Down, the 168th Medical Group assisted over 500 Fairbanks region veterans with medical services. The 176th Wing also provided airlift for the multiple village visits for Operation Santa Claus, bringing goods/supplies and holiday cheer to rural regions of the state. I mentioned rescue earlier, and it is the most visible, immediate and frequently requested capability - the ANG supported 89 missions in 2016, with 53 saves reported.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD said that inherent in each wing are the support functions, and she listed them: civil engineer squadrons; security forces; logistics; medical support; and communications. She added that these were all skill sets, personnel, and equipment that can be leveraged for state response and support.

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CHAIR TUCK asked if all 89 missions were to save lives.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD clarified that the 89 missions were flown only by AK ANG. She offered that there were probably more

missions flown by other assets in the state. She confirmed that the 89 missions flown by AK ANG were all rescue missions, and there were 53 saves.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked if the 53 saves represented 53 lives.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD responded that was correct, but clarified that these individuals were not necessarily going to die, just that they were recovered and, therefore, didn't die.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD referred to slide 12, the fourth slide titled "Alaska Air National Guard," as an overview of past successes, current operations, and future outlook. She declared, "Bottom line is we're busy, but that doesn't mean we don't have our eyes on the future. We want to ensure we stay vital and relevant to both the nation and the state." She said AK ANG is looking for ways to help meet the total force tanker requirements in Alaska, as there is more refueling need than there is capacity, and that need is growing. She stated that AK ANG also intends to continue to focus on modernizing its force. It is currently converting the HC-130s to the new J model. She said AK ANG continues to innovate in the Arctic, developing rescue capacity. She gave, as example, the two Arctic sustainment packages, which are airdrop equipment bundles that have equipment that can sustain 25 people for up to 72 hours in austere Arctic conditions. She asserted that even with three years of positive gains, recruiting remains a focus area, and AK ANG continues to welcome community support and ideas to innovate recruiting methods.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD said, "In closing, Mr. Chairman, representatives, I want to assure you that your Alaska Air Guard is filled with highly trained and motivated airman. They are your neighbors, your friends, your co-workers, your employees. As members of our community, they go above and beyond in their commitment to serve the nation and the great State of Alaska."

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for clarification on the transference of airframes.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MANSFIELD, in response to Representative Saddler, confirmed that the eight C-17s are transferring from active to AK ANG, the C-130s are being decommissioned, and the H to J upgrade will occur to the tankers and remain with AK ANG.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL JOE STREFF, Commander, Alaska Army National Guard, stated that the Alaska Army National Guard (AK ARNG) is 1,735 soldiers strong. He said "We work hard every day to be ready to execute our federal missions anywhere in the world but our state mission any time in Alaska." He relayed that the federal government pays AK ARNG soldiers' wages and pays to train and equip them, which, he proclaimed, is a great benefit to the State of Alaska. He related that AK ARNG has 42 state employees, who are mostly engaged in facility maintenance, and a large majority of the salaries are funded by a cooperative agreement between the state and federal government.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF alluded to the list of units on slide 13, titled "Alaska Army National Guard," and attested that they represented capabilities. He said AK ARNG consists of "an infantry, aviation, military police, ground missile defense, engineer, medical, and signal organization, to include a training center." It is located in 19 communities across the state of Alaska and affords Alaskans eligible to serve in the military the opportunity to be citizen soldiers in AK ARNG.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF went on to say AK ARNG is one of the components of the U.S. Army. Other components include active U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Reserves. He maintained that AK ARNG is unique in that the chain of command reports to the governor, instead of the President. The governor may order AK ARNG to active duty for homeland security missions, yet it also must be ready to fight the nation's wars, so it has federal operational relevance, as well. He referred to slide 14, also titled "Alaska Army National Guard," and stated that AK ARNG has deployed on a number of overseas contingency operations - to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and the Balkans. He added that it is currently deployed to Afghanistan in support of "our Mongolian friends and our state partners" and also in the Horn of Africa conducting aviation operations.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF said that the AK ARNG state partnership program is with Mongolia and is in its 15th year. He added that

this program is regarded as the standard for the U.S. Department of the Army and the National Guard Bureau. He said that through the partnership, it is helping to grow the civil response and military capabilities of Mongolia, which is a significant contributor to the United Nations peace keeping missions.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF relayed that AK ARNG mans the ground-based missile defense system at Fort Greely. He said that the system, established in 2004, is operated by 210 guardsmen who protect North America primarily from North Korean missiles, 24/7. He asserted that the Arctic is increasingly important and the United States is working to develop a strategy for that area. He said AK ARNG is sponsoring the Arctic Interest Advisory Counsel, created to assist in the development of the national Arctic strategy. He added that AK ARNG's first meeting is with a number of northern tier states and will be in Barrow. He further stated that AK ARNG is aligned with the U.S. Pacific Command and the U.S. Army Pacific, and its 1st Battalion 297th Infantry Regiment is part of the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which is part of the Hawaii National Guard. He declared that if called upon to defend the nation, AK ARNG is expected to deploy with the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. He relayed that AK ARNG also maintains a great relationship with the U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK), and participates in a number of exercises and training events with them. This relationship includes aviation support to airborne operations, cooperation between their schoolhouses, and Arctic skills training.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF then referred to slide 15, the third slide titled "Alaska Army National Guard," to highlight some of the state missions accomplished by AK ARNG in Alaska. He said that Arctic Care was started in 1995 as a Navy preserve mission and has expanded to include a multi-branch exercise to provide free medical, dental, psychological, vision, and veterinary care in Alaska's underserved communities. The Alaska Army National Guard works with the Native health corporations to identify communities, primarily in western Alaska, and rotate through them. This exercise trains hundreds of service members in humanitarian disaster relief.

CHAIR TUCK asked if there are AK ARNG personnel in the fields of vision, dental, health, and veterinary care.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF responded that these providers could be active duty, reservists, or national guardsmen, but they are

specialists in those fields and are credentialed. He further explained that the active duty has veterinary services in Alaska, providing veterinarians to perform rabies shots, spaying, neutering, and other services.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked how many communities and individuals were served through Arctic Care.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF responded it was difficult to enumerate but estimated it to be over 100. He said that in 2012, for example, guardsmen visited 11 villages around the Kobuk River area near Kotzebue and saw hundreds of patients in the various villages, plus dogs and cats. With 20-plus years of operation, the number served is fairly extensive.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked if the funding for Arctic Care was federal, that is, part of the AK ARNG operational budget.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF responded in the affirmative, and stressed the opportunity it represents for the state of Alaska and the health corporations to utilize the services of reservists and active duty personnel who come to Alaska at the expense of their own units.

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REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked for clarification of veterinarian services in regard to AK ARNG personnel.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF explained that AK ARNG does not have veterinarian services, but the active duty and reserve personnel have veterinary services. He added that the veterinary services also monitor food coming on post, for quality management.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF related that Operation Santa Cause represented a partnership between the Alaska Army National Guard and the Alaska Air National Guard. He went on to say AK ARNG provides support to the Veterans' Stand Down in partnership with 50 agencies. This annual program provides medical, dental, vision screening, housing, employment, and financial assistance. He said that AK ARNG Blackhawk helicopters supported the McHugh

Creek fire-fighting efforts, executing dozens of hours of flight time and dropping nearly 300,000 gallons of water to protect residents of Turnagain Arm. He mentioned that AK ARNG aviation and ground teams are prepared to support the rescue coordination center for whatever missions might require military support.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF asserted that AK ARNG, with facilities around Alaska, is ready to save Alaskan lives in concert with the Alaska State Troopers, Air National Guard, U.S. Coast Guard, and local authorities. He reiterated AK ARNG brings significant assets to the Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) mission. He especially noted the 103rd Civil Support Team (CST), which is ready 24/7, 365, to identify and assess chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats in Alaska. Additionally, AK ARNG advises civil authority and response measures, and assists with requests for additional support.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF then referred to slide 16, the fourth slide titled "Alaska Army National Guard," and stated that "we are fully engaged in 2017 and look forward to 2018 and beyond to ensure we are a relevant and ready force." He said AK ARNG will expand its recruiting in rural, Western Alaska. He added, "Our intent is to grow that force so that we can increase our Arctic capability and capacity, but also go ahead and increase our diversity in our organization."

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF relayed that vital to national security, AK ARNG will maintain its highest level of readiness with its ground-based missile defense system. He assured the committee that AK ARNG will work across DMVA to add value to each of their divisions and endeavors to resolve the challenges of limited state and federal government funds while improving mission readiness.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for an update on recruitment and retention within AK ARNG.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF responded that across Alaska there is a spectrum of diverse candidates, and the current focus is to get

"the right people coming into the right units and making sure it's an ethical and focused organization."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about changes in missions and staffing and, specifically, if AK ARNG was currently using the Alcantra Armory in Wasilla to greater advantage.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF answered that there is an evolving stationing plan for the Alcantra facility. He said that AK ARNG has asked the federal government, through the National Guard Bureau, to fund improvements. He related that the Alcantra Armory houses portions of the infantry battalion, the Military Police Company, and Alaska State Defense Force residents; therefore, good use is being made of the facility. He acknowledged the potential of recruitment in the Matanuska Valley for decades to come.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL added that "the refurbishment of a new Alcantra Armory was number one" on her National Guard Bureau "wish list" for military construction this past year.

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MIKE O'HARE, Director, Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), referred to slide 17, titled "Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management," and stated that the mission of the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHSEM) is to foster a prepared and resilient state of Alaska, keeping Alaskans safe from all hazards, whether they be natural or manmade. He applauded the 62 workers under him. He reiterated that the mission is to "save lives, protect property, prevent suffering" from those hazards. He said that the strategic direction of the division is to: work collaboratively within the DMVA integrated team; coordinate resources with the Alaska Air National Guard, the Alaska Army National Guard, the Alaska State Defense Force, and the U.S. Coast Guard; and plan, train, and exercise to enable all communities in Alaska to be better prepared and more resilient to take care of their citizens.

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MR. O'HARE summarized the "Strategic Direction" on slide 18, also titled "Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management," by saying DHSEM constantly strives to be better in

coordinating and improving relationships with all of its partners and all of its customers to accomplish the task. He offered that DHSEM tailors its approach to meet a community's needs and to leverage the strength and resources of all of its partners, whether local, state, tribal, federal, or non-governmental faith-based organizations. He offered a binder, titled "Small Community Emergency Response Plans," for committee members to pass around and review. He said that typically, in the past, response plans have been neglected. He offered that the current response plans consist of easy-to-use flip charts that "anybody, under any circumstance, can grab this thing and say, we have a fire, we have a flood, we have ice breakup time. Who do I call? What do I do? What's the checklist to think of? What are the thought processes by which I should be executing first? Who do I call?" He stated that the phone numbers are all in the plans. He related that his staff are working with the communities to put together these small community response plans, referred to as SCERPs. He relayed a success story about category 2 and 3 hurricanes on the west coast affecting St. Lawrence Island. He mentioned he received a call from Shaktoolik, one of the affected communities, expressing appreciation for the SCERP, which helped them be better organized, be better prepared, know what to do, and be more confident and resilient. He declared, "This is the essence, this is the foundation of community resilience with regards to disaster preparedness and planning that we're striving for." He referred to the "really cool" gear shown on slide 18, which consists of tactical emergency communication devices that can be located quickly anywhere in Alaska to establish communications, a mobile emergency operations center that can travel anywhere on the road system and establish communications if needed, and the earthquake simulator for outreach to communities.

[1:58:04 PM](#)

MR. O'HARE referred to slide 19, the third slide titled "Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management," to describe the organizational structure of DHSEM. "Planning" and "Preparedness," on the left side of the chart, represent staff who engage with all Alaskan communities to do community planning and mitigation. Mitigation includes modification projects, such as home elevation or relocation, which help residents be less vulnerable to threats. Planning includes assisting communities with disaster planning and preparing their SCERPs. He mentioned the resiliency team, which coordinates "all of the various entities that could bring resources, planning, understandings of the community. You can't plan until you really understand

what's going on out there." He concluded, "This is how we engage with the community. This is how we engage in collaborative fashion."

MR. O'HARE referred to "State Emergency Operations Center/Response" on the chart on slide 19, and mentioned that this center is located in the basement of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) and is the center point of response coordination for "anything that happens in Alaska." He declared that there were seats at the center for all of DHSEM's partners - military, U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska Army National Guard, Alaska Air National Guard, Alaska State Defense Force, appropriate state agencies, and volunteer and faith-based organizations - to come together with the full authority of their agency and with their resources to bring a quick response to communities in peril.

MR. O'HARE then referred to "Disaster Assistance," on the far right of the organizational chart, and explained that this represents individuals who do the long-term care in the community recovery programs, who have intimate knowledge of community dynamics, and who have relationships with community residents.

2:00:50 PM

MR. O'HARE turned to slide 20, the fourth slide titled "Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management," to describe the successes, operations, and outlooks of the division. For successes, he mentioned the Fall Preparedness Conference, in which DHSEM invites participants from all Alaskan communities to convene in Anchorage to engage in preparedness, outreach, training, and table top exercises. The purpose is for attendees to focus on improving themselves in their response to the community. He added that in the past, there have been two large preparedness conferences, but the plan now is to have just one per year and move conference resources and efforts to the rural "hub" communities for regional focus.

MR. O'HARE discussed "FY2017 Operations" on slide 20, by saying DHSEM continually conducts response operations. The operations include responses for federal and state declarations of disaster and responses to communities to identify and address issues, coordinate resources, and avert disasters. He offered that a major success of the division is the Community and Emergency Response Team (CERT) training that Outreach Chief Michelle Torez gives to Military Youth Academy cadets in effective community

planning and preparedness for response to disasters. He added that Alaska National Guard members and Alaska State Defense Force members will be incorporated into the training to expose cadets to recruitment opportunities in those agencies. He asserted this effort to be the foundation for community resilience as it builds new leadership for emergency management.

[2:04:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ shared her experience with Heads Up Disaster Response through her work with the Salvation Army, and reiterated that the SCERP is a practical, easy-to-use tool for planning and organizing disaster response. She added that as a member of a local volunteer organization, she felt welcome "at the table," and DHSEM was remarkably professional and collaborative.

[2:05:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if the scope of the Alaska Shield exercise would be the same as last year and whom it would involve, and he added that he would like to be involved as an observer.

MR. O'HARE responded that Alaska Shield is the state's large field exercise for a particular threat focus. The next date for this exercise will be in 2019. He said it would be a homeland security-focused event to involve many communities and regions in Alaska. He invited all committee members to attend.

MR. O'HARE turned the committee's attention back to slide 7, titled "Village Relocation," to discuss village relocation as a mitigation project. He declared that investments to communities "to harden them to meet the threats" is a vital investment to community resilience. He said that it is the community's decision whether to stay in place or relocate. If it chooses to stay in place, then DHSEM must "harden", elevate, and/or look at other mitigation opportunities. He mentioned that there was no specific agency responsible for village relocation. He asserted that Sally Russell Cox (local government specialist IV, Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA), DCCED), coordinates with communities that have identified that they are threatened and potentially want to look at relocation. Ms. Cox, along with DCRA and DCCED, work with the villages to understand what they want to do and what their plans are, and then they mobilize the resources of the various agencies that "can help move this along." He added that it was hugely a team effort. He offered

that DHSEM's role in DMVA is as a conduit to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mitigation resources. He added that for every disaster for which the state has a federal disaster declaration, the state receives money for statewide mitigation projects. He related that relocation of the Village of Newtok to Mertarvik will have a huge cost and take a long time. He added that, to date, there had been ten years of planning for the relocation, and even though there has been some new development at the new location of Mertarvik, DHSEM is "nowhere near getting those houses built and moved over there." He mentioned that one of the reasons for the slow progress is that there is no one agency with the \$100-150 million to relocate a community. He offered that even with the resources that DHSEM partners bring to the table, these resources come with restraints and reporting requirements. He asserted there are "cascading effects." He explained, "If we move so many houses, could we build the school now in the new location?" He emphasized the complexity of such a mitigation opportunity and stated that collaboration was key.

[2:10:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if DoD has much interest in continuing to plan for similar relocations in light of the drawn out nature of the Newtok response and lack of final resolution.

MR. O'HARE responded that DMVA, as Alaska's key point of contact with DoD, uses projects such as the relocation of Newtok as Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) opportunities, and Alaska can make a bid to the National Guard Bureau for the project as an engineering training opportunity for the military. He said that the National Guard Bureau's list of projects is long, and it is difficult to get a project on that list.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL opined that she did not believe that the outcome of that relocation project is on DoD's scope, so would not jeopardize future IRT bids.

[2:12:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked for the number of residents in Newtok.

Mr. O'HARE responded 600-700 residents.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD noted the state's \$3 billion deficit, the state's huge expenses, and the \$20 trillion federal deficit, and she asked what Newtok would have done hundreds of years ago "without all these bureaucrats, all these agencies ... all over the place" She additionally asked: "Number two, whose responsibility is it to move? And number three, is it because all these government buildings and dollars that have gone into this community, is that what needs to be moved?" She opined that the community's residents would have been more mobile in the past, and she asked about the dynamics of the move in regard to government infrastructure versus personal housing.

[2:13:39 PM](#)

MR. O'HARE responded that the issues Representative Reinbold brought up about government's roles and responsibility in assisting the involved communities is an ongoing discussion at DHSEM with each community at peril.

[2:14:12 PM](#)

CHAIR TUCK asked what gives responsibility for relocation of communities to DMVA.

MR. O'HARE responded that the responsibility of DMVA in the endeavor mentioned is "as a small piece of this puzzle" in accessing some mitigation resources. He continued that "without having those pieces in the partnership to try and meet the whole, we're not going to get anywhere."

CHAIR TUCK asked, "This is mitigation between the village and the State of Alaska or the village and the federal government?"

MR. O'HARE responded that all of them - federal, state, tribal, and Denali Commission looking for federal resources - are involved to meet that mission.

[2:15:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there is an interagency avian bird flu team up and operating, and if that is considered a continuing threat.

MR. O'HARE answered that DHSEM works closely with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and with Andy Jones (Section Chief, Emergency Programs: Health Emergency Response Operations, EMS and Trauma) and his staff, and they share

information regularly on threats, patterns, and trends nationwide and in Alaska. He confirmed that avian bird flu was absolutely an ongoing threat.

2:16:01 PM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD offered her appreciation for the importance of homeland security and urged DMVA to "keep your eye on the biggest threat." She cited the threats mentioned at the beginning of the presentation - those involving North Korea, China, Russia, and infiltration of radical groups - and offered that they may have the biggest impact on most Alaskans.

MR. O'HARE replied he couldn't agree more. He added that "this is a moving process and we have to be ... lucky all the time." He contended that DMVA looks at all of the moving threats and has relationships with all of its partners - DoD, the federal government, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), law enforcement, state troopers, and Department of Public Safety (DPS). He also mentioned the importance of the DPS intelligence information sharing center, called the Intelligence Fusion Center, and of having a homeland security advisor to the governor, who is the commissioner of DPS. He asserted that DMVA responds to changing patterns and trends by ensuring community plans are in place that will help them respond to threats.

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MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL added that there are Alaska National Guard personnel, within the Intelligence Fusion Center, who are active in counter drug operations in partnership with the FBI and the drug enforcement agency.

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REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked about the nature of the upgrade to Alcantra Armory.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL responded that it would be a new armory building. She confirmed this project as being number one on her military construction merit list.

BRIGADIER GENERAL STREFF added the upgrade project at Alcantra includes not only a new building but fencing, scheduled road improvements, and other infrastructure improvements. He said that DMVA would find out this year if the project is selected and, if so, construction would start sometime after 2020.

2:20:04 PM

COLONEL ALASKA JOHN JAMES, Commanding Officer, Alaska State Defense Force, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), referred to slide 21, titled "Alaska State Defense Force," and said that the mission of the Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF) is to provide a trained and organized state military reserve supportive of homeland security and civil support operations. He related that ASDF has 76 soldiers and is growing across the state. He added that it is organized into the Brigade Headquarters and a Forward Support Battalion at Alcantra Armory. He further stated that: the Headquarters Company provides command and control; the MP Company provides liaison officers at emergency operation centers in communities; an engineer company is able to assess buildings, bridges, and community structures post event; and a signal company is capable of providing communities a secondary or tertiary means of communication. He said ASDF has detachments in Fairbanks, Valdez, and Juneau, and is establishing signal detachments in Kodiak and possibly Cordova and Sitka. He went on to say that the last state defense force is the scout battalion headquarters located in Bethel, and detachments will be established at Quinhagak, Kipnuk, Qwethluk, and Hooper Bay. Analyses will also be conducted in the communities of Nome, Kotzebue, and Barrow, for possible establishment of scout detachments in those communities.

COLONEL JAMES turned to slide 22, also titled "Alaska State Defense Force," and went on to say that soldiers are trained in: first aid; instant command systems; search and rescue; oral, written, and electronic communications; tobacco cessation; environmental stewardship; leadership skills; and many other subjects. The Alaska State Defense Force is designed to encourage and enable state organized militia service in rural communities. He mentioned that the roots of the state militia were in the Alaska Territorial Guard, and villages and small towns were able to participate over the years. He said that ASDF wants to renew and expand this proposition to increase both capacity and resiliency across the state and to make the state defense force and National Guard stronger and more reflective of the people it serves. He reiterated ASDF's mission to serve the community, increase emergency management capacity, and continue the tradition of military service in Alaska.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about the source of funds used to study the potential for ASDF detachments across the state.

COLONEL JAMES replied that the majority comes from DMVA, but he is looking for other sources, such as 501(c)3s and private donations. He assured the representatives that since it is a volunteer organization, the expense is low.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL clarified that there is no line item for ASDF operations in the DMVA budget, but through efficiencies, DMVA was able to distribute \$30,000 to ASDF last year, which, she added, was twice the amount given in any previous year. She said that in order to scout for, resource, equip, and train recruits, the governor has approved a small amount in his budget, \$200,000, as seed money to "grow" the ASDF as a state militia and to create conditions for increased recruitment into the Alaska National Guard, reserves, and active component forces across the state.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER commented that last year's recommended increase for DMVA funds was rejected, and he speculated the fundamental state fiscal situation to be similar.

MAJOR GENERAL HUMMEL offered that DMVA has scaled back its request for this year and has started pursuing other funding opportunities.

[2:25:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked if Southeast Alaska has been considered for ASDF expansion.

COLONEL JAMES responded yes.

[2:26:55 PM](#)

VERDIE BOWEN, Director, Office of Veteran Affairs, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), referred to slide 23, titled "Office of Veterans Affairs," and stated that the mission of the Office of Veterans Affairs (VA) is to advocate for the Alaska veterans, their families, and transitioning military members to receive all of the benefits they have earned through their service to the country. He declared that the biggest issue regarding this mission is the misconception that all benefits can be bestowed at once, when, in fact, each member

needs to be interviewed individually and benefits are assigned according to a number of variables: when they served in the military; where they served; length of time of service; condition of service when released; and disabilities incurred during service. He went on to say the state of Alaska has the largest number per capita of veterans in the nation. There is a staff of four state employees and 17 grant funded Veterans Service Officers (VSO) providing services to veterans throughout the state. He said that last year 62,000 veterans, family members, and transitioning military members were served. He mentioned that for the VSOs, that number averages eight per day, seven days a week. He said that VSOs and his staff provide a great service to the veterans and their families by returning a great deal of money to veterans. He asserted that during the past year, \$105 million was returned to veterans and family members, the largest single check being \$574,000. He explained that some of these payments are back payments for issues occurring a long time ago. He added that these payments come into Alaska and are spent in the communities. He also offered that about 19,000 Alaskan veterans are receiving a total of \$247 million per year in disability compensation and pensions through the VA. He added that these disabilities were incurred during service.

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MR. BOWEN turned to slide 24, also titled "Office of Veterans Affairs," and said that the VA provides \$154 million in healthcare for the veterans in Alaska. He attested that \$134 million of the \$254 million is through contracts with local healthcare providers, which is unique to Alaska. He explained that since there are only five VA funded health care facilities in Alaska, the rest of the healthcare has to be provided at local facilities, including healthcare through an Alaska Native sharing agreement. He went on to say that the Alaska VA helped veterans obtain certificates of eligibility to receive \$1.1 billion in home loans, through VA home guarantees. He stated that the Alaska VA looks "outside of our office" to find other funds to help veterans. It is the third year for the Highly Rural Transportation grant, which has been received in five borough areas, \$50,000 per borough area, and it helps transport veterans to healthcare sites or to medication dispensaries. He mentioned that two weeks ago the Alaska VA signed a contract to bring in a new program called the State Approving Agency, which will help bring in more job programs and will evaluate more institutions of higher learning - both under the GI bill and post 9/11 [the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001]. He

offered that program allows him to cover the wages of one of his state employees under a federal grant.

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MR. BOWEN related, "Nothing is really straight forward within the VA system and, especially in the federal government, nothing is really straight forward." He relayed a story of an individual with asthma, who was a pilot. He said that in this individual's records was "RAD," which is reactive airway disease, which is not a compensable disability. He said that his staff had to obtain a doctor's statement for the individual explaining that RAD was asthma. The result was all of the medications for that person are now covered. This, he said, illustrates the importance of the assistance the VA provides. In addition, he cited a VA study that demonstrated that if a veteran applies for benefits on his/her own, the average annual income, through compensation, is about \$3,500, compared with \$11,000 if he/she utilizes a VA staff person.

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MR. BOWEN mentioned the new Veterans Information System (VIS), which now has information on 18,000 veterans. He offered that through this system, the VA is now able to send postcards to veterans in outreach communities prior to visiting. He said that his office will continue partnerships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which assists with outreach efforts by sending a team to accompany Alaska VA staff. He said the biggest challenge for the Alaska VA is bridging the gap between communities on the road system and the 161 communities off the road system with regard to access to care and education.

[2:35:40 PM](#)

MR. BOWEN mentioned that travel by the VA has been restricted at times; therefore, Alaska VA staff visit the communities without the VA support team. He said that through the Tribal Veteran Representative Program, local volunteers are trained and number over 300 throughout the state. He opined that these volunteers are of great assistance during the outreach visits.

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MR. BOWEN offered that with the upcoming transitions within the VA, Alaska VA is monitoring the Alaska Native health care sharing agreements between the 27 Native entities and the VA to

ensure they "stay in place." There are two years remaining for the health care sharing agreement program, giving Alaska VA time to educate the new VA leadership about them.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked how long the VSO grants were in place and if they were "pretty solid."

MR. BOWEN responded they are pretty solid and are funded annually.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH prefaced his question by noting the large differential, \$6,500, in the benefit amount received by veterans who received assistance through the Alaska VA office as opposed to "going it alone." He asked if a veterans could independently utilize the VIS to get an approximation of the benefits for which they qualify.

MR. BOWEN responded, "In reality, the issue we run into, when it comes to individual benefits, we have to bring them in one at a time." He went on to say the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) would prevent storing that level of information in the software application. He said name, address, email address, time of service are entered into VIS, which allows the Alaska VA to target its search. He gave as an example the contaminated water system at Camp Lejeune, from 1953 to 1988, and attested VIS facilitates identifying service members impacted by this contamination.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked if there was a benefit calculator in VIS that a veteran could use independently.

MR. BOWEN answered no. Veterans need to file for benefits; it is a long process; and it may involve legal issues. He affirmed that the results of application were generally successful.

[2:40:48 PM](#)

BOB ROSES, Director, Alaska Military Youth Academy, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), emphasized the level of support of DMVA for the Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA) program, contributing to its success. He referred to slide 25, titled "Alaska Military Youth Academy," and stated that AMYA is a program designed for 16- to 18-year-old youth who are at risk

- those who have dropped out of high school or are in jeopardy of not being able to complete their secondary education by the time they are 19 years old. The Alaska Military Youth Academy teaches them eight basic core components: academics, physical fitness, leadership/followership, responsible citizenship, service to community, health and hygiene, life coping skills, and job skills. All eight core components must be successfully completed for a cadet to complete the program. He added that the program consists of 22 1/2 weeks of residential status followed by 12 months of post-residential status. During the 12 months, cadets report back monthly "to let us know if they're working, if so where. Have they joined the military? Have they gone back to their local high school to actually get a high school diploma, as opposed to a [General Education Development] (GED)?" He relayed that if they are not engaged in any of these activities, they are required to perform 30 hours of community service and provide documentation of service hours to AMYA.

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MR. ROSES, in response to Representative Tuck, described the 22 1/2 weeks of residential status: a 5:00 a.m. rising; physical training; 90-minute classes Monday through Thursday; study hall and community service two days per week; and tutoring. Group leaders are assigned to three or four cadets to mentor and monitor. During the 12 months of post-residential status, they are required to check in with AMYA monthly and provide documentation of their activity, which could be a pay stub, school record, military record, or documentation of community service.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked if there were consequences if the cadet loses contact with AMYA.

MR. ROSES responded that unfortunately, there are not. He cited the incentives provided to the cadet for filling out the monthly report - \$100 per month for the first six months and \$50 per month for the last six months.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked about the consequences of missing a month of reporting.

MR. ROSES replied, "It's an all-or-nothing game." He added that AMYA seeks to teach the cadets personal responsibility, along with self-respect, self-discipline, and self-worth.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked for the success rate of the program.

MR. ROSES responded that about 55-60 percent cadets will follow through with all 12 months of reporting.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER remarked that "being part of a team and being responsible for somebody other than themselves is a powerful motivator."

MR. ROSES added that the leadership/followership component addresses that concept. He further stated that some 18-year-old students have come to AMYA having never earned a single high school credit. He said, "How do you get them through a 22-week program where they can earn their GED? How do you get them to be a responsible leader? Well, you don't do it by not giving them the opportunity. You do it by putting them in that position and holding them to a level of accountability where they measure up, and, if they don't qualify for some reason, they get removed as a squad leader. Because they didn't do what they're supposed to doesn't mean they won't try it again." He said all cadets get an opportunity to participate in a leadership position: it is not only an opportunity but a requirement of the program. He added that AMYA is an accredited high school and can issue a high school diploma. He said a student can earn 7 1/2 high school credits through the AMYA curriculum, which is aligned with the state curriculum standards. He offered that each year AMYA awards 8 to 15 high school diplomas and 75 to 85 GEDs. He added that AMYA does "credit recovery," which means a student may return to high school with a little over a year's worth of high school credits earned in the 22 1/2 weeks at AMYA.

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REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER affirmed that he took the tour of AMYA and was very impressed.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked if students from rural Alaska get transportation support to attend AMYA.

MR. ROSES confirmed AMYA pays for transportation to and from AMYA for any students in outlying areas. He added that if the student drops out of the program in the first month and a half, AMYA encourages the parents to pay for the transportation, but

if the family has no means, then AMYA will pay. Many cadets from rural areas experience "culture shock," and they are the hardest to retain in the program. He mentioned that years ago, through a cooperative agreement with the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, a counselor was provided to the AMYA campus for these students, but the funds for that service have long since disappeared. He emphasized a need for that type of counseling.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD expressed her appreciation for the work of DMVA and its "amazing team." She mentioned the importance of AMYA's work in teaching life skills to high-risk youth and the benefits of this work to society.

[2:55:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked if the cadets are covered by health insurance.

MR. ROSES replied yes. He said that AMYA strives to ensure every cadet is insured, either through their families, through Denali Kid Care, or through another agency. He added that no cadet goes without medical care; AMYA has a medical staff, including a nurse practitioner and a registered nurse. If AMYA has to transport a cadet off campus for services, the parents are contacted, but also AMYA has medical power of attorney. If, in the rare instance, services are not covered in some way, either by insurance or the provider, AMYA will cover the cost.

[2:57:49 PM](#)

BRIAN DUFFY, Director, Division of Administrative Services, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), gave a brief summary of his background. He referred to slide 27, titled "Division of Administrative Services," and said that all of the programs and services described by the presenters require money, manpower, and material. He asserted that the mission of the Division of Administrative Services (DAS) is to deliver, assist, and serve, which is aptly summed up by the acronym "DAS." He said DAS delivers key products and services in the forms of information technology, budget, financial management, and procurement. He stated that it assists DMVA personnel in executing their assigned missions. He added that DAS is mindful of whom it ultimately serves - the state's veteran population and all Alaskans. He gave practical examples of services provided - uniforms for AMYA cadets, food for the AMYA dining

facility, or materials for use in the classroom - and more complex services, such as providing contract support in disaster response and relief efforts. He mentioned that his finance team is focused on the effective and efficient management of DAS's complex accounting system.

MR. DUFFY, referring back to Representative Spohnholz's question about veterinary services in the U.S. Armed Forces, stated that the primary mission of these veterinarians is to provide support to the military working dogs that are part of the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Air Force security forces. Their secondary role is to provide veterinary services to the eligible population on the installation "within the means of their capacity."

[3:01:48 PM](#)

ROBERT DOEHL, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), explained that the federal military has reserve components for all branches of the military, but only the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps have state components. The Alaska Naval Militia consists of about 60 Alaskans in the U.S. Navy Reserve, who have volunteered for state service as well as federal service. They are trained, available to assist in time of state disaster, and volunteer for state active duty in time of disaster.

MR. DOEHL referred to slide 28, titled "Alaska Aerospace Corporation," and said that the Alaska Aerospace Corporation (AAC) is not, by statute, part of DMVA. It reports to a board of directors, is appointed by Governor Bill Walker, and the DMVA provides administrative oversight. He said that two years ago the general funds appropriation for operating AAC was "zeroed out," and no funds have been requested this year. He stated that AAC provides aerospace services. It operates a rocket launch facility on Kodiak and provides rocket launch services, such as radar safety telemetry for "anywhere in the world" rocket launches. He said that there will be two rocket launches on Kodiak this summer, in May and June, and possibly two additional ones. He related that AAC is generating a self-sustaining amount of money for itself, including \$8 million of contracts with the federal government and a commercial venture for \$700,000 to provide launch services outside of Alaska with the telemetry equipment.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about "the ownership structure of the launch facility."

MR. DOEHL said that the board of directors continues to explore options for ultimate privatization, but remains concerned for possible loss of trust and confidence in the AAC, with sensitive contracts at stake. He expressed the concerns: not disrupting a growing business; needing to protect Alaska's interest in AAC and making sure there is fair compensation; providing for ongoing sustainability; and fulfilling a vital national need in terms of the second rocket launch facility in the nation that can do polar launches. He added that the rocket launch facility is in an optimal location for the Arctic launches necessary for the satellite arrays needed for development of the Arctic and is in a necessary training area.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that AAC is in the position to diversify the economy, as constituents often advocate.

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MR. DOEHL, in response to Representative Reinbold's stated appreciation for no budget request associated with AAC, attributed that to the business development model under President and CEO Craig E. Campbell of AAC. He opined that the national need for AAC is probably even greater considering the threats from North Korea and other rogue nations. He added that the rocket launch site is the optimal location to develop and validate the technology necessary to defeat those threats.

MR. DOEHL referred to slide 31, titled "Alaska GF Budget by Department," and reiterated the small "slice of the pie" DMVA represents in the state budget and the ample funds the department brings into the state.

[3:12:27 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 3:12 p.m.