

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

May 9, 2019

11:19 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Mike Shower, Co-Chair
Representative Geran Tarr, Co-Chair
Senator Lora Reinbold
Senator Shelley Hughes
Senator Mia Costello
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Representative Josh Revak
Representative Laddie Shaw
Representative Ivy Spohnholz

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT

Colonel Tim Jones - retired - Fairbanks
Brigadier General Julio "Randy" Banez - retired - Fairbanks
Commander James Chase - retired - Anchorage
Nelson N. Angapak, Sr., Anchorage
Colonel Robert Doehl - retired - Anchorage

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Chris Tuck

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Sara Rasmussen
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Sharon Jackson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

ARMED SERVICES PRESENTATIONS

- Brigadier General Torrence Saxe, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard; Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs
- Colonel Cory Mendenhall, representing Lieutenant General Thomas Bussiere, Alaska North American Aerospace Defense Region, Alaska Command, Eleventh Air Force

- Colonel Adam Lange, representing Commanding General Major General Mark O'Neal, U.S. Army Alaska
- Rear Admiral Mathew Bell, Commander, Seventeenth District U.S. Coast Guard

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

BRIGADIER GENERAL TORRENCE SAXE, Adjutant General
Alaska National Guard; Commissioner
Military & Veterans Affairs
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered a presentation on the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

COLONEL CORY MENDENHALL, Chief of Staff/Executive Director
Alaskan Command (ALCOM) &
Alaskan North American Air Defense (NORAD) Region
Eleventh Air Force
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered a Command Overview Briefing for ALCOM.

COLONEL ADAM LANGE, representing Major General Mark O'Neil
U.S. Army, Alaska (USARAK)
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered a presentation titled "United States Army Alaska".

REAR ADMIRAL MATTHEW T. BELL, Commander
U.S. Coast Guard Seventeenth District (USCG)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered an update for the U.S. Coast Guard Alaska.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[11:19:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR GERAN TARR called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 11:19 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Reinbold, Hughes, Costello, Kawasaki, and Co-chair

Shower; and Representatives Revak, Shaw, and Co-chair Tarr. The public members present were retired Colonel Tim Jones, Julio "Randy" Banez, Commander James Chase, Nelson N. Angapak, Sr., and retired Colonel Robert Doehl.

Joint Armed Services Committee Presentations:

11:20:08 AM

CO-CHAIR TARR provided introductory remarks.

11:21:07 AM

SENATOR COSTELLO said she is a committee member for the Joint Armed Services Committee (JASC), representing District K in Anchorage.

11:21:18 AM

TIM JONES said he is a JASC public committee member from Fairbanks. He added that he spent 27 years in the U.S. Army, retiring as a colonel out of Fort Wainwright.

11:21:27 AM

JIM CHASE said he is a JASC public committee member. He disclosed that he was a commodore for the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in Alaska and has been an Alaskan citizen since 1969.

11:21:46 AM

SENATOR KAWASAKI said he is a JASC committee member, representing Fairbanks and Fort Wainwright.

11:21:53 AM

JULIO "RANDY" BANEZ said he is a JASC public committee member. He noted that he retired from the Alaska Army National Guard as commander.

11:22:04 AM

SENATOR REINBOLD said she is a JASC committee member, representing Chugiak, Eagle River, and part of JBER.

11:22:13 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SHAW said he is a JASC committee member, representing District 26. He added that he served in the military for 24 years including service as a U.S. Navy SEAL.

11:22:23 AM

ROBERT DOEHL said he is a JASC public committee member. He detailed that he a retired colonel from the Alaska Air National Guard.

[11:22:32 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she is a JASC committee member, representing District F for Chugiak and Palmer. She added that she is the wife of a Vietnam veteran and has a son currently deployed in the Middle East as a C-130 pilot.

[11:22:47 AM](#)

NELSON ANGAPAK said he is a JASC public committee member. He detailed that he retired from the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) and is a retired veteran.

[11:23:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK said he is a JASC committee member, representing District 25. He disclosed that he served in the U.S. Army.

[11:23:27 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER said he is a JASC committee member. He detailed that he served in the U.S. Air Force for 24 years. He explained that the committee meeting provides an opportunity to tell Alaskans what is going on in the state, to communicate with military representatives, and to identify things that might be needed.

[11:24:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR TARR said she is a JASC committee member, representing District 19 in Anchorage that shares a border with JBER.

[11:24:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RASMUSSEN joined the JASC meeting.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER announced that the JASC will first hear from Brigadier General Torrence Saxe, the adjutant general (TAG) for the Alaska National Guard. He explained that Brigadier General Saxe ensures that more than 4,000 U.S. Army and Air National Guard members are organized, trained, and equipped to respond to both state and federal taskings. He noted that Brigadier General Saxe has commanded at every echelon and was most recently the assistant adjutant general and commander of the Air National Guard. He asked that Brigadier General Saxe introduce the armed services presenters.

[11:25:18 AM](#)

BRIGADIER GENERAL TORRENCE SAXE, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard; Commissioner, Military & Veterans Affairs

(DMVA), Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska, introduced the armed services presenters as follows:

- Colonel Mendenhall representing Alaskan Command (ALCOM), Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region (NORAD), Eleventh Air Force headquartered at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER).
- Colonel Adam Lange, Deputy Commander, Sustainment, U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK), Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER).
- Rear Admiral Matthew T. Bell, 17th District Commander, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).
- Brigadier General Torrence Saxe, DMVA, Alaska National Guard, Alaska Air National Guard, Alaska Army National Guard, Alaska National Guard Joint Staff, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Veterans Affairs, Alaska Military Youth Academy, and the Alaska State Defense Force.

He emphasized that the presentation addresses "Team Alaska".

[11:25:44 AM](#)

COLONEL CORY MENDENHALL, Chief of Staff for Lieutenant General Thomas Bussiere, Alaskan Command (ALCOM); Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) Region; Eleventh Air Force, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska, said his overview is on behalf of his commander, Lieutenant General Thomas A. Bussiere, who is unable to attend the meeting.

He explained that ALCOM represents all services: Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. He said if Lieutenant General Bussiere were in attendance he would want to express his appreciation for the legislative support as well as the support from the governor and the civic leaders in the communities in Alaska where military families live. He emphasized that ALCOM could not execute its day-to-day mission without its exceptional support from its mission partners, the Alaska National Guard, the U.S. Army Alaska, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the command's interagency partners.

He addressed the agenda for his briefing as follows:

- Strategic significance of Alaska.
- Combined headquarters.
- Our mission.
- The Arctic.

- Two-year outlook.
- Military operations and construction in Alaska.
- Key takeaways.

[11:27:52 AM](#)

COLONEL MENDENHALL addressed "Alaska is the most strategic place in the world" and summarized that Alaska's geography is vital to the country's national security and its critical location for homeland defense and power projection for U.S. forces. He noted that Alaska is within nine hours from the world's following major hubs: Moscow, Berlin, Washington D.C., Honolulu, Tokyo, Seoul, and Beijing.

He said with the advancement in modern aircraft technology like the F-22 and the F-35, Alaska's strategic location will be emphasized on the globe. Additionally, the importance of Alaska to the country will continue to grow as the Arctic evolves with increased human activity.

He explained the "Combined Headquarters" in Alaska as follows:

- Alaskan NORAD Region Bi-National Command:
 - U.S. and Canada.
 - Maintains readiness to conduct a continuum of air space control missions that includes:
 - Daily air sovereignty and active air defense against manned and unmanned airborne targets in a time of crisis.
 - Mission executed 24 hours a day, every day of the week.
- Alaskan Command (ALCOM):
 - Conducts homeland defense and support to civilians and authorities within the Alaska area to defend the United States.
 - Provide support in a time of crisis.
- Eleventh Air Force:
 - Provides dedicated, organized, and equipped forces to project combat airpower and strategic airlift worldwide.
- Primary Mission Partners:
 - U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK).
 - U.S. Coast Guard District 17 (USCG D17).
 - National Guard (Alaska/Hawaii/Guam).
 - Reserves (Alaska).
 - Federal and State Interagencies.

11:30:02 AM

COLONEL MENDENHALL addressed "Homeland Defense" as follows:

- Number-one priority: "No fail mission".
- Must be prepared for two possible scenarios:
 - In the Arctic,
 - Through the Arctic.
- Strong defense partnership between U.S. and Canada is essential.
- Bottom line: "Alaska is our watch."

He addressed "Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)" as follows:

- Command and control.
- Deployable communications.
- Overland search and rescue coordination.
- Disaster response/request for assistance:
 - Federal and state partnerships.
 - Support to the State of Alaska.

He explained that state government plays the primary role of implementing and facilitating local efforts before, during and after incidents from their emergency management agencies, Alaska State Troopers, health agencies, and the National Guard. Federal assistance through the Stafford Act can be provided when the governor of Alaska requests assistance for a presidential declaration of an emergency, state, or local capabilities exceeded, or on behalf of the impacted tribal government. What is important to know is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has an area office in the Anchorage Federal Building to serve as a forward field office for pre-disaster readiness and planning. Civil support preparedness is part of ALCOM's daily focus. ALCOM knows that Alaska relies on the military capabilities and resources more than other states due to Alaska's geography; therefore, federal and state partnerships within and out of Alaska are more critical in order to meet requests of state authorities. ALCOM provides disaster response via command and control, and of active duty military and federalized national guard forces, deployable communication and resources expertise, overland search and rescue coordination as well as personnel as part of the Alaska FEMA support team.

11:32:07 AM

COLONEL MENDENHALL addressed "Arctic trends" as follows:

- Melting ice.
- Competition for natural resources.
- Increased Russian military activity.
- Chinese influence.

He referenced a NASA video that depicts declining Arctic sea ice from 1979 through 2016, averaging 13-percent decline per decade. Arctic sea ice covered 7 million square kilometers in 1979, 4.6 million square kilometers in September 2018. The thicker "multi-year" ice now covers less than 33 percent of the Arctic. The reduction in sea ice enables an increase in human activity that sets Alaska for discussions regarding the future of the Arctic.

He addressed "Alaska as an Arctic nation" as follows:

- Alaska makes the United States an Arctic nation.
- Reduction in Arctic sea ice enables transit through the northern sea routes.
- Ships sailing from South Korea to Germany via traditional routes takes 34 to 46 days, the northern sea route reduces the time to 23 days.
- Increasing interest in natural resources and commercial fisheries has increased the potential for tension and conflict in the region.
- The Russian military has increased their military activity and installation footprint as a result of the receding sea ice:
 - The Arctic is a large contributor to the Russian GDP.
 - In the Arctic, Russia has:
 - 14 operational airfields,
 - 16 deep water ports,
 - 40 icebreakers with 11 in development,
 - Many installations revitalized from Soviet Union era.
 - ALCOM closely monitors Russian activity daily.

He addressed responsibilities for "USNORTHCOM lead for Arctic affairs" as follows:

- Arctic capability advocate.
- Maintain academia and private sector relationships.
- University of Alaska academic support.
- Arctic Domain and Security Orientation course.
- Maintain critical relationships with indigenous peoples.
- Military exercises in support of NORAD and USNORTHCOM.

COLONEL MENDENHALL said in a desire for the Arctic to remain secure and stable in the region, General Terrence O'Shaughnessy, Commander for U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), signed a memorandum on March 11 designating Lieutenant General Thomas A. Bussiere as USNORTHCOM's lead for Arctic affairs. While the new designation does not provide additional explicit authorities, it does imply new responsibilities for task and direction liaison authority in order to meet the USNORTHCOM commander's Arctic line of effort. Engaging international and interagency partners, including geographical [inaudible] commanders to determine Arctic-related mission requirements while gradually increasing the department's domain awareness in the Arctic, was one of the key tasks as well as establishing an Arctic synchronization forum and executing an Arctic symposium series to ensure a "whole of government approach" with respect to efforts on defense, security, and safety in the Arctic. He noted that the next Arctic symposium is scheduled for November 2019 in Fairbanks.

[11:34:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ joined the committee meeting.

COLONEL MENDENHALL highlighted ALCOM's "two-year outlook" for major initiatives, exercises and operations as follows:

- The Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC):
 - Largest and absolute best training range in the U.S. and arguably world:
 - Size of Indiana.
 - Six times the size of the next largest one, the Nevada Test and Training Range in Nellis Air Force Base.
 - Hosts year-round exercises in readiness training in air, land, and maritime domains.
 - Provides the space for demonstrating the capabilities for the most advanced military systems like the F-22, F-35, and the multi-launch rocket system.
 - Continued JPARC support is vital to ensure the military remains trained and ready.
- Red Flag Alaska:
 - Held three to four times a year at Eielson and JBER.
 - Large force simulated combat flying exercise:
 - 2018:
 - Participants from 16 international partners that was very successful.

- Arctic Edge:
 - Homeland defense exercise for 2019.
 - 2020:
 - USNORTHCOM designed to practice the military's ability to deploy and operate in the Arctic.
 - Primarily focused on improving operational capabilities that support domain awareness, communications, infrastructure, and sustainable presence in the Arctic.
 - The outcomes will help the military to effectively collaborate with other combative commands like Indo-Pacific Command and European Command, and military services to access current and future needs.
 - Could not have occurred without the support of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation.
 - U.S. Marine Corp (USMC) and U.S. Navy (USN) training in Alaska:
 - Growing interest in conducting operations in Alaska.
 - 500 sailors are expected to participate in the next Arctic Edge.
 - A battalion-sized force of marines is expected to conduct off-shipboard operations on to land as part of the exercise.
- Fifty USMC planners in headquarters at JBER are looking at a new exercise on Adak and in Cordova:
 - Not part of Northern Edge but will test Arctic capabilities.
 - Expeditionary capability exercise that will be conducted in September 2019.
 - Four ships will partake off the waters of Alaska for exercises to test logistic capabilities.

[11:39:13 AM](#)

COLONEL MENDENHALL addressed military construction by the Department of Defense (DOD) in Alaska as follows:

- Eielson Air Force Base:
 - 2017:
 - Construction began in preparation for the 2020 arrival of F-35 aircraft.
 - By 2022 there will be 3,500 more personnel and a total of 54 F-35 aircraft, resulting in 100 fifth-generation stealth fighters, more than any other place in the world.
 - Current spending in preparation for the F-35:

- \$453 million:
 - Beddown facilities and infrastructure.
 - FY2019-FY2024 spending:
 - \$145 million:
 - F-35 beddown facilities and repair center, heat and power boilers.
- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson:
 - FY2019-FY2024:
 - Extend runway 16/34.
 - Repair alert hangar.
 - Testing new agile combat deployment concept:
 - Uses a small cadre of F-22 and F-17 aircraft with:
 - Self-contained mission planning,
 - Munitions,
 - Fuel,
 - Logistic support.
 - Allows for temporary aircraft dispersement.
 - Concept will be tested in Galena and King Salmon.
 - \$74 million in earthquake damage that occurred November 2018:
 - FY2019: \$22.5 million in scheduled project repairs.
- Clear Air Force Station:
 - Current:
 - \$40 million:
 - Fire station and power plant fuel storage.
 - FY2019-FY2024:
 - \$128 million:
 - Consolidated engineer/security forces complex and dormitory.
- Long Range Radar Sites:
 - Air Force investing \$7.5 million in environmental restoration across Alaska.
 - Air Force plans on investing \$22 million in FY2019 in environmental restoration.

[11:42:23 AM](#)

COLONEL MENDENHALL addressed "take away" as follows:

- Homeland defense is Alaskan Command's number-one priority:
 - Alaskan-based forces are ready to deploy and fight in response to any regional threat.

- Alaska is the perfect strategic power projection location for air and ground military forces.
- As key terrain in the Arctic changes and human activity increases, Alaskan Command must anticipate and outpace evolving threats:
 - Remain committed to working with allies and partners to promote a balanced approach to improving security in the Arctic.
- The JPARC is the DOD's premier training area for joint, coalition, and partner nations' forces:
 - Offers a world-class training environment.
 - Provides high altitude, extreme cold, simultaneous air, ground, and naval joint operations challenge that is needed to train troops to be the best in the world.
- Alaskan support for U.S. military service members and families is second to none.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER asked Colonel Mendenhall if there is anything that the State of Alaska can do to be more helpful. He noted that his question ranges from changes in the Arctic, deep-water port studies, all the way to supporting veterans. He pointed out that Alaska has the largest veteran community in the nation.

[11:44:28 AM](#)

COLONEL MENDENHALL replied that Alaska does a lot for the U.S. military. He said the continued support of the military's ability to train in Alaska and off its shores is critical to the nation's defense. He reiterated Alaska's importance as follows:

- JPARC's ability to train like no other place in the world is critical for the military's readiness.
- Focus in the Arctic cannot be understated.
- USNORTHCOM's commander made several comments recently about the Arctic and his concern about the Arctic, hence the reason for the new designation as the lead for Arctic affairs.
- Working with Alaska natives on what they know will be important for U.S. military forces.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER noted that on the previous day, the Senate Transportation Committee addressed a proposed Alaska rail spur that goes the rest of the way down through Delta to Fort Greely and its ballistic missile defense base. He asked how important a rail spur and a deep-water port would be for moving supplies.

COLONEL MENDENHALL replied that ALCOM is familiar with Alaska's logistic challenges where the railroad is limited, but the state's deep-water ports are sufficient for moving supplies. He added that he was not familiar with the proposed rail spur and suggested that the question be addressed to the Missile Defense Agency (MDA).

[11:48:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER recognized that Representative LeDoux was in attendance.

He detailed that the proposed rail spur would connect the from Fairbanks all the way through Fort Greely and the ballistic defense base. He said the legislature is looking at a resolution to have a rail spur that would connect Alaska through Canada and the Lower 48 for another mode of supply transportation.

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK asked how a railway connected to the Lower 48 would impact Arctic training opportunities and operations in JPARC.

COLONEL MENDENHALL answered that railway connected to the Lower 48 would provide options; however, not having a railway from the Lower 48 to Alaska would not prevent Arctic training in Alaska.

CO-CHAIR TARR addressed projects in the Fairbanks area, specifically the central heat and power plant boilers at Eielson Air Force Base. She asked if there are any energy integration partnership opportunities for the Fairbanks area.

COLONEL MENDENHALL answered that he must defer the question to the Eleventh Air Force at Eielson.

[11:51:26 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if there is anything the Alaska Legislature can do to urge Congress to be more aggressive with Russia and China in the Arctic waters.

COLONEL MENDENHALL answered that he must defer the question to Admiral Bell from the USCG.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ said she is curious about the following:

- The infrastructure needed to support the military in Alaska.

- The Port of Alaska's role in supporting the military's buildout.
- The Port of Alaska's role in supporting the Eielson Air Force Base's expansion.
- The Port of Alaska's designation as a military strategic defense port.

COLONEL MENDENHALL answered that ALCOM supports the port being fixed or upgraded in addition to a need for oversight. Twenty percent of the military's goods for military operations come through the Port of Alaska. Approximately 90 percent of all goods for Alaska comes through the Port of Alaska. For the most part, the military does everything it can to support what the state wants to do with the Port of Alaska.

[11:54:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ noted that one of questions has been related to the additional price tag for the Port of Alaska that comes along with it being designated as the military strategic defense port. She asked Colonel Mendenhall to address the funding required for the port's military designation.

COLONEL MENDENHALL replied that ALCOM is aware of the estimated cost to fix the Port of Alaska. He asked if Representative Spohnholz was asking if the DOD should offset some of the port's repair costs.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ answered no. She specified that her question was more related to the \$250 million in additional costs associated with being a military strategic defense port.

COLONEL MENDENHALL replied that he did not know about the added cost for the Port of Alaska. He said just like the railroad coming from the Lower 48, providing the military with more options to train and project force across the Pacific and Arctic is beneficial.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ conceded that there still is discussion at the federal level about whether there is federal funding available to the Port of Alaska. She pointed out that the port is relevant for the military in supplying fuel, and goods and services to support military bases in Alaska. She emphasized that the discussion about the Port of Alaska is not just about civilian and commercial needs, but military readiness and security as well.

[11:57:02 AM](#)

COLONEL MENDENHALL concurred and emphasized that the Port of Alaska is important to ALCOM; however, the port is not a limiting factor for the military to execute its mission in a time of war.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER asked Colonel Mendenhall to address the growth of the ballistic missile defense base as well as Kodiak's launch complex. He noted that the Kodiak launch base is generating more on the civilian side; however, he pointed out that the facility matters to the nation due to its ability for polar orbit launches.

COLONEL MENDENHALL suggested that Co-chair Shower's questions be directed to the MDA and the USCG.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER noted that his intent was to address a broader perspective to let people know about the ballistic missile defense base and Kodiak's launch complex.

COLONEL MENDENHALL remarked that the U.S. is no longer a sanctuary and Alaska is vital as the first line of defense for the Arctic and North America.

[12:00:14 PM](#)

COLONEL ADAM LANGE, Deputy Commander, Sustainment, U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK), Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska, delivered a presentation titled "United States Army Alaska". He thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the commanding general for USARAK, Major General Mark O'Neal, the 11,000 "Arctic Warriors" and their families, and the civilians that support USARAK. He added that he thanked the committee to be able to publicly say "thank you" to the surrounding communities that USARAK calls home in Alaska. He remarked that Alaska communities outside of JBER are quick to welcome soldiers and their families with open arms when they arrive in Alaska.

He noted that USARAK's motto is "Arctic tough", a motto that describes the application of the warrior ethos and the profession of arms to the unique and challenging environments of Alaska. The motto also serves as an expression of the U.S. Army's partnership with Alaska.

He pointed out that a paratrooper photo in his presentation illustrated the "Arctic tough" motto. The photo shows the paratroopers from the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team which is the only extreme cold weather trained airborne brigade in the DOD. He said the photo shows the brigade conducting an airborne

operation at the Donnelly Training Area near Fort Greely. The photo is representative of a day-in-the-life of USARAK, "24/7" for all seasons. He emphasized that readiness is USARAK's number-one priority for the units stationed in Alaska, units that are uniquely postured to generate and sustain readiness.

COLONEL LANGE said the combination of world class training facilities, the opportunity to leverage joint-force training exercises, and the strategic reach for deploying forces from Alaska serve to make the state a premier location for USARAK. Alaska's location in turn helps to ensure that USARAK's soldiers and units are ready to deploy, fight, and win anywhere in the world. USARAK says, "If you can do it here, you can do it anywhere in any environment, regardless of where we are called on to deploy."

[12:02:56 PM](#)

He said USARAK's mission is to provide for "trained and ready forces" in support of worldwide unified land operations, being prepared to protect the homeland, and to provide defense support to civil authorities in the event of a natural disaster. USARAK's broad mission includes supporting U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Army Pacific, partnering with U.S. allied and partner nations, those particularly with Arctic or extreme cold weather capabilities, and sustaining and strengthening interagency relationships.

He said for USARAK to do its mission there are an array of forces assigned to resource through America's First Corps, which is located at Joint Base Lewis McChord in Washington state, and U.S. Army Pacific in Hawaii; those represent the USARAK's two senior higher-level headquarters in its chain of command. He explained that for operations and training related to homeland defense and defense support civil authorities, USARAK works through ALCOM to ensure readiness to support to ALCOM in Alaska.

He explained that the footprint for USARAK is challenging in Alaska. USARAK is bifurcated by the Alaska Range and separated by 350 miles. USARAK has combat power at both JBER and Fort Wainwright. USARAK also operates a third location as a very important training center. The forces assigned to USARAK include the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne) at JBER and the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team stationed at Fort Wainwright. In addition to the 1st Stryker Brigade at Fort Wainwright, the base is also home to aviation battalions: First Attack Reconnaissance Battalion of the 25th Aviation Regiment, which is assigned to the 25th Infantry Division; and the 1st General Support Aviation

Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment assigned to the 7th Infantry Division at Joint Base Lewis McChord; however, both of the battalions provides direct support to USARAK's formations.

COLONEL LANGE explained that to help sustain the U.S. Army's Alaska-based force, the USARAK also has the 17th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion which is headquartered at JBER and split at Fort Wainwright. The 17th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion provides logistics and sustainment support to all USARAK units north and south of the Alaska Range.

He detailed that USARAK's third location is the Northern Warfare Training Center (WTC) at the Black Rapids Training Site located near Fort Greely. WTC is the U.S. Army's center for the development of extreme cold weather tactics, techniques, procedures, and instruction. The Black Rapids Training Site is a valuable training and testing center that is available to the total force to increase extreme cold weather operational capability.

[12:05:46 PM](#)

He addressed "Home Station Training", noting that USARAK's number-one priority is readiness, a priority that entails generating trained and combat ready, dependable, rapidly deployable formations made up of skilled, tough, alert, and adaptive warriors. To sustain focus on readiness, USARAK plans and executes a demanding training schedule centered on collective training events that employ combined arms maneuver. The training events are enabled by JPARC.

He detailed that USARAK trains to be prepared to respond to any crisis or contingency the nation calls upon; in Alaska that means training to sustain the ability to conduct combined arms maneuver as unified land operations, but there is a component of support to civil authorities in defense of the homeland from Alaska. The 7.2 earthquake that occurred in November 2018 was a potent reminder of how important it is for USARAK to strengthen its interagency relationships which are so important in responding to major crisis.

He detailed USARAK's training exercises as follows:

- Arctic Anvil 19:
 - October 2019;
 - JPARC;
 - Annual exercise to prepare Brigade Combat Teams to succeed during Combat Training Center rotation;

- o Focuses on readiness for worldwide deployment.
- Courage Ready:
 - o January 2019;
 - o JPARC;
 - o Emergency Readiness Deployment Exercises hosted by America's First Corps as part of the U.S. Army's readiness model.
- Spartan Pegasus:
 - o March 2019;
 - o Deadhorse, Alaska;
 - o Homeland Defense/Defense Support of Civil Authorities exercise focused on Arctic Operations to test on thriving in the Arctic;
 - o Rotates yearly between the two Alaska Brigade Combat Teams;
 - o Example of joint and interagency cooperation.
- Alaska Shield:
 - o April 2019;
 - o Alaska;
 - o State of Alaska disaster response exercise;
 - o Exercises USARAK's Defense Support of Civil Authorities response capabilities;
 - o Example of joint and interagency cooperation.
- Northern Edge 19:
 - o May 2019;
 - o JPARC;
 - o Biennial INDO-PACOM exercise focused on improving future application of combat operations and weapon capability.
- Arctic Aurora:
 - o May 2019;
 - o JPARC;
 - o Annual bi-lateral exercise with the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force;
 - o Strengthens solidier and unit relationships with allied forces and supports interoperability in the Pacific.

COLONEL LANGE emphasized that all the previously noted training is made possible by the infrastructure made available at JPARC, a world class training environment that enables realistic, large scale, force-on-force training so important to building adaptive leaders and ready units. He concurred with U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan's proclamation that, "JPARC is the crown jewel of the Department of Defense training environment." USARAK's units know JPARC is a world class training environment, they do not take the center for granted, and they seek to maximize JPARC's

training benefits every time they go out and exercise their unit missions.

[12:09:32 PM](#)

COLONEL LANGE referenced "1/25 Stryker Combat Team National Training Center Rotation" as follows:

- Over 42,000 soldiers from 1/25 SBCT deployed to the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California in February 2019.
- NTC tested the 1/25 SBCT's combat readiness to be globally deployable and regionally engaged.
- The 1/25 SBCT, joined by "Airmen and Marines", totaled over 6,000 personnel.
- The 72nd Tank Brigade of the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) also participated in the training to strengthen the bilateral partnership.
- SBCT's skills will soon be put to good use at their upcoming deployment to Iraq.

He addressed "Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged" in his presentation for upcoming events as follows:

- Deployments:
 - Operation Inherent Resolve 1/25 Stryker BCT:
 - Iraq;
 - September 2019.
- Exercises:
 - Iceman 2019:
 - Bilateral training event with Canada;
 - Quebec, Canada;
 - February 2019.
 - Land Force Talks:
 - Mongolia;
 - April-May 2019.
 - Joint Warfighter Assessment 19.1/Bayonet Focus:
 - Joint Base Lewis-McChord.
 - April-May 2019.
 - Arctic Aurora:
 - Japanese Ground Self Defense Force.
 - JPARC.
 - May-June 2019.
 - Arctic Anvil:
 - Camp Shelby, Mississippi.
 - September-October 2019.

- Combat Training Center Rotation:
 - 4/25 IBCT (Airborne):
 - Fort Polk, Louisiana.
 - January 2020.

COLONEL LANGE said the "Arctic tough, Arctic warriors" of USARAK remains hard at work building readiness while supporting the nation across the globe from Alaska. He reiterated that USARAK's readiness is its mission, calling and duty. He emphasized that Alaska provides an ideal training environment, opportunities, and support that cannot be matched.

[12:13:40 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER recognized that Representative Jackson is in attendance.

SENATOR KAWASAKI said his co-chair colleagues have been working diligently on suicide prevention across Alaska. He pointed out that the total number of veterans who die per day is 22, noting that those who have served in the armed services are twice as likely to commit suicide. He recalled that Major General O'Neal opened an inquiry and deployed a team at Fort Wainwright to discuss suicides. He asked if there has been an update on the noted suicide study.

COLONEL LANGE explained that in April there was a team of 15 that was formed out of the Army Surgeon General's office. The team is comprised of medical providers, clinical social workers, and epidemiologists. The team came together under the name of the "Epicon Team", which stands for "epidemiological consultation" team. Epicon conducted interviews and executed over 50 focus group engagements with a wide range of military members, information that Epicon is parsing through. A survey will be conducted for the forces at Fort Wainwright. A mid-term review from Epicon is expected by October 2019 with a final report due January 2020.

SENATOR KAWASAKI responded that Major General O'Neal's attention to detail is appreciated. He said whatever the Alaska Legislature does, suicide prevention is important.

[12:16:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK asked if the proposed rail connection would benefit USARAK's training or opportunities in Alaska.

COLONEL LANGE answered yes. He said a rail line would be helpful for moving large equipment at Fort Wainwright. He said a rail

line is not a requirement, but given the extreme weather conditions, having another option would be of utility.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER noted that there has been an issue getting access to the training land due to a bridge. He asked if there are any access issues specifically related to the state that USARAK would need help with for training requirements.

COLONEL LANGE answered that he is not aware of issues at the USARAK level. He surmised that there may be some issues that are being worked on by the installation team at Fort Wainwright.

MR. JONES asked Colonel Land if USARAK supports the Port of Alaska's importance in supporting its operations, specifically the 25th Stryker Brigade.

COLONEL LANGE answered that the Port of Alaska is very important to USARAK for moving heavy vehicles, fuel, and logistical requirements.

BRIGADIER GENERAL SAXE announced that the next presentation will be from Rear Admiral Bell with the Seventeenth District U.S. Coast Guard.

[12:19:02 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL MATTHEW BELL, District Commander, United State Coast Guard (USCG) Seventeenth District, Juneau, Alaska, delivered a USCG update for forces across Alaska. He explained that he is one of four district commanders that report to the USCG Pacific Area Commander, Vice Admiral Linda L. Fagan in Alameda, California.

He addressed "Coast Guard Missions" as follows:

- Prevention:
 - Commercial vessel safety and security.
 - Waterfront facility safety and security.
 - Aids to navigation and waterway management.
 - Icebreaking.
 - Boating safety.
- Response:
 - Search and rescue.
 - Oil and chemical spill response.
 - Law Enforcement:
 - Fisheries,
 - Drugs,
 - Migrants.

- o Defense operations.
- o Boarder and port security.

COMMANDER BELL summarized that the USCG serves and safeguards the public, protects the maritime environment and its resources, and defends the nation's interest in the Alaska maritime region; in a state as vast as Alaska, the USCG cannot do that alone so the USCG works closely with its federal, state, local, and native partners as well through transparent engagement with industry, nongovernmental, and private organizations to meet the diverse needs of the maritime public across all of USCG's statutory missions.

He said the USCG's missions fall predominantly in the prevention and response side. He remarked, "If it is happening on or near the water, the U.S. Coast Guard is engaged and engaged often as Alaska is a maritime state." He noted a recent search and rescue that occurred in the Sitka area where crew members were forced to abandon the vessel Masonic.

He addressed USGA activities in Alaska as follows:

- Outer continental shelf drilling in the Arctic has come and gone and may come back again.
- Cruise ship activity in the Arctic started in 2016.
- A widened Panama Canal has brought new and larger cruise ships to Alaska.
- USGA's commandant presented an "Arctic Strategic Outlook" where Alaska and the Arctic are center stage with focus on:
 - o Enhanced capability to operate effectively in a dynamic Arctic.
 - o Strengthen the "rules-based order".
 - o Innovate and adapt to promote resilience and prosperity.
- Protect living marine resources:
 - o Ensure the both the safety and sustainability of the \$6 billion industry.
 - o Work closely with federal and state partners to conduct fisheries boardings at the dockside, inshore, and the nation's exclusive economic zone.
 - o Alaska has a sustainable fisheries program because of all the participants are fulfilling their important roles in the active management of those resources.

He addressed USGC's international activities in the northern Pacific as follows:

- Works closely with northern Pacific countries such as: Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, and Canada.
- Conducts joint patrols and law enforcement activities to enforce treaties designed to protect highly migratory fisheries such as salmon from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing on the high seas.
- Despite heightened global tensions, cooperation amongst the northern Pacific countries remains strong and the joint efforts have reduced overfishing in the region:
 - Noted the seizure of the Run Da fishing vessel for illegal fishing.

12:22:37 PM

COMMANDER BELL addressed "Coast Guard Forces Stationed in Alaska" as follows:

- USCG's 17th District includes the entire State of Alaska and its 44,000 miles of shoreline.
- Area of responsibility encompasses nearly 4 million square miles of ocean.
- USCG looks to best position its finite resources to effectively meet mission demand.
- USCG performs its statutory missions throughout Alaska with a force of 2,500 active duty civilian, reserve, and auxiliary members.
- 2,800 dependents provide support to half of the uniformed USCG members.

He addressed "Cruise Ship Traffic for 2019" as follows:

- Cruise ships bring a valuable set of visitors, resources, and revenue to the state.
- Cruise ships present the highest risk for mass operations in Alaska, especially in southeast Alaska.
- Up to 22 individual cruise ships executing multiple itineraries in southeast Alaska at any given time between April and September.
- Six very large cruise ships carrying upwards of 5,000 passengers will visit Alaska in 2019, up from 2 vessels in 2018.
- Approximately 1.4 million tourists will visit Alaska on 34 different cruise ships calling to Alaska over 500 times in 2019.

[12:24:33 PM](#)

COMMANDER BELL addressed "Fuel Storage Facility Inspections" as follows:

- USCG partnerships are important to accomplish its in-the-field prevention portfolio mission.
- USCG would prefer spending more time preventing casualties than responding to them.
- Protecting Alaska's valuable marine resources and pristine environment relies on a robust system to prevent, and when necessary, respond to oil and chemical spills.
- USCG is the federal lead for spill response in Alaska's coastal zones and works together with state and local counterparts to manage activities through:
 - Oil response planning,
 - Training and exercises,
 - Certification of oil response organizations,
 - On-scene oversight of spills when they occur.
- USCG Sector Anchorage has lead on the Maritime Safety Task Force (MSTF) Initiative:
 - New "hub and spoke" mode using multi-mission teams to reach facilities in the remote regions of the state to conduct statutory inspections.
 - USCG's goal is to inspect all USCG regulated facilities over the next three to five years and create a baseline assessment of facility compliance:
 - 360 out of 394 facilities are not accessible via the road system.
 - Facility infrastructure is aging, and oil spill response is extremely expensive:
 - For example, \$9 million was expended on a 3,000-gallon heavy oil spill in a remote part of Kodiak within the last year.

He addressed "Forward Operating Locations" as follows:

- USCG conducts missions across Alaska all year with a seasonal search to Arctic regions for vessel and facility inspections in the ice-free months.
- To achieve the highest state of readiness during the more active seasons, USCG stands up three different Aviation Support Facilities (AVSUPFAC):
 1. Cordova:
 - Stands up from May 1 to September 30.
 - Single H-60 helicopter.

- Stands in Bravo-2 status.
- 2. Kotzebue:
 - Stands up from July 1 to October 31.
 - Two H-60 helicopters.
 - Stands in Bravo-2 status.
- 3. Cold Bay and St. Paul:
 - Stands up a readiness status in support during the crab season:
 - King crab: October through November.
 - Opilio crab: January through March.
 - Single H-60 helicopter.
 - Stands at Bravo-2 status.

[12:27:04 PM](#)

COMMANDER BELL addressed "New Coast Guard Assets for Alaska" as follows:

- C-130 J's.
- Fast response cutters.
- Offshore patrol cutters.
- Buoy tenders.
- Polar Security Cutters.
- Unmanned aerial systems.

He noted that the commandant of the USCG is committed to ensuring that USCG maintains its operational excellence and that the branch is prepared to operate in an opening Arctic. The USCG is excited about the changes in capabilities that have already arrived in Alaska and looking forward to those that will arrive in the next few years; for instance, USCG Cutter Kukui replaced the USCG Cutter Maple in Sitka in 2018, the USCG Cutter Sycamore is in the yards in Baltimore, which will be replaced by the USCG Cutter Fir in Cordova in the fall of 2019.

He detailed that the USCG's fast response cutters (FCR), two have already been deployed in Ketchikan with four more expected over the next four to six years with deployments in Sitka, Seward, and Kodiak. Two additional FCRs will be positioned in Juneau and Petersburg by 2022.

He noted that the USCG's C-130-J transition in Kodiak continues to progress, the USCG has three of the fixed-wing aircraft in Kodiak with two additional aircraft expected by fall of 2019.

He said the next class of cutters, the offshore patrol cutters (OPC), will be home-ported in Kodiak by 2023-2024, replacing the

Douglas Monroe and the Alex Haley. The first two OPCs will be deployed in Long Beach, California.

COMMANDER BELL remarked that the Polar Security Cutter (PSC) program has been making the news of late. The USCG commandant has gone out with a strategy of "6-3-1", he wants six PSCs: three heavy, three medium and "he wants one now!" USCG has just awarded the PSC contract for the first PSC to VT Halter Marine (VTHM) in Pascagoula, Mississippi. VTHM should start PSC construction by the later part of 2020 with the first PSC delivered in FY2024. The first PSC will likely replace the Polar Star which does the resupply mission in Antarctica. Alaska will likely see the first PSC in 2024-2025.

He said unmanned aerial systems continues to be a technological advancement that the USCG is taking advantage of. The USCG's national security cutter (NSC) Stratton will test and deploy the ScanEagle unmanned aerial system in the Arctic.

[12:30:02 PM](#)

He addressed "Pelagic Strike/Alaska Shield" as follows:

- USCG participated in state-wide Alaska Shield Full Scale Exercise.
- USCG Marine Security Response Team West (MSRT-W) deployable specialized force conducted hook and climb and simulated counter-terrorism operations. Participants included:
 - City of Cordova,
 - Alaska State Troopers,
 - Civil Air Patrol,
 - U.S. Forest Service,
 - FBI,
 - Cordova Volunteer Fire Department,
 - Cordova Amateur Radio Club,
 - Alaska Department of Public Health,
 - NOAA- NWS,
 - NORTHCOM, TRANSCOM, ALCOM.

He said the cooperation and partnerships the USCG has with its DOD components is phenomenal. USCG has a robust training and exercise schedule that keeps the branch engaged and connected. The best example is the recently completed Alaska Shield, a tri-annual, state sponsored exercise. USCG conducted a "pelagic strike counter-terrorism" exercise in conjunction with Alaska Shield 19 to meet its shared preparedness objectives. Alaska Shield 19 tested the USCG's ability to mobilize specialized forces to Alaska in response to a terrorism or homeland security

threat on a vessel. Approximately 70 maritime security response team personnel deployed their small boats and other equipment from home base in San Diego via strategic airlift to Alaska that was provided by NORTHCOM and ALCOM. The City of Cordova, the State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, State DOT, and the Alaska Marine Highway System, and other state and federal agencies, were integral to Alaska Shield 19's planning.

COMMANDER BELL added that superior teamwork and communications were required within the past summer to support Operation Talon Archer with the U.S. Air Force. Operation Talon Archer included work between the U.S. Geological Survey, the FAA, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and DOD personnel to help install a NORAD NORTHCOM sponsored early warning system in Aleutian Island chain which increased Alaska's Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and tested the heavy lift helicopter capability over water.

[12:31:39 PM](#)

He addressed "Anchorage Earthquake" as follows:

- USCG priorities:
 - 100-percent accountability of USCG members and families:
 - Achieved.
- Safety of life, search and rescue (SAR):
 - Shifted airborne C-130 to SAR mission.
 - Immediate launch six aircraft.
 - Sector Juneau assumed Sector Anchorage's SAR coordination.
- Port assessment and recovery:
 - Sector coordinated with port partners.
 - USCG LNOs deployed to SEOC and FEMA RRCC.

He said following a major incident, USCG 17th District's immediate priorities include accountability of USCG members and their families, search and rescue, safety of life, and assessing and mitigating any impacts to the marine transportation system. Interagency training and relationships established prior to the earthquake incident were essential to effective coordination and communications, including the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) training and exercises, the Alaska National "Earth Ex" from November 2018, the recent NORTHCOM-FEMA transportation feasibility analysis, USCG's regional interagency steering committee meetings and working groups, periodic Alaska ESF and interagency partner

meetings which is lead by FEMA Region 10, and participation in the ALCOM-DOD training and exercises including the annual Vigilant Shield exercises, defense support of civil authorities trainings, and the "joint logistics over the shoulder" (JLOT) exercises.

12:33:01 PM

CO-CHAIR SHOWER asked Commander Bell to confirm that the USCG said during the previous year's meeting that "1.5" Polar Security Cutters would be considered.

COMMANDER BELL answered "technically, yes". He explained that the Polar Star, the single heavy icebreaker, goes south every year and the Cutter Healy, a medium class research vessel, applies to the Arctic.

MR. ANGAPAK pointed out that Alaska has the longest coastline in the U.S. and asked Commander Bell how the state can get more icebreakers.

COMMANDER BELL answered that the USCG commandant just rolled out the USCG's "Arctic Strategic Outlook" that provides insight as to his thinking and the direction that the USCG is going to go from homeland defense and security perspective. Increased Arctic capability is a component that will be rolled out over the next 10 to 15 years. The USCG is addressing the interim for the Arctic.

SENATOR HUGHES asked Commander Bell what the Alaska Legislature can do to address with the federal government the USCG's resources in the Arctic, especially due to Chinese and Russian activity.

COMMANDER BELL emphasized that the Arctic is a "U.S. interest" and not just an "Alaska interest". He reiterated that funding is going towards the PSC program.

12:37:47 PM

CO-CHAIR TARR noted that the joint committee does not have representation from coastal community legislators. She thanked the USCG on behalf of Alaska's coastal communities for the safety that they provide.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER concurred that the U.S. is behind in the Arctic and other countries are taking advantage of it. He conceded that there is not much the state can do. He noted that the USCG is "incredibly stretched" for the resources they have been given

and he wants to make sure that the state is doing what it needs to do.

SENATOR KAWASAKI addressed "graywater" and noted that in September 2018 there was a graywater spill of 26,000 gallons in Glacier Bay by the Westerdam that was not self-reported to the USCG as per federal and international law. He noted that Holland America was fined \$250.

COMMANDER BELL answered that the \$250 fine was from the U.S. Forest Service. He said he was going to hold off additional details for the graywater incident until the USCG has concluded its investigation. He conceded that there has been a problem across the cruise line industry, noting that Carnival has been called out a couple of times for previous incidences.

12:40:29 PM

BRIGADIER GENERAL TORRENCE SAXE, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard; Commissioner, Military & Veterans Affairs, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska, delivered a presentation on the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. He addressed an earlier question on the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) and noted the system's locale importance due to Alaska's broader surface area versus other places.

He said as part of DOD with a state and federal emphasis, he would address three points regarding his new role as adjutant general as follows:

1. Focus on state operations:

- Ongoing study on every airfield in the state:
 - Make sure that the Alaska National Guard knows how to get to airfields and determine the means to standup to whatever is needed.

2. People are the most important asset:

- Rural engagement:
 - Alaska National Guard is too concentrated in Anchorage and Fairbanks.
 - Alaska National Guard should reflect Alaska in places that the Alaska National Guard should be in.
 - Recruiting should occur in Alaska's native areas.
- No room for toxic leadership:
 - Define what that really means.

- oHave responsibility and authority at the appropriate level by "pushing down the authority to the appropriate level".

3. Future missions and assets:

- "Guard owned iron":
 - oPartnership at JBER with the 11th Air Force.
 - oNew models for HC-130J aircraft.
 - oNo longer have the HC-130H aircraft.
- Association with "active duty":
 - oShould KC-46 aircraft refueling go to Eielson.
 - oSmall role at Eielson when F-35 aircraft are delivered.
 - oInvolvement with Clear Air Force Station when a Long Range Discrimination Radar is installed.

[12:46:03 PM](#)

BRIGADIER GENERAL SAXE addressed "National Guard End State, Team Alaska" as follows:

- Team Alaska: Empowered professionals, dual mission, and future focused.

He explained that as a dual-status commander for the Alaska Guard includes a huge contingency role for events like the recent earthquake where traffic was directed both on a state and federal level; training is required to properly do that. He emphasized that, "To defend Alaska you have got to know Alaska."

He noted that the Alaska National Guard has gone completely from a strategic reserve to an operational component. The Alaska National Guard has a connection with active duty and acting as an independent entity is long gone.

He addressed the Alaska Air National Guard as follows:

- C-17 association and HC-130 upgrade:
 - o Alaska Guard "owns the iron".
 - o Alaska Guard has a high retention rate as opposed to active duty counterparts.
- Six deployments to 14 countries.
- Search and rescue.
- Poised for Space National Guard:
 - o Alaska is one of eight states to have a space mission.
 - o Air traffic control for space.

12:49:26 PM

BRIGADIER GENERAL SAXE addressed the Alaska Army National Guard as follows:

- Recruiting and retention:
 - Recruiting and retention is up.
 - Intent is to "go outside of the road system" to recruit and communicate.
- Increased deployments:
 - U.S. Army is more operational within the Guard.
- Aviation upgrade:
 - Adding to helicopter inventory with Dakota and Chinook helicopters.
 - Help with federal and state deployments, including fighting fires.

He addressed the Alaska National Guard Joint Staff as follows:

- Domestic operations focus, natural disasters:
 - Recent earthquake got everyone's attention.
 - Dramatic shift to domestic response and natural disaster.
- Mongolia State Partnership Program:
 - Strategic locale partnership.
- Exercise Arctic Eagle/Alaska Shield.

He addressed the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management as part of the DMVA and detailed as follows:

- Cook Inlet earthquake response.
- Yukon-Tanana-Koyukuk rural resilience workshop.
- Cyber emphasis.

12:52:51 PM

He addressed the Division of Administrative Services regarding "state versus federal dollar amounts". He said DMVA receives some state funding and detailed as follows:

- FY2016 Operating Budget Impact:
 - State General Fund Dollars Spent:
 - \$16.3 million.
 - Federal dollars Received:
 - \$618.6 million.
- FY2017 Operating Budget Impact:

- o State General Fund Dollars Spent:
 - \$15.9 million.
- o Federal dollars Received:
 - \$744.0 million.
- FY2018 Operating Budget Impact:
 - o State General Fund Dollars Spent:
 - \$15.3 million.
 - o Federal dollars Received:
 - \$792.1 million.

BRIGADIER GENERAL SAXE addressed the Office of Veterans Affairs as follows:

- Outreach to all veterans of any era.
- Assisted record 68,828 Alaskans.
- \$600 million in federal benefits dispersed.

He addressed the Alaska Military Youth Academy as follow:

- Recent class graduated 156 cadets.
- 70 cadets awarded GEDs.
- 11 cadets awarded high school diplomas.

He noted that his wife sponsored two cadets. The academy is "life changing", classes continue to grow, and his intent is to keep the program going.

He addressed the Alaska State Defense Force as follows:

- Alaska National Guard "force enabler".
- Constabulary effort.
- End strength up 76 to 130-plus.

He said his intent is to get up to "Arctic Strategy" level by increasing the force to 500 people.

[12:56:17 PM](#)

MR. ANGAPAK asked Brigadier General Saxe to address assistance for personnel transitioning from overseas deployment to civilian life, especially those living in rural Alaska.

BRIGADIER GENERAL SAXE concurred with the previous testimony regarding suicide statistics. He opined that suicide is the most unfortunate death because it is an act of desperation. He said he tells people to say something if somebody is not acting the

same. He emphasized that the Alaska Guard has access to official programs to provide assistance.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER noted that his son served two tours in Iraq as a Marine and that half of the men in his platoons have committed suicide since their return.

1:00:03 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SHAW said he has worked with Representative Tarr on "recognizing someone of value", Kirk Alkire, a constituent of Senator Reinbold. He continued as follows:

Today I would like to ask my fellow committee members to join me in signing a letter of appreciation and recognition of Kirk Alkire.

Kirk is a retired first sergeant who served his final tour of duty with 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, also known as the "4-2-5". His last deployment in Iraq in 2007 became a change point in his 20-year Army career. During that 15-month deployment of the "4-2-5", 53 soldiers were killed in action, including 4 from his artillery regime. Kirk carries those 53 dog tags, one for each of those 53 soldiers as a reminder of the sacrifice for our freedom.

Kirk felt the best way to honor his soldiers was to honor their families, so he set out to get a peak in the Chugiak Mountain Range named on behalf of the Gold Star families. Gold Star families are family members of fallen service members who died while serving in time of conflict. Kirk succeeded in his efforts on behalf of Gold Star families by getting formally recognized "Gold Star Peak" through the U.S. Board of Geographic names; for those efforts initially, immediately following he was recognized by U.S. Senator Sullivan on the floor of Congress.

Kirk and I will be leading a group of Gold Star Peak and Mount POW/MIA up the mountain Memorial Day weekend. Joining us along with fellow veterans will be Gold Star family members. Admiral Bell and General Saxe have accepted our invitation to climb as well, we hope that they will be able to join us Memorial Day weekend. We on the Joint Armed Services Committee

would like to thank Kirk for his efforts on behalf of fellow veterans and the community.

1:02:06 PM

CO-CHAIR SHOWER announced that Senators Reinbold and Kawasaki have invited those interested to attend the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee regarding a bill moving out of committee that will give military dependents and spouses license preference to help them when they move, noting how hard that is to get jobs and keep their careers up during the transition.

He thanked testifiers for spending time with the committee to tell members what is going on and how the legislature and governor might be able to help. He thanked attendees for their service and for taking time to talk to the committee.

CO-CHAIR TARR echoed Co-chair Shower's comments and noted that she looks forward to continuing conversations. She announced that the committee is considering a possible meeting in October in Fairbanks that will tie into a site visit to view all the military construction in Fairbanks.

1:04:28 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Tarr adjourned the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting at 1:04 p.m.