

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

May 7, 2019

1:12 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Laddie Shaw, Chair  
Representative Chuck Kopp  
Representative Ivy Spohnholz  
Representative Steve Thompson  
Representative George Rauscher

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Chris Tuck, Vice Chair  
Representative Sharon Jackson

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION: PREPARING ALASKA'S DEFENSE COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

TIM FORD, Chief Executive Officer  
Association of Defense Communities  
Washington, District of Columbia

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Preparing Alaska's Defense Communities for the Future," dated 5/7/19.

JEFF STEPP, Staff  
Representative Chris Tuck  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Asked a question during a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Preparing Alaska's Defense Communities for the Future," dated 5/7/19.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

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**CHAIR LADDIE SHAW** called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. Representatives Thompson, Kopp, Rauscher, and Shaw were present at the call to order. Representative Spohnholz arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**PRESENTATION: PREPARING ALASKA'S DEFENSE COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE**

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CHAIR SHAW announced the only order of business would be a presentation by the Association of Defense Communities.

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TIM FORD, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Defense Communities (ADC), provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Preparing Alaska's Defense Communities for the Future." Mr. Ford informed the committee ADC began 45 years ago within the Office of Economic Adjustment, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). He said the Office of Economic Adjustment is the DoD agency tasked with engaging communities, thus ADC was formed to be a nongovernmental partner working with communities and states to support the military. One of ADC's goals is to be a connection point between defense communities, defense states, the military, and industry, to ensure all work together in support of national security. The association is an [Internal Revenue Section 501(c)(3)] organization and has additional goals to enhance knowledge and to educate. As part of ADC's goal to educate, it educates lawmakers, at the federal and state levels, about issues confronting defense communities and states, so lawmakers understand the efforts taking place across the country to share information and ensure preparedness. As a membership organization, ADC has members in communities in Alaska, and engages with the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA); in fact, the deputy commissioner is a part of ADC's State Advisors Council that oversees and shares state efforts to support the military. In addition, ADC holds conferences with the military in Alaska on military bases, and last year, Mr. Ford was in Fairbanks (slides 1 and 2).

MR. FORD directed attention to slide 3 entitled, "Our Programs," noting ADC hosts significant events including a national summit.

In addition, each winter ADC brings together military leaders and communities for an event called "Installation Innovation" to discuss the future of military bases. Returning to the goal of legislative education, he said ADC supports the Defense Communities Caucus as a way to urge lawmakers at the federal level to support key issues that help the military and communities. Also, ADC issues a widely read e-newsletter, "On Base," which is distributed to interested parties across the country and is available to all. Mr. Ford explained one of ADC's signature programs is "America's Great Defense Communities," which is a program in partnership with the U.S. Automobile Association (USAA), that highlights what communities are doing to promote quality of life; in the last three years, eighteen communities have been recognized for being great American defense communities (slide 4).

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REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked what characteristics make a community a great defense community.

MR. FORD opined a great defense community has an awareness that its role is to support [the military] every day, at the state and local government level, and at the community organization level. For example, the community actively participates with and advocates for the defense community. Further, ADC has learned there are many different categories of support including education, housing, and childcare. In fact, as part of the great defense community program, ADC is building a large library of ideas; although all communities and states are slightly different, ADC is developing a picture of what great communities do to support nearby military installations. He advised education is the number one focus in terms of community engagement and ADC seeks to ensure great schools are available to military families. Another important issue is to ensure quality housing is available to servicemembers on- and off-base.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ expressed her understanding Alaska has the highest per-capita rate of current and retired military; Anchorage, Fairbanks, and other Alaska communities have worked hard to be military-friendly, as has the University of Alaska by facilitating the transfer of students' credits. She asked for specific and practical recommendations as to how a community becomes a great military defense community.

MR. FORD said ADC has learned the needs of servicemembers are constantly evolving thus ongoing engagement with the military

makes a community great: listening to what the military is doing; listening to servicemembers' needs; making sure the community adjusts to "those dynamics." He acknowledged it is difficult for communities to anticipate and prepare for the changing needs of the military and servicemembers.

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CHAIR SHAW asked whether ADC works directly with service organizations such as the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

MR. FORD said ADC works with the Association of the U.S. Army, the Air Force Association, local governments, DoD, and all branches of the military services. Also, ADC partners with other military groups in its role as a connection point between local and state governments and the military.

MR. FORD turned attention to slide 5 and informed the committee the first key issue communities should be aware of are budget issues; budget issues determine how military installations grow and how they are supported. The last five to seven years have been a "chaotic period," although in the last two years funding has been stable and there have been some increases in active duty strength, in Alaska and elsewhere; however, in the upcoming year, there may be an unpredictability to the defense budget that could cause harm to military installations. He said issues around "the military construction bill" will not be resolved quickly because of debates on [the border wall being constructed between the U.S. border with Mexico], and other military funding will be debated as well. Mr. Ford opined there is a consensus to not have a decline in the defense budget, but the outcome is uncertain. He stressed it is important for local communities to voice opinions to their congressional delegations in support of passing the military budget (slide 6). Another key issue is the "new" national defense strategy (slide 7). He remarked:

If you talk to anyone in DoD they have been taught now to align everything they say, in terms of the defense strategy, but I think there's a lot of question marks in the post-Mattis era and in ... the Department of Defense, where this strategy goes, moving forward. But it has been very critical to how DoD is making decisions and, and [what] we have told our communities over and over again is read it, digest it, understand its implications, but I think we're all trying to

figure out what does this mean and how will things evolve with the new secretary of defense.

MR. FORD continued to slide 8 and stated the third key issue concerns quality of life, a topic that was viewed as "a nice thing to talk about" but is now recognized by departmental leadership as a real factor in decisions about the location of bases. He pointed out the location of bases is important to the economies of defense communities; for example, DoD's investment at Eielson Air Force Base is a long-term investment in Fairbanks. Further, DoD leadership believes education is important and the quality of schools near bases will be part of future basing decisions; ADC has worked with DoD on how to measure the quality of schools. He provided examples of state and local programs that promote a broad quality of life such as, improved education for children of servicemembers, and employment for military spouses. The final issue in this regard is the concern about housing; although on-base housing is an internal DoD issue, 70 percent of servicemembers live in communities surrounding bases thus the quality, affordability, and availability of housing is critical.

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MR. FORD continued to slide 9 and pointed out more states are investing in defense infrastructure - just as they do in other economic drivers - to ensure that DoD can meet its mission and bases are retained; for example, Massachusetts established a bond fund of \$150 million for projects in support of its military installations. In addition, states and communities are driving installation resiliency and efficiency efforts, such as a partnership in New Jersey to improve water supply facilitated by the use of an intergovernmental support agreement, which allows [local and state governments] to share services with bases to reduce costs. Another example of direct state investment is that Virginia purchased land to provide for base expansion (slide 10). He stressed military installations are just one piece of a state's defense economy that includes industries in support of defense, such as manufacturing facilities, that can also be promoted at the state level, and he provided examples (slide 11). A new program called the Defense Community Infrastructure Program is a federal funding stream which can be used at the state and local level to support infrastructure projects that enhance military value. The program requires a cost-share of 30 percent outside funds and 70 percent DoD funds; allocation for the program is forthcoming (slide 12).

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MR. FORD provided a list of five areas on which he encouraged state leadership to focus: understand current and future mission capabilities by creating a state commanders council to ensure regular contact with base commanders; protect the availability of land, facilities, and airspace from encroachment by development; improve and invest in the ability to accommodate and support the future force through advance planning; manage the cost of operations by creating efficiencies by sharing services; support your state's efforts on military retention by focusing attention on the importance of the military and its future (slides 14 and 15). He invited the committee to attend the Alaska Defense Forum hosted by ADC in Fairbanks in October [2019], which will be an opportunity for community and state leadership to talk about the future of defense in Alaska (slide 16).

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REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON returned attention to slide 12, which referred to federal funding in support of state and local infrastructure projects that enhance military value. He recalled [House Bill 316, passed in the Twenty-seventh Alaska State Legislature] allows a community or an area to be named a military facility zone and thus provides various benefits to the community.

MR. FORD noted the money to support state and local infrastructure projects has not been appropriated and he urged the committee to inform the Alaska congressional delegation of the importance of this funding to local communities and to states.

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JEFF STEPP, Staff, Representative Chris Tuck, Alaska State Legislature, asked Mr. Ford to elaborate on how state legislatures participate in the defense forums.

MR. FORD explained the goal behind defense forums is to help ADC members organize at the state and local level. The conferences have provided a way for states to bring communities together and, in some states, the forums have been the start of an ongoing effort. For example, in Ohio, ADC hosted a forum and now the state holds a statewide forum to bring communities

together on an annual basis. The second goal of a forum is to share information ADC has garnered on the "bigger picture," and to share national ideas that can be focused to a local level and engage business leaders, and local government. He said when local entities and members of the public are engaged, they are more willing to support and advance [military] issues. However, participation by state legislatures varies by state; in California the forum is hosted by the state legislature, which puts legislators and staff from the governor's office in close contact with base commanders. He assured the committee, subsequent to the forum in Alaska, there will be opportunities for the legislature and authorities at the local level to discuss how to continue statewide engagement.

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#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at [1:44] p.m.