

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

October 5, 2021

2:02 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Matt Claman, Co-Chair  
Senator Mike Shower, Co-Chair (via teleconference)  
Representative Ivy Spohnholz  
Representative Geran Tarr (via teleconference)  
Representative David Nelson  
Senator Joshua Revak (via teleconference)  
Senator Roger Holland (via teleconference)  
Senator Lora Reinbold (via teleconference)

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Chris Tuck  
Senator Scott Kawasaki

**PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Colonel Tim Jones, retired - Fairbanks (via teleconference)  
Brigadier General Julio "Randy" Banez, retired - Fairbanks (via teleconference)  
Colonel Robert Doehl, retired - Anchorage (via teleconference)  
Colonel George Vakalis, retired - Anchorage (via teleconference)

**PUBLIC MEMBERS ABSENT**

Nelson N. Angapak, Sr. - Anchorage  
Commodore James Chase, retired - Anchorage

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

**ARMED SERVICES PRESENTATIONS:**

**ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD (AKNG) UPDATE**

- HEARD

**ALASKAN COMMAND (ALCOM) UPDATE**

- HEARD

US Army Alaska (USARAK) UPDATE

- HEARD

US COAST GUARD (USCG) 17th DISTRICT UPDATE

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

TORRENCE W. SAXE, Major General; Adjutant General  
Alaska National Guard (AKNG); Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Delivered the AKNG Update.

DAVID A. KRUMM, Commander, Lieutenant General,  
Alaskan Command (ALCOM), US Northern Command; Commander,  
Eleventh US Air Force, Pacific Air Forces; Commander,  
North American Aerospace Defense Command  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Delivered the Alaskan Command (ALCOM)  
update.

BRIAN EIFLER, Major General; Commanding General  
US Army Alaska (USARAK), Deputy Commander,  
US Alaskan Command (ALCOM)  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Delivered the US Army Alaska (USARAK)  
update.

KRISTOPHER BERG, Command Chief Master Sergeant  
Eleventh US Air Force (USAF), Commander  
Senior Enlisted Leader Alaskan Command ALCOM &  
Alaskan NORAD Region  
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a portion of the USARAK update.

NATHAN A. MOORE, PE  
Rear Admiral; Commander  
U.S. Coast Guard 17th District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Delivered the US Coast Guard 17th District update.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

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**CO-CHAIR MATT CLAMAN** called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Revak (via teleconference), Holland (via teleconference), Reinbold (via teleconference), and Co-Chair Shower (via teleconference); and Representatives Spohnholz, Nelson, and Co-Chair Claman. Public members present were Colonel Tim Jones (via teleconference), Colonel George Vakalis (via teleconference), Colonel Robert Doehl, and Brigadier General "Randy" Banez. Representative Tarr (via teleconference) joined the meeting soon thereafter.

**ARMED SERVICES UPDATES**

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**CO-CHAIR CLAMAN** announced the committee would hear update briefings from the armed services. He offered members the opportunity to introduce themselves and provide a brief background.

**SENATOR HOLLAND** stated he failed to mention at the previous meeting that he is still a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

**CO-CHAIR CLAMAN** recognized Major General Torrence W. Saxe.

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**REPRESENTATIVE TARR** joined meeting.

**ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD UPDATE**

[2:09:17 PM](#)

**MAJOR GENERAL TORRENCE W. SAXE**, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard (AKNG); Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska, began a PowerPoint on the Alaska National Guard (AKNG). He turned to slide 2, Three Phases. He discussed the three phases taken since he took command three years ago. He related that Phase 1 focused on the troops to make sure they understood their role in the military. Phase 2 focused on the AKNG operations in the state as a whole and in individual places on the road system. He remarked that some places in rural Alaska

have not had an AKNG presence during the last decade. Lastly, Phase 3 focused on drafting the first AKNG Arctic Strategy.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slides 3-4. He related that the map on slide 4 identified the AKNG's primary focus on communities, shown by blue stars for air guard locations, including Juneau. Four years ago he was commander at Eielson Air Force Base (AFB), when for the first time the unit flew KC-135s to Juneau. He reported that for the first time in 15 years, the AKNG conducted a commissary run to Bethel. This mission consisted of taking commissary orders and flying out goods from the Anchorage and Washington, DC commissaries to the Bethel hangar. This provided the community with lower-priced goods than ones available in the rural community. Over 200 people attended the event that brought tens of thousands of dollars into the community.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE directed attention to the photo of two recruits from Chevak. He related that the AKNG went to Nome pre-COVID to check on the community. He directed attention to the bottom left photo of the Kodiak Armory, which will be named posthumously after Daniel Harmon, a Vietnam era-soldier. He highlighted two reasons to visit rural Alaska. He stated that the AKNG would want to get to a community quickly in the event that a fire or flood emergency arose. Active duty troops can be dispersed to the "blue-starred" hubs depicted on the slide.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE discussed the Arctic sustainment package delivery on slide 5. He directed attention to the photograph, which showed parachutes dropping food and medicine that could sustain a small group of people for two weeks.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE discussed slide 6, Domestic Arctic Response. He directed attention to the photograph on the far right that was taken about 5 years ago. At the time, the Alaska Defense Force Team, administered by the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA) noticed an unfamiliar fishing vessel. It was identified as a Russian fishing trawler that had ventured into American waters without the authority to do so. This illustrates the importance of maintaining routine patrols using trained officers. He highlighted several other slides that showed arctic transports of goods by ground and via helicopter.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 7, Operations. He acknowledged that there were times the AKNG does not want to repeat. He said he would shift from federal operations to state operations. The AKNG empowers its troops by having a zero tolerance for toxic leadership, sexual assault and sexual harassment.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE said he likes to say that the AKNG is building relationships from "Alaska to Mongolia." Alaska partners with Mongolia. The AKNG mentors the Mongolian Air National Guard on how to establish its own air force, he said.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE referred to a world map on slide 8. He reported that as of this morning the domestic Army and Air National Guard troops are deployed in the US at Volk Field and Langley AFB and internationally at Guantanamo, Poland, Mongolia, Al Dhafra, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Kuwait, and Antarctica. On any given day dozens or hundreds of AKNG members are deployed throughout the world. The days of a strategic reserve, in which the AKNG is called up for a global conflict are long gone. Instead, the AKNG serves the state and nation every day.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 9, the Alaska Army National Guard. The photo on the upper left shows one of six new CH-47F Chinook helicopters. The photo on the lower left shows the helicopter training for fire suppression. Fort Greely has received 40 ground-based interceptor missiles and 20 more are forthcoming.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 10, the Alaska Air National Guard (AKNG). He stated that together the Army National Guard and Alaska National Guard are arguably the most operational in the nation, with many troops deployed on 24/7 missions. Clear Air Force Station has been renamed as Clear Space Force Station (Clear SFS). He directed attention to the C-17 aircraft, a versatile airlift aircraft used to assist the USAF.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 11, Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF). He highlighted the productivity of the ASDF. He remarked that Commander Jeff Brown said they have been more active over the past 24 months than over the past two decades. He reported that nearly 30 percent of its members have been actively involved in some aspect of COVID-19 in state

operations, including contact tracing and working at the airport warehouse for the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). The ASDF has risen from 76 members to close to 200.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 12, Alaska Naval Militia (ANM). He stated that Alaska is one of the few states with an enabled militia. The ANM is comprised of 60 US Navy and US Marine Corps reservists. The ANM has actively assisted for COVID-19 activities, fires and floods. He reported that ANM has a new commander.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 13, Office of Veterans Affairs. He directed attention to the photograph of the bronze medal that will be given to families to honor the Alaska Territorial Guard service members.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE reported that the Stand Down will be held in Anchorage on November 1-4, 2021. [Stand Down helps veterans who need assistance with medical, legal, housing and employment]. He directed attention to the photo of Alaska Cab, shown on the upper right side of the slide, whose role is to take veterans, primarily Vietnam veterans, to medical appointments. He directed attention to the map showing DMVA offices in Sitka, Juneau, JBER, Kodiak, Fairbanks, Utqiagvik, Wales, Toksook Bay and Bethel.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 14, Alaska Military Youth Academy. He reported that the academy graduated cadets in the midst of COVID-19. Currently, there have been zero cases within the school. Cadets are routinely tested. Cadets have an opportunity to earn a GED or high school diploma. A high percentage of cadets go on to serve in the active duty military or the AKNG.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 15, the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management. He highlighted recent natural disasters that occurred in Alaska, including in 2018 an earthquake in Anchorage and fires and floods in 2019. The slide also had photographs of the Cook Inlet Earthquake Response to the 2018 Anchorage earthquake, the Yukon-Tanana-Koyukuk Rural Resilience Workshop and the State Emergency Operations Center.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to slide 16, Team Alaska. He stated that the goal is to have empowered professionals, a dual mission and a focus on the future with AKNG's counterparts.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE turned to questions on slide 18. He said the best mission statement he has seen is shown on this slide along with a photograph of several guardsmen. It read, "This We'll Defend."

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REPRESENTATIVE NELSON asked if there was any thought of expanding the commissary run to other hubs throughout Alaska.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE answered yes; the commissary runs are popular so he would like to extend them to other Western Alaska hubs, including Chevak, Bethel, Kotzebue, and Nome. During his visit to Chevak this spring, the community expressed interest in a commissary run. The AKNG was able to implement protocols and conduct the commissary run successfully during COVID-19. He applauded the team effort in Washington, D.C. and JBER.

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REPRESENTATIVE NELSON remarked that AKNG members serving in rural communities do not have access to commissaries for goods like a soldier or guardsman in Fairbanks or JBER does. He asked for a progress report on the Rural Engagement Program.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE answered that it was looking much better. He remarked that COVID-19 understandably slowed down the progress since AKNG cannot go into an area unless it is safe to do so. However, AKNG has established relationships at the bigger hubs, in particular in Nome. He expressed an interest in holding operational and recruiting events. He pointed out that Nome has an incredible facility, but currently only one soldier uses this big facility. Obviously, this facility must be filled quickly, he said.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE highlighted the importance of having local AKNG serving in communities. First, during domestic AKNG emergency efforts, it helps to have people on the ground in the event of a fire or flood since it improves response time because locals are familiar with the area and the residents. Second, to accomplish its federal responsibilities, it is great to have AKNG on the ground directing traffic when AKNG needs to get active duty troops into the area. He said he must have the

assurance that AKNG pilots know how to fly into these areas. Plans to visit Bethel, Chevak and all surrounding areas are on hold for a couple of months due to the latest COVID-19 surge. He said he will coordinate rural visits with the communities.

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CO-CHAIR SHOWER expressed appreciation for the good work the AKNG is doing throughout Alaska. He echoed the importance to continue to work in rural Alaska, especially since young men and women have fewer choices in smaller communities. He acknowledged the opportunities and education that come with AKNG service.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER said he received requests for information on the COVID policy mandated by federal government. He noted that the potential ramifications for military members refusing COVID-19 vaccinations could be similar to receiving a dishonorable discharge so he has questions. First, he asked what will happen to the men and women serving if they refuse vaccinations. He understood military members were seeking exemptions for medical or religious reasons or to have additional time to research data on vaccines. Second, he asked what progress has been made on options for those who refuse the mandated COVID-19 vaccination. He said he would like clarification since substantial misinformation surrounds COVID-19.

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CO-CHAIR CLAMAN stated that presenters were advised to be prepared to address public policy questions within their service branch.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE answered that the federal mandate initiated by the President is channeled through the chain of command to the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the US Army and the Secretary of the Air Force. Every private and airman is being asked if they would like to apply for an exemption, he said. If so, the service member will be referred to a Chaplain or Human Resources with the knowledge that he will not be the person approving or disapproving any exemptions. In the event the exemption is not approved by the proper authority, the service member must get the vaccine. He emphasized that those who apply for exemptions will be provided any help necessary to go through the process. He reiterated that each individual will be given the option to apply for an exemption. Based on the service member's response, the person will either get the COVID-19 vaccine in the near future or go through the exemption process

with the understanding that the decision will not be made by him, [but by someone up the chain of command].

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CO-CHAIR SHOWER asked what would happen if the service member refuses the vaccine after they were denied an exemption. For example, he asked if the soldier would be given a dishonorable discharge.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE responded that the US Army and the US Air Force use different processes. He stated that the US Army has been prescriptive by outlining a certain level of discipline. However, the US Air Force has not been quite as clear. He advised that his policy letters contain information that the discipline would be administered by supporting commanders, but any potential discharges for the AKNG will be decided at his level.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE explained that he did not want individual battalions making different decisions. In consultation with the Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG Corps), he wants to be certain he has received all of the information to make a decision. He stated that he wants to ensure that any decisions are fair, just, and equitable for everyone in this situation. He said he has not yet received all of the information from the active duty US Army or the active duty US Air Force members. Decisions will be made for the AKNG in December but the US Air Force will be pushed until the summer 2022. He stated that as questions arise, they will go up the chain of command to him.

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CO-CHAIR SHOWER acknowledged that some people will choose not to get the COVID-19 vaccine. He commented that he would appreciate knowing how military men and women will be treated when the time comes. He wants to be certain military members are treated fairly, honored for their service and not punished. He asked that the committee be given the information when it becomes available.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE responded that he directed subordinate managers to keep confidential the names of any service members who request exemptions. He said he does not want any individuals' names made public to help ensure those service members are not singled out. He said he wants these individuals to be respected throughout the process.

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CO-CHAIR CLAMAN asked if he knew how many people were applying for exemptions.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE replied the current numbers range from 5-10 percent of the active duty members.

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SENATOR REINBOLD said the COVID-19 vaccination is a deep concern to her and she is adamantly opposed to forced immunizations. She offered her view that it is unconstitutional. She offered her belief that only one Pfizer vaccine was licensed to market. She asked if he knew what ingredients were contained in the Pfizer vaccines. She asked if members will receive the licensed vaccine.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE answered that he cannot answer the question related to the chemical composition of the Pfizer vaccine. The federal mandate is only for the Pfizer vaccine, but AKNG will accept the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine for members who received it on their own.

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SENATOR REINBOLD said according to state law, Alaska residents have the ability to decline all medical interventions, including inoculations. She commented that Colonel Aguilar, Commander, JBER, is mandating masks for people recreating on JBER facilities and recommending people avoid businesses that do not require a vaccination card or antigen/PCR tests. First, she asked for comments on Colonel Aguilar's directives. Second, she asked if anyone was pushing back on President Biden's illegitimate constitutional tyranny.

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CO-CHAIR CLAMAN stated that Major General Saxe could answer the question on Senator Reinbold's perspective about whether it is constitutional or unconstitutional but he is not required to take a position. If he chooses to answer, it does not mean he is taking a position, he said.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE answered that Commander Kirsten Aguilar, who serves as the installation commander, has the authority to decide who can come on JBER. However, most of the guardsmen live off base so it would not directly apply to them. He related his understanding that off-base guardsmen would be on base for more than one drill.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM informed members that Colonel Aguilar's requirements for masks on federal installations is per the DOD order, which is dependent on whether the rate of infection is significant or high. Thus, Colonel Aguilar is enforcing the federal order. Further, Colonel Aguilar has the authority to enforce mandates to service members in the Anchorage area based on the public health emergency order issued several weeks ago in response to rising cases.

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SENATOR REINBOLD asked whether the generals were aware of Lieutenant Colonel Theresa Long's affidavit that the Pfizer vaccine is dangerous, a Navy flight surgeon's warnings about dire consequences and the Colorado lawsuit Austin v. Roberts. She asked whether there was any compensation for injuries or ailments related to reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE answered that it would be determined by a line of duty (LOD) process, such that if it was proven that a vaccine caused a health condition, it would go through the appropriate medical authorities and the person would be given a certain percentage of the service member's disability. This is the case for any type of injury, he said.

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SENATOR REINBOLD said COVID-19 vaccines impact her constituents. She related her understanding that Commander Aguilar's authority ends on base and she cannot overrule state and local laws.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE answered that Commander Aguilar can control who is allowed on base. He stated that military jurisdictions are outlined in Title 10 of the federal authority and AS Title 32 for the state authority.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM informed members that military commanders have the authority to direct active-duty service members' movements. For example, an installation commander could put a local business off limits, perhaps due to known drug activity, excessive fights or other safety issues. It would only be applicable to active duty service members. Further, there are a number of things a commander can do including restricting drinking alcoholic beverages, he said.

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SENATOR SHOWER asked Major General Saxe to keep the committee informed about service members who have issues with the exemptions that lead to repercussions. He expressed an interest in helping military members who have honorably served their country.

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CO-CHAIR CLAMAN recognized Lieutenant General Krumm.

### ALASKAN COMMAND (ALCOM) UPDATE

[2:47:40 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID A. KRUMM, Commander, Alaskan Command, United States Northern Command; Commander, Eleventh Air Force, Pacific Air Forces; Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, began a PowerPoint on the Alaskan Command (ALCOM) update.

[2:49:12 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID A. KRUMM reviewed slide 2, ANR and ALCOM Overview.

ANR and ALCOM provide:

- Forward-based C2 to detect and defeat threats in and through the Arctic
  - Increased activity in Northern Approaches over last three years
- Spans operational level gaps between six CCMD plans
  - Extended span of control operational reach for NORAD and USNORTHCOM
  - Synchronization of joint forces across all domains and bi-national relationship
  - Unity of effort, unity of command
  - Regional subject matter expertise and critical partnerships

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM directed attention to the map on slide 2. He stated his area of responsibility includes the Alaska North Region (ANR) and the Alaskan Command (ALCOM). The hashed areas indicated on the map relate to the air defense implication zones in and around Alaska. The red solid line show the area of responsibility that extends through Canada to the North Pole. It is a large expanse that is becoming increasingly accessible since climate change creates less ice and more activity in the Arctic, he said. He acknowledged the need for a more sustained

presence and the ability to thrive, not just survive in the Arctic.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM directed attention to the map on slide 3 that shows Alaska is the most strategic place in the world. Alaska's location allows the military to get anywhere in the Northern Hemisphere within nine hours. For example, it is faster to travel from Anchorage to Tokyo than it is to travel from Hawaii to Tokyo. He noted the quote by General Glen Van Herck, US Northern Command Commander: "We must continue to take into consideration and understand the unique dynamics and challenges of the Arctic Environment". The Arctic used to be considered a barrier while the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were considered important defenses. However, the Arctic is no longer considered a barrier due to improved technology and human activity.

[2:52:03 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM turned to slide 4, DoD Across Alaska, consisting of a map of Alaska superimposed on the Lower 48. He highlighted Alaska's immense size by stating that it takes 3 hours to fly by jet fighter from JBER to Eareckson Air Station at the tip of the Aleutians. He related that about 9 percent of Alaska's population are members of the Department of Defense (DOD), AKNG, AKNG reserve, civil service or their families.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM discussed Arctic Affairs, slide 5. The commander of ALCOM is the US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) lead for Arctic Affairs and the operational-level lead for Arctic capability advocacy. He related the Department of Defense (DOD), United States Coast Guard (USCG), the US Air Force (USAF), the US Navy, the US Army and the US Marine Corps have all published Arctic strategies. There is a general recognition that the presence in the Arctic needs to increase, that people need to work and thrive in the Arctic and the military needs to prepare rather than react to circumstances. This is being done via branches of the service, by educational programs and symposiums.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM related that there have been significant discussions about the Arctic and how the US can protect its interests. What happens in Alaska is critically important to the future of the nation, he said.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM reviewed Homeland Defense on slide 6, which read:

- No fail mission and our #1 priority
- Must be prepared for two possible scenarios
  - In the Arctic
  - Through the Arctic
- Strong defense partnership between U.S. and Canada is essential
- SECDEF Priorities: Defeat COVID-19, Prioritize China as the Pacing Challenge, Address Advanced and Persistent Threats, Innovate and Modernize the DOD, Tackle the Climate Crisis

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM highlighted that the military is focused on homeland defense. He reviewed the bullet points. Although China is prioritized as challenging, Russia poses the most existential threat to the nation in the next few years. ALCOM takes pride in defending the US and will do so at all costs.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM turned to slide 7, Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA), which read:

- Command and Control
- Deployable communications
- Overland search & rescue coordination
- Disaster response/request for assistance
- Federal and State partnerships
- Support to the State of Alaska

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM emphasized the importance of the federal and state partnerships. He applauded the Alaska National Guard (AKNG) military and civil partnerships.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM turned to slide 8, the 11th Air Force Overview. He said he serves as the Commander of the 11th Air Force. He directed attention to the wide ranging area of operations from Eielson, JBER, and Joint Base (JB) Lewis-McChord Air Force bases, to JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam Air Force Base (PHAFB), Andersen Air Force Base (AAFB) and Wake Island Airfield. He said he thinks of these bases as the tip of the spear when considering the threats from China. Thus, the team conducts exercises regularly.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM turned to slide 9, Operational Overview & Two-Year Outlook. He stated that ALCOM trains every single day. Over the next two years ALCOM will conduct Arctic Edge winter operations. ALCOM conducts the Red Flag operations three to four times a year, experimenting to find ways to accomplish what needs to be done. ALCOM also trains with the USMC and US Navy in Alaska. ALCOM has been considering additional command and control exercises.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM stated that ALCOM has been conducting annual operations at Colony Glacier for recovery at the 1952 C-124 that crashed en route to then Elmendorf Air Force Base. Further, he stated ALCOM will conduct a feasibility study for Eldridge Glacier in an effort to recover the remains of 19 service members who lost their lives in the crash. It is important to keep the commitment to bring home military members, he said. He highlighted that the F-35 squadron bed-down at Eielson AFB is proceeding.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM stated that ALCOM continuously makes improvements to JBER and Eielson AFB. Further, as Major General Saxe mentioned ALCOM continues to look for sites in Alaska for agile combat deployment. It is important to disperse and operate anywhere in Alaska, especially to counter any potential target to JBER or Eielson AFB by US adversaries. ALCOM works to improve its facilities in King Salmon, Galena, Utqiaguik and Nome for operational uses. Finally ALCOM works to ensure the DOD continues its strong investment in the capabilities and infrastructure in Alaska.

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KRISTOPHER BERG, Command Chief Master Sergeant, Eleventh US Air Force (USAF), Commander, Senior Enlisted Leader of the Alaskan Command (ALCOM) & Alaskan NORAD Region, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska. He reviewed slide 10, Arctic Tabs.

Arctic Leader Qualification Program

- Memo Signed in January of 2021
- USAF is responsible for 79% of DoD Arctic Missions
- Purpose:
- Develop Leaders with Increased Arctic Awareness
- Prepare Leaders to Advocate on Arctic Affairs

- Build a Future Force Ready for Action to Support a Safe and Secure Arctic Region

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CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT BERG highlighted one component of the US Air Force was to professionalize service in the Arctic. One way to do so was to create the Arctic Leader Qualification Program. He indicated ALCOM hopes to develop leaders with an increased Arctic awareness and to prepare leaders to advocate on Arctic affairs. Those qualified are awarded a Special Experience Identifier and an Arctic Tab. This tab provides commanders a quick way to identify members with Arctic experience. The program is intended to support the 2109 DOD Arctic Strategy.

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CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT BERG reviewed slide 11, The Ted Stevens Center (TSC) for Arctic Security Studies. He paraphrased the mission:

Mission: The Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies will build strong, sustainable, international networks of security leaders to advance U.S. national security priorities in the Arctic region. In DOD's establishment plan to Congress, the Department defined four mission areas: 1. Advance Arctic awareness, both among partners and within the increasingly professionalized field of U.S. Arctic service; 2. Advance U.S. Arctic priorities; 3. Reinforce the rules-based order in the Arctic; and 4. In keeping with SECDEF's priorities and the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, address the impacts of climate change.

- June 9, 2021
  - IAW NDAA 21 DoD announced their 6th and newest regional center: the TSC
- September 22, 2021
  - DoD named Maj Gen Randy "Church" Kee, USAF (Ret), the TSC Senior Arctic Advisor for Arctic Security Affairs...his duty is to support the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the establishment and early operations of the TSC
- Expected Mid-October
  - DoD to announce the location for the center
  - Anchorage is one of three locations (the others are Colorado Springs and Washington D.C.)

3:03:38 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM reviewed slide 12, Serving, Living Thriving in the Arctic.

- Our relationship with Alaska is key for our military readiness and the wellness of our families
- Key Focus Areas:
  - The Fairbanks North Star Borough Housing Crisis
  - Military and Spouse Licensure Reciprocity
  - Schools

3:03:40 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM stated that USAF service members stationed in Alaska almost universally love the state, although initially it can be a little scary. He reviewed three things members can track, with respect to military families. First, the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) asked and the USAF agreed not to build new homes on Eielson AFB, in conjunction with the addition of the F-35s and the personnel associated with it. Instead, the community wanted to build homes in the borough for the military families and receive the economic benefit from them. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 these homes were never built. Thus, the USAF has decided that service members can't bring their families to Eielson AFB due to a lack of quality homes. He remarked that the housing market is currently unhealthy.

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM stated that the USAF is working with the Alaska Congressional Delegation and the Governor's office on this issue. He emphasized the importance to these service members to have their families reside in Alaska. He asked members to help ensure that contractors are incentivized. He offered to provide members with details of specific housing needs.

3:06:16 PM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM identified reciprocity of professional licenses and quality of schools as two key issues for military families. He thanked the legislature for passage of SB 21 and SB 12, relating to occupational licensing and temporary licensing for military spouses, which were beneficial. Although some spouses expressed concern about the interpretation of language

related to substantially-equivalent licenses, he will work with the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) to ensure that it is defined appropriately. ALCOM would prefer to have full reciprocity for their licensees like 34 other states have done to various degrees. He highlighted the number of dual-income families continues to rise. Reciprocity of professional licenses helps ensure spouses can relocate with their military members. He urged member to continue to work to ensure quality schools are available for children of military families.

[3:08:43 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER asked him to provide updates on two project areas: the Alaska-Alberta (A2A) Rail Corridor, which provides an alternate means to move equipment due to issues with Alaska's ports. Second, he asked for an update on the proposed deep water port. He expressed an interest in knowing if the state needs to take any action to keep these projects moving forward.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM answered that the infrastructure is one issue ALCOM struggles with in Alaska. The Department of Defense (DOD) always prefers to retain the option to move its forces for logistical purposes, whether it is for combat or due to a crisis. Therefore, DOD would be an active user. He advocated for the deep water port to transport fuel and supplies north of the Aleutians. He said due to Arctic ice melt and accessibility that it would be in the US's interest to sustain maritime operations in the Arctic region. Although he said he cannot endorse specific projects, he said he would not be disappointed if either or both projects were completed.

SENATOR SHOWER expressed interest in knowing that ALCOM was willing to move forward with these important projects.

[3:12:23 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM paraphrased slide 13, COVID 19, which read:

- Military readiness - required to win our nation's wars, anytime, anywhere
  - COVID mitigations have slowed the rate of infection on our installations
  - Contact tracing data shows the bulk of our infections occur off the installation
  - Our readiness requires access to resources and capabilities located off the base, to include medical facilities

- This is a war, not a battle - request your help in defeating this enemy

[3:12:25 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM said the military needs to be ready for action at any time. This means that a segment of the military members cannot be sick with any illness, whether it is COVID-19 or another illness. The military has established procedures to ensure that sufficient military members can answer the call, including requiring masks be worn, sanitizing facilities and spreading people out on its installations. ALCOM has been very successful in minimizing on-base transmissions. However, the majority of military members live off base and are part of the community. These military families visit schools, churches, restaurants and stores off base. Further, some members go to doctors or medical facilities off base. The vast majority of COVID-19 cases on base have resulted from off base transmission of the infection.

[3:14:18 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM asked members to understand that military readiness is not just a force but also a family. He asked the committee for help in defeating the enemy, which is minimizing the COVID-19 infections while still allowing military members and their families to have access to places in the communities. Reducing the risk of infection will help ensure military readiness and the national defense, he said.

[3:15:03 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM reported that the military has received a valid military order to get the vaccine and is working to fulfill that requirement. The military has taken great care to ensure that those military members who have requested medical and religious exemptions receive all the support that they need. He anticipated that it could be a lengthy process, in part, due to the field chain of command. Each branch of the service is slightly different in how it fulfills the legal military order. That is how it is being treated, he said.

[3:16:16 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM paraphrased slide 14, Take Aways, which read:

- Homeland Defense is our #1 priority - Alaska is the perfect strategic power projection location for air and ground military forces

- We are committed to DSCA and our partnership with the state
- The Arctic is a rapidly changing environment that will demand continued focus
- Military forces in Alaska are essential to operations in the region and across the globe
- Thank you for your continued support of our military members and their families to ensure operational readiness and world-class quality of life

[3:16:18 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM emphasized the military readiness in Alaska. He highlighted that the fifth-generation fighter jets, the [Kawasaki] C-2 military transport aircraft, and tanker aircraft will be the first to fly anywhere in the world when needed.

[3:17:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON stated that in 2019 the USN and the USMC did a joint exercise on Adak. At the time, these branches expressed an interest in reopening the base. He asked for an update.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM answered that the US Navy and the USMC are still debating whether to reopen Adak. During meetings with senior USN and USMC leadership ALCOM has advocated using Adak for amphibious training. He offered his view that there is a shift happening with the withdrawal from Afghanistan regarding what the focus will be. The USMC typically conducts rotational Arctic and mountain warfare training in Norway. There has been some discussion about conducting training here on alternate years, but no decisions have been made yet. However, leadership recognizes the potential in Adak.

[3:19:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON asked for an update on any additional infrastructure in the Arctic that could affect the quality of life for military families in Alaska. Many of the branches have emphasized investing in infrastructure.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM remarked that there will always be concerns about the quality of life. His focus is on meeting the day-to-day needs for housing, schools and childcare for active duty members. He will move forward on other things once these basic needs are met. In addition, the focus will shift once the military expands its presence to other areas in Alaska. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that those military

members and their families will have the same level of service that members have in the larger communities.

[3:20:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON stated that the legislature supports spousal reciprocity for professional licensure that was mentioned earlier. He asked if there is something else the legislature can support that will help the active duty members such as US Army or USAF medics or USN corpsmen.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM answered that he is not allowed to lobby. However, he could mention what would be beneficial. He highlighted that the military training is world class and Alaskans may want to use members' skill sets.

[3:22:14 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN stated that Representative Tarr, via text, asked about HB 53, related to student school enrollment deadlines, which can be especially difficult for families with special educational needs.

[3:22:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked if there were specific things related to schools that the legislature could address, such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM answered that he does not have any specifics on HB 53. Some military families have expressed concern about not being able to register their children in schools prior to arriving in Alaska. This would be advantageous for families and he encouraged the legislature to consider it.

[3:23:43 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM remarked that the USAF conducts a study and issues a "Support of Military Families Report." It covers every installation in the world. It covers licensure portability and public education. He offered to provide a copy to the legislature via the legislative liaison. He pointed out that it covers student-teacher and student-counselor ratios, which he encouraged the legislature to consider addressing. The report also contains other information, such as demographics, he said.

[3:25:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR offered to follow up on the study. She stated that HB 53 will address early school registration prior to military family relocating to Alaska. She reported that HB 53

passed the House and is currently before the Senate Education Committee.

[3:25:57 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER commented that he understands the need for military readiness. He asked if he had any thoughts on what will happen to military members who decide not get COVID-19 vaccines. He said he was unsure what clarity he could provide to active or reserve military constituents who expressed concern about repercussions or wanted to know their options. He related his understanding there are some exemptions to the requirement for vaccines.

[3:27:09 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM responded that the armed services provide military members information and education about the vaccine and exemptions. Military members who do not want to be vaccinated are encouraged to apply for medical or religious exemptions. He said there is not any stigma for those who apply for an exemption. Active duty members who don't wish to be vaccinated but do not qualify for an exemption are informed that the order requiring COVID-19 vaccinations is a valid, legal order. He acknowledged that each situation is different so commanders will deal with these issues on an individual basis. He stated that obeying orders is a foundation of the military culture.

CO-CHAIR SHOWER remarked that there is not a great answer for this awkward situation.

[3:29:14 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN asked for an estimate of the number of USAF members requesting exemptions.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM answered that the USAF numbers in Alaska were small. He estimated that approximately 2-2.5 percent requested exemptions, which are being accommodated.

[3:30:06 PM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD expressed concern that the USN flight surgeon was reporting significant negative results to the vaccine. She remarked that there is a case in Colorado. She said she wants to fight for soldiers' freedom. She recalled that then President Clinton issued an executive order due to the debacle with anthrax. That order demands informed consent, which would include information on the vaccine, long-term research, efficacy, long-term safety and any alternative treatments. She

offered her belief that good alternatives to the COVID-19 vaccine exist. She asked if soldiers could stand on the executive order from former President Clinton that raised safety concerns. She asked why soldiers were being forced to take the new mRNA gene therapy.

[3:31:28 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM advised Senator Reinbold that he could not speak to the specifics about the COVID-19 vaccines. He said the Secretary of the Air Force and secretaries of the other services indicate that the law says that when a vaccine is no longer under emergency authorization and is approved by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), that vaccine can be mandatory for active duty service members. He offered his belief that this is what the order is based on.

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN said he would allow a limited response. He said he understands that she has a very different opinion and does not agree with the protocols that Lieutenant General Krumm has testified are in place. However, those protocols are coming from the DOD and USAF, he said.

[3:32:03 PM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD remarked that many believe it is a "bait and switch." She offered her view that the COVID-19 vaccines have not gone through the full Phase 3 trials. She characterized the order as illegitimate and asked if he has complete assurance that it is not the Pfizer vaccine but is the vaccine that was licensed for use in the US.

[3:33:30 PM](#)

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KRUMM answered that the direction from Secretary of Defense Austin was that the only authorized vaccinations were the ones approved by the FDA for normal use, in this case only Pfizer. He said could not speak to her specifics. He offered his belief that Pfizer would be the only COVID-19 vaccine offered to service members but allowances will be made. For example, if service members preferred to be administered a Johnson & Johnson vaccine on their own, they would be allowed to do so even though the vaccine has only been approved for emergency use.

[3:34:57 PM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD pointed out that there were two Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines, that one is Comirnaty [and the other is BioNTech].

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN recognized Major General Brian Eifler.

## US ARMY ALASKA (USARAK) UPDATE

3:35:16 PM

MAJOR GENERAL BRIAN EIFLER, Commanding General, United States Army Alaska (USARAK), Deputy Commander, United States Alaskan Command (ALCOM), Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska, began a PowerPoint on the USARAK update "America's Arctic Warriors." He stated that he has been the Commanding General of the US Army Alaska (USARAK) for just over two months. During this time he has found Alaska very supportive of its active duty military troops and veterans.

3:37:05 PM

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER reviewed slide 2, USARAK in the Last Year, which consisted of four goals and missions of Maintained Readiness, which read:

### Army Arctic Strategy

- Chief of Staff of the Army visit to USARAK (Jul 2020)
  - Army Arctic Symposium (Dec 2020)
- Army Arctic Strategy (Jan 2021)

### Arctic Warrior 21

- Conducted during winter (Feb 2021)
- Assessed Arctic capabilities
- Validated equipping needs and limitations
- Identified strengths and gaps

### COVID 19 Response

- Safety of Soldiers, Families, civilians and communities
- Maintained readiness
- Supported civil authorities

### Quality Of Life Improvements

- People as #1 Priority
- Focus on Ft Wainwright
- Improved barracks
- Better food
- Assignment pay
- Talent management
- Better fitness facilities
- Operational readiness

[3:37:07 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER stated that last year the Chief of Staff of the US Army visited the US Army Alaska (USARAK) to conduct Army Arctic Strategy in line with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the other branches of services. After decades of split focus in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US Army has redirected its forces in Alaska in an effort to develop Arctic expertise for the US Army.

[3:37:45 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER related that last year USARAK conducted Arctic Warrior training exercises for about 1,000 soldiers in the field. It provides cold-weather training so the troops are ready for anything. He said it is similar to the training USARAK conducts in other cold regions around the world. This year, the US Army will conduct winter training at the Joint Pacific All Time National Readiness Center for 8,000-10,000 soldiers.

[3:38:19 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER stated that the US Army would typically send its Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) to a joint readiness training center in Fort Polk, Louisiana or to the National Training Center in Fort Erwin, California. Instead, due to the shift to Arctic strategy, it will focus on intensified winter training. In March, it will conduct its Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Capability (JPMRC) using live, virtual, constructive (GLV) decisive action collective training. Training will replicate an opposing force with observer controls. This shift represents major changes from last year as USARAK continues to develop its Arctic strategies and capabilities.

[3:39:13 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER directed attention to the document "Regaining Arctic Dominance, The US Army in the Arctic" shown on slide 3. He offered to provide it to members who have not yet read it. It highlights the need to regain Arctic dominance by developing the skill sets troops need to fight and win in any cold region environment.

[3:39:41 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER related that USARAK has a split duty. It is charged with homeland defense, which it supports in the geographic combatant command USNORTHCOM, but it is also charged with supporting USINDOPACOM and is responsible to Commander Admiral Aquilino. USARAK has the only airborne force on the western side of the globe. The US Army also understands that it needs that Arctic expertise. Effort is more regionally focused rather than deploying troops worldwide. He highlighted that the

Himalayas and India are located in USINDOPACOM. USARAK works with India and Nepal. In fact, Indian troops will come to Alaska this month for an exercise. He noted that Nepalese soldiers train in the US Army Leadership Schools.

[3:40:41 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER said USARAK is expanding its partnership and allies and will increase its work with eight Arctic nations. He acknowledged that USARAK does not work a lot with Russia, but it does work with NATO countries, including Norway. Norway will host the NATO conference next month that USARAK representatives will attend. As part of the Arctic strategy, USARAK will work with the Alaska National Guard (ANG), other military branches and communities to work on the skill sets needed to survive and operate in extreme cold-weather environments. He characterized it as going back to its roots of 150 years in Alaska.

[3:41:55 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER said since USARAK worked to develop the Arctic strategy for the US Army, it is helping them implement that strategy. Many things are pre-decision, including determining what type of forces and equipment are needed and identifying the doctrine, organization and placement of USARAK in Alaska. USARAK is informing the US Army on the best ways to accomplish this.

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER directed attention to the COVID 19 Response information on slide 2. He offered his view that Lieutenant General Krumm did a great job articulating the challenges and orders the military has been given. He reported that about 91 percent of US Army personnel in Alaska is partially vaccinated and over 80 percent are fully vaccinated. USARAK will continue to handle any exceptions to the COVID-19 vaccination policy. The number of troops refusing vaccines continues to dwindle. USARAK is in the same position as Lieutenant General Krumm mentioned in terms of adjudicating cases. He said he does not have much more to offer.

[3:43:25 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER directed attention to the Quality of life improvement bullets on slide 2. He said there are a lot of old problems with the infrastructure but the US Army is working to address the infrastructure in the defense budget. He stated that DOD's defense budget has funded projects on Fort Wainwright. Further, Remote and Austere Conditions Assignment Incentive Pay, or RAC-AIP provides a one-time, lump-sum payment for locating to Fort Wainwright or JBER to offset the initial cost of items

needed to live in Alaska. He stated that many military families love Alaska and retire here. It shows up in the per capita figures of veterans living in Alaska.

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER highlighted that not while everyone wants to be assigned to Alaska or can handle the harsh environment, but for the first time US Army active duty soldiers can now request being stationed in Alaska. USARAK has increased its recruiting efforts to identify people who want to live in Alaska, are up to the challenges and can thrive here. In terms of the quality of life, USARAK is investing in modern facilities at Fort Wainwright, including barracks.

[3:45:45 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER emphasized that the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Capability (JPMRC) is a big deal. He invited members to attend and observe some of the training.

[3:46:14 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER turned to slide 3, USARAK: The Army's Premier Cold Weather Force, consisting of six photographs and four bullet points. He discussed the bullet points:

- Improving Arctic capability
- Modernizing the force
- Training with allies/partners
- Maintaining readiness

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER highlighted the importance of improving Arctic capability and developing a cold-weather force. Training is extended for longer periods, ranging from one to two weeks or longer to enable troops to get comfortable operating in the field. Training focuses on surviving, operating, and fighting. This effort includes increasing school training during the winter months at the Northern Warfare Training Center (NWTC) and Black Rapids training site at Fort Wainwright. It provides an opportunity during this inter-war period to focus on Arctic strategy, which is the first time it has been offered in several decades. He acknowledged it will take more than one season to accomplish readiness.

[3:47:09 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER directed attention to the second bullet point on slide 2 which relates to modernizing the force. He related that a substantial amount of equipment was not designed for the extreme-cold weather in the Arctic so it has been repurposed. The US Army said in its Arctic Strategy, "We've got

to get it right." The US Army will wrestle with when and how to accomplish these equipment adjustments, but it now recognizes the challenge. For example, the SUS-V shown in the lower-right photograph on slide 2 will be replaced with the Oshkosh CATV in the next two years. It will help USARAK with its mission to have the all-terrain vehicles.

[3:48:07 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER directed attention to the third bullet point on slide 3, Training with allies/partners. He remarked that COVID-19 travel restrictions impacted this. USARAK will continue to develop its relationships with its allies and partners: Canada, Norway, Japan, South Korea, and Nepal while maintaining its readiness to support any need in the Arctic or the USINDOCOM. That is the focus of this command, he said. He pointed out that Canadians are imbedded in Alaska, providing part of the leadership team at JBER.

[3:49:20 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER turned to slide 4, Teamwork. He stated that this highlights the great partnership with the DOD and US allies. He agreed with Lieutenant General Krumm on the strong relationship the military has in Alaska with the civilian community. In fact, in his 30 years of service, he has never seen such a strong relationship between the military and the civilian community as he has observed in Alaska. Nor has he seen as many military volunteers as in Anchorage and Fairbanks. He applauded the symbiotic relationships that have been forged. Community support is important and makes a difference to service members. The military does not always have strong community support, he said.

[3:50:32 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN informed members that the committee will not take any COVID-19 questions since Major General Eifler indicated he had nothing further to add.

[3:50:52 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER said he has a question on infrastructure. USARAK uses the road system and convoys for transportation, but Alaska has limited rail and roads. He asked if he could identify any impediment that the state could address to assist USARAK.

[3:51:44 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER responded that the railroad has limited lines. He related that rapid deployments are done by rail so the Alaska Railroad provides a life line. He stated that USARAK and

the state have a partnership and will need to work together to address transportation needs and provide backup plans for inclement weather or homeland security crisis.

[3:53:11 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN stated the audio was breaking up.

[3:53:44 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER stated that drone, unmanned aircraft and aircraft traffic is increasing in Alaska, especially during hunting seasons. He asked whether the legislature should be looking at airspace conflicts and if the state should advise the community via the Aviation Council. He asked if he has observed or discussed any airspace conflicts.

[3:53:55 PM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER answered that he has not yet seen this. His further response was [indiscernible].

[3:55:50 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN recognized Rear Admiral Nathan A. Moore.

**US COAST GUARD 17TH DISTRICT UPDATE**

[3:55:55 PM](#)

NATHAN A. MOORE, PE, Rear Admiral; Commander, U.S. Coast Guard 17th District, Juneau, Alaska, began a PowerPoint on the US Coast Guard, 17th District Update.

[3:56:27 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE turned to slide 2, Geostrategic Operations. He said the US Coast Guard (USCG) has seen increased activity between the Arctic and the maritime boundary line. He directed attention to the photographs on slide 2 to illustrate the vessel activity with Canada, Russia and China. The USCG is unique in that it is both a law enforcement agency and a military branch of government under the jurisdiction of Title 10 and Title 14. This allows the USCG to push back on foreign vessels operating in and around Alaska's waters. He stated that illegal and unreported fishing has become a concern. The USCG has seen the Chinese fishing fleet fishing much closer to US waters than previously observed. It has also had interactions with the Russian fishing fleet along the maritime boundary line. The USCG in Alaska sends ships out of Dutch Harbor, Kodiak and aircraft is heavily involved in USCG operations throughout the state.

[3:58:25 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE turned to slide 3, Domestic Operations. He stated that the geostrategic work the USCG performs does not take away from its statutory mission in Alaska, which ranges from homeland security to permafrost melt that causes leaking fuel tanks. The USCG routinely sees multiple issues related to fuel storage problems in remote villages. Unfortunately, fuel often ends up in the water. He highlighted other activities, including search and rescue missions and cruise ship safety. He emphasized the importance of cruise ship safety in Alaskan waters. Although the cruise industry had limited cruises this year, the industry plans to gear up to a full schedule in 2022.

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE turned to slide 4, People. He said the men and women serving in the USCG in remote locations experienced a difficult year and a half. Further, COVID-19 restrictions have been tough on people from a resiliency and mental health standpoint. Some USCG members are stationed at JBER or Kodiak, but most of the remaining members in Alaska are not stationed at military bases. These members are often not in close proximity to military services or other military families.

[3:59:05 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE turned to slide 5, Communications Infrastructure. He stated that communications in high latitudes is always a concern. He directed attention to the photograph of the Gulf of Alaska. Southeast Alaska, Kodiak and Southcentral Alaska are grouped together in Southern Alaska because these regions are in the Gulf of Alaska. He noted that the shaded areas show locations of VHS repeaters. He highlighted that there are not any VHS repeaters in Western or Northwest Alaska so these areas lack any communication coverage. The USCG monitors daily any "near miss" cases where a Good Samaritan, usually another fishing vessel or tug work to rescue vessels in trouble. Sometimes the USCG must send aircraft to assist. For example, during a fishing derby, the USCG will send a C-130 to orbit the area and monitor vessel emergency calls. Although the USCG works to add infrastructure, as the photographs on slide 5 show, the conditions are rugged and it is tough to install and maintain communication infrastructure. He characterized new infrastructure as a high priority for the USCG in Alaska.

[4:02:14 PM](#)

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE turned to slide 6, Shore Infrastructure. He stated that the Alaska USCG currently receives more federal funding than ever before. He reported that the current funding level of \$300 billion was acquired from previous appropriations. The USCG's current projects include rebuilding piers in Kodiak,

adding more housing on a Kodiak base, rebuilding a station, installing piers and adding housing in Seward and ships in Sitka. He said he hopes to capitalize on this momentum and move forward as discussions for homeporting the new Polar Security Cutter (PSC) and Security Cutter. These are the two classes of icebreakers the USCG hopes to fund and build during this decade. He concluded by saying all of the sovereignty work the USCG is doing along the border requires patrol assets. Thus, infrastructure has become critically important, he said.

[4:03:57 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SHOWER asked for an update on the deep water port. He related his understanding that Rear Admiral Moore cannot advocate for it, but he asked if there was anything the state could do to help in that effort.

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE answered that a deep water port would be incredibly valuable to the state and USCG. He remarked that the USCG would use a deep water port if it was built in northern Alaska.

[4:04:40 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CLAMAN thanked the presenters for an informative session.

[4:05:09 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Claman adjourned the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting at 4:05 p.m.