

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

April 25, 2023

3:35 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Laddie Shaw, Co-Chair
Senator Scott Kawasaki, Co-Chair
Representative Stanley Wright
Representative Jamie Allard
Representative Cliff Groh
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Mike Shower
Senator Kelly Merrick
Senator Forrest Dunbar

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Mike Prax

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S) : ALASKA MILITARY COMMAND UPDATE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

DAVID NAHOM, Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force;
Commander, Eleventh U.S. Air Force, Pacific Air Forces;
Commander, Alaskan Command, U.S. Northern Command;
Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richarson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a PowerPoint presentation during the Alaska Military Command Update presentation.

BRIAN EIFLER, Major General, U.S. Army;
Commanding General, Eleventh Airborne Division;
Deputy Commander, Alaska Command
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richarson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "11th Airborne Division America's Arctic Angels," during the Alaska Military Command Update presentation.

NATHAN MOORE, Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard;
Deputy Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area;
Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Seventeenth District
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "2023 Coast Guard Update for the AK Joint Armed Services Committee," during the Alaska Military Command Update presentation.

TORRENCE SAXE, Lieutenant General, Adjutant General
Alaska National Guard;
Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richarson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs," during the Alaska Military Command Update presentation.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CO-CHAIR LADDIE SHAW called the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. Representatives Wright, Groh, and Shaw and Senators Shower, Merrick, Dunbar, Wielechowski, and Kawasaki were present at the call to order. Representative Allard arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also present at the table were Retired Colonel Bob Doel, Senior Fellow at the Rasmuson Foundation, recommended by the Municipality of Anchorage; Retired Brigadier General Julio ("Randy") Banez, Deputy Director Defense Logistics Agency Energy Alaska, recommended by the adjutant general of the Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

PRESENTATION(S): ALASKA MILITARY COMMAND UPDATE

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CO-CHAIR SHAW announced that the only order of business would be Alaska Military Command Update presentation.

DAVID NAHOM, Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force; Commander, Eleventh U.S. Air Force, Pacific Air Forces; Commander, Alaskan Command, U.S. Northern Command; Commander, Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD); gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Alaska Military Command [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He began with a short video which explained the origin of the Alaska Military Command and the Alaska North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) Region. He moved to slide 2, which showed Alaska on a global map, and he emphasized its strategic location, as it is close to many "hotspots" around the world. He noted on slide 3 that he is a "three-hat commander," and he described his commands.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL NAHOM moved to slide 4, titled "NORAD Regions," and explained how the U.S. Air Force is divided regionally, as seen in the diagram. He stated that the purpose of NORAD is to protect the homeland with air power. He moved to slide 5, titled "ANR Functions," stating the functions are mainly aerospace warnings and aerospace control. He pointed out the picture of a Russian jet being escorted from Alaska airspace. He moved to slide 6, titled "ALCOM Functions" and highlighted the two primary missions: Homeland Defense (HD) and Defense and Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA).

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL NAHOM showed a map on slide 7 and stated that the U.S. Air Force is mostly based at Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks and at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) in the Anchorage area. Combined there are almost 100 advanced air force fighters in the state, he said, and this is for international protection, especially in the South China Sea. He discussed the different transport aircraft that are also in the state. He stated that each symbol on the map represents the presence of the U.S. Air Force in the state.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL NAHOM moved to slide 8, titled "Operations and Exercises." He stated that the operations pictured are ongoing. He discussed the training opportunities in the state, expressing that it is the best place in the world to train. He moved to the next slide and emphasized that partners and allies are critical to mission success, stating that no one entity is in charge, and this is "what makes us powerful." He moved to slide 10, titled "Challenges and Opportunities." He pointed out the challenges in Alaska, citing the unpredictability of Russia, North Korea, and China. He suggested that domain awareness of outside threats needs to be upgraded. He added that the

changing environment in the Arctic is also a challenge to the operations in Alaska. He reiterated the importance of command relationships.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL NAHOM moved to slide 11, titled "High Altitude Balloon (HAB)- Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon (UAP)." He stated that this incident was interesting in that those in the Lower 48 did not realize that this started in Alaska in the Aleutian Islands. He stated that the high-altitude balloon [from China] traveled through Canada and Montana and to the East Coast of the United States. He said the incident emphasized that homeland defense begins in Alaska, as voiced by U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL NAHOM moved to slide 12, titled "Arctic Skills Training," to highlight the improvements in training, as every airman must take Alaska-specific classes while in the state. He moved to slide 13 and pointed out that housing is an issue on Eielson Air Force Base. He said one concern is dormitory housing for long-term airmen, as space is limited. He said airmen from out of town must stay in expensive hotels in downtown Fairbanks during training. He stressed that more dormitories need to be built, specifically for junior-enlisted personnel.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL NAHOM concluded the presentation on slide 14, titled "Military Spouse Licensure." He expressed the importance of ensuring that work is being done to provide opportunities for military spouses that are licensed as registered nurses, teachers, or in other vocations, as they are educated people who can contribute to local communities, such as Fairbanks.

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REPRESENTATIVE GROH questioned whether senior commanders are concerned about the quality of public education in Alaska for their children. He asked what the legislature could do to provide more housing and better public education.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL NAHOM confirmed the need for more affordable housing around Eielson Air Force Base. He expressed concern for personnel, such as staff sergeants and tech sergeants with families, as they earn only about \$2000 per month. He repeated the need for more base housing as well. He asked for support from the state and communities to build more housing. He acknowledged the schools on Eielson Air Force Base lack the same facilities as schools in Fairbanks and North Pole.

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The committee took a brief at-ease at 3:57 p.m.

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BRIAN EIFLER, Major General, U.S. Army; Commanding General, Eleventh Airborne Division, Deputy Commander, Alaska Command, gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "11th Airborne Division America's Arctic Angels," [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He moved to slide 2, titled "Mission & Organization." He pointed out the map of the army installations at Fort Wainwright, JBER, and Black Rapids Training Site. He drew attention to the mission statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Mission: 11th Airborne Division executes expeditionary operations within the Indo-Pacific theater, conducts multidomain operations in the Arctic, defends critical infrastructure in homeland defense and on order decisively defeats any adversary in extreme cold weather, mountainous, high latitude, and high-altitude environments through large-scale combat operations.

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER furthermore emphasized the goal is to not go to war but to have an insurance policy in case the country needs to be ready. He echoed the previous presenter, stating that Alaska is a great place to train for Arctic conditions. He moved to slide 3, titled "Arctic Training" and reviewed the four training exercises portrayed. He moved to slide 4 and pointed out the entities that the U.S. Army must maintain partnerships with, including other military branches, numerous nations, communities, Alaska Natives, and academia.

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MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER concluded on slide 5, titled "CSA's Expectations for America's Arctic Angels," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Whether you maneuver by helicopter or cold weather all-terrain vehicle,

Whether you wear a parachute or skis,

You are the 11th Airborne Division and wherever you go, you will be the most highly trained, disciplined, and fit Arctic warfighting unit in the world, ready to fight and win.

That is what you will do.

That is who you are.

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MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER, in response to a committee question, stated that the transition to the Eleventh Airborne was a matter of restructuring into an operational division, so it would deploy in a way that it was not able to before. He explained about the change in the headquarters, in combination with the different capabilities of staff, as this creates a more inclusive force. He continued that this was a restructuring into a division artillery brigade to make it more of a fighting unit.

MAJOR GENERAL EIFLER, in response to a question concerning the ability to move troops by a new rail to Port Mackenzie, recognized the insecurity in the state concerning the ports and the one railroad. He opined that if something happens, where would be the backup. He said troops are currently deployed from both bases, but there is room for improvement. He suggested that a [year-round], all-weather capable air field is needed for deployment. He said there is a need to increase space on the bases, but funding has been allocated to other bases across the country. In response to a follow-up question, he stated that the number of deployments would not change, but this has more to do with the command and control from the new headquarters, as this has expanded the capability to do more deployments.

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The committee took a brief at-ease.

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NATHAN MOORE, Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard; Deputy Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area; Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Seventeenth District, began the PowerPoint presentation, titled "2023 Coast Guard Update for the AK Joint Armed Services Committee," [hard copy included in the committee packet].

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE advanced to slide 2, titled "Operations in a Strategically Competitive Space," which addressed the maritime geostrategic competition the U.S. Coast Guard deals with. He said competition has ramped up in recent years, and he highlighted five examples in the Bering and Chukchi Seas.

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE described the U.S. Coast Guard campaign to connect with local communities, on slide 3. He identified the problem of suicide in the U.S. Coast Guard, and as a measure to prevent this, he said that the program creates an initiative to connect U.S. Coast Guard members to their communities, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE advanced to slide 4 and discussed maritime safety, emphasizing the aging fuel tanks in villages. He stated that the U.S. Coast Guard is responsible for the prevention of oil spills from these tanks. He emphasized that search and rescue is still the "bread and butter" of the U.S. Coast Guard and will continue to be.

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE moved to slide 5, titled, "Communications Infrastructure." He mentioned Rescue 21, which is a modified system for communication relay in South Central and Southeast Alaska. He said that this is basically diesel-powered generators on mountain tops with microwave links. He noted that because of storms these sites are often shut down. He stated that the U.S. Coast Guard has invested millions of dollars into these sites, and the sites are operating at a higher level. He concluded with discussing shore infrastructure. He pointed out the new vessels that the U.S. Coast Guard is acquiring, along with new housing for the crews on these ships. He illustrated the growth and development of coastline facilities in Kodiak, Sitka, Seward, and Ketchikan.

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REAR ADMIRAL MOORE, in response to a committee question concerning how Alaska can help, stated that the Sitka land transfer and sale from the state was a major accomplishment. He continued that a deep-water port that would give better access to the Arctic is essential. He suggested that when the Port of Nome is built, the U.S. Coast Guard will use it, especially for a fueling station, as this would not require a trip to Dutch Harbor. He reiterated that as the U.S. Coast Guard expands, it would need the development of housing for staff.

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The committee took a brief at-ease at 4:27 p.m.

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TORRENCE SAXE, Major General, Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard; Commissioner, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, provided the final presentation of the afternoon, titled "State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs," [hard copy included in the committee packet]. Addressing how the state can help, he said that having more access to airfields is a priority, along with the use of the Port of Nome.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE moved to slide 2 to address some common questions asked about the National Guard. He addressed the national self-reliance issue, stating that this concerns the defense of the homeland by defending the Arctic. Addressing recruitment and retention, he noted that the numbers are going up. Concerning rescues, he noted that there is usually one per week. He stated that there is a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault and harassment. He moved to slide 3, which showed a map of the 80 armories in the state, and he described the ongoing process of returning these sites to the original landowners. The process also entails recruitment from these local communities into serving in the Alaska National Guard. He noted the interest in Western Alaska. To tie in local communities, he stated that some of the hubs are being named in honor of local veterans.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE continued to slide 4. He stated that concerning rural operations and bigger hubs, Typhoon Merbok [September 15, 2022], was the first full-scale operation to put this into practice. He stated that this was the biggest off-road response in around 40 years. He pointed out the Nome and Bethel hubs, where people mobilized in the effort. On slide 5, the boxes denoted the presents of the National Guard in this effort. He noted that it was a big response, and this created the ability to make connections with communities. He moved to slide 6, which showed pictures of National Guard members interacting with communities around the state. He publicly thanked the communities that took care of the troops during this event.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE moved to slide 7, which showed a map of National Guard installments around the world. On slide 8, he pointed out that his focus is on the troops and leadership does

matter. He explained that service members are cared for after retirement from the service, as seen on slide 9. He noted that Alaska has over 10 times the number of retired veterans than any other state. He provided examples in the Aleutian Islands and in Hoonah of ways the National Guard has honored veterans.

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MAJOR GENERAL SAXE moved to slide 10 and illustrated how the National Guard still honors the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) and their families. He moved to slide 11 and highlighted the first event held in Alaska connecting female Veterans. He stated that there were over 150 participants. He continued to slide 12, which described an event in Anchorage where the Alaska VA Healthcare campus was renamed to the Colonel Mary Louise Rasmuson Campus. He emphasized the youth academy and its essential role for the National Guard, as seen on slide 13.

MAJOR GENERAL SAXE showed slides 14 to 17, titled "Honoring Our Heroes." He described an event in 1955 in Kodiak when two Russian aircrafts attacked a U.S. Naval plane, which crashed in Gambell on impact. He said all 11 crew members were saved by local community members of Gambell. On slide 17, he highlighted the Alaska Heroism Medal that was presented to Corporal Bruce Boolowon and the surviving families of those who saved these crewmen in Gambell.

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CHAIR SHAW thanked the presenters.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Joint Armed Services Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m.