

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

April 27, 2023

1:50 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Stanley Wright, Chair
Representative Laddie Shaw
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Cliff Groh
Representative Andrew Gray

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Dan Saddler

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW(S): ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD.

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JAMES PALEMBAS, Brigadier General, Commander and State Director
Alaska Army National Guard
Fort Richardson
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an overview of the Alaska Army National Guard.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:50:51 PM](#)

CHAIR STANLEY WRIGHT called the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting to order at 1:50 p.m. Representatives Shaw, Groh, Gray, and Wright were present at the call to order. Representative Rauscher arrived as the meeting was in progress.

Overview(s): Alaska Army National Guard

[1:52:04 PM](#)

CHAIR WRIGHT announced that the only order of business would be an overview of the Alaska Army National Guard.

[1:52:22 PM](#)

JAMES PALEMBAS, Brigadier General, Commander and State Director, Alaska Army National Guard, gave a PowerPoint presentation titled, "Overview of the Alaska Army National Guard" [hardcopy included in committee packet]. He moved to slide 2 to present an organization chart, with the Alaska Army National Guard (AKARNG) falling within the Alaska Organized Militia. On slide 3, he showed key leaders of the Alaska Army National Guard.

[1:54:57 PM](#)

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS moved to slide 4 to share the vision of AKARNG, which is to create a diverse, trusted, and capable organization built on ready and resilient soldiers and leaders. He said that AKARNG's retention rates have improved, with the guard being in the ninety-fourth percentile. He explained that AKARNG has two missions: Title 10 federal missions to deploy and fight and Title 32 with the state to activate per orders from the governor.

[1:56:47 PM](#)

CHAIR WRIGHT asked about usage of sandbags as depicted on slide 4.

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS responded that during Typhoon Merbok, the guard was activated and set to Western Alaska, and during this mission dirt and sandbags were moved.

[1:58:02 PM](#)

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS returned to the presentation on slide 5 to discuss the guard's units, detachments, and locations. He stated that there are 1,741 soldiers across three major units: Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ), 38th Troop Command (TC), and the 297th Regional Support Group (RSG). He said that in 1990, there were 83 armories across the state, but currently the goal is to divest these armories to allow for municipal or local use. He shared that AKARNG has divested 39 armories since 2013, with

26 more to go. He stated that AKARNG will have 19 armories at the end of the divesting process.

2:03:54 PM

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS moved to slide 6, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

297th Regional Support Group (RSG) Mission

The RSG is a deployable headquarters that manages base camps or base clusters with a population of 6,000 or more personnel and requires services beyond basic life support. Additionally, the 297th RSG ensures its subordinate units are trained, equipped, and available for federal and state missions.

During Defense Support of Civil Authorities operations, the RSG serves as a brigade-sized command responsible for all assigned units.

Currently the 297th RSG is tasked to support the transition of Fort Riley, KS from an inactive Mobilization Force Generation Installation (MFGI) to an active MFGI during Large Scale Mobilization Operations (LSMO)

38th Troop Command (TC) Mission

The TC is a non-deployable headquarters element designed to provide C2 over disparate units and ensures its subordinate units are trained, equipped and available for service in the event of a federal or state emergency.

During Defense Support of Civil Authorities operations, the 38th TC serves as the primary headquarters for Joint Task Force-Alaska.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS moved to slide 7 to present a worldwide deployment map. He detailed federal deployments since 2018.

2:06:25 PM

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS moved to slide 8, which read as follow [original punctuation provided]:

The 49th Missile Defense Battalion operates and secures the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD)

system at Fort Greely 24/7/365. They are prepared to destroy intercontinental ballistic missiles in mid-course to defend the US and designated areas with assets at Fort Greely and Vandenberg Air Force Base.

2:08:01 PM

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS moved to slide 9 and discussed civil support missions that AKARNG conducts in Alaska.

2:09:33 PM

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked about the Alcantra armory in the Wasilla/Palmer area.

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS said Alcantra is still an active armory and houses units. He said the armory is on state land and is the guard's contingency operations site.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked if AKARNG utilizes the Black Rapids.

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS answered yes, as there is an active-duty cold weather training program housed at Black Rapids.

2:12:42 PM

CHAIR WRIGHT questioned the benefits of cooperative agreements.

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS explained that the state benefits from such agreements because of the federal dollars.

2:13:57 PM

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS returned to the presentation on slide 10, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Alaska - Mongolia State Partnership Program
- Partners since 2003
 - Share similar challenges and opportunities
 - Co-deployments for 17 years in Iraq and Afghanistan
 - Overseas Deployment Training to Khaan Quest Exercise 2006-Present
 - Humanitarian Assistance training: Gobi Wolf Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange

- Subject Matter Expert Exchanges: leadership, engineering, security, disaster response, medical, etc.
- Whole of Government participation in public health, public policy, natural resources, education, and humanitarian assistance

[2:16:43 PM](#)

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS moved to slide 11, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Enduring Operations

- 19-unit locations throughout the state
- Full time manning in 11 locations

Operations Last 90 Days

- Detachments 1&2 Golf Company 2-211th GSAB, supported a Combined Arms
- Life Fire Exercise at JBER by providing 24hr MEDEVAC Operations
- 103rd Civil Support Team supported local Anchorage security elements for the 2023 Iditarod Race Ceremonial Start
- 49th Missile Defense Battalion trained on a fire control software update and an additional missile interceptor field
- 49th Theater Gateway provided Joint Reception, Staging, and Onward Integration support to Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC) at JBER, Clear and Fort Wainwright, Alaska
- Defense Movement Cell (AKARNG G4) with augmentation from 11th Airborne managed over 100 convoys and over 500 pieces of rolling stock in support of JPMRC
- 1-297th Infantry Battalion conducts training supporting their upcoming Joint Readiness Training Center Annual Training and deployment in early FY24

Community Events

- Cama-I Dance Festival in Bethel, Alaska
- River Watch
- Operation Santa

[2:18:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY thanked Brigadier General Palembang for his service and shared his son's personal deployment experience.

BRIGADIER GENERAL PALEMBAS commented that the guard is a small organization, so it is hard to not know the people.

[2:20:15 PM](#)

CHAIR WRIGHT congratulated Brigadier General Palembang for his recent advancement and thanked him for his service.

[2:20:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SHAW thanked Brigadier General Palembang, and he stated that it seems that through the guard, the state is connected in some way.

[2:21:55 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs meeting was adjourned at 2:22 p.m.