

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY AFFAIRS, AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2022 Interim

October 26, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 5th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection was held on Wednesday, October 26, 2022, at 10:00 AM, in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Walker Thomas, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Stephen Meredith, Co-Chair; Representative Walker Thomas, Co-Chair; Senators Jimmy Higdon, Dennis Parrett, Wil Schroder, Whitney Westerfield, Mike Wilson, and David Yates; Representatives John Blanton, Kevin D. Bratcher, Myron Dossett, Chris Freeland, Chris Fugate, Al Gentry, Jim Gooch Jr., Mark Hart, Matthew Koch, Scott Lewis, Bobby McCool, Scott Sharp, Pamela Stevenson, Ashley Tackett Laferty, Bill Wesley, and Buddy Wheatley.

Guests: Colonel Lance O'Bryan, Garrison Commander, U.S. Army Fort Knox; Brigadier General (Ret.) Jim Iacocca, President and CEO, Knox Regional Development Alliance; Colonel Andrew Jordan, Garrison Commander, U.S. Army Fort Campbell; Kelli Pendleton, President and CEO, Campbell Strong Defense Alliance; Brigadier General (Ret.) Steve Bullard, Executive Director, Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs; Kyle Hurwitz, Director, University of Louisville Center for Military-Connected Students; Eric Sherman, Southeast Regional State Liaison, Department of Defense; Captain Ryan Hogsten, Rescue Company 1, Lexington Fire Department; and Lieutenant Doug Hargreaves, Executive Officer of Special Operations, Lexington Fire Department.

LRC Staff: Mark Mitchell, Jessica Zeh, and Logan Schaaf.

The September 28, 2022, meeting minutes were approved.

U.S. Army Fort Knox

Brigadier General (Ret.) Jim Iacocca, President and CEO of Knox Regional Development Alliance, and Colonel Lance O'Bryan, Garrison Commander, Fort Knox, provided updates on the activities and future plans of Fort Knox and the Knox Regional Development Alliance.

General Iacocca said the Knox Regional Development Alliance (KRDA) was born out of the CORE Committee, which was created by community leaders to recognize the importance of Fort Knox. In 2017, the KRDA was established. They are managed by a 28 person board, consisting of both ex officio members and members selected through a nomination process. Their first objective is to protect the existing missions and advocate for new ones at Fort Knox. KRDA also helps defense contractors establish connections with the Army, but they do not advocate for them.

KRDA creates opportunities and connections for soldiers and families. They created the first military spouse employment initiative. Working with Elizabethtown Community and Technical College, they started a coding academy to teach computer skills at the installation. They also market Fort Knox's potential at the political level.

General Iacocca highlighted Fort Knox's regional impact, including the \$2.8 billion it injects into the economy, its \$956 million annual payroll, the 22,000 jobs on the installation, and the 13,000 jobs supported off the installation.

General Iacocca listed some of Fort Knox's other positive qualities and provided policy recommendations. The Department of Defense released studies on the potential impact of climate change on military installations and determined that Fort Knox is not impacted. There are no environmental restrictions on training. Housing costs have become an important issue, as many soldiers and their families are priced out of homes in the area. General Iacocca concluded by recommending the repeal of the vehicle sales tax for soldiers who purchased a car in another state and were relocated to Kentucky, and the repeal of the retirement pay income tax as a way to convince potential community leaders to stay near Fort Knox after retirement.

Colonel O'Bryan noted that Fort Knox is home to nine General Officer commands, the most per capita of any installation. They have missions worldwide. Colonel O'Bryan explained Fort Knox's motto, "Strength Starts Here." As the home of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, they train and validate all recruiters. U.S. Army Cadet Command, the largest organization producing newly commissioned Second Lieutenants every year, is also based in Fort Knox. Human Resources Command manages a soldier's career from start to end, and the Command Assessment Program helps determine an officer's strategic leadership potential. Fort Knox is also home to unique ranges, including the 360-degree live fire range on the Salt River and the Digital Air Ground Integration Range (DAGIR).

Colonel O'Bryan emphasized the multifunctional nature of Fort Knox and its potential for future growth. It is the Army's first energy secure and energy independent installation. They also have multiple Intergovernmental Support Agreements with Hardin County and Elizabethtown. Fort Knox's improved Muldraugh Water Treatment Plant recently came online, and Hardin County's investment in water infrastructure is crucial to

its success. Colonel O'Bryan concluded by highlighting the continuing efforts to improve childcare services for military families.

Responding to a question from Representative Bratcher, General Iacocca and Colonel O'Bryan said that the retirement income tax factors into the retirement plans for service members at Fort Knox.

Responding to a question from Senator Parrett, General Iacocca and Colonel O'Bryan said that there is an ongoing study of nurse pay at Fort Knox.

U.S. Army Fort Campbell

Colonel Andrew Jordan, Garrison Commander, and Kelli Pendleton, President and CEO of the Campbell Strong Defense Alliance, delivered presentations on Fort Campbell. Colonel Jordan highlighted Fort Campbell's importance for national security. It is home to some of the most deployed units of the U.S. Army. Within days of the September 11, 2001, attacks, units from Fort Campbell were deployed to Afghanistan, and the 101st Airborne Division has participated in every operation since its formation in 1942. Members of the 101st Airborne Division are in Europe, helping to support allies and deter aggression.

Fort Campbell has one of the country's largest airfields, and they also use roads, rail, and barge facilities. The active duty population is approximately 28,000, with 20,000 belonging to the 101st Airborne Division. There are approximately 52,000 family members and 6,000 civilians. The total supported population of Fort Campbell is almost 250,000 people, and the total economic impact is \$10.1 billion.

Colonel Jordan said that about 31 percent of the soldiers who leave the service from Fort Campbell decide to keep living in the region, seven points higher than the Army average. Another 20 percent are flexible on where they decide to stay, and favorable policies from Kentucky could help persuade them to stay in the Commonwealth. Colonel Jordan invited the members of the committee to visit, observe their spouse employment program, and provide guidance for how Fort Campbell might partner with organizations like the Kentucky Department of Labor. Colonel Jordan also spoke about Fort Campbell's efforts to increase private housing for soldiers, as well as their efforts to renovate barracks.

Kelli Pendleton emphasized Fort Campbell's role as the largest employer in Kentucky. She also listed Campbell Strong Defense Alliance's objectives, including support for existing units and missions, advocating for modernization, development and improvement of the installation, attracting defense related companies to the region, improving post-private partnerships, and supporting employment and transition services and workforce partnerships.

Ms. Pendleton praised the VMAPP Committee's work on the resolution passed in the 2021 Regular Session supporting Fort Campbell's Future Vertical Lift helicopter

program. She also listed potential opportunities for Kentucky coming from the installation, including additions to the workforce and population growth. To increase the attractiveness of Kentucky for soldiers leaving Fort Campbell, Ms. Pendleton recommended repeal of the state income tax for military retirees, improvement in education, increased housing availability, and expanded workforce opportunities.

Responding to a question from Representative Hart, Ms. Pendleton said that there have been some issues at the federal level related to military housing that have affected Fort Campbell, but they are being addressed now.

Responding to a question from Senator Westerfield, Ms. Pendleton highlighted Fort Campbell's messaging efforts around the reduction in income tax resulting from the passage of House Bill 8 during the 2022 Regular Session. Colonel Jordan praised the efforts of Campbell Strong Defense Alliance to educate service members on retirement.

Responding to a question from Senator Higdon, Ms. Pendleton said that housing is now the top issue for military families. Schools and employment for military spouses are also issues of high importance. Colonel Jordan said that Fort Campbell has been working with Christian County schools to improve education for military dependents.

Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs

Brigadier General (Ret.) Steve Bullard, Executive Director of the Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs (KCMA), Kyle Hurwitz, Director of the University of Louisville (UofL) Center for Military-Connected Students, and Eric Sherman, Southeast Regional State Liaison for the Department of Defense, spoke about the work of their organizations.

General Bullard highlighted the introduction of the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-Plus, a new program that will be introduced within Kentucky during December. It will provide up to a \$1,500 stipend to assist military families with childcare costs. He also covered KCMA's legislative agenda for the upcoming regular session, including passage of the real estate disclosure requirement relating to base activities for properties near Fort Knox and Fort Campbell.

Mr. Hurwitz spoke about the work of UofL's Center for Military-Connected Students. Military-Connected refers to veterans, active-duty service members, reserve members, National Guard members, dependents, and Reserve Officer Training Corps Cadets. UofL earned a Military Friendly Gold designation and a Military Friendly Spouse designation for 2022-2023, and earned recognition from Military Times as a Best for Vets College for 2022.

Many military-connected people choose UofL for its high ranking degree programs, special tuition rate, waived application fees, priority course registration, Salute to Service

program, and Student Veterans Association chapter. The Center for Military-Connected Students was created in 2022. A renovation of Brodschi Hall, thanks to a \$600,000 appropriation by the General Assembly, is scheduled to start in January of 2023 and will host military-connected students by July of 2023.

Mr. Sherman praised the Emergency Medical Services Compact, which will ease licensure requirements for military spouses and help them gain employment.

Responding to a question from Senator Higdon, General Bullard praised efforts to get Kentucky to join a cosmetology licensure interstate compact, which would also benefit military spouses.

Kentucky Urban Search and Rescue Initiative

Representative Mark Hart, House District 78, Representative Buddy Wheatley, House District 65, Captain Ryan Hogsten, Rescue Company 1, Lexington Fire Department, and Lieutenant Doug Hargreaves, Executive Officer of Special Operations, Lexington Fire Department, spoke about the benefits of an urban search and rescue (USAR) team for Kentucky. USAR is a type of rescue operation that can locate, extricate, and provide initial medical stabilization of victims trapped in both urban and rural areas. Once described as a team mainly used for structural collapses due to natural disaster, war, terrorism, or accidents, today they are used to respond to all types of disasters.

Since 2010, approximately 180 firefighters have received USAR certification, but there is not yet a Kentucky-based team. If Kentucky created a USAR team, it would define a mission statement, develop an accredited program that would be a stand-alone division under the umbrella of a larger entity, and develop accredited response teams strategically placed throughout the state. The estimated costs of a USAR program for Kentucky are \$12.9 million in the first year, \$13 million in the second year, \$3.1 million in the third, and \$3 million in years four through ten.

Captain Hogsten and Lieutenant Hargreaves covered three hypothetical scenarios and how a USAR team would respond to them.

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM. The next meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection will be Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 10:00 AM.