

LOUISIANA MILITARY ADVISORY COUNCIL  
BEING HELD ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2025  
617 NORTH THIRD STREET, FLOOR 1, LABELLE ROOM  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

REPORTED BY:  
KRISTIE GARRISON, CCR

## 1 APPEARANCES:

2 ROBERT M. ABBOUD, JR.  
3 CLARENCE E. BEEBE  
4 SUSAN B. BOURGEOIS  
5 ROBERT J. ELDER  
6 THOMAS FRILLOUX  
7 JOHN E. MANION, III  
8 CHARLTON J. MEGINLEY  
9 MICHAEL REESE  
10 GARY B. SILBERT  
11 DOUGLAS JUDICE  
12 AVON KNOWLTON  
13 PAIGE CARTER  
14 JASON MAHFOUZ  
15 ERIC BARKLEY  
16 CHRIS GOODE  
17 LOGAN MORRIS  
18 JAMES TUEK  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

1 MR. ABBOUD:

2 Thank you for taking the time to  
3 join us today. We're certainly excited to  
4 have everyone join us from almost every corner  
5 of the state. We appreciate the opportunity  
6 to visit, to get updates, really some great  
7 work that we do throughout the state.

8 So I'm showing about five minutes  
9 after lunch, so I think I'll go ahead and call  
10 this meeting to order. You should have in  
11 your packets a copy of the meeting agenda for  
12 today, as well as a roster of board members.  
13 Please do take a minute just to look through  
14 that roster when you have time. Should you  
15 need any updates or revisions to the roster,  
16 please let us know.

17 So I think -- I know we have a very  
18 busy agenda for us today, a very exciting  
19 agenda, so I'll do my best to help us follow  
20 along closely and keep us on time. So to kick  
21 things off, we'll start with the roll call.  
22 I'll go through and quickly announce, but if  
23 there are any mispronunciations, any updates,  
24 please don't hesitate to let me know. So  
25 we'll start here.

1 Mayor Clarence Beebe?

2 MR. BEEBE:

3 Here.

4 MR. ABBOUD:

5 Representative Raymond Crews?

6 General Robert Elder?

7 MR. ELDER:

8 Here.

9 MR. ABBOUD:

10 Brigadier General Mahfouz on behalf  
11 of Major General Thomas Friloux?

12 MR. FRILOUX:

13 Here.

14 MR. ABBOUD:

15 Mr. Robert Gatti?

16 Mr. Brian Jakes?

17 Avon Knowlton?

18 MS. KNOWLTON:

19 Here.

20 MR. ABBOUD:

21 Mr. John Manion?

22 MR. MANION:

23 Present.

24 MR. ABBOUD:

25 Under Secretary John Phillips, on

1           behalf of Secretary Meginley?

2           MR. PHILLIPS:

3           Here.

4           MR. ABBOUD:

5           Ms. Deborah Randolph?

6           Senator Mike Reese.

7           MR. REESE:

8           Here.

9           MR. ABBOUD:

10          Major General Ronald Richard?

11          Mr. Gary Silbert?

12          MR. SILBERT:

13          Here.

14          MR. ABBOUD:

15          Christina Smith, on behalf of

16          Secretary Susan Bourgeois?

17          MS. SMITH:

18          Here.

19          MR. ABBOUD:

20          Mr. Ronnie Slone?

21          Mr. Eric Barclay, on behalf of

22          Barksdale Forward?

23          MR. BARCLAY:

24          Here.

25          MR. ABBOUD:

1 Admiral Joel Whitehead?

2 Thank you very much, everyone.

3 So we typically begin our meetings  
4 with the Pledge of Allegiance. So I'm going  
5 to ask that you please all rise, and saying  
6 the Pledge.

7 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

8 MR. ABBOUD:

9 So moving on to agenda item number  
10 three, the previous meeting's minutes. The  
11 minutes should have been shared with you from  
12 our last meeting in December. Upon review,  
13 did anyone have any questions, comments, or  
14 notes from the previous meeting's minutes?

15 I'm hearing none.

16 Does anyone have a motion to adopt  
17 those minutes?

18 MR. SILBERT:

19 So moved.

20 MR. ABBOUD:

21 Any second?

22 MR. MANION:

23 Second.

24 MR. ABBOUD:

25 Okay. It's been moved and seconded.

1 All in favor, please say aye.

2 THE COUNCIL:

3 Aye.

4 MR. ABBOUD:

5 All right. Agenda item number four.  
6 Before we get into the reports and overviews,  
7 I did want to take a moment to introduce to  
8 the LMAC board one of my colleagues, Ms.  
9 Christina Smith. She currently serves at LED  
10 as the Executive Director of Operations and  
11 Business Services. And she will be serving as  
12 Secretary Susan Bourgeois' voting member and  
13 designee for the LMAC board.

14 Christina, I can say, is an  
15 exceptional leader. She certainly brings a  
16 mission-driven approach to cultivating  
17 economic development and will be a value  
18 resource for mission readiness and support for  
19 veterans across the state. So, I just wanted  
20 to take a moment to welcome you, to introduce  
21 you to the board, and certainly an honor to  
22 have you join us today.

23 Secondly, I also wanted to  
24 acknowledge the Chief Officer for Business  
25 Development at LED, Paige Carter, and I wanted

1 to give her just a minute to speak with the  
2 board and have her provide some updates for  
3 LED. So at this time, I'll turn it over to  
4 Paige.

5 MS. CARTER:

6 Thank y'all for having me. Robbie,  
7 thank you for the invitation to join you.  
8 Many of you I have worked with throughout my  
9 15 or so years in and out of the department.  
10 Thrilled to be here again as the Chief  
11 Assistant Officer here for the department.

12 Those of you I haven't gotten to  
13 work with yet, I look forward to meeting you  
14 and getting to really know how we can  
15 integrate between our department, the LMAC  
16 board, and then also the entities in which you  
17 serve.

18 So one thing that I will update --  
19 so y'all haven't met since December, correct?  
20 So from December to today, LED has published  
21 our new strategic plan. How many of you have  
22 seen that yet? Hopefully, a good many.

23 I think one of the most important  
24 things to acknowledge is that it had been 17  
25 years since the state of Louisiana had done a

1 statewide strategic plan. As many of you can  
2 imagine, your neighborhoods look different.  
3 Your communities and the entities in which you  
4 serve look vastly different. One of the  
5 biggest components to really put that into  
6 scale for me is to think about when that  
7 strategic plan, the previous one was issued,  
8 the Haynesville Shale wasn't the Haynesville  
9 Shale. We were building in-port terminals for  
10 energy. So imagine how different that is from  
11 where we are today, and the fact that we  
12 didn't have a new plan guiding the work that  
13 our department and our partnerships like each  
14 of you are really working toward.

15 So then that updated strategic plan,  
16 if you haven't seen it, there's a lengthy  
17 version that's about 90 pages on our website,  
18 and then a prettier marketing version that's  
19 about 15 or 20 pages. I'd encourage you to  
20 take a look at both, and Robbie can make sure  
21 to get you a hard copy if you haven't seen  
22 that.

23 But what you'll see is that there  
24 are seven key pillars that we as a state will  
25 be focused on. Those pillars are derived

1 based on asset mapping across the entire state  
2 to look at what are our strengths, what are  
3 the assets that really curate those strengths,  
4 and then what are we going to take bets on  
5 together. From that strategic plan and those  
6 seven pillars, we will also be doing regional  
7 strategic plans across the entire state so  
8 that we can ensure we have visibility on what  
9 does defense and that pillar for us of  
10 aerospace and defense look like for the  
11 Shreveport area that's vastly different from  
12 the New Orleans area. We'll look at that from  
13 a regional perspective, and then a local  
14 perspective as well. So really excited to be  
15 getting into that work and see that momentum  
16 really take off.

17 And then, of course, to see  
18 something like aerospace and defense culled  
19 out as a statewide asset sector and a priority  
20 for all of us to get behind. So again, if you  
21 haven't gotten a chance to take a look at  
22 that, please do.

23 What also has spun out since that  
24 strategic plan is, okay, how are we going to  
25 do work for that now. And so what we've also

1 published is an 18-month working plan. And so  
2 it's called the 9-by-90. Some of the news  
3 outlets have picked that up. We had a -- it's  
4 called the LEDP board meeting in this same  
5 room about two to three weeks ago where our  
6 board approved that plan. And that's the  
7 working plan. How are we going to do and how  
8 are we going to execute on the strategic plan  
9 to bring forward the state of Louisiana and  
10 our communities to lead into the future?

11 So I would say two big updates  
12 there. Very strategic, but then also from the  
13 business development perspective, know that we  
14 are excited and eager to continue our  
15 collaboration with each of the entities in  
16 which you represent. And, if I haven't got to  
17 meet you, haven't got to work with you yet, I  
18 look forward to it.

19 Robbie and our team, we've got about  
20 30 or so on the ground doing the business  
21 development work to lift this state into the  
22 future and make sure that we are most  
23 importantly cultivating and stewarding the  
24 companies in the Army assisting industry that  
25 have built Louisiana into what it is today.

1                   So I look forward to joining more of  
2                   these meetings. I know Robbie's got it on my  
3                   calendar for the foreseeable future. And  
4                   again, if I haven't met you yet, I look  
5                   forward to that. I look forward to getting to  
6                   work with you closely. Thank you for having  
7                   me today.

8                   MR. ABBOUD:

9                   Thank you as well.

10                  Just to echo, the opportunity is  
11                  certainly there, just given the assets, the  
12                  veteran population in the workforce. So  
13                  continuing to cultivate relationships, the  
14                  partnerships are critical. Louisiana is  
15                  certainly positioned to execute against them.  
16                  So thank you again, Paige.

17                  So moving on to number five from the  
18                  agenda item, we can go ahead and move into  
19                  reports and overviews. I know we have General  
20                  Mahfouz joining us from the Louisiana National  
21                  Guard. So, at this time, I'd like to turn it  
22                  over to you, sir, just to provide some updates  
23                  on Guard activities.

24                  MR. MAHFOUZ:

25                  Thank you very much. Ladies and

1 gentlemen, for those of you who have not been  
2 in person, I'm Brigadier General Jason  
3 Mahfouz. I'm an Assistant Adjutant General  
4 for the Army side of the Louisiana National  
5 Guard. General Friloux has an Assistant  
6 Adjutant General proper, a two-star, and then  
7 he has two one-star Assistant Adjutant  
8 Generals myself and Brigadier General Coco,  
9 who is my counterpart on the Air National  
10 Guard side of the house.

11 First off, before I get to the  
12 slides, just publicly acknowledge the  
13 continued faith and trust the government  
14 places in the Louisiana National Guard for a  
15 variety of missions. Starting at the  
16 beginning of this calendar year with security  
17 missions in New Orleans after the terrorist  
18 attack and continuing through Mardi Gras,  
19 making sure that the Guard was relevant in the  
20 homeland security and in that gray space  
21 between homeland security and homeland defense  
22 that we like to call homeland defense  
23 activities, making sure that the Guard is  
24 working in tandem with our state and local law  
25 enforcement agencies and other federal

1 agencies to stay ahead of threat, whether that  
2 threat be from a hurricane, that's brewing in  
3 the Gulf or popping up at the edge of the Bay  
4 of Campeche, or whether it's an unknown event,  
5 unanticipated, like a terrorist attack. The  
6 governor has provided that trust to General  
7 Friloux to operationalize the Guard in ways  
8 that bring Guard resources to a variety of  
9 complex problems. We're grateful for that  
10 support.

11 I'll start out with our federal  
12 mission, and this is the bread and butter of  
13 the Guard, so to speak, what we are federally  
14 resourced to do on a wartime mission, as it's  
15 often referred to, how we contribute to the  
16 national defense in a variety of ways, and  
17 those soldiers and airmen that we deploy  
18 overseas in support of those contingency  
19 operations.

20 Currently, we have 855 soldiers and  
21 airmen deployed around the world, 400 sourced  
22 for future deployments in other theaters. And  
23 this would -- that 855 includes 700 members of  
24 the 256 Infantry Brigade Combat Division  
25 headquartered out of Lafayette in their

1 ongoing missions in European and African  
2 theaters of operation. I just mentioned about  
3 domestic deployments.

4 Here in the state, we also have 135  
5 guardsmen who have deployed to the nation's  
6 capitol in support of security operations in  
7 the national capitol region in support of the  
8 D.C. police and the federal zone. And just  
9 yesterday, an additional 95 guardsmen have  
10 been activated for service in the state in  
11 support of defense, the Homeland Defense with  
12 respect to support of ICE. So at the ICE  
13 detention centers around the state, they're  
14 seeing an increase in requirements there. The  
15 governor authorized an activation in support  
16 of DHS of 95 guardsmen that will be work in  
17 the various facilities around the state in  
18 logistics and administrative support tasks.  
19 That's kind of the ones over the world, both  
20 domestically and internationally.

21 Moving on to the next slide, sir.  
22 I'll talk a little bit about our all hazards  
23 response mission since January. And the  
24 terrorist attack that I mentioned through  
25 Mardi Gras and Super Bowl and continue to

1 provide support to the state when needed as we  
2 monitor this time of year, everyone's focus is  
3 on the tropics and we continue to be focused  
4 in that regard.

5 And a little unique in our focus  
6 this year, that back in March, the Louisiana  
7 National Guard was tasked with strategic  
8 oversight of the Governor's Office of Homeland  
9 Security and emergency preparedness where I  
10 serve as the director in my dual hat capacity.  
11 So with the efficiencies that are gained  
12 between combining the Louisiana National Guard  
13 and its enabling functions and the core  
14 mission of the Louisiana Office of Homeland  
15 Security Emergency Preparedness, we're able to  
16 leverage a lot of resources that used to be  
17 fairly compartmentalized. That those barriers  
18 have been removed. We started that transition  
19 back in March.

20 I'll move on to the next slide.  
21 Cyber operations continue to be a persistent  
22 threat. Most of them are with nation-state  
23 actors operating on the coast.

24 In April, in order to advance our  
25 equities in this area, we moved our Cyber

1 Protection Team, it's the 178th CPT, to what  
2 we refer to as the cyber corridor in Bossier  
3 Parish, co-located Cyber Innovation Center.  
4 They're partnering on different projects with  
5 Louisiana Tech University and other  
6 stakeholders that operate out of the CIC. In  
7 addition, to that restationing, we had to seek  
8 out some partnerships to ensure that our  
9 soldiers that are assigned there have  
10 opportunities to work in the communities. And  
11 thanks to LED for helping facilitate those  
12 discussions and aligning those service members  
13 with those opportunities.

14 Along with GOHSEP and Louisiana  
15 National Guard, we've been able to offer those  
16 skill sets to augment a response and for  
17 missions that are really outside of what we  
18 call the defense the DODIN, the Department of  
19 Defense Information Network.

20 Most of our time previous to these  
21 partnerships was spent protecting the DODIN,  
22 working on our own infrastructure, protecting  
23 it against cyber attack. With the advent of  
24 the cyber protection mission element, we can  
25 now send those same soldiers and airmen to

1 work off DODIN. We're growing a cyber  
2 operations squadron within the 159th Fighter  
3 Wing and Air Guard, which will add additional  
4 capability. It's a new mission for the 159th  
5 Fighter Wing, and that unit will be stationed  
6 at Jackson Barracks, Louisiana.

7 Moving on to the economic impact.  
8 Guess the reason why most of us are here and  
9 paying attention. Very year, the National  
10 Guard remains present throughout all 64  
11 parishes, and this year's no exception. He  
12 economic impact varies from year to year. His  
13 year, it's estimated to be around 55 -- or  
14 \$555 million, rather, but that's about on par  
15 with where we see on a three-year average.  
16 That is tied to, whether it's directly tied to  
17 our force structure that exists in those  
18 parishes or whether it is partnerships with  
19 stakeholders outside of Gard and parish  
20 relationships and our kind of drug program,  
21 which really covers the entire state. It's  
22 bot just missions taken out of one particular  
23 parish, but the counter-drug mission, just  
24 like the cyber mission, affects everyone in  
25 the state and is applied in partnership with

1 law enforcement agencies and also people in  
2 parishes.

3 I'll move on to the next slide,  
4 which is speaking of strategic plans. Just to  
5 stay on that theme a little bit. When the  
6 Adjutant General was assigned by the Governor,  
7 General Friloux published a 2052 strategic  
8 plan. It is a forward-looking vision for the  
9 next 30 years, and it indicates -- it is a  
10 reorganization of our mostly Army National  
11 Guard units that is a second-order effect of  
12 many things that are really external factors.  
13 Those would include force structure changes to  
14 our combat units and our combat support units.  
15 The Infantry Brigade compact team will  
16 transform over time into a mobile brigade, and  
17 we will receive new combat vehicles associated  
18 with that mission.

19 Aligning our resources and personnel  
20 against that plan, against the 2052 plan, as  
21 we react to changes, and also the Secretary of  
22 the Army, primarily, and changes to our 159th  
23 Fighter Wing to adjust our combat readiness to  
24 prepare for mobilizations.

25 What the 2052 plan highlights some

1 of the features is we're getting out of the  
2 mentality of the Guard from the '40s where we  
3 had to have a physical readiness center  
4 location in every little town along major  
5 thorough fairs because soldiers primarily  
6 struggled to get to drill. Most of them  
7 worked and drilled and lived in these  
8 communities where we had our armories. We've  
9 evolved that to a campus plan.

10 The campus atmosphere brings  
11 together a lot of resources that service  
12 members can tap into, not just for themselves  
13 but for their families in a way that reflects  
14 a more modern application of the talents of  
15 our soldiers and our airmen, and the  
16 requirements they have outside of the Guard.

17 Our 2052 plan is published on our  
18 website. It's a public-facing document. It's  
19 pretty easy to read. All the key performance  
20 indicators and milestones associated with that  
21 plan are pretty easily understood. That will  
22 be adjusted over time, like any strategic  
23 plan, as we've seen changes from OSD,  
24 Department of the Army, Department of the Air  
25 Force.

1                   One thing we do know is that the  
2                   Guard will have an enduring presence in the  
3                   state. If anything else would have broke,  
4                   I'll get to our previous mission here in a  
5                   minute. And how well-positioned we are for  
6                   that group.

7                   Moving on under the same concept,  
8                   the recruiting retention I just mentioned.  
9                   We've had another great year, and we're  
10                  really -- six years running, where we have  
11                  outpaced our competitors for the market share.  
12                  For those of you who ever dealt with  
13                  recruiting and what components of the military  
14                  are receiving the fair market share of the  
15                  eligible recruiting population out there,  
16                  Louisiana National Guard tends to punch above  
17                  our weight and has for the last six years.

18                  Out recruiting -- our mission  
19                  provided by both Army National Guard and  
20                  International Guard through the National Guard  
21                  Bureau exceeded our retention as well. The  
22                  retention standard for most of DOD, they  
23                  anticipate about 24 to 26 percent attrition  
24                  rate across the board. So they set those  
25                  retention targets in the mid 70s, 76, 78.

1 We've always exceeded that or have exceeded  
2 that for a number of years. We just finished  
3 out the last fiscal year at 80 percent --  
4 above 80 percent on retention. We had some  
5 states -- with some units in the state,  
6 achieved as much as a 99 percent retention  
7 rate for their service members. And we  
8 continue to have a strong sense of purpose for  
9 our soldiers and airmen. The deployments I  
10 mentioned at the beginning of the slide are  
11 just a key indicator of the level of  
12 satisfaction of the guardsmen that we have.  
13 They often sign up for benefits, but they stay  
14 because they're actually doing the missions  
15 that they signed up to do.

16 Moving on to the next slide.

17 Military Construction, MilCon, as many of you  
18 know, runs on a five-day schedule. We have a  
19 tremendous amount of MilCon that is currently  
20 executed or on the verge of being executed. I  
21 won't belabor everything on that list, but you  
22 can see the total current modernization or  
23 construction schedule has an impact of nearly  
24 \$67 million.

25 And in the future, those

1 construction modernization efforts will result  
2 in nearly \$100 million. And by the time we  
3 actually get to some of these projects with  
4 the CPI and other cost factors applied to  
5 those future projects, we'll probably see  
6 they'll come in well over \$100 million.

7 Moving on to the next slide. I'll  
8 talk about Camp Minden for a minute. In the  
9 2052 plan, the Adjutant General has identified  
10 Camp Minden as really an economic engine for  
11 partnership with public and private partners,  
12 as well as our DOD counterparts that are in  
13 Webster and Bossier Parish, respectively.  
14 We're 20 miles from Barksdale Air Force Base.  
15 We've been identified by Barksdale as a  
16 contingency location for many of their  
17 operations as they expand the weapons  
18 generation facility there at Barksdale. I'm  
19 looking at Camp Minden potentially because of  
20 the secure area for lay down materials or  
21 bringing in materials as they're waiting on  
22 the phases of construction for the weapons  
23 generation facility to come online. Camp  
24 Minden is looked at as a near-site location  
25 that can stay in some of those materials, so

1 we're excited about that partnership.

2 We have 1,500 acres of commercial  
3 property that's available out there for  
4 manufacturing, industrial manufacturing,  
5 weapons manufacturing because of its standoff  
6 and some of the tenants that are already  
7 there, plenty of space for facilities and  
8 economic growth.

9 Move on to the next slide, and talk  
10 about Air Sovereignty, the 159th Fighter Wing  
11 and its strategic mission in support of the  
12 NOAA Eagle Alert. This is a two F-15s,  
13 currently the Charlie model is what we're  
14 flying in anticipation of upgrading to the EX  
15 in the out years. That F-15EX will replace  
16 the current platform, but suffice to say the  
17 alert mission and the airspace controller, the  
18 ACA mission will endure protecting really the  
19 southern watch of the United States. Their  
20 area of operation for scramble and alert  
21 really is the entire Gulf region. They'll  
22 pick up everything from Pensacola Naval Air  
23 Station's airspace all the way out to airspace  
24 in Texas. So fast movers getting out onto the  
25 teeth, interdicting any threats that are

1 coming from the southern hemisphere.

2 As we look for the F-15 Charlie to  
3 be replaced, I'd be remiss if I didn't  
4 champion or at least acknowledge how that  
5 effort has been championed by our  
6 congressional delegation. All of the members  
7 of this room and their support in 159 Fighter  
8 Wing will continue to have that economic  
9 impact in southeast Louisiana, which we  
10 estimate is about \$135 million annually.

11 We continue to partner with our  
12 other F-15 Charlie units in Massachusetts and  
13 California to find solutions for the gap. The  
14 F-15 Charlie, for those of you who are  
15 familiar with service life extension programs,  
16 referred to as SLEP programs, the Charlie has  
17 been SLEPed out as far as we can go. So  
18 there's going to be some gap years there.  
19 We'll be keeping the details that are still  
20 pliable in partnership with the other F-15  
21 wings so that everybody has the assets they  
22 need on ramp to perform the missions that  
23 they're assigned. That's my last slide.

24 In conclusion, The Louisiana  
25 National Guard, both Army and Air appreciate

1 the support that we've receive from this body  
2 and we look forward to answering any questions  
3 you may have.

4 MR. ABBOUD:

5 Council, any questions or comments?

6 MR. MAHFOUZ:

7 Just because I didn't think to do it  
8 before, I apologize, Sergeant Major, Command  
9 Sergeant Major Clifford Hoffman is our Command  
10 Senior List Leader. He makes sure that if I  
11 cross the street, don't get hit by a car, and  
12 most other things. I understand what's put in  
13 my ear when it's time for me to look forward  
14 and say the Pledge. So like every officer,  
15 I'm fortunate to have a battle buddy here with  
16 me today.

17 And also here today is our is  
18 retired Lieutenant Colonel Mike Poche, who  
19 many of y 'all know, probably more so than  
20 y'all know me. Mike wears a variety of hats,  
21 mostly in our legislative liaison capacity,  
22 both with our in-state and with our partners.

23 MR. ELDER:

24 Yeah, I have a question. A lot of  
25 interest, actually, with Washington with using

1 Louisiana as an occasion to think about the  
2 only Louisiana to do their own further south,  
3 because it replicates what it would look like  
4 if you were on Taiwan. Has anybody talked  
5 with the Guard about that all?

6 MR. MAHFOUZ:

7 I'm not aware of any conversations,  
8 at least at the strategic level, that would --  
9 I mean, we are -- our 1595 Fighter Wing is --  
10 if you use the antiquated term, more trace,  
11 more trace to [inaudible]. It's been some  
12 time out there, the black units in Kadena that  
13 they have flown with in the past and deployed  
14 with Guam. So with air power and their  
15 ability to project, like, you know, now it's  
16 not a challenge for them to deploy to  
17 [inaudible], to do that training on the  
18 ground, but I'm not aware it's serving any  
19 purpose.

20 Yes, sir?

21 MR. SILBERT:

22 I was just going to ask you about  
23 getting from now until 2027 to 2029. It  
24 sounds like you're talking to your colleagues  
25 about how we can provide maintenance to the

1 existing aircraft. Do you feel like you'd be  
2 able to stay ahead of it, or are you gong to  
3 have to start cannibalizing air crafts.

4 MR. MAHFOUZ:

5 Well, controlled substitution is the  
6 term that's used for what we used to all call  
7 cannibalization. So, when an aircraft has  
8 exceeded its usefulness in the fleet, they do.  
9 We have tails on the ramp right now that can  
10 know on the fly because of the problems with  
11 loranger or other components of the aircraft.  
12 They can't be upgraded digitally anymore, so  
13 they will take the high-demand parts on those  
14 aircraft, put them in shelf stock. Many wings  
15 around the country are doing the same.

16 The production line for the parts  
17 that -- the F-15 Charlie is a very old  
18 aircraft. It is not a fiber optic aircraft.  
19 It is very much a copper aircraft. So, in  
20 those terms, you want as much upgrading you  
21 can do to them, and that's why the EX is going  
22 to replace it. It's a great platform. The  
23 Charlie has a lot of usefulness left in it.  
24 And we believe in partnership with those other  
25 wings that we're going to be able to get there

1 and make ends meet without a gap in  
2 capability.

3 Thank y'all for y'all time.

4 MS. ABBOUD:

5 Thank you for your time. Certainly  
6 appreciate it, General.

7 I know from the Camp Minden  
8 perspective, this is a tremendous opportunity  
9 and the Cyber Protection Team is certainly  
10 exciting, and one that we're happy to partner  
11 with the National Guard on. Thank you.

12 Next, I'd like to call on Secretary  
13 General Charles Meginley for Veterans Affairs  
14 Report.

15 MR. MEGINLEY:

16 Good afternoon, everybody. I don't  
17 have any slides. I'm going trying to keep  
18 this relatively brief, but y'all know trial  
19 lawyers and if you give them a platform, so  
20 I'll try to keep it within reason.

21 A few months ago, I printed out, we  
22 had this made. This is an info graph. If you  
23 want it, we'll get it to you. I'll pass this  
24 around. This is an info graph on the economic  
25 impact that the veterans of the state of

1 Louisiana have right now. These numbers, we  
2 believe, are going to change in a couple of  
3 weeks when we get the new VA data, which  
4 should be released any week now. But right  
5 now, what you can see is there's approximately  
6 262,000 vets. Just in compensation and  
7 benefits alone from the VA, we bring in \$2.1  
8 billion. This is coming from about 80,000  
9 veterans within that subset of 262,000. So a  
10 very small part of our population is bringing  
11 in a substantial amount of federal dollars  
12 into the state. That doesn't include, of  
13 course, the VA money itself.

14 When you include the VA money with  
15 respect to the hospitals and the health care  
16 and the education piece, the baseline minimum,  
17 we believe, is at least \$4.7 billion, just in  
18 terms of the VA presence in the state of  
19 Louisiana alone. So, as you can imagine, when  
20 you have any veterans who are receiving VA  
21 benefits, that's taken off of other medical  
22 and health care plans and put it on the fence  
23 to take care of again, our subsection. As  
24 I've stated many times, veterans are an  
25 economic powerhouse in this state when it

1 comes to benefiting the rest of our society.

2 One thing of note, we have been in  
3 conversations with the federal VA. There is a  
4 very strong possibility that we will be  
5 getting a visit from our VA secretary later  
6 this year. One of the places that I have  
7 urged him to come visit is the VA Medical  
8 Center in Alexandria. Those of you who live  
9 in central Louisiana know that the VA in  
10 Alexandria, it's a little rough, but it's also  
11 very important because it is the primary  
12 healthcare facility for about 30,000 rural  
13 veterans in the state. And for many veterans  
14 in the central and southwest part of  
15 Louisiana, that is their hospital. It is the  
16 hospital of Alexandria. And again, it is in  
17 significant need of some upgrades. They are  
18 about to get a cash inflow of federal dollars  
19 to do some repairs. But ultimately, the  
20 question is, what's the long -term viability  
21 of Alexandria? We need to make sure that  
22 we're doing everything that we can to make  
23 sure that Alex is here for generations to come  
24 after we've left.

25 My point was, hopefully the VA folks

1 will come in. Senator Reese will certainly  
2 let you know. The invitation was to come  
3 visit the Alexandria VA, and then bounce over  
4 to Fort Polk, come see the CMOC, and come see  
5 what they're doing over at Fort Polk. So a  
6 little unusual to have a VA secretary come to  
7 a rural area, but to me, it's very important  
8 that we do that so that, no offense to my  
9 friends in New Orleans, but let's spread a  
10 little bit of the congressional love around.

11 We had a really successful  
12 legislative session this past year. I think  
13 over the last two years, we pretty much have  
14 been able to make a lot of strides with what  
15 we're doing. But just a couple of things that  
16 I want to highlight from the session. One of  
17 the things that we realized early, early, this  
18 year was if you were a National Guard member,  
19 and some of y'all may not know this, not all  
20 National Guard members are considered  
21 veterans. It's a nuance in the congressional  
22 law. But one of those ramifications of a  
23 potential guardsmen not being a veteran is  
24 they would not be eligible for our veterans'  
25 homes. So Representative Gatlin took that on

1           this year, and they were able to change the  
2           law to ensure that our guardsmen, who may not  
3           necessarily be a veteran, would have  
4           authorization and have the ability to go into  
5           our veterans' homes. And we've already  
6           started admitting National Guard troops into  
7           our homes. So it was something that was  
8           needed, and we've gotten a pretty good  
9           response from that as well.

10                     One of the other things we did, we  
11           are aligning ourselves in the national program  
12           when it comes to Purple Star Universities.  
13           The state had a decent plan and program that  
14           came to recognizing our schools as to who  
15           would be military friendly, but it was very  
16           Louisiana-centric. We are now aligned on a  
17           national program to have our colleges and  
18           universities recognize this Purple Star  
19           schools based on certain criteria. And I  
20           think three schools have already made that  
21           Purple Star designation.

22                     The MFA board now has authority to  
23           provide micro grants to 501c3s. So we  
24           recognize that there's a whole bunch of 501s  
25           who are doing really good stuff in the

1 veterans space, but there's no money for them.  
2 But our military family assistance fund, the  
3 MFA, now has the authority to issue up to  
4 \$10,000 grants for those organizations who are  
5 really doing some good in our state.

6 And then one of the last kind of fun  
7 things that we did, and it's really not a fun  
8 thing, it's more of a -- was a much needed  
9 thing. It allows us to kind of expand the  
10 military honor program. There are a lot of  
11 civilians who are helping the veterans of the  
12 state. But there was no way for me to  
13 recognize them. So we opened up the Honor  
14 Medal Program to a very, very specific set of  
15 civilians who are really contributing to what  
16 we're doing here. And so at some point, we're  
17 wrapping up right now the application for  
18 that. So, if you know a civilian who you  
19 believe should be honored, please let us know  
20 so we can take care of that.

21 When it comes to our budget right  
22 now, we were appropriated \$17.1 million. Of  
23 that, \$3.7 million came from the Lane claim,  
24 so we are processing Lane. Many of y'all know  
25 this is the Lane disability. Right now, we

1 have about a little over 400 or so applicants,  
2 which sounds like a lot. But this past fiscal  
3 year, we've processed more claims than the  
4 last two or three years combined. And right  
5 now, if our projections are correct, we will  
6 blow through the legislature's money on this  
7 quite significantly. So we are moving the  
8 backlog of claims. We went from having 1.5  
9 persons essentially adjudicating the claims to  
10 now having 10. So we are moving these cases  
11 much, much faster. I've signed \$600,000 of  
12 checks in the last two weeks. And so it's  
13 going to be a bad problem for you, Senator.  
14 Good problem for us in the bar, because we're  
15 moving these cases out. And so I'm very happy  
16 with what my team is doing on that. Like I  
17 said, the projections are these things are  
18 going to be moving much, much faster.

19 If you're not tracking the Boot --  
20 some of y'all may know the Boot is the program  
21 that is essentially taking transitioning  
22 service members and finding them to work. The  
23 Boot has paid back essentially the state's  
24 money in terms of investment. They get \$1.5  
25 million of appropriate dollars. And we will

1 get you the numbers, those of you who want it.  
2 But they are placing people, placing veterans,  
3 placing active duty service members who are in  
4 the process of getting out of the service at a  
5 very rapid rate right now. We have plenty of  
6 folks who are calling our office saying, tell  
7 me more. We put them to Andrew Gordon and Ben  
8 Armstrong, and they are getting placed very,  
9 very fast. The relationships that Ben and  
10 Andrew are forging with our local businesses  
11 is quite incredible. And we're going in and  
12 doing that as well, and I really believe the  
13 Boot is one of the success stories of the  
14 incorporation's past.

15 We also have a program and a  
16 partnership with NextOp. NextOp, whereas the  
17 Boot is placing anybody that will come in as a  
18 transitioning service member, NextOp focuses  
19 mainly on junior enlisted. Putting in the  
20 work and they're located mainly in the New  
21 Orleans area. NextOp just got a major grant  
22 from the Bob Gruber Foundation. They are  
23 helping to put soon to be transitioning  
24 service members and veterans also to work  
25 mainly in the New Orleans area. Very proud to

1 have that partnership with them as well.

2 Two other things of note from the  
3 Louisiana DBA in the last six months or since  
4 we've met, we've testified now twice in  
5 Congress. We received a specific  
6 congressional invite to talk about the quality  
7 of our homes. We were the only state that  
8 received an invite. Myself, Dr. Buller, and  
9 our homes director, Matt Duhon were there.  
10 And the congressional folks were left asking  
11 us more questions as to how do we get what  
12 we're doing here to the other states? And so  
13 we were very, very proud to be able to have  
14 that opportunity to talk about what we're  
15 doing down here.

16 Two weeks ago, we testified in a  
17 field sub-hearing on mental health and  
18 veterans from Senator Cassidy. We were part  
19 of the panel providing enough information.  
20 Again, one of the problems that most states  
21 have and, of course, Louisiana is no  
22 different, is I have a very limited budget,  
23 and I don't have much of a budget for  
24 outreach. So when it comes to veteran mental  
25 health, I rely very heavily on partnerships

1 outside of, not outside of Baton Rouge, but  
2 pretty much anywhere in the state. And so  
3 leveraging those partnerships with those 501s  
4 who are doing this as part of their mission,  
5 when it comes to mental health, when it comes  
6 to housing, when it comes to veteran suicide,  
7 is critical for us to meet the needs that we  
8 have to take care of our veterans. And so  
9 that was the purpose of that hearing, was how  
10 do we continue to leverage those partnerships,  
11 but it's also how do we continue to make the  
12 federal VA stronger in this area. And we  
13 regularly provide a substantial number of  
14 recommendations to Senator Cassidy and to the  
15 VA committee on how to continue to improve  
16 better mental health.

17 One last thing, and it kind of ties  
18 in a little bit with the mental health piece.  
19 One of the big partnerships that we are  
20 really, really proud of right now is we  
21 partnered with the University of Louisiana,  
22 Lafayette. ULL and our department came  
23 together and we proposed to them and said,  
24 look, if you really want to help veterans, I  
25 don't have enough data. I need some data.

1           Would you be willing to run a study? And we  
2           kind of gave them some of the thoughts that we  
3           were looking at doing. And ULL drafted a  
4           questionnaire, they drafted a study. And  
5           right now, they are in the process of  
6           finalizing their report. And it's the first  
7           of a kind in the state where we're going and  
8           trying to figure out how best we can take care  
9           of veterans.

10                   And so right now, the school has  
11           already preliminarily released a report.  
12           We're in the process now of conducting field  
13           surveys and field interviews to see, all  
14           right, how do we kind of tie this in? And we  
15           believe that the survey, which the federal VA  
16           has already caught wind and is very, very  
17           interested in seeing the results. Could be  
18           something quite groundbreaking based on what  
19           ULL has proposed. The numbers preliminarily  
20           are somewhat disconcerting, particularly when  
21           it comes to the issue of PTSD. Our rates  
22           based on reported PTSD may be substantially  
23           higher than the national average. And that  
24           was one of the key findings, preliminarily,  
25           that the school has revealed.

1                   So we're very excited to see what  
2                   ULL is going to come out and how the study is  
3                   going to continue to develop. And I'm very  
4                   hopeful that a lot of the questions that we  
5                   have in the veterans space will be answered by  
6                   what they were able to discern and to gather.

7                   With that said, does anybody have  
8                   any questions for us? Thank you for your  
9                   time.

10                  MR. SILBERT:

11                   Good afternoon. I'm Gary Silbert.  
12                   I pretty staff what we refer to as SEMA,  
13                   Southeast Louisiana Military alliance. We try  
14                   to keep our thumb on top of the missions in  
15                   Southeast Louisiana, which include the 8th  
16                   District Coast Guard, which is really part of  
17                   Homeland Security, not so much the Pentagon.

18                   Marv Perez, the Marine Forces  
19                   Reserves Headquarters, we have a big Guard  
20                   presence in addition to the Joint Reserve Base  
21                   of Belle Chasse. We have Belle Chasse, NIWC,  
22                   the Naval Information Warfare Command, and the  
23                   Army Logistics Operation also at Belle Chasse.

24                   These missions represent about 3, 4  
25                   percent of GDP in Southeast Louisiana. It's a

1            huge economic impact and we feel very  
2            fortunate to have it in our presence.

3            My report, I'm just going to cover a  
4            few of the missions just to provide some key  
5            updates. I'd like to start with the  
6            recapitalization of the KC-130. It's a  
7            logistics mission that's handled at the  
8            reserve base of Belle Chasse. We've been  
9            working very hard with the Navy Reserve and  
10          Congress through Chris and his team at the  
11          Roosevelt Group. We're in the third year  
12          working with these folks. We started in '24  
13          with one aircraft. Then in '25, two more  
14          aircraft, C-130Js. We have four aircraft  
15          Senate, one in the House for '26. And we're  
16          moving forward to try to use unfunded priority  
17          resources for six more aircraft.

18          It's a logistics mission, as I  
19          mentioned. If you talk to the folks in the  
20          Navy, they will tell you that they have to  
21          have -- they have to be thinking about a  
22          potential Northern Pacific in the 2027 time  
23          frame. And this logistics mission without any  
24          aircraft can't serve that role. So I believe  
25          the Pentagon Navy leadership has seen the

1 wisdom in staff now. Again, I think it's on  
2 the right track.

3 The International Guard Fighter  
4 Wing, the F-15EX, the General pretty much  
5 covered that. We're playing a strong support  
6 role with Chris and the delegation and your  
7 colleagues in Washington to ensure that that  
8 keeps moving along, closely tracking the  
9 timeline to ensure that it remains on time.

10 There are some quality of life and  
11 other related community issues going on in  
12 Belle Chasse in New Orleans. Chris and I  
13 spent the day trying to wear them out at Belle  
14 Chasse, really trying to get a handle on what  
15 these issues are, try to prioritize them, see  
16 what we can do specifically to line up some  
17 funding and future budgeting.

18 I've listed some examples. We might  
19 better understand and prioritize these, and  
20 I'm sure there's some others that they'll  
21 bring to our attention tomorrow. But a pair  
22 of water tank, swimming pool, dining facility  
23 that doesn't exist, and then a new emergency  
24 operations center.

25 The Naval Information Warfare Center

1 is probably one of our best kept secrets.  
2 It's located out at the Lakefront. About 600  
3 employees, 300 contractors, 300 full-time  
4 employees. They're supporting the Marines and  
5 the Navy, personnel systems, vessel systems,  
6 warfare systems. It's very important. And  
7 this unit reports to Charleston, and there's  
8 one other, I believe, in San Diego. And over  
9 time, what's happened is we've had some of the  
10 work taken away from us to be blunt and move  
11 back to Charleston. It would not be in our  
12 best interest just to knock on the door of our  
13 delegation and tell them to talk to those  
14 so-and-sos in Charleston and give us some more  
15 backing. We are trying to get around it and  
16 be smarter about it.

17 We're taking a cue from what was  
18 done, I believe it's called the Palmetto  
19 Project, or Palmetto Node in Charleston, where  
20 they stood up a tech node, for lack of a  
21 better term, where the local community has put  
22 up money and it's bringing together the  
23 universities, business, the defense community,  
24 and the Navy to understand where we can solve  
25 their problems using entrepreneurs, using the

1 academic community. And so we're going to  
2 replicate what was done in Charleston,  
3 patching that now at UNO. We'll be meeting,  
4 Chris and I, with consultants that have been  
5 engaged to help with this effort at the  
6 University of New Orleans today and tomorrow.  
7 And we're really excited just moving forward.  
8 It's more of a creative way to bring work and  
9 grow what NIWC can do and solve their  
10 problems. Very exciting opportunity.

11 I think that pretty much sums up  
12 what I wanted to cover. Do you guys have any  
13 questions?

14 MR. ELDER:

15 The Bayou Tech Node, are they  
16 setting -- this going to be a public-private  
17 partnership?

18 MR. SILBERT:

19 I think from the standpoint of the  
20 involvement of the University of New Orleans,  
21 that's probably the public partnership. I  
22 mean, think about things that could surface,  
23 no pun intended, they would be using the lake  
24 to test vessels and technology and drones and  
25 things like that that entrepreneurs in

1 partnership are having. Tech partnerships  
2 with UNO, professors there, and working with  
3 obviously the Navy to come up with solutions  
4 to meet the needs of the future.

5 MR. ELDER:

6 I talked about one of the potential  
7 things with the state in terms of bringing  
8 jobs. A lot of times we find if people have  
9 money, they'd like to spend in the state, but  
10 you have to have a way to put it into  
11 contract. The only organization in the state  
12 that has a contract with DOD, so they're  
13 somewhat limited, at least the way they're  
14 still now, which is focused on software  
15 development. But if they could be persuaded  
16 more because of the partnership they had, they  
17 opened up, you actually can find additional  
18 ways, not just for the Navy and the Marine  
19 Corps, but for the Army and the Air Force as  
20 well, to bring in the dollars that they have  
21 to be able to work and support some of the  
22 partners.

23 MR. ABBOUD:

24 You're right, General, this is a  
25 tremendous opportunity. Thank you for the

1 update, Gary.

2 Next, we'd like to call on the  
3 Barksdale team, Mr. Eric Barkley.

4 MR. BARLEY:

5 Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Eric  
6 Barkley. I'm the President and CEO of  
7 Barksdale Forward.

8 I'm very blessed and fortunate to  
9 have Retired Lieutenant General Robert Elder  
10 with me today. And also Chris will, I'm sure,  
11 cover some items for Barksdale as well as we  
12 move through our presentation.

13 Barksdale is the home of Air Force  
14 Global Strike Command, the 8th Air Force, 2nd  
15 Bomb Wing, and the 307th Reserve Wing. It's  
16 one of the few, if not only, bases that has  
17 that cross-section of representation from the  
18 U.S. Air Force. It represents \$1 .1 billion  
19 and economic impact in Northwest Louisiana.  
20 It is truly an economic driver for our corner  
21 of the state.

22 My job, our job, is to advocate and  
23 educate for the mission of Barksdale. That's  
24 been going on for over 30 years. A fellow  
25 named Murray Visor, who I just replaced over

1 the last year or so, and he sends his regards  
2 to you.

3 The thing I would tell you is, we  
4 have done a really, in my opinion, a good job,  
5 but it's time for a rebranding of our image,  
6 and we have undertaken that. That's the first  
7 thing we're going to talk about here in just a  
8 minute. I didn't realize we had an agenda.  
9 We're going to talk about our brand. We're  
10 going to talk about advocacy work we do for  
11 the Air Force Global Strike Command, review  
12 our projects that we've been working on  
13 through TRG and General Elder, some  
14 partnerships and initiatives, and then some  
15 interesting closing remarks from the General  
16 regarding a recently conducted Air Force  
17 campaign, which you'll all be interested in.

18 So moving along on our rebranding,  
19 we felt like that it was time to become a  
20 little more fresh in our image. Chris and I  
21 actually had some conversations about this as  
22 well. We wanted to project the strength, the  
23 advocacy work that we do, as well as the  
24 forward momentum that we're seeing in our  
25 base, again, reflecting that in the image that

1 we project to the public.

2 Next slide, please.

3 One thing interesting that I found  
4 out when I took this job is Barksdale Forward  
5 never had a website. In this day and age,  
6 that's very unusual. So we have undertaken to  
7 do that very thing. It's still in the works.  
8 And when it comes online officially, I'll  
9 certainly let everyone know. And it will be a  
10 nice outlet for the mission and the  
11 information that we would like to make sure  
12 that the public knows. We obviously changed  
13 our logo. I understand from Chris that this  
14 kind of looks like what the new Air Force One  
15 looks like. So anyway, that's what that looks  
16 like.

17 Next slide.

18 I've alluded to most of this, but we  
19 wanted to enhance public recognition of who we  
20 are and what we do. We definitely wanted a  
21 stronger digital presence just from the  
22 standpoint of moving from very little to  
23 hopefully a very effective digital footprint.  
24 We wanted to improve community engagement with  
25 a professional image and certainly encourage

1 greater participation and support from the  
2 public.

3 And finally, just to be a more  
4 polished brand presence. As a credible  
5 forward-thinking leader in supporting our base  
6 in the community. It's a lot of words, but  
7 basically we just wanted to come up at times  
8 with who we are and what we do.

9 Next slide, please.

10 Over the last several months, I  
11 would say even longer than a year, we have  
12 been working on re-optimization plans  
13 regarding Air Force Global Strike,  
14 specifically, but the Air Force overall, I  
15 alluded to this in my last presentation the  
16 last time that we met, but I'll just throw a  
17 bouquet at the Roosevelt Bureau for the  
18 outstanding work that they've been doing with  
19 our congressional delegation and across other  
20 stakeholders to ensure that Barksdale Air  
21 Force Base and especially Air Force Global  
22 Strike Command will not be weakened in their  
23 mission as a result of any of this effort on  
24 the part of the Air Force.

25 There was an effort to repatch some

1 of the contingent at Barksdale, and we worked  
2 very hard through Chris and his group to slow  
3 that down. Again, we don't want to do  
4 anything that would affect the Air Force's  
5 overall ability to do what they need to do to  
6 defend our nation, but yet we do see issues at  
7 Barksdale and the Global Strike Command that  
8 we believe that our position actually is  
9 beneficial to all.

10 You can see from our notes that the  
11 contacts range everywhere from STRATCOM to the  
12 Office of Secretary of Defense, and even our  
13 own Senator Mike Reese was in a meeting  
14 recently that backed up our efforts to do  
15 these very things. So thank you, sir, and the  
16 group that went with him.

17 The other thing that's going on  
18 right now in regard to that is in the annual  
19 NDAA. We have made efforts, again, through  
20 our representation in Washington, to work with  
21 our CODEL to codify Air Force Global Strike  
22 Command in U.S. public law. I'm certain that  
23 Chris will probably talk about this in greater  
24 detail than I'm going to give you right now.  
25 But we have made good progress. Our CODEL in

1 Washington has done a phenomenal job to  
2 recognize the importance of what it is that  
3 we're trying to do to establish Global Strike  
4 Command as a permanent part of the law. But  
5 because it's such an important part of what  
6 our Air Force does, this is just a recognition  
7 and a -- searching for the right word here --  
8 strengthening of their mission and the  
9 leadership at that base.

10 You'll see that the Air Force has  
11 been looking at the possibility of reducing  
12 some four-star leadership generals across the  
13 command. And that will continue to be an  
14 effort that we are keeping our eyes very  
15 closely on. Again, either General Elder or  
16 Chris might have some more comments on that  
17 right now. We certainly believe that that  
18 command is vital to our nation and deserves a  
19 four star leader.

20 Next slide please.

21 The other thing that we work on is  
22 the MilCon-related infrastructure-type work  
23 that goes on. Here's just a laundry list of  
24 some of the things that we've either worked on  
25 or are underway already. In the latter part

1 of this year, they will begin a renovation of  
2 either end of the Barksdale runway. They'll  
3 do it one end at a time, so the runway will  
4 not be taken out of service. When it rains,  
5 they may need to land somewhere else. But you  
6 can see \$41 million for that.

7 Weapons generation facility, it's  
8 already been alluded to. I understand it's  
9 several weeks ahead of schedule, which we're  
10 very pleased about.

11 Corrosion control facility is one  
12 that doesn't really jump out at you when it  
13 comes to what the base might need, but it is  
14 critical to keep the corrosion off the B-52,  
15 which they plan to fly into the 2050s. The  
16 facility that we have right now is really  
17 showing its age, not only the facility, but  
18 the equipment itself. There is a \$50 million  
19 problem that they've had, because this job has  
20 been in the queue for quite a while, is the  
21 bids that came in were higher than the \$50  
22 million. So we anticipate some movement on  
23 that this fall. Hopefully, it doesn't delay  
24 too much longer. But that is really, of all  
25 of these, that is one that really jumps off

1 the page for me, because it's something that  
2 we've got to have to keep that plan flying.

3 The alert facility, Chris is  
4 actually coming to tour that. The alert  
5 facility has been there as long as I've lived  
6 in the Shreveport-Bossier area and can  
7 remember it being just as it is. It has  
8 leakage problems. It has a lack of the  
9 cooking equipment and all the things that go  
10 along with quality of life while in the  
11 facility. So that is, again, a very important  
12 project. As you can see, we've got a lot  
13 going on at the base right now.

14 Child Development Center, I believe  
15 I've reported in the past that we have two  
16 wings of that Child Development Center. One  
17 is more modern than the other. The older of  
18 the two would be the one that's replacing  
19 that, and that's coming up in the very near  
20 future.

21 We're also working on a dorm. I  
22 feel very good about that in FY26. With all  
23 of the new security people that will be coming  
24 in to protect the weapons generation facility,  
25 you're going to see a great need for more

1 space for folks to live while at Barksdale.  
2 We'll continue to monitor the requests that  
3 we'll have from the legislature in preparation  
4 for the following fiscal year.

5 So that's a lot of what's going on  
6 there. It's a very busy place right now. And  
7 I'll take the next slide.

8 This is some of the just random  
9 things that I'll be doing later this fall.  
10 We'll be going to the Association of Defense  
11 Communities in October, where we always have a  
12 chance to meet with Robert Moriarty and the  
13 SAF/IE team. Shared firing range, I asked the  
14 General to hang out afterwards, and we can  
15 chat about that just a little bit.

16 Barksdale's firing range is -- our security  
17 people are going far to shoot their long range  
18 weapons right now. It's two and a half hours,  
19 I believe, or so. So we have been working to  
20 try to find a local solution. We're open to  
21 any and all options right now, one of which,  
22 sir, we'd like to talk to you about possibly.

23 Finally, in regard to partnerships,  
24 one of the things we've identified that we try  
25 to get done in 2025 and try to get in 2026 is

1 to get the leadership of the SAF/IE team to  
2 our installation to look at the installation,  
3 but have some community meetings on how we can  
4 better partner to assist our base.

5 MR. MEGINLEY:

6 Eric, these partnerships with  
7 Congress, how much do they talk about veteran  
8 retirement populations surrounding the  
9 installation?

10 MR. BARKSDALE:

11 It does come up. I don't recall  
12 exactly to what extent or necessarily a  
13 specific presentation that I've heard, but I  
14 think there is value there.

15 MR. MEGINLEY:

16 Because I know, like, you have  
17 Caddo, Bossier that has 28,000 or so veterans  
18 that pump in about \$250,000 million into the  
19 community. Obviously, one of the things that  
20 might hinder a veteran staying in Caddo is the  
21 base itself, the ability to get a commissary,  
22 to do a lot of things a lot retirees, like me,  
23 who've been in Barksdale 12 times to get to go  
24 to while one base. So I'm just kind of  
25 curious, you know, like, how do they -- what

1 do they talk about in terms of those  
2 amenities, those opportunities for veterans to  
3 kind of stay in touch?

4 MR. BARKSDALE:

5 And by the way, thank you for your  
6 interest you've shown. You've made many a  
7 trip to Northwest Louisiana, and we appreciate  
8 that.

9 So yeah, I'll keep an eye on that  
10 and see what types of programs we can get  
11 coming up, especially in this upcoming year.

12 That may be all of my slides,  
13 Robbie.

14 Aha! This is the one you've been  
15 waiting on. And with that, I'll introduce  
16 General Elder for a very interesting  
17 presentation. Thank you for your time.

18 MR. ELDER:

19 It's good to be with all of you  
20 here.

21 I will tell you, by the way, I'm not  
22 sure who sent it to the veterans in Catahoula,  
23 but we all got resources over the past month,  
24 a letter reminding us that the veterans, I  
25 retired my V-card. It went to all the

1 veterans. Reminds us about the VA hospital.  
2 In Barksdale, there's a card. If you're not  
3 retired, but if you're a veteran, you get a  
4 card that will let you use the commissary,  
5 right, VX, and use some of the hospital  
6 facilities, which, by the way, I mean, you're  
7 able to get your pharmacy things from the  
8 base, zero, as opposed to anywhere else.

9 So one of the things that we do  
10 every year is we do a triad conference hosted  
11 in Louisiana at the LSU Shreveport. We did  
12 another one this year. We maxed out the  
13 facility. We had 200 people. They have a  
14 bigger auditorium. We'd like to make it  
15 comfortable, so we put 200 people in a  
16 ballroom. So, I guess, we may have to go back  
17 and look at the auditorium next year. People  
18 still wanted to go. But we did have virtual  
19 options. We had about 200 people locally.  
20 Well, I'd say a lot of people flew in. And  
21 then we also had a virtual option. So there's  
22 a lot of interest in that part of it.

23 But of late, what I wanted to talk  
24 to you about is, we're getting a lot of  
25 interest in some of the other things, long

1 range strike can do, particularly with the  
2 bomber. And where we've gotten a lot of  
3 attention, and I'm sure -- I know you've heard  
4 about this, so I thought it'd be worthwhile to  
5 talk about this a little bit, because of how  
6 important Louisiana is, in terms of our  
7 ability to do this.

8 So, this Operation Midnight Hammer,  
9 this is actually the chart that you -- if  
10 you've watched it on TV, was the brand new  
11 chairman General Kane briefing this slide,  
12 basically laying out how this thing worked,  
13 showing that you had the bombs that took off  
14 out of the Whiteman. This was all planned at  
15 Barksdale Air Force Base, coordinated with  
16 Barksdale.

17 Barksdale is the, right now, the  
18 only place that the Air Force has that can  
19 communicate with the stealth airplanes without  
20 people know that they're talking to them. So  
21 to protect the communications, that's very  
22 important. It doesn't really do much good to  
23 have a stealth airplane and let everybody know  
24 you're there because you're talking on the  
25 radio. So they can actually communicate with

1           them. There's a special radio that they have  
2           that uses a wave form that's not detectable.

3                       So, at any rate, this shows what  
4           they did. They flew all the way over. You  
5           might have heard there was a deception plan in  
6           this thing where they also, not shown here,  
7           they sent B2 bombers towards Guam to give an  
8           indication that they were getting ready to do  
9           a strike that they do from Guam to possibly go  
10          into Iran. Meanwhile, it went this way. It  
11          wasn't the way that they were expecting. A  
12          lot of support for this. As you see, there's  
13          fighters who were involved. Fighter support  
14          was largely there to partially mask that they  
15          were there. They could put out signatures.

16                      And you talk about a noise, it's  
17          kind of like, you know, if you go to a really  
18          loud concert, you try to talk to the person  
19          next to you, they can't hear a word you're  
20          saying. That's basically what you try to do  
21          with this electronic warfare. You raise the  
22          noise a little more so that it's as quiet as  
23          these things are. It's like someone's trying  
24          to whisper to you at a rock concert. So  
25          that's basically what happened there.

1                   At the same time, you had the Navy  
2                   launching their conventional Tomahawk land  
3                   attack missiles that were coming out the Gulf  
4                   there going against the site that didn't have  
5                   to have the deeply penetrating weapons. So it  
6                   was quite a feat to coordinate all this  
7                   effort. It worked perfectly, multiple  
8                   services involved.

9                   But it brought a lot of attention to  
10                  what we didn't really know that you could do.  
11                  We've had this capability for a long time, so  
12                  people didn't really realize it. So this  
13                  really built a lot of attention for what is  
14                  happening, particularly with the bomb force,  
15                  but also with the cruise missile force, which  
16                  we had with the B-52s. Even though the B-52s  
17                  weren't involved, it's a similar weapon that  
18                  the B-52 carriers that the Navy was shooting  
19                  from their strike group.

20                  If you give me the next slide, the  
21                  other thing that the bomber's been used for a  
22                  lot, so people, believe it or not, in Europe  
23                  or to a lesser extent in the PACOM, this is  
24                  the civilian population we're talking about.  
25                  They keep seeing all these news articles. So

1           they know a lot more about what our bombing  
2           forces are doing than most people in the  
3           United States. And the reason is that they're  
4           doing these, they call them bombing task force  
5           operations, and they're purposely there to do  
6           either deter a mission, which is something  
7           you're doing with your adversaries. An  
8           insurance condition is something where you try  
9           to work with your partners. You're going to  
10          be on their side.

11                   NATO, obviously -- with the NATO  
12          countries in particular and with Japan and  
13          South Korea, we'll actually fly the bombs in  
14          certain patterns and stuff. They join up and  
15          they fly together. It's to assure the  
16          populations there. They also have a pretty  
17          good deterrence effect. We're able to pull  
18          this off because not many countries can really  
19          do that.

20                   And then the third big area is what  
21          we call competition. So it's basically an  
22          influence operation. That the U.S. government  
23          is trying to do to try to influence the way  
24          people in third-party countries, so they may  
25          not be our partners, they may not be our

1       adversaries, but there are countries that we  
2       would like to keep them aligned with the West  
3       and not be aligned with the other guys. And  
4       so those are competition issues. So a lot of  
5       these missions are actually there to do the  
6       signaling part.

7               And then when it ends up happening,  
8       the reason it's so quiet is they know about it  
9       in the countries because these country teams,  
10      that's where the embassy is, the embassy has a  
11      country team, and they're the ones that  
12      actually do the messaging. So they -- the  
13      country team go out, you have Paul Milwaukee  
14      who's talking to their counterparts in the  
15      country, the economic officer, the media  
16      people, people who do the social -- not  
17      social, well they actually use social media,  
18      but it's basically the social cultural  
19      ministries that they have there. And as a  
20      result, there's a lot that gets done. The  
21      trigger for this, the thing that allows them  
22      to have the conversation, is that they fly  
23      this long-range bombers, and then they  
24      actually work in partnership with countries.  
25      And they've been in virtually every European

1 country in the Pacific, Australia. They've  
2 done a lot with Korea and Japan as well.

3 I don't want to go through all  
4 these, but these are all the things that these  
5 EUCOM, that's the European Command, or  
6 Indo-PACOM, the Indo-Pacific Command, or  
7 Central Command, which is the Middle East, but  
8 they've done some in Africa as well, AFRICOM.  
9 This is what they ask for.

10 So they go to the Joint Staff and  
11 they say, we want some bomber task force  
12 missions to support this. In some cases, they  
13 actually deploy airplanes over the region.  
14 They actually see them show up of the land.  
15 Sometimes they will fly somewhere close to the  
16 main operating base, one we like to use, like  
17 the UK, we go to Fairford, we go to Rome,  
18 Spain. There's a base in the Indian Ocean  
19 that we can go to. It's actually owned by the  
20 Brits. And it's just closer, and then you can  
21 fly from there, where you've got the support  
22 equipment, and then partner up with these  
23 other aircraft that are flying. They also do  
24 stuff with the Navy as well.

25 So it's funny, you don't see here in

1 the States, but over there, they say, look at  
2 all these things that are happening. You've  
3 got these bombers that are joining up with  
4 aircraft that are launching carriers. They're  
5 doing stuff in the other countries. It sends  
6 a really big signal. This is all coming out  
7 of Louisiana.

8 And what Eric pointed out, he's  
9 right. There's no other base in the Air Force  
10 that has a major command headquarters, Air  
11 Force Strike Commands, an operational command,  
12 which is the Air Force, and then an  
13 operational wing. In this case, they have two  
14 operations, with all departments. They never  
15 had all that together. It's a huge synergy  
16 that Air Force Strike Commands is trying to  
17 take advantage of. And I think the state of  
18 Louisiana has been taking advantage of this as  
19 well. I don't want to read these things to  
20 you, but it's big.

21 And one of the things that's so  
22 different about it, the last one was big  
23 because it was a combat operation. Things  
24 blew up. This is very different because  
25 you're flying these airplanes to enable or

1           empower somebody else to be messaging and  
2           influence the way that people are thinking  
3           about whether they should take this on or  
4           fight this. And it's been very effective.

5                     And then one more slide.

6                     I'm trying to get people to realize,  
7           we need to be bragging about this. If you go  
8           to Virginia, even parts of Virginia that are  
9           not in the tidewater area, they're very proud  
10          of the fact that they have this. In the  
11          tidewater area, you've got the Langley Air  
12          Force, the FF-22s, you've got the Navy there  
13          as well. And so they're very proud. So the  
14          whole state knows that this is like -- that's  
15          where the fighters are. That's where the  
16          combat aircraft are from the Air Force.  
17          That's where the Navy has their big surface  
18          ships. So they brag about it. They're very  
19          familiar with it.

20                    Everybody, I think, knows that you  
21          go to Las Vegas, outside of Las Vegas, is  
22          where the Air Force has its weapons school,  
23          including what the Navy does there. Everybody  
24          knows about the Top Guns in California, the  
25          Air Force is there and they brag about it.

1                   What I'm telling you is I live in  
2                   Louisiana. We should be bragging about this.  
3                   We should be bragging about the JRTC. We  
4                   should be bragging about what we have in the  
5                   South, because it's one of the main, I hate to  
6                   break this news to you, it's one of the  
7                   easiest ways for someone to launch an attack  
8                   against the United States is to come in from  
9                   the South. So who puts time into all of this  
10                  is Louisiana.

11                  But the one big thing is what we do  
12                  with the bomber force is unique. It's not  
13                  just there to do combat. They're called upon  
14                  to do combat. Every day it's doing these  
15                  missions here. It's important to realize  
16                  nobody else that thinks that. And I actually  
17                  think that one of the things that we as a  
18                  state and as a military can do is really  
19                  capitalize on this to make people understand  
20                  that if you really want to come do things that  
21                  look at the full range of what you do with  
22                  military operations, you ought to come look at  
23                  the state of Louisiana.

24                  And that's basically my message to  
25                  you. We're trying to do this specifically out

1 of Barksdale Forward for the Barksdale bomb  
2 forces and ICBMs. But realistically, we  
3 should be looking at statewide, we're doing  
4 things that nobody else does. I think that's  
5 an opportunity for us. Thanks.

6 MR. ABBOUD:

7 It's a great point, too. I mean,  
8 just the role Louisiana plays in the security  
9 of our nation, and certainly the  
10 infrastructure, the military assets that we  
11 have in the state and what that represents in  
12 terms of the economic growth and opportunity  
13 here is a message that certainly we can  
14 [inaudible]. Thank you.

15 Next, I'll like to call on Louisiana  
16 Armed Forces Alliance. Ms. Avon.

17 MS. KNOWLTON:

18 You know, it's really hard to go by  
19 behind midnight hammer in anything. My  
20 sister, she's in the Air Force, and she lets  
21 me know that Air Force is pretty much number  
22 one. So she's in Virginia. Well, I'm here on  
23 behalf of the Army.

24 My name is Avon Knowlton. I am with  
25 Louisiana Armed Forces. I'm their executive

1 director. I've been in this position two  
2 years. But about 19 years ago, I'm going to  
3 tell your age at this time, 19 years ago in  
4 the back of a chamber office, we -- some of us  
5 got together and had to come up with some  
6 solutions pretty fast. And it has evolved  
7 into a great organization. I'm proud to say  
8 that we've rebranded a little bit.

9 So if you'll go to the next slide,  
10 Robbie. We're going to talk some things with  
11 you guys about what you see here. This is  
12 going to be our update. Let's go to the first  
13 slide.

14 New headquarters. A couple of years  
15 ago, we had to rethink ourselves and think  
16 outside of the box. As you know, we were Fort  
17 Polk Progress, and we had a little something  
18 going on with our name change, and we'll get  
19 to that in just a minute. But on January  
20 31st, we officially cut the ribbon on a brand  
21 new office, the first office we've had. It's  
22 been a long time coming. We started off, like  
23 I said, working wherever we could find a  
24 space. Mike Reese was our chairman at the  
25 time, and he functioned out of the back of a

1 moving and storage company, and his office is  
2 there. Pretty much lived out of our vehicles  
3 for a while. So we're pretty excited about  
4 the new office. And thanks to the police  
5 jury, we were able to obtain a really neat  
6 space there.

7 And Jim Tuck is our chairman this  
8 year. He's here with me today. And our vice  
9 chair, Mr. Beebe -- Mayor Clarence Beebe, I  
10 should say, and I've brought my big guns as  
11 well with Logan Morris here.

12 But this is our new office, and you  
13 can see there's quite a bit of folks there,  
14 and we are very proud of that.

15 We rebranded ourselves to somewhat  
16 of an organization where we wanted to be the  
17 community's alliance. So we wanted to focus  
18 on community, veterans affairs, and Fort Polk  
19 where our membership is growing. We have  
20 several new partners. We are part of the  
21 Police Jury Association with four police  
22 juries in our alliance. Louisiana Municipal  
23 Association with 11 municipalities now in our  
24 alliance. And with the Chambers of Commerce,  
25 with seven surrounding chambers of Fort Polk

1 in our alliance.

2 Again, our membership is growing.  
3 We work on many community events and veteran  
4 issues now. We're proud to be part of the VA.  
5 We have done quite a few events. We were a  
6 part of Speaker Johnson's office, Veterans  
7 Resource Fair. That kind of spearheaded some  
8 things with us with the Louisiana Department  
9 of Veterans and their resource fairs. We're  
10 proud to be part of that.

11 We've partnered with the  
12 city of DeRidder on veterans banquets and  
13 things of that nature. We're partnering with  
14 the local law enforcement officers in Fort  
15 Polk for National Night Out. We're a new  
16 partner with the City of Lake Charles and the  
17 Mayor's Law Enforcement Committee. And we're  
18 going to be sponsoring their Southwest  
19 Louisiana Veterans Resource Event coming up  
20 this fall. We partnered with Fort Polk and  
21 the City of DeRidder in Beauregard Parish for  
22 their first annual Patriot's Ball.

23 So, as you can see, we stepped out  
24 into the community and said, what do you want  
25 us to do? What do you want us to be a part

1 of? And there are so many veterans in our  
2 communities, and we're so proud to serve them  
3 and serve the men and women of the Armed  
4 Forces.

5 Next slide, please. All right. Thanks.  
6 2001. Sorry, 2021. That's wrong, right? '21.  
7 Congress established a naming commission to  
8 identify and rename some of the Confederate  
9 military establishments across the United  
10 States. And then Fort Polk was officially  
11 renamed Fort Johnson.

12 And then this year, the Army  
13 restored the name Fort Polk. And this time it  
14 was in honor of General James H. Polk. And we  
15 had a wonderful redesignation ceremony that  
16 day. With the Polk family in attendance, and  
17 General Curl and the JRTC did such a fabulous  
18 job on that. And then right after that, Fort  
19 Polk Exchange was renamed for Sergeant William  
20 Henry Johnson.

21 We all have such a good time when we  
22 go to D.C. and get to meet and work with folks  
23 there. And that's where I met Eric with  
24 Barksdale this year. I'm proud to be part of  
25 the Association of Defense Community Summit

1           there.

2                       We also had our delegation who you  
3           see we had quite a bit. It's a very regional  
4           board of directors now for Louisiana Armed  
5           Forces. We have so many folks who settled  
6           there from Central and Southwest Louisiana.  
7           We all met there, and we were able to meet  
8           with Speaker Johnson, Senator Cassidy, and her  
9           staff from the other offices. And the  
10          Louisiana delegation really stressed the  
11          importance of priorities for us, including the  
12          RUBA, the Catalyst Pathfinder Lab at Fort  
13          Polk. And just to increase and stabilize,  
14          give us some stability on the number of  
15          soldiers and the work that needs to be done  
16          there.

17                    I'm really breathless today. I'm  
18          going to apologize a little ahead of time.  
19          Had a little accident this week. And I'm  
20          working with some bruised ribs.

21                    But we've had some really good  
22          feedback on some of those missions and  
23          requests. And at this time, I'm going to ask  
24          Logan to come up, if you would. Logan is our  
25          former CASA. I say former, because you know

1           what happened with the CASA program. But he's  
2           a great ambassador for our region. And he's  
3           going to go over a few things and help me out  
4           here.

5                   MR. MORRIS:

6                   Good afternoon, it's a pleasure to  
7           be here today. Thank you, Avon.

8                   So, next slide, please.

9                   The four-star trip date for Fort  
10          Polk, we continue to monitor that regularly.  
11          Unfortunately, troop strength at Fort Polk has  
12          been reduced steadily since 2013, and with  
13          that comes a unique set of challenges in terms  
14          of maintaining comparison to the core services  
15          of an installation. So, we really drove that  
16          home continuously at our visit to D.C.

17                  One example of the one hand we give  
18          it and the other hand we take away is the M10  
19          Booker, a light tank that was originally going  
20          to be based there. And then we found out  
21          before it actually hatched that it wasn't  
22          coming. And so in that regard, we pivot there  
23          and certainly thank the Roosevelt Group and  
24          our delegation in D.C. for all they're doing  
25          to monitor those things.

1           The six s-valves, we used to have a  
2           security forces brigade and those were thought  
3           to be going away, and now there are six.  
4           There discussions of getting one at Fort Polk,  
5           ATI-based is really where it's at, but we're  
6           not really sure that's going to happen there.  
7           I think Chris is going to cover some more  
8           Intel on that as he gets there.

9           On the bright side, the 46th  
10          Engineer Battalion is not going away. As the  
11          Army -- it was two years ago now that I was at  
12          a meeting in Fort Polk and it was whispered  
13          that was happening like it was a done deal.  
14          And so a lot of those movements were  
15          happening. It is not going away now. In  
16          addition to that, there will be two additional  
17          engineering units coming to Fort Polk. And I  
18          think both of those are coming from Knoxville,  
19          if I'm not mistaken. Maybe one from Germany,  
20          but for sure one from Knoxville.

21          Finally, I want to acknowledge the  
22          work of Fort Polk revitalization strategy that  
23          was recently briefed inside the White House.  
24          Coincidentally, Senator Reese and a member of  
25          our state delegation were invited to the White

1 House with the Secretary of Defense. I was  
2 honored to put together some of the winning  
3 talking points on the partnerships our state  
4 has. And he was very, very, very impressed  
5 with the headway that we've made on those  
6 fronts. The Boot program in particular, our  
7 licensing reciprocity, and also the  
8 collaboration efforts with the VA through  
9 BJAC, the Bayne-Jones County Army Community  
10 Hospital. I couldn't speak to the other  
11 facilities on short notice in the time frame  
12 that I have, but I know that they're being  
13 moved around the state in that regard.

14 To that point on the collaboration  
15 with the VA, I also want to note that we found  
16 out that the Assistant Secretary of Defense  
17 for Health Affairs visited Dr. Stephen  
18 Ferrara. He let Bayne-Johnson Army Community  
19 Hospital know that they were now authorized to  
20 see veterans again. He had reversed and  
21 rescinded that policy in February, and nobody  
22 had notified, DHH had never notified the  
23 hospitals that it was a possibility.

24 So our only win there was just to  
25 test that out. A spouse of a veteran, a

1       former retiree, who was on a three-month  
2       waiting list for a hearing test and hearing  
3       aids, went to BJAC for an appointment with an  
4       audiologist, and nine days later had a hearing  
5       aid. And that was in four or five days to get  
6       it done. So I was very, very pleased to see  
7       something like that. And I do encourage and  
8       hope that Secretary Collins does come over and  
9       see some of those capabilities that are there  
10      in facility sharing as we attempt to reduce  
11      the cost of doing business for both the  
12      Defense Health Agency and the VA, if that's  
13      possible.

14               Next slide.

15              Chris, are you going to cover most  
16      of the specifics in here?

17              MR. GOODE:

18              You can go ahead. I mean, it's that  
19      59 number in the middle is all you have to  
20      talk about.

21              MR. MORRIS:

22              So, unfortunately, we still have a  
23      bridge too far in terms of our RUBA. We've  
24      got to go back to the drawing board during  
25      conference and get some additional money

1           because we do not have enough to finish what  
2           is needed. If any of you saw it recently,  
3           there was a publication in Army Times where  
4           the Iowa National Guard had been down there  
5           and it was a little moldy where they were and  
6           people couldn't believe that's what they were  
7           staying in while they weren't in the box.

8                       There's a joke in the Northeast that  
9           the problem with the lighting in the tunnel  
10          from New York is that it's New Jersey, and  
11          that's how they feel about the current RUBA at  
12          Fort Polk. They come out the box to what we  
13          currently have there, and it's substandard  
14          living conditions.

15                      And no joke, for my Air Force family  
16          in here, that they have a waiver. They are  
17          not required to stay in the room when they're  
18          there on training rotations. So the situation  
19          is that bad, and it's a very expensive  
20          project. I'm not picking up any funding from  
21          the Air Force people. Y'all have a great  
22          policy on that. I would use it, too, if I had  
23          that capability.

24                      But we do have to have the  
25          additional funding there to get this done.

1 And many of these buildings are 25 years old,  
2 a good 11 years past their life cycle, due  
3 cycle. And if you saw them in person, you  
4 understand why it's a problem. There's no  
5 plumbing indoor in these facilities. And so  
6 soldiers come out of the box after being there  
7 for 12 days, go to a shower trailer. So  
8 primitive doesn't begin to describe it. So  
9 I'll let Chris cover that later if he needs  
10 to.

11 Next slide, please.

12 We were successful with the help of  
13 Roosevelt Group and our delegation in getting  
14 some language in that would suggest or  
15 hopefully get us a Catalyst Pathfinder Lab.  
16 There are 11 of those located around the  
17 United States. General Curl, the Command  
18 General of the JRTC in Fort Polk, set up kind  
19 of an ad hoc intelligence lab innovation cell  
20 within 509th and Geronimo's of Fort Polk, this  
21 would build on that. And also hopefully,  
22 create a public-private sector partnership to  
23 identify technical challenges and rapidly  
24 transition soldier-driven innovation. And so  
25 if you've been to Fort Campbell, there is a

1 partnership with Duke University that is  
2 earth-shatteringly neat to look at and see. I  
3 mean, they are literally taking things in a  
4 lab right there on the spot, printing them in  
5 three dimensions, and bringing them back out  
6 to be tested. And that's the real-time  
7 expectation that the Secretary of the Army has  
8 for the Army Transformation Initiative. It  
9 began before the Secretary was in office, but  
10 it's been growing and actually snowballing.  
11 So we're excited to do that and get some of  
12 those capabilities at Fort Polk.

13 I think one of the keys there that I  
14 learned during the Army's road trip last year  
15 at Fort Polk was that a lot of the technology  
16 that was developed at Fort Campbell and at the  
17 other labs had to be tested at JRTC. So, why  
18 we did not have a Catalyst Pathfinder Lab at  
19 Fort Polk remains a mystery to me, but I was  
20 briefed on it when I was there, and I reached  
21 out to them and asked them if they would be  
22 interested, and they absolutely were. The  
23 linchpin here is going to be finding a  
24 partnership with an institution of higher  
25 education, either Northwestern State

1 University, or Tulane, or Louisiana State  
2 University, so I'm hopeful that we're able to  
3 put that together. And I, again, want to  
4 drive home and propagate the Roosevelt Group  
5 for assisting in getting this language in  
6 there that would really set us up for success  
7 in this program.

8 And next slide, please.

9 Last but not least, we do have our  
10 annual membership dinner coming up this coming  
11 Thursday. I think many of you have RSVP'ed  
12 RCP. If you haven't and would like to, I'm  
13 sure we can find a spot. We should have  
14 between 85 and 90 active duty service members  
15 and spouses there for the event. It will be a  
16 joint celebration of the accomplishments of  
17 the Armed Forces Alliance and also our  
18 official celebration of the Army's 250th  
19 birthday. So it's going to be a great event.  
20 We've got about 300 confirmed attendees from  
21 the community and around the state, and we  
22 certainly appreciate each of you for that, and  
23 our partner, the Greater Virginia Chamber of  
24 Commerce for hosting this event with us.

25 MS. KNOWLTON:

1                   We just want to say thank you for  
2 everything that you've done in this process.  
3 We appreciate you, and again, we're so  
4 grateful to you.

5                   Senator Reese, we thank you for your  
6 continued support for the Louisiana Forces  
7 Alliance.

8                   Robbie, you guys at Economic  
9 Development are so good to us. We really  
10 appreciate everything you do.

11                  And finally, Chris, thank you for  
12 all your team does to support us. It's very  
13 much appreciated.

14                  MR. MORRIS:

15                  And specifically to Secretary  
16 Meginley, the Boot program is wildly  
17 successful at Fort Polk. I would say, I think  
18 the latest figures show that probably 70  
19 percent of our success cases came out of that  
20 office. Mr. Ben Iles works hand-in-hand,  
21 lockstep with retired Commencementary Major  
22 Chris Altman, who runs the Transition  
23 Assistance Program for Fort Polk. It is  
24 literally a one-stop shop and it has made a  
25 night and day difference in the transition of

1 the service member from afternoon to the  
2 retirement. It's neat to see somebody  
3 wondering what they're going to do from skill  
4 bridge or not qualifying for skilled bridge,  
5 and then walking across to the next desk and  
6 finding an opportunity to work their  
7 retirement. So we genuinely appreciate that,  
8 and I'd be happy to submit a letter of  
9 recommendation for expansion of the program to  
10 the Governor or the city to be able to  
11 increase it.

12 MS. CARTER:

13 One of the things that came to mind  
14 when you're talking about the Catalyst  
15 Pathfinder Lab is looking at opportunities  
16 through LSU, but in particular, Pennington and  
17 the amount of DOD research they do around  
18 soldiers and wearables and a lot of that  
19 activity. There's tremendous opportunity  
20 there. So we can definitely support making  
21 some of those connections.

22 MR. MORRIS:

23 We'd love that. And we have a real  
24 estate there as well.

25 MS. CARTER:

1                   And you can leverage what's been  
2                   going on and go fund it and that would be an  
3                   additional clinical opportunity for them. I  
4                   mean, tremendous public-private partnership  
5                   there. And can see it come to fruition.

6                   MS. MORRIS:

7                   One last item I'd like to cover is  
8                   on the civilian workforce at Fort Polk. I  
9                   know it impacts every federal agency within  
10                  the state of Louisiana. It has openings, but  
11                  the hiring freeze is extended now to January.

12                  One office that we are particularly  
13                  short at at Fort Polk is Casualty Assistance.  
14                  Our director retired last year, or earlier  
15                  this year, April, April 30th, actually, and  
16                  his job has not yet been to be retired. They  
17                  were already two down, and now they're a third  
18                  down.

19                  But the Casualty Assistance office  
20                  at Fort Polk covers East Texas, Louisiana,  
21                  Arkansas, and Mississippi, Southern Arkansas.  
22                  This year, through the Soldiers of 310, The  
23                  509th, 46 Engineers, and what is now the law  
24                  enforcement company, the 519th, by the way,  
25                  has provided armed guard services for 4,800

1 funerals this year. I mean, it's an  
2 astronomical number. That also includes  
3 support from Guard and Reserve. So one of the  
4 issues that we're having right now is we are  
5 not able to give full military honors to every  
6 veteran that deserves them because we do not  
7 have the manpower or capacity to do it. I  
8 certainly appreciate, and I make a special  
9 point of attending as many of those services  
10 as I can, and also visiting with those service  
11 members because they volunteer to be trained  
12 for honor guard duty, but they are voluntold  
13 for the services that they're assigned to.  
14 And so Fort Polk is punching way above its  
15 weight limit with a reduction in troop  
16 strength to cover those services that are  
17 required. And we appreciate the National  
18 Guard for their assistance in coordinating  
19 those and streamlining the process as much as  
20 possible as those are tasked.

21 Do you have questions, comments,  
22 random wisdom?

23 MR. TUEK:

24 I just want to make one comment,  
25 agreeing with everything that Ms. Avon said.

1 Thanking everyone, Senator Reese, LED, which  
2 actually went to D.C. with us back in March,  
3 working with us, and especially Chris and the  
4 Roosevelt Group, and everyone else that has  
5 helped. One person she forgot to mention, and  
6 that's Avon herself. She has been a  
7 phenomenal executive director for us, and she  
8 has really grown our organizations and really  
9 kept the board informed and progressing in  
10 every avenue. So I just wanted to make  
11 sure -- she won't pat herself on the back, but  
12 somebody needs to because she does a great  
13 job.

14 MS. KNOWLTON:

15 Thank you. I appreciate that.

16 MR. GOOD:

17 I will move as quickly as I can.  
18 Let's go to the next slide.

19 Chris Goode, Roosevelt Group.

20 And Logan, to your credit, this is  
21 how things are supposed to work. He got  
22 briefed on this Pathfinder idea, and it  
23 probably took him five times to keep telling  
24 us about it. But we did finally sort of  
25 sanctify it in this year's appropriations

1 bill.

2 So the JRTC can't get away from this  
3 bill. It is in that bill. You can call it a  
4 report, whatever you want. But it is in  
5 there. And now we can run with it. And  
6 they're going to have to respond to it. So  
7 let's go to the -- yeah, really three big  
8 things. I want to just give you a quick  
9 overview of what we're seeing happening in  
10 terms of defense policy inside the  
11 administration. Give you a quick  
12 congressional defense update as well to  
13 include the reconciliation process. The other  
14 individuals spoke really well about the  
15 defense community, so I really want to focus  
16 on a couple of use cases that we've work on,  
17 some repetition, some not. And then talk a  
18 little bit about our next steps going forward  
19 to the end of this year.

20 So again, I always tend to put this  
21 slide up. We are in D.C. We're at 200 Mass  
22 Avenue. The important thing, if you are in  
23 DC, please stop by. My phone number is there.  
24 My e-mail is there. You know, we see folks  
25 come into town, and they do stuff. You know,

1 the Secretary was in our office a few months  
2 ago. The Adjutant General has been in the  
3 office with his team a number of times. When  
4 Robbie's in town, people come by, and it's  
5 important to meet the team and to exchange  
6 these ideas, ideas like the Pathfinder Lab.  
7 So we're here, we have a great team, really  
8 proud of how we support these defense  
9 communities, and it's always been a privilege  
10 to support the Louisiana server.

11 Next slide.

12 So, let's talk real high-end, and  
13 I'll move -- but I think it's important just  
14 to talk a little bit about how all this  
15 started in this new administration. And, you  
16 know, despite a lot of criticism of the  
17 Secretary in terms of Signal Gate and, you  
18 know, firing people, you have to give him  
19 credit in terms of, you know, he's been  
20 absolutely unapologetic about these key  
21 priorities. And they really, you know, it's  
22 sort of a microcosm of the Trump  
23 administration in general. There is something  
24 coming out of DOD. It's, like, every day  
25 something's happening. And they really are

1 moving out quite promptly on things like, you  
2 know, the Indo-Pacific. And they've been  
3 trying this agile combat employment concept.  
4 It's been around for a long time, but it's  
5 certainly going to be critical to the way that  
6 we would have to employ ourselves should there  
7 be a peer fight in the Asia-Pacific area of  
8 operations.

9 Big modernization capabilities,  
10 things like the F-47 to replace, to become the  
11 new Air Force fighter, Golden Dome. I mean,  
12 these things are gigantic, big-time programs.  
13 There's really been no change in terms of  
14 resiliency and defense industrial base. That  
15 Title III Defense Production Act funding,  
16 that's still churned along and is, if  
17 anything, in a grown province. You know,  
18 recruitment is up. But, you know, bigger than  
19 that, just how we are organizing ourselves as  
20 the Defense Department, how the JROC, you  
21 know, the Joint Requirements Process, it's all  
22 been blown out. I mean, they are really kind  
23 of taking things down to the studs and  
24 rebuilding how we buy things, how we validate  
25 equipment. And that hasn't been done in a

1 long time. And some of that is being  
2 validated and supported by a Republican  
3 Congress, right? That's why you see things  
4 like the SPEED Act, and the FORGE Act, and the  
5 SHIPS Act, all of which would probably be  
6 enshrined in this new National Defense  
7 Authorization Act. So there's a lot going on,  
8 and it's been exciting to watch.

9 Next slide.

10 So when you get to the actual  
11 budget, right, this is the first year that we  
12 really reached that \$1 trillion mark in terms  
13 of defense spending. And, you know, the  
14 regular appropriations process isn't played  
15 out yet, but, you know, you're in that, like,  
16 high 895, whatever it's going to be. It  
17 hasn't been fully appropriated. In fact, the  
18 Senate has put an additional \$25 billion into  
19 the defense piece.

20 And then you have the reconciliation  
21 piece, so you will get over a trillion  
22 dollars. And, you know, the bottom line, as  
23 they develop this budget, there was  
24 essentially a decrease of 17 percent in  
25 domestic funding and an increase of 14

1 percent. To get those numbers to where  
2 they're at.

3 Next slide.

4 And, you know, in terms of what we  
5 did, again, big items, this missile defense  
6 piece, Golden Dome will be about \$25 billion  
7 just to start out with. A ton on  
8 shipbuilding. You know, like I said, the  
9 F-47, nuclear modernization, et cetera. And  
10 those priorities, again, you know, that's what  
11 is happening. And again, you know, taking  
12 care of the troops, 3.8 percent pay raise for  
13 any of you guys that have kids in the  
14 military.

15 Next slide.

16 Pretty good slide here in terms of  
17 the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. You know, if  
18 you need these slides, you know, I'll pass  
19 them on. You know, it gets into the SALT  
20 deduction. You know, Medicaid and Affordable  
21 Care Act, et cetera. But, you know, from a  
22 defense perspective, all the defense  
23 contractors and people who follow this, you  
24 know, it's that column, right? You know,  
25 okay, what are these savings? What do we get?

1 It was \$156 billion in additional funds to the  
2 Department of Defense. Reconciliation has  
3 been around since 1974. It's specifically on  
4 the budget. And when you have a Republican  
5 president and a Republican House and a  
6 Republican Senate, it's sort of a good way to  
7 avoid a filibuster and get to 51 votes and  
8 keeping ib budget. But we've never really  
9 used reconciliation for defense spending.

10 And again, the president, give him  
11 credit for reading the room, because if you  
12 remember, he was the one who said, you know,  
13 the Senate -- the Senate especially said, you  
14 know, we've got to have two bills, and this is  
15 just far too complex, we're going to split the  
16 taxes from the rest of the program. And, you  
17 know, the President said, no, we're doing one  
18 bill, because I think he realized that's about  
19 all he gets in four years. And, you know,  
20 there are additional reconciliation ideas out  
21 there right now that have gone nowhere.  
22 Congress is like, we're done. We got it done.  
23 Let's take this win. So we'll see if you  
24 really can employ reconciliation again when  
25 they come back. We'll see how successful that

1 is.

2 Next slide.

3 So this is a really good chart in  
4 terms of how reconciliation, FY26, will play  
5 out. And the reconciliation dollars, they're  
6 not spent in a year. They're going to be  
7 spent probably within two, maybe three years.  
8 And when you look at the numbers, how they're  
9 going to combine, again, it's submarines, it's  
10 ships, it's aircraft. Not a lot of  
11 Army-specific items on this list. It is  
12 shipbuilding and ship repair. And for our  
13 private contractors who are dying to get their  
14 hands on reconciliation, there's not going to  
15 be as much money as I think they'd think for  
16 new programs.

17 And, you know, human nature being  
18 what it is, and as cynical as I am, I guess,  
19 it's going to be a lot easier for program  
20 executive officers and PMs to dump vast  
21 amounts of money to their existing contractors  
22 versus going out and lending, taking risks,  
23 creating entirely new programs. But we'll  
24 see. You know, it's still a work in progress.

25 So, in terms of the bills we look

1 at, obviously the National Defense  
2 Authorization Act, there's really two defense  
3 bills going on. There's the policy bill,  
4 which is the authorization act that changes  
5 names of military bases and pays the troops.  
6 And then there's the appropriations bills,  
7 which are pure money bills. So this is  
8 generally on time. It's of particular  
9 importance to us this year because we have  
10 some major actions still to be completed, like  
11 the codification of Air Force Global Strike  
12 Command, the National Disaster Medical System.  
13 You know, we're trying to make that a program  
14 of record so we don't have to go out to the  
15 Louisiana delegation every year and beg for  
16 money. And now that we've got that firmly  
17 entrenched in Shreveport. That is a  
18 moneymaker. It's going to be producing money  
19 for LSU Health every year, guaranteed. We  
20 want it to be a program of record, and we're  
21 getting really close to that. So those are  
22 the two big ones that still we have to fight  
23 in conference. But we anticipate it all being  
24 wrapped up by December, unless some things  
25 really go sideways.

1                   Next slide. You can skip that one.  
2                   And we have about 10 real requests  
3 out there. And if you look between the Senate  
4 and the House, you'll see some big numbers and  
5 small numbers. And that's just life. You get  
6 it in one house, and you don't get it in the  
7 other. And then you've got to attack in  
8 conference and do your best to come out whole.  
9 And that's in -- I'm going to talk to these so  
10 we can go to the next slide.

11                  So, again, I mentioned Speed and  
12 Forge. Again, if you're in the defense  
13 industry, you're part of this ecosystem and  
14 you're, you know, responding to competitions  
15 and engaged in other transactional  
16 authorities. You know, in selling commercial  
17 goods, these acts are something that you  
18 should probably get familiar with. They're  
19 not law yet, but, you know, I think between  
20 the Speed and the Forge Act, they will get  
21 wrapped into this National Defense  
22 Authorization Act.

23                  So next slide.

24                  So, you know, when we look at  
25 Louisiana, just, you know, big picture, you

1 know, this was a different year. It was, you  
2 know, coming off an election year. The House  
3 and Senate were Republican, not great vast  
4 majorities. The administration is Republican.  
5 And we really did step back and we're  
6 encouraged and sort of challenged by the  
7 Speaker's office to look at some bigger items,  
8 big ticket items, big wins. And over about  
9 the time frame of about three months, you  
10 know, around D.C. Mardi Gras, we actually  
11 assembled like a top ten list. And it was  
12 really, you know, it was white space stuff.  
13 It was what could we really do. And there  
14 were some big ideas, maybe some crazy ideas,  
15 but, you know, reopening shipyards and moving  
16 headquarters from D.C. to Louisiana. I mean,  
17 it was, they weren't crazy ideas, they were  
18 good ideas and big ideas. And we had a lot  
19 of, we had a number of good discussions with  
20 the Speaker's staff.

21 And at the end of the day, you know,  
22 for people who are up in D.C. quite often,  
23 they know that it really came down to, can we  
24 do two things? Can we get off this, you know,  
25 relentless cycle of trying to protect the Soul

1 Brigade at Fort Polk by going deeper into  
2 strategy and getting additional stability with  
3 soldier strength? That was one.

4 And the second was taking on this  
5 Air Force Golden Strike Committee. Because,  
6 you know, we try to be good actors, we try to  
7 do the right thing, we try to work with the  
8 Air Force, but over time, you know, the sense  
9 that the community was getting around Bob was  
10 very clear that it was not a good deal for  
11 Barksdale. When the whole thing was floated,  
12 we said, fine, we'll work with you, but we're  
13 not going to budge on certain things. And at  
14 the end of the day, it all came down to  
15 congressional action, which is fine.

16 Next slide. And I want to just,  
17 again, talk about a couple other things. The  
18 National Disaster Medical System. I want to  
19 touch again on this KC-130 program and F-15,  
20 so next slide.

21 So back to Fort Polk, you know, it  
22 took about three years months, but our entire  
23 team, we have a really good Army team.  
24 Working with LAFO, working with LED, working  
25 with CASA. You know, we put this strategy

1 together, which is about 20 pages, that  
2 really, you know, builds the strategy from  
3 ground up. And, you know, takes on the  
4 reality that Fort Polk, and this is probably  
5 somewhat an unfair statement, you know, the  
6 JRTC is not still stuck in the days of the  
7 global war on terrorism. But, you know, we're  
8 re-centering that mission to pure conventional  
9 combat training, to really looking seriously  
10 at soldier strength. And we looked at a dozen  
11 different types of formations. Clearly, the  
12 Army is most impressed by and most sees the  
13 need for additional multi-domain task forces.  
14 And then ensuring and highlighting that if  
15 you're really going to fight against a peer,  
16 and you look at what the Chinese are doing,  
17 you look at what's happening on the Ukrainian  
18 battlefield, you better have really good  
19 cyber, electronic warfare, urban warfare,  
20 unmanned systems, and really good logistics to  
21 look at.

22 And does the JRTC have that?  
23 Absolutely. It's really pretty impressive.  
24 But do they have it all? Probably not. And,  
25 you know, so again, it was a vector check to

1 the Army to say, hey, if you don't do it,  
2 we're going to force you to do it, and we're  
3 going to get the delegation to do it.

4 So, you know, I think the document  
5 is very good. I'm proud of it. We completed  
6 it in June. You know, we talked to the  
7 governor. In fact, I talked to the governor  
8 in person at an air show, and he said, I'm  
9 going to sign it, and I'm going to help you  
10 get it to the right people. And it was Mike  
11 who we indicated was just in the White House.  
12 We printed a bunch of these things up, we put  
13 some talking points together, and it has been  
14 distributed.

15 Has it been distributed to the  
16 President, to the Secretary of the Army?  
17 Probably not yet, but it's a start. And there  
18 is an opportunity for some follow-up, which  
19 we've got to do once everyone's back after  
20 Labor Day. We've got to re-hit this and try  
21 to get some footing.

22 So let me move on. Back to the  
23 codification piece.

24 This is really new territory. In  
25 law prognosis, use of Title 10 to legally make

1 Air Force Global Strike Command a legal  
2 codified unit is not something that's done  
3 very often. It was actually done for the A-10  
4 nuclear directory. And that's sort of how we  
5 got inspired to do it. But making it part of  
6 the law and ensuring that a four-star is  
7 always there would be a coup. And this  
8 command, I can guarantee you, will never leave  
9 Barksdale Air Force Base if we actually pull  
10 this off. And it's not going to be easy to  
11 do. I mean, we were really successful on the  
12 House side. The Senate put some watered down  
13 the language. You know, we are talking to  
14 everybody at Barksdale Forward, and their  
15 board is hitting the congressional delegation  
16 hard.

17 The next step, you know, the next  
18 wicket is a Senate amendment to mimic the  
19 House one and let these two come together and  
20 get the Speaker involved to say, I got to have  
21 it, or this thing's not going to the floor.  
22 Sorry, game over. So that's, you know, if we  
23 can get to that point, we'll pull this off.  
24 And frankly, given what the Chinese are doing,  
25 what the Russians are doing, I really don't

1 care about anybody's sensitivities, you know,  
2 among the professional staff that, oh, we just  
3 don't normally do this. There is no reason we  
4 cannot put a fence around our nuclear  
5 capability and just say, it's enshrined in  
6 law. We are going to be a nuclear power at  
7 infinitum. So that's the objective. That's  
8 how we've been trying to frame it. And again,  
9 you know, we're halfway there.

10 Next slide.

11 And, you know, Eric mentioned this,  
12 you know, a lot of -- things are really kind  
13 of sliding sideways, you know, when you're  
14 talking about losing billets and losing  
15 positions and repatching. And, you know, even  
16 though we were doing all this congressional  
17 stuff in the background, there was a lot of  
18 upfront work talking to the Pentagon and  
19 engaging DOD leaders. And the whole thing  
20 sort of just unwound over time. And I'd like  
21 to think, you know, Barksdale's efforts and  
22 our efforts together sort of put a light on  
23 this thing and reminded people in the Pentagon  
24 that you can't go too fast on the nuclear  
25 piece, because mistakes can be made. And in

1 the past, those mistakes have been really  
2 problematic. And I think, you know, we put  
3 some clarity back into this, and they did step  
4 in. They stepped off. Which is a good  
5 success, and we didn't stop, we didn't put our  
6 foot off the pedal because we are going to  
7 this next step with this National  
8 Authorization Act language, which would really  
9 put a pin in this thing and be a huge success.  
10 Excellent.

11 In terms of the future there,  
12 listen, you're right. This aircraft is not  
13 going away. It is going to fly, you know,  
14 until 2050. There's a lot of great things  
15 going on at Barksdale. There's a ton of money  
16 being pumped into Barksdale. You know, this  
17 weapons generation facility, it's great, it's  
18 ahead of schedule. It will enshrine a nuclear  
19 mission at Barksdale forever. You know, a new  
20 weapon going in there, and yeah, ultimately  
21 the B-52 is going to be retired, and you'll  
22 get the long range. But, you know, the base  
23 itself, are we there with everything? Of  
24 course, not. There's still quality of life  
25 issues, just like at Belle Chasse, that need

1 to be attacked. But for all the work, there's  
2 been a lot of money put down there.

3 And Bob, with all due respect, I  
4 would challenge you a little bit on people  
5 being proud of Barksdale and the visibility of  
6 Barksdale. Because if you walk around  
7 Malmstrom Air Force Base or FE Warren or  
8 Minot, There is no way those bases are more  
9 visible than Barksdale. I think having the  
10 B-52s, and having this delegation, and even  
11 Virginia, we represent them. And I would put  
12 Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Cassidy ahead of Tim Kaine  
13 and Mark Warner. So, you know, we are -- I  
14 get what you're saying, I do. But trust me,  
15 you know, this delegation is pretty hardcore  
16 when it comes to Barksdale and protecting it.  
17 And you guys have done a remarkable job. I  
18 think you're, I think the Barksdale Forward  
19 group is much stronger, much more visible than  
20 any of those defense communities. So, you  
21 know, I think we're in a good place, I really  
22 do.

23 Next slide.

24 All right, again, you know, our  
25 unsung hero here is Shreveport and LSU for

1 stepping up and doing a lot of things pro  
2 bono, essentially, to go up to D.C. multiple  
3 times and to lobby hard to become the sixth  
4 national disaster medical system site in the  
5 United States. You know, again, this was just  
6 in trying. This is new. It happened in  
7 April, April 15th. They were officially added  
8 to the program. The requirement here to  
9 become part of the system -- and the National  
10 Disaster Medical System has been around  
11 forever. But the pilot to specifically  
12 support DOD is only a few years old. And the  
13 criteria was you have to be co-located with  
14 military installation with a long runway, you  
15 have to have a research hospital, and you have  
16 to have a VA hospital. And we said, perfect.  
17 LSU is great for this. And they used to have  
18 a bunch of contractors running it. They  
19 changed that model a few years ago to  
20 university hospitals to run it.

21 And like I said, you can laugh at  
22 only \$500,000, but that's basically \$500,000  
23 just to be in the program. What the real  
24 benefit is, LSU is now part of what they call  
25 this ecosystem that they can compete for

1 grants and they can offer up unsolicited  
2 grants to this entire system, which is run by  
3 five big federal agencies. And now, if we  
4 become a program of record, LSU will be  
5 basically granted a specialty, whatever it's  
6 going to be, biowarfare, whatever. And  
7 they're going to have a great opportunity,  
8 again, to go after some of real money. So  
9 this is very real. It's very important.

10 We say it all the time. There's  
11 100,000 casualties that are going to be coming  
12 back every week for the first couple months of  
13 a big scenario. And we are not prepared to  
14 take all these casualties. That's why LSU and  
15 this area will be right in the middle of that,  
16 should we be bringing back casualties from an  
17 Asia-Pacific scenario. So, big win.

18 Next slide, and I'll keep moving.

19 On the F-15EX, we had the active  
20 director of the Air National Guard in our  
21 office last week, Duke Pirate. Duke is  
22 fantastic. He is an F-15 pilot. Again, the  
23 first thing he said is, don't talk to me about  
24 Louisiana. You guys are taken care of. We're  
25 going on time. And we have a means to ensure

1           that you're going to get the jets, and there  
2           shouldn't be a loss of iron. Remember,  
3           Massachusetts, they're moving to the F-35s.  
4           So you're exactly right. They're going to  
5           start moving these aircraft around, as they  
6           need to until they fill these parking spots  
7           with brand new aircraft.

8                       But if you look at the numbers, I  
9           mean, Duke basically said to me, he said, when  
10          we first took on this new F-15 mission, a lot  
11          of people laughed at it. They said, oh, we  
12          don't want it because it's not what the active  
13          duty is going to fly. And it's going to  
14          become guard aircraft. It's just going to be  
15          this dog. Well, that's completely changed.  
16          In fact, we cannot fight the Chinese without  
17          this new F-15EX. It carries a ton of weapons,  
18          it has better legs, and it is going to be  
19          pivotal to breaking down the door in any China  
20          contingency. So, you know, the 159th guys in  
21          DELS, they're not going to just be, you know,  
22          pushing you know, Dr. Smith, you know, out of  
23          the airspace in Cessna, they are going to be  
24          in Kadena on the front lines, rotation-wise,  
25          doing really important stuff. And the

1 Congress has figured it out. The problem is  
2 speed. And Boeing -- Boeing is a problem.  
3 Boeing still can only deliver about two of  
4 these a month. But it's not Congress' issue.  
5 Congress is like shoveling money at this  
6 program. So, you know, we're going to build  
7 them, we're going to keep building them, and  
8 Louisiana is going to get them.

9 Clay Higgins was fantastic. You  
10 know, we did get language. It's not  
11 directive. You can't get directive language  
12 at this point. But I don't have any doubt  
13 that Louisiana is going to be in a really  
14 good -- we're in a very good spot now.

15 There was some craziness with  
16 Michigan, as you know. We jumped in and the  
17 governor went in to see President Trump and  
18 for all his decisiveness. On the other hand,  
19 sometimes you have the last person in the room  
20 syndrome. And, you know, that caused some  
21 concern that Michigan getting out F-15s could  
22 somehow derail Louisiana. Well, the day that  
23 happened, the Speaker and Mr. Scalise got  
24 phone calls. Your tag was right on top of it,  
25 and the assurances were made very fast from

1 the Air Force that New Orleans is going to be  
2 in good shape.

3 Just two more slides, I think.

4 On the KC-130Js. You know, as Gary  
5 mentioned -- I'm sorry, this is a great story.  
6 The Navy has never formally asked for a  
7 KC-130J. Zero. Every year. You know, I know  
8 there's a lot of angst around F-18s, whether  
9 they're flying at Belle Chasse or not. But  
10 about three years ago, the former N-98 who  
11 runs all of naval aviation, who we hired,  
12 said, why are you spinning your wheels on  
13 F-18s when you can help the Navy Reserve  
14 actually get something they need at Belle  
15 Chase. And that started that process where we  
16 worked with the Navy Reserves directly with  
17 Lockheed Martin, who also was frustrated  
18 because they couldn't get anything done. And  
19 we said, Louisiana has to be the face of this.  
20 And the Reserves said, you become the face of  
21 this, you'll get the aircraft. And we're  
22 getting the aircraft. And we started from  
23 zero. This is the third year. And now we are  
24 going to get every single KC-130J at Belle  
25 Chasse will be recapitalized with brand new

1 aircraft. And, you know, the larger vision is  
2 they have space for two squadrons versus one,  
3 and we want to get two squadrons down there.  
4 And, you know, is that going to be possible?  
5 We'll see.

6 But the production line for Navy  
7 Reserve KC-130Js is now going and operating,  
8 and having Lockheed on your team is not a bad  
9 thing to have, but we want that squadron fully  
10 recapitalized. And like I said, we go to war,  
11 your C-17s take certain stuff, and your C-5s,  
12 we have a few left, but the Navy really  
13 doesn't have intramodal coverage, except for  
14 these KC-130s. And right now they're the  
15 oldest C-130s in the inventory. So this is  
16 long overdue, and it's good to see that we're  
17 making progress and VR-54 is going to be  
18 happy.

19 So in terms of next steps, we have a  
20 lot of work left on Capitol Hill, again. The  
21 key things, the Air Force Global Strike  
22 Command, KC-130Js, as Gary mentioned, there's  
23 only one in the Senate, the House put four, so  
24 that has to be conferenced, National Disaster  
25 Medical System making a program record. We

1 got a lot more work on the revitalization  
2 strategy with Fort Polk.

3 You know, we really haven't talked a  
4 whole lot about shipbuilding and ship repair  
5 in Louisiana. The governor has appointed and  
6 is a new person to lead that effort. You  
7 know, we want to align ourselves with that  
8 effort. There's a lot there, and you know,  
9 focus heavily on that at the firm. You know,  
10 and we are very cognizant of quality of life  
11 issues. I mean, we're still lagging at JR,  
12 the joint reserve base, and certainly  
13 Barksdale has some things to work on. We'll  
14 see the Coast Guard tomorrow to re-explore  
15 some additive manufacturing efforts with them,  
16 and we talked about Pathfinder and the Bayou  
17 Tech Node, and I think both have groups there.

18 So that's what we're doing. For the  
19 rest of the calendar year.

20 Any questions?

21 MR. ABBOUD:

22 Thank you. Just for the updates and  
23 really bringing some opportunities out for us  
24 in the state.

25 So with that, I know we ran a little

1 over here, but is there any other new business  
2 to come before the council today? I'm hearing  
3 none.

4 Any comments from the public.  
5 Hearing none as well.

6 So that should cover everything for  
7 today. Thank you to the presenters. And  
8 again, just the economic impact that military  
9 assets, defense contracting, veterans have in  
10 our state is significant. Billions of  
11 dollars, over 70,000 jobs, and the work that  
12 we do as part of this council is a significant  
13 part of that. So thank you for being here and  
14 the work you all do.

15 Okay. So with that, any motions to  
16 adjourn?

17 MR. SILBERT:

18 Second.

19 MR. ABBOUD:

20 Okay. All in favor please say aye.

21 THE COUNCIL:

22 Aye.

23 MR. ABBOUD:

24 Thank you for your time.

25 (Hearing concluded on/or about 3:13 PM.)

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September 10, 2025, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



KRISTIE GARRISON, CCR

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