

In The Matter Of:
Louisiana Military Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2021

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. ABBOUD:

All right. Good morning,
everyone. My name is Robby Abboud,
Executive Director of the Louisiana
Military Advisory Council. Great
to see everyone this morning, and
thank you for attending today's
meeting.

I'm showing 10 after, so I
think we're clear to go ahead and
proceed. I know we have a number
of important topics to get to. So
we'll follow along with the agenda,
which is printed, and it should be
in each of your packets.

Since we typically begin our
meetings with the Pledge of
Allegiance, I'll ask that you do,
please rise and join me in saying
the Pledge.

(Whereupon, everyone stands and recites the
Pledge of Allegiance.)

Thank you, everyone. So before
we kick off with the rest of the
agenda here today, I'd like to do a

1 quick roll call for the record. As
2 always, please correct me should
3 there be any mispronunciations.

4 Mayor Clarence Beebe?

5 Mayor Beebe:

6 (No response.)

7 MR. ABBOUD:

8 Representative Raymond Crews?

9 REPRESENTATIVE CREWS:

10 (No response.)

11 MR. ABBOUD:

12 General Robert Elder?

13 GENERAL ELDER:

14 (No response.)

15 MR. ABBOUD:

16 Mr. Robert Gatti?

17 MR. GATTI:

18 (No response.)

19 MR. ABBOUD:

20 Mr. Brian Jakes?

21 MR. JAKES:

22 Here.

23 MR. ABBOUD:

24 Mr. John Manion?

25 MR MANION:

1 Here.

2 MR. ABOUD:

3 Secretary Don Pierson?

4 SECRETARY PIERSON:

5 Present.

6 MR. ABOUD:

7 Ms. Deborah Randolph?

8 MS. RANDOLPH:

9 (No response.)

10 MR. ABOUD:

11 Mayor Rick Allen?

12 MAYOR ALLEN:

13 (No response.)

14 MR. ABOUD:

15 Major General Ronald Richard?

16 MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:

17 Here.

18 MR. ABOUD:

19 Mr. Gary Silbert?

20 MR. SILBERT:

21 (No response.)

22 MR. ABOUD:

23 Mr. Ronnie Slone?

24 MR. SLONE:

25 (No response.)

1 MR. ABOUD:

2 Senator Mike Reese?

3 SENATOR REESE:

4 (No response.)

5 MR. ABOUD:

6 Secretary Joey Strickland?

7 MR. WILLIAMS:

8 I'm present for Secretary

9 Strickland, Larry Williams.

10 MR. ABOUD:

11 Very good. For the record, Mr.

12 Larry Williams is in attendance and

13 will report on behalf of Secretary

14 Strickland.

15 Mr. Murray Viser?

16 MR. VISER:

17 (No response.)

18 MR. ABOUD:

19 Major General Keith Waddell?

20 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

21 Here.

22 MR. ABOUD:

23 And Rear Admiral Joel

24 Whitehead?

25 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:

1 (No response.)

2 MR. ABOUD:

3 Okay. Thank you very much
4 everyone. It looks like although
5 we don't have a quorum today, it
6 will not prohibit us from moving
7 forward. We just won't be able to
8 seek to adopt any motions.

9 And primarily, the next item on
10 the agenda here is the approval of
11 the prior meeting's minutes. So at
12 this time, I'd like to ask board
13 members for any questions,
14 comments, or notes for the previous
15 meeting's minutes, which was August
16 24th, which should have been shared
17 prior to today's meeting.

18 MR. JAKES:

19 I move that we accept the
20 minutes of the previous meeting.

21 MR. ABOUD:

22 Thank you, sir. There was a
23 motion moved to accept the
24 meetings. Unfortunately, without a
25 quorum, we can't officially approve

1 a motion. But without any comments
2 related to the meetings from the
3 prior meeting, we can go ahead and
4 proceed to the next item on the
5 agenda.

6 I'd like now to take a moment
7 to turn it over to LED Secretary
8 Don Pierson, LMAC chairman for a
9 few remarks and comments.

10 SECRETARY PIERSON:

11 Thank you, everyone, for
12 carving out time to be here with us
13 today, and this is a very important
14 activity and an important meeting.
15 It's not reflected in our
16 attendance today. Unfortunately,
17 there are a number of end-of-year
18 conflicts and various things that
19 our board members had communicated
20 to us that would make it difficult
21 for them to look at this date. We
22 contemplated shifting the meeting,
23 however, it looked like to us that
24 we could wrap up the end of the
25 year and have our required meeting

1 numbers and proceed without any
2 significant impacts related to
3 that.

4 It's also not indicative about
5 the amount of effort and work
6 that's been ongoing throughout
7 2021. It's been quite the
8 challenging year. You're going to
9 hear a report issued by our
10 Roosevelt Group with Mr. Chris
11 Goode and others participating.
12 That will be a big part of the
13 story today.

14 But certainly, the governor has
15 been very active and engaged as
16 we've been through a tough budget
17 cycle in Washington, D.C. That has
18 required that we be very mindful
19 and utilize some of our elected
20 officials, senators and
21 congressmen, and others, to
22 persuade, send our message, and
23 lobby for very important outcomes.
24 We would argue for the security of
25 our nation and for the strength of

1 our armed services, and
2 particularly where we interact
3 where the rubber meets the road at
4 Barksdale Air Force Base, at Fort
5 Polk, at Belle Chasse, and at other
6 installations.

7 The other important information
8 that you have received and
9 hopefully have seen some publicity
10 about has been the conduct of our
11 economic impact analysis that we've
12 obtained and conducted, and it
13 demonstrated a \$9.4 billion annual
14 economic impact to our state
15 represented by the Department of
16 Defense and the retirees and other
17 military-related operations here in
18 the state.

19 That's very significant. We
20 knew that. And that's part of the
21 reason that we're constantly
22 engaged with our military
23 counterparts. And that also
24 represents a very significant
25 number, I think 77,000, jobs across

1 our state.

2 We had growth since the last
3 economic impact. So hopefully,
4 that points to some good things
5 that are outcomes of the work done
6 by this organization and by the
7 representatives, and certainly,
8 reflective of the time and
9 attention that we put into all
10 these important matters.

11 So those will be discussed a
12 little bit more in detail or at
13 least presented to you in detail.
14 Again, I apologize for a low
15 turnout, but we will have a more
16 robust gathering at our next
17 engagement.

18 We typically try to place these
19 on military installations. There
20 were still COVID restrictions out
21 there that the military
22 installations were observing. And
23 for that reason, we went to the
24 fall-back position of coming here
25 to Baton Rouge.

1 So great to be with you today.
2 I'll go back to our executive
3 director, Robby Abboud, and proceed
4 with the program. Thank you.

5 MR. ABOUD:

6 Thank you very much, Mr.
7 Secretary.

8 Just to echo the secretary's
9 comments, I know there's no
10 shortage of activity, certainly,
11 robust engagements statewide. So
12 with that, we'll go ahead and
13 proceed to the next agenda item
14 which are reports from our
15 partners.

16 So first on the agenda, we had
17 Secretary Strickland. So what I'll
18 do now is call on Mr. Larry
19 Williams to come up and report on
20 behalf of Secretary Strickland with
21 the Department of Veterans Affairs.
22 And Mr. Larry Williams is the
23 Veterans Outreach Program Director.

24 Thank you, sir.

25 MR. WILLIAMS:

1 Mr. Abboud, thank you.

2 Good morning. As he said, my
3 name is Larry Williams, and I serve
4 as the Veterans Outreach Program
5 Director at the Louisiana
6 Department of Veterans Affairs.
7 And I will be briefing for
8 Secretary Strickland who had prior
9 engagements that he had to meet.

10 I just want to go over some of
11 the programs at the Louisiana
12 Department of Veterans Affairs and
13 where we currently are. I'll start
14 with our Veterans Assistance
15 Counselors.

16 Each Parish across the state
17 has a Veterans Assistance Counselor
18 Office, and currently, we have 74
19 working veterans assistance
20 counselors around the state who
21 provide a myriad of services to the
22 veterans in the parish that they
23 serve such as filing claims for
24 disability, pension, aid and
25 attendance, and other claims that

1 can be filed as well. Our veterans
2 assistance counselors also help
3 determine eligibility for VA health
4 care, answer general questions, and
5 provide insight to citizens on
6 veteran-related topics.

7 I'll move into our Veteran
8 Homes. As you know, we have five
9 Veteran Homes across the state of
10 Louisiana located in Jackson,
11 Reserve, Jennings, Monroe, and
12 Bossier. Our veterans homes
13 provide for skilled nursing
14 services to care for those
15 residents that require extensive
16 care for a period of time. Also,
17 just a quick reminder, our Veteran
18 Homes are open to veterans, veteran
19 spouses, and also Gold-star family
20 members. And currently, we house
21 over 500 of those individuals.

22 Moving on to our cemeteries, we
23 have five veterans cemeteries
24 across the state located in
25 Keithville, Leesville, Slidell,

1 Rayville, and Jennings. Currently,
2 we will be expanding the cemeteries
3 in Leesville and Keithville in
4 order to meet the need, and those
5 operations will be underway in the
6 very near future.

7 Moving on to our Louisiana
8 Veterans Corps Program or also
9 known as LAVetCorps. Our
10 LAVetCorps navigators are Veterans
11 who work on college campuses around
12 the state of Louisiana assisting
13 veteran military dependent and
14 survivor students. The LAVetCorps
15 navigators can connect veteran
16 students across campuses with LDVA
17 benefits' counselors, LDVA support
18 and service programs, and of
19 course, federal benefits and
20 programs as well. There is a
21 LAVetCorps navigator on 31 college
22 campuses across the state of
23 Louisiana working to assist our
24 veteran, military survivor, and
25 dependent students, who as we know,

1 can face very unique challenges
2 throughout their college careers.

3 Of course, we have our Military
4 Family Assistance Fund. The MFA
5 fund was established to provide
6 financial assistance to our
7 veterans, their families, but also
8 reservists, and our National Guard
9 soldiers. In relief of Hurricane
10 Ida, the MFA granted over \$120,000
11 to veterans and their families
12 across the state of Louisiana. The
13 MFA fund can assist with household
14 expenses such as mortgage, rent,
15 and some repairs, utilities such as
16 electricity, gas, water, sewage,
17 and garbage, and also, some vehicle
18 expenses such as payments,
19 insurance, and major repairs. You
20 can always contact us if you have
21 any questions about the Military
22 Family Assistance Fund.

23 I would encourage everyone to
24 remember the Louisiana Veterans
25 Honor Medal. The Louisiana

1 Veterans Honor Medal was created to
2 honor, recognize, and thank our
3 Louisiana veterans, but Louisiana
4 Honor Medal is also available to
5 our National Guard and Reserve
6 soldiers as well.

7 The Outreach Program was
8 created about a year and a half
9 ago, and that program is made up
10 solely of myself. Secretary
11 Strickland felt like we needed an
12 outreach program so that we can
13 focus on some areas that are of
14 need across the state of Louisiana.
15 My focus is the Louisiana Gold-Star
16 Families Program, Louisiana Blue-
17 Stars Family Support, Veteran
18 Homelessness Prevention, Women
19 Veteran Outreach, and also Veteran
20 Job Placement Assistance and
21 Referrals.

22 But also of need, I saw, and me
23 and the general was talking about
24 this earlier, I saw a need to
25 assist our veteran business owners

1 across the state of Louisiana. So
2 early on, when I took this
3 position, I actually made a call at
4 that time to Stephanie Hartman and
5 Mandy Mitchell, and they were nice
6 enough to talk to me for about an
7 hour on the programs that the LED
8 offers for our veteran business
9 owners and prospective veteran
10 business owners. But as me and the
11 general were discussing earlier,
12 getting the word out is very
13 important. So as I go across the
14 state and conduct different events
15 and talk to veterans, I always take
16 a one-sheeter, which Solomon Lee
17 was nice enough to provide me, so
18 that our veteran business owners
19 and prospective business owners can
20 know about the programs that are
21 available to them.

22 Very briefly, each year we
23 honor Louisiana Gold-Star Family
24 members by having our Louisiana
25 Department of Veterans Affairs

1 Gold-Star Mothers and Families
2 recognition ceremony that's held at
3 the Gold-Star Memorial at Veterans
4 Park.

5 We assist our Louisiana Blue
6 Star Families by providing our full
7 support to them, and we support the
8 yearly events that they hold around
9 the state of Louisiana.

10 Veteran Homelessness Prevention
11 is very important. We act as a
12 liaison between homeless veterans
13 or veterans that are in danger of
14 becoming homeless by putting them
15 in contact with the many
16 organizations around the state that
17 provide assistance to homeless
18 veterans such as transitional and
19 permanent housing, the payment of
20 rent, food assistance, bus passes,
21 life-skill training, and mail
22 services.

23 If you encounter a homeless
24 veteran, or you know of a veteran
25 that may be in danger of becoming

1 homeless, please do not hesitate to
2 reach out to me because there are a
3 lot of federal funding that comes
4 down to our continuance of care
5 here in Louisiana to assist our
6 homeless veterans.

7 Women Veterans Outreach: The
8 Women Veterans Outreach program
9 recognizes and honors the
10 contributions of Louisiana women
11 veterans. We also connect women
12 veterans with support organizations
13 and resources that are available to
14 them.

15 Recent events include our
16 Louisiana World War II Women
17 Veterans Honor Ceremony, which was
18 held this past June and of course,
19 our first annual Louisiana Women
20 Veterans Healthcare Symposium,
21 which was held in January of this
22 year, and gearing up for the second
23 annual Women Veterans Healthcare
24 Symposium, which will be held in
25 March. And of course, we'll

1 celebrate Louisiana Women Veterans
2 Day, June 12, 2022. But we also,
3 COVID in mind, will hold events
4 such as luncheons and honor
5 ceremonies, and of course,
6 Louisiana Women Veteran
7 conferences.

8 Veteran Job Placement and
9 Referrals: We do assist veterans
10 with employment largely through
11 partnerships that we have
12 throughout the state of Louisiana
13 such as partnerships with NextOp
14 Vets out of New Orleans, the
15 Louisiana Workforce Commission. We
16 also work very closely with
17 Louisiana Economic Development,
18 U.S. Department of Labor, Louisiana
19 Department of Transportation and
20 Development, and other non-profit
21 organizations that can assist us
22 with putting veterans to work.

23 And finally, suicide prevention
24 is very important to the Louisiana
25 Department of Veterans Affairs. We

1 continue to assist with the
2 prevention of suicide among our
3 veterans and service members. Each
4 year, we hold an annual suicide
5 prevention summit. That's held
6 every September. And currently, we
7 are participating in the Governor's
8 Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among
9 Service Members, Veterans, and
10 their Families initiative. This
11 initiative has been going on for
12 about six to seven months now, and
13 our goal is to develop new
14 techniques that we can implement in
15 the state of Louisiana to prevent
16 suicide, and we hope, or our goal
17 is to implement two additional
18 methods of preventing suicide by
19 fall of 2022. We're working
20 through the logistics now. But we
21 want to implement those methods
22 statewide.

23 And pending any questions, Mr.
24 Abboud, that's my brief.

25 MR. ABBOUD:

1 Thank you, sir. Thank you very
2 much, Mr. Williams.

3 I'd like to pause now for any
4 questions or comments following Mr.
5 Williams' report. I think it
6 certainly demonstrates the value of
7 partnerships and how those can be
8 so critical in leveraging,
9 especially in our work with the
10 veterans initiatives and veterans
11 first business work that we all do.

12 So certainly appreciate your
13 report today, thank you.

14 MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:

15 I have a comment.

16 MR. ABOUD:

17 Yes, sir. Would you like to
18 come up to the microphone, Mr.
19 Richard?

20 MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:

21 Well, I don't think I need to
22 do that. I need to just add a
23 couple of things.

24 MR. ABOUD:

25 Okay.

1 MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:

2 I thank you very much, Mr.
3 Williams. I do appreciate it.

4 Mr. Secretary, on the Veterans
5 Initiative that took place several
6 years ago, I applaud that you all
7 continue to strive to get that
8 recognition to the veterans owned
9 businesses. However, the publicity
10 needs to improve on this. I
11 continue to get calls from veterans
12 to say how do you do this? How do
13 you get these stickers? I think
14 it's stickers now. It started out
15 as plaques, I think. I think it's
16 stickers now that they get on
17 veterans owned businesses.

18 I would ask to consider, Mr.
19 Secretary, a public service
20 initiative to where you would get
21 the word out how to apply for this
22 and make it easier for veterans
23 owned businesses to first of all,
24 understand there's such a program
25 that exists, and secondly, how do

1 you get recognized for that.

2 Because many people in
3 Louisiana, based on the governor's
4 initiative of two meetings ago
5 where he wanted to make Louisiana
6 more friendly to veterans, he asked
7 that we consider how we can do
8 things like that. And so I ask if
9 considering an advertisement, I
10 think that would probably be trying
11 to get that information put
12 forward.

13 SECRETARY PIERSON:

14 Sure. You make a great point.
15 And it's certainly something we
16 take very seriously. And I want
17 you to know that it's a constant
18 effort to educate people. And we
19 have new veterans exiting the
20 military every day that start up
21 businesses. So this is not a set
22 and forget. It's not a one point,
23 we told them, they should know
24 about it or why can't they find it
25 on our website?

1 We are actively engaged in
2 promotion of the program and did a
3 special buy just prior to the end
4 of October so that we'd be ramping
5 up towards the 11th of November,
6 Veterans Day. These buys, these
7 purchases are using our LED
8 marketing funds go to social media
9 outlets such as Facebook and other
10 ways that we reach young people and
11 young veterans these days.

12 So we did execute a targeted
13 campaign. That won't be a one-time
14 thing. We will continue to
15 execute. We'll continue to work
16 closely with the Veterans Affairs
17 folks. We also publicized this to
18 a network of small business
19 development centers that we have on
20 each campus around the state. We
21 agree with you whole-heartedly that
22 we need to continue to really have
23 a focused approach to get the word
24 out, get more of the certificates
25 and the decal that represents a

1 veteran-owned business out there.

2 So perhaps, just that messaging
3 didn't reach you, but it's great to
4 have the opportunity to communicate
5 to you and to the broader group,
6 and to everyone that will get our
7 minutes, that we are, indeed,
8 focused on promotion of this
9 important program, have been
10 engaged, and will remain engaged
11 going forward.

12 **MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:**

13 Thank you very much.

14 Again, not to prolong my
15 comments, I would like to, at the
16 next meeting, if we could have a
17 report on, I believe it's held in
18 your office, the 600 that we've
19 identified as veterans-owned
20 businesses that participated in the
21 program. That number was used
22 three years ago. 600, the same
23 number. I'd like to see if there's
24 an increase. I think maybe there
25 might be. From the start of the

1 program to now, what that number
2 is? I, along with several other
3 people are confused about this
4 number 600, and that it just seems
5 like it started at 600, and then
6 well, that's where it is now,
7 apparently.

8 SECRETARY PIERSON:

9 And I think that's correct that
10 we don't know where it is now. We
11 haven't reported out on that. We'd
12 be happy to get that information
13 for you.

14 MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:

15 Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I
16 know you all are trying.

17 SECRETARY PIERSON:

18 No, it's a steady effort. That
19 number should be well in advance of
20 600 now. And we're happy to report
21 on that. And all of us can work
22 together to continue to make sure
23 people are aware of the program and
24 participating in it.

25 MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:

1 I appreciate it. I really do.

2 That is --

3 SECRETARY PIERSON:

4 At our next meeting, we'll have
5 some very specific data for your
6 office.

7 MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD:

8 Thank you. And my last point
9 has to do with the fact that also
10 include Veterans Affairs. Of the
11 74 men and women that are
12 representing Veterans Affairs in
13 our 64 parishes, I know there's a
14 combination of several parishes
15 under several teams, if it'd be
16 possible to identify and publicize
17 the ability of retired veterans to
18 renegotiate with the VA? It was
19 brought to my attention that many,
20 many veterans, upon retirement get
21 a disability. And that disability
22 usually is ten percent unless
23 there's something major wrong with
24 the veteran.

25 As age continues to creep on

1 all of us, many of these veterans
2 go back and take a look at this
3 through the VA. And amazingly,
4 amazingly, the percentage of
5 increase is way, way above 50
6 percent.

7 So I would encourage your
8 representatives to encourage
9 retired veterans to revisit the VA,
10 and that's done through the
11 Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
12 They're the people that do that.
13 Go back and revisit the disability
14 portion of their VA benefits. If
15 y'all could look into that I would
16 appreciate it and I know they would
17 appreciate it.

18 Thank you very much for your
19 time, Mr. Secretary. I don't want
20 to nominate, obviously. I have
21 many many ideas about how we can
22 improve the state of Louisiana as
23 far as making it veterans friendly.
24 Unfortunately all of them have to
25 do with further revenue to the

1 state. So those are not very
2 popular at this stage.

3 MR. ABBOUD:

4 Thank you very much, sir. I
5 did receive just a quick note from
6 Mr. Patrick Witty in the back.
7 He's the Director of our Community
8 Competitiveness and Small Business
9 Services. He did relay that right
10 now, we're at 740 businesses
11 certified through the Veterans
12 First Business initiative. So
13 that's currently where we are on
14 that count. But of course, we'll
15 provide, certainly, more
16 comprehensive notes and breakdowns
17 following on our next meeting.

18 So with that, I'll now call on
19 General Waddell for his update on
20 Guard activities.

21 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

22 Thank you, Mr. Robby. Good
23 morning fellow council members, I
24 am Major General Keith Waddell, the
25 Adjutant General of the Louisiana

1 National Guard. I would like to
2 thank Secretary Pierson and Mr.
3 Robby for allowing me the
4 opportunity to give the update on
5 the Louisiana National Guard's
6 efforts since August 24, 2021.

7 Today, the Louisiana National
8 Guard remains operationally engaged
9 in federal deployments, COVID
10 Operations, IDA Operations, and
11 Steady State Operations.

12 Currently, we have 174 plus Guard
13 men and women federally deployed
14 either overseas or at a continental
15 United States CONUS location.

16 That's a reduction of over 2300
17 Louisiana National Guard men and
18 women since my last report. The
19 returning soldiers and air men and
20 women and their families will have
21 a yellow-ribbon training
22 reintegration event. I know SGR
23 was present last month at the
24 event, and they'll be doing that
25 over the next several months to be

1 reintegrated after their
2 deployments.

3 The Louisiana National Guard
4 continues to build readiness each
5 and every day, and we stand ready
6 to serve on all federal deployments
7 when notified.

8 Louisiana National Guard's Task
9 Force COVID is approaching two
10 years of continuous operation and
11 continues to do exceptional work.
12 We maintain 800 plus guard men and
13 women dedicated to fighting the
14 pandemic. We're currently working
15 six lines of effort. They are
16 testing, vaccinations and boosters,
17 food banks, Louisiana Department of
18 Health, Emergency Operations Center
19 Support, Cyber, and Logistics.

20 To date, our team has
21 administered nearly half a million
22 tests, packaged more than 41.3
23 million pounds of food,
24 administered 190,000 plus vaccines,
25 and completed more than 98,000 plus

1 emergency delivery missions.

2 That's faster than UPS, Amazon, and
3 FedEx. Truly remarkable work by
4 our Guard men and women with
5 operations currently planned
6 through 1 April 2022.

7 Additionally, the
8 responsiveness support outreach
9 collaboration with other local
10 state and federal agencies have
11 been our key to success in our
12 response to the global pandemic.

13 Louisiana National Guard has
14 had another busy hurricane season
15 in 2021. Hurricane Ida was a
16 catastrophic event with a
17 destructive impact throughout a
18 large part of our state, most
19 notably in southeast Louisiana. I
20 am pleased to report we were ready
21 and honored to serve alongside many
22 great local state and federal
23 officials. The collective efforts
24 of all during the Hurricane Ida
25 response saved lives, prevented

1 human suffering, and protected key
2 infrastructure.

3 The Louisiana National Guard
4 had another year of 100 percent
5 call out. We executed our EMAC
6 agreements with 15 states and 1
7 territory, and coordinated support
8 from active-duty service members
9 from the United States Army, United
10 States Navy, and the United States
11 Marines.

12 The numerical composition from
13 all components were: 5,291 from
14 Louisiana National Guard, 3,118
15 from our EMAC states and territory,
16 482 active-duty service members.
17 With a total response force of
18 8,891 personnel, the Louisiana
19 National Guard team completed 1,248
20 WebEOC requests for Hurricane IDA.

21 I would like to highlight
22 several response efforts. We
23 rescued 397 citizens and 65 pets
24 during search and rescue
25 operations. We operated 95

1 commodity distribution points,
2 pods, micropods, hubs and spokes
3 you may have heard them called, and
4 provided commodity pushes to
5 distribute in excess of 6.7 million
6 meals, 7.9 million liters of water,
7 1.3 million bags of ice, 310,000
8 plus tarps, in 34 parishes.

9 Our engineer teams and route
10 clearance teams assessed 5,214
11 miles of road, cleared debris from
12 2,946 miles of roadway, and cleared
13 50,355 cubic yards of debris from
14 170 municipal facilities in support
15 of 16 parishes. In Jefferson
16 Parish at Grand Isle, engineers
17 emplaced 1,689 super sacs and 10s
18 of 1,000s of cubic yards of sand to
19 close 12 breaches in the Burrito
20 levee.

21 In conjunction with GOSEP, we
22 deployed 417 generators to support
23 key infrastructure in 14 parishes.
24 We still have two generators on
25 mission down in Lafourche Parish at

1 Golden Meadow today.

2 We conducted 68 security
3 missions in support of local law
4 enforcement in 34 parishes. Our
5 communications teams provided voice
6 and data support to 18 locations in
7 16 parishes. Those Starlink
8 systems supported, they continue
9 today at Grand Isle, and I see that
10 going on through the end of the
11 year.

12 We deployed our Multi Role
13 Bridge Company's Improved Ribbon
14 Bridge initially as a ferry system
15 in Lafitte and later as a temporary
16 bridge to support the crossing of
17 30,710 civilian vehicles until the
18 Acrow bridge was in place.

19 Joint cyber teams completed a
20 large nondisclosure response in
21 October and have been working
22 closely with the Office of
23 Technology Services, Louisiana
24 State Police, and others to
25 prepare, educate, and increase

1 awareness in an effort to avoid
2 cyber incidents. We remain a
3 colleague with ESF-17 for future
4 cyber incidents, and our 170-A
5 Cyber Protection team is currently
6 CONUS deployed, and I look forward
7 to visiting them at some point in
8 early 2022.

9 On the readiness side,
10 Louisiana National Guard's current
11 in-strength is 108.3 percent, and
12 Louisiana Air National Guard stands
13 at 101.6 percent.

14 From a personnel readiness
15 standpoint, the Louisiana National
16 Guard is the Number 1 National
17 Guard in the country according to
18 all personnel metrics tracked by
19 the National Guard Bureau. This
20 year, we broke our previous year's
21 record with 86 percent retention
22 rate. That was an increase of four
23 percent from the previous year.

24 Louisiana Air National Guard
25 achieved a 97 percent retention

1 rate, which was an increase of two
2 percent from the previous year, and
3 maintains high morale throughout
4 the entire wing. These
5 accomplishments are quite amazing
6 considering the operational tempo
7 we've had here in Louisiana and
8 overseas.

9 With military construction, we
10 continue working hard on our
11 facilities across the state. Over
12 the past month, we held multiple
13 ground-breaking events. We broke
14 ground on a \$20.4 million 41
15 thousand square foot facility at
16 the Camp Beauregard Readiness
17 Center on November 3, 2021. And on
18 November 30, 2021, we broke ground
19 on a low-medium income housing
20 project at Camp Beauregard. This
21 project will provide 25 new homes,
22 three to four bedrooms that will
23 replace a number of our old modular
24 trailers.

25 We are anxiously awaiting the

1 groundbreaking in Lake Charles at
2 the Chennault Airport for the 3rd
3 Battalion and 156th Infantry
4 Battalion's new Readiness Center.
5 This is a \$24.7 million project, 60
6 thousand square foot facility, that
7 we hope to break ground on in early
8 '22.

9 The 159th Fighter Wing's new
10 Alert Complex and Apron at Belle
11 Chasse are currently at 20 percent
12 on their construction. And we were
13 pleased to learn this last week
14 that the Louisiana National Guard
15 will receive \$13.8 million dollars
16 to construct a new 200 person
17 barracks in support of our regional
18 training institute according to
19 FY22 NDAA. Real excited about
20 that.

21 Louisiana National Guard
22 continues to work with National
23 Guard Bureau, our congressional
24 delegation, Governor Edwards and
25 his administration for future

1 military construction project
2 opportunities. We do have a
3 foothold on new armories for the
4 256th Infantry Brigade Headquarters
5 in Lafayette, and second to the
6 156th Infantry Battalion in
7 Abbeville, and both of those
8 projects are scheduled to kickoff
9 in 2025.

10 With our Youth Challenge
11 Program, we remain the premier YCP
12 in the nation, and that's been said
13 over and over by a lot of entities
14 outside of Louisiana. Across the
15 board, we maintained class
16 enrollment throughout the COVID
17 restriction period and plan to
18 accomplish 80 to 90 percent
19 enrollment beginning in 2022
20 pending COVID restrictions. We're
21 hoping the Omicron variant is not
22 going to have a negative impact on
23 our YCP programs.

24 Since August, the program
25 graduated 173 out of 212

1 enrollments, bringing us to a total
2 number of 368 graduates out of 435
3 enrollments for this year. We're
4 still running the three programs,
5 one at Gillis Long, Camp
6 Beauregard, and up at Camp Minden.
7 We anticipate adding 75 graduates
8 to this number on December 22nd
9 with Camp Minden's graduation.

10 Our other educational programs
11 are doing very well also and they
12 did so throughout 2021. The star-
13 based program provided 639 fifth
14 grade students the opportunity to
15 participate in the science,
16 technology, engineering, and
17 mathematics, the STEM program that
18 we have there. And the JOB
19 Challenge Program graduated 57
20 trainees in areas such as Culinary
21 Arts, Medical Assistants, Welding,
22 and Automotive.

23 With our state partnership
24 program, we continue to work with
25 our partners in Belize and Haiti.

1 Right now, we have 20 exchanges
2 scheduled with Belize in 2022 and
3 14 exchanges scheduled with Haiti
4 in 2022. We've executed several
5 events already this training year,
6 but we have had eight cancel due to
7 COVID travel restrictions, the
8 earthquake that took place in
9 Haiti, and a lot of the unrest as
10 well for Haiti and other
11 restrictions imposed on us by
12 Southern Command or Southcom.

13 Given our current strength
14 disposition and our data, Force
15 Structure procurement remains a top
16 priority. Cyber, chemical, and
17 aviation rank as our top three.
18 But certainly, this could change
19 depending upon the Army's division
20 realignment forthcoming. I remain
21 engaged on the acquisition of the
22 F-35s for the 159th Fighter Wing.
23 And recently, we worked very hard
24 with our congressional delegation
25 and National Guard Bureau to remove

1 proposed language to the FY22 NDAA
2 that would have delayed F35
3 fielding to Louisiana's own 159th
4 Fighter Wing. So we were glad that
5 language was stricken.

6 I remain proud and appreciative
7 of the men and women I have the
8 privilege to serve alongside.
9 Additionally, I would like to
10 publicly thank their families and
11 employers for their enduring
12 support of Louisiana National
13 Guard.

14 In closing, I would also like
15 to thank Governor Edwards for his
16 leadership and our state, local,
17 and federal partners for their
18 service and support of Louisiana
19 National Guard and the state of
20 Louisiana.

21 Thank you for your time and
22 attention today, and I would open
23 it up for any questions or comments
24 of me at this time.

25 MR. JAKES:

1 General?

2 **MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:**

3 Yes, sir?

4 **MR. JAKES:**

5 What is an exchange -- what
6 signifies an exchange in Haiti and
7 the other countries --

8 **MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:**

9 So on exchanges, we have things
10 like security exchanges. They may
11 come over and observe what our
12 military policemen do, and they
13 look at some of the tactics,
14 techniques, and procedures that we
15 have. And they can go back and try
16 to implement those things, you
17 know, disaster management's a big
18 thing or emergency management. We
19 do a lot of those sort of exchanges
20 with them because like us,
21 hurricanes hit them too. So we do
22 that.

23 Engineering. They're trying to
24 build out their engineering
25 capacity specifically in Belize.

1 And most of their soldiers in the
2 Belize Defense Force are infantry
3 soldiers. And they want to build
4 out that skill set so they can do
5 some internal things to build up
6 their installations or their
7 forward operating bases that they
8 have as they try to counter drug
9 trafficking and narcotics activity
10 that goes on in the country.

11 So you know, they come to us.
12 We go to them. We send our senior
13 leaders. As a matter of fact, last
14 week the Belize delegation sent
15 down six folks to visit with us and
16 we kind of talked 2022 and 2023
17 some of the things that we're
18 doing. Some of the women's
19 initiatives that they have going on
20 in those countries or specifically
21 in Belize are encouraging, I
22 believe. Our inspector general
23 program, we try to share that with
24 them as well so they can kind of
25 keep the checks and balances within

1 their systems also.

2 But you know, on average, as
3 long as the funding's available, we
4 go down there and do what we can
5 for those countries. It is a very
6 important diplomatic tool, and I
7 think the active component realizes
8 that. And when you look at all the
9 SPP programs across the 54 states
10 and territories that we have, just
11 about everybody has at least one
12 partner if not more. But again, I
13 think just across the board, you
14 know, it's been an added value to
15 all of the countries that are
16 involved and to ours as well.

17 MR. JAKES:

18 Thank you. Excellent --

19 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

20 Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

21 MR. WILLIAMS:

22 Was that the youth challenge
23 you said graduated --

24 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

25 That's the Job Challenge

1 Program.

2 MR. WILLIAMS:

3 Job Challenge Program?

4 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

5 Right. So we actually got a
6 three-year grant for our Job
7 Challenge Program through the
8 Department of Labor, and it will
9 end, I think, at the end of '23.
10 And then, we're going to try to
11 keep the program going. But we're
12 trying to expand some of the skill
13 sets there that they have besides
14 those four disciplines, Culinary
15 Arts, Welding, Medical Assistants,
16 and what was the last one, make
17 sure I hit them all here, Mr.
18 Williams, Culinary Arts, Medical
19 Assistants, Welding, and
20 Automotive. Automotive is the one
21 I couldn't remember.

22 MR. JAKES:

23 That's for your soldiers?

24 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

25 So that is for our Youth

1 Challenge Cadets. When they
2 graduate, they can transition to
3 the Job Challenge Program where
4 they can work on credentialing. So
5 whenever they go out and try to get
6 a job, they have these
7 certifications or credentials that
8 they can bring to a potential
9 employer. So they're not really
10 starting from square one, they
11 actually have some things to help
12 them with their salary.

13 MR. JAKES:

14 And that's at all three --

15 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

16 Just one. At Gillis Long
17 Center. But we could have a cadet
18 that graduates from Camp Minden
19 that comes down to the Gillis W.
20 Long Center to the Job Challenge
21 Program and enrolls in automotive.

22 MR. JAKES:

23 Okay --

24 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

25 Yes, sir. Okay. Thank you,

1 sir.

2 MR. ABBOUD:

3 Thank you very much, General
4 Waddell, not only for your
5 leadership, but also, certainly,
6 the service of those in support of
7 these critical Guard activities.
8 So thank you very much. We
9 certainly appreciate that report.

10 Next, we'll move on to call on
11 Mr. Chris Goode with the Roosevelt
12 Group. He will provide a report on
13 military installation activities.

14 MR. GOODE:

15 Great. Can you hear me?

16 MR. ABBOUD:

17 Yes.

18 MR. GOODE:

19 All right. Good morning, Mr.
20 Secretary.

21 I think, Robby, you're going to
22 put some slides up. I just have
23 about five slides. All right.

24 Okay.

25 So I'm Chris Goode, managing

1 partner with The Roosevelt Group.
2 Unfortunately, Rick, and Marty, and
3 Gary all could not be there in
4 attendance. So I'm just going to
5 do sort of a wrap up and quick
6 presentation of where we've been
7 this year and a couple of just some
8 specific updates on the individual
9 installations.

10 Robby, if you're on the first
11 slide there, if you can go to that
12 first slide.

13 So you know, as you know, we
14 track, and I can't see the slide.
15 On the first slide, you know, we
16 track the defense bills very
17 closely. I think General Waddell
18 just mentioned and referred to the
19 National Defense Authorization Act,
20 and that's the big policy bill
21 where, you know, you have across
22 the top line, or basically,
23 embedded in that NDAA. That bill
24 is going to pass and get signed
25 afterwards of just a vote to

1 proceed on it yesterday in the
2 Senate. And it should get -- so we
3 can be fully locked into law.

4 And with that, you know, there
5 have been some significant wins --
6 weapons generation facility, a
7 large job at Fort Polk. The TAG
8 mentioned the F-35 basing. That's
9 something that the TAGs were very
10 organized, thankfully, in August,
11 was organized. And we'll talk a
12 little bit about that provision.
13 It's great that it was taken out
14 because it would have prevented the
15 F-35 from going to two National
16 Guard bases. And there was a lot
17 of these antibodies that still
18 exist, and we'll get a little bit
19 into that.

20 There's also a provision on
21 Inter Governmental Service
22 Agreements and Robby and Don are
23 all keyed in on that. But that's
24 an important authority for Fort
25 Polk.

1 Basically neutralize.

2 Communities are engaging in that
3 skill set. That was removed after
4 a lot of work and effort.

5 We're at continuing resolution
6 if anybody around the table does
7 any business with DOD, we're
8 certainly in DOD. That obviously
9 is an impact that we're all used
10 to. That CR goes through February
11 18th. Again, no one starts and
12 other implications from CR's. We
13 really don't have any expectations.
14 We don't see any appropriations
15 bills before the end of the year.
16 The focus has clearly been on this
17 Build Back Better Bill, the
18 bipartisan infrastructure bill, as
19 you know, was done back in
20 November.

21 You know, there is clearly a
22 lot of pressure from, you know,
23 very vocal progressives in terms of
24 reducing defense spending,
25 democratic administration. That

1 said, I think Congress did a pretty
2 good job, at least, to add \$25
3 billion in FY22 spending. I don't
4 see any -- in really any state that
5 has an active defense community.
6 We'll talk a little bit about that.

7 Next slide. So you know, two
8 drivers, I'm just going to mention,
9 you know, to try to get into the
10 psyche of defense personnel, and
11 you know, again, I know General
12 Waddell sits in these discussions
13 and inside the National Guard
14 Bureau and the active component,
15 but you know, when you -- we sat on
16 at the Reagan Defense Forum with
17 the Secretary of Defense,
18 basically, all the Secretaries,
19 probably a dozen members of
20 Congress on the Appropriations
21 Committees and Authorization
22 Committees, and between that and
23 the unveiling and the global
24 posture review, it's all China,
25 right? China. China. China.

1 Space Force. Important.

2 I-- across the country when it
3 comes to poor structure. You can
4 see that quote on the other side in
5 terms of rough Gallagher
6 (phonetic). It's very animated and
7 you know, we spent some time on the
8 Cyber Solarium Commission and the
9 whole Cyber piece gets baked into
10 any China scenario.

11 Next slide. So real quick, so
12 back to the philosophy. I think
13 the issue inside DOD and you know,
14 we don't have the security
15 clearance, but you know, if you do
16 get a chance, a couple of the
17 articles you may want to take a
18 look at that I think captures the
19 essence of the urgency inside DOD,
20 and it's not so much that we know
21 China has ambitions. We all read
22 the newspapers. We know what
23 they're doing in terms of cyber
24 theft, hypersonics.

25 You know, they're building as

1 many silos to put ICBMs in them as
2 fast as they can. They're building
3 full-scale mock-ups of aircraft
4 carriers in the desert. We know
5 all that.

6 But the real issue that I think
7 the Pentagon planners are
8 confronting is, you know, that
9 China's real --

10 (PAUSE)

11 -- how we really are postured,
12 and what sort of trades we're going
13 to take with legacy -- platforms
14 and installations to be able to be
15 there and be there ready to go.

16 So why do we care? Well, you
17 know, there are implications,
18 actually, at the end of the day,
19 when you look at these challenges
20 in Louisiana, it's been made very
21 clear to us in conversations and
22 sitting out at Reagan, and a lot of
23 other venues, the Air Force is
24 basically focused on three things.
25 It's recapitalize the nuclear

1 enterprise. That's a huge issue.

2 That's NC3 and the GBSD.

3 That F-15 decision, that's been
4 punted to the second quarter of
5 next year. People talked to
6 Kendall specifically on this, he
7 has said, don't worry. There is no
8 fire, no smoke. It's just a simple
9 environmental assessment issue.

10 But then again, I have a budget to
11 deal with, so just be patient.

12 So the problem with that isn't
13 again, making a decision. The
14 problem is executing the decision
15 and ensuring that those F-15s or F-
16 35s get to the bases on the
17 original timeline versus being
18 having those Guard bases at the end
19 of the line for the production of
20 whatever 145 or so F-15s.

21 We're in a situation that we
22 know PACOM is basically saying we
23 need most of them out here now.
24 You still have to plus up an FTU in
25 Oregon. So by the time you get to

1 Belle Chasse, Massachusetts, and
2 California, that could be too late
3 for these F-15Cs. And I got about
4 a half-a-dozen general officers who
5 have flown them on my staff, and
6 there are more technical problems
7 with them now, than there were even
8 six months ago. So there is no
9 reason that we cannot be a lot more
10 vocal on that.

11 In utilizing Massachusetts, we
12 can only work with mass
13 development. Warren has been
14 pretty good. Richard Neal,
15 Chairman of Ways and Means, has
16 been very engaged. In addition to
17 California, we don't put a whole
18 lot in California, in addition to
19 Louisiana. And I'd be very selfish
20 on this, basically, to say, hey,
21 these defense communities are all
22 vibrant communities. They're all
23 investing in these bases. We've
24 been at this for three years.
25 You've got to stick to this

1 timeline. And then do whatever you
2 want to do with C-130s and these
3 other bases. But this decision has
4 to be sacrosanct. This decision
5 has to be made and it has to be
6 executed on time. And we can go
7 talk about that as we go forward
8 into the next year.

9 And then just closing thoughts:

10 You mentioned MILCON, Louisiana
11 will see more MILCON than any other
12 state or worldwide location in
13 FY22, I would just remind everybody
14 that there are community project
15 funding opportunities now. In the
16 topline defense accounts, it's only
17 MILCON and RDT&E that allows
18 community project funding. And to
19 the credit of Louisiana, the
20 members and the senators jumped on
21 that opportunity and got some good
22 wins on community project funding.

23 So there are good ideas on
24 MILCON that's, you know, whatever
25 35 percent design and hanging out

1 there. We should know about it.
2 And that should be a possibility
3 for next year community project
4 funding. Not a lot of members, not
5 a lot of delegations used it.

6 You know, the Department is
7 under significant pressure to
8 prepare for this peer action, and
9 sooner rather than later, the
10 equities of interest that probably
11 are going to be impacted,
12 certainly, as I discussed, we'll
13 see what happens with Guard. I
14 think they're going to be
15 pressurized just as the Army will
16 be likely pressurized in FY23.

17 If they're going to go after
18 something, the Army is probably a
19 good target. Again, O&M is always
20 the first thing they look at. That
21 means rotations, green-flag
22 exercises. But we'll see.

23 And then unfortunately, BRAC,
24 unfortunately, is a factor again,
25 despite all its dysfunction and bad

1 data and bad choices. But this is
2 a discussion for the delegation.
3 And let me tell you, memory doesn't
4 last long, but BRAC is a bad deal.
5 It's a great deal for lobbying
6 firms that can get more clients. I
7 don't want anymore clients when it
8 comes to this subject because BRAC
9 is awful. You know, it would be
10 bad for Louisiana.

11 You want to get rid of Global
12 Strike Command? You want to get
13 rid of the 3rd Brigade? BRAC meets
14 all of those issues really, really
15 easy. So I think DOD should be
16 able to realign. I think they
17 should be able to organize better.
18 But BRAC is just not the right
19 thing.

20 So and we'll see in the FY23
21 Defense request. I think we're
22 going to see a lot of challenges.
23 It is not going to look anything
24 like FY22. But we will see soon
25 enough, so time will tell.

1 the other item, comments from the
2 public.

3 (No Response)

4 MR. ABOUD:

5 I'm hearing none as well.
6 So that will get us to the end of
7 the agenda here. Before passing
8 back to Secretary Pierson for some
9 closing remarks, I was given a note
10 to remind members of the council
11 that there is a requirement to
12 complete annual ethics training by
13 the end of the year, December 31st.
14 So if you have not done that, you
15 should have received a note via
16 email with directions on how to
17 complete that online. If not,
18 please reach out to me, and I'll
19 run that to ground immediately for
20 you. For those who have already
21 done it, thank you. But again, if
22 you have any questions about that
23 or have any challenges completing
24 that training, just let me know and
25 I'm happy to assist in any way I

1 can.

2 So thank you all again today
3 for attending. And with that, I'll
4 pass it back to LMAC Chairman,
5 Secretary Don Pierson.

6 SECRETARY PIERSON:

7 Again, thank everyone for
8 coming today. We do look forward
9 to a robust 2022. A lot of
10 activities ongoing to continue to
11 follow up at our major
12 installations and other
13 installations across the state. We
14 do know that we'll be meeting with
15 the Roosevelt Group in January and
16 map out the year, keep you advised
17 along the way, and look forward to
18 all your interactions. It's not
19 something that we do on one or two
20 or three days a year. It's a part
21 of our program of work and we're
22 always robustly engaged. We're
23 always looking for ways to get
24 better, so thank you for your input
25 and comments along the way. That

1 helps us stay on top of our game.

2 Again, thank you for being here
3 today. We look forward to
4 continuing to serve with you.

5 * * * * *

6 (Whereupon, the meeting in the above-
7 entitled cause was concluded.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

1
2 This certification is valid only
3 for a transcript accompanied by my original
4 signature and original required seal on
5 this page.

6 I, Dorothy N. Gros, CSR
7 (Certificate #90049) in and for the State
8 of Louisiana, do hereby certify that on
9 December 15, 2021, the above-entitled
10 meeting was reported by me in the voice
11 writer reporting method, prepared and
12 transcribed under my personal direction and
13 supervision, and is a true and correct
14 transcript to the best of my ability and
15 understanding; that after having been duly
16 sworn by me upon authority of R.S.37:2554,
17 the named witness did testify as
18 hereinbefore set forth in the foregoing 64
19 pages; and that the transcript has been
20 prepared in compliance with transcript
21 format guidelines required by statute or by
22 Rules of the Board;

23 That I am informed about the
24 complete arrangement, financial or
25 otherwise, with the person or entity making

1 arrangements for deposition services and I
2 have acted in compliance with the
3 prohibition of contractual relationships,
4 as defined by Louisiana Code of Civil
5 Procedure Article 1434 and in the Rules and
6 Advisory Opinions of the Board; and that I
7 have no contractual relationship, direct or
8 indirect, between a court reporting firm
9 and any party litigant in this matter, nor
10 is there any such relationship between
11 myself and a party litigant in this matter;

12 That I am not related to counsel or
13 to the parties herein, nor am I otherwise
14 interested in the outcome of this matter.

15
16 SIGNED THIS THE ____ DAY
17 OF _____, 2021.

18
19
20
21
22 _____
23 DOROTHY N. GROS, CCR
24 License No. 90049
25

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