

LOUISIANA MILITARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

1 MEETING MINUTES FOR THE
 2 LOUISIANA MILITARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
 3 HELD VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE
 4 IN ACCORDANCE WITH REVISED STATUTE 4217.1
 5 ON THE 16TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2020
 6 COMMENCING AT 10:07 A.M.
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 21 REPORTED BY: BELINDA D. VIGUEIRA, CCR
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1 MR. PIERSON:
 2 I think we're clear to go ahead and
 3 call the meeting to order at this point in time. And
 4 we typically start off our meetings with the Pledge
 5 of Allegiance.
 6 Lauren, if you can throw me over to the
 7 share screen I think we have a flag. Yes. And if
 8 you will please rise and join me in the pledge.
 9 (PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE WAS CONDUCTED.)
 10 Thank you, folks. I hope for those
 11 that were not available on the video we had a great
 12 looking American flag there, so. Thank you for that.
 13 MR. PIERSON:
 14 Um, Robby Abboud is our new executive
 15 director. Robby would you please conduct roll call
 16 and read our certification.
 17 MR. ABOUD:
 18 Yes, sir, absolutely.
 19 Good morning, everyone. Thank y'all
 20 for joining us. I'd like to get started here with
 21 the roll call so please feel free to correct me
 22 should there be any mispronunciations and just a
 23 reminder again to please unmute to respond, so go
 24 ahead and get started here.
 25 MR. ABOUD:

1 Mayor Clarence Beebe.
 2 MR. BEEBE:
 3 Here.
 4 MR. ABOUD:
 5 Representative Raymond Crews.
 6 (No response.)
 7 MR. ABOUD:
 8 General Robert Elder.
 9 (No response.)
 10 MR. ABOUD:
 11 Mr. Robert Gatti.
 12 MR. GATTI:
 13 Here.
 14 MR. ABOUD:
 15 Mr. Brian Jakes.
 16 MR. JAKES:
 17 Here.
 18 MR. ABOUD:
 19 Mr. Larry Jones.
 20 (No response.)
 21 Robert Abboud is present.
 22 Secretary Don Pierson.
 23 SECRETARY PIERSON:
 24 Present.
 25 MR. ABOUD:

1 Ms. Deborah Randolph.
 2 MS. RANDOLPH:
 3 Present.
 4 MR. ABOUD:
 5 Mayor Rick Allen?
 6 MR. ALLEN:
 7 Present.
 8 MR. ABOUD:
 9 Major General Ronald Richard?
 10 (No response.)
 11 MR. ABOUD:
 12 Mr. Gary Silbert.
 13 MR. SILBERT:
 14 Present.
 15 MR. ABOUD:
 16 Mr. Ronnie Sloan?
 17 MR. SLOAN:
 18 Present.
 19 MR. ABOUD:
 20 Senator Mike Reese.
 21 SENATOR REESE:
 22 Here.
 23 MR. ABOUD:
 24 Secretary Joey Strickland.
 25 SECRETARY STRICKLAND:



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1 Present.

2 MR. ABBOUD:

3 Mr. Murray Viser.

4 MR. VISER:

5 Here, sir.

6 MR. ABBOUD:

7 Brigadier General Keith Waddell.

8 GENERAL WADDELL:

9 Here, sir.

10 MR. ABBOUD:

11 Rear Admiral Joe Whitehead.

12 ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:

13 Here.

14 MR. ABBOUD:

15 Okay. Very good, and I'd also like to

16 make a note that in accordance with Revised Statute

17 4217.1 and the current public health emergency as

18 declared by Governor John Bell Edwards' executive

19 orders this meeting is being held via video

20 conference in a manner that will allow for public

21 input as set forth in the notice posted yesterday

22 morning before 10:00 A.M. and we will make this

23 meeting available, um, via recording and LMAC will

24 provide for attendance at its essential meeting today

25 via video conference because it is unable to obtain a

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1 quorum.

2 MR. PIERSON:

3 All right. Robby, I think we

4 distributed the meeting minutes from our previous

5 meeting. Um, maybe it would be appropriate to call

6 for that approval, but we won't be able to approve

7 them because of lack of quorum, but we will ask if

8 there are any notations that anyone observed from the

9 minutes provided that need an edit or correction.

10 Hearing none, we'll anticipate that the

11 minutes are in good shape, but we won't adopt them

12 today due to the lack of quorum.

13 Now, proceed with the my introductory

14 remarks and an important introduction. It's been a

15 tumultuous year. I don't need to tell anyone that.

16 We've all experienced it in their own ways. Just

17 incredible. But first order of business is simply to

18 introduce you to Robby Abboud. Um, Jeanette Haney,

19 the former director, had anticipated that she'd be

20 with the Military Advisory Council for quite sometime

21 but her husband, a marine officer, received orders to

22 Washington D.C. and faced with a lot of uncertainty

23 in the economy in Louisiana, their family chose to

24 relocate back to D.C. So, Jeanette's service

25 terminated with the state and she's now serving with

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1 her family, the nation and in order ways in the

2 Washington area. So, with that, we were able to

3 identify internally here at LED a outstanding young

4 man that will now serve as our executive director,

5 Mr. Robby Abboud. Comes to us from this part of the

6 country. I'm going to let him speak to you in just a

7 moment, but he's got a Master's in public

8 administration from LSU that he earned in 2014. He

9 came to LED probably right about the time the

10 pandemic started, so he has not been afforded the

11 opportunity to get out to all the military

12 installations yet. I look forward to getting him out

13 on the ground, both with Roosevelt group and others

14 in Washington. As time marches on and we're able to

15 resume our more normal activities and operations.

16 But all that said, he's been a very quick study here

17 in the department, and has not previously served in

18 the military, so he's learning the language. He

19 knows we use a lot of acronyms, but again, quick

20 study, and let me just give Robby a moment to say

21 hello.

22 MR. ABBOUD:

23 Thank you, sir. It's certainly my

24 pleasure to join y'all told and certainly look

25 forward to learning more. Not only about the

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1 interests but about the challenges in LMAC as a

2 whole. Obviously, to Mr. Secretary's point, this is

3 my first LMAC, so I've not had the opportunity to

4 meet you all yet, but of course, certainly look

5 forward to that opportunity. And as Secretary

6 stated, I do work here at LED as the assistant

7 director of community competitiveness, as well as

8 being heavily engaged in a number of projects here

9 within the department.

10 Of course, it's my goal as executive

11 director to certainly develop a deep awareness and

12 current understanding of the issues facing military

13 families and service members and I certainly seek to

14 better understand the inventory of assets that we

15 have here in the state and the specifics the families

16 and service members at each of our State's

17 installations.

18 So, I do look forward being fully

19 engaged learning about the issues that are important

20 for each installation, but also the surrounding

21 communities. So, of course, when appropriate, I look

22 forward to getting out and meeting with each of you

23 and completing visits with each of these

24 installations across the state, and so I'll certainly

25 seek out information from you all, but, please,



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1 always feel free to reach out to me with questions or
 2 points of information and that feedback certainly be
 3 important in identifying strengths and needs as well
 4 as challenges at each of our State's installations.
 5 So I know you should have my contact
 6 information in prior correspondence. I would like to
 7 reiterate that I look forward to working with all of
 8 you and certainly learning more from each of you as
 9 we move forward.
 10 MR. PIERSON:
 11 Thank you, Robby. With the exception
 12 of maybe the years where we really ramp up for a base
 13 realignment and closure, the BRAC commissions and
 14 where statewide we put all hands on deck. Those were
 15 some very, very busy years for our military advisory
 16 council and all those that are represented here
 17 remember those times very clearly. Um, this year,
 18 2020, has rivaled the amount of time and attention
 19 that we have placed on a lot of our military assets,
 20 both the organic assets of Barksdale and Joint
 21 Readiness Training Center in Belle Chasse, but also
 22 with the Guard and you're going to hear from all
 23 these folks here shortly with some great
 24 presentations, but the backdrop was also the storms.
 25 There was some very significant

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1 activities in the Pentagon and in the Congress.
 2 Jeanette got a great grant application with the
 3 Department of Defense in a new pilot kind of a grant
 4 program that was launched, and we were in midair with
 5 that when she departed, and so, Robby came in and
 6 completed that application and we were awarded that
 7 grant. We'll let that come as part of the progress
 8 report a little later. But noticing what a very able
 9 job Robby did with that, I've now got him managing a
 10 portfolio of award applications for other things that
 11 the State has an interest in, and in security monies
 12 from Economic Development Administration, EDA. Our
 13 regional headquarters over in Austin, they were
 14 provided with \$1.5 billion through the CARES Act and
 15 with that distribution and new availability of
 16 funding there are a number of significant projects
 17 that we went after statewide and Robby's done a great
 18 job administering that program so far, and will
 19 continue to do so. But these are very challenging
 20 and very complex awards and then when you receive the
 21 award as we have through the office of Economic
 22 Adjustment, the Department of Defense used this OEA
 23 as their, uh -- to run the pilot program for these
 24 installation improvement program grants that were
 25 provided. Getting the award is just sort of the

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1 starting gun to make a long journey that's got a lot
 2 of interaction with local governance, and working and
 3 trying to bring local government, through a school
 4 board in this case in Vernon parish, the State
 5 government and Federal government, we get a lot of
 6 paperwork and boxes to check. So uh, Robby's been
 7 successfully managing that with our great partners in
 8 Vernon Parish, and so that will be an exciting part
 9 of the story to relate to you today.
 10 Of course, Joe Waddell will be
 11 reporting shortly about the amazing job our Guard has
 12 done in support of Covid activities which are
 13 ongoing, and in support of the major storms and
 14 hurricanes that we've experienced this year and this
 15 has put an amazing burden on the shoulders of the
 16 Guard and the Guard has risen to the challenge. and
 17 even now, Major Waddell will talk about troops being
 18 deployed overseas right now, and a number of
 19 important lanes. Barksdale, Belle Chasse, both very,
 20 very significant engagements that they'll be
 21 reporting on, but I just wanted to set the stage for
 22 you this morning.
 23 You know, we've had some years where
 24 not so much was going on and certainly it's always
 25 important to be vigilant and to maintain our

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1 important relationships and we always got to be
 2 fighting for defense dollars in Washington. It's
 3 just a competitive environment that we live in, but
 4 this year more so than any other in recent memory, we
 5 just had a tremendous amount of activity and a lot of
 6 it very positive, even with this backdrop of Covid
 7 and -- and storms ongoing.
 8 So, with that, let's begin to get to
 9 these reports and call first on Secretary Strickland,
 10 Veterans Affairs.
 11 SECRETARY STRICKLAND:
 12 Good morning, Secretary Pierson, and
 13 members of the committee. It's an honor for me to
 14 have the opportunity to bring to you and it's an
 15 honor to have led the VA Department under Governor
 16 Edwards these past five years. Since our last
 17 meeting I've had the honor of having been selected by
 18 the Federal VA to chair the National Cemetery
 19 Committee for the Federal VA in Washington. That's
 20 not only an honor for me but an honor for our state.
 21 I'd like to start out by telling you a
 22 little bit about our department. A department that
 23 I'm very proud of, that I've been associated with
 24 since 1998. The department is a cabinet level
 25 department of 853 employees and some of you know this



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1 already, but others are new and don't know so I want
2 to give you our mission statement.

3 Our mission is to provide comprehensive
4 care and quality service to Louisiana's 300,000
5 veterans and their families with regard to health
6 care, education, disability benefits, long term care,
7 and burial honors. Our department motto is similar
8 to the Federal VA. We care for those who have borne
9 the battle, their families and their children. We're
10 fond of saying in our department that for us everyday
11 is Veteran's Day and every day is Memorial Day.
12 Because everyday we're talking care of veterans in
13 our homes, processing benefits for them, and every
14 day we're burying veterans and their loved ones with
15 dignity and honor in our five cemeteries.

16 Again, here in Louisiana, we're
17 supporting nearly 300,000 veterans with the largest
18 cohort of veterans now being Vietnam veterans
19 followed by Desert Storm and, of course,
20 Iraq-Afghanistan veterans.

21 I'd like to start out with a discussion
22 of our veterans assistance counselors. Their job is
23 to support our veterans in terms of compensation and
24 pension benefits which also include getting them into
25 the VA Healthcare System. To do this, we have 74

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1 benefits and claims offices located throughout the
2 state, Secretary Pierson and committee, staffed by 60
3 accredited veterans assistance counselors. They're
4 all veterans. Many of them are retired military from
5 various services. They're all highly trained and
6 highly skilled. Each parish has at least one service
7 office location with some of the bigger cities having
8 two and three, up to four, counselors, cities such as
9 New Orleans and Shreveport.

10 Last year the Louisiana Department of
11 Veterans Affairs Benefits Offices brought in more
12 than \$1.2 billion in Federal VA compensation and
13 pension benefits to Louisiana veterans and their
14 families. This is money that goes directly into
15 medical care for veterans and into the veteran's
16 pocket to support their families, and money that is
17 spent in the local parish and town economy's. This
18 is not money that goes to state government.

19 Um, I'd like to just go over some
20 benefit highlights for a moment. At this point in
21 fiscal year 2021, our service officers have filed a
22 total of 23,698 claims. They have answered, even
23 with this pandemic, they've answered 2,438 claim
24 inquiries and they completed nearly 45,000 other
25 actions for Louisiana veterans. And altogether we've

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1 made nearly 50,000 contacts with claimants throughout
2 the state.

3 We continue, also, to work closely with
4 Secretary Pierson's office verifying veteran's status
5 and business owners for LEDs Veterans First Business
6 initiative, certifying the status of over 602
7 applicants since it's release.

8 We're also working on 75 pending
9 applications for the Louisiana National Guard. The
10 \$100,000 and \$50,000 disability benefit passed by the
11 legislature a few years ago. Some of these claims
12 are more complex as you can imagine than others with
13 larger number of records to review, so, the time
14 needed to complete them tends to vary by person, but
15 eight have decision letters pending now; 23 claims
16 have been completed; eleven denied, and 12 approved.
17 The legislature a few years ago passed a bill
18 awarding any Louisiana National Guard with
19 100 percent service connection at the first look by
20 the Federal VA a \$100,000 award. This is in addition
21 to the VA service compensation that they authorized
22 to receive as well. For those veterans, younger
23 veterans, who have at least 20 years and who are
24 100 percent service connected, but reached the
25 hundred percent over a period of time, they will

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1 receive \$50,000. It's a great benefit. Only one of
2 its kind that I'm aware of in the nation. I'm very
3 proud to be able to process these claims for our
4 Guard. Very close to the Guard. Many of my children
5 started out in the Guard.

6 Contact assistance has repositioned
7 itself to meet the never-ending challenge of
8 assisting our veterans and their families during this
9 pandemic. To date all veteran service offices are
10 reopened throughout the state with the exception of
11 five offices that we're working to fill right now.
12 We have issued over 116 boxes of protective masks,
13 317 bottles of hand sanitizers, 68 gallon-size
14 bottles of disinfectant, and 36 desk shields of
15 Plexiglass to our employees in the Veterans Service
16 Offices for their protection and for their safety,
17 and the safety of our veterans we're serving.

18 One of the things we've had to do
19 instead of having veterans come into the offices
20 at-will and sit in a waiting room, we are now having
21 those veterans make appointments with our service
22 officer and come I at their appointment time and
23 schedule. Those that come in unannounced, they have
24 to wait in their vehicle until the service officer is
25 finished with the veteran and then they are called



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1 in. There's a phone number that's posted on the door
 2 similar to when you go to the doctor's office and,
 3 actually, it's working pretty good. Instead of
 4 having a whole bunch of Veteran's sitting around in a
 5 waiting room telling war stories, it's now just the
 6 service officer and the veteran, so it's working
 7 pretty well.

8 The veterans' homes, as you know,
 9 are -- or maybe you don't know -- but we have five
 10 state-of-the-art world-class veterans' homes where we
 11 take care of not only elderly veterans, but we take
 12 care of combat wounded veterans and their families.
 13 Also take care of Gold Star families. A lot of
 14 people don't know that, but we have five. They're
 15 located in Jackson, Monroe, in Jennings, in Bossier
 16 City and in Reserve. Each home is federally
 17 certified to provide 156 beds with exception of
 18 Louisiana home at Jackson, which is 129 beds.

19 In the past four years we have spent
 20 millions of dollars in all five homes renovating them
 21 and making them even more comfortable for our
 22 veterans, but in March we were presented with a huge
 23 challenge. One that we've never seen before. I have
 24 served veterans for 21 years and it's been one of the
 25 biggest challenges of my career and that's when the

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1 pandemic hit in our Reserve home. We were short of
 2 PPE equipment. We weren't sure how to deal -- we
 3 weren't sure what we were dealing with or how to deal
 4 with it and as a result we lost a number of veterans
 5 in the Reserve home. So the learning curve was very,
 6 very steep, but we did learn, and we came to the
 7 realization that, with the help of our Guard and with
 8 the help of a lot of different folks, we quickly
 9 learned how to deal with this pandemic and the key is
 10 testing, testing, testing, isolation, social
 11 distancing, and by doing that we were able to get
 12 this pandemic out of four of our five veterans'
 13 homes. We have no positives in Jackson, Jennings,
 14 Bossier City or Reserve, and we're very happy about
 15 that. We do have and we are struggling with the
 16 positive situation at the Monroe home. At the Monroe
 17 home we have currently 27 positive veterans in the
 18 facility. One positive veteran is in the hospital.
 19 We've had 8 Covid deaths, unfortunately, in Monroe.
 20 Of our employees out of 41 employees that were
 21 positive, 17 are currently still positive and out
 22 recovering with 24 recovered. And so, we've had to
 23 close the visitation that we had opened there until
 24 we can get that under control. It's been tough with
 25 so many employees out sick. We've had to reach out

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1 to the Federal VA at Overton Brooks for support in
 2 terms of medical personnel to come in and take the
 3 place of our LPNs and CNAs, and I'm pleased to tell
 4 you that Director Crockett, who oversees Overton
 5 Brooks has stepped up to the plate and is providing
 6 great assistance to us in Monroe.

7 The governor is fully aware of it. We
 8 have briefed him, and I would expect to be well here
 9 in the next coming weeks. We're, uh, working with
 10 Walgreen's and CVS to receive consent forms which we
 11 have received all of them. We have -- they are now
 12 in the hands of our five home administrators and
 13 we're working with our staff and our veterans to fill
 14 out those consent forms. Our goal is to have all of
 15 those consent forms filled out by Friday of this week
 16 and we'll be prepared to receive vaccinations on the
 17 28th. Hopefully sooner, but the 28th is what we're
 18 being told. So we're very, very happy with that.
 19 And that will be vaccinations for all of our veterans
 20 in the homes as well as our medical staff.

21 now I would like to talk a little bit
 22 about operations at our veterans cemeteries.
 23 Operations at those five cemeteries continue. We
 24 operate those cemeteries Monday through Friday all
 25 year long. They are located in Keithville, which is

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1 our first State veterans cemetery and our oldest.
 2 It's now about 15 years old. Our other cemetery is
 3 in Leesville near Fort Polk. Our busiest cemetery is
 4 in Slidell. And then we have our fourth cemetery is
 5 in Rayville in the northeast near, uh, near Monroe.
 6 Between Monroe and Rayville. And then the Southwest
 7 Louisiana Veterans Cemetery is in Jennings. Our
 8 busiest cemetery with over 3,000 burials now and been
 9 opened three years is in Slidell and we just
 10 completed a major expansion of the columbarium
 11 because it appears now that our nation has gone more
 12 to cremation burials as opposed to casketed burials
 13 and we were running out of the niche in the
 14 columbarium walls. That's completed now and provides
 15 about 6 to 700 more niche spaces for cremated ashes.

16 Our second busiest cemetery is
 17 Keithville which is near Barksdale. This spring we
 18 will open a new garden and we will also do a major
 19 expansion of columbarium facilities in partnership
 20 with the Federal VA. We received a \$2 million grant
 21 to get started on that expansion.

22 Last year, I'm honored to tell you,
 23 that the Northeast Louisiana Veterans Cemetery in
 24 Rayville received the Federal VA's top award for best
 25 run cemetery in the nation, and that was a real



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1 feather in our cap because that means that we beat
 2 every other of state veterans cemetery and national
 3 cemetery in the nation. So, and I would love to be
 4 able to duplicate that but that's kind of like
 5 winning the Olympics, so we'll keep trying.
 6 Cemeteries are final resting places for
 7 our veterans, their spouses and their dependent
 8 children, and we are -- we are honored to be able to
 9 take care of our veterans when their life is over
 10 with dignity and to take care of their families, but
 11 we've had to modify how we do things during this
 12 pandemic as well.
 13 Right now only the immediate family is
 14 allowed to attend the services at each committal
 15 shelter. Everyone else has to stand behind the
 16 committal shelter. No one is turned away. Large
 17 groups still come, but everybody has to wear a mask.
 18 We have extra masks on hand in case a lot of people
 19 show up without masks. Everyone has to wear one.
 20 Everyone has to be socially distanced. Flag details
 21 operate as normal, but they also have to wear a mask.
 22 Rifle teams are spread apart more than normal. Taps
 23 players stand off to one side. We don't have a taps
 24 player, we use the, uh, the sound system at the
 25 cemetery.

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1 So, we're accomplishing the mission but
 2 it's not the way we normally do business or prefer
 3 and I'm hoping we can get back to normal this summer.
 4 We have, also, another program that
 5 we're very proud of. Two years ago we wrote a grant
 6 to the Americorps Foundation and we received \$300,000
 7 and some of that money was matched by the legislature
 8 in working with our college and university presidents
 9 and the governor we were able to establish student
 10 veteran centers on 29 of our public college and
 11 university campuses plus one private university in
 12 New Orleans, Xavier. Currently these 27 centers are
 13 fully staffed by Louisiana Department of Veterans
 14 Affairs trained LaVetCorps navigators. That's what
 15 we call them. the LaVetCorps navigators. They are
 16 Americorps service members and they are -- they are
 17 students who are going to school, all veterans, and
 18 they -- they work with their fellow veterans. We
 19 bring them in for three days of training. They work
 20 with their fellow veterans who may need assistance to
 21 navigate veterans affairs issues, be it GI Bill or
 22 compensation, pension. Whatever they need, these
 23 navigators assist their fellow student. And we have
 24 8,000 student veterans successfully transitioning
 25 from military life to college curriculum, and we're

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1 supporting them we want to see them graduate, be
 2 successful and stay in our state and contribute to
 3 our society. Uh, we are very proud of that program.
 4 We just received our second \$300,000 from the
 5 Americorps Foundation to continue that program.
 6 So, those -- those are the major
 7 programs that the Louisiana Department of Veterans
 8 Affairs operate, but there are others. We are a
 9 full-service department. We run a Louisiana honor
 10 medals program. We recognize Louisiana veterans for
 11 their service and we've awarded more than 10,000
 12 medals since January of 2016 with a total of over
 13 70,000 medals throughout the State of Louisiana.
 14 We also recognize that when our
 15 National Guard deploys or our members of our society
 16 are on active duty, sometimes, especially, we're
 17 concerned with our Guard. If you are a young veteran
 18 working in a plant and making, maybe, 45 to 50,000 a
 19 year, all of a sudden you're mobilized and you're an
 20 E4 or E5. Your salary drops down and it's very easy
 21 to get behind on a mortgage payment or a car payment
 22 or a truck payment. We're concerned about that. We
 23 want the veteran to focus on the mission, to
 24 accomplish the mission and get back home to their
 25 families. So, we can award through the Military

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1 Family Assistance Fund to any Louisiana veteran and
 2 their families up to \$10,000 a year to save their
 3 mortgage, for example, and they don't have to pay
 4 that money back. That is a program that our
 5 legislature passed a few years ago, specifically, to
 6 support not only our Guard but other military
 7 families as well. And we have awarded since January
 8 of 2016 nearly \$700,000 to deployed Louisiana
 9 National Guard members and to military and veteran
 10 families facing personal financial hardship. The
 11 good news is that all of that money was donated.
 12 None of that money comes from the legislature. We
 13 have over \$400,000 still in the pot to help our
 14 veterans and our deployed Guard. We also process
 15 Title 29 tuition assistance for families of fallen
 16 soldiers, and we're honored to be able to do that.
 17 We have a lot of young people going to school who no
 18 longer have, unfortunately, their mom or dad living
 19 with them.
 20 We run a very vigorous incarcerated
 21 veterans program that I'm very proud of. Last year
 22 we were able to get the legislature to pass a bill
 23 requiring the Department of Corrections to notify us
 24 if a veteran that's incarcerated is going to be
 25 released within six to eight months so that we can



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1 process any benefits that that veteran may -- might
 2 have coming to them, and we want to do that because
 3 when a veteran goes into prison let's say that
 4 they're 80 percent service connected. They only get
 5 10 percent of their service connection. The other
 6 80 percent either goes to a family or is held in
 7 abeyance until they are released and we want to get
 8 that money flowing again and hopefully that will cut
 9 down on the rate of recidivism and make them
 10 successful in their life. And we have -- we have a
 11 dedicated veteran who is also an ordained minister
 12 who runs that program and he's very, very good and
 13 very effective.

14 We also have another program that we're
 15 very proud of. We just received the nation's top
 16 award for how we run that program, the
 17 professionalism of our certifying authorities. it's
 18 called the State Approval Agency and what that --
 19 what the State Approval Agency does is approves and
 20 certifies all educational training institutions for
 21 veterans receive the GI Bill. Anywhere from a beauty
 22 school to top universities, even LSU. Anybody who
 23 receives GI Bill in the State of Louisiana has to be
 24 certified and approved by our department to receive
 25 that money. Last year the State Approval Agency

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1 brought in over \$300 million for Louisiana's eight
 2 hundred -- 8000 veterans and their families. So
 3 we're very, very proud of that program.

4 So, Mr. Secretary, members of the
 5 committee, this concludes my briefing subject to any
 6 question that anyone may have. I'm honored to serve
 7 on your committee, Mr. Secretary, and I'm honored to
 8 work with you. I've known you for a long time and
 9 so, that's it for me.

10 MR. PIERSON:

11 Thank you Secretary Strickland. And
 12 for anyone that may have any questions we would be
 13 happy to entertain those. The governor requires
 14 great partnerships within his cabinet officers.
 15 Certainly, General Waddell and I work very closely
 16 together, but Secretary Strickland and I work very
 17 closely together as well. We had some great activity
 18 around November 11th Veterans Day. We were together
 19 on the LSUS campus where we visited one of these vet
 20 service centers that Secretary Strickland's program
 21 has put into place.

22 We've had a lot of business pushed to
 23 veteran owned companies through Hudson Initiative
 24 this year, General Waddell operating out of the
 25 Emergency Operations Center over there with a lot of

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1 these contracts going out through the Hudson
 2 Initiative, both disadvantaged businesses and
 3 veteran-owned businesses were really lifted up and
 4 given opportunities here, and we've spent record
 5 amounts of money with our veterans this year. The
 6 Main Street Program, the grant program has specific
 7 set aside for veteran-owned businesses. At
 8 OpportunityLouisiana.com our veterans program that
 9 links us to the Veterans Affairs programs that
 10 Secretary Strickland managers and also our vets with
 11 security clearances are in very high demand right now
 12 in the private sector, and we're plugging them into
 13 as many Louisiana companies as we can.

14 So thank you for the great partnership,
 15 Secretary Strickland and we will now call on General
 16 Waddell for the update on his very robust Guard
 17 activities.

18 GENERAL WADDELL:

19 Well, thank you, Mr. Secretary. Good
 20 morning, fellow council members. I would like to
 21 thank Secretary Pearson for allowing me the
 22 opportunity to give an overview of Louisiana National
 23 Guard's efforts in this unprecedented year, 2020.
 24 This year has been like no other. Louisiana National
 25 Guard has been active throughout the state throughout

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1 this entire year with multiple state emergencies, our
 2 national emergency, and preparing for federal
 3 mobilizations. I would offer that the men and women
 4 of the Louisiana National Guard and their families
 5 are true heroes. The support they have provided the
 6 state this year and projecting into next year is like
 7 nothing any of us have ever seen. I would, also,
 8 like to thank Governor Edwards for his leadership and
 9 our local, state and federal partners for their
 10 service and support for our team in our great state
 11 of Louisiana.

12 Louisiana National Guard's efforts
 13 during COVID-19, cyber intrusions, ransomware
 14 attacks, multiple hurricanes, multiple tropical
 15 storms, tornadoes, federal deployment, unit drills
 16 annual trainings, and steady State operations are
 17 truly remarkable. Back in March our state and
 18 country began COVID-19 operations. For the last nine
 19 months Louisiana National Guard has worked with its
 20 partners in combating this pandemic. We have worked
 21 three primary lines of effort. They are testing,
 22 food banks and logistics for the of majority of this
 23 time. Our testing program is coordinated with
 24 Louisiana Department of Health, the Governor's Office
 25 of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness,



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1 which I will refer to as GOHSEP from this point
 2 forward, and our parish Office of Emergency
 3 Preparedness directors. We have been in every parish
 4 testing at some point over the past nine months and
 5 we average operating about 22 testing sites each day
 6 during the week, and testing sights each day on the
 7 weekend. People participating in daily testing rank
 8 from about 150 per day on the weekends to about 2,000
 9 per day during the week. The ranges fluctuate during
 10 spike and trough periods. To date your Louisiana
 11 National Guard has tested over 305,000 citizens in
 12 Louisiana.

13 We work at eight food banks throughout
 14 the state. They're in Baton Rouge, Lafayette,
 15 Monroe, Terrebonne. Jefferson, Alexandria, Caddo and
 16 New Orleans. Speaking to the director personally,
 17 they provide food boxes to a number of parishes
 18 across the state and are thankful to have us on site
 19 due to losses in volunteers and the increase in
 20 demand throughout the state.

21 Of note, we also participate in food
 22 distribution campaigns routinely and if you look at
 23 the info graphic slide, to date we're at actually
 24 20.9 million pounds of food packaged since we
 25 started working in the food banks back in March.

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1 Logistically, we have worked
 2 collaboratively with FEMA, the Louisiana Department
 3 of Health, GOHSEP to ensure final destination of all
 4 PPE and ventilators. We understand urgency, purpose
 5 and effective collaboration with our federal, state
 6 and local partners are essential to success. Our
 7 teams goal has been to receive and try to push out
 8 all PPE and ventilators within 24 hours of being
 9 missioned. To date we have delivered PPE to all 64
 10 parishes multiple times and to over 120 medical
 11 facilities throughout Louisiana. While conducting
 12 24/7 operations we have completed over 4500 plus
 13 distributions as of this morning. Again, you can
 14 look at info graphic and see where we stand as far
 15 as 56.6 million items of PPE that have been
 16 delivered to date. At our high point we had about
 17 1300 guardsmen on duty supporting COVID-19
 18 operations and today we stand at about 680 plus.
 19 Recently, we added two additional lines of effort to
 20 our current operations. We had vaccine teams ready
 21 to support when required. Cyber elements working
 22 with LDH's teams and we've expanded our logistics
 23 operations to include redundancy support at the
 24 vaccine hub locations throughout all nine GOHSEP
 25 regions in the state. Other highlights during Covid

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1 include your Louisiana National Guard working with
 2 Orleans and Jefferson Parishes and our federal
 3 partners on setting up the first three
 4 community-based testing sites in the country. These
 5 sites were the first ones ready to open in the
 6 country to serve our citizens and visitors to our
 7 state. Next, for the first time Louisiana National
 8 Guard utilized the dual-status commander it was
 9 brigadier general Lee Hopkins to command sailors,
 10 Marines and soldiers supporting medical missions
 11 within our state. These 120 plus federal forces
 12 deployed from Jacksonville, Florida to Louisiana to
 13 support the personnel housing units in the Morial
 14 Convention Center and at the Baton Rouge General
 15 Hospital. Lieutenant General Richardson, the Army
 16 North commander, came down for two visits and shared
 17 that our efforts at the Baton Rouge were the model
 18 and that Army North and North Com were encouraging
 19 other states to follow this model in utilizing Title
 20 10 forces in their states.

21 I know Robby pulled up the info graphic
 22 and what I would share is: That is updated each day
 23 and at the bottom where you see the COVID-19 response
 24 numbers, that they are related. I think this one
 25 showing 11, so whenever our PAO pushed it over to

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1 him, it's a little dated, but you see the Laura-Delta
 2 recovery, which I'll talk about here in a moment, and
 3 Zeta as well.

4 So, let's talk hurricanes. This year's
 5 hurricane season was like no other. Record setting
 6 on a lot of fronts and Louisiana was not spared.
 7 This hurricane season we responded to all seven
 8 storms, three of which were major hurricanes. Our
 9 normal response in accordance with our all-hazards
 10 plan includes activating guardsmen, pre-staging
 11 vehicles and equipment 24 to 48 hours out from the
 12 storm, repositioning resources and commodities and
 13 setting conditions for effective response.
 14 Cristobal, Marco, Sally, and Beta were smaller storms
 15 for Louisiana but did require the Louisiana National
 16 guard to mobilize soldiers and airmen, but not to the
 17 numbers you saw with the three larger hurricanes nor
 18 with our efforts to respond. Those smaller storms we
 19 pre-positioned forces throughout the state based upon
 20 threat and/or path of storm. For Beta we had 100
 21 guardsmen on duty. Nearly 1300 for Cristobal, 2,000
 22 plus for Marco and 2600 for Sally. For each storm we
 23 pre-positioned varying amounts of high water
 24 vehicles, boats, aircraft, engineer assessment teams,
 25 engineer work teams, ground transporters for



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1 commodities, generators, liaison efforts at parish
 2 emergency operation centers, governmental support
 3 teams and advisors and placed super sacks on the
 4 burrito levee down in Grand Isle multiple times.
 5 On the three big hurricanes, Laura
 6 Delta and Zeta we were heavily engaged in numbers and
 7 effort. With Laura we were preparing for a one-two
 8 strike with Marco hitting in the east followed up
 9 shortly thereafter by Laura in the west. We
 10 pre-staged more than 3,000 Guardsmen, 220 plus
 11 high-water vehicles, 65 boats, 19 aircraft, and
 12 numerous engineer assets arranged throughout the
 13 western border, coastal region, eastern border and at
 14 key strategic locations throughout central Louisiana
 15 for the one-two punch.
 16 Additionally, FEMA sent down over 50
 17 plus truckloads of water and meals to the regional
 18 staging area we have in Roseland and followed it up
 19 with another APAC of commodities at Camp Beauregard
 20 later in the operation. Once we saw Marco was a
 21 non-event, we shifted our eastern personnel and
 22 equipment westward in preparation for Laura's
 23 response recognizing that this storm would be a
 24 powerful hurricane, we activated over 6200 guardsmen
 25 for Hurricane Laura response. Laura's impact

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1 throughout Louisiana is undeniable. Our priorities
 2 were to save lives, prevent human suffering, and
 3 protect the infrastructure. Louisiana National Guard
 4 was able to evacuate 40 people, 32 pets within the
 5 affected region. We distributed commodities within
 6 20 plus Parishes, we cleared debris from 1700 miles
 7 of road, cleared over 210 structures, provided static
 8 and roving security in affected parishes, mostly in
 9 Calcasieu and Cameron parishes, and provided over 300
 10 generators. We established over 43-points of
 11 distribution which are also known as PODS and they
 12 were throughout Louisiana and we ultimately
 13 distributed 7.3 million plus liters of water, 5.36
 14 million MREs, 1.25 million bags of ice and 198,000
 15 plus tarps.
 16 Our plan calls for PODS to be opened in
 17 three days, and for this storm we opened five sites
 18 within 36 hours. At our peak we had nearly 28 PODS
 19 and hubs in operation. The latter notes that I just
 20 gave you were records for Louisiana National Guard.
 21 Today we still have two generator
 22 missions ongoing in Cameron parish and parish
 23 officials project they'll be needed until the end of
 24 the month.
 25 Forty-three days after Hurricane Laura,

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1 Hurricane Delta hit. Louisiana National Guard was
 2 already working in many of the same areas impacted by
 3 this storm but our initial set was the
 4 pre-positioning of 122 high-water vehicles, 60 debris
 5 boats, 24 aircraft, and 18 route cleaner teams. we
 6 activated over 3100 guardsmen for this storm. We
 7 Evacuated 37 people, and 3 pets. Established 31 PODS
 8 throughout the impacted parishes. Of note, this time
 9 our first POD was set up within 24 hours of the storm
 10 passing. We assessed 3270 miles of roadway and
 11 cleared 1820 miles of road. We conducted search and
 12 rescue and security operations in the affected
 13 parishes, delivered 75 more generators although
 14 hundreds were still on mission from Hurricane Laura
 15 and distributed over 455,000 plus liters of water,
 16 731,000 meals, 143,000 bags of ice and 31,000 plus
 17 tarps.
 18 Finally, near the end of October
 19 Hurricane Zeta hit the southeast part of Louisiana.
 20 Our initial set was more than 1000 Guardsmen. 68
 21 high-water vehicles, 48 boats, four aircraft, eight
 22 route clearance teams, all pre-staged to respond to
 23 Hurricane Zeta. Once Zeta clears we executed our
 24 priorities of work and then sustained operation. We
 25 distributed more than 38,600 meals, 80,790 liters of

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1 water, 22,150 bags of ice, 35,400 plus tarps, and
 2 delivered 74 more generators. We operated two PODS
 3 in 13 hubs for the commodities distribution. We
 4 assessed 852 miles of roadway and cleared 140 miles
 5 of road and two structures. I would note that in
 6 every storm once conditions allowed we quickly
 7 reestablished our three lines of effort COVID-19
 8 operations.
 9 In April 2020 Ouachita Parish was hit
 10 by a tornado with most damage occurring in the cities
 11 of Monroe and West Monroe. Louisiana National Guard
 12 responded with 32 soldiers working with local and
 13 state officials for two weeks. We hauled out over
 14 599 loads of debris from the impacted area.
 15 delivered water, tarps to the citizens of Ouachita
 16 Parish and some soldiers even worked at the northeast
 17 Louisiana Food Bank packaging about 700 boxes of food
 18 daily that was ultimately delivered to citizens in
 19 the affected area.
 20 This year we responded to 15 cyber open
 21 source missions. Responses have taken anywhere from
 22 one week to two months. The locations of these
 23 intrusions or ransom ware attacks and our general
 24 cyber support include the local government, parish
 25 school boards and state government. I would note



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1 that we have been heavily engaged in these cyber
 2 missions since July of 2019 starting with the Sabine
 3 Parish School Board intrusion. don't see this
 4 missions going away for sometime.
 5 Throughout this year many of our units
 6 have trained in preparation for federal deployments
 7 in support an operations such as Spartan Shield,
 8 Inherent Resolve, Freedom Sentinel. Our solders
 9 worked hard to build their unit readiness and get
 10 their readiness goals prior to mobilization. This
 11 preparation and training were accomplished during a
 12 pandemic and for many units during Hurricane
 13 preparation and response. Truly, a remarkable
 14 accomplishment given all that's happened in 2020.
 15 The Louisiana National Guard current
 16 federal deployment total is 2100 plus with another
 17 700 plus scheduled to deploy overseas or stateside in
 18 the next six months. Recently, Louisiana National
 19 Guard was recognized at the state capital by
 20 Louisiana house of representatives with house
 21 concurrent resolution 35 sponsored by representatives
 22 Chuck Owen and Kenny Cobbs, which commended the
 23 Louisiana National Guard for its exemplary work,
 24 tremendous dedication, ands effort to protect the
 25 lives and welfare of our citizens, and we were

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1 greatly appreciative of that recognition by the House
 2 and the Senate.
 3 As you have just heard Louisiana
 4 National Guard has made a huge impact on the State of
 5 Louisiana and our country in 2020. I am so proud and
 6 appreciative of the men and women of our organization
 7 that I have the privilege to serve along each and
 8 every one of them and with their families and their
 9 employers. These Guardsmen have been beacons of hope
 10 during these difficult times and are true American
 11 heros.
 12 I would like to have take this opportunity
 13 to wish all of you happy holidays and Mr. Secretary
 14 this concludes my report subject to questions.
 15 MR. PIERSON:
 16 Thank you, General. A year ago if we'd
 17 been in December and talking about a guard mission of
 18 conducting 300,000 medical tests, the movement of
 19 21 million-pounds of food to food banks and providing
 20 57 million pieces of PPE across our state it would
 21 appear to have been complete science fiction to us.
 22 Here, 12 months later, these are now not just notions
 23 these are accomplishments and incredible
 24 accomplishments at that.
 25 So, thank you for the service of so

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1 many men and women doing so much on so many fronts
 2 right now and with great complexity of all the things
 3 that you have to manage. From the floor if anyone
 4 has questions for General Waddell, please speak now.
 5 MR. ABBODD:
 6 I do. Secretary, I want to take this
 7 opportunity to thank General Waddell. I've been in
 8 the National Guard since 1988 and I have never been
 9 so proud of our soldiers and airmen and what they
 10 have done in this state. This mission is, uh, that
 11 they've had to conduct over the last year, I just
 12 don't think people can really wrap their head around
 13 the sacrifice that our civilian soldiers have had to
 14 make -- our citizen soldiers have had to make over
 15 this last year. So, General, thank you. 1It's an
 16 honor to serve with you.
 17 GENERAL WADDELL:
 18 Thank you Robby. I appreciate that.
 19 On behalf of the team, we appreciate you.
 20 MR. PIERSON:
 21 All right. We will now call on
 22 Barksdale Forward, an update, Mr. Viser, you should
 23 be catching, as you did with General Waddell's
 24 presentation, a screen share feature which allows for
 25 PowerPoint slides.

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1 MR. VISER:
 2 Yes, Mr. Secretary. I have it up.
 3 Thank you so much, and Secretary Pierson, Secretary
 4 Strickland, General Waddell, members of the
 5 committee, thanks for the opportunity to give you a
 6 little slice of the world up here in northwest
 7 Louisiana.
 8 Um, some of this may be sound like old news,
 9 but it's really not. A little update on where we are
 10 with the Interstate 220 into Barksdale and the new
 11 east gate. We've been working on this project since
 12 oh, gosh, I couldn't even begin to tell you. I think
 13 Senator Ritter was a brand new senator when we first
 14 started to work on this, and it continues to be an
 15 adventure as we go down the road. As you're aware,
 16 the state and Bossier City and Bossier Parish went in
 17 partnership to extend Interstate 220 into the East
 18 Side of Barksdale Air Force Base. Go over a railroad
 19 track that is just on the outside of the base
 20 boundary, and is also on the outside of the existing
 21 east gate where all the commercial vehicles go in.
 22 This project is well underway and as I talked with
 23 the Parish administrator yesterday about it. He said
 24 they'll be driving on it come this fall. So, that's
 25 really a -- quite an accomplishment considering where



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1 we were in the beginning with this. The pickup that
 2 we've had has been the funding for the gate that will
 3 join up with this road and as I've said to anybody
 4 that will stand still long enough to listen, we don't
 5 want to have a gate to nowhere and we certainly don't
 6 want to have a road to nowhere. The issue is the
 7 funding for the new gate. The gate was originally
 8 programmed in the 2011-2012 timeframe and was
 9 originally costed to be -- projected to be a
 10 \$12.5 million. Well, obviously, costs have gone up
 11 since then when it appeared that the -- the community
 12 and the state were serious about building this road.
 13 The Air Force had to come back and reprice the --
 14 reprice the value of the gate at \$36 million.
 15 So, there's, obviously, a disconnect
 16 there between twelve and a half million and
 17 36 million and it's been somewhat of a scramble
 18 within the Air Force to try to come up with how
 19 they're going to make up that delta. And with the
 20 help of Congressmen Johnson and former Congressman
 21 John Fleming, the Secretary of the Air Force, was
 22 quizzed and agreed that the Air Force will look at
 23 reprogramming some funding in the 21 National Defense
 24 Authorization Act and then the funding would be final
 25 in hopefully 21 or in the FY22 defense appropriation.

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1 As it stands right now it looks like we're going to
 2 come pretty close to matching up the finished roadway
 3 with access to Barksdale. It may not be ideal at
 4 first, but it's going to happen and I think we're all
 5 excited about that. It solves numerous issues.
 6 The other big military construction
 7 project we're looking at is a new weapons generation
 8 facility. It's a huge project. Probably in the
 9 neighborhood of a little over \$200 million to build
 10 this new weapons generation facility. It's for the
 11 storage of not just special weapons but also the
 12 things that carry the special weapons and it will
 13 be -- it's different from a weapons storage facility
 14 which we had at Barksdale up until about eight or ten
 15 years ago, but it will be a facility where the things
 16 that are loaded onto the airplanes are actually
 17 serviced and built up in a enclosed facility. Um,
 18 so, it's going to be a good feather in Barksdale's
 19 cap to have that. The secretary of the Air Force has
 20 indicated in writing that the weapons generation
 21 facility is going to be in FY22's president's budget.
 22 We don't know what that budget's going to look like,
 23 obviously, with the new change of administration, but
 24 it is the number one priority for Air Force Global
 25 Strike Command right now.

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1 The new facility would result in 3 to
 2 400 new personnel at Barksdale. Two additional
 3 MILCON projects, military construction projects come
 4 along with that. A 132 person security personnel
 5 dorm that will be built near that facility for rapid
 6 response time, as well as 35 lane indoor firing range
 7 and while that might sound -- why would you want an
 8 indoor firing range? Well, some of the weapons they
 9 will be firing in that firing range go up 50
 10 caliber -- 50 caliber weapons and a 50 caliber round,
 11 as my friends in the infantry can tell you, travels
 12 about five miles. So you don't want one of those
 13 things getting away and hurting somebody.
 14 Mission Modernization and Budget. Next
 15 line, please. The current B52s that are on the ramp
 16 at Barksdale and Minot, North Dakota, Minot Air Force
 17 Base in North Dakota, came off the assembly line in
 18 1961 and 1962. They are projected to be flying into
 19 at least 2050 and re-engineering these aircraft is
 20 the next significant upgrade for the B52. This is
 21 significant because the current engines on these
 22 airplanes are, as you might imagine, unsustainable at
 23 this stage. The parts are just literally not made
 24 for these engines any more and when there's something
 25 that breaks on them, they either have to go out to

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1 Davis Monthan Air Force Base which is where a lot of
 2 old B52s and aircraft that had these same type of
 3 engines are stored and gets part or take parts off of
 4 existing B52s that are on the ramp at Barksdale, or
 5 in some cases, just leave the hole in the wing. Not
 6 in the wing but where the engine would go. And,
 7 obviously, the airplane can't fly like that.
 8 The Air Force is requesting
 9 \$175 million in Fiscal Year '20 for new engines.
 10 That number is going to go up to probably around
 11 300 million and FY21 and stay at that level until
 12 FY20 -- I'm sorry. In five year projections out for
 13 the budget request to put these new engines on the
 14 airplane. The engines will be engines that have
 15 already been designed and are flying. Not this
 16 particular engine but the design is flying on
 17 airplanes right now and the -- the plan is that these
 18 engines will not have to be taken off of the B52s
 19 until the end of the service life of the airplane.
 20 They'll be more economical, more fuel efficient and
 21 pollute less and will provide longer range, which
 22 provides for less tanker support. Seventy-six
 23 bombers in the fleet. Three engine competitors;
 24 Pratt Whitney, General Electric, and Rolls Royce are
 25 in the running to provide these engines and as you



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1 might imagine each contractor has a different idea of
 2 what the particular engine ought to be. They're
 3 using an expedited procurement process on this
 4 project called Section 804 and they are hopeful that
 5 that will -- that project will, or that program will
 6 continue.

7 Next line, please. Quality of Life
 8 issues, as you might imagine, are very important to
 9 the men and women that are in the military and
 10 relocation for these families is the greatest -- is
 11 the most traumatic event they go through, and as you
 12 know they are being -- our folks are being asked to
 13 move around quite a bit. As a result, the Air Force
 14 has evaluated all 154 of its bases and the respective
 15 communities where these bases reside. Specifically,
 16 focused on two areas; public education and licensure
 17 portability. We've had some success thanks to the
 18 State Legislature and to the governor in a couple of
 19 license portability skill sets with emergency medical
 20 services people, E.M.S. folks, as well as -- um --
 21 I'm sorry. I'm drawing a blank here. As well as
 22 physical therapy. Sorry. Um, public education and
 23 its portability is going to play -- is going to be
 24 used in future evaluations for basing decisions.
 25 Public education is compiled using 60 percent for

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1 academic performance criteria, for school criteria
 2 20 percent, and service offerings criteria
 3 20 percent. The school districts attended by
 4 Barksdale students were given an overall red rating.
 5 Now, these criteria were looked at and rated red for
 6 failing, yellow for needs work, green for good.
 7 Obviously, that's not something we want to see for
 8 Barksdale. Specifically, if you look at how they
 9 were broken down, um, additional support was listed
 10 for graduation rate which is academic performance.
 11 Suspension rate, which is under school criteria,
 12 school climate criteria, and student to mental health
 13 ratio. Licensure portability was rated yellow.
 14 Again, although the state legislature and the
 15 governor have had success in the areas of E.M.S. and
 16 physical therapy. These ratings will be reviewed
 17 yearly, or, if there is a base -- a base -- a basing
 18 activity or basing criteria that's necessary, they'll
 19 look at them look, look at these areas right then
 20 that year.

21 Continuing on quality of life issues. Next
 22 slide, please. Um, as we said, licensure portability
 23 was rated yellow. State legislatures, we've already
 24 talked about that. As these quality of life issues
 25 are looked at moving forward, I strongly suspect that

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1 not only will these be looked at but other areas will
 2 be looked at in the future; community crime
 3 statistics and whether the surrounding community
 4 provides a welcoming environment to the military
 5 families stationed here. I think these are also
 6 going to be big issues that will be looked at in
 7 future evaluations of our bases throughout the Air
 8 Force.

9 I'd be happy to answer any questions on my
 10 presentation. If not, if there aren't any, that's
 11 the end. Thank you.

12 MR. PIERSON:
 13 Murray, I remember great Bossier
 14 schools. I'm just a little surprised that it's red
 15 there.

16 MR. VISER:
 17 Yeah, the problem comes in that the Air
 18 Force uses zip codes to determine where the
 19 students -- where the folks live off base and some of
 20 the students live in Caddo Parish. Some of them live
 21 in Bossier Parish. So Caddo and Bossier Parish are
 22 mixed together, and we're trying to figure out how do
 23 we look at what Bossier schools have done to try and
 24 solve some of the issues that Barksdale, they're part
 25 in Barksdale, which they have been very successful,

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1 Bossier schools has, in providing programs and
 2 providing school of choice for the young people that
 3 live on base, the families that live on base. So,
 4 they have done an outstanding job. Unfortunately,
 5 some of the Caddo schools don't measure up as well as
 6 the Bossier schools.

7 MR. PIERSON:
 8 Well, again, we won't try to solve it
 9 here today, but if there is a pathway to, you know,
 10 through student census known to, perhaps, Bossier
 11 officials that, you know, this constitutes 80 percent
 12 of the young people or that the military dependents
 13 and then that they're in these schools with the
 14 statewide rankings that are very high, then, you
 15 know, that alternate set of data given that it's
 16 accurate and produced locally, could be very valuable
 17 to us, so we'll circle back with you on that.

18 MR. VISER:
 19 We have, uh -- we have broached this
 20 subject with the under secretary of the Air Force for
 21 installations, energy and environment, Mr. John
 22 Henderson, so he is aware and he and his team are
 23 aware that there is somewhat of a potential
 24 disconnect between Caddo schools and Bossier schools,
 25 so we're trying to work through that process.



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1 MR. PIERSON:
2 All right. Uh, we will now proceed to
3 our next installation, Fort Polk. Fort Polk Progress
4 update, please.
5 MAYOR ALLEN:
6 Thank you, Mr. Secretary. As you all
7 know, we got a new leader at Fort Polk. Brigadier
8 General David Doyle was here previously as Commander
9 of Operations Group 2017, a great guy. And since
10 he's been here before we kind of skipped the
11 honeymoon period and went right to work. So, he's a
12 good fit for our efforts, I believe, and as we move
13 forward.
14 Next slide, please. Intergovernmental
15 Service Agreements. You know, Fort Polk continues to
16 be a leader amongst defense communities all over at
17 the world. In a two year effort on Capitol Hill to
18 institute a pilot program so that the base could
19 retain some of the money that they're -- that they're
20 seeing as in savings. So, last year Louisiana
21 congressional delegation added reporting requirements
22 to the National Defense Authorization Act and this
23 year that delegation took the next step and to where
24 25 percent of the cost capture will be given back to
25 the base level. So, we got to keep an eye on that

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1 and make sure that our garrison is, actually, going
2 to see the benefit of that 25 percent that our
3 Louisiana deligation has worked very hard on.
4 Next slide, please. Our Defense
5 Community Infrastructure, the program, what a
6 tremendous success it was at \$7.5 million campus
7 connection learning projects at five schools in
8 Vernon Parish. And thank you Mr. Secretary for all
9 your hard work in spearheading that effort. That
10 DCIP was huge for Vernon Parish and will be
11 instrumental. Most importantly, the DCIP will not go
12 away for next year, but they will mainly focus on
13 three areas and that's military value, uh, residence
14 and quality of life at those installations. Last
15 year was funded, you know, between -- around
16 50 million and we're hoping between 50 and
17 100 million this year. We're waiting to see what
18 those numbers will be. And, of course, I'll come hat
19 in hand and hopefully get the State to commit and
20 resubmit an application for infrastructure for Fort
21 Polk Entrance Road which is very important to Fort
22 Polk and our community. it's going to be a lot
23 tougher this year because people have time to prepare
24 those proposals. last time it was kind of a short
25 notice, so eliminated a lot of competition so I

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1 suspect there will be a lot more competition in that
2 effort this year.
3 Next slide. MILCON at Fort Polk, you
4 know, budgeted for 2021. Only nine active duty Army
5 military construction programs were funded. Fort
6 Polk received 29 million and new information system
7 facility. We'll take a look at fiscal year '22 for
8 that joint operations center but at this point it's
9 still remains unclear.
10 Next slide, please. Um, our next step
11 is, you know, since the pandemic we've kind of not
12 been able to go to Washington and get our face and
13 our name in front of senior military leadership and
14 we've got to do that. Virtually if necessary. Some
15 intel suggests that Ryan McCarthy will still remain
16 Secretary of the Army. And our objective has to be
17 to meet with these senior leaders and reacquaint
18 ourself with Louisiana congressional delegation and
19 their staff. As we -- as we -- as this continues to
20 evolve we have to gain more insight on the Army
21 quality of life program and how it impacts Fort Polk.
22 We have to stay in front of them and we will be
23 working with the Roosevelt group to make sure that we
24 do a little better job of that in '21 than we've done
25 in 2020. Been a very difficult year, as y'all know,

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1 and we'll continue to find innovative ways to get in
2 front of them and make sure they know we're still
3 here. And that'll conclude my report, Mr. Secretary.
4 MR. PIERSON:
5 Mayor, thanks for your great
6 leadership. And just to drill down here a little bit
7 more because, certainly, a great victory for the
8 community, the award that was made was actually made
9 to the Vernon Parish School Board. Senator Reese,
10 yourself, the superintendent over there were all very
11 helpful on the preparation of this award application
12 that Robby spearheaded taking that handoff from
13 Jeanette. One of the things we note is, actually, we
14 tried for two bites at the apple. We're just
15 aggressive that way, and that infrastructure grant
16 was really all packaged up and submitted. So, we've
17 got it on deck. As soon as we started to see the
18 dashboard flicker where they'll accept new
19 applications we'll be ready with that one. We'll
20 circle back just to make sure nothing's, changed
21 locally. If there's any lessons learned from the
22 process of awards that were made to other
23 communities, we'll be able to integrate that.
24 Additionally, on the award that we did win, that
25 \$7.5 million is going to go to those five technology



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1 learning centers that are going to be put on two high
 2 school campuses, two middle school campuses, and one
 3 elementary school campus. I do want to highlight
 4 here that the governor has stood up for the
 5 community. He stood up for the role that the Vernon
 6 Parish School Board plays in educating those
 7 dependent that travel with the military families, and
 8 \$7.5 million award was actually 80 percent of that
 9 and the balance of it had to come from the state
 10 through LED. So, the governor authorized
 11 participation in that grant for something like
 12 \$825,000 and additionally were coming to do some
 13 repair work on the North Polk Elementary School on
 14 the station and that's unrelated to any grant at all
 15 but really basically direct assistance coming to get
 16 that school to where it needs to be for those
 17 military dependent children. We're listening here.
 18 The things that are identified by Fort Polk and Joint
 19 Readiness Training Center for their top priorities is
 20 where we're trying to jump in and help. We're doing
 21 that on roads. Certainly, the retention of the funds
 22 being made available through cost savings and the
 23 leadership that you all have demonstrated in forming
 24 these contracts to allow the military to not be in
 25 the garbage collection business and another

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1 businesses and to contract that off post and have
 2 that partnership is just fantastic.
 3 So, we will. We will continue to stay
 4 very, very focused both in Louisiana and in
 5 Washington DC and in Congress and at the Pentagon and
 6 the leadership that we're getting from local level is
 7 making all of this success possible and the strong
 8 commitment of our governor who's engaged all the time
 9 in every way that we ask him to jump in.
 10 So, thank you for that report today.
 11 Anyone have questions for Fort Polk Progress folks?
 12 Hearing none, we'll move over to the Southeast
 13 Louisiana Military Alliance. Mr. Gary Silbert.
 14 MR. SILBERT:
 15 Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Good
 16 morning, fellow LMAC members. Just going to jump
 17 right in. Next slide, please. Three key areas I'd
 18 like to update you folks on. I'm going to jump right
 19 in if you go to the next slide, please, Robby. So,
 20 some pretty significant good news which pretty much,
 21 it's very good for Belle Chasse and it's continued
 22 mission, the fact that decision was made by the Air
 23 Force to replace the aging F15C aircraft with either
 24 an F35 or an F15 EX mission. Something that would
 25 serve to keep operations out there for decades to

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1 come. So that's wonderful news. What we're looking
 2 to do with the assistance of the Roosevelt Group and
 3 just a shout out to Chris and his team, General
 4 Elder, Kathleen and Matt for all they do to help us
 5 anticipate the pocket and bringing their significant
 6 expertise and horsepower to the cause. I thank you
 7 for that.
 8 So, we're pretty much decided to do a
 9 full-court press on attempting to get the F35
 10 mission. Obviously, we'll be happy with either for
 11 the either National Guard or Belle Chasse to, again,
 12 replace the F15C. But in that regard we've got some
 13 communications out to our delegation and directly
 14 from the governor and the mayor of New Orleans to the
 15 Secretary of the Air Force to let them know how
 16 interested we are in insuring that we, really,
 17 obviously, want to support either but whatever we can
 18 do to get the F35 would be just a huge win for us,
 19 so. Um, additionally, as part of the process it's
 20 critically important that the 159th fighter wing
 21 prepare as the Air Force comes in and evaluates
 22 locations for these missions and appropriateness that
 23 the Roosevelt Group has been meeting and going
 24 through various preparations with the local folks to
 25 help make sure we put our best foot forward and we're

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1 fully prepared as the Air Force selection process
 2 proceeds. It'll be done -- I understand the decision
 3 will be in the summer of 2021.
 4 Next slide, please. The next slide,
 5 Robby. Yeah. Next slide. Keep going. So, um,
 6 again, just to follow through on the next steps that
 7 are short term, you know, we've got some scores we've
 8 got to address relative to education and licensure
 9 and New Orleans, like North Louisiana, didn't score
 10 so hot in education and so we need to shore that up,
 11 doubling down to see what we can do to do that.
 12 We'll also, as I mentioned, be -- the Roosevelt Group
 13 will be getting the -- when 159 is ready for the
 14 visits as they occur, we'll coordinate with Navy
 15 leadership no ensure there are no conflicts with any
 16 future planned flying missions.
 17 And then significant good news along
 18 the way that supports this effort is great -- next to
 19 Belle Chasse you have the Gulf of Mexico so that
 20 range is very desirable with respect to noise, and
 21 encroachment and other things that might come up in
 22 another location. We've got a tremendous track
 23 record for the Air National Guard with respect to
 24 maintenance safety, every different metric you have.
 25 They're on their game and done a wonderful job. And



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1 along the way, we have been able to assess that we'll
 2 get MILCON funding for improvements there that may --
 3 that place very attractive and here most recently the
 4 apron and alert facility funding.
 5 And then, finally, especially with the
 6 help of the Roosevelt Group, we've got the tactics
 7 project in the budget for fiscal year '21 which
 8 really ups our game with respect to our
 9 attractiveness and exercises over the gulf and
 10 communications and tracking the results of those
 11 exercises.
 12 Next slide, please. The not so great
 13 news is just regarding the 204, the Navy Air Reserve
 14 mission. Navy has made a decision not to replace the
 15 aging F18 Cs and Ds with later model hornets.
 16 Apparently, they've made the decision to use airframe
 17 from the Air Force, the F16, I believe, and, you know,
 18 while we've alerted the Louisiana delegation to this
 19 and we received some assurances from the Navy, just
 20 with respect to the mission at Belle Chasse, it's
 21 never over until it's over, so, we really feel a
 22 strong need to track this and to do what we can to
 23 keep that mission there. It's a lot of jobs. It's a
 24 lot of value added, and so, you know its something
 25 we're going to be tracking very closely. So, yeah,

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1 it's a developing situation that remains a concern.
 2 The next slide, please. And then
 3 lastly, regarding the Marine forces MarForRes command
 4 here in Algiers. The marine leadership is looking at
 5 cutting back quite a bit of active duty enlisted
 6 Marines coming up in fiscal year 2021. The focus is
 7 to prepare for peer fighting in lighter more mobile
 8 units so they want to, you know, obviously, we want
 9 to anticipate things and ensure that we don't have
 10 cuts here in, you know, in support of this and, you
 11 know, it's -- we can expect cuts but hopefully, you
 12 know, we'll limit our exposure there.
 13 Feedback that we got from
 14 Representative Garret Graves office is that, you
 15 know, we have some assurances from Lieutenant General
 16 Bellone for investing -- continuing investing in New
 17 Orleans and that mission that is likely that we'll
 18 just see small loss in MarForRes South and, you know,
 19 it's kind of a lot of reasons just in terms of their
 20 mission to support that. Some of the concerns
 21 regarding MarForRes just has to do with a potential
 22 cruise ship terminal near the facility. An ongoing
 23 problem we've had. And I guess it's a perception
 24 problem, if you will, around New Orleans that they
 25 view the community just a associated with the French

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1 Quarter, and that's just not really the case. Lots
 2 of the bachelors, married folks -- married folks
 3 often leave their families behind and come here and
 4 the schools have been a bit of a problem. And you
 5 know, a lot of the Marines end up actually commuting
 6 from the Northshore or other areas as much as an hour
 7 or so to send their kids to less expensive schools.
 8 Some of the better quality schools.
 9 (INAUDIBLE COMMENT)
 10 Yes. So, that's something that we
 11 continue to have to address.
 12 Next. So, That's pretty much it.
 13 Again, I want to thank the Roosevelt Group for their
 14 continued support and wish everyone a safe holiday
 15 season, Merry Christmas, Happy New Years. Thank you
 16 and I'm happy to take any questions.
 17 MR. PIERSON:
 18 Thank you, Gary. A comprehensive
 19 report there, and certainly this whole issue around
 20 the aircraft and the competition for newer aircraft
 21 came up pretty rapidly during COVID and required a
 22 lot of nimbleness on behalf of the team in Washington
 23 spearheaded by the Roosevelt Group and we'll be
 24 hearing from Chris Good next in just a minute. But,
 25 also, great work on the ground by Gueniot, Inc. and

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1 others to gather the information. Certainly, we're
 2 seeing across the state in each of the communities
 3 that a lot of emphasis on education and how critical
 4 that is as the factor driving the quality of life
 5 decisions that all the branches are under challenging
 6 fiscal scenarios and we are in this competition for
 7 where basing decisions will be made. And so, all
 8 defense-related communities will be working as
 9 closely with school systems there. Having sort of
 10 the finger on the pulse of where next investments --
 11 it could be a high school or something in the
 12 vicinity of Belle Chasse, weighing in with the
 13 information about the tremendous economic impact of
 14 these facilities can be important. So thank you for
 15 helping us continue to monitor that. Any questions
 16 for our Southeast Alliance Group? All right, hearing
 17 none, to the Roosevelt Group. Mr. Chris Good.
 18 MR. GOODE:
 19 Great. Thank you. Thank you to
 20 Secretary Pierson and to Ted Waddell as well.
 21 You can move to the next slide.
 22 Thanks. So I'll move through these briefly. A lot
 23 of work has already been captured by the three
 24 defense communities. Um, I do want to provide a
 25 little bit of a higher level post-election



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1 perspective real quick. An update. We have some new
 2 employees, some new team members that I think
 3 everybody on the phone should be aware of because you
 4 have access, obviously, to them. I want to touch a
 5 little bit deeper on the most recent National Defense
 6 Authorization Act, and then fill in some blanks on
 7 some of these bigger lines of effort. So, next
 8 slide.

9 So, just real quick, I know you we all
 10 read the newspapers and watch the news and understand
 11 what's going on, but a couple of the key dates for us
 12 is the new congress coming in in early January as
 13 well as the budget, the new Fiscal Year 22 Budget
 14 coming up to the hill. The appropriations for FY21
 15 are being wrapped up as we speak. They could be,
 16 literally, you know, almost signed here. And as,
 17 additionally, you know, the next COVID relief bill
 18 and so forth. Bottom line, we see the next FY22
 19 budget coming up, hopefully on time, you know, that
 20 first Monday of February which helps us, obviously,
 21 shape our legislative priorities for FY22. We have a
 22 pretty regimented admiral rhythm every year in terms
 23 of developing legislative priorities for all three of
 24 these communities. And, you know, we put some real
 25 thought into those. We don't, you know, take on

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1 things that are un-executable, but things that
 2 hopefully will provide special real value like the
 3 Intergovernmental Service Agreement and so forth. As
 4 well, you know, it's a different year. Obviously,
 5 with an election year, you have 4000 new political
 6 positions being filled, 1200 Senate confirmed
 7 positions, and we obviously monitor those with more
 8 of an eye to the national security space.

9 So, next slide. And from a, you know,
 10 top level Biden transition team. You know, many of
 11 you on the phone may know a number of these folks on
 12 the chart, many of which will ultimately find their
 13 way into the administration. Obviously, your
 14 congressman from the Second District is well
 15 represented there as part of the core Biden team,
 16 which is good news.

17 So, little closer to our world, next
 18 slide, is the Biden administration Pentagon
 19 transition team. This is, also, good news story for
 20 us. I mean, We work quite closely with Mike McCord
 21 and, you know, Michelle Howard, and others on this
 22 list. Debra Wada has been a senior adviser
 23 consultant to the Roosevelt Group for the last two
 24 years. She called John Simmons and I just three
 25 weeks ago and said, you know, don't talk to me for

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1 the next six weeks and off she went to support this.
 2 But, you know, she's fantastic. She was a deputy on
 3 the House Armed Services Committee, worked in the
 4 Pentagon, you know, would not at all be surprised if
 5 Deb and a lot of these folks join the Biden Pentagon
 6 team. Good it's good to have some friends there, and
 7 we'll continue to monitor that.

8 Big picture, next slide, in terms of,
 9 you know, the question you always hear is, okay,
 10 what's going to happen to defense spending and
 11 strategy and so forth. Um, you know, we really have
 12 very little evidence that there's going to be a
 13 significant deviation from the national defense
 14 strategy that Jim Mattis helped put together in 2018
 15 in term of two things. In terms of a continued focus
 16 on major peer threats and certainly formational
 17 technologies. We just don't see that being deviated
 18 upon quite so dramatically. And that's probably a
 19 good thing for Louisiana for the most part; but
 20 certainly there's going to be change. You know, we
 21 certainly, even, Adam Smith, you know, the chairman
 22 of the House Armed Services Committee has already
 23 openly called for a new review and a new national
 24 defense strategy, which is inevitable, so, you know,
 25 there could be some underlying reasons for concern.

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1 I mean, we know things like the long-range strike
 2 option has always been politically, you know -- you
 3 know, it's been a political football, frankly. That
 4 could have an impact on things like the weapons
 5 generation facility. So, you know, hopefully we get
 6 this thing in the ground and fully authorized in
 7 FY22. I still maintain last year would have been the
 8 optimal year seeing the whole national defense
 9 authorization was focused on the nuclear enterprise,
 10 but you know, we do have some good indications that
 11 it is still moving forward, but we're not going to
 12 know until that budget release is finalized.

13 Um, you know, on the other hand we have
 14 been suffering through sequestration. Sequestration
 15 is over, and again, not to suggest that defense
 16 spending is going to necessarily go up, but certainly
 17 we're not under these artificial constraints. We do
 18 feel that there is going to be continued, you know,
 19 very serious oversight of legacy platforms where you
 20 may have too many of one thing or the other thing is
 21 too old. That doesn't necessarily impact Louisiana
 22 as significantly as you may think. You know the B52s
 23 were built, you know, before a lot us were alive and
 24 will probably outlive all of us as well. They're not
 25 going anywhere. That's a great mission for Louisiana



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1 as we know. The F-15s at Belle Chasse are old, but
 2 they are absolutely going to be replaced. Belle
 3 Chasse is getting a new mission, which is, as Gary
 4 said, good news. There's some, you know, pieces to
 5 that strategy we'll talk about in a few minutes.
 6 The real weakspot is that, you know,
 7 what happened, a relatively obscure and safe F18
 8 adversary mission. That is a problem, and, you know,
 9 Gary has done a good job at rooting out that intel
 10 and we'll talk a little bit about that again here in
 11 a few slides, but that's an issue and that is going
 12 to undoubtedly demand some FY22 congressional support
 13 which we are going to work and work quite hard.
 14 And then, finally, we would be crazy
 15 not to, you know, always keep BRAC in mind. In this
 16 new administration, obviously, people are going to
 17 mention BRAC. That BRAC still has a fan base, as
 18 crazy as that, I think that whole concept is at this
 19 point. I served on a BRAC commission. We all know
 20 BRAC better than anybody in the city, but it will
 21 come up and we just have to be prepared for it. I
 22 don't think it's gonna -- it's certainly not going to
 23 be authorized in FY22 but beyond that, you know,
 24 we'll see.
 25 So, next slide. Real quick, I just

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1 want to stress, we put a lot of thought into who we
 2 hire. You know, we have a good mixture of full-time
 3 and part-time consultants based on need, but, you
 4 know, we just recently hired full time 4-star General
 5 Mike Holmes who just was recently the Army combat
 6 commander in Langley. I mean, he is -- talk about a
 7 guy that really understands transformation,
 8 understands the Air Force, is a joint warfare guy.
 9 You know, he's a huge add to the team. He'll be
 10 helpful across these defense communities. Steve
 11 Farnen M 99 former Army general logistician. We want
 12 to get him more involved alongside Chris Hughes who's
 13 been very helpful on Fort Polk. Mirta Doden's
 14 (spelled phonetically) in the middle there, former
 15 intel officer helping with strategic coms. And then,
 16 finally, back to New Orleans, which admittedly had
 17 been sort of less of a workload for TRG has sort of
 18 become more of a workload and that's good, but, you
 19 know, we always had sort of, you know, some
 20 vulnerability in terms of covering down well on
 21 places like SPAWAR. You know, it was just hard to
 22 find people that knew that business. So over the
 23 year we have hired part-time but provides us a lot of
 24 hours, Pat Sullivan on the far right was just
 25 recently the executive director civilian of NIWC, so

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1 knows New Orleans quite well, and then in the bottom
 2 left, Vinny Coglianesse was the former US Marine Corps
 3 commander of all Marine installations. So when it
 4 comes to Marine forces reserve, Vinny's gonna be
 5 dynamite, and just gives us an extra push there. And
 6 then, finally, you know, Boris Becker, rear admiral
 7 was the commander of SPAWAR. He is just about to
 8 sign an agreement with us knowing full well that, you
 9 know, we have New Orleans and we want him to help
 10 there as needed. So, some good updates or good
 11 additions I should say to the team.
 12 Next slide. So, let me -- I just want
 13 to fill in just a couple of the blanks here. And if
 14 Bill Eitner can unmute. It's in here. I'm giving
 15 you an audible buildup, but let me start on the next
 16 slide. So, as Gary indicated --
 17 Go ahead and move to the next slide.
 18 Um, here's the good news. The good news is, you
 19 know, the F35 F15 Enterprise as they call it, is
 20 extremely small. There's only three bases out there.
 21 One base gets the F35. Two bases gets the brand new
 22 F15 EX, which is going to be a great aircraft as
 23 well. As we indicated we have been tracking this
 24 process pretty carefully. The Congress notified the
 25 candidate bases in August. The next big step that

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1 you'll hear about the Air Force will get out and
 2 about. It may be completely virtual. It Maybe a
 3 mixture, I don't know, but between February and April
 4 they will do their site surveys, and that's a very
 5 regimented, serious process within -- in coordination
 6 with 159th. They have an remarkably adept team that
 7 is already pretty close, I think, to having their
 8 site visit presentation all wrapped up. The
 9 secretary of the Air Force will make the decision in
 10 the summer. They'll be a NEPA process. There also
 11 is. And the first aircraft in the case of the F35
 12 will touch down in January of 2026 if everything goes
 13 according to plan.
 14 Bill, if you're ready to go, maybe you
 15 could explain where you're at with the team and give
 16 the group a bit of your background first and then
 17 I'll jump back in.
 18 GENERAL EITNER:
 19 Yes, good morning, leaders. I'm Bill
 20 Eitner. I'm a retired three-star general and my last
 21 position is I ran the air defense for the United
 22 States which is also one of the missions of the 159th
 23 and air sovereignty alert. We've been working with
 24 them quite closely and as Mr. Silbert said that the
 25 desirement is to get an F35 if possible. They're



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1 both great airplanes, but we're going to try for the
 2 5th generation new airplane. To do that Chris Goode
 3 directed that we stand up a red team effort through
 4 the Roosevelt Group to help the 159th and we have a
 5 very experienced group of leaders, former leaders.
 6 We have the former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary
 7 of the Air Force installations, Kathleen Ferguson,
 8 and she's the one that actually stood up the
 9 strategic basing process that's still used by the
 10 secretary of the Air Force. We have two retired Air
 11 Force and Air Guard generals and we have the pilot
 12 who for four years his only job was to run the
 13 conversion for Burlington, Vermont which was the
 14 first Guard duty to receive the F35. Our team has
 15 had the first of four video meetings with the 159th
 16 and additionally we've had internal meetings, emails,
 17 phone calls, all this to help analyze, revise,
 18 present these significantly positive attributes of
 19 Belle Chasse to help shape the Air Force decision.
 20 We're leaning heavily on the lessons learned up at
 21 Burlington, Vermont and also the fact that the rest
 22 of us members have been on the basing committee
 23 itself to make sure that any issue that might
 24 jeopardize the ranking of Belle Chasse in this
 25 competitive process is addressed.

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1 So, if you look at this slide, let's
 2 look at the upper right-hand corner first. And as
 3 mentioned before, the same thing that has occurred up
 4 at Barksdale. Using all zip codes is not necessarily
 5 a representative way to discuss education. The area
 6 around Belle Chasse has some great schools such as
 7 Belle Chasse Academy. Belle Chasse Academy ranks in
 8 the top 3 percent of all the middle schools in the
 9 entire US. The Roosevelt Group had a meeting with
 10 Secretary Pierson and we brainstormed some ideas and
 11 possible priority placement into that school to kind
 12 of address the red and make people more at ease that
 13 there is some great schools and get people into those
 14 schools. Same thing with licenses, whether it's a
 15 hairdresser or medical professional, ways to make
 16 that a little easier.
 17 These other considerations are
 18 important to make sure we paint a fair and accurate
 19 picture of Belle Chasse through this process. The
 20 bottom right is data for now, but shows how the
 21 Secretary of Air Force actually sees and receives
 22 this information, and then they'll be discussions as
 23 to what else goes into the equation. In the
 24 categories that are difficult, expensive or
 25 impossible to change, Belle Chasse is looking very

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1 good. They have great air space, they have a large
 2 ramp, plenty of runway. The main facility is not
 3 available to other bases. It's looking like the cost
 4 will be as low as anyone's, and the members of the
 5 159th are a fantastic team. So the Roosevelt Group
 6 is looking for a great outcome here. This is a team
 7 effort. We appreciate the letters of support and
 8 actions of many of you leaders on this call. And I
 9 can answer any questions. If not, back to Chris
 10 Goode.
 11 MR. GOODE:
 12 Thank you, Bill. Much appreciated.
 13 Let's move on because we have six minutes left and I
 14 just have a few more slides.
 15 okay. Just a couple comments on
 16 Murray's presentation and the gate. I want to stress
 17 something. You know, this -- Louisiana did nothing
 18 wrong in terms of going out there raising money and
 19 building an interchange. The way that this got
 20 fouled up is a long story of incompetence, excuse me,
 21 inside Air Force in terms of how they planned and
 22 designed and carried this thing out, and we have been
 23 working overtime ever since. To the point that, you
 24 know, we got the full amount 48 million and
 25 additional 36 million fully authorized in this

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1 current FY21 NDAA. It is not an appropriation, but
 2 having done that, that is behind us. The gate will
 3 get funded, and having done that that included the
 4 governor of Louisiana, John Bel Edwards, virtually
 5 talking earlier this year with Sean Wilson, with Don,
 6 to the Secretary of the Air Force, with the Assistant
 7 Secretary of the Air Force, John Henderson. We
 8 followed that up with a White House visit that Doc
 9 Fleming stood up and said, yeah, I get it. The White
 10 House asked the Secretary of the Air Force and the
 11 Assistant Secretary to come over to the sit room and
 12 talk about the gate. We talked to John Henderson
 13 after the meeting. He said, A, I never thought I
 14 would sit in the situation room in the West Wing of
 15 the White House, and B, I never thought I'd be
 16 sitting in the situation room talking about a gate.
 17 So, you know, the delegation is 100 percent aware of
 18 this. We're doing everything we can. Hopefully we
 19 will see a reprogramming. I would love to see an
 20 appropriation FY21. If not it's FY22 or bust. So
 21 it's been a slog. I really wish this hadn't
 22 happened, but it is where we're at.
 23 Um, next slide. And next slide. And
 24 in terms of the IGSA this is just the pilot program,
 25 again. Jacob Gattman on Senator Kennedy's staff,



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1 and the senator stood up. They never wavered on
 2 this. It took two years. We wanted to get this done
 3 last year. We got a report and we were thrilled to
 4 see this actually in law. So this is a big win for,
 5 especially, Louisiana that does so much of this type
 6 of work.

7 And then I just have one last slide.
 8 Just some quick lightning round of additional
 9 observations. Murray is exactly right on, you know,
 10 education and licensure. The reason it's important
 11 not only in Barksdale but at Belle Chasse is if you
 12 get the F35, that comes with a compliment of the
 13 active duty people. So they are absolutely going to
 14 look at education and licensure, which is why the red
 15 scores is problematic. That additional consideration
 16 slide that Kathleen Ferguson's briefed to the
 17 secretary of the Air Force 500 times, that's where we
 18 need to -- we need to get in some considerations
 19 like, hey, it's not as bad as you think. That's
 20 going to be the effort over the next six months.

21 Um, the other piece to this is
 22 diversity and inclusion. If Noble was on the phone
 23 today he could tell a very scary story about how the
 24 Air Force has really had to confront this, not
 25 necessarily at Barksdale, but some other bases where

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1 they're having real problems where airmen actually
 2 feel compelled to wear their uniform just to leave
 3 the base. That's going to be a problem and this
 4 could be the next criterion that we see in terms of
 5 basing.

6 Moving on to DCIP win. I got to tell
 7 you, you know, there were 130 applications. Mayor
 8 Allen's right. You know, we kind of took this -- you
 9 took this by storm, but getting 7. million, whatever,
 10 was pretty good considering some of the awards were
 11 \$250,000 and none exceeded 10 million. So that was a
 12 great win. Talked about the F18. The entire
 13 delegation is informed. Mr. Scalise's national
 14 security adviser, his leadership person is informed.
 15 This merits real work next year in terms of the
 16 marine forces reserve command. This is another area.
 17 The entire delegation has been focused on this, and I
 18 actually think you may see more people as a result of
 19 this realignment of MarForRes North and MarForRes
 20 South, so I think this is a stabilized, not-so-bad
 21 situation. Should anybody in the community say, you
 22 know, why is MarForRes North gravitating away. Well,
 23 you're getting, essentially, MarForRes South, and
 24 there is just now happening. This realignment
 25 basically happened in this very month.

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1 Fort Polk, just like the Marine Corps,
 2 you know, the soldier force structure is, as usual,
 3 going to be an issue. We are paying for technology
 4 adaptation, new technologies through manpower.
 5 That's why the Marines are reducing in size. To pay
 6 for, you know, artificial intelligence and machine
 7 learning and new equipment. The same thing is,
 8 basically, going to happen inside the Army. And
 9 then, again, I want to stress, you know, we have some
 10 new great folks that should we run into any issues at
 11 NIWC in New Orleans. I think we have a great team to
 12 better support that piece of the engagement.

13 So, That's all I have, Mr. Secretary.

14 MR. PIERSON:
 15 All right. Well, thank you for that
 16 very comprehensive report; and, again, I think it was
 17 very evident to all our membership here on the call
 18 that your expertise and knowledge has been a very
 19 critical element to guide the installations
 20 represented on the call today. I want to just
 21 briefly pause to ask if Senator Mike Reese would like
 22 to make any comments to the group here today. You're
 23 on mute, sir.

24 SENATOR REESE:
 25 No. Thank you, Don. I just appreciate

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1 all the effort that LED continues to put into this
 2 effort for all of our defense communities. You know,
 3 it just blows me away how far we've come in the
 4 period of time that LED has supported this effort and
 5 the level of sophistication that the Roosevelt Group
 6 has brought to it. And just continue to be grateful
 7 for everybody's work and all of our defense
 8 communities in Louisiana and by LED and Roosevelt
 9 Group. Thank you.

10 MR. PIERSON:
 11 Well, thank for your leadership,
 12 Senator, and I think I can speak for this body
 13 collectively that we feel great that one of our own
 14 is now in the Senate. Your work over many years has
 15 brought Fort Polk progress to where it is today and
 16 we know that your vision and leadership in the Senate
 17 will help us continue the strong efforts for all the
 18 military elements that were represented on the call
 19 today. And, specifically, I'll ask for you to help
 20 us with our LED budget. I know they'll be a pretty
 21 rugged fiscal session ahead of us. There's going to
 22 be cuts. LED will take our, quote, fair share
 23 unquote, but hopefully we're going to be able to make
 24 sure that all of our critical operations, this being
 25 one of them, are sustained with the resources that we



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1 have in the future.

2 With this conclusion of all the

3 reports, and the formal pieces of this, simply say

4 that we will be missing congressman Cedric Richmond

5 in the congressional delegation. Very pleased for

6 his inclusion into the Biden leadership team, and we

7 know that that's going to be valuable to us, but in

8 the not too distant future they'll be an election in

9 southeast Louisiana and we'll bringing a new

10 congressman onboard and we'll be introducing them to

11 our of colleagues at the Roosevelt Group, and the

12 other cabinet secretaries, et cetera, and doing that

13 educational exercise to make sure they know how

14 important the entire fabric of our Department of

15 Defense relationship is to our state, to the nation,

16 and beyond. So, that will be another part of what

17 we're about in the coming months.

18 At this time, I'll ask commission

19 members, council members, if there are any other

20 elements or items of business to come before the

21 council today?

22 Um, hearing none. Also, I will ask

23 Robby or David Carter if there have been any

24 questions that have come from the public that's had

25 the opportunity to monitor these proceedings.

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1 MR. CARTER:

2 Have not been any, Secretary.

3 MR. PIERSON:

4 Thank you, David. Robby, have I left

5 anything out? Are we ready to wrap? You're re on

6 mute.

7 MR. ABBOD:

8 Yes, sir. Good to go.

9 MR. PIERSON:

10 Okay. All right. Well, that's it for

11 today. Very comprehensive reports. Thanks to all

12 the reporting agencies for providing that information

13 to us. We will continue to monitor this COVID crisis

14 that we are in in this modified Phase 2 here in

15 Louisiana. I know the governor is assessing what the

16 path forward looks like, but I know recently he was

17 one of four governors included in a visit to the

18 White House with the president where all the briefing

19 materials are just speaking to how grim the next 30

20 to 60 days can be, and may well be as hospitals

21 approach capacity, given that there's a substantial

22 Thanksgiving wave that's followed by a holiday wave.

23 It's just very tragic. So, we'll ask everyone to

24 guard their health. We will look for a spring or

25 early summer LMAC meeting for trying to get back on

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1 tempo for two a year. As you heard the certification

2 at the early part of this meeting, we can only do

3 Zoom when it meets the legal requirements. So, we

4 get those verified and it's actually very helpful to

5 conduct these meetings by Zoom, but it's not a

6 permissible under current legislation, full time

7 acceptable way to run all meetings. We're afforded

8 this opportunity by the COVID crisis. So the future

9 meetings may well be once again in person given the

10 opportunity to do those, and we had hoped to be at

11 Belle Chasse on this rotation. We may well be at

12 Belle Chasse at the next time that both public health

13 crisis makes that permissible and with permission of

14 the leadership there. But that sort of the aim going

15 forward and where we try to host the meetings is sort

16 of on a rotation of our significant military

17 installations around the state.

18 So, with that, I want to just thank

19 everyone for their time and attention today. Direct

20 any queries over the coming weeks and months to Robby

21 and I., and welcome him onboard. Y'all go and have a

22 great holiday season, and guard your health. Take

23 the comments of our governor to heart that it's

24 really a critical time in American and specifically

25 in Louisiana as we seek to try to navigate through

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1 this with the minimal amount of health issues

2 occurring to all of our citizens and soldiers. Thank

3 you all. Have a good weekend.

4 (WHEREUPON THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:06 P.M.)

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