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LOUISIANA MILITARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Held on JUNE 27, 2023

AT THE LASALLE BUILDING

GRIFFIN ROOM, FIRST FLOOR

617 North Third Street

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70802

REPORTED BY: KELLY S. PERRIN, C.C.R.

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1	APPEARANCES:
2	SECRETARY DONALD M. PIERSON, JR., (CHAIRMAN)
3	DUSTIN GUY, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF
4	(REPRESENTING SECRETARY/LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOEY
5	STRICKLAND, VICE CHAIRMAN)
6	GENERAL ROBERT J. "BOB" ELDER
7	MR. BRIAN P. JAKES, SR.
8	MR. JOHN E. MANION, III
9	MS. DEBORAH B. RANDOLPH
10	SENATOR MIKE REESE
11	MR. GARY B. SILBERT
12	MR. RONNIE L. SLONE
13	MR. MURRAY W. VISER
14	BRIGADE GENERAL D. KEITH WADDELL
15	REAR ADMIRAL JOEL R. WHITEHEAD
16	ROBERT M. "ROBBY" ABBOD, JR., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
17	FOR LMAC
18	MR. LINK MUSTIN, THE ROOSEVELT GROUP
19	MRS. PAT VISER
20	
21	
22	Reported by:
23	Kelly S. Perrin, Certified Court Reporter
24	
25	

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. ABBOD:
All right. Good afternoon, everyone.

ALL PRESENT:
Good afternoon.

MR. ABBOD:
It's a pleasure to have y'all join us this afternoon for today's LMAC meeting. I'll go ahead and call today's meeting to order. I'm showing about five past one, so I think we can go ahead and get started. I know we have a number of important topics and activities to report out on. There's certainly been a lot of great work going on in pretty much every corner of the state. So I'm excited today to get to those reports and give you all an opportunity to share the great work that's going on throughout the state.

So since we typically begin our meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance, I'll kindly ask everyone, if you wouldn't mind, rising and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance?

(PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE BY ALL)

MR. ABBOD:
Thank you, everyone. You may be seated.

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So I'll do my best here to stick with the agenda. Each of you should have a packet. And within that packet, you should have an agenda. You should also have a list of our current LMAC Board members. If you do have a chance to look through that list and see any updates, revisions, changes to email addresses, please do let me know and we'll make that update in our system.

So we can go ahead and begin. Really, this is a little out of order. We did the Pledge first, but I'll move to our roll call. And please, again, forgive me for any mispronunciations.

Mayor Rick Allen?
(No response.)

MR. ABBOD:
Mayor Clarence Beebe?
(No response.)

MR. ABBOD:
Representative Raymond Crews?
(No response.)

MR. ABBOD:
General Robert Elder?
GENERAL ELDER:

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1 Here.
 2 MR. ABBOUD:
 3 Mr. Robert Gatti?
 4 (No response.)
 5 MR. ABBOUD:
 6 Mr. Brian Jakes?
 7 MR. JAKES:
 8 Here.
 9 MR. ABBOUD:
 10 Mr. John Manion?
 11 MR. MANION:
 12 Here.
 13 MR. ABBOUD:
 14 Secretary Don Pierson?
 15 SECRETARY PIERSON:
 16 Present.
 17 MR. ABBOUD:
 18 Ms. Deborah Randolph?
 19 MS. RANDOLPH:
 20 Here.
 21 MR. ABBOUD:
 22 Major General Ronald Richard?
 23 (No response.)
 24 MR. ABBOUD:
 25 Mr. Gary Silbert?

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1 Here.
 2 MR. ABBOUD:
 3 Okay. Thank you very much, everyone.
 4 I'm showing that we do have quorum. So we can
 5 move to Item No. 3, approval of previous
 6 meeting minutes? Did anyone have any
 7 questions, comments, or revisions to the prior
 8 meeting minutes? I believe those were
 9 circulated prior to today's meeting. So I'd
 10 like to ask for any comments at this time?
 11 Okay. I am hearing none. Does anyone
 12 have a motion to approve?
 13 MR. JAKES:
 14 So moved.
 15 MR. ABBOUD:
 16 Any second?
 17 MR. SILBERT:
 18 Second.
 19 MR. ABBOUD:
 20 All in favor, please say aye.
 21 ALL:
 22 Aye.
 23 MR. ABBOUD:
 24 Thank you. And with that, I would like
 25 to turn the meeting over to Secretary Don

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1 MR. SILBERT:
 2 Here.
 3 MR. ABBOUD:
 4 Mr. Ronnie Slone?
 5 MR. SLONE:
 6 Present.
 7 MR. ABBOUD:
 8 Senator Mike Reese?
 9 SENATOR REESE:
 10 Here.
 11 MR. ABBOUD:
 12 Secretary Joey Strickland?
 13 SECRETARY STRICKLAND:
 14 I'm here.
 15 MR. ABBOUD:
 16 Mr. Murray Viser?
 17 MR. VISER:
 18 Here.
 19 MR. ABBOUD:
 20 Major General Keith Waddell?
 21 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 22 Here.
 23 MR. ABBOUD:
 24 Rear Admiral Joel Whitehead?
 25 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:

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1 Pierson for his remarks.
 2 SECRETARY PIERSON:
 3 Thank you for your time and attention
 4 today. It's very much helpful for us to have
 5 the opportunity to interface to update you on
 6 a number of the things happening around the
 7 state, particularly as they relate to the
 8 military installation. My job today will be
 9 to walk that fine line of not stealing the
 10 thunder from a number of other reports that
 11 will be made but to still highlight some of
 12 the recent activities that we've had.
 13 Certainly, Senator Reese has been engaged in
 14 the Legislative Session and they've concluded
 15 their work, not completely, but for the most
 16 part, I guess, as they monitor which bills the
 17 Governor will sign, which ones he'll let
 18 become law without his signature and where
 19 vetoes are viewed to be appropriate by the
 20 Governor.
 21 But overall, the session, I think was
 22 very strong for the state. We have a very
 23 strong economy right now, \$473 million was
 24 provided to pay down State Employee's
 25 Retirement fund debt; \$50 million to Teacher's

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1 Retirement debt; \$181 million was placed into
 2 the Rainy Day Fund; \$505 million dollars were
 3 allocated to DOTD for various state priority
 4 road projects; another \$409 million in
 5 infrastructure projects, reports, and other
 6 important systems and roads and buildings and
 7 parks across the state; \$147 million for
 8 coastal protection; 193 million for higher ed;
 9 \$288 million for K-12 Early Childhood
 10 Education; \$144 million augments to the
 11 Department of Health. So the economy has been
 12 very, very strong in our state.
 13 We have currently employed more people in
 14 Louisiana than ever before in history at
 15 higher wages. For LED, we tracked the
 16 investment coming into our state. And in
 17 2020, that was \$10 billion. But in 2021, that
 18 was \$20 billion. In 2022, that was another
 19 \$20 billion. In 2023, we're tracking right at
 20 \$18 billion right now. So we're going to have
 21 another very strong year in Louisiana driving
 22 the economy forward here. But we'll reserve
 23 some time later in the meeting for Senator
 24 Reese to add any remarks he may want to speak
 25 to relative to the Legislative Session.

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1 Executor Director Robbie Abboud and I
 2 attended the Redesignation Ceremony of Fort
 3 Johnson, formerly Fort Polk, and named after a
 4 World War I Medal of Honor recipient, and that
 5 took place on the 14th of June. It was
 6 well-attended and a great day for the POST.
 7 Last Tuesday, we had Governor Edwards at
 8 the Paris Air Show. You have to travel far
 9 sometimes to see all the people that you need
 10 to meet up with. I guess we do that at
 11 Washington Mardi Gras. We travel there to see
 12 people from all around our state and a number
 13 of our elected officials. But for the
 14 Governor at the Paris Air Show, he was able to
 15 interface with executives from Boeing,
 16 Lockheed Martin, Airbus, and Northrop Grumman.
 17 And, of course, Boeing's got the space launch
 18 system program with a large number of
 19 employees at Michoud. Also, Lockheed Martin
 20 manufactures Orion Space Capsule at Michoud
 21 with another large contention of employees
 22 there.
 23 Also of interest, just to note, and in
 24 Northrop Grumman, there's a lot of work on
 25 military aircraft at Chennault over in Lake

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1 Charles, a very important economic activity
 2 there in Lake Charles and diversifies the
 3 economy of that region. So those were all
 4 nice pieces for us and important intersects.
 5 One of the other pieces of that that's
 6 happening currently is that there's a lot of
 7 interest around Camp Minden, where for many,
 8 many years, that was the Louisiana Army
 9 Ammunition Plant putting together the 155
 10 Howitzer rounds and other ammunition that
 11 supported the Korean and Vietnam Wars now has
 12 some activity there, America's last black
 13 powder manufacturing operation. But it's a
 14 place where energetics and explosives are not
 15 confronted with a community that doesn't want
 16 that happening in their backyard. Fortunate
 17 for us, that area has hosted for more than 50
 18 years, so they're comfortable as we bring in
 19 some of the more modern types of manufacturing
 20 opportunities there. And we've got our
 21 fingers crossed and appreciate the great
 22 working relationship that we have with General
 23 Waddell and his personnel that are allowing us
 24 to joint venture in these engagements. And
 25 when they're asking about the capacities and

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1 the capabilities there, it does take that team
 2 effort. So great working with you on these
 3 activities and opportunities, General.
 4 Some things that you may want to note is
 5 on 10 July, Stephenson Stellar Corporation
 6 will have their ribbon cut in Shreveport at
 7 the Biomedical Research Foundation area there
 8 in the medical corridor. They're doing some
 9 great work with Global Strike Command working
 10 on a lot of things we can't talk about, but we
 11 know that there's a great deal of activity
 12 that's involved with all those operations. So
 13 it's great to be growing our software
 14 footprint and doing so in Northwest Louisiana.
 15 Also of note in the same time frame
 16 almost, but there will be a Triad Symposium at
 17 LSU on the 20th and 21st of July. That will
 18 attract a large number of high-ranking Air
 19 Force and other service officials and elected
 20 officials into the area for a number of those
 21 discussions about the Nuclear deterrents, the
 22 role of the B52 bomber, and other elements;
 23 really a topnotch level of speakers. And I
 24 encourage you to look into that. And you can
 25 Google the Triad Symposium at LSU and it will

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1 come up available for you to register. Not
 2 only -- you don't have to travel, but a lot of
 3 it can be attended virtually by Zoom. So if
 4 that's of interest to you, please know that
 5 that symposium is coming, and LED will be
 6 represented there.

7 And finally another note for future
 8 activity, on October 31 to November 4, New
 9 Orleans will host the 2023 Congressional Medal
 10 of Honor Convention. It's a convention of
 11 really the Nation's most prestigious and
 12 patriotic celebrations. The number of Medal
 13 of Honor recipients is dwindling and -- but
 14 they expect more than 30 or 40 of those to be
 15 present. And you'll hear a lot more about
 16 that as we approach that date.

17 That's my report for the moment. I'll be
 18 available and under Other Business or to take
 19 your questions later in the meeting. Thank
 20 you, Robbie.

21 MR. ABBOUD:

22 Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. So
 23 we can go ahead and proceed on to Item No. 5
 24 on today's agenda, so Reports, Overview and
 25 Discussion. And to begin, I'd like to go

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1 ahead and call on Deputy Chief of Staff for
 2 the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dustin
 3 Guy, who will be reporting on behalf of
 4 Colonel Strickland today.

5 MR. GUY:

6 Thank you. All right. Thank you very
 7 much. So, as Robbie said, I'm Dustin Guy.
 8 I'm Deputy Chief of Staff for the Louisiana
 9 Department of Veterans Affairs and
 10 representing Secretary Joey Strickland. He's
 11 actually at a VA appointment today, so he
 12 couldn't be here with you but certainly
 13 appreciate the opportunity to brief on the
 14 Department.

15 The Louisiana Department of Veterans
 16 Affairs is an 850-person department that
 17 serves Louisiana. It's 283,000 veterans and
 18 their families. According to the Federal VA,
 19 our Veterans Assistance Counselors help bring
 20 in more than \$1.6 billion statewide in
 21 compensation and pension dollars.

22 As of June for fiscal year '23, our VACs,
 23 our Veterans Assistance Counselors filed more
 24 than 132,000 claims on behalf of Louisiana
 25 veterans. In terms of appeals, our staff

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1 worked 301 of those appeals resulting in
 2 retroactive payments of more than \$2.2 million
 3 in fiscal year '23. Our VACs have also
 4 verified veteran status of 1,252 businesses
 5 for LED's veterans first business initiative.

6 We have five veteran cemeteries located
 7 across the state, and I wanted to share a few
 8 of our numbers with those cemeteries. So our
 9 central Louisiana veteran cemetery in
 10 Leesville, we have 1,344 interred there and
 11 they average about 12 burials per months. At
 12 our Northeast Louisiana veteran cemetery in
 13 Rayville, there are 932 interred; average 11
 14 burials per month at that cemetery. At our
 15 Northwest Louisiana veterans cemetery in
 16 Keithville, 4,021 interred with an average of
 17 29 burials per month. And at our Southeast
 18 Louisiana veterans cemetery in Slidell, 4,112
 19 interred. They average 49 burials per month.
 20 That is our busiest cemetery. That cemetery
 21 opened in 2014. And our latest cemetery in
 22 2020 is in Jennings at the Southwest -- it's a
 23 Southwest Louisiana veterans cemetery. There
 24 are 382 interred at that cemetery and they
 25 average 12 burials per month. Overall, we

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1 have nearly 10,790 total interred in all five
 2 of our cemeteries. And overall, we're
 3 averaging 113 burials per month.

4 We are working with the Federal VA on
 5 construction products at three cemeteries. At
 6 Leesville, \$2.25 million; at Rayville, \$1.1
 7 million, and Slidell, \$5.2 million. We just
 8 completed a \$4.4 million project in Keithville
 9 to add 1,520 preplaced concrete crypts and
 10 1,260 Columnbarium niches among other
 11 improvements. It was an amazing process.

12 Let me tell you, we haven't -- we visited
 13 the cemetery during the construction. And, in
 14 fact, we're going to be visiting again this
 15 Friday, and it was an amazing process to see
 16 them placing these crypts in the ground, the
 17 amount of earth that they moved, and then the
 18 precision in which that they placed them, it
 19 was really amazing.

20 Our veterans homes, we have five veterans
 21 homes located across the state and we are
 22 caring for almost 600 veterans at these five
 23 homes. Our census numbers continue to
 24 increase by the hard work of our staff
 25 rebuilding them post-pandemic. Our veterans

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1 homes were hit very hard, unfortunately, but
 2 they are recovering and doing very well. And
 3 our numbers reflect that with a census at
 4 nearly 600. Our veterans family members and
 5 our community volunteers are back in their
 6 homes.

7 Our LaVetCorps Program, so we operate 32
 8 college and university campus veteran centers
 9 through our LaVetCorps Program where we call
 10 them navigators. They are student veteran
 11 leaders serve 10,000 student veterans and
 12 their families. This is -- we call it the
 13 LaVetCorps Program, this is actual an
 14 AmeriCorps Grant. This program is in its
 15 fifth year and we're seeing more veterans
 16 graduate and we want them to be leaders and to
 17 live a life after military service.

18 We are currently looking to fill
 19 vacancies in Delgado Community College West
 20 bank, Northwest Louisiana Technical Community
 21 College, Northwestern State University, South
 22 Louisiana Community College, Tulane
 23 University, and the University of Holy Cross
 24 to begin service in August.

25 Our State approving agency that approves

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1 all our GI bill payments for college campuses
 2 and student veterans, we have certified 244
 3 active institutions to receive GI bill
 4 payments. Most recently, brought in more than
 5 \$168 million in Federal dollars to Louisiana's
 6 higher education communities. Our Military
 7 Family Assistance Fund, that is a need-based
 8 program that we're very, very proud of, it
 9 provides assistance to veterans that are in
 10 need. Like I said, it's a need-based fund.
 11 It could be help with car payments, home
 12 loans, bills. Any veteran who falls on hard
 13 times, this is a Louisiana Resident Veteran
 14 who has been honorably discharged, they're
 15 eligible -- basically eligible for this
 16 assistance. The Board reviews application and
 17 we can award up to \$10,000 per year to a
 18 veteran. This fiscal year, we have awarded
 19 nearly \$125,000 in need-based claims to
 20 Louisiana veterans.

21 Like I said, this is a fantastic program.
 22 It allows us to respond very quickly to
 23 veterans who are in need. We have different
 24 thresholds in terms of approval. We have an
 25 administrator who has the authority to approve

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1 up to \$1,500. Then it goes to a three-person
 2 committee up to \$2,500, and then a full board
 3 up to the \$10,000. Please, I want you all to
 4 be aware of this program. We've been able to
 5 help so many veterans and their families.
 6 Especially during Hurricane Ida, we were able
 7 to respond very, very quickly to veterans in
 8 need. In fact, many times, we were able to
 9 get them assistance before their insurance
 10 companies were able to.

11 I want to share, if I can, an email that
 12 we just received this weekend that kind of
 13 speaks to this program and the significance of
 14 it. This was an email, and it's very short,
 15 that was sent to our program administrator
 16 from a veteran that we assisted through this
 17 program, and he says:

18 I would like to take this opportunity to
 19 thank you and all of your staff for help you
 20 all provided for our family. My broken ankle
 21 is healing well and I'm back at work. If it
 22 wouldn't have been for the assistance you all
 23 provided, we would have lost just about
 24 everything. Again, I thank you all from the
 25 bottom of my heart. If there is anything I

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1 can do to help you with the good work y'all
 2 do, please do not hesitate to contact me.

3 So this is a fantastic program. It's
 4 made up primarily of donations. It's about a
 5 half-a-million-dollar fund at this point. And
 6 like I said, we're able to get the money to
 7 veterans and their family in need and we can
 8 do it rather quickly. So I just want you all
 9 to be aware of it. Veterans can fill out an
 10 application on our website, which is
 11 vetaffairs.la.gov. And those interested can
 12 make donations online as well, and I have
 13 cards. I also have some guide books that I
 14 want to make sure, if you're interested, you
 15 get one. It goes through all of our -- all of
 16 our programs. It's brand new, hot off the
 17 press up to date. It has all updated contact
 18 information. I want to make sure you have
 19 that. I probably don't have enough for
 20 everybody, but we'll certainly get them to
 21 you. Like I said, I have my card. We can get
 22 you whatever you need.

23 As far as our Outreach Program is
 24 concerned, we held our first Veterans Career
 25 and Education Fair on May 19th. More than 50

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1 veterans met with employers and pursued job
 2 applications. We're working to bring more job
 3 referral and job placement resources to
 4 veterans.

5 On July 19th, in Baton Rouge, we'll
 6 unveil and dedicate the new heritage monument
 7 in honor of African American Service Members
 8 throughout our Nation's history. This
 9 monument will be in the Louisiana Veterans
 10 Memorial Park next to the State Capitol.

11 In August, we will unveil and dedicate
 12 the new Purple Heart Trail in our Louisiana
 13 Veterans Memorial Park as well.

14 In September, we'll hold our annual
 15 Suicide Prevention Summit and Gold Star
 16 Mothers and Families Recognition Ceremony.
 17 That will also -- Gold Star Recognition
 18 Ceremony will also be held in Louisiana
 19 Veterans Memorial Park. We have a monument
 20 there specifically for Gold Star Families.

21 We're planning a great event in Baton
 22 Rouge during the week of Veterans Day this
 23 year. It will center around a documentary
 24 about a grandson who chronicled his World War
 25 II grandfather's service, which will be shown

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1 at the Manship Theatre in downtown Baton
 2 Rouge. And you can sign up for news from us
 3 at vetaffairs.la.gov.

4 So we have a lot going on. We never slow
 5 down, that's the Colonel's direction, and
 6 that's what the Governor expects of us, so
 7 that's the Mission. So that completes my
 8 report. Does anybody have any questions?

9 GENERAL ELDER:
 10 The packages that you have here, is that
 11 also online?

12 MR. GUY:
 13 What's that?

14 GENERAL ELDER:
 15 The packages that you have here for
 16 distribution, you also have that online?

17 MR. GUY:
 18 This right here?

19 GENERAL ELDER:
 20 Yes.

21 MR. GUY:
 22 I don't believe so due to the volume of
 23 it. I mean, certainly, our website is a good
 24 resource and would get you in contact with
 25 someone who can give that to you, but I'll

Page 23

1 make sure you have one for sure.

2 GENERAL ELDER:
 3 Okay.

4 MR. GUY:
 5 Anyone else? Thank you very much.

6 MR. ABBOD:
 7 Thank you very much, Dustin. We
 8 certainly work closely with the Department of
 9 Veterans Affairs. Dustin, you mentioned our
 10 veterans first business initiative, so we
 11 remain grateful for the work you all do and
 12 remain grateful for our partnership. So thank
 13 you for that.

14 Next, I would like to call on General
 15 Waddell to report on guard activity. And I
 16 may just need one moment to pull up your
 17 slide.

18 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 19 Okay. And I'll get him, our Governor's
 20 fellow to pass out a packet as well if you
 21 want to make notes along the way. All right.
 22 Senator Reese, Secretary Pierson, General
 23 Elder, Fellow Council Members, good afternoon.
 24 Again, I'm Keith Waddell, the acting General
 25 of the Louisiana National Guard.

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1 Before I get started, I just want to, as
 2 a baseline, I want to let everybody know our
 3 strategic objectives in Louisiana National
 4 Guard have not changed. They still revolve
 5 around readiness, supporting our deployed and
 6 redeployed units, all hazards operations,
 7 which are basically state emergencies, and
 8 moral, legal, and ethical service. So that --
 9 the first three are really a focused point for
 10 me during my presentation here this afternoon.

11 So as far as build and maintain
 12 readiness, I want to share something that took
 13 place in March. We actually have a recruiter
 14 named Staff Sergeant Christian Knoll. He was
 15 the top production NCO in the entire nation,
 16 all 54 states in territory, number one for the
 17 second year in a row. Sergeant Knoll is from
 18 around the Shreveport area and has done very
 19 well, and he represented Louisiana well as he
 20 got that national award in March from
 21 Lieutenant General Jensen, the Director of the
 22 Army National Guard. And Sergeant First Class
 23 Jade Mays was the marketing NCO of the year
 24 for the entire country. So two success
 25 stories back here in our backyard, extremely

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1 proud of both of them.
 2 And they have contributed to what you see
 3 with personnel readiness up there. We're
 4 doing very well in terms of strength in
 5 Louisiana National Guard. If you look at the
 6 Army and the Air, both well over 100 percent,
 7 which is critical because as we try to compete
 8 for force structure and bring in more units
 9 into the State of Louisiana, that's really the
 10 first cut in what they're looking at. So once
 11 the numbers kind of demonstrate that the state
 12 can support, and as long as that force
 13 structure is something Louisiana can use, we
 14 go after it. We don't get it all. But if it
 15 fits for Louisiana, certainly, we try to get
 16 it.
 17 We are currently ranked number one as far
 18 as the Strength Health Index goes from the
 19 National Guard Bureau. It takes into account
 20 a variety of personnel metrics, and Louisiana
 21 is number one in the nation there. They do it
 22 every week in terms of kind of re-popping the
 23 chalk. And for the last four weeks, we've
 24 been on top. So, hopefully, we'll get to stay
 25 there.

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1 As far as equipment readiness, right now
 2 we have 27,500 reportable items in Louisiana
 3 National Guard. That's wheels and track
 4 vehicles. We're at about 94 percent right
 5 now. We're going through annual training with
 6 a lot of our units. So I like to be around
 7 97 percent is where I feel really good, but we
 8 do have a maintenance company that's deployed
 9 in Kuwait right now with a lot of full-time
 10 technicians, so that has set us back. And
 11 we're kind of readjusting our strategy to try
 12 to get the numbers back up.
 13 So as long as the parts are flowing in,
 14 because that is another constraint we have
 15 right now, as long as we can get those parts
 16 and hang them, we can drive those numbers up.
 17 But I still feel confident that if something
 18 happens as far as state emergency, your
 19 Louisiana National Guard will be there ready
 20 to respond and take care of the citizens and
 21 visitors to our state.
 22 With training readiness, again, we're in
 23 annual training right now. We do very well in
 24 terms of our peers as far as qualified
 25 individuals. You see we're number two; really

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1 go with number one, number two most days. So
 2 our training managers do a good job in our
 3 soldier availability and airman availability
 4 so they can go to training is also important.
 5 So when those two points intersect, end
 6 result, qualified soldiers and airmen for your
 7 Louisiana National Guard.
 8 So I get questions all the time about
 9 recruiting and how we're doing. So when you
 10 look at these two line graphs and you kind of
 11 see on the left side of the chart on the green
 12 line for the Army where you kind of had that
 13 downward trend, I will tell you right now, we
 14 have over 800 accessions in the Louisiana
 15 National Guard. So last year, we finished at
 16 769 for the entire year. We're already over
 17 800 with three months left to go.
 18 So our goal is a little over a thousand.
 19 I think we're going to come in a little over
 20 1,100 by my estimation. And based upon
 21 recruiter production at this point, we get
 22 45 -- nearly 45 percent of the market share.
 23 When you're talking about branches and
 24 components, your Louisiana National Guard
 25 recruiters are really, really working it hard

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1 along with the unit members. So, again, huge
 2 success there.
 3 On the air side, last year, we finished
 4 at 82. We're already at 93 right now. So
 5 when that COVID Vaccine Recension took place,
 6 we saw the numbers skyrocket in terms of
 7 accessions in the Louisiana National Guard.
 8 We did recently open up a storefront on
 9 Airline Highway. Right next to the storefront
 10 with the active Air Force and Reserves, we're
 11 right nextdoor neighbors to them. So we did a
 12 ribbon cutting a couple of weeks ago. We
 13 enlisted four people that day. So this is the
 14 best market in the State of Louisiana, so
 15 having that storefront there should really
 16 drive up the numbers as far as our Air Guards
 17 are concerned. So we're excited about that.
 18 On the retention side, on the Army, I
 19 think we're going to be around 78 percent this
 20 year. We've really gotten fat and happy over
 21 the last couple of years; 82, 86, and
 22 82 percent again; 78 percent is our
 23 organizational goal. We'll reach that this
 24 year. Still got some work to do these last
 25 three months. But in my back reach with the

Page 29

1 commanders, all the feedback I'm getting is
 2 positive. And any mitigation we can do to
 3 keep them on the team, certainly we're going
 4 to do that. I think that the fighter wing on
 5 the air side will be back up around 92,
 6 93 percent this year and that's kind of where
 7 we're used to as far as the Air Guard is
 8 concerned.

9 On Federal mobilizations, currently, we
 10 have 470 soldiers and airmen that are deployed
 11 somewhere in the world. The 1083rd
 12 Transportation Company, we actually did their
 13 deployment ceremony this Saturday at Airline
 14 High School. They actually left Saturday
 15 afternoon for Fort Cavazos, formerly known as
 16 Fort Hood, Texas. And they will be there
 17 until about July the 25th, and they will have
 18 onward movement to Kuwait where they'll spend
 19 nine months serving in theater.

20 Our next unit that is up is the assault
 21 helicopter battalion. Those three elements,
 22 Alpha, Delta, and Echo, they will be at
 23 Virginia during their deployment supporting
 24 Federal operations there.

25 So you see the projections in terms of

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1 392 more? I'll tell you, I get calls, it
 2 seems like almost every week with a
 3 notification for either an individual or a
 4 small unit to deploy. So we'll be adding to
 5 that list where you see sourcings there. That
 6 continues to grow almost every week.

7 On state emergency responses, we finished
 8 Plaquemines Parish this past Friday. So with
 9 the saltwater intrusion that was coming up on
 10 the Mississippi River for Buras and
 11 Boothville-Venice, we actually sent down
 12 palletized water to both of those locations to
 13 help them through the weekend. I know GOHSEP
 14 is working the long-term operation there. And
 15 the week before that -- or the weekend before
 16 that up in north Louisiana with the severe
 17 weather that took place there, we pushed a lot
 18 of water. We had generators on the ground.
 19 As a matter of fact, we recovered our last
 20 generator today from DeSoto Parish. So we
 21 should be able to close that 2023 northwest
 22 severe weather mission out today. And I'll
 23 talk cyber a little bit in a moment.

24 On innovative readiness training: So
 25 these are for our engineer battalions. So

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1 we've got three construction engineer
 2 battalions in Louisiana National Guard. Two
 3 of them have already been through their two
 4 weeks of annual training. So we've had a
 5 month's worth of work with Grambling, Grant
 6 Parish, and Lost Bayou Scout Camp. And we're
 7 making great progress there.

8 So the 520th engineer battalion out of
 9 Monroe, they will be the last engineer
 10 battalion that will start annual training
 11 after the 4th of July. They will put the
 12 final touches on all these projects that you
 13 see over on the right side. The reason those
 14 two on the left are highlighted is we've
 15 already completed both of those projects. So
 16 Grambling State is a Phase II. We actually
 17 went and cleared and grubbed a large section a
 18 couple of years ago. President Gallot got us
 19 to come back up there to do another 50 acres.
 20 A lot of horizontal work. All is well.

21 Grant Parish is in Phase II also. We
 22 began construction of a rifle and pistol range
 23 last year, which was basically all horizontal
 24 work. And then now, we're going back to
 25 finish up some of the horizontal and put in

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1 some of the vertical requirements that Sheriff
 2 McCain has.

3 Lost Bayou Scout Camp is a mile-long
 4 road -- stretch of road. They want some
 5 reshaping and re-profiling of that particular
 6 road. And then, the Vermilion Fire Tower is a
 7 horizontal project that will have a day one
 8 start after the 4th of July holiday. All of
 9 those are our IRT projects. These are huge
 10 wins for us with the community, so we love
 11 doing them any time we have a chance.

12 On our Training Center Rotations: I had
 13 the opportunity to go Fort Johnson a couple of
 14 weeks ago for the 44th Infantry Brigade Combat
 15 Team out of New Jersey. We actually had
 16 elements of the 256 from Lafayette that
 17 supported the opposing force. So that 183 PAX
 18 that you see right there, those were from the
 19 Lafayette unit or surrounding area.

20 And we also got to bring in our state
 21 partner of Belize. They sent about 140
 22 individuals from the Belize Defense Force and
 23 the Belizean Coast Guard that participated
 24 with the Special Operations Forces that were
 25 part of that rotation, so huge win. All the

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1 Belizeans, Minister Marin who is the Minister
 2 of Border Security and National Defense in
 3 Belize, I had an opportunity to talk to him.
 4 He was raving about all the great things that
 5 the Belizeans got to do while they were at
 6 Fort Johnson during that rotation.
 7 The next rotation up for us is when
 8 Hawaii comes through, the 29th. It's a small
 9 element. We'll just go support the observer
 10 controllers where they actually do the
 11 evaluations of the units that are going
 12 through.
 13 So with JRTC, we get a lot of requests
 14 from them just because we're in their
 15 backyard. And if they're ever short on a
 16 rotational unit, a lot of times, they'll reach
 17 out to me and say, "hey, can y'all support?"
 18 I mean, we look and see if we can; and,
 19 certainly, if it's possible, we do.
 20 On our cyber operations, so they just
 21 finished their two weeks in Arkansas of
 22 training. I think the last time I reported,
 23 they had just gotten back from Fort Meade,
 24 Virginia on their Federal deployment. Again,
 25 these guys and gals amaze me in terms of the

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1 work they actually do. With Emergency Support
 2 Function-17, you see how many incidents we've
 3 been involved with on the top left there
 4 really since 2019, very busy bunch.
 5 We haven't been as busy of late other
 6 than doing remote work. And that decision is
 7 made as it goes up through Director Tingle and
 8 Dickie Howze. The State says so. So, you
 9 know, we stand by. We're all ready to engage
 10 if they need us. We put them on state active
 11 duty in terms of our soldiers and airmen and
 12 they address whatever issue someone may be
 13 having.
 14 On our installations, we actually had a
 15 reduction of one readiness center. We
 16 transferred the Jonesboro Readiness Center
 17 over to the City of Jonesboro. So Mayor Spike
 18 Harris, Representative Jack McFarland, and
 19 Senator Jay Luneau were all part of that and
 20 hadn't used that facility for a little over
 21 five years. Mayor Harris came to me and said,
 22 "hey, sir, we'd like to do this. We'd like to
 23 re-purpose the armory so that we could conduct
 24 our police operations out there." So I think
 25 that's their headquarters for the police

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1 department.
 2 And in the back, the Legislature actually
 3 afforded them some money, I think, last year
 4 to do some development in the back so they can
 5 have farmers' markets and community kind of
 6 activities behind that readiness center. So
 7 Mayor Harris is full of energy, got a lot of
 8 great ideas and things that he wants to do for
 9 his municipality. So we were able to support
 10 him in that endeavor.
 11 On the military construction that you see
 12 on the right, I guess the specific update I
 13 will give you: On the Lake Charles Readiness
 14 Center, that project should finish, we
 15 believe, next summer. You know, over 50,000
 16 square feet of area for the soldiers for that
 17 unit. The Belle Chasse Alert Center, we think
 18 we'll be doing a ribbon cutting this summer.
 19 There was something with salt stabilization, a
 20 question when they were working on the apron,
 21 so they're trying to figure that out, and once
 22 they get that figured out and mitigated, we'll
 23 do that ribbon cutting.
 24 The Pineville Readiness Center is just
 25 about ready. I actually walked through the

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1 other day. They were doing some inside work.
 2 So I think we're very close there. And the
 3 Low Median Income Housing area that we have in
 4 back of Training Center Pineville, they
 5 probably -- it will probably be this fall
 6 before we're able to allow families to get
 7 into those housing areas. Everything else is
 8 kind of a renovation or an upgrade, but we
 9 have over a hundred million dollars of
 10 construction going on right now in Louisiana
 11 National Guard, which we're extremely excited
 12 about and thankful to our State Legislators as
 13 well as our Congressional Delegation for all
 14 their support in making these projects a
 15 reality.
 16 The future construction you see right
 17 there with the Lafayette Readiness Center,
 18 that one won't actually kick off until 2025.
 19 And these other projects go out to 2027. So
 20 big thing is we don't want a Budget Control
 21 Act to happen. We don't want that money to be
 22 taken back and we don't want to have to rereck
 23 those projects. So we keep them on the
 24 forefront, and you'll see that when we start
 25 talking about legislative priorities here in a

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1 moment.

2 On the Force Structure: So the engineer

3 branch, because we've gone through a

4 divisional realignment within the Army, what

5 has happened is in an engineer force structure

6 that we have, they've restructured the mobile

7 Augmentation Company and the Sapper Companies

8 into what they call a Combat Engineer Company

9 Infantry. So like in this state with the

10 256th Infantry Brigade, you know, we need

11 engineers that can go out there, dig fighting

12 positions, put in obstacles and all those

13 things that the maneuver elements need us to

14 do for them to conduct their operations. So

15 we lost our mobile Augmentation Company, which

16 is 926, and our Sapper Company. And basically

17 that's about 250 people, and the CECI is what

18 they call it with an acronym, it's about 170.

19 So we had a net loss there, but we're falling

20 in line with what the force structure is.

21 And my conversations with General

22 Hokanson, the Chief of National Guard Bureau,

23 and General Jensen, the Director of the Army

24 National Guard, they understand we had a bill

25 we paid there, but we still -- we paid a lot

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1 and our numbers indicate that if some other

2 force structures come available, Louisiana

3 needs to get it. So I don't let them forget

4 that any chance I get. I pretty much stay on

5 that.

6 We did have a transaction with Washington

7 State. So in Louisiana, with our chemical,

8 radiological, nuclear response element, what

9 they call CBRN, we've had infantry and

10 engineer units doing decontamination

11 responsibilities or missions. And what has

12 happened over the last 10 years is we've lost

13 a lot of soldiers because they didn't join the

14 National Guard to do decontamination. They

15 joined to do maneuver or construction, combat

16 engineering, whatever they joined to do. So

17 because I knew we were losing a lot of folks

18 here, I said, we need to try to get a chemical

19 company. So we didn't land a chemical company

20 whenever the force structure announcements

21 came out. So I went -- my second course of

22 action was to try to trade with another state.

23 So I went to Major General Bret Daugherty

24 from Washington State and said, "hey, I'll

25 trade you some MPs for come chemical." So we

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1 basically traded a platoon with the

2 understanding that, if it works better, we'll

3 keep doing that. So, you know, the value of

4 that chemical unit, especially here in south

5 Louisiana and all the plants that we have is

6 force structure we need.

7 So we'll continue to try to build upon

8 that chemical momentum that we have here.

9 It's supposed to stand up in September of this

10 year is when that first platoon will get here.

11 So we'll have to take it through training. It

12 just takes time, but we'll get them there

13 eventually. And the force structure that we

14 currently have at risk with the 122nd, what

15 they call ASOS and our TACP Enterprise, has

16 been identified for remission.

17 So the Director of the Annex Guard is

18 Lieutenant General Mike Loh. So in the last

19 presentation we had, we pushed back really

20 hard in the NDAA, the National Defense

21 Authorization Act last year to try to get the

22 TACP, you know, sustained here in Louisiana,

23 but with General Loh and General Brown, CQ

24 Brown, the Chief of the Air Force, who will

25 certainly be the Secretary of Defense here

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1 shortly. So seeing what's coming, the best

2 thing for Louisiana is to try to go after a

3 cyber squadron. So, you know, my position to

4 General Loh was, if y'all are going to take

5 our ASOS and TACP from us, we need a cyber

6 security squadron. So I'm just waiting for

7 the announcement to be made, but I feel like

8 we're fixing to get a cyber security squadron

9 here in Louisiana.

10 So I'm very optimistic just like I was

11 with the F15EXs. It worked out; so doing the

12 same thing here. And then my priorities

13 really hadn't changed in terms of force

14 structure in what we're trying to bring in and

15 to just show you some examples of where we're

16 making some stride there.

17 Our legislative priorities, when I go see

18 the Congressional Delegation, this is what I

19 talk to them about: The zero cost healthcare

20 for all National Guard service members. It's

21 been number one on our list. I don't think it

22 will happen this year honestly, but Senator --

23 or excuse me, Congressman Kim from New Jersey,

24 Congress Kelly from Mississippi, and there's a

25 coalition of elected officials that are

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1 helping us. We think dental will probably get
2 across the finish line, so we may get free
3 dental for every National Guardsman. So that
4 may be step one, and hopefully, step two,
5 we'll be able to get the healthcare. So we'll
6 keep working at it.
7 The F15 Eagle Recap, I keep it on there
8 even though the announcement was already made
9 by the F15EX is coming to Belle Chasse. We'll
10 talk a little bit more about that in a minute.
11 The MILCON, those are some of the things
12 I showed you on an earlier slide. Again, I
13 don't want it to lose -- I don't want it to
14 come off the radar, so I keep it there because
15 we need it because a lot of our facilities are
16 really old here in Louisiana.
17 And then the last one right there is just
18 the equity. With the duty status reform, the
19 equity is between the active component and the
20 Reserve, the National Guard.
21 Our legislative accomplishments, I just
22 highlighted a few on the Federal side. I
23 mentioned the F15EXs. That's a \$9.6 billion
24 investment in Louisiana. And the longevity of
25 having a wing here for 40 years speaks volume.

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1 So those -- that's a huge win right there in
2 itself. But with our education programs and
3 Job ChalleNGe, Youth ChalleNGe, STARBASE, I
4 get excited about those programs and what they
5 do for Louisiana.
6 And in the State Partnership Program, as
7 far as a diplomatic tool, I submit to you
8 there's nothing more valuable than that. And
9 it's proven itself over and over and over
10 again. You know, example I give you is with
11 Ukraine. That's California's partner. And
12 California has worked really closely with the
13 Ukraine and you see what's going on right now.
14 So that has paid a huge benefit.
15 On the state side, I know we have Senator
16 Reese in here, but to all the men and women
17 that served within the terms of what they did
18 for us on the state side, three things to
19 highlight: House Bill 485, it's fee exemption
20 for every serving member of the Louisiana
21 National Guard that's in college. So right
22 now, they already were entitled to state
23 tuition exemption. So what is happening is a
24 lot of universities, they start jacking up the
25 fees. So, you know, and I'll use Southern and

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1 LSU as an example. You go to Southern right
2 now, it's 2,400 for tuition and 2,400 for
3 fees. You go to LSU, it's 2,200 for fees;
4 2,200 for tuition, so that would basically
5 zero all that out for any active member of
6 Louisiana National Guard. So it will take it
7 back to where we were kind of in the '80s.
8 And, quite frankly, a Louisiana Guardsman
9 today is doing a whole lot more than a
10 Louisiana Guardsman was doing back in the
11 1980s. And you think back to that Federal
12 slide and that state slide that I showed you,
13 that speaks for itself. So I think that's why
14 it went through the Senate and the House
15 unanimous in terms of supporting 485 there.
16 So we're very grateful for that.
17 The other thing, 369, that 25 percent
18 automobile insurance reduction, any active
19 duty service member of the State of Louisiana,
20 they were already getting that, okay. That's
21 part of BRAC way back when. So our Enlisted
22 Association went after this one and got it
23 passed as well. So now any active Guardsman
24 will qualify for a 25 percent reduction on
25 their automobile insurance. So we're trying

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1 Cyber security to save them all we can. And
2 this is part of our retention package too that
3 we can present and recruit them for that
4 matter to an applicant or a current serving
5 member to keep them on the team. So
6 everything we can do to help Louisiana, we're
7 going to do it.
8 And then the final thing right there is
9 those of you who know about the Cyber security
10 Commission that we have in place, that's a
11 strategic working group that does what they do
12 that the Governor started back in 2017, which
13 was significant. And I'll tell you a lot of
14 states are jealous of the work that's done by
15 this group. We're blessed with a lot of
16 talent from a lot of different sectors across
17 the state of Louisiana, and we're making good
18 headway on all the action items that we take
19 on.
20 On the installations update, just some
21 more, but I think probably cited for you on
22 the Camp Beauregard redesignation, the
23 announcement was made by the Louisiana
24 National Guard Training Center Pineville. So
25 we're trying to change -- as we identify the

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1 installation, no longer do we say Camp
 2 Beauregard. We try to focus on Training
 3 Center Pineville. We anticipate the ceremony
 4 will take place in the fall.
 5 Secretary Pierson talked about Fort
 6 Johnson. I think we'll get a good turnout
 7 when we do our redesignation ceremony as well.
 8 They've already taken down, for those of you
 9 familiar with the installation, when you go to
 10 Pineville now, they've already taken down Camp
 11 Beauregard on the main front gate and where
 12 you see the tankers. So the letters are
 13 supposed to get in in August. We'll get them
 14 to hang the new letters up. And then, once
 15 they're able to do that and repaint our water
 16 tower, we'll be ready to execute on our
 17 ceremony. So, again, we're really excited
 18 about that recognizing the Louisiana National
 19 Guard today and the values that we represent.
 20 The Purple Heart installations, so we
 21 joined the trail. We actually did an
 22 announcement, an unveiling on June the 1st.
 23 Governor Edwards gave the countdown, three,
 24 two, one, and all of our installations, when
 25 you go in our installations now, you'll see

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1 the Purple Heart designation there. So those
 2 recipients, they get discounts on our building
 3 fee, preferential parking. Anything we can do
 4 for those veterans, we're going to do it. So
 5 we're excited about that announcement we got
 6 to make.
 7 On our state partners, I talked about
 8 Belize a little earlier. With Haitians, we've
 9 had some exchanges here lately. It's really
 10 been focused on emergency management. We
 11 still can't travel to Haiti because of
 12 restrictions and all the things that are going
 13 on there right now, but they do send teams up
 14 to meet with us to talk about different topics
 15 that interest them. So, again, strong
 16 diplomatic tool here. Real thankful to be
 17 partners with both of these countries.
 18 On our Ed Programs, right now with the
 19 Youth ChalleNGe Program, we actually have two
 20 that are in session. Training Center
 21 Pineville is out right now. Camp Minden,
 22 Gillis W. Long Center are actually conducting
 23 classes. The Job ChalleNGe Program got about
 24 39 that are active currently. And on the
 25 STARBASE Program, since it's involves 5th

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1 graders, they're out for the summer. So we're
 2 not really doing anything there other than
 3 getting ready for the next school year when we
 4 actually bring those folks on.
 5 On the STARBASE, we're looking to try to
 6 get another program in the southwest
 7 Louisiana. We're going to have to jump
 8 through some hoops to get it because our
 9 state's only authorized five and we have five
 10 right now. And we've got three, Fort
 11 Johnson's got one, Barksdale got the other.
 12 So we'll have to get an exception to get an
 13 initial STARBASE here, but we're working with
 14 state leaders and local leaders to get that
 15 done.
 16 And the final slide right here is just
 17 the backbone of our organization, the unsung
 18 heroes of our organization. We actually did a
 19 few great commission events for the folks that
 20 run these programs a few weeks ago just to
 21 show our appreciation. We gave a bunch of
 22 awards out. But their value to our
 23 organization, I just can't speak enough about
 24 them and I'm so thankful for these folks and
 25 the volunteers that we have. They really make

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1 us the quality organization that we are. So
 2 thanking them is the least I can do as far as
 3 I'm concerned.
 4 So, ladies and gentlemen, that concludes
 5 my report, subject to questions or guidance.
 6 Yes, sir?
 7 SENATOR REESE:
 8 No, thank you for your presentation,
 9 General. But the one question I have is
 10 related to changing the force structure for
 11 engineering, the battalion?
 12 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 13 It was a company.
 14 SENATOR REESE:
 15 Company?
 16 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 17 Two companies, yes, sir.
 18 SENATOR REESE:
 19 What, in any way, is there a negative
 20 effect on Louisiana in your ability to respond
 21 to our national disaster missions with the
 22 changes that you're making today? Here is
 23 background and the reason why I'm asking that
 24 is because we are now understanding that the
 25 46 engineers of Fort Polk might be on the

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1 bubble as well and I'm trying to better
2 understand now how they could have an
3 impact -- a negative impact to our state
4 during disaster preparedness response?
5 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
6 I don't think it has anything negative,
7 Senator Reese. Certainly, the reduction of
8 50, 60 people may seem like a big deal. It's
9 not really, because any shortage that we have,
10 just like for Hurricane Ida, I'll give you a
11 good example. Hurricane Ida's 256 Infantry
12 Brigade, the 527 Engineer Battalion and about
13 three other companies were out, so we had
14 2,800 National Guard service members that were
15 out of the state during Hurricane Ida. So,
16 basically, our plan -- our whole hazard plan
17 has us calling other states to help us.
18 So we have EMAC Agreements with, you
19 know, I saw the tag of Arkansas last week and
20 he and I were talking about, like, "hey,
21 Keith, I'm ready. So as soon as we get the
22 call, we'll send whatever we need to send down
23 to you to support you." So I don't think we
24 have any gaps. You know, certainly, I think I
25 could put 8,000 people or guard members

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1 anywhere in Louisiana if we need to if we had
2 a state emergency right now, and 8,000 is a
3 lot of folks. So I really don't think, you
4 know, that change in force structure is really
5 going to affect us that much in terms of
6 putting us at risk for any state emergency.
7 SENATOR REESE:
8 Okay. Thank you.
9 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
10 Yes, sir.
11 Yes, sir?
12 MR. SLONE:
13 Again, thanks for the presentation. It
14 always gets me back energized about what our
15 military is doing --
16 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
17 Yes, sir.
18 MR. SLONE:
19 -- and things around the state. I was
20 curious about the potential -- well, not
21 potential, but what are the demographics of
22 the enlistees? Are you tracking that? I know
23 it wasn't in here on the report, but is there
24 anything you can share with us on that?
25 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

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1 I could get you the actual statistics
2 because we have a Joint Diversity Executive
3 Council.
4 MR. SLONE:
5 Okay.
6 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
7 And we met quarterly. And, in fact, I
8 just left a call a little while ago, as a
9 matter of fact, to come to this meeting. But
10 we have all the statistics. We actually have
11 them on the website where you can go and
12 actually see them.
13 MR. SLONE:
14 Yeah.
15 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
16 But, certainly, I can give those to you
17 offline, or however you want me to do it.
18 MR. SLONE:
19 Yeah, either way is fine. If we can
20 communicate directly, that would be great,
21 because I think it speaks not only to the
22 folks that we are going in but the folks that
23 we're concerned about because of education and
24 our workforce in general --
25 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:

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1 Yes, sir.
2 MR. SLONE:
3 -- as to, you know, who's actually --
4 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
5 Right.
6 MR. SLONE:
7 -- enlisting.
8 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
9 And, you know, that's part of my argument
10 on the fee exemption.
11 MR. SLONE:
12 Uh-huh.
13 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
14 Because what I -- I guess the background
15 that I shared was, you know, somebody can get
16 used to work in the school system. I would
17 have family and kids come to me all the time,
18 and when those fees started going up, now you
19 put it out of reach for a lot of kids --
20 MR. SLONE:
21 Yes.
22 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
23 -- and families. So, you know, in
24 Mississippi, they charge \$150 a semester for
25 fees. In Arkansas, it's \$100 for fees a

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1 semester. In Texas, it's \$1,000 a semester
 2 for fees. So, I mean, we got a few of them --
 3 MR. SLONE:
 4 So we're in first place.
 5 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 6 -- leaving out of our state, you know,
 7 leaving our state because it just put it out
 8 of reach. So, you know, I agree, I think that
 9 was a big win for us from the demographic
 10 standpoint too. But you'll see with the
 11 numbers --
 12 MR. SLONE:
 13 Uh-huh.
 14 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 15 -- especially on the enlisted side, I
 16 mean, we're pretty close. It may be 5644.
 17 MR. SLONE:
 18 Okay.
 19 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 20 So, I mean, those demographics, we're a
 21 lot better than any other state in the country
 22 when you look at demographics, I think, on the
 23 enlisted side as well as the officer side.
 24 MR. SLONE:
 25 And one last comment to that is we have,

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1 in southeast Louisiana, the largest population
 2 of Hispanic. And I remember being a recruiter
 3 in Miami and just about everybody we were
 4 recruiting were Cubans.
 5 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 6 Yes, sir.
 7 MR. SLONE:
 8 So...
 9 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 10 Yes, sir. Well, I'll get with you
 11 offline --
 12 MR. SLONE:
 13 Sure.
 14 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 15 -- to get you your information and I'll
 16 send you an email --
 17 MR. SLONE:
 18 Thank you.
 19 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 20 -- if that's all the questions?
 21 MR. SLONE:
 22 Yes, sir.
 23 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 24 General Elder?
 25 GENERAL ELDER:

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1 I'm curious about the decision on the
 2 122nd ASOS, you know, I could see the argument
 3 when those F15Cs were an air mission, not an
 4 air to ground mission. If the -- if they're
 5 going to get an EX, which does have the cast
 6 mission and you have the JRTC right there, it
 7 doesn't make sense. I mean, what is the Air
 8 Force or the Guard, whatever their foundation,
 9 why do they want to pull it out now?
 10 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 11 You know, General, when we went to the
 12 briefing with General Loh, I want to say there
 13 were 15 to 20 elements that they identified,
 14 as what I call Legacy or what we probably call
 15 Legacy. And, you know, they kept talking
 16 about the re-missioning and he acknowledged us
 17 pushing back on the TACP. And I guess my
 18 position on it, as I got the presentation and
 19 caught him offline to talk to him, it was,
 20 like, so do you want to have something or do
 21 you want nothing or do you want me to force
 22 something else on you? I said, I don't want
 23 anything forced on me. I would rather keep
 24 what I have, just like all those airmen want
 25 to stay in the job that they're in; because

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1 even during state emergencies, that ASOS, in
 2 terms of what they can do from a communication
 3 standpoint is very valuable to us, especially
 4 when we're dropping super sacks and things
 5 like that. But I guess I just wait it out and
 6 I'm, like, you know what, if we're going to
 7 lose this battle eventually, cyber security is
 8 probably where we need to go and then maybe we
 9 go back to them when we get the Exes online
 10 and are able to reengage on that particular
 11 issue.
 12 GENERAL ELDER:
 13 So in your mind, there's no way to engage
 14 on it at this point? You'd have to wait?
 15 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 16 I really don't think it is. I mean,
 17 listening to General Brown's position when he
 18 was the Chief and General Loh as the Director,
 19 I mean those are two points of information,
 20 I'm like, okay, this is probably a battle
 21 we're going to lose.
 22 GENERAL ELDER:
 23 Just move it somewhere else?
 24 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 25 Yes, sir. Things will be more

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1 regionalized. So when they looked at our
2 numbers, we were like 53 percent, I think, on
3 TACP, and we were doing some things to try to
4 recruit more people in; like, we were having
5 infantry soldiers leave the infantry units to
6 go to TACP because they wanted all the
7 high-speed stuff.
8 GENERAL ELDER:
9 Uh-huh.
10 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
11 And we were growing the numbers and we
12 got it to about 75 percent. But because we
13 didn't get it there fast enough, General Loh
14 and General Brown made the decision that that
15 piece has to go to another state.
16 GENERAL ELDER:
17 Okay.
18 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
19 But if we get the cyber squad, I think
20 that's going to be a win for us.
21 GENERAL ELDER:
22 And, again, I was looking for it again,
23 the 122nd Fire Squad had a Red Air mission for
24 it and that went away. And is that what I
25 heard you say? I couldn't find it in the

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1 notes here.
2 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
3 The 122nd went to Langley last year.
4 They had, I guess, a six-month or three-month
5 deployment to Langley.
6 GENERAL ELDER:
7 Oh, talking about deployment to support
8 Red Air --
9 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
10 Yes, sir.
11 GENERAL ELDER:
12 -- at this point.
13 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
14 Now, we did just get back from Air
15 Defender. We were at Air Defender, I guess,
16 25 plus countries in Germany. You know, they
17 did a great job in the last couple of weeks in
18 Germany with Air Defender. So real proud of
19 them.
20 GENERAL ELDER:
21 And I just have one last question.
22 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
23 Yes, sir?
24 GENERAL ELDER:
25 You never talked at all about NGR

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1 funding. How does the State do in terms of
2 getting NGR money, and is there places where
3 you could use it, you think?
4 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
5 Well, based upon the conference we had
6 last week, I probably need to get back with
7 you offline, General Elder, because it came up
8 with all the Adjutant Generals as we were
9 talking NGR funding, and I guess there was a
10 lot of -- a lot of voices that didn't agree
11 about what it should be. So we're supposed to
12 have another meeting to be able to talk about
13 that with General Hokanson and see what we're
14 going to rerack. So...
15 GENERAL ELDER:
16 I'm sorry, the National Guard Reserve --
17 it's a special fund reserved for National
18 Guard modernization type things. So...
19 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
20 Now whenever those modernization windows
21 come open for us, what I've told all of our
22 units is, it doesn't matter what, you know,
23 what training you're supposed to be doing, we
24 got to stop and make sure we don't miss the
25 modernization window, because if you miss it,

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1 you go to the back of the line. So that may
2 delay you three to five years from getting
3 your new stuff. So we're trying to hold the
4 line there in terms of those modernization
5 windows. So...
6 GENERAL ELDER:
7 Thank you.
8 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
9 Okay. Thank you. All right. Anyone
10 else?
11 Okay. I appreciate your time this
12 afternoon.
13 MR. ABBODD:
14 Thank you very much, General. Following
15 along on the agenda here, I would like to call
16 up Mr. Gary Silbert, Southeast Military
17 Alliance.
18 MR. SILBERT:
19 Yes. Thank you. And I'll do it from my
20 seat. If you have any questions along the
21 way, please don't hesitate to interrupt me and
22 ask.
23 Just building on General Waddell's
24 presentation, we are particularly proud of
25 winning the F15EXs at Belle Chasse. It's a

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1 huge victory. We've been working really
 2 closely with the National Guard and the
 3 Rosedale Group for quite sometime. You know,
 4 obviously, we were hoping for either the F35
 5 or the F15EX. We would have been happy with
 6 either, but the F35, I believe, ended up going
 7 to Massachusetts. But we are replacing F15Cs
 8 that are approaching 40 years old, and we are
 9 hopeful that this aircraft will serve us for
 10 the next number of decades to come. So it's a
 11 huge victory.

12 You know, these things don't just happen.
 13 During the General's presentation, you saw all
 14 the metrics and by every measure, we really do
 15 stand out in the Air National Guard around
 16 maintenance, safety, attendance. And so these
 17 things don't just happen. So I really do just
 18 want to thank you for your performances. You
 19 really have served us well.

20 Just in no particular order, a couple of
 21 things that I'm pleased to update you on.
 22 We're currently working with Matt Zelden,
 23 Integrated Resource Management, the University
 24 of Louisiana System, and The Roosevelt Group
 25 in attempting to get a seventh maritime

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1 academy here in Louisiana at Federal City.
 2 There's a 15-point checklist. And,
 3 supposedly, we've done 14 out of the 15, and
 4 so we're getting pretty close working with the
 5 Maritime Administration. This requires an
 6 annual million-dollar allocation in the
 7 Department of Transportation via a House Bill.
 8 We also need the OMB to request and include in
 9 fiscal '25 dollars to get this done. So we'll
 10 be continuing to endure pressure on the
 11 Maritime Administration, pushing the
 12 Department of Transportation and we'll need to
 13 try to get this done. We're really excited.

14 Also, we're working with the Coast Guard
 15 and Astro America. It's a company that's
 16 interested in doing qualitative manufacturing
 17 or 3D printing to produce spare parts for the
 18 Coast Guard. As you can well imagine, it's
 19 not easy to find parts on the shelf. Many of
 20 them have to be remanufactured. So this idea
 21 of being able to do the 3D printing to add
 22 quantities and in a timely manner is pretty
 23 exciting.

24 Representative Troy Carter has been
 25 sponsoring some legislation and has the

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1 support of our senators to try to get this
 2 done. I've introduced the principal with
 3 Astro America with UNO, which is where
 4 hopefully this will happen, subject to
 5 funding.

6 We have a new 8th District Commander of
 7 the Coast Guard, I think it's Rear Admiral
 8 Richard Tim or Timmy.

9 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 10 Admiral Timmy just retired.

11 MR. SILBERT:
 12 Oh, okay. It's his replacement. Thank
 13 you. Do you -- can you share the name?

14 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 15 Yeah, I was at the change of command last
 16 Friday. Rear Admiral Richard Timmy retired
 17 there and had the change of command for new
 18 District Commander David Barata, and he just
 19 came in last week. He will take over command
 20 of the eighth Coast Guard district, which is
 21 the largest Coast Guard district in the Coast
 22 Guard in 26 states and headquartered in New
 23 Orleans.

24 MR. SILBERT:
 25 That's right.

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1 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 2 And has seven major supporting commands
 3 throughout those 26 states, including three
 4 air stations and seven sector commands,
 5 including one in Louisiana.

6 MR. SILBERT:
 7 Thank you for that. A little closer, you
 8 know, Ronnie Slone, who is a more recent
 9 Military Council member, marine veteran and
 10 successful entrepreneur in his own right in
 11 southeast Louisiana is our new Chairman of the
 12 Calendar Commitment Group, which is our
 13 defense community productions, and we thank
 14 him for all that Ron is doing. We had a
 15 recent meeting with our Captain on the base;
 16 reported that we have 90 Boeing contractors
 17 coming to train in Kuwait on the F18 over a
 18 two-year period starting in September.
 19 They'll be training in waves of four in over
 20 18-week periods. Unlike Ukrainian pilots, I
 21 think these guys are already pilots.

22 So this will be a little more specific
 23 and it should help give a nice little shot in
 24 the arm to our economy to have these folks
 25 staying in hotels and our contractors. So

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1 and, hopefully, we'll be able to build on that
 2 in the future, some of the training machines
 3 with international folks.
 4 We have our air show. I think that was
 5 on hiatus for a while due to COVID and other
 6 reasons, which will be March of '24. And I
 7 think those are the main things I wanted to
 8 report. I'm happy to answer any questions. I
 9 have to leave about 10 minutes of three for a
 10 meeting upstairs. If I have to leave early, I
 11 apologize, but I just wanted to mention that.
 12 GENERAL ELDER:
 13 Can I ask you a question about the air
 14 show? I might get with you on offline. So
 15 how often do you do your air shows, about
 16 every other year; or once it gets going again,
 17 it will be every year?
 18 MR. SILBERT:
 19 I think it's every two or three years. I
 20 think there's a little bit of internal
 21 competition to get it, and it just doesn't
 22 happen.
 23 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 24 Which air show is this? I'm sorry.
 25 MR. SILBERT:

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1 Huh?
 2 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 3 Which air shows is it?
 4 MR. SILBERT:
 5 This is at Belle Chasse.
 6 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 7 Yeah, it's every two years. So we did it
 8 last year. It will be next two years.
 9 GENERAL ELDER:
 10 So I should talk to you offline, because
 11 if you're in the air show business, you don't
 12 have consistency every year. It makes it a
 13 little difficult to get your acts. Barksdale
 14 is also every other year.
 15 MR. SILBERT:
 16 Oh, okay.
 17 GENERAL ELDER:
 18 And it's nicely in line to not be the
 19 year of Belle Chasse. So if those things were
 20 married up, we could go and collectively have
 21 the ax lined up so that we wouldn't be
 22 fighting. Because when you have a break, you
 23 have to fight for the ax.
 24 MR. SILBERT:
 25 So ours is March of '24. When is your

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1 air show?
 2 GENERAL ELDER:
 3 Next will be March of '25.
 4 MR. SILBERT:
 5 Yeah, I appreciate you saying that.
 6 Thank you.
 7 MR. ABOUD:
 8 Very good. Thank you, Gary.
 9 I'll next call on Mr. Murray Viser for an
 10 update on Barksdale Forwards. And, Murray,
 11 you're welcome to sit or come up, whatever you
 12 prefer.
 13 MR. VISER:
 14 I think I'll just be lazy. We are
 15 thankful for the help with the Roosevelt Group
 16 and our Congressional Delegation. We are in a
 17 really, really an enviable position as far as
 18 B52 goes. We're probably looking at 20 to 30
 19 years out of having B52s stay at Barksdale
 20 thanks to hypersonic weapons and the B52J. So
 21 I'm not going to jinx it and say that we're
 22 too golden because we certainly are not. I
 23 don't think there is such a thing anymore.
 24 And I'm not going to steal Link's thunder
 25 here, because I know he's got slides also.

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1 But we are very fortunate at Barksdale right
 2 now. And we're going to ensure not to try not
 3 to take our eye off the ball and make sure
 4 that we are where we need to be. Again, B52
 5 systems have been upgraded. Barksdale
 6 infrastructure has been upgraded. I'll let
 7 Link address those. Again, thanks to the
 8 Roosevelt Group and our Delegation. We are in
 9 very good shape.
 10 A couple of things that are coming up at
 11 Barksdale. Commander of Air Force Global
 12 Strike Command, General Tom Bussiere is going
 13 to -- he goes to senior leadership conference
 14 September 18th through the 23rd and he will
 15 have representatives from all of the Air Force
 16 Global Strike Command bases on campus for
 17 that. So that's a really wonderful feather in
 18 our hat for that.
 19 And Barksdale, coming up in November,
 20 Barksdale and the Shreveport-Bossier community
 21 is going to host a Global Strike challenge,
 22 that's November 7th, 8th, and 9th. And all of
 23 the Global Strike Command bases will be
 24 competing for the Barksdale trophy, which
 25 basically is a trophy that allows the

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1 communities some bragging rights so that
 2 they -- it encourages them to continue to
 3 support their bases and to do what needs to be
 4 done. So that's one page. And we're looking,
 5 again, probably 20 to 30 years for B52s.
 6 That's good.
 7 And General Bussiere, we're delighted to
 8 have him back at Barksdale. He's been there
 9 before. We have a great deal of MILCON that's
 10 coming up. And, again, I don't know if Link
 11 will discuss that, but I'll be happy to answer
 12 any questions anybody might have.
 13 SENATOR REESE:
 14 That's all good news.
 15 MR. VISER:
 16 Thank you, sir.
 17 MR. ABBOD:
 18 Thank you very much, Murray. So we'll go
 19 ahead and we'll jump Louisiana Armed Forces
 20 Alliance. And Link will include some updates
 21 for Louisiana Armed Forces Alliance as part of
 22 his report out. Link is with the Roosevelt
 23 Group based in Washington, D.C. He does great
 24 work interfacing with the Congressional
 25 Delegation, so we certainly look forward to

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1 today's update. Just one moment while I pull
 2 it up.
 3 MR. MUSTIN:
 4 Thank you, Robbie. Good afternoon,
 5 Council Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm
 6 Link Mustin, I've got the privilege and tall
 7 order of standing in for Chris Goode, who many
 8 of you have known for a decade or more. He's
 9 unable to be here, but I'm grateful for the
 10 opportunity.
 11 A quick bio from me, I transitioned from
 12 active duty as a Surface Warfare Officer in
 13 the Navy. This year, I served at-sea for
 14 several years on four ships. And then most
 15 recently, I served in the Pentagon as a
 16 congressional liaison to the House and Senate
 17 Appropriations Committees and became
 18 intimately familiar with the bill processes
 19 and the budget rollout and the annual
 20 appropriations from NDAA requests. So I'd
 21 like to spend the next 8 to 10 minutes just
 22 giving y'all an update on what we're seeing in
 23 Washington, revel in some of the victories,
 24 including the ones Murray talked about and
 25 talk a little bit about strategic focus from

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1 '25 and out.
 2 So the key initiative shaping the
 3 legislative landscape for defense or the
 4 annual President's Budget Request, National
 5 Defense Authorization Act, and then the
 6 Appropriations Outlook which have all been
 7 referenced today. But at the most basic
 8 level, the recent debt limit negotiation set
 9 spending caps for FY'24 and FY'25 based on
 10 FY'22 levels and then nonbinding caps over the
 11 fit of the future defense plan out through
 12 '29. So we'll see small growth over the next
 13 five to six years, but that could change in
 14 '26 if things are renegotiated.
 15 The caps are going to require the
 16 government to be more discerning in how they
 17 spend and invest Federal dollars, but we're
 18 optimistic that we're still going to see
 19 initiatives like DCIP and Community Project
 20 Funding and congressionally-directed spending
 21 that will benefit the State of Louisiana.
 22 So for the next two slides, we'll talk
 23 about appropriations and NDAA timeline. And
 24 appropriations is always a little bit more
 25 concerning than NDAA. NDAA is sort of a

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1 must-pass Bill. It's been passed year over
 2 year form decades. But in the last 10 years,
 3 I think we've only seen an Appropriations Bill
 4 pass on time once.
 5 So we're watching appropriations closely,
 6 but with a skeptical eye. And both
 7 appropriations and NDAA were delayed this year
 8 because of the debt still in negotiations. So
 9 we're a little bit behind the ball, which is
 10 concerning for appropriations because they
 11 need as much time as possible. And we're
 12 expecting that the Bills will get passed on
 13 the floor in the House and the Senate, but
 14 it's likely that we'll see a continuing
 15 resolution this year like we have in the past
 16 which presents certain challenges like no new
 17 starts.
 18 On the NDAA timeline, they're moving
 19 along. The House has completed their markup.
 20 The Senate has completed their markup. We
 21 expect four votes in July followed by
 22 conference and expect to see a Bill hopefully
 23 passed on time. But we're confident this will
 24 get passed. And we -- I was at an event with
 25 a senior member of the House Armed Services

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1 Committee recently from Alabama, and he was
 2 talking about NDAA and appropriations and
 3 said, "I'm not concerned about the NDAA, that
 4 will get through, but I am concerned about
 5 appropriations." And the picture he painted
 6 was kind of scary because he couldn't see
 7 ourselves up as long as a two-year CR. And
 8 some of it comes down to the differences in
 9 the House and the Senate. But there's also
 10 challenges with Pentagon policy and other
 11 things that are -- could trigger amendments
 12 like the Hyde Amendment and others that --
 13 well, could present a challenge for
 14 appropriations. So that's one that we're
 15 watching closely.

16 For some of the comparisons in the NDAA,
 17 you know, as normal, the House and the Senate
 18 have different positions on various issues
 19 with the highlights are looking at Ukraine
 20 aid. They're looking at the ship numbers and
 21 platforms for the Navy, Navy retirements, what
 22 the Navy would like to divest of ships to save
 23 money, and that's always a tricky, sticky
 24 issue. DEI policy, Cyber Force, General
 25 Waddell talked a little bit about cyber, a

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1 cyber squadron. The House doesn't have a
 2 provision for a Cyber Force, but the Senate
 3 does. So we don't think any of these
 4 differences will prevent a Bill from getting
 5 passed.

6 For budget highlights, there's a lot of
 7 bullets up here, but just to point out a few,
 8 the Defense budget, \$842 billion, an increase
 9 of 3.2 percent over last year's enacted
 10 levels. We're going to see the highest pay
 11 raise for the military and civilians since
 12 2002. Another big one is the robust Nuclear
 13 Enterprise Modernization investment, which is
 14 a strategic significance for Louisiana. So
 15 that's encouraging that we're continuing to
 16 see that investment.

17 This is just a snapshot of the defense
 18 budget, a breakdown. You can see with the
 19 wind down with the wars in the Middle East and
 20 increasing focus on China and Russia, the Navy
 21 and the Air Force are tending to get more
 22 money over time. The Army is growing, but
 23 you'd expect to see last year and this year
 24 not a huge jump in appropriations. But at the
 25 bottom, you can see some highlights, a \$26

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1 billion increase over the last year, and then
 2 \$100 billion since FY'22.

3 For Louisiana MILCON, there's indirect
 4 benefits in the defense bill, you know, that
 5 benefit Louisiana, like, I think in the SHPO,
 6 you have a conversation account, for example,
 7 the Navy added \$400 million for Ship-to-Shore
 8 Connector, which is built by Textron. But
 9 specifically for the State, the MILCON adds
 10 are usually typically a lot of money and
 11 they're reliable, we get them on time. And
 12 Murray talked about some of the -- some of the
 13 enviable benefits that Barksdale has gotten
 14 recently. And this year is an eventful act
 15 with the Weapons Generation Facility, \$112
 16 million authorized and passed in the
 17 HAC-MILCON kind of appropriations waiting to
 18 see what the Senate is going to do, but very
 19 likely that we'll see the same with the
 20 Senate.

21 And then Community Projects Funding,
 22 which is essentially Earmark, a new name for
 23 Earmark, but Rep. Johnson pioneered, pushed
 24 through a medical facility expansion of the
 25 307 Bomb Wing for \$7 million. And that would

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1 have never gotten done without his support.

2 There is one area of MILCON that is not
 3 dead in the water, but it's not looking
 4 promising right now which is the Multipurpose
 5 Athletic Field at Fort Johnson. HASC
 6 authorized it, but it was not funded in the
 7 HAC-MILCON Bill. It was not included in the
 8 budget request. So just the fact that HASC
 9 authorized it is promising. So it's not dead
 10 in the water and we're going to wait and see
 11 what HASC is going to do. But right now, it
 12 is not an issue that was funded.

13 So the next three slides, I'm just going
 14 to talk about LAFA/Fort Johnson, Barksdale,
 15 and then SEMA. The big push for Fort Johnson
 16 over the last four months has been this
 17 Defense Community Infrastructure Program, the
 18 DCIP initiative for the Leesville Airport
 19 Runway Extension. It's a \$5 million project.
 20 The application was submitted last week. And
 21 some of the key dates are down here.
 22 Mid-August, we expect to receive a grant
 23 application invitation; and then here, by
 24 September on whether or not that funding is
 25 awarded. So that will be the -- I think it

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1 will extend the runway out to 5,600 feet,
 2 which would be a big win.
 3 And then for Barksdale, Murray alluded to
 4 some of these things already, but big win in
 5 obtaining the \$7 million CPF grant for
 6 upgrades to the 307th Bomb Wing Medical
 7 Facility.
 8 Our next focus is trying to arrange a
 9 Community Partnership Air Force visit with
 10 Barksdale to discuss things like quality of
 11 life, childcare options, and then identify
 12 potential additional DCIP opportunities for
 13 projects.
 14 And then looking out, Strategic Planning
 15 for FY'25, we'd like to coordinate a command
 16 briefing with the Barksdale leadership and the
 17 Roosevelt Group during the Community
 18 Partnership meeting to focus on where the
 19 needs are for FY'25 and beyond.
 20 And then in closing with SEMA, Gary spoke
 21 about it, General Waddell talked it, but this
 22 is a big win with the F15EX replacement to
 23 replace the outdated Charlies and Deltas.
 24 Continuing efforts to focus on the Navy's
 25 intent and the stance on modernizing the

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1 adversary fleet. I know that's a concern at
 2 Belle Chasse, and it's something we're
 3 watching closely.
 4 MR. SILBERT:
 5 Link, if I could probably share what I've
 6 been told, to serve a good purpose for the
 7 next three to five years is really beyond
 8 that.
 9 MR. MUSTIN:
 10 Right.
 11 MR. SILBERT:
 12 It's the solution we're talking about.
 13 MR. MUSTIN:
 14 Right. And, again, I'm looking forward
 15 to having more of that discussion. I've had
 16 an opportunity to be with Gary tomorrow at
 17 Belle Chasse and hear about the base and what
 18 the needs are. And I look forward to having
 19 that discussion. I know that's a hot button.
 20 And I just kind of talked about that last
 21 bullet.
 22 So that concludes my presentation.
 23 Hopefully, it bought y'all back some time and
 24 I'm happy to standby and answer any questions
 25 as well.

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1 GENERAL ELDER:
 2 Just one, you mentioned that you didn't
 3 think the budget cap would influence
 4 congressional directed funding, but so the
 5 caps were based on what was spent last year,
 6 so there were already -- plus what's in there,
 7 so it's just held at that, it can't go above
 8 that; is that the situation?
 9 MR. MUSTIN:
 10 Yes. Yes, sir.
 11 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 12 That was my question to begin with, but
 13 the second one is, do you all have any
 14 thoughts or ideas on what's going to happen
 15 with Senator Tuberville's hold on flag and
 16 general officer promotions or --
 17 MR. MUSTIN:
 18 That's a great question, sir. That's
 19 been asked a lot. Especially, I'm also a Navy
 20 Reservist assigned to the second fleet in
 21 Norfolk, Virginia, and that comes up a lot
 22 because it's getting to the point now where
 23 people can't PCS, they can't move. You've got
 24 06s taking, you know, Captains in the Navy,
 25 for example, taking jobs designated for

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1 Admirals who are just waiting to be able to
 2 promote. And I think it probably won't change
 3 until there's enough pressure.
 4 Just recently, I read an article about
 5 the Pentagon talking about the readiness
 6 impacts of Senator Tuberville's stance. And I
 7 think when, once -- when the -- when DoD can
 8 paint a picture of the readiness impacts, the
 9 detrimental readiness impacts to the Senator
 10 Tuberville's position, he probably won't have
 11 enough pressure to change his mind. Because I
 12 think, in his mind, the crux -- my impression
 13 of the crux is, he is not necessarily opposed
 14 to -- he is -- in his -- he thinks it's
 15 unprecedented that the military would pay for
 16 soldiers, sailors, and airmen to have the
 17 procedure, the abortion procedure. And that's
 18 his sticking point is that DoD should not be
 19 paying -- it's not that they can't take a
 20 leave, but that DoD should not be paying for
 21 that. And DoD sees it as a readiness concern.
 22 So it's really -- this is coming down to
 23 politics, and I know it is creating a
 24 readiness issue though.
 25 MR. VISER:

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1 Yeah. It is a definite readiness concern
 2 because Barksdale has two General Officers
 3 right now that are being held up, General
 4 Gebara and also General Bussiere (sic).
 5 MR. MUSTIN:
 6 Yes, sir.
 7 GENERAL ELDER:
 8 Not Bussiere.
 9 MR. VISER:
 10 Not Bussiere, I'm sorry.
 11 GENERAL ELDER:
 12 Lutton.
 13 MR. MUSTIN:
 14 Lutton. Thank you very much. But it's a
 15 mess.
 16 MR. MUSTIN:
 17 Yeah, there's changes of command that
 18 have been delayed.
 19 GENERAL ELDER:
 20 So for our clarification, the issue is
 21 not the services. Secretary Austin's letter
 22 said services could pay for the travel to go
 23 to a hospital, a military hospital where --
 24 where in the state where procedures can be
 25 performed, it doesn't change anything in terms

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1 of what can be paid for within the direct
 2 policy. They authorize them to pay travel --
 3 MR. MUSTIN:
 4 Right.
 5 GENERAL ELDER:
 6 -- for that.
 7 MR. MUSTIN:
 8 Yes, sir.
 9 GENERAL ELDER:
 10 So it's not paying for the procedure
 11 itself; it's paying for the travel.
 12 MR. MUSTIN:
 13 No, no, not the -- sorry, yeah, it's the
 14 travel for the procedure. But it's sticky and
 15 I think -- I mean we've got nominations now
 16 coming out of the Marine Corps, Chairman of
 17 Joint Chiefs. There are ways that the Senate
 18 can get people confirmed, but it's very
 19 painful and laborious and it's causing a
 20 readiness concern. I think when DoD -- once
 21 Senator Tuberville feels enough pressure about
 22 the military readiness that's being launched,
 23 that may change.
 24 Well, thank you for the opportunity to be
 25 with you all. It's my first time to Baton

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1 Rouge and New Orleans and it's been awesome so
 2 far. So I look forward to working with y'all
 3 in the future.
 4 GENERAL ELDER:
 5 You come in with the baseball team?
 6 MR. JAKES:
 7 Geaux Tigers.
 8 MR. ABBOD:
 9 Thank you very much, Link. We'll go
 10 ahead and jump to the Executive Director's
 11 report. I know we should be cognizant of the
 12 time here, so I'll move quickly on this
 13 report. But I did want to highlight, Link
 14 mentioned, he referenced the DCIP Project,
 15 which is through the Office of Local Defense
 16 Communities and Cooperation, and the shorthand
 17 is DCIP, but it's the Defense Community
 18 Infrastructure Program.
 19 In 2020, they had the Pilot Program and
 20 LED stood up and applied for funding with
 21 partnership and under leadership of the
 22 Governor's office, been working with the
 23 Vernon Parish School Board as well as a
 24 support letter that we received from
 25 Installation Command at the time at Fort Polk.

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1 So I wanted to just highlight progress
 2 because we're in year three of the work we're
 3 doing on that project, and we're approaching
 4 about 80 percent completion. And we expect to
 5 have a number of sites complete by the start
 6 of next school year. So, again, just some
 7 information already provided, the security
 8 award in September of 2020 and it's a
 9 seven-and-a-half-million-dollar grant and
 10 that's through OLDCC. This is to develop
 11 technology enhanced learning centers at five
 12 school sites in the Vernon Parish School
 13 System. And each of those sites will have
 14 steam buildings, technology centers, outdoor
 15 learning space that are outfitted with these
 16 technology packages to really enhance quality
 17 of life in military value on behalf of members
 18 of the military as well as their spouses and
 19 families.
 20 So here's the first -- the first item I
 21 wanted to show you. This is from March of
 22 this year. We did a site visit OLDCC
 23 leadership, Colonel Sally Hannan flew in and
 24 met with the school liaison office officer as
 25 well as architect, Vernon Parish School Board,

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1 and our Regional partners to walk through the
2 site. So at this time, it's about 65 percent
3 complete. Right now, we are about 80 percent
4 complete.
5 But I did want to show you, you can see
6 here on the right side, this is one of the
7 technology centers. It's about 60 foot by 40
8 foot. This will be outfitted with the
9 technology package. And on the left side a
10 little further down is a larger steam
11 building. So those are about 90 feet by
12 60 feet. And so each of these school sites
13 will have each a technology center, a steam
14 building, as well as some outdoor learning
15 space. So this is the inside of the steam
16 building. Again, this is about 65 percent
17 complete back in March, but I did want to
18 highlight some of the project progress to
19 date.
20 This is the inside of the technology
21 center. Again, it's about 60 foot by 40 foot.
22 Leesville Junior High School, which is just
23 across the street from Leesville High School,
24 part of the grant went to a LED digital sign
25 to communicate messaging to students,

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1 teachers, and parents. And just behind that
2 is one of the technology centers.
3 So it's still at Leesville Junior High,
4 this is the inside of the technology center.
5 And then this is one of the outdoor learning
6 spaces. This is about 40 feet by 100 feet in
7 which they'll have an opportunity to go
8 outside and do some activities and some
9 learning in just a different space. And just
10 behind this is a steam building. So at
11 Leesville Junior High as well, you'll have a
12 technology center, outdoor learning space, and
13 a steam billing.
14 Vernon Middle, this is just a photo of
15 the technology center. Just on the other side
16 of this is a steam building as well. Vernon
17 Middle also has an outdoor learning space.
18 And then Pickering High School and
19 Elementary School, this is -- it's two schools
20 but one site. And so the elementary school
21 has -- they do have a steam building. And
22 then Pickering has a steam building and
23 technology center. Now, all sites will be
24 ready by August of this year, so the start of
25 the new school year, all sites except for the

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1 steam building and technology center at
2 Pickering High School. So four of the five
3 will all be ready by the start of August of
4 next school year. And then in September,
5 shortly thereafter, they will finish these
6 final two sites.
7 So, again, I know I'm running through
8 them pretty quickly, but for the sake of time,
9 I at least wanted to show progress to date.
10 It's been a significant initiative that we've
11 taken on, but one that's been tremendous in
12 displaying the alignment of partnership that
13 we talk about day in and day out to execute on
14 some of these deliverables.
15 And the second piece I wanted to just
16 mention, Dustin had mentioned it earlier, the
17 veterans first business initiative. Since we
18 met last, we have reached a significant
19 milestone of 1,000 businesses that have been
20 enrolled or certified through the veterans
21 first business initiative. And so LED, once
22 we hit that mark in March earlier this year,
23 we did launch an advertising and marketing
24 campaign around that to highlight this
25 activity and this achievement. And I did want

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1 to relay just a quick excerpt from that press
2 release:
3 Louisiana veterans first business
4 initiative established in 2019 to promote
5 businesses owned by veterans, active duty
6 reserve military, or Gold Star spouses has
7 reached a new milestone with the certification
8 of its 1,000th participating veteran-owned
9 business. This program provides an
10 opportunity for Louisianans to give back to
11 the current and former service members and
12 their families who have sacrificed so much for
13 us. And it is a tribute to the tremendous
14 contributions that veterans make to our
15 state's economy."
16 And so I just wanted to relay that just
17 to highlight the progress that we've made over
18 these initiatives that we've been working on
19 for years now, and it's great to see the
20 progress that we've made.
21 And so with that, that will conclude the
22 Director's reports. I did want to move to
23 General Comments, New Business.
24 Senator Mike Reese, if you have a moment,
25 I'd like to invite you to make a few comments

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1 recapping the Legislative Session.
 2 SENATOR REESE:
 3 Sure. I'll be glad to add to some of
 4 what Major General Waddell talked about
 5 earlier. A few more Bills of interest in the
 6 Legislation this session dealing with the
 7 military, one of them was from an
 8 infrastructure standpoint is continue funding
 9 Highway 117 in Fort Polk at Johnson, that's
 10 how we primarily access for our main base out
 11 to our training area where they purchased
 12 about 75,000 additional acres. We've moved \$6
 13 billion up into Priority 1 funding to get that
 14 project initiated and started with \$30 million
 15 in trailing funds in P5. And we'll see that
 16 project start coming to fruition over the
 17 course of the next two years.
 18 There was an Act 355 by Stephanie
 19 Hilferty that deals with property tax
 20 exemptions for veterans with disabilities and
 21 kind of clarifying some existing law in that
 22 category. We have Senate Bill 187 that deals
 23 with the occupational therapy licensing
 24 compact. Again, we continue to try to enter
 25 these compacts where possible to really

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1 benefit our military spouses to come to
 2 Louisiana with licensure from another state.
 3 That's been very, very successful in the areas
 4 of nursing and physical therapy in this and
 5 occupational therapy.
 6 Another Bill HB472 by Buddy Mincey, the
 7 Bill requires a five-year teacher certificate
 8 to be issued to a service-connected military
 9 member whether it's a family member or active
 10 duty that comes to our state with an active
 11 teaching certificate from another state that
 12 we would immediately recognize that with a
 13 five-year teaching certificate. And they're
 14 still subject to background checks and that
 15 standard background information.
 16 And then another interesting thing that
 17 we brought it up here on a number of
 18 occasions, I'm happy to see somebody make that
 19 first-step effort at it, but Representative
 20 Miguez had House Bill 466 that added some
 21 additional training modules to the State
 22 Police's online gun safety courses that really
 23 focus on veteran suicide, active duty and
 24 veteran suicide by handgun. And so they
 25 directed the State Police to add some training

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1 modules that focuses specifically on that
 2 topic. And, obviously, we need to do
 3 everything we can as a state to get behind
 4 that epidemic. So those are just a few more
 5 Bills, Robbie, that I found that were focused
 6 on the military this session.
 7 MR. ABOUD:
 8 Excellent. Thank you, Senator.
 9 Any other comments at this time in Other
 10 Business? Yes, sir?
 11 GENERAL ELDER:
 12 I wasn't here long enough to do actually
 13 do a full blown report, but one of the things
 14 that happened this year is that the Secdef has
 15 changed the way they're handling the NC3,
 16 Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications
 17 funding which before had always been done by
 18 the services. They brought it up as being
 19 starting not in '24, but '25. It's going to
 20 be programmed by OSD itself. The reason
 21 they're doing that is -- and by the way, the
 22 service was a problem with the Air Force is
 23 they would take money that was that the OSD
 24 thought should be going to the Communications,
 25 and they'd push it into something else and

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1 then OSD would put it back in and they said,
 2 well, we just want it to go in there in the
 3 first place.
 4 There's some other things that occur with
 5 that could have some interesting implications
 6 for things that at Global Strike Command in
 7 terms of things that they'll be responsible
 8 for, but that's further down and that should
 9 be a good thing for us.
 10 The other thing that's of interest is
 11 that Stratcom is trying to set up a network
 12 with 3 nodes for doing NC3 related things; one
 13 outside of Barksdale, one in the national
 14 capital region. And that could be a really
 15 good thing for us because it would be a
 16 prototyping experimentation site that would be
 17 there outside of Barksdale. And they have
 18 some -- it's worth mentioning, Link, because
 19 the Nebraska Delegation put some language and
 20 also some funding requests in that were not
 21 only for Nebraska but for Louisiana and also
 22 for Virginia. Actually, it didn't say
 23 Virginia and Maryland but they wanted it in
 24 the NCR, and but so it could be a benefit to
 25 us. So I thought it would be of interest to

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1 the group.
 2 MR. ABBOUD:
 3 Thank you, General.
 4 Yes, sir?
 5 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 6 I just have a quick question again for
 7 the Secretary. Could you tell us again when
 8 is that location and date of the medal of
 9 honor convention?
 10 SECRETARY PIERSON:
 11 It will be at the World War II Museum in
 12 New Orleans and, again, those dates are
 13 October 31st through 4 of November. You
 14 should see some promotion around it. But if
 15 it's something you have interest in, it's
 16 probably a good idea to, you know, lean into
 17 some content on the web at the World War II
 18 Museum site. And there's a very convenient
 19 and nice hotel they have adjacent to the
 20 facility, so getting in there in advance might
 21 be of interest to you as well.
 22 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 23 I'm the President of the Navy League in
 24 New Orleans and we would be happy to help in
 25 any way we could with that if you need

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1 assistance.
 2 SECRETARY PIERSON:
 3 Yeah, the folks over there in the
 4 Administration would welcome that very much.
 5 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 6 I want to say I had a meeting with him
 7 last week, Pete Crain. You know Pete Crain?
 8 He's the CASA for Louisiana in the south, and
 9 I know I had to send a (indiscernible) to him
 10 in a meeting and they were doing some things
 11 in terms of planning and supporting the event,
 12 so I know they asked us to do that, but I can
 13 share Pete's name and number with you.
 14 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 15 That would be great.
 16 MAJOR GENERAL WADDELL:
 17 You can reach out to him and see what
 18 y'all can do.
 19 REAR ADMIRAL WHITEHEAD:
 20 Yes, sir. Thank you very much.
 21 MR. ABBOUD:
 22 Any Other Business before we move on?
 23 Okay. I'm hearing none.
 24 I'd like to open the floor for questions
 25 or comments from the public?

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1 Okay. I'm hearing none.
 2 So that should cover everything for
 3 today. I would like to call on LMAC Chairman
 4 Secretary Pierson for some closing remarks.
 5 SECRETARY PIERSON:
 6 Just very proud of the work that we're
 7 accomplishing. As you know, this
 8 Administration is winding down. We've got 195
 9 days left or something of that nature, but the
 10 work, we continue to aggressively pursue.
 11 Really proud of the \$7.5 million technology
 12 centers over there in Vernon Parish School
 13 Board. Don't let these float through your
 14 mind that maybe we could get one of those.
 15 That program was discontinued, so they're one
 16 off. But we keep watching the menu, and
 17 thanks to the Roosevelt Group for helping us
 18 watch the menu. And that's why we're making
 19 another DCIP award application for that runway
 20 extension that you heard briefed as well.
 21 So we continue to engage what we call in
 22 the military targets of opportunity and done
 23 so very successfully. Thank you for your
 24 support and the support that we get from the
 25 Legislature to be able to execute this. We'll

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1 continue to keep you informed. I think we'll
 2 have another LMAC meeting later this year.
 3 MR. ABBOUD:
 4 Yes, sir.
 5 SECRETARY PIERSON:
 6 We have -- we're seeking to always
 7 execute two a year. And once we get a
 8 location identified, we'll pass that along to
 9 you so you can save the date. And look
 10 forward to seeing some of you up there at the
 11 Triad Symposium in Shreveport that will be in
 12 just a few weeks. Thank you very much.
 13 MR. ABBOUD:
 14 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.
 15 With that, any motions to adjourn?
 16 MR. SILBERT:
 17 Move to adjourn.
 18 MR. ABBOUD:
 19 Any second?
 20 MR. SLONE:
 21 Second.
 22 MR. ABBOUD:
 23 All in favor, please say aye.
 24 ALL:
 25 Aye.

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1 MR. ABOUD:
 2 Thank you very much.
 3 (WHEREUPON, THE MEETING ADJOURNED)
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1 This certification is valid only for a
 2 transcript accompanied by my handwritten or digital
 3 signature and the image of my State-authorized seal
 4 on this page.
 5 Signed:
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 7 KELLY S. PERRIN,CCR
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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
 2 I, KELLY S. PERRIN, a Certified Court
 3 Reporter, Certificate #23035, in good standing with
 4 the State of Louisiana, as the officer before whom
 5 this meeting was taken, do hereby certify that the
 6 foregoing 99 pages;
 7 That this testimony was reported by me in
 8 stenographic machine shorthand by Computer-Aided
 9 Transcription, transcribed by me or under my
 10 personal direction and supervision, and is a true
 11 and correct transcript to the best of my ability
 12 and understanding;
 13 That the transcript has been prepared in
 14 compliance with transcript format guidelines
 15 required by statute or by rules of the board, that
 16 I have acted in compliance with the prohibition on
 17 contractual relationships, as defined by Louisiana
 18 Code of Civil Procedure Article 1434 and in rules
 19 and advisory opinions of the board; that I am not
 20 of counsel nor related to any person participating
 21 in this cause and am in no way interested in the
 22 outcome of this event.
 23
 24
 25

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