

KENTUCKY COMMISSION ON MILITARY AFFAIRS
ANNUAL FULL COMMISSION MEETING

Microsoft Teams
December 5, 2025
10:00 AM EST

DRAFT Minutes DRAFT

NOTE: While these minutes have the appearance of a transcript, the following remarks are paraphrased for editing purposes. Direct quotes are identified with quotation marks, except for the directly quoted remarks by Governor Andy Beshear and the text of the Sen. Mitch McConnell and Sen. Matt Deneen letters. If anyone notices needed corrections, please email steven.bullard@ky.gov with an overview of the desired correction(s).

A. Call to Order and Welcome

1. Call to Order/Welcome – Brig Gen (R) Steve Bullard, Executive Director
 - i. Called to order at 10:00 a.m.
 - ii. Bullard noted that the slides from today’s meetings are all available on the KCMA website at www.kcma.ky.gov, including the letters from Sen. Mitch McConnell and State Sen. Matt Deneen, Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) priorities, and the recent *Strengthening the Defense Industrial Base of Kentucky* report accomplished this year through our Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation Kentucky COMPETES grant with the University of Louisville.
2. Roll Call – Stacey Shane
 - i. Executive Committee Present: LTC (R) Whitney Allen; Brig. Gen. (R) Steven Bullard; MG Hal Lamberton; Lori Harper; COL (R) Shontelle Adams; Heather French Henry; James Hurt Jr.
 - ii. Other Participants – Governor Andy Beshear (video); COL (R) Tim Cocanougher (Attorney General); Coulter Minix and Bobby Puckett (Governor’s Office); Jamie Link and Chelsea Fallis (Education and Labor); Holly Johnson, Laura Gillis and Geri Grigsby (Finance); Dr. Steven Stack and Laurie Robinson (Health & Family Services); Jon Wertzler and Karen Yates (Economic Development); Gordon Slone (Energy & Environment); Mary Elizabeth Bailey, Jill Cook and Robert Long (Personnel); Ray Perry, DJ Wasson and Tatum Herrington (Public Protection); Mike Hancock and Brandy Bihl (Transportation); Rep. Steve Bratcher (General Assembly); Jason McGinnis (Chief Justice of the Supreme Court); Josh Keats and Chris Allen (Homeland Security); Mona Juett and Kim Wooldridge (Tourism, Arts & Heritage); Keith Jackson and Nicole Megles (Justice); Juan Renaud (KDVA); Corey Ann Jackson (Military Affairs); Tiffany Sizemore (DMA/Emergency Management); Lance O’Bryan (Knox Regional Development Alliance/Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army Emeritus); Stacey Shane (KCMA); COL Mike Snowden (101st Airborne and Fort Campbell Garrison); BG Maurice Barnett (Army Cadet Command); COL Taylor (1st TSC); Johnny Calhoun (100 TD); COL Clint Williams (Army Reserve Aviation Command); BG Colin Morrow (84 TC); COL David Holstead (Fort Knox Garrison); BG Adam Smith (Adjutant General of the Army); COL Samuel Morgan and Joel Kallenberger (BGAD); Capt. Randy Preston (Coast Guard Sector Ohio Valley); Major Gosling (V Corps); Brandon Brummett (Army Corps of Engineers); COL (Ret) Jerry Cecil (CASA Emeritus); Donietta Hawkey (USDOL-VETS); Daryl Casey (Joint Executive Council of Veterans Organizations); BG (USA Ret) Mike Ritchie (ESGR)
3. Approval of Minutes – December 6, 2024
 - i. Accepted by acclamation, as presented

B. Governor Andy Beshear

Gov. Beshear welcomed all participants through video, text as follows:

“Hi everyone! It’s Andy. I’m honored to give my personal thanks to you, our heroes, who serve and protect our Commonwealth and our country. We are home of the free because of the brave. Kentucky is one of our nation’s strongest military communities. Two of the most well-known and respected bases call Kentucky home – Fort Campbell and Fort Knox. Both play a major role in our nation’s defense, and both have bright futures. As many of you know, Britainy worked to support our military children at these bases, visiting many of the schools there. And both Britainy and I have been proud to support these children, through the Purple Star School program, which now has nearly 170 participating schools. Kentucky is also home to the Blue Grass Army Depot, a leader in the

Army's logistics system, supporting all Army installations east of the Mississippi River. And we've got the best National Guard in the entire country. This year alone, during the multiple natural disasters we've faced, our soldiers and airmen showed up in strength. They delivered food and water. They helped families find their loved ones. And they performed life-saving rescue missions. Our National Guard members showed up to help our Feeding Kentucky food banks. Fifty-five Guard members supported efforts across eight food banks, ensuring our neighbors have access to the food they need. We're also proud of our Reservists, serving in Kentucky and the service they provide. We've had a great year of moving things forward together. In September, the Blue Grass Army Depot finished processing secondary waste from chemical weapons. We've expanded access to occupational licenses for military spouses. And we've expanded access to licensing for military medical personnel. The Kentucky General Assembly, with support from the Kentucky Association of Manufacturers and others, launched their Air Mobility and Aviation Economic Development Task Force, and our Department of Veterans Affairs has been recognized with a fifth consecutive award for customer service. We're committed to our military families, and we're committed to this work. We thank you for your service. We'll never take it for granted. We will honor your work by continuing to build that better Kentucky and better America for everyone. God bless you. God bless the Commonwealth. And God bless the United States of America."

C. Legislative Updates

1. Federal

- i. **Letter from Senator Mitch McConnell was read, praising commission efforts.**
- ii. Text of letter: "Dear Friends, In connection with the Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs' annual meeting, it is my distinct pleasure and honor to share my thoughts on the hard work that Kentuckians have undertaken this year on behalf of our collective national security. Servicemembers of the Kentucky National Guard and those assigned to Kentucky's military installations have answered our call over the past year, both at home and abroad. Fort Campbell's 101st Airborne Division has made valuable contributions to our national security through its rotational deployment of a Brigade Combat Team to Romania to deter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe and through its Combat Aviation Brigade to the Middle East. The Kentucky Army National Guard's 138th Field Artillery Brigade began its transformation into an Operational Fires Command to take on a critical role of coordinating all artillery forces available to V (Fifth) Corps in Europe. I'm also proud of the Kentucky Army and Air National Guard for providing critical and timely support to civil authorities in the February and April floods that afflicted parts of our Commonwealth. 2025 marked another banner year for Kentucky's contribution to our national defense. On September 11, 2025, the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant processed the last of its remaining chemical weapon secondary waste, helping to close the book on America's chemical weapons stockpile. As this mission continues to wind down, I am excited to advocate in Congress for Blue Grass Army Depot to take on new responsibilities that can solve painful shortfalls in our defense industrial base and support the readiness of our armed forces. As we approach the new year, please know that I will continue to do all that I can to ensure that the Kentucky National Guard and Kentucky's defense installations have the infrastructure and resources they need to support our forces deployed all over the world. As we look back upon the past year, I also reflect on the heartbreaking loss of four soldiers of the 101st Airborne, a Cadet Summer Training participant at Fort Knox, and a Kentucky Airman stationed at F.E. Warren Air Force Base. Each of these individual tragedies reminds us that our men and women in uniform take on greater risks in volunteering to defend our country, to whom we owe a solemn debt of gratitude. We live today in the most dangerous international environment since the end of the Second World War. I've said many times before that our adversaries in China, Russia, North Korea and Iran are increasingly working together to undermine the peace and security of the free world. As Chairman of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and Kentucky's Senior Senator, my priority is to ensure that the men and women of our armed forces have the resources they need to keep us all safe. As always, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs' outstanding work in advocating for Kentucky's servicemembers, veterans, and their families. I also want to thank our men and women in uniform, who stand watch across our Commonwealth, our

nation, and the world in defense of our American way of life.”

“Sincerely, Mitch McConnell, United States Senator”

2. **Exception to Agenda: COL Mike Snowden, Commander, Fort Campbell Garrison, has been tasked short notice to represent the Army at a local area funeral later this morning. We changed the agenda to allow him to complete his presentation.**
 - i. COL Snowden began by noting the funeral is for one of our Fort Campbell champions, who has been a steward to the installation and a great partner to Fort Campbell. He thanked the Commonwealth of Kentucky for its resolute leadership on behalf of Fort Campbell, citing as an example the recent loss of federal appropriations and, with it, DOD Education Authority (DODEA) after-school activities. Through great teamwork with state and local officials, and Sen. McConnell's leadership, youth sports and club activities were restored. COL Snowden noted there are only four DODEA high schools in America, and two of those are here in Kentucky. He acknowledged Governor Beshear's comments about championing the cause of military spouses, especially, licensure, reciprocity and credentialing from other states. Major General Gardner strongly supports efforts to ensure our spouses can continue to further their career even though they follow a soldier. The lack of reciprocity initiatives can put spouses on the sidelines unintentionally, so we appreciate Kentucky's efforts to get that aligned with other states, COL Snowden said. We want to make sure they're recognized because when our families come to Fort Campbell, we find they often want to stay because it's a good, supportive military community. Getting that done is a huge lift for us. Secondly, partnership with the communities around us is one of MG Gardner's points of emphasis. The Army is our soldiers' first employer, COL Snowden emphasized, so the Army takes them from their hometown and transitions them into a formidable member of our workforce, whether it be in the Army or beyond their time of service into our civilian community. We're trying to connect with our local and regional businesses to offer the opportunity for those soldiers who transition back to the civilian community to skillfully and artfully off-ramp them into civilian life. We often find that the best way to do that is through our Career Skills Programs (CSP). We want to find businesses who are willing to take on an internship for a soldier who is planning to exit the military, to showcase these opportunities outside the uniform, and for the soldier to showcase skill sets that we've given them. We want you to say this is exactly the kind of person that I need for my business. Please help us spread the word. We're always looking for other CSP partners and DoD Skillbridge partners. The Department of War has begun to give a lot of latitude locally to installations to begin to work with industry partners. COL Snowden also stressed that the Army is working to figure out how we can better innovate. The 101st Airborne and the 5th Special Forces Group here have been deemed a transformation and contact organization. The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment is always looking at opportunities to transform, as well. Innovation happens naturally here at Fort Campbell, so we invite industry partners who wish to showcase their technologies to come to Fort Campbell be a part of Eagleworks. Work with our organizations and let us see how we can give feedback to tailor their innovations to better fit our war fighting mission.
3. State
 - i. **Letter from the Chair of the Senate Veterans, Military Affairs & Public Protection Committee in the Kentucky General Assembly, Senator Matt Deneen, was read, outlining committee goals.** Text of letter: “As we embark on the 2026 budget session, the Senate Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection (VMAPP) Committee has focused its sights on passing legislation to financially benefit veterans, military personnel, first responders, and constituents of the commonwealth at large. This past biennium—more specifically this past year—highlights the need for continued funding for critical resources including disaster response, military readiness, and veteran benefits. When we invest in our service men and women, we see a definitive impact of their service across the commonwealth. For example, during our August and September Interim Joint VMAPP Committee meetings, Kentucky Emergency Management's Urban Search and Rescue reported their teams evacuated, air lifted and/or rescued approximately 1,500+ Kentuckians during the floods in 2025. The price we pay to equip our military and first responders is priceless when we save Kentuckians' lives. During the interim, we have had several response groups and programs, request funding consideration, during the next budget cycle. These include:

Water, and wastewater, infrastructure—to assist economically disadvantaged communities struggling with crippling infrastructure, and water, emergencies;

The Kentucky Coroner’s Association—seeking mass fatality trailers for mass disasters;

Wolfe County Search and Rescue—Seeking a building for equipment storage and training, and to replenish rescue equipment;

The Kentucky Drug Task Force—which needs additional funding to supplement funds received from the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program;

And, Line of Duty Hazardous Disability Coverage—A bill to fill the gap in disability coverage and death benefits for first responders.

Additionally, there have been several proposed policy changes addressing challenges our current military personnel and veterans face. These include:

Implementing Licensing Compacts to help military families—remaining DOD priority compacts include EMS, Dental/Dental Hygienist, Interstate Massage Therapy, APRN, Dietician, Physician Assistants, Psychologists, and Respiratory Therapy;

Eliminate the Military Vehicle Tax—to remove the duplication of vehicle tax payment for soldiers with a Permanent Change of Station to KY

Veteran Benefits Support and Protection—to regulate private veteran benefit groups to ensure veterans are not taken advantage of when processing a claim for increased disability rating benefits.

While passing the biennial budget is the primary objective of this session, we hope for the opportunity to address these, and other, issues as assigned. I remain committed to engaging in discussions with folks on these topics and others to ensure our military and public service members are given the tools they need to carry out their daily duties. They need our support just as much as we need theirs in our times of need. Should you wish to discuss any of these items with me further, please contact me at my legislative office at (502)-564-8100 or matthew.deneen@kylegislature.gov.”

Sincerely, Senator Matt Deneen

- ii. **Remarks by Rep. Steve Bratcher, Vice Chair, House Standing Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, Public Protection, focused on the General Assembly’s support for military servicemembers and families.** Rep. Bratcher stressed his gratitude for all those serving today. As the state representative for the 25th District in Hardin County, Elizabethtown, he has a special connection to Fort Knox, and serves in the Air National Guard. So I am one of you, Rep. Bratcher said. He said that when he became vice chair of VMAPP, he set a vision to be the most military friendly state in the nation. We have some work to do on this and are now benchmarking other states to see what benefits they offer, he said. I know we lag behind in some areas, especially tax reform, he stressed. Rep. Bratcher said he is open to hearing from constituents from the entire state. I want to hear from all areas so that we can make Kentucky a better state for the military, he said. He discussed his Heroes to Healers bill from the 2025 session, which directs colleges and universities to grant credits in 27 military healthcare-related fields and to identify gaps so that they don't have to start over if they're going back and getting their degree. We support compact licensing agreements, so if you have a profession in another state, when you come to Kentucky, we accept that license. We are looking at the car tax. If somebody pays car tax in Alabama and they're ordered to come to Fort Knox or Fort Campbell, then they pay another car tax when they get to Kentucky. It just doesn't seem right, especially when they ordered to come here for military service. We're looking at disability sharks, the ones that take advantage of our disabled veterans when they claim disability for their ailments from military service. We're also looking at allowing for the placement of military representatives on the local zoning board as ex-officio members. We want the military installations engaged in zoning discussions, he said. When they're building new communities right up next to the base, it creates potential issues.
- iii. **Remarks by Samantha “Sam” Sliney, Southeast Region Liaison for the Defense-State Liaison Office, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, focused on current DSLO priorities.** We have several new priorities in Kentucky this year, as shared in the meeting documents, Sliney said. We have a brand-new education policy enhancement regarding the implementation of the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission (MIC3)

across the country, which protects the rights of military K-12 school children and families. Our Deputy Assistant Secretary's personal priority is "Solutions for Military Homeschoolers." We are also advocating for extended military family leave laws as we've seen the increased utilization of the National Guard over the past five years, both across the country and internationally. We are advocating for ensuring that when a service member is called to duty, their spouse has the opportunity to take paid or unpaid leave for a finite amount of time to prepare for that travel, or while leaving to go to training or deployment. We want states to protect their job and ensure family economic stability. We often see military spouses quitting their jobs because they don't feel like they can both work and care for their family alone, she said. They need to balance a deployment or preparing for a deployment. Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction is currently the number one priority for the department, Sliney said. In Kentucky, it relates to Fort Knox and Fort Campbell. The second priority is advocating for exempting family childcare homes from needing to carry both a Department of Defense and a state licensure to care for children in their homes off the installation. The third priority is state support of military families with special education needs. We're reaching out to Senator Mike Wilson and Rep. Myron Dossett on the state MIC3 council to see if they have interest in it (*Update from shortly after the meeting – Rep. Vanessa Grossl plans to carry this legislation*). I believe it could be an easy fix to the current existing statute in Kentucky that would provide timeliness in processing individual education plans for military families that need special education access when they get to Kentucky, she said. We are also looking at Kentucky's policies in response to interpersonal violence by service members. We want to ensure military commanders can know if their service member has violated any type of civil protection order or military protection order so that the unit can provide options for the families. It applies to both Active Duty/Reserves and the National Guard, but it's a little bit more nuanced for the Guard, she said. The National Guard Bureau came to us, and so I'm working with the Adjutant General's legislative liaison to figure out how this might work in the state. Please reach out to me if I can be a resource, Sliney said, noting that she is not meant to only work DoD state policy priorities, but also to serve as a resource to the state.

- iv. **Remarks by Brigadier General U.S. Army Retired Mike Ritchie, chair of the Kentucky Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, focused on the ESGR program here in our Commonwealth.** BG Ritchie stressed that much of what ESGR does is simply education. Most people don't know what ESGR is and does. It is a DoD organization under Reserve Affairs, staffed by volunteers across the nation. In Kentucky, we have approximately 40 volunteers statewide, he said. One of our missions is to work conflict resolution between Guardsmen, Reservists and their employers, he said. We have a special team of people called Ombudsman who work those issues. Fortunately, in recent years, the number of issues per year have declined. We only had about 20 cases in Kentucky last year, all of which were resolved at the local level. Our goal is to have the employee still want to work there and the employers still want them as an employee, BG Ritchie stressed. We also educate community leaders and employers about what the Reserve Components do. It still amazes me that many employers still don't know. They think it's about filling up sandbags and waiting for a flood. We educate them that the primary mission is the federal mission. The structure is the same, the training is the same, the requirements are the same as the Active Duty. Those service members bring skills to their businesses and their community functions across the state. The third part of our program is our Awards Program, BG Ritchie said. We're very proud that the only way a business or community entity can be recognized with an ESGR award is through DoD nomination from the service member, he said. This year we presented about 250 local awards to first line supervisors all the way up to CEOs of corporations. We present three top level awards in Kentucky. This year, that was Norton Healthcare for the large business category, Manchester Prison System for the public entity award, and the Duncan and Housman law firm for the small business category. Those programs go a long way in helping folks to understand what the program is about and telling them that service members and the community really appreciate what they do on behalf of supporting our service members in the Guard Reserves. In past years, we've done an annual Boss Lift with the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard and the Army Reserve Aviation Unit at Fort Knox. Boss Lift programs go beyond simply briefings and information sharing, BG Ritchie stressed – we actually put them on a military

aircraft such as a helicopter or C-130 and take them to a training event so they can see Guardsmen and Reservist' training. They get a feel for what they really do and have the chance to talk to their service members while they're in uniform. If you know of a community leader or a business person who'd benefit from that kind of exposure, KCMA staff knows how to get in touch with me. We welcome nominations. Ms. French Henry, we've invited you the last couple of years and would like to see you on one this year. I would love to, Commissioner Henry responded. BG Ritchie closed by saying that ESGR volunteers would appreciate the opportunity to speak across the state, especially outreach to employers. Please make us aware of those, he asked. Bullard noted that ESGR makes an excellent speaking topic for local chambers, rotaries and other business organizations.

D. KCMA Update

Brig. Gen. (R) Steven Bullard, Executive Director

Bullard began his annual report with by stressing that KCMA does not have any regulatory authorities. Our role is facilitatory, he said, engaging with numerous partners in many areas of the Commonwealth, from military to state and federal government to education to the Defense Industrial Base (DIB). KCMA has two full-time staff in Bullard and Executive Advisory Stacey Shane. The commission has a small executive committee with four ex-officio members, (secretary for Economic Development, the KCMA executive director, the Adjutant General of Kentucky, the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs) and five at-large members appointed by the governor, as defined by statute. The full commission membership is also defined by statute and includes cabinet secretaries, military organizations, and others including the General Assembly, Attorney General, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and ESGR.

Bullard reviewed strategic planning, focusing on the identification of five strategic goals. He noted that his presentation and associated reports are available on the KCMA website under Meetings (<https://kcma.ky.gov/About%20Us/Pages/Meetings.aspx>). The military command presentations will be uploaded immediately following today's meeting, he said.

Goal One is to **Protect and Grow DoD installations and Activities**. This includes monitoring Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) activities, threats and opportunities. The bottom line, he said, is that it's a very positive environment right now. Kentucky has done a tremendous job through the legislature, the governor's office and state/community agencies to "BRAC-proof" Kentucky and put us into a great position. DoD can put their units anywhere and can move them very easily. While a new BRAC is very unlikely in the short term, BRACs occur every year through the Defense Appropriations Act and the National Defense Authorization Act. They form a "mini-BRAC" in which movement can be made in any given year.

Bullard noted that, due to the recent federal government shutdown, DoD is behind in publishing their annual *Defense Spending by State* report. They have published an abridged version which notes that Kentucky defense spending increase slightly, by \$0.1B, over the past year, ranking 14th in the nation in direct defense spending (personnel and contracts). KCMA will update its *Kentucky Defense Activity Report* once all reporting is complete. The Commonwealth continues to rank in the top 16 among states in all measured categories, with those rankings anticipated to remain consistent with last year's.

Bullard praised the Knox Regional Development Alliance (KRDA) as a U.S. Army best practice excelling as a watchdog for Fort Knox in the greater area around the Fort Knox community. Fort Campbell is well represented by the Christian County Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee and Citizens for Fort Campbell, in partnership with Todd and Trigg Counties. He said a special shout out goes to the Richmond area Kentucky Chemical Demilitarization Citizens Advisory Commission and their Chemical Destruction Community Advisory Board, a subset of the commission. In September they celebrated the final eradication of actual chemical weapons and their associated residue, completing several decades of outstanding work coordinating with Blue Grass Army Depot leadership. We'll be looking at terminating the CAC/CDCAB because their mission is complete and highly successful, he said.

As noted by Governor Beshear and Senator McConnell, we have much to celebrate, Bullard stressed. Fort Campbell has now been officially designated the first home of the Army's future Vertical Lift Aircraft, the tilt-rotor MV-75, which will be the successor to the aging UH-60 Blackhawk. This will happen in the 2030 timeframe. That, and funding for the new control tower and hangar are major victories for the communities around Fort Campbell in their ongoing advocacy effort. Fort Knox continues to grow and earned the honor of Outstanding Garrison Command for the Army. We had a tremendously successful National Guard Southeast Region cybersecurity exercise this year. The Guard's leadership in this role helps Kentucky build on its growing cybersecurity initiatives.

As noted before, Blue Grass Army Depot celebrated a major accomplishment in their chemical weapons cleanup. They are now moving on to site cleanup operations. We are excited about their funding for a military container production plan and we have more opportunities under evaluation, as Senator McConnell noted, which we hope will be cause for celebration in the near future.

We are also closely watching new Army initiatives in partnership with our Energy and Environment Cabinet. EEC has been a great partner for the depot and its eradication and cleanup effort. While it's too early for us to outline today, the potential exists for Kentucky to greatly benefit from additional partnerships with Fort Knox and others, especially in energy production. We are excited about the possibilities and if we can succeed, it'll be a tremendous win for our Commonwealth.

Our community advocacy organizations continue to visit the Pentagon in Capitol Hill on behalf of our communities. I am fortunate to be in my fifth year as co-chair of the State Advisors Council for the national Association of Defense Communities. Bullard thanked Executive Committee member Heather French Henry for setting up our 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War display in the Kentucky State Capitol building this year, showcasing the contributions of our female service members. He noted the Kentucky State Capitol building has been closed for needed internal repairs, a closure that may last up to four years. KCMA has relocated our office space to the State Office building on High Street in Frankfort, along with the majority of the governor's staff.

Goal Two is to **Expand the Economic Impact of Kentucky's Defense-Related Industry**. Bullard stressed that today's reporting is one year dated as we await new reports delayed by the recent federal government shutdown. However, the recent abridged *Defense Spending by State* report indicates the continuation of our steady state status. Direct defense spending in Kentucky has risen by over \$6 billion since our KCMA strategic plan was adopted in late 2018, well over the \$2B goal set by the Executive Committee.

Bullard stressed that this spending does not include operations spending. Per DoD and economists at universities around the state and country, he said, defense spending by state is simply not quantifiable. Operational funds are expended all over the world during active operations. The expectation, he said, is that operations spending is roughly equivalent to personnel and contract spending, which conservatively gives Kentucky a true economic boost of well over \$20 billion annually.

We were very pleased with the adoption by the General Assembly this year of both an Air Mobility and Aviation Economic Development Task Force and a Veterans Caucus. We were proud to complete our 4th Department of Defense Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) Grant program in partnership with the University of Louisville. This resulted in a great product, our *Strengthening the Defense Industrial Base of Kentucky* report, including an ecosystem sustainability plan, an implementation plan, a futures analysis and a findings analysis. U of L was also just awarded a very unique Defense Innovation Unit, one of only eight DoD "on-ramp" hubs in the country. The DIU will focus on connecting Kentucky's industry innovators and researchers with key DoD organizations, and they will provide technical assistance to existing defense business and to start-ups from start to finish.

Returning to annual defense spending by state, Kentucky ranks well up in the top 20 in all measured areas. Our Commonwealth continues to be a strong performer in our nation's defense community with over 53,000 Kentuckians receiving a direct employment check from DoD, including service members, DoD civilians, and contractors. This does not include military retirees. The military ranks 4th in Kentucky in employment by sector. Total payroll is approximately \$3.3 billion annually. Humana Military continues to manage the DoD Tricare Health Insurance program for all military personnel and families worldwide from their base in Louisville.

Bullard stressed that Kentucky is an overwhelmingly Army state. Army assets received 93 percent of Kentucky's direct DoD allocations. Christian and Hardin Counties far and away lead the Commonwealth in Defense sector employment because of the proximity of Fort Knox and Fort Campbell. Blue Grass Army Depot is the Army's logistics hub for installations east of the Mississippi River. Lexington Bluegrass Station is operated by the Kentucky National Guard and serves as a major logistics and special forces hub. The Army Corps of Engineers manages a multi-state presence out of Louisville and is a major factor in maintaining both Fort Campbell and Fort Knox, along with Ohio River dams and major construction facilities in our state. Kentucky has the nation's largest inland "brown water" Coast Guard presence with Coast Guard Sector Ohio Valley in Louisville and Paducah. The Navy Reserve operates their own facility in Louisville, serving our nation's Fleet Reserve forces.

The Kentucky National Guard draws from all 120 Kentucky counties. Headquarters is at Boone National Guard Center in Frankfort. They have well over 50 armories, a Kentucky Air National Guard base at the Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport, and three training sites, including the 15,000-acre Wendell H Ford Regional Training site in Greenville.

The area surrounding Fort Knox constitutes Kentucky's sixth largest urban community. And between 400- to-500 soldiers transition back to civilian life from Fort Campbell each month, which offers a great employment transition opportunity for both the soldiers to stay in Kentucky and for Kentucky business and industry.

Goal Three is to **Develop and Implement the Model for Transitioning Service Members, Veterans and Spouses**. Bullard said KCMA does this through a variety of partners and are strong supporters of DoD priorities as identified through the Defense State Liaison Office. The KCMA executive director serves as the State Commissioner of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3), which facilitates military family transition to new school districts. We have a great partner in the Kentucky Department of Education and in the school districts around Fort Knox and Fort Campbell. In addition, Bullard serves on the MIC3 National Executive Committee and has been the national Compliance Chair for going on five years.

KCMA is also charged with chairing the Kentucky Purple Star Schools Advisory Committee. We partner with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, the Kentucky Department of Education, Seven Counties Services and other organizations to provide support for military connected families. Now in our third year of operation, we have 168 participating Kentucky K-12 schools and seven All-Purple Star counties. We encourage Veterans Service Organizations to get involved with the schools to help support this program. This Fall, we were pleased to release our brand-new *Veteran's Day Program Guide* for K-12 schools. Kentucky schools are required to celebrate Veteran's Day, and the biggest question we get is, what ways can we do this? Give us ideas. We've done that with this guide. We're also working on guides for celebrating April's month of the Military Child and for Purple Up! Day and hope to have those out by the Spring, if not sooner.

Goal Four is to **Establish Kentucky as the Most Military Friendly State and Grow Veterans/Retiree Population**. Bullard said we have a great partner in the Kentucky General Assembly, which has passed well over 200 laws in this area since 1954. Successes in 2025 include Heroes to Healers, facilitating

licensure in 27 healthcare related fields, expanded internment eligibility for National Guard and Reserve personnel and their families in our state veterans' cemeteries, and an enhancement to the DoD priority Barber and Cosmetology compact, one of many compacts Kentucky has already joined. We applaud the new and growing Kentucky General Assembly Veterans Caucus established this spring by Rep. Adam Moore of Lexington as a new opportunity to spread our message. This year, our session priorities include advocating for positive military related legislation, including membership in the new DoD-priority Dietician and Respiratory Therapy occupational licensure compacts. These compacts need grassroots support. When the associated community is engaged and wants these compacts, we do everything we can to help them become a reality. And, if you're one of the first seven states to join a new compact, you get to lead that compact. That's a tremendous added incentive. Kentucky is a leader in several of these compacts. DoD and KCMA strongly support occupational licensing compacts with any major impact on military members and spouses.

Our Goal Five is to **Communicate Strategically and Gain Advocacy**. Bullard closed by showing a slide of the many KCMA partner organizations, stressing that we rely on partnerships and relationships to effectively advocate for the military community in Kentucky and the nation. We are proud to work with all of you, Bullard said, and we look forward to developing more partnerships in the future.

E. Military Activity Reports

(associated slides are available at <https://kcma.ky.gov/About%20Us/Pages/Meetings.aspx>)

1. U.S. Army V (Fifth) Corps

- i. U.S. Army V Corps, headquartered at Fort Knox, manages deployed U.S. Army forces from their forward headquarters in Poznan, Poland. They are currently commanded by Lieutenant General Charles Costanza, with the majority of their Fort Knox-based team forward deployed because there's so much activity in Europe. V Corps' mission is to assure our NATO allies and deter against Russian aggression, said MAJ Goslin. They operate 20 sites throughout Europe on the eastern flank, with deployed 27,000 soldiers assigned to three brigades in Germany.
- ii. MAJ Goslin noted the Kentucky National Guard's 138th Operational Fires Command provides fuel, artillery support and planning, both at Fort Knox and forward. V Corps builds NATO war fighting capability, mentors NATO Corps and Divisions, partners with adjacent NATO Corps and regionally aligned forces with specified NATO units. Based off V Corps priorities, they support war fighters prior to and during deployment, up to culminating evaluations.
- iii. MAJ Goslin discussed individual training, small unit tactics and integrating higher echelons throughout the training cycle. Intelligence personnel and other support units at Fort Knox reach forward to help train our NATO partners and regionally aligned forces. V Corps also conducts war fighting symposiums and other initiatives that support the Army through our Allied land component commands. We train how we're going to fight in the next battle, MAJ Goslin said. V Corps supports Ukraine through NATO convergence and capability initiatives, with a continuous cycle of planning and rehearsals.
- iv. MAJ Goslin discussed intelligence support activities from Fort Knox, and support of exercises such as the Ukrainian training exercise Operation Trident Ready. Their goal is to ensure Army and NATO forces are up to date and maintaining currency. V Corps provides support to our European partners, maintaining peace through vigilance throughout Europe, projecting power forward from Fort Knox, teamed with NATO-led capability.
- v. MAJ Goslin discussed transformation efforts with brigades and divisions that allow them to grow to meet the next battle. He closed by praising V Corps' outstanding integration with the Kentucky Army National Guard's Operational Fires Command and the support they provide to regionally aligned partner throughout Europe.

2. U.S. Army Recruiting Command

- i. Deputy Commanding General BG Eric Van Den Bosch thanked everyone present for the hard work that you do to advocate for our service members and for our workforce. Last year, you were updated on where we're going as a command as we established our new 3-star (Lieutenant General) command.

Under now-LTG Johnny Davis, USAREC has subordinate commands in the Recruiting Division, Cadet Command and the Army Marketing Office. LTG Davis was promoted in January.

- ii. With the deactivation of Army Training and Doctrine Command and Army Futures Command, and the activation of Army Transformation and Training Command (T2COM), USAREC will serve as the Force Generation Command, integrated to recruit, access, and train the next generation of Warriors. This will enhance oversight, reduce attrition, and provide flexibility to achieve readiness across the Army. BG Van Den Bosch stressed that USAREC is now responsible from the soldier's first handshake to his/her first unit of assignment. The command is responsible for recruiting officer and enlisted soldiers and getting them to initial military training before we hand them off to operational units, he said. We have opportunities in synchronizing across that space, with more visibility when we recruit on how well those recruits fare when they go through the training cycles. We have more feedback to improve our effectiveness as we no longer just hand recruits off into the training pipeline. Now we look at how precisely we can deliver trained soldiers to our Army.
 - iii. How can you help, he asked? As the number of veterans proportionately decreases across our population, those of you who served in the military have past experience and can help by sharing your story, BG Van Den Bosch said. Share the benefits of military service while you're in service and beyond. Provide meaningful school access to our recruiters when schools are in session and students are present.
 - iv. Bullard added that, under the new 3-star command structure, U.S. Army Cadet Command now falls under Recruiting Command. While they're not briefing today, Bullard said, I'll note we're very proud of what they do at Fort Knox. They oversee approximately 280,000 junior ROTC cadets at over 17,000 high schools across the U.S. That's the third largest youth program in the United States, behind Scouts and 4H. Their senior ROTC cadet program is composed of over 28,000 cadets on approximately 920 college and university campuses. Annual ROTC cadet summer training continues to bring approximately 8,000 cadets to Kentucky each summer. Last year we noted that Cadet Command partnered with the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness Office, Career and Technical Education, to bring on COL Tim McDonald upon his Army retirement from Cadet Command to be a new State Director of Army Instruction. They've created a robust and innovative program to manage Army JROTC operations at Kentucky high schools.
- 3. Kentucky National Guard**
- i. Major General Hal Lamberton, the Adjutant General of Kentucky, discussed the development of the Army National Guard's new Operational Fires Command at the request of the National Guard Bureau. Kentucky was fortunate to set up the prototype command from their 138th Field Artillery Brigade, he said.
 - ii. MG Lamberton noted they just completed exercise Avenger Triad with V Corps in Poland and are building towards future Warfighter exercises. MG Lamberton said this Fall's Cyber Bluegrass Exercise, referenced in earlier comments, focused on the offensive side of cyber, much of which is on the sensitive or secret side of the operations world. He stressed the Guard is uniquely positioned because we've got a presence in all states and territories, and therefore is more focused on cybersecurity, in particular with the domestic operations world. For this, the Guard must continue developing relationships with other federal government entities, including Homeland Security, FEMA and the federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). The National Guard also continues to exercise cyber at the state level through state exercises including Cyber Shield, which covers multiple state and even international partners.
 - iii. The key element of their Fall exercise, MG Lamberton said, was that, prior to this exercise, there was no cyber-focused exercise that that dealt strictly with the Southeastern U.S. (FEMA Region 4). While the Kentucky National Guard served as lead, this was very much a collaborative event with both federal and state partners, including our Kentucky Office of Homeland Security, the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management and the Commonwealth Office of Technology, plus the FBI and CIA. We'll do this exercise again next year, he said. We need to, because a lot of organizations talk cyber, but they aren't necessarily talking to one another. These Cyber Bluegrass exercises bring

together the various entities who could end up responding to a cyber incident and enable them to build a working relationship prior to such an incident. Quite simply, MG Lamberton said, it follows the first responder's mindset – you don't want to introduce yourself or pass out business cards for the first time at the scene of an incident.

- iv. MG Lamberton also reviewed the success of their innovative Kentucky Enlistment Enhancement Program (KEEP), which is a monetary-incentivized referral program that rewards soldiers and airmen who identify a neighbor, a friend, a relative, who they believe would be a good fit for the Kentucky National Guard and pass their contact information to our recruiters. The recruiter does the work from there. Once that person enlists into either the Kentucky Air National Guard or the Kentucky Army National Guard, the person who provided the referral receives \$500. We're now almost three years in, and it's been hugely successful, MG Lamberton said. We're getting about a third of our recruiting mission accomplished through such referrals. That one-third dynamic is growing even further as we're still improving and deepening the pool source that referrals are coming from, he said. Initially this program was only for our currently uniformed soldiers and airmen. Now it's expanded to our retirees, and we're even looking beyond that. This is a credible program unique to the Guard, as our federal brothers and sisters in U.S. Army Recruiting Command are not able to offer this resource. I anticipate further expansion, he said.
 - v. In another area, our National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) is valuable to U.S. Army V Corps out of both Fort Knox and Poland, MG Lamberton said. We've recently initiated a relationship with Greece, just barely eight days ago, with a suspense date that is a very quick turnaround. There's a lot of emphasis on building this relationship quickly because Greece is particularly attractive and important as it's one of the current 32 members of NATO. MG Lamberton noted all the activity and support through NATO related to Ukraine. Greece to date has not participated in SPP. Kentucky has a lot to offer Greece and is interested in developing this partnership, he said.
 - vi. Lastly, MG Lamberton praised the impact of the Kentucky National Guard's Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center, a massive training area in Western Kentucky of approximately 15,000 acres. Its utility for military customers goes well beyond just the Kentucky National Guard, he stressed, noting we're expanding its capabilities. For example, he said, in the next two quarters, I anticipate having a multi-lane machine gun range complete. That's hugely important for us in the Guard because it gives us control over qualifying our crew-served weapons. A typical dynamic with any state's National Guard is that we often must travel from our hometown armories to a training site or facility to obtain and keep our qualifications, MG Lamberton said. This gives us positive control over our own range, which is huge. We deploy our servicemembers overseas, making this sort of training essential as we support national and international security missions for our military, MG Lamberton stressed.
- 4. The Adjutant General of the Army**
- i. Brigadier General Adam Smith, the Adjutant General for the Army, said he has the best job in the Army because he wakes up every day with the sole priority of taking care of soldiers, families and veterans. He leads a team of about 550 soldiers and civilians, primarily here at Fort Knox, but also with their Physical Disability Agency at Joint Base San Antonio in Texas as well as their Military Postal Service Agency, spread out between Chicago, the East Coast and West Coast.
 - ii. Our mission is pretty simple, BG Smith said. We develop and execute all human resources policies in support of 1.1 million soldiers, Active, Guard and Reserve, and over five million veterans and associated family members around the world. Essentially, he stressed, we're driving personnel readiness for the Army, making sure that soldiers and families are prepared and focused on their warfighting mission and not distracted by any administrative noise that's going on in the background. They can stay focused for whatever the nation calls upon them. We do that through a multitude of different services we provide. We like to say the life cycle, or sort of cradle to grave, of services that we provide start from day one when an applicant receives their first ID card to ensuring their military pay is aligned throughout their life cycle. As they continue to grow, advance in promotion or take on any special duties, we're making sure that those appropriate incentives and pay and support align with what they're doing.

- iii. BG Smith said they manage the Army's Transition Assistance Program, a huge partnership through the Department of War for all of our Skillbridge or Career Skills Programs. We're actively working with our partner agencies to provide opportunities for soldiers who are transitioning from the service, he said. If you think about transition, it's the one task in the Army that every soldier will do. And it's the only task in the Army that we provide no training for ahead of time. We put a lot of emphasis not to encourage people to separate, but to make sure that when they do, they have a smooth transition that enables them to land solidly on their feet. This both drives down unemployment compensation costs and ensures they have opportunities to enter into the civilian force with all the appropriate benefits and entitlements that they've earned throughout their career. Whether it's two years, 10 years or 30 years, we're ensuring they're set up for success, BG Smith said. He stressed he takes personal pride in that accomplishment, knowing that a happy veteran is one of the best recruiters that we can possibly have out there on the streets championing our mission and the opportunities that are available within every component of the Army.
 - iv. Continuing Education is very germane for this body here, as well, BG Smith said, noting they oversee tuition assistance credentialing assistance for all of our soldiers. We work with all components to ensure that they can continue to better themselves, advance their careers and have assistance from the Army in doing so. They work to ensure soldiers are properly credentialed, based on their service qualifications, by state institutions and programs. The Physical Disability Agency assists servicemembers who are being medically evaluated for potential medical retirement or separation, ensuring that they receive all due benefits on transition from the Army, including the proper disability benefits. Our goal, he stressed, is that this doesn't plague them for years to follow, so we also support any veterans who are working with the VA.
 - v. Lastly, he said, we run the Army Service Center, which helps soldiers, families and veterans with personnel matters. The contact information is on his slides. While we have our frequent questions we support; essentially, we're here for any need that they might have. If they don't know where to go or don't know where to start, we're the front door for them to get their questions answered or direct them to whichever agency can provide that support. Yes, we do get called on where the bowling alley is located here on Fortress Knox, and we're happy to help with that, too, he said. We're happy to help our veterans. Just last week, BG Smith said, we had the opportunity to help a widow obtain the DD214 for her deceased spouse to ensure she kept her entitlements for her and her family. In terms of how you can help, just let people know we're here, send them our way, give them our information. There's no question that we can't get to the bottom of. We exist to take care of soldiers, to take care of families, and to take care of veterans. And we love doing it, BG Smith said.
- 5. U.S. Army First Theater Sustainment Command**
- i. Chief of Staff COL Fran Taylor spoke on behalf of Major General John Hinson and Command Sergeant Major Adam Lepley, who are currently deployed in Israel. First Theater Sustainment Command is America's only permanently deployed sustainment command, facilitating relationships and activities with 21 countries across the Middle East, COL Taylor said. The command focuses on people, partners and innovation supporting the Army and Central Command, taking care of both soldiers and sustainment of operations.
 - ii. Their strategic plan looks beyond just the current fight in the Central Command Area of Operations. Based in Kuwait, when you see missions in the Middle East highlighted on civilian news channels, those are normally related to the First Theater Sustainment Command. We sustain the joint force in theater and set the theater to respond to crisis and conflict, COL Taylor said, with lines of effort focused on training our composite Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve components. They sustain the joint force, set the theater, maintain material readiness, and engage in theater security cooperation, innovation and transformation. First TSC conducts theater security cooperation with host nation partners and the joint forces deployed there. We innovate and integrate emerging technologies by providing the latest innovative resources and tools to enhance our partners relationships and our joint environment. We provide centralized sustainment and mission command in theater.
 - iii. Our main command post is our headquarters here at Fort Knox, supporting operations downrange, COL Taylor said. We have a fusion team that travels forward at least twice a year to liaison with our

operational environment. Fort Knox is where we look at the strategic outlook of the entire theater and our focus in operations. On any given day, over 18,000 service members and 500 civilian contractors are in countries supporting U.S. operations. Our experts coordinate and track reports of movement of vehicles, equipment and resources that travel throughout the theater to support operations. The bottom line is we improve fighting positions and deliver readiness to the field.

- iv. Our Kentucky family had the honor of conducting 44 military funerals across four states in 2025. Our soldiers and civilian personnel volunteer extensively in their respective Kentucky communities. Those are some of the honorable things that we contribute to our Kentucky families, who enable us to do our mission by taking care of our soldiers and families. Your efforts are much valued and much needed for us, COL Taylor stressed. That's important because we support our mission downrange, so we must ensure our families are cared for here in the state where we reside.

6. U.S. Army Reserve 84th Training Command

- i. BG Colin Morrow, 84th Training Command Deputy Commanding General, spoke on behalf of Major General Kelly Dickerson and thanked Kentucky for its leadership and support of the military and its veterans. He said the 84th is headquartered on Fort Knox, with approximately 5,000 soldiers and 162 civilians in four training divisions and the headquarters. The 84th TC runs five-to-six large scale multinational combat operations exercises each year. They feature a mix of collective and individual warfighting training focused directly on anything that enhances warfighting skills. The 84th TC runs the Observer Coach and Trainer (OCT) Academy, generating up to 800 instructors and assessors who then go out with rotational units that are part of the larger exercises to help them be successful. Their Senior Gunner Course supports live fire convoy certification by working with rotational units long before the exercise so they can train up for the right skill set to be successful during certification. BG Morrow stressed that the 84th is prepared to execute any Army Training Initiative (ATI) task.

7. U.S. Army Reserve 100th Training Division (Leader Development)

- i. Command Executive Officer Johnny Calhoun represented Commanding General Brigadier General Martin Jung and Command Sergeant Major Christian Davis. Calhoun said we have been really excited the last couple of months because U.S. Army Reserve Command and 80th Training Command are transitioning the 100th back to their World War II roots. We have a storied history where basic training was at the heart of what we did. Over the years, we transitioned away from that, he said. We have always been doing Leader Development and Military Occupational Specialty training, and that is what you see today. Our 83rd Army Reserve Readiness Training Center (ARRTC) at Fort Knox is at the forefront of the individual training mission.
- ii. Calhoun showed slides outlining the coming transition, noting it's still pre-decisional so some changes may occur; however, they're working to optimize their broader training mission, courses and locations. In this transition, staffing at Fort Knox will increase from 268 to 891 personnel, with approximately 3,500 personnel across the Southeast Region, a 292 percent increase in overall personnel. Traditionally, he said the 100th has been putting 12,000 students through our pipeline just here on Fort Knox. With this new construct, we expect to put 18,000 students through, a 50% increase, he noted. Our goal, he said, is soldier training and leader development. We will continue to do that and get back into initial individual training. It's exciting for us, he said, adding we also get an opportunity to support ROTC Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox. Our drill instructors will get an opportunity to shape those cadets.
- iii. He offered ways the 100th Training Division and Kentucky can help each other, such as finding synergies in training and support. Resources are limited, he said. If we can train on basic soldier tasks, such as weapons qualifications, by leveraging Kentucky National Guard armories, ranges, simulators or maintenance bays, we would love to do that, Calhoun said. We have different types of vehicles to drive and maintain, where teamwork can help our maintainers with training, parts and support, for example. It will take a lot of administrative and logistical support to streamline some of these processes. For my part, I'm unfamiliar with state level processes so we would certainly look forward to participating in planning meetings where we could work out some of these details, he said.
- iv. Recruitment and retention are always needed, he added. There are opportunities all the time in the Reserve world as well as the Active Duty and National Guard, he said, stressing we are constantly

looking for talent that aligns with soldiers' personal and family goals. We would welcome transitioning soldiers who would like to continue serving through the 100th Training Division, he said. They'll find the 100th is a great place to be.

- v. He praised Kentucky for supporting Fort Campbell and Fort Knox, especially for expanding support to education and family support programs. If we can continue to build the education and experience of our soldiers, our forces are going to be all the more stronger for it, he said.
- vi. He closed by offering the opportunity for BG Jung to comment. BG Jung said he reiterates what has been previously stressed today by other General Officers, that we are all very thankful for the Commonwealth's support to our military community. He said he has been based in multiple states and has not seen the level of support like he's seen in Kentucky. The 100th Training Division is coined the "Kentucky Division" because of its heritage, BG Jung said. We are strong, we're growing by over 200 percent, and it is exciting times during my tenure here. I'm happy to be part Kentuckian right now, he said.

8. U.S. Army Reserve Aviation Command

- i. Deputy Commander COL Clint Williams said the Army Reserve Aviation Command (ARAC, or "A-Rack") is the headquarters for all Army Reserve Aviation units, composed over 4,400 soldiers, 600 civilians and 230 aircraft across 12 states. They are the only Title 10 Federal Reserve Aviation Organization in the U.S. Army. However, he said, his report is much less positive this year than last as the Army Transformation Initiative (ATI) ordered Army Reserve Rotary Headquarters inactivation effective at the end of FY2026. That takes about 80 percent of the ARAC's footprint and inactivates it nine months from now, the core of which exists here at Fort Knox.
- ii. COL Williams showed a slide outlining what will be lost in terms of capabilities. In summary, he said, 45 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters will no longer be part of active units. Here on Fort Knox, the brigade headquarters that exists in the building I'm currently briefing from is also inactivating. What will be retained is a consolidated ARAC headquarters, probably downsized from a one-star General Officer command to an O-6 Colonel command a theater fixed-wing company in the form of eight C 12 aircraft. Now, on the inactivation date of 15 September 2026; if you drive by Godman Army Airfield or fly over it, you'll probably still see a lot of aircraft on the airfield. These aircraft will divest over time based on Army's directive to sell the equipment off to foreign military, other government agencies, or otherwise decommission the aircraft.
- iii. We will still maintain a visible footprint here on Fort Knox into FY2027, COL Williams said. Ultimately, our units will be inactivated and not operational as a result of ATI directives. The biggest personnel impact is the 102 civilians that exist here as part of the Aviation Support Facility at Fort Knox. Without the 45 helicopters, that civilian maintenance workforce will be reduced down to about a half dozen or so, just to maintain dispatch and operations for the C-12 aircraft. In terms of civilian employment impact to the region, to the state at large, that's probably the biggest impact. However, you know a lot of citizens of the Commonwealth and bordering states will lose their immediate connection to the Army Reserve because their units are inactive. Their Military Occupation Specialties aren't available in the in the immediate region.
- iv. We're working through exactly how to give opportunities to folks that are losing their military Reserve opportunities here. The 100th and the 84th are viable options. The Kentucky National Guard has been very accommodating to us, particularly for opportunities for those with aviation skill sets. I think we'll have a landing spot for most of our folks, COL Williams said, although this is difficult to deal with in the moment and at the very least shocking to a lot of folks. This will also impact Godman Army Airfield and garrison services provided through the airfield, based on the reduction in aircraft density here.
- v. I think ultimately we'll all land on our feet, COL Williams stressed. We remain postured for reestablishing the organization if the Army decides that there's a new capability they want to establish in the Army Reserve in the form of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles or any other new capability. We believe we at least have the infrastructure and some of the core personnel to use as a platform to perhaps rebuild in the future, when and if the Army and Department of Defense at large decide to do so. Unfortunately, this might be the last time you hear from the ARAC on this Commission call. We

will still maintain our contacts with this group here, particularly as we look to provide our folks opportunities or at least connect them to opportunities in the region.

9. U.S. Army Garrison Fort Knox

- i. Fort Knox Garrison Commander COL David Halstead highlighted the impact of the Army Transformation Initiative (ATI) on the installation. Broadly speaking, he said, ATI is designed to build efficiencies and right size the Army. Currently Fort Knox projects a net loss of 1,975 personnel. However, he said, as you've heard from our tenant units, Fort Knox is the home of eight General Officer commands and our span of reach in terms of Army missions is as broad and as wide as any installation in the Army. This includes supporting CENTCOM with 1st TSC, Europe through V Corps, and supporting U.S. Army Recruiting Command, which now owns the entire pipeline from civilian to soldiers. Our Reserve and National Guard missions are strong, as highlighted by our partners in the 100th, 84th and Kentucky National Guard. This net loss of approximately 2,000 is primarily from the ARAC and the 19th Engineer Battalion.
- ii. Fort Knox remains a vital platform for mobilization and readiness for all three components, Active, Guard and Reserve. Our new Child Development Center (CDC) is on track to complete by 2027, COL Halstead said. Our current CDC is one of the oldest in the Army, which makes it very difficult to meet statutory requirements and also puts a strain on the workforce. This new CDC will bring first class care to our military, families and military children across the board and allow us to repurpose the current CDC into a one-stop headquarters for all in processing. That's something we highly need because we're spread out across post.
- iii. In terms of economic impact, he said, Fort Knox remains the second largest employer in the state of Kentucky, behind only UPS, with 26,000 civilians, soldiers and family members calling Fort Knox home. We have \$484M in Fort Knox-based contracts awarded to small businesses in FY2025. These Fort Knox based contracts to the local community support small businesses. Looking at that economic impact pack from a broader perspective, a total of \$5.6 billion annually is pumped into the local economy, supporting Harden, Meade, Bullitt, and Jefferson Counties primarily. That includes \$3B in payroll. We'll remain an economic powerhouse for Kentucky. We were awarded the best installation in the U.S. Army, a testament to those 26,000 strong people who call Fort Knox home. We have an incredible workforce.
- iv. The passion for the military mission here at Fort Knox is unparalleled anywhere I've been in 25 years in the Army, COL Halstead said. Finally, he said he'd like to thank the Commission and the Commonwealth of Kentucky for all they do to support not just Fort Knox, but Fort Campbell as well. This really is a great place to call home.

10. Blue Grass Army Depot

- i. Blue Grass Army Depot (BGAD) Commanding Officer COL Samuel Morgan said they are proud to be the third largest Active Duty Army installation in in Kentucky. As the third largest, that means we've got two Active Duty soldiers on our installation, he said. That may amaze you, but what we lack in uniformed members we make up with an incredible workforce.
- ii. We are also a part of the organic industrial base, COL Morgan said. We are one of 23 depots in that enterprise that makes up the Army's arsenals, depots and munition centers. When you think about the organic industrial base, our system really an incredibly important insurance policy for the United States with regards to how we scale up for large-scale operations. BGAD is, effectively, a traditional Active Duty power projection platform for munitions and chemical defense equipment, COL Morgan stressed. BGAD focuses their lines of effort around people, readiness and transformation and modernization, he added. Our Consolidated Shipping Center is top notch, capable of shipping 300-plus containers per day of munitions and equipment.
- iii. BGAD falls under the Joint Munitions Command and is generally thought of as a munitions' depot, he said. However, probably 30 percent of our work also supports Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command, with chemical defense equipment (non-lethal) supporting homeland defense and force-provider equipment. Armies always are changing in flux, so the Army's transformation initiative has also affected BGAD, he said.

- iv. What does the future look like for us? What becomes of the chemical munitions mission and the Blue Grass Chemical Agent Destruction Pilot Plant as the last remaining secondary waste has been destroyed? It's a really exciting time for us because these changes create a fresh canvas for us as the Department of War and the Army seek transformation and modernization. We believe there's an opportunity for other initiatives across the Army to look at BGAD. This includes a flexible modular production assembly line for 155mm artillery ammunition rounds. You've probably followed the Russia-Ukraine conflict. If so, you understand the significance of artillery. It wasn't as in vogue for a while. That conflict highlighted how important those sorts of munitions remain.
- v. Drones have become a significant part of the future battlefield. The Army has initiated a program called Sky Foundry, an enterprise where several different depots across the United States are doing production of different capabilities to build domestic drones with the organic capabilities that we have in the industrial base, supplementing commercial industry. We need the capability to scale up combat operations of drone aircraft, so the Army is also looking at doing domestic production. BGAD has been chosen as the innovation hub for program.
- vi. COL Morgan mentioned programs such as the Defense Innovation Hub at the University of Louisville for continuing innovative partnerships. We're looking for partnerships with academia and commercial industry to support our efforts as an innovation hub. In this role, one of our main efforts will be testing. Partnerships with programs like Eagleworks Laboratories, also known as Advanced Propulsion Physics Laboratory, could help not just in field testing but from the engineering side of testing. Another new program, said COL Morgan, is container fabrication, with \$27 million allocated for the design, build, container fabrication. Quite frankly, he said, I don't know how to build a container, so that's an area where we are looking for commercial industry partners.
- vii. The core BGAD mission will remain a government-owned, government-operated facility doing out-load shipment. What augments our workforce and capabilities is leveraging Private Public Partnerships and other missions that can be done on the depot. Container fabrication is a great example because there is little domestic production currently in the United States. That could be an incredible opportunity for the state and local region. We're looking for anyone that can help with that.
- viii. We're really looking to do advanced manufacturing, incorporating that into all of our production capabilities. We've met with University of Kentucky and they have an amazing capabilities there, COL Morgan said. Aside from those futuristic things that we're anticipating, what we're doing right now is enhanced security. The full spectrum of what we're doing there is absolutely amazing, he said. We've had several folks from this commission meeting visit as part of our Physical Security Enterprise and Analysis Group (PSAG) initiative where we are integrating artificial intelligence into many of our sensor platforms on the depot. As we're in this meeting, we received approval for more funding for related projects, everything from the common camera that you have at a front gate to incorporating radar into your perimeters. Where we have dead space on a daily basis, we are flying drones over our depot remotely and autonomously, using artificial intelligence integrating all those capabilities.
- ix. When you think about what a depot of the future look like, we hope to be the model, COL Morgan said. The goal for all Army installations is to provide top-notch, futuristic security that we are just now developing, he said. He said he is amazed at how quickly their efforts with artificial intelligence and drones is progressing. We'd like to be the first to integrate taking drones to a different level of incorporating artificial intelligence, to see how much further we could expand those capabilities. Modernization of our facilities is really important to us. We continue to work to improve our foxhole, as Blue Grass Army Depot was established in the 1940s, COL Morgan stressed. We're still operating a lot of those original facilities to this day. He noted they are working innovative warehouse designs for small arms.
- x. Our remaining line of effort is people, he said. Creating transformation and modernization, and doing futuristic things while also maintaining our existing readiness, comes down to having an incredible workforce. They're just as passionate and committed as anybody that wears the uniform. We're extremely proud of our team, he said. As we look at investing in our human capital to meet the production needs of the Army's future readiness, it's critical to leverage some of our displaced personnel from the Blue Grass Chemical Agent Destruction Pilot Plant. That's an incredibly talented

and technically skilled workforce we can incorporate on the depot side as we look at partnerships with local communities and technical school schools to have a pathways program where we can educate our youth and hire them in the future. As these future missions come along, COL Morgan said, he thinks it will be incredibly important for BGAD to have that talent available, equipped with new technical skills.

11. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers- Louisville, KY District

- i. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District, had a technical conflict and were not able to participate; however, they provided a quick review of their mission with 1,100 Department of the Army civilians and 10 active-duty personnel supporting a multi-state region around the Ohio River. Their civil works area covers over 67,000 square miles, covering most of Indiana, most of Kentucky, part of Ohio and part of Illinois. They support Fort Knox, Fort Campbell, Bluegrass Army Depot, working within the with the Commonwealth while also supporting design and construction for the Army Reserve and the Air Force Reserve in the region. They support federal agencies such as Virginia, USDA and the Federal Bureau of Prisons.
- ii. Last year, they executed over \$1 billion in contracts in this region, including their flood risk management program. The Corps of Engineers have prevented over \$1 billion in damages to the local area since their inception in 1937. One of the things they're most proud of is their recreational facilities in Kentucky typically provide over \$500 million a year in economic benefits to our region.

12. U.S. Coast Guard Sector Ohio Valley

- i. Deputy Commanding Officer Commander Matt Winland briefed on behalf of Commanding Officer Randy Preston. The United States is a maritime nation, and the marine transportation system is the backbone of our economy, CDR Winland said. Economic security equals national security. Here at Sector Ohio Valley, we execute Coast Guard statutory missions to protect the maritime transportation system and the people that use and work on it. Sector Ohio Valley's area of responsibility covers parts of 10 states, including Kentucky; over 3,000 miles of navigable river from Pittsburgh down to the confluence of the Tennessee River basin and its tributaries, all of the Ohio and about 300 miles of the Mississippi.
- ii. Maintaining the marine transportation system is a team sport, he said. In Kentucky, we have about 180 Active Duty, Reserve and civilian personnel, with about 400 across our 10-state region. It's a big mission for a small group of people, so to execute our missions, we engage our local, state and other federal government agency partners, mostly law enforcement and fire. CDR Winland showed a slide of their FY2025 exercises and joint operations, including tactical boarding drills on Kentucky lakes, boating safety, illegal charter boat operations, and more with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. We partner with state law enforcement and the sheriff's departments with canine capability to get on board commercial towing vessels to prevent drug use on board our commercial towing vessels.
- iii. Our 180 active-duty personnel are spread over four geographic locations in Kentucky. Sector Ohio Valley headquarters is on the fourth floor of the Federal building in Louisville. The Obion, a 65-foot buoy tender, operates out of Owensboro. Our Marine Safety Unit in Paducah does commercial vessel inspections, investigations and much more – the regulatory work of the Coast Guard, CDR Winland said. Our Coast Guard Cutter Chena in Hickman is a 75-foot river tender. We work closely with the Army Corps of Engineers to make sure the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers stays open.
- iv. We have 11 statutory missions touching everything from icebreaking to Corps of Engineers' support to navigation. The last three years we've had historic low water on the Mississippi River. CDR Winland said the concern is when does historic stop being historic and just become routine? But keeping the confluence open is critical just for an economic standpoint. You're looking at about 15 percent of the nation's GDP that goes through there via barges annually, he said. Sixty percent of the nation's grain exports go down the Mississippi River via barge. Because low water tends to coincide with crop season, he said, keeping that thing moving is critical to literally feeding the world.
- v. CDR Winland noted that the Russian incursion into eastern Ukraine's donbas region deprived much of Europe of its coal supply. West Virginia is now keeping the lights on in Eastern Europe, making these coal shipments even more critical to national security, he said.

- vi. CDR Winland noted that they have lost much of their small boat capabilities, so they've doubled down on reaching out to other government agency partners to do joint law enforcement operations. We've been very successful thus far, he said, in making lemonade out of lemons through joint boardings with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, the Cincinnati police, Louisville marine agencies and other partners.
- vii. He noted the Coast Guard does not have any big bases outside of our training commands or major cutter bases. In places like Kentucky, we blend transparently into the communities we serve. As such, we're kind of subject to whatever the market demand is for housing and medical and education, he said. Advanced specialized medical care is a challenge in some of our geographically more isolated areas, so we're frequently sending people to either Memphis or Cleveland Clinic or someplace much further away to seek higher level care. CDR Winland said he would like to advocate on behalf of our other government agencies here in the state for additional support for them. They're carrying the water for us in terms of bringing maritime capability assets to the river, he stressed. And they're graciously conducting joint operations with us, so further supporting them is directly supporting us.
- viii. The Coast Guard is also hiring, he added. We have a recruiting office in Louisville, so if anyone is interested, they can reach out to us. We also welcome anyone to meet with us at Sector headquarters or any of our subunits, he said.

F. Open Discussion

No participant presented a topic for open discussion or offered any questions. Bullard advised that the next full commission meeting will be Friday, December 4, 2026 at 10 a.m. ET (virtual), and reminded everyone that slides are available on the KCMA website. The minutes will be completed and posted by the end of the month.

G. Next Full Commission Meeting – December 4, 2026, 10:00 a.m. ET (virtual)

H. Adjourn

Adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

***** Audio file: 801_0049 (Folder C) (NEEDS UPDATING)**