

**MINUTES
of the
SECOND MEETING
of the
MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**July 9, 2012
Clovis-Carver Public Library
Clovis, NM**

The second meeting of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee for the 2012 interim was called to order by Senator David Ulibarri, co-chair, on Monday, July 9, at 8:47 a.m. in the Ingram Room of the Clovis-Carver Public Library, Clovis, New Mexico.

Members

Rep. Thomas A. Garcia, Co-Chair
Sen. David Ulibarri, Co-Chair
Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon
Sen. Richard C. Martinez
Sen. John Pinto
Rep. Bob Wooley

Absent

Rep. Dianne Miller Hamilton

Advisory Members

Rep. Thomas A. Anderson
Sen. Carlos R. Cisneros
Rep. George Dodge, Jr.
Sen. Clinton D. Harden, Jr.
Rep. Rodolpho "Rudy" S. Martinez
Rep. Edward C. Sandoval

Sen. William F. Burt
Sen. Mary Jane M. Garcia
Sen. Eric G. Griego
Sen. Timothy M. Keller
Sen. William H. Payne

Staff

Pam Stokes, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Douglas Carver, LCS
Rebecca Griego, LCS

Guests and Handouts

The guest file and copies of all handouts and written testimony are in the meeting file.

Monday, July 9

Welcome and Introductions

Senator Ulibarri opened the meeting by extending a welcome to the committee, staff and members of the public present. He asked all committee members and staff to introduce themselves. After introductions, Senator Ulibarri turned the chair of the committee over to Representative Dodge, as the committee was meeting in Representative Dodge's district (Senator Ulibarri resumed the chair after the break for lunch). Mayor David Lansford welcomed the committee to Clovis, noting his appreciation for the committee's work and the importance of the military to his community.

Cannon Air Force Base (CAFB) Operations — Mission Briefing

Brigadier General Select Albert M. "Buck" Elton II, commander, 27th Special Operations Wing (SOW), CAFB; Colonel David C. Piech, commander, 27th Special Operations Mission Support Group, CAFB; and Chief Master Sergeant P.J. Henderson gave a presentation to the committee on CAFB's mission. Their presentation was outlined in a PowerPoint document that was presented to the committee. Brigadier General Select Elton noted that there had been a dramatic mission change for CAFB after 50 years of being focused on fighter and bomber missions. Since 1987, CAFB has been part of the Air Force Special Operations Command (SOC). Brigadier General Select Elton discussed the organizational structure of the SOC and the SOW, the projected growth in the 27th SOW and the aircraft flown by and the missions conducted or supported by the 27th SOW. He also detailed plans for development on CAFB and on the Melrose Air Force Range. In addition, he briefly discussed some issues surrounding low-altitude flight training, noting the advantages New Mexico and southern Colorado have for such training. He noted that an environmental impact assessment (EIA) has been completed and that the Air Force has decided to conduct a broader study. This broader study could lead either to another EIA or to a full-blown environmental impact statement.

Members of the committee asked questions about the capabilities of remotely piloted aircraft (RPA), known colloquially as "drones". Members of the committee also asked for further details on the review of the low-altitude flights and about the availability of medical facilities on CAFB for veterans who live in the area. There was some discussion of how Federal Aviation Administration regulations intersect with the low-altitude flight training plans. There was also discussion of encroachment on CAFB by the surrounding civilian areas and some problems that the current layout of roads might pose as the base population expands.

Family and Community Support Services — Cannon Airman and Family Readiness Center

Major Dina Quanico, commander, 27th Special Operations Force Support Squadron, CAFB, made a presentation to the committee on the Cannon Airman and Family Readiness Center. Her presentation was outlined in a PowerPoint document that was presented to the committee. Major Quanico discussed the integrated delivery system (IDS), which includes a wide spectrum of support services, including religious, counseling, health and recreation services. She then discussed the Airman and Family Readiness Center, which provides

comprehensive family support services, including the Emergency Family Assistance Control Center, relocation assistance and transition assistance. The Airman and Family Readiness Center enhances resiliency in the troops, especially given the particular stressors of the special operations lifestyle. Family support services also include personal financial management, assisted by two accredited financial counselors. Additionally, the Emergency Family Assistance Control Center provides crisis assistance and identifies personal needs through the Air Force Personnel Accountability and Assessment System. The Air Force Aid Society provides financial aid for emergencies in the form of loans or grants, as well as funding for a variety of community programs. Relocation and transition assistance are also provided for CAFB families, including a variety of employment resources. An extensive Family Readiness Program (FRP) provides deployment preparation and support. Other programs include the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program, a survivor benefits plan and casualty assistance office, and a resource center with computer work stations and self-help tutorials and resources. A variety of other programs help those on CAFB to integrate with the local community, liaise with the local school systems, find volunteer opportunities and work on personal and family enrichment.

Brigadier General Select Elton added that the personnel at CAFB move often and are gone often, which produces significant stressors on families. Service members at CAFB are deployed as often as they are at home, a rate greater than the norm in the Air Force. He also noted that conducting RPA strikes, where personnel use lethal force although they are not deployed, presents unique challenges.

Members of the committee asked questions about the transferability of professional licenses and how that impacts the integration of CAFB families in New Mexico and discussed access to CAFB facilities by members of the local communities.

Housing Issues and Options on CAFB

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Figiera, P.E., commander, 27th Special Operations Civil Engineer Squadron, CAFB, gave a presentation to the committee on housing issues at CAFB. His presentation was outlined in a PowerPoint document that was presented to the committee. He discussed the increase in personnel at CAFB and how that impacts the housing available both on CAFB and in rental units in Clovis and Portales. Both family and dormitory space on CAFB are near capacity. Due to this housing crunch, CAFB will, over the next three to three-and-one-half years, be demolishing old housing units and constructing new ones under a 50-year privatization scheme with Balfour Beatty Communities. He noted that the Department of Defense mandates that bases only build to 80 percent of their requirements, so as CAFB continues to grow, it will rely even more on the local community for housing. At present, Clovis and Portales have vacancy rates of one percent.

Members of the committee had numerous follow-up questions about the privatization partnership.

Family and Community Support Services — New Mexico National Guard Family Readiness Program

Brigadier General John D. Bledsoe, Jr., acting adjutant general, New Mexico National Guard; Therese Sanchez, state family program director, FRP; Boyd Barger, Yellow Ribbon specialist; and Rachelle Day, Family Assistance Center coordinator, gave a presentation to the committee on the New Mexico National Guard FRP. Their presentation was outlined in a PowerPoint document that was presented to the committee. They discussed the FRP, whose mission is "to establish and facilitate ongoing communication, involvement, support and recognition between military families and the military in a partnership that promotes the best in both". They noted that the Family Assistance Centers are regional focal points for all service members and their families. The Yellow Ribbon Deployment Programs cover pre-, mid- and post-deployment services. The FRP has a youth program to support the children of military members, runs the SouthWest Assistance Team that provides a variety of support services for service members and their families, employs directors of psychological health for behavioral health services, employs military and family life consultants for counseling and has outreach services for survivors of fallen service members. The FRP also includes the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, which assists National Guard and Reserve members in finding a meaningful job; and the Military One Source 24-Hour Call Center, which provides additional counseling services. The FRP also has special initiatives in the areas of resiliency, suicide prevention and sexual assault, and collaborative initiatives focusing on awareness training for clergy members not associated with the National Guard and other local support and wellness providers.

Members of the committee inquired about how outreach is done for these programs, and there was a brief discussion of the effectiveness of some of the initiatives.

Foreclosure Prevention and Affordable Housing Issues in New Mexico

Don Arnold, Veterans Administration prior approval lender and veteran advocate, gave a presentation to the committee on foreclosure prevention and housing issues in New Mexico. Mr. Arnold gave an overview of the profile of veterans in the New Mexico housing market and discussed some specific cases he had encountered of veterans losing their homes or becoming enmeshed in foreclosure problems. He presented the following recommendations to the committee: that there be required mediation before foreclosure on a property; that banks be required to pay interest on an escrow account to the homeowner; that the senior exemption to property taxes be increased; that there be a graduated veterans tax exemption, depending on the percentage of service-related disability; that there be more transparency in loan documentation; and that an architecture be developed in the state to deal with problems New Mexico veterans have with home loans. Members of the committee suggested that Mr. Arnold work with Secretary of Veterans' Services Timothy L. Hale on solutions to the problems he discussed. Representative Martinez made a motion, seconded by Representative Wooley, that a letter be sent to Governor Susana Martinez requesting that she intervene in the problems of foreclosure for veterans. The motion passed with all present voting in favor.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the committee adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

