Good afternoon on this gray and cold day in Jefferson City. I am writing to give you my latest installment of the column I write weekly to update you on defense and military issues affecting Missouri, what I accomplished during the past week, and my plans for the week ahead.

As I wrote last week at this time, our team is working hard on the finishing touches for the Missouri Military Appreciation Day on February 5, 2020. I am happy to share the good news that in addition to having our Missouri military leaders honored in the Capitol, we will also have two officials from the Department of Defense visiting Jefferson City. We are excited about the way our schedule of events has come together, albeit a little slower than we had imagined.

DoD Officials at Military Appreciation Day 2020

Deputy Assistant Secretary of DoD for Force Education and Training, Charles (Fred) Dummond, has agreed to be a keynote speaker at the Military Appreciation Day luncheon on February 5. Governor Mike Parson will give an address at the luncheon and introduce Secretary Dummond.

Also joining military and community leaders from around the state will be Patrick O'Brien, Director of the Office of Economic Adjustment, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Mr. O'Brien will lead a seminar for community leaders on issues such as installation resiliency, base closures/realignments, compatible land use, and public investments in infrastructure that support national security missions.

University of Missouri Tech Park at Fort Leonard Wood

I had the pleasure this past week of meeting with Dr. Mun Choi, President of the University of Missouri System (UMS) and Dr. Hal Higdon, Chancellor of the Ozarks Technical College (OTC) of Springfield to discuss the future of the University of Missouri Technology Park at Fort Leonard Wood. UMS and OTC, as well as other institutions, are considering how they might work together to support the Park, which has seen its vacancy rate rise and its future financial viability drawn into question.
My role in the meeting was as an advocate for establishing a new business plan for the facility to better enable university researchers, defense contractors—especially small technology companies—and the Leonard Wood Institute (LWI) to be able to interact with the Army on initiatives that will benefit the state and surrounding communities economically, and strengthen the military mission of Fort Leonard Wood (FLW). LWI is an organization started at FLW in 2006 that works to identify research funding that can be used for Missouri-based R&D projects that benefit FLW.

The Park was founded in 1999 by local, state and University leaders in cooperation with U.S. Army as an economic development strategy. It is currently operated by the UMS on U.S. Army property and its two buildings and infrastructure are owned by a partnership between the UMS, which serves as the managing partner, and the Missouri Technology Corporation (MTC), a state entity connected to the Missouri Department of Economic Development (DED).


Our team last week met with Jake Laktas, the new University Program Director at Washington University (WashU) in St. Louis for the National Security Innovation Network (NSIN). NSIN was established 3 years ago as the National Security Technology Accelerator (MD 5). Its name and mission were changed last summer to NSIN, which is a DoD program that operates under the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU).

NSIN organizes communities of innovators to solve national security problems. The organization works with leading research universities and venture capitalists to which DoD give its most complicated problems and from which it can discover novel concepts and solutions. Rather than provide funding for technologies or government R&D, NSIN focuses on developing these inventor networks, to which it provides tools, training, and access to DoD assets and information.

An example of an NSIN program is Hacking for Defense (H4D). The H4D program is a 10-16 week college course that teaches students to work with the Defense and Intelligence Communities to rapidly address priority national threats.

Mr. Laktas is in charge of developing new regional networks of commercial innovation hubs and research universities, including those in Missouri, that can collaborate with DoD. My team and I are committed to working him, our Missouri universities and entrepreneurs, civic boosters, and the Missouri Technology Corporation to help grow the program in our state.
Week ahead

The main focus of my week ahead is in putting final plans into place for the Military Appreciation Day on February 5. We expect to get formal invitations out soon to community and industry leaders and firm up our agenda for speakers and events during that day.

Until next time, I welcome your feedback on the work I am doing on behalf of our military and defense sector.