Military Advocate Weekly Update

March 8, 2020

I am writing on this Sunday evening from St. Joseph where I joined with community leaders, Missouri’s Adjutant General, leaders of the 139th Airlift Wing, and others at a dinner honoring a site survey team from the U.S. National Guard Bureau. I will write more below on what the team is doing in Missouri.

On this first Daylight Savings Time weekend of the year, I am sending you my weekly column in which I report on issues of importance in our state’s defense community, and let you know what issues I am working on and why.

I had some great meetings this past week at Whiteman AFB and elsewhere that focused on military spouse employment, and I look forward to being able to announce some ideas about how our state can do a better job of providing assistance.

MMPEC Meeting

The MO Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission (MMPEC) held its quarterly meeting by telephone last week, where I reported on the progress we are making in achieving MMPEC’s new strategic plan, which was adopted last December.

One major topic of the meeting was a report on the newly rescheduled Missouri Military Appreciation Day on March 31, 2020. The planning is going well and detailed agendas published during the coming week.

Saint Joseph/139th Airlift Wing

I had the great pleasure of joining a community dinner this evening given in honor of a team of U.S. Air National Guard personnel from Washington, D.C. The team is in St. Joseph surveying the suitability of Rosecrans Air National Guard base and the 139th Airlift Wing for hosting the assignment of a new Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES) the Guard Bureau and the Air Force are considering. Such AES units are considered to be “flying ambulances” for the military.
The survey team will spend the next two days looking at Rosecrans infrastructure and investigating the capacity of the region to produce additional guardsmen who can staff a new squadron, particularly nurses and other healthcare providers, as well as other factors.

**BG Levon Cumpton**, Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard, and St. Joseph business and governmental leaders, including the Mayor and leaders of Missouri Western State University and MOSAIC Life Care, the regional hospital network, were on hand to meet the survey team and to talk about the strong support that the city, county and state give to the 139th. **Col Ed Black**, the 139th Commander, hosted the event and extolled the great relationship his wing enjoys with the Community.

The National Guard Bureau originally listed 11 Air Guard Bases flying C-130H aircraft as candidates for the new AES squadron. The Air Guard announced in November that the number was reduced to 4, with Rosecrans still in the competition.

**Governor Mike Parson**, **Congressman Sam Graves (MO-06)**, **Senator Roy Blunt** and **Senator Josh Hawley** have all written to the Air Force Secretary in support of St. Joseph being chosen for the new AES location. A decision is expected in the 1st half of 2020.

**Whiteman AFB and Spousal Employment**

I spent most of last Wednesday at WAFB meeting in various offices and also attended the Whiteman Base Community Council luncheon where **Admiral Charles Richard**, Commander of the US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) was the featured speaker. Admiral Richard is in overall command of the nation’s nuclear forces, including US strategic bombers (including B-2s at Whiteman), ICBM’s and Trident submarines operated by the Air Force and Navy.

While at Whiteman, I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of the 509th Mission Support Group to talk about how the state and its partners could do a better job of ensuring that military spouses who are stationed at Whiteman can be matched with jobs that fit their skills and experience. The Air Force and the other Services are focused on working with states and communities to improve the quality of life for military families, including making sure military spouses can work in their professions as they move from state to state.

I am proud to say that the Missouri General Assembly is making great progress toward passing legislation that will create military spouse “professional license reciprocity”. The legislation, would ensure that military spouses who move to Missouri from another state where they hold a professional license can become licensed in the same profession here in Missouri within a short period of time and at a low cost.
I expect to be able to announce an initiative in the near future that would focus on a new way of matching interested employers with military spouses, as well as service members transitioning out of the military and veterans.

**Corona Virus Disease/COVID-19**

The military has put contingency plans into place that would prepare installations across the country, including those in Missouri, to deal with infections affecting those installations. Included in those plans are ways of quarantining significant numbers of service members and families, if necessary, and limiting travel of military personnel from Europe and Korea to US installations.

I will not attempt to repeat all that is being reported in the popular media. However, I want you to be aware that the military is treating the issue seriously and has been busy with preparations if the disease spread becomes more serious.

**Week ahead**

During the week ahead I expect to be part of a team meeting with one of our state’s lesser known defense businesses about plans they are considering for an expansion. I will also be talking to the national Blue Star Families organization about ways we can work together to better understand military spouse employment needs. Finally, I will be in St. Louis on Thursday for a Boeing Elected Officials and Community Leaders meeting, an occasion the company uses to give periodic updates on production of its world famous aircraft, and the services it provides to DoD.

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