



18 November 2020

Alaska Civilian Armed Services Team (ACAST)

Memorandum of Recommendations

In support of Military Investments in Alaska

Greetings from the Alaska Civilian Armed Services Team (ACAST). ACAST is a volunteer/pro-bono advisory activity, and participants serve as appointed by the Governor of the State of Alaska. ACAST was established by Administrative Order 291, under State of Alaska Governor Bill Walker. The Purpose and Duties of ACAST is to “provide strategic and actionable recommendations to the Governor in the form of task-specific briefings and reports informed by strategic planning documents, and recommend appropriate strategies for direct, ongoing civil-military collaboration, to:

1. Maintain and increase Alaska’s military capacity and capability in both the active component and guard and reserve forces; and
2. Acquire future missions, infrastructure, and recurring military exercises in Alaska for military forces based inside and outside of the state.”¹

In accordance with the Administrative Order, ACAST seeks to meet on a quarterly basis and provides an Annual Report. After establishment in Summer of 2018, ACAST members worked to develop and promulgate a report, submitted to Governor Walker who in turn, provided to Governor Dunleavy in early December 2018.

Following the transition activities between administrations, ACAST reinitiated activities in Winter 2020, with the most recent meeting accomplished on 24 June 2020. The current co-chairs will lead ACAST activities until December 2020.

In accordance with the existing Administrative Order, ACAST’s 2018 Report of Recommendations remains an enduring list of feasible, suitable and acceptable initiatives that, if implemented, would advance the posture, capability, resiliency, morale and community connectedness of U.S. military forces stationed in Alaska. These recommendations would assist U.S. forces ability to better defend U.S. National Interests in Alaska, and surrounding regions, while also addressing key issues effecting the health and well-being of U.S. military forces and their dependents.

As the highest of near-term priorities these recommendations, the ACAST Team provides the following points and supporting discussions for Congressional, Department of Defense and Department of Transportation review and approval considerations.

These are:

1. Basing studies to station USAF KC-46 air refueling aircraft in Alaska.
2. Continued planning and development of an Arctic deepwater port.

¹ <https://gov.alaska.gov/admin-orders/administrative-order-no-291/>



3. Multi-year planning and funding for the Alaska Marine Highway system.

Since the completion and submission of the ACAST November 2018 report, several key factors have arisen that present new complications to the security and defense challenges impacting the safety and well-being of U.S. citizens and U.S. national interests in Alaska and the surrounding region. Accordingly, additional factors warrant attention:

These are:

1. Conduct a charter study on a suitable replacement for Alaska National Guard HH60 Blackhawk helicopters with CV-22 Osprey tilt rotor aircraft.
2. Re-establish enduring U.S. Navy presence with dedicated facilities in the Aleutians.
3. Mission and installation enhancements to the Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI), based on the mission importance to U.S. defense.
4. Advocacy to the Secretary of the U.S. Air Force, for establishing U.S. Space Command (A functional Unified Command for the U.S. Military) at Anchorage Alaska.

Discussion:

KC-46 replacements to KC135s. In light of rising Great Power Competition in the Arctic, U.S. force posture in Alaska is ever more critical to preserve and defend U.S. national interests, which includes the U.S. Homeland. The Russian Federation continues to test U.S. and Canadian resolve in approaching U.S. and Canadian Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ) via Long Range Aviation conducted by Russian strategic (Tupolev Tu-95 “Bear”) bomber aircraft. The U.S. Air Force 5th Generation F-22 aircraft assigned to 11th Air Force and under command of the Alaska NORAD Region of the Canada-U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command continue to respond to these tests, are critically reliant on Eisenhower era (1950s) KC-135 aircraft assigned to the Alaska Air National Guard. The need to upgrade these aircraft to longer range and modern KC-46 “Pegasus” aircraft to provide 11th Air Force fighters extended range to intercept these and other threats to the homeland to better protect U.S. citizens who call Alaska home, is overdue.

U.S. Arctic deepwater ports. The National Defense Authorization Act over the past several years has directed Department of Defense Studies for deepwater Arctic ports. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) recently announced port expansions for the port of Nome that advances the possibility of a U.S. deepwater port. However, no official designation has yet to be established and insignificant funds to realize a truly capable U.S. Arctic deepwater port have been secured. Meanwhile, the security dynamics of the U.S. Extended Economic Zones (EEZ) of the Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort Sea regions continue to witness rising traffic, that challenges the waterways management and enforcement of U.S. statutes and regulations for the 17th District of the U.S. Coast Guard. Establishing strategic U.S. Arctic deepwater ports would provide suitable basing, administration and logistics to project power to better secure the U.S. Arctic EEZ. ACAST is appreciative of the USACE announcement and strongly believes the need to move forward with planning and investments to secure deepwater ports critically needed for defending the maritime approaches to the across the homeland of the U.S. Arctic region.

Multi-year federal funding of the Alaska Marine Highway System. Since publishing the November 2018 ACAST Report, the Alaska marine highway system has experienced further degradation in equipment, and additional funding challenges, putting this vital link connecting Alaskan coastal communities more at risk. The system provides a vital line of communication and transportation enhancing U.S. maritime homeland security and defense posture. A failing marine highway system sends a signal of fading maritime resolve to U.S. adversaries who may question the nations’ will and



ability to support its remote Alaskan coastal regions and people. Similar to U.S. Federally subsidized air and rail transportation, U.S. federal subsidizing the Alaska marine highway system is in the U.S. national interest. While the State of Alaska has been expected to support day to day operations and maintenance, there is simply not enough State of Alaska provided funding to support vessel and infrastructure recapitalization. As such, multi-year U.S. Federal funding is needed to provide replacement vessels and refurbish port facilities.

Charter study for consideration to replace Alaska Air National Guard HH-60s with CV-22s. Alaska's vast size makes response to remote Search and Rescue (SAR) cases highly complicated, often times requiring HH-60s to be joined by HC-130 air refueling aircraft from Anchorage basing to the SAR case and return. Meanwhile, due to the extreme environment, minutes count. A few too many minutes long in the response can turn a rescue of for live humans into a recovery of human remains. In comparison to HH60s, USAF CV-22s have nearly double the range of a HH-60 and fly nearly twice the speed, creating a game changing capability in support of Alaska ANG's lifesaving mission. While ACAST presents very strong advocacy for such a study, the ACAST would caution such a study serving to down-scope platforms, which could be catastrophic in a mass casualty event (such as disaster response to an earthquake or Tsunami, to which the state lives in constant anxiety of the next large scale event).

Re-establish an enduring U.S. Navy presence in the Aleutians. Nations across the east Asia are advancing and increasing the tempo in which they are projecting maritime forces through the Bering, Chukchi Seas and into the Arctic Ocean in accordance with their national interests. This includes the People's Republic of China. Re- ACAST is highly appreciative of recent Aleutian activities and exercises from U.S. Navy forces, which highlight the need to increase the need to transition basing from an expeditionary to a permanently manned basis. Refurbishing and expanding logistics facilities at Adak would provide needed capability to support U.S. Navy forces responding to crisis and deterrence missions in both the Northern Pacific and the Bering Sea. As a maritime anchor in the Western North Pacific and the gateway to the Arctic, re-establishing enduring U.S. Navy presence in the Aleutians would serve as a deterrent and demonstrate resolve U.S. interests will be protected and defended.

Mission and installation enhancements on the Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI), based on the mission importance to U.S. defense. The GBI force at Ft. Greely Alaska is the U.S. protection from a rogue missile attack. The mission reliability of the GBI's should be among the highest priorities for the Department of Defense. Ft. Greely remains an austere location, challenged by extreme cold and extensive winters. Mission and installation enhancements to the GBI force at Ft. Greely to improve human and machine performance and resiliency under arctic operating conditions is in the national interest and should be a national priority.

Advocacy to the Secretary of the U.S. Air Force, for establishing U.S. Space Command (A functional Unified Command for the U.S. Military) at Anchorage Alaska. The Secretary of the U.S. Air Force, supported by the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for installations, environment and energy, will make a final decision in "early 2021" (according to multiple press releases) in a basing decision for U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM). This new, functional unified command of the U.S. military will be led by a 4-star flag/general officer and be comprised of approximately 1,400 military and civilian personnel, plus supporting industry. There are three minimum criteria that any location must meet:

- The location must be within one of the 150 largest metropolitan statistical areas in the U.S., based on 2019 population estimates from the Census Bureau. (Anchorage is #69)²

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_cities_by_population



- The location must be within 25 miles or less of a military base. (Anchorage is home of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, headquarters to Alaska Command, 11th Air Force, Alaska NORAD Region, U.S. Army Alaska, and Alaska National Guard Joint HQ)
- The location must have a livability index score of at least 50 points out of 100, based on statistics kept by AARP's Public Policy Institute. (Anchorage scores a total score of 50.³)

South Central Alaska is home to Alaska Aerospace Corporation, with business offices in Anchorage and space launch operations at the Kodiak Pacific Spaceport Complex, a state-of-the-industry spaceport on Kodiak Island.⁴ USSPACECOM, a unified command, will provide combatant command for all operational space forces assigned to the military services, which will include the newly approved U.S. Space Force. Alaska is home to a number of installations and capabilities that can transition to U.S. Space Force in an organized, trained and equipped function, which include assets located at Eareckson Air Force Station (AFS) on Shemya Island, Clear AFS and Ft Greely and other remote sites. Based on alignment of operational assets, a location in the higher latitudes that are associated with space defense mission, presence of a premier commercial launch facility and location decision parameters that meet or exceed existing criteria, Anchorage and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson is exceedingly suitable to serve as the host of USSPACECOM.

The State of Alaska ACAST understand there are no easy solutions to the above set of recommendations. Advancing each one requires analyzing vulnerabilities, risks, costs and competing priorities. However, the regret factors associated with not advancing on these recommendations, should one or more scenario develop that urgently highlight the need...should be given the highest possible consideration in deciding to seek the needed authorizations and appropriations.

Respectfully presented.

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³ <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/search#Anchorage+AK+USA>

⁴ <https://akaerospace.com/>

