

MINUTES  
**SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Monday, January 24, 2022
- TIME:** 8:00 A.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairwoman Lodge, Vice Chairman Guthrie, Senators Winder, Anthon, Lee, Heider, Stennett, and Burgoyne
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Harris
- NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.
- CONVENED:** **Chairwoman Lodge** called the Senate State Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.
- INTRODUCTION:** **Chairwoman Lodge** welcomed Colonel Ernesto DiVittorio. She urged the Committee to read through Colonel DiVittorio's biography and noted some of the things he has accomplished. (see Attachment A)
- PRESENTATION: "State of the Gunfighters" from Mountain Home Air Force Base (MHAFB)** presented by Colonel Ernesto DiVittorio, Commander of the 366th Fighter Wing.
- Colonel DiVittorio** explained that next year the MHAFB will be celebrating its 80th anniversary. The Base opened in 1953 as a training station for a bomber air crew. During the Korean War, they became a strategic air command. Now there are neither bombers nor missile fields. In 1966 the Base became a tactical air command. **Colonel DiVittorio** provided more MHAFB history (see Attachment B). The 366th Tactical Fighter Wing moved to MHAFB in 1972. **Colonel DiVittorio** discussed: 1) how large, hand held guns are used for defense in case it is necessary to land or jump from a plane; (2) why Singapore is an important partner; (3) what the four pillars are and how those apply; (4) what has happened with air power over the last 20 years; and (5) investigating ways to make the wing better by being a more difficult target. **Colonel DiVittorio** also commented on the great power competition going on in the world right now because the United States is not the only country in power. There is a growing footprint from Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and violent extremist organizations. This means that the military must be prepared to be agile because they are now looking at adversaries that can fire back. **Colonel DiVittorio** discussed improvements being made at the Base and future plans for growth.
- Senator Heider** asked if plans are being made about housing additional people coming to the Base. **Colonel DiVittorio** responded that there are plans in place for additional housing on the Base as well as other facilities to support that growth. **Senator Heider** asked where airmen are being deployed. **Colonel DiVittorio** said they have airmen in the Middle East as well as small units in Europe going to the Indo- Pacific.
- Senator Winder** expressed appreciation for Colonel DiVittorio's service and for presenting this update for the MHAFB Gunfighters. He asked if there was still an opportunity for MHAFB to get a variety of aircraft. **Colonel DiVittorio** stated there are exciting things in the future but could not say which aircraft would be coming.

**Senator Stennett** noted that the Idaho Water Resources Board has been working with MHAFB toward augmenting water resources from the Snake River to the Base. Is the growth on the Base included in the strategy so there will be enough water? **Senator Stennett** stated her interest in geothermal. Will there be some kind of agreement between MHAFB and Idaho Power to supplement power? **Colonel DiVittorio** responded that he wasn't qualified enough to speak to all those questions, but the water pipeline is certainly needed at MHAFB and is included in all of the assumptions related to the ability to take on additional missions which would result in additional people. In respect to the power, some of the geothermal sites are on the Base. Lieutenant Colonel Josh Aldred, Commander, Civil Engineering Squadron, is coordinating and communicating with Idaho Power to look at any potential opportunities.

**Chairwoman Lodge** referred to the leadership changes that occur every three years and stated her concern about the continuity and historic perspective that could be lost. **Colonel DiVittorio** responded that, in respect to energy and water, the Base maintains a robust, long-term civilian presence to ensure that continuity passes on.

**Senator Burgoyne** stated his thanks to Colonel DiVittorio for his presence at the meeting and the Air Force for their presence in Idaho. He noted the close coordination and cooperation between the various branches of the service which is also related to the significant presence of the Idaho National Guard in Boise. **Senator Burgoyne** also commented on the preparedness of the military and although there are some controversies about noise, the citizens of southern Idaho appreciate seeing the military on the road and in the air showing that defense preparations are in place. **Colonel DiVittorio** agreed.

**Senator Heider** referred to the bill that was passed last year to allow water from the Snake River to be diverted to Mountain Home. He asked for an update. **Colonel DiVittorio** reported that the pipeline is not in. The final design for the pipeline is due in March. In April they will be on the ground working with the Bureau of Land Management and expect a completion date in 2023.

**Chairwoman Lodge** asked if there is still a military presence in Wilder, Idaho. **Colonel DiVittorio** said he didn't know but would find out.

**Colonel DiVittorio** introduced Chief Master Sergeant Joshua Tidwell, Captain Stewart H. Harris, Captain Krystal Jimenez, Public Affairs Officer, and Community Coordinator, Mr. Tracy Giles.

**Chairwoman Lodge** welcomed Senator Zito from District 23, the district where MHAFB is located.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business, **Chairwoman Lodge** adjourned the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

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Senator Lodge  
Chair

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Twyla Melton  
Secretary