

Office of Military Affairs

At a Glance

ROBERT T. ROSS, *Executive Director*

OFFICE OF MILITARY AFFAIRS (OMA)

Established – July 2007

Statutory authority - Connecticut General Statute 32-58b

Central office – Third Floor, 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06420

Recurring operating expenses - \$200,000.00

Organizational structure – As an independent agency, OMA is staffed with a full-time Executive Director, designated as a department head in the executive branch, reporting directly to the Office of the Governor. The Executive Director is supported by Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) staff members who provide administrative services for OMA in various functions, including but not limited to, office administration, financial management, legal counsel, information technology, economic research and legislative affairs.

Mission

The Office of Military Affairs promotes and coordinates state-wide activities that enhance the quality of life of all branches of military personnel and their families and to expand the military and homeland security presence in this state.

Statutory Responsibility

Under the provisions of Connecticut General Statute 32-58b, OMA coordinates policies and programs to enhance the quality of life of service members and their families from all branches stationed in or deploying from Connecticut. OMA develops and implements strategic initiatives to prevent the closure or downsizing of Naval Submarine Base New London. OMA advocates for Connecticut's defense industries with efforts to retain established defense industries and encourage the relocation of new defense manufacturing to the state. And OMA serves as liaison to the Connecticut congressional delegation on defense and military issues.

The legislation setting forth duties and responsibilities of the OMA Executive Director was revised by the Connecticut General Assembly to more accurately reflect the ongoing activities of the office. The revised legislation was signed into law by the Governor on June 19, 2015.

Connecticut's Enduring Role in National Security

In Washington D.C., the debate over national defense issues in 2016 took place on two broad levels.

The first dealt with governance, with the outgoing Obama Administration submitting its Fiscal Year (FY) 17 budget in February, and Congress then proceeding with its usual hearings by the Senate and House Armed Services committees and grinding out a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), providing funding and policy guidance. On a parallel track, the Senate and House Appropriations defense subcommittees performed similar due diligence with the goal of producing an FY17 defense appropriations bill.

The second – more in the public spotlight – was on the political level, as both presidential candidates debated and discussed defense and other national security issues and made numerous proposals to strengthen U.S. defense capabilities. National security was also an important topic in Senatorial and House races nationwide.

As regards to defense issues important to Connecticut's economy and its defense industrial base, the year was a good one. Significant funding was authorized for continued production of two *Virginia*-class submarines annually, continued engineering and design work on the *Columbia*-class program involving replacement of *Ohio*-class ballistic missile submarines, continued procurement of the F-35 fighter aircraft with its Pratt & Whitney engines, and Sikorsky helicopter programs.

On the policy level, the year ended with Congress approving a fairly robust FY17 NDAA in the month of December, just before Congress adjourned for the year. FY17 was the second straight year where budget caps imposed under the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA) – through a budgeting process known as “sequestration” -- were lifted for both defense and non-defense bills under legislation passed in late 2015.

However, Congress was unable to pass an FY17 appropriations bill for the Department of Defense (DOD) and most other federal agencies. As a result, the year ended with all departments except the Department of Veterans Affairs (the only regular FY17 appropriations bill passed by Congress before adjourning was for the VA and military construction) operating under a congressional “Continuing Resolution” (CR), which froze FY17 spending at FY16 levels with certain exceptions.

While Congress worked through defense and other national security legislation, public attention was riveted on the presidential race. One of the most high profile campaign issues was debate on rebuilding our military with additional troops and equipment, including a significant increase in the size of the Navy, a matter of significant impact to Connecticut.

Throughout this transition, Connecticut's defense industrial base remained strong in 2016 and projections for the years ahead are very good. In fact, a major challenge will be to ensure that the state's prime contractors and their suppliers are able to provide the skilled workforce that will be needed for ramped-up defense production over the next several decades.

The National Coast Guard Museum

The United States Coast Guard is the only military service that does not have a national museum. On April 5, 2013, after a decade of false starts and failed attempts, the Commandant of the Coast Guard announced the decision to build a National Coast Guard Museum (NCGM) in downtown New London. The National Coast Guard Museum Association (NCGMA) proposed a world class museum at the head of New London City Pier. It will be adjacent to the Union Station, the Greyhound bus station and Cross Sound Ferry landings. Governor Malloy participated in the announcement and committed up to \$20 million in state funding to build a pedestrian bridge to connect the museum with all elements of the New London multi-modal transportation hub.

On April 17, 2013, the Governor directed all state agencies to collaborate in this undertaking and to help the U.S. Coast Guard and City of New London advance the project. He also directed the OMA to coordinate the efforts of state agencies on his behalf.



Rendering by Payette®

Negotiations with stakeholders advanced swiftly. On July 26, 2013, the State Bond Commission approved \$500,000 for advance engineering and design of the pedestrian bridge and authorized the DECD to enter into an assistance agreement with the NCGMA. The State of Connecticut, City of New London, USCG and NCGMA negotiated a Memorandum of Agreement to clearly define roles and responsibilities in this partnership to build the museum.

Much of the financing for the \$100 million museum will be raised in a national fundraising campaign coordinated by the NCGMA. Contingent upon this fundraising effort and a series of prerequisite agreements with area stakeholders, construction could begin as early as 2020.

Creating Military Value in Submarine Base New London

Chief among the reasons to create OMA was the very real probability that the Submarine Base (SUBASE) in Groton would be closed. Twice it was targeted by the DOD for closure in the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. Twice, *Team Connecticut*, a group of public and private sector individuals, got organized and worked tirelessly to reverse the almost certain closure of the base. Today, the primary task of OMA is to do proactively what *Team Connecticut* had to do reactively in 1993 and 2005. We don't want to wage this battle again.

The predictable economic catastrophe associated with the potential closure of the SUBASE is obvious to anyone familiar with southeastern Connecticut. The loss of the positive effects we realize from the base -- its \$5 billion annual economic impact and over 15,000 jobs -- would be devastating. The ripple effect throughout the state would simply be the reverse of what we experience today. Hundreds of small businesses deriving their business and clientele from the base would go under. Without this economic anchor, the regional economy would be severely impacted, in every industry cluster.

It is clear that another BRAC round will eventually be approved by Congress. DOD will continue requesting another BRAC round every year until one is approved. Subject matter experts widely believe it could happen as early as 2021. OMA efforts will continue to focus on developing and executing strategic initiatives to enhance the *military value* of the base in preparation for the next BRAC round when it comes.

In 2007, the General Assembly authorized \$40 million for investments in *military value* at the SUBASE to protect it from closure. Since then, funding has been directed to several carefully selected projects. This strategy is built on the criteria used by prior BRAC Commissions and aims to assess and enhance the *military value* of the base, thereby decreasing the likelihood it would be targeted for closure. By increasing *military value* in operations, infrastructure and efficiency, we reduce the feasibility of closure because DOD simply can't afford to recreate that capacity anywhere else. It's not about sunk cost. It's about current and future *military value*.

Today the SUBASE is undergoing a remarkable transformation as old infrastructure is demolished and replaced with modern capacity. People familiar with the SUBASE recognize its ongoing dramatic transformation into a modern campus of new buildings, specifically designed for unique operations, specialized training and high-tech support functions associated with producing and maintaining our nation's submarine force.

Working in a close partnership with Navy officials in Connecticut and at the Pentagon, OMA has established a legal framework through which the state can transfer funds to the Navy for carefully selected projects.

In March 2012, Governor Dannel P. Malloy met with former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus in his Pentagon office to discuss the SUBASE. The Governor confirmed that the state will continue its unprecedented partnership with the Navy to transform the base and support service members and their families.

Previous state-funded projects have included construction of new buildings to support operations and maintenance, construction of training equipment, construction of a new high efficiency boiler for base-wide steam utilities, and purchases of land for encroachment mitigation on both the northern and southern perimeters of the base. Collectively, these projects represent a wholly unique partnership with the Navy in diverse and creative areas of base improvements.

In 2015 Connecticut transferred \$1.2 million to the Navy for early planning of a microgrid to be developed on the base. This microgrid will provide energy security for base operations and potentially reduce the operating cost of the base by incorporating clean cogeneration capacity and highly efficient power controls and distribution systems. Governor Malloy again met with then Navy Secretary Ray Mabus to enlist the Navy's staff expertise in the project and to discuss creative methods for private sector funding in a future long-term power purchase agreement. Secretary Mabus agreed to provide his authority and staff expertise to this project and sent a delegation to meet with state and local officials at the SUBASE.

As important as these ongoing state-funded investments are, they represent only a small fraction of the military construction projects underway on the base. Since 2005, there have been over \$300 million worth of planning, demolition and construction projects on the base, with about \$14 million of them funded by the state. So, the state is an important but modest partner in a much larger effort to modernize the base.

OMA will continue to work closely with our congressional delegation, state and local officials, regional stakeholders and Navy leadership to identify future projects as part of our ongoing strategy to enhance the *military value* of the base and protect it from closure in a future BRAC round.

Quality of Life and Military Service in Connecticut

Advocating for service members and their families has become one of the most important roles of OMA. Military families stationed here for duty assignments or training enjoy supportive local communities, excellent public schools and the unique experience of living in New England. As families in transition, they occasionally need reasonable accommodations and OMA actively engages state agencies and local organizations on their behalf. Many examples of this advocacy can be read on the OMA website.

The OMA is a member of the national Association of Defense Communities (ADC), a Washington-based organization that represents states and communities nationwide that host military installations. In June 2017, the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments was one of only eight communities in the nation to receive the ADC Great American Defense Community designation for their outstanding collective efforts to support military bases, service members and their families.



Photo by Mark C. Jones

Conclusion

Connecticut's Office of Military Affairs demonstrates an efficient model for achieving tangible strategic outcomes. Since it was established, the office has produced a partnership with the Navy that is unprecedented in the United States. The SUBASE is now in a much better position to withstand another round of BRAC. The Connecticut National Guard and U.S. Coast Guard Academy are realizing and planning for expansions with new facilities to support their missions. The State and City of New London are looking forward to being the home of the National Coast Guard Museum. OMA has helped coordinate consistent and sustained support for increases in defense and military economic impacts within the state. Most importantly, OMA has advanced the *quality of life* and *quality of service* for service members and their families stationed here and deploying to destinations around the world.

Connecticut's diversified defense industries continue to thrive due to the high quality and strategic relevance of the products designed and manufactured throughout the state. Our defense industries enjoy superb reputations for their highly skilled workforces, outstanding management and efficient business practices.

Residents should be proud of Connecticut's long history as what George Washington called the *Provisions State*. It is an important part of our character, embedded in the economic fabric of our state and a legacy that should be carefully protected. The Office of Military Affairs will continue to seek opportunities to enhance the military and defense industry presence in Connecticut and advocate for the many organizations and people in our state - particularly military members and their families - who serve and support our nation's defense.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

OMA is required by statute to prepare and submit a report of activities, findings and recommendations annually to the Governor and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to commerce and public safety, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. The most recent annual report is publically available on the OMA website:

http://www.ct.gov/oma/lib/oma/oma_2016_annual_report.pdf