

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.

The Office of Military Affairs is an active member of the Association of Defense Communities (ADC), a Washington-based organization that represents states and communities nationwide that host military installations. In 2015 OMA Executive Director Bob Ross was elected to the ADC Board of Directors for his many contributions to the organization, including participation on numerous discussion panels at national and regional meetings.

Defense Industry Analysis

The Office of Military Affairs conducts ongoing trend analysis to understand and project defense spending in Connecticut, a significant sector of our state economy.

From a national perspective, most of 2015 involved uncertainty over the level of defense spending available in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, beginning Oct. 1, 2015. This was mainly due to political differences in Washington on whether exemptions to spending caps put in place by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA) should apply only to defense spending or also for non-defense agencies. However, the year ended on a positive note with a budget deal that lifted both defense and non-defense spending limits for FYs 2016 and 2017.

On the state level, Congress continued to approve significant funding for programs of importance to Connecticut, including procurement of two *Virginia*-class attack submarines in 2016, replacement of the *Ohio*-class ballistic missile submarines, and continued procurement of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, with its Pratt & Whitney engines. These are all key programs for the state's defense industrial base.

Defense Spending and Concerns Nationwide

The year got off to a rocky start with respect to national defense spending. The Republican-controlled Congress produced a FY 2016 defense policy bill, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which exceeded the limits on FY 2016 spending contained in the 2011 BCA – a process known as sequestration. The bill included \$58 billion in a fund designed for Iraq/Afghanistan combat support in a budget account called the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund. Under the BCA, OCO funds are exempted from the sequestration spending caps.

As the bill took shape in the Senate and House in early 2015, Democrats strongly argued that the OCO funding was merely a way of getting around the spending caps and that such exemptions should be granted for non-defense spending as well. As a protest, Senate Democrats blocked consideration of not only the annual defense appropriations bill – a separate piece of legislation from the NDAA – but all other appropriations bills as well. This debate spanned the spring and summer months.

In October the Senate and House approved the FY 2016 NDAA containing the additional OCO funding despite the Democrats' protestations against the defense-only exemptions from the sequestration spending limits. As he previously pledged to do because of the defense-only sequestration exemption, President Obama vetoed the bill, sending it back to Congress. At the

same time, and with the new fiscal year underway Oct. 1, the federal government was facing a possible shutdown since not a single agency appropriations bill had been passed by Congress.

The legislative gridlock resulted in high political drama in Washington. On Sept. 30, John Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, unexpectedly announced he was stepping down as Speaker and would resign from Congress by year's end. After his announcement, he and other House leaders worked behind the scenes with the Senate leadership to work out a deal to allow additional across-the-board spending in FY 2016 and FY 2017 in both the defense and non-defense bills. This was known as the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (BBA), which became law in November. Shortly thereafter, the President signed a revised NDAA and a government shutdown was avoided.

There was general agreement in the Pentagon, on Capitol Hill and among defense experts that while the projected defense spending levels for FY 2016 and FY 2017 were not ideal, at least they provided a stable environment for the military services in their budgetary and operational planning.

Submarine Base New London and the Submarine Industrial Base

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.

Creating Military Value

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 2019. 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 \$50 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 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 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 \$250 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 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 60,000 square foot 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.

- **The National Coast Guard Museum**
<http://www.coastguardmuseum.org/>



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 2018.

Connecticut's Coast Guard and Navy Commemorations



To commemorate the 225th Birthday of the USCG and the 100th anniversary of the USCG Academy at its current location, Governor Malloy declared the summer of 2015, *Connecticut's Coast Guard Summer*. Throughout the summer, local officials and businesses organized numerous celebratory events, culminating in the United States Coast Guard's official designation of The City of New London, Connecticut's first Coast Guard City®.



Recognizing another historic milestone, Governor Malloy declared the period of October 2015 to October 2016, *Connecticut's Submarine Century*, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the nation's first submarine base and the establishment of the Submarine School. The first Navy submarines arrived October 18, 1915 and over the years created the iconic image people have observed for a century. Submarine Base New London, the submarine capital of the world, was officially established on June 21, 1916 when U.S. Navy Commander Yeates Stirling assumed command of the Submarine Base, Submarine Flotilla, and the Submarine School in the harbor of New London on the Groton shore.

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.

The state's diversified defense industries continue to thrive. Even as the nation prepares to dramatically cut defense spending, Connecticut will be less severely impacted 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_2015_annual_report.pdf