

House General and Military Affairs
MILITARY DEPARTMENT TESTIMONY
Fiscal Year 2022

February 2021

Functions Performed by the Department:

The Military Department has 5 Major Programs that make up this budget: Administration, Air Services, Army Services, Building Maintenance, and Veterans Affairs. These programs support the Missions of the Vermont National Guard. Listed below is the state support to our core mission:

1. Provide command and control for the Vermont National Guard to insure it is prepared to respond to State and Federal activation.
2. Provide and alternate EOC, personnel and equipment support for Vermont emergencies.
3. Provide security for 4 VTNG facilities (Ethan Allen Firing Range, Camp Johnson, AASF, and VTANG), and firefighter support to the Burlington International Airport and surrounding communities.
4. Provide support services to Vermont Veterans.
5. Provide STEM education opportunities to Vermont children (STARBASE).
6. Maintain VTNG buildings and property; to include 22 armories and 11,318 acres throughout the State. The 22 Armories are divided into 14 state owned armories with a 50% share of state funds for operating cost, 6 federal armories with a 25% state share for operating cost and 2 federal armories with no state share.
7. Provide engineering, environmental and energy efficiency oversight.
8. Administer contracting services to VTNG
9. Employ approximately 905 full-time; 2,854 part-time personnel, federal payroll \$147M.

Federal Funding/Reimbursement:

Absent the tuition benefit grant, FY2020 expenditures totaled \$29.67M, of which \$24.62M was federally reimbursable, leaving the state with \$5.04M or 17% of the total cost. This represents \$4.88 of federal reimbursement for every \$1 of general funds spent. Actual reimbursable operations are realizing \$8.43 of federal reimbursement per \$1 of general funds spent.

Staffing:

Wages and benefits for the Military Department are budgeted at a total of \$13.4M for FY2021. The State's share is \$2.2M, level with FY2021. For FY2021, the Military Department's position count is 160. Of the 160 positions, 143 receive varying levels of Federal Funding, averaging about 94% federal reimbursement and only 17 positions are 100% State Funded.

Budget Development Form:

The Military Department's total budget increased \$33,211 or 0.59% for FY2022 from the FY2021 base budget, to include the tuition benefit grant.

- The Administration realized General Fund increases for Internal Service Funds, operating costs and the Tuition Benefit Program, as well as funding for a new Joint Enlistment Enhancement Program. All increases are offset by vacancy savings, for a total General Fund decrease of 0.81%.
- Air Services increases by 7% in General Funds for increased operating costs and funding required for Military Leave and salary pay caps.
- Building Maintenance has a .49% increase for changes in personnel and operating costs.
- Veterans Affairs General Fund has a .83% increase, which includes an increase for salary/benefits and decrease in Internal Service Funds. The Veteran's Cemetery Special Fund increases 7.8% for costs required to operate the cemetery year-round.
- Federal Funds will see a significant decrease for FY2022 due to a \$27M Military Construction Project awarded in FY21.

Grants:

Under E.215 - \$1.32M of General Fund will go to VSAC for Guard scholarships to support 100% Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program.

Under E.219 - In the Veterans Affairs division, Fiscal Year 2022 appropriates \$21,000 for the Veterans Assistance Fund; \$7,500 for the Veterans Day Boy Scouts parade; \$1,000 for Veterans Medals; \$5,000 for Military, Family, and Community Network; \$10,000 to the American Legion in support of VT Boys and Girls State; \$4,800 for the expenses of the Governor's Veterans' Advisory Council.

Performance Management Outcomes:

The Military Department submitted two items as part of the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) process:

(1) Energy Management is an ongoing priority for the Vermont National Guard and the Military Department. The Department has gained more than 96,000 square feet of facility space over the last five years. Although the overall energy consumption has increased marginally, the state share of total energy consumption continues to remain around 2016 levels.

This is attributed to maximizing the federal match to upgrade heating systems to include geothermal, wood chip, natural gas and upgrading electrical system to incorporate solar and converting lighting (indoor /outdoor) to LED. Additionally, there have been many facilities upgrades to include insulation, windows and doors. All new construction meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

The projected level consumption over the next few years is attributed to a steady state training mode as compared to recent heightened training readiness levels required for deployment.

(2) State Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Performance Activities: State VSOs are part of the Office of Veterans Affairs. Their function is to provide outreach to over 42,100 veterans currently living in Vermont and to advocate on their behalf regarding benefit claims to the federal government. They also conduct workshops for veterans and veterans' groups to connect them to available resources. There are 3 VSOs and their salaries/benefits total approximately \$251,468 annually and is paid from the General Fund. As represented in performance measures; they are doing great work helping veterans receive their benefits which in-turn reduces hardships to our veterans. Their caseload for FY 2020 was 593 claims and they helped veterans recover \$7.7 Million in new benefits. This generates a return on investment of \$31 of Federal benefits for every \$1 of State funding which pays for the VSO salaries/benefits.

Vermont National Guard FY2020 Accomplishments

Recognizing the roles, the National Guard fills in the State of Vermont, it's important to share the many accomplishments of our Soldiers and Airmen during FY2020. All these training and development activities directly contribute to the readiness of our soldiers and airmen meeting their federal, state and community mission.

Air Guard:

- Hired first woman as an F-35 pilot (currently in training)
- The 158th Fighter Wing Priority One Task Force (P1TF) received the Air National Guard Diversity and Inclusion Team Award for 2020. The P1TF is designed to improve recruiting, diversity and inclusion in the VTANG. The team is comprised of Airmen of all ranks, genders and ethnicity.
- The 158th Fighter Wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.
- Officer James Sides, 158 SFS was recognized as the 2020 Air National Guard Security Forces Flight Level Civilian Supervisor of the Year.
- Ms. Julie Shea, 158th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Specialist was recognized as the Air National Guard 2020 Outstanding Communication Civilian of the Year.
- Fire Department responded to approximately 250 Mutual Aid incidents. Mutual Aid Emergency Response to 17 Cities and Towns in Chittenden County Vermont

Army Guard:

- August 14th, our Vermont Army National Guard Aviation worked with local first responders from Waterbury Backcountry, Barre Town Fire Department, Plainfield Fire and Rescue, and East Montpelier Fire Department to evacuate a badly injured hiker from

Spruce Mountain in Plainfield. The VTARNG Blackhawk, with no place to land, used a hoist to successfully lift the hiker from the mountain and transport her for treatment at UVM Medical Center. This was truly a team effort and exemplifies the ability of our Vermont National Guard to assist local authorities when called.

Joint: COVID 19 Pandemic Response:

The VTNG joined forces early and continues support of Vermonters, the Governor, SEOC and other state agencies as part of the COVID19 pandemic response.

- Although no longer our mission, the VTARNG provided support in conjunction with the Vermont Food Bank for food distribution across Vermont. At end of mission, over 3.2 million meals were distributed.
- Ongoing support of the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) with COVID19 testing. To date, over 32000 samples collected.
- Conducting VDH sample kit assembly. To date, over 115,000 kits assembled.
- Continued support of FEMA in staffing SNS warehouse operations for reception and distribution of supplies. To date, over 470,000 products organized and shipped, 302 trucks offloaded, and 106 deliveries and pickups completed.
- Established the Essex Alternate Health Facility, in the period of about 7 days the VTNG built and staffed a fully functional 400 bed facility for both COVID positive and non-COVID patients. Construction cost including labor was approximately \$235,000. Currently the AHF is in a warm status. 200 bed non-COVID19 patient beds, and a 50 bed COVID19 isolation pod. The facility can be operational in 48-72 hours.
- 40 Soldiers and Airmen are engaged with voluntary COVID-19 mapping (contact tracing).
- Provided our Defensive Cyber Operations Element to the UVM Medical Center in response to the cyber-attack on their network, worked over the course of a month to get back online.
- The VTNG is working with partner state agencies for vaccine distribution and administering.