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The 39th Adjutant General of Maine Address to a Joint Session of the 126th Maine Legislature, March 4, 2014

Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management

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The 39th Adjutant General of Maine

Address to a Joint Session of the 126th Maine Legislature

4 March 2014

President Alfond, Speaker Eves, members of the 126th Legislature, distinguished guests, and fellow officers, Soldiers and Airmen of the Maine National Guard: Thank you once again for the opportunity to address you today to update you on the status of your National Guard, Emergency Management Agency, Bureau of Veterans' Services, and the Maine Military Authority. Since I last came before you we have had some tremendous successes in the Department, and we have begun to see some significant changes as well. Along with those successes and changes, we have also experienced some challenges; some of these challenges are not new, and some are emerging. I can start today by assuring you that your Soldiers, Airmen and the civilians of the Department are ready, highly trained, well-led and able to support the citizens of Maine and the nation to the high standards and in the dedicated and professional manner which we have all come to expect as ordinary, from these extra-ordinary people.

Before I begin the formal part of this address, I'd like to recognize and acknowledge some important people who are with us in the chamber today. Very special thanks as always to the outstanding professionals of our Maine State Select

Honor Guard who posted the colors here today. The Honor Guard has since 2004 performed over 10,000 military funerals for veterans in our state – the highest by percentage of population of any state Honor Guard in the country. I'm very pleased to welcome today my mentor and predecessor as Adjutant General, Major General (retired) Bill Libby and his wife Cindy - thank you sir for your leadership and continued support. I'm fortunate to also have here today my mother, Mrs. Anne Campbell, and my brother Mr. Thomas Campbell, both here from away. And finally, I want to recognize and thank my wife, Mrs. Judy Campbell of Greenville – she remains my most important support and, as my true commanding officer, she is constantly working to keep me on the right path. Her service, quite literally around the world as the wife of a professional Soldier since 1987, is in no small measure the critical element to any success I may have had, and I owe her everything.

In July of last year I went with about 120 Soldiers and Airmen from the Maine National Guard to Pennsylvania, in order to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the battle of Gettysburg. As most of you know, units from the Maine State Volunteer Militia, our National Guard, played critical and historic roles at that battle, one of the most central in the military history of the United States. While in Gettysburg we toured the battlefield, and ceremonially laid white pine wreaths on the monuments of all 18 Maine regiments which fought there. We

finished the day at Little Round Top, where we held a solemn ceremony in partnership with our comrades from the Alabama National Guard, whose forebears fought our Maine Soldiers for control of that hill in 1863. Joined by Governor LePage, we remembered the sacrifices of that day, and recognized our current Soldiers and Airmen who continue to serve our state and nation in ways which I'm sure would make the Maine men of 1863 justly proud. At that ceremony were the current commanders and regimental colors of the 1st Battalion 167th Infantry from Alabama – the successor unit of the 4th Alabama – and the 133rd Engineer Battalion from Maine – the successors of the 20th Maine. These are the two regiments who fought there 150 years ago. On that day in 1863 the Alabama men marched 23 miles before charging up Little Round Top under fire five times, and the 20th Maine famously held off those desperate assaults with rifles, bayonets, and even rocks and fists. We joked with our Southern friends that it only took them 150 years to make it to the top of the hill. We also told them that if they didn't behave, we'd send them back down the hill just like we did the last time Maine and Alabama met there!

It is events such as this trip to Gettysburg that make me so proud, and so humbled to be a part of such a superb and historic organization as the Maine National Guard, and the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management. It is not only the past valor and sacrifice of our predecessors, but the

service and dedication of our current Soldiers, Airmen and civilian employees which gives me such hope for our future. These men and women are truly the next Greatest Generation.

When I addressed you last year I had been The Adjutant General of Maine for roughly seven months, and so I felt it would be useful during the address to spend much of the time allowed me describing the structure, duties and missions of the various agencies and bureaus which make up the Department. I won't do that today. Instead, I will cover for you some of the accomplishments of the Department since last year, and give you an overview of the scope of activities in which we have been engaged. I'd like to begin, however, with a discussion of what I see as some critical issues which will dramatically affect the Department, and specifically the Army National Guard, in the near future. If these issues are not resolved successfully, the Maine National Guard and the National Guard across the nation will be effected in such as way as to reduce it to the lowest relative level of strength and combat capability the organization has had in over a century, if not in our history. This dangerous situation will have terrible ramifications not only for our national security, but will significantly reduce our historic state militia's ability to execute their Constitutional role of support to our civil authorities, protecting lives and property during times of emergency.

That statement may sound like hyperbole – I completely understand if as sensible Mainers when you hear statements like those I just made, you are naturally inclined to think that once again, a uniformed military officer is attempting to sow fear and consternation in hopes of defending an inflated budget. In this case, however, I hope that you will bear with me and see that my statements describe a very real, very serious set of circumstances. And far from attempting to defend a bloated defense budget, my concerns about the future of the National Guard are inseparable from a motivation to see the national defense budget reduced, while maintaining a strong military and reinforcing the role of Congress and our state governments in determining how our nation's military establishment is to be maintained, and for what purposes it will be used.

Last year I warned that there was a possibility that the senior leaders of the Army would use this current fiscal environment to attempt a dramatic reduction in the size and combat capabilities of the National Guard. This has, unfortunately, come to pass. During this past summer and fall I was privileged to be one of ten Adjutants General from around the country who participated in closed-door discussions about this very topic with the Army's senior uniformed leaders and civilian officials. These discussions were an unsuccessful attempt by the Active Army to convince the leadership of the National Guard to accept what we saw as unnecessary and even dangerous reductions to our organizations, along with

changes to our structure which would place in jeopardy the role of the National Guard as the primary Combat Reserve of the Army. Recognizing that the Army, along with the rest of the country's military, needs to be smaller in order to reduce defense spending after this long period of war, the Adjutants General, in cooperation with The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, have made several proposals since last fall to the Army and other senior defense department officials which would cut our budgets in the way mandated by the Federal Budget Control Act, while retaining capability in the National Guard and for the total Army. Despite the fact that the Chief of the National Guard Bureau is a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and that these proposals met the budgetary requirements of the Army, they were summarily rebuffed. This rejection, coupled with a failure to produce any transparent analysis supporting the Active Army's positions, has made it clear to us, therefore, that there is a significant possibility that the Army's plans go well beyond budgetary considerations and seek a fundamental reduction to and change in the traditional combat role of the National Guard.

For example, one of the demands of the Army leadership has been that they require that all attack helicopters in the Army must be moved to the Regular, active force. At first, they made this demand saying that it was driven by a pressing need to reduce costs. When presented with facts demonstrating what is only logical – that placing all of the Apache attack helicopters, the most expensive Army aircraft

to maintain, train and keep ready, in the most expensive part of the Army, cannot possibly save costs – the Department of the Army has stopped discussing costs and has resorted to shop-worn and frankly untrue statements about the National Guard not being accessible, not being combat ready, and not performing at the same levels as the Regulars. If our country has learned anything in the years since 2001, it is that statements like these are myths, and that our National Guard is just as capable as our partners in the Active force. With regard to the question of whether or not the Guard is accessible, as I asked last year when I made this address, “When, since 1636, has the National Guard not been there for the nation when needed?” As concerns the combat performance of the National Guard, I would ask this question: How many Guardsmen must be killed or wounded in combat, how many Guard units must serve with honor, courage and distinction, garnering awards and decorations, before we stop viewing them as any different from any other Soldiers, Airmen, or units?

Additionally, we have heard questions asked by defense officials like, “Why does a governor need tanks or Apache attack helicopters?” Again – these unhelpful statements mask the real question, which goes to the purpose of our Founders insisting that the preponderance of our national military structure be based in the state-controlled, citizen militia. The real question is: Why does the United States Army need tanks and attack helicopters, and given that need, how

can we then maintain the best possible, most capable military at the least cost?

The answer to that question is, of course, by relying, as we have done for the past 237 years, on the National Guard. National Guard units cost roughly one-third to maintain as Regular units, and are only called to active service when needed – the money the nation thus saves on defense can be used to invest in other national priorities. This fact is why we have throughout our history insisted on small standing Regular forces and have relied on our Citizen-Soldiers during crises. Additionally, the competence, leadership and experience residing in National Guard units, which have been so amply demonstrated in combat abroad and during emergencies at home, is available to governors to assist civil authorities in the states. And by keeping the majority of our combat units in the Guard, the nation retains that visceral tie between the military and its parent society, ensuring that we only go to war when it is absolutely necessary and that when we do, our whole country is engaged. This has been the paradigm of our national military organization since the 18th century, and there is no logical or valid reason to change it now.

Last Monday the Secretary of Defense presented a preview of what the proposed Defense budget would be for fiscal year 2015. The complete budget will be presented to Congress this week. This budget will seek to reduce the Army National Guard from its current size of 350,000 Soldiers, which it has maintained

with minimal changes since the mid-1990s, to 335,000 Soldiers. Moreover, if the Congress does not alter or eliminate the sequestration required under the Budget Control Act, under this plan the Army National Guard will be further reduced to 315,000 Soldiers. What does this drastic and unprecedented reduction of our country's citizen militia mean for the state of Maine? If these plans are allowed to pass, our current Maine Army National Guard of 2,122 Soldiers, already reduced by over 500 Soldiers since 2007, will potentially be reduced by roughly another 200 Soldiers. With a force of less than 2000, the Maine Army National Guard will be the smallest it has been since Maine gained its statehood in 1820. We will lose jobs, we will lose helicopters and other important equipment, and we will have to close armories in our communities. And most importantly, the Maine Army National Guard will not have the ability it currently has to support our citizens in time of emergency. It is worth noting here that in 1936, following the economic devastation of the Great Depression and when the population of Maine was far smaller than it is today, our Maine Army National Guard consisted of almost 4000 Soldiers.

Two weeks ago the Adjutants General from across the country sent a letter to the Secretary of Defense expressing deep concern and disagreement with these plans. That letter has not yet been acknowledged. Last week Governor LePage, along with 49 other governors, sent a letter to the President of the United States

expressing similar concerns. As all of you know, it is rare indeed that all fifty Governors, of all political backgrounds, can agree on any single issue, let alone a matter of national fiscal and security import such as this – it is a clear indication of the deeply problematic nature of the Defense Department’s budget proposals that the governors have been so united in their opposition.

There is currently a bill before the US House of Representatives which seeks to halt any planned changes to the National Guard’s size and make up, and establish a commission on the future structure of the Army. Both of our state’s Congressional Representatives have signed onto this bill as co-sponsors. The commission called for in this bill would be independent, would be made up of experts from all components of the Army along with other agencies, and would conduct an impartial review of the roles and missions, and the balance between the Active Army, the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. The commission would then make recommendations to Congress as to how we can construct the best, most capable total Army at the least expense to the nation. I am confident that such a commission will validate the role and strengths of the National Guard. It is hard to overestimate how critical it is that in the next few weeks and months as the debate surrounding this budget unfolds, all of our citizens and leaders are aware of these serious matters, and how they might affect our state and its military forces.

Turning to the subject of the current status of Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, I must again say that in spite of pressures, both operational and fiscal, the Department is in excellent condition and continues to enjoy notable successes due to the exceptional people who make up our units, bureaus and agencies. The Bureau of Veterans' Services, led by the untiring and venerable Mr. Peter Ogden, has continued to perform its mission of ensuring that our many veterans and their families are recognized, that they have access to their well-deserved benefits, and that our state's four Veterans' Cemeteries continue to set national standards for beauty, dignity and efficient operation. This year the 36 dedicated employees of the Bureau assisted veterans and family members from across the state in filing VA medical enrollment applications and claims worth over \$49 million dollars in recoveries. With the receipt this past year of over \$1.7 million dollars in VA grants for maintenance, upgrades and expansion, our cemeteries will allow us to bury Maine's veterans and their spouses well into this century, and will ensure that we can provide a place suitable for honoring their service and sacrifice. A special thanks here to Mr. David Richmond who is the state's manager of our cemeteries – Dave has one of the most visible and important positions in the Department and is the epitome of a caring, dedicated and effective public servant.

Some of the initiatives the Bureau is engaged in will help us to expand our assistance to some of our underserved populations – we remain concerned about our ability to reach our younger veterans of these most recent wars, as well as women veterans and some of our most elderly. We are in the process of hiring a service officer who will be charged specifically with outreach to women veterans, and we are planning a reorganization of our offices to allow for better services where the bulk of our veteran population resides. This reorganization will also allow for service officers to travel in order to reach veterans in more rural areas and those who are in nursing homes. As we hire our newest generation of service officers, we anticipate that their shared experiences will help us to better engage with veterans from the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan.

We continue to manage a large program to recognize Maine's veterans and their families. Mr. Ogden spends countless hours working with veterans and our Congressional delegation to ensure that they have the awards and decorations they have rightly earned – among other projects this year he submitted a comprehensive dossier for one of our veterans of Vietnam to upgrade a previous decoration for valor to the Congressional Medal of Honor. Pete travels almost weekly to ceremonies around the state, sometimes assisted by others from the Department but mostly on his own, in order to present the state's gold, silver and bronze star medals and certificates to veterans – we just recently held one of these ceremonies

at the Maine State Museum to honor many of you, our veterans who currently serve in the Legislature and the administration. As always in this endeavor, the Governor and especially the First Lady have been extraordinary in their support and leadership, helping our entire Department as we work with veterans, as well as our currently serving military personnel and their families.

The Maine Military Authority, which operates our equipment rebuild facility in Limestone, is led by the very capable Mr. Tim Corbett of Belgrade. The Military Authority has had a difficult year, but we have some reason for encouragement as well. With severe reductions in Defense Department funding in the past year, the Authority has had their operations drastically curtailed, along with their budget. Last year we received over \$42 million dollars in Federal funding for the facility in Limestone, and this year that budget was reduced to only \$7.4 million dollars. This precipitous cut has required us to reduce our workforce this year by 155 people, down to only 57 employees. Clearly this situation has caused great difficulty for our valued workers who have earned a global reputation for excellence. However, with the cooperation and assistance of DOT Commissioner David Berhardt and his staff, along with some great municipal partners in Al Shultz and Rod Carpenter from Biddeford-Saco, we have begun a transit bus rebuild program at Limestone which shows great promise. We now have the only large-scale mass transit overhaul and refurbishment facility in the

Northeast, where fully one-half of the nation's public mass transit buses operate.

We currently have an initial bid in with the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority to rebuild busses for the city of Boston, and that potential program along with several other Federal transportation grant applications gives us hope that we can begin to recover from the loss of our traditional military projects. With your assistance in encouraging our school districts and municipalities to consider refurbishing their busses in Limestone, we have every reason to believe that the Maine Military Authority will recover its position as a key economic engine for Northern Maine.

One of the other pillars of the Department, the Maine Emergency Management Agency, has just completed one of their busiest years on record. They have continued to demonstrate the kind of innovation, professional expertise and cooperative spirit which have made them regional and national leaders in emergency management and homeland security. Through this year MEMA's dedicated staff of 28 emergency managers has received and disbursed to our cities, towns and counties over \$8 million dollars in federal grants, for activities such as dam safety, hazardous materials planning and training, emergency planning and exercises, and border security. They began the year by working with the federal government to secure over \$3 million dollars in cost reimbursement and recovery funding for the federally declared winter storm disaster early last year. MEMA's staff was also an integral part of assisting the city of Lewiston last spring in dealing

with the aftermath of the spree of arsons there which left hundreds homeless.

Concurrent with their high level of activity, continued reductions in both state and federal funding have created strains on MEMA's ability to sustain important programs, and we are working diligently to sort through tough decisions and what we can continue to accomplish given these pressures.

This year of storm and disaster response culminated with the ice storm which hit the state just before Christmas, and which left thousands without power and heat at a time when the temperatures were some of the coldest we've experienced in recent years. MEMA staff worked long hours over two weekends and through the Christmas holiday to coordinate weather updates, transportation and utility restoration, emergency sheltering, and public information across the state. Recovery efforts continue to this day, and MEMA is working closely with federal, county and local partners in this effort as Governor LePage has applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for disaster recovery funding. Ms. Lynnette Miller, MEMA's Communications and Special Projects Director, has particularly distinguished herself in this effort. Over her long service at MEMA, among her other accomplishments Ms. Miller has built a robust social media presence for the agency which was extremely valuable during the ice storm. This

public messaging was a key component of MEMA's response during the storm.

Many thanks to Ms. Miller for her dedication to the people of Maine.

MEMA's comprehensive training and exercise program has been especially noteworthy this year. Among many notable exercises this year, MEMA was the state's lead agency for the national-level civilian-military exercise Vigilant Guard. In November, working hand in hand with the Maine National Guard, US Northern Command, the National Guard Bureau and states from New England, across the northeast, Virginia, Maryland and others, MEMA coordinated the largest single domestic response exercise in the state's history, with over 3000 participants. Leading up to the event, a separate week-long exercise in September focused on interoperable communications, and we held many other smaller, preparatory exercises across the state. Vigilant Guard included federal, state, military and civilian agencies at all levels, as well as international participation from the Provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick. The exercises were a success, and provided many lessons learned and steps for improvement that we are carrying out today.

Finally, as many of you know, MEMA has recently undergone a significant change in leadership. This fall we said goodbye to Mr. Rob McAleer, the long-

serving and outstanding director who led MEMA for the past 7 years. Rob's contributions to the state and nation as the consummate emergency management professional are well-known, and his mature and steady hand during crises has been a critical asset to our state. Rob is now in well-earned retirement, and we are all extremely fortunate to have as his replacement Mr. Bruce Fitzgerald of South China. Bruce has been with MEMA for ten years, and is already living up to the standard set by his predecessor. Welcome to Bruce, and thank you to the legislature for confirming him so rapidly.

2013 was in many ways a year of change for the Maine National Guard. As we have reduced our military commitments in Afghanistan, along with reduced budgets our National Guard has seen a slight deceleration of our operational tempo and overseas deployments. We have worked hard to continue recruiting quality young people to serve in our formations, and although successful in keeping units filled up to this point, the loss of the tuition assistance program funded through the Maine Military Authority has made that difficult work even more challenging. We have also experienced some changes in leadership, as many of our senior leaders have retired, and we have moved up younger officers into positions of responsibility and authority. With those changes, however, one constant has

remained – your National Guard is still recognized around the world for its excellence and for the caliber of its Soldiers and Airmen.

The Maine Air National Guard, led by the team of Brigadier General Gerard Bolduc of Bangor, and Command Chief Master Sergeant Robert Peer, also from Bangor, continues to be one of the most outstanding organizations in the U.S. Air Force. The 1,127 Airmen of the “Maineiacs” serve in three units; the 101st Air Refueling Wing in Bangor, and two communications and electronics units in South Portland – the 243rd Engineering Installation Squadron and the 265th Combat Communications Squadron. Your Air Guard has deployed and returned home 109 Airmen this year, and today has 42 Airmen serving overseas, including the 101st Air Refueling Wing Commander, Colonel Doug Farnham of Bangor. We are very proud of Colonel Farnham, who was specially chosen to serve a tour as the Deputy Commander for all Air Force refueling and airlift operations in the Middle East and Central Asia.

This year the 101st Air Refueling Wing has continued to support Operation Noble Eagle, the air defense of the continental United States, with multiple lines of aerial refueling alert and sorties. In addition to Operation Noble Eagle, the 101st continues to run the North East Tanker Taskforce Air Bridge Scheduling office,

which manages around-the-clock direction and scheduling of air refueling support for all US and allied aircraft transiting across the Atlantic Ocean. Between support to the Tanker Task Force, Operation Noble Eagle, supporting combat operations in Afghanistan and other missions in the Middle East, the Maineiacs have flown hundreds of operational sorties and thousands of hours this year, and have refueled hundreds of reconnaissance, strike and transport aircraft. Last winter the 101st again demonstrated their ability to take on complex, no-notice missions and excel – they received an alert tasking to provide air bridge planning and aerial refueling support for Operation Patriot Missile, an emergency mission to deploy US Army Patriot Missile batteries to Turkey to protect that ally from rockets fired from inside Syria. With little time to plan and on top of the steady-state operations the wing maintains, over four days Maineiac aircrew flew fifteen missions and offloaded over 180,000 gallons of fuel to air transports, ensuring that our allies and the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in Southern Turkey got the air defense batteries needed for their protection.

As part of their mission to service transient aircraft in Bangor, in 2013 the Maineiacs serviced 1000 US and allied military aircraft on the ground and supported over 16,000 aircrew, processing a total of over 14 million gallons of jet fuel. This record remains one of the most remarkable of any refueling wing in the

entire US Air Force, and the reputation for professional excellence your Airmen have earned over the years continues to make the symbol of the Maine Air Guard one of the most recognized in the world.

The communications and electronics squadrons in South Portland have also remained busy this year. As part of its ongoing mission to provide support to the total Air Force for electronics installation, the 243rd deployed to five Continental United States locations as part of training events, saving tens of thousands of dollars by completing work for federal, state, and local agencies. The 243rd remains the lead support for the Air Force's Global Decision Support System and Consolidated Air Mobility Planning System worldwide. They currently operate and maintain inventory of a 4,500 square foot warehouse facility and this year processed over \$15 million dollars' worth of Air Force equipment and assets. This summer the 243rd will deploy 30 Airmen to Afghanistan in support of the Army for the second time in the past three years.

The 265th Combat Communications Squadron played a key role in the statewide Vigilant Guard exercise in November supporting the Guard's Joint Operations Center at Camp Keyes, demonstrating again their ability to sustain communications for state agencies in the event that civilian systems are degraded

or destroyed. These Air Force communicators form the key element in our state's growing cyber defense capability, cooperating with state government, the University of Maine system, the Maine Emergency Management Agency and law enforcement to respond to developing foreign and domestic threats to our computer systems and critical infrastructure. The 265th Cyber team participated in numerous exercises in 2013 around the nation, and we expect that in cooperation with a developing capability we have in the Army National Guard, our state's cyber defense enterprise will be more capable and ready into this year. It is hard to overstate the serious concern we have in the Department related to the cyber threat, and we will continue to improve our ability to respond. We have much work to do, but we will be untiring in our efforts.

This year our Airmen have continued to be recognized for their excellence and service. Among other decorations, they have earned two Legions of Merit and 27 Meritorious Service Medals. They have also been recognized nationally for achievement – Senior Airman Hailey Breen of the 101st was selected as the Outstanding Aerospace Medicine Airman of the Year for the entire National Guard, and Staff Sergeant Adam Potter and Senior Airman Thomas Bard from the 265th received recognition as the best in their fields through the Air Force's Excellence in Warfighting Integration and Information Dominance Awards

Program. These men and women exemplify all that is best in our Maine Air National Guard, and bring great credit to us all.

The Maine Army National Guard, the oldest and largest element of our Department, continues as it has since 1760 to fight our country's wars overseas and protect our citizens and communities here at home. In 2013 we brought home from deployment or mobilized and sent into combat 378 Soldiers, including the headquarters of the 133rd Engineer Battalion from Gardiner and Portland. The 133rd is deployed today in Afghanistan commanding over 900 personnel from other states and units, grinding through the process of closing and realigning bases during our drawdown there. The engineers of the 133rd, Maine's oldest and most highly decorated unit, continue to live up to the state's motto of "Dirigo." We have gotten reports that in Afghanistan they have established such a reputation for excellence, and so many visiting senior officers and other dignitaries want to visit them, that they are now known by their higher headquarters from the 82nd Airborne Division as "The Greatest Show on Earth."

Our fixed-wing aviation detachment from Bangor recently returned from their third combat deployment in the past ten years, and during that mission they were expertly led by Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ron Ireland. Chief Ireland is one of

our most senior and experienced Army aviators – this latest trip overseas was his 5th operational deployment. He cannot be here today because he is preparing for night flight training of some of our newer pilots. With Chief Ireland on that mission in Afghanistan was Sergeant First Class Justin Anderson, on his 6th combat deployment. These men exemplify the selfless service we have come to expect as almost routine from our Guard Soldiers, and we owe them and their families, indeed all of our Guard families, an extraordinary debt of gratitude for their willingness to answer the nation's call with the professionalism and courage that represents what is best in our National Guard and our Maine people. Waterville's 488th Military Police Company returned this summer from a year in Afghanistan, serving at the U.S. military detention facility at Parwan. Our MPs also distinguished themselves in what is an incredibly tough and demanding environment. Bangor's Company C, 1st Battalion 126th Aviation Regiment, Maine's Air Medevac Company, also returned last year from their fourth operational deployment since 1998 – they spent a year supporting US and coalition forces forward stationed in Kuwait, where they had the rare pleasure for an Army helicopter unit of flying missions from the decks of US Navy ships in the North Arabian Gulf. We also sent an Army contracting team to the Middle East last year, where they oversaw the execution of over 400 contracts for the US government, worth over \$30 million dollars.

Lest we think that all of our Army Guard missions are in the Middle East and Afghanistan, our Public Affairs Detachment deployed 4 of their people for a year in Kosovo, and one of their products produced there was just recognized as the best video news segment in the entire National Guard in 2013. The 136th Engineer Company from Skowhegan and Lewiston sent platoons on two, three-week rotations last year to El Salvador, where they built schools, clinics and other humanitarian infrastructure projects. The 136th, along with the 262nd Engineer Company from Westbrook and Belfast, also completed projects for the Boy Scouts of the Pine Tree Council in here in southern Maine, working to upgrade and improve their summer camp facilities. And finally, the 185th Engineer Support Company from Caribou executed several projects in support of the towns of Caribou and St. Agatha.

Our Maine Army Guard units and Soldiers continue to be recognized for their bravery and their professional excellence. This year our Mountain Infantrymen from Brewer were awarded the Army's Valorous Unit Award for their most recent combat rotation in Afghanistan during 2010. This highly prestigious award, which is given to units who collectively demonstrate valor and superior performance under fire at the level required for an individual to be awarded the

Silver Star, is rarely given at all; Brewer's Company B, 3rd Battalion 172nd Infantry Regiment is the first Maine unit ever to earn this highly prestigious distinction. Major Paul Bosse of Auburn, who commanded B Company during that time, along with his First Sergeant, Master Sergeant John Brooks of Glenburn, is with us today in the gallery.

On Sunday we also honored Bangor's 286th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion – our state's Logistics Warriors. The 286th was awarded the Army Meritorious Unit Award for their outstanding mission execution while in Afghanistan in 2009 – the 286th ran all of the logistics for U.S. and coalition forces across southern Afghanistan during the dramatic build-up there during that time. Lieutenant Colonel Diane Dunn from Newburgh was the 286th Commander for that deployment, and she was also the state's primary military staff officer involved in the planning and execution of our major Exercise Vigilant Guard this fall. I'm happy to announce today that we have selected Lieutenant Colonel Dunn to be promoted to full Colonel and to take command of the state's Logistics Brigade in July – she will be the first woman ever to command an Army Guard brigade in our state's history. Congratulations to Lieutenant Colonel Dunn and her family.

Our Army units and staff are recognized around the country for their excellence – as is fitting for frugal New Englanders, we have become well-known for our budget management and care with limited resources. This year our Army facilities management team was given an award for being the best installation management staff in the nation. Our fiscal and property team here in Augusta was rated as one of the best in the nation, and our supply and equipment accountability section at the state headquarters won the Army Supply Excellence Award for being the best in the northeast region. Our recruiters continue to exceed the standard, making the Maine Army Guard top in the nation last year for re-enlistment. One of our hard-working recruiters, Staff Sergeant George Churchill from Presque Isle, was named the top recruiter in the state last year, and is the first Soldier from Aroostook County to ever achieve that distinction.

At the outset of this address I discussed with you the serious dangers, both fiscal and structural, that we face as an organization. Again – I cannot overemphasize what the stakes are for our National Guard and for our state as this defense budget debate proceeds. I ask for all of your continued support for our units and our men and women in uniform, both here in Augusta and in Washington, DC. However, as we face this latest round of threats to our state's militia, I can assure you that our Soldiers, our Airmen and the dedicated civilians

of the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management will remain ready, vigilant and constant in our duty to protect the lives and property of our citizens, ensure dignity and care for our veterans, and to defend our nation against all threats, regardless of their origin. Our state has a proud history of military and civilian service to the nation, always contributing far more than what our small population would suggest. Mainers are tough and resilient, and your current state militia is no different than what it has always been – brave, resourceful and dedicated. It remains the greatest honor of my life to be Maine's 39th Adjutant General, and to have the privilege of serving side-by side with these extraordinary men and women. Thank you again for the opportunity to tell their story.

Bayonets, Forward!