Governor's Military Council
Q2 2026 Business Meeting Summary

May 21, 2026
Conference Room 2-302 A & B
California Natural Resources Agency
715 P Street, Sacramento, CA

Opening Remarks

Chair Vice Admiral (Ret.) Jody Breckenridge called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Breckenridge welcomed new member Lt Col (Ret.) Tara Leweling USAF, and noted Dr. David Smith's potential representation for the Mojave area given his space expertise, and recognized the attendance of Stephanie Dashiell, Dr. Cristina Davis, and William Franco. Turning to administrative and strategic matters, Chair Breckenridge and Brian Ferguson addressed the upcoming gubernatorial election and state transition, asking Council members to remain engaged to ensure continuity, compile priority topics for discussion, and collaborate on a forward-looking strategic framework.
Brian Ferguson provided updates on the California Defense Summit.

Roll Call and Quorum

Executive Director COL Jon Siepmann conducted a formal roll call at 9:05 a.m., confirming a quorum of appointed members.

Members Present:

- Vice Admiral (Ret.) Jody A. Breckenridge, USCG, Chair, Governor's Military Council
- Lieutenant General (Ret.) Edward Hanlon, Jr., USMC, Vice Chair, Governor's Military Council
- Colonel (Ret.) Soo Lee Davis, USA, Member, Governor's Military Council
- Rear Admiral (Ret.) James Johnson, USN, Member, Governor's Military Council
- Colonel (Ret.) Fred Meurer, USA, Member, Governor's Military Council
- Command Sergeant Major (Ret.) Roberta Santiago, USAR, Member, Governor's Military Council
- Mr. Jeffrey A. Klein, Member, Governor's Military Council
- Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Tara Leweling, USAF, Member, Governor's Military Council
- Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation: Sam Assefa
- California Military Department: Brigadier General David Kauffman, ARNG
- California Natural Resources Agency: Ms. Sara Aminzadeh
- California Environmental Protection Agency: Mr. Scott Lichtig
- Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz): Ms. Danna Stroud
- California Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency: Ms. Melinda Grant
- California Department of Veterans Affairs: Mr. John Spangler
- Office of Governor Gavin Newsom: Mr. Brian Ferguson

Public Comments

No public comments were offered during the designated period.

Action Items

The Council discussed internal organizational feedback and ongoing administrative transition planning.

Executive Director Updates

Executive Director Jon Siepmann commended the Council's hard work on the California Defense Summit. He also highlighted the Council's geographic reach, noting an upcoming site visit to military installations in the Mojave region and plans to prioritize members with relevant expertise. He noted Naval Postgraduate School innovations involving an NVIDIA supercomputer and encouraged members to submit trip recommendations. Chair Breckenridge added that a survey will be distributed to gather structural feedback on Council operations.

Sentinel Landscapes Partnership Briefing

Ms. Stephanie Dashiell presented an overview of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, a joint program managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of the Interior (DOI), and Department of Defense (DoD) to align conservation, agricultural sustainability, and military readiness. Nationwide, 19 Sentinel Landscapes are designated across the U.S. and its territories.

The Mojave Sentinel Landscape, designated in 2024, spans 3.5 million acres across four counties and encompasses Edwards AFB, Fort Irwin, Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, and Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms. Governance is directed by a steering committee comprising the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), local counties, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), with Legacy Works Group managing contract administration. Priority areas focus on species conservation (such as desert tortoise protections), landscape stewardship, partner coordination, hazard resilience (fire, flood, drought), and land protection through conservation easements, land acquisitions, and Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) projects.

Deputy Secretary Sara Aminzadeh emphasized that natural infrastructure and desert water retention preserve landscapes, reduce natural hazards, and sustain military training operations. In response to inquiries from Councilmember Leweling regarding expansion opportunities, Ms. Dashiell outlined the two-year designation cycle requiring pre-proposals and established REPI baselines. Chair Breckenridge, Councilmember Meurer, and Ms. Dashiell discussed elevating the program's visibility

during the gubernatorial transition to demonstrate cost-effective partnership models that benefit surrounding communities.

UC Davis Defense Research Briefing

Dr. Cristina Davis presented on UC Davis's defense research initiatives, tracing the university's military collaboration back to telemetry work during the Manhattan Project. UC Davis maintains active defense research partnerships with the Army Research Laboratory, Navy laboratories, Beale AFB, Travis AFB, Yuba Water Agency, and national laboratories including Sandia, Los Alamos, Berkeley Lab, and Lawrence Livermore.

Dr. Davis detailed UC Davis's Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) research pipeline structured across four phases: *Sensor, Think, Validate, Act*. Key focus areas include GPS-denied autonomous navigation, computer vision, target recognition, aerodynamic bird flight dynamics, and Office of Naval Research (ONR) range and endurance projects. Beyond aerial platforms, UC Davis conducts space-focused medical and operational research, including cryo-sleep concepts, space medical evacuation ("space ambulance") platforms, and haptic control sleeves for remote robotic operation. Commercialization is supported through public-private partnerships at Aggie Square in Sacramento.

During Council discussion, Chair Breckenridge noted the need for expanded research into maritime/water-based unmanned platforms. Councilmember Hanlon raised inquiries regarding global advancements in robotics and wire-guided/fiber-optic UAS technologies in foreign conflicts; Dr. Davis affirmed that U.S. research capabilities remain highly competitive. Councilmember Meurer highlighted counter-UAS (C-UAS) as an urgent operational priority.

<u>Member Agency Updates and Council Discussion Items</u>

- **Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation**

Director Sam Assefa emphasized the need for tight alignment between state agencies and the Department of Defense amid rapid global shifts and a transition from traditional land encroachment to drone encroachment issues. Implementation continues for the California Military Installation Resilience (CalMIR) program, the web-based Vulnerable Community Platform, and the GIS-based CAMEO/CAMP

platform transition. Additionally, CalSEA secured $4 million from the Navy to expand California's submarine and maritime industrial base workforce, targeting upskilling for 3,000 workers.

- **California Military Department**

Brigadier General David Kauffman provided updates on the California National Guard's summer Annual Training (AT) operations and ongoing wildfire suppression support through Joint Task Force Rattlesnake. He highlighted the expansion of the State Partnership Program to include Mexico alongside Ukraine and Nigeria. He highlighted an upcoming quadrilateral UAS exercise hosted by the California Military department in September. State funding provided an additional $15 million subsidy to increase operational flexibility for the Counterdrug Program. He also noted state efforts under the Governor's Executive Order regarding C-UAS, with Brian Ferguson emphasizing local county coordination.

- **California Natural Resources Agency**

Secretary Wade Crowfoot reflected on the Council's history since its founding under Governor Jerry Brown and Ellen Tauscher. Deputy Secretary Sara Aminzadeh announced state park free admission initiatives for veterans on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, priority tracking for Sentinel Landscape expansion (including Vandenberg Space Force Base and El Centro), ongoing wildfire suppression efforts (completing 300 projects in the past year), and a joint lease renewal with the Navy at Trestles Beach (San Onofre State Beach). Councilmember Hanlon noted the 20-year operational training history at Trestles Beach.

- **California Environmental Protection Agency**

Scott Lichtig outlined ongoing wildfire cleanup efforts, post-disaster rebuilding, and brownfield remediation led by the Department of Toxic Substances Control across 50 sites in 30 cities. Key projects include the Filsker Bird Homes development (200+ units) and ongoing decontamination at Hunters Point Shipyard in San Francisco to return land to productive use. CalEPA is also releasing an API for the zip-code-level CalHeatScore vulnerability tool.

- **Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development**

Danna Stroud highlighted Round 2 of the Jobs First initiative grants and a recent investment summit featuring 31 proposals from military communities, citing the REACH framework as a regional model. GO-Biz is partnering with UC Santa Barbara and Allan Hancock Community College on a 2-year Aerospace Technician Certification program, with plans to replicate the framework near Kern County, Los Angeles AFB, and Mojave Air and Space Port. Ethan Nash noted that the Military Economic Impact Study (MEIS) is progressing.

- **Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency**

Undersecretary Melinda Grant reported on the structural division of BCSH effective July 1 into the California Housing and Homelessness Agency and the California Business and Consumer Services Agency. The Department of Consumer Affairs continues to expedite professional licensing for military spouses. She thanked the National Guard for their work with the Counterdrug program. She highlighted deploying Proposition 1 funds ($1 billion available) for mental health housing via Homekey+ projects in partnership with CalVet.

- **California Department of Veterans Affairs**

John Spangler detailed outreach to Tribal veterans and updates on the $38 million Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), which exceeded its first-year goal by completing 18,000 mental health appointments for veterans and their families. CalVet continues joint supportive housing awards under Homekey+.

- **Governor's Office Update**

Brian Ferguson reported on state budget finalization and executive focus areas including artificial intelligence, land use, Olympic planning, and the C-UAS Working Group, offering Governor's Office support to advance Council priorities.

Adjournment

Chair Breckenridge summarized key takeaways from the ADC 50 conference, highlighting national discussions on drone integration, military spouse support networks, and quality-of-life scorecards. The Council engaged in an extended discussion regarding data center developments, noting their extreme local energy and water demands (with 70% of water used in cooling being consumed). Chair

Breckenridge shared Virginia's policy model requiring data centers to fund their power infrastructure requirements, while Councilmember Meurer emphasized the need to update regulatory frameworks and grid transmission infrastructure to protect critical national security assets.

The Council also discussed Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) as potential energy solutions for military installations, and Chair Breckenridge urged the Council to establish direct advisory avenues with Cal OES, the Pentagon, and incoming state administration leadership.

Chair Breckenridge adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.