



MINUTES

International Relations Committee

Monday, March 21, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Annette Sweeney, Vice Chairperson

Representative Terry C. Baxter, Chairperson
Representative Ako Abdul-Samad

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I. Procedural Business

Call to Order and Adjournment. The meeting of the International Relations Committee was called to order by Chairperson Baxter at 11:00 a.m., Monday, March 21, 2022, in Room 19 of the State Capitol, Des Moines. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

II. Iowa National Guard Presentation — State Partnership with Kosovo

Lieutenant Colonel Kerri Lewers, Iowa National Guard, provided background information about Kosovo and the State Partnership Program (SPP) of the Iowa National Guard with Kosovo. The SPP is a joint program developed by the United States Department of Defense (DOD) that pairs U.S. states with partner countries to build partner capacity and improve interoperability and readiness to meet emerging challenges. Many other states also have an SPP with other countries. Kosovo is a small eastern European country with a population of 1.7 million. The population consists of mostly ethnic Albanians, and small populations of ethnic Serbians and others. Kosovo has been the location of numerous conflicts through the centuries but gained its independence from Serbia in 2008. The SPP between the Iowa National Guard and Kosovo is entering its 11th year. The benefits of the SPP include direct influence with the Kosovo security forces, real-time access to the United States Embassy, increased military capability and readiness, enhanced regional stability, and the sharing of timely and relevant information with the United States government. Finally, the SPP increases the global security of the United States.

III. Discussion

Committee members asked numerous questions. The committee heard an SPP begins with an application by a state to the DOD. The DOD chooses the SPP country on behalf of the state. The committee discussed the impact of the Russian and Ukrainian war on Kosovo, eastern Europe, and the United States. The committee learned that the California National Guard is in the SPP with Ukraine and how the relationship benefits both the United States and Ukraine. The committee discussed the ways the Iowa National Guard may be promoted in the community including speaking with various constituent groups. The committee also discussed diversity within the Iowa National Guard.

IV. Materials Filed with the Legislative Services Agency

The following materials were distributed at or in connection with the meeting and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the link on the committee's website:

www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings/documents?committee=661&ga=ALL

1. Iowa National Guard State Partnership Program—Kosovo