

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MURRAY TOURS WESTOVER AIR RESERVE BASE; CONVENES MEETING OF NEW TASK FORCE TO UNIFY SUPPORT FOR MILITARY JOBS AND INVESTMENTS

CHICOPEE – Thursday, March 15, 2012 – Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray today toured Westover Air Reserve Base as part of his tour of military bases across the Commonwealth to build grassroots support to protect the missions, jobs and economic investments associated with the bases. Lieutenant Governor Murray was joined on the tour by local, state and federal officials as well as Air Force base leaders, business association leaders and members of the community.

Following the tour, Lieutenant Governor Murray chaired a meeting of the newly created Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force, which included a roundtable discussion at Westover Metropolitan Airport.

“Through proactive planning, Massachusetts has and will continue to position the state to protect our military bases,” said Lieutenant Governor Murray. “Massachusetts’ strong military presence and related defense industry is critical to our economy and our residents. Through the work of this Task Force, the Patrick-Murray Administration will work tirelessly with our congressional delegation and partners across the state to keep Westover Air Reserve Base and all of Massachusetts’ military bases open and their missions intact.”

Today’s visit to Westover Air Reserve Base is the third of at least six visits to the state’s military bases. In addition to Westover, Lieutenant Governor Murray has toured Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield and Hanscom Air Force Base, and plans to tour the Massachusetts Military Reservation / Otis Air National Guard Base in Falmouth, Natick Soldier Systems Center in Natick and Fort Devens in April.

“Each visit helps build the record and arms us to tell the real Massachusetts story in the BRAC process,” said U.S. Senator John Kerry. “Lieutenant Governor Murray’s visit to Westover helps highlight the work they’re doing there, and gives greater definition to the story we need to tell about the defense installations and industry in Massachusetts.”

“I don’t believe the lopsided cuts to the Air Reserve Components are in the best interest of our national security,” said U.S. Senator Scott Brown. “Westover Air Reserve Base is a valuable strategic defense asset and plays a valuable role in the Massachusetts economy. The Air Force’s proposal to halve the 439th Airlift Wing’s C-5 aircraft is ill-advised and will hurt our nation’s critical, global strategic airlift capabilities.”

“I’m grateful to the Patrick-Murray Administration – particularly the Lieutenant Governor – for their leadership on this issue,” said U.S. Congressman Jim McGovern. “The Task Force is an important part of

our efforts to grow and strengthen our economy and to help keep our country safe.”

On February 27, Lieutenant Governor Murray signed an executive order establishing the Commonwealth’s Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force. The Task Force, chaired by the Lieutenant Governor, engages state agencies to work directly with stakeholders to develop and implement actions that will support military bases across the Commonwealth. Today’s visit to Westover is just one example of the work the Task Force is leading.

The executive order builds on the work Lieutenant Governor Murray has led over the last year, including a series of strategy meetings with Administration cabinet secretaries and private sector groups such as the Massachusetts Defense Technology Initiative to gather current data and perspectives about each military base so Massachusetts can better position, promote and protect assets for each base. The Task Force will work towards completing a comprehensive strategic plan in the coming months.

“Our military bases are part of the fabric of the Commonwealth and we’re looking for new ways to maintain and enhance these facilities with investments in areas such as energy efficiency or clean energy, which create local jobs and upgrade existing infrastructure,” said Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Richard K. Sullivan Jr.

In addition to engaging local and regional support to help promote and protect the state’s military bases, the Task Force will develop, coordinate and implement actions in the areas of workforce training, infrastructure improvements, environmental and utility savings, housing and transportation to support the missions at military bases across the Commonwealth. Additionally, the Task Force will identify steps the state can take to remedy problem areas before preliminary recommendations from the federal government are adopted and missions are implemented. Lieutenant Governor Murray and members of the Task Force will advise the Governor, Executive and Legislative Branch officials regarding the ongoing efforts by the U.S. Department of Defense to close, realign, restructure, streamline, or in any way impact military bases in Massachusetts.

In January, the U.S. Department of Defense announced a plan to reduce federal defense spending by approximately \$500 billion over the next decade as a result of federal deficit reduction negotiations. The Department of Defense explained that cuts would be achieved in part by reducing total force numbers and relying on technological advances to build a more streamlined military. The Pentagon also requested that Congress authorize a Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) to recommend the closure or consolidation of select military bases across the country.

“I commend Lieutenant Governor Murray for taking the initiative to bring together business, education, government and the community to support the important relationship that Massachusetts has with the defense industry – particularly here near Westover Air Reserve Base,” said Jack Wilson, chairman of the Defense Technology Initiative. “Massachusetts is home to a large number of jobs that directly and indirectly relate to the defense industry and forging this partnership on the community level is critical to western Massachusetts and nation’s economic and military security.”

“The Chicopee Chamber appreciates what the Lt. Governor is doing in his grassroots efforts to bring

awareness to the importance of our military bases in the Commonwealth,” said Gail A. Sherman, President of the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce. “Chicopee’s Westover Air Reserve Base is the largest reserve base in the nation.”

During today’s visit, Lieutenant Governor Murray also highlighted recent initiatives in support of the state’s veterans and defense industry. The Patrick-Murray Administration’s FY 2013 budget proposal includes \$11.25 million in increased funding for vital veterans’ services, including workforce training. The defense industry and its workforce is also a major part of Massachusetts’ economy with thousands of employees working at the state’s military bases and more than \$14 billion in defense contracts awarded to Massachusetts firms in 2010.

“As the nation’s largest Air Force Reserve base, Westover is an extraordinarily valuable asset to our country’s armed forces,” said Representative Joseph F. Wagner. “It is also a catalyst for our region’s economy, generating more than \$200 million in economic activity every year. I applaud Lieutenant Governor Murray and the Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force for their work to protect and strengthen Massachusetts’ military installations.”

“Many of my constituents are in the military and are proud to serve their country,” said Representative Nicholas Boldyga. “I look forward to working with my colleagues in the legislature to protect and preserve jobs at military installations across the Commonwealth.”

Since 2007, Lieutenant Governor Murray has led the Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans’ Services and today’s announcement tour builds on the Administration’s commitment to the Massachusetts veterans’ community, our regional economies and the state’s defense industry. To learn more about the Patrick-Murray Administration’s commitment to Massachusetts veterans, visit www.mass.gov/veterans.