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DOCA

Defense Orientation Conference Association

New Mexico Program Executive Summary

June 2015

DOCA members gathered last week in Albuquerque, New Mexico to meet with officials at Kirtland Air Force Base, Sandia National Laboratories and Los Alamos National Laboratory. The blue skies and warm, dry air were a welcome respite for many in the group who have recently been dealing with drenching storms, flooding, tornadoes and, in the case of Californians, record drought.

After Board and Executive Committee meetings on Sunday afternoon we gathered in the "Fireplace Room" of the historic Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town for a reception. It was the perfect setting to reacquaint with longtime friends and to meet our newest prospective member Bret Culbreth of West Sacramento, CA and his wife Terry Annesley. Several other spouses were able to make the trip: Cassie DeYoung (wife of Doug), Larry Laufer (husband of Lyn Zanville), Ann Lawrence (wife of Dave), Louise McCann (wife of Bill), Sue Sauter (wife of Bill), Elizabeth Tierney (wife of Tom) and Ann Woody (wife of John).

After a quick meeting Monday morning to review the schedule and cover ground rules we made the short drive to Kirtland Air Force Base. Kirtland has myriad of tenant commands but our short time there allowed only for visits with the 377th Air Base Wing, the 58th Special Operations Wing and the Air Force Research Lab. As always, the Air Force was a most gracious host, and we capped off our visit there with a luncheon at the Officer's Club where we had the chance to chat with Airmen and officers assigned to the base.

Then it was on to Sandia National Laboratories, one of several facilities in the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) system. Sandia's research, and that performed at Los Alamos National Lab, goes far beyond their original and continuing charter to sustain the United States nuclear deterrent capability. We observed and discussed the Center for Global Security and Cooperation, science and technology efforts, strategic partnership projects, a robotics vehicle range, Microsystems and Engineering Sciences Applications center and much more. We capped off our visit there with a quick stop at the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History before heading on to Santa Fe.

Day three was spent at Los Alamos National Lab. From the start of the Manhattan Project in 1943 until today their primary focus has been on developing and sustaining the nuclear stockpile, but their research efforts encompass so much more. We toured modeling and simulation facilities, saw some of the world's fastest (and highest capacity) computers, advanced explosives testing and counter-improvised explosive device (IED) training. As our hosts pointed out, we could have spent a week there and still not have scratched the surface of all of the work and research they do.

From sustainable energy, to quality of life efforts, to cybersecurity and much more the men and women of our national labs labor every day to make life safer and better for Americans and others throughout the world. We were very privileged to have had the opportunity to visit with some of the country's best and brightest who work to solve some of the most challenging problems confronting mankind. Recruitment is difficult, particularly at Los Alamos because of its remote location. But patriotic scientists and engineers are still drawn to the challenges and important work done at these facilities.