

Longstanding partnerships recognized at ceremony

Local, state and federally elected officials joined with the Bellevue, Omaha and Sarpy County chambers to commemorate their longstanding partnerships with leaders from Offutt Air Force Base during a ceremony Feb. 9, 2024.

The local leaders signed a community partnership memorandum, which was mostly a symbolic gesture that highlights the past, while pledging to continue working together to build upon what is already established. “It’s incredibly important that we all have extraordinary gratefulness in our hearts for one another and our relationships,” said Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen.

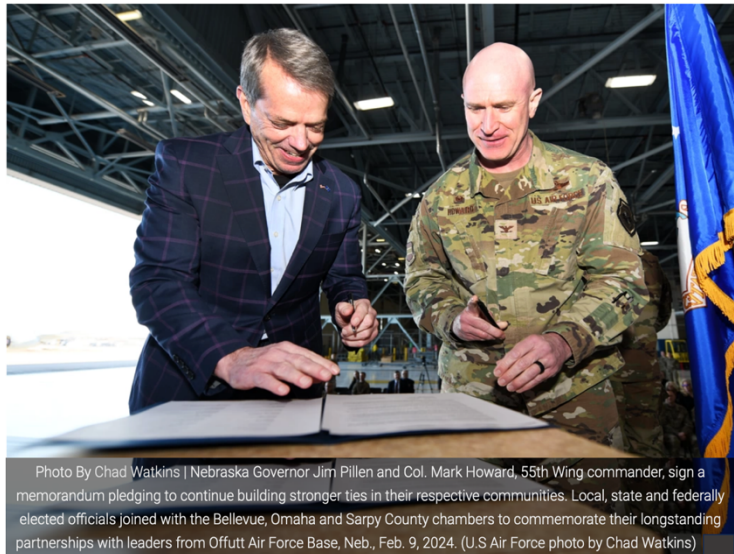


Photo By Chad Watkins | Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen and Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander, sign a memorandum pledging to continue building stronger ties in their respective communities. Local, state and federally elected officials joined with the Bellevue, Omaha and Sarpy County chambers to commemorate their longstanding partnerships with leaders from Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., Feb. 9, 2024. (U.S Air Force photo by Chad Watkins)

“The highest calling in government service is keeping us safe and making sure that plane gets the bad guys,” he added while pointing at the RC-135V/W Rivet Joint parked just outside the bay door.

“That aircraft right there, finds bad guys and tells good guys quick, where the bad guys are,” said Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander. “It’s a big deal that we celebrate this relationship. We can’t do anything without your support.”

Originally established as Fort Crook in 1896 and designated as Offutt Field in 1924 before becoming Offutt Air Force Base in 1948, the installation has traditionally enjoyed overwhelming support from the local community, which has become the envy of many communities and installations across the country.

“Everywhere I’ve been in the state of Nebraska in the last three years, countless times I’ve been asked, ‘what’s the one thing you love about Nebraska?’” Pillen said. “As life-timers we get flustered look down and don’t know what to say, the answer is the people.”

The non-binding memorandum focused on strengthening partnership, building trust, resolving conflicts, leveraging resources, increasing capacity as well as recovery and response.

“We have a unique mission, there’s only one of these in the Air Force, that’s why a lot of people get to stay here,” Howard said. “The deeper reason though, I want to emphasize this, is that you fall in love with it.”

With more than 11,000 military and civilian members and an annual economic impact of \$2.7 billion, Offutt plays a crucial role in the local and state economies.

“What goes on at this base with all of the people and all of the different responsibilities it’s imperative we support them to ensure that we win,” Pillen said. “We’re all in on making sure that quality of life is enhanced and that this is a home away from home and then your long-term home.”