



NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES, INC.

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May 22, 2007

The Honorable Bennie Thompson
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
H2-176 Ford HOB
Washington, DC 20545

Dear Chairman Thompson,

The National Guard Association of the United States is pleased to support your committee's upcoming hearing on the state of equipment readiness in the National Guard. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you.

Since September 11th, the National Guard's role in active deployments has drastically increased. When the Pentagon was attacked, the first responders from off-site were Guardsmen from the National Guard Readiness Center; in many ways, a sign of what was to come.

When we needed to ease public safety concerns at our airports, it was the National Guard who provided security under the command of their governors. This action helped ease the transition to a coordinated security system overseen by the Transportation Security Agency. Since then, the Guard has continued to be forward-looking in many ways. Recognizing the need for every state to maintain disaster response capability, at least one National Guard Civil Support Team has been established in each state. This is an acknowledgement that the National Guard is our nation's firstline provider of military assistance to civil authorities. Without this National Guard capability, the rapid, large-scale response and recovery from Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters would never have been possible. This is also true for Operation Jump Start, which is taking place on our southern border: use of the National Guard in support roles is the fastest and most effective way to bolster our Border Patrol agents until an adequate number can be trained.

All of this has occurred at the same time that the National Guard has changed from a cold war strategic reserve to a fully operational force. The Army and Air Guard now deploy regularly alongside their active duty brethren to fight the Global War on Terrorism. In 2005, over 55% of the troops fighting the war on terrorism were National Guardsmen. In just the last few weeks those who remain at home or have already returned from overseas missions have responded to wildfires in California, Florida, Georgia, and Minnesota, tornado damage in Greensburg, Kansas, and massive flooding in Southern Iowa and Northwestern Missouri.

This new dependence upon the Guard as an operational force has had an impact on the mission at home. Prior to Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, the Army Guard had, on average, 70% of its authorized

equipment on hand at home station. Then, as Army Guard units began heading overseas in combat roles, they deployed with their mission equipment sets. Units brought trucks, HMMWVs, helicopters, combat and engineering vehicles. Because of the high operating tempo and equipment attrition in Iraq, more of these vehicles were needed than expected, causing the Army to require units returning home to leave their equipment for follow-on units.

By 2007, the National Guard Bureau reported that on average, Army National Guard units in the states now had less than 40% of their authorized equipment on hand. This critical situation is not due to action in Iraq and Afghanistan alone, but can also be traced to under funding and equipping by the Army. Much of the equipment shortage in the Army National Guard has evolved over the years as risk assessment by the Army led them to make decisions forced upon them by constrained budgets. The Air National Guard has equipping issues as well, but not nearly as severe as the Army National Guard.

Significant change must be effected if this situation is to be remedied. LTG Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, has outlined the "Essential 10" capabilities concept as the most expedient way to alleviate the homeland defense equipment gap. By concentrating on these 10 "dual use" areas, the intent is that governors will have what is needed to ensure proper response for state missions as well as allow units to do as much of their pre and post-mobilization training in-state as possible, reducing the need to spend additional months in a mobilized status. The National Guard Association of the United States believes the National Guard Bureau and the Army have a good plan. They now need the funding for equipment and training to execute it.

Once again, thank you for holding this hearing and your committee's leadership on these issues. We are pleased that your committee is taking an interest in the National Guard's role in homeland defense. We look forward to addressing these and other issues with you as the legislative session continues.

Sincerely,



Stephen M. Koper
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)
President