



Committee on  
**HOMELAND SECURITY**  
Chairman Michael McCaul

*Opening Statement*

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Martha McSally (R-Ariz.)  
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications**

**“Defense Support of Civil Authorities: A Vital Resource in the Nation’s Homeland Security  
Missions”**

**Remarks as Prepared**

Like politics, all disasters are local. Whether it is a hurricane making landfall in a coastal state, a bomb exploding at a mass gathering, or a wildfire threatening life and property, state and local first responders and emergency managers will be the first on the scene to manage the response.

Sometimes, however, the magnitude of these emergencies will exceed the capabilities of these responders. Governors may activate their National Guard Forces, in addition to requesting federal government support. Coordinated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, this assistance may also include assets from the Department of Defense.

Today’s hearing will examine the vital role played by the military in these homeland defense missions.

So far this year, we have seen record snowfalls, destructive tornados, and massive flooding around the country. Last week marked the start of the 2015 hurricane season and areas out west, including in my home state of Arizona, are gearing up for what is predicted to be an above average wildfire season.

In such emergencies, defense personnel and assets act as flexible force multipliers to the response.

When activated by a governor, a state’s National Guard can provide, on short notice, search and rescue, logistics, firefighting, and law enforcement support. Federal military forces may also supplement state capabilities.

We’ve seen this in action. National Guard forces responded to the massive flooding in Texas and Oklahoma by rescuing stranded citizens, transporting supplies, and providing equipment that assisted in accessing areas isolated by floodwaters.

Arizona National Guard personnel and resources have contained and suppressed wildfires, protecting the life and property of Arizona's citizens.

National Guard and federal military forces were deployed in response to Hurricane Sandy, which tested the use of the dual status command structure. I'm interested to hear more from our witnesses about the coordination and integration of defense capabilities during this, and other, responses.

The National Guard also executes an important law enforcement support function. More than 400 Massachusetts National Guardsmen were on site during the 2013 Boston Marathon to supplement local law enforcement. These personnel were quickly able pivot their mission to assist victims and secure the crime scene after the bombs detonated.

As the threats to our nation have evolved, so too have the military's homeland defense capabilities. DOD and the National Guard have units dedicated to responding to incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) agents or explosives.

This subcommittee held two hearings on the threat of chemical and biological terrorism earlier this year. We know that terrorists have long had an interest in using CBRN agents in their attacks. The resources and expertise provided by these specialized military teams is an essential capability to meet this threat.

We have two distinguished panels of witnesses before us today to discuss the importance of defense support to state and local emergency response providers and the lessons that have been identified in previous response collaborations.

I look forward to learning more about the coordination of local, state, federal, and military response capabilities, along with areas that could be improved to make this vital response capability even more nimble.

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