

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

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THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Opening Remarks

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Visclosky, distinguished members of the subcommittee; I am honored to appear before you today representing more than 460,000 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen in the Army and Air National Guard. The National Guard serves with distinction as the DoD's primary reserve component and as the Governor's force of first choice in times of crisis. Each day Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen serving from throughout the nation, its communities, the states, territories and the District of Columbia contribute to our nation's overseas and domestic security objectives. The National Guard stands poised to fully implement its authorities, to execute its responsibilities, and to build upon its 376-year legacy as an operational force deeply engrained within the foundation of American strength and values.

Always Ready, Always There

Over the past decade, the National Guard Bureau has evolved to better support a truly operational force. Today that evolution continues as the Bureau adapts to support the responsibilities concomitant with a position on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We have undertaken an expansive review with numerous stakeholders including the States, the Active Army and Air Force, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Informed by senior leaders and armed with the lessons of the force's many overseas deployments and non-federalized stateside responses to natural

disasters, we have identified enduring priorities for the National Guard Bureau.

A major priority is to ensure that the National Guard is providing the best possible capabilities to the Department of Defense. To that end, the National Guard Bureau has worked with Congress and the Department to improve our most important programs. Recently, new guidance, in the form of a DoD Instruction, was promulgated to enhance the National Guard's unique State Partnership Program. This innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint program leverages funding from other programs (such as annual training and DOD's humanitarian assistance program) and enhances partner capabilities, advances defense reform efforts and achieves greater military interoperability to support U.S. security cooperation efforts. Among other benefits, State Partnership Program alignments have resulted in joint National Guard and partner country deployments in support of multi-national operations in Afghanistan. These critical partner-country deployments reduce pressure on U.S. forces worldwide and hedge against the need for more direct and costly U.S. military involvement in future contingencies. With the additional guidance, this program will better support the goals of the partner nations, the Combatant Commanders, and our national interests.

The National Guard Bureau's efforts reflect the Department's overall goals of meeting the defense strategic guidance and protecting the

nation in a fiscally constrained environment with ever present threats. We must deliberately make tough choices and budget accordingly during the dynamic and tough fiscal challenges currently facing the Department of Defense and the nation. A core competency of the National Guard is to rapidly, robustly, and competently expand the nation's full-spectrum military capability to defend vital national interests in the most affordable, lowest risk manner possible. The National Guard remains ready – every day, to expand the capacity of the President and our Governors to meet the needs of the American people whether shaping the security environment, engaging across the world and within our communities, or bringing full-spectrum military power during times of critical need.

An Operational Force for Domestic and Overseas Missions

Over the last decade, the American people have made a tremendous investment in ensuring the National Guard is an operational and integral force. There is no question now that National Guard Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen training, equipment, and capabilities mirror that of their active component counterparts.

The Department of Defense continues to meet the challenges posed by the persistent, evolving, and emerging threats and to engage around the world. The operational capabilities of the National Guard are an integral aspect of that effort. Both the Army and Air National Guard

have contributed thousands of soldiers and airmen to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Guantanamo Bay, Djibouti, the Sinai, and other locations across the globe. Today's Citizen Soldier is likely to have deployed at least once since 9/11 with an expectation that he or she will deploy again. With recruitment and retention rates at record levels, it is clear they are able to carry the load.

Today's fiscal environment requires the Reserve Component to be maintained as an operational force. This means the National Guard has to be trained, ready, and equipped to face the full spectrum of threats facing our nation. The Nation's investment in its National Guard has resulted in an operational force that is ready, available, and accessible. Throughout history, the National Guard has answered every call, participated in every contingency, and supported the full spectrum of international responses. As a part-time force that has met or exceeded established readiness and proficiency standards, the National Guard is a crucial operational asset for future contingencies.

The National Guard also provides the Governors with an organized, trained, and disciplined military capability to rapidly expand the capacity of civil authorities responding under emergency conditions. Each year, the National Guard responds to a myriad of domestic emergencies. In fact, shortly after I assumed duty as the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the National Guard responded to a near-complex catastrophe caused by Hurricane Sandy. During those operations nearly 12,000

Soldiers and Airmen from 21 states responded to calls from their governors for assistance to save lives, clear debris, and perform transportation and security missions. Air National Guard aircraft hauled personnel and more than 2,160 tons of equipment, food, water, and other need supplies during Sandy recovery missions. The response to Hurricane Sandy also demonstrated how robust Emergency Management Assistance Compacts between governors enabled states to help each other build, rapidly employ and sustain military capabilities tailored to the size and kind of disaster. During Hurricane Sandy, these EMACs allowed West Virginia National Guard power restoration teams to go into New York and expand the capacity of civilian agencies to reconnect and restore power there, the beginnings of a critical infrastructure strike team concept that begs further development. More recently, thousands of Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen from across the Northeast responded to the massive blizzard that dumped over three-feet of snow in some areas.

Last year alone, the National Guard responded to more than 100 natural disaster missions. The Air National Guard provided almost 237,000 duty days in response to floods and dropped more than 2.4 million gallons of retardant and 1.49 million gallons of water over wildfires. The Army National Guard also provided nearly 7,000 Soldiers in support of national security events such as the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, the G-8 and NATO Summits, and the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit.

The National Guard quickly and efficiently responds to new contingencies, providing a constant presence throughout the homeland. The Air National Guard has also been protecting American skies since 2001, flying more than 5,050 sorties in support of the Aerospace Control Alert mission. The National Guard continues to provide support to interagency partners along the Southwest border. Since 2010 the National Guard has supported U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to detect, deter, and disrupt transnational criminal organizations. The Counterdrug Program also provides unique capabilities to local law enforcement agencies to enable federal, state and local counternarcotics officers to better fight transnational organized crime and other national security threats.

As a scalable response force, the National Guard can quickly provide lifesaving capabilities to complex catastrophes through Civil Support Teams, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Packages, and Homeland Response Forces.

There is a Guard member in nearly every zip code; the National Guard links Main Street America to the military. In order ensure the DoD is cost-effective and connected to the American people, the Army and Air National Guard in 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia must remain strong as an operational force.

Fiscal Responsibility in Shaping the Future

The National Guard is dedicated to providing State and Federal leaders with an organized, trained, and disciplined military capability. As a part-time force, the National Guard is able to provide this capability in a cost-effective manner. The National Guard must be adequately funded and sized to continue to provide this integral operational capability.

The National Guard provides a cost-effective, proven solution to our country's budgetary crisis while helping to ensure our security. The National Guard allows the nation to maintain a robust military capability at the least possible cost to the taxpayer and is a viable resource for reducing the Department's cost of doing business. Maintaining a significant force structure in the National Guard allows for a scalable force, able to provide tiered responses at local, state, regional or national levels as required by the events themselves. As a cost-effective force, the National Guard is able meet steady state demands and act as a hedge for unforeseen world events. At any time, the National Guard can augment the active duty to surge and regenerate forces. Adequately funding the National Guard ensures the Department of Defense has access to a uniquely agile and skilled force postured to embrace new missions outlined in the President's Defense Strategic Review. During a time of constrained budgets, using the National Guard an operational force will

help to ensure the nation is getting the most defense capability at the lowest cost.

National Guard Personnel and Readiness

The Citizen Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard are our greatest asset. I am committed to providing a healthier, more resilient, more diverse, and values-based force able to perform the most difficult tasks on behalf of our citizens, the states, territories and the nation. Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen exemplify and live by American values and, as a result, are recognized as community leaders. Serving out of a sense of civic responsibility, Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen become the model citizen others strive to emulate. Located in over 3,000 communities, the National Guard is the link between citizens and their Armed Forces. It is imperative that we maintain this high quality of service member and continue to support those currently serving and attract the best and brightest to join the National Guard's ranks.

Today, every member of the National Guard has joined or re-enlisted after 9/11. These Citizen Soldiers and Airmen have gained a vast amount of experience over the past decade. They have used that experience to defend our Nation overseas, respond to emergencies at home, and contribute to their communities. While the National Guard focuses on high quality recruits, it is imperative to retain the hard-earned combat-seasoned leaders and service members currently within

National Guard units. While providing a highly capable force the National Guard can continue to maintain cost-effective readiness by regaining talented Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines returning to their home communities following extended periods of active duty. This natural progression provides the force structure and opportunities needed to allow for a continuum of service and strengthening America's Armed Forces.

To maintain this high quality operational force, it is my responsibility to provide the highest quality services to the Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen and their families. I am committed to keeping the faith of the all-volunteer force which includes caring for our wounded warriors, preventing suicides, preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment, and aggressively pursuing appropriate disciplinary and administrative actions in cases of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Today both the Army and Air National Guard are providing care to wounded warriors. Through programs like Warrior Transition Units, Community-Based Warrior Transition Units, and the Air National Guard Wounded Warrior program, service members are getting professional support and assistance from the point of injury to life after separation or retirement.

The National Guard has taken significant steps to prevent suicides. Resiliency training and the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training program are working to recognize individuals in crisis, intervene to keep

them safe, and refer them to the help they need. The National Guard Bureau Joint Surgeon's Office (NGB-JSG) has established a National Guard Psychological Health Program. With NGB-JSG guidance, the Army and Air Guard have placed licensed behavioral health providers, known as State and Wing Directors of Psychological Health (S / WDPHs), in every Wing, state and territory. DPHs work for the Wing commanders, senior leaders, and others to advise leadership on psychological health issues. These counselors also provide immediate expertise for Soldiers and Airmen as consultants for individual and family psychological issues, offering professional clinical assessments and referrals to help navigate complex systems of care. In the last 18 months, DPHs have provided 14,177 consultations and 2,881 clinical referrals. During that same time, DPHs actively mitigated 954 high risk situations; to include suicidal, homicidal and assault cases.

Over the last year, the National Guard Bureau has worked with the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, and the states to redouble our efforts to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment and improve our reporting and response when it occurs. Commanders and action officers running the National Guard Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program are committed to creating a command climate that encourages victims to report incidents to trained Sexual Assault Response Coordinators or hundreds of victim advocates in the Army and Air National Guard. These trained personnel are available to

assist National Guard sexual assault victims with their reporting options and resources.

In keeping faith with an all-volunteer force, we must support the National Guard families that sacrifice with the Soldiers and Airmen. The National Guard Bureau created Family Assistance Centers in all 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia to act as “one-stop” shops. These Centers provide information and referral, assistance with identification cards and the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System, assistance with TRICARE and dental issues, legal assistance, financial issues help, and employment issues referral to Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. The Army and Air National Guard are also working to ensure that National Guardsmen can help support themselves and their families when they return from deployments. To assist returning service members find employment, the National Guard has available: the Guard Apprenticeship Program Initiative which partners with the Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship to facilitate job skill training opportunities for Soldiers and Airmen that enables them to earn national certification in chosen occupations; the Job Connection Education Program which improves the service members and spouses’ ability to research, obtain, and retain civilian employment through one-on-one career counseling, job skill searching, job fairs, and local employer partnerships; and, the Employment Partnership of the

Armed Forces which links service members and employers to mutually beneficial employment resources and career employment opportunities.

Closing Remarks

As the new Chief of the National Guard Bureau, I want to thank you for your continued support of our Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen. I look forward to opportunity to work with you throughout my term. I look forward to your questions.