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Senate Armed Services Committee

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
BEFORE
THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
THE PROPOSAL TO MAKE THE CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD
BUREAU A MEMBER OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
November 10, 2011

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Thank you for the opportunity to address with you the important question of whether the Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB), should be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). I cannot overstate the dedication and bravery of our reserve forces in the current fight. Because of their contributions and sacrifices, there is an understandable desire to extend to our reserve forces an appropriate level of recognition. While I would support almost any effort to provide such well-deserved recognition, I do not think that changing the national command structure is a necessary or appropriate tribute. In my view, the CNGB's current, limited supporting role is an appropriate one inasmuch as the CNGB lacks the overarching strategic insight necessary for JCS membership. I also believe that CNGB membership would create unnecessary duplication within the Department of Defense (DOD) and the JCS, complicate unity of command within the Army and Air Force, fragment the reserve community, and create uncertainty with regard to National Guard leadership.

Although the National Guard is without doubt a key player in today's conflicts, I believe the CNGB lacks the requisite insight into all levels of strategic planning by virtue of his limited role in the DoD, and, more specifically, Army and Air Force affairs. The JCS provides direct military advice to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. In order for the JCS to carry out this duty, its members must be able to address the strategic direction of the armed forces. They must be capable of preparing strategic plans, to include plans which conform with resource levels; preparing joint logistic and mobility plans to support those strategic plans; performing net assessments to determine the capabilities of the armed forces; preparing contingency plans conforming to the guidance of the President and the Secretary of Defense; advising the Secretary on critical deficiencies and strengths in force capabilities (including manpower, logistic, and mobility support); establishing and maintaining a uniform system of evaluating the preparedness of each command to carry out missions; and providing advice concerning the extent to which the program recommendations and budget proposals of the department conform with the priorities established in strategic plans and with the priorities established for the requirements of the unified and specified combatant commands. Additionally, JCS members provide advice concerning doctrine, training, and the education of the armed forces. The JCS' responsibilities therefore require a leadership structure that is wholly dedicated to the national defense, and thoroughly knowledgeable of the processes that resource and develop our defense strategies and the programs and resources required to develop and maintain responsive capabilities. The staffs of each Service Chief gain this detailed understanding through multi-layered integration with the joint staff and key DoD staffs. The integration of the staffs is a key enabler of success. The preparation of strategic and other plans outlined above therefore requires much more than the ability to cast a vote; it requires participation at every level and an undivided focus. With its dual mission, supporting role, and state focus, the CNGB is not structured for full participation in the roles set for the Chiefs in Title 10. Accordingly, I do not believe the CNGB has the currency or capability to assume the necessary level of engagement requisite for JCS membership.

Additionally, contrary to Congressional policy, including the CNGB into the JCS would

create unnecessary duplication within the JCS because the federalized National Guard, as the Army and Air Force's reserve component, serves a supporting role. This duplication could result in an unfairly amplified representation of Army and Air Force concerns. It will also create a representational imbalance with regard to reserve affairs in favor of the federalized National Guard. The Army and Air Force Chiefs of Staff are best suited to equitably advise on the most effective employment of their supporting elements.

Moreover, providing full voting membership to the National Guard Bureau—an organization not primarily responsible for the planning and execution of national strategy—would not only be unprecedented; it would be an extraordinary “solution” to an unclear problem. When Congress established the Department of Defense, it codified a policy that called for eliminating unnecessary duplication in the DoD. Congress designed this policy, which exists in Title 10 today, in effort to seek more effective, efficient, and economical administration not only in the DoD but in the national command structure. The role of the National Guard, when executing a Federal mission, is to fold in with and execute missions in support of the Army and Air Force Chiefs of Staff. In preparation for these missions, and in recognition of its supporting role, the Guard is permitted to train with these Services and at their schools.

For Title 32, non-federalized National Guard matters, the CNGB serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense through the CJCS. In this Title 32 capacity, no unnecessary duplication exists because the CNGB is uniquely situated to channel communications between the several States and the Secretary of Defense. Where Congress federalizes the National Guard, however, the CNGB serves as the principle advisor to the Secretary of the Army, the Army Chief of Staff, the Secretary of the Air Force, and the Air Force Chief of Staff. Due to the importance of this supporting role, the CNGB appropriately maintains an advisory voice within the JCS. This structure is intuitive; it reflects the manner in which Congress intended to use the federalized National Guard and Air National Guard as the Army's and Air Force's reserve component.

As noted in the recent JCS letter to this Committee, CNGB membership in the JCS would also complicate unity of command for both the Army and the Air Force and contribute to Service balkanization. The current organizational structure ensures that the Chiefs of Staff of the United States Army and the United States Air Force are held singularly accountable to the Executive and Legislative Branches of Government for the readiness and combat effectiveness of their respective Services, including their reserves. This is as it should be, and this is what Congress intended when it created the existing structure. Unity of purpose and of command is crucial in both the preparation and employment phases of the armed forces. When it comes to making decisions for the defense of the nation and the preparations necessary for the achievement of its national objectives, success requires single-mindedness.

Also as noted in the JCS letters to this Committee, elevating the role of the CNGB would further segment one community of reservists—a community that is already challenged with executing its dual mission. When the National Guard is federalized, the command

relationship between the CNGB and the Army Chief of Staff and the Air Force Chief of Staff mirrors the Navy and Marine Corps' unified command relationship for their reserve components. Marine Forces Reserve, for example, as the reserve component for the Marine Corps, is organized, trained, and equipped under the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This Service identification and matriculation enhances unity of command and the cohesion of combat units. In my interactions with Marine reservists, I've noted their pride and motivation in simply continuing their service to the nation as Marines. I applaud the lack of cultural distinction between active duty and reserve Marines, and I am confident that this same motivation also drives reservists in other Services to step forward. The proposed elevation of the CNGB risks fracturing the successful dynamic that our forces have achieved by diluting the understanding of the supporting and supported command relationships, and unbalancing the appropriate preparation of our active and reserve forces.

Lastly, I believe that CNGB membership on the JCS could create an unhealthy ambiguity in the responsibility for leading the men and women of the National Guard. As a Service Chief, I fully subscribe to the notion that I am singularly accountable for the welfare of all Marines and their families, active and reserve. As Commandant of the Marine Corps, I have the same responsibility to the Marine Forces Reserve as I do to the regular forces. The missions for which all Marines are trained and equipped is unified with the command structure that leads them. The families that decide to stay with the Corps know whose job it is to ensure their best care: it is mine. Bifurcating leadership, however, might lead to critical leadership gaps recognizable only after some future failure occurs. Most concerning, these gaps could affect the responsibility of caring for these troops and their families. For the sake of our reservists and their families, we cannot afford such a risk.