

**STATEMENT BY**

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**BEFORE THE**

**SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

## **Opening Remarks**

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, distinguished members of the Committee; I am honored to appear before you today representing more than 460,000 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen of the Army and Air National Guard. The National Guard serves with distinction as the Department of Defense's primary combat reserve to the Army and Air Force and as the Governor's military force of first choice in times of domestic crisis. Each day Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen serving throughout the nation help to achieve our nation's overseas and domestic security objectives by doing three things extraordinarily well: fighting America's wars, protecting the homeland, and building global and domestic partnerships. These three overlapping operational missions align within Chairman Dempsey's strategic direction to deter threats, assure partners, and defeat adversaries while also providing localized, reliable, on-demand security and support to Americans within their own neighborhoods. The National Guard stands poised to build upon its 377-year legacy as an operational force deeply engrained within the foundation of American strength and values.

Today, thanks to the support of Congress and the American people, after 12 years of war the operational National Guard is the best manned, trained, equipped and led force in its history. We are able to do all of this because of our great Citizen Soldiers and Airmen. Today's

Guard is accessible, ready, and capable; and I might add, it provides a significant value to the American taxpayer.

### **Accessible**

There is no limit to accessibility due to a full suite of authorities available to access and employ the Guard. Since 9/11 our leaders have mobilized our National Guard members more than 760,000 times for overseas operations. We have filled every request for forces while also meeting every request to support domestic response missions at home. At the same time the National Guard is present in approximately 3,000 communities and immediately accessible to their governors in the event of a domestic incident or natural disaster. The National Guard is scalable and able to provide forces for any contingency or emergency.

### **Ready**

The National Guard is at its highest state of readiness as a result of readiness funding and equipment modernization provided by the Congress. I want to especially thank the Congress for support provided in the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account which have been critical to our equipment and modernization upgrades. Your support ensures that the men and women of the National Guard have the resources they need when called upon by the nation.

The Army National Guard adheres to the same individual readiness requirements as the Active Army. It differs when it comes to collective training. This difference is by design. All Army units, regardless of component, follow the same training strategy. The Army strategy reflects the characteristics of the components and maintains some parts of the active Army at a higher state of readiness for nearly immediate employment. Leveraging the inexpensive cost of dwell, Army Guard units maintain sufficient collective proficiency to support leader development and are ready to quickly surge to a higher level of readiness. Our Brigade Combat Teams culminate their progressive force generation cycle at Combat Training Center rotations like their active duty counterparts. If mobilized, these units can achieve Brigade Combat Team level proficiency after 50-80 days of post-mobilization training. When deployed for operational missions Guard and Active Army units are indistinguishable. Army Guard Brigade Combat Teams will not replace early deploying Active Army Brigade Combat Teams in their overseas “fight tonight” missions. Army Guard Brigade Combat Teams are well suited for surge and post surge mission sets.

The National Guard is the “fight tonight” force in the homeland; ready to respond rapidly and decisively to the Governor’s requirements. Just as the active Army and Air Force are forward-deployed around the world the National Guard is forward-deployed in communities across America. This forward presence saves lives.

## **Capable**

The capability of the National Guard is exactly as it should be today. Our units, Soldiers and Airmen have accomplished every mission assigned to them, including the broadest range of mission sets possible: from Brigade Combat Teams conducting counterinsurgency operations and Combat Aviation Brigade deployments, to expeditionary Wings operating around the world, as well as non-standard units such as Agribusiness Development Teams. We have done all of these missions side-by-side with our joint, interagency and international partners.

The Army National Guard allows the nation to rapidly expand the Army through mobilization with trained and ready units. The only way you can do this is if the Army Guard has sufficient capacity with the same training, organization and equipment maintained at appropriate readiness levels. Maintaining an Army Guard with similar force structure to the Active Component is important to growing future combat leaders and providing the necessary strategic depth we need in our land forces.

Domestically, we have proven time and again our ability to meet the needs of the governors and our citizens, regardless of the scope of the crisis. Whether responding to a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina or Sandy, Colorado flooding, California wildfires, or the Boston Marathon Bombing, the National Guard is everywhere when it is needed.

## **Value**

As an adaptive force capable of rapidly generating as-needed forces, today's National Guard offers significant fiscal value to the nation for tomorrow's turbulent security environment. The National Guard's lower personnel costs and unique capacity-sustaining strengths also provide efficiencies to free up critical resources for Total Force modernization, recapitalization, and readiness. At one third of the cost of an active duty service member in peacetime the Guard provides a hedge against uncertainty while allowing us to address our fiscal situation. Furthermore, every dollar invested in the National Guard allows for a dual use capacity that provides the Governors and the President capabilities to meet the demands both within and beyond U.S. borders.

The Department of Defense faces tough decisions on how to balance readiness while preserving force capacity as a strategic hedge in an uncertain and complex world. Already cuts in FY15 have significantly impacted our readiness in that no National Guard Brigade Combat Teams will be sent to our Combat Training Centers. In Fiscal Year 2016, if BCA level cuts are imposed, the Department of Defense and the National Guard will have to make even more difficult decisions than those in this budget request. We will face greater reductions in manpower, our modernization and recapitalization efforts will be delayed

significantly, and the frequency of critical collective training and leader development experiences, such as Combat Training Center rotations, will diminish or even go away. As a Total Force, this will impact the National Guard's ability to provide forces for overseas and domestic contingencies. However, as we move forward in this difficult financial environment, today's unprecedented National Guard readiness posture offers options to preserve both capability and capacity rather than choose between them. This investment should not be squandered.

### **Accountability**

Ensuring the National Guard is an effective and accountable steward of public resources begins with every Soldier and Airman. Innovations that improve efficiency must continue to be encouraged and implemented. Everyone in the National Guard—from general officers to privates and airmen—must adhere to, and embody, the ethical standards articulated in our core values.

Our responsibility must be to ensure that the American people feel confident that our actions, with regard to the use of resources, are above reproach. We must audit activities, both inside and outside of the National Guard Bureau, to bolster an environment of full accountability if we hope to continue to earn the respect of the American public and to recruit the best and brightest that America has to offer.

We are currently doubling our efforts to ensure that we remain good stewards of the taxpayer's money. Despite having an already lean headquarters we have followed the Secretary of Defense's directive to decrease our headquarters staff by 20%. We are completing a major overhaul of our contracting process through a number of steps, to include a revamped organizational structure to provide greater senior leadership oversight, improved formal training, an internal contract inspection program, and a rewritten National Guard Acquisition Manual. We will continue to actively advance our methods of increased accountability as we hold ourselves to the highest standards of fiscal ethics and integrity.

### **The Future**

Looking to the future, there are three things the National Guard will continue to do for this nation extremely well. First, we will execute the warfight as the proven combat reserve for both the Army and Air Force. Second, we will protect the homeland as the "fight tonight" force in our local communities. Finally, the structure of our force, the very nature of our force, is trained for the warfight and ready to respond in the homeland, allowing us to continue to build enduring partnerships both at home and abroad.



## **Fighting America's Wars**

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 part of these efforts. Over the last decade, the American people's investment has ensured the National Guard is an operational and integral force. Some 115,000 Guardsmen have two or more deployments. Furthermore, fiscal year to date, the National Guard has deployed more than 11,000 personnel to 11 countries. However, we expect these deployments to decrease over time as the conflict in Afghanistan draws down.

There is no question that National Guard Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen training, equipment, and capabilities closely mirror that of their active component counterparts. We are also an adaptive force that is changing as the threats to the United States evolve. Modernization and equipping of Army Guard units gives the nation a rapidly scalable land force to address threats to the United States and its allies. Sustaining the advantages of today's National Guard requires maintaining a high state of readiness through some level of operational use, relevant training, and continued investment in modernization and force structure. Thanks to the Bipartisan Budget Act we remain that strong operational force, but without further action by Congress the National Guard, along

with the Army and Air Force, will have to make difficult choices about readiness and modernization.

A force of Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen that has met or exceeded established readiness and proficiency standards, the National Guard is a crucial operational asset for future contingencies. We will remain adaptable as we plan and prepare to operate effectively in the joint operational environment as part of the Army and Air Force and execute emerging missions.

### **Protecting the Homeland**

The National Guard provides the Governors with an organized, trained, and disciplined military capability to rapidly expand the capacity of civil authorities responding under emergency conditions.

Prepositioned for immediate response in nearly every zip code across the country the National Guard can quickly provide lifesaving capabilities to the states, territories, and the District of Columbia. Whether it is the 3,100 National Guard members supporting recent winter storms across 12 states, seven Civil Support Teams supporting water decontamination in West Virginia, or the Dual Status Command concept in support of the Super Bowl, our Soldiers and Airmen are always ready. Should the “worst day in America” occur, our fellow citizens and state Commanders-in-Chief expect us to be there; ready to respond quickly and effectively.

The National Guard also assists U.S. Northern Command and the military services in the daily execution of federal missions such as providing immediate response against weapons of mass destruction or industrial accidents. Every day Air National Guard fighters are protecting the nation's skies and the Army National Guard air defense forces are protecting the homeland. The National Guard supports the Department of Homeland Security to assess the vulnerabilities of our nation's critical infrastructure, assists in interdicting transnational criminals at our borders, conducts wildland firefighting, and augments security during special events. The National Guard community-based tradition spans 377 years of localized experience and national service in times of need and is America's clear first choice for military response in the homeland.

### **Building Global and Domestic Partnerships**

Each day, the National Guard strengthens and sustains partnerships around the world and within our communities. The National Guard's innovative State Partnership Program pairs individual states with partner nations to establish long-term cooperative security relationships in support of the Geographic Combatant Commands. The State Partnership Program is a joint security cooperation enterprise highly regarded by U.S. ambassadors and Combatant Commanders around the world that has evolved over 20 years and currently consists

of 68 partnerships involving 74 countries. As a result of these strong military-to-military relationships, 15 partner nations - from Estonia to Jordan, from El Salvador to Poland - have paired up with our states and deployed 79 times together to Iraq and Afghanistan. National Guard Airmen and Soldiers participated in 739 State Partnership Program events across all combatant commands in Fiscal Year 2013 alone.

The three fundamental characteristics of the State Partnership Program that help define its success are, first and foremost, the enduring relationships fostered; the ability to share the National Guard's highly relevant domestic operations expertise; and lastly, the National Guard's interagency and inter-governmental role in response to domestic crises and disasters. Additional benefits of the State Partnership Program include economic co-development, educational exchanges, agricultural growth to build food security, and support to other federal agencies such as the State Department. National Guard civilian expertise in areas such as engineering, emergency management, infrastructure development and reconstruction are in significant demand within developing nations that are eager to partner with America, but require sustained trust-building engagements before relationships can realize their full potential. Some of today's state partnerships span more than 20 years. During that time, the individual careers of National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have matured alongside those of their counterparts in partner countries thereby creating enduring relationships. Overall, the complementary

nature of the National Guard's three core competencies provides a powerful security cooperation enabler for Combatant Commanders to employ.

We also serve our individual states and the nation from within the same communities where we live and work when out of uniform. The local relationships we forge with our public and private partners provide daily benefits that strengthen communities through programs such as Youth ChalleNGe – a successful community-based program that leads, trains, and mentors 16-18 year old high school dropouts. Over the past twenty-one years, 121,976 former dropouts have taken the “ChalleNGe” and demonstrated the program's success. These programs enable seamless public-private synergy.

### **Our People**

At the very heart of these core competencies is our most important resource – our people. The well being of our Soldiers, Airmen, their families and their employers remains a top priority for every leader throughout the National Guard. We will continue to aggressively work to eliminate sexual assault and suicides across the force and maintain faith with our people – the very same people who have put their faith in us.

### **Prevent Sexual Assault and Harassment**

Sexual assault is a crime, a persistent problem that violates everything we stand for. All of us have a moral obligation to protect our members from those who would attack their fellow service members and

betray the bonds of trust that are the bedrock of our culture.

Eliminating sexual assault in the National Guard remains a moral imperative, with leaders setting and enforcing standards of discipline, creating a culture that instills confidence in the system, and a no tolerance culture for inappropriate relationships or sexist behavior.

To assist us in preventing sexual assault and harassment, in August 2012 the National Guard Bureau established the Office of Complex Investigations within the Bureau's Judge Advocate's Office to assist the Adjutants General in responding to reports of sexual assault arising in a non-federal status. To date the Bureau has certified 92 specially trained investigators that are able to assist the states and to respond to their needs when an incident of sexual assault or harassment arises. The efforts of the Office of Complex Investigations to work in close collaboration with the State military leadership has been a tremendous success and invaluable enabler in assisting the 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia in addressing this most serious problem.

### **Suicide Prevention**

One of the strengths of the National Guard is that we are representative of our great American society. Unfortunately, this also means that the suicide trends our society struggles with are also present in the National Guard. While suicides in the Air National Guard are

decreasing, the Army National Guard rates remain high. Although there have been a below average number of Army National Guard suicides year to date in 2014, there were 119 suicides in 2013, the highest per year number over the past six years.

To better understand and address this serious issue we have taken a number of actions. We have reached out to the State Mental Health Directors and Commissioners for opportunities to partner with and establish relationships, which will allow us to ensure that appropriate state, local and community resources are available to our Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen. Furthermore, each state, territory and Air National Guard wing currently has a licensed behavioral health provider that provides clinical mental health assessments, education, information and referrals for our Soldiers and Airmen. These providers also act as subject matter expert advisors to our senior leaders. We are also working with the Air Force to learn from its superior suicide prevention program. Fortunately, Congress allocated \$10M for additional Army National Guard behavioral health counselors in the FY14 budget. The National Guard Bureau also has representation in suicide prevention at the DoD level where we participate on suicide prevention committees and councils, and to ensure we are getting the best information and the latest research. This is a complicated problem; however, I assure you that the National Guard will engage all support programs in order to work collaboratively to address this heartbreaking challenge.

## **National Guard Psychological Health Program**

Our Psychological Health Program provides ready access to high quality mental health services to our Airmen, Soldiers and their families. We provide support to our members in several ways. Our state Directors of Psychological Health (DPH) are very effective at directly addressing help-seeking behaviors and reducing stigma by educating all levels of leadership about psychological health as part of force readiness. In calendar year 2013 Air National Guard DPHs worked 3,500 clinical cases, 17,000 information and referrals visits, made 54,000 outreach contacts, mitigated 243 suicides and managed 336 high risk cases in the National Guard. We work closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to leverage services and support for our members by increasing access to behavioral healthcare and offering mental health vouchers through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Access to Recovery program. Through HHS, the Health Resources and Service Administration identifies specific federally funded health initiatives and programs to better support health care needs for the National Guard population, especially in remote, rural areas. Additionally, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, through our close working relationship with HHS, has trained all National Guard contracted counselors on the Affordable Care Act for Guardsmen who may be uninsured or under-insured. Finally, we have a total of 174 Army and Air National Guard mental health counselors throughout the



54 states, territories and the District of Columbia that are available to our Guardsmen who are in need of assistance.

### **National Guard Family Programs**

As Overseas Contingency Operations wind down in 2014, funding is also expected to decrease for our family readiness programs that are tied to the challenges our Guardsmen face when dealing with a deployment. Our lessons learned during the last 12 years have shown that we cannot go back to pre-9/11 assumptions with little to no support infrastructure for geographically-dispersed service members and their families. Our family programs leverage a network of strategic partnerships that enhance well-being through increased access to outreach services. For instance, 454 Army National Guard Assistance Center specialists and 91 Air National Guard Airman and Family Readiness Program Managers are spread throughout the nation and offer immediate outreach and referral for service members and families. Moreover, each of the 101 National Guard State Child and Youth Program Coordinators provide support to our service members' children that in 2013 saw more than 50,000 National Guard children participate in events such as youth camps and councils. Maintaining access to current services and resources, particularly those that build strong family and spouse relationships, and strengthen financial wellness and

employment will pay dividends in future years and will directly contribute to the readiness of our force.

### **Fiscal Challenges**

Before closing I would like to address the fiscal challenges we are facing. The investments made in the National Guard as an operational force have served the nation well over the past 12 plus years. None of this is possible without the support we have received from this Committee and our parent Services. However, the uncertain fiscal environment in the future will certainly impact the Guard. Secretary Hagel has already outlined the significant drawdown in force structure, including reductions in the Army and Air National Guard. Secretary Hagel has already outlined the significant drawdown in force structure, including reductions in the Army and Air National Guard. While the Congress provided relief in FY 14 and 15 with the Bipartisan Budget Act, the Budget Control Act remains the law. The failure to address the cuts required by the BCA will impact our ability to modernize and recapitalize our equipment, particularly in the Air National Guard. It will also degrade the readiness of the Army National Guard.

These fiscal challenges come at a time when we are faced with asymmetric and conventional threats from state and non-state actors; to include our physical environment. These challenges demand the full capability the National Guard currently provides, both at home and

overseas, and its ability to adapt to meet critical future missions. We can reduce the Force Structure of the Army Guard to 335,000 spaces, with an End Strength of 345,000 Army Guardsmen and still comply with the Defense Strategic Guidance; albeit at increased risk. Any cuts below this present too high of a risk in my view, not only in terms of the threats we face overseas, but also in the homeland.

**Closing Remarks: Always Ready, Always There**

The National Guard is always there when the nation calls. Whether serving in uniform or in their capacity as civilians, National Guardsmen are vested in a culture of readiness and volunteer service. Time and time again, I see examples of where innovative civilian skills complement military training in operations both overseas and at home. Likewise, the military expertise garnered from the past 12 years of consistent operational use has improved our ability to support the homeland. Whether responding to a manmade or natural disaster or planning for future emergencies with first responders, the unique combination of civilian and military experience pays tremendous dividends to the American taxpayer. Today's National Guard is flexible and scalable to America's changing needs on any given day. The National Guard has been and will remain "Always Ready, Always There" for our nation.

I want to thank you for your continued support of our Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen. I look forward to your questions.