

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

**PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT,
UNITED STATES SENATE**

SUBJECT: INSTALLATION READINESS HEARING

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**This statement represents the views of the witness and does not represent those
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BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the readiness of Air National Guard forces in relation to our facilities. I am Colonel Janice Stritzinger, the Civil Engineer for the Air National Guard. I lead an organization that operates \$12.6 billion in facilities supporting Air National Guard missions while protecting our forces and the environment. We develop policies and program resources to support nearly 108,000 Air National Guard men and women performing missions in support of the Air Force from over 170 locations.

We have concerns about the degraded condition of some of our facilities, about the limited resources to address these shortfalls, and the impact this has on our readiness, retention and recruiting. At the same time, we are very proud of our achievements in maximizing the limited funds we have been given and I would like to share these successes with you as well.

Overview

The Air National Guard is a constitutionally unique military organization with roots dating back to the very beginnings of our country and its militia. Our State and Federal missions are accomplished by 88 flying wings and 1,600 support units located at 173 locations in all 50 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia. The plant value of Air National Guard-managed real estate exceeds \$12.6 billion with over 4,800 facilities comprising in excess of 32 million square feet. We partner with 67 civilian airports that provide access to an additional \$4.4 billion in airfield infrastructure at a fraction of what it would cost us to own and operate it ourselves.

These facilities support a Total Force capability that is unrivaled in the world today. While comprising roughly 34 percent of the Air Force's mission capability, the Air National Guard specifically provides 100 percent of the Nation's air defense and 45 percent of the theater airlift mission to name a few. In addition to high visibility missions like last year's flight to the South Pole to rescue Dr. Gerri Nielsen, the Air Guard is a significant player in the Aerospace Expeditionary Force.

Air National Guard civil engineers make up 30 to 40 percent of the Air Force contingency engineering capability performing a variety of missions. Last summer, our units were actively involved in fighting the devastating fires in the west. Members of your committee visited our unit from Anchorage, Alaska while they were deployed in Equador. Less glamorous, but equally important, are routine training exercises performed here in the U.S. Unfortunately, 18 of our Red Horse engineering troops died in a plane crash while returning from such a training project in Florida. In visiting with the families, friends, and employers of these dedicated citizen airmen, I was encouraged by their continuing commitment to the mission. As senior leaders, we owe these troops the best possible resources to perform their jobs. One of those key resources is the installation they operate and train from.

Facilities in the Guard today run the gamut between deplorable and those which have won design and construction awards. As a direct result of Congressional support nearly 50 percent of the Air National Guard facilities are adequate. We know that given the funding, we can produce right-sized, efficient, quality work places for our airmen. However, there are three barriers that stand in

our way - an aging infrastructure, lack of sufficient funding, and the impact of new mission conversions.

Aging Infrastructure

The average age of an Air National Guard facility is 26 years. Our pavements are significantly older. Given the limited funding for real property maintenance, most of these facilities have had little regular maintenance. Imagine your house after 26 years with no new paint or carpet. The industry standard for replacement of facilities, otherwise known as the recapitalization rate, is 50 years. Our recapitalization rate is more than four times the industry standard. The Air National Guard has 1,460 facilities greater than 50 years old with a combined plant replacement value in excess of \$2.1 billion.

Other metrics used to describe the state of our facilities include the recently published installation readiness report. This report attempts to put a face on the relationship between facilities and unit readiness. It is a relatively new product and is still being refined, but the initial review of Air National Guard facilities is disturbing. It confirms our opinion that limited funding is resulting in facility system failures.

Lack of Sufficient Funds

The Air National Guard currently comprises 7 percent of the total Air Force plant replacement value (excluding the value of infrastructure at civilian airfields). Given projected funding each flying wing can expect one MILCON project every 22 years. This is simply insufficient to support our current facilities and cannot begin to address the many new mission requirements.

Our real property maintenance account is similarly stressed. With current funding allocations consisting of just one percent of the plant replacement value, each unit can expect to receive on average \$690,000 per year to maintain, repair and upgrade all facilities and infrastructure on the installation. A typical Guard base has 325,000 square feet of facilities and 125,000 square yards of pavement. Back to my example of your home, it would be difficult to maintain aged residential construction, much less an aircraft maintenance hangar, at only \$1 per square foot.

Some Air Force funding is targeted to replace “quality of life” facilities like dormitories and fitness centers. This is an important focus, but does not translate well into the Air National Guard. Our traditional guardsmen work for their civilian employers during the week, and dedicate their weekends and free time to serving the Air National Guard and our Nation. For them, quality of life is a quality workplace to train in and operate from. This translates into readiness. There is no accommodation for this “quality of life” so portions of the Air Force budget exclude the Air National Guard and do not benefit our military members.

At the 67 civilian airports we occupy, we occasionally participate in joint projects with the airport and the Federal Aviation Administration. These projects, referred to as military construction cooperative agreements, allow us to spend appropriated funds on non-federal property. This program is mutually beneficial to the airport, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Guard and the taxpayer, as it ultimately saves money for all parties. The difficulty lies in ownership of the real estate. Air Force funding is based on owned and leased real estate and facilities. All Air National Guard funds spent on these joint airport projects come from a

program, which is sized to support only the real estate we own or lease. As a result, every dollar spent on an airport is one dollar less available to fix our own failing infrastructure.

The bright spot in all these dire budget issues is the great support we have received from Congress. Assistance from Congress has accounted for over 70 percent of the Air National Guard MILCON program in the last several years. This support has ensured that critical current mission requirements are being addressed. It has allowed us to replace outdated, inefficient and unsafe facilities with modern quality facilities at a rate of 4 to 1. This means that for each new facility constructed, we have demolished four old facilities that were draining our resources.

New Mission Beddowns

We are currently programming and executing major new mission beddowns at five locations. Beddown construction is critical to reaching initial operational capability for the new weapon system, but the limited funding is making most facility projects "late to need." The beddown of our B-1 bomber unit at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia was started in 1994. We anticipate the final facility projects will not be complete until after fiscal year 2004 at best. We are using temporary trailers and facilities previously scheduled for demolition by Robins officials. Ten years to beddown a new mission is too long for personnel to train in borrowed and condemned facilities.

Additionally, future new missions have the potential to overwhelm our program. Given the historic funding of three to four projects per year our entire

President's Budget could be strictly new mission projects. Repair, upgrade and replacement of existing facilities will be delayed for many years.

Recruiting and retention are critical to all components, including the Guard and Reserve. For potential recruits, the face of the Guard is our installation facilities. If this face is a double-wide trailer, old, run down and in a state of disrepair, it will not entice the type of young person we need in our service today. This aspect of the link between quality facilities and readiness should not be underestimated.

Maximizing the Funds in Our Program

The challenge of maintaining facilities and readiness have also provided opportunities to excel. We have undertaken several initiatives within the Guard to get the most out of every dollar. We continue to pursue joint projects at every opportunity, have improved our execution strategies, and aggressively manage our funds to provide for reprogramming actions.

Joint Projects

The scoring process used to allocate limited Air Force MILCON funds does not readily support matching fiscal years on joint projects between components. To better achieve our joint goals, we worked with the Air Force Reserve to outline an extensive program of joint projects including dining halls, medical training facilities, troop quarters, and headquarters facilities. To facilitate advocacy, the Air National Guard was carrying the full scope for the project in our future years defense program. Language included in the FY01 SASC MILCON report 106-292 removed our ability to report unfunded requirements and, consequently, our ability

to show this joint project agenda. We are continuing to pursue the projects, but you will find pieces in each of our MILCON programs now.

Improved Execution Strategies

Since the large majority of our program comes through budget year decisions, we do not have the normal lead time for design and construction. We have taken steps to ensure projects are awarded in the first year of the appropriation so our people enjoy the benefit of their new facilities as quickly as possible. Our execution has improved dramatically in recent years.

Aggressive Management of Our Funds

The generous support of the Congress has also created a shortfall in planning and design funding. We have been successfully identifying savings in the construction program and gaining the requisite Congressional approval to apply them to these design needs. In addition, we have completed a \$12 million reprogramming action to buy out a large part of the backlog in unspecified minor construction. These relatively small projects are often the most beneficial to units executing a conversion. They can be executed more quickly than MILCON projects and tend to address the immediate needs of a unit. We are gradually increasing the baseline funding in this account, but need additional savings and Congressional approvals to sustain this program. Savings that had been earmarked for this account in FY 2001 were taken to pay the Congressionally mandated \$100 million recission.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to meet with you today. We do face some significant challenges in our attempts to support the Air National Guard's varied missions and readiness with adequate facilities. An aging infrastructure, low projected budgets, and large new mission beddown bills will continue to challenge us. Your tremendous support has been critical to our program and has touched virtually every person in our organization in one way or another. We will continue to take steps that maximize the effectiveness of the dollars we do receive. Again, thank you for this opportunity to present my views.