

STATEMENT BY

**KENNETH O. PRESTON
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY**

BEFORE THE

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Mr. Chairman and committee members, I want to thank you for this opportunity to sit before you today and represent the 1.1 million men and women of America's Army.

Your support in the past year and your continued support today have had a tremendous impact on our Army's ability to prevail in the Nation's war against terrorism. Your support allows us to ensure our Soldiers are fully prepared for their missions and to support their Family members who wait patiently for their Soldiers to come home.

First, I would like to introduce the Soldiers seated behind me, the Command Sergeant Major for the Army National Guard (ARNG), Command Sergeant Major John Gipe, who serves as the Senior Enlisted Advisor for LTG Clyde Vaughn; and the Command Sergeant Major for the Army Reserve, Command Sergeant Major Leon Caffie, who serves as the Senior Enlisted Advisor for LTG Jack Stultz. They represent more than 543,000 citizen-Soldiers who play a vital role in defending our Nation. These two men bring a "warrior focus" to their positions to ensure our Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers are trained and ready to deploy. They also represent the Army's 2008 Soldier and NCO of the Year winners. The Army's Soldier of the Year is SGT David Obray, from Fairmont, Minnesota, is a Construction Equipment Repair Specialist assigned to the 492d Engineer Company, 414th Engineer Command, Army Reserve. The Army's NCO of the Year, SSG Michael Noyce – Merino, from Melrose, Montana, is an Infantryman assigned to Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 163rd Cavalry Regiment, Montana National Guard. We are all very proud of these two Soldiers, their accomplishments and the role models they provide to all 1.1 million Soldiers serving our Nation.

Since 9/11, we have activated nearly 239,730 Reserve and 342,089 National Guard Soldiers in support of the Global War on Terror. Together they have been, and are, heavily engaged in both the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of operation, and supporting Homeland Security with missions ranging from missile defense, to supporting the US Border Patrol, and providing disaster relief.

Together with their active duty counterparts, the Guard and Reserve form a unified and dynamic team that brings unmatched skills enhancing our capability to fight and win. In fiscal year 2008 (FY08), our Reserve and National Guard partners provided nearly 95,094 Soldiers to the Nations defense.

Today, the American Soldier is busier than ever. We currently have more than 245,000 Soldiers forward deployed to 80 countries around the world. We have over 136,000 deployed to Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa in Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), multi-functional brigades, functional brigades and other force enabling units. Additionally, 258,000 Army Civilians are performing critical missions in support of the Army. More than 4,100 of our Civilians and more than 33,000 U.S. contractors are forward-deployed, performing vital missions abroad. In addition, there are 46,056 of our National Guard and 18,418 Reserve Soldiers mobilized today, serving all around the world and assisting with Homeland Security. These Soldiers provide the US border patrol with surveillance capabilities in Operation Jump Start in four states along the U.S - Mexico border. Soldiers deployed to the Horn of Africa are training the Djiboutian and other armies, while denying terrorists a sanctuary in which to run their terrorist camps. Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan take the fight to the enemy every day while recruiting, training, and equipping their armies and police forces to provide a safe and secure environment for their citizens.

During the past year, I traveled nearly 300,000 miles to visit, speak, and listen to Soldiers and their Families all over the world. I have seen daily the tremendous work and sacrifices of the American Soldier, their Families and our Army Civilians. The culture of innovation fostered by our young men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan continues to show the American spirit of ingenuity, even under the most challenging of environments.

GEN Casey, early in his tenure as our Army Chief of Staff, searched for a way to describe the state of our Army. He uses the term “out of balance.” We are not broken or hollow, but this era of persistent conflict has strained our Army resources; Soldiers, Families, and equipment, to a point where we are consumed by the demands of the current conflict. We define persistent conflict as protracted confrontations among state, non-state, and individual actors that are increasingly willing to use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends.

Globalization and emerging technologies will further exacerbate rather than ameliorate the tendency towards persistent conflict. While we have as a Nation the best military components of landpower in the world between the Army, the Marine Corps and the Special Operations Forces, we are not sufficient for victory by ourselves. We must integrate our capabilities with the efforts of the interagency, our allies, and our indigenous partners to exploit these collective capabilities across the full spectrum of operations. This year, we defined in our doctrinal Operations Manual, FM 3-0, that full spectrum operations are the simultaneous combination of offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations across the spectrum of conflict to achieve decisive results. We published FM 7-0, Training for Full Spectrum Operations this past year. One of the fundamentals in this manual is the elevation of stability operations to a level and focus consistent with offense and defense operations.

The Army has four strategic imperatives to restore balance and posture ourselves for the 21st century. These four imperatives; Sustain, Prepare, Reset, and Transform provide Army leaders, the Army staff, and the enabling and support network outside the Army an understanding of those needs to restore balance and posture ourselves for the 21st century. We must Sustain the Army's Soldiers, Families, and Civilians; continue to Prepare forces for success in the current conflict; Reset returning units to rebuild the readiness consumed in operations to prepare for future deployments and future contingencies; and Transform to meet the demands of the 21st century. With your support, we intend to restore balance to the Army, sustain our force and build both capability and capacity for future challenges.

Sustain

Recognizing the commitment and increasing sacrifices that our Families are making every day, on April 17, 2008, we launched the Army Community Covenant. The Army Community Covenant is a partnership with civic leaders at both local and state levels with our installation leaders. Local communities and installations signed more than 80 Community Covenants over the past year at all installations around the world. The Covenant recognizes the commitment Soldiers and their Families are making every day, and the strength of the Community comes from the support of Employers, Educators, Civic and Business leaders, and their Citizens, partnering with our installation leaders to enhance quality of life.

The Soldier Family Action Plan and Army Family Covenant build on our investments in Soldiers and Families. The Army Family Covenant continues to provide Soldiers and Families with a quality of life that is commensurate with their quality of service they provide to the Nation. The Army Family Covenant conveys our commitment in seven general areas: standardizing Family programs; increasing access and quality of health

care; improving Soldier and Family housing; ensuring excellence in our schools, youth services, and child care facilities; expanding education and employment opportunities for Family Members; improving Soldier quality of life in recreation, travel, and the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program; and improving relationships with local communities and marketplaces. In FY08, the Army committed \$1.4 billion to our existing Family Programs creating an immediate, positive impact on our Families.

Thirty-six states now provide in-state tuition rates to military Families. We hired more than 1,000 new Family Readiness Support Assistants to provide additional support to Family Readiness Groups in deployable units across the Army. We supported 249 enduring Army National Guard Family Assistance Centers to assist Soldiers and Families in accessing support services regardless of their geographic locations.

We created 36 Warrior Transition Units to support more than 11,000 wounded, ill, or injured Soldiers, with a singular focus on warrior healing and support to their Army Families. We established 9 community-based health care organizations to help our wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers focus on their treatment, rehabilitation, and transition. We enhanced care for mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and conducted a TBI/PTSD chain teaching program for all Soldiers and Families. The chain teaching program focused on educating Soldiers and leaders about the symptoms of TBI/PTSD and to work towards eliminating the stigma associated with asking for help.

We implemented the Intervene, Act, Motivate (I. A.M. Strong) Campaign with a goal of eliminating sexual harassment and sexual assault. In FY09, we committed \$1.5 billion for all Family Programs at our installations. The increase in Family Programs supports our commitment to the Army Family and Community Covenants to enhance quality of life programs in support of Soldiers and Families during this era of persistent conflict.

Military families routinely move from installation to installation both here in the U.S. and overseas. These frequent moves pose unique challenges to the Families of school aged children. These challenges include the transfer of records and credit, course sequencing, graduation requirements, redundant or missed entrance exams, and kindergarten and first grade entrance age variations. The average military child averages two moves during their high school years and can experience six to nine different school systems in their lives from kindergarten through 12th grade. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in cooperation with the Council of State Governments, drafted an interstate compact that addresses these issues.

The Compact is now active in 11 states. I ask your support and emphasis for this critical state legislation as it deals directly with our school-aged children, removes barriers to educational success imposed on the children of all Military Families, and allows for a more uniformed treatment of Military children transferring between school districts and states.

Army Child and Youth Service (CYS) Programs are an immeasurable force multiplier. CYS is mission essential for our Soldiers and Families in helping to reduce the conflict between their responsibilities as parents and their mission as Soldiers. Several factors contribute significantly to the necessity of child care and youth supervision for our Families. Military Families are generally younger than the average American family and are often separated from their own extended family support system. Forty-eight percent of Soldiers who deploy have children under the age of two. Soldiers' duties require child care and youth supervision options up to 10 to 14 hours a day including early mornings, evenings, and weekends. Remote duty stations and overseas locations often lack adequate care options, when one spouse deploys we create a geographical single parent. Last year, Child, Youth and School Services expanded deployment cycle support by increasing operating hours for Child and

Youth Service Programs and increased respite care from 5 to 16 hours per child per month. Child Development Centers offer more hourly and respite child care services to help parents and guardians find the time to address personal needs such as medical appointments or to have a break from the stress of being a geographical single parent during the deployment cycle. Families of deployed Soldiers have the opportunity to access and receive respite child care at no cost. CYS eliminated registration fees and reduced other program fees to ease the financial burden of Families. CYS increased support for Warriors in Transition such as no-cost hourly child care to Families and caregivers during medical appointments. To help meet the increasing demand for available spaces, the Army added 72 centers in FY08.

Since Army Child and Youth Programs are critical to the Army's All Volunteer Force, we plan to construct 8 permanent Child Development Centers in FY09. The Army Chief of Staff directed that Army Child Care Programs reach an end state of providing 80 percent of the demand by the end of FY09 (from an original target date of FY13). Soldiers consistently rate these two programs as important to their Family's quality of life and heavily weight these programs to their decision to remain with the Army Team. Army Child and Youth Programs send a clear message that the Army cares about Families, wants to minimize Soldier and spouse lost duty time, wants to influence Soldier and spouse decisions to stay with the Army team, to allow Soldiers and spouses to concentrate on their jobs, and provide positive growth and development opportunities for children.

Military One-Source continues to be a multi-component approach for community support and services to meet the diverse needs of Soldiers and Families. The Army further developed Army One Source (AOS) to provide Soldiers and their Families the service specific care they require to

sustain themselves. AOS will integrate Family Programs and services for all Active, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers, and Families. AOS provides Soldiers and their Families single portal access for all programs and services. AOS provides 24-hours a day, 7-days per week toll-free information, referral telephone line and internet based services. Over the next year, we will release the eArmy Family Messaging System, a key component of AOS. The eArmy Family Messaging System is a state of the art, multi-media tool for deployed commanders to improve communication with Army Soldiers and Family members at home by mail and Short Message Service (SMS) text messages. AOS provides 14 baseline services at the installations' Army Community Services office, National Guard Family Assistance Centers and Reserve Readiness Centers. In FY08, AOS received more than 20 million visitors per month. To date, there are more than 115,000 registered users Army wide.

Our Installations are the Army home to our American Soldiers. The quality of life for all our Soldiers and Families is an inseparable element of our readiness posture. To improve quality of life, we focused our initiatives and our resources on the areas most important to our Soldiers and Families.

Forty-five percent of our current force is single. For these Soldiers, we are in the late stages of our ambitious barracks modernization program. At the end of FY09, 50,769 out of 170,000 (33 percent) of our barracks will meet a 1+1 or equivalent standard greatly enhancing their living standards. Experience has shown us that high-quality; safe and modern barracks significantly increase Soldiers' morale and quality of life and supports our retention needs. With our FY09 through FY13 appropriation request, we will reach our target goal of 147,700 Soldiers living in modernized barracks. We are presently conducting a pilot program for privatized housing for single Soldiers at five locations. Forts Irwin, Drum, Bragg, Stewart, and Bliss do not have affordable or available housing off the installation to support single NCOs and officers who

receive a housing allowance. These locations are ideal to conduct a pilot program and test the privatized barracks concept with a private partner.

One of today's challenges is keeping our training barracks safe while meeting the needs of our Soldiers in Initial Entry Training (IET) on their journey to become permanent party Soldiers. Today, there are four Army Training Centers with IET barracks. In FY08, Army funded \$1.37 billion the Training Barracks Upgrade Program (T-BUP) to improve training barracks for Active, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers. In FY09, the Army funded \$748.1 million in the SRM and MILCON dollars to construct, renovate, and modernize our training barracks. At the end of FY09, the Army will have 50,329 of 121,413 of our training barracks spaces adequately funded for modernization. Unfortunately, some Soldiers still reside in WWII-era barracks. We must also consider the permanent increase to the Army's end strength over the next several years.

I ask for your continued support in making certain we can complete our barracks modernization program. This program will ensure all of our single Soldiers have a living standard we can be proud of.

One of the Army's key strategies to improve Family housing is the application and use of privatized housing where practical. The Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) is providing quality, modern state of art housing in communities that our Soldiers and their Families can proudly call home. RCI became a critical component in our effort to eliminate inadequate Family housing and has made a significant positive impact in improving our Soldiers' and Families' quality of life. At the end of FY08, we privatized 83,080 homes at 38 installations. By the end of FY09, we project that privatized housing through RCI will include over 89,000 homes at 45 installations, or 98% of our inventory. Our RCI program began in 1999, and is on a glide path to successful completion. Following this year's privatization schedule, we plan to complete privatization with Fort Richardson in March 2010. Our housing strategy is working!

Recruiting and Retention

The Army is a people-centric organization; therefore Soldiers are the centerpiece of our formations. We cannot fight and win without well-trained, motivated, and dedicated Soldiers.

In FY08, we recruited 169,859 young men and women across all three components – Active, Guard and Reserve. The active Army recruited over 80,000, the National Guard 62,000 and the Reserve over 26,000 Soldiers. This incredible accomplishment, while fighting the Global War on Terror, is directly attributed to the hard work of our recruiters, the support of our Army leaders, elected officials, and the support of the Nation.

With your support, we designed and implemented programs that assist our recruiting efforts. The Sergeant Major of the Army Recruiting Team (SMART) program received 54,716 referrals, which resulted in 10,761 new enlisted Soldiers. The Active First Program helps recruit Soldiers for the active Army via the National Guard.

Under this program, the Guard recruits Soldiers who will commit to 30, 36, or 48 months' active duty in service needed military occupational specialties (MOSs). These Soldiers then continue their service in the Army National Guard (ARNG). The program applies to new recruits with no prior military service filling shortage or critical MOSs. Bonuses are paid when a Soldier reaches his/her first duty station after completing Initial Entry Training. After active duty, a Soldier has two options: re-enlist in the active Army or transition back to the ARNG. The Active First Program began on October 4, 2007, and produced 1,604 enlistments in FY08 and 303 enlistments this year. Early indications reflect we are on track to meet or exceed our recruiting goals for FY09.

Army retention programs are also a success story as the Army continues to retain Soldiers at tremendously high levels. Since 2002, our retention rates remain high and we have met our retention goals each year since 1998. In 2008, we exceeded our retentions goals in the active

component by 14 percent and 11 percent in the Army Reserve. The National Guard intentionally finished the year at 93 percent to maintain their authorized end strength cap. The first 3 months of FY09 have been the most successful retention period in Army Retention history. Retention success is directly attributed to our Army leaders throughout our units and organizations and the command climate they create, coupled with a satisfaction of job placement and unit missions around the world, and the quality of life provided for the Soldiers and their Families, as good or better than they could provide for themselves working in the civilian sector.

We have recently seen deployed units or units currently deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan with reenlistment rates at 110-120% of their yearly goals. To date, the 4th Infantry Division completed 96% of their entire FY09 mission while deployed in Iraq already this year. In another example, 1,215 troops reenlisted in Baghdad on Independence Day this past year, resulting in the largest reenlistment ceremony since the all-volunteer force began in 1973. We must continue to retain our best and most experienced Soldiers to sustain our Army and win the Global War on Terror. Commanders and Senior Leaders will continue to focus on retaining our very best Soldiers. We will closely monitor our selective reenlistment bonus programs and our Critical Skills Retention Bonus program. We appreciate your continued support to our recruiting and retention efforts as they allow us to sustain this quality all volunteer force.

Prepare

We must prepare our force by readying Soldiers, units and equipment to succeed in the current strategic and operational environments, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. We continue to adapt institutional, collective, and individual training to enable Soldiers to succeed in combat and prevail against highly adaptive and intelligent adversaries. Ensuring Soldiers have the best available equipment to protect themselves and maintain technological advantages over our

adversaries is our focused commitment. We improved training facilities progressively over the last several years at home station and at our combat training centers. We increased realism and incorporated challenging irregular warfare scenarios.

Army Mobile Training Teams can, for some MOS technical courses, provide training at their home duty station. This initiative, when applicable, works to provide needed professional development while keeping the Soldiers home at night with their Families. Our professional development for Soldiers continues to improve cultural and foreign language skills. We initiated a Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program to strengthen the fitness and resiliency of our Soldiers to include their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. The strategy will enhance resilience, or the ability to recover from an adverse event or experience, including combat and life experience.

We have seen an increase in the suicide rate for the fourth consecutive year. Over the past two years, we increased our efforts, enhanced resources and initiatives to mitigate the cause of suicidal behavior. We will conduct a stand-down within a 30-day window from February 15 to March 15 to identify Soldiers at risk for suicide. The stand-down includes training for peer-level recognition of behaviors that may lead to suicidal behavior, and intervention at the lowest level. A chain teaching program will follow the stand-down from March 15 to June 15 to ensure we touch every Soldier and leader in the Active, Guard and Reserve. The Army's BATTLEMIND training prepares Soldiers and their Families for the stressors of deployment and combat while assisting with the detection of possible mental health issues before and after deployment. BATTLEMIND training prepares Soldiers and their leaders for reintegration to home following a combat deployment. We are teaching life-long skills to Soldiers, Leaders and Families.

"Strong Bonds" is a specialized training program for single Soldiers, couples, and Families to assist them with their communications to improve

relationships and build skills that enhance relationships and strengthen resiliency. On October 23, 2008, the Army and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) signed a five year memorandum of agreement to conduct research to help reduce the suicide rates. It will be the largest single study on suicide that NIMH has ever undertaken.

Our Soldiers are better equipped today as individuals, teams and squads than they have been in our 233 history. This past year, we invested heavily to ensure all Soldiers receive the latest force protection equipment and high-quality gear. The Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) program accelerates the fielding of commercial, off-the-shelf technologies to quickly deliver essential equipment to Soldiers before they deploy. RFI leverages current development programs, lessons learned from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and commercial, off-the-shelf technology to give Soldiers increased survivability, lethality, and mobility.

To maintain currency and relevance, the RFI list of equipment issued to Soldiers is updated regularly by the Training and Doctrine Command. This past year, we added the mountaineering boot to better support Soldiers operating in the mountains, a moisture wicking sports bra, and the Army Combat Shirt (ACS) designed for wear under the body armor.

Current individual protective equipment now includes the Improved Outer Tactical Vest (IOTV) and Enhanced Small Arms Protective Inserts (ESAPI), and the Fire Resistant Army Combat Uniform, (FR ACU). The IOTV is more than three pounds lighter than its predecessor, designed in 11 sizes, is designed to fit Soldiers better by utilizing multiple adjustment points that improve weight distribution, has a mesh lining for better ventilation, provides an increased area of protection coverage, and features a quick release handle to allow Soldiers to instantly remove the vest in emergency situations. IOTV provides improved protection against multiple small arms. We are currently at 100% in fielding the IOTV and ESAPI to all Soldiers in all theaters of operations. In September 2008, we

established a Non-Destructive Test Evaluation (NDTE) Plate Inspection Facility in Kuwait.

The NDTE is a reception area that provides an X-rays inspection of all ESAPI when Soldiers return from theater to ensure the integrity of the plate has not been compromised. This year, we will establish a NDTE facility in Afghanistan and position five NDTE facilities stateside. The Army Combat Helmet (ACH) with Pad System provides increased ballistic and concussive protection. The seven pad suspension system, with four-point harness, improves the center of balance, provides better comfort, improves situational awareness, and enables Soldiers to aim and fire weapons from the prone firing position without interference from the IOTV.

Everyday, Soldiers are patrolling the roads in armored wheeled vehicles in Baghdad, Bagram, and all points between. The Army leadership continues to work initiatives to support fielding of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, add-on armor kits to improve the current fleet of vehicles, aircraft survivability equipment, electronic countermeasures and combating improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Currently, we have 11,998 MRAPs in theater and they are saving Soldier's lives. In addition, we have over 57,000 armored, light medium and heavy tactical wheeled vehicles in theater supporting operations.

The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) has been instrumental in identifying the tactics, techniques, and procedures, what we call TTPs, of how the enemy employs IEDs and how we counter that threat. IEDs are the number one terrorist weapon used worldwide. Our Soldiers are learning the enemy's TTPs for using IEDs at our Combat Training Centers around the world before deploying to combat.

Our training focus and our in theater strategy is focused on defeating the entire IED system – from individual force protection, to finding the IEDs before they explode, to identifying the network of bomb suppliers and makers, and the insurgents that emplace the devices. Since 2005, we

have had increasing success in countering IEDs by attacking their network, defeating devices, and training our force. Continued support by Congress will ensure that Soldiers, regardless of component, deploy with superior equipment and capabilities.

The Rapid Equipping Force (REF) partners with industry, academia, and military leaders in supporting our Soldiers' equipping needs. They provide commercial, off-the-shelf and government, off-the-shelf solutions to meet commanders' needs in Theater.

Reset

Eight years of combat operations is taking a toll on our people and equipment. The pace and tempo of combat operations over a calendar year in Iraq and Afghanistan exceed the planned annual tempo of our combat ground and aircraft equipment. Resetting this equipment every couple of years is critical to our Nation's readiness and requires timely and adequate funding while we are in a state of persistent conflict with Soldiers deployed. Our ability to continue our Reset programs will determine our readiness and versatility for future contingencies. This year, we reset nearly 125,000 pieces of equipment and intend to sustain this pace for as long as troop deployment levels remain consistent. The maintenance activities and capacity of our Army depots increased to their highest levels in the past 35 years. The Army Material Command has done a magnificent job resetting all types of equipment with increased speed, quantity, and quality of material delivered back to the field.

We recognized this past year that we needed standardized reset process. In FY08, we initiated a six-month reset model program for 13 units: eight Active and five Reserve Component units. These units have no readiness requirements or Army-directed training for 6 months in Active duty units and 12 months in Reserve Component units. This 6-month period allows units to focus on Soldier and Family integration, professional and personal education, property accountability, and equipment

maintenance. The reset program increases reintegration time for our Soldiers and Families.

Transform

For the past five years, we worked to transform our Army from a division-centric, Cold War-focused Army to a more modular force that is made up of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs). In FY08, we completed the conversion of 46 brigades to a modular structure. We are presently about 84% through the largest organizational change of the Army since WWII. As we expand the number of units, our deployable force pool increases. Having a larger pool of deployable units allows us to increase Soldiers' time at home between deployments, and gives us more predictability for Soldiers and their Families. This predictability and stability helps sustain our All Volunteer Force. In conjunction with our modular transformation, we are rebalancing our units to prepare the Army for full spectrum operations. We are 60 percent complete in our efforts to rebalance job skills required to meet the challenges of our new unit modular units and the 21st century.

Future Combat Systems (FCS) is the cornerstone of Army modernization. FCS accelerates the delivery of advanced technologies to Soldiers through a process known as spin-outs. This aggressive fielding schedule, coupled with a tailored test and evaluation strategy, ensures Soldiers receive reliable, proven equipment. As these systems complete their testing, we field this equipment to the Soldiers on the ground. Several prototype systems are in use in combat and they are saving lives. We unveiled the FCS Non-Line-of-Sight Cannon (NLOS-C) on September 23 this past year. The NLOS-C was the first prototype of the common-chassis manned ground vehicle that will become the basis for future BCTs.

In January 2007, Congress authorized a 74,200 increase in the Army end strength; 65,000 in the Active; 8,200 in the Guard; and 1,000 in the Reserve, with a manning goal of 2012 for the Active and 2013 for the Guard and Reserve. In September 2007, the Army accelerated Active and Guard manning levels to 2010. This brings the end strength to 547,000 in the Active, 358,200 in the Guard, and 206,000 in the Reserve. We expect to meet or exceed our accelerated growth objectives in 2009.

The Way Ahead

In closing, I want to stress the amazing work being done by our Soldiers and Army Civilians around the globe. They represent what is best of our Nation and work to build lasting relationships wherever they deploy. We have come to know this generation of heroes as the “Next Greatest Generation.” Like their predecessors of an earlier global conflict, the impact of their service will be felt for many years to come. Every generation has its heroes, and this one is no different.

Throughout this last year, many of you have traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan and seen the many great things our Soldiers accomplish every day. You know our young men and women are working to ensure the security and stability of Nations abroad and ultimately ours.

We announced 2009 as the Year of the NCO. During this year, we will accelerate previously approved strategic NCO development initiatives that enhance training, education, capability, and utilization of our NCO Corps. We will showcase the NCO story for the Army and the American people to honor the sacrifices and celebrate the contributions of the NCO Corps, past and present.

Our NCOs lead the way in education, in training, in discipline. They share their strength of character with every Soldier they lead, every officer they serve, and every civilian they support.

Thank you again for your continued support of our Soldiers and their Families. We have made great strides by your commitment to improve

their quality of life. We still have challenges but with your help, I am positive we can continue to take care of our Army family.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak before you today and represent "America's Army" and all it stands for. Thank you.