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STATEMENT BY

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL H STEVEN BLUM
CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU**

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the state of readiness in the Army and Air National Guard. The Army and Air National Guard are engaged with our active component Army and Air Force counterparts in combat operations. War is never cheap, easy or pleasant. You can be proud that the citizen-soldiers and airmen of your Army and Air National Guard are ready to answer the Nation's call to arms. The National Guardsmen who are mobilized and deployed overseas are superbly trained and equipped. Like their active duty counterparts, they are unquestionably the best trained and best equipped American fighting force in history. For more the past 15 years, the National Guard has consistently delivered trained and ready units to the Army and Air Force when called on to do so. Over the past four years, this pace has been intense. The ongoing operational tempo and, in the case of the Army National Guard, the need to cross-level personnel and equipment from non-deploying units to increase readiness of deploying units has resulted in a situation in which readiness of our units here at home has declines over time. We are prepared to provide additional details on this situation.

I am honored to have with me today Lieutenant General Clyde A. Vaughn, Director, Army National Guard and Lieutenant General Craig R. McKinley, Director, Air National Guard. Together we will address your concerns regarding readiness in the Army and Air National Guard.

Recent Mobilization Policy Changes

On January 11, the Secretary of Defense announced his decision to limit Guard and Reserve mobilizations to 12 months is truly historic. It demonstrates

his willingness to listen to advice, the courage to make tough decisions, and the commitment to do what is right. His new mobilization policy will have significant positive long-term effects on personnel readiness, employer, family and public support.

The United States has made a commitment of national effort that requires military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere around the globe. The fulfillment of those commitments demands that our Total Force -- active duty, National Guard and reserve components -- all be brought to bear on the task at hand. This is a "long war." In addition to the execution of our overseas operational requirements, Army forces must also be reset and transformed during periods between deployments. These are tough challenges. We must pace ourselves accordingly. The burden cannot be carried by the active component alone. The National Guard is committed to doing its part as a full partner in the Total Force. We have carried a fair share of the burden so far. We intend to continue to carry our fair share the rest of the way. No one will dispute that the task before us in Iraq is a difficult one and that the path to success is long and hard.

The benefit of remobilizing the National Guard is that the tough duty along that path will be shared. The citizen-soldier will stand with his active duty comrade to accomplish the mission. This allows active duty forces to rest, reset and transform to be ready to fight again.

Is it tough? Yes, it is. Can we do it? Yes, we can. The National Guard today is a veteran force. America's citizen-soldiers are up to the task.

The National Guard's equipment needs

The President's budget request is now before the Congress. That request includes an unprecedented commitment and investment by the Army to improve the equipment readiness of the Army National Guard. The president's budget also seeks the funding needed for the Air National Guard to continue to be fully-integrated modern total force partner for the Air Force. It is imperative that the National Guard receives the full support of Congress for every penny in that request.

Last year, Congress provided \$150 million for Army and Air National Guard in the National Guard and Reserve Equipment account. Millions more were provided in Service procurement accounts. In addition, Congress also provided another \$500 million as part of the broader Army reset funds. This was still extremely helpful in addressing the equipment needs of our citizen-soldiers. The National Guard is tremendously grateful for this support. I must implore this committee, in the strongest possible way, to remain steadfast in your dedication to addressing the persistent equipment shortfalls we face.

This is absolutely critical.

The Army Force Generation model works on the assumption that units have the equipment needed for training. This model is going to be less effective if this assumption is not met. Currently the Army National Guard has on-hand only 40% of its equipment requirement and an additional 11% is either deployed or stay – behind -- equipment. This hinders the ability of our units to train. It also can slow our response to disasters and terrorist incidents in the homeland, as equipment may need to be brought into an affected area from further away.

Improved equipping strengthens readiness for both overseas and homeland missions but it also reduces stress on the people in our ranks. With more equipment on-hand, we can conduct more and better training at home station.

If we are to be successful in our goal of providing our soldiers a shorter total mobilization period and maximize time in theater for the combatant commander, it is imperative that we reduce post-mobilization training time prior to deployment and accomplish more of it at home station prior to the mobilization to active duty. We need the equipment to do that training. If units train regularly at home station with the best equipment, then little training is needed in the post-mobilization period immediately prior to deployment. A 100% optimally equipped Army National Guard will allow training, possible homeland missions, and deployments to all occur simultaneously.

The Army National Guard's equipment needs are critical, but we can't ignore the needs of the Air National Guard. They also simultaneously perform both State and Federal operations ranging from domestic and global humanitarian efforts to homeland defense and the Global War on Terrorism.

For FY08, the Air National Guard has identified modernization and recapitalization shortfalls in Precision Engagement, Datalink/Combat Identification, 24-hour operations, and Enhanced Survivability. All shortfalls are founded on validated Air Force and Combatant Commander Requirements, vetted through a forum of reserve component and active duty warfighters at our annual Weapons & Tactics Conference.

In addition to the Air National Guard equipment needs, we have identified Air Guard funding challenges in the areas of transformation, Total Force Integration (TFI), Base Realignment and Closure Implementation, new mission bed down, recruiting, retraining, and other program shortfalls.

Efforts to assure stronger unit cohesion

From the very beginning of the War on Terrorism, the Army National Guard has provided forces in every package and manner requested. When tailored forces were required, we tailored them. At the beginning of the war, however, we were still structured as a strategic reserve in the Cold War model. For the Global War on Terrorism, the need is for fully manned and equipped units. To achieve this, we had to pull people and equipment from non-deploying units to fill those slated for deployment. This hurt unit cohesion and ruined the readiness of the non-deploying unit. When that unit later was selected for deployment, it required even more people and equipment to be brought in. Cross-leveling people and equipment to solve problems in the short term causes serious troubles in the long term and must be stopped.

The case of 162nd Infantry of the Oregon Army National Guard illustrates the issue. The unit is the subject of the book, "The Devil's Sandbox" by historian John R. Brunning. When one battalion from the 162nd Infantry was alerted for an overseas mission, volunteers from the other two battalions jumped into the deploying one. Months later, a second battalion received a mission. By the time the third battalion received its mission to fight in Iraq, there were few soldiers still in it – they had been piecemealed away. If all three battalions had a predictable schedule this could have been avoided.

Military leaders know, however, that units are more effective and soldiers more steadfast when unit cohesion is preserved. We must move away from the piecemeal, last minute approach of building units out of individuals. We must move toward having cohesive units who train together, fight together, and come home together. We must deploy units as units, not as ad hoc, last minute collections of individuals.

The Secretary of Defense's new mobilization policy takes us in a powerful step in that direction. Additionally, we have reorganized our Army National Guard forces, eliminating hollowness in those of our units which we plan to

mobilize and deploy. These are now full formations. They contain veterans and they contain new soldiers, many of them brought into our ranks by our highly successful Guard Recruiting Assistance Program and by the recruiting and retention bonuses and other incentives helpfully provided by Congress.

For the Air National Guard, the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) construct has helped tremendously by making it possible for our Airmen to forecast the likelihood of deployments. This affords them the opportunity for advance planning and in a vast majority of cases we encourage the use of volunteerism to decrease the number of mobilization requirements. This construct has worked well for the Air Force, their needs and deployment styles are different from the Army, our Air National Guard forces have deployed within the AEF system successfully since its inception. In fact, since 9-11, approximately 50,000 Air National Guard members have been mobilized and more than 60,000 volunteered for deployment within the AEF construct. Some low-density, high-demand career fields such as Security Forces, Airlift and rescue units are feeling a greater strain. We need to ensure that programs such as bonuses for Airmen in these careers are fully funded to help relieve stress and enable increased recruiting into these needed areas.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, your National Guard is fully up to the task of answering the call to duty. At the National Guard Bureau, we are absolutely committed to working closely with the Services to effectively implement fresh ideas and new approaches to meet the challenges we face today in such a way that our citizen-soldiers can be trained and ready to serve and that their service will be of a nature that they will continue to serve for years to come.

We are grateful for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. We welcome your questions.