

**VERBAL TESTIMONY OF**  
**SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY KENNETH O. PRESTON**  
**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR**  
**Washington D.C.**

**25 February 2009**

Chairman Miller, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to sit before you today and discuss National Service.

President John F. Kennedy said during his January 20, 1961 Inaugural Address "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." It is our responsibility as Americans to volunteer our time and efforts towards making both the Nation and our local communities better places to live and thrive. This holds true from a global perspective as America is a member of the global community and are efforts that ultimately have a positive impact here at home. Today we are focusing on national service which is often defined as volunteering one's time and efforts to a cause greater than one's self. This past July we celebrated the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our All-volunteer force.

Today, the Army has more than 247,000 Soldiers forward deployed to 80 countries around the world. We have more than 135,600 Soldiers currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. In addition, there are 51,000 of our National Guard and 28,500 Reserve Soldiers mobilized today, serving all around the world and assisting with Homeland Security.

The Army's mission is to fight and win our Nation's wars. The Army's capabilities provide the Nation with support across the full spectrum of conflict. This full spectrum includes general war to stability and civil operations to humanitarian relief. This is more than combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Full spectrum includes border patrol along the Mexican border to weather disasters in New Orleans and Kentucky.

Careers in the Army are more than the infantry Soldier and tank commander in Iraq and Afghanistan. We offer 28 Career Management Fields with 221 Military Occupational Specialties. These specialties range from general construction, veterinarian to diver and multimedia illustrator.

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. Army retention programs are also a success story as the Army continues to retain Soldiers at tremendously high levels. 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.

These incredible accomplishments, while fighting the Global War on Terror, are directly attributed to the hard work of our recruiters, the support of our Army leaders, elected officials, and the support of the Nation.

Throughout history, volunteers played an integral role in the life of Soldiers and their Families. In the early years of our country volunteers mended uniforms, cared for the sick and wounded, and comforted Families of fallen Soldiers. Today our volunteers are found throughout the military community. Soldiers, civilians, retirees, spouses and youth provide services in schools, in hospitals, on sports fields, and in many other

organizations and offices. Through their dedicated service, volunteers transform military installations into communities. Each military community has an Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator (AVCC) who is responsible for volunteer activities in and around their area. Army Community Service is one of many installation organizations that has a volunteer program. They come to us from both the active and reserve components. The common bond of these volunteers is the desire to help meet the needs of Army community members. Their desire is to assist ACS in its Mission of "Self-Help, Service and Stability." The ACS has more than 10,000 volunteers who contribute approximately 1 million hours of service.

I am proud that this year we will celebrate 2009 as the Year of the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps. During this year, we will recognize the leadership, professionalism, commitment, courage and dedication of the NCO Corps. Recently GEN Casey, Chief of Staff, Army stated he believed the NCO Corps was the glue holding our Army together. The NCO Corps is the reason behind our success on the battlefield today and is the standard to which other nations' armies aspire. NCOs provide invaluable service and have made great sacrifices in the line of service. NCOs continually prove

their dedication to service and a willingness to make great sacrifices on behalf of our Nation. We also seek to **inform** the American People of the roles, responsibilities and the quality of service of our NCO Corps. NCOs provide inspiration and motivation. NCOs are outstanding role models for all Americans and are exemplary subjects that are truly representative of the Nation's moral character and strength for all men, women and children. During the course of this year we will continue to **enhance** our NCO Corps' education, fitness, leadership development, and pride in service through the implementation of programs and policies that support the sustainment and growth of our NCO Corps.

Mr. Chairmen, committee members, thank you. I look forward to your questions.