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FOR THE RECORD

STATEMENT BY

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

BEFORE THE

**SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE**

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ON

READINESS OF THE ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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Chairman Inouye 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. 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. In the past four years, the increased 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 decline of readiness for units here at home.

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. Congress also provided another \$500 million as part of the broader Army reset funds. This was 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.

The Secretary of Defense's decision to limit Guard and Reserve mobilizations to 12 months is truly historic. His new mobilization policy will have significant positive long-term effects on personnel readiness, unit cohesion, and employer, family and public support. In order to give 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.

In FY08, the Air National Guard is accepting risk in its modernization and recapitalization programs such as Precision Engagement, Datalink/Combat Identification, 24-hour operations, and Enhanced Survivability. 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.

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.