

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Durbin, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is a pleasure to be here today with my fellow National Guard and Reserve Leaders.

Always Ready, Always There ... this is the motto of America's National Guard. It embodies the character and spirit of all those who have served in the National Guard from its founding in 1636 to those serving today. From militia companies mustering on village greens in response to Paul Revere's warning, to the ever-evolving and complex world that we live in today, the National Guard is more resilient, relevant and ready than ever before.

Since assuming my duties as Chief of the National Guard Bureau last summer, I have traveled and talked to the men and women of our National Guard serving in the homeland and abroad. The locations were different and the missions varied, but what I took away from each encounter was the pride I felt in our Guard members and the dedication each of them exhibited in serving their communities, their states and our nation. Today's National Guard is the finest we have ever had.

Our security environment is more dynamic and complex and our nation places greater reliance on its National Guard. This is why my focus every day is to ensure we are ready and we have the resources to accomplish our three core missions -- fighting America's wars, securing the homeland, and building enduring partnerships at the local, state, Federal and international levels.

WARFIGHT

Fighting America's wars and defending our nation must be our primary mission. From Brigade Combat Teams deploying on schedule to get into the fight as fast as air and sea lift can move them, to flying manned and unmanned platforms anywhere around the world – we are the primary combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force.

After 9/11, our National Guard began its transition to the operational force it is today. Since then, Guard members have deployed more than 850,000 times to locations such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, the Balkans, Guantanamo Bay, and the Sinai. Today, we are an operational force that fights seamlessly with the joint force. With the implementation of Total Force initiatives with the Army and Air Force, we are more closely integrated than ever before.

Our interoperability with the joint force will deepen and evolve as we confront future threats – threats that are now global, emanate from all domains, and are adaptable and multi-functional in their forms. Only a well-integrated and well-trained force will keep our nation safe and secure our national interests.

On any given day, the National Guard has approximately 18,000 Soldiers and Airmen mobilized in support of combatant command missions overseas. During my visits with our men and women, I was told time and again they wanted to do more and they were not tired. I know we can judiciously increase our deployment numbers to relieve stress on active duty forces and help them grow readiness to address emerging threats.

HOMELAND

Here in the homeland, the National Guard is the nation's primary military crisis response force. We use the experience and capabilities we gain from combat to respond to threats here at home such as Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) attacks, large scale natural disasters, and cyber-attacks.

In order to be more prepared and have the ability to respond quickly and effectively, the National Guard Bureau initiated an All-Hazards Support Plan to help state Adjutants General plan and execute response and recovery operations, and provide the Secretary of Defense greater awareness of non-federalized Guard activities.

On average, more than 4,000 Guard members conduct operations here in the United States on any given day. Whether we are providing security forces, logistics, communications, emergency medical assistance, or other types of support to civil authorities, we do it with speed and proficiency. We also help facilitate a unified response across local, state and Federal agencies using legal authorities that permit the Guard to be employed under state or Federal command.

In my first 120 days as Chief of the National Guard Bureau, our nation encountered two large-scale disasters, flooding in Louisiana and Hurricane Matthew on the East Coast. At the height of the record flooding in Louisiana, approximately 3,000 Guard members supported civil authorities with water evacuation, search and rescue, and shelter support. During Hurricane Matthew, over 8,300 Guardsmen and women worked with our Federal, state and local

government agencies and first responders to support recovery efforts along the eastern seaboard.

Although these events serve as reminders of the devastation that disasters can wreak on our communities, businesses, and families, I am inspired by the skill, professionalism, and dedication I witnessed from our Guard members. I could not be more proud of how seamlessly, and professionally we augment and integrate our entire emergency response network. The National Guard is essential to All Hazards recovery and the resilience of our communities when disaster strikes.

While our combat and homeland response missions are what we do, building enduring partnerships is an essential part of how we do it. We accomplish our missions overseas and at home only through the partnerships we forge at the international, Federal, state and local levels. The relationships that the Guard develops on a continuing basis play a critical role in our ability to maintain preparedness and respond quickly to disasters and emergency events.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

On the international level, our State Partnership Program (SPP) will be 79 nations strong once we formalize our partnership with Malaysia. The SPP allows us to partner with nations around the globe to realize mutual understanding, friendship, and security cooperation. This low-cost, high-leverage program has built enduring partnerships and bonds of trust with approximately one-third of the nations in the world -- relationships that assure our allies, deter our foes, and

support the transition of many nations from security consumers to global security providers. This program is a part of the long game. We build relationships, friendships, and build our future.

On the Federal and state levels, we work with our partners on matters such as cyber defense; counterdrug; all-hazards planning; CBRN defense; and emergency response. Close relationships with partners such as the Department of Homeland Security, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, are essential in helping to synchronize Federal, state, and local efforts and resources when disasters strike. National Guard partnerships bring a holistic approach to coordination that promotes unified response efforts and an exchange of information before, during, and after an event. We build and provide resiliency in our communities and help our nation respond, rebuild, and heal from catastrophes like no other military component.

Across the nation in hometown America, our Guard members are active in both Federal and state statuses with programs and services such as Youth ChalleNGe, Joining Community Forces, and rendering military funeral honors for veterans. These programs provide critical support to families and individuals when they need it the most.

Our nation faces a myriad of challenges. Emerging near-peer competitors, rising regional powers, and the constant threat of violent extremist organizations pervade our security environment. Threats emanate from both state and non-state actors, who often conduct operations that stop short of direct conflict, yet provoke,

disrupt, and destabilize – both abroad and here at home. Resource challenges require we make every dollar count.

In response to these challenges, I have established three priorities I will focus on during my time as Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

READINESS

My first priority is to provide ready forces to the President and our Governors. Readiness begins with our force structure. I am working with the Army and Air Force to have a balanced array of combat and enabling forces that largely mirrors the active component and is modernized concurrently. We must prepare by providing high-level collective training opportunities such as Combat Training Center rotations and Red Flag exercises. Realistic training improves the readiness of the National Guard and develops leaders that are able to support joint force requirements.

Readiness also includes plans to replace and upgrade obsolete or aging National Guard facilities and warfighting equipment. Ensuring proper training facilities and the latest equipment greatly enhances the readiness of our force.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

For the Army National Guard, Total Army readiness continues to be the top priority. The nation must ensure all three components of the Army are trained and interoperable to project land and air power across all warfighting domains. The Army began its Associated Units pilot program, a multi-component initiative

bringing together capabilities from the Army, the Army National Guard and Army Reserve. These partnerships allow our soldiers to train and build readiness together as a Total Army.

In order to achieve and maintain our readiness, the Army National Guard is identifying the appropriate levels of end strength, full-time support, and modernization such as Armored Brigade Combat Teams, Stryker Brigade Combat Teams and aviation platforms. We are also reviewing the locations of our Army National Guard Readiness Centers, some of which are in isolated rural areas, to ensure our stationing reflects changing U.S. demographics. It will also give us the ability to respond to emergencies in densely populated areas.

AIR NATIONAL GUARD

The Air National Guard continues to leverage its existing model of multi-component forces with its associate wings. The Air Force and the Air National Guard maintain the same standards of operational readiness and cross-component operational capabilities for daily and surge operations. Developing 21st Century Guard Airmen, readiness, and modernization and recapitalization are essential Air Guard efforts. This past year, National Guard Airmen supported more than 16,120 deployment requirements to 56 countries. At home, we are the primary force provider to the North American Aerospace Defense Command protecting America's skies, while continuing to respond to state and local emergencies when requested. The Air National Guard is always ready when our nation calls.

PEOPLE

My second priority is our people. The well-being of our Soldiers and Airmen, including support for our families and employers, is the foundation that underpins our service. We are committed to establishing a respectful environment that always strives for a diverse force where all members have the opportunity to reach their military goals. Acts that demoralize units and degrade readiness, such as sexual assault and sexual harassment, will never be tolerated. We must ensure all victims receive our utmost support and care.

The number of Soldiers and Airmen taking their own lives is a tragedy. Simply put, we can and will do more to prevent suicides. We will ensure first-line supervisors, battle buddies and wingmen have the training they need to look out for each and every Soldier and Airman. We will place great emphasis on mental health programs and provide resiliency training to units and leaders as we strive to prevent further suicides in our ranks.

We will also ensure increased awareness of family readiness programs and employment assistance programs so that families know where to turn for help. We will do our best to provide our Guard members and their families more predictability in order to better plan and prepare for deployments and training obligations. We owe these measures to our service members and their families for their dedicated service and the sacrifices they undertake for our nation.

Employers are critical to the success of the National Guard. Our employers deserve the same predictability as our service members and families, particularly if

our deployments increase in the future. The National Guard benefits from our part-time force's civilian skills and experience, which is a unique strength of the reserve components. In return, our employers can leverage the military training and experience our Guardsmen and women take back with them. It is truly a win-win situation.

INNOVATION

My third priority is innovation. As the character of war and threats continue to evolve, creative minds are necessary more than ever. We need to develop imaginative solutions to our most serious challenges. We must inspire a culture willing to change. While we have been fighting for the past 15 years, the rest of the world has not remained idle. Our adversaries have improved their technology and our technological superiority is waning.

The National Guard will continue to work with our active component counterparts in high-priority mission sets such as Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance and Remotely Piloted Aircraft. Our ability to use our civilian-acquired skills and partner with critical infrastructure owners, government entities, public and private utilities, and other non-governmental organizations uniquely positions the National Guard to protect America's critical infrastructure.

Although innovation often relates to technology, we also have to think about innovation in other ways. We have to leverage our culture, our skill sets, our authorities, and our way of doing business. Innovation will help us strengthen our ability to recruit and retain, forge the most resilient force, implement more efficient

processes, and update obsolete doctrine in order to better protect our states and nation.

CONCLUSION

I am proud to serve with each and every member of the National Guard. Although we have daunting challenges ahead, we will employ our skills to the fullest and continue to contribute in ways not seen before. Every Citizen-Soldier and -Airman is indispensable to our operational force, and we can succeed only through their commitment and extraordinary talent. We must strive to be more innovative, responsive, capable, and affordable as we continuously move forward to confront the challenges ahead.

Thank you for your continued support of the National Guard and their families.