

STATEMENT BY

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Introduction

Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Durbin, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee; I am honored to testify before you and represent the Soldiers of the Army National Guard.

I would like to express my gratitude for the continued support that this committee and Congress as a whole have provided to the Army National Guard. As the active Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard trained and deployed shoulder-to-shoulder over the past thirteen years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress consistently provided the resources for the Total Army to remain the most formidable and capable land force in the world. As a result, the Army Guard has fully transitioned from a Cold War-era strategic reserve to a combat-seasoned, full-spectrum operational force.

With regard to the Army Guard's recent contributions to our national defense, the numbers speak for themselves. Since September 11, 2001, Army Guard Soldiers have completed more than 535,000 individual mobilizations in support of federal missions, with 364,871 individual Soldiers mobilizing to Iraq and Afghanistan during that period. The Guard mobilized 25,236 Soldiers for service around the world in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, and today we have more than 5,500 Soldiers mobilized in the United States and overseas.

At home, the Army National Guard remains the military's primary domestic responder. There were 45 major disaster declarations in 30

states and territories in 2014. In FY 2014, Army Guard Soldiers served nearly 700,000 duty days under the command of the nation's governors, assisting our fellow citizens during domestic emergencies and aiding federal authorities in other critical areas such as counterdrug efforts and security along our Southwest border. At home and abroad, the Army Guard is and will remain an indispensable force.

The President's Fiscal Year 2016 Army National Guard Budget

The combination of the budget caps included in the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 required Army Guard leadership to make hard choices in the face of a resource constrained environment. The President's FY 2016 budget increases funding levels in both Operations and Maintenance (OMNG) and National Guard Personnel, Army (NGPA) accounts compared to FY 2015. Additionally, the Army Guard end-strength is planned to be further reduced by 8,200 Soldiers to 342,000, although this decline is 5,700 less than was planned last fiscal year.

The Army Guard has and always will respond to the call. However, reduced funding in FY 2015 is making it more challenging to maintain acceptable levels of readiness. We thank Congress for providing additional appropriations for two Combat Training Center rotations in FY 2015. The FY 2016 President's Budget is a step toward improvement, but we remain concerned that readiness levels are at risk in future years.

The FY 2016 Budget provides the Army Guard a \$542M increase in Operations and Maintenance funding and a \$298M increase in Personnel (pay and allowances) funding in FY 2016. We also want to thank Congress for adding \$24M to our Funeral Burial Honors account in FY 2015. This ensured that we continue recognizing those who have served.

National Guard Military Construction (MCNG) funding for FY 2016 is requested at \$63M more than the FY 2015 enacted level. The FY 2016 Budget request funds only the most critical facility construction needs. This forces the Army Guard to delay the replacement of our aging infrastructure. To preserve existing facilities, the Army Guard relies on Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM) funding. FSRM is increased in the President's Budget for FY 2016, which helps the Army Guard to make essential repairs. However, many of our facilities are not modernized.

Overall, the President's FY 2016 Budget provides the Army Guard with \$534M over BCA levels. Defense and Army leaders have emphatically stated that funding at BCA levels would present an unacceptable risk in readiness. The Army questions whether they will be able to support the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance under BCA. Sequestration-level funding would degrade our ability to recover from the cuts sustained in FY 2015.

The President's FY 2016 Budget request includes manageable risks. For example, our readiness for global and domestic missions will

likely be reduced as medical and dental readiness begin to drop. Changes in force structure and end strength will incur costs to retrain Soldiers to serve in different types of units and different career fields. We refer to this as “personnel turbulence.” The extent of personnel turbulence and the associated costs are difficult to predict across the 54 States and Territories. Managing personnel turbulence within the FY 2016 Budget request will likely be challenging.

Full Time Manning is critical to the Army Guard’s ability to maintain Foundational Readiness. Foundational Readiness is our ability to perform the mandatory personnel, administrative, maintenance, and supply functions as directed by Title 10 and Title 32, United States Code and, Department of Defense policy. It is important to note that the Army Guard did not experience wartime growth in Full-Time Manning. Our Full-Time Manning has always focused on readiness, not mobilization functions or large scale collective training events.

The Army Guard faces potential changes in end strength and force structure in the near term. These changes will incur additional costs to re-train Soldiers, re-station units, move equipment, and modify existing facilities.

FY 2016 Budget Focus: Equipping

Since 2001, the Army Guard has received significant investments in equipment acquisition and modernization. Of the total quantity of Army Guard equipment authorized, 90 percent is on-hand. Fortunately,

this equipment is modernized and fully interoperable with the rest of the Army. Our Equipment on Hand (EOH) for Modified Table of Organization and Equipment units is currently at 91 percent, which is good news. Critical Dual-Use (CDU) equipment is used for domestic responses and war fighting missions. We are pleased to report that CDU equipment is 92 percent on hand.

Despite our impressive EOH levels, sustaining aging equipment coupled with reductions in funding across the board, including reductions in Operating Tempo (OPTEMPO) and Depot Maintenance, funding, will result in a gradual decay in readiness. A reduction in depot maintenance funding forces us to defer critical depot overhauls, which reduces fleet operational readiness rates for vehicles and equipment.

FY 2016 Budget Focus: Training

The FY 2016 Budget buys back some skills training, supports increased professional military education opportunities and provides additional funds for pilot training. Although the FY 2016 Budget request does not buy back the entire Initial Entry Training (IET) backlog from FY 2015, the IET funding increase in the FY 2016 request is still beneficial. The FY 2016 funding request, in conjunction with last year's congressional increase, begins to restore Duty Military Occupational Specialty Qualified (DMOSQ) rates near 85 percent. Educational requirements are prerequisites for the advancement and promotion of

deserving Army Guard officers and Soldiers. Therefore, it is essential to fully fund the training budget request.

Constrained Army Guard funding reduces opportunities for unit training. Collective training is critical for leader development and unit cohesiveness, which can quickly erode without comprehensive unit-training events. Funding for Special Training increased in the FY 2016 request, but it remains below FY 2014 obligations. This funding will support pay and allowances for two CTC rotations and enabler missions. Most units will only be able to train to Individual/Crew/Squad-level proficiency.

FY 2016 Budget Focus: Installations

As a community-based force, the Army Guard has facilities in nearly 2,600 communities, making it the most dispersed military component of any service. In many towns and cities these facilities are the only military presence, with the Guard serving as the most visible link between hometown America and the nation's Armed Services. These readiness centers, maintenance shops and training centers serve as pre-mobilization platforms during times of war and power projection platforms during civil support operations in communities.

Army Guard facilities depend upon the military construction program (MILCON), the FSRM program, and the Base Operations Support (BOS) program. Funding for these programs dropped significantly over the last several years, which lessened our ability to

replace aging infrastructure and preserve existing facilities. Our facilities do not meet current capacity requirements and they are deteriorating at a rate where most will be in “poor” condition by 2020 and in “failing” condition by 2027. The FY 2016 President’s Budget increases funding for Army Guard MILCON FSRM and BOS, which is helpful. The FY 2016 Budget funds the FSRM program at 80 percent of the DoD Facility Sustainment Model and it funds the BOS program at an amount consistent with the past three years of average BOS obligations.

FY 2016 Budget Focus: Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Sexual assault is a crime. Reduction of sexual assault in our ranks is a top priority of senior leaders across the Army Guard. As of February 2015, the Army Guard assigned 97 full time Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates Coordinators. In addition to full-time support personnel, the Army Guard has trained more than 3,000 collateral duty Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates at the brigade and battalion level. Further, the Office of Complex Investigations continues to provide Adjutants General specialized federal investigatory resources for cases involving sexual assault. The FY 2016 Budget sustains support for the Sexual Harassment / Assault Response Program (SHARP).

FY 2016 Budget Focus: Suicide Prevention

The Army Guard lost 76 Soldiers to suicide in calendar year 2014. This represents a one-third reduction from 2013. While no one factor can be pinpointed as the cause of this decrease, the Army Guard has implemented many efforts to improve the health of its force, including hiring additional support personnel, coordinating closely with the community, and conducting relevant training. The Army Guard will continue to layer efforts to provide care to its Soldiers, Civilians, and Families at every level.

Although our unit leaders may only see the majority of their Soldiers during a single drill weekend each month, they are overcoming the challenges of leading geographically dispersed part-time Soldiers. By reducing the stigma associated with asking for help, leaders are making a difference. The number of reported suicide interventions increased by 27 percent from 2013 to 2014. Though a challenging goal, we strive to prevent all suicides. Every Soldier is a treasured asset to the Army Guard.

In 2014, the Army Guard executed a national contract to provide a Suicide Prevention Program Manager in every state. The Army Guard increased the number of personnel trained to intervene in a suicidal situation by 116 percent in FY 2014. In FY 2015 The Army Guard will provide training to 259 Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training program trainers, who will in turn train approximately 9,600 additional gatekeepers. Additionally, Army Guard behavioral health counselors

provided informal behavioral health consultations to more than 37,000 Soldiers and family members. The Army Guard will continue to make suicide prevention and behavioral health a top priority. The FY 2016 Budget sustains support for the suicide prevention program.

FY 2016 Budget Focus: Recruitment and Retention

Fiscal Year 2015 has been one of the most challenging years in recent memory for Army Guard recruiting and retention. In the first quarter the Army Guard achieved 88.6 percent of the enlisted recruiting mission, recruiting 9,995 of 11,278 required Soldiers. From FY 2014 to FY 2015, the Army Guard recruiting budget dropped by nearly \$20M. Continued recruiting performance at this level has the potential to put the Army Guard between 5,000 and 6,000 below FY 2015 authorized end strength. The FY 2016 Budget restores \$4.2M for recruiting and retention.

FY 2016 Budget Focus: Medical Readiness

Thanks to dedicated attention to this issue by Congress and Guard leaders at every level, the Army Guard's medical readiness dramatically improved from a fully medically ready percentage of 22 percent in FY 2007 to 86 percent in 2014.

However, given the resource constraints the organization continues to experience we expect that medical readiness will decline. It does not take long for medical readiness to drop dramatically. After medical readiness drops, the Army Guard will have to invest more funding and

time to regain it. The Army Guard can only send medically qualified Soldiers to training and on missions. Therefore, a deficit in medical readiness equates to a deficit in overall Army Guard capability.

Closing Remarks

After more than a dozen years as an operational force, the Army Guard is at a pivotal moment in its history. The FY 2015 Budget is forcing the Army Guard to function at funding levels lower than FY 2014. Today's force has experienced a substantial increase in personnel turbulence, reductions in facilities readiness, and reduced training opportunities, among other effects. The President's FY 2016 Budget begins to put the Army Guard back on the path toward higher readiness.

Should the Army National Guard return to sequestration-level funding, the resource reductions will have an immediate, severe impact on Army National Guard readiness and our ability to respond at home and abroad. This would also result in additional reductions to end strength.

We will work with our Department leaders and Congress to find creative solutions to our formidable fiscal and national defense challenges. I thank you for your continued support for the Army National Guard and I look forward to your questions.