

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

**SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
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ON

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THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Opening Remarks

Chairman Inouye, Ranking Member Cochran, distinguished members of the subcommittee; I am honored to appear before you today, representing 360,000 plus Citizen-Soldiers in the Army National Guard, an organization that is historically part of the foundation of our great democracy.

Citizen Soldiers as part of the Operational Force

Our Army National Guard (ARNG) is approaching a decade of war with an all-volunteer force. Our Army National Guard Mobilizations in Support of Overseas Contingency Operations in FY10, including Soldiers who have mobilized multiple times, were 41,744 for Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operations Iraqi Freedom & New Dawn, and another 3,054 mobilizations to the Balkans, Sinai, and elsewhere around the world. A staggering 477,323 Soldiers have been activated since 9 /11, and 34,700 Soldiers are currently mobilized as of March 5, 2011.

We are an operational force in a transition mode within the ARFORGEN rotational cycle. To the credit of our Soldiers and their leaders, we are experiencing huge successes in our homeland defense and overseas missions. We continue to see young and not-so-young people who want to join and serve in the ARNG. Just as impressive are the retention rates of our current serving force; most are combat veterans who make the decision to continue to serve at historic rates; they clearly understand we are at war. Our reenlistment rate as of EOM February 2011 for enlisted Soldiers is 72.4% of our total force and 73.8% of our Soldiers with Mobilization experience. These retention numbers are especially impressive when we consider that at the end of FY10 the average

dwelling time for our Soldiers with mobilization experience was 2.4 years. As a first step, the Army goal is to achieve 4 years dwell by 2014, but balancing the force will not happen overnight.

The experience we have gained since 9/11, the modern equipment fielded, the training delivered to our Soldiers, and the frequency of deployments, have resulted in a highly seasoned, well-equipped combat force. As of end of month December 2010, 53% of ARNG Soldiers are combat veterans; more than half of our force – and we hope to retain that level of experience. Our force has truly become an operational force. At the end of FY10, 84.45% of ARNG forces were Duty Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Qualified -- an escalating increase from 73.27% at the end of FY08 and 83.06% in FY09. The experience of our Army National Guard in recent years has strengthened our Soldiers and units to the benefit of our nation like no other time in recent history. Several high-level research studies have been commissioned to guide the future of our Army National Guard operational force including an OSD-RA study and the General Reimer study. Ultimately, these studies agree that for a relatively modest investment, an Operational Army National Guard can be sustained. In return, the nation will benefit from the past investment and experience of the ARNG. In a budget-constrained environment, the Army National Guard is an extremely cost-effective, substantially paid-for option that the nation needs to sustain. It is important that we maintain our key force structure elements of 8 Divisions, 8 Combat Aviation Brigades, and 28 Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs).

Equipment and Critical Dual Use

Our nation has invested over \$37 billion in equipment for the Army National Guard in the past six years. That investment was made in both Critical Dual Use (CDU) and other required equipment, used for both domestic homeland crisis response missions and overseas contingency operations. Overseas contingency operations have spurred improvements in the capacity of the ARNG to support the war effort, to respond to natural and man-made disasters, to provide critical assistance during state and national emergencies, and to be prepared to respond to potential terrorist attacks in defense of the homeland. Our homeland response enterprise includes 10 Homeland Response Forces (HRFs) – 2 validated in FY11 and 8 in FY12, 17 Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFPs), and 57 Civil Support Teams (CSTs).

CDU equipment includes tactical radios, rotary aircraft, ground transportation vehicles, and digital command and control enablers. The Army has made significant efforts to improve the ARNG CDU equipment posture and remains committed to ensuring the ARNG has the CDU equipment required to support Homeland Defense/Homeland Security (HLD/HLS) and Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations. To highlight this level of commitment, ARNG equipment-on-hand rates for Critical Dual Use equipment are projected to increase to 94% by October 2012. That's an increase of 19% over the four years since the ARNG began monitoring CDU rates.

During fiscal year 2010, the ARNG received over 154,000 pieces of new equipment valued at \$9.8 billion. With this influx of new equipment, the on-hand percentage for all equipment is currently at 92% and continues to be maintained at levels greater than 90%. The Army continues to improve the equipment on hand and modernization levels for the Army National Guard. The Army views this as critical for the ARNG to be employed as an operational force. The Army Equipping Strategy established equipping aim points for units as they progress through the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) process which will help build unit readiness and maintain unit parity in terms of both modernization and interoperability.

Quality Facilities

The Army National Guard is a community based force. As such, our facilities are often the foundation for community support of an all-volunteer force. The ARNG has made some great progress with several LEED (Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design) Silver certified facilities meeting the qualifying requirements for recycled material usage, natural lighting, and energy conservation. We have further opened the call for volunteer installations to take part in Army IMCOM's Net Zero initiative. The ARNG, however, still has much work to do to provide quality facilities to perform our dual mission across the 54 States and Territories. Quality facilities link directly with Soldier readiness, family, youth, and morale programs such as Yellow Ribbon and Youth ChalleNGe. The ARFORGEN model requires increased usage of ARNG facilities. Forty percent of ARNG readiness centers are more than 50 years old

and require substantial modernization or total replacement to meet the needs of an operational force. To achieve quality in facilities, we have thus far executed 99% of MILCON funds in FY10 and estimate we will need \$774 million in MILCON dollars for FY12.

Aviation Support

The Army National Guard (ARNG) aviation program, both fixed and rotary wing aircraft, provided huge benefits in supporting Domestic Operations this past year. Every year offers ARNG aviation a new set of challenges. Last year, fixed-wing aircraft transported emergency supplies and personnel during floods, wildfires, and other emergencies across the nation and throughout the Gulf Coast during the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. During the oil spill recovery effort, ARNG aviation crews logged 3,722 hours and moved over 16 million pounds of cargo. The Operational Support Airlift Agency provided critical combat support by transporting blood donations and Wounded Warriors across the United States. Fixed-wing aircraft also transported much-needed supplies and personnel to Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake. At home and abroad, these aircraft flew 53,029 hours, completed 11,312 missions, transported over 3.5 million pounds of cargo, and carried more than 70,000 passengers.

Rotary wing units and aircraft in FY10 flew approximately 50,000 hours in civil support. These missions included support of disasters and declared emergencies in which Guard aviation displayed versatility and flexibility such as responding to the largest oil spill to affect the U.S., the Deepwater Horizon spill. ARNG rotary wing crews flew missions such as sand bag emplacement,

personnel evacuation, engineer damage assessment, and law enforcement agency support. In Haiti the Puerto Rico National Guard flew two UH-60s based out of the Dominican Republic in support of the American Embassy in Port-au-Prince giving an early signal that help was on the way to support the restoration of health services. ARNG Security and Support aircraft and crews continue to provide planned support to counterdrug operations nation-wide and notably along the southwest border. Our aviation forces responded to floods in Arizona, North Dakota, Louisiana, and West Virginia; provided wildfire support in Minnesota; and flew search and rescue missions in California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Oregon. ARNG rotary wing missions crossed the full spectrum of domestic support.

ARNG fixed wing and rotary wing capabilities have been and continue to be a critical dual use asset that the Army and Adjutants General rely heavily upon. The operational tempo of our ARNG aviation units continues to be elevated as overseas commitments and domestic support requirements remain steady.

Army National Guard aviation not only supports Domestic Operations such as responses to hurricanes, oil spills, search and rescue operations, forest fires, floods, and weather emergencies, in addition, we continue to support overseas deployments such as Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and Kosovo. We do so with an aging aircraft fleet. Since 2001, the ARNG has retired over 600 legacy aircraft and fielded 300 modernized aircraft. The ARNG is simultaneously modernizing aircraft to reduce sustainment costs, increase

readiness, and support interoperability for the deploying force. ARNG aviation also includes Unmanned Aircraft Systems and related Ground Support Equipment. Aviation and related support systems remain persistent items of interest on modernization priority lists.

The Army needs to continue its modernization plan if the ARNG is to meet current and future demands in the Homeland and on missions abroad. The ARNG fleet currently has shortfalls in CH-47 Chinook and AH-64D Apache airframes.

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisitions, Logistics and Technology) recently directed the Program Executive Office-Aviation to divest the C-23 Sherpa aircraft not later than 31 December 2014. In accordance with Army guidance, the ARNG developed a plan to retire the 42 existing C-23 aircraft in 2011-2015. The 2010 Vice Chief of Staff, Army capability portfolio review directed a requirements-based assessment on the need for Army utility fixed wing aircraft. The ARNG expects more fidelity from HQDA in the coming months on the number of utility fixed wing aircraft the ARNG will continue to retain and operate to meet Army fixed wing requirements.

National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation

The National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation (NGREA) is a special Defense Appropriation that complements each Service's base appropriation. NGREA is intended to procure critical modernization items of equipment that the base appropriation is not able to fund.

The Army's goal is to ensure that ARNG units are equipped properly with Critical Dual Use (CDU) capabilities to execute Homeland Defense and Defense Support to Civil Authorities (HLD/DSCA) missions effectively. These missions include federal such as overseas deployments and state such as disaster relief in support of the governors. Our specific ARNG goal is to equip the ARNG with over 80% of the CDU requirement. The Army has committed to keeping CDU equipment levels above 80% on hand. According to the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report (NGRER) 2010 report, the ARNG has the following key equipping challenges:

1. Achieving full transparency for procurement and distribution.
2. Equipping units for pre-mobilization training and deployment.
3. Equipping units for their Homeland Missions
4. Modernizing our helicopter fleet
5. Modernizing our Tactical Wheeled Vehicle (TWV) fleet

The above challenges involve obtaining a full complement of "heavy tactical vehicles, small arms, communications systems, field artillery systems, and combat systems" (NGRER, 2010, p. 1-8)

Military Construction (MILCON)

Currently, 40% of our Readiness Centers are over 50 years old. Not only do many of these facilities fail to meet the needs of a 21st century operational force, many fall short of DoD, federal, or state building standards and requirements to include: anti-terrorism/force protection, energy efficiencies, and

Americans with Disabilities Act (ACT) requirements. The Army National Guard fiscal year 2012 military construction request for \$774 million is focused on improving this situation and making additional MILCON improvements in the categories of Grow the Army, Modernization, Transformation, Training Support, and Planning and Design and Unspecified Minor Military Construction. Under the Grow the Army category, we are submitting a request of \$101 million for 11 Readiness Centers. These new Readiness Centers will be implementing the energy efficiencies. For Modernization, our budget request includes \$197.7 million for 11 projects including readiness centers and aviation support centers in support of our modern missions. For Transformation, we are requesting \$197.9 million for ten projects which include three Tactical Unmanned Aircraft System Facilities (TUAS), five Readiness Centers, one Army Aviation Support Facility, and one Field Maintenance Shop. For Training Support: In fiscal year 2012, the Army National Guard is requesting \$245 million for 16 projects which will support the training of our operational force. These funds will provide the facilities our Soldiers require as they train, mobilize, and deploy. Included are five Operations Readiness and Training Complexes (ORTC), seven range projects, one Maneuver Area Training and Equipment Site (MATES), one railhead expansion and container facility, and two deployment processing facilities. For Other Support Programs, our fiscal year 2012 Army National Guard budget contains \$20 million for planning and design of future projects and \$12 million for unspecified minor military construction to address unforeseen critical needs or emergent mission requirements.

Lack of a fully funded MILCON request creates a significant backlog for construction projects. Deficiencies primarily exist in four main areas within ARNG facilities: readiness centers, training facilities, maintenance facilities, and infrastructure. The funding backlog for readiness centers is \$30.3 billion; the majority of these facilities cannot meet anti-terrorism/force protection (AT/FP) requirements.

ARNG Resilience

People are our most precious resource. The quality of the Citizen-Soldiers of the Army National Guard is unprecedented. However, we are experiencing a troubling increase in the incidence of suicides. In Calendar Year 2010, the ARNG suicide rate nearly doubled; the number of ARNG suicides for CY2009 and CY2010 were 62 and 112, respectively. Ninety-one percent of the ARNG Soldiers who committed suicide were Traditional Drilling Guardsmen vs. full-time Army National Guard and are not eligible for many of the support services available to the AC or our Title 32 Active Guard and Reserve Soldiers. Some had deployed in support of Army operations and over half had not deployed or were still in the process of being indoctrinated into the ARNG. While we do not know what triggers their decisions, we do know that the stressors that may affect their outlook such as employment, relationship issues and previous behavioral health issues must be identified and mitigated to promote their welfare and well-being. Subsequently, the ARNG is teaming with DoD and the Army to incorporate Traditional Drilling Guardsmen into future studies such as the Study to Access Risk and Resilience in Our Service Members (STARRS).

The ARNG has made the promotion of Resilience and Risk Reduction with a corresponding decrease in suicidal behavior our top priority. The ARNG has developed a holistic approach to enhance the resilience and coping skills of our Soldiers, Families, and Civilians by promoting risk reduction through leadership awareness, training and intervention programs. The ARNG Resilience, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Campaign Plan was developed to promote an integrated program of prevention, intervention and mitigation at all levels. This document nested all other collaborative efforts within DOD, Army and NGB to promote unity of effort and synchronize our objectives. The plan was also distributed to State Leadership to shape and focus their efforts on improving the mental, physical, and spiritual health of their Soldiers and Families throughout our formations.

Since our Citizen-Soldiers are reflective of society as a whole, it comes as no surprise that in-depth analysis indicates the increased ARNG suicide rate may correspond to an increasing national trend in at-risk and suicidal ideations and attempts. In addition to our efforts to promote Soldier resilience, the ARNG leadership also recognizes the role of ARNG Families, Peers, and Employers as providing the foundation of each Soldier's support network. These groups are present in the Soldier's life between their traditional drill periods and have the ability to identify and address negative behaviors before they lead to functional impairment or at-risk behaviors. The ARNG provided the States with training programs for both family members and employers to assist in identifying those that should be referred to unit leadership for assistance and the applicable

support services available in their community. States have capitalized on community based resources and solutions to provide services beyond the installation.

The ARNG resourced 54 Suicide Prevention Program Managers in the States in FY10 and trained over 200 Master Resiliency Trainers assigned to brigades and battalions. We are striving to help each of our Soldiers become ready and resilient. For instance, the ARNG Leader's Guide to Soldier Resilience was developed to provide "battle drills" for common Soldier issues; this publication complements the ARNG CSM's Soldier to Soldier Peer Support program promoting "Buddy Aid" including basic intervention skills and trigger points for referrals or emergent care. The ARNG CSM has emphasized the roles and responsibilities of leadership during his two national CSM conferences this past year. Our Soldiers and families are encouraged to take the Global Assessment Tool, which identifies individual resilience levels and uses the self developmental modules to increase self awareness and resilience. Additionally, we increased collaboration with the Army Center for Substance Abuse in order to address substance abuse prevention, outreach and treatment for Soldiers, as well as Leaders and Families, so they understand their roles. Our efforts to increase assets available to Commanders to improve Soldier resilience include partnerships with national and community organizations such as the American Red Cross, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency, counselors and clergy, and use of the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program.

Within the Army National Guard, we have set an ultimate goal of zero suicides. Our current count is 12 suicides so far this calendar year versus 22 this time last year. At this time it is too early to determine State level trends but we will continue to monitor them. Several States have developed comprehensive social support and mental health initiatives. These programs emerged out of a need to promote Soldier and family resilience and reduce potential stressors including employment and financial issues, domestic strife and promoting reintegration following deployment. Several of our States including Michigan, Nevada, Nebraska, California, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Illinois have innovative resilience programs and the National Guard Bureau is encouraging the exchange and expansion of best practices. The Army National Guard, in conjunction with the Active Army, the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and each of the States, territories, and District of Columbia has made turning this trend around a priority. Many more efforts too numerous to cover here are ongoing and I am confident that, as a team we will turn this trend around. In the end, I believe the Soldiers and Families of the Army National Guard will be more resilient and ready in the service to the communities, States and the nation.

While the ARNG is making great strides within States to integrate suicide prevention, intervention, and risk mitigation at all levels, more work needs to be done in this area. Desired ARNG capabilities, in terms of resilience, risk reduction, and suicide prevention, include emergent care and treatment for ARNG Soldiers regardless of status; behavioral health and substance abuse treatment for Soldiers, regardless of status; resources to train and support State

Resilience and Crisis Intervention personnel; and embedded behavioral health capability at the brigade level to promote healthy lifestyles and provide early identification of the potential at-risk Soldiers. After a nearly decade-long era of “persistent engagement,” ARNG families have been truly remarkable and their health and well-being are absolutely critical to the security of the nation. The services are vital to sustain our role as an operational force as well as promoting the continuum of care for those AC Soldiers who will transition to the RC during the upcoming reduction in the Army’s end strength.

Acknowledging unemployment as a stressful challenge affecting our Soldiers and Families, the Army National Guard implemented employment outreach as a necessary step in building resilience. The Job Connection Education Program is an employment initiative designed to help improve quality of life for unemployed or underemployed Soldiers. This program focuses on how Soldiers seek, obtain, and retain civilian employment.

In 2009, the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard became partners in a collaborative effort to build relationships with employers. In 2010, the employment program was renamed to the Employer Partnership Office (EPO). The goal of the EPO program is to create employment opportunities for Soldiers by establishing a good working relationship with the private sector. The program, in 2011, is known as the Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces. Members from all the Reserve components, their Families, and Veterans have access to the tools and benefits of this program.

Of most importance is the effort to build resilience in our Soldiers. We are training “Master Resilience Trainers” and “Resilience Training Assistants” both of whom are Soldiers with acquired resources and insights. They will be assigned to every Company-size unit and will be responsible for teaching Soldiers coping skills. There are many more efforts too numerous to cover here that are ongoing and I am confident that, as a team we will turn this trend around. In the end, I believe the Soldiers and Families of the Army National Guard will not just be physically strong, but will be an emotionally and spiritually stronger force in service to our States, territories, District and nation.

Medical Readiness

Medical readiness of the Army National Guard is one of our highest priorities and as such we have provided the states with additional resources in support of the medical readiness mission. A national Case Manager/Care Coordinator contract has been in place since 2006 to assist in supporting the management of Soldiers identified with medical conditions that prevent deployment. Currently 100 Nurse Case Managers and 328 Care Coordinators are supporting all medical issues to ensure Soldiers have the best opportunity to regain medical deployability status.

In the past two years we have added full-time Medical Readiness NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers) located in Battalion and above organizations. Medical Readiness NCOs are responsible for the identification of medical conditions which may require some action by the case management team and serve as the medical readiness advisor to the commander.

Medical care has always been in place to support any Soldier in the ARNG with an injury or illness proven to be in the Line of Duty (LOD). The care is coordinated with the Military Medical Support Office through our Joint Force Headquarter Health Systems Specialist (HSS). Medical care provided based on an LOD is limited to the condition that occurred while in a duty status.

Additional efforts have been made administratively to provide assistance to those Soldiers identified that have certain medical conditions. The ARNG Medical Management Processing System was introduced this past December and provides a framework to manage Soldiers identified with medical conditions through the complexities of our health care systems. Effective use of this framework can assist in the return of Soldiers into our formations or into the Physical Disability Evaluation System (PDES).

In an effort to assist reserve component Soldiers who were having difficulty in negotiating through the Army PDES, the Army established the Reserve Component Soldier Medical Support Center. The purpose of the RC SMSC is to expedite and assist Soldiers with PDES processing and ensure packets going through this system are complete, validated and tracked through the Electronic Medical Board system (eMEB). We are currently validating our numbers, however, it appears up to 12,000 Soldiers in the ARNG may require processing through the Medical Evaluation board/ Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB).

When preparing our Soldiers for mobilization much time and effort is taken to ensure all Soldiers meet the medical standards as outlined by the theater of

operation. Today, units arrive at mobilization stations with over 90% of all Soldiers in the ARNG arriving at the mobilization station ready for deployment. The other 10% have minimal medical actions required in order to clear them for deployment. With that said less than 1% of the ARNG Soldiers sent to mobilize come back to the state with an identified medical concern that prevents them from deploying into their theater of operation.

Since September 2001, 640 ARNG Soldiers have paid the ultimate sacrifice in combat operations while 5,152 were wounded in action. As of March 7, 2011 the ARNG has 1,795 Soldiers assigned to the Warrior Transition Unit (WTU), 1,481 assigned to the Community Based Warrior Transition Unit (CBWTU) with a combined population of 3,276 Soldiers currently assigned. The cumulative numbers of Soldiers assigned since September 2001 is 29,007. Additionally, 5,164 Soldiers have been wounded in action and 10,702 suffered from disease or non-battle injuries while deployed in support of contingency operations.

Soldiers who have deployed in support of a contingency operation have additional medical resources to call upon when the need arises. All Soldiers who deploy are eligible for TRICARE Early Eligibility 180 days prior to mobilization and 180 days post mobilization through the Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP). Eligible family members are also able to participate in TRICARE during the Soldiers mobilization. Soldiers can also enroll in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system during demobilization. Recently discharged combat Veterans are eligible to take advantage of an

enhanced health care enrollment opportunity for 5 years after discharge. After the 5 year period, these Veterans will still be able to apply for health benefits with VA, but will have their status for receiving VA health care determined under normal VA procedures that base health care priority status on the severity of a service-connected disability or other eligibility factors. This would mean some Veterans could face income or asset-based restrictions, as well as delays in establishing their VA health care eligibility while their disability status is determined.

Providing care for our Soldiers who have never deployed has improved since Congress passed legislation in 2008 to support participation in the TRICARE network via TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS). TRS is a premium based health plan available for members of the Ready Reserve and their family members. Current premiums are \$53.16 per month for member only coverage and \$197.76 a month for member and family coverage. Although that might not seem like a lot of money, for a junior enlisted Soldier that could mean his or her entire monthly drill check going to pay for health care premiums. As of January 2011, 15,769 Soldiers are currently enrolled in TRS in the Army National Guard. The ARNG is focusing on reducing the number of medically non-deployable Soldiers within our formations, but without a full-time health care benefit medical readiness remains a challenge.

Closing Remarks

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and invite your questions and comments.