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The National Guard: Full Spectrum Force in the Global War on Terror

Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, Chief, National Guard Bureau

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COLONEL MACHAMER: Good morning, and welcome to the Foreign Press Center. As you are aware, the National Guard, our National Guard, is now playing a very significant role in the global war on terror, both abroad and here at home, and we're pleased to have with us this morning Lieutenant General Steven Blum, who is the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to talk about that. General Blum will give a brief presentation and be glad to take your questions.

Sir.

LTGEN BLUM: Thank you. Thank you very much. As was announced, we're going to talk about the National Guard today and its role, unprecedented role, in the global war on terrorism. The Guard is the longest serving military service in the United States. It predates the nation, it has been serving for over 367 years, and it has always been in the homeland defense business. And today, it is being used in a new and different way, as an operational force, as a full spectrum force, both supporting the Army and the Air Force of the United States overseas and defending the homeland back here at home, and doing both simultaneously, and, by the way, responding to all of the disasters that Mother Nature can bring our way, such as the current hurricane season. Next slide.



This is where we are. As you can see, we are engaged all over the globe. The National Guard of the United States, both Army and Air support, every combatant commander around the globe, both here at home, we support the Northern Command and NORAD, STRATCOM, and PACOM, Pacific Command for Hawaii, Alaska, Guam and Marianas. All of the areas shown in red show the support that we have in significant numbers in Europe, Asia, South America and in Central/Southwest Asia, as well as other regions of the world. Next.

This is the menu of operations where they are performed by the National Guard today. From the left-side of the chart, which is largely military support to civilian agencies and law enforcement; and as you move to the right on the chart, it gets increasingly complex and dangerous and, ultimately, close ground combat in a joint expeditionary and campaign quality environment overseas, as you see towards the right-hand side of the chart.

All of these things are being done by over 100,000 National Guardsmen this morning, as we speak, and those tasks that are shown in the gray box in the center can be done under the control of the governors here at home or can be done under the control of the Department of Defense in the name of the President as a federal mission here at home.

The right-hand side of the chart outside of the gray box must be done in a federal role because we are overseas and deployed as elements of the Army and the Air Force.

But you can see the National Guard is participating in every single aspect of our national security strategy, one being defense of the homeland is number one, that is always job one for the National Guard, but it doesn't mean we have to defend the homeland here at home if we may be participating in what I consider to be, to use a sports analogy, the unscheduled -- I mean a scheduled away game, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Kosovo, in Bosnia, the Horn of Africa.

So the unscheduled home game, should it occur back here at home, such as what we experienced on the 11th of September 2001, where the National Guard was the first military responders and in the New York incident were the only needed military responders for that incident. There was no federal response there from federal troops. It was -- except for the United States Coast Guard. Next slide.

We have two readiness mandates. The National Guard has always had to take an oath to support and defend two constitutions, one of the United States, which takes priority over any other in our country; and then, at the same time, they swear allegiance to follow the orders of the governor of a state and the constitution of the state when it does not conflict or contradict the allegiance that is sworn to the national Constitution.

So the governors maintain command-and-control and utilization of the National Guard at all times, unless the President requires the National Guard or orders the National Guard into federal service, and when that occurs there's never a contest, it's automatic that the priority goes to the national mission or to the federal mission.

The Secretary of Defense has asked us to improve access of our National Guard for the Department of Defense and to

be a more meaningful and useful tool in the global war on terror, and we have done that. We are transforming the National Guard from a strategic reserve to be called only in time of World War III to be an operational force that can be called at any time, any place, for any reason, both here at home or abroad.

And that's presented us some challenges because we still have a mandate to the governors to provide them the right force capabilities and the same type of forces and the capabilities and the right mix and the right size in the right place so that they can handle Hurricane Ivan or they can handle al-Qaida should they visit a neighborhood in the United States, so that we can either detect, defeat, prevent or respond to a terrorist event or some act of tragedy induced on the American people by weather patterns or earthquakes or hurricanes, tornados, and even volcanoes lately. Next slide.

In order to do that, we have established a joint force headquarters in every state and territory so that we can leverage the capabilities of both the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard and find a way to pull in, in a very collaborate and synchronized way, the capabilities of the Navy and the Coast Guard for homeland defense and response to weapons of mass destruction events here at home. The joint force headquarters exist in every state and territory. We have 54 of these. They are on a 24/7 round-the-clock watch and these capabilities are available 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and we have developed some new capabilities that I'll tell you about in a few minutes. Next slide.

The joint force headquarters that just described essentially provide command-and-control, communications, computers, intelligence fusion, analysis, information sharing, surveillance, reconnaissance of their local areas -- highly, highly important and powerful tools in the deterrent phase of counterterrorism or the prevention phase -- and they provide us a defeat mechanism, because if we can detect it, we can defeat it.

Should we fail to detect it or defeat it, we will be able to respond and mitigate the consequences of such event by leveraging all the capabilities shown in this list. These units can come out of the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard and some come in combination as a join team so that we have the right capabilities in the right place in the right numbers so that the governors can discharge their duties and responsibilities as the senior elected official of the state.

You can see that 75 percent of the National Guard is always, always immediately available to the governors 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, should they need them.

The part that's missing out of this pie chart are the 119,000 citizen soldiers and airmen that are deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia, the Horn of Africa and all of those other places that were shown on the global map where we're not at home but we are abroad doing our job as part of the United States Air Force or part of the United States Army. Next slide.

Each one of these joint force headquarters is a tactical joint task force capable headquarters that is able to manage the

Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, Coast Guard active duty reservists or National Guard, or all in combination, if necessary, to include interagency and intergovernmental responders to whatever the incident may be in each one of these states or territories.

The National Guard Bureau itself makes sure that we have a consistent, nationwide command-and-control network that synchronizes the response from across the entire nation. In every community and every neighborhood we have an ability that's built in, but we also have a reinforcing ability to pull units and capabilities and troops from any neighboring state or states anywhere in the United States, if necessary, to come into the affected area to mitigate the problem or to do the either defeat or prevent mechanism.

The strategic headquarters for all of this in the continental United States is United States Northern Command; and for Alaska and Hawaii it's Pacific Command; and for certain specific missions, it's STRATCOM, Strategic Command. This organization, this command-and-control structure, can access the entire United States Army that's in CONUS [Continental United States], the entire United States Navy, entire United States Marine Corps or Air Force that is left in CONUS, and they can come in because these joint force headquarters have a reception staging and onward integration function already built into them that enable that to happen. In other words, they allow all these forces to seamlessly flow into the state and respond if the governors need them. Very, very powerful model, which means that there's no part of our country that is not protected and would not have the capability to respond if it were attacked or if it suffered a tragedy. Next slide.

In addition to all of that, the National Guard is taking on some specific initiatives to make us more relevant, more ready, more accessible and more essential to the defense of our homeland. I've spent some time talking about the joint force headquarters and the goodness it brings. In addition, we have all over the nation developed chemical-biological response teams, force packages of Army and Air National Guard units that have special equipment and special training so that they can do mass decontamination, the treatment of mass casualties, technical extraction of victims from rubble buildings.

In addition to that, each and every state and territory, all 54, have an immediate quick reaction force and a rapid response force which can deliver a battalion size, trained and ready organization in less than 24 hours. Most can deliver a company size in less than four hours anywhere in their state or territory.

In addition to that, we have the 32 civil support teams that are already trained, equipped and certified and distributed in 32 states, shown in green on this chart. The states that are shown in yellow are the 12 that are being developed, trained and readied now. They will be readied by the end of next year. And the ones in red will be the ones that follow on in 18 months after that.

So, ultimately, in a very short order, every state and territory will have a civil support team. Now, what can that civil support team do? It can identify chemical, biological, radiological and high conventional explosive devices. It can detect them. It can advise what to do about it to the civilian local first responders -- the police, the fire department and

emergency services people -- and it can offer an immediate communications bridge so that the local first responders can plug in to the Department of Defense communications system immediately so that we can start flowing all of those capabilities that I described a little bit earlier into each of those regions that are needed. Next slide.

In addition to that, we have a joint continental United States -- that means everything shown in that green map up there -- it's not all continental, some of it is out in the Pacific Ocean and in the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean. And all the states and territories of the United States are connected by a secure IT system, information technology system, but it's secure that it cannot -- you don't have to speak in code, you can talk in real text in real time, but it is encoded, encrypted, where someone can't crack into it and know what's being said.

And at the same time, we can do that through non-secure means and we also have the ability to do that in a secure fashion or a classified fashion even through videoteleconferencing. So not only can you get the words and the conversation and information you need in a real-time method, but you can also see images of what's going on, pictures of what's actually going, so that they better understand the situation.

We share this shared awareness with every one of those state headquarters so that everybody has knowledge of what's going on real-time, and we also share it with Northern Command, Pacific Command, Strategic Command or any other DOD function that would have a need to know or a desire to know what's going on for that event.

In addition, we have access to the Department of Homeland Security's information network system and we have integrated that into this so that we not only have Department of Defense information and intelligence going in there, but we also have civilian law enforcement and civilian responder information nationwide going and being shared in those headquarters.

We have a 24/7 365-day operation centers so that there is no time that you could ever not call one of these states joint force headquarters and not have a cell that is able to respond. So we are on a completely different footing than we were on prior to 9/11/2001 -- a tremendous capability that has been developed in the last three years that most people in our own nation don't even know about.

Having said all that, I think what we have delivered is what we promised, a ready force, a reliable force, absolutely an essential force and an accessible force, accessible both to the governors here at home and to the President and the Secretary of Defense and the services when they need them abroad.

I'll take your questions.

QUESTION: Yes. What's your response to -- I won't mention any names here, but to the claim that has been made many times over during this campaign that the Guard nowadays is, I mean, it's a backdoor draft?

LTGEN BLUM: There is no way that the word "draft" can be associated with the National Guard. The National Guard has never had any of its members brought into its ranks by a draft in 367 years and we never plan to use a draft to fill our ranks. The National Guard has always been a volunteer force, it will always remain a volunteer force, and to suggest that these citizen soldiers and airmen patriots that have willingly pledged to interrupt their lives, their education and distance themselves from their families to protect their nation and their communities, I think is a disservice to the people in uniform to suggest anything otherwise.

QUESTION: Yes, can I ask about the tasks that you can actually perform with the citizen soldiers. In the highly technical military of today, are they able to perform, let's say, in the National Guard, the Air National Guard, identical tasks to the professional airmen or the Air Force? They fly similar airplanes, they do everything that these professional soldiers do?

LTGEN BLUM: If you're asking me, are they just as good as their active duty counterparts, no, they're clearly not; they're better, by the admission of the United States Air Force. That's not my claim. That's the evaluation that General Jumper* or General Mosely* would give you. The National Guard pilots are actually more experienced pilots. They are unmatched by any air force in the world, including the United States Air Force. They are clearly the best aircraft maintainers on the planet and they are some of the most experienced pilots on the planet.

So I wasn't being facetious when I said what I just said. That is the rating that if you talk to any knowledgeable Air Force senior officer, they would tell you the same thing I just did.

COL. MACHAMER: General, I have a question. I understand that the National Guard has developed relationships with other countries. Could you discuss that a little bit?

LTGEN BLUM: Well, the National Guard has something called a State Partnership Program, and right now we have 48 nation-states around the world that have formal partnerships with states here at home, National Guard units and states here at home, the most recent of which is Colorado and the country of Jordan. Right before that, we established one with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the state of Maryland.

And we've had tremendous success with this program. It's been in existence since the early 1990s. It was originally established to act as a catalyst and assistance for partner states or satellite states of the former Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union disintegrated and we matched up Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, those states were matched up early on so that we would give them a mil-to-mil relationship with the National Guard here in the United States. It would be a little simpler to deal with than trying to deal with the large United States as a country in its entirety, and I think it has proved a success in that all of those early state partnership programs have now matured to the point where they move from a state partnership to the Partnership for Peace program and now all of those countries that I just named are NATO -- are in the NATO alliance and many are serving shoulder-to-shoulder with National Guard soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bosnia right now, today, as we speak.

So we took the success of that early program, and each combatant commander saw the goodness in it and it has now expanded to 48 and we expect to add another ten states to that in the next 18 months. In fact, the program has grown to be so successful and so far-reaching that we have hired our first political advisor, or POLAD, for the negotiations Bureau, Dr. John Finney. He is an experienced Foreign Service officer with experience as a political advisor, or a POLAD, for combatant commanders and on-the-ground commanders in Southwest Asia and in Europe, and has great experience here in Washington. The secondary effect of that is that there will be a bridge between the Department of Defense and the Department of State all around the world, but a much better bridging than has previously existed, and the National Guard will provide that bridge. Just as the National Guard will provide the bridge between the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security in the states, we act as an auxiliary to the bridge between the Department of State and the Department of Defense abroad with the State Partnership Programs.

QUESTION: What about recruitment, now that the Guard's mission has been widened, worldwide and 24/7 in this country? Are there still volunteers?

LTGEN BLUM: Are they still volunteers?

QUESTION: Volunteers to join the Guard.

LTGEN BLUM: Oh, absolutely. I am very pleasantly surprised that as we have used the National Guard in an unprecedented manner, in greater numbers than ever before, at least in the last 30 and a half years, that our retention rate, or our reenlistment rate or our experienced soldiers who deploy are staying with us at higher rates today than at any other time that we've measured this in the last 13 years. That's a very, very reassuring indicator that the Guard is healthy and alive and will remain a viable force, even though we're using it the way we're using it, and using it in the numbers that we're using it.

In addition to that, the other factor that I'm watching very carefully is are we going to be able to recruit new members into the Army and Air National Guard, and so far our experience says yes, we will, that the young men and women of our country are still willing to stand up and to be counted, and when their nation needs them they are ready to serve.

And I might add this. I have been in uniform for 37 years and I have never seen the quality of the soldiers and the airmen that we have in our ranks today any better than it is right now. There has been no degradation or sliding back in the quality of the force. It actually is the best quality force, the most professional force, the most committed force, the most versatile force, that I have seen in my 37 years in uniform.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) professional forces or only the Guard?

LTGEN BLUM: Well, you asked me about the Guard. It applies to the Guard. But I would say that you could also say the same about the United States Army, Marine Corps, navy, Coast Guard and Air Force because we get our members from the same demographic group as they do and we enlist to the same standards. There's not a different

standard. To get into the National Guard or to the Air Force, the standard is the same. To get into the Army, to enlist in the Army or the Army National Guard, the enlistment standards are exactly the same. There is no relaxation of standards. That's why it makes us able to be interchangeable parts on the battlefield either here at home fighting a hurricane or a tornado or terrorists or overseas doing the missions that we're asked to perform there.

Thank you, sir.

COL. MACHAMER: Thank you, General.

LTGEN BLUM: Thank you. Thank you very much for having the opportunity to share this information with you. Thank you.

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