

Statement of the Honorable George W. Foresman

**Under Secretary for Preparedness
U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

**Commission on the National Guard and Reserves
December 13, 2006**

Good morning Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide my perspective on national preparedness and the role of the National Guard and Reserves in keeping America safe and secure.

We are currently experiencing a tremendous transformation in the way that our nation approaches preparedness. We are expanding the capabilities of our national civilian community and the private sector to prevent, protect, respond and recover from a full range of hazards. The very fact that we have a national, synchronized preparedness priority is a benchmark in our nation's history.

The Federal response to Hurricane Katrina marked a turning point in the relationship between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Defense (DoD). In partnership with DoD, DHS has worked closely with U.S. NORTHCOM on broader coordination and exercises to streamline the process for DoD to support DHS.

Over the course of the past 25 years, the evolution of preparedness activities in this country has been inconsistent and lacking in focus. The preparation for emergencies and disasters, prior to September 11th was not a national approach. It was a Federal approach, a State approach, a local approach, a tribal approach, as well as a public sector and private sector approach– without respect to options for tying all of these perspectives together. Further divided within this context is clarity of the roles of civilian government versus the role of the military in dealing with a crisis situation.

Until recently, there was no synchronized, and truly national capability for the civilian government to deal with disasters, in part due to the decentralized nature of American government. Until the recent promulgation of the National Incident Management System and the National Response Plan, in conjunction with the National Preparedness Goal and its associated capabilities-based planning tools– the Universal Task List and the Target Capabilities List– we did not have a shared national vision of preparedness. We have made significant progress so that communities, States, the private sector and the Federal interagency community are now focusing on the same goal– a shared culture of preparedness.

Preparedness is not simply about getting ready for disasters. Preparedness is about uniting all of our tools of national power to manage risk. And we have already seen marked improvements of how we, as a nation, protect and prevent under a broad umbrella of risk. We are targeting our Federal operational readiness, risk management, information flow, and grant programs with State and local and private sector partners in a manner that fosters coordination and cooperation. We now have shared doctrine, resources, and increased visibility into shared missions.

Mr. Chairman we will once again likely find ourselves confronted with, as we were on 9/11, the fundamental public policy question of, “How do we take care of our needs at home while projecting our defensive measures abroad?”

We have to have the capacity to prevent, protect, and respond and recover domestically across a wide range of hazards and threats that form our risk continuum. While the military (whether we are talking about active, reserve, or National Guard), are going to be important components, they should not be foundational components.

We know there are millions of State and local officials of which approximately two million are firefighters, police officers, public health officials, EMS professionals who are available to not only respond to events within their jurisdiction, but also respond to events across the country with the confine of interstate mutual aid. This “force” of state and local civilian personnel is comparable to the size of the U.S. military.

We also recognize that prior to the environment that we now find ourselves in, there was not a unified national approach to the coordination of these disparate resources. Today, however we do have the National Incident Management System; we have a consistent doctrine of training programs of how we manage incidents at the lowest possible tactical level and the strategic operational level. We are in a much better position to look at the distributed amount of local, State and military resources in a way that we are able to move them across jurisdictional boundaries- including States and communities as mutual aid resources.

We understand that in the 21st century there are threats to our shores domestically that will manifest themselves into targeted attacks tactical in nature and strategic in consequence— beyond the traditional law enforcement resources that we have available here at home. We have to have the ability to employ defensive measures with military forces domestically.

This brings us to the question of, “What is the best way to do this?” Is the best way to accomplish this through active duty military forces, or is the best way to accomplish this through the use of National Guard forces, which can serve either in a Federal or State role?

Having been at the State level for many years, I understand that the Guard has traditionally provided two primary missions: integration with the military in the context of national security and national defense. And by extension because of the original construct of the Guard, it has also served as a tool to Governors in dealing with domestic emergencies.

On the whole we should be looking to increase the capabilities of our civilian community so that we lessen the reliance on the military community for the traditional military support to civil authorities. The nature of the asymmetric threat in the 21st century means that we need to have a better capability for protection and prevention missions here at home, missions that can be carried out by the National Guard in support of the civilian community.

Let me touch on several specific issues. At Secretary Chertoff’s direction, the National Response Plan is in the process of being updated to better reflect the relationships

between Federal, State, and community officials when they respond to emergencies and disasters. Taken collectively, the NRP and the NIMS provide further clarity for response roles and more flexibility to quickly establish coordinated response efforts and improve the Federal government's ability to get critical supplies to disaster victims in concert with State, local and tribal officials.

The National Preparedness Goal describes the preparedness end-State that we want. The National Preparedness Goal utilizes and references standard planning tools, that include the National Planning Scenarios, the Universal Task List and the Target Capabilities List. Together these tools provide a consistent way for entities across the Nation to work together to achieve the National Preparedness Goal. The Universal Task List and the Target Capabilities List inform communities and States what they can do to bolster their preparedness by providing guidance on specific tasks and capabilities. The National Planning Scenarios provide a basis for a consistent approach for planning for disasters regardless of the scope and size of the specific scenario.

The Nationwide Plan Review serves as an important baseline assessment of current capabilities for catastrophic events nationwide. This information will help us target resources such as Federal grants, technical assistance, training, and exercises with our local, State, and private sector partners; the National Guard should be integrated into this national preparedness assessment.

We have invested 18 billion dollars in civilian capabilities at the State and local levels. The Federal civilian family is working with the State and local civilian family, as we recognize that it is the State and local responders who will provide the first echelon of response. We are moving toward a comparable level of command and control capability in that civilian sector, and it is important to remember that in the context of dealing with emergencies and disasters, the sovereignty of States has to be considered.

In closing, we must recognize that in today's Homeland Security environment characterized by asymmetrical threats such as hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural disasters as well as the threat of terrorism, the National Guard must be capable of responding to support States when called upon and Federal actions when required. The National Guard must be dual-hatted for either a domestic civil support role or a war time operations role in a way that keeps them ready and vigilant.

DHS is keenly interested in building upon our preparedness relationships with States and the DoD to ensure that we are optimally prepared for the continuum of risks. We are obviously interested in ensuring that these citizen soldiers are well prepared, since they are part of our total Homeland Security force package.

DHS is concerned with making sure that we have a fused national approach, including military assets, that is ready to operate under the National Incident Management System, the National Response Plan, and is integrated into national preparedness planning. This framework is solid and we will be successful.

Ensuring the optimum use of National Guard capabilities will depend largely upon our ability to collectively reflect on and answer the questions raised here today. Arriving at answers will require the nation to consider what the role of the National Guard should be and actively engage in debate to refine these responsibilities. Forums such as the one provided today by this Commission present the framework for determining the best possible ways to employ the National Guard for domestic disaster response. I encourage the Commission to keep us informed as you continue to address these very important issues.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Commission, thank you once again for providing me the opportunity to speak with you all today and for your continued valuable input on these important issues. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.