

Statement

of

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Before

The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves

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Good morning Chairman Punaro and distinguished 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.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the good work of this Commission in facilitating a very important discussion about how best to use our military reserve units in securing our homeland. Whether securing our borders and critical infrastructure or assisting civilian agencies to respond to emergencies and disasters, the men and women of our National Guard and Reserves are integral components in managing the 21st Century risks that threaten America's homeland security.

The National Guard has a long history of assisting with response and recovery operations and as a nation we have been fortunate to benefit from that experience and expertise. Since the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created more than three years ago, we have collaborated closely with the Department of Defense (DOD) on many issues relating to both the Homeland Defense mission of the DOD and the Homeland Security mission of DHS. Under the leadership of Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Chertoff, Secretary McHale, and Admiral Keating, our partnership is stronger than ever before. In just the past several years, DHS and DOD have partnered for countless exercises, training activities, and real-life missions. Domestically, these have included operations at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, the G-8 Summit, and the Presidential Inauguration.

The National Guard's response to our nation's most recent significant emergencies has been truly exceptional. Within hours of the attacks on the World Trade Center, 1,500 New York National Guard troops reported for duty. Less than 24 hours after the attacks, over 8,000 New York National Guard Soldiers and Airmen and women were on active duty supporting New York State's security needs. These troops provided not just a calming presence on the streets of New York during unsettling times, they provided New York's first responders with critical perimeter security support, refueling for civilian emergency vehicles, emergency lighting, power generation, communications, emergency transportation, engineering assets and other logistical support.

Most recently, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the National Guard provided an extraordinary response in the most severe and difficult conditions. Covering an area of 90,000 square miles - roughly the size of Great Britain - Katrina left a vital, thriving region in desolation and ruin. Under dangerous and threatening conditions, many put their lives at risk to save those who were stranded on rooftops, clinging to trees, or lost among the debris. All told, more than 49,000 people were rescued and hundreds of thousands more were safely evacuated.

Much of this was made possible by the support of the National Guard. Within 96 hours, the Guard amassed 30,000 troops to respond to Katrina. More than 48,000 Guard troops

supported response and recovery efforts in the Gulf – providing search and rescue, water, food, medicine, as well as removing tons of debris and aiding in the restoration of critical infrastructure.

I applaud the tremendous effort and enormous personal sacrifice of the men and women of the National Guard in responding to Hurricane Katrina. Their efforts brought calm and stability to a region that was badly needed in the aftermath of the storm. Their adversity in the face of disaster was admirable and each of every Guardsman and woman should be proud of their service and accomplishments in the Gulf Region.

While the Guard was incredibly successful in meeting its mission, it is clear that other aspects of the Katrina response were not as successful. Our country was not nearly as prepared as it should have been. President Bush and Secretary Chertoff are absolutely committed to enhancing our national preparedness efforts as we approach our next hurricane season, which officially begins on June 1st.

From experience as a state homeland security official and now as the DHS Under Secretary for Preparedness and responsible for integrating and synchronizing national preparedness, I would like to ask five key questions.

First, is there a clear, authoritative distinction between the Homeland Defense mission of the DoD and the Homeland Security mission of DHS? Do both missions have defined doctrines that delineate their individual goals?

Second, is the National Guard adequately resourced and structured for three key missions? These include: 1) disaster response—military support to aid authorities in times of crisis; 2) protecting the homeland – guarding critical infrastructure whether ports or pipeline; and, 3) the traditional role of augmenting the active service in times of war. We have seen all three in the past few years.

Third, are the current structures and legal authorities right? Do they allow the National Guard to operate in a dual role with active troops for disaster response while preserving inherent state identities? Conversely, should there be greater flexibility to perform federal types of missions while under State control such as border security?

Fourth, are we consulting with State leaders in our process of strengthening the National Guard? In many instances dialogue occurs through intermediaries whose position may or may not be clouded by one or more opinions.

Fifth, are we creating an environment that encourages men and women to join the National Guard given the combined war fighting, homeland, homeland defense/security, and disaster response missions?

To thoroughly answer these questions will require State and Federal leaders to sincerely consider what the role of the National Guard should be and then earnestly engage in further discussions about that role. It's critical that collaboration between Federal, State,

and local parties help to inform and define the Homeland Security and Homeland Defense missions. Our national preparedness goal is the product of the comprehensive planning and activities across a variety of activities.

There's no doubt that the National Guard is a critical element of the nation's total homeland security force, and this is especially true for States' homeland security posture. As we've seen in the past, the National Guard can provide needed equipment and personnel for domestic emergency response in a timely, effective, and efficient manner. However, there must be strong agreement between State and Federal leadership as to the operational objectives during emergency operations.

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 operations when integrated. We must ask ourselves if the National Guard can be dual hatted for either a domestic civil support role or a war time operations role and still remain ready and vigilant.

The Department of Homeland Security is keenly interested in building upon our preparedness relationships with States and the Department of Defense 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. We also recognize the stress and strain that major disasters can place on the National Guard and its readiness posture to support DOD.

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.