

**UNCLASSIFIED**

**STATEMENT BY**

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL H STEVEN BLUM  
CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**National Guard's Role in Future Total Force**

**109<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION**

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Mr Chairman, members of the committee. I wish to thank you for the opportunity to talk to you about the future of the Air National Guard. The National Guard and its Citizen Soldier and Airmen have worked hard to ensure we remain Ready, Reliable, and Relevant to the needs of our nation and the states and territories of the United States.

Today, Citizen Soldiers and Airmen are serving at home and around the globe in numbers not seen since the Korean War. Since 9/11, more than two-thirds of our Citizen-Airmen have participated in operations worldwide, most as volunteers. The National Guard is no longer a force in reserve; today's Citizen Soldiers and Airmen stands shoulder-to-shoulder with their active duty counterparts on the frontlines defending our nation in the War on Terror.

These successes are due in large part to Congressional support for the National Guard. However, we must not be blinded by the successes of yesterday and today. It is our job to ensure that our grandchildren's Air National Guard is Ready, Reliable, and Relevant.

The National Guard has been a pioneer in the transformation of our military. Today Joint Force Headquarters-state represents the centerpiece of the National Guard effort to transform in response to a changing security environment. The Joint Force Headquarters represents a comprehensive structural command and control response to the evolving requirements of the post 9/11 security environment. These Headquarters allow for a coordinated response that cuts across local, state, federal and joint military lines in ways that were simply not possible before. For example, these organizations provide Northern Command with state based organizations capable of acting as an essential interface with local governments; a key capability in meeting national Homeland Defense needs. Last year's G8 Summit in Georgia as well as the Democratic and Republican National Conventions all proved an integral tool in coordinating federal, state and local responses during the events.

Your National Guard is also DoD's first line of defense for America's homeland. Indeed, homeland defense is our #1 mission. While the Joint Force Headquarters-State is part of our homeland defense mission, we also provide civil support; chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive rapid response teams and protect America's skies through Operation Noble Eagle. The recent terrorist attacks in London serve as a reminder of how vigilant and prepared we must remain to defeat our enemy.

More specifically, the Air National Guard is working in partnership with the Air Force on several transformation initiatives. The Associate Units and Community-Basing programs are excellent examples of this partnership. Both the Associate Units program, where Active and Reserve Components share a weapon system such as the 192<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing at Langley flying the F-22, and Community-Basing, where active duty personnel are assigned to a National Guard base, are transformational concepts providing opportunities for the active duty Air Force to capitalize on Guard experience and expertise.

As you can see, the National Guard supports Air Force's transformation efforts, however that support comes with qualifications. As I mentioned earlier, the National Guard takes its homeland defense responsibilities extremely seriously, so we are concerned the Air Force's Future Total Force plan does not accurately take into consideration homeland defense analysis. If the purpose of transformation is to meet the threats of a new age then homeland defense analysis should play a pivotal role in Future Total Force. It was Air Guard pilots flying F-15s from Otis Air National Guard base Cape Cod Massachusetts that were our homeland's first responders after the horrific 9/11 attacks.

We look forward to working with the Air Force on developing new missioning requirements. We know that the Air Guard may play a role in Unmanned Aerial Vehicles; Command, Control, Communications, Computer, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, and space operations among other things, however it is hard to recruit and retain soldiers when their missions are not clear.

We must also make sure that when these new mission requirements are released they are sequenced in a manner that will allow the National Guard to be able to more efficiently and effectively leverage its current capabilities. An improper sequencing of new missions would not take advantage of the Air National Guard's locations, equipment, infrastructure and personnel capabilities. In short, the Guard could lose what makes it so successful – human resources.

We continue to have concerns over FTF and how it will be implemented. Additionally, the training requirements associated with changing a unit's mission creates unique challenges for our Citizen Soldiers and Airmen. Weapons system qualification training can take three months or longer. This is yet additional time away from their civilian jobs, and it is time that is difficult to schedule given the demands of the unit, individual, and the Air Force.

As such, the National Guard is fitting change into the construct of the Citizen Soldier and Airmen. We need to remember that our Citizen Soldiers and Airmen cannot just pack-up their families and move to another community. They have civilian careers to consider. For example, prior to moving the 126<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing from Chicago to Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, the unit was fully manned; after the move the unit was at 83.3% of authorized strength. Over 25% of the 126<sup>th</sup> personnel were lost due to the move, and it took five years for them to recover. We need to adequately assess and consider locations of future Air Force needs to meet the needs of the communities we serve. We cannot cut and run from our partner communities. It is the talents of the National Guard that add so much to the character of a community.

The National Guard and its Citizen Soldiers and Airmen are a valuable asset and an important contributor to our nation's defense. We must work as a team, a team that includes not only the active Air Force and Air National Guard, but also, the governors, the adjutants general, employers, members of Congress, and the dedicated, professional men and women of the Air National Guard.

Thank you.