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HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF  
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COMMANDER, CONTINENTAL U.S. NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND REGION  
BEFORE  
THE HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE  
21 JULY 2005

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Chairman Davis, Representative Waxman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Admiral Timothy J. Keating, it is an honor to appear before you and represent the exceptional men and women of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Our professionals are ready to act on a moment's notice to protect and defend our nation's airspace.

**Background.** Since 1958, the United States and Canada have defended the skies of North America through NORAD, a bi-national command. Using data from satellites, as well as airborne and ground-based radar, NORAD monitors, validates, and warns of attack against the U.S. and Canadian homelands by aircraft, missiles, and space vehicles, as well as emerging asymmetric threats. The Command ensures U.S. and Canadian air sovereignty through a network of alert fighters, tankers, airborne early warning aircraft, and ground-based air defense assets cued by military and interagency surveillance radars, such as those of the Federal Aviation Administration and its Canadian equivalent, NAV CANADA.

**Operation NOBLE EAGLE.** NORAD forces, as part of Operation NOBLE EAGLE, maintain a steady state, quick response posture to counter potential threats to North America. NORAD conducts irregular air patrols above major metropolitan areas and critical infrastructure facilities, in addition to maintaining an alert force of fighter, tanker, and control aircraft. NORAD aircraft sorties and alert commitments are based on a tiered response system. As threat levels intensify, the number of aircraft on alert and on patrol increase. As the threat is evaluated, air patrol locations and frequencies are reviewed and updated. Since 9/11, NORAD has flown more than 41,000 fighter and support aircraft sorties, and directed more than 1,900 fighter intercepts in response to potential threats.

**National Capital Region Integrated Air Defense System.** Because the U.S. National Capital Region is a symbolic target and contains many elements of our nation's critical infrastructure, it is protected around-the-clock by a

multi-layered, joint and interagency, integrated air defense system. The surveillance, warning, and air defense systems of the National Capital Region consist of:

- U.S. Army Sentinel radars for low-altitude radar coverage.
- A ground-based visual warning system that uses safety-tested, low-level, and eye-safe beams of alternating green and red lights to alert pilots that they are flying without approval in designated airspace.
- Department of Homeland Security helicopters and fixed wing aircraft on alert at Reagan National Airport to intercept slow, low-flying aircraft.
- U.S. Air Force fighter aircraft on alert at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland.
- U.S. Army ground-based air defense systems, which include the medium-range Norwegian Advanced Surface to Air Missile System, and the short-range Stinger and Avenger missile systems.

These systems augment our fighter defenses by providing "assets-in-place" in a quick reaction posture to protect the seat of our nation's government, as well as other key locations in the National Capital Region, from air attacks.

**National Capital Region Coordination Center (NCRCC)**. The NCRCC enhances interagency coordination by providing a venue for representatives of the many organizations with a stake in the defense of the National Capital Region to sit watch together. Through the NCRCC, various agencies have improved situational awareness of the actions of their defense partners. The NCRCC is a "coordination center"—no command or control of forces occurs at the Center. Participants include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Transportation Security Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Capitol Police, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Air

and Marine Operations and the Northeastern Air Defense Sector, which is a subordinate organization of NORAD.

**Conference Calls.** We have established a rapid conference call capability to facilitate information sharing among the White House, Department of Defense, Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Air and Marine Operations and law enforcement agencies in the event of an airspace violator or track of interest. These voice networks bring together different levels of decision makers from many organizations. By doing so, we increase situational awareness for all agencies, increase the decision-making time available to key leaders and shorten the reaction time for NORAD air defense forces.

**Rules of Engagement.** The President and Secretary of Defense have approved specific rules of engagement to deal with hostile acts within domestic airspace, which help ensure the safety of our citizens and the protection of critical infrastructure. They define what we can and cannot do in responding to a situation. The authority to engage a threat aircraft is assigned to individuals at the highest levels within the Department of Defense. The decision to engage is made by the highest-level engagement authority available. Since 9/11, we have conducted hundreds of Command-level exercises to test these rules of engagement and to train designated authorities. More importantly, these rules of engagement have proved their effectiveness many times in real-world situations. We continue to refine our procedures and coordination with the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Aviation Administration, civilian law enforcement organizations and other government agencies within the United States and Canada.

**Federal Aviation Administration Integration.** Our partnership with the Federal Aviation Administration to improve NORAD's surveillance and command and control capabilities has made significant progress. We have full-time Federal Aviation Administration representation in our command center at

NORAD, and the Domestic Events Network provides us real-time situational awareness that brings senior leadership into the decision-making cycle very early in a crisis situation.

The installation of 300 radios in Federal Aviation Administration facilities provides NORAD the means to communicate with interceptors throughout our country. The original plan to integrate 39 Federal Aviation Administration terminal/approach control radars has grown to a total of 45 radars, of which 38 have been fully integrated. The remaining seven are awaiting integration, operational acceptance or have been deferred until aging radars are replaced with a newer short-range system later this year.

On 1 October 2004, the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security assumed shared financial responsibility from the Federal Aviation Administration for our nation's long-range radars under a 75/25 percent cost-share formula for fiscal year 2005. In fiscal year 2006, the radars will be funded under a 50/50 percent cost-share arrangement. We urge Congress to fully fund the operations and maintenance accounts of both departments to preserve our critical air surveillance network until it can be upgraded or replaced.

**Partnerships.** United States and Canadian civil agencies continue to make air travel safer through increased airport and aircraft security measures. Civilian aeronautical organizations such as the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association continue to inform and educate the general aviation population regarding airspace procedures and revised flight restrictions. We partner with these groups and the Federal Aviation Administration to raise the awareness of general aviation pilots regarding temporary flight restrictions and other special airspace measures used to protect our nation's citizens and critical infrastructure.

**National Special Security Events.** NORAD has supported several National Special Security Events to include the 2005 State of the Union Address, 2005

Presidential Inauguration, the Republican National Convention, the Democratic National Convention and President Reagan's State Funeral.

**Conclusion.** Since 9/11, we have strengthened our ability to detect, assess, warn of and defend against air threats to North America. We will continue to refine our processes and procedures to minimize airspace violations and maximize the effectiveness of our response should an airspace incursion occur. Surveillance and control of U.S. and Canadian airspace remain critical components of our national security strategy. If NORAD joint air defense assets are called into action, we are prepared to employ this last line of defense.

We appreciate the House Government Reform Committee's contribution to the safety and protection of all Americans. I look forward to your questions.