

STATEMENT BY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL HARRY M. WYATT III

DIRECTOR,

AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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ON

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Opening Remarks

Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Wilson, distinguished members of the subcommittee; I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Air National Guard's personnel issues related to its ongoing role as an operational force. The evolution of today's threat environment has made it essential for the Air National Guard to strike the proper balance between operational force and strategic hedge. The diversity of our adversaries require us to have an adaptable force that is capable of efficiently engaging in the current fight while maintaining a cost-effective surge capability prepared for tomorrow's threat.

The Air Force has led the way in employment of Total Force policies and initiatives. While we have much internal debate over how best to balance Regular, Guard and Reserve components, we all recognize the benefits of each component. We have worked tirelessly to ensure institutional policies and regulations allow us to maximize the effectiveness and efficiencies of our force.

America's Exceptional Force, Home and Away

The Air National Guard anchors the Total Air Force team, providing trained and equipped units and personnel to protect domestic life and property; preserving peace, order, and public safety; and providing interoperable capabilities required for Overseas Contingency Operations. The Air National Guard, therefore, is unique by virtue of serving as both a reserve component of the Total Air Force and as the air component of the National Guard.

Upon founding in 1947, the Air Guard served primarily as a strategic reserve for the U.S. Air Force. Increasingly and dramatically, the Air National Guard has become more of an operational force, fulfilling U.S. Air Force routine and contingency commitments daily. Since 9/11, over 146,000 Guard Airmen have deployed overseas. A snapshot of U.S. forces at any time shows Air Guard members in all corners of the globe supporting joint and coalition forces in mission areas such as security; medical support; civil engineering; air refueling; strike; airlift; and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR).

By any measure, the Air National Guard is accessible and available to the Combatant Commanders, Air Force and our nation's governors. Currently, the nation has over 7,000 Air National Guard members deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other overseas regions. At 16 alert sites, three air defense sectors, and Northern Command, 1,200 Guard Airmen vigilantly stand watch over America's skies. Amazingly, 75 percent of our deployed individuals are volunteers, and 60 percent are on their second or third rotations to combat

zones. Percentages like these speak volumes about the quality and sense of duty of America's Air National Guard force!

The Air National Guard supports state and local civil authorities with airlift, search and rescue, aerial firefighting, and aerial reconnaissance. In addition, we provide critical capabilities in medical triage and aerial evacuation, civil engineering, infrastructure protection, and hazardous materials response with our Civil Support Teams and our Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and high-yield Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFPs).

In the past year, Air Guard members helped their fellow citizens battle floods, mitigate the aftermath of ice storms, fight wild fires, and provide relief from the devastating effects of a tsunami. Early in the year, Guard members from Kentucky, Arizona, and Missouri responded to debilitating ice storms, which resulted in the largest National Guard call-up in Kentucky's history. Last spring, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota Air National Guard members provided rescue relief and manpower in response to Midwest flooding. In September, the Hawaii Air National Guard sent personnel from their CERFP, a command and control element, and a mortuary affairs team, to American Samoa in response to an 8.4 magnitude earthquake-generated tsunami. These are just a few examples of how the Air Guard provides exceptional expertise, experience, and capabilities to mitigate disasters and their consequences.

Within the Total Force, the Air National Guard provides extraordinary value in terms of delivering the most immediately available capability for cost in meeting America's national defense needs. In its domestic role, the Air Guard provides capabilities to support local emergency responders with life and property saving capabilities and expertise in consequence management not usually found elsewhere in the Total Force.

The changing nature of our force and our mission causes us to relook the rank structure of our full-time support personnel, particularly at the more senior mid-management levels. Specifically, we are examining whether we face a growing need for majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels as well as Senior Master Sergeants and Chief Master Sergeants. The number of Airmen we are allowed to have in these grades is limited by law.

Best Value for America

The outstanding men and women of the Air National Guard continue to defend American interests around the world. Throughout 2009, the Air National Guard projected global presence in a variety of missions in regions ranging from the Balkans to Southwest Asia and from Eastern Europe to Latin America. We have provided much more than airpower, contributing our exceptional capabilities in security, medical, logistics, communications, civil support, and engineering, in order to support our nation's national security.

While the strategic environment has continually changed throughout history, the Air Guard has proven itself an adaptive force, able to meet any new

challenges. One reason for this success is that Guard members normally live in the same communities in which they serve during times of natural disasters or when called upon to respond to national emergencies. Our Guard members know the folks they support very well, because they work together, their children attend the same schools, and they shop at the same business establishments. Our fellow citizens know the local Guard members and their contributions, and their appreciation has been illustrated through countless welcome home parades and outpouring of support over the years.

Throughout history, many of the issues our forbearers faced are essentially the same issues we face today: aging capabilities and declining budgetary resources. The Air National Guard has consistently provided the answer in an efficient, cost-effective, community-based force that is ready and responsive to domestic and national security needs.

Best Value in Personnel, Operations, and Infrastructure

During the past year, the Air National Guard has deployed 18,366 service members to 62 countries and every continent, including Antarctica. The Air National Guard provides a trained, equipped, and ready force for a fraction of the cost. We provide a third of Total Air Force capabilities for less than seven percent of the Total Force budget. In all three areas – personnel, operations, and facilities – the Air Guard provides the “Best Value for America.”

A key Air National Guard efficiency is the part-time/full-time force structure mix. The predominantly part-time (traditional) force can mobilize quickly when needed for state disaster response missions, homeland defense, or when we need to take the fight overseas.

We have the ability to maintain a stable force with considerably fewer personnel moves than the Regular Air Force, which is a critical factor in our cost-effectiveness. Traditional National Guard members cost little, unless on paid duty status. Some Air National Guard efficiencies compared to regular military components include:

- Fewer “pay days” per year
- Lower medical costs
- Significantly lower training costs beyond initial qualification training
- Virtually no costs for moving families and household goods to new duty assignments every three or four years
- Fewer entitlements, such as basic allowances for housing
- Lower base support costs, in terms of services, facilities, including commissaries, base housing, base exchanges, child care facilities, etc.

The Air National Guard is an operational reserve with surge potential, with 2,200 mobilized and 5,700 volunteering per day. If this force were full-time active

duty, the military personnel budget would be \$7.62 billion. Air National Guard military personnel pay in FY09, including military technician pay, was \$4.77 billion, for a yearly cost savings of \$2.85 billion, or a daily cost savings of \$7.8 million.

Whether compared to another major Air Force command, or even to the militaries of other countries, the Air National Guard is an extraordinary value. In direct comparison with the militaries of France and Italy, for example, our Air National Guard members cost only \$76,961 per member, while the bills of those countries respectively run to \$128,791 and \$110,787 per member. Further, compared to the US Air Force, cost per Air Guard member is less than a fifth of that of the Regular Air Force. Comparisons such as these illustrate well the cost savings realized with an operational reserve possessing surge potential.

Operational savings are due to the Air National Guard's experienced force and lean operating methods. An examination of the Air National Guard's F-16 maintenance by Rand Corporation last year highlighted the ability of our maintenance personnel to generate double the amount of flying hours in a one-to-one comparison of full-time equivalents.

Recruiting and Retention

Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention programs play a critical role in supporting today's fight and how we posture our force for the future. The commitment of our field commanders and their exceptional recruiters are key factors in recruiting successes. Their partnership with the National Guard Bureau has enabled us to remove barriers that traditionally prevented the ability to meet end strength. The Air National Guard continues to build on that success and has focused its efforts to target critical needs.

As of February 2010, Air National Guard end strength is 108,743. The challenge as we move forward is to strike a delicate balance of remaining close to end strength while strengthening "effective" recruiting. We show troubling signs in specific areas of officer recruiting (currently, 1,500 short) and critically manned mission areas including Health Care Professionals, Chaplains, Engineers, Intelligence, and Mobility aviators. To compensate for lagging prior service numbers, the Air National Guard increased its emphasis on the non-prior service market. This required increases in advertising to the non-prior service market through radio, theatre, print media and web sites, as well as additional recruiters, community presence with store-front offices and additional advertising dollars. The continued support of the Air Force, Department of Defense, and Congress will undoubtedly shape the foundation of their success.

The quality of Air National Guard recruits has not declined and their retention rate remains strong at 96.9 percent. The Air National Guard saves on average \$62,000 in training cost for every qualified member retained or recruited. Our focus in this area allows us to retain critical skills lost from the active component and save valuable training dollars.

In 2009, through the use of our 14 In-Service Air National Guard recruiters strategically placed at active duty bases, the Air National Guard garnered approximately 896 confirmed accessions of a total of 5,309 accessions. The bonuses and incentive programs are a key component to that success.

Our Air National Guard incentive program is a critical component in our Recruiting and Retention efforts and serves to motivate and support manning requirements in units with skills that are severely or chronically undermanned. It is established to encourage the reenlistment of qualified and experienced personnel. Stable funding for the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention program is critical to our success.

Airman and Family Readiness Programs

In focusing on our Airmen we must also focus on the most important people in their lives – their families. The Air National Guard is a Wing-centered organization. Our 92 Wing Family Program Coordinators around the nation are at the center of our efforts to ensure our Airmen and their families receive the support they need.

In past year we were successful in having these coordinator positions upgraded from GS-9 to GS-11. Our coordinators are one-deep positions for us, so most of the effort is done through part-time support.

This is one area where we differ dramatically from our Regular Air Force counterparts. The Air National Guard does not have Airman and Family Readiness Centers as they have on active duty bases. In a culture that does not believe in saying “no,” our program coordinators have more and more piled onto their plates, thereby threatening the overall quality of service, if the Air National Guard maintains its pace as an operational force.

Programs like Operation Military Child Care have been very helpful.. Also, military and community partners like Military OneSource, Military Family Life Consultants, and Operation Military Kids, just to name a few, are extremely beneficial in meeting the needs of the Guard Airmen, especially while deployed. Youth Development Camps like Air Force Teen Aviation, Air Force Space Camp, and the Air Force Reserve/Air National Guard Leadership Summits are huge successes as well. Additionally, this year we are conducting training such as Community Healing and Response Training, which is part of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, and essential in our suicide prevention efforts.

For the Air National Guard, we believe maintaining strong family support programs are critical to ensuring the overall health of our force and our Guard Airmen.

Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve

We must recognize the importance of support for military service by families, military leadership and civilian employers. This is referred to as the "Triad of Support". It is important to maintain an overall climate in which military service is honored and supported. DoD's organization that addresses civilian employer support is Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

ESGR's vision is to develop and promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees serving in the Guard and Reserve. ESGR accomplishes this by gaining and maintaining employer support for Guard and Reserve service by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law, and resolving conflict through mediation. A Statement of Support, a formal statement voluntarily signed by an employer, is one way to demonstrate support and acknowledge employer rights and responsibilities under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). During FY09, 54,965 employers signed Statements of Support for their employees serving in the Guard or Reserve. This is an increase from the 44,861 employers that signed Statements of Support in FY08. Another indicator of the current employer support climate is the number of USERRA cases ESGR has mediated. The average number of cases ESGR mediated has remained consistent over the last three fiscal years: FY07 - 2,374, FY08 - 2,664, FY09 - 2,475. These numbers indicate less than .01% of all SELRES have opened a case to address employer issues. Based on these two indicators, it appears American employers are continuing to support their employees serving our nation.

Closing Remarks

The men and women of the Air National Guard greatly appreciate the cooperation and support you have provided in the past and look forward to working with you as we meet today's challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to your questions.