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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Calvert, and esteemed members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Russia's brutal, ongoing invasion of Ukraine has been a stark reminder of how quickly a democracy can come under attack, how persistently our strategic competitors seek to undermine the post-war global order, and how critical a manned, trained, and equipped military force can be. Moreover, it is a reminder of the power of citizens-turned-soldiers and airmen; men and women who, in times of crisis, step forward from their civilian lives to take up arms in defense of their country. This is the spirit of the Ukrainian people. It is also the legacy and the purpose of our National Guard.

The past twenty years have radically transformed the National Guard. The events of September 11, 2001, and the two decades of conflict that followed, required a better-trained, better-equipped, more-professionalized fighting force. The National Guard evolved to meet that mission. Today, we are an integral part of the Joint Force and our Nation's second-largest military organization after the U.S. Army; the Department of Defense (DoD) cannot implement the National Defense Strategy without the National Guard.

Today's National Guard stands stronger, more capable, and more professional than ever. We are ready to maintain our Nation's competitive edge in this new strategic environment focused on China and Russia. We are ready to fight and win future conflicts as part of the Joint Force. We are ready to use our battle-tested skills, equipment, training, and personnel to come to the aid of our American communities in times of crisis. In more than 2,800 locations across the 50 states, 3 territories, the District of Columbia, and around the globe, we are prepared for whatever the future may hold.

We are the National Guard, and this is our promise to America: Always Ready, Always There.

### **National Guard Missions in 2021**

The past two years have seen the National Guard perform at historic levels. Our unique, dual-status authorities allowed us to rapidly provide operational forces to the Joint Force while maintaining strategic depth in our formations to quickly respond to unforeseen needs of the Commander-in-Chief, Secretary of Defense, and governors. We faced several challenges simultaneously: projecting American strength overseas, continuing the national fight against COVID-19, and addressing a relentless series of natural disasters across the country. Nevertheless, the National Guard never missed a deployment to support every combatant command, and never failed to fulfill a mission directed by our Nation's governors. In every aspect of national defense, the National Guard brought professional experience gained in combat and a connection to our American communities—a dual-status, multi-use force unlike any other.

#### *Fighting America's Wars*

The National Guard's primary purpose is fighting America's wars. We continually participate in deployments around the globe that help deter aggression from strategic competitors, train alongside our international allies and partners, and ensure we are manned, trained, and equipped for combat. On any given day, approximately 19,000 National Guardsmen are supporting combatant commands' missions overseas.

After nearly two decades of combat engagement in Operation Enduring Freedom, the National Guard played a number of critical roles in the historic evacuation of the Afghan people in 2021. As part of Operation Allies Refuge, National Guard aircraft and aircrews helped evacuate both our Afghan allies and American citizens to safe havens in the region. We also provided teams of KC-135 Stratotankers to refuel aircraft over Afghanistan, and monitored conditions on the ground via pilotless MQ-9 Reapers. The National Guard also provided aeromedical evacuation, helped secure the Hamid Karzai International Airport, and supported the processing of Special Immigration Visa holders. Once our displaced allies arrived in the United States, the National Guard also supported resettlement operations, including transportation to evacuee housing sites, medical care, and other logistical needs. In addition, two National Guard facilities—Camp Atterbury in Indiana and Fort Pickett in Virginia—were among the military installations that helped process Afghan evacuees.

Today’s complex and dynamic geopolitical environment, and particularly the rise of strategic competitors, calls for a new Total Force approach, new capabilities, and a renewed commitment to readiness. Agile, battle-tested and battle-proven, the National Guard remains Always Ready, Always There to fight America’s wars.

### *Securing America’s Communities*

The National Guard’s community-based force structure brings unique advantages in homeland defense. Guard Airmen defend the National Capital Region, and man non-stop, 24-hour intercontinental ballistic missile defense systems from Alaska and California. In 2021, Guard Airmen flew more than 2,000 sorties protecting America’s air space in support of Operation Noble Eagle; operated 15 of the 16 NORAD Aerospace Alert Control sites; and manned the Western and Eastern air defense sectors to ensure detection, warning and tactical control of NORAD and USNORTHCOM tactical forces against external threats.

Though the National Guard’s primary mission is combat, our unique structure and authorities allow us to use our combat-driven personnel, skills, and equipment to help our communities in times of crisis. Located in 54 states, territories, and DC, the National Guard rapidly responds to disasters of every size and type.

In 2021, the National Guard served more than 10.2 million personnel days in domestic operations, including supporting the presidential inauguration, serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, responding to civil unrest, and helping communities coast-to-coast as they faced devastating and historic natural disasters. On average, more than 28,000 Guardsmen were involved in domestic operations on any given day in 2021.

After the events of January 6, 2021, more than 26,000 National Guardsmen—representing all 54 states, territories, and DC—deployed to the Nation’s Capital in fewer than three weeks. Supporting federal, state, and local law enforcement, the National Guard helped secure the presidential inauguration and facilitate the peaceful transition of power.

Combat training, equipment, and experience also helped the National Guard respond to severe weather events affecting many areas of the country in 2021, including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and winter storms. The National Guard cleared roads of debris, performed search and rescue missions, dropped water and fire suppressants over acres of flames, directed traffic, provided medical support, and delivered food, water, and supplies to devastated

communities. The Guardsmen who responded to these events left behind families and civilian jobs; many of them also lived in communities affected by these disasters. However, in times of great danger and difficulty, they answered the call to serve their communities and their Nation.

In addition, the National Guard continues to play a substantial role in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout 2021, the National Guard continued to man testing sites, provide assistance in hospitals, and ultimately help vaccinate more than 15 million people. Overall, in 2021, the National Guard conducted approximately 7.6 million personnel days in support of COVID-19 operations.

However, the National Guard's contributions to American communities goes well beyond responding to times of crisis. The National Guard participates in several programs that enrich American communities. For example, through the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program, Guard units have the opportunity to enhance their engineering, construction, healthcare, and transportation skills by performing services for underserved communities that would otherwise not have the resources to conduct them on their own. With the National Guard's own Youth ChalleNGe program, at-risk youth are given educational opportunities and the chance to develop life skills and self-discipline that can help them succeed as productive citizens.

The National Guard also assists law enforcement in detecting, interdicting, disrupting, and curtailing drug trafficking activities in our communities. By offering programs and capabilities including aviation assets, language skills, intelligence analysis, photographic imagery, communication support, and training centers, we are part of a full-spectrum approach to countering illicit drugs.

### *Strengthening America's Alliances and Partnerships*

The strength of the National Guard is amplified by our integrated efforts with our partners at every level: local, state, tribal, territorial, federal, and international. We know that trust, respect, and understanding cannot be surged in a time of crisis—it takes a long-term investment in relationships. By working closely and communicating frequently with our partners, we improve our understanding and our abilities to execute the mission, whatever it may be.

In 2021, the National Guard continued to work with local, state, and federal law enforcement to respond to episodes of civil unrest. We also worked with state and federal emergency management agencies to respond to disasters in the homeland, and trained with these partners to improve our response capabilities for future events.

Furthermore, the National Guard continued to expand the State Partnership Program (SPP), a unique security cooperation program that pairs a state's National Guard with a partner nation. In 2021, SPP added partnerships between Austria and Vermont, Cabo Verde and New Hampshire, and Egypt and Texas. Today, the SPP includes 85 partnerships with 93 countries. This unique relationship has been brought to the fore in Ukraine as the California National Guard has been instrumental in DoD efforts supporting the Ukrainian people for more than 28 years.

The past year's achievements indicate tremendous National Guard involvement across all mission sets, from fighting America's wars, to responding to disasters in the homeland, to working with partners at every level—and the expectation that we will continue to be involved at a high level in the years ahead.

## **Investing in America's Defense and Deterrence**

Today's National Guard is a tremendous value to America. The National Guard provides approximately 20 percent of the total Joint Force, in addition to our millions of personnel days in the homeland, yet only represents four percent of the Department's budget. We augment the Joint Force across all aspects of National Defense Strategy implementation, and directly support our communities in tangible, substantial ways. We do all this with lower training costs, lower facility and land use costs, and low personnel turnover. In fact, despite the national and international challenges of the past few years, the National Guard's retention rate remains high: people believe in what we're doing and they want to be a part of it.

Our evolution into an operational force was made possible by Congress and DoD investments. As a result, the National Guard provides the Army and the Air Force with enduring, rotational, surge, and follow-on forces, giving our Nation an affordable hedge against future risk.

The National Guard represents a lower-cost operational force for the Army and the Air Force, with the additional advantage of providing ready, skilled forces for our American communities in times of emergency. Because our primary federal mission is to serve as an integral part of DoD efforts to fight and win our Nation's wars, we must not be relegated to long-term, non-combat missions that detract from readiness. The global security environment demands unrelenting focus on maintaining our competitive advantage. As such, the National Guard must continue to invest in our primary federal mission: fighting and winning America's wars.

## **Looking Toward the Future**

The challenges of the past two years have thrust the National Guard into the spotlight, highlighting the duality of our federal and state roles as well as areas for improvement. While we have effectively demonstrated our ability to perform as an operational reserve, we seek greater inclusion in meeting the pacing threats of the next decade to modernize and remain interoperable with the Joint Force and our allies and partners.

The increased importance of the space and cyber domains, increasing national resilience, and a focus on alliances and partnerships are ways the National Guard contributes to the National Defense Strategy. In addition to these strategic themes, I have identified four priorities that will elevate National Guard readiness, making our force more resilient and more effective: people, readiness, modernization, and reform.

By prioritizing people, we are working to ensure our force is physically and mentally resilient, able to balance the demands of the mission with the demands of their families and civilian careers, and fully representative of the communities we serve.

By prioritizing readiness, we are better able to anticipate the challenges of the future, from strategic competition to disasters in our communities, and better leverage the Guard's unique capabilities to enhance the Joint Force and support the National Defense Strategy.

By prioritizing modernization, we position ourselves for the best possible deployment, deterrence, sustainability, and interoperability with our allies and partners.

By prioritizing reform, we leverage every resource.

### *National Guard Capabilities in Space*

Space is a vital and increasingly contested domain. Our success on the battlefield and the security of our Nation relies on space capabilities, which we use for navigation, communications, intelligence, and missile warning.

Since 1995, the National Guard has added warfighting capacity and manpower to space operations. Today, we provide 15 percent of the Department of the Air Force's space professionals and defend our Nation on behalf of USSPACECOM and other geographic combatant commands through missile warning, space electromagnetic warfare operations, and military satellite communications. In addition to decades of operational experience, the unique citizen-Soldier and citizen-Airman nature of National Guard members contributes to our military's efforts in space. Guard members often have aerospace-related careers in their civilian lives that help them also serve their country; 45 percent of our citizen-Airmen space professionals work in the civilian aerospace and high-tech industries.

### *National Guard in the Cyber Domain*

The National Guard has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to play a critical role in the DoD's cyber enterprise. Today, there are nearly 4,000 National Guard cyber operators across 40 states. Many of our Guardsmen have cyber-related civilian jobs at leading technology companies, and they are able to apply their expertise in the service of our Nation. In addition, we have also emerged as a trusted and valuable resource in helping our local, state, federal, and international partners defend and mitigate against malicious cyber activity.

As we do with civil unrest and public safety, the National Guard is able to use our cyber skills honed for combat in the service of our communities here at home. For example, during the last presidential election, more than 1,200 Guardsmen from 18 states provided IT support, vulnerability assessments, risk mitigation, and network monitoring at the request of their Governors. But in recent years, the National Guard has also responded to ransomware attacks against schools and local government organizations.

Constant contest in the cyber domain is our contemporary reality. The National Guard is a leader in the digital domain, and enhances our Nation's cyber capabilities in combat and in the homeland.

### *Increasing National Resilience*

Given the current strategic environment and climatological risks, we cannot disregard potential threats to our Nation's critical infrastructure. From cyberspace to satellites to first-responder communications, the National Guard plays an important role in both integrated deterrence and synchronized response to interruptions affecting these vital sectors. Our close coordination with partners at every level, our longstanding homeland defense capabilities, and our geographically dispersed forces all strengthen our national resilience. This benefits both the defense enterprise and the American people.

### *The State Partnership Program*

The National Defense Strategy is clear: Alliances and partnerships are a national security priority. Almost 30 years after its creation, the SPP is one of the most valuable security

cooperation programs available, and it is paramount that Congress provide stable and consistent funding per the FY 2023 President's Budget to ensure maximum program potential.

What began with 13 post-Soviet countries has expanded to include 45 percent of the world's nations, and helps ensure the DoD has capable, trusted, and interoperable partners at our side. Throughout Russia's brutal, ongoing invasion of Ukraine, we remain connected with seventeen of our SPP partner nations in the EUCOM area of responsibility who are providing support in the conflict to reinforce shared common defense goals. This includes the partnership between Ukraine and the California National Guard.

The SPP also provides our Soldiers and Airmen opportunities to build enduring relationships, train and learn with their partners, and become more aware of the global environment in which they operate.

However, Continuing Resolutions continue to impact execution of the SPP. When states and their partners receive funding late in the fiscal year, it is detrimental to the planning and execution of partnership events. As we continue to mature the SPP, we are working closely with the combatant commands and the State Department to identify and prioritize potential State Partnership countries. We appreciate Congress' continued support of this cost-effective, strategically valuable program.

### *People*

Our service is only possible because of our people: our Soldiers, Airmen, civil servants, families, and civilian employers. Every step we can take to make our people more ready and resilient ultimately helps us keep our promise to America.

Chief among these is medical readiness and ensuring healthcare coverage for every member who serves in uniform. There are approximately 60,000 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who are uninsured. However, we still demand our National Guardsmen be ready to serve at a moment's notice. If they are unable to seek treatment for a physical ailment or mental health crisis, or obtain follow-on care due to a lack of insurance, their readiness and ability to serve is impacted. In addition, the National Guard has unique challenges based on the part-time nature of traditional Guard service.

The Joint Force and the American public relies on the National Guard to be available in times of crisis—and over the past year, we have responded to every mission. We fight the same wars as our active duty counterparts; we spend weeks, months, and years away from our families like our active duty counterparts; and—unlike our active duty counterparts—we leave civilian careers behind to serve our Nation. To keep our promise to America—Always Ready, Always There—we support the Department's efforts to identify Duty Status Reform that reflects our service and sacrifice.

### *Readiness*

For the sake of readiness, we must fully integrate the National Guard into the Future Force Design's development, testing, training, and fielding.

We must also continue to innovate and collaborate with state, local, and federal partners to further strengthen our integrated homeland defense posture. Planning and preparing for

disruptions to critical infrastructure from hostile actors or climate change is key to developing resilience in the homeland.

However, one of the most significant threats to our readiness in the National Guard is budgetary uncertainty. When we are faced with a Continuing Resolution—or an ongoing series of Continuing Resolutions—we cannot program the manning, training, and equipment we need to successfully fulfill our obligations to the Joint Force or successfully support the National Defense Strategy. Our strategic competitors are not waiting for the next budget cycle; they are innovating, training, and looking to gain any advantage available. We cannot give them this advantage.

### *Modernization*

The National Guard is expected to be—and must be—fully interoperable with the Army and Air Force. Therefore, the Total Force structure must meet the demands of the modern battlefield where all components have deployable, sustainable, and interoperable equipment. We are working with the senior leadership of the Army and the Air Force to ensure National Guard force structure and equipment is included in future force design and modernization. We cannot predict when or where the next conflict will be, or what our competitors are bringing to bear, so we must stay engaged throughout this process to ensure our equipment, training and processes are modernized and ready to fight and win.

A key component of force modernization has been the use of National Guard and Reserves Equipment Account (NGREA) funds to acquire off-the-shelf solutions to reduce cost, procure equipment, and fill mission-critical shortages that ultimately improve National Guard readiness.

### *Reform*

We cannot allow our achievements to make us complacent. We must strive to build stronger service members and a more efficient organization, and continue to earn the taxpayers' trust. Our reform initiatives include ensuring drill weekends maximize readiness; increasing the number of telework-compatible career-building opportunities; and ensuring the National Guard Bureau (NGB) hears, understands, and amplifies the interests of Guardsmen around the world.

One critical element of reform is emphasizing the need to invest in the people and programs that make the greatest difference. We must foster an organizational culture that prioritizes performance and accountability. To that end, we must continue to integrate National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, both officers and enlisted, throughout the DoD joint enterprise to increase their readiness to lead in the Total Force. With the increased roles and responsibilities placed on the National Guard, Joint Force experience, education, and leadership will ensure the NGB is in a strong position to advocate for our Nation's Guardsmen in any and every setting.

### **Conclusion**

For 385 years, the National Guard has fulfilled its promise to America: Always Ready, Always There. By prioritizing people, readiness, modernization, and reform, we are preparing for the challenges of the future.

Our Nation relies on the National Guard to defend democracy, restore peace, and bring hope and security around the globe in times of crisis. We boldly face the future: Always Ready, Always There. I look forward to answering your questions.