

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

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Introduction: A Strong Past, A Stronger Future

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and esteemed members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the 435,000 Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian teammates of the National Guard. I also want to thank SEA Raines, the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the National Guard, for his counsel, and The Adjutants General of each of our States, Territories, and the District of Columbia.

As America's 250th anniversary approaches, it is fitting to reflect on the story of our Nation—a story inextricably linked with the National Guard. From our inception, we shouldered a dual mission: to be the sword that fights our Nation's wars and the shield that protects the homeland. The Citizen-Soldier model is our enduring strength. It worked for the Minutemen in the Revolution, and it works today for B-2 pilots to elite cyber operators. We are a unique value proposition: 20 percent of the Joint Force at 4 percent of the Department's budget. Our people make our force strong: our warriors and their families.

We face the nuclear ambitions of Iran, the corrosive influence of narco-terrorists, and the destructive power of natural disasters. This is not a random list; in the past year, the National Guard countered each of these threats. In Operations MIDNIGHT HAMMER and EPIC FURY, National Guard crews played a pivotal role in delivering the decisive blows that severed Iran's nuclear threat. That story started in Missouri, where the Air National Guard's 131st Bomb Wing seamlessly integrated with the Active Component's 509th Bomb Wing to prepare for the largest B-2 operational strike in U.S. history. In Operation ABSOLUTE RESOLVE, the National Guard provided unique capabilities to counter narco-terrorism in Venezuela. In the homeland, when floodwaters rose in Texas, an Army Captain and his crew conducted search and rescue operations, personally evacuating 78 children to safety. His personal bravery stands out, but he

is not alone. Guardsmen from Arizona, Arkansas, and North Dakota streamed in to assist as well as 16 Czech soldiers who joined the operation—a testament to the State Partnership between Texas and the Czech Republic.

These are just a few stories of the speed, power, and precision of your National Guard. The pace of simultaneous threats demands we are deployable, and interoperable with the Joint Force. Every day, we build the next chapter of the National Guard's story—a story of teamwork that begins in our hometowns, is built with our partners, and is proven in combat. We remain, Always Ready, Always There.

The Guard of Today: Resourced to Threat, Proven in Action

The year 2025 was one for the history books, defined by the scale and simultaneity of National Guard operations. Congress's support proved vital; the resources you provide enable us to meet the threats arrayed against our Nation.

Your investment in critical platforms like the F-15EX to Infantry Squad Vehicles, your robust funding of our National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA) and State Partnership Program, and your support for our counterdrug program, medical readiness, and training exercises like Northern Strike paid immense dividends for our Nation's security. For example, through NGREA we closed the night vision goggle capability gap for our Mobile Brigade Combat Teams and enhanced our electronic warfare capabilities through the procurement of Angry Kitten. We have a clear-eyed view of the complex environment we operate in, and the National Guard is at the forefront, resourced to the threat and proven in action.

Defending the Homeland: The Shield of the Nation

Defending the homeland is the Department of War's number one priority. Our dual mission—serving as the primary combat reserve of the Army and Air Force while simultaneously serving as the first military responder in domestic crises—is our greatest strength. This is the National Guard's foundational mission. We are experienced, trusted partners in homeland defense, and have proven our ability to respond to simultaneous missions without hesitation.

Our support to the homeland in 2025 alone was extraordinary: On any given day, an average of 1,300 personnel were employed in domestic response missions, totaling 2.4 million hours of direct, on-the-ground aid. We protected the homeland daily with airspace patrol missions and ground missile defense. More than 3,800 Service members in 19 States augmented law enforcement with high professionalism in service of their communities. When Hurricane Milton made landfall, 21,000 National Guard members from 43 States surged to provide relief, showcasing the power of interstate cooperation. During the 2025 wildfire season, 5,000 Guardsmen partnered with the California Fire Department. On our southern border, 2,100 personnel are actively supporting the Federal agencies which defend our sovereign borders. To facilitate our essential community support, when Governors use Federal assets—such as helicopters and vehicles—to accomplish State active duty missions, these reimbursements need to make their way back to the National Guard appropriations for repairs and maintenance.

Our homeland mission extends into the digital domain. Our force of 3,900 cyber operators is a strategic asset, bringing civilian-acquired skills from the nation's leading tech firms. In 2025, we activated over 400 cyber professionals to respond to real-world network intrusions against state and local governments. The National Guard is the cornerstone of a

"whole-of-state" cybersecurity strategy, blending military-grade expertise with an intimate understanding of local needs.

This operational tempo did not come at the expense of readiness; it enhanced it. In 2025, our recruiting exceeded our end-strength goals priming us for future growth. Our formations completed multiple Combat Training Center rotations and Warfighter exercises, and our excellence was on display at national and international competitions. As we renew our commitment to the Western Hemisphere, we cannot take our foot off the accelerator.

Building a Stronger Tomorrow: People and Modernization

The Guard's decisive response during Operations MIDNIGHT HAMMER, EPIC FURY and ABSOLUTE RESOLVE did not begin in the skies over the Middle East; it began years ago through countless hours training at our Wings and in our readiness centers. An accelerated response time for precision strike missions was only possible because those units trained with modernized equipment, interoperable with the Joint Force. When we build Guard capacity, we build global reach and deterrence. To keep our fighting edge, we must be resourced to threat. That begins with our facilities, equipment, and medical readiness.

Our adversary's weapons will treat us all the same. To deter, and if necessary, win, we must accelerate the modernization of our systems. Concurrent modernization of major weapons systems assures we are seamlessly integrated into the Joint Force with the most lethal, and survivable equipment. Good stewardship of that equipment requires predictable and sustained funding for foundational readiness accounts aligned to our operations tempo like flying hours, Weapons Systems Sustainment, Base Operational Support and Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Maintenance.

We operationalize our traditional Guardsmen through our full-time force. Supporting the President's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget to fund and authorize our full-time workforce ensures we have the right number of warriors, in the right place, at the right time for our operations tempo.

Our most critical asset will always be our Soldiers and Airmen. We are committed to supporting them, our families, and our communities. Medical readiness is the foundational pillar ensuring that the nation's warfighters are healthy to fight and that a capable medical system is ready to support them. Our State Adjutants General are continuously ensuring discipline and accountability throughout our formations. We stay stronger together, checking in on our teammates' physical, mental, and spiritual health, staying vigilant against enemies to our people and our readiness like suicide and sexual assault. Together with our State Adjutants General we are finding efficiencies and pushing resources to the states where they bolster readiness by advancing our core tenant to organize, train and equip our traditional force.

Stronger Together: The Power of Partnerships

Through the support of Congress and our Governors, the National Guard team begins in America's hometowns and reaches around the globe. This is possible through our extensive network of partnerships that amplify our strength and embody the principle of burden-sharing with our allies.

The crown jewel of our partnership efforts is the State Partnership Program. For over 30 years, the State Partnership Program proves that through strong soldier-to-soldier and airman-to-airman relationships, our allies will take on their share of the burden of creating peace through strength. In 2025, we added eight partners, the largest growth in the program's history. With the addition of Greece earlier this year we now have 116 total pairings offering partnerships, not

dependencies, to 60 percent of the world. In 2025, we conducted over 1,770 State Partnership Program events at just 1 percent of the theater security cooperation budget. To best leverage this invaluable, low-cost, high-impact program, we need flexible, consistent, and predictable funding.

Our partnerships also extend beyond the military-to-military realm. We have deep, proven relationships with local, State, and Federal law enforcement, as well as with academia and the private sector. These relationships are forged in crisis and honed through constant collaboration, ensuring a unified response when disaster strikes.

The Innovative Spirit of the Citizen-Soldier

Our formations bring incredible force multipliers that cannot be captured on a spreadsheet. An Army Engineering company in the active component may have a single Military Occupational Specialty, but in the National Guard, that same company is composed of dozens of different civilian specialties—cyber experts, business owners, teachers, and engineers. This experience allows us to approach every problem with a depth of expertise unique to our force.

The Secretary of War's directive is clear: we must innovate. To capitalize on the unique experience of our Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen, I am committed to empowering every Guardsman to think creatively and experiment. Status quo is not an option. Grounded in our communities, we allow the flexibility for States to develop game-changing technology. NGREA funding is a valuable tool in this national mission, because it allows us to rapidly field innovative solutions and dual-use equipment vital to supporting our states in the homeland mission. For example, we modernized F-16 electronic warfare capabilities years ahead of schedule, thanks to the ingenuity of the Air National Guard / Air Force Reserve Test Center. Across our States,

Territories, and the District of Columbia, we have 54 innovation incubators. Innovation is in our DNA.

Conclusion: Stronger Tomorrow

We are the indispensable core of the Joint Force, built to respond with speed, power, and precision. Our 435,000 Soldiers and Airmen are trained to crush any threat, from natural disasters to rogue States. Threats are unpredictable; our readiness is not. We deter our enemies, protect our freedoms, and defend the American people.

At home, we stand ready to defend our communities. Abroad, we deliver lethal force with our Joint Force partners. We innovate, drawing on the elite talent from every corner of the Nation. We anticipate, we prepare, and when the call comes, we act. Decisively.

I'm honored to serve the Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard. I am thankful for this Subcommittee's unwavering support. With your continued commitment, we will keep our promise to America and remain "Always Ready, Always There."

In closing, and with offering my deepest gratitude, I ask this Committee to remember the service and the lives of our fallen heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.