

STATEMENT BY

BRIGADIER GENERAL WALTER E. FOUNTAIN

ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

FIRST SESSION, 113TH CONGRESS

ON

ARMY READINESS

APRIL 16, 2013

NOT FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Opening Remarks

Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Bordallo, members of the subcommittee; I am honored to appear before you today, representing the over 355,000 Soldiers in the Army National Guard, including 23,000 members currently mobilized at multiple locations around the world defending our national interests. For 376 years Citizen Soldiers have been central to how the nation defends itself at home and abroad. Through resolve and readiness, Army National Guard Soldiers deliver essential value to our nation and its communities.

The Army National Guard of 2013 is the best-manned, best-trained, best-equipped, best-led and most experienced force in its long history. This is a direct result of the resourcing and legal authorities that Congress has dedicated to this purpose over the past decade-plus of conflict. The Army Guard has used those resources wisely, and is today an operational force that provides capabilities and strategic depth to meet U.S. defense and homeland security requirements. On the domestic front, in fiscal year 2012 Army Guard members served over 447,000 duty days under the control of the states responding to domestic emergencies – and that was, historically, a slow year. This current fiscal year (FY), which began with Hurricane Sandy, will likely post far higher numbers.

The bedrock of an operational force – a force that is actively engaged and is postured for employment at home and abroad whenever

called – is ready Soldiers. In order to ensure that Army National Guard Soldiers are ready, they must have effective training, modern equipment and capable facilities. They must also be physically ready for service, and be present in sufficient numbers to support the wide range of missions the Army National Guard is called to perform. Without these key elements, the nation's substantial investment in an operational Army National Guard, built at great expense in blood, sweat and treasure over a decade of conflict, will surely atrophy.

Personnel Readiness

One persistent false impression is that the Army National Guard is a “tired force” whose Soldiers, families and employers are worn out from the strain of more than a decade of conflict. No doubt, there has been strain. However, the Guard's Soldiers continue to show a strong appetite for service, and the Guard's appeal as a winning team that embodies selfless service to both nation and community continues to draw America's youth to its ranks. The Army National Guard recruitment rate is 102 percent of goal, while the retention rate stands at over 94 percent of goal (as of March 31, 2013). Every member of the Army Guard has made a conscious decision to join or continue to serve since September 11, 2001. This is a key point, as today's Guard differs from that of the pre-9/11 period in that today's Soldiers anticipate being deployed home and abroad in service to their country.

Indeed, nearly 50 percent of the Soldiers in the Army Guard today are veterans of a deployment, many having served multiple tours. Retaining this core of experience is critical to maintaining an operational force, and this year and the next present a particular challenge as the large cohort of Soldiers that grew the Army National Guard in 2007-8 becomes eligible for re-enlistment. While bonuses and incentives play an important role in deciding to stay in the Guard, the desire for relevant training and utilization at home and abroad drew many of these men and women to enlist in the first place, and will play a role in their decisions to stay. A key component of the operational Army National Guard is that it is a force that sees regular use, through a progressive readiness model – such as Army Force Generation – that prepares Soldiers and units for deployment every five years. This gives Soldiers, their families and civilian employers the predictability they need to plan their civilian lives and careers, while developing critical military skills exercised through tough, realistic training and operational employment.

The Army National Guard provides a balanced range of essential capabilities through our current end strength of 358,200. We are planning on reducing our end strength to 354,200 by the end of FY 2014. This end strength supports a force structure which consists of 40 percent combat maneuver forces, 24 percent support forces, 25 percent sustainment forces, and 11 percent generating forces. At the current level of manning, this balanced force provides an optimal set of dual-use

capabilities for supporting overseas contingency operations as well as concurrent state/territory requirements for Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA).

It is these comprehensive and complementary capabilities – of combat maneuver, support, sustainment and generating forces that keep the Army National Guard as a viable operational force.

Individual Soldier medical readiness is critical to build and maintain a ready and relevant operational force. The Guard has made great strides in leveraging leadership, best practices, and innovation to build efficiencies in how we use our funding and to improve the accuracy in how we account for each Soldier in order to increase medical readiness and manage the non-deployable force. Only 41 percent of Army National Guard Soldiers were considered fully medically ready in 2007; today 79 percent of the Guard is fully medically ready. That is the highest return on your investment and percentage of individual medical readiness ever recorded by the Army National Guard. Your continued support is essential, as we strive to attain 85 percent or greater medical readiness by December 2014.

Medical readiness extends beyond the physical well-being of Soldiers – leadership at all levels must ensure that Soldiers under their charge receive the mental healthcare screening and treatment that they need. The Army National Guard takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that Soldiers are given every resource and opportunity to address

mental health issues before they manifest into the tragic outcome of a suicide or other high-risk behavior. Resources have been dedicated to ensuring that each state and territory has a suicide prevention program manager, who provides training and oversight on suicide prevention matters for Army National Guard units within their states. In addition, the Vets4Warriors program has been expanded to ensure that all military personnel have nationwide 24/7 access to comprehensive non-clinical peer counseling and support services. The Army National Guard also works with DoD's Defense Suicide Prevention Office to promote awareness of the Military Crisis Line, a service that provides 24/7, confidential crisis support to those in the military and their families. The professionals at the Military Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Service members and their families of all ages and circumstances-from those coping with mental health issues that were never addressed to those who are struggling with relationships. They provide immediate access to care for those who may be at risk of suicide, along with additional follow-up and connection with Service members and Veterans to mental health services.

Additionally, the Army National Guard members have access to the expanding Partners in Care program. The program, originally started by the Maryland National Guard, leverages faith-based organizations to provide counseling, education and mentoring, transportation, and many other services to members of the National Guard and their families. It is

based on the belief that local faith communities can bring hope, offer support and continuity of spiritual care, and increase the resilience of rural and other dispersed military populations.

The Army National Guard has also established Master Resilience Training Centers at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin and Ft. Custer, Michigan, training over 2,800 Master Resilience Trainers and over 7,400 Resilience Trainer Assistants, who themselves will provide resilience training at the company and platoon level.

The Army National Guard has uniformed behavioral health officers and specialists that drill on the weekends, attend annual training and deploy to support Soldiers throughout the ARFORGEN cycle. They can provide military-mandated behavioral health screening in support of personnel and medical readiness. Because the Guard does not have full-time behavioral health providers, the Army National Guard has resourced 55 contract Directors of Psychological Health to provide behavioral health assessments, referrals, and track Army National Guard Soldiers as they receive care.

Suicide prevention, regardless of component, is a challenge for leadership. However, due to geographical dispersion and in-person contact between Soldiers and leaders being generally limited to drill weekends and exercises, it is a greater challenge for Army National Guard forces. When Army National Guard Soldiers are not drilling or otherwise on duty, suicide prevention support and services are limited.

Even when Soldiers are participating in inactive duty training, medical providers are only allowed to provide care in order to save life, limb or eyesight. These factors make identifying and treating potential precursors to suicide exceptionally difficult.

Another challenge facing today's military is sexual assault within the ranks. In calendar year 2012, the Army National Guard had 182 reported sexual assault cases – an increase of 39 reported sexual assault cases from the 2011 total. While the exact cause of the increase is unknown, we believe that enhanced education, a better understanding of the reporting process by Army National Guard Soldiers, and the strict confidentiality of the reporting have led to an increase in reporting. It is important to note, however, that according to Department of Defense data, the majority of sexual assaults continue to go unreported in all branches of the armed services.

There is no question that much more must be done to prevent sexual assaults and provide assistance to victims. For this reason, the Army National Guard increased awareness amongst senior leaders in every State and supported Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) training initiatives. The Army National Guard implemented the SHARP program in all 54 States, Territories, and the District of Columbia. Since 2011, more than 1,500 Army National Guard Soldiers have been trained in the 80-hour SHARP course. Currently, the Army National Guard has 88 of the targeted 108 full time SHARP/Sexual

Assault Response Coordinators and victim advocates at each State Joint Force Headquarters, with the remaining 20 personnel slated to be in place September 30, 2013. In addition, a National Guard Bureau (NGB)-level investigation team comprised of Army Criminal Investigation Division-trained Judge Advocates was established to provide impartial, third party investigative support at the request of State Adjutants General. The NGB investigation team provides investigative capability and reports back to the State leadership, augmenting state-level investigative capabilities.

Underlying the readiness of Army National Guard Soldiers, facilities and equipment is the cadre of full time manning personnel. From training Soldiers, to maintaining equipment, to administering programs and everything in between – the Soldiers and civilians of the Army National Guard full time manning workforce ensures that the Army National Guard continues to meet Army and Department of Defense standards for readiness. With full time manning levels currently at 72% of the 1999 Army-validated requirements, and with temporary full time manning levels drawing down as their war-related funding is decreased, it is more critical than ever to ensure that the level of full time manning remain where it is today. Any further reductions in full time manning will not only ensure that the already-stretched force is taxed even further, but there is a distinct likelihood that critical activities for normal unit operations and continued readiness will be negatively impacted.

Training Readiness

Realistic, regular individual and collective unit training is critical to ensure that Guard Soldiers are ready to serve in the full spectrum of operations, both globally and domestically. Over the last decade, Congress has provided substantial resources for enhanced Army National Guard training, including the use of realistic (and cost-effective) battlefield training simulators, rotations through live individual and collective, unit-based training, and providing Army National Guard units with rotations through large-scale training exercises.

However, despite gains in training quality and availability, due to a combination of sequestration and the Continuing Resolution Act (CRA), units have been significantly challenged to provide adequate funding to support all individual training required to achieve required readiness levels. Low resource availability has caused the Army National Guard to reduce the number of Soldiers that can be sent to schools this fiscal year by over 17 percent. Further, state Regional Training Institutes (RTIs) may be forced to reduce training seat capacity by nearly 7,000 throughout the remainder of FY13.

In addition to the impact on Army National Guard individual Soldier training, budget shortfalls due to sequestration have eroded Army National Guard collective training. For instance, sequestration has caused the cancellation of the 56th Stryker Brigade's Warfighter staff

training exercise in March and the 72nd Infantry Brigade's Warfighter staff training exercise in May 2013. The 40th Infantry Division Warfighter staff training exercise may be cancelled due to lack of resources to execute the event. The 33rd IBCT's Joint Readiness Training Center rotation in June 2013 and the 48th IBCT's National Training Center rotation in September 2013 have been cancelled due to current fiscal constraints. The Army National Guard's Exportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) is the primary venue for enabling Army National Guard units to meet Platoon level maneuver and live fire training requirements at home station in accordance with the Army Training Strategy; three brigade-level XCTC rotations are currently at risk due to lack of ammunition. While units will still receive a portion of their required training, resource reductions will prevent them from receiving all the training they require in order to meet the training and readiness requirements.

Just as reductions in training resources have negatively impacted readiness, so too has the reduction in the overseas operational use of the Army National Guard. In order to maintain levels of readiness that the nation expects and has invested in over the past decade-plus, Army National Guard Soldiers and units must see regular, predictable use. Now that the war in Iraq is over, and the war in Afghanistan is drawing to a close, there are fewer opportunities for Army National Guard Soldiers to participate in the kinds of missions and exercises that have

enabled their current levels of readiness. And, due to sequestration, the Army has been forced to cancel deployments of Army National Guard units for missions they have traditionally performed.

If the Army National Guard is to maintain the nation's substantial investment in its readiness and continue to be a cost-effective option for national defense, it must be used in a regular, predictable way. A force that is poorly trained and seldom used will be unable to respond with the efficacy the nation expects when called upon for the next war, contingency or disaster. Through the authority granted by Congress in the recent revision of 10 USC 12304(b), the nation's military leaders have full flexibility to use Army National Guard Soldiers for regular, foreseeable mission requirements. Without high-quality training and regular use, today's operational Army National Guard may return to a strategic reserve, unable to effectively support the Army's Total Force policy.

Equipment Readiness

The Army National Guard has received significant investment in its equipment over the last few years, increasing Equipment on Hand (EOH), Critical Dual-Use (CDU) equipment, and the overall modernization levels of equipment.

The Army's goal is to ensure that Army National Guard units are equipped properly with Critical Dual Use (CDU) capabilities to execute

missions both at home and abroad. The Army's goal is to equip the Army National Guard with at least 80 percent of the CDU requirement.

Overall CDU EOH is at 90 percent of goal, an increase from 86 percent two years ago and a significant increase from 65 percent at the time of the Hurricane Katrina response in 2005. Army National Guard EOH for Modified Table of Organization (MTOE) units is currently at 88 percent of goal (an increase from 85 percent two years ago). Of the 88 percent EOH for MTOE units, 83 percent is currently at home station (not mobilized) and considered available for domestic operations. Of the total quantity of EOH, 70 percent is considered modernized, while 18 percent of the on-hand equipment is not modern.

While modernization levels overall are good, and within one percent of active component levels, there are still areas of concern. The Army Guard's UH-60 Blackhawk fleet is the oldest in the Army, and current modernization plans have the Army National Guard falling further behind. Sixty-five percent of the active Army UH-60 fleet will be digital by 2020, at which time the Army National Guard UH-60 fleet will be less than 23 percent digitized. By 2025, the active Army will be completely digitized, while the Army National Guard will not be fully digitized until 2036. This ever-widening gap may eventually render a preponderance of Army National Guard UH-60s non-deployable for overseas contingency operations because of theater-specific restrictions.

The procurement and fielding of the UH-60M has already been delayed. Subsequent delays will result in Army National Guard lagging further behind the active component in modernizing the UH-60 fleet. And, due to sequestration, induction of UH60As into the UH-60A to L remanufacture line will stop in April 2013, further eroding UH-60 readiness.

Equipment reset, including field and depot level maintenance, also has a significant impact on overall equipment readiness. Currently, the Army is developing strategies and plans for the way forward as it copes with cuts in maintenance due to sequestration. As it currently stands, approximately 1,000 pieces of Army Guard equipment from eight brigades and 450 individual units will not enter Automatic Reset Induction during FY13. The brigades impacted hail from Minnesota, Oklahoma, Ohio, Hawaii, New York, Missouri, and two from Texas. The Army's reset priorities are driven by the readiness requirements of units that are next to deploy, the global response force, and forward-deployed units. As fewer Army National Guard units deploy, especially given the sequestration-driven decision to cancel Army National Guard deployments, the equipment reset backlog will certainly increase over time.

Simply stated – equipment procurement, reset and modernization equals readiness. Troops without adequate equipment are unable to deploy. Plus, equipment that is not able to be maintained once in use

puts Soldiers and those they are serving in danger. The public depends on modern, safe Army National Guard equipment to effect rescues and save property during disasters here at home, and Soldiers on the battlefield depend on the same equipment to ensure their missions are accomplished and they return home safely. Today, the Army National Guard has the appropriate mix of CDU EOH to support domestic operations, including disaster response and recovery. Continuing to maintain investments in equipment modernization, maintenance and procurement will be critical to ensuring the Army National Guard is ready to respond to any mission or requirement.

Facilities Readiness

The Army National Guard has facilities in more than 2,600 communities nationwide. In many towns and cities these facilities are the only military presence, with the Guard serving as the most visible link between hometown America and the nation's armed forces. Facilities are critical to readiness and support unit administration, training, equipment maintenance, and storage. They serve as platforms for mobilization during times of war as well as command centers and shelters during domestic emergencies.

While the Army National Guard transformed from a strategic reserve to an operational force during more than a decade of deployments, many facilities have not been updated in several

generations. Currently, more than 46 percent of Army Guard readiness centers are over 50 years old. Many fail to meet the needs of a 21st century operational force, cannot accommodate modern equipment and technology, are poorly situated, and are energy inefficient. In some facilities, modern equipment cannot fit into old storage and maintenance bays.

At current levels of funding, it will take 154 years for all Army National Guard facilities to meet the majority of the wartime/primary missions of the units assigned to those facilities.

Investment in Army National Guard facilities is truly an investment in local communities as well as in the Army National Guard. The majority of Army National Guard military construction is completed with local materials and local construction companies. Military construction funds flow directly into the communities in which the facilities are built, and many facilities serve as civilian facilities when not in active use by the Army National Guard.

Closing Remarks

Resources remain the principal reason why the Army National Guard is now a ready, operational force and will determine whether it stays that way. Resources have allowed the Army Guard to reach its authorized end strength levels and retain valued experience in the ranks. Resources have permitted the Guard to achieve individual and unit proficiency with advanced training devices and simulations, attend Army

schools, and participate in live and constructive exercises at the Army's premier training centers. They have allowed the Guard to surge personnel on active duty in order to better prepare units for scheduled deployments. They have equipped the Guard to a higher level of modernized equipment on hand than at any time in its history.

As the military enters a period of constrained resources and the Services conduct their analysis of the proper mix of active and reserve forces needed to accomplish national strategic goals, the Army National Guard as an operational force stands as a cost-effective and efficient solution to a wide variety of mission sets, and should continue to play an integral role in the fabric of our nation's defense.