

Statement for the Record

*Defense Support of Civil Authorities: A Vital Resource in the Nation's
Homeland Security Missions*

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Management Agency*

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on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications*

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Good morning Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Payne, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the State of Rhode Island's long and ongoing partnership with our National Guard. My name is Pete Gaynor and I am the Director of Emergency Management in the State of Rhode Island. As the Director and a professional emergency manager, I am responsible for preparing for emergencies, coordinating the activation and use of resources, ensuring an integrated and unified response, and managing the recovery effort in support of our local and state governments, citizens and businesses.

I am pleased to be testifying before the subcommittee today. I have submitted my full statement to the committee, which I ask be made part of the hearing record.

Today, with this testimony, I want to provide the subcommittee with information on the long-standing history of cooperation and partnership between our state government and the Army and Air National Guard forces based in our state. I hope to give you a sense of how we in Rhode Island have coalesced to make our state safer, more secure and more resilient against a host of natural and man-made

hazards. Additionally, I would like to highlight the challenges and opportunities we face in addressing the growing cyber threat.

The Rhode Island National Guard consists of more than 3,300 members. Most of its members are residents of Rhode Island and neighboring states. Under state law, the National Guard provides protection of life and property and preserves peace, order and public safety. The Rhode Island Guard has served and remains engaged in the Global War on Terror and Overseas Contingency Operations, with units that have deployed worldwide in direct support of national security objectives.

Within the State of Rhode Island, the Guard is inconsistently called upon in disasters by the Governor to provide military support to civil authorities during local emergencies, natural disasters and significant severe weather events. The Rhode Island National Guard provides a unique role with a distinct local response mission. They are our neighbors, they are our Citizen-Soldiers.

Since 2010, the Rhode Island National Guard has activated over 1,750 citizen-soldiers to respond to numerous natural disasters and events while simultaneously deploying over fourteen hundred individuals in four company sized units overseas. Specific events such as the 2010 March floods, Hurricane Irene 2011, Hurricane Sandy 2013, the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013 and the winter blizzards of 2013 and 2015 all required Rhode Island National Guard personnel and equipment. Compared to the previous fifty years, Rhode Island National Guard activation over last five years for state emergencies has increased over 200 percent.

Emergency Management requires a team effort from all facets of our community to assist with response and recovery. From citizens preparing to be on their own for the first 72 hours of an emergency, to electrical and gas providers teaming up with us in the State Emergency Operations Center, state departments, such as the Department of Transportation providing sand and salt to local communities in need, and our National Guardsman providing law enforcement support during special events. We simply require the whole community to help successfully navigate a crisis or special event.

The Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency is only one part of our State's emergency management team; we must leverage all of the resources of our collective team in preparing for, protecting against, responding to, recovering from and mitigating against all hazards; collectively we must meet the needs of the entire community in each of these areas. The US Armed Forces and National Guard have a historic precedent and enduring role in supporting civil authorities

during times of emergency, and this role is codified in the national defense strategy.

The National Guard is a unique and indispensable force multiplier in preparedness efforts and during times of need, from providing expert training and exercise support in the movement and dispensing of commodities to local communities to providing technical assistance to our Cyber Initiative. The National Guard is a ready, reliable and diverse force accessible for state, multi-state and federal purposes.

Typical State active duty missions include Security, Traffic Control, Evacuation, Search and Rescue, Civil Disturbance Control, Fire Protection & Fighting, Natural Disaster Relief, Debris Clearance and Emergency Response & Recovery efforts.

Our Civil Support Team (CST), a high-tech hazardous response and monitoring team works hand in hand with local, state and federal agencies in all mass gathering events such as the recently concluded 2015 Volvo Ocean Race in Newport, Rhode Island. The Rhode Island National Guard continues to be called upon during Winter Storms, Flooding and Hurricanes. The National Guard spectrum of support includes a Cyber Defense Team that provided network security support for the Presidential Inauguration in 2013.

Cyber security is an emerging role requiring a synchronized and holistic approach. Not unlike the counter drug mission or the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) forces, the CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP), and the Homeland Response Force (HRF); cyber security and cyber defense are emerging roles for the National Guard in partnership with local, state, federal agencies and businesses requiring updated or new laws to mitigate and prevent network attacks from domestic and foreign players. This is a new paradigm in consequence management; hacking into critical infrastructure nodes such as power grids, telecommunications sties or financial institutions can be as devastating to the public as a hurricane or blizzard.

Conclusion

The cohesive partnership between civilian authorities and the National Guard is instrumental in life safety and the protection our citizens. This partnership enhances our ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and assists in defending the United States against increasing cyber-attacks and acts of terrorism.

As challenges continue to evolve, we must continue to adjust and shape our emergency management and homeland security strategy and enhance our whole community concept. In the State of Rhode Island, the National Guard has proven its value time and time again. Its relentless commitment and dedication to serve and protect is unmatched.

We look forward to working with our partner and continuing our mission to reduce the loss of life and property in disasters, and to protect our State's critical infrastructure from all hazards by means of comprehensive emergency management policies and legislative initiatives.

Thank you, Chairwoman McSally and subcommittee members, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I stand ready to answer any questions you might have.