

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release
April 27, 2004

Contact: Robert White/Drew Crockett
(202) 225-5074

Government Reform Committee to Examine
National Guard Responsibilities & Readiness

Is the Guard Stretched Too Thin to Meet Its Ever- Expanding Role?

What: Government Reform Committee oversight hearing:
“Transforming the National Guard: Resourcing for Readiness”

When: APRIL 29, 2004, 10:00 a.m.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background:

Today, the citizen soldiers and airmen of the National Guard have accepted their growing roles in current and future national security and homeland defense challenges of the United States. Transforming, rebalancing, and resourcing the National Guard for readiness in this decade and beyond should be an immediate priority of the Administration, Congress and the individual states.

The Committee wants to ensure the National Guard receives the training, equipment, and resources it needs to fulfill missions of safety and security for the United States. This hearing seeks to examine proposed federal reforms and actions affecting the future of the National Guard, as well as reviewing the critical needs of states for National Guard manpower and resources.

The hearing will examine the emerging operational roles of the National Guard abroad and at home, and measure the level of readiness the Guard possesses to meet those roles. The Committee will focus on the proposed transformation plans for the National Guard; the increasing requirements of states for the National Guard in homeland security plans; the decentralized oversight and multi-layered management hierarchy of the National Guard, and the complicated coordination between it, DOD, DHS, and Governors’ offices; and resourcing streams used to ensure the readiness of the National Guard to fulfill current and future missions.

The traditional concept of Guardsmen serving one weekend a month and two weeks a year to perform state disaster relief and train for federal service was shattered after the September 11th terrorist attacks. Since 9/11, more than 175,000 Army and Air National Guard members have engaged in the global war on terrorism at home and abroad in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition to these missions, the Army National Guard remains the Army's primary force in Kosovo, Bosnia and the Sinai. The Army National Guard has also been charged with the responsibility to protect ships in transit to the Persian Gulf, and protect military bases at home and abroad. The Air National Guard has flown over 111,000 sorties abroad, including the majority of close air support in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. In Operation Noble Eagle, the Air National Guard conducts daily combat air patrols over the continental United States.

At home, National Guard responsibilities include security at airports, borders, critical infrastructure sites, Air Force bases and special events. The National Guard operates the Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams (CSTs). Meanwhile, the Guard continues to serve its traditional role as state militias: providing military assistance at the request of civilian authorities; providing medical and communications missions; national humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.

As the Guard transforms, the federal government needs to ensure that members of the Army and Air National Guard are properly manned for foreign and domestic missions and receive the latest training and equipment to meet these missions.

In March 2003, the Committee on Government Reform requested that GAO begin to study the tension between the increased reliance on reserve components in the war on terrorism and increased responsibilities of Guard units to their state's governors to provide forces for homeland security emergencies and other traditional state missions. While it is clear that the Army and Air National Guard personnel and units are making significant contributions to the nation's security, it is less clear that they are and will continue to be resourced and equipped to fulfill their massive federal responsibilities, as well as the expressed needs of states. GAO will report on its preliminary findings.

WITNESSES

Panel One:

The Honorable George E. Pataki, Governor of New York

Panel Two:

The Honorable Paul McHale, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense

The Honorable Thomas F. Hall, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

Lieutenant General H Steven Blum, Chief, National Guard Bureau

Major General John A. Love, Special Assistant to Combatant Commander for National Guard Affairs, United States Northern Command

Panel Three:

Janet A. St. Laurent, Director, Defense Capabilities and Management, General Accounting Office

Lieutenant General Wayne D. Marty, State Adjutant General of Texas

Major General Timothy J. Lowenberg, State Adjutant General of Washington

Major General Bruce Tuxill, State Adjutant General of Maryland

###