

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY,
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND THE CENSUS

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ON PROJECT SAFECOM: MORE TIME. MORE MONEY. MORE
COMMUNICATION? WHAT PROGRESS HAVE WE MADE IN
ACHIEVING INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LOCAL,
STATE, AND FEDERAL FIRST RESPONDERS?

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and other distinguished members of this subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify before you today to address the National Guard's existing ability to support first responders. I will also discuss information technology requirements that the National Guard of the several states have articulated for further enhancing their ability to support the first responders.

As you know, Section 10501, Title 10, United States Code provides the purpose of the National Guard Bureau to be the channel of communications between the Departments of the Army and Air Force and the several states on matters concerning the National Guard. In this regard, to assist in mobilization, training, and administration, the National Guard Bureau, with Congress' strong support, established a communications structure called "Guardnet." It links over 3,300 National Guard installations in over 2,700 communities in all 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia to the Department of Defense. Three hundred and twenty-one sites

are equipped with video teleconferencing equipment provided by the Distributive Training Technology Project that have been used during emergency operations for information sharing and for exercise training with first responders. In fact, sites in New York, New Jersey and Virginia were used for command and control, providing situational awareness and information sharing following 9/11. Since then, the National Guard has provided IT support for numerous events, to include the Winter Olympics in Utah, the G-8 Summit in June of this year, the Democratic National Convention in July, and just recently at the Republican National Convention in New York.

The National Guard is supporting the homeland security activities of the states. The National Guard Adjutants General in 25 states are dual-hatted as the Senior State Emergency Management Official reporting to the Governor. In 19 states the Adjutants General are cabinet level officials equal to the State Emergency Management Officer and there are various arrangements in the remaining states. Further, in 15 states the Adjutants General also serve as the Homeland Security advisor to the Governor. There is a National Guard Standing Joint Force Headquarters in each state and territory that consists of National Guard staff, as well as representatives from all of the military services and the federal, state, and local governments.

It is the National Guard who has the exclusive ability for exchange of classified information within the states.

In brief, the National Guard is presently integrated with both federal and state IT networks and can be called to participate with the first responders. The National Guard's close involvement with both state and federal governments provides a unique opportunity to assist in solving the problem of interoperability and information sharing.

In this regard, the National Guard Bureau is aggressively participating in exercises, demonstration projects, strategies, initiatives and programs, such as the Department of Homeland Security's SAFECOM program. We are working hard to improve interoperability and we recognize that all of our initiatives must be interoperable not only with Northern Command, but also with a federal government enterprise strategy. SAFECOM is the activity addressing this enterprise strategy and we are working to contribute to their success, thus assisting in the trusted sharing of information among all stakeholders involved in Homeland Security.

In 2001, the National Guard Bureau commissioned a Strategic Issues Task Force to determine IT training and

command, control and communication system support requirements for defense of the homeland. Based on a survey, the Task Force recommended a National Guard Joint Operations Center to serve as a single focal point for state, federal agency and DoD support requirements. Along with the Joint Operations Center there is a requirement to enhance Guardnet to be able to carry additional communication traffic between the state Joint Force Headquarters and the networks of DoD, the Military Departments and other federal and state agencies. The states require a quick reaction communications team at each state Joint Force Headquarters that can move quickly to any incident site. At the incident site, the states need wireless “reach-back” communications to the Emergency Operations Center and the federal and state networks. Within the incident site area, there is a need for interoperable communications among responders. Additionally, the states desire enhanced technologies in the distance learning classrooms to support homeland security training to serve as a forward Emergency Operations Center. Finally, there is a requirement for a National Guard communications unit trained and tasked to support any state when the state needs additional IT resources during a declared emergency. These requirements have been identified and are the focus of the National Guard Bureau.

In closing, the National Guard Bureau strongly concurs with the Chairman's remarks before this subcommittee in July that, "Information sharing and coordination among government organizations are central to producing comprehensive and practical approaches and solutions to combating threats." The National Guard Bureau is aware of its unique state and federal status under the Constitution and the opportunities that dual status brings to assisting in the war on terrorism. It is committed to providing interoperable information-sharing capabilities that are secure, reliable, dependable and that respect privacy provisions of the users.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.