

Statement of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS)

On

Combating Terrorism: Training and Equipping Reserve Component Forces

**Provided to the
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations**

**Of The
House Committee on Government Reform**

**Presented by
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May 11, 2004

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Thank you, Chairman Shays and Congressman Waxman for inviting me to testify on behalf of the National Guard Association of the United States.

As you well know, the mission of the National Guard has changed drastically since September 11, 2001. Today, Guards men and women are not only supporting missions to defend and protect our homeland, but they are also deployed abroad supporting our ongoing war on terrorism.

Today, there are more than 94,000 National Guard personnel serving on active duty in support of the global war on terrorism. These men and women, who are serving in harm's way, contribute over 40% of our fighting force in the Global War on Terrorism.

Mr. Chairman, the state of your National Guard is good. However, as the Guard participates in Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations throughout the world continue, we will always encounter challenges. I believe the Guard has demonstrated they are up to these challenges.

Our men and women serving in the Guard realize they have become more than “weekend warriors” as they support the war on terror each and every day at home and abroad. Many within the Guard are adjusting to the changing demands of military missions. It is not uncommon for members of the Army National Guard to be mobilized and deployed for an 18-month period. However, irrespective of the duration of deployment and the unpredictability in their call-ups, our minutemen and women are answering the call to fight and defend our country. Realizing these new missions, the National Guard is still recruiting some of America’s best and brightest citizen soldiers.

The current military leadership understands the hardships that the guard is enduring. The families and employers of these brave men and women understand and support the commitment that their loved-ones, coworkers and friends have elected to make. An Arkansas spokesman says, “Guard families are doing OK, though they have anxiety, they still support the Guard.” The Arkansas Guard has sustained five combat-related deaths while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, all deaths occurring just last weekend.

In preparing my testimony, I have solicited comments from the members of the National Guard Association and received feedback from The Adjutants General from the states, and communications from special operations forces and soldiers returning from areas of operations.

I would report to you that those in the field are thankful for the forward thinking and preparation that has been demonstrated by our nation’s Adjutants General (TAGs). In

several instances, training from lessons learned has been instituted from the ground up (state level) rather than top down from the federal level. As such, many states have taken the lessons learned from their returning or deployed units and incorporated new training regimens to prepare soldiers for their deployment in theater. Several states have initiated their own programs to prepare their soldiers for combat operations such as additional combat arms training to enhance the basic soldiers skills outside of the MOS skill set; and the use of additional funding to enhance communication and coordination training for units preparing for deployment.

In preparation for my testimony, I reviewed the questions that you posed to us. As such, in my capacity as President of National Guard Association, I would like to focus on two aspects of the questions you presented to us: training and resourcing.

With regard to training, some units are reporting that redundancy in training has extended stays at mobilization stations. Other feedback indicates that some of the existing training does not fit the scenarios that our personnel are encountering; this is also increasing time at mobilizations stations. This is requiring our soldiers being gone for eighteen months. There should be a review of our current policies and procedures to maximize the training and certification at home state. There exist instances where we are using training doctrine that is three years old. We should make every effort to reduce time a mobilization stations.

In addition, there should be a review of training for ANG transportation units. Some Air National Guard units are being deployed without training and required training in theater. A greater attempt should be made to train these units in the CONUS prior to deployment.

Allow me to read comments from a Special Forces unit that has returned from operations in Afghanistan.

- Transitions that occurred in Afghanistan between a National Guard SF Group and an Active duty SF group did not allow for an effective passage of information or situational awareness for two reasons.
 - Active component intelligence and command personnel who had been deployed to the region less than 8 months ago did not have confidence in the National Guard to further develop a valuable situational awareness or understanding.
 - The transition schedule did not allow sufficient overlap.
- After returning to home station from deployment most units did not see value in their receiving lessons learned or “heads-up” information from us. They viewed such an ad-hoc means of relaying information to be a training distracter. These unit’s commands believe that their power projection platforms and higher headquarters will be able to provide them the information they need to succeed. Some units have accepted offered briefings and work groups, only to limit attendance and to ensure that these meetings were kept short. Pro-active attempts at providing information failed because unit’s commands were not reachable or did not return attempted contact.

With regard to the issue of resourcing our Guard forces, the following comments were made:

- Adequate training with SAPPI plates and body armor should be done stateside. Soldiers need to be comfortable in their equipment before deploying to the theater of operations.
- We should be training and resourcing our forces at the C-1 level rather than taking extended time to train at the C-3 level. We must insure that our personnel have the materials and equipment that they will be using in the area of operations (AOR).

Mr. Chairman, allow me to read some excerpts of one of several emails I received from soldiers serving abroad:

“The current MTOEs do not provide the necessary equipment for units operating in the environment. For example our Truck Company is not authorized radios in each vehicle to maintain communications between drivers. The unit purchased secure hand held radios prior to deployment, which have been essential to the unit. The M16A2 is not the best weapon for transportation solders to quickly engage the enemy and should be replaced with M4s. A hatch cut in the top of the HETs (Heavy Armored Trucks) would offer better fields of fire and observation. Up-armored HMMWVs must be the standard. HETs and Medium trucks should receive additional armor and ballistic blankets to protect solders. The standard military weapons training must be enhanced to include Close Quarter Battle

and enhanced weapons training for all soldiers. This is very true for our transportation company personnel who during an ambush, transitioning into a mounted infantry soldier. At present, the individual states are purchasing equipment and providing the training required. MOSQ training schools must spend more time focusing on critical combat skills and eliminate non-survival skills such as Drill & Ceremony. Use every minute of training time on skills that will keep a soldier alive in combat.”

In the fog of war and in light of logistic and resourcing challenges facing our Guard units, they are producing innovations in the field as it relates to their individual equipment and vehicles. For the record, I would ask that an article from the Topeka Capital-Journal be entered into the record for the committee’s review.

As you can see there have been challenges that need to be addressed. I believe that our Guard units and their leadership are responding. I believe that our Guard units and TAGs are focusing on these training and preparing their personnel in order to protect the lives of our citizen soldiers.

Again, Mr. Chairman, our Guard personnel are rising to the new challenges each and every day. We must continually evaluate our mission and how we train and equip for such missions. I applaud you and this subcommittee for focusing on this important issue in order to serve our military men and women. They are our greatest assets. Without them, we cannot fight and defend our country. We must honor the sacrifices they make each day.

I thank you again for the opportunity to testify and look forward to your questions.