

**Testimony of Governor Ruth Ann Minner
Commission on the National Guard and Reserves
June 15, 2006**

Good morning, Chairman Punaro and Members of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves. The Commission's charge is an important one, and I appreciate the opportunity to join you today and discuss the roles of the National Guard, particularly as it pertains to me as Governor of Delaware. I will focus my remarks on a few topics:

1. The dual mission of the National Guard, and my role as their Commander in Chief;
2. Consultation with the Governors;
3. Guard manning and equipment requirements; and
4. Support for the Guard, Their Families, and Employers.

Role and Mission of the National Guard

The National Guard is the nation's only reserve component with both a state and a federal mission. The men and women of our National Guard are trained to the same standards and are performing missions worldwide, right alongside their active counterparts. Delaware Army and Air National Guardsmen and women are currently stationed overseas in harm's way, fighting the Global War on Terrorism. The All Volunteer Force and Total Force policies provide citizens an opportunity to serve. The National Guard gives Delawareans the opportunity to serve both their state and our nation.

The local citizens in Delaware, since colonial days, have relied on the Guard, under state control, to protect life and property. In other words, the Guard has been our own homeland security. The Guard's unique duality is a strength that provides the citizens of Delaware with critical resources for homeland security that are also available to the Governor, while providing the nation with ready, reliable, and trained men and women to fight and win America's wars.

From my experience in public service, the National Guard has served as the bridge between the armed forces and the citizens it serves. When the Delaware National Guard was mobilized for Desert Storm, following September 11th, and for the Global War on Terrorism, the citizens of Delaware took notice. Americans' interest in the military peaks when their National Guard is involved.

Often said in the post-Katrina analysis, although long cited, is that 'all emergencies are local'. All disasters, manmade or natural, are best managed at the local level. As Co-Lead Governor for Homeland Security at the National Governors Association, I have spoken to many of my colleagues about how to best utilize our resources – in state or across state lines - during times of emergencies.

I can give you many examples of how our Guard has helped fellow Delawareans during ice and snow storms, Nor'easters and hurricanes, and cleaning up an oil spill. They are always there, ready to respond, in Delaware or a neighboring state or across the country. I

am proud to say we demonstrated their expeditionary capability with immediate support to the citizens impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Delaware C-130s were on the ground with security forces and engineers within 24 hours of the Governor of Mississippi's request. Mississippi and Louisiana counted on help from my fellow Governors through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which provided them with necessary support in a timely manner. Other Governors have similar stories about their Air and Army National Guard, operating under state control, providing the first responders critical support.

The Air Guard provides me with a quick response force that is totally expeditionary, an invaluable resource at home and abroad. In Delaware, the Air Guard represents about 40% of the forces I have available to me in an emergency. The Air Guard capabilities to support homeland security are formidable and must be retained. Homeland security is a mission that the National Guard does well, and should do. However, homeland security should not be the National Guard's only mission.

As the only reserve component whose dual role is spelled out in the Constitution and in law, I can state without reservation that the National Guard needs to be fully resourced and supported by the Department of Defense, as a full partner in America's defense, at home and abroad. I agree with former Secretary of Defense Laird's editorial in the Washington Post that the nation should not be cutting its Guard and Reserve forces while engaged in the long war. I recommend the Commission study the fiscal advantages that the Guard provides when compared to a similarly equipped active duty unit. In those mission areas where immediate deployment is not required, the Guard should be the organization of choice for Air Force and Army force structure.

As Delaware's Commander in Chief, I believe the National Guard, with its dual role, remains a best buy for the citizens of Delaware and the United States. If a National Guard did not exist in this country, I'm certain that the Commission would recommend creating one.

Consultation with the Governors

In reading the Commission's 90 day initial report, I saw you have already noted that the DoD leadership did not fully consult or coordinate with the states in the development of plans that impact the National Guard. As I testified last year to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, the Air Force proposed, without consultation with me, the elimination of the only Air National Guard flying unit in Delaware. I was further dismayed at the Department of Defense's Quadrennial Defense Review recommendations and their fiscal year 2007 budget submission to Congress. If the Air Force would have consulted with me, they would have learned the key role the Air National Guard plays in all of Delaware's homeland security plans.

With the emphasis on the Army Guard cuts in the DoD fiscal year 2007 budget, the Air Force approached the future trying to sneak changes by while no one was looking. Again the Air Force failed to consult with the Governors, the Adjutants General, and National

Guard Bureau on the proposed cuts to the Air National Guard. In earlier testimony to this Commission, Major General Lempke recommended that this Commission hold hearings on the United States Air Forces plans for the Guard and Reserve. I support General Lempke's request.

In preparation for today's hearing, I reviewed the Commissioners' resumes. In each instance, each of you has served in key policy and decision making positions. I think you will agree that to best represent the interest of your constituents or stakeholders, you need to have a seat at the table where strategic decisions are made. I recommend that you look at policy and/or statutory measures requiring the Executive Branch to consult with, not merely inform, the Governors of issues that impact the ability to provide for the safety of their citizens.

Guard Manning and Equipping Requirements

In the course of your deliberations, you have heard testimony relative to the critical shortage of mission-essential equipment facing the Army National Guard, thereby effecting its ability to respond to state and federal missions. The Army Guard in my state is composed of combat support and combat service support units. Generally, Delaware has the right mix of units and equipment; however my Guard leaders and I are concerned with the amount of equipment left in Iraq and in what fashion this equipment will be replaced by the Army. Delaware has only \$3.26 million worth, or two percent, of our equipment that needs replacement; however, for a small state, those pieces of equipment – trucks, trailers, cranes, forklifts and HMMVs – are critical to emergency response, as well as for the training of our soldiers.

Current DoD policy prohibits the purchase of supplies or equipment used exclusively to support civil authorities. In a world in which security of the homeland demands that civilian and military capabilities be seamlessly integrated, this policy is outdated. Traditional ways to purchase and equip the units needs to change. To do this, I think the National Guard Bureau, in coordination with the states, should be mandated and given the authority to identify, validate and fill civilian/military and state/federal capability gaps so that the state and nation are prepared to respond to any emergency here at home.

The Commission should note that the nation's Governors are unified, as signified by our signing a letter to President Bush, voicing our opposition to cuts to the Guard, both Army and Air. The Department of Defense needs to work with me, and the other Governors, their Adjutants General, and the National Guard Bureau in a collaborative manner to best determine force structure requirements. In my view the Guard's homeland security role does not demand a new force structure, because the National Guard already provides a trained, ready, and cost effective solution to homeland security. When it comes to homeland security, I do not believe it can be micromanaged from Washington, D.C.

I support the National Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act. This legislation provides the Guard a stronger voice, increases its ability to secure essential equipment items, and elevates the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to four

stars. It will also require the National Guard Bureau to coordinate with the Adjutant General in identifying gaps between federal and state emergency response capabilities, which might best be filled through military assistance to civil authorities. As Governor, I believe passage of the National Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act will also improve the communication and consultation between the federal and state entities.

Support for the Guard, Their Families, and Employers

My final point addresses the families and the employers. The National Guard men, women and their families need benefits, regardless of mobilization status. Medical and dental readiness of our Guard men and woman transcends all components of training and equipping the force. Keeping our troops and their families healthy improves readiness and promotes retention. The 2006 National Defense Authorization Act, which offers TriCare options on a cost-share basis for Reserve component members, was a step in the right direction. The Commission should recommend the next step, authorizing funds for that benefit, thus allowing permanent access to TriCare for all Guard members.

The Guard employers also need assistance. I believe that Congress should assist employers who support our National Guard men and woman. Governors understand the vital role that employers of National Guard members play in supporting our citizen-soldiers and airmen. Several states, including Delaware, are following the lead of private employers to make up gaps between civilian pay and active-duty pay for state employees who are mobilized. As the Global War on Terrorism continues, the Commission should examine relief for employers, especially small businesses, such as tax credits and enhancing federal measures to address pay gaps for activated Guard and Reserves.

Conclusion

I thank you for your continued service to this country and the opportunity to appear before the Commission. I look forward to a beneficial dialogue about how best to support the men and women of our National Guard as they serve to protect our states and country.