

TRANSCRIPT

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Q: Welcome to Lieutenant General Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. It's the second time through for us, so it's good to have you. It's a good time to have a representative of the Guard.

Let's open up this morning, I want to talk to you about the Air Guard. Some months ago the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Moseley, announced that the Air Force was going to be reducing its end strength by 40,000 spaces. There was a great deal of speculation as to how that would be portioned out among active, Guard and Reserve.

He hit some criticism from the TAGs and the Guard and so he said let's just skip 2007. He wants the Guard to come back with some recommendations for 2008 and beyond. Where does that stand?

A: I don't want to complicate the question but I want to complete it so that it's accurate.

Q: Feel free.

A: The National Guard and the Air Force Reserve and the active all have a bill to pay. They have to get their organization in the right size for investing in modernization and equipping our forces so that we stay the preeminent Air Force in the world, and you have to do that within a budget. There are many ways to do that.

The Air Force has chosen to balance that fiscal challenge by reducing their manpower. We were

offered the same opportunity and suggested that we take down as much as 15 or 16 percent of our force structure to do that.

We did not think that was the best way to do it because we really are not sure right now exactly what capabilities need to be in the Air Guard for the future total Air Force and once we took the people out it is very very hard to make that adjustment near term. So we thought it would be smart not to take the people out until we had better fidelity on what mission sets the Air Force wanted us to pick up.

You have to remember, if they're going to come down 40,000, we're their off-ramp for either uncertainty; we're their off-ramp for a surge capability; and we're their off-ramp to take active duty expertise and keep it as a full time capability but part time pay in the Air Guard or the Air Force Reserve. So we thought it was smart not to take the manpower out.

Now we're not unwilling to change the mix of what we do with the manpower, but we thought just taking the numbers down would be the wrong way to do it.

We have chosen to pay our money out of OpTempo money and flying hours. So we have paid a significant portion of the bill. But we've chosen not to do it with manpower.

We also thought it was probably smart not to reduce the size of the Air National Guard dramatically at a time where we were making a significant ramping down of the manpower in the Air Force. Because where will those talented, experienced air men and officers go and have an opportunity to serve in the Air Force if there are no part-time opportunities in the Guard?

So they saw the wisdom of that and they are working with us on rebalancing what forces we keep in the Air Guard and what size the Air Guard will ultimately be. I'm not prepared to tell you it will be exactly where it is today or it shouldn't be slightly smaller than it is today. You could even make an argument that it should be larger than it is today for exactly the reasons that I just outlined.

Q: So the decision has not been made at this point.

A: No.

Q: But you've reached some really important conclusions that will affect that?

A: Exactly. There's buy-in by the Active Air Force at the Secretary Air Force level, Chief Air Force level, Chief of the Air Force Reserve, and the National Guard Bureau are working together on this thing. This isn't one of these back door smoky room deals where you get a surprise handed to you at the last minute. This is a collaborative, no-kidding, pretty professional and mature way we're dealing with this as opposed to the way some of the other things have come

together in the past.

Q: Acknowledging that no final decision has been made but you're heading in a certain direction, what is the implication for that 40,000 person figure that the Air Force--Is that going to now come down, or will all the 40,000 be taken?

A: That's really not my decision. That is really Secretary Wynne and General Moseley's decision what they want to do with the active force.

With the Air National Guard there will be no dramatic reduction in manpower in the Air National Guard in near term. There will be some significant adjustments of the skill sets and the capabilities that we deliver with the force, but the size of the force is not going to dramatically change I don't think in the near term future.

Q: General, would you talk a little bit about the Guard as the nation's strategic reserve and talk about where you are in that? You remember your barrels and pails and stuff? And how you measure the availability of people for extended deployments? And talk a little bit about the equipment and manpower shortages and what it's going to cost to fix that?

A: Well, yeah. Gee, that's--I'd love to talk about it.

Q: That's your next hour. [Laughter]

A: Really you could almost do an hour on that so I'll try not to do that. I'd like to get around that table here.

You hit on something Dave. What Dave's talking about what you've watched in the National Guard for the last five or six years is pretty much like watching an hour hand on a clock. It's moving and if you stand there and stare at it you don't really see it moving. But if you just think about what you've witnessed in the last six years you've seen the National Guard of the United States transform from a strategic reserve to a no-kidding operational force. You've seen them move from a force that six years ago you would be writing articles about are they relevant, do you really need them, are they structured correctly for, does the Army and Air Force really need what we have in the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard? That question, even our worst critics now, the worst thing they can call us is essential and over-used. So it's pretty amazing if you think about it in that short of period of time to see an organization that large make that much of a 180 degree change.

The way the National Guard is being used today is far different than the way the National Guard has been used in the history of this nation to be honest with you. It's being used overseas and here at home as an operational force. Now, for 367 or more years we have been the minutemen here at home for domestic use, and everybody understands that. So that goes all the way back to

our beginnings and our roots.

But to be an operational force that the Air Force and Army cannot do their job overseas without the Air Guard and the Army Guard, that's a fact today. That's not even an opinion. That's an absolute fact. If we didn't have an Army and Air National Guard today, we would have to invent one. I mean this country would have to invent one.

The most magnificent part of it is we've made that metamorphous from almost a caterpillar to a butterfly and it's that dramatic of a difference from what the Guard was six years ago to what it is today. The Guard today is doing every single mission that can possibly be done, minus the nuclear warfare piece, but every other mission that is possible on the whole menu or on the whole list of full spectrum operations from domestic support here at home, the Katrinas, the Ritas, the Wilmas, the Southwest border operation, the National Special Security Events, the Democratic National Convention, the Republican National Convention, Operation Winter Freeze up on the northern border, fighting forest fires.

Right now there's ten thousand citizen soldiers this morning out all over our country either guarding critical infrastructure, fighting forest fires, getting ready for hurricanes, 6,199 down in the four southwest border states that everybody thought we would have a problem doing. We didn't have a problem doing. It's an amazing organization. The responsibilities of the Guard domestically here at home and abroad are enormous compared to what they used to be. And I might add that the only organization in the whole Pentagon, in the whole of DOD that can provide trained and ready joint forces, joint capabilities on call that operate in the United States of America trained by the federal government, paid by the federal government, using federal equipment and federal organizations drop under the control of the Governors is the Guard. Nobody else can do that.

So now the National Guard Bureau has moved from an administrative bureau to just promulgate a policy and gave out resources to an operational headquarters that is a joint force provider of DOD forces in Title 32. Title 32 being federal pay, federal equipment, federal training, but under the control of the Governors. Just watching that you're watching that right now happen.

What you're seeing on the Southwest border is incredible. There is no other military organization in the world that could do what the Guard is doing down there, where you chop the forces and they're commanded and controlled by the four border state Governors. The forces coming in there are contributed by thirty other governors, thirty other states have forces down there this morning. That's where we got the 6,199. And over the next year about fifty or sixty thousand forces will rotate in there from every other state in the country to do a rotation down on the border. So you're protecting or helping to secure an international border which is clearly a federal mission and you're giving them federal troops, federally trained troops, and federal money is paying the troops. The states don't pay for it. But the operational control, the command and control of those forces is delegated to the Governors by the President and Secretary of

Defense. It's an extraordinary arrangement. It is exactly the right arrangement when it comes to defending the homeland or providing support to Department of Homeland Security, military support to the Department of Homeland Security.

This Operation Jumpstart, Dave, is not a military operation. It is not. It is a customs and border protection operation. We just happened to be asked to support them. But the name of it is their name, is their operation. It's to jumpstart their capability.

So the bottom line for the question you asked is that this is an extraordinary step that has happened almost invisibly and under the radar screen right before your eyes for the last six years. At the same time, we're training Afghan National Army; we're keeping the peace in the Sinai; we're keeping the peace in Kosovo and Bosnia; we have ground combat, combat service support, combat support forces in Iraq and Afghanistan; and we have fifty one nations where we have partnered development long-term, long-lasting relationships in our state partnership program where states and National Guard of the states are actually partnered with emerging nations around the world to help with our coalition partners and develop our alliances and partners in the world is becoming an increasingly dangerous place.

So to answer your question, the Guard six years ago and the Guard today are as different as that caterpillar and that butterfly. And frankly, my frustration is that the policies, the regulations, the resourcing models are still built largely for strategic reserve and still five years later have not caught up with the operational use of the Guard. That's where the friction points are. And that's why so many of you had to write articles about the inconsistencies with what we're doing and what we're being asked to do with how we're being resourced and what the regulations and policies are to guide us and where we're represented and how.

Q: How many people do you have available for extended deployments?

A: You mean right now?

Q: Yes.

A: We replenish the force at about almost twenty percent a year. So in a five year cycle, we pretty well completely regenerate a unit. So those units that were called in 2001 are just about fully regenerated at this point. And if they had to be re-sent or re-called or to re-serve, it would be consistent with our one in six model. If anybody is not familiar with that, we think that if we call the Guard for an extended deployment overseas, I'm not talking about for Hurricane Katrina or tonight something happens and we have to respond. Everybody understands that, employers, families, the Guard. But for a long overseas rotation we think we can do that with about a five year dwell period, in other words recovery period, go for one of those, come back, and not get called again for five years in the sixth year you'd be available to go again. Those units now in '07 will be available again.

I don't feel bad about that because they've essentially regenerated in those five years. I mean our recruiting has been enormously successful. We are just finishing up nine consecutive record breaking months of recruiting that we have never seen anything like that since the beginning of the volunteer force. In other words, since the end of the draft thirty five years ago we have not had nine consecutive months of recruiting as good as we've had in the last nine months. That is totally counterintuitive to what you think for an organization that is doing as much as it's doing overseas and at home and is being used at unprecedented rates and in an unprecedented manner. You would think the strain on the force would break it. In fact, it has invigorated the force.

We now have the youngest, most experienced National Guard this country has ever had. And the senior leaders, the generals and general officers, I've got over thirty senior National Guard generals that have had combat time as a general officer. I'm not talking about they had combat time thirty years ago as a young man or young woman and now they're a general, I'm talking about as a senior leader they've been a combat zone for at least a year. That is hugely valuable to the force. So I hope I got to everything you want. [Laughter]. I mean if I missed something let me know and I'll catch it.

Q: There were two aviation initiatives I wanted to ask about. One was equipping the

F-15s, the Golden Eagles, with the V-3 AESA radars and how that progress is coming. The other is that there were a number of units that were going to change to UAV operations. I wanted to see what the progress was there. I have heard virtually nothing about what has gone on with them. And if that, you know because of the issues with airspace and everything that were unresolved?

A: Let me try to make this answer a little more brief and to the point than the last one. I'm sorry about that.

We're committed to making sure that everything that is in the Air National Guard is fully interoperable and integrated with the active and the Air Force Reserve. So as the Air Force moves forward with the F-15 and the various enhancements to the F-15 we expect Air National Guard will follow right along in suit.

With regard to the UAVs, we are very very anxious to move to UAVs. I think the unmanned aviation era is really is in it's infancy, and the UAVs we're looking at today we will in a very very short time look back and be amazed that we thought this was the state of the art. I think the UAVs we're using today, and I have to be careful because I'm on the record here, but for me they're kind of like the Wright Brothers airplane as opposed to the F-22. They're that much different.

The capabilities of UAVs, the potential in the unmanned aviation aerial vehicle area is virtually,

we just scratched the surface of it. I mean the capabilities for miniaturizing those and their loiter time and what capabilities we'll be able to put on those as we miniaturize systems and get more precise with weapons delivery systems and ISR systems, surveillance systems and so forth. It will be incredible.

So I see UAVs as the future for the Air Force as a very very significant part of the future Air Force. I'm pushing very to get the National Guard into UAVs as early as I can. I think they will be immensely valuable to us not only in the war fight overseas but I think they will be immensely valuable to us for domestic use in basically for instance after something like Katrina.

What a magnificent tool that would be to launch UAVs and get a large area view of what you're really dealing with. We can use it for damage assessment and to pinpoint where we need to send our relief efforts in. I think they would have been hugely affective in adding to that.

I think they will be invaluable on the border someday. I expect that we will be employing UAVs in the Southwest border operation before too long. When you think about what a UAV can do and what it can see and who it can tell what it sees real time as opposed to what a human being can do out on the ground in a vehicle or walking around out on the ground, it's self evident why they're so valuable. I hope that gets to what you wanted.

Q: Well actually I need a good more detail on particularly the F-15 part. The Air Force has decided it could not afford to upgrade their F-15s with the AESA radar with V-3s. The Air National Guard was actually supposed to lead the effort on that by buying those systems and equipping a number of F-15s with the AESA radar. Is that happening and can you give us any sense of the schedule for and the numbers of aircraft to be equipped?

A: Since I'm on the record let me take it for the record and I'll give you exactly where we are with that. Let me get back and get with my guys and I'll actually give you exactly where we are. It's not a secret plan. It's one that's being worked out very closely with the United States Air Force. We don't want to get the Air Guard out of sync with its parent organization. So we're trying to work in tandem with them and I'll be glad to give you the fielding plan or where we are in that.

Q: With the UAVs there seems to be some reluctance of the Guard units to give up their manned aircraft and has that reluctance been resolved?

A: Well the reluctance--Look I would be kidding you if I didn't tell you that a fighter pilot who finds out he's coming out of the cockpit or she finds out she's coming out of the cockpit to be replaced by an unmanned aerial vehicle and that their opportunity to fly will be in probably a small trailer-like building where they remotely control a UAV that's launched at a distant sight is not excited about that. [Laughter].

But the people that are responsible for delivering capabilities are excited about it because it really does expand our capability in a much much more effective manner, a more cost effective manner, and it can achieve the same outcome for a lot less expense and also with a lot less risk, if you understand what I'm saying. Us flying a UAV over a sensitive sight as opposed to a manned airplane is quite a different risk management level and the cost is extraordinarily different on the positive side, on the good side, on the cost effective side.

So while the pilot that's leaving an F-16 cockpit is not excited about it, and I won't pretend to tell you that they are, they understand it by and large and many of them will actually migrate to other aircraft or they'll migrate to this mission set. All of them will not transition from the cockpit to flying UAVs nor do they need to. But as a leader that's trying to develop capabilities in the National Guard, the capabilities of the UAV are so enormous and the potential is so great that it is certainly the right way to go. I mean it's certainly a necessary step for the Air Force to move into this direction.

Q: What I expected you to say though was--[laughter]--that initially the idea was that UAVs were to go to the bases, the Air National Guard bases. I understood that we haven't worked out the national airspace issues yet applying those UAVs there. So my understanding is a lot of those guys are operating remotely. The aircraft are actually flying off in the training ranges where they are now so they are making a transition but they're doing it with some degree of--

A: I don't want to get into a level of classification but I think most of the people at this table are sophisticated enough to know that most of the UAVs flying in Afghanistan and Iraq are not--the people who are controlling them are back here in the states. I mean I think you know that. If you don't, you do now. [Laughter].

I'm not going to talk about where it's done or how it's done but that's how amazing they are. Now think about that where you can have the capability forward deployed in a combat zone yet the brains, the pilots, the people that program what they fly against and what they do when they see what they see. Those decisions are made in a reach-back area where you don't have to provide force protection they're not being mortared and rocketed and they're not having to be an expeditionary field conditions to do it.

So to me it's a perfect mission for the Guard. It's a perfect mission for the Guard if we can actually literally operate and control UAVs from the United States that are operating anywhere on the globe. That sounds to me like a perfect mission for the Guard as part of our transformation for the future.

Q: Have you started?

A: Yeah, we have started. We have them in California, Arizona, and Texas.

Q: They're flying the mission?

A: They're flying training missions. What's the other one? North Dakota, I think we're going to put one up there too. Okay?

Q: Okay.

Q: To pursue that, is the Air Force also considering a number of other types of missions, everything from cyber war through an enhanced role for ground combat security forces defending the air bases? Where do you see the Air Guard in the future in taking on some of those very unconventional non-flying roles?

A: I think we ought to be the preeminent force in those areas. I think and I'll tell you why, the Air Force is good, the military is good, but they are not changing as fast.

The real cutting edge expertise particularly in information systems, the ability to protect information systems, the ability to attack information systems. The whole cyber world is moving so much faster than a big defense apparatus like the Pentagon can move. So by having these units in the Air National Guard and the Reserve component I think you can get America's best and brightest brains with the most cutting edge expertise that we cannot afford to keep in uniform on a full time basis. But I think these people are patriotic enough and willing to serve their nation and basically bring their full-time capability on a part-time basis when we need them.

All of that if you think about it is almost a prescription for what is good about the National Guard. It brings in the civilian acquired skill sets plus the military skills and then kluges them or the synergy of those is enormously powerful. We see it in Iraq. We see it in the Balkans.

I think in the cyber area it makes perfect sense that the National Guard, the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard heavily invest in these kind of units for the future because that's a capability that is going to be very very much required by our Department of Defense to defend not only our country but to defend our defense systems.

To me it's a natural. So bottom line is yes, a big yes with an underline, we are very seriously interested in that. I am more seriously interested in having those kind of units be part of our end strength than I am keeping legacy flying airplanes that one day will be on a stick at the front gate of an airbase or in an air museum. I really want capabilities. I don't want a flying museum. I want capabilities that this country needs to protect itself here at home and abroad.

Q: What about the aspect of the Air Force Security Forces taking on more of a ground combat role and that spreading and becoming increasing [inaudible] for the Air Force. How do you feel about that?

A: Are you talking about the Airmen basically doing jobs that the Army traditionally--

Q: --offensive operations.

A: Well, if we're going to be an expeditionary Air Force which we're going to have to be and if you look at where we could potentially be in the world in the future and where we'll have to operate from, they're going to have to have that expeditionary capability to go into remote sights or less, more austere sights than they're normally used operating out of in Western Europe or the United States.

So the Air Force I think is rightfully investing in those types of units. I think the Air Guard again is a very natural place to develop those kinds of skills and to have those skills on call when the country needs it. Those skills would be absolutely useful here in the homeland if we needed it for counterterrorism or to respond to a WMD event or a natural disaster or when we're not being used overseas.

I'm trying to put capabilities in the Air National Guard. In fact, twenty five percent of the people that are on the border today, 6,199 people down there, about 1,700 of them roughly, are from the Air Guard. The Air National Guard is an integral part of the National Guard.

As I say, the National Guard Bureau is a different National Guard than you've ever seen except in the last few years, and we deliver Army and Air joint capabilities both here at home and overseas. Here at home we largely do it in Title 32, leave it under controls of the Governor. Overseas we're absolutely Title 10.

Frankly, everything is built for the Title 10 thing, but I'm telling you eighty percent of our work day to day is in this Title 32 area and that's really got to be addressed. It has not been seriously addressed at the Pentagon to the degree it needs to be yet. That is work to be done and I look forward to doing that work with the Department of Defense, the Department of Army, and the Department of Air Force because it is important work that has to happen.

Q: What have been the biggest difficulties you folks have discovered doing Jumpstart and particularly interesting? You know there was a period there that looked like you were not making 6,000 people on the border. Many Governors, particularly in the region I cover, the Southeast, argue that hey we can't provide any until after November 1st or December 1st because of hurricane season. But then suddenly boom they're moving people to the border. So what have been the difficulties in getting that, the [inaudible]? And also--

A: If you want a candid answer I'll be honest with you. The misrepresentation and articulation of the expectations by the media, to be honest with you. What has been appearing largely and in the media is not what I've been asked to do. What I've been asked to do is not difficult to deliver.

There was never any doubt, honest to God, in my mind at any time that we would not make the numbers we were asked to make. It represents less than two percent of the force especially when you leverage the Air National Guard capability and the Army National Guard capability pulling about seventeen hundred from the Air Guard. The remainder came out of the Army Guard. You have 6,199 down there today. The President asked if we can do 6,000 by 1 August. I said of course. As long there will be resources, as long as they will be paid, as long as they're going to be Title 32 where the federal money is coming to the states. The states don't have to pay anything. They just have to send their capabilities down there. And then if we do it smart and as you said we're careful about who's there and when they're there, the good news about the Guard is that's what we've been doing the last five years, trying to push capabilities to every zip code of this nation so that I don't have all my eggs in one basket, so if a region is going to be hit by a hurricane I can send 6,000 people to the border without diminishing the equipment and the personnel that I need to leave in those hurricane states to respond to a hurricane.

Now, after November and February or March, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina and North Carolina are going to want to send their troops to the Southwest border. I mean they're going to have to go do their training anyway. In the middle of the winter, the Southwest border is a pretty good place to do that. It's a very good, and I'm serious, a very good mission. But you don't ask them now. The beautiful part about--

Q: You are sending them now. Virginia and--

A: Let me tell you. They got offended that I didn't ask them. I'm being candid with you. I fenced Florida. I didn't want to touch Florida and I didn't want to touch Georgia. I didn't want to touch Alabama. I didn't want to touch Louisiana in particular and Texas is kind of stuck because they have the Mexican border and hurricanes. They had to do both, but they have a huge National Guard and are very capable to do that.

Florida and Georgia came back to me and said what do you mean we can't do this? We want to put people in this. Oh, okay. Well as long as you're willing to do it, we're willing to accept it. But if you're not willing to do it, we would prefer to leave you alone until November and we'll come and have you participate in this during the winter months when it's not a hurricane season, which makes perfect sense to me.

And then there are some of the states up in the Northwest that wanted to harvest our people for fires. So the beautiful part of the Guard is and that's another function the Guard is performing now they didn't use to perform.

When did you ever see the National Guard operating with fifty four states and territories to provide joint forces for the Pentagon? I mean can you imagine the Pentagon trying to do that? To be honest with you they can't. They don't have a conduit to do it. We are their conduit to do that.

We are doing our rightful mission as a bureau, National Guard Bureau. That's what we're there for, to be the channel of communication between basically the Army and the Air Force and the states and we're doing it I might say very very well. We have not failed in any mission to meet any of the gates they have asked us to do.

Frankly, I don't see any real great impediments as long as they leave us the flexibility to do our job, and they have, and let me work the duration forces, people that are going to be there for the duration. And they're all volunteers. Then the people that rotate in there are done on a voluntary basis.

The Governors of this country are remarkably supportive to this. I mean we have over thirty states that are there today. That ought to tell you something. We have states signing on this memorandum of agreement everyday. Alaska signed yesterday. So by the time the next couple of months are through, you'll have every state signed up. Just like when Katrina happened, every state responded. There was nobody sitting out.

Q: General, can you talk about the missions that the Air Guard in particular is doing along the border? And following that, there are no UAVs on the border right now. The customs and border protection doesn't. The only one they had crashed and the Pentagon is not providing any military tasking for that. Why not have the Air Guard provide some of that?

A: Well first of all, we have to have UAVs. As he accurately portrayed, they're only in their training mode right now. What I am looking at is why can't we do some of these training flights as operational flights? In other words, make the training flights, instead of just flying them around, let's use some of the training for an operational good. That's what we're doing with our engineers.

And you asked me specifically what the Air Guard is doing. They're doing a lot of the engineer work, civil engineering work. They're doing a lot of the what we call tactical infrastructure road building, road maintenance, fencing, lighting, sensors in placement. The infrastructure that's down there is much like you saw in San Diego. The Guards did that for about eighteen years. On the border is part of the drug support mission over the last two decades. So we've taken a proven model that we've used down there for about twenty years and applied it to this.

The Air Guard is also providing communications. There are many places along the border frankly where communications is very difficult. I don't want to put soldiers and airmen in an area where they can't communicate. I mean if they're down there to observe and report to the border patrol, they have to be able to communicate. Otherwise, the fact that they see it is kind of useless unless they can tell somebody.

So we have communications provided by the Air National Guard, medical support provided by

the Air National Guard, engineering. Some security forces were absolutely the air bridge flying people in and out of there and maintaining what we call the airlift control element, the people that program who flies in, who flies out, what comes in. These are exactly the same skills by the way they would employ if you sent them to Afghanistan or Iraq.

So to me it's great training. It's great operational experience. We're actually getting excellent training at the same time we're producing a lasting product for customs and border protection to enhance their ability to do their job. So it's kind of a win win for the American taxpayer.

Q: Okay. We've got eight questions left and twenty minutes.

A: I'll try to make my answers briefer.

Q: Let's make the questions un-MIRV'd. Go ahead.

A: Un-MIRV'd. [Laughter].

Q: The Air Guard in BRAC left a lot of these [inaudible] in limbo taking away your unit, flying your aircraft and such. What's the time table for telling these people who are losing their C-130s or F-16s when they're going to get new missions?

A: We have told, the first to lose their equipment are the ones that I owe the answers to first.

We're doing, I think, a very good job of providing bridge missions and long-term solutions to those units that are divesting of their old aircraft earliest. So we are now out to I think ten or eleven on the list. For instance, Connecticut. Let me give you a couple of for instances.

Connecticut was supposed to lose their A-10s. They've been told we're going to move them to C-21s when they lose their A-10s.

First of all, we extended the A-10s to the right for another rotation at the request of the Air Force. We did the same thing in Willow Grove in Pennsylvania. The A-10 mission is still much more viable than BRAC thought it might be when they did the best guess they could do. The A-10 will be operating a little longer and needed to be operated a little longer.

So Willow Grove, Pennsylvania we have extended the A-10 mission. In Connecticut we have extended the A-10 mission a little bit. And we already have identified for Connecticut. They're going to go to C-21s which is the small jets, transport jets. Then ultimately, they are targeted to receive the joint cargo aircraft and transition to that for the future. That sets them up pretty nice for the next two, three decades at least. I mean that's pretty good.

Then in North Dakota they have the oldest F-16s in the Air Force. They are the first to lose their

F-16s. They will come out of the cockpit of an F-16. They will go to two things. They will go to UAVs, Predators. And they'll also go to C-21s. So some people will be flying Predators and some people will be flying C-21s. C-21s are the same aircraft. Ultimately down the road they will be a light cargo aircraft, well not light cargo, joint cargo aircraft. Please don't use the term light cargo aircraft. [Laughter]. That's been surpassed, but that's what we're talking about.

So you can see what I'm trying to do is to replace the capability where we have absolutely magnificent infrastructure. When I say infrastructure I'm talking about state-of-the-art runway. No encroachment or better where the civilian will literally condemn or guarantee that they won't develop the property up against that airfield. I mean because they want the Air Guard there and they're partners in it.

Superior fire fighting, fuel-cell maintenance, hangars, the bases are first rate bases that cost us nothing because we've already achieved a very high level quality of base structure there. So to take an airplane out of that place to me makes no sense whether BRAC said to do it or not. So we will take out the older aircraft which does make sense to me, frankly. But we need to seriously consider putting new aircraft missions that are required by the Air Force in those places because that saves the American taxpayer an enormous bill for reconstructing or investing in infrastructure that already exists.

When you're talking about an airport just think about how difficult it would be to put a new airport anywhere in the United States. So once you close an airport, if you're not really sure that you need to close that airport you better be very very very considerate in your decision because to reopen an airport is literally impossible. Literally impossible.

Q:--civilian airfields and joint use.

A: I think that to me is one of the--Willow Grove is being considered frankly by the state of Pennsylvania to be an interagency, intergovernmental, joint shared use facility. I think that is frankly the best thing for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and for the Willow Grove airport.

We have four examples that come to mind, Nashville, Baltimore, Battle Creek. Gee, I got three to come to mind, but there are four of them out there where we do have a shared use facility and is a wonderful, wonderful partnership. I think Willow Grove is a perfect candidate for that kind of a partnership as well.

Q: You talked a little bit about this in your first answer but I'm curious if you could be a little bit more specific. What do you think the overseas operations have done to the Guard over the last several years both positive and negative? You talked a little bit about the younger and more experienced Guard. You talked a little bit about the abilities and development and that sort of thing. But from an equipment standpoint, from a personnel standpoint, again both positive and negative, what do you think these overseas operations have done?

A: Josh, I'm not trying to be a wise guy. I don't see any negatives in the Guard being overseas. I see a lot of negatives if you didn't use the Guard overseas. I think it would be a huge, huge monumental mistake for this nation to ever go to war without the National Guard in big percentages. Because when you call out the Guard, you do call out America. And when you don't call out the Guard, America doesn't get into the fight. You can't win a fight without the nation behind it's Armed Forces, the entire nation. It is just impossible in a significant way. I'm not talking about a little skirmish, I'm talking about a campaign type thing. You cannot have a campaign, an enduring campaign, in the United States military without the Guard. We give the Army, we bring to the Army it's campaign quality and we bring to the Air Force it's campaign quality. It's ability to sustain the effort and to maintain the effort of rotational force, the surge capability, and the depth of the bench.

The Guard has benefited in any measurable way by it's overseas involvement. We are the most experienced force we've ever been. That gives the American taxpayer citizen soldiers on-call with unprecedented experience and expertise. The Guard has been the resourcing strategy fallacy of not resourcing the Guard adequately as an operational force has been painfully obvious because of the use of the Guard overseas and the challenges we've had to meet and to make sure every young man and woman that went in harm's way had the very best equipment this country could give it. It has been a very challenging thing to do.

It has highlighted the shortages of equipment back here in the states to respond to natural disasters and counterterrorism or weapons of mass destruction. It has put a spotlight on the Guard that has not been there for over sixty five years, maybe a hundred and sixty five years. It has finally awakened the Pentagon to the national treasure the National Guard actually is to the Department of Defense. I mean it goes back to the original thing I started saying.

The Guard today is so much different than, the words don't even mean the same thing anymore. I mean think about any Chief of the Guard Bureau that would ever come in here in the past and want you to talk about. Just think about that. None of these would come up and even if they came up they wouldn't have been able to answer. I don't mean that in a pejorative term. It's not where they were working. It's not what their focus was. This is a different world.

Q: A great segue. What is your reset bill? Is it being met by the Pentagon? And what are your equipment shortages that you just referenced [inaudible]?

A: The reset bill is quite large for the Army and the Air Force. It is even proportionately larger for the Guard because we went in less resourced than our active counterparts and we suffered the same fair wear and tear, battle damage, battle loss that they did. So our equipment situation is more dire, more exaggerated. I don't know if that is a good word because that means that I may be misrepresenting it. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying we started off deeper, in a deeper deficit four, five years ago than they did. They started off, the Army in particular, was under

equipped before the war and that has exacerbated their situation.

So there is a clear need to re-equip, reset the active force and the reserve force. We need to make sure we do both, not one or the other. I'm not suggesting that one should get well at the expense of the other. They both need to be brought back up to and reset to be ready the next time they're called or to sustain what they're being called to do.

Q: Do you have a number, Army 17, Marines say their 12? What portion of that or--

A: Well the Army Guard is twenty one billion to re-equip the Army Guard. Now, that is not just reset. That's to buy them the equipment that they must have to do their job. I'm not talking about icing on the cake. I'm talking about the cake. I'm talking about the basic things--trucks, communications, engineer equipment, helicopters, night-vision devices, radios, and those things. It's twenty one billion dollars. The Army recognizes that. They also recognize that there is about two billion dollars in re-equipping the aviation portion of the National Guard. General Schoomaker and Secretary Harvey are absolutely, absolutely on the record committed to fencing that money and protecting that money and delivering that money over the FYDP.

Q: You'll get it in five years?

A: Yes, that's the plan.

Q: How are you?

Q: Good. I had a couple of questions. One just follow on to you're talking about the equipment over the FYDP and I was wondering about whether you had the money for personnel over the FYDP or the POM? And also wondering about the bill to include, to elevate your position to a four star. That has not--I wanted to ask your opinion about the fact that it's been left out that you'd be on the Joint Chiefs of Staff also?

A: Alright, I'll talk to most of that.

The personnel piece on the FYDP, right now we are not in the Army budget to be fully funded for an end strength of 350,000 which we expect to achieve this year. Having said that, and this is very important, the commitment has been made by everybody in the Pentagon that they will fund the Army National Guard for whatever we're able to recruit. And we have demonstrated to the point where everybody has good confidence level and the 350,000 end strength credibility's pretty good right now because we have seen a net gain of about 9,000 in the last nine months which is incredible for an Army at war for five years in an all volunteer force that's being stressed to the degree it is and to be able to recruit without reducing quality. Those kinds of numbers are absolutely extraordinary. It truly is. It's counterintuitive to probably everybody in this room.

At the same time we're keeping our people at a higher rate. We're reenlisting them. The satisfaction level is higher than it used to be and they feel good about what they're doing. They think they're making a difference. They feel they are actually doing something very important and they're staying with us in higher numbers than we even had ever projected.

So the size of the force I think, I am confident that the adjustments will be made in the budget to move money to the National Guard. I would like it done sooner than later, but it hasn't happened yet.

Q: What about your fourth star?

A: Let me skip that and go to the last part of her question. [Laughter].

I've said it in testimony and I'll say it to you. You make your own judgment. You heard what we're doing. You know what other organizations are doing. It's not for me to decide, number one. Hopefully, what we're doing will be recognized for the value it brings and appropriate actions will be taken at the appropriate level.

As far as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I want to go on record and tell you I've told the Senate and I've told the House on the congressional record and I'll tell the press that the Army and Air National Guard in my judgment should not be a separate service. And unless they are a separate service there is no need to put them on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are the heads of the separate services. Does there need to be a different arrangement of authorities and responsibilities of the Chief of the National Guard in today's environment? I think that evaluation's best made by other people than myself. My job is to be the Chief, not to figure out, you know.

Q: But isn't it your job also to figure out how to be more effective in your job? Could you be more effective?

A: Oh yeah. Sure you could be. I mean everybody at this table knows how this works. There's a hierarchy in any organization and what you're called can matter. Look in your own profession. You know, what your title is and what your rank holding is has a lot to say with how effective you can influence the organization you're working for. I'll just leave it at that.

Q: We appreciate the position you find yourself in.

A: It's a pretty tough thing to ask me frankly, especially on the record.

Q: You said I think it's certainly worthy of serious consideration.

A: I still think it's worthy of serious consideration. But what I'm talking about is you've got to realize that my organization is set up basically in a 1947 construct and hasn't been really seriously adjusted since then. So it's time to re-read what the job is and what it's supposed to do and see if that's what you want it to do. Is it set up to do that job? That's what someone's going to have to make a judgment on.

Q: Sir, two quick questions for you. One is to follow up on the UAVs. I was wondering if you could say at all when you think it might be from the training mode to operational mode? And whether you see the UAVs being used primarily overseas by the Air National Guard or do you think that it would be largely a homeland defense mission?

A: No, we can almost do it immediately. I think we can take some of the training we're doing and make it have some operational good right now here at home. I think we can do the same thing overseas because of the reach-back capability. I would like to move as fast as we can into that. I think it will have equal application or utility both at home or overseas.

What we won't be doing at home is using the lethal systems, but the overhead imaging and the sensors would be immensely helpful. Just think of putting UAVs up after a hurricane to do wide area damage assessment and what good that would be for emergency planners and civilian response agencies to have that product to work with. Real time down link, look at what's going on so you know where you really have to go, what bridges are really out, what railroads are really damaged, what areas are really still flooded, what areas people are still stranded. There are just so many things. For instance, wouldn't it be great instead of having helicopters looking for people if you had UAVs are looking for people and helicopters going and getting. So I could actually get more use out of the helicopters than we did. We saved 17,400 people with helicopters in Katrina. If I'd had more eyes out there knowing where to go we probably could have done even better.

Q: How many UAVs does the Air National Guard own? What are those?

A: We don't own any of them right now. They're all owned by the Air Force. We're flying a couple in training and they're to be fielded as soon as the fielding strategies are worked out. I guess you're aware especially of those of you that write in defense in the technical piece.

You know that there are some advocating for a Predator that is a really much more lethal weapon station carrier Predator but it's about three times more expensive than the basic Predator which is what I think we're probably better off using in the beginning. First of all, we could have three times as many of them out there for the same money. And I think the Predator, as I said this UAV technology is going to change so quickly that to invest in that heavily in the state-of-the-art Predator may not be the best way to do it. We may be better off having a mix of those things because as I say we're in a prototype really, in the infancy development of UAVs in my view. There would be others that see it different.

Q: Okay. General, I just wanted to follow up sort of on that re-set question. There's been a lot of conversation in the last week about Army readiness on Capital Hill and whether some of the Army units are combat ready. What is the situation with the Guard, the Army particularly, Guard units? And the equipment shortfalls? And how does that impact their readiness levels?

A: Okay. Just take the Army. We're part of the Army. Okay. Take the Army's issue which is real. It's such a genuine issue. It is an absolute concern that needs to be addressed. And then just take a magnifying glass and lay it on that issue and that's the situation in the Guard. It's a bigger problem in the Guard, and I told you why. It's because we were under resourced deliberately, that was the national strategy. We were not expected to be called. We are now called and used routinely. The strategy never was changed. So I am further behind. We're in an even more dire situation than the active Army but we both have the same symptoms. I just have a higher fever. Let's put it that way. Okay. I'm a little sicker in that regard than they are, and we both need to be cured. There's no question about it. We both need to be cured.

Q: Members of the Congress said last week that two thirds of the Army's units would not be combat ready. Is that been similar or worse for you?

A: That's worse for me. It's all by equipment. It's not because of the experience and training and personnel. It's equipment.

Q: Okay.

A: And that's for the Army as well.

Q: Okay. We're out of time. We appreciate you coming in.

A: Thanks everybody. I really appreciate it. Thanks again for your flexibility in the schedules.

Q: Much obliged.

END TEXT

