

**Testimony of
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**President
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**Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives**

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Chairman Hunter, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today on issues related to H.R. 5200, the National Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act of 2006. The National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) thanks you for your years of outstanding support to the National Guard.

As many of you know, NGAUS was formed in 1878 by former militia officers of both the Union and the Confederacy to seek united representation for the militia before the Congress. They were concerned that the militia, a constitutional pillar of the republic, was being left to languish in disinterest and neglect. How, they wondered, could forces created by the founding fathers and so recently locked in mortal combat in the shadow of their own homes, be so consistently short-changed and dismissed? They were successful in their efforts in bringing the Congress to the aid of the militia.

Mr. Chairman, how little times have changed.

NGAUS is here today because, as President Bush, the commander in chief of the National Guard of the United States said in a major speech in February of this year, “For 128 years, the National Guard Association has been fighting for the citizen-soldiers who fight for America.” We once again earnestly request your assistance.

Although the Guard wasn’t at the table during the formulation of the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the revelation that the National Guard is no longer a “strategic reserve” but rather an “operational force” changes the landscape for the

foreseeable future as to the level that senior National Guard leaders should be involved in Defense Department planning and programming.

Today, the Guard is needed more now than ever and the active forces simply can't get the job done without us. Guard members have proven time and again that if given the right equipment and training, they will perform on an equal basis with their Active component comrades. The Total Force concept introduced in 1970 by then Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird works, but only if the Guard is provided the resources it needs and is treated as a **full** partner in planning, programming, budgeting, and strategy formulation.

If you were to ask almost any senior Active Army or Air Force leader why the Guard wasn't at the table, they would emphatically reply "they were at the table." It is now generally conceded in testimony here on the Hill, that they were not. We believe that the Department of Defense is still deeply mired in an institutional bias toward the National Guard. Let me give you a contemporary example that seems to reflect this seeming inability to embrace the Guard.

A visit to the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) public web site reveals an interesting perspective into how the Department of Defense perceives the mission and capabilities of the National Guard.

USNORTHCOM's mission definition is to: conduct operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories and interests

within the assigned area of responsibility (AOR - which includes our borders between Canada and Mexico); and as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, provide military assistance to civil authorities including consequence management operations.

However, upon closer scrutiny of the web site, there is no perceptible reference to coordinating their efforts with the National Guard. It is also interesting to note that USNORTHCOM uses Article 1, Section 8, Clause 15 of the Constitution of the United States“to provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the union, suppress insurrection, and repel invasions” as justification of their mission. But, again, no reference at all to the National Guard! This seemingly insignificant oversight highlights a serious lack of leadership perspective that could promote a close working relationship with the states, their governors and the Guard.

More simply put, if cooperation is our common intent, why not say so!

During the Cold War, the Guard was seen as a strategic reserve in part because the Active forces consisted of end strengths at twice the levels they are today. Foreseeing then the increased level of forces that would be needed to perform peacekeeping operations and to fight the Global War on Terrorism was a practical impossibility. But that was 1989 and today, as the DoD recognized in its preface to the 2006 QDR Report, they are “still encumbered with a Cold War organization and mentality in many aspects of Department operations...and that it will seek new and more flexible authorities in budget, finance, acquisition and personnel”. NGAUS believes that same line of thinking

should apply to how they interact with the Guard on a daily basis. More importantly, engaging in denial is counter-productive.

In our view, this situation can no longer be swept under the rug. We must do all that we can to provide the American people with the most cost effective defense structure. Certainly we believe that such structure, in many cases, is the National Guard.

The Department of Defense announced in late May its opposition to all sections of H.R. 5200 and launched a campaign in Congress to either delay consideration of the legislation by referring it to the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves or to dismiss the bill completely on the grounds that neither the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs or Secretary of Defense believes the changes are either necessary or warranted.

Unfortunately, this same dismissive response to the Guard reaching out to be heard, as strategic level force-structure, policy, and funding decisions are being made, is the very reason legislation of this nature is so sorely needed.

The fact of the matter is that senior Guard leadership has only been involved in Pentagon decision making as an afterthought, requiring the adjutant's general, governors, Congress and NGAUS to launch vigorous campaigns to reverse decisions that were made without adequate Guard input. Action by the Senate was necessary to remind the Army of this very fact earlier this year.

The Guard's only goal is to have a seat at the table and a relative voice in the decisions that affect our readiness. Based on the Pentagon's standard response to these entreaties, the National Guard Empowerment Act of 2006 has been offered as a means to achieve that level of Defense Department involvement we have earned and deserve.

While the Secretary of Defense is wont to say, "The War on Terror could not be fought without the National Guard", clearly a serious disconnect still exists. NGAUS believes the Guard leadership should not be made to wait at the kitchen table for something to eat while the rest of the "family" is feasting in the dining room.

What the National Guard really desires is a culture change at the Pentagon that results in a seat at the table where Guard inputs are genuinely considered and subsequently factored into strategy, programming, policy and funding decisions with a clear understanding of the Guard's capabilities and unique force structure and missions. It's nothing more than demonstrating respect to a force that we depend on to augment our Active forces and to protect our homeland.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I sincerely thank you for your time today and am happy to answer any questions.