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**SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

STATEMENT OF  
GENERAL RALPH E. EBERHART, USAF  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND  
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
25 OCTOBER 2001

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Senator Levin, Senator Warner and members of the Committee:

Though the circumstances that led to this hearing are tragic, it is an honor to appear before you to represent the outstanding men and women of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Our hearts and prayers go out to those great American heroes who lost their lives or were injured on September 11, 2001, as well as their families and friends.

Our combined U.S. and Canadian response to the unprecedented terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was a tribute to the professionalism of our people. We are proud to be part of the national security team now focused on defeating terrorism.

#### Missions

For 43 years NORAD adapted to the changing threats--transitioning from an initial "air" defense orientation to a broader aerospace dimension--one that provides surveillance and warning of ballistic missile attacks and space events. The unprecedented attacks on 11 September 2001 were a reminder to our Nation of the need to detect, validate and warn of hostile aircraft or missile attack against North America. Proper attack assessment ensures the U.S. National Command Authorities and the Prime Minister of Canada can take appropriate action in response to an attack. Clearly, our ability to provide surveillance and control of U.S. and Canadian airspace remains vital and constitutes a critical component to the defense of North America.

NORAD's mission now has clearly expanded to protect North America against a domestic airborne threat. Prior to 11 September 2001, our air defense posture was aligned to counter the perceived external threats to North America air sovereignty. Within this context, our aerospace control and air defense missions have traditionally been oriented to

detect and identify all aircraft entering North American airspace, and if necessary, intercept potentially threatening inbound air traffic. These threats were generally considered as hostile aircraft carrying bombs or cruise missiles. Based on the recent events, we are now also focused on threats originating within domestic airspace such as hijacked aircraft. While we have adjusted to provide a rapid response to domestic air threats, we continue to execute our previously assigned missions.

#### **NORAD's Response**

On 11 September 2001, we quickly transitioned to an interoperable, joint and interagency force consisting of active and National Guard units, U.S. and Canadian military aircraft and U.S. Navy ships. Additionally, we have positioned portable air control radars to more rapidly respond to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requests for assistance. We are also working together with FAA representatives to access FAA radar data and now maintain a continuous communications loop.

With the approval of the President and the Secretary of Defense, we now have streamlined the Rules of Engagement for hostile acts over domestic airspace to ensure the safety of our citizens and critical infrastructure. We have increased our alert posture from 20 fighter aircraft standing alert to more than 100 U.S. and Canadian aircraft. These aircraft and aircrews now support the continuous combat air patrols over Washington D.C., New York, as well as random patrols over other metropolitan areas and key infrastructure. They remain on a high state of alert at 26 air bases across the country.

As a result of this heightened posture, our air defense activity has increased significantly. Last year, we scrambled fighter aircraft 7 times (including exercises) from 10 September - 10 October 2000. During the same period this year, we scrambled 41 times, plus diverted 48

fighter patrols from ongoing combat air patrols to assess tracks of interest, for a total of 89 events. Likewise, all of our units supporting Operation NOBLE EAGLE have experienced a significant increase in NORAD-related flying sorties. Normally, our units fly 4-6 sorties a month in support of the NORAD air defense mission. Since 11 September 2001, several of our units such as the one at Otis ANGB in Massachusetts have flown in excess of 100 sorties in the last month (approximately one-third of Otis' entire yearly flying program).

### **Challenges**

From a resource perspective, we must address our manpower shortfalls at the units charged with conducting our aerospace warning and control missions. The Administration's call-up of Reserve and National Guard forces was the right solution. In the near term, we need to ensure we allocate these forces to meet our greatest needs in the field. For the longer term, the execution of our National Military Strategy will hinge on our ability to attract and retain high quality, motivated servicemen and women and civilian employees. As always, our tremendous warfighting capability depends on our people. If we take care of them, they will take care of our mission. Without them, even our most effective weapon systems are of little value. Congress' initiatives to improve military and civilian pay, health care and housing for our professionals in uniform are a step in the right direction. We are very grateful for your continued support in these areas. However, we still have work to do.

### **Conclusion**

NORAD remains committed to protect our homeland in the face of this national tragedy. We believe we will be key to fighting and winning this

new war on terrorism against a faceless, cowardly enemy. To do this, we need to provide the right people and equipment to get the job done and we once again appreciate Congress' continued support.

We are heartened by the ongoing efforts to improve security at our airports. Our hope is that this increased vigilance will deter foul play on the ground and eliminate the need to commit fighters in the air. We should be the last course of action, implemented only after all other protective measures have been tried.

We stand with you and the rest of the Nation to meet every challenge and ensure freedom prevails. I am honored to appear before you and look forward to your questions.