



Executive Memorandum

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THE NATIONAL GUARD AND HOMELAND SECURITY

JACK SPENCER

For the United States, the nature of warfare changed drastically on September 11, 2001, when the homeland became a major theater of war. America's defense posture must evolve quickly to prepare for this new reality, and this evolution must include a rethinking of the role of the National Guard—a role President Bush's recently released Homeland Security Strategy treats as important.

This role, however, will require further definition. Given the reality that the homeland is a theater of war, as well as the imminent threat of terrorism and the increasing likelihood that U.S. civilians may be targeted at home in future conflicts, the role of the National Guard in homeland security must become part of war planning for any future war contingency. This means ensuring that adequate resources are available for forces abroad and for Guard units at home.

Taking the Lead in Homeland Security. The National Guard is the logical element of the U.S. armed forces to act as the lead military agency for homeland security. By law and tradition, the Guard connects local communities to the government. Units located in every American community have the capabilities, legal authority, and structure to respond quickly to attacks on the homeland. The Army National Guard, for example, maintains over 3,000 armories around the country, while the Air National Guard has 140 units throughout the United States and its territories. The close relationship between the National Guard and their locales

must be leveraged to ensure that local Guard units are prepared to respond to attacks and that they help to train other first responders in their communities.

Local health authorities simply are not adequately prepared to address the mass casualties that would result from such events. The Guard could help state and local authorities prepare for operations in a chemical or biologically contaminated environment and plan for medical treatment after an attack (combat triage). It also could help the authorities assess a community's level of response preparedness, identify interoperability and communications problems, provide alternative and complementary communications, and develop response plans to rebuild quickly any damaged "mitigating infrastructure," such as roads, bridges, and water supplies. While the Guard is already doing some of these things to some extent, they should constitute a critical Guard mission in today's new warfighting environment.

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Next Steps. The Administration has introduced a new military command structure to better address the threats facing the nation. Part of this effort includes development of the Northern Command to oversee the U.S. military's contribution to homeland defense. To ensure that the National Guard's role evolves in a way that best supports the homeland security mission, the Administration should:

- **Refocus the National Guard on homeland security.** The National Guard, the Department of Defense, and the states have in place much of the administrative and command infrastructure needed to enable the Guard to take on a greater homeland security role. But its focus—as defined in Title 32, Section 102 of the U.S. Code—remains one of supporting the active forces. The Guard's legislative focus should be on both homeland security and support of active forces. However, the Administration must be clear that the Guard's contribution to homeland security is to support state and local authorities, not to assume control.
- **Give homeland service the same respect as service abroad.** Because the government's primary purpose is to protect the people of America, the homeland is the most important theater of war. Active service in defense of the homeland should be given the same weight and respect as service abroad. Those serving in the homeland should receive appropriate benefits, and adequate resources should be dedicated to the homeland mission. Changing the culture of the Guard in this way would increase both the morale of those serving in this important component and the numbers of recruits who want to protect the homeland.
- **Provide adequate funding to support the Guard in its homeland security mission.** The United States must prepare for terrorist attacks on the homeland as a theater of war precisely because of its vulnerability. The war on terrorism has blurred the lines between national service (Title 10), national service under the command and control of the state governor (Title 32, Section 502[f]), and state service (Title 32). The federal government may provide funding for some Title 32 missions, but most are funded by the states. While this should remain the case for traditional Title 32 missions, missions that support homeland security efforts

should be funded under Title 32, Section 502(f).

- **Use State Area Commands (STARCs) to administer the new homeland mission.** Each STARC is the peacetime headquarters of the National Guard for the governor and adjutant general, with its own integral administration, logistics, and command and control facilities. A STARC controls all of the state's Guard units, armories, and bases, and can mobilize the Guard for state service. In a localized attack or major incident, a governor likely would use the STARC to direct the Guard to assist or supplement local first responders.

STARCs should have activation rosters for units and personnel that identify those who are also first responders with critical skills (such as fire department chiefs) so that these key people are not called up for duty but remain available for local emergencies; so that decisionmakers know the training, equipment readiness, and personnel strength status of all units; and so that they can establish a command and control center with redundant communications.

- **Use National Guard resources wisely.** The Guard's resources should be focused on homeland security, not on missions better handled by the private sector or other government agencies. For example, Guard units should not be guarding airports or the nation's borders. Guard members' specialized training and legal standing give them a unique role in homeland security that should not be squandered.

Conclusion. The American homeland is now a theater of war. The National Guard is well-suited to serving as the lead military agency for homeland security because its members live and work in communities. They are likely to be the first federal agents to assist local first responders in the event of an attack, and may well be the first responders. The United States must assure that active forces are adequately staffed and equipped to carry out their missions abroad even if the National Guard is called up for homeland security missions.

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