

# WebMemo



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## Making Progress on National Guard “Empowerment”

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In FY 2005, Congress established the independent Commission on the National Guard and Reserves to recommend changes in law and policy to ensure that the Guard and Reserves are organized, trained, equipped, and compensated to best meet the national security requirements of the United States. Last year, Congress charged the commission to review legislation intended to bolster the institutional authority of the National Guard Bureau and enhance the resources of the National Guard. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently endorsed all or part of 20 of the 23 recommendations in the commission’s second report, and many of these will be implemented quickly by executive order. Secretary Gates intends to modify the remaining recommendations based on feedback from officials within the Department and will soon send legislative proposals to Congress for the three recommendations that require changes in law. While Congress should be commended for its initiative, it must continue to support Pentagon efforts to implement the commission’s recommendations and include the necessary legislative proposals in the annual defense authorization bill.

**Vindication.** It is likely not a coincidence that shortly after Secretary Gates announced these reforms, senior defense officials acknowledged before the commission that members of the Guard and Reserves have not received the necessary funding and resources over the past several years.<sup>1</sup> Archaic decisionmaking, budgeting, and planning processes have impaired the National Guard and Reserves, particularly during the intense military operations of the last six years.

The National Guard’s high operational tempo and number of missions have not led to substantial increases in funding and resources, especially in regard to equipment. The demands of overseas missions, particularly in Iraq, have badly depleted the Guard’s domestic store of vehicles, weapons, and communications gear, leaving units with one-third of the equipment needed to meet requirements for homeland defense missions. The Army and Air National Guard must receive a long-term commitment of resources and funding to rebuild and modernize equipment.

With the National Guard’s dual missions, a lack of equipment impacts Americans at home when disasters strike and the Guard is activated. The recent tornado in Kansas exposed a National Guard with austere equipment shortages, which include having less than half of its tractor trailer trucks on hand for removing debris and less than one-third of its medium tactical vehicles with the high ground clearance useful during floods.<sup>1</sup> The extent of the resources needed to deal with the domestic emergencies—on top of the requirements for combat operations—necessitates that the National Guard have an adequate supply of equipment, a proper mix of capabilities, and the latest technologies.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
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While piecemeal funding has been provided to this effect in recent defense bills, a major effort is underway in Congress to reform the National Guard Bureau, promote the Guard Chief, and reform internal Pentagon processes concerning the Reserve Component. Leading that effort are Senators Christopher S. Bond (R-MO) and Patrick J. Leahy (D-VT), co-chairmen of the Senate National Guard Caucus, and Representatives Thomas M. Davis (R-VA) and Gene Taylor (D-MS), co-chairmen of the House Guard and Reserve Components Caucus and co-sponsors of the National Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act of 2007.

**Watershed Changes.** In his guidance to the service secretaries, Secretary Gates noted that “many of the recommendations made by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves were the direct result of perceived shortcomings they identified in the Department’s ability to support civil authorities in domestic emergencies.” For this reason, he is seeking an “aggressive implementation schedule” throughout the Department.<sup>3</sup> His key initiatives include:

- Defining, validating, and budgeting for civil support requirements generated by the Secretary of Homeland Security;
- Revising how the Department determines funding and provides resources for the Reserves, including its civil support requirements;
- Providing Congress with an annual report on collaborative DoD and DHS homeland security and civil support activities;
- Authorizing eligibility for the National Guard Bureau Chief to be promoted to the rank of General; and,
- Modifying Joint Professional Military Education to enhance opportunities for Guard and Reserve personnel to obtain joint education, qualifications, and experience.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Thomas Hall, summarized the importance of implementing several proposals:

We need tanks and things for dual use, but what we really need to look at are ambulances and helicopters and the things to respond to a disaster. And frankly, that’s my focus right now. How do we identify what those civil support requirements are? We’ve not had a methodical way to take a look at those within our budget. I think we need to have an entire new equipping strategy for the Guard and Reserve in light of today.<sup>4</sup>

Through executive order, a Council of Governors will be established to advise the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security on states’ requirements for the Guard and Reserves.

**Still Not Enough.** Through quickly approving the vast majority of the commission’s recommendations and many made in the National Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act, Secretary Gates has made substantial strides toward improving the outdated procedures that have hindered the National Guard and Reserves.

Going forward, the biggest cause for concern is the admission by senior defense officials that increased funding provided by the normal defense budgets and war-related supplemental spending bills are not meeting active-duty needs, much less those of the Guard and Reserves.<sup>5</sup> The baseline defense budget, excluding supplemental funding, is just not sufficient, according to Army Comptroller Nelson Ford. The current five-year budget period shows defense budgets declining after FY 2008, reaching 3.1 percent of the gross domestic product by FY 2012. Congress should enact the remaining legislative proposals essential for improving the National

1. Otto Kreisher, “Officials Say Reserves, Active Forces Not Getting Enough,” *National Journal’s Congress Daily PM*, May 16, 2007.
2. Dion Lefler, “National Guard Deals With Less Equipment,” *Wichita (KS) Eagle*, May 8, 2007.
3. U.S. Department of Defense, *Implementation of the Recommendations from the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves Memorandum*, May 10, 2007, at [www.defenselink.mil/news/May2007/d20070516\\_OSD05132-07.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2007/d20070516_OSD05132-07.pdf) (May 21, 2007).
4. Fred W. Baker III, “Defense Officials to Implement Guard, Reserve Changes,” American Forces Press Service, May 17, 2007, at [www.ngb.army.mil/news/archives/2007/05/051707-CGR\\_Gates.aspx](http://www.ngb.army.mil/news/archives/2007/05/051707-CGR_Gates.aspx) (May 21, 2007).
5. Kreisher, “Officials Say Reserves, Active Forces Not Getting Enough.”

Guard and Reserves and also commit to maintaining a robust military budgetary budget well into the future to meet the needs of all active and reserve components.

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