



May 26, 2009

The Honorable Pete Geren
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Geren:

In order to improve readiness in Army National Guard units and to decrease reliance on the pre-mobilization cross-leveling of personnel which degrades unit cohesion, the authorized end strength of the Army National Guard should be significantly increased. This is the most significant reform that could be made to complete the transition of the Army National Guard from a rarely-used strategic force to a ready operational force that can be employed cyclically over the long term.

The Congressionally approved fiscal year 2009 end strength limit for the Army National Guard is 352,600. The Secretary of Defense is allowed by law to waive end strength limits by up to 3%. Using this authority and supplemental funds, the Army National Guard has been authorized and funded to 358,200 soldiers for fiscal year 2009.

This level of end strength, however, brings with it a systemic problem which results in guaranteed unit lack of readiness which forces soldiers to be shifted out of their home units into deploying units in order to fill the unit with qualified personnel prior to mobilization.

Unlike in the active component, Army National Guard unit positions are filled with both untrained new recruits as well as fully trained and deployable citizen-soldiers. When a unit is about to deploy overseas, it must be filled only with fully trained soldiers. As a result, trained National Guardsmen must often be transferred out of their home unit, in order to fill out another unit slated for deployment. This cross-leveling of personnel hurts morale as well as the unit cohesion so important for success in battle. It imposes difficulties on families, and decreases the predictability in a citizen-soldier's service.

The way to achieve increased readiness and lower cross-leveling is not to decrease the number of units in the Army National Guard. Force structure reductions are clearly not an option when the demand for these forces is already at a level in which most units are at home for 3 years between deployments rather than the DoD goal of 5 years. America clearly needs more National Guard capability, not less.

The best solution to lessen this problem is to significantly increase the authorized and funded end strength level of the Army National Guard. While Army resource and

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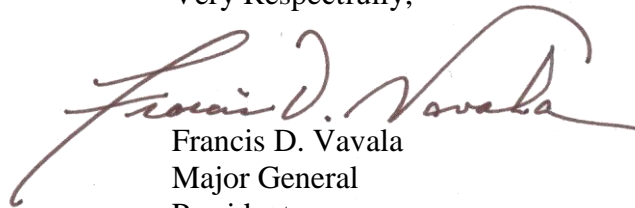
policy adjustments may help to reduce the large number of Army National Guard soldiers awaiting training, it will not be enough. The Adjutants General feel that the end strength of the Army National Guard should be increased by approximately 12,500 spaces. Thus the end strength authorization be roughly 371,000 soldiers. This will provide additional positions to hold untrained soldiers so that units can be filled to a much greater degree with trained and deployable troops resulting in increase unit personnel readiness and decreased cross-leveling.

With innovative programs like the Guard Recruiting Assistants Program and sufficient bonus funding, the Army National Guard has already demonstrated that it is capable of recruiting and retaining to this level. As of the end of the Month of March 2009, the Army National Guard had 368,379 citizen-soldiers on its rolls.

Moreover, as documented by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, the Army National Guard is a highly cost-effective means of national defense. Because National Guard soldiers serve part-time when not mobilized, the financial cost to the nation is far less than if similar-sized forces were to be maintained full-time in the active component.

In view of the need for America to have a ready Army National Guard which can be employed on a recurring basis to meet the security needs of the Nation in the 21st century, and the demonstrated capability of the Guard to recruit and retain strongly in such a demanding environment, and the cost-effectiveness of reserve component capabilities, the end strength of the Army National Guard should be increase to roughly 371,000.

Very Respectfully,



Francis D. Vavala
Major General
President

cc: Chief, National Guard Bureau