

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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CNGB TESTIMONY DRAFT
Border Security Mission

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, it is my honor to come before you today to discuss the most recent mission for the National Guard – assisting civilian authorities to increase the security along our Nation’s borders.

Since colonial times, the free citizens of this land have trained and prepared themselves as organized militia so that they could work their jobs, care for their families and pursue the American dream yet be ready to muster and respond when threats arose. That tradition continues in the modern National Guard

Citizen-soldiers and citizen-airmen stand ready to answer this most recent call to duty just as we have in recent years whether threats were terrorists, tyrants or tornadoes.

The President has stated his intention to bolster the security of our Nation’s borders. Under his plan, up to 6,000 Guardsmen will help the Department of Homeland Security to stem illegal immigration.

The National Guard is first and foremost a military reserve component for the Army and the Air Force, yet the Guard is also well-suited to do this mission. We have the experience, the skills, the capabilities, and the available, highly trained people which can help the Department of Homeland Security.

This will be a temporary mission. Border security *is and should remain* a civilian law enforcement responsibility. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement are responsible for securing the U.S borders. The National Guard’s temporary military support will assist the Border Patrol until it is able to increase its ranks.

This is not an entirely new mission for the National Guard. For two decades, the National Guard has assisted state and federal law enforcement agencies through the National Guard Counterdrug program. In the border States, this effort has often focused on drugs coming across the borders. In the aftermath of 9/11, our counter drug assets performed additional border security duty. So, as we head into this newest mission, it will be familiar duty for many of us. Additionally, National Guard engineers have in the past supported border security by provided various forms of support to border security. In the past, this support has included building tactical infrastructure such as bollard fencing, low water crossings in areas that are very inaccessible to the Border Patrol and other forms of engineering support. This provides the accessibility and mobility in rural and remote border areas which the Border Patrol needs to do its work.

Military readiness will not be degraded by this mission. The counterdrug program is structured to function without negatively affecting the National Guard's ability to provide units ready for mobilization. We will perform this new mission with the same philosophy in mind. There will be *no* degradation to the National Guard's capability to meet the requirements of federal military mission. As far as possible, the tasks our Guardsmen perform in this operation will build upon the individual and unit skills used in an overseas deployment.

The support our National Guardsmen will bring to this mission includes: Engineering, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, Training, Linguistics, Command & Control, Transportation, Logistics, Aviation, Medical, and Maintenance.

This mission will be executed as a State-Federal partnership. The mission will be accomplished by having selected National Guard units perform their couple of weeks annual training period and similar short tours of duty along the border. This approach allows us to accomplish the mission without the need for lengthy mobilization. Impact on the lives of Guardsmen will generally be no more that that normally caused by attending annual training. Every National Guardsman knows they have a two or three weeks annual training period that they're going to have to perform during the year. Those that will be on border duty longer than that will be volunteers.

Members of the National Guard participating in this mission will remain under State command and control. The States will receive funding and guidance from the federal government.

To ensure continuity and unity of effort we will have long-term leadership that remains in place in each State which will receive and employ units as they rotate in and out. Our intention will be that the equipment required for the mission will be identified, deployed and then remain in place. Units will rotate in and out to make use of that equipment. This is a model we have employed successfully in the past and will not be entirely new.

I have spoken with the Adjutants General of the border states. They are supportive of this concept. I have asked them to begin preparing their State plans for execution.

The initial commitment will be for up to 6,000 military forces on a rotational basis for a period of up to 12 months. Military support won't exceed 3,000 personnel during a possible second year of deployment. The process is expected to begin in June.

This mission will not impair the National Guard's capability to respond to natural disasters. Governors *will* retain sufficient National Guard capability to accomplish state missions to include disaster preparations. If a disaster strikes in any State while we are performing the border mission, there will still be plenty of National Guard forces available to respond. If one state needs more Guard help than it has on its own, States can shift forces and equipment under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. The men and women of the National Guard did a great job in responding the Hurricane Katrina. This year, we will be even MORE prepared because we have more troops available, more equipment, and more experience than we did last year.

CONCLUSION

Once again, your National Guard has been called on for the security of the Nation. Once again, we will answer that call. This is a mission the National Guard can do ...and do well. I look forward to your questions.