

**The Defense Department's Homeland Security Role:
How the Military Can and Should Contribute
Chairman Joseph Lieberman
February 13, 2008**

Good morning. This hearing is the first in a series our Committee will hold on the grave and genuine threat that terrorists will get their hands on weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and attack our homeland with them

The best response to this threat is, of course, to stop terrorists from getting and using weapons of mass destruction and that is what our intelligence and military forces are focused on. But, we cannot guarantee that our efforts to prevent terrorists from acquiring and using nuclear weapons in America will always succeed.

Consider the following.

The National Intelligence Estimate of on July 2007 warned – and I quote – that “al-Qa’ida will continue to try to acquire and employ chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear material in attacks and would not hesitate to use them if it develops what it deems is sufficient capability.”

Just last weekend, International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed El Baradei reinforced the specific threat of nuclear terrorism. He said, and I quote:

“This, to me, is the most danger we are facing today. Because any country, even if they have nuclear weapons, would continue to have a rational approach. They know if they use a nuclear weapon, they will be pulverized. For an extremist group, there is no concept of deterrence. If they have it, they will use it.”

El Baradei went on to say that the IAEA handles about 150 cases a year involving trafficking of nuclear material and that some material reported stolen is never recovered.

And, he added – and I quote – “a lot of the material recovered has never been reported stolen.”

It is in that context we hold our hearing today. We will hear testimony about the recent report from the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, which concludes that our government is not adequately prepared to respond to a WMD attack on our homeland.

In its final report, released Jan. 31, the Commission said:

“Because the nation has not adequately resourced its forces designated for response to weapons of mass destruction, it does not have sufficient trained, ready forces available. This is an appalling gap that places the nation and its citizens at greater risk.”
End quote.

I would add that the gap is not only appalling. It is unacceptable.

Today we will hear from Commission Chairman, retired Marine Major General Arnold L. Punaro, and two of his fellow commissioners, retired Air Force Lieutenant General James E. Sherrard III and retired Army National Guard Major General E. Gordon Stump.

We thank you for coming and we thank you for your service to our country and especially for your hard work over the last two years on the enormous task that you took on.

Your sweeping report – the first congressionally mandated reevaluation of the Guard and Reserves since the Korean War – makes 95 recommendations on reforms

needed to help the National Guard and Reserves effectively perform their missions both in defense of the homeland and on battlefields overseas.

We in Congress still need to carefully assess your 95 recommendations but I want you to know that, I agree with the Commission's overall vision.

As Chairman of this Committee, and a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I will work to ensure that our Guard and Reserve members and their families are treated with the respect and gratitude they deserve for their patriotic service, that we ease the burdens of their service as much as possible, and that all the members of the Guard and Reserve and their families get each and every consideration and benefit they have been promised a members of our modern-day Minutemen who are ready to leave their homes and families on short notice and defend this nation.

Today our committee will focus on the seven, very important, specific, and in some cases somewhat controversial recommendations the Commission made regarding homeland security, including your recommendation that DoD make its civil support a mission equal in priority to its war-fighting missions, and that governors be allowed to command federal military efforts in their states.

The Commission has recognized that the Guard and Reserves, forward deployed in communities across the nation, are uniquely suited to homeland missions, and has called for them to play a priority role in disaster response.

That recommendation raises the larger important question of how to rebalance the Guard's capabilities so that it can be prepared for its domestic response, but maintain its necessary critical role overseas.

Many of the Commission's recommendations are just common sense, like recommendation 6: "The Secretary of Defense should ensure that forces identified as rapid responders to domestic catastrophes are manned, trained and equipped to the highest levels of readiness."

Hurricane Katrina showed how important a coordinated military response is to a disaster.

The Department of Defense's commitment of personnel and resources to Katrina was large: more than 20 naval vessels, almost 300 helicopters, and 70,000 troops, including 50,000 National Guard troops, deployed to the gulf coast in the ten days following the storm.

But to those stranded on their rooftops, or in the Superdome and Convention Center without adequate supplies or sanitation for days, those resources came too slowly.

The challenges of response to a nuclear or biological attack where only the Department of Defense has the medical assets, the logistical capability, and the sheer manpower needed to respond would be immense

The key players—the National Guard Bureau, Northern Command, the Department of Homeland Security, other federal agencies, and the States and localities—must be integrated seamlessly in order to be ready to respond effectively.

Are we as ready as we should be? The Commission says no, and I find its answer to be convincing. That gives us the responsibility together to fix that. I look forward to your testimony.

Senator Collins.