

UNCLASSIFIED

STATEMENT BY

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL H STEVEN BLUM
CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU**

BEFORE THE

**SENATE HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE**

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**ON
HURRICANE KATRINA**

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Chairman Collins, Senator Lieberman, members of the committee; thank you for the opportunity to discuss the actions of the National Guard and the National Guard Bureau in response to Hurricane Katrina.

Today, the National Guard finds itself more than ever linked to the vital interests of our nation, both here at home and around the world. Even while we had more than 80,000 National Guard soldiers and airmen deployed in support of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and dozens of other nations, the men and women of the National Guard responded magnificently to the catastrophic events of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma here at home. Over 50,000 National Guard personnel hailing from every state and territory responded to calls for support during this difficult period. That is more troops than the United States employed during Grenada or Panama operations.

As the Nation begins the necessary process of assessing the effects of the hurricanes and the governmental response to those events, the picture is one of laudable successes as well as areas requiring improvement.

I am particularly proud of the timeliness and magnitude of the National Guard's efforts in advance of Hurricane Katrina and our response in its immediate aftermath. National Guard forces were in the water and on the streets of New Orleans rescuing people within four hours of Katrina's passing. More than 9,700 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen

were in New Orleans by the thirtieth of August. The National Guard deployed over 30,000 additional troops within 96 hours of the passing of the storm. At the peak of the operation, the Governors nationwide dispatched more than 42,000 National Guard troops to assist Mississippi and Louisiana. In short, the National Guard response to the catastrophic events of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma was both timely and extensive.

While we have been successful in meeting the needs of the warfight overseas, we must continue to significantly upgrade our ability to respond to domestic mission requirements. In order to ensure that our deploying units are fully equipped and ready to support operations anywhere in the world, we have transferred over 101,000 items of equipment in support of these missions. This situation has presented the National Guard with challenges in keeping our inventories here at home fully supplied with critical items such as trucks, radios, and heavy engineering equipment. With the help of Congress and the President, we have made an excellent start in addressing these challenges, and the President's Budget will allow the National Guard to continue on the road to recovery. Over the FY06-FY-11 timeframe, the Administration plans to invest \$19.2 billion and \$4.4 billion in the Army and Air National Guard, respectively, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to providing the resources necessary to protect our homeland. By fully funding this budget and the commitment it makes to the National Guard, Congress would help us greatly in meeting this challenge.

Interagency relationships are fundamental to the success of the federal response to any disaster, and we must continue to foster strong relationships with the Department of Homeland Security and Northern Command. Indeed, coordination efforts to date point to the need for better planning, procurement of more equipment and interoperable communications, and joint training of the National Guard, active duty forces, and our federal partners.

One tool that was available but not used in the military response to Hurricane Katrina was the dual-hatted state/federal military command authority. In 2004 domestic operations supporting the G-8 summit as well as the Republican and Democratic national conventions, a National Guard general officer appointed under this authority was highly successful in simultaneously commanding both active duty troops and National Guard troops in state status. This helped to achieve unity of effort between state and federal forces. That sort of unified effort is particularly important in a multi-state emergency such as Hurricane Katrina. We need to look for ways to make good use of the dual-hat authority in these types of events in the future.

As a full member of the national security team, the National Guard had met its mission requirements at home and abroad. However, a continued commitment to increased resources and better inter-governmental coordination are needed in order for the National Guard to be more effectively postured to meet the needs of the future. By working closely with the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Congress, the National Guard will continue to be Always Ready, Always There.

Thank you.