



The Florida Senate

Interim Project Report 2008-147

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Committee on Military Affairs and Domestic Security

FLORIDA NATIONAL GUARD EQUIPMENT READINESS

SUMMARY

The Florida National Guard has been required to commit a portion of its equipment resources to the Global War on Terrorism. A substantial amount of the Guard's remaining equipment is functional for state mission requirements but otherwise considered non-deployable by federal mission standards.

Currently available on-hand Florida National Guard equipment supported by equipment augmentation sources is considered sufficient to enable the Guard to perform its state missions.

BACKGROUND

Florida relies on its National Guard forces to provide assistance during disaster response. A series of disasters including Hurricane Katrina and tornadoes in the Midwest have recently called into question the ability of Guard forces nationwide to adequately respond to such missions. National Guard forces are now providing both homeland defense and support to the Global War on Terrorism overseas which has in turn required the expenditure of equipment resources.

This report reviews the extent of Florida National Guard equipment shortages and assesses their impact on the Guard's ability to perform its emergency preparedness and disaster response mission.

In conducting the review, committee staff considered certain key questions in order to establish a basis for assessment. These questions included:

- What type of National Guard equipment is considered mission essential for the emergency/disaster response mission?
- What is the current availability and readiness status of mission essential equipment?
- Who is responsible for providing for National Guard equipment needs?

- Are alternatives available to National Guard leadership to "work through" any mission essential equipment shortages in order to perform assigned missions?
- What provisions have been made for mutual aid with other states?

While pursuing these questions certain facts emerged including:

- The National Guard's traditional federal mission has undergone a fundamental shift that is having a significant impact on Guard equipment readiness.
- The federal government is principally responsible for providing Guard equipment resources.
- The National Guard has been required to commit a significant portion of its resources to the Global War on Terrorism.
- A multi-year plan has emerged to replace Army National Guard equipment.
- The Florida National Guard performed its disaster response mission during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons with less equipment available than is on-hand now.

The National Guard Has Experienced a Fundamental Shift in Its Traditional Federal Role

Traditionally, the National Guard has performed two missions. As a state force under the command of the Governor, the Guard acts to preserve the peace, repel invasion, enhance security and respond to terrorist threats and attacks, and to respond to emergencies.¹ The Guard's traditional federal mission has been to serve as a military strategic reserve within the U. S. Department of Defense (DOD). However, according to the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, DOD cannot meet today's operational requirements without drawing significantly on the Reserves. Since 1990, beginning with the involuntary mobilizations for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the

¹ Chapter 250, Florida Statutes, (F.S.).

Guard's federal mission has gradually shifted from providing a strategic reserve to providing an operational reserve.² DOD further acknowledges that the reserve components are becoming an operational reserve in its current report to Congress on National Guard and Reserve Equipment.³

This shift has had a profound impact on the deployment of National Guard personnel and the management of its equipment. According to Florida Department of Military Affairs sources, more than 9,700 Florida National Guard personnel mobilizations have occurred in support of federal missions (Title 10) since September 11, 2001.⁴ Florida National Guard personnel currently are serving overseas in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, at other locations worldwide, and in support of Global War on Terrorism missions in the United States.⁵

Likewise, current overseas combat operations have placed a demand on the inventory of National Guard equipment. The pace of replacing National Guard equipment deployed to combat has not kept up with the demand. DOD states that 40% of the Army's equipment has been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in the past three years.⁶

"In addition," according to DOD, "current operations require that the Army leave equipment in theater as Stay Behind Equipment (SBE) for follow-on forces. Ground force equipment is being stressed by harsh operating conditions and used at rates five to ten times greater than peace time conditions. The Army has

cross-leveled⁷ large amounts of equipment to deploying units causing serious concern for the equipment readiness of non-deploying and returning units."⁸ In an October 2005 report, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) expressed concern this way:

"In response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the subsequent launch of the Global War on Terrorism, the Army National Guard has been called upon to play a significant role in supporting active Army forces overseas while, at the same time, taking on new homeland defense missions, such as protecting critical infrastructure—all of which require that the Army National Guard have sufficient quantities and types of equipment items. In addition, the Army National Guard must use its allotted equipment to perform other domestic responsibilities, including responding to natural emergencies or incidents of civil unrest. Historically, the Army National Guard has been structured as a follow-on force that supports the active Army in overseas conflicts, and as such, Guard units have not been resourced with all of the equipment and personnel they require for their missions. Instead, it was assumed that there would be sufficient time for units to obtain the remainder of their resources prior to deployment. However, Army National Guard members now comprise 31 percent of the ground forces in Iraq...The post-September 11 increase in the Army National Guard's responsibilities, particularly its increased involvement in overseas operations, raises concerns about whether the Army National Guard has the equipment it needs to continue to support operations in the future."⁹

Given the assumption that the Army National Guard when used as a strategic reserve would have sufficient time to be fully equipped prior to a combat deployment, Guard units have typically been supplied with about 65% of the equipment they would need to perform their combat missions. This equipment is also typically older and less modern than the active Army.¹⁰

² Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, *Strengthening America's Defenses in the New Security Environment*, Arlington, VA, March 1, 2007, p. 10.

³ Department of Defense, National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report for Fiscal Year 2007, Washington, DC, February 2006, p. Forward.

⁴ Note: Each occurrence of a Guard member reporting to active duty in support of a federal mission is counted as one mobilization. The duration of each member's mobilization may be as short as several days or as long as a full combat tour overseas. During the covered period, individual members may have been mobilized on multiple occasions leading to the cumulative figure of 9,700 mobilizations.

⁵ Note: At the time of this report, Florida National Guard personnel strength was listed at about 12,000 soldiers and airmen. Approximately 800 members were deployed in support of federal missions.

⁶ Department of Defense, National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report for Fiscal Year 2007, Washington, DC, February 2006, p. 1-6.

⁷ Note: Cross-leveling is the practice of transferring equipment from non-deploying units to deploying units in order to achieve 100% of required equipment levels.

⁸ Department of Defense, National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report for Fiscal Year 2007, Washington, DC, February 2006, p. 1-1.

⁹ United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-06-111, *RESERVE FORCES - Plans Needed to Improve Army National Guard Equipment Readiness and Better Integrate Guard into Army Force Transformation Initiatives*, Washington, DC, October 2005, p. 1.

¹⁰ United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-06-1109T, *RESERVE FORCES - Army National Guard*

Currently, states' Guard forces average inventory levels of dual-use equipment¹¹ range from a low of 33.8 % in New Mexico to a high of 63.6% in Georgia.¹² The Florida National Guard currently is reporting an overall rate of 61% of authorized equipment.

Who is Responsible for Providing the Guard's Equipment?

As stated by the GAO, "Army National Guard personnel may be ordered to perform duty under three general statutory frameworks: Title 10 or 32 of the United States Code or pursuant to state law in a state active duty status. In a Title 10 status, Army National Guard personnel are federally funded and under federal command and control. Personnel may enter Title 10 status by being ordered to active duty, either voluntarily or under appropriate circumstances involuntarily (i.e. mobilization). Personnel in Title 32 status are federally funded but under state control. Title 32 is the status in which National Guard personnel typically perform training for their federal mission. Personnel performing state active duty are state-funded and under state command and control. Under state law, the governor may order National Guard personnel to perform state active duty to respond to emergencies, civil disturbances, and for other reasons."¹³ The DOD provides the funding of equipment for Title 10 and 32 missions. Much of this equipment has a dual-use capability for both federal and state missions. State governments may also fund unique equipment for specialized state missions.

What type of equipment is considered mission essential for the emergency/disaster response mission?

and Army Reserve Readiness for 21st Century Challenges, Washington, DC, September 21, 2006, p. 7.

¹¹ Note: Dual use equipment includes trucks and other wheeled vehicles, communications equipment, engineer equipment, aviation assets such as helicopters, generators, and other items that are necessary to perform both domestic missions such as disaster response as well as for use in combat.

¹² United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-06-1109T, *RESERVE FORCES – Actions Needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness*, Washington, DC, January, 2007, p. 27.

¹³ United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-06-111, *RESERVE FORCES - Plans Needed to Improve Army National Guard Equipment Readiness and Better Integrate Guard into Army Force Transformation Initiatives*, Washington, DC, October 2005, p.7.

According to the GAO, "Until recently, it has been assumed that the National Guard could perform its typical state missions with the equipment it had on hand for its federal missions."¹⁴

Dual-use equipment such as trucks, HMMV's, rough terrain forklifts, engineer equipment, generators, helicopters, and communications equipment as well as individual weapons and night vision equipment have typically been considered mission essential equipment for disaster response.

However, both the GAO and the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves have criticized DOD for not properly considering the Guard's requirements for domestic missions and not equipping the Guard for these missions. Domestic missions include requirements to participate in large-scale, multi-state events such as those contained in the National Response Plan's national planning scenarios and in civil support missions that address response to weapons of mass destruction and pandemic preparedness.¹⁵ The concern is that a multi-state event such as a Hurricane Katrina could overwhelm adjacent state Guard forces that typically rely on mutual support agreements between them to back-fill equipment and personnel needs during emergencies. The GAO believes that the types and quantities of equipment the National Guard needs to perform domestic missions have not been fully identified using an analytical process.¹⁶

On a positive note, the GAO reports that the National Guard Bureau has:

- Taken some steps to facilitate limited interstate planning; and

¹⁴ United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-06-1109T, *RESERVE FORCES – Actions Needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness*, Washington, DC, January, 2007, p. 5.

¹⁵ Id. and Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, *Strengthening America's Defenses in the New Security Environment*, Arlington, VA, March 1, 2007, p. xi.

¹⁶ ¹⁶ United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-06-1109T, *RESERVE FORCES – Actions Needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness*, Washington, DC, January, 2007, p. 12.

- Facilitated a conference of southeastern states to discuss how those states can cooperate and share equipment in response to a hurricane¹⁷; further
- In preparation for the 2006 hurricane season, the Army directed the temporary transfer of equipment such as trucks, night vision goggles, and floodlights from active Army units to coastal states Army National Guard units for a 180-day loan period with the expectation that the equipment would be returned at the end of the period.¹⁸

Florida National Guard officials have expressed confidence in their force's ability to respond to typical state missions using currently available equipment.¹⁹ In addition, the Florida National Guard proved itself to be highly capable during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons. Further, the Florida National Guard has established one civil support team capable of rapid deployment to assess suspected nuclear, biological, chemical, or radiological events. A second team is expected to be activated during Fiscal Year 2009.

Are Alternatives Available to Work Through Any Essential Mission Equipment Shortages?

Florida National Guard officials provided information regarding contingency planning for emergency preparedness and disaster response. Several alternatives exist that can augment current Guard equipment inventories.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) agreements are in place to provide mutual support in the case of an emergency or disaster. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands are members of EMAC.

Florida National Guard data indicates that through these EMAC agreements, Florida has the ability to acquire more than 100% of its equipment needs in an emergency. Guard officials recognize that an adjacent multi-state event could place severe strain on EMAC commitments and have planned accordingly. For example, certain aviation assets will be procured from states not adjacent to Florida. Further, Florida National Guard officials presented evidence of detailed planning

using worst case scenarios and strong commitments from EMAC partners to provide support as needed.

In addition, commercial grade rental equipment is available to augment on-hand equipment. For example commercial buses can be utilized for rapid troop transport across the state. Engineer equipment such as front-end loaders and dump trucks along with sport utility style vehicles, trucks, and vans can be temporarily obtained from commercial sources. During a natural disaster, commercial grade equipment in many cases provides a suitable substitute for tactical vehicles designed and ruggedized for combat mobility.

Plans call for utilization of on-hand National Guard equipment first followed by augmentation from alternative means as necessary.

A Multi-Year Plan Has Emerged to Replace and Upgrade National Guard Equipment

The Army is instituting a transformation from reliance on division size organizations to modular brigade combat teams that can be task organized for a particular mission. Because the National Guard has become an operational reserve to the active Army, the majority of Army National Guard units will be modernized under this plan. In the past, Guard units typically received older Army equipment as the active force modernized. Much of the Army National Guard's remaining equipment that has not been committed overseas is now considered non-deployable for federal missions. As the Guard transitions under the modular plan, Guard equipment will need to be upgraded to the level of the active Army in order to support future federal mission contingencies.²⁰

DOD states, "The Army equipping strategy includes approximately \$21 billion for equipping and modernizing the Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams during FY 2005-2011. This investment includes approximately \$6.0 billion in combat vehicles and weapons systems, \$4.5 billion in tactical wheeled vehicles, \$3.5 billion in communications equipment and \$3 billion in force protection equipment."²¹ Further, "(T)he Army National Guard's priorities for equipment will continue to be to deployed forces, mobilizing units, alerted units, modular transformation units and returning forces. Homeland

¹⁷ United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-06-1109T, *RESERVE FORCES – Actions Needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness*, Washington, DC, January, 2007, p. 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32 – 33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁰ Department of Defense, *National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report for Fiscal Year 2007*, Washington, DC, February 2006, pp. 2-9 to 2-13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-8.

Defense/Homeland Security missions will receive the same priority as mobilizing units.”²²

The Florida National Guard Has Undertaken Several Initiatives to Enhance Its State Mission Capabilities

After conducting site visits to the Florida National Guard headquarters in St. Augustine and Camp Blanding, committee staff reached the conclusion that effective command and control of forces is the key to the Guard’s ability to perform its state missions. Tactical grade equipment is necessary for mission accomplishment but it is almost useless without effective command and control.

In order to enhance its ability to command and control its forces, the Florida National Guard has substantially improved its ability to establish interoperable communications links with state and local agencies. The Guard has procured four trailer mounted Regional Emergency Response Node communications systems using federal funding. These systems provide satellite phone, 800 MHz frequency radio sets, land-line telephone, and other communications capabilities. Twelve additional systems are in the purchase cycle. This is a communications capability in addition to the Guard’s normal military communications set.

Further, the Florida National Guard has provided for an alternate State Emergency Operations Center at Camp Blanding. This center provides command and control redundancy for state emergency managers as well as for the Guard.

METHODOLOGY

In order to complete this project, committee staff interviewed members of the Department of Military Affairs and conducted site visits to the National Guard’s St. Augustine headquarters as well as the National Guard’s training facility at Camp Blanding. Committee staff conducted a review of pertinent reports to the U. S. Congress regarding National Guard equipment readiness and reviewed documentation provided by the Department of Military Affairs.

FINDINGS

Committee staff believes that the Florida National Guard has sufficient mission essential equipment available along with the ability to augment such equipment so as to be capable of adequately performing its assigned state missions. Data provided

by Florida National Guard officials indicates the Guard currently has more mission essential equipment on-hand than it did during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Legislature continue to closely monitor Florida National Guard readiness and to fund those resources that enhance the Guard’s ability to perform state missions.

²² Ibid., p. 2-22.