



RETHINKING THE NATIONAL GUARD AND HOMELAND DEFENSE

There is a growing call for the Executive Branch and Congress to rethink the role of the National Guard in the homeland. With the release of its second report to Congress on March 1, 2007, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves joined not only those who have become increasingly concerned about how long the National Guard and Reserves can function as an “operational reserve” without numerous necessary reforms, but also those who argue that the Department of Defense (DoD) needs to rethink its approach to homeland defense and how the National Guard fits into that broader picture.

The Commission’s detailed findings and recommendations concerning homeland defense and civil support are unbiased, thoughtful and, if acted upon comprehensively, would contribute significantly toward making the nation safer in the post-September 11 environment. For example, many of the Commission’s findings and recommendations aim to build upon work that has been conducted by the Government Accountability Office and in a July 2006 CSIS report entitled [The Future of the National Guard and Reserves](#).

Both the Commission and the CSIS report recommend that:

- The Department of Defense abandon its view that civil support missions are derivative of its wartime missions;
- That the department begin programming and budgeting to fulfill the its responsibilities of protecting the homeland.
- The Chief of the National Guard Bureau be made a principal adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense for matters pertaining to the Guard’s non-federal role;
- The charter of the National Guard Bureau be revised to reflect the Bureau’s critical role as an adviser to the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and combatant commanders on matters pertaining to civil support requirements relevant to the Guard, as well as planning, programming and coordinating the employment of Guard forces in non-federal status; and
- The National Guard and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) be further and substantially integrated.

The Commission also recommended that the Deputy Commander of NORTHCOM be a National Guard *or Reserve* general officer at all times. By including the federal Reserves, however, this recommendation has only a 50 percent chance of solving the current problem. The reason the Deputy Commander should be a National Guard general officer is two-fold. First, the National Guard will

likely make up a substantial portion of any civil support force responding to a catastrophe inside the United States, as it did during Hurricane Katrina. Second, for a wide variety of reasons, both real and perceived, there are substantial tensions between the National Guard community and NORTHCOM that are making it harder for these two institutions to work together effectively. Making the Deputy Commander of NORTHCOM a Guard general officer would reflect the significant role the National Guard's important role in the civil support mission and would work toward building a bridge between NORTHCOM and the broader National Guard community. While the Reserves have an important role in future civil support missions, there is not as compelling a need to have a Reserve general officer serve as the NORTHCOM Deputy Commander.

In releasing its recent report, the Commission also took an important step in joining many Governors, think tank experts, and others in the defense community who have made a number of broader recommendations that would strengthen the overall foundation for homeland security, homeland defense, and civil support in the United States:

- The Commission rightly recommended that the Department of Homeland Security generate civil support requirements that DoD would then validate and translate into the PPBE system;
- The Commission recommended that DHS and DoD jointly submit an annual report to Congress on civil support requirements and necessary funding for the mission;
- The Commission recommended that the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security develop a plan to exchange personnel with the goal of improving representation and understanding of the National Guard within these institutions, as well as the role of the Guard in critical areas such as planning and exercising;
- The Commission recommended that DoD fill the majority of NORTHCOM's billets with leaders and staff who have reserve component qualifications and credentials; and
- The Commission recommended that Congress establish a bipartisan Council of Governors to meet with and advise the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Homeland Security Council on matters pertaining to the Guard's non-federal missions.

Under the auspices of its Beyond Goldwater-Nichols project, CSIS is conducting a study examining how to achieve greater unity of effort in managing future catastrophes. Many of the issues the Commission raises in its second report go to the heart of the challenge of ensuring unity of effort within a nation that is firmly based on the notion of decentralized government. Defining requirements for civil support, translating them into the DoD PPBE system, placing a National Guard general officer in NORTHCOM's chain of command, and updating the NGB's charter to reflect its non-federal responsibilities are all important steps that must be taken on the road to greater unity of effort. The Commission has joined and strengthened the call for DoD to embrace its role in civil support missions, and has added important new ideas such as a Council of Governors. Congress and the Executive Branch would be well-served to carefully consider these recommendations as the new legislative and budgetary cycles get fully underway.

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