

Equipping the Army National Guard for the 21st Century

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The Army National Guard does not have an equipment modernization program of its own that is specifically designed to meet its unique needs and capabilities. While not ideal, the lack of a modernization program was acceptable when the National Guard was primarily an adjunct force to active units, for use typically in the later stages of conflict. Over the past five years, however, the Army National Guard has contributed nearly half of all Army troops on the ground in Iraq and has assumed an increased role in homeland defense missions.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Army National Guard currently faces a severe shortage of available equipment within the United States. The equipment that is available is typically older, more difficult and expensive to maintain, and not easily deployable or useful in all types of domestic missions. The lack of equipment is negatively affecting readiness.

The Army National Guard needs its own modernization program to buy the equipment that meets both the low-end and high-end mission needs unique to the Guard. The common sense solution to, and only affordable option available for, this equipment modernization program is the Army's Stryker Brigade Combat Team model.

The Army National Guard

The Army National Guard is a dual-purpose force of approximately 350,000 citizen soldiers. While the Guard is considered part of the Reserve Component of the U.S. military, it operates under a unique

legal status because the Posse Comitatus Act does not apply to National Guard troops during domestic missions while under state control.¹

Depending on the situation, National Guard units conduct both federal and state missions, from major combat operations overseas to domestic emergency response. Since 9/11, National Guard units have served in major combat operations, including Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, and have participated in domestic missions, such as the response to Hurricane Katrina, Operation Noble Eagle, border security, counter-drug, disaster preparedness and response, and civil support teams. Twenty-three of the state adjutants general also wear a second hat, simultaneously serving as state directors of emergency management or homeland security.²

A Perfect Storm: Army National Guard Equipment Shortfall

The National Guard's high operational tempo and increased missions have not yielded substantial additional funding and resources, especially in regard to equipment. The demands of overseas missions, particularly in Iraq, have badly depleted the Guard's domestic store of vehicles, weapons, and communications gear, leaving units with one-third of the equipment needed to meet requirements for homeland defense missions. Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Lieutenant General Steven Blum, confirmed that in September 2001 the Guard had 75 percent of its needed equipment "on hand." Today, that number is less than 35 percent.³

Several factors have contributed to the equipment problem. Active duty Army units have traditionally been regarded as "first to fight" and therefore receive the lion's share of funding and equipment. Under this doctrine, the National Guard and Reserves are equipped on a tiered readiness scale after active units have received their equipment.

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1. James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., "Critics of the Hurricane Response Miss the Mark in Focusing on Posse Comitatus," Heritage Foundation *Executive Memorandum* No. 983, October 3, 2005, p. 1, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/upload/83429_1.pdf.
 2. Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, "Executive Summary," in National Guard Bureau, "2007 National Guard Posture Statement," pp. 1-4, at www.ngb.army.mil/resources/downloads/2007posturestatement.pdf (November 8, 2006).
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

However, this does not guarantee that the remaining gear is enough to fully equip the Army's Guard units.

Moreover, similar policies of "cascading modernization" tend toward equipping "first to fight" units with the newest state-of-the-art equipment, while Guard units typically receive hand-me-down equipment.⁴ This approach results in National Guard units equipped with vehicles and gear that are worn out, dated, and not as easily supported by logistics structures. For example, some Army National Guard units still use M35 series trucks, M113 armored personnel carriers, and the older M1 tanks with 105mm guns. Other Guard units still rely on radio equipment that cannot change frequencies, use outdated encryption technology, and cannot communicate effectively with active Army units or first responders.

The Army's Force Generation model—designed to schedule more predictable deployments for troops and their families and better equip units preparing to deploy overseas—only exacerbates the problem. The Army provides equipment and other resources to units that are preparing to deploy from units remaining stateside. To meet combatant commanders' mandates that National Guard units deploy with 90 percent–100 percent of their required equipment, the Guard and Reserves have been transferring equipment from non-deployed units to those preparing to deploy to make up for severe shortfalls. As of July 2005, the Army National Guard had transferred over 101,000 equipment items to units deploying overseas, exhausting its inventory of some critical items, such as radios and generators, in non-deployed units.⁵

Transferring equipment from a non-deployed unit to one that is about to leave the U.S. causes a vicious cycle that continues with future deployments, incurring additional disastrous effects on unit

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4. James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., "The Army Reserves and the Abrams Doctrine: Unfulfilled Promise, Uncertain Future," Heritage Foundation *Lecture No. 869*, April 18, 2005, p. 9, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/hl869.cfm.
 5. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Plans Needed to Improve Army National Guard Equipment Readiness and Better Integrate Guard into Army Force Transformation Initiatives*, GAO-06-111, October 2005, pp. 3–4, at www.gao.gov/new.items/d06111.pdf (November 7, 2006).

preparedness. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Plunkett III of the Louisiana Army National Guard tells of his battalion's being called up for deployment to Iraq in 2004 just "one month after he had been ordered to give up his machine guns and other equipment to an Arkansas unit that was deploying sooner."⁶ As a result, his unit had very little training time with the gear that they took to Iraq because they received it just prior to deployment. This story is all too typical for Army National Guard units being called up for overseas combat missions.

In addition, as the conflict in Iraq becomes more protracted, the Guard has had to leave much of its equipment in Iraq so that it can be used by subsequent deploying units. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that since 2003, Army National Guard units have left over 64,000 items valued at over \$1.2 billion overseas. Non-deployed Guard units now face significant equipment shortfalls primarily because:

1. Prior to 2001, most Army National Guard units were equipped with only 65–79 percent of their required wartime items; and
2. Guard units returning from overseas operations, most notably in Iraq, have left behind equipment such as radios and trucks for follow-on forces.⁷

The Army's current model for distributing equipment does not account satisfactorily for the possibility of wars lasting four or more years. The Army's current policy is to call Guard and Reserve forces to active duty once every six years. At one point in 2005, half of all combat brigades in Iraq (over 40 percent of all U.S. military personnel in country) were from the Army National Guard. With no substantial reduction in U.S. troop levels in Iraq for the foreseeable future, and with active units being deployed at such a high rate in 2006—in part to relieve the strain on the Guard and Reserves—it appears increasingly likely that the Guard will need to be deployed again to maintain the necessary

6. Steve Liewer, "Reserves Spell Out Problems to Panel," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, September 22, 2006.

7. David M. Walker, "Reserve Forces: Army National Guard's Role, Organization, and Equipment Need to Be Reexamined," testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, October 20, 2005, at www.gao.gov/new.items/d06170t.pdf (November 8, 2006).

troop levels in Iraq, assuming that troop levels remain at or near their current numbers. As a result, the Pentagon may have to abandon the deployment policy that limits the involuntary recall of Guard members for 24 cumulative months.

If the major assumptions in the model used to determine what equipment goes to Reserve Component units are flawed, the National Guard, which is already suffering from a more severe equipment shortage than the active Army, will continue to fall behind in terms of equipment and readiness. General Blum has stated repeatedly that the Army National Guard will need at least \$21 billion to reset and buy the equipment that it needs to do its job.⁸

This multifaceted problem extends beyond the Guard's older gear and equipment shortfalls for domestic mission requirements. Department of Defense Directive 1225.6, *Equipping the Reserve Forces*, requires that replacement equipment be delivered to Reserve units for equipment transferred to the active Army for longer than 90 days. Many equipment transfers were never accounted for properly, and as of June 2006, few plans to replace equipment had been drawn up by the Army, and even fewer had been approved.⁹

Army National Guard Readiness

According to the GAO, the National Guard was forced to transfer large numbers of personnel and equipment among units to provide forces ready to deploy. This has only worsened the existing shortages of equipment for non-deployed units. As a result, "the preparedness of non-deployed units for future missions is declining."¹⁰ With over 53,000 National Guard personnel currently deployed for federal

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8. National Guard Association of the United States, "Blum: Equipment Shortages Crippling Army Guard Readiness," *NGAUS Notes*, August 4, 2006, p. 1, at www.ngaus.org/ngaus/files/ccLibraryFiles/File/000000001709/nnotes080406.pdf (November 8, 2006).
 9. Janet A. St. Laurent, "Army National Guard and Army Reserve Readiness for 21st Century Challenges," testimony before the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, GAO-06-1109T, U.S. Government Accountability Office, September 21, 2006, p. 11, at www.gao.gov/new.items/d061109t.pdf (November 8, 2006).
 10. Walker, "Reserve Forces."

missions and thousands more responding to recent natural disasters at home, Army National Guard units cannot afford to operate without all of their equipment stateside.¹¹

In the National Guard's 2007 Posture Statement, General Blum noted that "morale suffers when Soldiers cannot train for their wartime or domestic missions for lack of equipment"¹² Readiness is typically measured by evaluating personnel, training, and the availability of equipment and capabilities needed to support joint operations. Readiness can then be broken down into two broad categories: near-term and far-term. Standards such as unit C-ratings, recruiting goals met, retention, operational tempo, reserve component full-time manning, and installation operations measure near-term readiness. Far-term readiness is measured by additional metrics, such as post facilities, military construction, recapitalization and modernization of equipment, and research and development.¹³

Lieutenant General Clyde Vaughn, Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau and Director of the Army National Guard, recently commented on the state of the Guard: "From July 2002 through September 2005, overall unit readiness decreased by 41 percent in order to provide personnel and equipment to deploying units."¹⁴ If the preparedness of Guard units is declining and morale is suffering, the ability of the Army National Guard to respond quickly and effectively to domestic emergencies may also be declining. The familiarity of soldiers with their equipment improves both morale and deployment readiness. To remain a trained and ready force, the Army National Guard needs to have the right mix of capabilities and as much equipment as possible available in the U.S.

11. National Guard Bureau, "Army National Guard Fact Sheet: Army National Guard (FY2005)," May 3, 2006, p. 7, at www.ngb.army.mil/medialfactsheets/ARNG_Factsheet_May_06.pdf (November 8, 2006).

12. Blum, "Executive Summary," p. 4.

13. Mackenzie M. Eaglen, "A New Look at Readiness: Solving the Army's Quandary," Association of the United States Army *National Security Watch* No. 01-1, March 30, 2001, p. 1, at www.ousa.org/PDFdocs/NSW01-130mar01.pdf (Nov. 8, 2006).

14. Lieutenant General Clyde A. Vaughn, Vice Chief, National Guard Bureau, "Serving a Nation at War: At Home and Abroad," in National Guard Bureau, "2007 National Guard Posture Statement," p. 8.

The Need for Dual-Use Equipment

According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), “it has been reported that National Guard units responding to Katrina did not have adequate numbers of tactical radios or High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicles...adapted for high water operations because this equipment was in Iraq.” Additionally:

*The extent of the resources needed to deal with the consequences of Hurricane Katrina, on top of the requirements for combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, raises the question of what resources would be available in the event of another almost simultaneous catastrophic event.*¹⁵

The recent missions of the Army National Guard highlight the need to provide equipment to the Guard that can be used in all of its mission areas, from domestic disaster response to warfighting. To provide the right type of equipment, it is important, first, to identify the types of capabilities that will be needed for the dual missions of the Army National Guard.

In responding to domestic emergencies, such as a flood or an earthquake, the Guard must possess three core competencies: medical services, security, and critical infrastructure skills.

- Medical teams need to be developed that can deploy on extremely short notice and administer mass-casualty care to victims on site using existing facilities.
- While operating in the chaotic environment of a post-disaster area, Guard units must be able to work with local law enforcement in establishing and maintaining security and order.
- Finally, to facilitate a “return to normalcy,” essential services and critical infrastructure must be available. The National Guard, when partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Federal

15. Steve Bowman, Lawrence Kapp, and Amy Belasco, “Hurricane Katrina: DOD Disaster Response,” Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, September 19, 2005, pp. 15 and 16, at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33095.pdf (November 8, 2006).

Emergency Management Agency, provides the type of expertise and force structure required to speed the recovery of a disaster area.¹⁶

For the National Guard to be able to fulfill both its domestic and overseas wartime mission requirements, Guard leadership identified the “Essential 10” equipment needs. These 10 areas represent the \$4 billion shortfall that the Guard needs to address in order to meet both Air and Army National Guard force modernization needs. This funding shortfall does not include the \$21 billion needed for National Guard equipment repair and reset. The Guard’s “Essential 10” areas are:

- Joint headquarters and command and control
- Civil support teams and force protection
- Maintenance
- Aviation
- Engineer
- Medical
- Communications
- Transportation
- Security
- Logistics¹⁷

These essential components appear to take into account domestic mission capabilities. Equally significant is that the “Essential 10” areas do not entail single-use gear (capabilities that are useful for only one type of mission). The emphasis on dual-use equipment is critical to National Guard modernization because it means that troops will train and deploy with the same gear for both domestic and overseas missions. General Vaughn argues that dual-use equipment “ensures interoperability with

16. James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., “Shaping the 21st Century Role of the National Guard and Reserves,” testimony before the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, May 4, 2006, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/tst050406a.cfm.

17. National Guard Bureau, Office of Legislative Liaison, “National Guard Equipment Requirements: ‘Essential 10’ Equipment Requirements for the Global War on Terror,” March 16, 2006, at [www.ngb.army.mil/lll/analysis/docs/07/essential10_equiplist\(Mar06\).pdf](http://www.ngb.army.mil/lll/analysis/docs/07/essential10_equiplist(Mar06).pdf) (November 8, 2006).

the active force and increases the Army National Guard's ability to respond to natural disasters or in a homeland defense role."¹⁸

The Need for a Unique Equipment Modernization Program

A new paradigm is needed to ensure that the Army National Guard receives a long-term commitment of resources and funding to rebuild and modernize its equipment. The extent of the resources needed to deal with the domestic emergencies—on top of the requirements for combat operations—demands that the National Guard receive an adequate supply of equipment, a proper mix of capabilities, and the most recent technologies. The Stryker Brigade Combat Team, already used by some active Army units, is a proven model that should be employed to modernize and equip the Army National Guard.

The Stryker unit is a wheeled combat force that is highly mobile and transportable in C-130, C-5, or C-17 aircraft. The Stryker Brigade Combat Team is fast, maneuverable, and includes large numbers of infantry that are particularly suitable for missions within cities and towns like Baghdad or New Orleans. The Stryker platform includes medical evacuation, reconnaissance, fire support, engineer squad, and troop carrier variants. Other benefits include mobile command and control, larger evacuation capacity than other combat vehicles, rapid deployment (no heavy transport required and no damage to roads), and protection for rescue and crowd control missions.

The Stryker framework offers a middle ground of capabilities between heavy and light forces to fulfill all the missions of the Army National Guard. An approach based upon the Stryker model would:

1. Provide a better mix of capabilities to the Army National Guard to conduct state missions that complement the Guard's federal missions;
2. Utilize existing proven technology;
3. Provide savings in reduced training expenses as compared to the National Guard's current heavy mechanized units; and

18. Vaughn, "Serving a Nation at War: At Home and Abroad" in "2007 National Guard Posture Statement," p. 8.

4. Offer both a near-term answer and a long-term solution to many of the Army National Guard's equipment problems.

The Stryker's equipment and vehicle composition are ideally suited for domestic and overseas missions. The Stryker Brigade Combat Team can participate in wartime missions as a subordinate unit or in stability and support operations. The Stryker unit also has unique reconnaissance and networked communications capabilities that provide a "system of systems" approach to comprehensive situational awareness through interlinked command and control capability. These teams have chemical, biological, and hazardous material detection and containment abilities and can be organized with other units and technologies based on specific mission requirements (e.g., adding helicopters), thereby augmenting already existing capabilities. Finally, the Stryker model allows for units to be retrofitted with newer technology as it becomes available.

A Time for Action

Congress and the Administration have a window of opportunity to replace the National Guard's equipment comprehensively and systematically by modeling the Army's successful Stryker Brigade Combat Team. Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey recently committed to spending \$38.6 billion through 2013 for Army National Guard equipment.¹⁹ By identifying a specific program and providing the necessary funding to equip the Army National Guard, the active Army can begin to reverse the trend of underequipping the National Guard and robbing Peter to pay Paul to equip units deploying overseas.

To accomplish this goal, Congress should:

- **Fully fund** programs to reconstitute and modernize the National Guard;
- **Require** the Department of the Army to establish a system-of-systems modernization program, a Future Security System (FSS) designed specifically for the Army National Guard that is

19. Michelle Tan, "Relief for U.S. National Guard? Army Promises Billions for Strained Force," *Defense News*, October 9, 2006, p. 57.

optimized for its role as an operational force for missions at home and overseas; and

- **Require** the establishment of a dedicated program executive office to oversee the FSS.

For its part, the Department of the Army should:

- **Consider** using the proven organizations, equipment, and technology available in the Stryker Brigade Combat Team as the basis for quickly and efficiently fielding the FSS;
- **Ensure** that the FSS can be integrated seamlessly into the Future Combat System, enabling the Army of the future to act as one team both at home and overseas; and
- **Coordinate** FSS requirements with the other armed forces and the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that the nation has a comprehensive and coordinated set of federal capabilities to respond to catastrophic disasters.

Conclusion

The era when America could afford to treat modernization of the Army National Guard as an afterthought is over. The Army National Guard will continue to play a pivotal role in protecting Americans at home and abroad in the decades ahead, and it will need the best equipment for the task.

