

Running head: OUR NATIONAL GUARD NEEDS MORE MONEY

A National Guard in Need of Funds

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Abstract

This paper will address the funding shortage that currently faces the National Guard units across the nation. It will be hard to address this lack of funds without touching on the areas that use these funds. Equipment, facilities, training and personnel all equate to money. A need in any or all of these areas subsequently means a need for more funds.

The National Guard is currently operating at some of the lowest equipment levels in years. Over the last ten years, the guard has found itself deployed over and over. These deployments have drained equipment and funds.

The National Guards transition from a strategic to an operational reserve has put a strain on an already ailing funding problem. Our National Guard has a dual state and federal mission, without proper funding, guard units will not be able to perform either mission effectively (Laird, 2007). And in the fight on the War on Terrorism, this could mean guard or civilian casualties. In essence, lack of funds means lack of resources to accomplish the National Guards dual mission.

A National Guard in Need of Funds

Even though the National Guard has been completing its assigned missions, the National Guard should be getting more funds to replace and update missing and aging equipment. Without adequate funding increases, the levels of shortages and mission capable equipment will continue to plummet. And with the National Guard currently operating with less than 50% of its authorized equipment, the guard will soon be ineffective.

Facilities

There are 28,500 National Guard facilities across the nation worth a total of \$29 billion (Association Of The United States Army's Institute Of Land Warfare, n.d.). According to Department of Defense policy, facilities will be replaced every 67 years. The average age of all facilities is 39 years. It would currently take \$7 billion to meet DOD's policy to replace aging facilities. Between 1995 and 2002, the National Guard received \$1.55 billion for the Military Construction and Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization program (Association Of The United States Army'S Institute Of Land Warfare). There is also funding shortage for the FY 08 in areas of Transformation, Total Force Integration, Base Realignment and Closure Implementation for the Air National Guard. These cost estimates grow even more with new requirements caused by force

structure changes and transformation. At this rate the replacement costs continues to outpace the current budgeted construction funds.

Equipment

According to the National Guard Bureau, almost 90% of the National Guard has less than half of its authorized equipment that it needs to respond to a crisis. Less than half of the Air National Guard has the equipment that they need to deploy, which is the first time in 35 years that their readiness has been this low (Laird, 2007). With each deployment of a National Guard unit to Iraq or Afghanistan the equipment shortage increases in part due to equipment left behind in country and in the need to replace worn out equipment from the deployment. Nondeployed units are transferring equipment to deploying units to help make up some of the shortfalls (United States Government Accountability Office, 2006). This can only be seen as a short-term solution for a very big problem.

Since the Global War on Terrorism, National Guard units have left billions of dollars worth of equipment overseas. Due to the enormity of the amount of equipment left behind, the Army has not been able to replace all of the stay-behind equipment that it was required to replace. In 2004, the Army planned to provide \$1.346 billion, yet the National Guard only received

\$578 million (Dodd, 2007). It should not be forgotten that these equipment shortages adversely affect a states ability to deal with sudden natural disasters.

As soon as a guard unit returns back to its state from a deployment, that unit must be prepared to respond to the Governors call. The need to respond to fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and any number of emergencies is one of the missions of its dual role. Because of the unpredictability of nature, it is imperative that funding be provided for replacing equipment as soon as possible after a deployment.

Personnel

Like any other military organization today the National Guard is also facing a shortage of people in its full time staff positions. This is because the Army only funds 55% of the validated full time staffing requirements for the National Guard. Strength levels are based off of the old strategic reserve plan and do not take into the consideration today's operational reserve force mission (Dodd, 2007).

Based on the National Guards current and future overseas obligations, the level of full time support personnel will not sustain National Guard units. This shortage of full time support personnel and the lack of funding to increase new full

time positions is one of the main priorities of the National Guard Bureau.

Training

Nearly all of the Active Army units train year-round on the equipment that that unit will deploy to combat. Not so for the National Guard. Guard units are finding it necessary to train on new equipment that they will be using once the unit arrives in theater. This is causing guard soldiers to be mobilized for longer than necessary periods and does not maximize their time in theater (House Armed Services Committee & Subcommittee on Readiness, 2007).

Having the National Guard fully equipped with the right equipment would better allow for training, possible homeland defense missions and deployments all to occur simultaneously. This could also shorten the total mobilization period.

Conclusion

It can be easily concluded that although the National Guard has been completing all assigned missions up to this point with great success, failure to adequately fund the National Guard may very well lead to catastrophic results in the near future. The National Guard Bureau estimates over \$40 billion shortage of equipment and training to be able to respond to our national defense requirements (Dodd, 2007). The Total Force Policy

restored the National Guard to its more traditional place in the nation's defense strategy. Our country's military strategy relies on the National Guard as a ready, well equipped, and well-trained "operational reserve" combat force. It is imperative that the guard be funded appropriately to meet the challenges that our country is surely to face over the coming years.

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