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TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is to request the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform convene a hearing to examine chronic deficiencies in Department of Defense support for homeland security and civil support missions of the National Guard. Building on the Committee's past work on issues affecting Reserve Component service members, such a hearing would bring critical information to light regarding current readiness and urgent needs of Guard units.

On January 30th, 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a Committee-sponsored report entitled *Reserve Forces: Actions Needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness*. This report confirms that even 5 years after 9/11, the Department of Defense has not moved effectively to identify National Guard homeland defense equipment and training requirements.

The types and quantities of equipment the National Guard requires to perform domestic missions have not been identified in any systematic way. Nor has DOD acted on comments from Governors and State Adjutants General about growing strain on equipment and personnel. This is particularly true with regard to large-scale, multi-state natural disasters and terrorist attacks. States and federal agencies have not completed an integrated set of plans to identify the capabilities the National Guard would be expected to provide in response to events such as those described in the Homeland Security Council's 15 national planning disaster scenarios.

Yesterday, GAO released another Committee-sponsored report entitled *Chemical and Biological Defense: Management Actions Are Needed to Close the Gap between Army Chemical Unit Preparedness and Stated National Priorities*. This report specifically addressees the readiness of Army units assigned to chemical and biological preparedness and response. Most of these units reside in the National Guard and Reserve elements and GAO found those units woefully unprepared, understaffed and under-equipped.

These findings on Guard readiness led me to sponsor the National Guard Empowerment Act of 2007, along with our colleague Rep. Gene Taylor and Senators Daniel Leahy and Kit Bond. Our bill (H.R. 718) offers solutions that allow the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, as "the channel of communication" between the states and the Department of Defense, to come up with common requirements and a budget that would allow the National Guard to be equipped and trained for crucial homeland missions. An oversight hearing on the issues raised by the GAO findings would serve our mandate to monitor intergovernmental relations and would give states and Guard units a needed opportunity to describe the extent and impact of the failure to reform the way our citizen-soldiers are prepared to meet their challenging missions in the global war against terror.

Your consideration of this request is appreciated and I stand to ready to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis
Ranking Republican Member