



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

January 20, 2006

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

Army Secretary Francis Harvey announced Wednesday substantial cuts in Army National Guard forces nationwide. Six combat brigades are reported to be targets for these reductions. I strongly urge that DoD reconsider and take no action to reduce this valuable resource that has so admirably served our nation at home and abroad.

Targeting the Army National Guard for cuts of 24,000 soldiers nationwide is extremely shortsighted. At a time when our nation and our states rely on the National Guard like never before to fight the global war on terrorism abroad and to respond to natural disasters at home, we need to maintain the Guard's force structure. The security of our homeland and the effectiveness of the Armed Forces depend on the National Guard. What's more, as you know, the National Guard is one of the very few bargains in national defense. A well-trained and well-equipped National Guard brigade costs much less to maintain than a comparably sized unit of the active forces. Nationwide, the National Guard costs less than 5% of the defense budget.

As Governor and commander in chief of the Pennsylvania National Guard, I am tremendously proud of the accomplishments, the courage and the sacrifice of the men and women who serve their state and nation in our National Guard. Pennsylvania is home to the 28th Infantry Division (Mechanized). The "Keystone Division" includes three ground combat brigades, an aviation combat brigade, combat engineers and other units. The 56th Stryker Brigade was the only National Guard brigade in America to be chosen for transformation to a Stryker brigade. Nearly the entire brigade, more than 2,500 strong, deployed to Louisiana on very short notice in the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. Our 2nd Brigade Combat Team is currently serving in Iraq, and its soldiers have borne the brunt of many vicious attacks. Earlier this week, we buried the first Pennsylvania National Guard commissioned officer killed in combat since WWII. He is one of 23 Pennsylvania National Guard soldiers who have been killed in action in Iraq. Our 55th Brigade Combat team recently led Taskforce Keystone in deploying to Europe in the wake of 9/11. Our aviation brigade has deployed around the world and here at home.

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I could go on and on about the Keystone Division and its combat brigades, but my point is simple – we need these troops. These soldiers have answered the call and stood up for their nation and their commonwealth at great personal sacrifice. The President sends these soldiers off to war, requires them to leave some of their valuable equipment behind when they redeploy, and now the Army is planning to tell them we don't need them anymore. Just as these soldiers have answered the call to service, so I am calling on you to reconsider these unwise cuts targeting the National Guard.

The National Guard is the only military force shared by the states and the federal government, and it continues to stand ready to respond to a wide variety of homeland security and disaster preparedness contingencies. Major changes to National Guard units require careful coordination with the states and the consent of the governors. The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania recently affirmed this in declaring that an attempt to deactivate a Pennsylvania Air National Guard unit was “null and void” without my approval as Governor. I'm frankly astounded that DoD has apparently embarked on an effort of this magnitude without even making an effort at coordination with the states. I will not stand by and let needed resources be cut from the Pennsylvania National Guard, and I daresay my fellow governors will have the same reaction.

Secretary Rumsfeld, I ask you to join me, my fellow governors and the Nation's adjutants general in putting aside this ill-conceived proposal to cut the National Guard. I look forward to working with you and the leaders of our Congress to do what's right for our national defense so we can maintain the force structure and troop strength of our National Guard.

Sincerely,



Edward G. Rendell
Governor

cc: Ray Scheppach, Executive Director, National Governors Association
Brig Gen Stephen M. Koper, President, National Guard Association of the
United States
Maj Gen Roger Lempke, President, Adjutants General Association of the
United States
Senator Arlen Specter
Senator Rick Santorum

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Congressman Curt Weldon
Congressman John Murtha
Senator Don White, Chairman, Senate Veterans' Affairs and
Emergency Preparedness Committee
Senator Wayne Fontana, Minority Chairman, Senate Veterans' Affairs and
Emergency Preparedness Committee
Representative Paul Semmel, Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs and
Emergency Preparedness Committee
Representative Tom Tigue, Minority Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs and
Emergency Preparedness Committee
Maj Gen Jessica L. Wright, The Adjutant General