



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
BUILDING S-0-47
FORT INDIANTOWN GAP
ANNVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA 17003-5002

January 12, 2006

The Honorable Tim Holden
US House of Representatives
2417 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Holden:

The national media has reported that the Army is considering deep cuts in the force structure of the Army National Guard (ARNG). I am tremendously concerned that these proposed reductions could have long-term negative impacts on the Pennsylvania Army National Guard (PAARNG) and our ability to perform our state and federal missions. Although I would not ordinarily contact you based on media reports, the threat to the PAARNG appears so serious that I wanted to make sure you were aware of it.

One report indicates the Department of Defense (DoD) is planning to reduce the Army's troop strength by 34,000 soldiers in order to fund other programs. While the reports of planned cuts vary, it has been reported that the Army will cut one Active Duty and six National Guard brigades, each consisting of about 3,500 soldiers. The primary focus of proposed cuts appears to be on heavy (armor or mechanized) brigades. There are ten heavy brigades in the ARNG, two of which are in the PAARNG. In addition, some reports indicate the DOD will cut two Division Headquarters of 961 personnel each in the National Guard. Of course, Pennsylvania is home to the Headquarters of the 28th (Keystone) Division, the oldest division in the Army. Additional details are enclosed. We believe that cuts like those described in media reports are short-sighted and unwise.

It is reported that these reductions will be "easy to take" by the affected organizations because of the current under-strength manning levels in the Department of the Army (DA), ARNG and United States Army Reserve (USAR). Congressman Holden, I want you to know that if DoD proposes to take down a PAARNG brigade or other major unit, the cut will not be easy to take, at all. It will have serious adverse consequences for military and emergency preparedness in this Commonwealth.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of some important facts and enlist your support of efforts to maintain the end strength of the PAARNG. Today, there is a need for Army resources like never before in recent history. The idea of shrinking the Army is totally inconsistent with the need – identified by the Army, itself – to grow by 30,000 soldiers given today's operations tempo (OPTEMPO). The recently approved FY 06

federal budget approves a 20,000 soldier increase in the Army and another 10,000 troops for the United States Marine Corps.

The PAARNG must retain its current force structure as planned under the Army's transformation plan. That plan, which was developed and approved over a year ago, included the transformation to Brigade Combat Teams, and Pennsylvania was assigned an ARNG end strength number of 15,725. This is a strength level that is attainable and sustainable in the PAARNG. We are currently manned at 14,516 or 92.3%. Our strength is on the rise, and we have already grown by 101 soldiers in this fiscal year alone. Should a brigade be cut from the PAARNG, this would reduce our strength authorization to 12,225. This cut would provide a negative impact on the defense of our nation and the Commonwealth.

Reducing ARNG combat power will place the nation in a precarious position to fight terrorism, to defend our homeland and to ensure the safety of our citizens. In my opinion, the nation cannot afford this misstep that will permanently degrade our military capabilities. A reduction will require more frequent overseas deployments. It will stifle our emerging recruiting surge. It will erode our capability to respond to disasters.

A decade ago there was a proposal to cut Army force structure significantly. Fortunately, our leaders recognized the flaws in that proposal. Today, we are able to provide the needed forces to fight the Global War on Terror around the world while, at the same time, transforming to new, more lethal brigade combat teams.

Since 9/11/01, the PAARNG has deployed over 10,600 soldiers in support of the Global War on Terror. We continue to play a major role in that effort. In addition, we have provided, on a recurring basis, forces for the peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo and other places around the world.

The year 2005 was an extremely busy and productive one for the PAARNG. Because of our dual mission capability, the PAARNG has been able to support the federal requirements, Iraq, Kosovo, etc. with an average of 3,000 plus soldiers deployed on any given day. When the call to respond to Hurricane Katrina came in early September, the PAARNG immediately provided a brigade (2,500 soldiers) and a command-and-control logistics Headquarters to operations in Louisiana. We could not do this if the PAARNG were reduced by one or two heavy brigades. In addition, when the Army had a need to provide a corps level Headquarters for the recent Bright Star Exercise in Egypt, the PAARNG committed the Headquarters 28th Infantry Division to this important coalition training requirement. Today, over 3,600 Pennsylvania Guard members are serving on active duty supporting the Global War on Terror and peace keeping efforts.

Given our dual mission force responsibilities, the Guard is the only force available for immediate response to local and state emergencies. We are both a relevant and ready force, supporting both federal and state needs. The proposed reductions, while

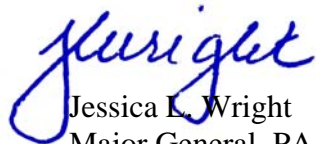
not yet specifically identified as PAARNG cuts, would result in a significant degradation of our capabilities.

Not only will cuts of this kind be bad for national defense and emergency response capabilities, they will have negative impacts on Pennsylvania communities. Each soldier in the PAARNG adds approximately \$10,000 per year to the local economy. With over 100 units throughout the Commonwealth, the negative economic impacts would be widespread. It is also important to note that the Guard is much less expensive than an active duty brigade of its equivalent. For about ten percent of the cost, the ARNG provides the same combat power as an active component brigade.

As you know, the National Guard plays a unique role in our federal system of government. The Guard is the only military force that is shared by the states and the U.S. Government. Under federal law, and consistent with the constitutional principles upon which the modern National Guard is built, the federal government is not supposed to undertake major changes to the branch, organization or allotment of National Guard units without first obtaining the approval of the Governor. Governor Edward G. Rendell was joined by Senators Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum in standing up for this vital principle when the Air Force proposed to deactivate a Pennsylvania Air National Guard fighter wing (the 111th FW, Willow Grove) as part of the 2005 BRAC round. No one from DOD has sought any input from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania concerning any possible future cuts to PAARNG brigades. I believe it will be unacceptable to Pennsylvania and many other states if the kinds of cuts reported in the media are undertaken without the coordination between the states and the federal government required by law.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued support of the PAARNG. If I can be of further assistance or you have questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,


Jessica L. Wright
Major General, PAARNG
The Adjutant General

Enclosure