

Condition of the Guard Address
Eighty-Third General Assembly
"Mission Focused - Warrior Ready"

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Good Morning Ladies and Gentleman – thank you for that warm welcome.

Speaker Murphy, President Kibbie – thank you for the invitation to address this joint convention of the eighty-third General Assembly of the Iowa Legislature. I am honored and humbled to be here and continue a tradition started by General Dardis and provide you with an update on the Condition of the Iowa National Guard.

Governor Culver, Lieutenant Governor Judge, members of the General Assembly, distinguished guests and fellow Iowans:

Here in Iowa, the National Guard is blessed to have incredibly strong support and encouragement from our elected officials, civic and community leaders and everyday citizens. This is something that every member of our organization understands and appreciates. It is definitively a force multiplier and a key component of our overall success. On behalf of the nearly 9,400 members of the Iowa National Guard and their families, thank you for your outstanding support of our men and women in uniform.

I also want to thank Governor Culver and Lieutenant Governor Judge for their strong leadership and support of all Iowans who serve in uniform, and for placing their trust and confidence in me to serve as the State's twenty-eighth Adjutants General. I am extremely honored to lead and represent the Soldiers and Airmen of the Iowa National Guard.

Military service is unique. When we serve, the entire family serves as well. This is certainly true for my family. With me this morning is my wife Suzanne, a veteran with 29 years of service with the Iowa National Guard, and recently retired from full-time military duty as a Lieutenant Colonel to support my appointment. We are extremely blessed with two wonderful children, our son Jacob and daughter Elizabeth, who are both students at Summit Middle School in Johnston. On behalf of our family, we thank you for the opportunity to continue serving our State and Nation.

In the past ten months since becoming the Adjutant General, I've had the privilege of traveling to visit our soldiers and airmen at their unit armories, annual training locations, mobilizing sites, community events, and our troops in Kuwait and Iraq, seeing first-hand the ready posture and strong condition of the Iowa National Guard. The motivation is high, morale is strong and the overall state of our Iowa National Guard Soldiers and Airmen is, "Mission Focused, Warrior Ready!"

Over the next several minutes I want to focus on three important areas: (1) review where we have come over the last several years; (2) discuss our campaign plan for the next year; (3) and highlight how we are taking care of our force.

It's been eight years since the United States and our allies responded to the attacks of September 11, 2001. The Soldiers and Airmen of the Iowa National Guard have served side by side with their Army and Air Force

counterparts as they helped liberate more than 50 million people from tyranny and terror in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Soldiers and Airmen of the Iowa National Guard, and their families, have made significant sacrifices in pursuit of this success on behalf of the American people. More than half of our Soldiers and Airmen currently serving are combat and deployment veterans. More than 14,000 of our personnel have served in the ongoing campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, peacekeeping duties in the Balkans, and Sinai Peninsula, and domestic support missions in Iowa and across the country.

Of the 73 Iowans that have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country, including the state's latest casualty, Captain Daniel Whitten, a member of the United States Army, 20 soldiers were members of the Iowa National Guard.

Through multiple federal deployments and domestic civil support missions, the men and women currently serving in the Iowa National Guard are among the most seasoned and experienced military professionals our state has ever fielded, in the more than 170 year history of the Iowa National Guard.

For the past couple of years, you've heard senior military leaders at both the state and federal level talk about the incredible demands being placed on our military, especially the Army and Air National Guard. In many cases, the demand for military forces exceeded the sustainable supply, and we lacked sufficient strategic flexibility to respond to other contingencies.

The transformation of the National Guard from a Strategic Reserve to an Operational Reserve is well underway. This concept makes it easier for us to systematically build and sustain readiness while making deployments more predictable for Soldiers, Airmen, Families, and Employers. While there is still much to do on this front, I believe today we are closer to a Total Force, than at any time in my 31 years of military service.

Thankfully, our state and federal military leaders have taken aggressive steps to do all we can to ease the burdens of military service on our service members and their families.

Since Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, committed to limiting mobilizations to one year, we have realized much needed stability and predictability in the Army National Guard. The Army's Force Generation cycle is not perfect, but it continues to provide us with adequate time to prepare and train our forces. Unlike the mobilizations we experienced early in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, when in some cases we had mere days notice - today we typically have more than a year to prepare.

Continued stability in Iraq and the Army's gradual improvements with balancing its forces, are moving us closer to realizing the goal of one year deployments every four to five years for reserve component units. Currently, with less than 200 Soldiers and Airmen deployed overseas, the Iowa National Guard is at its lowest number of personnel deployed since the beginning of the war.

It's not just our overseas deployments that have kept the Iowa National Guard busy. We have been involved with a number of domestic response missions, both in Iowa and in various states across the country. We learned from the Floods of 2008 and past natural disasters, that the Iowa National Guard and the State of Iowa must continue to be vigilant in our disaster preparations and exercises. Last summer, the Iowa National Guard, along with many partnering state agencies, hosted a Midwest regional emergency response exercise known as Vigilant Guard. This was a seven-day, multi-state, multi-site simulation, which included a series of training exercises designed to test emergency response plans and enhance operational relationships within FEMA VII Region states.

Approximately 1,000 personnel, including Soldiers, Airmen, civilians, and first responders from several states, participated. The Vigilant Guard exercise was the largest, most complex disaster exercise of its kind ever conducted by the Iowa National Guard.

Ours is a profession of looking forward and anticipating future needs. So even as we continue to meet the demands of current deployments and respond to homeland security needs, we must be mindful of the unpredictable nature of a dangerous world. Whether it is the recent failed attack on the US homeland or the drawdown of forces in Iraq and the build-up in Afghanistan, the situation could change drastically from what we know today.

One of my first priorities after being appointed as the Adjutant General last spring was to develop and implement the Iowa National Guard Campaign Plan.

The goal of this plan is the development of the future Iowa National Guard — a force that is capable of responding to a full spectrum of military and domestic operations.

This plan is our strategic vision to manage the actions and activities across the organization, and enable us to build new capabilities to ensure the Iowa National Guard remains relevant, responsive, and ready to meet emerging threats and accomplish assigned missions.

In order to maintain our organizational readiness, now and in the future, we are focused on maintaining our strength posture, infrastructure improvements, and the realignment of our force to achieve greater organizational efficiencies and maximize limited resources.

The Iowa National Guard continues to be a national leader in recruiting and retention. Both the Iowa Air and Army National Guard began fiscal year 2010 with over 100 percent of authorized strength. Our retention rates exceed national goals and are among the highest in the nation. We have been at 100 percent strength for more than nine years in a row – a significant accomplishment considering we are an all volunteer force, and have been a nation at war for more than eight years.

Thanks to your support of our military construction initiatives, Governor Culver and his predecessors' leadership, and the hard work of Iowa's Federal Congressional delegation, we have made significant strides in updating our facilities over the last several years.

Since 2007, the Iowa Air and Army National Guard has received more than \$152 million dollars in federal and state funding for military construction projects in Iowa. Additionally, the Iowa National Guard received nearly \$11 million dollars in federal stimulus funding allowing us to complete more than twenty infrastructure projects this year.

This past year we refurbished armories and field maintenance shops in Boone, Ottumwa, Perry, Spencer, Charles City, and Oelwein, and completed work on the new Iowa City Armory, which we will dedicate this spring. This year we are in the process of replacing armories in Muscatine, Burlington and Cedar Rapids, totaling over \$74 million in federal funding. Once completed, only five of our armories will be more than 45 years old, setting a standard for the entire nation to follow.

Through our realignment process, we divided our forces into four distinct organizations, or component as we refer to them. Each component has a Brigadier General who oversees and represents the units and their activities within that organization. This change aligns our internal organizations together based on mission, relationships, and functional capacity, while providing us with a more efficient means of command, control and communication across the Iowa National Guard.

As part of our requirement to provide trained war fighters, the Iowa National Guard deployed several Army and Air National Guard units this past

year, and announced several unit notifications for deployment in support of Overseas Contingency Operations.

The Des Moines based 132nd Fighter Wing with approximately 300 Airmen teamed up with the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing for a 90 day deployment to Iraq. They deployed in October and returned on Christmas Eve, after successfully supporting the coalition ground forces in Iraq with close air support, intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance capabilities. In one mission, pilots provided timely and accurate surveillance that resulted in the apprehension of a terrorist cell by Iraqi Coalition Forces. This was the ninth time that the 132nd Fighter Wing has deployed in support of Overseas Contingency Operations since 1996.

The 185th Air Refueling Wing from Sioux City continues to provide on-going support to the Air Force and the Army. Of the Wing's many world-wide missions, evacuating wounded Soldiers from a combat zone is one of the most unique and important missions that it supports. These Medical Evacuation missions provide timely and efficient movement and mobile care to wounded warriors being evacuated from the battlefield to Landstuhl, Germany.

The 185th evacuated more than 100 military personnel during its Afghanistan Medical mission in 2009.

The 734th Regional Corps Advisory Group Embedded Training Team mobilized in August 2008 and deployed to Afghanistan, where they provided mentorship and advanced training to the Afghan National Army and Afghan

National Police. During their mobilization, the team built strong relationships, conducted joint operations and increased the proficiency of Afghan security forces. These missions are important because they help lay the foundation for Afghanistan's stability and security and ultimately its future success as a nation.

In June of 2008, approximately 160 Soldiers from Company B, 248th Aviation Support Battalion mobilized for duty in Iraq. The unit, based in Boone, with detachments in Waterloo and Davenport, provided aviation maintenance support to a combat aviation brigade, which included aircraft diagnostics, repair, maintenance, and testing.

On station at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, the unit conducted extensive maintenance on numerous UH-60 and CH-47 helicopters, completing over 5,000 maintenance work orders during their nine months in theater. Company B's outstanding maintenance record helped ensure that the combat aviation brigade never missed a mission due to an aircraft readiness issue.

Detachment 1, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 211th Aviation, based in Waterloo, deployed to Iraq from October 2008 through July 2009. Company C flew over 2,200 hours with zero accidents during their MEDEVAC missions, including 52 point-of-injury pickups in dangerous urban areas, such as Fallujah and Al Karma, and remote border sites along the Syrian border.

In early 2009, the unit sent 10 Soldiers to Afghanistan to help reduce MEDEVAC wait times. They arrived in early April and made an immediate

impact, flying 625 mission hours and completing more than 250 patient transfers during their three month mission.

The 1133rd and 1168th transportation companies, with detachments in Audubon, Mason City, Iowa City, Perry and Marshalltown, mobilized for Iraq in October of 2008. They conducted over 300 missions, traveled more than 2.7 million miles, hauled nearly 130,000 short tons of cargo, and 8,000 pieces of equipment, all while providing their own organic security. They also rebuilt or replaced major truck components, including 20 engines and 15 transmissions, in more than 600 heavy equipment transport haulers, and completed more than 3,000 work orders. This medium truck company played an important role in helping draw down forces and equipment in Iraq.

We currently have two Camp Dodge based Army National Guard units deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 294th Area Support Medical Company has approximately 75 soldiers deployed to Iraq. The unit is tasked with evaluating casualties, performing basic medical treatment, and providing transportation for injured and sick personnel.

The 135th Military Public Affairs Detachment deployed 17 soldiers to Iraq and provides public affairs support to the 3rd Infantry Division. The mission of the 135th is to collect, produce and disseminate video, audio, and print stories, as well as online journalism products, to civilian and military media organizations.

We have several smaller units that are in a notification for training status and will likely deploy later this year. But by far our two most significant and anticipated deployments are the 2nd Brigade Combat Team and 734th Agribusiness Development Team for potential mobilizations to Afghanistan.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team deployment would be the largest single unit call-up of its type since World War II. Almost every community in Iowa will be affected in some way by this deployment.

The 2nd Brigade is full of veterans from previous deployments and the leadership team deploying forward is among the best in the Iowa National Guard. These leaders have proven themselves in previous deployments and challenging leadership assignments. With us today representing the 2nd Brigade Combat Team is the Commander, Colonel Tom Staton, and Command Sergeant Major Craig Berte.

The Agribusiness Development Team, which is made up of nearly 60 Soldiers and Airmen, is the "first ever" joint overseas deployment between the Iowa Army and Air National Guard. The intent of the team is to promote the revitalization of the agricultural sector within Afghanistan. Since 2007, a number of states have sent teams to Afghanistan including Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and California. These teams are designed to provide expertise, advice, and training in agricultural related specialties to provincial-level ministries and local farmers. The Iowa team will be staffed with personnel with agricultural-related expertise and experience, and will partner with

Iowa State University and other local agricultural organizations to provide continuous technical reach back support during this mission.

With us today representing the team is Colonel Craig Bargfrede, the commander, and its senior enlisted leader, Sergeant Major Robert Reedy.

Colonel Bargfrede has many years of experience working with agribusiness and grain elevator operations. Sergeant Major Reedy brings extensive interagency experience from his years with the Iowa National Guard's 71st Civil Support Team.

One of our foundation priorities is the development of Soldiers, Airmen and leaders, who are technically and tactically proficient, and can operate in complex environments. We accomplish this through military schooling, training, mentorship, deployments and opportunities to serve in challenging assignments. By having this strong foundation, we are better able to provide trained war fighters in a timely manner.

As the Adjutant General, I am personally responsible for certifying that all Soldiers complete their required pre-mobilization warrior tasks and training before deploying to their mobilization station. This is a responsibility that I take very seriously. To properly accomplish this task to standard for all 2nd Brigade Soldiers, the Iowa National Guard will conduct its first "State Annual Training Exercise" in more than 30 years at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, involving nearly all Iowa National Guard units to provide logistical and training support to assist the 2nd Brigade in their mobilization preparation.

Another important priority is ensuring that we are able to provide an effective joint domestic response capability to the state. This is an important mission for the Iowa National Guard and one we are deeply committed to in order to protect Iowans and critical infrastructure when called upon to do so.

With the large number of Iowa Army National Guard Soldiers expected to deploy later this year, our Joint staff and Homeland Security Emergency Management Division facilitated a regional meeting with nine Midwestern states in order to discuss mutual support and emergency compact agreements. This meeting resulted in a regional assessment of available manpower and equipment, agreements to support mutual aid requests, and a decision to make this meeting an annual event. Additionally, we are training retired Iowa National Guard members to provide expertise in key areas, where we may need assistance as a result of the deployment. By taking these steps now, I am confident that the Iowa National Guard will have a robust emergency response force available should the need arise.

The last priority area I want to focus on is caring for Soldiers, Airmen, Families and Employers.

In an effort to help all of Iowa's Gold Star Families, we recently hired Misty Stumbo as a Survivor Outreach Support Coordinator. Misty has been a part of our National Guard family for many years. She lost her son, Sergeant Dan Sesker, a member of C Troop, 1-113th Cavalry Squadron, in Operation Iraqi

Freedom in 2006, and is herself a Gold Star mother. *(I would like to recognize Misty for her sacrifice and dedicated service to the Iowa National Guard.)*

The purpose of the Survivor Outreach Support program is to demonstrate our commitment to the Families of the Fallen in whatever way possible. This may include assisting them with understanding and accessing benefits and entitlements, connecting with other Families of Fallen Soldiers through support groups, obtaining counseling, or assisting with any other issues that result from the loss of a loved one. Through this program, Misty will help ensure these survivors receive all benefits they are entitled too, and encourage them to remain an integral part of our military family for as long as they desire.

We recognize that the mental health of our force is as important as the other aspects of health. We are implementing a new program called Comprehensive Soldier Fitness which is to increase the resilience of Soldiers and Families by developing their strengths in all important domains: Emotional, social, spiritual, and family, in addition to physical.

We are also training soldiers as Master Resiliency Trainers at the unit level, in order to provide immediate support for our soldiers on deployment, as well as at home. The focus of this program will ultimately help us to maintain the total health of our force for the long term.

In preparation for the brigade deployment, we have added three more Family Assistance Specialists, bringing the total to seven. These specialists assist individuals with family issues, helping them connect to military, community

and veterans resources. They assist families when they experience financial problems, have military health insurance questions, or need identification cards. During mobilizations, the Family Assistance Specialist regularly check in with the families of deployed service members, to ensure they are coping well and receiving needed services. We currently have Family Assistance Specialists located in Camp Dodge, Iowa City, Council Bluffs, and Waterloo, as well as new offices in Sioux City, Ft. Dodge and Davenport.

As the Iowa National Guard prepares for what promises to be another busy year, many have asked, "What can I do to help?"

First, let me say "thank you" for what you have done, and are doing daily to support the men and women of the Iowa National Guard.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of the Governor's request to restore critical state funding to the Iowa National Guard to support this challenging year. Likewise, we are extremely grateful for your continued support of our National Guard Educational Assistance Program, which is helping nearly 1,200 Iowa National Guard Soldiers and Airmen defray their educational expenses this academic year.

Iowans from across the state have shown unbelievable kindness and encouragement to our members and we are grateful for their continued support.

It's the little things that sometimes mean the most – clearing the snow, cutting the grass, dropping off a home cooked meal, baby sitting, checking on

military families, sending care packages and letters, or by just simply saying
“Thank you.”

These are a few of the many ways Iowans continue shown their support
for all our men and women in uniform, and their families.

For the last eight years, the Iowa National Guard has been challenged like
few times in its history – and this year is shaping up to be the most challenging
yet.

It’s no small feat to prepare, train, equip and deploy more than 3,000
Soldiers while maintaining our organizational readiness, continue the efforts to
prepare trained war fighters for future needs, take care of the needs of our
Soldiers, Airmen and their families, while providing a robust domestic response
capability for Iowa. Yet, despite these incredible challenges, I am confident that
the Iowa National Guard will continue to set the example for all states; we will be
there for Iowa when they call; and as a force, we will remain “Mission Focused
and Warrior Ready!”

God Bless you and your families and God Bless our Men and Women
serving in harm’s way.

Thank you!

