

## 28. National Guard

THE Defense Department should restructure the National Guard so that it can respond to catastrophic events and assist in homeland security more effectively. It should also size units so that there are always forces training, with an emphasis on catastrophic response, medical, security, and critical infrastructure response units. Finally, the Department of Defense should create a Navy National Guard.

by *Alane Kochems*

### Recommendations

**1. Reorganize the National Guard to aid its response to catastrophic events.** The Defense Department should be responsible for responding to catastrophic events. It would be counterproductive and ruinously expensive for other federal agencies, local governments, or the private sector to maintain the excess capacity and resources needed for immediate catastrophic response. On the other hand, maintaining this capacity would have real utility for the military. The Pentagon could use response forces for tasks directly related to its primary war-fighting jobs—such as theater support to civilian governments during a conflict, counterinsurgency missions, and postwar occupation—as well as homeland security. These forces should mostly be National Guard units, since they have the flexibility to work equally well under state or federal control.

**2. Size National Guard units so that there are always forces training, ready for deployment, and recovering from deployment.** To accomplish this goal, the Defense Department would need at least six divisional units in order to have one always on active duty and ready for rapid response missions in the United States. The active unit should belong to NORTHCOM, which can then use it for experimentation, training, and planning purposes. This would give NORTHCOM immediate access to troops in the case of a large-scale disaster and provide troops for training exercises.

**3. Ensure that medical, security, and critical infrastructure response units are particularly robust for catastrophic response.** A National Guard that is prepared for a catastrophe would have robust medical,

### Notes

security, and critical infrastructure response units. The current defense medical support available for homeland security is too small and ill-suited for the task. The military needs a medical response that can deal with thousands of casualties on little notice, deploy in hours, assess and adapt existing structures for medical facilities, and deliver mass care to people in place rather than moving them to clinical facilities. The military also should have the ability to provide a response to a well-coordinated terrorist attack, using specially trained and equipped personnel who are practiced at working with civilian agencies. Finally, as currently structured, the military is of minimal utility in restoring critical national infrastructure after a catastrophic disaster at home or overseas.

**4. Create a Navy National Guard.** The emerging potential for maritime threats and low-altitude attacks augurs the need for an organizational structure that better utilizes the Navy's capacity to support homeland security. A Navy Guard would give coastal states more resources with which to address their maritime security and public safety requirements. Unlike the Coast Guard, the Navy Guard would focus on state needs when not on active federal service. It would also provide an organization within the National Guard and the Navy that treats homeland security missions as an inherent responsibility and would work to develop the requisite competencies and capabilities to fully support these tasks. Finally, a Navy Guard would provide a suitable partner for the U.S. Coast Guard to ensure seamless integration of daily DOD and DHS maritime operations.

## Facts and Figures

- The National Guard celebrated its 369th birthday on December 13, 2005.
- In 1903, important national defense legislation made the National Guard a Reserve force for the U.S. Army.
- Since the September 11, 2001, attacks, more than 50,000 members of the Guard have been called up by their states and the federal government for missions, both domestically and abroad.

---

*This chapter can be read online at [issues2006.org/nationalguard](http://issues2006.org/nationalguard).*

## Notes

## Additional Reading

The Honorable Rick Perry, “Federalizing Disaster Response,” Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 905, November 7, 2005, at [www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/hl905.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/hl905.cfm).

James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., and John R. Brinkerhoff, “Katrina’s Forgotten Responders: State Defense Forces Play a Vital Role,” Heritage Foundation *Executive Mem-*

*orandum* No. 984, October 5, 2005, at [www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/em984.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/em984.cfm).

James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., “Improving the National Response to Catastrophic Disaster,” Heritage Foundation *Testimony*, September 15, 2005, at [www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/tst091505a.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/tst091505a.cfm).