

TRANSCRIPT

## Defense Writers Group

A Project of the Center for Media & Security  
New York and Washington, D.C.

---

**General Joseph L. Lengyel**  
**Chief, National Guard Bureau**

**Sept. 19, 2017**

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. USERS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAPES OR NOTES OF THE SESSION IF ABSOLUTE VERIFICATION OF WORDING IS NEEDED.

---

**General Lengyel:** It's been a year already. I can't believe how fast, that it's been a year since I've been the Chief. So I look forward to -- I tend to be brief in my remarks, so I won't drill on too long on the topics.

But this hurricane response, domestic operation that's been demonstrated over the past more than a month now since Harvey hit, has kept us very busy. It shows well the National Guard in what we say, the three things that we say we do, which is we fight wars and we defend and protect the homeland and we build partnerships, and a lot of those things were evident here today, in this last month as we helped respond to hurricane, first Harvey, then Irma, and now Maria.

So you're right. I have been out traveling. I went to Texas during the prelude to Harvey and the immediate aftermath of Harvey. It was one of these hurricanes, as anything, they have proven themselves to be unpredictable in many cases, in terms of the strength and where they go and what they do and so Harvey in Texas, we thought it was going to be a rainstorm and it turned out to be a very large rainstorm that hung around in South Texas for a long time.

What I saw, I mean my overarching take-away from all of these responses so far has been I've not seen it work better where there's an integrated, collaborative response from the Department of Defense, the National Guard, the first responders the DHS and FEMA interagency team that responded. My sense was that it worked very very well.

Part of the things that I would say is that Texas first, and Florida, too, they have a very large, organic National Guard. The ability for us to respond to that. You know, the way

the system is designed is that the National Guard will always, normally be a big part of the response because the organic first responders augmented by their National Guard, augmented by surrounding states, and then augmented on top of that by additional Title 10 forces is the way the force builds to respond to the incident. And so Texas' system of the emergency responders from the state supported by the National Guard, supported by the Title 10 forces, it was big. At one point I think we had over 20,000 National Guard troops and some additional Title 10 forces that worked seamlessly to help mitigate the things that we do.

We bring equipment, search and rescue aircraft, things that we have an abundance of in the military. We use our military skill sets and training and apply it in the homeland. And in some cases, frankly, the fact that we were able to pick up and deploy our forces helps us exercise that part of our military skill set as well, is the ability to gather our forces and pack it up and then move it to a response position and do it.

Again, readiness being everybody's first priority, we look at every opportunity to build readiness and we found some of that to respond to the hurricane as well.

Same thing in Florida. Again, a big response. People forget that Irma scraped over St. Thomas and St. John on the way to Florida. I went down there and visited that place, and that town is shredded. They're still without a lot of power. They will be for a long time. While the power plant still functions, there's nothing on the surface to carry the power anywhere, so they're going to be without power on St. Thomas and ST. John for some more time.

And unlike Texas, who has 20,000 people in their National Guard and Florida that's got over 10, the Virgin Islands National Guard is very small and was very, the Title 10 response, particularly the Navy and Marine Corps who are afloat, came in and were on-scene immediately after that response to provide search and rescue operations and to begin to clear the debris and to get the society to set up points of distribution for logistics and food and water so that the community can come together, and that's what I saw when I got there. Subsequently, they're now preparing for the arrival late tonight probably of Hurricane Maria which is now going to probably hit just south of St. Croix, who was pretty much spared in Hurricane Irma, and then impact Puerto Rico directly, broadside, as a category five hurricane.

We have currently there now just under 1,000 National Guard forces including the Virgin Island National Guard. They're sheltered in category five capable shelters to withstand, so that once the storm passes they can come out and begin to respond.

Obviously, they've repositioned all the aircraft into shelters that are again category five capable on Puerto Rico for the helicopters that have been repositioned, and bigger aircraft have been actually moved off of Puerto Rico to the mainland, to Florida and to Savannah, Georgia. To wait until the storm passes and to go back in. So we're as postured as we can be for that.

And I don't want to let the wild fires go without saying, either. I mean we had at one point up to 2000 soldiers who were engaged in support of NIFC, the National Interagency Fire Center that's charged with kind of managing fires for the country. They bring together, at one point, 2000 soldiers and airmen were supporting California, Washington, Oregon, Montana. Some of those are still ongoing in what has become a regular and routine seasonal issue that we have to fight every day.

We've got lots of helicopters flying out there again, dropping millions of gallons of water on these fires, and soldiers who actually have to train up and prepare to work with the firefighters and the land firefighters out there, so.

Again, I'm happy to see the integration, the synchronization of the response efforts that I've seen from this. We've obviously gotten better as a national response framework since we learned a lot from Katrina over the years; gotten more efficient at it, and I'm happy with how it's gone. I think it says a lot about the country, that we can come together and the citizens you saw in Texas who were out there in their personal fishing boats saving people and doing those kinds of things, it was a demonstration of what's good about the country when everybody comes together in response to [inaudible]. That's kind of how I see it at this point.

**DWG:** It sounds like organizationally and in terms of game planning for responding to these disasters, you had things under control. How did you feel about the readiness of the troops themselves and the equipment that was needed to mount this response?

**General Lengyel:** We always suggest that our ability to respond at home in any number of catastrophes, whether it's weather related or terrorist related or the potential to respond what was a mass destruction or some event like that is related to our readiness for our warfighting mission.

I think the National Guard is concerned about our readiness as the services are. We derive our readiness from the equipment that we have and all of that is funding related.

I think our readiness to respond to these, we have to have trained people, trained equipment. We have to be there actually to do the response. Overall, I'd say we were, and we remain, ready to respond to domestic operations. We're well postured. As the National Guard goes our equipment sets, we suffer from the same issues with recapitalization, modernization of the force, but we had good capability in responding.

**DWG:** Sir, I wanted to turn from national disaster response to international issues if you don't mind.

**General Lengyel:** Okay.

**DWG:** As you know, the Oklahoma National Guard which is doing the training with the

Ukrainian Armed Forces at this point. In light of the Trump administration's skinny budget and the decision to transform to Iraq grant into [inaudible], what are the plans for the next year? What are you going to do for this military assistance program? Are you ramping it up or is it still standing within the plans?

**General Lengyel:** You mean specifically in Ukraine?

**DWG:** Yes, sir.

**General Lengyel:** I think that broadly speaking, our goal is to, we have a National Guard relationship with Ukraine. The California National Guard is a state partner of Ukraine. We have endeavored to build partnerships to continue to build friends and allies in the region, across Europe. We'll continue to do that. I think with specific regard to the grants, I'm not exactly sure what that will be. I know the Oklahoma National Guard is still there in Ukraine and has been. California was there before that, so I think we'll continue to do training in assistance to the Ukraine going forward.

**DWG:** As far as you know, there is no way to just wrap everything up as the next fiscal year begins and move out? Nothing like that?

**General Lengyel:** Not that I'm aware of.

**DWG:** Okay. Thank you.

**DWG:** I just want to ask first, Tara [inaudible]. One clarifier and then a couple of others.

Are the thousand National Guard troops that you're talking about? Are they on the Virgin Islands or are they actually on Puerto Rico waiting out for Maria?

**General Lengyel:** There are about a thousand on the Virgin Islands themselves, St. Croix, St. Thomas. So we did actually reposition about 150 forces who we said look, these are not essential forces for immediate response so we'll reposition them into Florida and Savannah to wait until the storm passes. We were concerned that we wanted some capacity to be able to respond for lifesaving needs and the rest. So we left not only the Virgin Islands National Guard who lives there and stay there to protect it, but some additional forces. Some, frankly 400 of them are from Puerto Rico who have repositioned onto the Virgin Islands so that once the storm passes they can come out and begin lifesaving and search and rescue activities.

**DWG:** Okay. And then can you give us a rough ball park cost to date since Harvey for the National Guard responding to storms? And you know, especially in the last month there's been a high concentration of need to respond. Are you seeing any wear and tear on something like the high water vehicles or things where you're going to need to ask Congress for additional funds as these storms even seem to get more intense each year?

**General Lengyel:** Right. I can't tell you, the funding on some of these things is, there is a state active duty funding to pay for the people and to rent the vehicles and to repair them is born in many cases by the states themselves. So I don't know exactly what the total cost that the states have done. But I can say that it's substantial. When you're putting 20,000 troops on state active duty and you're using Humvees and high water vehicles, some of them will break. There will be some cost at the end of the day to fix these things and to repair them. At the end of the day we'll tally it all up at some point, but I don't know what the total cost has been to this point.

**DWG:** And then to the pace of the storms right now, are you seeing additional wear and tear on your forces? Your ability to respond?

**General Lengyel:** With regard to the capacity of the force, I think Texas and their organic troops, part of their plan was to bring in other forces and relieve the Texas forces that had been in place. The Virgin Islands forces, again, they have a very small National Guard. We were in-flowing additional forces so that they could be replaced and go back to their families and fix their own houses that have been destroyed by the storms. So we have plenty of capacity from other states that can offer forces to go. We're not to the point where we can't do the mission, but we certainly, each individual state looks at the ability to replace in place their forces with other forces.

**DWG:** You said Puerto Rico has about 400 National Guard troops?

**General Lengyel:** That are currently in the Virgin Islands.

**DWG:** What do they have total?

**General Lengyel:** I'll get you that number. I don't know how big the total National Guard of Puerto Rico is, but one of the comments was, as we questioned this, was to make sure that they didn't deplete their own forces to respond in Puerto Rico, and they were quite sure that they had enough to respond at home in addition to supporting the Virgin Islands.

**DWG:** You talk about it at the top of your list, one hurricane right after the other, and then you brought up the wildfires as well. People have described how unprecedented it is. And so if I can just ask, how does that higher incident of natural disasters factor into how the Guard Bureau is going to plan for the years ahead and how it's going to budget, you know, what you're going to need more of? Are you planning for a steep increase in natural disasters in light of this?

**General Lengyel:** Again, the Guard's response is always to augment the states, and the lead federal agencies in terms of how we do that. So the money put aside to work natural disaster response is the Disaster Relief Fund. That's not National Guard money. That is money that's given to FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security so that

they can plan and budget and have enough money to do the response.

We don't particular plan funding, per se, to do disaster response. Our funding comes from -- now what we do do is every year we get together and we look at and we consider what is the likely event that we're going to have to respond to? And we plan to support individual states. For instance, frequently in the Gulf states if they have some of their military forces who are deployed overseas in a Title 10 sense, we plan early in the year, hurricane year, to backfill those capabilities into Louisiana or Mississippi that may not have their own organic forces postured to do the response.

So we look across the spectrum of likely needed capabilities to make sure that the states have them. If they don't have them, there's arrangements in place to provide them from other surrounding states. So this has been a pretty I would say aggressive hurricane season. Hopefully, and we're still early into it. I remember Hurricane Sandy hit near the beginning of November, when that actually hit, so we're not by any means out of the danger zone yet as far as hurricanes, so there could be more.

It does become an issue kind of at the end of the fiscal year with having money available to bring folks in. One thing that I do as the Chief of the National Guard Bureau is if I suspect that there's going to be some need for some state I can initiate kind of the gathering of capabilities and say I want you to come together and plan, pack up your stuff in a training activity, you know, as part of your training as a mobility kind of exercise, so I can posture them to be ready to move as fast as they can. If I think they're going to need rescue helicopters from New York or from California, but I can move those in a training sense and move them close to where the incident is going to happen to do that. And at the end of the year you start to run out of training dollars and the ability to move those kinds of things.

It is valid, good military training. And so I leverage that where I can.

Did that answer your question?

**DWG:** Yes. So just I guess to kind of follow up on that, do you see a scenario where there would be a need for some supplemental dollars later on?

**General Lengyel:** Could be. Yeah. I can see where if I got to a point where we had a capacity that was needed but I didn't have the money to do it, I would certainly make it aware to the Secretary and others to find additional dollars for that kind of capability. I would not want people to die because we were waiting for funding streams from someplace else. We would find a way to, I'm sure Secretary Mattis would help fund those things.

**DWG:** Before we go to Ellen I just wanted to follow up on one of those points briefly.

The Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, they're facing back-to-back hurricane responses

basically. Florida's the nearest other state which also is still in recovery mode. Have you had to do what you just mentioned, reposition or preposition forces from other states to help respond to these areas? Or do you think you've got it under control with what's currently in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico and available?

**General Lengyel:** We have forces right now that's are postured to move into the Caribbean and Puerto Rico once this is done. I mean we've already identified those forces. It would be silly to put them there now and let them get whacked. They would become part of the response as opposed to actually providing response. So we've got states that we've identified additional forces. Once the storm passes, we can move them in. That's what we do.

**DWG:** [Inaudible] California National Guard [inaudible]. [Inaudible] pay back [inaudible]. What have we done to make sure that anybody [inaudible] United States?

**General Lengyel:** I don't think we said nobody needs to pay back.

**DWG:** Okay.

**General Lengyel:** If I can just set the table a little.

It was determined in the California National Guard bonus that some monies were given to people who, by specific rules, were not entitled to the money. What caused the problem was the actual service members weren't aware they weren't entitled to it. But when the system discovered that they had inappropriately given the money to them, they began to recoup this money from people who had obviously spent it on things.

When this came up, it was brought to our attention, and it ended up being a good thing in that people serving, the well-meaning service members who didn't realize they got this money inappropriately and had served out the commitments of their contract, you know, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, it was led by OSD P&R, Personnel and Readiness, they were able to bring a team together to look across the many cases, there was about 17,000 individual cases that they looked at. And the guidance to us was look, if people were given this money, even if they by the letter of the law at the time weren't entitled to it, they didn't wrongfully, willfully commit a crime or fraud and they served out the terms of their contract that they signed up for, then that debt would be forgiven and they wouldn't have to do it.

So really, very quickly, there was an analysis done of those cases. The vast majority of the people were found to have not committed fraud or willfully, knowingly taken that money, and so the debt was forgiven.

There were some number of cases, and I think it was about 400, somewhere in there, where they determined that these people knew or should have known that they weren't entitled to these monies, and there was a debt established and recoupment did in fact

and is probably still ongoing. But all in all, I think, and to prevent it from happening any further through the new system called GIMS which is the Guard Incentive Management System, it makes it so that you cannot get the money in an incentive until all of the correct things have been -- you have to establish that you are correctly entitled to it first. It's just basically technologically brought up the system such that you can't get an incentive until we prove that you are eligible for it. That has been fixed.

And while I would love to say that it will never happen again. I think the system, there's more internal controls to make sure that it doesn't happen again.

**DWG:** Thank you, sir.

I think I recall one of your predecessors discussing disaster relief, talking about how useful they found an Android app to take a picture of and geotag it [inaudible], something like this.

In what you're dealing with now, is there any specific pieces of sort of technology command and control that you're finding useful? Or that you're lacking that you would like to have?

**General Lengyel:** That's a great question, and I would say yes. Clearly, as the National Guard has modernized its force to some degree, we have a large number now of surveillance capabilities, if you will. Surveillance is a bad word in the U.S., but we call it incident awareness and assessment. And there are platforms that can go in to survey post-disaster response areas and find areas that need, to include people that need to be rescued. There's the ability to do that.

So we have begun I'd say a more broad use of those kinds of capabilities in disaster response. No Predators, per se, have been flown over disaster response sites. But Civil Air Patrol has some capabilities loaded on their airplanes where they can fly over, and they are part of AFNORTH and they are coordinated. And we have RC-26 platforms that they [inaudible] data and utilized in a counter-drug kind of program with the kind of same assets that they can look and search and find areas for that.

We have used the Predator kind of assets to fight wildfire. California has in their National Guard Predators and they have flown them over with, you know, it's a very kind of onerous, rigorous process to get approval to do it. You have to ask the Secretary of Defense and he has to approve it, but we have flown these technologies over disasters. I was just in Oregon watching them fight the Chetco fire out there. They have civilian platforms now that do the same thing. They can fly in fires and look down there and find hotspots and help them prevent the spread of fire.

So technology definitely is taking effect.

The other side of the coin that I would mention is, one of the first technology

hackathons that I kind of participated in was a group that posed to a bunch of college students and teams, hey, give us technology solutions to finding and speeding recovery efforts and disaster response, and some of them come together with using their cell phones. I haven't been able to integrate any of those things into my particular place yet, but using technology and social media and then you see it all the time, rescues that are happening because people get on Facebook or Twitter and make us aware that people need to be rescued. So those are all enhancing our response efforts for sure.

**DWG:** So there's no way that that all feed into one area. So how exactly does that play into your response? Do you have somebody checking Twitter? Or [inaudible, civilian air control?

**General Lengyel:** Well, the State Emergency Operation Center monitors the social media places. That is how it goes, and it goes to the Search and Rescue Coordination Center, and the Search and Rescue Coordination Center will feed it out. It's a pretty interesting network.

The ability to do search and rescue, I watched the one down in Texas. Texas had an Air Operation Center. In that Air Operation Center, remember, this is all civilian controlled. This is not, you know, military is there but we feed the civilian controlled emergency response network.

So in this operation center you have Customs and Border Protection. You have the Coast Guard. You had, all of the services had representatives in there. Civil Air Patrol, absolutely. They were all in there, coordinating the response efforts using the air assets to go and rescue people. So you have to find them and then coordinate what's the best rescue to go in. You've got to deconflict it all, a safe area to operate. And that always takes a day or two to kind of spool up and get everybody okay, here's the situation, FAA is in there to control the airspace. It's a very complex operation with a lot of players who do come together on a regular basis, but there's always a bit of friction when the event starts off. So technology is changing the way we do search and rescue and that kind of thing.

**DWG:** Thanks for doing this.

There's been talk this morning of how unprecedented this disaster season is. That brings up the question of whether climate change is making these disasters worse.

In terms of your job, I'm wondering is climate change playing a role, the possibility that climate change is making disasters worse playing a role in how you plan for future disasters?

**General Lengyel:** Well, you know, I do think that the climate is change. I do think that it's becoming more severe. I think storms are becoming bigger, larger, more violent. I never know if this one speck of time is an anomaly or not. But we're having, we've all

seen now three category five storms that popped out in the period of a month. And so here's how it impacts me. I mean it impacts me because the National Guard does provide, we are the military domestic response force. We keep that as part of our job jar. We feel it's in our job to coordinate, prepare, respond, to these events. And I say that, and I still want to say that every response, everybody helps. That active duty helps, that all services help, but the National Guard takes it as this is something that we actually talk daily with, you know, weekly, monthly, with the first responders.

For us to do that stuff, we have to have some force structure that's located where the events might happen. So whether that's in Oklahoma where you have a lot of tornadoes, or whether that's in the northwest where you have a lot of fires, or whether it's in the Gulf or on the East Coast, we need force structure that is in all 54 states and territories and the District of Columbia, so that we can respond.

It doesn't work for me to put all of our forces on one base in any particular state. For you to respond -- just like globally, you've got to actually be there. So for us to have a disbursed presence, it's part of our business model. It's part of the reason I have multiple locations around a state so that we can provide that domestic ops capability we might have. That's how I think about it.

We had a lot of aviation assets that were used. We had at one point almost 40 C-130s that were postured to do aeromedical evacuation and general population evacuation in Beaumont when Beaumont was flooding. You know, without being able to bring those together, we risk not having that capability to respond in the homeland.

**DWG:** Good morning, General.

President Trump said yesterday when he was speaking with his French counterpart, he was inspired by the [inaudible] Field Day Parade. He said he'd like to investigate having a bigger military presence in the Washington, DC 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. You spent a large part of your career carefully employing military forces on the homeland. I wonder if you have any concerns about that idea? Is there a limit to how much militarization, for lack of a better term, we should have for civilian public events like that?

**General Lengyel:** For the National Guard, I think being that we are from the communities and we are from the folks that I think towns and for civilian events and national holidays and things like that, they like to see and proud of to see their forces come down and participate in those national events. I don't consider the militarization of that other than for Memorial Day we come out and we march in now the DC parade and we do those kinds of things. I think all those things are fine.

**DWG:** It does seem as though there's a difference, though, between bombers flying over an arena and the National Anthem played, and missile launchers and tanks going down Pennsylvania Avenue. I don't know what that difference is. Can you talk about that?

**General Lengyel:** I don't necessarily see, I didn't hear the President's comment, you know, so I think I saw last night that he was impressed with the military presence in France when he was there, but --

**DWG:** He was looking into it. In the meantime I'm going to talk to General Kelly about looking into that.

**General Lengyel:** Is he? I'm not aware of any plans to robust and roll missile launchers down Pennsylvania Avenue in the National Guard. [Laughter]. Or in any other military sense. We proudly participate as part of our communities. And show that hey, America's military is strong and we're there to support the American people, but I don't see it growing into a North Korean sort of parade or whatever that would be that we would see out there.

**DWG:** Dan, then we'll go to Nick, and then after that we'll open things up to round two.

**DWG:** Sir, thanks for your time today. Dan LaMotte, with [inaudible].

[Inaudible] Coast Guard in Texas after the disaster, one of the things that definitely came out of the scene talking with them was just the chaos that they had to deal with. I'm sure that applied to your forces as well.

From a command and control perspective, from an understanding of what's going on in the middle of a crisis like that, what do you think are the lessons learned? What do you think needs to change? What didn't work right this time?

**General Lengyel:** We haven't had a chance to do an AAR, After Action Review or Report on this one yet. I'm sure, and I hope that we, when we get to it, we will pull it apart and see what worked and what didn't work and how can we respond faster and the like.

These are big responses. I was struck by one of the things in Hurricane Harvey that I thought was interesting and I commend the Governor and the Texas Response Force for doing this, Governor Abbott, but there was a point at which this storm had come in about Rockport and Corpus Christi and kind of stuck in that place, but the band was all on the eastern part of the state and started to dump all that stuff. At one point the Governor said hey, get all the Guard, take them all out of Rockport and send them to Beaumont. Just do it. So they drove all night and they got in, and they moved several thousand troops all the way to Beaumont and Port Arthur and Orange, you know, where they had the massive floods. He didn't really have any other way to know, other than intuition, that hey, this Beaumont thing is going to be bad. So his response system did that. They drove all night, and people who were supposed to go from El Paso were en-route to the western edge of the storm, kept on going and went all the way to Beaumont. And they were there the next day when they needed to extract people from

the rising waters and the like.

So we'll pull it apart, as we always do, and it won't be just us. The Coast Guard will be there and the Guard will be there and the Title 10 forces will be there, and the first responders will be there, and it will be run by the Texas Emergency Management Agency there that does it. And we'll see how we can do it better in the future. But it's hard.

And one of the challenges the Texas folks had when they got to Beaumont was they said hey, the folks that we normally work for weren't there yet. So they had to kind of figure out, just go out and find people and save them and move them. One of the things that the military brings is those capable leaders able to make decisions. The military formation structure where a guy can take his company or platoon or whatever it is that they do in a military sense and apply it here. We're going to go out here and we're going to find people and move them and find shelters and set them up and so long story short, we haven't A, done it yet. We will.

From my perspective, I haven't found yet something that I would fault in the Texas piece. You know, at one point the public affairs issue and what you say, you know, the National Guard came out and we said hey, we have 30,000 forces that are ready to go, and that turned into the Governor turned down 30,000 forces. You know. So that was, none of that was true. We had just made ready, had done planning for other people that could come and help Texas if they wanted to, and that was a good news story. So to make sure that the communications and everything stays and nobody's misinformed, that's a challenge.

I think the actual response, I haven't found yet a place to fault it.

**DWG:** I just learned this morning that the F-35s are going to start being assigned to National Guard, the Vermont National Guard.

**General Lengyel:** Right.

**DWG:** Can you discuss further plans to upgrade and replace aging aircraft?

**General Lengyel:** That's true. The 158<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing in Vermont will, they're in the process of converting right now from F-16s to the F-35. I think that there will be more yet to be determined locations. There was recently a survey, an analysis done of five locations to determine the next two that would become F-35 bases, and that's yet to be announced by the Air Force. The Air Force looks across its portfolio and determines where they need, where it makes the best business sense to modernize or recapitalize the force and that's going to be an ongoing thing for a long time.

I think the F-35 is clearly a platform for the future. The Air Force needs more of them. We need more of them faster to deal with the threat in the world today. And so that's

going to go on across the force.

We're seeing the same thing in the tanker community. New Hampshire is getting the KC-46. They should get their first airplane next year, a brand new -- that is the first location I believe to convert in the Air Force from KC-135s to the KC-46. And it happens to be a National Guard location. And more of those --

**DWG:** The first in the entire Air Force?

**General Lengyel:** I think so. Isn't that true, Al?

**Voice:** I believe so.

**General Lengyel:** I think that's the first base we'll convert is Pease Air National Guard base in New Hampshire.

The National Guard is a big part of the Air Force, so as the Air Force modernizes and recapitalizes, so must the Guard.

**DWG:** When do you anticipate those next two F-35 locations being announced?

**General Lengyel:** It's supposed to come out here in the next couple of months. I'm not exactly sure when they'll announce it. But I know their review of the five locations is complete. They're analyzing it, and they will announce it in the relatively near term. I don't have an exact date for you.

**DWG:** I think Fort Worth is announced too.

**General Lengyel:** Fort Worth is an Air Force Reserve, and that's true. That has been announced. The Air Force Reserve, you know, the Air Force business model in terms of how it uses its reserve component, it's become pretty efficient. A lot of capability resides there.

**DWG:** [Inaudible]. And some of the active duty components were from [inaudible]. They had extra-centric excess force structure. Do you have any excess infrastructure? Or do you think you could use consolidation? What is your opinion on that? Do you want it? Do you want to stay away from it? Do you want me to shut up?

**General Lengyel:** BRAC is, I think it's incumbent upon us as members, leaders of the military that as we look at spending resources, to make the military the most ready, the most capable force that can defend the United States. It's incumbent on us to always analyze force structure and where it is and how much it is. I know the Air Force says they have somewhere around 20 percent excess infrastructure. I know when I look at our force structure, keep in mind that as the National Guard we have, that description I just told you about my need to be postured all around the location. It doesn't work for

me to be in one spot. We have to be in the states, under command and control of the Governors so that we can respond and do our homeland mission.

Sometimes people will look at a National Guard base that happens to be located on a civilian field, like many of our bases are, and they'll say well it would be much more efficient if you would take that and you would put it on another base and locate them all on one. And I would tell you that I think our National Guard bases, Vermont's a good example. If you go to Burlington Airport, there's a small enclave with a fighter squadron. There's nothing on that base that isn't dedicated to fighting wars and, I mean there's no BX, no commissary, no gymnasium, no chapel, no golf course, no any other infrastructure. It is there to generate airplanes and send them to go to, you know, muster the part-time force and send them to go be part of the Air Force if you need it. And I think it's very efficient.

On the Army National Guard side, we have some old facilities that are located in parts where the demographics have shifted and there no longer are people there to support units. But in many cases that's a state function, not a federal function. They need to look at those. And where we can consolidate with other Reserve components and alternate drill weekends and become more efficient, I think we're all for that. We're all for maintaining the most efficient, most combat capable military we can, and we should always be looking at ourselves. But I do not think that we have a lot of excess infrastructure in our National Guard forces structure.

**DWG:** Justin Doubleday with Inside Defense. Thank you for taking the time today.

I just wanted to ask you about readiness. I think you've talked about improving the speed of readiness processes and just trying to improve that. How successful have you been, you know, one year in in getting after some of those goals?

**General Lengyel:** Let me tell you just a little bit about readiness in the National Guard. Our readiness is funded, we are right where we're supposed to be in terms of what we're built to go do. On the Air side, our readiness approximates very closely that of the active component. Our fighter squadrons and tanker squadrons and military squadrons, essentially the people are ready, our maintenance rates are similar to the active component. Our ability to deploy. And when you look at our force and a structure that has 35 percent full time and the rest is a part time force, I think it's a success.

When you look on the Army side, General Milley and the Army has invested in our readiness. We have 27 brigade combat teams in the Army National Guard. It would be silly for us to keep all of them at C1. It would be silly for us to buy readiness to keep all of those at the most ready status.

One of the things that makes the reserve component value is that just in time readiness is what we bring, so you don't buy the readiness, you don't pay for the readiness until

you determine you're going to use it.

But the issue is, in this world today where this threat environment where we look around, we need to get ready faster than we used to. So General Milley has doubled the number Combat Training Center rotations that we have. So where we used to have two per year, we now have four per year starting in '18.

So I think that 15 years of war in the Army, 16 years of war in the Army, and really dating back to 1991 in the Air Force, this continuous operational use of us has made us a more ready force. It's made us be able to get ready faster. And that is a cultural thing as much as anything, and not all of it costs money. I mean we've been able to have a disciplined approach to training, a focused approach on spending resources to make sure that we're spending those resources dedicated towards the readiness of the force.

So readiness is high on everybody's priority. I don't if -- General Milley, General Goldstein, myself, we all say readiness is the number one priority. The ability to use the force and make it ready faster. And I think we have had some success in doing that. You just look at the operational tempo and I'm going to give you two seconds here on the operational use of the force.

As we changed and reformed the National Defense Strategy, as we look at what the military needs to look like for the next ten years or twenty years from now, one of the things that's different about our force today that wasn't true 20 years ago is you have an operational force in the reserve component. There is a portion of our force that every day is deployed, that every day is training to deploy. One of my favorite stories from Hurricane Harvey was the fact that right in the middle of the hurricane response a battalion of 800 Texas National Guard troops went to Fort Bliss to deploy to the Horn of Africa to do that mission. Right in the middle of that response. They didn't stop their Title 10 commitments to the warfight. They responded in the homeland, and they sent a force of 800 folks to go to Horn of Africa.

So whatever force we build as part of the future going forward, having a reserve component that is used operationally, and that means a piece of it. Today as I talk to you, we have 20,000 troops that are engaged in a Title 10 mission set that are mobilized and gone. If you look back, to 2005 in Iraq, we had 80,000 troops that were deployed. So our operational tempo in terms of that. You take the other 15,000 that are doing Hurricane duty response, we're up in the near 40,000 folks that are engaged today.

But the fact that we're an operational force, it makes us integrate with the services better. It makes the services more willing to invest in us, buy us new equipment, train our forces, and when we deploy, you don't hear the stories anymore about this National Guard unit came in and they weren't ready and they didn't do it. Those stories are gone. And we have division headquarters now that are commanding battle space, if you will, in Kuwait, who are in Afghanistan. Our Air National Guard division headquarters are deployed doing that.

And so the thing that's making that all work is the fact that a piece of our force is always continuously engaged and we should never build a force again that doesn't do that. Because the far side of the spectrum with the use of the reserve component is, the worst case scenario is two global events where you need the military at one time, and you need the World War II scenario of full mobilization. If you continually use us, we'll be more ready, we'll be better equipped, we'll be better integrated, and everything works better because of that.

So I'll kind of get off my soapbox on that, but I believe very strongly in the continued operational use. They should never make us the strategic reserve that just sits over on the side and is only called up, you know, for the big reserve, the big one.

Make sense?

**DWG:** Yeah. To go back to [inaudible] all costs money, but [inaudible] expensive.

**General Lengyel:** NTCs, it's \$50 million for getting to go train. It's a lot of money.

**DWG:** Have you had to shift some of your investments around to get after some of those readiness issues?

**General Lengyel:** I think that we have a lens on readiness all the time, and where are we spending money? I told you the three things -- warfight, homeland and partnerships, or people. If money isn't directed at one of those kinds of things, then we look at changing and reallocating.

One of the things we've looked at is full-time support. You know, the number of full-timers that we have to make the force. The reason we have a National Guard Bureau, it is to make sure that the force, when mobilized, is ready to go. And so the reason we have full-time people in the National Guard is so that when the citizen soldier or airmen come to train, that the apparatus is there for them to train. That whatever it is that they train on, whether it's a tank or an airplane or you name whatever the system is, that it's functioning. There's maintainers. That it can work. That when they come to drill weekend, they get out of their pickup truck and they go do their military function and do real, actual military training. Whether it's individual training or over time built up to collective training like when you go to the National Training Center. That's why we have them.

So we've looked at the deployment of full-time resources, where are they specifically so they can maximize the training of the people who are coming in to drill. And so we spend a lot of time thinking about that.

**DWG:** We'll go to the speed round. Beginning with Paul, then Tara, then Dan.

**DWG:** You mentioned Afghanistan. With the upcoming [inaudible], are you expecting that's going to require any additional resources from the National Guard? Whether that's airlift or actual deployment of troops?

**General Lengyel:** I haven't seen exactly what those 3800 people are, 33,000 people are, but I'm sure that the National Guard will be part of it. We're there right now, Special Forces are there in Afghanistan right now. Aviation assets. Special Forces folks are there. Because we're an operational force, Army doesn't do anything, Air Force doesn't really do anything without the National Guard being part of it. And no doubt that we will be part of it.

**DWG:** You don't expect that to require an [inaudible] increase?

**General Lengyel:** No. I mean, not significant. There may be more deployments come out. But not in terms of tens of thousands of people. Obviously there will be a spin and the Army will choose to use some of our force structure to go. I think we should. It keeps America connected to what's going on over there.

**DWG:** One follow to his. His questions always generate other questions. But do you have National Guard forces in Afghanistan right now? And --

**General Lengyel:** We do.

**DWG:** -- in general, how many do you think you've got on the ground there at any given time? Like the current force levels.

**General Lengyel:** I don't know exactly how many I have there. We have some Air assets and some Army assets. And I wouldn't want to get into specific numbers.

**DWG:** Okay.

Back to the technology with the hurricanes. What has been the most valuable piece of equipment for the forces right now? Has it been high water vehicles? Is it, could you talk a little bit about what's really been in demand, and maybe if you have time, to go through like the each's. Like how many generators have you guys put on the ground? How many high water vehicles do you have on the ground?

**General Lengyel:** I think capabilities are unique to the military are what we bring. We brought 120-ish helicopters to Harvey and then they got revectoring towards Irma. And then we're bringing helicopters towards Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. So aviation assets because they're unique to us. With the hoists and those kinds of things.

High water vehicles are obviously something that we brought a lot of. Lots and lots of trucks. And Title 10, active component forces brought additional trucks out of Fort Hood in the Harvey and the like.

**DWG:** Do you know in general how many?

**General Lengyel:** How many numbers? I don't.

But you know, I think that at one point I saw a number from Fort Bragg that were driven down into Florida, some number of 200 trucks, high water vehicles that were brought down from us. So there were hundreds of vehicles that enabled the response.

We have a communications capability that we have. It's called Joint Incident Site Communications capability where we can actually bring these systems into a disaster response area where maybe the cell phone networks have been taken out and we can actually establish a network for people to be able to communicate. And we have two of those systems right now postured into the Virgin Islands so that once the hurricane passes we can reestablish communications there as quickly as we can.

Again, that's really just a domestic capability. We don't deploy that capability anywhere else. That's something we have bought with our National Guard/Reserve equipment account funds that was particular to the domestic ops.

**DWG:** You're concerned about climate change, preparations for climate change, do you see your Bureau and your forces needing different equipment, more boats, high water vehicles, or any kind of [inaudible]?

**General Lengyel:** Well, certainly we look at that. One of the basic principles that I go by as Chief of the National Guard Bureau is you know, that first and foremost, we get federal dollars to augment the United States Army and augment the United States Air Force. So I look at equipment that works for both the warfight piece and the homeland piece. It's rare that we have a domestic-only capability. We have some. We have some like the JICS that I just told you about. We have some like our Domestic Civil Support teams where these are the teams every state has, most states have one, a couple of states have two, but they can go in and identify biological, radiological, kind of their high tech laboratories on vehicles that can go say is this somebody trying to put anthrax or -- We have some domestic-only response, but in general, I like capabilities in the Army Guard and in the Air Guard that first do a warfight mission that can be applied to the homeland mission.

One of the things we do is we look at, if you're going to buy this for the warfight, is there any changes or modifications that we could make that would make it more applicable to a homeland mission? Communications, radios, you know, how can I buy military radios that also work in domestic nets? Can I make sure that you know, if there's a no-cost kind of -- let's choose wisely such that they can bring added value to the domestic piece.

We did use, we have two special tactics teams in the National Guard. These are high speed, jump out of airplanes, have special boats, Special Forces kinds of teams. But they

have a lot of boats, and both of those teams -- one in Oregon and one in Kentucky -- came to both Houston and to Florida with their swift water boat teams and capabilities and can do rescue things. We have bridging companies that, if you're going to build bridges across rivers you need boats. We use bridging companies to come and use their boats in Houston responses and the like.

So we always look for those kinds of capabilities. I look for how can I apply the warfighting capability for the domestic operations capabilities. And if there's something specifically for the homeland, we'll bring it up. We'll talk about it. Sometimes the Governors will bring it up and talk about it. It's a capability that they want in their piece. You know, you just watched over the weekend the Missouri Governor had to mobilize for some domestic response activities. And so that's not necessarily a warfighting skill, that's a domestic skill that is unique in the Guard that we train for and we practice for. And we do that. So we do bring that domestic lens to it, but primarily our equipment comes from the warfighting piece.

**DWG:** General, I wish we had more time, but I need to keep you on schedule as well.

**General Lengyel:** We'll do it again.

**DWG:** Absolutely.

**General Lengyel:** Thank you all for your questions. Don't hesitate to reach out to me or my folks if there's ever some question you have about the National Guard. Please. Thank you.

**DWG:** It's been a pleasure, and good luck with Maria.

**General Lengyel:** Thank you very much.

# # # #