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**STATEMENT BY
MASTER SERGEANT ALPHONZO W. ALLEN
ALASKA AIR NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES**

**July 19, 2006
San Antonio, Texas**

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Chairman Punaro, distinguished members of the commission, I am very grateful for the opportunity to testify here today and to give you my perspective as a Air National Guardsman who has served in the National Guard for 8 years and who has been deployed for overseas operations.

I have been asked to provide you with my perspective based on experience with the mobilization process, compensation and benefits, family and employer support, and the adequacy of unit and individual equipment and training. Additionally, I have been asked about those factors, which will shape Guard members decisions to re-enlist.

I would like to start with a short narrative regarding my career with the Air National Guard. I joined the Alaska Air National Guard, 168th Air refueling Wing in October of 1998 Eielson AFB, Alaska after completing 10 years of active duty service in the United States Air Force from April 1987 to April 1997. Eielson AFB Alaska was my last active duty station and is currently were my guard unit shares a joint Security Forces complex with active duty. I have been deployed on Operations Southern Watch/Enduring Freedom (Kuwait-Kuwait City International Airport (KCIA) Feb 2002 to Jun 2002) and Iraqi Freedom (Tallil AB Iraq Feb 2005 to Sep 2005). During the past 8 years I have been very fortunate to serve under great leadership within my unit, wing and state. During my last deployment my unit was responsible for providing perimeter security for Tallil AB which extended 5 miles "outside the wire" of the base. Protecting 10,000 Coalition Troops, two thousand of which were US Army soldiers. A first within the Air Force and now a model of the perimeter defense capability which uses Air Force security forces personnel as the first line defenders for protecting air bases in Iraq. My primary duties consisted of the direct supervision of troop in the most dangerous sector of the base. The entry control sector. Which was two miles outside the main base. My sector searched over 72,000 Iraqi workers and medical patients and 11,000 vehicles during a 6-month period. Confiscating over 1000 weapons and 300-hidden/undeclared cell phones, which are frequently used as trigger mechanisms to detonate improvised-explosive-devices. My troops also successfully neutralized an attempt to breach security at the main gate, destroying a decoy water truck/vehicle-born-improvised-explosive-device and its occupants. My repetitive battle drills of enemy-action-scenarios and a post rotation system within the sector during the hottest months in Iraq concluded without any loses of military personnel to hostile fire or extremely high temperatures. In short, these experiences have given me valuable insight on what security forces guardsmen are exposed to during deployments and I am honored to share my experiences.

Factors Paramount in Decision to Re-Enlist

The factors that were paramount to my decision to Re-enlist in the Air National Guard are the people of my particular unit. Guard unit's train together for years. We know each other's strengths and weakness and what works to build a successful team. It starts from the commander to the lowest airman. We see the same faces every month for drills which builds esprit de corps! Secondly, the

access to military bases throughout the United States and their facilities. The commissaries, exchanges, exercise facilities and lodging are exceptional. These facilities allow guardsman to maintain a higher overall quality of life that is not afforded to the general public. Third, what guardsmen represent to their community. We are our community's example of the core value "Service before self." We are the doctors, police officer's, firemen, cashiers at your local department stores, laborers, small business owners, waiters, teachers, citizens that can be counted upon to answer the call of duty for our nation and state in time of crisis. Wherever it exists.

Mobilization / Demobilization

My particular unit has experienced one partial mobilization of a 13-man squad for year, which began in April 2002. The 13-man squad was activated in April 2002 for one year and deployed to twice. The first deployment was to Saudi Arabia for 4 months, May through August 2002. The second deployment was to Baharain for 4 months, Dec 2002 through Feb 2003. Prior to that activation, I volunteered for deployment to Kuwait for 4 months-Feb 2002 to Jun 2002. My most recent deployment was to Iraq for 6 months-Feb 2005 thru Aug 2005. The deployed location contained 60 percent active duty security forces troops and 40 percent Guard and Reserves security forces troops. From the Guard and Reserve troops I worked with, morale was high and all of us volunteered for the chance to serve in Iraq. The time frame between Kuwait and Iraq deployments was 3 years. This was perfect for my unit and employer.

Early notification of the deployment was the key to my unit's success and worked well to prepare civilian employer for my absence.

Compensation and Benefits

The total sum of my monthly pay in Iraq exceeded my civilian take home pay by \$1800.00. All the entitlements were clearly explained to my family and me through a town hall style briefing. This format included organizations such as Family Support, Finance, Legal Office, and ESGR. This also allowed my civilian employer to attend which further enhanced their support for my deployment.

Medical Care

The medical care I received during my deployment occurred in Iraq and was minor without any additional follow-up needed. After the deployment, members of my unit where seen for follow-up medical issues and where able to receive appointments on base. To my knowledge, no complaints were filed about the timeliness of the appointments or quality of medical care they received. Also, my employer (State of Alaska, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities) allowed the continuation of my health care coverage for my family as long as I paid my premium, which was \$75.00 per month.

Family and Employer Support

I received overwhelming support from my immediate family about the deployment and the role I played. They are the best. The Family Support Center of the 168th Air Refueling Wing has one outstanding civilian in charge by the name of Nola Barnes. She called my family frequently checking on them and kept them updated on my status and return date. Any questions my wife had about the deployment, she answered or directed her to the person with the answers and followed up with her afterwards. The materials contained in the deployment package Nola provided were also very, very helpful. From the time I enlisted in the Air National Guard until today, my employer has been super supportive. I have never had a conflict concerning the time needed to attend weekend drills or deployments. I always keep them informed of what is to come concerning me about deployments, training or temporary duty assignments. As soon as I know, they know and our relationship has worked well.

Adequacy of Unit and Individual Equipment

My unit was well outfitted with the required equipment for my deployment to Iraq. We had the latest Body Armor(Interceptor Body Armor) with the plates. We had the latest (Mitch style) helmets, which are superior in comfort to the Vietnam era style helmets and offered the same protection. We received the new M-4 Carbine(Smaller version of the M16 rifle) rifle with the laser aiming system, 6 months prior to the deployment. This allowed us to qualify and carry our own weapons. Every member of my team had a sufficient number of uniforms, hydration systems, gloves and many other items. The installation in Iraq also issued most of the aforementioned equipment, excluding the new weapon systems.

Unfortunately, the most glaring equipment disparity was the M1114 Up armored HMMWV's assigned to the Security Forces at my base. We do not deploy with the vehicles, they are in theater upon our arrival. Our vehicles averaged being 15 years old, broke down a lot and did not have the Red Dot A/C units. The maintenance shop their did the best they could keeping our fleet of Up-Armored vehicles running but our vehicles were just to old and worn out.

Adequacy of Unit and Individual Training

The training my unit received for deployment was mostly in house. We have subject matter experts in radio communications and combat arms training & maintenance within our ranks. Our unit routinely conducts additional training with our night vision equipment, weapon systems, setting up tents, defensive tactics or anything relevant to our mission which is deploying. The mid-level and senior non commissioned officers within my unit average 5 years together training as a team and at least one operational deployment together. This has paid huge dividends for us. Additionally, a number of our guardsmen in my unit are civilian police officer's and firemen with instructor certifications in firearms tactics, CPR and Emergency Trauma Technician. This allows us to receive new updated training on a consistent basis from a civilian perspective as well.

Conclusion

I have thoroughly enjoyed my service in the Air National Guard and the people I work with and for. To be able to offer my own experiences to the Commission as it considers changes to the future role of guardsman is a great, great honor and I am happy to answer your questions.