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THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

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Dear Citizen:

Our Nation is at war. We are fighting a war unlike any that we have fought before. It is a war fought against a global terrorist network, whose leaders, soldiers and supporters are unlikely to surrender in the foreseeable future. It is a war that has many fronts. Some of the fronts, such as those at national borders, are discernible. Other fronts, like those in cyberspace and in the hearts and minds of the American and foreign populations, prove difficult to pinpoint and evaluate. Although this war began before the infamous terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that day is recognized as the beginning of the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

In the State of the Union Address last month, President Bush stated that "some people question if America is really in a war at all. They view terrorism more as a crime, a problem to be solved mainly with law enforcement and indictments. . . . After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got. "

In the twenty-eight months since our Nation was attacked, the United States Armed Forces, in conjunction with coalition forces, have liberated fifty million people in two countries (Afghanistan and Iraq) by overthrowing the terrorist regimes that controlled them. Our forces have captured or killed 46 of the top 55 wanted in Iraq, including Saddam Hussein, and nearly two thirds of known al-Qaeda operatives. Just last week, we captured Muhsin Khadr al-Khafaji, number 48 on the "most wanted" list. This week Iraqi police captured another of the top 55, arresting Muhammad Zimam abd al- Razzaq al-Sadun, "number 41." Our Forces have hunted down thousands of terrorists, disrupted terrorist cells across the globe and in the United States. It is likely that the GWOT has prevented additional terrorist attacks on the United States and other countries.

Last year, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers stated, "We are a nation at war. This is the time for our military to rise to the occasion and serve the nation at a time like no other." To our military, the existence of war was obvious. Their preparations for and deployments to harsh environments in Southwest Asia crystallized "war" as an actual and personal reality. Yet, the statement itself serves as a reminder that some of us were not and still are not convinced that America is "at war."

Our military always rises to the occasion. The military serves the nation as effectively during peace as it does at war. Whether at peace or at war, members of our Armed Forces provide the force needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country, to fight and win our

wars. Ultimately, the mission is to preserve the many freedoms our Nation enjoys and to uphold the rights of the American people as guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

To secure the American way of life, our service members sacrifice many comforts and privileges that Americans are apt to take for granted. On a daily basis, our forces endure family separations, while deployed to forgotten distant lands where they sustain casualties on a daily basis. The families of our Armed Forces conversely feel the void left by their deployed loved ones, left behind to cope with the loneliness of isolation, often feeling helplessness, especially in the face of unnerving, unrelenting news of casualties. To be sure, they and their families have risen and will continue to rise the occasion.

Our Armed Forces (1.4 million active and 1.3 million reserve) and their families do not question the fact that America is a war. Members of our force understand the personal and professional implications of the war. With more than 540 American deaths in Iraq and over 100 in Afghanistan - and thousands of serious injuries, including thirteen from Hartford's 143rd Military Police Company -- our Armed Forces understand firsthand the personal and professional implications of the GWOT. To us, GWOT is defined and measured in terms much more valuable than the hundreds of billions of dollars spent to finance the GWOT operations.

Almost on a daily basis, C-17 transport planes land at nearby Andrews Air Base with seriously wounded soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan, who are loaded on ambulances for treatment and rehabilitation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), in Washington, D.C. Last month, I visited wounded soldiers at WRAMC. Many of the scars borne by our soldiers recovering there were a result of amputations, injuries sustained from rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices and mines. They do not suffer from the kinds of injuries caused by bullets. A visit to our warriors recovering at WRAMC is sure to drive the toll our service members pay deeply home.

On September 14, 2001, in response to the terrorist attacks, President Bush proclaimed a national state of emergency. He also issued Executive Order 13223, ordering the Ready Reserve of the Armed Forces to active duty. Under this call to active duty, hundreds of thousands of Reservists have been called upon to drop their civilian affairs and report for military duty. Thousands were called, performed military duty and were released back to their reserve status. Today, nearly 200,000 Reservists are mobilized, fighting the GWOT. Of the mobilized Reservists, 140,000 are serving overseas. Those deployed to Southwest Asia are required to serve one year "boots-on-the-ground." Most Reservists serving in Southwest Asia will have been mobilized and separated from their families for nearly eighteen months upon demobilization and return to their civilian occupations.

The National Guard, the oldest component of the Armed Forces, is an integral and indispensable partner in our national security. Nearly 500,000 (350,000 soldiers and 110,000 airmen) of our 1.3 million Reservists are National Guardsmen. Our Guardsmen are citizen soldiers and airmen, service members who serve our respective states as well as our country. We are your neighbors and coworkers who, in times of peace, perform military training, preparing for the inevitable call to arms or civil disasters. We train to the same standards of our active-duty counterparts. We number twenty percent of the Total Force; yet receive a fraction (under five percent) of the defense budget.

Since September 11, 2001, we have mobilized nearly 40% of our Nation's Reserve. That percentage will continue to increase, as the Reserve is called to shoulder a larger role in the GWOT. Under the ongoing Iraqi troop rotation, 130,000 U.S. troops will leave Iraq and be replaced with 110,000 fresh soldiers and Marines. At the same time, 11,000 forces turn over in Afghanistan.

As much as 40 percent of the new Iraqi Freedom force will be Reserve and National Guard troops, who now expect deployments well beyond a year -- extended if necessary as previous Reserve and regular force deployments have been. Citizen soldiers now comprise about 22 percent of the roughly 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. By the time the rotation is complete, nearly half the new Iraqi Freedom force will be members of the National Guard and Reserve. An American force of that size -- and composition -- will be required for years, at least through the year 2006.

As with politics, wars, even if the battles are fought in distant lands, are also fought locally. The Connecticut National Guard has fully participated in the GWOT. Immediately following the September 11th terrorist attacks, Connecticut National Guardsmen responded to the call of the Governor, rapidly mobilizing and deploying to provide security at our airports and at critical infrastructure points, such as Millstone Nuclear Power Plant, the Gold Star Bridge and the New Haven Tank Farm. Our Connecticut soldiers and airmen always rise to the occasion, whether for local relief in response to an emergency or for our Nation's defense in response to war.

Since September 11, 2001, the Connecticut National Guard's 5,000 soldiers and airmen have been called to perform duty under state and federal authorities. Thousands of our soldiers have performed state duty securing Connecticut's critical infrastructure. More than 2,000 of our soldier and airmen have mobilized and deployed, nearly 50% of our entire force, to support the GWOT. Connecticut National Guardsmen have performed and are still performing duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, Jordan, Kuwait Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, Germany and Italy. Our Guardsmen routinely deploy throughout Connecticut and to nearly every state in the nation, either for domestic security missions or for training.

In support of the war, the Connecticut National Guard is providing soldiers and airmen in a wide array of occupational specialties. We are sending doctors, lawyers and chaplains. We are sending our fighter and helicopter pilots, military police, engineers, mechanics, infantry and artillery soldiers. Our personnel perform duty of all descriptions, from the construction of bridges and the boring of wells to the providing of close air support for ground troops and the training of the new Iraqi police forces. We are there in force.

Our personnel, your neighbors and coworkers who are members of the Connecticut National Guard, fully participated in the liberation of Afghanistan and Iraq. We are now participating in their reconstruction. We are also conducting essential missions in Connecticut and our sister states and across the globe. For duty, honor, state and country, we always rise to the occasion.

The Connecticut National Guard is a unique dual-status agency, having both federal and state missions. The federal mission is to maintain properly trained and equipped National Guard units for prompt federalization in the event of war, domestic emergencies or other exigencies.

The state mission is to coordinate, support and augment federal, state and local authorities in emergency response; provide emergency management planning, funding, and training assistance to communities; and conduct community service programs. The National Guard, a capable force available to state governors for civil and emergency relief, is a full and equal partner in the defense of our Nation, in times of war and peace.

Whether individual Americans believe we are at war should not undermine our collective support of our service members and veterans. The American people, especially our federal and state elected officials -- in Congress as well as in our state capitols -- should wholeheartedly support our Armed Forces, our Total Force -- Active, Reserve and National Guard. We, as a Nation, must not permit the amorphous composition of the enemy and the debate over the definition and nature of this war to corrupt the reality of our national values and undermine our resolve to defeat our enemies. Likewise, we must ensure that we do not alienate the spirit of our national treasure -- our Armed Forces -- who are dedicated to our liberty, national security and defense, who sacrifice much for our common interest and benefit, who ask for -- and receive -- little in return.

This session, I've introduced legislation to our General Assembly to ensure that Connecticut's service members and veterans receive well-deserved recognition for their sacrifices and efforts. Some view this legislation as controversial, even radical, in that it streamlines existing programs and thinking regarding our military and veteran communities. We, as a society, must react to our changing environment and improve our response to the plight of our service members and veterans, lest we -- and those whom we serve -- become too unmoving, too bureaucratically entrenched to accomplish the mission. The time to improve the rewards for those who have sacrificed and who are sacrificing for us is now. Our delay or denial, in regard to support for our service members, veterans and their families, is ultimately our disgrace.

Sincerely,

William A. Cugno  
Lieutenant General  
The Adjutant General