



Our National Guard: Too High a Price

Almost Half of Soldiers Scheduled to Deploy to Iraq from National Guard

Veterans for America (VFA) is greatly concerned that between now and the end of President George W. Bush's term in office on January 20, 2009, almost half of the Soldiers who are scheduled to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan – totaling almost 20,000 troops – will come from the National Guard.

Further, nearly half of the Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams (BCT's) deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan in this timeframe will be on their second tour. Also, VFA has found that a very high percentage of Guard members in units on their first deployment will be on their second or greater deployment. More than 50% of members of the Washington National Guard have been deployed before, as have more than 30% of the New Jersey Guard.

To put the deployments of the National Guard in historical context, at least 35 states have deployed more troops to Iraq and Afghanistan than to any war since World War II.¹ In all, as of March 31, 2008, more than 267,399 members of the National Guard have been deployed since September 11, 2001, and, as of that date, 32,871 National Guard troops were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Between now and January 20, 2009, the deploying National Guard BCT's will come from Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Beginning in spring 2009, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania (again), Tennessee, Texas (again), Vermont, and Wisconsin are scheduled to deploy National Guard BCT's.

Traditionally, Guard leaders have aimed to give their troops five times as much time at home as deployed. None of the three Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams scheduled to deploy for a second time later this year will have had five years at home between deployments. This means that many Soldiers who are soon to deploy will have had insufficient time at home to rest, recuperate, and integrate new members. In addition, as numerous Army studies have demonstrated, multiple deployments with inadequate time at home have severe post-combat psychological consequences.

Any discussion of Iraq war policy must address the consequences of these deployment policies. Last year, the Department of Defense found that members of the National Guard who had been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan were 25% more likely to have suffered a combat-related psychological wound than members of the active-duty Army who have been deployed.² Within the past two weeks, an Army history of the Iraq war found that “the price paid by reservists [i.e., members of the National Guard and Reserve] and communities to sustain long and repetitive mobilizations...may not be sustainable in the future.”³ “The 360-degree threat” environments of

Iraq and Afghanistan have placed members of the National Guard in harm's way to a degree never expected – with devastating consequences.⁴

The effect of Guard deployments on communities is also considerable. Many communities are forced to devote additional resources to police and fire services to compensate for Guard deployments. Emergency responders not deployed, in turn, often work overtime, which places an additional burden on the fiscal resources of cities and towns. The absence of fire and police personnel also strains some smaller forces to the point of reducing their effectiveness as first responders.

As the recent flooding in the Midwest demonstrated, the presence (or absence) of adequate number of National Guard members can be of considerable benefit to local communities, states, and regions. On the other hand, when National Guards are understaffed, disaster response can be hobbles, as partly demonstrated by the inadequate response to the destruction of Hurricane Katrina.

Large-scale deployment of members of the National Guard also strains the ability of states to respond to other contingencies. Recently, the Government Accountability Office (GAO)⁵ reported that Federal authorities continue to coordinate inadequately with state Adjutant Generals in the development of homeland defense, homeland security, and civil response plans. VFA is greatly concerned that such inadequacies, combined with the deployment of large numbers of troops from neighboring states (for instance, both New Jersey and Pennsylvania are soon to deploy a large percentage of their National Guards), could have catastrophic effects in the event of regional contingencies.

Recently, VFA found through its work with New Jersey Guard members and their families that one of the most pressing concerns is the anticipated financial hardship that will result from the deployment of many families' chief income earner. As New Jersey will deploy half its National Guard to Iraq, the economic impact will be significant. There are other effects on families. In the case of New Jersey's recent mobilization of the 50th BCT, at least 13 married couples will be deployed to Iraq later this year. In addition, 15 brothers will be deployed; eight brother-sister duos; and five father-son combinations. Also, VFA's work has shown that National Guards often have a high percentage of single parents in their ranks. These deployments will obviously have enormous implications – including disrupted family dynamics, as well as financial and emotional hardships – for the families affected.

In short, Iraq policy debates must recognize the strains that Guard members, their families, and their communities continue to endure – and the steps that must be taken to ensure that our country is treating them fairly. A national conversation is merited; not a one-sided debate.

Breakdown by Number of Tours of Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams (BCT's) Scheduled to Deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan Between Now and the End of President Bush's Term

IRAQ

SECOND DEPLOYMENT

- 29th BCT (**Hawaii**)
- 36th Infantry Division, 56th BCT (**Texas**)
- 81st BCT (**Washington**)

FIRST DEPLOYMENT

- 50th BCT (**New Jersey**)
- 28th Infantry Division, 56th BCT (**Pennsylvania**)

AFGHANISTAN

FIRST DEPLOYMENT

- 33rd BCT (**Illinois**)

State-By-State Breakdown of Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams (BCT's) Scheduled to Deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan Between Now and the End of President Bush's Term

A note regarding fatality figures in this report:

As of July 1, 2008, the total number of National Guard fatalities from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) was 540.⁶ VFA mourns the death of these servicemembers and all others who have died in our recent wars, as well as earlier wars.

Due to the Army's transition to a modular force, which has entailed, among other steps, relocating and reflagging units, and the difficulty of consolidating information from a wide range of open sources, the fatality figures in this report are VFA's best estimate of National Guard fatalities.⁷ There may be some variance between the fatality figures in this report and reports from other sources.

Hawaii

The fatality figures in this report are VFA's best estimate.

After the 29th BCT from Hawaii returned from its first deployment to Iraq in January 2006, Hawaii's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Bob Lee, promised that the 29th BCT would not deploy again for five years.⁸ This was thought reasonable since the 29th had suffered almost as many KIA's on its tour of Iraq as an average active-Army BCT (and three times the KIA rate of other National Guard BCT's that had been deployed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan). Unfortunately for the members of the 29th BCT, the Pentagon announced in October 2007 that the unit would be deployed again in 2008. At that time, General Lee stated that he did not "feel good" about the unit's short time at home.⁹

During the 29th BCT's first tour, 18 members of the unit were killed in action.¹⁰ The Hawaii National Guard has already deployed more troops to Iraq than to any war since World War II.

29th Brigade Combat Team

- Tours:
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), December 2004 to January 2006: 18 fatalities
 - 18-month mobilization
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), scheduled to deploy late summer/early autumn 2008
 - Estimated 12-month mobilization

Illinois

The fatality figures in this report are VFA's best estimate.

Around 3,000 Soldiers from the 33rd BCT are scheduled to be mobilized for 12 months for a deployment to Afghanistan in the fall of 2008 to train Afghan Army and National Police units. This will be the unit's first deployment as a brigade and the largest deployment of the Illinois Army National Guard troops since World War II.¹¹

Twenty Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard have lost their lives in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

33rd Brigade Combat Team

- Tour:
 - Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), scheduled to deploy late summer/early autumn 2008
 - Estimated 12-month mobilization

New Jersey

The fatality figures in this report are VFA's best estimate.

More than 2,800 Soldiers from New Jersey and more than 260 Soldiers from the Michigan National Guard will be deployed to Iraq as part of the 50th Brigade Combat Team (BCT). This represents roughly half of New Jersey's National Guard and the largest deployment of the New Jersey Guard since World War II. According to New Jersey Guard officials, at least 30 percent of the members of the 50th have been deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan before. While each of the 50th BCT's subordinate units have deployed previously, this tour will be the unit's first as a brigade.

In total, five members of the New Jersey National Guard have lost their lives in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In June, training for the 50th BCT began in Fort Bliss, TX, and will last approximately three months. The 50th BCT will be deployed to Iraq shortly after training concludes. In October 2007, the members of the 50th BCT were informed that they would be deploying to Iraq in 2008, rather than 2010, as originally planned. At the time, New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine stated: "You are handicapping yourself to some degree when you send people out of state. We will be strapped for resources." He also added that he had "serious questions" about how New Jersey's National Guard was being used, while also voicing strong support for New Jersey National Guard members and their families.¹²

50th Brigade Combat Team

- Tour:
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), scheduled to deploy late summer/early autumn 2008
 - Estimated 12-month mobilization

Pennsylvania

The fatality figures in this report are VFA's best estimate.

The Pennsylvania National Guard's 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the 28th Infantry Division is scheduled to deploy to Iraq for the first time as a brigade in January 2009. The Pennsylvania National Guard has reported that the 56th Stryker BCT, which is composed of approximately 3,000 troops, could be engaged in security missions and offensive operations.¹³ The Stryker – a light-armored transport vehicle – gives the brigade its name. The 56th Stryker BCT is the only unit in the National Guard trained to use the Stryker.

The Pennsylvania National Guard, which has deployed more Soldiers to Iraq than in any war since World War II, has lost 37 Soldiers in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

28th Infantry Division, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team

- Tours:
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), scheduled to deploy November 2008
 - Estimated 12-month mobilization

Texas

The fatality figures in this report are VFA's best estimate.

The first deployment of the 36th Infantry Division's 56th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) in December 2004 marked the first time since World War II that a Texas National Guard divisional brigade deployed as a unit.

Eight members of the Texas National Guard have lost their lives since September 11, 2001. In all, the Texas National Guard has deployed more troops to Iraq than any war since World War II.

36th Infantry Division, 56th Brigade Combat Team

- Tour:
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), December 2004 to December 2005: 8 fatalities
 - 18-month mobilization
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), scheduled to deploy late summer/early autumn 2008
 - Estimated 12-month mobilization

Washington

The fatality figures in this report are VFA's best estimate.

By 2004, Washington had already deployed more troops to Iraq than to any war since World War II.

The 3,800 members of the Washington National Guard's 81st Brigade Combat Team (BCT) are scheduled to deploy to Iraq for the second time in late summer/early autumn 2008. The unit's mission will focus on providing security within Iraq.

The Washington National Guard has lost five Soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

81st Brigade Combat Team

- Tours:
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), February 2004 to March 2005: 9 fatalities
 - 15-month mobilization
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), scheduled to deploy late summer/early autumn 2008
 - Estimated 12-month mobilization

¹ VFA has confirmed that the following states have deployed (or will soon deploy) more troops to Iraq and/or Afghanistan than to any war since World War II: Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

² Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health, "An Achievable Vision: Report of the Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health," June 2007, p. ES-2.

³ Dr. Donald P. Wright, Colonel Timothy R. Reese with the Contemporary Operations Study Team, "On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, May 2004--January 2005," p. 575.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 586.

⁵ United States Government Accountability Office, "Steps Have Been Taken to Improve U.S. Northern Command's Coordination with States and the National Guard Bureau, but Gaps Remain," GAO-08-252, April 2008, and United States Government Accountability Office, "U.S. Northern Command Has Made Progress but Needs to Address Force Allocation, Readiness Tracking Gaps, and Other Issues," GAO-08-251, April 2008.

⁶ "Some Gave All...: Total Casualties as of July 1, 2008," US National Guard Bureau, http://www.ngb.army.mil/features/somegaveall/Some_Gave_All_List.xls.

⁷ Fatality figures in this report are derived from two primary sources: *Department of Defense, Operation Enduring Freedom: Military Deaths from October 1, 2001 by Name as of July 5, 2008*, http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oef_list_of_names.pdf; Department of Defense, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Military Deaths from March 19, 2003 by Name as of July 5, 2008*, http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oif_list_of_names.pdf.

⁸ Audrey McAvoy, "Lee doubts island Guard members will be mobilized soon," Associated Press, January 12, 2007.

⁹ Gregg Kakesako, "National Guard: Orders saddled on isle Guard," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, October 20, 2007.

¹⁰ Gregg Kakesako, "Citizen soldiers ready for Kuwait, Some members of the 29th Infantry Brigade will be escorting convoys in Iraq," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 6, 2008.

¹¹ John Reynolds, "Guard unit gears up for Afghan war duty, Largest deployment for state since WWII," *The State Journal-Register* (Springfield, IL), February 21, 2008.

¹² John Reitmeyer, "Corzine Decries Guard use in Iraq, Says State will Suffer in Case of Emergency," *The Record* (Bergen County, NJ), October 19, 2007.

¹³ Cody Switzer, "700 from region to be sent to Iraq, Stryker brigade to be part of 33,000-troop deployment," *Erie Times-News*, July 2, 2008.