United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 2, 2006

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon, Room 3E880
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

According to recent press reports, the Department of Defense plans to submit, as part of the Fiscal Year 2007 Defense Budget, a proposal to Congress cutting the Army National Guard by almost 17,000 personnel as well as making substantial reductions in the end-strength of the Air National Guard. If true, we strongly oppose these proposals.

As you well know, the National Guard's dual-purpose force has, once again, demonstrated its inherent importance to the security of the nation. No other contribution better illustrates this point then the fact that almost 40 percent of U.S. ground personnel in Iraq are members of the National Guard. Clearly, this statistic confirms the essential role of the Guard in our nation's Total Force strategy. Simultaneously, the National Guard's response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated the value of the Guard's equally vital mission: to support civilian authorities; defend the homeland; and respond to emergencies at home.

It is our understanding that these proposed cuts are in response to emerging budget realities. However, we firmly believe that reductions in personnel strength to the National Guard are not cost-effective. In fact, many cost-benefit analyses show that the National Guard provides a higher-level of capability for each dollar of investment. This is true, in part, because the force leverages the skills and expertise that Guard personnel maintain in their civilian professions.

Therefore, we will respectfully oppose proposals to cut the end-strength of the National Guard and hope to work with you to ensure the Guard maintains a robust capability to meet its responsibilities as a dual-purpose force.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kit Bond

CHRISTOPHER S. BOND
Co-Chair, National Guard Caucus
United States Senate

Patrick Leahy

PATRICK LEAHY
Co-Chair, National Guard Caucus
United States Senate

George Allen

Joe Biden

Bob Inglis

Evan Bayh

E. Benjamin Nelson

Arlen Specter

Harry Reid

Lisa Murkowski

Jim Bunning

Maria Cantwell

Jim Talent

Norm Coleman

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Barbara Boxer

Dianne Feinstein

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Kent Conrad

Max Baucus

Mary Landrieu

Tim Johnson

Blanche L. Lincoln

Barbara Boxer

Barbara A. Mikulski

Rick Santorum

Craig Thomas

Jim Jeffords

Susan M. Collins

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C. H. Smith

Ron Wyden

Ken Salazar

Orrin Hatch

Olympia Snowe

Frank R. Lautenberg

Patty Murray

Lincoln Chafee

Mike DeWine

Jim Talent

Chris Dodd

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Michael B. Enzi

Mark Dayton

Tom Sage

Ted Kennedy

John Thune

Chuck Grassley

Jim Inhofe

David Vitter

George V. Voinovich