NATIONAL GUARD ON-THE-RECORD TELEPHONIC MEDIA ROUNDTABLE

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Introduction:

Welcome to, all of you who are here for attendance for our media round table. We'll be starting in a very few minutes. If you would please ensure that you keep your mics muted until, and unless we are able to call on you. And I will be starting very shortly, and then reading the Rules of Engagement. So, thank you and we really do appreciate you being here. We'll be starting very shortly, just want to welcome each of you here. And we will start in about approximately two minutes.

We're going to begin. Good afternoon, thank you for joining us today; my name is Major Dyana Allen, and I am going to be moderating this media round table on the National Guard Mobilization for DC Support. This is scheduled for approximately 45 minutes and is on the record. Before I begin, I ask that you continue to remain muted until I call on you for your questions.

And when asking a question, please identify yourself, and your outlet. Because we have so many of your interests today, please go ahead and ask your most important question first, and then if we are able to go through the list; then you can ask a follow one. So, the rules will be; ask one question and then we are going to be going to the next outlet. So, we are going to begin, today with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Dan Hokanson he's going to begin to provide us a statement, and then we are going to continue with Mr. Jonathan R. Hoffman, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

Each of their bios were provided in the media release, and at the end of this media round table, if we have any open questions or anything, we will follow up with you, and provide the information as requested.

Opening Statement:

Army General Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau:

Right now, we have approximately 6,200 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from 6 states and the District of Columbia on the ground in the NCR supporting civilian authorities.
We have received support requests from the Secret Service, Capitol Police, and Park Police, and have been authorized to provide up to 15,000 Guard members to meet current and future inauguration support requirements.

To date, our troops have been requested to support security, logistics, liaison, and communication missions.

In case you are not already aware, the National Guard has a long and proud history of inauguration support and the forefathers of today's National Guard were present for the Inauguration of George Washington, and we have been part of every inauguration since.

As always, our first priority is to protect people and property. The National Guard looks forward to working with our district and federal partners to ensure a peaceful inauguration for President Elect Biden on January 20th.

Dialogue:

[Name]    [QUESTION/RESPONSE]

GEN Hokanson: Thank you for this opportunity to talk about our National Guard troops and the continued support of the District and federal authorities.

Right now, we have approximately 6,200 National Guard soldiers and airmen from six states and the District of Columbia on the ground in support of civil authorities here in the National Capital Region. We have received support requests from the Secret Service, Capitol Police and Park Police, and have been authorized to provide up to 15,000 Guard members to meet current and future support requirements.

To date, our troops have been requested to support security, logistics, liaison, and communication missions. In case you're not already aware, the National Guard has a long and proud history of inauguration support and the forefathers of today's National Guard were present for the inauguration of George Washington, and we have been part of every inauguration since then.

As always, our first priority is to protect people and property. The National Guard looks forward to working with our district and federal partners to ensure a peaceful inauguration for President-elect Biden on Jan. 20th.
Also, I'd like to point out that, as of today, we have 64,000 National Guardsmen currently mobilized. In addition to those here, we have 21,000 supporting COVID-19 efforts around the country and various other missions that we do day to day. This is down markedly from our high point this summer of 120,000.

One point I would like to highlight today is with respect to the New York National Guard, in addition to sending personnel down here to support the National Capital Region, they're also working this week to re-stand-up the Javits Center and provide support for COVID-19, the administration of vaccines there.

And so, our folks are very busy but they're very fortunate and that's what they sign up to do. And of the 441,000 that we have in the National Guard, they look forward to helping their communities and their states and nations in any way they can.

With that, Jonathan and I welcome your questions.

Maj. Dyana Allen: Hi, everybody. So, with the interest of time I'd like to ask everyone to just ask one question and one follow-up and I'll be calling on you. From The Washington Post, Dan Lamothe, please.

Dan Lamothe: Q: Hello. Yes, I'm sorry. I was struggling with the mute there for a second. One point I wanted to touch on, Congressman Crow released a readout of his call with Secretary McCarthy last night and referenced his concern about whether or not there will be any kind of effort to make clear there's no extremists within the National Guard. While I think there's certainly no indication that the great majority would be, but there has been -- that issue has come up in the last calendar year. What is feasible for the Guard to do to screen these people ahead of time in a relatively small time frame? Thanks.

GEN Hokanson: Dan, with respect to that, we work very closely with law enforcement agencies. And if they identify any personnel of interest or concern, obviously we'll work with them on that. But I am not aware of any specific concerns at this time. Over.

Dan Lamothe: Q: Is there any new or added effort here that the lawmakers have requested?
GEN Hokanson: Not that I'm aware of, Dan. Thank you.


Barbara Starr  Q: General Hokanson, if you're going to have 15,000 troops there -- that's, of course, a significant mass of troops. So, can you give us your assessment of the threat that you believe they are facing and whether or not you believe they need to have weapons to be able to defend themselves?

GEN Hokanson: So Barbara, with respect to that, we really work off of the requirements that the -- in this case, the federal agencies -- their support requirement. And that really drives the number of personnel that we will provide to meet their requirements.

With respect to arming, obviously we work very closely with the -- the federal agency, the FBI and law enforcement to determine if there is a need for that.

Obviously, we're -- we're very concerned that -- we want individuals to be -- have the right to self-defense. And so, that'll be an ongoing conversation. And if the senior leadership determines that that's the -- the right posture to be in then -- then that's something we will do.

Barbara Starr  Q: Can I just follow-up (very ?) quickly (that ?) you already have a significant number of troops that are not armed. Do you believe the National Guard that are currently on the streets need to have some ability to defend themselves?

GEN Hokanson: Yes, Barbara. So when we look at that -- like I said we -- we will -- we address this literally every day (and ?) multiple times during the day and keep a close communication with the FBI and law enforcement.

And if we identify a threat, we want to make sure that any Guardsmen that we have out on the street are properly equipped and prepared for anything that they may face.


Helene Cooper  Q: Hi. Thanks for doing this. We've heard a lot over the past weekend from Maryland Governor Larry Hogan about a slow response from the National Guard, including saying that he couldn't get his requests
approved quickly enough.

And that he would mobilize their -- the Maryland Guard were mobilized and ready to go but couldn't actually cross over the border into D.C. without an OK from the Pentagon, and that that took forever. Would you like to respond to any of that?

GEN Hokanson: Well, ma'am, I -- all I can tell you is when I -- I got word that -- that the Virginia and Maryland National Guards have been contacted or their governors had, I reached out really immediately, as soon as I found that out, to both Virginia and Maryland.

And I spoke to the Virginia adjutant general at about 3:46 p.m. on the 6th. And he confirmed that -- yes, that -- that their governor had mobilized their National Guard Response Force. And each of our 50 states, three territories, and D.C. have an identified National Guard Response Force.

The general standard we use is that -- that they -- the initial element or about a quarter of that force should be at their armory within eight hours. And within 24 hours is when we expect the -- really the full force to be there. So, with respect to Maryland, I actually spoke to the -- to the Maryland adjutant general at about 3:55 p.m.

And at that time, he had mentioned that, yes, the governor had asked them to mobilize their Response Force. At the time, he told me they had 100 soldiers headed to their armory.

And he believed that they would be able to -- to be down to Washington, D.C., in eight to 10 hours from then with their equipment. And we called up later, it was at 11p.m. that evening that the full unit was there and accounted for and -- and drawing their equipment.

And they were the first units into Washington, D.C., to support the D.C. National Guard. And I believe they arrived at 9 a.m. on the 7th, the next day. And when we look at the timelines that we request for National Guard Response Forces, they -- they met all the -- the general guidance that we provide them.

Helene Cooper: Q: So, is this a false narrative that Governor Hogan is putting out? Because he's painting a picture of the Maryland National Guard standing at the border, ready to rush to -- to help out at the Capitol, and there's a hold up at the Pentagon. You're saying that's not what happened?
GEN Hokanson: No, ma'am, not from my conversation with their adjutant general. That it wasn't until 11 p.m. that their unit was fully marshaled and -- and with their equipment.

And that -- that really sticks with the general guidance that we looked at. Usually eight hours, as I mentioned, for the first about 25 percent of the unit and then 24 hours to have the whole -- the whole unit ready to go.

Helene Cooper Q: And how worried are --

(CROSSTALK)

Mr. Hoffman: Helene, this is Jonathan. Helene, this is Jonathan --

Helene Cooper Q: Yes?

Mr. Hoffman I just want to add, as General Hokanson just described, there were two parallel things going on is that the governor had activated the Guard. They were moving through their mobilization efforts on a timeline to deploy to the NCR and to D.C.

And at the same time, (inaudible) was talking with General Hokanson and had conversations with the secretary -- with the governor and Secretary McCarthy to receive the authorization to come in, which took place I think about 45 minutes after General Hokanson's initial conversation.

So two parallel things happening, one did not delay the other. And I think general -- I think the governor actually addressed this in his interview yesterday, where he indicated that -- that there was no real actual delay in getting the personnel into D.C. based on that requirement to seek approval from Secretary McCarthy.

Maj. Dyana Allen: Thank you for that, sir and ma'am. I'm going to just call on the next person, but I'll come back to you for a follow-up. AP, Lolita Baldor. And if I can just remind everybody to mute your phones if you're not speaking please. We're getting some feedback.

Lolita Baldor Q: Hi, thanks. General, can you just sort of specifically address the authorities for the Guard, both the 1,100 D.C. Guard that were on the ground quickly, the other 6,200 that are now here and then the rest that are
coming in, specifically those?

Are they activated under federal law? Are they allowed at all to do any law enforcement? And as you look ahead, are you going to -- is there any ability to allow them to do any types of law enforcement, sort of, getting back to the weapons issue obviously?

GEN Hokanson: Lolita, so when we look at this -- so within the D.C. Guard, they're part of the D.C. National Guard. And so they -- in this case if you look at on Jan. 6th, they were there assisting the Metro Police Department with traffic control points and also potential crowd control at the Metro station.

When we looked at -- when they went into full mobilization, the 1,100 within the D.C. Guard, they were looking at what support requests that they were given and what actually tasks they would like them to do. And so, in many cases they do have the authority to do law enforcement but really it's literally as a last resort.

And we try to remind folks that, you know, the National Guard -- we're not first responders but when it comes to a disaster, we're often the first ones there on the scene. But when it comes to law enforcement, really we want to make sure that all law enforcement officers have been exhausted before we bring in the National Guard.

And in many cases, we ask our National Guard to do those missions that's like protecting a facility or location to free-up the law enforcement officers so they can then perform the law enforcement activities.

And if you look at respect to the soldiers and airmen coming from other states into Washington, D.C., most of their mission sets are -- are really security.

And they follow strict rules on the use of force that's given to them by the D.C. National Guard. Because once they come here, they'll follow under in this case the commanding general of the D.C. Guard, Major General William Walker.

And as they come in, each one is briefed on what their responsibilities and authorities are. And they're very clear to make sure everyone understands what they can and what they're being asked to do and not asked to do.

Lolita Baldor Q: Sir, does the -- General, just -- are you saying that they -- do they fall
under Title 10, (where ?) they would be (prohibited ?) by the -- by posse comitatus or is it just strictly a case-by-case basis on the mission?

GEN Hokanson: In this case, Lolita, they're all mobilized under Title 32, so they're not Title 10. So, they are authorized to do law enforcement if that's requested from the supporting agency.

Q: Thank you.

Maj. Dyana Allen: Dyana, this is Tracy --

(CROSSTALK)

Tracy O'Grady-Walsh: Can you make sure this whole group gets the National Guard graphic that we've put together?

Maj. Dyana Allen: Yes, ma'am.

Tracy O'Grady-Walsh: Thanks.

Maj. Dyana Allen: We'll send that out with everybody who has RSVP’d. And if I could just ask everybody to please look at your phone and make sure that you're muted. We're getting quite a lot of interference.

Okay. ABC News, Luis Martinez

Luis Martinez Q: Hi. Thank you. Just want to get the information, there are reports out there that you may have between 10,000 or 13,000 National Guardsmen on hand for the inauguration. Can you confirm those numbers?

And in the past you've had -- the National Guard has participating in the inauguration but more a support role, I think. Can you lay out for us exactly what the additional Guardsmen will be doing? Will they (be the ones ?)?

And for Jonathan, what will the role be for active-duty personnel in the National Guard? Will they be mainly ceremonial, or will they be also doing similar things like what the Guard is doing right now?

GEN Hokanson: So Luis, I'll take the first part before I hand it to Jonathan. So right now, we've got a plan for 10,000. We've been authorized up to 15,000. And the number of folks we have here is really directly dependent on the requests
that we get from either the Secret Service, Capitol Police, or Park Police.

And so, we continue to refine the requests literally daily. But right now, we've got 10,000 inbound and we're authorized to go up to 15,000. And so, we continue to work with them on a case-by-case basis. And right now, the mission sets we'll be getting are primarily providing security, logistics, liaison, and communications missions. And if those change, we'll be able to let you know.

But currently that's all that we're planning to do. And let me hand it off to Jonathan with respect to the active-duty.

Mr. Hoffman: Yes, Luis, really I think the question with regard to (inaudible) on units is accurate. The -- I do see in any inauguration, the Military District of Washington, and other units from around the country (similarly ?) will participate in the parade or some of the other festivities that take place in the inauguration.

We -- obviously, those events have curtailed because of COVID. I don't want to speak for the Presidential Inaugural Committee, but they still have events that will require ceremonial support. Much of that ceremonial support will be from active-duty units, say, the Old Guard or the Marine (Barracks, and ?) I am including units from around the country that could be supporting that.

So those are ceremonial in nature. They are not intended to be a part of the security efforts or the other efforts that the National Guard are taking as part of the law enforcement support to federal law enforcement. I can't speak to whether that could change based on threat assessments (or ?) requests. There may be capabilities that others are not able to meet. But I'm not aware of any of that at this time.

And then just following up on -- the secretary's commitment is to provide the support necessary through the inauguration, past the inauguration, as the new administration sees fit and as the threat exists. So, we're not looking at Jan. 20th as the last day and then people will pack up and go home at the conclusion of all the events.

So, there will be some element that will remain for a brief period to ensure safety and security in the days following the inauguration as well. And that's the commitment that we've made.
Luis Martinez: Q: And what number do you (think ?) for the active-duty?

GEN Hokanson: I would have to direct you (to NBW ?) on that with regards to ceremonial efforts. I'm not tracking the inaugural committee requests for ceremonial units right now.

Luis Martinez: Q: Thanks.

Maj. Dyana Allen: OK. Thank you, sir.

From Reuters, Idris Ali?

Idris Ali: Q: Yes, thank you.

Very quickly, how does the 15,000 number compare to inaugurations in the past in terms of National Guard troops provided for security? And secondly, there was a story, I believe, on Jan. 8th saying the Brigadier General David Wood, of the Pennsylvania National Guard, had said that his (crew ?) will be armed (for the use of force ?).

So, I'm just wondering, has there not been a determination about weapons or is it just each different Guard units gets to decide, if you could clear that up?

GEN Hokanson: So Idris, just to -- when we look back, I believe there was 9,000, but we can get you the exact number that were there for President Obama's inauguration. And the number has varied obviously over the years. And we did have, I believe, at least 5,000 scheduled to come in anyway due to the COVID environment.

And I apologize. I didn't get (to a whole note ?) on the conversation about weapons. But what we did is anytime our part National Guardsmen go somewhere, we make sure that they bring all of the equipment that they may or may not need so that we don't have to, you know, drive back to New York to go to something that we forgot. So when we ask them to travel, we ask them to bring all their equipment -- their safety equipment.

We actually -- actually make sure that they do bring their weapons as well just so they are here locally. Ideally, we'll never need them. But if we do we want to know that they're close by, they are readily accessible, if necessary, based on the mission.
Maj. Dyana Allen: OK. FOX News, Jennifer Griffin?

Jennifer Griffin: Q: Thank you very much.

Will these National Guard that are arriving on Saturday -- and can you confirm the number that will be arriving by Saturday? Will they be used in any of the protests that are planned prior to Jan. 20th? And are those protests still being given permission to proceed?

GEN Hokanson: So, Jennifer, I can't answer the question whether or not the protests will proceed. I'd have to refer to the D.C. mayor's office with respect to that.

With respect to the personnel that we have coming in, the 6,200 today and then we're building up to 10,000 or potentially more by Saturday, we are basically responding to any request for support from the agencies -- the federal agencies here in D.C. And so, if their request is in support of a protest then that's something that the secretary of the Army will make a decision on and, if so, we will provide the support requested.

Jennifer Griffin: Q: And just a quick follow-up. Do you regret that the Capitol Hill Police and others did not request the National Guard in advance for Wednesday's event?

GEN Hokanson: Jennifer, I really couldn't comment on that from my perspective.

Maj. Dyana Allen: OK. McClatchy, Tara Copp?

Tara Copp: Q: Hi, thank you so much for doing this. (One quick ) question -- might be a good follow-up (for after this ?), is -- is there any way to get a breakdown of where the additional thousands of forces are coming from, which states are sending their units? That would be deeply appreciated.

Secondly, to follow-up on Dan's question at the beginning, there was a request (from ?) Representative Crow to have Army CID start to look at everybody who's coming into the city, all the service members, just to -- to vet them for any sort of extremist ties. And what I've heard from you, General Hokanson, is that there will not be an additional security vetting taking place, of those service members coming into the city. Is that correct?

GEN Hokanson: So Tara, I'm actually not tracking that. I would refer you to the secretary of the Army's office with respect to that because I'm not -- I'm not aware
of that at this time.

Jonathan?

Mr. Hoffman: No, I -- I would just say I know the secretary of the Army had a conversation with the representative. Would have to get a full readout of that conversation.

Tara Copp Q: OK, OK --

(CROSSTALK)

GEN Hokanson: We do not tolerate extremists in our ranks and that's -- that's the bottom line and -- and we (haven't ?) and so any effort and any opportunity we have to identify individuals that have extremist behavior, extremist tendencies, they will be addressed, they will be referred to the appropriate authorities for -- for addressing that. But that's been the -- the -- the premise of -- of the department for as long as it's been in place and we'll continue to do so.

Tara Copp Q: OK. And lastly, Mayor Bowser, in her press conference last week, spoke about how D.C. has become this regular hotspot for potential violent protests, and I was wondering, General, if you've had any conversations about potentially having a long-term presence in the city, if you've talked to the Army about it, if you've talked to the mayor about it, especially because it doesn't seem like these protests are going to end and -- as you said, after the 20th and maybe not some months later?

GEN Hokanson: Yes, Tara, and so this is an ongoing conversation. I was actually with General Walker last night at the D.C. Armory and we continue to look at the environment and want to make sure that we have the capabilities that our -- our communities would request as best as we can. And so that will be an ongoing conversation, obviously with the secretary of the Army and the appropriate authorities, to determine what type or if -- if that's something that they want to pursue in the future, but we are very aware of that.

Maj. Dyana Allen: Thank you -- thank you (for speaking, sir ?). CBS News, David Martin?

David Martin Q: Yes, I'd like to go back to the extremist question once again. Are you - - are you aware of any members of the National Guard who participated in the storming of the Capitol?
GEN Hokanson: And so David, with respect to that, I know that law enforcement is working to identify, you know, any individuals involved in the breach of the Capitol, and if there were any service members involved in any criminal activity, they'll be handled by law enforcement or referred to their chain of command, as appropriate.

David Martin Q: But are -- are you aware of any that have been identified as of right now?

GEN Hokanson: No, David, not at this time.

Q: OK, thank you.

Maj. Dyana Allen: Thank you. AFP, Paul Handley?

Paul Handley Q: Hi, thank you for taking my call. Can you -- go back -- going back to the Army, can you say that the National Guard are all (equipped and ready to use riot gear ?) and will you have armored vehicles? I'm just wondering whether there's any sort of controls on whether they suit up with riot gear or whether you need a special permission as you do with firearms or they take them out on the street with them either way?

GEN Hokanson: So with the relation to this, (Paul ?), we really look at the support request from -- from the agency. In this case it would be the Secret Service, Capitol Police, or Park Police.

And really they work -- General Walker works very closely with them and the secretary of the Army to approve the appropriate posture in terms of whether they wear near gear, riot gear, if they have weapons or any -- any special equipment that they may -- may be needed.

And so, they'll make sure that they agree upon that before the mission set. So they don't automatically go to one stance. It's a fully coordinated operation when they do that. And with the respect to armored vehicles, I am not aware of any -- any request for armored vehicles at this time. And none that I'm aware of, not even any conversations.

Maj. Dyana Allen: OK, thank you sir. POLITICO, Lara Seligman.

Lara Seligman Q: Hi, thanks for doing this. A couple quick questions. Just first of all, about the riot here on Wednesday. Were -- how quickly were Guardsmen
able to access their riot gear if they needed to? I -- my understanding is that (inaudible) right there in trucks nearby.

And then my second question is, are there concerns from the Guardsmen that they don't have the proper body armor or equipment to protect themselves in the coming days?

GEN Hokanson: So Lara, two questions there. So the first one, with respect to the mission that they were performing on Wednesday and this was agreed upon (the - - the, you know, ?) uniform that they would be wearing.

And so, when we look at the folks at the traffic control points, they were in the uniform that requested and agreed upon. But in the vehicles that they were literally parked right next to, they had their body armor and their helmets just in case things got a little bit out of hand and there was never a need for that.

Now with respect to the riot gear to go to the Capitol, that was pertained of the D.C. National Guard Armory. And so when the request was made, the secretary of the Army made the decision that those units return to the D.C. Armory to get the full complement of everything that they would need because they did not anticipate that level of violence.

And it also gave them a chance to not only put on all the equipment and be ready but also get a briefing on what exactly they would be asked to do so that when they got there, they knew the mission set that they were going to and they were fully equipped and ready to perform now.

Mr. Hoffman: Hey there, Lara. It's Jon. Just to clarify, I think as the general said, they had personal protective gear with them. They did not have riot gear with them.

GEN Hokanson: And then with respect to concerns for the soldier, Lara. We look at that very closely and we have all of the units that come in to bring that equipment. Of course, the D.C. National Guard had it here as well.

And if there's anything specific that they may not have, we work very closely with the National Guard around the country as well as the Army to make sure that we get that equipment there prior to its -- prior to its need.

Lara Seligman Q: Thanks.
Maj. Dyana Allen: OK. And with that (sir, we have about ?) --

GEN Hokanson: (Dyana ?), just let me (hit ?) --

(CROSSTALK)

GEN Hokanson: -- one note there. So, my highest priority is not only the protection of our citizens and our property, but my highest priority is the protection of our National Guardsmen and women. And so I work very closely with the adjutant general to make sure that we never put a soldier or airmen in a position where they do not have the proper equipment or the ability to protect and defend themselves.

Maj. Dyana Allen: OK. Thank you for the media on the line. We're just right at 1300. So General Hokanson and Mr. Hoffman, if you have closing comments, we'll take those now.

GEN Hokanson: Jonathan?

Mr. Hoffman: So everybody, thank you for jumping on. Obviously, we remain available to answer any follow up questions. And we're hoping to have some further announcements just clarifying some of the National Guard and DOD support for the coming weeks.

We are focused at this point, very forcefully, on ensuring a safe inauguration on Jan. 20th for vice -- President-elect Biden -- and ensuring that activities between now and that date are safe within the capital.

And so there is a significant planning effort under -- underway right now that includes Secretary Miller, other Cabinet officials and other leadership within -- within the District of Columbia. So, we'll have updates on that throughout the day and throughout the week. But please just give us a call if you have any further follow-ups.

GEN Hokanson: And just on behalf of the National Guard, I want to thank you for taking the time. And these questions are really good and very helpful for us to make sure that we're communicating properly.

But the one thing I would just try and leave you with is just the incredible men and women in our National Guard. Many of those left their civilian jobs, their families. And when they were asked to volunteer and help
support our nation, they did.

And we've got that from the 6,200 around the country and it's actually going to grow to about 10,000. And also, when you look from what -- the work that they're doing in their states as well, of course, we're keeping a look across the entire country to make sure that we're monitoring and there are Guards in every state or in close coordination with the local law enforcement agencies to provide any support requested, but also the continuation of our COVID-19 support and our support to Operation Warp Speed.

So, thanks for your interest and we appreciate the opportunity to share time with you today.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 55 minutes

For information regarding this transcript, please send an email to the National Guard Bureau Media Operations desk at ng.ncr.ngb-argent.mesg.ngb-media-desk-owner@mail.mil.