



Director, Army National Guard

December 13, 2008

Fellow Citizen Soldiers and Army National Guard Family Members,

The Army National Guard is one of this country's most enduring institutions. Born in 1636 out of a need to defend freedom in a fledgling nation, our Guardsmen and women today continue that legacy of protecting the liberties of the American people.

On December 13, we celebrate our 372nd year and we commemorate the innumerable sacrifices and accomplishments of our Army National Guard Family.

With valor, integrity, and determination, our Citizen-Soldiers persevere through the largest wartime call-up since the 1940s. Simultaneously, they preserve and protect the homeland and the lives and property of its citizens, leading the path to recovery across the nation in response to natural disasters. In missions worldwide, the Guard serves not just as a defender of freedom, but as a beacon of hope and goodwill to those in need.

Three centuries after our founding, the Army National Guard is answering not just the call to duty but calls to duty. Our 363,000-plus Citizen-Soldiers willingly and selflessly respond to the aid of their countrymen in times of need at home and plant their boots in combat zones to defend freedom abroad. They are fast becoming the new "Greatest Generation."

Guard members sometimes render this extraordinary service at tremendous cost. Soldiers deploy for missions, far from home and family, knowing that the call to duty may require the ultimate sacrifice - and still they answer that call. Such commitment and determination to serve is what gives life in America its highest qualities. From each generation, such patriots routinely step forward to defend the ideals of our free society and enable our nation to thrive.

Our Soldiers can perform these acts of heroism because they are in turn supported by heroes - our Families. Our Army National Guard Families have made this sacrifice for their country for more than 300 years. It is a debt we can never repay. Their unwavering support is crucial for this organization to maintain the level of readiness required for our Minutemen to respond rapidly to our varied missions.

As we mark our 372nd birthday, we hold in our hearts and remember in our prayers our loved ones deployed and departed. We remain forever grateful to those who have sacrificed to secure a future of persistent peace for generations to come.

We are American Soldiers. We proudly represent the United States of America and are honored to serve, in every way, the citizens of this great nation. With an unparalleled legacy of defending freedom, we confidently stand on our pledge that the Army National Guard is *always ready, always there.*

Happy Birthday!

**Clyde A. Vaughn
Lieutenant General, US Army
Director, Army National Guard**