

National Guard Birthday Message 2009

On the Thirteenth of December each year, we celebrate the creation of one of America's most enduring institutions – our National Guard. The Guard has a proud history of serving and protecting the American people at home and defending our allies abroad. Now, more than any time in our history, our National Guard keeps our military, our Nation strong. We would not have been able to maintain over eight years of sustained combat operations without this incredible service and the sacrifices of Guard families and employers who also contribute.

During World War II, National Guard units were among the first in the fight. America's Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen performed valiantly during the Cold War in far away places from Korea to Europe. Over 20,000 Guardsmen served on active duty in the Vietnam War, and over 75,000 answered the Nation's call in support of Operation Desert Storm.

Today over 70,000 of you are currently supporting expeditionary operations in locations around the world while still maintaining vigilance and crisis response stateside. Your efforts are making a remarkable difference at a critical time in our country's history. We could not do it without you.

On behalf of your fellow service members of the Armed Forces, the Joint Chiefs and I thank you and your families and employers for 373 years of courageous sacrifice and service to our Nation. Because of you, the National Guard is *Always Ready*, and *Always There*.

Sincerely,

M.G. MULLEN
Admiral, U.S. Navy