



Washington



Iowa

March 6, 2012

TO ALL GOVERNORS:

As co-chairs of the Council of Governors (Council), we are writing to provide you an update on our discussion with the Department of Defense (DoD) on the U.S. Air Force's Fiscal Year 2013 budget proposal and its disproportionate impact on the National Guard.

During the Council meeting on February 27, we presented Secretary Panetta with the letter signed by 49 governors and discussed governors' strong concerns regarding the Air Force's proposal and its treatment of the Air National Guard. Also present at the meeting were the Secretary of the Air Force, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Advisor to the President. A full list of meeting participants is attached.

We communicated our understanding of the need to reduce defense costs while making clear that the Air Force's proposal does not consider the impact on states or the detrimental effect it would have on the Guard's ability to respond to domestic emergencies. It fails to acknowledge the experience and cost benefits the Guard offers over active duty forces. In particular, we stressed our concern that contrary to the Statement of Principles (attached), governors were not informed of the proposal nor provided an opportunity to provide input. We therefore requested that the Air Force proposal be reconsidered.


In response, Secretary Panetta discussed DoD's overall military strategy and the tough decisions that need to be made to reduce the size and cost of our military forces while maintaining our nation's ability to respond to conflicts overseas. He understood our concerns and stated his desire to work with us to address these issues through Air Force channels.

The Air Force has given our Adjutants General until March 13 to work through the National Guard Bureau on a modified plan to ensure the Air National Guard retains the ability to provide governors critical support during times of emergency and provide maximum national military capability at the lowest possible cost. As you know, it was unit and equipment cuts that prompted us to write to Secretary Panetta; but the remaining portion of the Air Force proposal was released today and reveals plans to reduce Air National Guard manpower by 5,500 positions. We are expanding our discussions on counter proposals to include manpower cuts. We will keep you apprised of our progress.

In addition to these important budget discussions, the Council continues to focus on implementation of the Joint Action Plan for Unity of Effort. The first of five areas discussed in the Joint Action Plan was addressed by the Dual Status Command legislation that was codified last year, as well as the Memorandum of Agreement that all but two states have signed. We are now focusing on the remaining areas such as improving shared situational awareness. As we develop proposals to address these items, we will share them with you for your feedback prior to taking action through the Council.

In a short period of time, the Council has accomplished what was envisioned by Congress when it created the Council. For a summary of the Council's history and activities, please refer to the attached National Governors Association memorandum.

Sincerely,


Governor Christine O. Gregoire
Co-Chair


Governor Terry Branstad
Co-Chair

Enclosures:

Council meeting participants
Statement of Principles
NGA memorandum