

Condition of the Guard Address
Eighty-Sixth General Assembly

Iowa's Service of Choice:
Accessible, Responsive, and Capable
The Iowa National Guard

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Good morning Ladies and gentlemen – thank you for your warm welcome.

Speaker Upmeyer, President Jochum, distinguished members of the Iowa Senate and House of Representatives – thank you for the opportunity to once again address this joint convention of the Eighty-Sixth General Assembly of the Iowa Legislature.

Governor Branstad, Lieutenant Governor Reynolds, distinguished guests, and fellow Iowans.

It is my honor to stand before you today in this great chamber – in front of a joint session of the Iowa Legislature – to share with you the Condition of the Iowa National Guard.

I want to begin by saying thank you – thank you to Governor Branstad, Lieutenant Governor Reynolds, and the Iowa General Assembly for your consistent and strong support and outstanding leadership during one of the longest, most challenging periods in our nation’s and state’s history.

We are incredibly grateful for your participation in our homecomings, sendoffs, and military ceremonies, and for your untiring efforts to work critical issues between the Council of Governors, the Department of Defense, and the National Guard. We also thank you for your support of the Home Base Iowa program and everything you do to honor the men and women who serve in the military, their families, and our civilian employers.

I also owe a very special thank you to the mothers and fathers who continue to show their support for the Iowa National Guard by continuing to entrust us with their most sacred treasure – their sons and daughters - and for allowing them to serve our state and nation.

Nothing is more important or a greater testament to the vitality of our organization than for a parent to trust us with whom they cherish most. I will continue to do everything I can to honor that trust and strive to never allow it to be broken.

And I want to thank the people of Iowa. Your continued support for our Soldiers, Airmen, and families has been absolutely incredible, particularly over the past 14 years as a nation at war.

In this time of uncertainty where national and global security challenges are intertwined with fiscal constraints, the Iowa National Guard stands ready to meet these challenges head-on and open a new chapter in our long and proud history.

This new chapter begins with an Iowa National Guard that is more accessible, responsive, and capable than ever before.

A strategic transition is underway in the U.S. military – a necessary transition driven by constrained resources after more than 14 years of sustained combat operations.

While the Iowa National Guard must deal realistically with federal budget limits coupled with a volatile global security landscape, we must always ensure that we can accomplish our four core missions in the Iowa National Guard:

-Providing combat-ready Soldiers and Airmen for the global warfight and operational missions as required to keep our nation safe;

-Responding here at home with robust homeland security and domestic response capabilities;

-Making our communities better places to live; and

-Building strong relationships with our Total Force partners.

But in addition to our four primary missions, there are unique opportunities for the Iowa National Guard to assist the State of Iowa as a shared partner in finding solutions to some of our State's challenges.

Whether it is providing our young people an opportunity to pursue higher education, offering meaningful job skills and employment, molding productive citizens, or promoting a healthy, drug-free, physically-fit Iowa, the Iowa National Guard can help Iowa solve many of those challenges.

The Iowa National Guard has proven, time and time again, that we are and will remain *Iowa's Service of Choice* for our young men and women who want to serve their state and nation, and keep Iowa strong.

In the 21st century, developing and maintaining skilled Soldiers and Airmen requires drawing strength from the broadest possible pool of service-eligible Iowans. The Iowa National Guard of the future must continue to enlist and utilize the best people Iowa has to offer.

Last month, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced that for the first time in our nation's history, women in the U.S. armed forces may serve in any position for which they're qualified, including in combat roles.

How does that affect Iowa? As a result of this policy change, nearly 1,700 positions in the Iowa National Guard have opened to Iowa women this year for the first time in our nearly 180-year history.

Our best qualified citizens, regardless of gender, will now be afforded the opportunity to serve in any duty position across the Iowa National Guard. And we didn't waste time turning Secretary Carter's words into action. High school students Cheney Spaulding of Fort Dodge and Dakota Doocy of Lone Rock have enlisted into artillery positions as females for the first time in our history with the 1st Battalion, 194th Field Artillery, and University of Iowa sophomore Megan Reaska became Iowa's first female combat engineer in December. We couldn't be prouder of these groundbreaking young women and the example they set for all Iowans.

Our ability to meet all contingencies in Iowa and abroad while enabling security around the world is no small task. For nearly a decade and a half of combat, our Iowa men and women have fought alongside our active component counterparts with distinction and valor.

Since 9/11, the Iowa National Guard has met every deployment requirement assigned to them, with the broadest mission sets possible. From the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team conducting counterinsurgency operations, to our expeditionary 185th Air Refueling Wing

operating around the world, as well as highly-specialized units such as the 734th Agribusiness Development Team, we have worked seamlessly with our active duty Army and Air Force counterparts. With nearly 18,000 individual overseas mobilizations since September 11, 2001, the Iowa National Guard has proven time and time again, that we are and will remain a full operational partner with our active duty counterparts.

Today, more than 40% of our currently serving Soldiers and Airmen are combat veterans, the highest percentage in our organization's modern history. Their accomplishments and capabilities are a testament to the years of training and investment Iowa and our nation have put into the Iowa National Guard to form a vital piece of the on-demand, all-volunteer force that defends our nation.

We have the most proficient, capable, accessible, and battle-tested National Guard in the history of Iowa. Today, the Iowa Army and Air National Guard is the best trained, equipped, and led organization in our 177-year history.

Currently we have approximately 15 Soldiers and Airmen deployed around the world, which is among the lowest number of deployed service members from the Iowa National Guard since the start of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. But despite the reduction in overseas contingency operations, Iowans continue to serve across the globe on a daily basis.

As we gather today, Airmen from the 185th Air Refueling Wing from Sioux City are deployed worldwide, providing ongoing refueling support of real-world missions to the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and coalition forces.

In the past year, the 185th has deployed more than 320 Airmen for nearly 15,000 active duty days. During this deployment cycle, Airman from the 185th deployed to nine countries in support of Central Command operations, flying 137 missions for 1,100 flight hours, while

refueling coalition aircraft with more than 22 million pounds of fuel. The unit was awarded its eighth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award this past year, which speaks volumes about the quality and performance of this unit and its Airmen.

Additionally, we have two Iowa Army National Guard units and several individual deployers identified for potential overseas deployments in 2016.

Going forward, the need for the powerful capabilities the National Guard provides cannot be overstated. Right now the level of uncertainty, the velocity of instability, and potential for significant conflict around world is greater than since the end of the Cold War in 1989.

We are now at a point where current and projected demands for Army and Air Force assets around the globe continue to decrease. But as we've seen before, this situation could change in a moment's notice, depending on the needs of the nation.

With the continued downward trend in deployments, the Iowa National Guard has ramped up its training opportunities to keep our skills sharp and capabilities robust. During 2015, the Iowa National Guard conducted one of its most aggressive training years in history. We sent units to: Korea; Camp Guernsey, Wyoming; Camp Rapid, South Dakota; Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Red River, Texas and to the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, Louisiana, among other locations.

The 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team was one of two brigades selected out of twenty-eight brigades in the Army National Guard to participate in a training rotation at the world-class Joint Readiness Training Center. Nearly 6,000 active duty, Army Reserve, and National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from 24 states, including more than 3,000 from the Iowa National Guard, participated in this rigorous, relevant and realistic 21-day field exercise. The successful

training center rotation validated the 2nd Brigade as a priority brigade for future Army requirements.

As a result of their outstanding performance at the Joint Readiness Training Center, selected units of the 2nd Brigade will deploy to Alaska this summer for a 21-day annual training event, where they will help prepare active duty Army units for an upcoming Joint Readiness Training Center rotation. In addition, elements of the 2nd Brigade headquarters will conduct annual training in Turkey and Korea to support Army command post exercises.

This type of training partnership between Army National Guard, Army Reserve, and active duty Army units is a new concept designed to increase training opportunities and to boost leader development and capabilities within the Army. Called the Total Force Partnership program, it is the first of its kind in the Iowa National Guard. In our case, the Total Force Partnership program establishes a formal relationship between the Army's 101st Airborne Division and Iowa's 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

New emerging missions continue to make the Iowa National Guard even more relevant today at home and abroad, particularly with the innovation of advanced technology fielded into the military services,

We continue to make great progress on the conversion of the 132nd Wing, based in Des Moines, from F-16 fighter aircraft into three new, enduring missions: a Remotely Piloted Aircraft group; an intelligence surveillance reconnaissance group; and a cyber operations squadron.

Over the past two years, the unit has aggressively sent its Airmen for training in their new career assignments. More than 630 Airmen have completed or are attending technical schools at various installations across the U.S., gaining valuable training in imagery analysis,

remotely piloted aircraft operations, and cyber security that will translate well into Iowa's growing technology sectors. Additionally, unit members earned more than 100 associate's degrees in 2015 through the Community College of the Air Force program, which ranked the 132nd first out of 90 Air National Guard units across the country.

With the departure of the F-16 fighter jets, the 132nd has repurposed the Iowa Air National Guard Base Des Moines facilities to support the consolidation/stationing of the RC-26 and C-12 fixed wing aircraft, along with providing indoor storage capabilities for UH-60 "Mike" model helicopters, the newest helicopter in the Iowa National Guard fleet. This consolidation effort utilizing existing Department of Defense facilities protects more than \$75 million dollars of aircraft from harsh weather and environmental damage and repurposes hangar space to maximize taxpayer dollars.

As the 132nd provided more than \$70 million in economic infusion to Iowa last year through salaries, unit purchases from the local economy, military construction, and indirect job creation, retaining these highly-skilled Airmen and this unit at the Des Moines Airport significantly benefits Des Moines and the entire state of Iowa.

Additionally, current and future military construction necessary at the Iowa Air National Guard Base Des Moines for the mission conversion over the next several years is estimated at \$15-20 million, which will provide additional economic benefit for local builders and suppliers.

Another significant milestone for the Iowa Air National Guard is the 75th anniversary of the 132nd Wing at the Des Moines Airport.

Throughout 2016, the 132nd will celebrate their proud military aviation history through several planned community events.

With the operation of three new enduring missions, the stationing of multiple aircraft at the facility, the strategic basing of the 71st Civil Support Team at the Airbase, the one-of-a-kind Distributed Training Operations Center, and the enduring national security mission requirements at the Des Moines International Airport, the Iowa Air National Guard Base Des Moines is more important to our state and nation than ever before in our 75-year history at the airport.

Another way we're supporting and adapting to the changing global and operational environment is through the National Guard's State Partnership Program, or SPP.

The Iowa National Guard's State Partnership Program with the Republic of Kosovo continues to make great progress since its creation in March 2011.

Since the inception of our partnership with Kosovo, we have expanded our vision of a "Whole of Iowa/Whole of Kosovo" relationship and have conducted more than 90 engagements over the past five years between Iowa government and private entities, the Kosovo Security Force, Kosovo's Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Education, and Economic Development, and other Kosovo agencies.

Today, I am honored and very pleased to introduce the new Kosovo Ambassador to the United States, Vlora ("vuh lor uh") Citaku, ("chee tah koo") and the Kosovo Security Forces Military Attaché to the United States, Brigadier General Xhavit ("jah vit") Gashi ("gah shee"), who are with us this morning as my honored guests.

I asked them to join us here today to help highlight this critically important relationship, but also to recognize the Kosovo government's historic decision to establish their first-ever consulate and trade office, which will open this Friday in downtown Des Moines.

Friday's ceremony will mark the first-ever foreign consulate office to open in Iowa, which has tremendous potential to promote and expedite trade and other opportunities between Kosovo and Iowa.

Please join me in giving Ambassador Citaku and Brigadier General Gashi a warm Iowa welcome.

Ambassador Citaku and General Gashi, thank you for making the journey to join us here today. We are honored to partner with Kosovo and we look forward to a strong and productive relationship in the years ahead.

But what anchors everything we do, whether in 1839, today, or in the future, is readiness. The Iowa National Guard has been able to maintain our position as a national leader in readiness among our fellow states because of programs like the Iowa National Guard Educational Assistance Program, a program funded in its entirety by the state of Iowa.

This year, nearly 1,700 of our men and women received up to 100% tuition paid at the State Regents' rate to attend Iowa colleges, universities, and community colleges through this program, keeping our young people here in the state and providing them with a high-quality, Iowa education. This critical recruiting and retention tool helps ensure our readiness and provides an invaluable benefit to our Soldiers and Airmen, and also to the state of Iowa, by educating young Iowans and keeping them in Iowa.

Another program that is assisting our citizens who join the Iowa National Guard and improving our readiness is our "Enlist to Employ" concept, which provides our servicemembers with employment opportunities in Iowa upon the completion of their degree program. Like many of our Soldiers and Airmen, I'm a living example of an Iowan who joined the Iowa National Guard after high school, attended Des Moines Area Community College,

Drake University, and Iowa State University, found meaningful employment in Iowa, and remained here.

We've partnered with two Home Base Iowa CHAMPS schools, Des Moines Area Community College and Iowa Central Community College, to conduct the Enlist to Employ program.

These types of programs fit hand-in-glove with the Home Base Iowa vision of attracting Iowa citizens and veterans to serve in the Iowa National Guard, attend Iowa colleges, universities and community colleges, and become a productive member of Iowa's workforce after graduation.

And the Iowa National Guard is doing our part to stimulate the economy of Iowa. This year, the Iowa National Guard brought in more than \$353 million dollars of federal funding into the state, which is more than 97% of our department's budget. Our Soldiers and Airmen pay more in state property, payroll, and sales taxes than what the state provides in funding to the Iowa National Guard.

In addition to high-quality Soldiers and Airmen, we also need multifunctional and well-maintained infrastructure to keep the Iowa National Guard ready for the warfight and for emergency response here at home.

This past year, the Iowa Air and Army National Guard executed nearly \$20 million in federal funds for our construction and capital projects program. We completed new construction, renovations or additions at the Mason City, Clinton, and Sioux City armories, and at the Iowa Air National Guard Base Des Moines.

We currently have renovation and construction projects underway at the Council Bluffs armory and Field Maintenance Shop, the Dubuque armory, and the Iowa Air National Guard Base Des Moines.

Whether responding to natural disasters such as severe storms, tornadoes, blizzards, flooding, or man-made threats to the homeland, the Iowa National Guard is the first military force to reach the scene, working hand-in-hand with state and local leaders and emergency personnel when called by the governor.

I am very pleased to report that 2015 has been a relatively quiet year for our emergency response operations.

We used this additional time to plan, prepare, and exercise for potential disaster response on a multitude of scenarios.

Last year, my emergency response priority for the team was the development, synchronization, and rehearsal for a large scale, catastrophic tornado in our state.

This last year, we shifted our focus to plan and conduct the national-level Vigilant Guard exercise. The mission of this domestic operations exercise was to evaluate the Iowa National Guard's ability to respond to multiple, geographically-disparate, catastrophic disasters in order to strengthen federal, regional, and state response partnerships. My intent for the exercise was to stretch the limitations of the Iowa National Guard, requiring additional assistance from regional and federal organizations. This training exercise partnered the Iowa National Guard with local, state, and federal agencies, and the United States Northern Command.

The additional time we gained from last year’s relatively-quiet combat, peacekeeping, and domestic operations has allowed our organization to refocus on organizational readiness, which drives everything we do.

I would like to share the results of these efforts with you.

First, your Iowa National Guard is a national leader in the “quality” of the Soldiers and Airmen that we recruit. We are in the top echelon of the National Guard for the quality of recruits into the National Guard for 2015.

More than 22% of our Basic Training, Advanced Individual Training, or technical school graduates are either honor or distinguished graduates, on the commandant’s list, or in the top 10% at their respective military schools.

These efforts have not gone unnoticed by the U.S. Department of Defense and other military organizations; Iowa units and individuals received several significant awards for 2015:

-The 132nd Communications Flight received the General Harold W. Grant Award for excellence in warfighting integration;

-The 132nd Financial Management Office, led by Lt. Col. April Marmon, was recognized as the top Financial Management Office in the Air National Guard;

-The 185th Force Support Squadron’s Customer Service section was awarded the Department of Defense’s RAPIDS site excellence award for exceeding the standards by adopting new processes that benefit customer service;

-Staff Sergeant Randale E. Meyer, 133rd Test Squadron in Fort Dodge, Iowa, was selected as Air Battle Manager of the Year Non-Commissioned Officer for the Air National Guard;

-Senior Master Sergeant Thomas Fennel, 185th Air Refueling Wing, Sioux City, received the field recognition award for Human Resource Advisors; and

-Sergeant First Class Gene Tackett and Sergeant First Class Dan Aguirre received the regional Chief of Staff, Army, Supply Excellence Award.

We are humbled by these prestigious national awards presented for excellence across the organization.

As I come to a close, I hope I have left you confident that the Iowa National Guard is Mission-Focused and Warrior Ready.

We have executed every mission assigned, served our state and communities here at home, and deployed wherever needed in a moment's notice.

I am very proud of our Soldiers, Airmen, their families, our rich heritage, and our resolve as we continue our role in the preservation of the ideals upon which our nation and state were founded. The Iowa National Guard is woven into the fabric of our state through communities everywhere, ready and willing to transform from civilians to Guardsmen and women on a moment's notice.

Our nation will undoubtedly face significant domestic, global, and fiscal challenges in the future. The Iowa National Guard will strive to meet these challenges by providing our state and nation an accessible, responsive, capable, ready, and affordable force focused on our fundamental mission of Defending America – at home and abroad.

On behalf of our men and women and their families, thank you for this opportunity today to provide an update and assessment of the Iowa National Guard. Thank you. Warrior Ready!