

May 26, 2005

**Testimony of John Iffland, Brigadier General (Ret.)
to the
State of California Little Hoover Commission**

Please find below my responses to those questions posed to me in your memo of April 26, 2005. I understand these comments will form the basis of the Commission's questions to me during the May 26 Hearing on the topic of "Be Prepared: Getting Ready for New and Uncertain Dangers (January 2002)."

However, before we begin with your questions, I would like to make a few comments pertinent to this work. The following comments and recommendations are based on nearly 34 years of military experience which includes most recently, command of a coalition air wing supporting combat operations in Iraq and the command of the National Guard's only western US aerial firefighting equipped C-130 wing. This most recent command has spanned the last decade.

In the Gulf, Guard men and women, some from California, along with Air Force Reserve and Active Duty men and women established a bare base operation as the President instructed the Secretary of Defense to prepare for the invasion of Iraq. From of that operation, I had opportunity to fly the first C-130 into Baghdad Airport. We carried badly needed medical supplies. Bombs still dropped in Baghdad and on subsequent flights, we carried out our wounded.

Today, thousands of our California Guard men and women now have similar experiences. The enemy we prepare for and fight both in the Gulf and in California is well known to us, it is serious, quite real and, very deadly.

We here owe every bit of our energy, resource, and attention to this war that we find ourselves in the middle of and to the emergencies in California that we prepare for. It not only includes the Global War on Terror, but also against natural disaster that is equally as devastating.

The fires of 2003 killed too many of our citizens and destroyed too many of our homes. We can do better than allowing our C-130s to sit on a ramp ready to go and no tasking that would allow us to attack such monster fires.

I am here for no other purpose than to assist this council with its work as our Governor and departments of state set about to continue with all of their great work and more as we go forward to protect the citizens of our great state and nation.

Your first question:

- 1) "Please describe the progress that California has made since the Commission issued its 2002 and 2003 reports on improving emergency preparedness, as well as priorities for where further progress needs to be made."

Response:

I read with great interest the Commission's 2002 and 2003 reports. I am very pleased to be able to report to you that I agree almost without exception to the comments, assessments, and findings of the reports. Most emphatically, I especially agree with two of the Commission's assertions: first, all emergencies are local, and second, "...information, coordination and leadership are essential to a rapid and effective response to any emergency." With that back drop, I offer these specific comments.

As General Eberhardt concluded his time as Commander of the US Northern Command, he was asked, "What is the most worrisome element of the US future as it relates to the Global War on Terrorism?" His response, paraphrased, was: "My single biggest worry is that the American people become complacent over time regarding this war and that out of this empathy comes less focus, concern, budget, and therefore ability to respond when we are attacked again." He also stated that, in his opinion, it was not of if we were going to be attacked again, it was when and in what form.

The Commission's previous reports reflect on the "...wartime mentality, California, along with other..." To that end committees were formed or expanded to include the State Strategic Committee on Terrorism (SSCOT) and the subset committee "State Terrorism Threat Advisory Committee. Adding the contributions of these committees to the already existing, and highly experienced, response infrastructure results in California being well prepared to respond to most situations. We have heard that our State Emergency Response Plans are among the best, if not the very best, in the Nation. That very well may be so. Frankly, however, I am concerned that the State is not as well prepared as it ought to be for multiple and simultaneous terrorist incidents.

The report suggests that the Terrorism Threat Advisory Committee, organized to advise the Governor on terrorist-related actions and intended to coordinate state with federal and local agencies, is an element that may well require clarification regarding Governance of officials and organizations.

These and other elements form my thoughts, to include comments on the organization chart showing "Lead Agencies for Emergency Response State Emergency Plans – Terrorism Annex."

The State of California, in aggregate, has made incredible progress since the Commission's previous reports were published. California has made that great progress even while facing severe economic conditions and experiencing three different leaders of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and a change of leadership at OES, at the Highway Patrol, and at the California State Military Department, all organizations critical to any emergency response. Further, the impact of the Global War on Terrorism has been very significant on our state's military department, certainly more significant than at any time since the Korean War and perhaps since World War II.

This impact results not only because of the more than 7000 California Army and Air National Guard members mobilized for duty around the world, including nearly 4,000 soldiers and airmen

deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, but also because of the tremendous effort of the thousands of California Guard members who had to prepare, process, mobilize, and demobilize those members who did deploy. That is an important factor because those mobilized Guard members represent thousands of emergency responders no longer available to the State.

Here is our progress and the need to progress further.

The OES has made significant strides in achieving improved information collection, improved communications, and improved contingency planning for critical potential terrorist targets. Probably the most significant achievement is the completion of the combined Emergency Response Center. This state-of-the-art facility, designed to quickly bring together representatives from ALL stake holders in state government, can rapidly establish a highly flexible “war room” tailored to meet the exigencies of various types of incidents. The ERC is a functional design which should avoid the pitfall of arguing governance, thus obviating a basic element of the Commission’s previous findings, at least to some extent. The ERC aggregates and shares critical pertinent information, thus addressing another of the Commission’s previous concerns. And since priorities are, or at least one would hope they are, a by-product of cooperation, other concerns previously raised by the Commission should be resolved.

I should add a parenthetical comment here. Even with the significant improvements offered by the ERC, in my opinion those improvements do not obviate the need for operations centers within each organization. The ERC provides the mechanism for inter-agency coordination; intra-agency coordination is still best achieved through each agencies’ own individual operations center.

As one looks to the federal efforts of this nation and to the efforts of our allies, one sees a keen focus on inter-agency coordination centers. Invariably, one of the key lessons learned at our own federal level and by our allies is that membership of the coordination centers is critical. Agency representatives must be individuals empowered to act on behalf of their respective agencies. Experienced agency representatives is a critical factor, as is that representatives possess all the necessary clearances.

Coordination centers must be equipped, staffed, and exercised to the highest standards, across the spectrum of potential incidents. Finally, a state-level coordination center must have the clear authority to act on behalf of the Governor, or at least on behalf of an element which has the authority to act for the Governor.

California has a precedent for that type of element in the “War Council” established under Governor Warren, renamed the “Emergency Council” following WWII. I understand that, unfortunately, not only has the SSCOT been disbanded, but also the Emergency Council was de-emphasized by Governor Davis and now is essentially dormant.

I am concerned that it is not clear that we maintain the same level of “wartime mentality” that existed in 2002. I believe that wartime mentality is critical to our preparations. I believe we can promote that necessary mentality by publicly re-energizing, and perhaps even renaming, the Emergency Council. I suggest renaming it to a name that demonstrates the urgency of our

ongoing war on Terrorism. I would also strongly urge that we ensure that the council have the attributes of the inter-agency coordination centers I just discussed, which probably necessitates a comprehensive review prior to re-establishment.

Other progress that is to be commended is the Homeland Security Agency's program for training, as funded by the US Department of Homeland Security. This federal funding is managed and coordinated by the California National Guard acting in its unique dual role as the State Military Department. Training and exercises are traditional core competencies of the National Guard, and especially of the California National Guard, so centralizing the management of training at the Headquarters of the State Military Department while decentralizing the execution of training to the responsible agencies has proven to be an excellent decision. As a former military officer responsible for the training of thousands of personnel going into combat, I say with absolute conviction that training and exercise programs should be expanded significantly. To be absolutely blunt, this truly is a matter of life and death.

Within the California State Military Department, where much of my experience and expertise resides, I find good progress. Fortunately, my last military assignment was with the US Northern Command, helping them design and establish their Standing Joint Force HQ. That is the federal military element that would deploy to a state whose Governor requested the President to provide federal military assistance. In 2004, Major General Eres, Adjutant General of the California National Guard, asked me to call upon that experience with NORTHCOM to assist him design and establish a corollary California National Guard element. General Eres' basic concept was very similar to the solution we developed at NORTHCOM, i.e., establish a lead element that would augment the California Military Department in times of extreme need and that would help provide linkage to any federal forces provided by NORTHCOM as well as to other state and federal responders.

With that basic outline from General Eres, I led a team to recommend alternatives we felt met the General's guidance and fulfilled the requirements that our experience had taught us would be necessary. Our team developed recommendations, approved by General Eres, that we believe has resulted in a transition to a wartime footing that is both more immediate and much more seamless with federal military forces and with federal and other state and local emergency responders. We recommended an organizational element and processes within the California State Joint Forces Headquarters that closely correlate to NORTHCOM's, both during non-response or "peacetime" periods, then transitioning to a response or "wartime" posture. Our recommendations included elements of command and control, communications, information analysis, and improved reconnaissance assets. Our recommendations were also consistent with an initiative underway by the National Guard Bureau in the Pentagon to establish "Joint Forces HQ – State" in every state. In fact, I am proud to point out that several of the what we in the military call "subject matter experts" drawn to the Pentagon to develop the Joint Force HQ – State were members of the California National Guard.

The wild fires of 2004, while fortunately not as devastating as those of 2003, provided a real-world test of our recommendations—and demonstrated that we were right on target. Had our recommendations, along with the improvements made within the OES discussed earlier, been fully implemented during those disastrous 2003 fires, I am convinced that California responders

could have saved many lives, many homes, and much of the nearly one million acres of valuable timber and forests lost. Obviously, the wild fires were the direct cause of the devastating losses we suffered, but regrettably factors attributable to human brainpower contributed in some measure. I believe we have made good progress in improving those human factors.

Still, I urge that the necessary resources be provided to continue the progress within the California State Military Department, to include protection of vital air and ground assets that provide a dual role within the state as well as the deployed war-fight, and additional equipment designed to bridge the differences between civilian and DoD equipment. Another critical element is the OES Fusion (Emergency Response) Center and personnel from contributing agencies to more completely staff it. I also urge that the California State Military Department, OES, the California Department of Health & Human Services, the Governor's advisor for Homeland Security, and other appropriate agencies reform, restructure, reenergize, and rename the Emergency Council. Other areas of improvement include procuring more capable and interoperable equipment for local police departments, using funding available from US Department of Homeland Security grants, and focusing greater attention on our ports. Last, and certainly not least, I urge that training and exercises be expanded, and that this be one of the primary requirements of the revised Emergency Council, with execution performed by the State Military Department.

I would like to add some additional comments. First, I was dismayed to see that on page 16 of the Commission's 2002 report that the California State Military Department was not even listed as an element of the state's Emergency Response State Emergency Plan – Terrorism Annex. This is even more telling when you recognize that in 26 states in this nation, the Adjutant General of the National Guard has responsibility for both the military and the civil emergency response organizations (OES equivalent), and is accountable for both to the Governor. Yet in California, which by the way has the most-utilized National Guard for emergency duties of any state, the Guard wasn't even acknowledged. That points back to my earlier comments about the absolute necessity for all stake-holders to be involved.

New technologies are being brought to bear, in planning and in detection. Still more is near ready for fielding and we need to stay absolutely on top of those. The Commission's report of 2002 remains accurate...our capability is inadequate.

California is the leader in the technology industry, yet other states lead us in achieving interoperable communications. Even in other large states facing budget problems, studies of the interoperable communications problems and potential solutions have been launched on a broad basis.

California is still not yet a signatory to the Emergency Management Compact (EMAC). Only we and HI hold out. This simple add would have made a difference in the '03 wildfires.

Governance, as it relates to roles and missions of all stakeholders, should continue to be refined. Clearly, observable cooperation across these agencies has been achieved over the past 18 months, with new leadership making the difference. We now know, unlike the Commission's

finding in the 2002 report, who the “California Tom Ridge” is. Now we should further clarify the charter, role and responsibilities, particularly as it relates to the other well operating stakeholders.

All states have such a position. In MA, their HLS advisor, Mr. John Cohen, is a good friend and we have collaborated a great deal. He has clear charter, direct access, and exceptional coordination across and within the Governor’s senior most staff and agencies. That model works well.

Our Governor is leading us forward and his progress should be noted and commended, on all aspects of California life, including our preparation for a terrorist attack, and our ability to save life and maintain order. If the nature of the next attack-and there will be a next attack-warrants federal assistance, we now have the basic constructs and processes to seamlessly implement a Federal/State cooperation with a known and exercised single purpose, based on a common plan. The new laws allowing State National Guard personnel to lead federal forces correct a long-standing inequity and are now well understood, and our soldiers and airmen are so much better trained than in the past.

State OES is hardened by experience. They have a good plan to build from and an even better strategy and capability to respond with.

I urge the committee to look at our “peace time” structures with an eye toward greater urgency and greater cooperation, by plan, role, mission(s), responsibility, construct, and possible aggregation. Breaking down the remaining barriers and reenergizing the “war time” council, we can share with every citizen in this great state that ALL is being done in the near term and long term to protect us from terrorist intimidation or attack.

- 2) Please describe your California experience with coordination and communication between federal, state and local officials in responding to large scale emergencies, and how communication and coordination could be improved.

I had the distinct honor of serving in the California Air National Guard from 1978 to 2004. During my career, most of which was spent as a weekend drilling, or what is now called a traditional Guard member, I served in both the 129th Rescue Wing, located at Moffett Field near Sunnyvale, and in the 146th Airlift Wing, located at our Channel Island Air National Guard Base near Oxnard. In 1991 I accepted the request of the California Air Guard leadership to leave my fairly successful civilian career and become the full-time California Air Guard commander of the 129th Rescue Wing. I felt quite honored to be offered that opportunity as the 129th is one of only three Rescue Wings in the entire Air National Guard across the country.

In 1993, the California Air Guard leadership asked me to assume command of the 146th Airlift Wing, one of the largest C-130 Airlift Wings in the National Guard. In 1996 I was promoted to Brigadier General, one of only a dozen generals to command an Air Guard wing in the country. When I assumed command of the 146th, it was one of only four C-130 wings in the entire United States Air Force to fly the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) in support of wild fires all around the country. Because of our work in supporting both the US Forestry Service and the California Department of Forestry, the 146th Airlift Wing became the lead organization for

the wild fire fighting mission of the Air Force, and in 1999, although I was “only” an Air Guard general officer, was designated by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force as the Officer of Primary Responsibility for the Air Force wild fire mission. In that role, I was repeatedly activated and tasked to “command” all National Guard forces assigned by the several states and all active duty forces assigned to combat wildfires.

Also in that role, following the near tragic crash in 2000 of an Air Force Reserve C-130 flying a MAFFS mission, Gen Ryan, then Chief of Staff of the Air Force, tasked me to conduct a comprehensive review of Air Force doctrine for supporting civil authorities, including especially the then-current doctrine governing what we in the military refer to as “command and control relationships”. I am proud to say that this Air Guard-led review resulted in a significant revision of not only Air Force policy, but also the Joint Chiefs of Staff incorporated our recommendations and issued revised Joint Doctrine governing all services.

And as I mentioned earlier, my last assignment in uniform was with US Northern Command, selected from all Air Guard general officers nationwide to assist NORTHCOM stand up as an entirely new joint, or all-service, command established by the President in response to the new world that existed post 9-11. My primary task at NORTHCOM was to assist them with design and establish the Standing Joint Force HQ. That experience gave me new insights into how the federal active duty forces organize and prepare to respond to terrorist acts. My experience as Joint Task Force Commander during the 2003 wildfires, when I was assigned active duty Air Force, Air Guard, Air Force Reserve and US Marine ground and air assets, certainly helped prepare me for and reinforce my work at NORTHCOM. Frankly, there are very few military officers, Active, Guard, or Reserve, who have the knowledge, based on recent personal experience, of the system now in place for providing military assistance to civil authorities.

So over my 26 plus year career in the California Air National Guard, I have accumulated a significant amount of experience in responding to emergencies of many types and of many sizes. During my career, I was involved with nearly all of our state’s emergencies where California National Guard assistance was called upon. Those missions included the 1986 Guerneville floods, when our specially-equipped C-130s were able to communicate across a variety of radio frequencies used by different agencies to effectively provide airborne command, control, and communications for the intensive evacuation and relief effort. In 1989, I participated in Guard support following the Loma Prieta earthquake that devastated the Bay area. Because Moffett Field was so close to the epicenter yet our runways were still intact, the California Military Department assigned all aircraft, including Army Guard helicopters and Air Guard fixed-wing assets, involved in this relief effort to us there at Moffet.

That event probably marked the first really big instance where the proliferation of emerging newer technology communications devices proved so vulnerable, as all cell phones-then pretty new and, we all thought, really nifty devices became overloaded or disabled. Even POTS (our highly technical military acronym for Plain Old Telephone System) was so severely disrupted as to be essentially unusable. UHF, VHF, and FM frequencies were dysfunctional. Only a single California National Guard HF channel, thoughtfully retained as the newer and “improved” UHF and troposphere communications systems were being fielded, remained functional. It was not enough. Communications across all components was so poor that the California Guard State HQ

could not continue to monitor and direct us. We may be a little better off today, but I fear we are not as much better equipped as we should-and could-be.

Shortly after I took command of the 146th Airlift Wing near Oxnard, the devastating Malibu fires occurred, destroying so many homes and properties. I can't tell you how frustrating it was to me and so many of my unit members to literally be sitting in our MAFFS-equipped C-130s, watching the fires, yet not being able to launch simply because the system in use then didn't allow for a rapid response. That has now been improved, yet has much room for improvement.

Within just a few months more, the Northridge earthquake occurred, again taxing all the Guard assets that the state and our air wing could muster in support of that devastation.

In each of these disasters, the Incident Command System served us well, but our ability, and the ability of all agencies, to communicate across the radio spectrum was and remains hampered. That simply cannot be permitted to continue. I am personally aware of technical fixes to this problem. I'm not sure there is a 100% solution out there, but I do know of a fairly inexpensive device that is available right now which can provide interoperable voice communications among any voice communications devices currently in use. Solving the interoperable communications problem has to be a top priority. Admittedly, this is not a simple task. There are many factors that impact this problem, including the obvious one of cost. Also, a factor for the Guard is that it must remain compatible with the active component, since over 95% of the funding and equipping of the Guard comes from federal funds and is focused on traditional post-mobilization requirements.

However, there are "work-around" capabilities at our disposal, even if only temporary. For instance, the California National Guard's Civil Support Teams are equipped with a communications van that accommodates the majority of radio types and frequencies expected to be used by various agencies during an immediate response to a terrorist incident. OES has a similar capability that focuses on interoperability with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Local law enforcement has received federal funding to achieve similar results, although that effort should be centrally managed at the State level to ensure interoperability and best prices. None of these are perfect solutions, but they certainly help – if managed properly. I would recommend that addressing this interoperability communications problem on a statewide basis be another top priority for the revised Emergency Council that I discussed earlier.

Through all of my experiences providing National Guard assistance during civil emergencies, the issues of communication and coordination – the essence of your question, were at the forefront. As the Commission's 2002 report points out, preparedness of civil responders then was based on the Incident Command System, yet the military did not use such a construct. The ICS is a parallel of the current Federal Incident Command System, and it works. The California National Guard is very familiar with it and operates quite capably within it.

As I mentioned in earlier testimony, the California Military Department's Joint Force HQ is transitioning to a structure that will make seamless the transition to the new federal military assistance system established by the US Northern Command. While that system is almost totally new to the active military establishment, the National Guard, especially the California National

Guard, has a long history of supporting civil authorities during emergencies. Our challenge now is to meld our experience with the active duty forces new role, and the California Guard's initiatives are well along in meeting that challenge.

New doctrine and changes in applicable laws are familiar to our California Military Department and I am confident equally familiar to OES, based on the apparent communications and coordination between these two agencies. Still, more progress is needed and is possible. I hope I have provided some recommendations and some observations that will add value to the critical effort towards that needed progress.

We have the committee structures available to be activated and the capabilities within our organizations to continue to make needed progress across the areas you question. It is important that the urgency of the situation not be lost and continued focus at a "wartime mentality" be maintained. As the Governor reorganizes California, the elements of state government, and their local and federal counterparts, that have responsibility to protect our citizens in a time of a terrorist attack should incorporate policies, processes, relationships, and joint training now so that their response when that dreaded day comes is based on habitual, not ad hoc, relationships and processes.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond today.