

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Daniel Hokanson
Chief
National Guard Bureau
111 South George Mason Drive
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear General Hokanson:

We write to express our concern with the current imbalance of resources for the Florida National Guard (FLNG) compared to other states in the Union, and the dire need for additional force allocation in Florida. Despite being the third most populous state, the FLNG is ranked 53 out of 54 in the ratio of Guard personnel to total state population. We urge you to take state demographic and operational tempo into consideration when reviewing reallocation of force structure, when force structure is available, and address the pressing need that the FLNG has for additional resources.

As you may know, the State of Florida experiences the third most damage from natural disasters, per household, of all states in the country. Yet, our state has the second smallest Guard presence in the country to assist in these emergencies. Florida's 1,350 miles of coastline exceeds the total combined coastlines of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. Additionally, more than 17 million Floridians currently live within 30 miles of the coast.

In the last 28 years, there have been 48 National Guard activations in Florida, and many of these activations required a multi-state response. Hurricane Irma in 2017 required approximately 2,200 Guard personnel from 22 states. FLNG is strained for resources in responding to natural disasters, and with most states still using their Guard personnel for COVID-19 efforts, we are concerned about the lack of Guard resources in Florida in future weather events that typically garner a multi-state response. The limited resources allocated to Florida has affected the FLNG's ability to rotate personnel and putting greater demands on Guard families.

In the implementation guidance for the National Defense Strategy, the Pentagon said: "Demographic and economic trends within the U.S. will challenge our ability to recruit and retain quality Guardsmen over the next several years. Meeting this challenge is fundamental to our long-term success." Furthermore, among the recommendations in the National Guard Bureau's *Impact of U.S. Population Trends on National Guard Force Structure* report to Congress last year, the Bureau states, "as the U.S. population continues to shift from North and North Central regions of the country to the South and West, the National Guard may need to evaluate re-allocating mission sets to other geographic areas to keep pace with changing

demographics across the country.” Despite these statements, the FLNG did not receive any additional forces in the 2021 force re-allocation.

Resourcing additional personnel to the FLNG when available, considering our rapidly growing population and the operational tempo demands from the high rate of natural disasters, will enhance the readiness of FLNG and its ability to help the NGB respond to its Federal mission requirements. We therefore request answers to the following questions:

1. How does the National Guard Bureau (NGB) plan to keep force structure allocated commensurately with changing demographics across the country, considering the limitations of 104(c) of Title 32?
2. Does the NGB plan to determine baseline force structure requirements for each Guard formation to address domestic migration?
3. Given that some states face greater threats that require a response from Guardsmen, what considerations has NGB given to historical data regarding deployment of Guard personnel in determining reallocation of force structure?

We also look forward to reviewing the National Guard Force Apportionment report due on March 1, 2022, and the Study on Reapportionment of the National Guard Force Structure Based on Domestic Responses mandated by Section 518 of the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act.

We encourage NGB to provide additional support to ensure that the FLNG has the force structure and resources necessary to continue to keep Floridians safe and secure. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman-Schultz
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



María Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis
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Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
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Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
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Val Demings
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Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
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