

**Written Testimony of Major General William L. Enyart (Ret.)**

**Before the Senate Judiciary Committee**

**September 30, 2025**

**Dangers of Misusing the Military for Civilian Law Enforcement**

Good morning, Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Durbin, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today about the critical role that our military and National Guard forces play in protecting our great nation and the harms of using them to police their fellow Americans.

**Introduction**

My name is William Enyart. I am a retired Major General. I come from a proud family of veterans. My father, brother, and I served a total of nearly sixty-four years. We each served as enlisted members. I was commissioned as an officer in 1982. I served nearly thirty-six years in the military. After retiring from military service, I was elected to Congress where I represented Illinois's 12<sup>th</sup> congressional district and served on the House Armed Services Committee.

During the last five years of my military service, I was the Adjutant General, or commanding general, for the 13,000 soldiers and airmen of the Illinois National Guard. I had Guardsmen serving in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan 24 hours a day, 365 days a year throughout that time. We had the largest combat deployment of Guardsmen since World War II.

I recite these facts so that you understand I have experience at the enlisted, officer, general officer and policymaker level. This varied experience forms the basis of what I will tell you today.

**The Important Role of the National Guard**

I am here to talk with you about appropriate uses of our state National Guard forces.

I am not here to talk about the laws governing deployment of the National Guard. There are others better qualified than I to do that. I am here to talk about proper use—and risks of misuse—of a magnificent tool made up of over 400,000 of our nation's finest men and women.

The National Guard has a proud history of service to our nation from the Revolutionary War to the World Wars to today's conflicts.

The National Guard is first and foremost a military reserve force. We train in military skills to provide part-time citizen soldiers who stand ready to come to our nation's defense. Having a trained and ready reserve force is critical to our national security.

The Guard is part of the finest military reserve force in the world. There were times during the Iraq war that the Army National Guard provided more than half of our combat power in Iraq.

While we are primarily a combat force that the nation relies on to supplement our active-duty soldiers in times of war, our other, equally important, role is as a trained and ready force to assist state and territorial governors with emergencies that arise at home. In our state role, we deploy to assist primarily in disaster response and recovery. We deployed to New Orleans for Hurricane Katrina, across Illinois for Mississippi River floods, to St. Louis for tornadoes, to Nevada to help the Nevada Air National Guard fight forest fires—to name but a few.

Our state National Guard forces also stand ready to assist in times of extraordinary civil unrest when the local civilian authorities need and request assistance—but such extreme civil disturbances are thankfully quite rare.

### **What the National Guard Is Not**

You have heard what we are. Here's what we are not: we are not a trained civilian law enforcement reserve. Nor should we be.

Our soldiers typically receive a couple of hours a year in civil disturbance training. We do not receive anything like the months and years of training in community policing, including patrol safety, criminal law procedure, escalation of force procedures, and protection of civil rights and civil liberties that are required to become qualified civilian law enforcement officers.

Let's be honest here. We are soldiers who are trained to destroy the enemy on the battlefield. We are not trained for protecting First Amendment rights and de-escalating tensions during a protest. We are not trained for safeguarding Fourth and Fifth Amendments when questioning or arresting suspected criminals. We are not trained to conduct traffic stops, to gather evidence, to investigate crimes, or a whole host of other duties that local authorities are trained to perform.

We are not trained for these duties because civilian law enforcement is not our role—that is the role of civilian authorities. Requiring National Guard troops to act as civilian police would take them away from their critical training and role responding to natural disaster and preparing for wartime engagements.

The calls to mobilize National Guard forces around the country for criminal law enforcement fail to understand these facts. Placing them in situations they are not properly trained for puts both Guardsmen and their fellow Americans at risk, hurts morale, and will undercut troop preparedness for their essential roles. This is predictable and unnecessary.

Rather than pulling Guardsmen from their critical duties, policymakers should ensure that civilian law enforcement programs have the tools and resources they need to effectively support the safety of their communities.

### **Misguided Mobilization of the Guard Hurts Taxpayers, Our Soldiers, and Their Families**

Mobilizing National Guard forces for law enforcement also has a financial and human cost.

First, there is the enormous and unnecessary cost to the taxpayer. By some estimates, the National Guard mobilization in Los Angeles has already cost taxpayers \$120 million for 4,000 Guardsmen for 60 days and remains ongoing. That is a very high price tag for what is—at best—a stop gap measure if the goal is law and order. How many police officers could have been hired, trained and put on the streets for \$120 million?

There is also an enormous cost to the Department of Defense and to FEMA. Every dollar spent deploying the National Guard for a job that can be performed better and at a lower cost by civilian law enforcement is a dollar that cannot be spent on training and preparing these soldiers for their critical missions defending the country and responding to natural disasters. It is money that cannot be spent providing them with necessary equipment. And it is money that will not be there for disaster response when the next hurricane hits New Orleans or the next tornado levels St. Louis.

And let us not forget the costs to the individual soldiers and their families. These are part-time soldiers who have signed up to serve their country in times of dire need. Most have jobs at home. They are teachers, small business owners, healthcare providers, students. They have families who rely on them. Employers who rely on them. When they are mobilized, they are away from their homes, jobs, studies, and families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A private-first class makes about \$91 a day. That's about \$11 an hour. A young person flipping burgers in Illinois typically makes at least \$15 an hour—which means that most Guardsmen are missing out on needed wages when they are called to duty.

When these soldiers are doing what they signed up for—defending our great nation or helping their neighbors recover from a natural disaster—they do not mind sacrificing lost wages, missing a child's birthday, or losing months away from school. This is the sacrifice they signed up to make for their country.

But they did not sign up to be taken from their homes, their jobs, and their families to serve as political props bagging trash or policing their fellow Americans for weeks and months on end. And their employers, spouses, and children did not sign up for it either.

This misuse of the Guard will damage recruiting, retention, and readiness of these great Americans. How many employers will continue to hire Guardsmen when they see them painting fences in Washington, D.C.? How many young soldiers will encourage their friends to join up

when they are bagging trash instead of defending their country or helping their neighbors when disaster strikes?

### **Conclusion**

One of the U.S. military's strongest assets is that it holds the public trust and can attract recruits from all sectors of the population. Dragging the military into what is widely perceived as a domestic political fight will undermine public trust in the military, which will ultimately weaken the military and make us less safe.

It took a generation to recover from the stain of Guardsmen shooting and killing college students at Kent State during protests over the Vietnam War in 1970. We are one trigger pull away from another such tragedy. I implore you: do not let it happen.

National Guard forces are for a real emergency, not a band aid for long-standing problems that require long-term solutions.