

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**

**Donald L. Nelson**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary Of Defense For**  
**Reserve Affairs, Manpower and Personnel**

**Before the**

**House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

**“VA and DoD Cooperation and Reintegration of National**  
**Guard and Reserves”**

**June 24, 2008**  
**2:00 P.M.**

# Mr. Donald L. Nelson

## Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (Manpower and Personnel)

Donald L. Nelson was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (Manpower and Personnel) on March 10, 2008. He serves as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs for all National Guard and Reserve manpower, personnel and compensation policies; including Reserve component manpower requirements and utilization, personnel programs and management, the official Reserve component personnel database and system, Reserve medical readiness and programs, and development of legislation affecting Guard and Reserve manpower, personnel and compensation.



Mr. Nelson previously served as the Deputy Attorney General for the State of California, a position he held from 2000 until his current appointment. Prior to that, he was a business attorney in private practice for eight years following a varied and successful career as a corporate attorney and, ultimately, the managing partner for the San Francisco branch office of a statewide law firm, responsible for all business development activities.

Mr. Nelson is also a retired U. S. Navy Reserve officer, having served in the Navy Reserve from 1968 through 2002. He served in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm as the Navy's only representative in theatre on the Department of Defense War Crimes Documentation Commission.

Mr. Nelson has a B.A. (with honors) in Economics and Political Science from the University of Minnesota and a J.D. from the University of Wisconsin, with State Bar of California admission and District of Columbia admission both in 1978.

Mr. Nelson is active in a wide range of youth and civic activities including the Boy Scouts of America and organized sports.

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Chairman Filner and members of the subcommittee: thank you for your invitation to talk about DoD and VA cooperation on the reintegration of our National Guard and Reserve veterans. As you know, Section 582 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2008 required the Department to establish a national combat veteran reintegration program to provide National Guard and Reserve members and their families with sufficient information, services, referral, and proactive outreach opportunities throughout the entire deployment cycle. I'm pleased to tell you that the Joint Deployment Support and Reintegration Program Office opened on March 17, 2008.

The office has liaisons from the National Guard, the Army Reserve, the Navy Reserve, and the Air Force Reserve, serving as subject matter experts to assist us in implementing the program. Veterans Affairs' Deputy Secretary Mansfield has committed to continue and to strengthen the partnership with the Department by placing a subject matter expert from the VA on our staff as well. We are working closely with the VA VHA/DoD Outreach Office that focuses its efforts on outreach to National Guard and Reserve members and their families. We also work with the National Guard Transition Assistance Advisors, the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, the Departments' Joint Family Resource Center and their Joint Family Support Assistance Program, as well as each of the National Guard and Reserve family program offices to ensure that the Department is doing everything possible to make the best use of available resources to meet the deployment support requirements of our returning military

veterans, especially those that are geographically separated from military installations and dispersed in all 54 states and territories as well as Europe.

We are in the final staffing of the Directive-Type Memorandum that will implement the Department's deployment support and reintegration program. That directive requires the Services and their Reserve components to provide the 30, 60, and 90 day reintegration programs for their returning members beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of this fiscal year. It also requires them to implement a robust deployment support and reintegration program beginning in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of fiscal year 2009. Our office will monitor and manage these programs at the strategic level and ensure that locally available resources are used to the maximum extent possible while also making sure that the availability of these programs is shared between the components to allow members and families to access them at the location closest to where they reside.

The Department recognizes that support of families and employers is vital to success. The Department and Reserve Affairs have devoted substantial resources and efforts toward expanding the support for our families. The challenge is particularly acute for widely-dispersed reserve families, most of whom do not live close to major military installations. Thus, we have developed and promoted web sites and electronic support for families, established and promoted the use of the 700 military family service centers for all Active, Guard and Reserve members and families to provide personal contact, and hosted and participated in numerous family support conferences and forums. Reintegration training and efforts to support members and families following

mobilization, particularly for service in a combat zone, are vital. The reintegration program in Minnesota has proven to be an exceptional success and forms the basis for the Joint Deployment Support and Reintegration Program with its Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Center of Excellence for all Guard and Reserve members. The Department is fully committed to implementing this program, which will provide Guard and Reserve members, and their families, the support that will help them during the entire deployment cycle—from preparation for active service to successful reintegration upon return to their community and beyond. We will continue to work with Veterans Affairs, State Governors and their Adjutants General, the state family program directors as well as with the Military Services and their components to ensure an integrated support program is delivered to all Guard and Reserve members and their families.

The support for employers over the past six years mirrors the increased support for families. We doubled the budget of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). We developed an employer database which identifies the employers of Guard/Reserve members, expanded the ESGR state committees and their support (over 4,500 volunteers are now in these committees) and are reaching out to thousands more employers each year. The Freedom Awards program and national ceremony to recognize employers selected for this award has become a capstone event, in which the President has given 45 minutes of his time in the Oval Office in each of the past two years to recognize the annual Freedom Award winners (15 recipients per year are selected from more than 2000 nominees from small business, large business, and the

public sector). Never in the history of the Guard and Reserve have families and employers been supported to this degree and they appreciate it, as this effort is critical to sustaining an Operational Reserve.

This committee has always been very supportive of our National Guard and Reserve Forces. On behalf of those men and women, I want to publicly thank you for all your help in providing for them as they have stepped up to answer the call to duty. The Secretary and I are deeply grateful, our military personnel and their families certainly appreciate it, and we know we can count on your continued support. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify on behalf of our Guard and Reserve.