

*Remarks for the
50th Anniversary of the 172 Airlift Wing
July 12, 2003*

- Recognize Adjutant General Lipscomb /
Major General Cross / Colonel Odom /
Colonel Jernigan / Colonel Brock
 - Thanks for leadership of Mississippi
National Guard / best guard in America

- ***Leadership is action, not position***

- Mississippi National Guard and 172nd
Airlift Wing didn't earn reputation by
just following orders
- You earned it because you have done
your job – and continue to do your job –
better than anyone else

- Morning of September 11, 2001, I asked General Lipscomb a simple question: ***“Is the Mississippi National Guard ready?”***
 - His answer was just as simple: ***“Yes, sir, we are.”***

- ***The best are always ready to answer their country’s call***
 - ***No doubt that you are the best***
 - You’ve proven that for the past 50 years

- Incredible history of the 172nd
 - Started as the 183rd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron in 1953, the only Night Photo Reconnaissance unit in the country

- Flew the 1000th support mission into Vietnam in June 1967
 - Led relief efforts in aftermath of Hurricane Camille in 1969
 - First Air National Guard unit to win John Pesch Trophy for sustained outstanding performance in flying safety
 - Over 200,000 accident-free flying hours and ten Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
- The reputation of the 172nd grows stronger still with support of war against terrorism
- 55 members still on active duty in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Noble Eagle

- Your response to America's call has been swift and admirable
 - In recent months, we've watched men and women of the Mississippi National Guard answer the call to service in places we know, and some we don't

- Deployments have gone to the Middle East, Asia, and locations that remain classified
 - This much we do know: The Mississippi National Guard is ready
 - Wherever you go, you are well-trained, and you'll get the job done

- As commander-in-chief of the Mississippi National Guard, I can't express enough the *pride* I feel knowing that you're serving your state and your nation
 - This much I do know for sure – when America needs the *very best*, the call is made to *Mississippi*

- You are the ones called on by your country because you have proven yourselves time and time again
 - You've set a high standard for others to follow

- Impact of your example seen in the tremendous recruiting numbers for the Mississippi National Guard
 - We lead the nation in recruiting
 - Actually second behind Guam, but we're also a little bigger

- When I took office, I told General Lipscomb I wanted to increase the strength of the Guard, and that's what has happened
 - Last three years have seen gain of more than 500 new soldiers
 - All this after a nine year period with no new recruits

- Just as important, the number of recruits who joined the Mississippi National Guard straight out of high school jumped as well, *from 62% to 82%*
 - Role of the Guard in serving as a positive influence for our young people has never been stronger
 - Extremely proud of the fact that you are in our schools working with our kids

- Read Colonel Brock's article about new mentoring program in recent issue of "The Mockingbird"
 - Commend you for this great effort
 - Encourage you to get involved

- You've had a proud history in the 172nd, and that history is about to enter a new phase
 - C-17 Globemaster is on its way
 - 172nd is first Air Guard unit to get the C-17
 - Only fitting that *the nation's best new plane* comes to the *nation's best Air Guard unit*

- Excited about the C-17 program and what it means to the 172nd and to Mississippi
 - Know you will set the standard for other units around the country

- It's the leadership of people like General Lipscomb that make a difference
 - It's the leadership of every one of you here today, the men and women of the 172nd, that makes a difference
 - *You make the Mississippi National Guard the best in the nation*

- You're the backbone of America's military, and you are setting a new standard of excellence
 - I'm proud of your work, and I'm proud to tell your story to others around our great country

■ Happy 50th Anniversary to the 172nd Airlift
Wing

- May God bless you and your work
- God bless Mississippi / God bless
America