

*Remarks for the
Retiree Day at Camp Shelby
May 21, 2003*

- Recognize General Lipscomb / thank him
for leadership of Guard

- Want to begin by saying how proud I am to
be here with you today
 - Thank you for your commitment to the
Mississippi National Guard
 - Thank you for your dedication to our
nation

- This is a tough time for America and all peace-loving nations
 - Terrorist attacks continue overseas
 - American embassy closed in Saudi Arabia after bombings
 - Britain and Germany closing their embassies as well

- Yesterday, we raised the threat level up to orange, signifying a high risk of terrorist activity
 - Decision based on intelligence
 - One intelligence official said it was “reasonably spooky stuff”

■ However you refer to it, we take it seriously here in Mississippi

- Later this morning, our Homeland Security Council is meeting
- Reviewing key sites and policies for emergency situations
- Committed to ensuring safety and security of our people

■ Here today to thank you for the work you did to keep us safe

- You set a high standard for others to follow
- I believe today's Mississippi National Guard is doing just that

- There's a lot of our guardsmen that have been deployed in recent months
 - They all answered the call of their country
 - They're fighting to defend the principles of freedom and justice
 - American principles / Mississippi principles

- We know this for sure
 - They are the best-trained Guard personnel out there
 - They don't back down from doing difficult work
 - They get the job done

■ As commander-in-chief of the Mississippi National Guard, express *pride* felt knowing our soldiers are serving their state and their nation

- This much I do know for sure – when America needs the *very best*, the call is made to *Mississippi*

■ You've been there when the call comes down

- You've answered it and done what you were called to do
- You've done your duty
- We're all the better for it

- You prove yourselves time and time again,
and you have set a high standard for others
to follow
 - Soldiers here training this week are
living up to that standard

- Another impact of the standard you set is
seen in tremendous recruiting numbers for
the Guard

- We lead the nation in recruiting
 - Told General Lipscomb 3 years ago I
wanted to increase strength of the Guard
 - That's happened

- In last 3 years, we've seen a gain of more than 500 new soldiers
 - That has happened after a 9-year period with no new recruits

- Just as important, number of soldiers joining the 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 the Mississippi National Guard in our schools

■ There are other ways the Guard is impacting Mississippi

- About Face program / teaching life skills
- Youth Challenge program here at Camp Shelby / helping turn lives around and build a better future

■ Influence of the Mississippi National Guard is felt far beyond our borders

- Important that it remain a positive influence
- Especially during times like these, when the threat of madmen is closer than we like

- The war in Iraq is over, and we have won
 - Saddam's reign of terror is over
 - Now we have to continue our war on other terrorists and those who support them

- Had the opportunity Monday to help celebrate veterans and their incredible sacrifices
 - People like Sonny Montgomery and Congressional Medal of Honor winner Jack Lucas

- Today proud to be here to celebrate the sacrifices you made as well
 - Thank you for your service to Mississippi and America

- Years from now, another governor will stand here and talk to a group of retired soldiers from the Mississippi National Guard, like I'm doing today
 - He will thank them for their service in the war against terrorism
 - He will thank them for their service in Iraq and Afghanistan
 - He will speak of the standard they set

- The overall message will be the same
 - We are proud of you and thankful for you
 - We are praying for peace
 - We are praying for our nation

■ May God bless you, the great state of
Mississippi and the United States of
America