

WHEREAS: The National Guard, the oldest component of the Armed Forces of the United States and one of the nation's longest-enduring institutions, celebrated its 366th birthday on December 13, 2002. The National Guard traces its history back to the earliest English colonies in North America. Responsible for their own defense, the colonists drew on English military tradition and organized their able-bodied male citizens into militias; and

WHEREAS: The colonial militias protected their fellow citizens from Indian attack and foreign invaders and later helped to win the Revolutionary War. Following independence, the authors of the Constitution empowered Congress to "provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia." However, recognizing the militia's state role, the Founding Fathers reserved the appointment of officers and training of the militia to the states; and

WHEREAS: Today's National Guard remains a dual State/Federal force. The militia provided the bulk of the troops during the Mexican War, the early months of the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War. In 1903, important national defense legislation increased the role of the National Guard, as the militia was now called, as a Reserve force for the United States Army. In World War I, which the U.S. entered in 1917, the National Guard made up 40 percent of the U.S. combat divisions in France; in World War II, National Guard units were among the first to deploy overseas and the first to fight; and

WHEREAS: Most recently, following the attacks of September 11, 2001, more than 50,000 Guardsmen were called up by both their States and the Federal government to provide security at home and to combat terrorism abroad. Today's National Guard continues its historic dual mission, providing to the states units trained and equipped to protect life and property, while providing to the nation units trained, equipped and ready to defend the United States and its interests all over the globe; and

WHEREAS: Today, the men and women of the National Guard are putting their lives at risk to defend us all against terrorism; now

THEREFORE: I, SONNY PERDUE, Governor of the State of Georgia, do hereby commend the

NATIONAL GUARD

and extend the thanks of a grateful state for all that you do to protect our nation.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Executive Department to be affixed this fourth day of July, 2003.