



January 28, 2026

Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate

Re: Estimating the Costs of Troop Deployments to U.S. Cities

Dear Ranking Member Merkley:

This letter responds to your request that the Congressional Budget Office estimate the costs associated with federal deployments of National Guard personnel to U.S. cities. You asked CBO to focus on three categories of costs: the costs to activate, deploy, and compensate National Guard personnel; the operational, logistical, and sustainment costs of maintaining those deployments; and any additional direct or indirect costs associated with the use of National Guard or other military forces.

Since June 2025, the Administration has deployed National Guard personnel or active-duty Marine Corps personnel to six U.S. cities: Los Angeles, California; Washington, D.C.; Memphis, Tennessee; Portland, Oregon; Chicago, Illinois; and New Orleans, Louisiana. The Administration has also kept 200 National Guard personnel mobilized in Texas after they left Chicago. CBO estimates that those deployments (excluding the one to New Orleans, which occurred at the end of the year) cost a total of approximately \$496 million through the end of December 2025.

The costs of those or other deployments in the future are highly uncertain, mainly because the scale, length, and location of such deployments are difficult to predict accurately. That uncertainty is compounded by legal challenges, which have stopped deployments to some cities, and by changes in the Administration's policies.¹ The factors CBO used to estimate the

¹ On December 31, 2025, the President announced that the Administration would no longer continue the deployments in Los Angeles, Portland, and Chicago.

costs of deployments in 2025 suggest that continuing the ongoing deployments at their size as of the end of 2025 would cost \$93 million per month. More generally, deploying 1,000 National Guard personnel to a U.S. city in 2026 would cost \$18 million to \$21 million per month, depending mainly on the city's cost of living.

Domestic Troop Deployments Since June 2025

On June 7, the President issued a memorandum directing that at least 2,000 National Guard personnel be called into federal service to protect federal government personnel and property.² In response to that memorandum, about 4,200 National Guard personnel were activated and deployed to Los Angeles, along with about 700 active-duty members of the Marine Corps. That California deployment was largely completed by late summer, although 100 National Guard personnel remained mobilized through the end of the year. On January 21, 2026, the military announced that all of the personnel involved in the deployment had been demobilized.³

On August 11, the President issued a memorandum authorizing the Secretary of Defense to call District of Columbia National Guard personnel into federal service to address crime in Washington, D.C.⁴ The memorandum also directed the Secretary to call members of state National Guards into service in the city, as appropriate. Approximately 2,400 National Guard personnel from the District of Columbia and various states were activated and deployed to Washington. On November 26, after two West Virginia National Guard members were shot while on duty in the city, the Secretary of Defense announced the deployment of an additional 500 National Guard personnel to Washington.⁵ (According to the National Guard Bureau, 560 additional personnel were deployed.) The Administration recently indicated that the deployment in Washington will continue at least through the end of 2026. An ongoing lawsuit has

² White House, "Department of Defense Security for the Protection of Department of Homeland Security Functions" (Presidential memorandum, June 7, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/59r8hwab>.

³ U.S. Northern Command, "Federal Protection Mission" (January 21, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/va4dekw3>.

⁴ White House, "Restoring Law and Order in the District of Columbia" (Presidential memorandum, August 11, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/mub2dz28>.

⁵ Matthew Olay, "Hegseth to Order 500 Additional Guardsmen to D.C. Following Shooting of Two Soldiers" (Department of War news release, November 26, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/35tpz3fp>.

challenged its legality, although the deployment remains in effect, partly on the basis of the President's "unique power within the District."⁶

On September 15, the President issued a memorandum authorizing the Secretary of Defense (referred to in the memorandum as the Secretary of War) to call National Guard personnel into federal service to address crime in Memphis, Tennessee.⁷ Unlike the previous memorandums, this one also requested the governor of Tennessee to mobilize National Guard personnel in their state capacity (that is, not federalized under title 10 of the U.S. Code). In response, about 150 Tennessee National Guard members were initially activated and deployed to Memphis. That number was later increased to 1,500 personnel. The Administration has not announced an end date for the Memphis deployment, which is the subject of an ongoing lawsuit in state court challenging its legality.

On September 28, the Secretary of Defense activated National Guard personnel to protect federal personnel and property in Portland, Oregon.⁸ Approximately 400 members of the Oregon and California National Guards were mobilized and sent to the city. Their deployment was enjoined by court orders, but they were permitted to remain mobilized. The Guard personnel from California have since left Oregon and been demobilized. On January 21, 2026, the military announced that all of the remaining Guard personnel activated for the deployment in Oregon had been demobilized.⁹

On October 4, the President issued a memorandum authorizing the Secretary of Defense to call at least 300 members of the Illinois National Guard into federal service to protect federal personnel and property in Chicago.¹⁰ About 375 members of the Illinois National Guard were mobilized to the city; in addition, some 200 members of the Texas National Guard were sent to Illinois briefly before returning to Texas. The deployment in Chicago was enjoined by court orders, but the Guard

⁶ *District of Columbia v. Trump*, No. 25-5418 (D.C. Cir. Dec. 17, 2025) (order granting stay pending appeal of the District Court's preliminary injunction against the deployment).

⁷ White House, "Restoring Law and Order in Memphis" (Presidential memorandum, September 15, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/mtkmbhs4>.

⁸ *Oregon v. Trump*, No. 3:25-cv-1756 (D. Or. Oct. 4, 2025) (opinion and order granting temporary restraining order).

⁹ U.S. Northern Command, "Federal Protection Mission" (January 21, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/va4dekw3>.

¹⁰ White House, "Department of War Security for the Protection of Federal Personnel and Property in Illinois" (Presidential memorandum, October 4, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/2uu6hx5r>.

personnel were permitted to remain mobilized. On January 21, 2026, the military announced that all of the Guard personnel in Illinois had been demobilized.¹¹ However, the 200 Texas National Guard personnel remain mobilized on standby in Texas.

On December 22, the Secretary of Defense activated 350 National Guard personnel to address crime in New Orleans, although they will operate in their state capacity.¹² The deployment is stated to last through February 28, 2026, and is not reflected in CBO's estimates of the costs of deployments through the end of December 2025.

How CBO Estimated the Costs of Domestic Troop Deployments

In CBO's assessment, the costs of deploying federal troops for operations in U.S. cities consist of the following types of expenses:

- The additional costs incurred for military pay and benefits, including health care, when National Guard personnel are mobilized;
- Costs to provide lodging for active-duty and National Guard personnel deployed away from their home stations;
- Costs to provide food (which the military refers to as subsistence) for personnel deployed away from their home stations; and
- Transportation costs to move personnel from their home stations to their deployments and back again, as well as costs to transport personnel between their lodging and their assigned location each day.

CBO does not expect the military to incur significant costs to operate and maintain equipment during domestic deployments. So far, such deployments appear to mainly involve foot patrols conducted by small units, without the extensive types of supporting forces or heavy equipment associated with operations in combat zones. Similarly, CBO has no basis for anticipating that the Department of Defense (DoD) will need to purchase equipment to replace any damaged during domestic deployments.

¹¹ U.S. Northern Command, "Federal Protection Mission" (January 21, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/va4dekw3>.

¹² Department of War, "Statement From Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell on National Guard Support to Louisiana" (December 23, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/4yjde2em>.

Table 1.

Average Daily Costs per Service Member for Domestic Troop Deployments

Dollars per day

City	Troop type	Basic pay ^a	Health care	Lodging	Subsistence	Transportation	Total
Los Angeles	Marines	0	0	191	86	34	311
Los Angeles	National Guard	260	25	191	86	34	596
Washington, D.C.	National Guard	260	25	196	92	34	607
Memphis	National Guard	260	25	129	74	34	522
Portland	National Guard	260	25	155	86	34	560
Chicago	National Guard	260	25	142	92	34	553
New Orleans	National Guard	260	25	157	80	34	556

Data source: Congressional Budget Office, using data from the Department of Defense and the General Services Administration.

a. Includes the basic allowance for housing and accrual payments for military retirement pay and retirees' health care.

Military Pay and Benefits. When National Guard members are called to federal service, they are compensated at the same rate as personnel in the military's active component. Using DoD's 2025 budget documentation, CBO estimates that the increase in military personnel costs associated with activating National Guard troops—that is, the average increase in costs when changing Guard personnel from nonmobilized to mobilized status—is approximately \$95,000 per person per year, or \$260 per person per day (see Table 1). That estimate includes basic pay as well as other elements of military personnel costs, such as the basic allowance for housing and accrual payments for retirement pay and retirees' health care. (Activated National Guard personnel become eligible for some elements of military compensation, such as the basic allowance for housing, only if they are mobilized for more than 30 days.)

National Guard members who are called to federal service qualify for military health care provided through the Defense Health Program, as do their dependents. Using historical cost data from DoD, CBO estimates that the increase in health care costs associated with such activation averages roughly \$9,100 per person per year, or \$25 per person per day.

National Guard personnel typically remain in mobilized status for a longer period than they spend performing duties in a city. Accordingly, CBO's per-person, per-day totals include additional days for mobilization and for demobilization processing (such as administrative out-processing, medical checks, and returning equipment) on the basis of information provided by National Guard officials. Those totals also include days for paid leave that National Guard personnel accrue while they are mobilized.

Activating National Guard personnel could also affect their eligibility for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Eligibility for some VA education benefits, for example, is based on the duration of qualifying active-duty service. Deploying National Guard personnel could increase the amount of education benefits they receive. In addition, some National Guard or active-duty personnel could incur a service-related injury during deployment, which could increase the amount of disability compensation they would receive in the future. The timing and size of any such increases in veterans' benefits are uncertain, and the additional costs are likely to be small, so CBO did not attempt to estimate them here.

In addition to the National Guard members deployed to the six U.S. cities discussed above, 700 active-duty Marines Corps personnel were deployed to Los Angeles as part of the operation there. CBO's estimates do not include additional costs for pay, benefits, or health care for active-duty personnel, who already receive such compensation and benefits as part of their service.

Lodging. For this analysis, CBO assessed that all deployed personnel would require daily lodging. National Guard personnel furnished CBO with the values of the contracts they used to provide lodging and subsistence for their personnel in Los Angeles, Washington, Memphis, Portland, and Chicago. For those cities, CBO used the Guard's actual contract costs in its estimates of total costs.

In cases for which CBO did not have information about actual contract costs—the New Orleans deployment, the standby force in Texas, and possible future deployments to unknown cities—it estimated lodging costs by using the same daily rates that federal agencies use to reimburse their employees for lodging while on official travel in the United States. Those government per diem rates are set to reflect reasonable prices for the accommodations that can be expected to be available in the civilian economy. The rates, which are publicly available from the General Services Administration, are adjusted for locality and for time of year to reflect

variations in the cost of living.¹³ The rates for cities where the military has been deployed are close to the actual costs that DoD has incurred for lodging in those cities. For January 2026, federal per diem rates range from \$129 per person per day in Memphis to \$196 in Washington, D.C.

Subsistence. For this analysis, CBO also assessed that all deployed personnel would require daily meals and reimbursement for incidental expenses. For the deployments in Los Angeles, Washington, Memphis, Portland, and Chicago, CBO used values for subsistence from the National Guard's contracts. When CBO did not have actual subsistence costs, it estimated those costs using the federal per diem rates for meals and incidental expenses provided by the General Services Administration. Those rates range from \$74 per person per day in Memphis to \$92 in Washington, D.C.

Transportation. Using information provided by National Guard personnel, CBO estimated that transporting personnel to and from the relevant cities, as well as transporting them to and from their lodging during their time mobilized, would cost an average of about \$34 per person per day. Transportation costs make up a small part of the total estimated costs of domestic deployments, so those total costs are not sensitive to this estimate. (For overseas deployments, DoD's transportation costs are dominated by the heavy equipment that units bring with them, but the domestic deployments since June 2025 have involved little heavy equipment.)

Costs of Deploying Military Personnel to U.S. Cities

Using the estimates of daily expenses described above, CBO estimated the costs of the domestic military deployments that occurred in 2025 as well as the costs of planned or potential deployments in 2026 and beyond (see Table 2).

Total Cost of Deployments in 2025. CBO calculated that the deployments in Los Angeles, Washington, Memphis, Portland, and Chicago, plus the mobilized National Guard personnel standing by in Texas, cost a total of approximately \$496 million through the end of December 2025. (That estimate does not include the New Orleans deployment, which began at the very end of the year.)

¹³ General Services Administration, "Per Diem Rates" (accessed January 3, 2026), www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates.

Table 2.

Costs in 2025 and Potential Future Costs of Deployments in Various Cities

City	Peak deployment size (number of personnel)	Cost through the end of December 2025 (millions of dollars)	Deployment size at the end of December 2025 (number of personnel)	Cost per additional month (millions of dollars)
Costs for cities where forces have been deployed				
Los Angeles	4,900	193	100	n.a.
Washington, D.C.	2,950	223	2,950	55
Memphis	1,500	33	1,500	28
Portland	400	26	100	n.a.
Chicago	375	21	375	4 ^a
New Orleans ^b	n.a.	n.a.	350	6
Total^b	10,125	496	5,375	93
Costs for notional future National Guard deployments to generic cities				
Generic city with a high cost of living	1,000	n.a.	n.a.	21
Generic city with a low cost of living	1,000	n.a.	n.a.	18

Data source: Congressional Budget Office, using data from the Department of Defense.

n.a. = not applicable.

a. Cost for 200 members of the Texas National Guard who remain mobilized on standby in Texas after taking part in the deployment in Chicago in 2025.

b. The New Orleans deployment, which began in late December, is not included in the peak deployment numbers or the total cost of deployments through the end of December 2025.

Monthly Cost of Future Deployments. CBO also estimated the potential cost per month of continuing ongoing deployments at their size as of the end of 2025. That cost would range from about \$6 million a month for 350 personnel in New Orleans, to \$28 million a month for 1,500 personnel in Memphis, to \$55 million a month for 2,950 personnel in Washington, D.C. In addition, the 200 mobilized personnel standing by in Texas would cost about \$4 million a month.

If military forces were deployed to other U.S. cities in the future, the cost per month would vary with the size of the deployment, the cost of living in a given city, and the mix of National Guard and active-duty personnel used in the operation. Deploying 1,000 National Guard members to a hypothetical low-cost city (similar to Memphis) would cost about

\$18 million per month, CBO estimates. The same deployment would be more expensive, about \$21 million a month, in a hypothetical high-cost city (similar to Washington, D.C.).

The marginal costs of such deployments could be lower if active-duty personnel were used instead of National Guard members, because active-duty personnel already receive full pay and benefits.

Uncertainty About Future Costs of Domestic Deployments

CBO's estimates of the future costs of domestic troop deployments are subject to three major sources of uncertainty:

- It is unclear how long such deployments will last. The 2025 deployment in Los Angeles appears to have been largely completed in three months, with most personnel already demobilized. The deployments in Portland and Chicago recently wound down. No end date has been set for the deployments in Memphis and Washington, D.C. (although the latter was recently extended through the end of 2026). In addition, it is unclear how long the 200 National Guard personnel who are standing by in Texas will remain mobilized. Future costs will be affected by the length of a deployment and the number of personnel deployed.
- It is unclear what the potential scope of future deployments might be or where they might occur. The Administration has indicated a desire to establish a permanent quick-reaction force to enable more regular deployments in the future, and the President has considered deploying the National Guard to additional cities.¹⁴ The estimates that CBO provides in this letter apply to the costs of generic hypothetical deployments that might occur in the future.
- Many of the deployments that began in 2025 have been challenged in court. Legal challenges have prevented National Guard personnel from being deployed to carry out their intended missions in Portland and Chicago, although they were stationed nearby after being mobilized. Such a situation does not necessarily reduce costs,

¹⁴ For example, a Presidential memorandum from August 2025 directs the Secretary of Defense to “ensure the availability of a standing National Guard quick reaction force that shall be resourced, trained, and available for rapid nationwide deployment.” See White House, “Additional Measures to Address the Crime Emergency in the District of Columbia” (Presidential memorandum, August 25, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/mvkby2m5>.

because National Guard members who are mobilized and awaiting deployment while away from their home stations incur essentially the same costs as deployed personnel. Costs decline once National Guard personnel are demobilized.

I hope this information is useful to you. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip L. Swagel", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phillip L. Swagel
Director

cc: Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chairman, Committee on the Budget, United States Senate; Honorable Ron Wyden; Honorable Angela Alsobrooks; Honorable Richard Blumenthal; Honorable Elizabeth Warren; Honorable Chris Van Hollen; Honorable Tammy Duckworth; Honorable Alex Padilla; Honorable Cory Booker; Honorable Richard Durbin; and Honorable Andy Kim