Rep. Peter Welch announced a $792,000 federal grant Wednesday to fund the acquisition of mountaineering equipment for the Vermont National Guard. Welch made the announcement at the Ethan Allen Firing Range in Jericho, alongside Brigadier General John Farnham.

Vermont's 86th IBCT (MTN) is the U.S. Army's only conventional unit designated as a Mountain Infantry Brigade. Welch was successful in securing $792,000 for Mountain Specific Operational Equipment, which will enhance the 86th IBCT's ability to complete its mission in the rugged, mountainous environment of Afghanistan.

The Vermont Guard is expected to deploy to Afghanistan in the near future.

"We must do all we can to support our Vermont Guard as they prepare to deploy to Afghanistan," Welch said. "These funds are key to ensuring our Guard members have the equipment, training and support they need to achieve their mission."