

MANNING: THE FOUNDATION OF AN OPERATIONAL NATIONAL GUARD

BY

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MANNING: THE FOUNDATION OF AN OPERATIONAL NATIONAL GUARD

Introduction

For the past eight years, the Army National Guard (ARNG) has been utilized as an operational force but managed and resourced as a strategic reserve. The Department of Defense has defined the Reserve Components (RCs) operational role this way:

“The RCs provide operational capabilities and strategic depth to meet U.S. defense requirements across the full spectrum of conflict. In their operational roles, RCs participate in a full range of missions according to their Services’ force generation plans. Units and individuals participate in missions in an established cyclic or periodic manner that provides predictability for the combatant commands, the Services, Service members, their families, and employers. In their strategic roles, RC units and individuals train or are available for missions in accordance with the national defense strategy. As such, the RCs provide strategic depth and are available to transition to operational roles as needed.”¹

The manner in which the ARNG is currently manned, trained and equipped must be adapted to meet the requirements of an operational force to ensure that it is ready and available when needed.

Under the strategic reserve construct, the ARNG was mobilized for up to 18 months that provided time for units to cross-level personnel and fix readiness issues prior to deployment. As an operational force, the ARNG does not have the luxury of months to prepare its soldiers for deployment. Instead, units must be ready to react immediately to domestic situations or for wartime deployments on relatively short notice. It is critical that the ARNG maintain units at the highest level of personnel readiness in order to provide the forces required at the time needed to be an effective operational force.

¹ Department of Defense, *DoD Directive 1200.17* (Washington, D.C., 2008), 8.

Manning is the foundation of an operational force. If the force is not properly manned, units cannot effectively train at the collective level to prepare for missions, employ their equipment, or properly execute assigned tasks. In this regard, General Casey in a letter to Lieutenant General Blum stated:

“Our goal is to achieve full spectrum readiness for ARNG units and full deployment readiness on mobilization. I would like you to outline the systemic policy changes needed to enable Guard units to achieve and maintain P1 personnel readiness standards during pre-mobilization...”²

This paper examines the major personnel issues that have had an impact on the personnel readiness of the ARNG and provide some implementable recommendations in order to help achieve the personnel readiness required of an operational force. First, the ARNG must ensure that the organization continues to maintain more end strength than force structure. Next, it is critical that a Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Student (TTHS) account be established for the ARNG to prevent units from being manned with soldiers who cannot meet deployment requirements while the training backlog for non-prior service recruits is reduced to a more manageable timeframe. Finally, the ARNG must build readiness as early as possible in the Army Force Generation Model by focusing efforts on medical and dental readiness plus recruiting and retention to allow units to stabilize the force that is deploying in a timely manner to provide the commander the ability to conduct effective collective training prior to entering the available phase which results in formations requiring less time at the mobilization station and more boots on the ground time.

² Chief of Staff of the United States Army George W. Casey, *Letter to Lieutenant General Steven Blum*, 16 March 2008.

Background

Throughout the history of the United States, the Active Army (AC) has historically been augmented by citizen-soldiers in various forms: militia, volunteers, draftees, and involuntarily mobilized soldiers to defeat the threats to the nation. The Armed Forces Reserve Act of 1952 created the strategic reserve construct for the Reserve Components for the Armed Services. As a strategic reserve, the Army National Guard would provide support to AC forces during major combat operations and serve as first responders in times of domestic crisis. Prior to September 11, 2001, Army National Guard soldiers expected to train one weekend a month, conduct a 15 day annual training period, and possibly participate in an exercise. The probability of a unit being alerted and deployed for an extended period in support of a wartime mission was very unlikely.

Since the global campaign against terrorism and Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) began in 2001, the ARNG has maintained an incredible operational tempo for which they were neither designed nor resourced. The demand for ground forces to meet global commitments has grown to exceed the sustainable supply. This has resulted in the Army, including the ARNG, being “out of balance”.

This is the first protracted conflict that the United States is engaged in with an all-volunteer force and without a draft. Currently, the AC is less than 40 percent of its size 35 years ago and many of the Army's key capabilities reside in the reserve component. The United States Army Reserve (USAR) and the Army National Guard contain 42

percent of the Army's combat forces, 66 percent of the Army's combat support forces, and 71 percent of the Army's combat service support forces.³

By necessity, the Army National Guard has become an integral part of the Army's operational capability. The Army National Guard's current design as a strategic reserve to meet the Cold War era threat does not support the requirements of today's or the future operating environment. To meet the security demands of the 21st Century, the Army National Guard must be resourced as an integral part of the Army's strategic plan to be able to respond to the Nation's call. As an operational force, the Army National Guard should provide capabilities across the full spectrum of operations and strategic depth to help defeat current and future threats to security, plus respond to a range of non-military contingencies.

Personnel readiness is the bedrock of an operational force. In order to provide trained and ready units when required, the ARNG must focus on policies and processes that will allow units to achieve and maintain the highest levels of personnel readiness while minimizing the necessity to cross-level personnel across formations. Cross-leveling is the process of reassigning personnel and equipment from units that are not deploying to formations that are preparing to deploy in order to increase the gaining unit's personnel and equipment readiness levels to those required for the successful execution of the mission.

Deployment Impact on Personnel Readiness

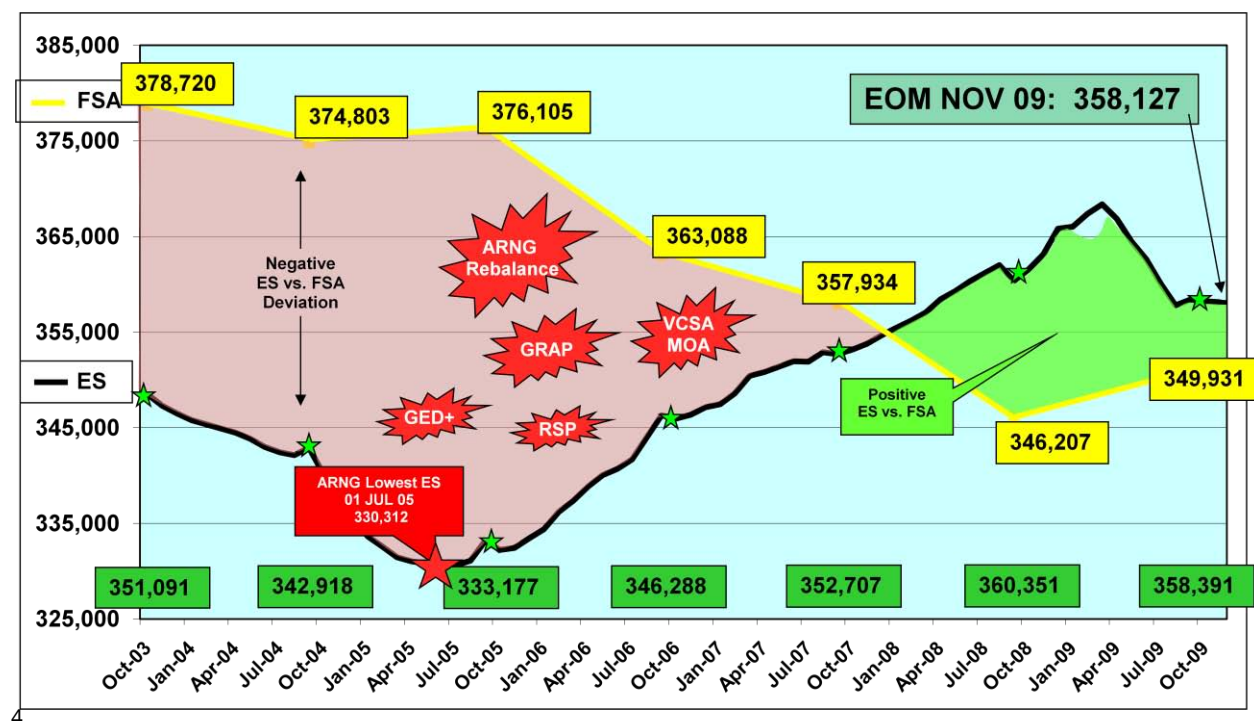
The systemic challenges caused by over-structure, under-manning, and lack of a Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Students account forced the ARNG to cross-level personnel in order to provide the operational Army formations that were 100 percent

³ ARNG G-3, *Army National Guard Force Structure Percentages* (Arlington, VA, 2010).

manned after 9/11. As a strategic reserve, the ARNG was never expected or resourced for cyclic deployment. Under a decidedly Cold War model, the ARNG was expected to fully mobilize for one time use in a general war. Therefore, cross-leveling personnel would not negatively impact a donor unit's readiness. The pace of guard mobilizations and the stress of cyclic deployment resulted in the rapid decline of personnel readiness because of the continuous need to cross-level personnel between units.

Each additional deployment of an ARNG formation that required cross-leveling decreased the non-deployed donor's readiness. The degree to which it did so depended on the extent of the cross-leveling necessary. Cross-leveling not only negatively impacts a donor unit's personnel readiness but can also negatively impact the unit cohesion and training readiness of gaining organizations. Implementing solutions to improve readiness of ARNG units will greatly reduce the amount of cross-leveling required to prepare units for deployment and lessen the negative readiness impact on donor units.

Correcting the Force Structure – End Strength Imbalance



Prior to January 2008, the ARNG had a significant imbalance between the force structure allowance and end strength. Force structure allowance is the number of positions or spaces authorized by Congress, while end strength is the number of personnel in the organization actually filling positions. In the recent past, the ARNG could not satisfy the personnel readiness demands of a functioning operating force so long as it maintained more authorized force structure than authorized soldiers in its end strength.

For example, in October 2005, the ARNG had a force structure allowance of 376,105 with an end strength authorization of 333,177. Even if manned at 100 percent of its end strength authorization with trained and ready soldiers, the ARNG could only achieve a manning level of 88 percent in perfect conditions.

⁴ Director Army National Guard, *An Operational Army National Guard* (Arlington, VA 2009).

This imbalance between the force structure allowance and total end strength ensures that individual ARNG units cannot be fully manned at home station. Notably, for the first time in recent history, the ARNG has maintained a positive balance between end strength and the force structure allowance from January 2008 to the present. The ARNG achieved this by rebalancing its formations to provide the capability required by the Active Army and eliminating unnecessary force structure from its organization. Previously, even if the ARNG was manned at 100 percent of end strength, it would still have to cross-level personnel because of being authorized more force structure than people to fill the spaces. With the force structure–end strength imbalance corrected, the next major force structure issue to address is building an ARNG Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Student (TTHS) account.

The need for a Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Students (TTHS) Account

To respond to its changed status from a strategic reserve to an operational force, the ARNG has had to cross-level personnel across formations and states in order to provide trained and ready units that are postured to accomplish real world combat missions. To achieve the required personnel readiness levels necessary to function as an operational force, the ARNG needs a Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Students (TTHS) account where it can assign soldiers who cannot deploy. A TTHS account is a classification utilized by the Active Army to assign soldiers who are in a status that would prevent them from deploying; this would be done instead of assigning them to an operational unit. Since these soldiers are unable to deploy, assigning them to an operational unit would degrade the readiness of the formation. In the ARNG, all soldiers regardless of availability for deployment are assigned to an operational unit resulting in further

degradation of organizational readiness. The authorization and resources to do so would alleviate the need to cross-level soldiers to increase personnel readiness in individual formations. The ARNG TTHS should focus primarily on “Trainees”.⁵

Title 32 Section 301 directs, “To be eligible for Federal recognition as an enlisted member of the National Guard, a person must have the qualifications prescribed by the Secretary concerned for the grade, branch, position, and type of unit or organization involved. He becomes federally recognized upon enlisting in a federally recognized unit or organization of the National Guard.”⁶ Based on this Title 32 section requirement, all soldiers that are recruited and enlisted into the ARNG must be assigned to an authorized position in a unit. Although all newly assigned soldiers will increase the unit’s assigned strength, the personnel factor or P-level of the unit will not improve with the accession of a non-prior service soldier.

One of the key metrics of a unit’s personnel readiness is the available strength percentage, not the unit’s assigned strength. Any soldier that has not completed officer basic course (OBC), warrant officer basic course (WOBC), or initial entry training (IET) requirement or its equivalent is coded as “TN” (minimum training for deployment not completed category) and is not available to deploy with the organization until trained to the minimum standard.⁷ An ARNG TTHS account would help reduce some of the challenges associated with this. Without a TTHS-like account, non-prior service

⁵ Headquarters Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 600-8-6 Personnel Accounting and Strength Reporting* (Washington, DC, 1998), 14. “Trainees include officer accession students. Trainees are those active duty soldiers who have not completed initial entry training. Entry training includes basic training, advanced individual training, and other proficiency or developmental training accomplished before arrival at first permanent duty assignment.”

⁶ United States Code Title 32 Section 301.

⁷ Headquarters Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 220-1 Unit Status Reporting* (Washington, DC, 2006), p. 123-124.

soldiers that are either not available or unqualified will still be assigned to deployable units, creating the impression that these units are fully manned and ready.

Two factors compound the issue of assigning non-prior service soldiers directly to a unit instead of a TTHS account. First, the recruiting mix of the ARNG has dramatically changed over the last ten years. Now ARNG units recruit more non-prior service personnel than prior service accessions. From fiscal year 2000 and 2005, the recruiting mix of the ARNG remained steady between prior service and non-prior service accessions; approximately 45 percent prior service versus 55 percent non-prior service.⁸ A dramatic shift in the recruiting mix occurred in fiscal year 2006 to 39 percent prior service and 61 percent non-prior service.⁹ Non-prior service accessions have trended higher every fiscal year since 2006, reaching a record high of 71 percent of accessions in fiscal year 2009. In fiscal year 2009, the ARNG recruited 40,952 non-prior service soldiers who were directly assigned to units but were not yet available for deployment.

The second factor is the training pipeline. Non-prior service soldiers in the ARNG do not immediately ship to initial entry training upon enlisting. Some can wait up to 12 months before they ship to basic training. As of 30 November 2009, the ARNG had 30,408 soldiers in the training pipeline; 10,349 awaiting training, 16,104 at training, and 3,955 awaiting phase II training.¹⁰

Due to the training backlog and the relative scarcity of training seats when they are needed, soldiers can spend up to 24 months in the training pipeline before completing the minimum training required for deployment. The entire time he or she is disqualified

⁸ ARNG G-1, *Recruiting Data FY 2000-2009* (Arlington, VA, 2010).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Army National Guard Strength Command, *Training Pipeline Data* (Arlington, VA, 2010)

from deployment with the organization. In addition, a prior service soldier that is qualified and deployable cannot be recruited to the unit since a position vacancy does not exist. This lack of TTHS “slack” severely handicaps the ARNG ability to achieve the readiness required of an operational force.

Creating a TTHS Account in the ARNG

There are three viable courses of action open to the ARNG for establishing a functional TTHS account. The first course of action is creating a TTHS account via an increase in the end strength. By doing this, the ARNG will be able to continue to provide the capability required to support the national military objectives, provide units that are truly operational, and decrease the stress on the all-volunteer force. This will be a political challenge at a time of tight budgets in the active force, but no action will result in further stress on the reserve component and decline in operational readiness. The second option is to decrease the current ARNG force structure allowance to form the TTHS account. A reduction in the ARNG force structure allowance will degrade the ARNG ability to respond to state and federal missions, decrease dwell time for units, and increase the stress on the force. The final course of action is to establish the TTHS by both increasing the end strength and decreasing the force structure allowance. Although not as severe, the impacts would be similar to establishing the TTHS account by decreasing the ARNG force structure allowance.

The time is now right for a TTHS account for the ARNG because units have the proper framework to truly achieve the readiness levels to transform to an operational force. Although the method of creating a TTHS account for the ARNG should be debated, the ARNG must institute a TTHS account to be able to achieve the necessary

personnel readiness in units required of an operational force. A lack of a TTHS account forces units to cross level personnel to fill formations for mobilization due to non-deployable soldiers being assigned to units which degrades not improves the readiness of a unit. The implementation of a TTHS account will increase unit readiness by assigning soldiers who are not available or qualified to a holding account until they have completed the minimum acceptable level of training in their duty military occupational skill qualified and available for deployment. By forming a TTHS account, the ARNG can provide an operational force that is ready and responsive to meet the challenges of the future. Once all the force structure issues are resolved, the ARNG must build personnel readiness through the Army Force Generation Model.

Building Personnel Readiness through ARFORGEN

The Army Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN) is a process to prepare forces for employment by building readiness over time while providing predictability for soldiers, their families and employers. The RC ARFORGEN model is currently a five year model divided into three phases: reset, train/ready, and available. Upon returning from deployment, a unit is placed in the reset force pool to recuperate, reconnect with their families and readjust to civilian life.

A unit moves through the train/ready force pools as it prepares for future missions and conducts collective training. When a unit is ready to deploy again, they are assigned to the available pool. The key for ARNG units is to achieve the highest level of personnel readiness early in the train/ready force pool in order to allow the unit to conduct effective collective training prior to entering the available pool.

A formation must be properly stabilized prior to entering the collective training phase to ensure the personnel training are the personnel deploying. Medical and dental issues associated with deployment must be identified early to provide the unit enough time to correct the problems before moving too far into the train/ready phase. By building personnel readiness early, cross-leveling from other units to fill formations in the available pool will be minimized, collective training will be more effective and efficient, and unit cohesion will remain intact.

A Key Issue - Improving Medical/Dental Readiness

Medical and dental readiness must be addressed early in the Army Force Generation Model to positively impact the readiness of a unit prior to mobilization. The Unit Status Report (USR) and the Medical Protection System (MEDPROS) are two excellent tools that provide the readiness status of units as they flow through ARFORGEN. Leaders at all levels must emphasize the importance of personnel readiness and make it a priority. If a unit cannot deploy with the personnel it is training, the time devoted to training is irrelevant.

In February 2007, the Department of Defense implemented the 12 month mobilization policy which has forced units to address medical and dental readiness at home-station in order to maximize collective training at the mobilization station.¹¹ Prior to the 12 month mobilization policy units did not focus on personnel readiness prior to reaching the mobilization station. A unit expected to have all its medical and dental issues corrected at the mobilization station which resulted in an organization spending up to 6 months at the mobilization site before deploying.

¹¹ Statement by Colonel David Sproat (Chief Surgeon of the ARNG, NGB) Before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation. "Dental Readiness of the ARNG." April 23, 2008.

Corrective medical and dental treatment at mobilization stations is often more expensive, reduces training time, and may necessitate treatment short-cuts which could create issues during deployment.¹² Furthermore, treatment at mobilization stations does not catch Class 3 and 4 personnel cross-leveled into units until after mobilization. Individuals cross-leveled to fill gaps are typically only 50 percent dentally ready because they have not been on alert nor have they been receiving needed treatment.¹³ Cross-leveled soldiers that need treatment due to medical or dental issues miss valuable training time which negatively impacts the cohesion and integration of the new soldiers into the deploying unit.

The Tricare Reserve Select medical insurance plan (TRS) offers coverage comparable to most civilian health insurance plans at below-average cost, in which DoD pays 72 percent of the cost.¹⁴ In 2008, data illustrated that 60-70 percent of Guardsmen had health care coverage. The foundation of a healthy force is the ability of soldiers to take preventive measures and attain health care when needed. Without health insurance, receiving adequate care is problematic for most except in the most extreme circumstances.

Dental readiness in the ARNG has been a major challenge to providing manned formations for deployment and is consistently the main reason for soldiers being ineligible for deployment.¹⁵ As is reflective of the nation, very few ARNG soldiers have private dental insurance that would ensure good dental health to meet the Army's

¹² House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation Reports. "Findings and Recommendations of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation in Support the Military Personnel Subcommittee re: Dental Readiness in the Reserve Component." (Page 2). Accessed: <http://armedservices.house.gov/oi-subcom-reports.shtml>

¹³ Findings and Recommendations p2

¹⁴ Jim Greenhill, "Army Guard strives to improve medical readiness." National Guard Bureau, March 9, 2010 (b).

¹⁵ Sproat

mobilization standards without additional care at the mobilization station. The cornerstone of improving dental readiness across the force is to provide dental exams and treatment outside of alert and throughout the Army Force Generation Cycle. In conjunction with providing dental care early, the ARNG must leverage the dental benefits available during demobilization and increase the capability of the ARNG Dental Corps.

The Army Select Reserve Dental Readiness System (ASDRS) will enable states to provide dental treatment to soldiers through local contracts or utilizing the Tri-service Reserve Health Readiness Program (RHRP).¹⁶ The ASDRS would use existing authority to provide care to members of the reserve not on alert, by referring reserve component soldiers to civilian providers through the RHRP. The ASDRS will also track dental readiness of alert status and remind soldiers about appointments.¹⁷

The First Term Dental Readiness Program (FTDR) was approved in May 2008 and will provide examinations for soldiers and identify dental issues that need to be treated at the training station. The FTDR program currently provides an initial exam, “simple Class 3 care” at 5 Basic training and 13 Advanced initial training sites.¹⁸ If care cannot be given at the training station, ASDRS provides the ability to correct these issues when the soldiers return to the state.

In 2008, participation in the FTDR was less than 70 percent, due in part to limited access to soldiers during training and inadequate facilities at some locations.¹⁹

¹⁶ Sproat

¹⁷ House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation Reports. “Findings and Recommendations of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation in Support the Military Personnel Subcommittee re: Dental Readiness in the Reserve Component.” (Page 3). Accessed: <http://armedservices.house.gov/oi-subcom-reports.shtml>

¹⁸ Findings and Recommendations

¹⁹ Findings and Recommendations p1

Additionally, issues identified at demobilization stations can be treated when returned to their home state. The FY2009 NDAA provided \$23.3 million from existing Army medical accounts for the FTDR.²⁰ To make FTDR effective, soldiers must be made available for treatment and an investment in dental facilities is required.

Reserve component members became eligible for an annual dental exam in 2008 by military approved dentists, but can only receive treatment after being alerted for mobilization. Treatment between the alert and mobilization can occur through the Reserve Health Readiness Program (RHRP) which uses contracted dentists from the private sector, DVA or Dept. of Health and Human Services, paid for by Tricare. If military dentists are unavailable, care can be brought through the Military Medical Support Office (MMSO), when the military will authorize and reimburse a visit to a civilian dentist.²¹

Upon demobilization, reserve component soldiers receive limited cost-free dental benefits, including access to the Tricare dental plan and programs available through Department of Veterans Affairs and the Transitional Assistance Management program (TAMP). The Demobilization Dental Readiness (DDR) program provides exams and “class 3 treatment” at demobilization. The DDR program can be executed utilizing mobile dental exam units which could result in 8-12 percent improvement in readiness. While more expensive, it allows units to be examined and treated together.²² The FY2009 NDAA provided \$8.5 million for DDR programs from existing Army medical accounts.²³ Along with the DDR program, the Army expanded its post-deployment

²⁰ Findings and Recommendations

²¹ Findings and Recommendations p2

²² Findings and Recommendations p2

²³ Findings and Recommendations p3

grace period to allow soldiers 180 days to obtain a dental exam before reverting to a class 4 status (unknown), instead of the previous 90 day limit.²⁴

The ARNG Dental Corps provides the states and territories the capability to internally provide dental exams and basic care to its soldiers. Currently, the ARNG Dental Corps is less than 60 percent strength, with the majority of remaining dentist being retirement eligible. The current retirement age of the National Guard medical and dental corps is 64 while the other three components the retirement age is 68.²⁵ The increase of the retirement age to 68 would allow the ARNG to retain the majority of dental corps while trying to increase the dental corps strength. Without a fully manned dental corps, the leadership of the ARNG will have difficulty accurately determining the dental readiness of organizations, conduct essential pre-deployment dental exams, and providing basic dental care.

Providing two medical readiness days per year would add incentive for the soldier to complete readiness requirements. This would further improve overall unit readiness by removing medical readiness days as a competitor for training days. This would also allow units to go on active duty to seek medical/dental treatment without loss of income from civilian employers. These medical readiness days are transferable and can be pooled between soldiers within a unit, depending on the need of extended treatment of the other soldiers in the unit.²⁶

The ARNG has identified and implemented many programs to improve medical and dental readiness. States have been focusing on dental readiness and have been sending units who are part of a brigade combat team to mobilization stations with an

²⁴ Findings and Recommendations p2

²⁵ Sproat

²⁶ Findings and Recommendations p3

increasingly high dental readiness rate of over 90 percent. This can be illustrated with the 39th BCT from Arkansas which was 92 percent dentally ready in January 2008, compared to October 2003 when the average was 13 percent dental readiness in the same unit.²⁷ The policies, procedures, and resources focused on improving personnel readiness to prepare brigade combat teams for deployment should be modeled and applied to the force as a whole. States are given a number of options by the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to improve medical and dental health. Treatment programs are tailored to meet specific unit needs, using a variety of different programs, and are eligible for funding from the NGB.²⁸ The Department of Defense is making large investments to the health of the force by providing many options to soldiers for medical and dental care. In return, the ARNG should hold soldiers accountable to be deployable as a condition of service. The improvement of medical and dental readiness in the ARNG has allowed commanders to recoup the time lost to treatment and enable them to focus on collective training and maximize the boots-on-the-ground time in-theater.

Recruiting and Retention

Prior to July 2005, the ARNG end strength was on a downward trend. The senior leadership realized that in order for the ARNG to remain a relevant asset, it needed to reverse the trend dramatically in order to provide the ready forces necessary of an operational force. In July 2005, the ARNG implemented the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP) to establish a position of strength from which the Army

²⁷ Sproat

²⁸ Findings and Recommendations p2

National Guard can achieve its accession mission and increase the number of MOS-qualified Soldiers.²⁹

The GRAP program was designed to transform the way the Army National Guard conducts recruiting and retention operations, marked a return to community based recruiting (grassroots) and reduced the cost of recruiting new officers and soldiers while increasing the number of new officers and soldiers recruited. To be eligible to participate in the GRAP program, an individual must be in one of the following statuses: TPU/MDAY officer and enlisted soldiers, AGR enlisted soldiers, currently mobilized enlisted soldiers, enlisted soldiers on ADOS orders (not assigned to Recruiting and Retention) and ARNG retirees with 20+ years of verified service.³⁰ The qualified individual becomes a Recruiting Assistant (RA) that works as a contract employee versus directly for the ARNG. Recruiting assistants earn income by supporting recruiting efforts by identifying men and women who are qualified to serve in the ARNG. RAs earn \$2,000 for each prior service member or each new accession that enlists and reports to Basic Training within 365 days. The amount earned for recruiting an Officer, up to \$7,500, is determined by the critical needs of the ARNG and how the candidate earns his or her commission. The strength of GRAP is the RAs are who recruit people they will serve with and are implanted in their respective communities which put them in a unique position to identify potential officers and soldiers from the people they already know. GRAP allows the Guard to effectively promote strength from within by recognizing and rewarding those who help achieve its goal to maintain today's readiness and strength requirements while preparing for tomorrow's challenges.

²⁹ Army National Guard Strength Command, *Guard Recruiting Assistance Program* (Arlington, VA, 2010)

³⁰ Army National Guard Strength Command, *Guard Recruiting Assistance Program* (Arlington, VA, 2010)

Since its inception, the GRAP program has been a tremendous success story for ARNG recruiting and retention efforts. In FY2006 the ARNG exceeded retention goals by 18 percent, and reached recruiting goals of 99 percent (signing up 19,000 more soldiers than 2005). The ARNG has had a net increase of 14,000 soldiers over 2006.³¹ The ARNG grew from 330,000 in June 2005 to 362,000 in 2008, due to the success of recruitment, especially G-RAP. In 2009, GRAP accounted for 30 percent of all recruits in the ARNG.³² The ARNG grew by 18,800 over two fiscal years up to 2009, which means that the ARNG achieved more total end-strength than all other Department of Defense components combined.³³

2009

The ARNG reached and exceeded its congressionally mandated end-strength goal of 358,200 one month before the end of the fiscal year. The end-strength was 358,391 (100.1 percent of its fiscal year goal). ARNG also met its retention goal by retaining 36,672 soldiers (106 percent of its goal of 34,593). The Guard made changes to its recruitment policy in late 2009 in order to decrease its end strength from 362,493 to the congressionally mandated 358,200. The ARNG reduced end strength while meeting accession and retention goals. Its 56,000 soldier accession mission was fulfilled with 56,071 soldiers, and 36,672 were retained to meet the 34,593 retention mission.³⁴

These goals were met with the assistance from state leaders focused on end-strength by placing some soldiers into duty statuses that better describe them, including

³¹ Fred W. Baker, "Gates Promises More Predictable National Guard Deployments." *American Forces Press Service*, March 2, 2007.

³² Mike Smith, "Army, Air Guard Reach End-Strength Goals." *American Force Press Service*, October 14, 2009.

³³ S. Patrick McCollum, "Army Guard on Course to Reach End-strength Goal." *American Forces Press Service*, July 10, 2009.

³⁴ Mike Smith, "Army, Air Guard Reach End-Strength Goals." *American Force Press Service*, October 14, 2009.

enlisted soldiers with expired terms, non-validated pay, or no training seat reservation.³⁵ A limited number of recruiters also carried out increasingly efficient and precise “targeted recruiting”. They focused on specific skills which were tailored to the adjusted force and its skill shortages. The National Guard Bureau was in touch with state and local recruiters to consult on which recruiting programs should be bolstered or more strongly utilized. According to Major General Ray Carpenter, the ARNG was required to reduce its end strength by 10,000 by September 2009, because the cap was reach as mandated by Congress. This allowed the Guard to select and keep the “highest quality” soldiers in its ranks. The military occupational specialty qualification rate went from approximately 80 percent to over 90 percent during this period of time.³⁶

2010

The ARNG had a total strength of 358,442 in February 2010. Over 4,000 were recruited in January 2010, surpassing set goals. Retention numbers were reported at 124 percent of the assigned mission, with over 3,115 soldiers retained.³⁷ Because of the success in recruiting and retention, medical and bad conduct waivers will no longer be granted to new enlistees and the maximum enlistment age has changed from 42 to 35, greatly improving the quality of the force.³⁸ Another benefit experienced is the age of the force. Because the ARNG has been replacing 20 percent of its force every year,

³⁵ Mike Smith, “Army, Air Guard Reach End-Strength Goals.” *American Force Press Service*, October 14, 2009.

³⁶ Mike Smith “Army Guard’s readiness ‘incredible’ says Carpenter.” *National Guard Bureau*, February 19, 2010.

³⁷ Mike Smith “Army Guard’s readiness ‘incredible’ says Carpenter.” *National Guard Bureau*, February 19, 2010.

³⁸ S. Patrick McCollum, “Army Guard on Course to Reach End-strength Goal.” *American Forces Press Service*, July 10, 2009.

the ARNG is the youngest it has been since the end of the draft nearly 40 years ago, resulting in less health issues as experienced with an older force.³⁹

The ARNG has made unprecedented gains in strength by leveraging the strong points of the organization and implementing creative ways to recruit and retain soldiers. The ARNG has grown a force that is younger and more capable than at any time in the history of the National Guard. It is an amazing accomplishment considering all this was achieved during a period of conflict.

Conclusion

In order to meet the post-9/11 requirement for ground forces around the world, the ARNG has transformed itself from a “strategic reserve” to an “operational force”. During the 1990’s, DoD assumed significant readiness risk by underfunding the ARNG resulting in units that were not prepared for an operational role in which they found themselves. As a strategic reserve, DoD could afford to under resource the ARNG, ramping it up as necessary with the benefit of advanced warning. Over the past decade, long-term, cyclical global deployments have revealed the costs of this increased risk on operations, readiness and morale of the RC.

In order to ensure the ARNG can meet the current and future demands placed on its forces, the investment in personnel readiness must be a priority. To accomplish this, the leadership of the ARNG cannot allow the force to become hollow again by adding more force structure to the organization without having the personnel to fill the formations. A TTHS account must be implemented to ensure operational units are manned with only soldiers who are available for deployment, eliminating the false impression of ready units. The ARFORGEN process needs to require organizations to

³⁹ Michael Dann, “How 9/11 Changed the National Guard.” *National Guard Bureau*, September 5, 2006.

achieve higher levels of personnel readiness earlier in the cycle to guarantee units can effectively train at the collective level prior to entering the available force pool. Medical and dental issues should be addressed efficiently leveraging the programs implemented to provide care to soldiers. Soldiers should be provided medical readiness days to address issues and required to meet health requirements for deployment in order to be in good standing. The ARNG needs to maintain its current success in strength management to provide units with individuals who can meet the minimum requirements for deployment.

The ARNG must continue to make personnel readiness the highest priority in order to provide America with an effective organization that is able to supply a wide array of capabilities that can respond to domestic emergencies, contribute to homeland defense, and support overseas contingency operations when needed.