

# The Air National Guard's Contribution to the Total Force

Brig Gen Craig R. McKinley

## The Citizen-Soldier

Citizen-soldiers have played a central role in America's defense since the first English colonists settled in North America in the early seventeenth century. Throughout most of our history, the American people have relied upon the militia and National Guard as well as volunteers to provide the vast bulk of their military manpower in wartime. Prior to the cold war, large standing forces in peacetime were considered unnecessary, overly expensive, and a potential threat to our liberties.

Only in major crises like the Civil War, World War I, and World War II, did the nation tolerate the establishment of large standing forces. For all of its shortcomings in training and discipline, this system was considered cost-effective, strategically sound, consistent with our cultural values, and supportive of democratic institutions. With this basic philosophy of military institutions, the English colonists gained a foothold on the Atlantic coast, fought off the attacks of hostile Indians and European powers, won the nation's independence, acquired a vast continental domain, survived a great Civil War, and ended slavery while becoming an increasingly affluent and liberal society.

Citizen-soldiers have also aided their states in coping with natural disasters and civil unrest. This dual mission—both state and federal—has served as a source of great pride among guardsmen for generations and has helped maintain the highest retention statistics among the reserve components. This close relationship between the Guard and the states has also helped knit the fabric of the US military as one of the most trusted institutions in the federal government. The Air National Guard proudly supports the heritage of the citizen airman.

Brig Gen Craig R. McKinley is the deputy director, Air National Guard, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. As deputy director, he assists the director in formulating, developing, and coordinating all programs, policies, and plans affecting over 108,000 Air National Guard members in more than 1,260 units throughout the United States, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. He is a command pilot with more than 4,000 hours in F-15, F-16, F-106, T-33, T-37, T-38, C-130, and C-131 aircraft.

## The Air Guard's Early Years

In the twentieth century, the relative importance of the citizen-soldier declined. The evolution of technology and the emergence of the United States as a great world power drove a shift of emphasis to the standing forces of the professional military. But, until the Vietnam War, the bulk of our manpower was not composed of professional soldiers. Draftees and volunteers filled the gap in times of need. The twentieth century also saw the addition of the federal reserve forces to fill the needs of trained soldiers in times of crisis.

Although the Air National Guard (ANG) was not established as a separate reserve component until 18 September 1947 when the Air Force was created, National Guard aviators have played significant roles in all of America's wars and most of its major contingencies since the First World War era. On 2 August 1908, the Army formally accepted the world's first military airplane from the Wright brothers. Meanwhile, a group of enthusiasts had organized an "aeronautical corps" at the 7th Regiment Armory in New York City to learn ballooning. They were members of the 1st Company Signal Corps, New York National Guard. Ballooning experiments were also considered an important military aviation undertaking in support of infantry units.

In 1910, members of the 1st Company Signal Corps raised \$500 to finance their first aircraft. The investment disappeared when the plane crashed on takeoff during maneuvers that same year. In 1911, the Curtiss Aeroplane Company loaned the unit an aircraft and pilot named Beckwith Havens. Later, Havens joined the unit as a private and was recognized as the National Guard's first aviator. In August 1912, he flew with the Army in joint maneuvers.

There were many efforts to form Guard aero units in various states by civilian flyers and businessmen who were interested in promoting the general development of American aviation. On 1 November 1915, Capt Raynal Cawthorne Bolling, a prominent New York City attorney, organized the Guard's first genuine aviation unit. The Aviation Detachment, 1st Battalion, Signal Corps, of the New York National Guard, trained at Mineola Field on Long Island, New York. The unit rented, then purchased, its own aircraft with funds donated by the Aero Club of America and other contributors. This unit is recognized as the Air National Guard's oldest unit and its lineage is still carried by the 102d Rescue Squadron, New York Air National Guard.

Subsequently, the organization was redesignated the 1st Aero Company and was “provisionally recognized” on 22 June 1916. The unit was called into federal service and mobilized on 13 July 1916 during the border crisis with Mexico. Captain Bolling’s unit was joined by the 2d Aero Company of Buffalo, New York, and 12 other Guard officers from other states. However, instead of seeing active service in the southwest, they remained at Mineola Field training and were released from federal service on 2 November 1916.

The three months’ training at Mineola Field was not satisfying for the fledgling National Guard aviators. Little was accomplished by the group, and they received scant support from the War Department. Captain Bolling saw the main problems as difficulty of obtaining funds for spare parts and the inability to recruit expert mechanics into the National Guard. Instead, his unit had to rely entirely on paid civilians to maintain its aircraft. He was convinced that military aviation could only be developed under the auspices of the regular Army.

## **World War I**

Captain Bolling’s sentiments were shared by the Army, and this early experience convinced the War Department not to activate Guard aviation units when President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war in April 1917. Although no Guard air units were mobilized in World War I, a significant number of guardsmen volunteered as part of the initial pool for the Army to draw aviators. Approximately one hundred guardsmen had either qualified as pilots or were in training to become military aviators. Convinced that they could make valuable contributions in the air, these patriots had to leave the Guard and enter the Signal Corps Reserve in order to fly in the war.

Some guardsmen, including then Colonel Bolling and Maj Reuben Fleet of Washington State, occupied senior Air Service positions and played prominent roles in air operations in France. Lt Col Philip A. Carroll, an attorney, had learned to fly with Bolling in 1915 at Mineola Field. Colonel Carroll helped form the 1st Aero Reserve Squadron and shipped overseas as the unit’s commander. Once in France, he eventually became chief of the Training Section of the Army’s Air Service. Maj John M. Satterfield, whose 2d Aero Company had also trained at Mineola Field, was a prominent banker and businessman from Buffalo, New York. During World War I, he served on General Pershing’s staff in France, and his principle duties were to buy aircraft and develop airfields for the Army Air Corps. Maj Reed Chambers, a Tennessee guardsman, flew with Eddie Rickenbacker on the first US Army combat air mission.

At least four guardsmen became aces during World War I. Moreover, 2d Lt Erwin R. Bleckley of Kansas was awarded posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism as an aerial observer.

Guard aviation earned the reputation as “flying clubs” in the years between World War I and World War II. In the

interwar years, Guard aviation was closely linked to commercial aviation. In 1918, Maj Reuben Fleet began the nation’s first airmail service. This Army program captured the imagination of the people and demonstrated how flight could deliver a useful service to both the military and civilian communities. Charles Lindbergh also joined the Missouri National Guard as a pilot, motivated by a sense of service and a love of flight.

## **World War II**

Guard aviation took on a serious note with the outbreak of war in Europe. Although its equipment was obsolete, its pilots and maintenance personnel were outstanding. During World War II, approximately 4,800 experienced National Guard aviation personnel were mobilized. Most Air Guard units were stripped of many key personnel and reequipped with more modern aircraft. Some of the early deploying squadrons maintained a degree of unit integrity and cohesion. But most lost their character and identity as Guard organizations. The most significant wartime contribution of National Guard aviators was to train and lead the large numbers of volunteer airmen who had entered the Army Air Force during the war. That role was epitomized by Lt Col Addison E. Baker, a guardsman from Ohio, who commanded the 93d Heavy Bombardment Group’s daring raid on Ploesti, Rumania. Colonel Baker’s heroic leadership once again led to the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor.

Despite the heroic success of Guard aviation personnel during World War II, many senior officers in the Army Air Forces remained skeptical of the usefulness of guard aviation units in postwar defense plans. Gen Hap Arnold was a vocal opponent of Guard aviation. He believed the guard could not perform missions in modern aircraft because they lacked the time to train and took too long to mobilize. He was proved wrong in the coming years.

## **The Cold War Era Begins**

On 18 September 1947, the Air National Guard was born as an independent reserve component of the Air Force. Initially, servicemen returning from overseas met in civilian clothes to form units and pursue their love of flight. These units trained with outdated equipment and were poorly funded. But the experienced aviators and maintainers retained from the war allowed them to continue to expand the Guard’s mission capabilities.

## **The Citizen-Spaceman**

Air National Guard personnel have also made significant contributions in space to forge the way in making the Air Force an aerospace force. Maj Donald “Deke” K. Slayton, an original “Mercury Seven” astronaut whom NASA picked to be one of the first Americans in space, was a former fighter pilot with the Minnesota Air National Guard’s 109th Fighter Squadron. Major Slayton served as a B-25 bomber pilot with

56 combat missions in Europe during World War II and resigned as a captain in 1946. Major Slayton took a reduction in rank to second lieutenant to join the 109th when he moved to St. Paul to attend school in March 1948. "I was able to fly as much with the Air Guard as I had been on active duty," he said. "The pilots were the cream of the World War II fighter pilots." He left the Guard in 1949 to take a job with Boeing Aircraft, but when the Korean War broke out, Major Slayton rejoined the 109th to serve his country.

Two of the three astronauts who flew the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission were former guardsmen. Capt John "Jack" L. Swigert Jr. flew in the Air Force from 1953 to 1956, serving in Japan and Korea before resigning to take a job with Pratt and Whitney as a test pilot. To keep his military flight status current, he joined the Massachusetts Air Guard's 131st Tactical Fighter Squadron. He resigned from the Air National Guard as a captain after he was accepted for the astronaut program in 1965. Capt Frederick W. Haise Jr. began his military career as a Marine Corps pilot from 1954 to 1956. He left the Corps to study aeronautical engineering at the University of Oklahoma. Like Captain Swigert, he wanted to keep his flight status up-to-date, so he joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard's 185th Tactical Fighter Squadron. When he was selected for the Apollo 13 mission, he invited members of his former Guard units to attend the launch, 64 of whom were present to watch the historic liftoff 11 April 1970. Captain Haise credited his Guard service for enabling him to successfully deal with the Apollo crisis.

Lt Col Robert A. Rushworth, who started his aviation career with the Maine ANG, became America's second "winged astronaut" in 1963. Winged astronauts were those who flew the experimental X-15 rocket to the edge of the Earth's atmosphere and returned to land on the dry salt flats of Edwards Air Force Base (AFB), California. Colonel Rushworth piloted the X-15 for its first "dead" instrument landing. Data gathered during this and other such tests have been incorporated into the space shuttle's training program, meaning tests conducted by a former guardsman nearly 40 years ago are still being applied today.

Capt Russell Schweickart entered the astronaut program directly from the Massachusetts ANG in 1963. Captain Schweickart was commissioned in the Air Force in 1956, following his graduation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in aeronautical engineering. He then joined the Massachusetts Air Guard's 102d Tactical Fighter Wing in 1960 and was with the unit when it deployed to Phalsbourg Air Base (AB), France, during the Berlin Crisis of 1961. Captain Schweickart served with the unit until he was accepted for the astronaut program in 1963. At 27, he was the youngest in the third group of astronaut trainees selected. He also was the first member of any reserve component to move directly into the program. His space missions went on to record a number of firsts that helped pioneer the US manned-flight program.

## **The Korean War**

The Air Guard mobilized 45,000 airmen in 66 of its flying squadrons—over 80 percent of its total force—in support of the war. Nearly 25 percent of those mobilized were in aircraft control and warning squadrons. However, the call-up exposed the weaknesses of all US military reserve programs, including the Air National Guard. It took three to six months for some Air Guard units to become combat ready. Some never did.

Eventually, the ANG made a substantial contribution to the war effort and the Air Force's global buildup. Although initially unprepared and ill-equipped for combat, air guardsmen had flown 39,530 sorties and had destroyed 39 enemy aircraft by the end of the war. Four air guardsmen became aces and more than 101 were either killed or declared missing in action. Because of the lack of initial preparation for combat, senior ANG and Air Force leaders became seriously committed to building the Air National Guard into an effective reserve component force. The Guard began to receive modern equipment and funding to shape it as an effective fighting force.

In the mid-to-late 1950s the Guard added special operations and aeromedical airlift capabilities despite Air Force sentiments that the Guard couldn't handle large aircraft and should stick with fighters. Due to the persistence and political acumen of the director of the Air National Guard, Maj Gen Winston P. "Wimpy" Wilson, the Guard obtained 48 C-97s to form six air transport squadrons in the early 1960s.

Air guardsmen continued to play a major part in supporting America's national interests at the outset of the Cold War. In April 1961, 80 air guardsmen, serving as civilian volunteers, trained exiled Cubans to fly old B-26 bombers and transports during the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The guardsmen volunteered for combat missions after the exiles lost two B-26s on D day.

In August 1961, President John F. Kennedy ordered 148,000 guardsmen and reservists to active duty in response to the Soviet blockade of Berlin. Twenty-one tactical fighter squadrons, four tactical reconnaissance squadrons, six air transport squadrons, and a tactical control group were mobilized for the Berlin Crisis. Once again, deficiencies in range for the Guard's F-86 aircraft and lack of spare parts for maintenance caused United States European Command to question the value of the Guard's participation. Operation Stair Step was needed to "island hop" more than 200 Air Guard fighters to Europe. A need for air refueling capability was identified to extend the US military's global reach. Several Guard units made the transition from fighters to tanker aircraft.

## **The Vietnam War**

On 2 January 1968, President Lyndon Johnson ordered the mobilization of 9,343 ANG personnel in response to the North Korean seizure of the American spy ship, the USS

*Pueblo*. Within 36 hours, approximately 95 percent of the air guardsmen had reported to their units. Eight tactical fighter groups, three tactical reconnaissance groups, and three wing headquarters were mobilized. Four fighter squadrons were deployed to Vietnam. The 355th Tactical Fighter Wing in Vietnam was officially an Air Force unit, but 85 percent of its members were guardsmen. An additional 1,333 air guardsmen mobilized on 13 May 1968 in response to the Communist's Tet offensive in Vietnam. The Air Guard flew approximately 30,000 sorties and 50,000 combat hours in Southeast Asia.

The bitter end of the war in Vietnam, the mistrust in government institutions it generated, and the economic realities of maintaining a large active duty force called for a new defense strategy. In the wake of the Vietnam War, the Department of Defense (DOD) adopted a Total Force policy in 1973. The Total Force policy was designed to hold down costs as well as strengthen ties between the military and American society by providing greater reliance on the National Guard and Air Force Reserve. The strong political alliance forged between the regular and reserve forces helped the DOD achieve its highest approval rating from the American people in decades, and the unprecedented defense spending of the Reagan administration helped modernize the Guard to the highest readiness levels in its history.

### **The Birth of the “Total Force” Concept**

The war in Vietnam stretched the Air Force's ability to maintain its commitments in Europe. As a result, the ANG assumed aerial refueling responsibilities for Air Force and NATO fighters in Europe. ANG KC-97 tankers were retrofitted with jet engines to fuel modern fighter aircraft on “real world” training missions over Europe. As one unit would complete its service, another would arrive and continue operations. From 1967 to 1977, Operation Creek Party—sustained primarily with volunteers on a rotational basis—flew 6,512 accident-free sorties, completing 47,207 hookups, and off-loading 137,398,620 pounds of fuel. More significantly, the operation demonstrated that the Air Guard could sustain significant operational rotations overseas in support of the Air Force without resorting to a politically sensitive mobilization by the president or Congress. This rotational philosophy, using a volunteer force, remains virtually unchanged today. The success of Operation Creek Party contributed to the development of the Total Force policy to better integrate active duty and reserve component forces.

As the drawdown of active duty forces continued after the Vietnam War, some unique missions began to transition to the Air National Guard. In 1983 the 193d Special Operations Group, Pennsylvania ANG, flew propaganda missions in its EC-130Es over Grenada aiding in the evacuation of American citizens in Operation Urgent Fury. In 1988, the 109th Tactical Airlift Group, New York ANG, began Operation Deep Freeze, flying supplies to Antarctica in support of scientists from the National Science Foundation.

The Air Guard also became the primary airlifters for US SOUTHCOM in the 1980s. Air National Guard civil engineering squadrons built roads and schools. Operation Just Cause, to expel Manuel Noriega, the dictator of Panama, and to install a democratically elected president, was a success in part due to the efforts of the Air National Guard. In the 1990s, air guardsmen manned radar stations and flew fighter aircraft in Latin America to monitor drug-running aircraft.

### **The Persian Gulf Crisis**

The Persian Gulf Crisis saw 12,404 air guardsmen mobilized to federal service. Of that number, 5,240 deployed to Southwest Asia while another 6,264 served in the continental United States, and 900 were assigned to Europe and other overseas locations. Unlike previous mobilizations, the Air Guard required no additional training or new equipment. Air Guard fighters participated in the air campaign from the first day. Additionally, it was the first time in the Air Guard's history that the majority of those called up were not members of combat flying units—or any type of flying unit—they were instead members of support units.

Air Guard F-16s flew 3,645 missions and dropped 3,500 tons of ordinance without losing a single aircraft to enemy fire. Air Guard Special Operations EC-130s flew approximately 2,000 missions lasting some 8,000 hours. And the Guard's aerial tankers pumped over 250 million pounds of fuel into more than 18,000 aircraft. Guard airlifters flew over 40,000 hours, transporting 55,000 people and 115,000 tons of cargo.

### **The Post-Cold-War Era**

The Air National Guard continues to play a vital role in American defense strategy. It now maintains a large share of the Air Force's combat capability. In 1997 the ANG assumed responsibility for manning First Air Force, which is responsible for the air defense of the continental United States against air-breathing threats. Today, the Air Guard also maintains a large percentage of the support mission capabilities for the Air Force (table 1). Key combat communications and engineering installations capability now reside mainly in the Air National Guard.

ANG contributions to current operations remain strong. In Operation Allied Force, our guardsmen answered the call once again. President Bill Clinton authorized the recall of 4,870 air guardsmen for the Kosovo Operation. The Presidential Selective Recall brought 3,266 personnel to the fight—87 units responded. An additional 300 personnel volunteered who were not part of the total tasking, and another 250 guardsmen were mobilized at stateside locations. Air Guard KC-135s logged 10,300 flying hours and flew 1,640 sorties to offload 50 million pounds of fuel to more than 5,100 receivers. And our A-10s logged 3,073 hours and flew 558 sorties delivering over 14,000 rounds of munitions.

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of the Total Air Force**

Mission	ANG	Air Force Reserve Component	Total Reserve Component
Rescue	26	28	54
Tanker	51	14	65
Theater Airlift	49	22	71
Strategic Airlift	16	22	38
Bomber	12	6	18
GP Fighter	34	6	40
Air Defense	100	0	100

Note: Numbers represent percentage of total Air Force capabilities.

Members of A-10 units from Massachusetts, Idaho, and Michigan combined to form the 104th Expeditionary Operations Group (EOG). The dynamics of the developing air campaign required the members of the 104th EOG to mobilize quickly. Incredibly, within 15 days of notification, the new unit was engaging targets from its base in Trapani AB, Italy. Within two days of arrival, the 104th EOG had already destroyed five tanks and several artillery pieces. As Maj Gen Dick Platt, commander, Massachusetts ANG, stated on the eve of the 104th EOG's deployment to Kosovo, "This is not your grandfather's raggedy militia. This is probably *THE* most experienced, most well-trained expeditionary force." Once again, nonaviators provided the bulk of the support. Civil engineers, maintenance, munitions, intelligence, and communications personnel remained in-theater long after the air campaign ceased.

### **The Expeditionary Aerospace Force**

Today, the Air National Guard maintains 88 flying wings and more than 105,000 personnel. While Guard aviation is commonly recognized as an integral part of any significant Air Force operation, our support personnel also now cover the globe in support of every major deployment. If you look closely, you will see air guardsmen at all levels of these deployed organizations performing side-by-side with their active duty counterparts.

The Air National Guard is a full partner in the Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) concept and is increasingly recognized as a vital part of the Global Reach doctrine. The ANG is currently accepting about six percent of the Air Force EAF commitment—close to 25 percent of our total force structure every 15-month cycle. That means that over a 30-month period, nearly half of the ANG will participate as Expeditionary Aerospace Total Force warriors. And it's not just the aircrews. For example, our Civil Engineer's Combat Support commitment for EAFs 1 through 10 trans-

lates to about 2,900 faces or 35 percent of the total population to complete a 15-month cycle. And, these warriors bring a wealth of experience to the table. Over 61 percent of our Guard members have served previously on active duty in either aviation or combat support career fields. Moreover, 97 percent of our pilots have more than 500 hours of experience in their particular aircraft versus a 30 percent experience level among their active duty Air Force counterparts.

### **A Bright Future**

The Guard is no longer viewed as a wartime-only mobilization force. The Air National Guard has gone from being seldom called to first called. As our end strength decreased by 10 percent from FY90 to FY98, our utilization rate increased by 1,000 percent. Today, air guardsmen actively participate as a shaping force for the twenty-first century and contribute to America's uncompromised air dominance. The inferior equipment that plagued the Air Guard in its early years is a thing of the past. Most Air Guard units now boast modern aircraft. In fact, the Air Guard maintenance complex received the 1998 Air Force Association Maj Gen Earl T. Ricks Memorial Trophy and boasted the lowest flight mishap rate of any US military aviation organization in history.

No longer does the Air National Guard wait years to receive modern equipment. We've begun accepting C-130J glass cockpit tactical airlifters. Precision-guided munitions are also making their way into the Air Guard inventory. And associate unit training sites with Air Guard units serving at active duty bases, are permitting air guardsmen to be at the forefront of training active duty aircrews. As a shaping force, the Air National Guard is helping to lead development of a follow-on tanker to replace the KC-135.

The Air National Guard has come a long way since it was established as a reserve component of the Air Force after World War II. And we are still mainly a part-time, voluntary force. For more than 70 percent of our force, the ANG is a second job—or third if you count their families at home. This "citizen-airman" concept has served the country well since its birth, through tumultuous times, and into the next millennium.

Our emergence from the cold war as the only remaining superpower supports the Air Guard's vision of *a world-class organization of warriors, community-based men and women, serving the Total Force, Nation, State, Community, and Family . . . Always Ready AND Continuously Preparing for the Challenges of Tomorrow*. The Air National Guard remains a vital part of defending that way of life and guarding America's skies.

### **Selected Readings**

- Air National Guard Heritage*. Washington, D.C.: Historical Services Division, National Guard Bureau.
- Grant, Rebecca. *Airpower and the Total Force: The Gift of Time*.

Gross, Charles J. *The Air National Guard: A Short History*. Washington D.C.: Historical Services Division, National Guard Bureau, 94–180.

\_\_\_\_\_. *White Paper: US Reserve Forces in the Post Cold War Era*, 14 August 1997).

Listman, CWO John W. “Citizen Spacemen: Guard Pilots Flew X-15 Rocket, Apollo Missions,” *National Guard Magazine*, September 1999, 87–89.

Stump, Maj Gen E. Gordon. “Air Guard Triumphs in Kosovo.” *National Guard Magazine*, July 1999, 8.

Weaver, Maj Gen Paul A., director, Air National Guard. “Reflecting the Past, Anticipating the Future: The Timeless Value of the Citizen-Warrior.” Lecture. 1999.