

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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ANTICIPATING CHANGE: THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
AND BEING AN OPERATIONAL RESERVE

by

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Zubik is an infantry officer, who is currently enrolled as a resident student in the Air War College. He was commissioned through the Illinois National Guard Officer Candidate School (OCS) program in 1986. In 1987 he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communication from Eastern Illinois University and in 1996 he earned a Master of Social Work from the University of Illinois. LTC Zubik has served in Kosovo as the Chief of Operations for KFOR 6A, in Bosnia as the Deputy of Military Operations for the NATO Commander, and in Afghanistan as the CJ1 for Task Force Phoenix. He has served as a platoon leader, company commander, OCS company commander, battalion commander and brigade S3.

Abstract

The National Guard (NG) rightfully champions its designation as an operational force. In the last decade the Army NG through the Army Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN) has continually produced operational units that deployed all over the world in support of OIF/OEF. The achievement of being an operational force was enabled by the desire, commitment and personal sacrifice of NG Soldiers, the NG's visionary senior leadership, and vast supplemental appropriations providing the fiscal resources necessary to create deployable units. However, with the pending reduction of fiscal resources and the continual need to mobilize ready forces, the NG will lose its effectiveness, efficiency and most importantly its sustainability, unless the NG adapts to the demands of being an operational reserve in a financially austere environment. To adapt to this reality, the way the NG maintains operational readiness has to overcome diminishing resources, institutional thinking, and the requirements of being an operational reserve by: 1) a paradigm shift in thinking by State and NG leadership; 2) right-sizing the total number of NG Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs)/ units; 3) refining the measuring and tracking mechanisms of NG units and; 4) increasing the State's reliance on the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) process. By implementing these changes the NG can sustain its brigades and battalions as a cyclic operational reserve.

Introduction

“We will resist the temptation to sacrifice readiness in order to retain force structure, ... An ill-prepared force will be vulnerable to corrosion in its morale, recruitment, and retention. Unless we are prepared to send confident, well-trained, and properly equipped men and women into battle, the nation will risk its most important military advantage”¹

Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense, January, 2012

The National Guard (NG) rightfully champions its designation as an operational force. In the last decade the Army NG, through the Army Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN), has continually produced operational units that deployed all over the world in support of OIF/OEF. The achievement of being an operational force was enabled by the desire, commitment and personal sacrifice of NG Soldiers, the NG’s visionary senior leadership, and vast supplemental appropriations providing the fiscal resources necessary to create deployable units. There is an old adage “to whom much is given, much is expected.” With the title of being an operational reserve, the nation expects much out of its Army NG. However, with the pending reduction of fiscal resources and the continual need to mobilize ready forces, the NG will lose its effectiveness, efficiency and most importantly its sustainability, unless the NG adapts to the demands of being an operational reserve in a financially austere environment. If it does not, the NG will return to being a strategic reserve.

The publications of DoD Directive 1200.17, Managing the Reserve Components as an “Operational Force”² and National Guard Bureau’s (NGB) White Paper titled, “Implementing the Army Force Generation Model in the Army National Guard”³ clearly indicate that the strategic objective or “end” for the NG is to remain an Operational Reserve. However, one of the primary means with which the NG has earned the designation of being an operational reserve

¹ (Panetta 2012)

² (Gates 2008)

³ (Bureau, Army National Guard G1 Personnel Gateway 2011)

has changed; the budget has shrunk. To adapt to this reality, the way the NG maintains operational readiness has to overcome diminishing resources, institutional thinking, and embrace the requirements of being an operational reserve. To overcome these obstacles and achieve the mandated cyclic operational readiness, the following actions are demanded: 1) a paradigm shift in thinking by State and NG leadership; 2) right-sizing the total number of NG Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs)/ units; 3) refining the measuring and tracking mechanisms of NG units and; 4) increasing the State's reliance on the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) process. The risk of not obtaining cyclic operational readiness is that in the future when the NG is "called" it will be relegated to its former self, a strategic reserve, and not the operational reserve that the nation expects. Therefore, if the "end" and the "means" are already dictated, then rethinking the "way" in which NG units achieve operational readiness is the only question that requires careful examination to ensure the NG can achieve and maintain its part within US National Security Strategy.

History

History is pockmarked with examples where nations have let their military forces whither, later realizing the magnitude of this error. The ill-famed Task Force Smith is the standard bearer for this lack of preparedness.⁴ Some leaders have understood the principle of readiness. Secretary Rumsfeld's famous quote, "You go to war with the Army you have. They're not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time"⁵ illustrates that military forces enter war with the training they have and the equipment they have on-hand. It appears this axiom is becoming truer as time progresses. In WWII, the US Army needed almost one year of preparation before it engaged the enemy in ground combat with "Operation Torch" in North

⁴ (Garret 2000)

⁵ (Donald Rumsfeld 2004)

Africa and two and a half years before it was ready for D-day⁶. Moving forward to Desert Storm, five NG brigades were mobilized; three maneuver brigades and two field artillery brigades⁷. There is debate as to why only the field artillery brigades made it to the field of battle. However, the unmistakable bottom line is that when the maneuver brigades were needed, they were not ready in time. Recently, the Israeli Commission reviewed the 2006 Israeli/Hezbollah War.⁸ This review stated the poor showing by the Israeli Army was in part due to their reserves not being properly trained or equipped.⁹ With this in mind, military units that are not operationally ready have no business being on the battlefield; there have been enough tragic examples in history to prove this point. At any level, one should question why a nation should spend resources on military forces if they are not readily deployable.

Paradigm Shift: Thinking Unit Operational Readiness

This paradigm shift entails the NGB and individual States adapt their primary mission as to making and facilitating the mobilization of operational units via ARFORGEN; not end-strength or the number of Soldiers capable of being mobilized. In the past, the NG cross-leveled Soldiers from within States and between States, cobbling a unit together for a mobilization. This system allowed the Army NG to focus on end-strength, and not on the unit achieving the requirements of a mobilization. This system is inefficient, ineffective, unsustainable and expensive. The Army NG must stop focusing on end-strength as the sole indicator of a unit's health and focus on those items that make a unit operational, thereby ensuring the unit is ready to meet its National Security requirement. The following diagram (Figure 1) is provided to help visualize the change in thinking needed to move from an end-strength centric culture to an

⁶ (Anderson 2003)

⁷ (MELNYK 2001)

⁸ (Matthes 2008)

⁹ (Matthes 2008)

operational reserve centric culture. General Stephen Lorenz (ret), former Commander of Air Education and Training Command, states “in lean times leaders must make tough choices to protect core tasks.”¹⁰ The US is in lean times. NG units must be able to fulfill their Mission Essential Task List without cross-leveling personnel between units and have only a limited need for “passbacks” to fill vacant low density MOSs/equipment shortages in order to be ready to mobilize in 60 to 90 days. If this paradigm was enacted in 2008, one-fifth of the NG’s brigades and battalions would be ready to deploy this year without significant outside assistance.

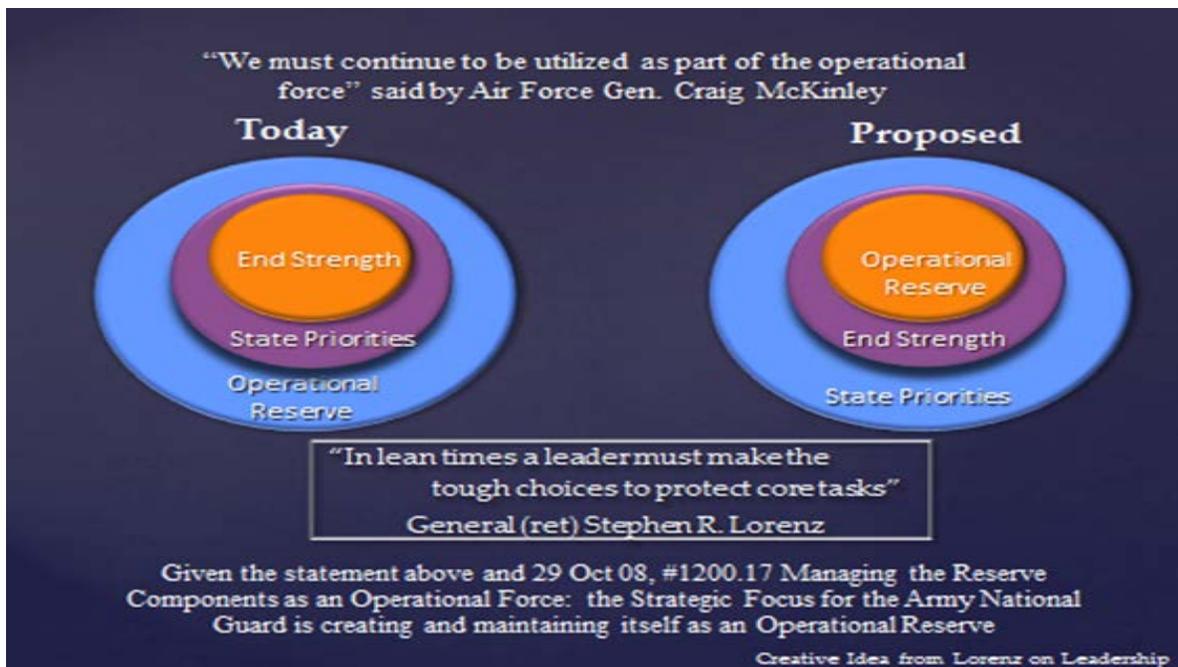


Figure 1

Besides the institutional thinking stated above there are other obstacles in creating a sustained operational force within the NG: right-sizing the number of BCTs/units, measuring combat readiness of the BCTs/units throughout the ARFORGEN cycle, and increasing the reliance on EMAC. All of these considerations are significant shifts in past business practices

¹⁰ (Lorenz 2011)

and have political ramifications, but to keep the NG as an operational reserve they must be dealt with head-on.

Generating Resources to Improve Readiness

There are two primary problem sets concerning the possible reduction of NG BCTs and units. The first and most important strategic question is how many NG BCTs/units are needed to fulfill the NG's nested mission within the US National Security framework. Currently, there are 28 BCTs in the NG structure and there are 45 BCTs in the Active Army. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, after a thorough analysis, stated in a briefing at the Pentagon on January 27, 2012, "The Army will remain capable through its planned drawdown of 80,000 Soldiers and at least eight brigade combat teams."¹¹ While this equates to an 18% reduction in the number of Active Army BCTs; the concomitant reduction of NG BCTs is not necessarily appropriate. Reducing the number of NG BCTs by itself will not make the remaining BCTs anymore capable of obtaining the cyclic operational readiness standard. There needs to be a reason to reduce the size of the NG force and there are two.

Currently, the NG units are funded as a strategic force, not as an operational force and this needs to change. Both the Navy and the Air Force are platform driven; to some extent they are ruled by their machines. An F-15 Eagle cannot fly if trained personnel are not available to run the support and maintenance systems. The BCTs in the NG are becoming platform driven; BCTs are becoming ruled by their machines. There are a whole host of systems a BCT has to manage and train on that did not exist in the 1990s, such as the Shadow Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), the Trojan Spirit and the Prophet, along with many other systems. Qualifying operators on these systems, and then maintaining these systems is a time intensive task, growing

¹¹ (Daniel 2012)

well beyond the age-old standard of “one weekend a month and two weeks a year”. For a new piece of equipment to be issued, a Soldier needs to be recruited or retrained and he/she may have to acquire a Security Clearance. Some of the unit’s personnel will have to attend New Equipment Training (NET) and Maintenance New Equipment Training (MNET). This is just to issue the equipment; additional training is needed to integrate the Soldier and the equipment into the unit’s war-fighting ability. Once a unit gets a piece of equipment there is upkeep. For example, the Army just released:

“the PM-UAS announced plans for fielding the new Tactical Common Data Link (TCDL) for both Active Component (AC) and ARNG UAS units. New Equipment Training (NET) on the TCDL system requires *44 days of training in order for units to be able to receive the new upgraded UAS systems.*”¹²

To put this in perspective, in a regular year a NG Soldier will have 39 days of military duty. If this Soldier is a UAS operator, he/she will have 39 days of training and an additional 44 days of military duty to keep current on his UAS. Therefore, this Soldier will spend more time on keeping current with the UAS than for his/her normal drill requirement. If this Soldier does not complete this training, the UAS is not mission capable and the BCT loses a key enabler. If this is a year before deployment, the time requirement for the Soldier will be even greater.

The Air National Guard (ANG) has achieved operational readiness by having a more robust staff of AGR/Tech workforce and the Army NG should follow suit. Recently, the ANG provided many of the air refueling assets needed to support Operation Odyssey Dawn. The ANG on an exceptionally short notice supported Operation Odyssey Dawn with Airmen from 11 ANG air refueling wings.¹³ This type of short notice response would not be possible if their platforms, man and machine, were not ready.

¹² (Bureau, G3 Sitrep 2012)

¹³ (Orrell 2011)

The State of Illinois will be used to compare and contrast the differences between the full-time workforce of ANG units and ARNG units. The discrepancy between the entities is staggering. Illinois' 33D IBCT has approximately 3,540 Soldiers assigned, of which 159 are full-time Soldiers/Technicians, for a percentage of 4.5%. The IL ANG has 906 AGR/Military Technicians for 2,853 Airmen. Almost 32% of the total strength is working full time to support the unit.¹⁴ Whereas the 33D IBCT has less than 5% of the unit working as full-time support

		AGR/Military Tech	Percentage
Soldiers in 33D IBCT	3545	159	4.5
Soldiers in the IL ARNG	10065	1394	13.85
Airmen in the IL ANG	2853	906	31.8

Figure 2

and the IL ARNG has slightly less than 14% working full time. The ANG has determined that a robust full-time staff is the key to maintaining their platforms and completing their mission.

In the past the NG has used Soldiers on temporary orders, called Active Duty Operational Support (ADOS). ADOS personnel are used to support readiness and manage the increased workload experienced during the train-up for a mobilization. Relying on ADOS personnel ensures a turnover of personnel, thereby losing their knowledge and experience. Some others point to the Pre-mobilization Training and Assistance Element (PTAE) as a way to enhance the readiness of a unit. The PTAE is an NG organization, located within each State that is comprised of Soldiers who have recent combat experience. PTAE Soldiers help train a unit who has less than one year to their mobilization. However, there are three systemic flaws with the PTAE. First, is the assumption that there will always be Soldiers with recent combat experience to fill its ranks. Secondly, the experiences the PTAE Soldiers have may not always match the needs of the mobilizing unit. Lastly, the concept of the PTAE does not support cyclic readiness.

¹⁴ (Anonymous, AGR/TECH Positions in the IL NG 2012)

It is suggested, the resources that are currently devoted to the ADOS and the PTAE personnel be refocused on reinforcing the AGR workforce, thereby reinforcing the unit. The Army NG must inculcate the lesson of having a robust full-time force to meet the demands of being an operational reserve. The reduction of the NG BCTs/units, not a reduction of end-strength, will help generate the resources to man the remaining BCTs/units. It will do this by decreasing the number of armories the NG operates and reassigning the current AGR personnel to the remaining units. Most importantly, increasing the AGR force will possibly prevent fatigue of the AGR/Tech force. The full-time force has operated at an exceedingly high OPTEMPO and ignoring this situation may lead to Soldiers departing the full-time force and taking their experience, knowledge and wisdom with them.

There is always a battle over fiscal resources, but the current issue is not solely attributed to the lack of financial resources. It appears the root of the problem is that when the Army went to the modular unit concept, such as the Brigade Combat Team, the fiscal policies to support this concept did not keep up. This is similar to Fred Ikle's arguments in his book "Every War must End"¹⁵. As wars progress, the war aims change. The Army changed how it provided forces to the war effort; it went to providing modular units, such as BCTs, but the fiscal method to support those forces did not change. The processes that resulted in the mobilization of forces were often funded through supplemental appropriations via Operational Contingency (OC) funds. States would get their annual budget and then get OC money to support the units that were mobilizing. Given the current period of fiscal constraint, OC funds are drying up and there needs to be a fiscal transition to continually supply operational units from the NG without the reliance on OC funds.

¹⁵ (Ikle' 2005)

The scope of this paper will not allow for a line by line accounting of the NGB's budget. However, if the aim is to create and maintain operational units through the use of the ARFORGEN model, then the following format could be used to determine how many brigades and battalions the NGB's budget could support. First, isolate a NG BCT and then by each ARFORGEN year accurately and realistically determine the funding that a BCT needs to successfully complete the ARFORGEN cycle. Total each of these years and one can have a reasonable estimate of how much money it takes to sustain a BCT in the ARFORGEN cycle. NGB then portions this dollar amount, by brigade and battalion, to each State depending on where their units are in the ARFORGEN cycle. Now the hard part, it will probably turn out that the current number of NG units cannot be supported by the annual budget that the NGB is provided by DoD. However, this may not be a significant issue if the focus is on operational units, for the reduction of the number of NG units will increase the resources for the remaining units, thereby increasing their readiness. The analysis of the NGB budget under the current budget allocation is crucial to providing a realistic estimate of what the NG can provide to the nation in terms of operational brigades and battalions. Clearly, DOD and NGB want units that are capable of being deployed that support national security interests. However, other competing interests, where end-strength is the priority, are contradictory to this goal.

Right-sizing the total number of the BCTs/units recognizes the current fiscally constrained environment while providing the right force mix to generate the necessary fiscal resources to man, equip and train units to meet the expected 60 to 90 day notification for deployment. By not addressing these concerns, the nation runs the risk of having an OPTEMPO that outstrips the NG full-time force, provides undermanned and under-resourced units and presents the opportunity for the best and brightest to leave the NG.

Tracking and Managing National Guard BCTs/Units

Often when an organization has conducted business for a long time, strategic changes are difficult to accomplish and past practices often blind one to new ways of thinking. It appears the NG as an entity is still focused on end strength. For example, in November 2010 Army Maj. Gen. Raymond Carpenter, acting director of the Army National Guard stated “Our number one priority for 2011 is end strength across the Army Guard”¹⁶ This is not to state that the NG’s leadership is myopic in their vision concerning end strength. The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Air Force Gen. Craig R. McKinley recently stated “Traditionally after most conflicts in our nation, we’ve put the Guard and reserves back into the can on the shelf and it atrophies and has gone back to a state of disrepair.”¹⁷ General McKinley further elaborated that he plans to place greater emphasis on training and education after the current wars end so that combat skills are not lost.¹⁸ Managing end-strength and acquiring individual Soldier’s qualifications are key tasks, but they are only the initial steps in creating a deployable unit. However, the intensive focus on the metrics of end-strength or individual skill qualifications is insufficient, because it does not ensure units are operational. It is reasonable to see why this line of thinking became so dominant.

For many years the United States had time to mobilize and train its units before sending them to war. It is not enough to train and mobilize individual Soldiers to send to war. The US must mobilize capable units, able to employ all the tools necessary to seize, retain and exploit the initiative and prevail in sustained land operations.¹⁹ As an example, in the opening days of the

¹⁶ (Salzer 2010)

¹⁷ (Jean 2010)

¹⁸ (Jean 2010)

¹⁹ (Warfare September 2011)

Afghanistan War, the US sent just a few specialized units with the right capabilities to initially rout the Taliban²⁰. How do these concepts apply today for the NG?

It used to be thought, and some still believe, that NG units need about 60 to 90 days to train and mobilize. This was probably true before the days of the Army Battle Command System (ABCS) and a host of other specialized MOSs embedded in the modern BCTs. It is no longer true. Keeping a modern, digital infantry NG BCT operational takes years of continuous planning and management to keep low density MOSs in the formation. The table below is a small sampling of some of the low density MOSs in a modern brigade and the time it takes to qualify a Soldier with that MOS²¹. In this table there are 11 MOSs. Six MOSs take one year to become qualified, two take about two years and three take approximately three years to become qualified.

MOS	Description	Time in weeks	Months
94E	Radio COMSEC Repair	45	11.25
94F	Small Electronics Repair	45	11.25
13A	Fire Support Officer	43	10.75
25U	Signal Support	49	12.25
35F	Intel Analyst	129	32.25
65D	Physician Assistant	143	35.75
131A	FA Warrant Officer	56	14
94M	Radar Repairer	77	19.25
25B	Inform Tech Spec	51	12.75
35P	Cryptologic linguist	144	36
35M	Human Intelligence Collector	111	27.75

Figure 3

These figures list only the time it takes for these Soldiers to become MOS qualified, not recruited and then integrated and synchronized within a unit.

To illustrate this point, a current Battalion Commander in the NG stated he was having difficulty acquiring a certain intelligence MOS, a 35F. This is one of the MOSs that takes about three years to acquire. In asking him where he was three years ago, this battalion commander

²⁰ (Bergen 2011)

²¹ (Anonymous, Low density MOSs 2011)

stated he was on a Police Mentor Team in Wardak Province, Afghanistan. Therefore, to solve his current issue, a Soldier needed to be recruited three years ago to be available today, but three years ago that commander was focused on keeping his Soldiers alive and not recruiting a 35F.²²

One could look at the MOS issue at the macro level. An infantry BCT has about 3,440 Soldiers within six battalions. Of the six battalions, two are infantry battalions and one is a cavalry squadron, for an approximate total of 1,720 Soldiers. Therefore, half of the Soldiers in the infantry BCT do not hold an infantry or cavalry MOS, but some other specialized MOS.

These examples illustrate that a unit must pay continuous attention to its MOS fill, for in the year prior to mobilization it is too late to make significant corrections. This brings Secretary Rumsfeld's quote to life "You go to war with the Army you have."²³ If IBCT Soldiers are not trained and ready to operate their Army systems six months prior to M-Day, it will be very difficult to mobilize this brigade as a modern digital BCT. In the end, the US will be left with mobilizing ad hoc units or worse yet creating a Korean War vintage infantry brigade. In fact, it takes a brigade two years or longer to become operational, not 60 to 90 days. True, one can transfer Soldiers with low density MOSs from another unit, however, that undermines the ARFORGEN cycle, and hurts the other unit's readiness and cohesion. Unfortunately, having the BCTs/units solely responsible for their low density MOS fill is a bridge too far. For at least two years of the ARFORGEN cycle the unit is either deployed or managing the intensive operational tempo needed to complete pre-deployment training requirements. To remedy this particular issue it is suggested that the States take ownership of low density MOSs.

There are some methods that could improve the manning readiness of the NG and reduce the need to cross-level Soldiers from other units. Units need to be authorized and manned to at

²² (Anonymous, Low density MOSs II 2012)

²³ (Donald Rumsfeld 2004)

least 125%, possibly to 135% of their Unit Manning Roster (UMR) and to 150% of low density MOSs. The necessity to man at 125%-135% of the UMR is due to the 6 year length of a standard enlistment contract. This creates a condition in which approximately 18% of the force changes over every year and is not available for deployment. A 150% fill for low density MOS is required to compensate for the time it takes to recruit and train a Soldier with a high skill requirement. When these Soldiers are not in formation, it takes years to train them and during this time the unit loses some of its effectiveness.

Recommended Manning for a NG Unit	
MTOE Strength for Mission	100%
Trainees, not Available for Mission	18%
Soldier Medically Not Qualified for Mission	5%
Stay-Behind Force	2%
Minimum % of UMR to Sustain Readiness	125%

Another method to reduce cost while improving readiness is to reduce the number of Military Intelligence Companies supporting the NG BCT from 28 to 14. These units are by far the hardest to recruit for, their MOS training can take years, and the equipment and the storage of that equipment is expensive. These remaining 14 MI companies will not be assigned to any particular BCT, but provide overarching support. Additionally, the majority of these MI Soldiers need to be full-time Soldiers, thereby relieving the burden of long military schooling which can interfere with their ability to maintain civilian employment. This solution reduces cost and improves readiness in the area that takes the longest to build proficiency.

There is an old adage, “what gets checked, gets done.” It is suggested that NGB and the Army add other measurements to the Unit Status Report (USR), specifically measurements that

track the readiness of a BCT's digital systems (Figure 5)²⁴. The USR is designed to provide senior commands a snapshot of a unit's capability. In tracking big block items, the USR does not provide the fidelity to visualize a unit's operational capability or the granularity needed to assess the unit's posture in relation to the ARFORGEN cycle. The standard Man, Equip and Train model can be used. For Manning, does the unit have 90% of the required MOSs for that section? For Equipping, does the unit have all of their equipment and is it functional? Finally, the commander of the unit can provide an estimate of how proficient the unit is with the equipment. Tracking each BCT through the ARFORGEN cycle on the use of their systems is crucial to maintaining the NG as an operational reserve. It is suggested that NGB hosts a design conference with the BCT commanders to frame the necessary components that need to be measured to track operational readiness. Furthermore, on a yearly basis each BCT commander will brief NGB on the status of their unit in comparison to the ARFORGEN standard, which will provide time to rectify readiness issues before they become critical.



Figure 4

²⁴ (IBCT 2010)

Having 3,400 Soldiers from an IBCT ready for mobilization and meeting the end-strength goal are not effective measurements of readiness. A more exact method of determining whether a unit is operationally ready is the combination of the number of Soldiers ready to be mobilized, all low-density MOS slots are filled, the digital systems that make-up a BCT are operational and the unit's leadership team can execute unified land operations. Furthermore, fully operational units can accomplish these tasks without cross-leveling personnel from other units/or States. To achieve this goal, units must have a manning authorization to at least 125% of UMR strength, and 150% on low density MOS. NGB must increase the AGR/Technician to Soldier ratio to match the demands of being an operational force. The number of MI units needs to be reduced, but simultaneously the remaining MI units must have a significant increase in their full-time manning. NGB needs to hold units accountable by tracking them against yearly ARFORGEN milestones. Finally, States must assume primary responsibility for low density MOSs.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact

The NG will never fail at its emergency response mission; we have a “no-fail” contract with our communities. There is no better way to respond to an emergency than with a fully operational unit with all of its equipment. Rightfully, each state wants to protect their NG Soldiers and their units from the axe of a limited budget. The primary reason a State wants to keep its NG is to protect its citizens during a state emergency. In times of emergency it is often the NG assisting with relief operations. Governors want the option of calling on the specialized and multiple skill sets of NG Soldiers and their equipment. NG forces are immediately available to the State, where Active Army units are not immediately available and also have other limitations.²⁵

²⁵ (Command 2012)

States, when responding to a disaster prefer to have a variety of units, such as signal, transportation, chemical and infantry units. Thus, States with a larger and more diverse NG force would have greater capability. States that have a limited/small NG, or have their NG deployed, must increase their capability to a disaster by using the successful program called the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)²⁶. EMAC is the process by which a State can “rent” assets and/or capabilities from another State, including their NG. All States and territories are already a part of an EMAC. The use of the EMAC process has increased over the last several years. A successful example of EMAC was seen in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene that struck Vermont and closed 2,700 miles of roads. Vermont activated an EMAC request for engineering assets, which the Virginia NG provided. The NG Soldiers worked for the Vermont Agency for Transportation and together they opened up all but 57 miles of road in eleven days, a stunning achievement²⁷. It is envisioned with shrinking budgets EMAC will become even more crucial in the future as NG end strength is considered for reduction. One option to improve the current EMAC system is to refine the Mission Ready Packing (MRP) process. A MRP is one of 38 standardized force packages the NG can provide²⁸. The MRP process allows for a rapid response and for the requesting state to know exactly what type of assets they will receive. It is suggested that each year every State submit the type and number of Mission Ready Packaging (MRP) they can provide to the NGB. This will allow two actions; first it will be known what types of assets are available each year. Secondly, States could assign their units responsibility for a certain number and type of MRPs, thereby allowing Soldiers to prepare for this mission.

²⁶ (Emergency Management Assistance Compact 2012)

²⁷ (Puryear 2011)

²⁸ (Emergency Management Assistance Compact 2012)

Summary

The NG can sustain its brigades and battalions as a cyclic operational reserve. However, tough choices will need to be made to make this a reality. This paper does offer some cost reduction methods, but always mindful of this axiom, “if it’s worth doing, it’s worth paying for” and in this case “what we are doing” is preparing units to protect our citizens in the homeland. Within the austere financial environment, NGB must set the expectation that units will move from mobilization to mobilization, without an infusion of money, cross-leveling personnel or other last minute band-aide fixes. To support this expectation, each unit needs to be more robust in their authorized strength, especially in low density MOSs and in their full-time force. States and NGB as resource providers must provide the resources the unit cannot provide for themselves: managing of low density MOSs, acquisition of Combat Training Center rotations and Leadership Training Programs. Creating 14 predominantly full-time MI units that are in general support of the NG BCTs relieves the difficult task of maintaining the Military Intelligence manning and infrastructure, while simultaneously reducing the operating costs and increasing readiness. NGB must also track the BCT’s digital systems and their overall readiness throughout the ARFORGEN cycle. We must realize that we are at an inflection point, the nexus of money and readiness. Maintaining our current practices will fail the NG in maintaining the banner of being an operational reserve and more importantly the trust of the American people who expect us to be ready.

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