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INFORMATION PAPER

25 August 2015

SUBJECT: Active Component (AC) to Reserve Component (RC) Accessions

1. Purpose: To inform the National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA) about AC to RC accessions to the Army National Guard (ARNG).
2. Summary. Over the course of the last ten years, AC to RC accessions have played a significant role in maintaining the strength and professionalism of the ARNG, and also retaining experienced service members in the Total Force. While AC to RC accessions are an important tool for end strength management, these accessions do not represent a large proportion of annual ARNG accessions and inherently involve a cost to benefit discussion with regard to personnel management implications. The ARNG's transition to an operational force in support of persistent contingency operations and reductions in AC to RC missioning over the last 14 years demanded a force that relied more on non-prior service (NPS) accessions to fill its ranks than during the years preceding the Global War on Terrorism. Therefore, the ARNG has seen an 8.5% decrease in the proportion of annual AC to RC accessions from fiscal year (FY) 2001. It is assessed that this trend will continue in the near to mid-term as the ARNG maintains its recruitment processes from the past decade, attempts to retain institutionally experienced personnel, and AC to RC accession missions remain constant.
3. Background:
 - a. The ARNG categorizes each accession as either a prior service (PS) or NPS Soldier. A PS accession is a service member who previously served in another component or branch of the U.S. military or had a break in ARNG service. Additionally, a subset of PS accessions is the AC to RC accessions population. This population is those ARNG Soldiers transitioning from an AC into the ARNG. The vast majority of these AC to RC accessions are Soldiers coming from the Regular Army. In this paper, the use of the term AC to RC accession is used specifically in discussing those Soldiers who have transitioned from the AC Army to the ARNG.
 - b. Prior to the start of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) in 2001, AC to RC accessions into the ARNG were nearly 10,000 per fiscal year. As of 24 August 2015, the ARNG had only accessed 2,985 AC to RC service members for FY 15. The overall decline in AC to RC accessions over the past fourteen years represents various changes in resourcing and personnel policies, as well as the fundamental change in the management of the ARNG to a component that generates the majority of its operational force.
 - c. From FY 92 through FY 99, the majority of annual ARNG accessions were PS accessions, with an average AC to RC accession population of 8,303 during those years. After reaching a peak ratio of 66/34 in favor of PS accessions in FY 94, PS

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accessions as a percentage of total accessions declined consistently from FY 96, through the GWOT, and remain low today. Naturally, NPS accessions increased to meet end strength goals, as AC to RC accessions for FY 02 through FY 14 averaged 4,900 Soldiers – representing only a small proportion of annual total accessions.

d. The effects of changes to personnel policy, resourcing, and the operational environment are illustrated by the ARNG's accession population composition from FY 01 onward. Of FY 01 total accessions, approximately 49% were PS accessions, with 15% identified specifically as AC to RC accessions. By FY 2006, the proportion of accessions identified as AC to RC accessions was down to 8.4%, representing an overall decrease in the proportion of annual PS accessions of 13% from FY 01 levels. This PS accession decrease is a reflection of the increased deployment cycles of the AC and RC, associated personnel policy changes, and the requirement to simultaneously grow all components of the Army in order to meet operational demands. Since FY 02, the ratio of PS to NPS accessions has reversed course from the 10 years preceding the GWOT when the preponderance of annual accessions were PS. From FY 10 to the current period, PS accessions have represented approximately 30% of total annual accessions, with 70% being NPS accessions. During the past five years, the proportion of PS accessions identified as AC to RC accessions have accounted for 5.3% to 8.4% of total accessions. Despite an upward trend in the number of AC to RC accessions since FY 10, AC to RC remains a minor proportion of total accessions.

e. ARNG AC to RC accessions were impacted by several factors over the last 15 years, and continue to shape the force today. When the Army was required to increase end strength across all three components, of which a primary tool is increased retention, the ARNG received less AC to RC service members into its ranks. This was compounded by invocation of 10 USC § 12305(a), the "stop-loss" policy, which involuntarily extended service members beyond their end of term of service (ETS) during wartime, thereby reducing the likelihood of AC service members transitioning to the RC to fulfill their service obligation. Additionally, as the perception of the ARNG as a strategic reserve shifted toward one of an operational reserve, it is plausible that fewer transitioning service members viewed the ARNG as a lower operations tempo alternative to the AC, and chose to forego ARNG military service.

f. NPS accessions are inherently more expensive to recruit and train than AC to RC Soldiers, but greater levels of resourcing associated with contingency operations allowed the ARNG to recruit and train more NPS Soldiers than in the previous decades. This led to increased promotion and retention of NPS Soldiers over the course of the last several years, with less emphasis on recruiting transitioning AC service members into the ARNG as a means of training cost savings.

g. Department of the Army changes to missioning and incentives has allowed the Army Reserve (USAR) to receive a greater proportion of the transitioning AC service members than the ARNG. Since FY 14, approximately two-thirds of Army AC to RC accessions were to the USAR, with one-third going to the ARNG. This may be

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corrected in future years, bringing the distribution of AC to RC accessions more in balance.

4. Programs:

a. Reserve Component Career Counselors (RCCC) are the primary facilitator of AC to RC accessions into the ARNG. These counselors are located at all major active duty installations and meet with all Soldiers separating from the AC in order to identify and inform prospective AC to RC service members. RCCCs have access to applications that allow them to view ARNG vacancies and connect the service member with a State, Territory, or District of Columbia In Service Recruiter (ISR) for further evaluation and transition.

b. A pilot program called AC to RC Training Program was developed and implemented in FY 15 to support military occupational specialty (MOS) re-class for AC Soldiers who wish to join an ARNG unit that does not support their current MOS. This program is currently located at Fort Hood, TX, and will expand to Fort Bragg, NC for an additional pilot year during FY 16. This program is an attempt to alleviate training costs for the ARNG by providing fully qualified AC to RC Soldiers upon arrival at the ARNG unit.

c. The Low Density Recruiting (LDR) program, which ended on 1 April 2015 and is currently being reconstituted, is designed to match AC to RC Soldiers who hold a low-density MOS with low-density MOS vacancies. The program accommodates an AC to RC soldier who would like to live and drill in different states by providing a \$300 travel cost stipend to qualifying individuals.

5. Discussion:

a. AC to RC accessions pose several benefits and costs to the ARNG. With respect to benefits, the ARNG gains a trained soldier into a vacant position. This benefit is twofold, as the ARNG saves recruiting costs, Initial Entry Training (IET) costs, drill pay and allowances, and the time associated with moving a recruit from entry of military service through MOS qualification – a period of up to 24 months. Furthermore, transitioning AC Soldiers can fill vacant positions at skill levels above entry level that may otherwise take years to fill with a qualified NPS accession. To that same end, many units rely on trained, transitioning AC service members to fill low-density specialties that may have a lengthy and expensive qualification pipeline. As ARNG training resources decrease in the mid-term, limiting NPS accessions and subsequent initial entry training throughput, the demand for AC to RC service members will increase.

b. Regarding the costs of AC to RC accessions, foremost is retention of these service members in the ARNG. Historically, AC to RC accessions, as a subset of PS accessions, have the lowest retention rates. AC to RC Soldiers often transition to the ARNG in order to fulfill a service obligation, which could be as little as two years. This

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practice results in mid-career position vacancies that present a persistent manning challenge to ARNG units. Currently, there are no ARNG programs geared specifically toward retaining AC to RC Soldiers to impact retention rates. AC to RC service members receive the same retention incentives and command attention as NPS Soldiers as they near their ETS or end of service obligation.

c. With respect to personnel management challenges, and in conjunction with the previous point, AC to RC accessions meet an immediate need, but are seldom a long-term solution. The increase in NPS accessions over the last 13 years enabled the ARNG to generate, train, promote, and retain its own force. Integrating greater numbers of AC to RC accessions into the force at mid-career positions could stagnate the career progression of NPS Guardsmen and develop a dependency on AC to RC accessions to fill vacant junior NCO and company grade officer positions. This is especially important when considering that AC to RC Soldiers retain at significantly lower rates than NPS Soldiers; creating greater turnover in leadership positions. Additionally, in order for the ARNG to avoid training costs associated with NPS accessions, AC Soldiers transitioning to the ARNG must be MOS qualified for a vacant position at a commensurate grade. Any deviation from these three factors diminishes the cost savings normally attributed to AC to RC accessions, given the costs associated with MOS re-class and military education requirements.

6. Assessment. AC to RC accession is a valuable tool to the ARNG in achieving end strength goals, filling low-density MOS vacancies, and providing trained and ready Soldiers to the states and territories. However, AC to RC accessions represent a small proportion of annual accessions and are impacted by factors largely beyond the control of the ARNG. Additionally, AC to RC accessions present unique personnel management challenges that must be overcome on a unit-by-unit basis, and weighed against the needs and health of a force that has largely been built on NPS accessions over the past 14 years. While AC to RC service members allow the ARNG to avoid upfront training costs normally associated with NPS accessions, the comparatively low retention rates of AC to RC accessions offset the initial financial benefit over time. To that end, AC to RC accessions are complementary to NPS accessions, and not a supplement for proven recruiting and retention practices. While the demand for AC to RC Soldiers will increase as ARNG recruiting and training resources decrease, AC to RC retention rates suggest that the ARNG will only be able to supplement for resource shortfalls in the short-term. With strength cuts to all service components, lower operational employment, and low AC to RC accession missioning, it is unlikely that the ARNG will see any significant increase in AC to RC accessions in the near-term, especially in those areas that would offset NPS training resource constraints. Retention rates will remain a significant factor in the practicality and cost savings of increased AC to RC accessions.

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