

COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY
Statement of Major General Darren G. Owens
U.S. Army Retired

I would like to welcome the Commission to Texas. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear before the Commission today and make comments on behalf of the men and women serving today in the United States Army that are Citizen Soldiers. I am a retired traditional National Guard Soldier with 38 years of service. I started my military career by serving three years on active duty before missing Texas so much I left active duty and returned to Texas. Here I began to miss the Army and joined the Army National Guard. I have served at every level of the National Guard from platoon to the National Guard Bureau, I am what most will call an M-Day Solider. I have trained units, mobilized and deployed units for both support to civil authorities and overseas contingency operations, and have deployed myself. All of this gives me a unique perspective of Army National Guard units, their ability to train, their family issues, their employer issues, and their community perspectives.

Fort Hood is a great place to see what has and can be done with all components of our Army. As the largest active duty installation as well as a major training and equipment maintenance and storage facilities for both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve, Fort Hood has been an integral part of the ability of the Army to mobilize and deploy in support of overseas operations. Here at Fort Hood the 36th Infantry Division just completed a successful multi-component Warfighter exercise and annual training.

We have all seen the Army National Guard become an operational force, fighting side by side with our active duty partners, working hard to win the long wars that began almost 14 years ago. During this era of persistent conflict the Army National Guard has been an essential force multiplier in the overseas warfight, able to maintain high levels of readiness, all the while remaining focused on our constitutional roots as the organized militia of the states. We have continued to rapidly respond domestically as the nation's first military responders under the command of our nation's Governors whenever and wherever we are needed to provide support to civil authorities and conduct homeland defense operations as part of the core missions of the United States Army.

The Nation needs a National Guard that is manned, resourced, ready, and structured to meet the security challenges faced by the United States Army in the remainder of the 21st century. The Army National Guard is an integral part of the Army. It is organized in accordance with Army force management policies and processes, thus enabling seamless integration into the Army force mix, while providing more predictability to leverage unit readiness and availability for deployment.

Prior to the tragic events of 11 September 2001, most of the Army National Guard did not enjoy the same level of manning, equipping, and training as the active component due to many decades of being resourced as a strategic reserve, waiting for that once in a lifetime total mobilization. As a result, personnel and equipment had to be cross-leveled to build whole units for mobilizations and deployments. Now the Army National Guard is equipped and manned just as the Title 10 forces. This has enhanced unit readiness that meets the challenges of the current

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operational environment and has allowed the Army National Guard to meet every operational requirement asked of it by the Title 10 forces.

It is imperative that the Army National Guard look like the active component. In order to remain an operational combat reserve that provides cyclic, predictable readiness for the Army it is imperative that we have standardized MTOEs across all components and that we have the same modernized equipment across all components resourced at 100% of requirements. Never forget that readiness is a function of people, equipment, structure, and training. I remember when we were a strategic reserve based on tiered readiness. Our equipment was different, our authorized manning was different, and our MTOEs were different. When Desert Shield and Desert Storm came even our most ready units were not asked to go because of these differences.

Today we have seen the Army National Guard meet every mission requirement asked of it by the Army. Today our Army is considering removing the AH-64 Apache from the Army National Guard Combat Aviation Brigades. One reason is that there are those that say the Governors do not need the AH-64 Apache for support to civil authorities. That may be true, however, we have not needed Abrams tanks for support to civil authorities, and in fact for most of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan the Army has not needed units equipped with Abrams tanks to perform the missions. If our force structure and equipment is different from the active component we cannot meet the missions needed by the Army. Why? Because we would be different.

Most of you remember that in 2010 the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade from Texas which includes the 149th Attack Battalion was named the best aviation unit in the United States Army. Not in the Army National Guard but in the United States Army. When Army National Guard units are equipped and manned as active component units they do two things. First they serve as a capable combat reserve capable of performing the same missions as active component units and second, they offer a place to retain expertise and capability at a reduced cost.

Every Army National Guard Unit I have been a part of has had many members that came from active duty. These experienced soldiers left active duty for many different reasons. They still leave today and in some cases only because of the downsizing of the active component. However, many of these experienced soldiers still want to serve. The Army National Guard offers a place for those experienced soldiers who decided to leave active duty before retirement to continue to serve and retain their skills and capabilities for future use as part of the combat reserve. The National Guard captures some of the best of the combat experience that comes off active duty and retains it in the force. You know how long it takes to train a good attack helicopter pilot or a platoon sergeant or a brigade staff officer. Retaining those skills is important to the Army.

As soon as Army National Guard units are not manned and equipped like their active duty counterparts they will cease to be the operational reserve they are today. We will once again

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have the tiered readiness of a strategic reserve rather than the cyclic readiness that has allowed the Army National Guard to be an effective operational reserve.

There has been a lot of discussion that the Army National Guard is not accessible, that Soldiers do not want to deploy, and that employers are tired and will not support the availability of National Guard Soldiers. Never forget that the National Guard is a community based force that connects the Army to the people. Our communities are so supportive. In fact the 1-112 Cavalry in Bryan Texas where I live is serving in the Sinai today. But what Bryan/College Station knows is that it is the "Bryan National Guard" that is deployed for their freedom. The community is supporting the Army by supporting its National Guard.

The Army National Guard is accessible. I have been privileged to be a Texas Guardsman. Here in Texas, we have had Governors who have always said "You go when they call; just keep me informed". I do not know of any time the Guard has not come when the Army called. I have seen many units ready and willing to go but never called.

When it comes to employers I seen that almost all are willing and wanting to support their employees that are Soldiers. They all understand emergencies but they like the predictability of the current force generation model. I believe we can continue to see employers support their National Guard. In fact, one of the Troop Commanders in the Sinai works with me. This is his 3rd deployment since he came to work with us. Everyone supports him and makes up for him being gone.

Beyond the operational force the Army National Guard brings key strengths to the force in both the defense to civil authorities and stability operations mission areas. The Guard's inherent connection to civil authorities is based on the Army National Guard as a community based force with armories in hometowns all across America and on the relationship built with states and local governments by generations of Guardsman responding in times of crisis. As long as the Army National Guard has Soldiers, leaders, and staffs trained and equipped for Army missions the Guard can respond to any request for support of civil authorities. It is the Army training, organization and equipment that makes the Guard so capable in the homeland. We have taught our Soldiers and leaders that if you can do the Army stuff you can do any mission civil authorities ask of you.

In addition to support to civil authorities the Army National Guard is extremely capable of conducting stability operations and building partner nation capacity in support of overseas contingency operations with minimal post mobilization training. The civilian skill of National Guard Soldiers combined with their military skills enables National Guard units to carry out stability missions that active component units may not be able to perform without significant additional resources. The most successful of these were the Agriculture Development Teams

deployed by the Army National Guard to Afghanistan. These teams were able to operate independently and build significant Afghan government capacity by utilizing the Army National Guard's civil and military skills and the community relationship between the National Guard and the land grant universities of each state. These Ag Development Teams deployed with very short post mobilization training and independently conducted stability missions building Afghan government and rural economic capacity as part of decisive active in non-permissive environments with little direct support from active component forces.

All of this being said, what does the right force structure look like? Balancing the force between components must be strategy driven and resource informed. We have all studied and seen how the size of the active component has grown during the time of war. We have also studied and seen how the size of the active component has been reduced at the end of each major conflict. Given the nation's current fiscal situation how do we retain the greatest capability at the least cost?

The reserve components were never designed or funded to deploy immediately to a no-notice crisis. It will not be a reserve component that would fight tonight in Korea if the need arose. However, the reserve component is designed to be at a given level of readiness. The force generation model has allowed units required for support of missions to be ready when required with significantly reduced post mobilization training. Today the Army National Guard provides a significant portion of the operational force for less than 15% of the total Army budget.

Based on all of this, it should be obvious that we need to have the greatest capability possible within the current budget to meet all the missions given the Army. As the active component begins to reduce in size due to budget reductions we can retain much of that capability by having an Army National Guard that retains or even increases its authorized end strength that is organized and equipped like the active component, and used as the accessible combat reserve it is.

The United States Army serves and represents every citizen of this Nation. Keep the Army strong and ensure we have the capability possible to protect these United States. Thank you.