



# **THE ADJUTANT GENERAL**

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Written response to the  
National Commission on the Future of the Army

*Winning in a complex operating environment requires “innovative and adaptive leaders and cohesive teams that thrive in conditions of complexity and uncertainty” along with “ Army forces capable of conducting missions in the homeland or in foreign lands including defense support of civil authorities, international disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, security cooperation activities, crisis response, or large-scale operations”*

These two assertions, fundamental to the U.S. Army’s Operating Concept, also describe the core competencies of today’s National Guard leaders and formations. For those of us in uniform as Citizen-Soldiers we live these challenges every day and apply that experience in combat and in the homeland on a routine basis. It is this broad continuum of experience and service that defines the modern Guard leader as well as the vast majority of Soldiers in its formations.

Our force, though often misunderstood as complementary or somehow secondary in capability to the active component is, to the contrary, the very embodiment of the Army’s Operating Concept and definition of what our nation requires to fight and win its future wars. The Soldiers that serve today share the same training, standards and combat experiences of their active component counterparts, but add to that a depth and breadth of reinforcing experiences and training in the homeland, interagency and private/public sector which greatly enhances their military capabilities and ability to adapt to a changing threat landscape. These experiences are the rule in our force, not the exception, and exist by design rather than by accident.

We have recognized for some time that lethality is but one aspect of a successful military, and near value-less when not reinforced by adaptability, agility of thought, and broad spectrum operational capability. We are, in our formations, lethal Soldiers, but are also a great deal more. We are, by construct and in practice, the manifestation of the modern adaptive force articulated in the Army’s Operating Concept. There is no amount of military training or spending that can replicate our inherent capability or rival the spectrum of experience and talent brought to bear by our members. There is no mission we cannot excel at and no military challenge our members cannot meet.

It is from this perspective that we urge the Commission to thoughtfully consider the role of our force in America’s future Army and to imagine the results when this force is appropriately leveraged and resourced against our nation’s strategic imperatives abroad and at home. We believe the reserve component of the Army and the National Guard in particular is foundational in creating the force that will meet the unknown and unknowable future threat and retain the adaptive capability necessary to fight and win our nation’s wars and accomplish it at a cost our nation can afford.

To understand how the National Guard fits in, and what its role should, and can be, it is useful to consider the issue in terms of readiness, accessibility, capability and finally, culture.

Readiness is one of the principal factors that has been used to delineate the active components from its reserve counterparts. In theory, it is a unit’s relative state of preparedness for any given mission at any given time. In practice, it is an equation of personnel, equipment and training factors that add up to a



rating that can be quantified and compared to other units. There are a variety of factors that impact readiness including funding, access to training and maintenance and a unit's position in the force generation cycle. At any given time any unit, active or reserve, can be more or less ready depending on these factors. And while it may be true that reserve units can be at a disadvantage in terms of funding and access to training, it doesn't tell the whole story. The fact is, there are units in all components that are more or less 'ready' to meet mission. It is also a fact that the current measures of readiness are generic in nature and do not necessarily reflect a unit's actual capability to perform the mission presented to them. In many cases our missions at home and abroad do not fit neatly into a standardized Mission Essential Task List (METL), and require experience and skills well outside of what can be gained on a Situational Training Exercise (STX) lane. Other measures, such as operational readiness rates for vehicles and equipment that may never be utilized in theater, also become quickly irrelevant in a discussion of true mission readiness. This isn't an argument for a total abandonment of current readiness standards, rather an assertion that those standards ought to be understood for what they are and not be used interchangeably as a measure of a unit's ability to meet mission.

Along with readiness, accessibility, or access to a unit within a specified timeframe, is used to differentiate the Guard from its Title 10 counterparts. There is an often perpetrated myth that the Guard is difficult to deploy because that deployment requires concurrence from a Governor, or that Guard forces need to be left in the homeland to respond to disasters. Both of these notions, though containing elements of truth, have proven to be materially false through 14 years of sustained conflict and natural disasters alike. The Guard has not turned down missions since 9/11 and has met all of its obligations at home and overseas. Gubernatorial consent is swift and routine and not required for most mission types, including combat missions.

The National Guard, though valuable in emergency response, exists within a much larger spectrum of public, private and military response capabilities. It is also capable of executing combat and emergency response operations concurrently as evidenced during Hurricane Katrina, when 50,000 Guardsman rapidly deployed to assist Louisiana while far more were engaged in combat operations overseas.

Finally there is the notion that the Guard will not be ready in a rapid enough timeframe to get to the fight. This notion reflects a lack of understanding of both strategic realities and of the Guard's real-world track record. The National Guard routinely mobilizes and deploys for military missions within hours, not days weeks or months. This isn't specialty, or high readiness units, it's all units, and it is possible because we are what we say we are; highly skilled, motivated and capable. That these missions are executed within a homeland AOR, is largely immaterial. Missions overseas are just farther away, and involve the same logistics and mobility challenges faced by the active component. It's always good to have additional training and preparation when we have the luxury, but it is by no means a true requirement. This is not to say that a rapidly deployable element of the active component isn't needed, it is instead a recognition that that component could be joined in short order by the Guard; within a few days or weeks as the situation permits. Finally, from a strategic standpoint, the notion that some future conflict exists wherein a full mobilization of a large active component is required but the same conflict

ends before the Guard could be accessed is as absurd as it is readily disprovable though hundreds of years of our national experience.

Capability, along with readiness and accessibility, is a critical measure of a unit's value, and is an area where the National Guard truly excels. It excels by design and in practice, because of its depth, talent, and adaptability. Each formation brings to the table a diverse array of skills and experience and couples it with cohesion borne over time. Even within the realm of standard readiness and training measures our Soldiers compete well with their Active Component counterparts. They are able to compete because in reality our modern National Guard Soldiers serve far more than the minimum 39 days required. In California that figure is near 93 days and is consistent with other Guard service nationwide. And of those 93 days our Soldiers spend on federal duty, almost all of it is in training of one form or another or on operational deployment.

This figure is also not reflective of the countless hours spent in coordination, study and planning out of uniform, nor does it account for time spent in frequent state operational response. Finally, when assessing what constitutes effective training and preparation for full-spectrum missions, the value of the hundreds of days of diverse private and public sector training and experience our Soldiers accumulate each year should not be discounted. It is this precise array of diverse skills and experience that embody the idea of adaptability and broad spectrum capability within our force. Not only is this private and public sector training significantly mission enhancing, it also comes at no cost to the DoD. This isn't just about civilian law enforcement and medical personnel making better MPs and Medics, it's about a Guard Rifle Company, with scores of diverse occupational backgrounds, being more capable at its broad-spectrum infantry mission. The Guard, in this context, becomes our most adaptive asset, in an unknown future fight. Bring it all together and you get true full-spectrum Soldiers and units that are ready for anything at a fraction of the cost of the active component.

This brings us to a final point, and though less tangible, it is perhaps even more critical in considering the design of our future total Army, that is culture. In the current landscape it is culture that ought to bring us together as a force, rather than divide us. Regardless of component, we share the same values, patriotism and desire to selflessly serve. We also share the same desire for mission accomplishment, at home and abroad. In my own experience, and that of countless members of our force, it is in combat where the distinctions between us most acutely blur and dissipate. In that environment, no one cares where you came from, just what your capabilities are and what you bring to the fight. That is precisely as it should be, and we need to capture that culture and instill it within all of our formations, regardless of component or duty station. That culture change will not be instant, but is nonetheless readily achievable through, innovation, understanding and will.

The innovation part can be achieved through a variety of means, but would certainly be promoted through the concepts of blended units, continuum of service and inter-component leadership. We go to the same schools, have the same organizational structures, and maintain the same standards and equipment. We need to take much greater advantage of this fact in combining our elements to effect strategic, operational and tactical gains for our force as a whole. Understanding, goes deeper, but will be a natural byproduct of some of these innovations. As Soldiers serve together, they achieve

understanding and mutual respect. It is not difficult to imagine a modern Brigade Combat Team, perhaps all of them, being comprised of Active and Guard, or even fully-blended formations. The capability that could be gained, the savings that could be achieved and the understanding that could be promoted are not difficult to envision. An era where Soldiers all serve as a single team, in a single Army, is truly achievable, but it can't happen without the will of the leadership of our collective force.

The challenge before our nation and charge to this Commission is to recommend a vision for our future total Army that effectively balances capability, cost and responsiveness and does so in the most efficient way possible. We owe it to our Soldiers and we owe it to the taxpayers to get this right. This Commission has the opportunity to spark a fundamental change of thinking from a component-centric approach to a construct that envisions a full-spectrum force that seamlessly combines and leverages the capability of each component in a way that is transparent to customer: combatant commander or domestic incident commander. When fighting and winning in an unknown and unknowable future, the key is adaptability and capability built in to the fabric of our force. I challenge the Commission to blend that fabric using a combination of the finest cloth on earth, the Soldiers of America's Army.



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