



## **National Commission on the Future of the Army**

2530 Crystal Drive, Zachary Taylor Building, Suite 5000  
Arlington, VA 22202

**SUBJECT:** National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA) Minutes – National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) Conference, Nashville, TN

**Date:** 12 September 2015

**Time:** 1055 – 1111 and 1357 – 1500 CST

**Locations:** Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN

**Format:** Speech delivered by Chairman and question and answer discussion with Captains and Lieutenants

**Attendees:**

GEN (R) Carter Ham, NCFA Chairman  
SEC Thomas Lamont, NCFA Vice Chairman  
MG (R) Raymond Carpenter, NCFA Executive Director  
Mr. Don Tison, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)  
COL Rich Miller, NCFA Staff  
LTC Barry Vincent, NCFA Staff  
Mr. Kerry Schindler, NCFA Staff  
Mr. Johnny Thomas, NCFA Staff  
COL Kristen Dixon, NCFA Staff

**Documents Submitted to Commission:** ARNG Company Grade survey results

### **Meeting Summary**

Start time 1040.

Commissioner Ham was introduced to the general assembly by MG (R) Gus Hargett, President, NGAUS. The general assembly audience consisted more than 5,000 officers warrant officers, and senior noncommissioned officers from the Air and Army National Guard. Some spouses of service members also attended. The event was open to the news media, but none were present.

Commissioner Ham began by describing the Commission's mandate, composition, staff, subcommittees, and transparency rules from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), under which the Commission operates. Next, he described the phases of work used to methodically study the problems and arrive at informed conclusions in order to make sound recommendations to the President and Congress.

Remarks then shifted to the Total Army concept, a concept in which the Army is made up of three distinct, essential and interdependent components. The friction and

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competition between the components is unhealthy and needs to stop. Leaders throughout the Army and Congress need to lead in a way that strengthens the Army as a whole working together in service to the nation.

Resources and global security trends seem to be on divergent paths. The demand for Army capabilities is increasing, while the budget is decreasing. The concept that the Army should do more with less is a failed concept. The Army can only do less with less.

The Nation must capitalize on the operational experience now resident in the Reserve Components (RCs). RCs provide both needed operational capabilities and the strategic depth for the Army. However, the Army is not taking full operational advantage of the eight Divisions in the ARNG.

Commenting on the potential transfer of AH-64 Apache from ARNG to Regular Army, he noted there is no evil intent on the matter. There are strongly held, legitimate, and widely differing views. The issue is extremely complex, and whatever conclusion the Commission reaches will result in some disappointment.

Commissioner Ham concluded his remarks by talking about the Soldiers and leaders from across the Army with whom the Commission has interacted. He explained the all-volunteer force as the crown jewel making the US Army the greatest Army in the world. We must continue to attract, recruit and retain the type Soldiers and leaders we have now across our Army. They and their families are the ones who bear the burden of defense of the nation. We owe them our very best.

The audience was given an opportunity to ask questions, but none were asked. The speech concluded at 1110.

The NCFA personnel departed the general assembly hall and all went to lunch. The group reassembled at 1330 prior to meeting with a group of ARNG company grade officers.

Commissioners Ham and Lamont, Executive Director, and DFO were introduced to the assembled group of about 150 ARNG officers in a meeting room away from the assembly hall.

CPT Mark Timmons, President of the Company Grade Association, provided opening remarks followed by a presentation of results from a survey taken by 2,096 ARNG company grade officers.

Commissioner Ham explained the purpose and the composition of the Commission and DFO discussed the FACA provisions and the transparency requirements for Commission activities.

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Commissioner Lamont talked about the where places the Commission sought information from across the government to assess the future operational environment and gain a firm understanding of the risks for Army forces as part of the Commission answering the NCFA mandated tasks.

MG (R) Carpenter thanked the group for standing up in defense of our country. He then led the group through a series of questions asking the officers to respond by raising their hand.

1. How many people had served in the active Army and then transferred to the ARNG? ~25%
2. How many had deployed once? >50%
3. How many had deployed twice? ~20%
4. How many had deployed three times? ~10%
5. How many had deployed four times? One Officer
6. When you have deployed at least once, were you satisfied with your mobilization experience? Many were and many were not.
7. How many of them had to make a personal choice to attend Professional Military Education (PME) or attend Annual Training (AT) with their unit? ~20%
8. Talking about readiness, what do you believe your unit level of proficiency is? Most think your unit is T2 level of training proficiency.
9. How many believe resourcing is adequate for their unit? <5%
10. With the potential government shutdown looming, what are the impacts to Soldiers who are attending a school? One officer spoke about the last government shutdown when there were Soldiers from their unit at a school. The Soldiers were sent home in the middle of the course because there were not sustainment provisions remaining at the post and many of the instructors were not allowed to work. The Soldiers were not allowed to come back to finish the course. Now, Soldiers are being withheld from similar courses for fear that the same scenario will repeat.
11. Regarding the Secretary of Defense policy for a mobilization to dwell ratio of 1:5, is that about right or what do you recommend with respect to families and employers as sustainable for a protracted conflict like the past 14 years?

One CPT noted the duration of deployment of one year seems too long. The ARNG doesn't drop in training readiness after a deployment down to ground

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zero, but rather stays at a fairly high rate of training readiness since the people don't move and they have gained a lot of experience from the deployment. Maybe more frequent, but shorter mobilizations similar to the Air National Guard or the Air Force would work better.

Another CPT, an Apache pilot, stated that the active Army holds the ARNG to a higher standard than it holds itself to regarding readiness level (RL) progression. Their ARNG unit was required to achieve 100% RL progression for all 21 combat crews prior to deployment. The active Army counterpart unit that arrived in AFG about the same time was only 80-85% RL progressed and did not have the full complement of combat crews. ARNG units are required to go to Fort Hood for three months of post mobilization training away from families, but the same level of training is not required for active Army units prior to sending them overseas. The CPT stated that a nine month BOG deployment followed by two or three years dwell should not require the same 90 days of pre-deployment training as before, since it had been such a short time in dwell. The CPT also discussed the difference in how ARNG Soldiers are treated compared to active duty Soldiers during their pre-deployment training. The ARNG Soldiers are required to abide by General Order #1, which prohibits alcohol consumption and restricts off-post activities. Active duty Soldiers are treated like adults through their pre-deployment training period, allowed to drink alcohol, and to see their families right up to their deployment.

Another CPT spoke to the length of pre-deployment training being too long and reiterated the previous statement regarding General Order #1 and First Army's treatment of RC Soldiers. His experience was recent from a mobilization in 2014. Training needs to be tailored to each unit based on what training the unit has already completed and not repeat training after mobilization. First Army continues to be rigid with training plans regardless of the mission the unit is going to perform even when the unit leadership tries to point out the unit's mission, task and purpose compared to unnecessary additional tasks. His stated preference for BOG:Dwell is 1:4 or 1:3 with 9-10 months actual time in theater. De-mobilization timeline is also too long. Individual de-mobilization really takes two days. By dragging that process out over two weeks, the Army prolongs Soldiers' time away from families and for no good reason.

A short explanation of de-mobilization length was provided by Commissioner Lamont from his experience as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Soldiers were rushing through the de-mobilization process and intentionally not disclosing injuries sustained on the deployment so they could go home sooner than if they disclosed those injuries. Disclosing injuries meant they would have to remain at the de-mobilization site for additional medical evaluation or treatment. Some Soldiers later claimed their injuries were sustained during the deployment, and the Army had a hard time

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bringing those Soldiers back on active duty orders to be able to provide them the care that they deserved.

The CPT's rebuttal was that Soldiers and leaders have just completed 9-12 months where they make life and death decisions every day, and then are expected to sit idle in lock-down at the de-mob site, where they are not supposed to make any decisions or question any process. The process makes us feel like we are being treated like children. Soldiers get into trouble because they do not treat them like adults when they return from deployment. We treat them like victims, and we have to stop doing this.

A combat Engineer CPT spoke about his unit meeting all the force generation readiness aim points and not being employed during their available year. They want to be employed on mission. They want to serve.

12. Have any of you experienced your units receiving a Notification of Sourcing (NOS) and then being off-ramped? Over 50% responded they had been off-ramped after receiving a NOS. One CPT noted he had experienced being off-ramped twice. Once he was a platoon leader and also serving at the State level as an officer recruiter. He had recruited ROTC cadets to the ARNG unit specifically for the mobilization. When the unit was taken off sourcing, those young lieutenants were upset. The unit received second NOS for a different mission, and the same thing happened again. Later, the unit was called upon to perform a State Active Duty mission and the Soldiers had to be convinced that it was real notice delaying their response time. This experience resulted in poor retention for the unit.

Another CPT spoke about the impacts to the State for a unit being off-ramped close to the Mobilization date. The State is responsible to purchase Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) items for each member of a deploying unit. Not only is this expensive, but there are countless man-hours wasted when the RFI items are not needed due to unit off-ramp.

A CPT spoke of a BCT in her State that received NOS for 1,300 Soldiers. Those Soldiers were identified and began making life decisions to go on the deployment. As the deployment approached, the required number of Soldiers dropped to just over 300 impacting nearly 1,000 Soldiers who were off-ramped. Many of those Soldiers were in college and because of the deployment, had not enrolled. They postponed a semester of college because the off-ramp occurred after the semester began.

13. Is 39 days of training the right number of days to accomplish all the Army is asking you to do? Can you accomplish all the mandatory training tasks in AR 350-1? The group unanimous responded, "No." There must be relief from the massive list of mandatory training tasks.

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One CPT noted 39 days would be enough if the AR 350-1 requirements were cut in half. Also, more days may be needed for BCTs later in their force generation cycle to achieve higher level collective training. After achieving readiness objectives, employ the unit in available year for something. Even if employment is an overseas deployment for training mission for three weeks, the Soldiers get the sense of accomplishing something.

Another CPT pointed out the number of days available is not the only issue. One also must consider what training the unit leadership has planned, resourced and conducts. No Soldier comes to drill to sit around and watch power point presentations. They want to learn something, do something, and feel like they have a purpose. He believed some Soldiers may need more training than others, so another way to possibly look at this problem is to allow unit commanders more flexibility to bring individual Soldiers or small parts of the unit in when needed (MI Company Commander speaking about his unit).

14. How many of you have participated in XCTC?<sup>1</sup> ~70% raised their hand.
15. How many of you have been to JRTC (Joint Readiness Training Center) or NTC (National Training Center)? ~10% raised their hand.
16. How valuable is XCTC in preparing for a CTC (Combat Training Center) rotation? A lieutenant spoke up having been through JRTC as a Private, and later as a 2LT having completed the XCTC prior to that second rotation. He affirmed the additional training from the XCTC was very valuable to improving the unit's ability to perform tactical tasks, as well as build unit cohesiveness.

Commissioner Ham encouraged the group to continue to provide input to the Commission through the NCFA website. The meeting adjourned at 1507 and ended NCFA activities for the day.

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<sup>1</sup> The Army National Guard's eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) program is an instrumented Brigade field training exercise designed to certify Platoon proficiency in coordination with First Army.