



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) Site Visit at the National Training Center (NTC) minutes

Date: 24 August 2015

Time: 0800-1700 hours

Location: NTC, Fort Irwin, CA

Attendees:

Commissioner Carter F. Ham, Commission Chairman
Commissioner Raymond F. Chandler
Commissioner Robert F. Hale
Commissioner Jack C. Stultz
Mr. Don Tison, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
Ms. Deborah Gantt, Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO)
MAJ Cory Simpson, Commission Legal Advisor
MG (Ret) Ray Carpenter, NCFA Executive Director
COL Richard Miller, NCFA Staff
COL Kristen Dixon, NCFA Staff
Ms. Cherie Emerson, NCFA Staff
LTC Gregory Hartvigsen, NCFA Staff
LTC Steven Pierce, NCFA Staff

Documents Submitted to Commission:

1. 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group overview
2. Task Force Talon Task Organization chart, 1-183rd Attack Reconnaissance Battalion
3. NTC Command Group: NTC overview brief
4. The Adjutant General (TAG) of Idaho: written statement

Meeting Summaries

The Commissioners and NCFA staff linked up with COL Mark Van Dyke, Commander, 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group (TASM-G), California Army National Guard (CAARNG) at Joint Force Training Base (JFTB) Los Alamitos, CA. The group departed at 0820 hours for NTC by military aircraft with COL Van Dyke briefing the Commissioners during the flight.

The DFO opened the meeting by reviewing the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) with those in attendance. As the group flew to the NTC, COL

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Van Dyke provided a briefing on the TASM-G and its Intermediate Aviation Maintenance peacetime mission as well as its war-time mission when deployed.

In response to a Commissioner's question of how the TASM-G will be affected if the National Guard loses Apaches, COL Van Dyke provided three courses of action. First, the TASM-G would cease to do Apache work; contractors would need to pick up that work load. Second, TASM-G personnel would be qualified (school trained), but not proficient (not working on Apaches outside of deployment). The third course of action would have a section of the TASM-G force structure in the Active Component (AC) and available to deploy with the AC units.

COL Van Dyke then discussed the TASM-G role in preparing other ARNG aviation units for mobilization, work force composition, and individual status as AGR (Active Guard and Reserve), Military Technician, or contractor. He emphasized their number one priority mission is support to the war fight. He also expressed his opinion that the mobilization process through the power projection platforms is cumbersome, time consuming and expensive.

This meeting ended at 0920 hours when the flight landed. Upon arrival at NTC, NCFA personnel met with the NTC Commander and his staff: MG Joseph Martin, Commanding General, NTC and Fort Irwin; COL David Lesperance, Chief, Operations Group, NTC; COL Matthew Moore; COL Cark Michaud; LTC Paul Cunningham; MAJ Ian Lauer; and CSM Noe Salinas.

The DFO opened this meeting at 0935 hours by reviewing the FACA requirements with those in attendance. Commissioner Ham then made a few opening remarks followed by MG Martin providing a briefing about the NTC.

The NTC brief included a short history and description of Fort Irwin and the NTC. He emphasized the NTC's importance in building readiness in the Army. MG Martin explained how NTC works to replicate the complexity of the current operational environment. He discussed the throughput capability of the Army's Combat Training Centers (CTC), including NTC, and the length of time of each rotation.

The rotation underway at NTC during the NCFA site visit was a National Guard and Army Reserve rotation with Soldiers from 22 states. OCTs (Observer/Coach/Trainers) from all three Army components were also participating. MG Martin pointed out that all NTC rotations are multi-component. The Reserve Component sustainment/support units can be difficult to access due to duration of rotation and may need better programming/funding to participate in future rotations.

He also discussed the differences in levels of readiness for Active Component and Reserve Component BCTs when they arrive at and when they depart from the NTC. He noted Division Tactical Operations Centers are operating as part of BCT higher headquarters during rotations, but NTC's charter and focus is BCT proficiency.

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This meeting adjourned at 1030 hours and the group moved to another building to meet with personnel from the 40th Infantry Division (40th ID), CAARNG, tactical command post (DTAC). NCFA personnel engaged with BG Mark Malanka, Deputy Commanding General, 40th ID and LTC Ray Hoeflein, Chief of Operations.

The DFO opened the meeting at 1040 by reviewing the requirements of the FACA with those in attendance. BG Malanka gave a tour and overview of the 40th ID DTAC. He outlined the purpose of the DTAC, its mission and scope. He summarized the value of being able to setup and use all the Division's tactical information and communications systems to conduct the processes necessary to exercise mission command in a field environment. 40th ID worked with the NTC's notional 52nd ID (higher headquarters for rotational BCTs) and integrated their two units to provide mission command and support to the 116th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) while the BCT conducted operations in the maneuver area. The next goal for future NTC events for the 40th ID is to move the DTAC out of the cantonment area and into the exercise box.

Although not the primary focus for a NTC rotation, 40th ID recommends sending First Army OCTs to evaluate the DTAC to increase the training event benefit for the Division. Commissioners asked the 40th ID to share their experience with all ARNG Divisions if the 40th ID felt the exercise was beneficial. BG Malanka said 40th ID would provide an after action review to other ARNG divisions.

The meeting ended at 1210 hours. NCFA personnel accompanied by NTC staff moved by military aircraft to the the maneuver area to visit the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team (116th ABCT), Idaho ARNG, command post. Commissioners and NCFA staff met with COL Russell Johnson, Commander, 116th ABCT; CSM Henry Chin, 116th ABCT; and LTC Scott Nauman, NTC Senior Brigade Trainer;

The DFO opened the meeting at 1230 hours by reviewing the requirements of the FACA with those in attendance. COL Johnson gave a tour and overview of the 116th command post that included an overview of the headquarters operations, the layout of friendly and enemy forces, and an introduction of key staff personnel. He discussed the length of time the staff officers and NCOs held their current positions and the major training exercises his unit used to get the staff prepared for the NTC rotation.

COL Johnson answered questions regarding the biggest challenge the BCT had during the NTC rotation at the Soldier, staff, and commander levels. He discussed the training his unit conducted to prepare for the rotation and expressed his opinion on how often a National Guard BCT should cycle through a CTC. He also explained where in the readiness cycle the BCT was positioned as part of the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle. COL Johnson discussed levels of readiness prior to arrival at NTC, expectations for pre- and post-rotation, and the funding challenges associated with preparing for the rotation, especially in years when defense funding was executed under a Continuing Resolution.

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COL Johnson mentioned that First Army support was vital to the BCT home station train up prior to the NTC rotation. 116th ABCT is part of the 34th ID, MNARNG, and is also partnered with 4th ID at Fort Carson, CO. The 116th works with and has a close relationship with one of the 4th ID BCTs at Fort Carson. When asked by a commissioner, COL Johnson expressed concern with the loss of the Apaches from the ARNG as the 116th is co-located with the 1-183rd Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB) and trains regularly with them. COL Johnson answered questions regarding the last time the 116th deployed in 2010-11 and what deployment pace would keep the Soldiers motivated. He indicated that the training and state support mission to civil authorities can keep Soldiers motivated if there are no contingency deployments.

Commissioners and COL Johnson discussed the full-time manning of the units and employer support for the units coming from three different states. The discussion then shifted to how many days on average the Soldiers trained in the year prior to the NTC rotation and how this affected retention numbers for unit manning. Full time support (FTS) manning is at 66 % and this causes the FTS personnel to work extra hours per week to make up the work load. The average number of days Soldiers trained for the year prior to the rotation was 59 days rather than the statutory minimum 39 days. The point was made that if no deployment is planned, the NTC rotation should be in the available year, not the year prior. Retention varies and is more affected by the life cycle that new Soldiers go through in a six-year enlistment period (e.g. college, jobs, marriage, starting a family, etc.) than the training and deployment cycles.

The meeting ended at 1320 hours and the group boarded the helicopters and moved to the 3rd Squadron, 116th ABCT, ORARNG, command post. LTC Brian Dean, Commander, 3-116th ABCT, and CSM Ronald Bloker, 3-116th ABCT, met with the group. The DFO opened the meeting at 1330 hours by reviewing the requirements of the FACA with those in attendance. LTC Dean provided the unit update brief before answering questions.

LTC Dean answered questions from Commissioners concerning readiness of his squadron pre- and post-rotation, challenges with Professional Military Education (PME) while preparing for NTC, and FTS manning levels in his units. He indicated that attending PME was a lower priority in the year prior to the rotation even though this can affect promotions and retention. LTC Dean also discussed that his unit is resourced at about 65 % of full-time manning.

When asked if this rotation would satisfy Soldiers desire to deploy or do something significant, he indicated “not really” as the rotation just whets their appetite for deployment. In response to a question about sustaining the training after the NTC rotation, LTC Dean answered that knowledge management training will be critical as well as more maneuver training incorporating opposing forces (OPFOR).

The meeting ended at 1400 hours and the Commissioners and NCFA again boarded the helicopters for the 1st Squadron, 163rd Cavalry Regiment (1-163rd Cavalry), MTARNG, where they heard from the Commander, LTC Michael Moreni.

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The DFO opened this meeting at 1410 hours by reviewing the requirements of the FACA with those in attendance. LTC Moreni gave an update brief on 1-163rd activities. He answered questions from Commissioners concerning the rotation and how preparing for and executing the rotation affected retention. LTC Moreni indicated that if the rotation were followed by a deployment, the rotation would not have an adverse on retention, but if not followed by employment, the drive to be super-trained led to Soldiers asking “to what end”.

He noted that the unit has a retention hit underway as many of the Soldiers signed up to deploy in 2010 and their initial enlistment is coming to an end. This timing has caused a crew stability issue that has been his biggest challenge. LTC Moreni also indicated that he had 32 of 34 authorized AGR positions filled, which is sufficient to support the unit. He noted that required vice authorized manning levels were State controlled.

This meeting ended at 1425 hours and the NCFA personnel boarded helicopters for movement to the NTC Urban Warfare Media Center. SGT Natasha MacKenzie, Vulture Team Operations SGT, NTC Urban Warfare Media Center, engaged with the Commissioners.

The DFO opened the meeting at 1440 hours by reviewing the requirements of the FACA with those in attendance. SGT MacKenzie gave an overview of the capabilities and training resources available at one of NTC urban warfare training sites. She explained the control center’s ability to manipulate effects such as smoke, lighting, sounds and smells in individual rooms of each of the buildings. She highlighted the ability to record audio and video from many cameras within the training area and the significant impact that those recordings have on the NTC’s ability to facilitate objective After Action Reviews (AARs) with rotational units. She also discussed the safety features inherent in the control system. The meeting ended at 1455 hours and NCFA personnel moved to another room at the Urban Warfare Center to meet with ARNG, First Army and NTC leadership.

At 1500hrs the following leaders met with Commissioners and NCFA staff:

- Maj Gen Gary Saylor, TAG, ID;
- BG John Goodale, Assistant TAG, ID;
- COL Michael Garshak, Chief of Staff, ID;
- Brig Gen Michael Stencel, Assistant TAG, OR;
- COL William Pendergast, Commander, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, OR;
- BG Kenneth Koon, Assistant TAG, WI, and Deputy Commander, Division West, 1st Army;
- MG Joseph Martin, Commanding General, NTC and Fort Irwin;
- COL David Lesperance, Chief, Operations Group, NTC

The DFO opened the meeting by reviewing the requirements of the FACA with those in attendance. The Commissioners conducted a roundtable discussion with the TAG, Assistant TAGs, and unit Commanders currently training at the NTC. Maj Gen Saylor

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indicated that seven to ten years was too long between NTC rotations and that Soldiers want to 'do things'. He also indicated that two-year notice is sufficient to prepare for an NTC Rotation.

COL Pendergast noted that, based on the number of ARNG Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCT) and training center throughput, the rotational cycle for each ARNG IBCT to train at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, LA, is about once every 20 years. He also outlined the major training events of the ARFORGEN cycle culminating in the CTC rotation prior to the available year. He noted that with the drop in ARNG end strength, his unit would not be capable of organic vehicle maintenance and would need to go to Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), WA, for that support.

Maj Gen Saylor stated that the troop reductions would affect Idaho's ability to meet the State mission. He also indicated that Soldiers find the State mission satisfying. When asked about employer support, Maj Gen Saylor answered that it varied depending on the State, while Brig Gen Stencil thought the effect on families had a greater impact on Soldiers than employer issues.

COL Garshak responded to a question from Commissioners about the ability of the National Guard to attract former AC Soldiers. He stated that Idaho has been very successful with bringing in Apache pilots in particular. COL Pendergast discussed the Regional Training Institutes (RTI) and the One Army School System. He described the ORARNG success in providing schools seats for the AC Soldiers from JBLM. He also commented that the mobilization process has gotten much better over the years and that First Army is very good at executing that process.

This meeting ended at 1600 hours. Commissioners and selected NCFA staff moved to another room for a NTC out-brief discussion with MG Martin and COL Lesperance,

The DFO opened the meeting at 1610 hours by reviewing the requirements of the FACA with those in attendance. Discussion began with review of relative readiness of units arriving to NTC. There are different levels of readiness between National Guard and Regular Army Brigade Combat Teams arriving to NTC. AC units are resourced and prepared at a higher collective training level than NG units. This reality stems from resourcing and time constraints for higher echelon collective training. For example, the different readiness levels impact how intelligence information, process, and products are used at the battalion and brigade levels. The higher the collective training readiness level upon arrival, the better a given unit is able use intelligence products in the decision-making process. Likewise, the higher the collective training readiness level the unit has upon arrival, the easier the unit can integrate combat capabilities like the AH-64, fires, and sustainment.

Discussion then transitioned to who sets the entry level training requirements for arrival to NTC for a NG unit. No one seemed to have a definitive answer. The consensus was that someone needs clear responsibility for setting training requirements for entry into NTC rotation and the expectations need to be made clear, uniform, and early to allow

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units time to better prepare for NTC. This approach would ensure better training at the BN and BDE level staffs during the rotation.

Discussion then transitioned to what "available" means for a NG unit, an active unit, and a joint force commander. The central take-away is that a joint force commander should set the criteria, and then all brigades, regardless of component, should be "available" when the brigade is able to satisfy these criteria. Challenges were identified, as many of the Regular Army and NG brigades are "available," but not necessarily ready. Additionally, the limited time provided a NG unit to conduct higher level collective training means a NG unit could not be ready for use by a joint force commander until sufficient post-mobilization training is conducted. The group then discussed how a unit's NTC rotation could fit into the unit entering the available pool. While no consensus was reached, Commissioners agreed the Institutional Subcommittee should examine the topic further.

The group then discussed how completing a NTC rotation did not equate to a T1 levelⁱ of readiness at each level of command (company, battalion, and brigade). The question remained with no consensus at the end of the discussion of how to best integrate a NTC rotation into a unit's training cycle for NG and AC, and to synchronize the rotation with the unit entering the available pool.

The DFO closed the meeting at 1640 hours. All NCFA personnel then departed by military aircraft for Joint Force Training Base (JFTB) Los Alamitos, CA, for overnight rest.

ⁱ Army units routinely report readiness for manning, equipping, and training. Training is reported at various levels labeled T1, T2, etc., based on a unit's ability to conduct collective tasks.