

# National Guard's role in the Total Army

## Introduction

In recent testimony to the National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA), General Odierno stated, "Today we need each component in our Total Army to be complementary. They (the Reserve Component) have never been interchangeable, nor should they." He continues his commentary on the National Guard by stating that, "Simply put, the difference between the Active and Reserve formations is in how we organize, train, and employ our formations." Recent history has proven that the National Guard has proven itself an equal partner in the operational force, equally trained, interchangeable and effective. This paper addresses the National Guard's interchangeability, effectiveness, and the application of the Total Force policy by the Army.

## The interchangeable force

The use of the National Guard as an integral part of contingency operations has clearly proven the theory of the Total Force. GEN Milley recently stated at his confirmation hearing that,

*"The United States Army cannot conduct combat operations in a sustained way overseas without the use of National Guard, the reserve, we just can't do it."*<sup>1</sup>

The question that remains is in what capacity does the National Guard serve in the future force? The answer lies within the fundamentals of the Total Force policy. The Army Total Force requires interchangeable, formations that are equally effective regardless of component. In order to achieve this objective, the National Guard's role must be a full spectrum equal partner, interchangeable with Active component units.

## The National Guard is Interchangeable

As noted above, GEN Odierno stated that the National Guard is not interchangeable with the active component. However, multiple examples attest to the contrary. US Army Special Operations Command is organized with seven Special Forces Groups, two of which are in the Guard. Every operational plans incorporate all seven groups without regard to component. By definition, that makes them interchangeable. Additionally, there are countless numbers of RIP/TOAs recorded in OEF and OIF in which National Guard units replaced Active Component units and vice versa. Following its service in Afghanistan, New York's 27 IBCT "significantly expanded the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) through the training and mentoring of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) that contributed to successful Afghan-led operations in the field." Leaders in both theaters commented that you can't tell the difference between soldiers from the Guard and the Active Component.

Additionally, there are examples of how the National Guard exceeds the requirements of interchangeability due to their unique skills sets. When the Active Component prepared for its mission in support of the African Ebola crisis, they were trained by National Guard Civil Support Teams and CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package units. Perhaps a better mission assignment would have been to use the trainers to conduct the mission.

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During the war in Afghanistan, Secretary of the Army Geren asked the Guard to deploy "Agribusiness Development Teams" comprised of Guardsmen with experience in farming to bring agricultural expertise to Afghan agriculture, a commodity which represents 45% of Afghan Gross Domestic Product and employs 70% of the population.<sup>2</sup> This unique use of National Guard capability displays the full spectrum of the Total Army when the National Guard is incorporated as an interchangeable partner.

### The National Guard is Effective

As noted above, when addressing the NFCA about the future of the Army and the potential force mix, GEN Odierno is clearly not in favor of interchangeability, commenting that the National Guard is not as effective as the Active component.<sup>3</sup> However, that statement is contradictory to his previous views of the National Guard on September 11, 2012 Gen Odierno stated,

*"...our Total Army has been essential to our plans for the last 11 years: We have a true and proven operational Reserve, with experience that comes from more than 675,000 mobilizations."*

GEN Milley echoed his comments during his Senate confirmation hearing.

*"...as commander in Forces Command I deal with the National Guard and United States Army Reserve on a frequent basis...We trained together, we operate together, we have partnerships together, and I have commanded National Guard forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan...the National Guard has been key over the last decade and a half and have served very proudly and honorably, both in Afghanistan and Iraq."*<sup>4</sup>

These remarks are borne out by 14 years of history. Sampling just 2 states, Louisiana and West Virginia proves the effectiveness of Army National Guard units in actual conflict. Louisiana deployments in support of OIF and OEF included 18 Meritorious Unit Commendations, including several battalions receiving multiple awards. Citations included "...exceptionally meritorious combat in the performance of outstanding services for at least 6 months during...military operations against an armed enemy", and, "outstanding devotion and superior performance of exceptionally difficult tasks as to set it apart and above other units with similar missions."

West Virginia received similar results. They had 19 unit awards during OIF and OEF, 6 units received awards for multiple deployments. Additional comments "For extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance in action against enemy forces", "exceptionally meritorious service in pursuit of joint military missions of great significance", and, "meritorious service in connection with difficult and challenging missions" belie the fact that the Guard has proven itself effective in large numbers over the long period of conflict since 2001.

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## Empowering the Total Army

Total Army effectiveness and interchangeability is dependent on a commitment to the Total Force Policy. DoD Directive 1200.17 states that Service Secretaries will “manage their respective RCs as an operational force such that the RCs provide operational capabilities while maintaining strategic depth to meet US military requirements across the full spectrum of conflict”<sup>5</sup>. SECARMY McHugh’s implementation of this policy was resolute in the expectation that the AC and RC would be an integrated force with equal capabilities, using the same standards and validation processes<sup>6</sup>.

A review of policy implementation shows the Active Component falls short of meeting the Secretary’s directive. National Guard formations are often the last to receive new equipment, as demonstrated by the shortage of Block III AH60s in National Guard formations. Decisions like this cause a restrictive disadvantage to the National Guard that can be perceived as ineffectiveness, readiness, or accessibility issues. Restrictions to MOS and specialty school slot allocations, limited CTC rotations for ARNG BCTs, and disproportionate staff training opportunities also place a higher burden on the National Guard to succeed despite these disadvantages.

Effective implementation of the Total Force Policy should expand beyond readiness and contingency operations. In his testimony, General Odierno postulates using RC formations as part of long-term, predictable requirements in support of other than contingency operations.<sup>7</sup> In order to accomplish this, predictive planning and the allocation of 12304b funding is required to allow for the use of National Guard forces in support of COCOM objectives.

## Together, One Army

Total Force Policy has been US Military bedrock for over 40 years. Our Nation’s Land Force, the Total Army, benefits by its ability to plan and program using the unique additional capabilities of each component while also ensuring their interchangeability. This is proven over 14 years of combat operations, where the National Guard has proven itself to be interchangeable and effective... an equal partner of the Total Army.

The successful future of the Army will depend largely on leveraging the experience, contributions and value of the National Guard. We recommend that the NCFE emphasize the continued implementation of the Total Force policy by distributing Army combat forces between the Guard and Active Components. Additionally, we recommend the Commission emphasize the need for the Secretary to resource National Guard units equitably to continue its interchangeability and proper readiness preparation.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, hearing on Army Chief of Staff Nomination, July, 21, 2015, 34

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationalguard.mil/News/ArticleView/tabid/5563/Article/573128/national-guard-to-help-afghan-agriculture.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Statement by The Honorable John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army and General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff, Army, before the Commission on the Future of the United States Army, May 19, 2015, 10.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Congress, 36

<sup>5</sup> DODD 1200.17

<sup>6</sup> Secretary of the Army Memorandum 4 Sep 2012 subj Army Directive 2012-08 Army Total Force Policy

<sup>7</sup> Odierno, 13