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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Air National Guard has been at war as an integral and essential part of the Total Air Force for 25 years. During this time, the men and women of the Air National Guard have proven to be remarkably adaptive, versatile, and resilient.

The first Gulf War, Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM, utilized the forces, tactics and doctrine designed during the Cold War to defend NATO from an attack by the Warsaw Pact. As a result, the Air National Guard contributed to the fight as a voluntary, strategic reserve force augmenting Air Force contingency operations.

The security environment changed significantly after the first Gulf War. First, the end of the war did not signal an end of hostilities, as the Air Force launched into a series of airpower-centric operations including Operations Northern and Southern Watch, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, back to Iraq, and now Syria. At the same time, the Department of Defense went through a post-Cold War drawdown and a restructuring of forces including a 33.7% cut in Air Force manpower and a 41.5% reduction in aircraft between 1990 and 2015. This restructuring included a change from a forward-basing posture to a forward-presence strategy, and a shift in the apportionment of forces within the Total Air Force.

The combination of a continued high-demand for Air Force capabilities and a decrease in active duty Air Force capacity resulted in greater reliance upon the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve. In 1990, the Air National Guard was 15.1% of the Total Air Force manpower and operated 19.3% of the aircraft; by 2015 the Air Guard contribution had increased to 21.5% and 21.4% respectively. For the men and women of the Air National Guard, what began as volunteering for operational missions during Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM evolved into the most significant application of involuntary mobilization since the Korean War.

For the National Guard, including the Air Guard, the demands of Overseas Contingency Operations were compounded by increased calls to

protect life and property at home from natural disasters or terrorist attacks. Federal, state, and local communities began to increasingly recognize and rely upon the versatility of Guard Airmen to adapt their training and equipment, designed for the Air Guard's federal, national security mission, to assist them in responding to state and local emergencies – commonly referred to as “dual-use” capabilities.

The dedication of the men and women of the Air National Guard has facilitated the transformation of the Air Guard from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve. The Air National Guard does not simply train at home for the next major war, but instead augments the Total Air Force in day-to-day operations and provides surge capacity for unforeseen emergencies at home or abroad. Today's Air National Guard is:

- A Proven Choice in the Warfight;
- A First Choice in Homeland Operations; and
- An Enduring Choice in Building & Maintaining Partnerships.

The men and women of the Air National Guard continue to do a remarkable job fulfilling the tasks asked of them as an operational reserve. As leaders, we must ensure that they receive the foundational support, training and equipment necessary to continue to meet the needs of the nation and their communities.

## **YEAR IN REVIEW**

### ***A Proven Choice in the Warfight***

The Air National Guard is integral and essential to the U.S. Air Force's contribution to our nation's security; our Guard Airmen's dedication to the nation is clearly evident. In 2015, the men and women of the Air National Guard filled 9,006 combatant command requests for support deployments to combat zones, and U.S.-based support for combat operations, many as volunteers. The Air National Guard contributed to the U.S. Air Force's

deterrence and assurance mission with deployments to U.S. special interest areas such as Japan, South Korea, and Europe – often back-filling Air Force forward-based units deployed to combat.

While the war on terrorism is predominantly fought overseas, many Guard Airmen are actively engaged state-side, defending the homeland. The Air National Guard is the primary force responsible for defending the airspace over U.S. territory – monitoring radar scopes, manning the command and control system that coordinates airspace defense, piloting the fighter aircraft that intercept potential threats and the aerial refueling tankers that extend the range and endurance of the fighters – the men and women of the Air National Guard are *Always on Mission 24/7/365*.

Guard Airmen are fully engaged in “reach-back” missions, *i.e.*, missions that use global communications and data links to provide direct support to deployed warfighters from U.S. locations. Air National Guard Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) units in California, North Dakota, Arizona, Texas, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and Iowa are currently flying 14 combat orbits providing armed reconnaissance to forwarded deployed forces. Units in Tennessee and Iowa are converting from MQ-1 to MQ-9 RPA and will be operational this year. Four additional MQ-9 units in Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Michigan, and New York are scheduled to be operational in FY2017. The intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) data collected by the RPAs is integrated into the joint ISR architecture at the Air Force Distributed Common Ground Systems (DCGS). Air National Guard DCGS units process, exploit, and disseminate actionable intelligence from data collected by a variety of sensors on the U-2, RQ-4 Global Hawk, MQ-1 Predator, MQ-9 Reaper, and other ISR platforms.

Cyber security is another global national security mission the men and women of the Air National Guard support from their home stations. According to the *Department of Defense (DoD) Cyber Strategy* of 2015, the Department will:

- Build and maintain ready forces and capabilities to conduct cyberspace operations;
- Defend the DoD information network, secure DoD data, and mitigate risks to DoD missions;
- Be prepared to defend the U.S. Homeland and U.S. vital interests from disruptive or destructive cyberattacks of significant consequence;
- Build and maintain viable cyber options and plan to use those options to control conflict escalation and to shape the conflict environment at all stages; and
- Build and maintain robust international alliances and partnerships to deter shared threats and increase international security and stability.

Over 6,600 Guard Airmen support the 21<sup>st</sup> century cyber mission. In 2015, 12 Cyber Protection Teams were stood up to identify and counter threats to critical mission assets in support of USCYBERCOM. Teams include Cyber Tactics, Test & Evaluation, Cyberspace Command & Control, Active Cyber Defense, Information Aggressors, three National Mission Teams and two Cyber Training/Distance Learning Squadrons. Air Guard “cyber warriors” support the Total Air Force contribution to the DoD cyber mission. In order to support both national and domestic needs, Air National Guard cyber units are geographically distributed among the ten Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions.

The strategic deterrence mission is a top priority for the Air Force and the Air National Guard is an active participant. The 131<sup>st</sup> Missouri Air National Guard Wing transitioned from F-15s to the B-2 stealth bombers in 2008 and became the first nuclear strategic bombing wing in the Air National Guard. Today, the 131<sup>st</sup> Bomb Wing, in a classic association with the Air Force’s 509<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, Whiteman Air Force Base, is integral to the Air Force Global Strike Command mission. The Air Guard also supports the strategic deterrence with KC-135 aerial refueling tankers. In addition, North Dakota Air National Guard

Security Forces help protect two components of the nuclear triad at Minot Air Force Base.

The men and women of the Air National Guard also assist the Air Force in its space superiority mission with two Space Warning Squadrons, two space Command and Control Squadrons, a Space Operations Squadron, and two Space Control Squadrons. Collectively, Air Guard Space Squadrons provide missile warning, satellite maneuver, configuration, and operation for MILSTAR and Advanced Extremely High Frequency constellation, and space situational awareness in support of global and theater campaigns.

When our Guard Airmen return from deployment, overseas or at home, they do not simply return home to their civilian jobs. First, many have to regain currency in skill-sets that were not used supporting the current Overseas Contingency Operations. For example, F-15 and F-16 pilots seldom use their air-to-air warfighting skills when deployed to the Middle East; therefore, they must refresh those skills through both home-station training and exercises such as Red Flag to regain their full-spectrum combat qualification. Finally, as members of the National Guard, our members have additional homeland/domestic commitments.

### ***A First Choice for Homeland Operations***

The Air National Guard's responsibilities go beyond fighting America's wars. As the air component of the National Guard, the men and women of the Air National Guard are charged to provide for the protection of life and property and to preserve peace, order, and public safety. The most visible role of the National Guard is its response to domestic emergencies: natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, and man-made disasters such as terrorist attacks and civil unrest. Our Guard Airmen are ready to help their neighbors in any way, but most often, they employ their dual-use capabilities, i.e., they adapt their combat equipment and skills to serve their communities. For example, during winter storm Jonas, the Air National Guard provided over

5,000 man-hours to their local communities. Guard Airmen augmented local first responders (emergency medical, firefighting, search & rescue), manned emergency shelters, provided emergency transportation for personnel and supplies, and setup and operated backup power generators and communication networks. As a result of the Baltimore riots in April 2015, our Air Guard members were requested by the Governor to assist the overwhelmed law enforcement officials. Air Guard members utilized crowd control techniques to help stabilize the situation. In October 2015, South Carolina received historic rainfall from Hurricane Joaquin and our Air Guard members were there to assist the community. They executed civil-authority support missions to preserve the lives and safety of South Carolina residents and assisted with recovery efforts.

Aside from disasters, Air National Guard emergency response units assist their communities at home. Units typically include trained Airmen and equipment for fire response, security, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), medical response, and other civil support functions. Through mutual support agreements, Air Guard organizations are quick to respond, equipped and manned to support their local civilian communities. Nearly every day, Air National Guard fire departments are called upon to augment local fire responses and/or to back-fill local first responders when out on calls. Air Guard security forces are routinely asked to assist local police with traffic control after a major vehicle accident or unexpected road closure. In many areas, the Air Guard has the only EOD capability available to respond to local incidents making them an invaluable part of their communities.

### ***An Enduring Choice for Building and Maintaining Long-Term Partnerships***

Many people join the Air National Guard because the Guard personnel system will allow them to serve from their local community. This assignment stability inherent to the National Guard also enables it to support enduring

relationships both at home and abroad. The Guard Airmen contribute to a number of programs designed to improve partner nations capabilities and U.S. interagency cooperation.

The Air National Guard is an active participant in the Department of Defense State Partnership Program. The State Partnership Program pairs U.S. states and territories with partner countries in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship. The objectives of the Program are to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation. Last year Guard Airmen participated in 119 State Partnership Program events. For example, the South Carolina Air National Guard worked with the El Salvador military to help them improve their disaster response management and capacity; the Maryland Guard helped the Estonian Air Force improve their airport security and airspace management system; and, Soldiers and Airmen from Illinois helped the Polish military establish a noncommissioned officer leadership training program.

In addition to the State Partnership Program, the Air National Guard conducts formal military training for allies and partners. Last year, the 162<sup>nd</sup> Arizona Air National Guard Wing trained 31 F-16 pilots from Singapore, Indonesia, Norway, Oman, Denmark, Iraq, and Thailand. The 174<sup>th</sup> Attack Wing, New York Air National Guard trained 16 airmen from France and the United Kingdom on MQ-9 maintenance. The 143<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing of the Rhode Island Air National Guard trained C-130 aircrew members and maintainers from Iraq. Lastly, the 139<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing provided Advanced Airlift Tactics Training to 75 students from eight allied nations including Japan, New Zealand, Germany, Belgium, and Australia.

Air Guard members also participate in training programs run by U.S. allies. Eight Guard noncommissioned officers attended the International Noncommissioned Leadership Development in Canada and five Air Guard junior officers attended the International Junior Officer Leadership



Development program in Germany. These programs are run by the International Air Reserve Symposium, an informal organization of chiefs of air reserve components from around the world.

Air National Guard units have ongoing interagency partnership relationships. Of special note is the relationship between the New York Air National Guard and the National Science Foundation under which Guard Airmen operate the U.S. Air Force's only ski-equipped C-130s (LC-130) to provide logistical support to Science Foundation expeditions to Antarctica and Iceland. While the National Science Foundation provides the funding for this support, the Air Guard participants gain invaluable training and experience.

The Air Guard has a long-standing partnership with the US Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. Under this support agreement, members of the California, North Carolina, and Wyoming Air National Guard supplement Forest Service aerial firefighting capacity using C-130 transportable Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS). Last year, Guard Airmen flew 350.9 hours and dropped 246,000 gallons of fire retardant on U.S. forest fires.

## **BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE**

The Air National Guard priorities for this year are our Airmen, Readiness, and Modernization & Recapitalization. The men and women of the Air National Guard have done a remarkable job of responding to the needs of the nation both overseas and at home. Most of today's Airmen joined the Air National Guard after 9/11 with the full understanding of the demands of the new Air National Guard. However, the Air National Guard is now an operational reserve, but stands upon a foundation built when it was a strategic reserve. This foundation consists of the Air Guard's infrastructure and organizational manning. If the Air Guard is to continue as an operational reserve, we must ensure the foundation is sound. This year's priorities are intended to identify and reset the foundations for the new Air National Guard.

## ***Support for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Guard Airman***

While the hard work and dedication of the Guard Airmen, their families, and their employers made possible the transformation from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve, they now bear the greatest burden. We have seen evidence of the stress on our extended Air Guard family due to repeated deployments and the demands of balancing military and civilian careers. Much like changing civilian careers or jobs, we see anxiety in our Airmen as they transition into new missions, especially in emerging missions such as Remotely Piloted Aircraft or cyber. We are closely watching for what may be a new version of post-traumatic stress in those Airmen who are fighting the war from their home stations, *e.g.*, the Guard Airmen who are targeting enemy combatants with Remotely Piloted Aircraft and then go home to “normal” family life. Additionally, this stress does not end with the actual operators; it also extends to the Airmen supporting them, their families and their employers.

We, like all the military services, see changes in the demographics of our force. The force is younger; only 41% of today’s Guard enlisted Airmen are over 35, as compared with 52% in 2003. More of the Guard Airmen are married than in the past, to include our young enlisted Airmen. We have seen a reduction in the number of enlisted Airmen joining the Air Guard after serving in the regular, active-duty military (prior-service). Changes in the Air Guard’s demographics impact recruiting, training, deployments, career progression, retention, family support programs, physical and mental health programs, and employer relations – nearly every aspect of the Air National Guard.

Last year, Congress provided the resources necessary for the Air Guard to hire Directors of Psychological Health for each wing. The Directors coordinate the various wellness resources available both in the military and the local communities, and help Guard Airmen and their families access these resources. Air National Guard Directors of Psychological Health provide early intervention, crisis support, clinical referrals to service members and their families. Airmen and Family Readiness Program Managers (AFRPMs) reached

nearly 719,000 Airmen/family members through formal and informal contacts in FY14.

The Department of Defense and the Air Force are currently working on a number of new programs to support and assist military members and their families, including enhancements to Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR), Airmen Family Readiness, and suicide prevention. These are all excellent programs, but most are designed for the active duty military with centrally located manpower and infrastructure to implement the programs. The Air Guard is currently exploring cost effective ways to export the programs to the Guard's geographically dispersed, 67% traditional or part-time workforce.

The challenging global environment means our Guard Airmen are busier than ever and the skills required for that environment continue to become more complex. The traditional model of one weekend a month and two weeks a year has become overburdened with time consuming ancillary training programs that take away from our Airmen's availability for skills training. During 2015, we completed the first year of a three-year test of the new Ancillary Training Pilot Program developed by the Air National Guard. The Ancillary Training Pilot Program has resulted in added flexibility, greater commander and supervisor involvement and an 80-percent reduction in hours spent outside of core skills training. The program has been so successful that we are now working with the Air Force Reserve to implement a similar program for their members.

The Air National Guard's FY2017 budget request includes an increase in Air Guard end-strength to an approved steady-state end-strength of 105,700 through FY2017. This reflects the full restoration of A-10 aircraft manpower.

### ***Readiness***

The official Department of Defense definition of readiness is, "The ability of military forces to fight and meet the demands of assigned missions," but the

concept is far more complex. The “demands of assigned missions” are not the same for every mission; a unit may be ready for one mission but not others. There are many variables that go into the Readiness calculus, including recruiting and retaining quality manpower, initial skills training, currency training, and upgrade training, personal readiness including medical and dental requirement, and equipment availability and mission capability status. The changing demographics of the Air National Guard, equipment age, mission changes, operational demand on personnel and equipment, availability of and funding for formal schools, and many other factors all impact Air Guard readiness. For example, the Air Guard recruits non-prior-service Airmen (a member who has not previously served in the military), the recruits must be sent to Basic Military Training and a formal school for initial training in their mission specialty. Initial training is followed by Mission Essential Skills Training to “season” the individual Airman, integrate them into their unit, and prepare them to work with/on the specific equipment assigned to their unit. All this takes time and money. These recruits must be brought onto active duty, sent to school, and once back at their unit, given sufficient man-days to become a productive member of the unit. Airmen require unit equipment for hands-on training and skilled unit instructors to conduct the training.

Our demographics are shifting to a younger workforce and we are beginning to encounter a noticeable decline in the experience levels of our full time force. An Air National Guard wing’s full time force is the source of training for our traditional Guard members. They are the key to the maintenance of readiness for our units and their personnel. An informal look at the experience levels of our full time technician force in six states showed that 55-percent of permanent technician pilots have less than six years of full-time experience. Experience levels are declining, at a time when skill complexities required to accomplish the mission are increasing and aircraft mission capable rates are lower.

In addition to a declining operator experience level, the maintenance force is also younger and less experienced. This decrease in the age and

experience among maintenance personnel, coupled with an aging aircraft fleet that requires more maintenance, creates challenges to maintaining a mission capable rate at our units sufficient to maintain the robust flying schedules necessary to keep our younger, less experienced aviators current and proficient.

The Air Guard is continually evaluating and adjusting its military personnel (MILPERS) and operations & maintenance (O&M) budgets to meet the dynamic requirements of the Air Force and our Air Guard units. Over the next year, we plan to closely examine the foundational assumptions use to resource the Air National Guard to ensure its resourcing matches its operational posture for the future.

### ***Modernization and Recapitalization***

The objective of all recapitalization and modernization programs is to ensure that an organization's equipment is both safe to operate and capable of accomplishing the organization's mission. Technically, recapitalization is trading in old equipment for new and modernization is updating old equipment. Recapitalization of all components of the Air Force is primarily the purview of the Air Force in coordination with the Air National Guard. For the Air National Guard, which operates some of the oldest Air Force equipment and has both federal and state responsibilities, modernization is always a priority. It is vital to ensure that we maintain the right capabilities. Last year the Air National Guard equipped 217 F-16C aircraft with the Scorpion Helmet Mounted Integrated Targeting (HMIT) system. HMIT is an integral piece of the kill-chain, allowing the pilot to rapidly cue sensors and/or weapons to targets of interest. This increase in situational awareness, both day and night, allows Guard pilots to de-conflict operations with friendly air and ground forces, minimizing fratricide and enhancing weapons employment.

To improve its capability to respond to domestic emergencies, the Air Guard procured 21 Mobile Emergency Operations Centers (MEOC). This equipment provides a rapid response, comprehensive command and control

capability for commanders, first responders, local civil authorities, and other government agencies. The MEOC assigned to the 127<sup>th</sup> Wing, Michigan Air National Guard, served as the chief command and control outpost for the first 36 hours in response to the Flint, Michigan water crisis.

The Air National Guard continues to work closely with the Air Force and Congress on C-130 modernization plans. Ensuring the Air Guard's C-130 fleet meets U.S. and international air traffic control requirements by 2020 is one of our top modernization requirements.

## **Conclusion**

The men and women of the Air National Guard were instrumental in transforming the organization from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve. When one considers all of the wonderful work our Guard Airmen are doing around the world, it is clear that they are up to the task, understand this is not their parents' Air National Guard, and are prepared for this "new normal." However, much of the foundation upon which this operational reserve Air National Guard was built and designed was put in place to support a strategic reserve force. Now that our Guard Airmen have settled into the "new normal," it is time to step back and make sure the foundation can continue to support the organization. Identifying and modernizing the strategic reserve foundations of today's operational Air National Guard will take time, but the changes are necessary to ensure the men and women of the Air National Guard are able to continue to answer the call.

The Bipartisan Budget Act has provided needed stability and predictability. However, with a non-sequestered budget, the Air Guard can begin to address the foundational changes that must be made to preserve our role as an operational reserve, improve readiness and to modernize and recapitalize Air Guard capabilities to meet future security challenges.