

Strategy Research Project

Improving Readiness in the United States Army National Guard

by

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Abstract

This paper justifies the need and proposes a strategy to establish a Trainees, Transients, Holders, and Students like account within the U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) and outlines four key measures that would enable its successful implementation. First, the Army needs to identify the 'critical' capabilities and related ARNG organizations that are required early in the force flow or are essential for strategic success against the Four Plus One National Security Challenges; i.e., meets the contingency requirements and threats posed by Russia, China, North Korea and Iran, plus those for countering terrorism. Second, the ARNG should focus its management efforts on the identified 'critical' organizations and establish balanced 'unit groupings of excellence' of state forces, with the appropriate manning priorities, expertly distributed for over-strength/under-strength manning, collective training and state missions. Third, and in conjunction with the Associated Units Pilot Program, the Army should develop a resourcing strategy to apply additional 'operations tempo' resources to enable the 'critical' units to meet the postulated contingency requirements. Finally, the ARNG needs to rebalance its force structure across the 54 States, Territories and the District of Columbia to address the existing underlying manning challenges.

Improving Readiness in the United States Army National Guard

Our fundamental task is like no other – it is to win in the unforgiving crucible of ground combat. We must ensure the Army remains ready as the world’s premier combat force. Readiness for ground combat is and will remain the U.S. Army’s #1 priority.

—General Mark Milley¹

In General Milley’s initial message to the Army, he laid out three priorities:

readiness, the future Army, and taking care of Soldiers. Regarding readiness, he said:

We will always be ready to fight today, and we will always prepare to fight tomorrow. Our most valued assets, indeed, the Nation’s most valued assets, are our Soldiers and our solemn commitment must always be to never send them into harm’s way untrained, poorly led, undermanned or with less than the best equipment we can provide. Readiness is #1, and there is no other #1.²

To support the Chief of Staff’s number one priority in an era of diminishing resources, the Army National Guard (ARNG) must develop innovative approaches to maintain personnel manning levels of P1 (90 percent fill or better) for the associated forces required early in the force flow and/or those that are essential for mission success.³ The units associated with these essential capabilities are termed “critical” units/organizations within this paper.⁴ Correspondingly, the Department of Defense (DOD) strategy requires a cross-component response (Active and Reserve forces) to meet the threats posed by the “Four Plus One” challenges. The Four Plus One challenges include threats from Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran; and the plus one includes meeting continued counter-terrorism operational requirements. Of the first four challenges, the DOD needs to be able to respond to two near simultaneous contingencies: one requiring the *decisive defeat* of the adversary and the second *denying* the adversary achievement of its objectives. At the same time, DOD must maintain its current counter-terrorism level of effort.⁵

Importantly, the Army is challenged in its ability to meet the Four Plus One force requirements by both the ongoing Army-wide force reductions that are diminishing its overall capacity and an associated unbalanced force mix across its three components (Active, Guard and Reserve). The resultant reduced and unbalanced force mix imposes a problematic reliance on “critical” capabilities resident in the Reserve Component (RC (both Army National Guard and Army Reserve)). In a 2016 report on Force Planning, the Government Accountability office found that: “The Army prioritized retaining combat units, as well as other segments of its force structure, when planning to reduce its end strength to 980,000 soldiers and as a result will take proportionately more position reductions from its enabler units.”⁶

For instance, when assessing total Army capabilities within the Transportation Corps, the RC owns over 80 percent of the Army’s total force structure.⁷ This preponderance of capability and capacity within the RC portends an increased reliance on the RC to meet Combatant Commander force demands; especially those required to deploy early for the contingencies.

Significantly, the ARNG does not currently have a Trainee, Transient, Holdee, and Students (TTHS) account (this account covers soldiers generally in statuses that make them unavailable for training or deployments) yet the ARNG carries a historical average of approximately 20 percent of its Soldiers that are non-deployable. Uniquely for the RC, the total number of authorized soldiers or “faces” (set by the congressionally approved end-strength) equals the total number of personnel “spaces” reflected on all of its authorization documents (Tables of Distribution and Allowance (TDAs) plus Modified Tables of Distribution and Allowance (MTOEs)).

This contrasts with the Active Component, which maintains a difference of 13 percent overage (termed the TTHS Account) of “faces” to compensate for available Soldier shortfalls. Thus, every soldier that is in the RC, regardless of the soldier’s actual availability, is counted against an existing position in an RC organization. This includes whether the soldier is awaiting attendance, or actually attending basic individual training away from the unit, transiting to another geographic location or unit, being processed for medical or disciplinary discharges, or even attending a year-long professional education program.

These “uncovered” absences severely impacts the present-for-duty strength and the associated un-readiness of their parent units to meet mission requirements. This high percentage of personnel that are unavailable for deployment creates a situation where, on any given day, the number of available soldiers in the average RC unit is 80 percent (P2) or less and unable to conduct effective collective training or deploy.⁸ Although personnel can be cross-leveled from other units that possess similarly qualified soldier specialties, the cross leveling from other units further decrements the manning levels of those source units and decreases the readiness across the entire force.⁹

Moreover, the ARNG has additional manning issues that prevents reform and complicates the efficient management of readiness. First, the State Adjutant Generals will not support resourcing a TTHS account with spaces that would cause further reductions in force structure below congressionally approved end-strength levels. Despite not actually losing any net personnel authorizations, they view the loss of the associated force structure as detrimental to their ability to effectively support both state

and federal mission requirements. Second, there remains an imbalance of manning levels across the entire ARNG force structure footprint. Some states consistently have more faces than spaces and some states routinely are unable fill their spaces with faces. Notwithstanding, for the RC in general and ARNG in particular, the manning challenge is the proverbial “long pole in the tent” that must be resolved if the RC is to meet the deployment and employment challenges required of the new strategy and associated RC force demands. What is needed is a comprehensive force re-allocation and resourcing plan that takes into consideration the constraints, restraints and manning impediments of the expected institutional opposition and the realities of the managing environment.

To meet General Milley’s number one priority of readiness requires a comprehensive plan that will achieve the required readiness objectives for at least the ‘critical’ organizations essential to strategic success and is also politically palatable and executable. Simply stating the case for why the ARNG needs a TTHS account has been done in the past.¹⁰ However, because of the aforementioned substantial drawdown of forces within the Active Component (AC), the force management landscape has changed and requires an increased reliance on RC forces to meet operational demands. There now exists a compelling need for change.

This paper recommends establishing a TTHS-like account within the ARNG and proposes four implementation measures. The first is the identification of the “critical” ARNG organizations required to meet the Four Plus One contingency demands. The second reform measure focuses on the designation of balanced “unit groupings of excellence” of state forces, with the appropriate specified manning priorities, that are

expertly distributed to facilitate over-strength/under-strength manning, grouped to enable multi-functional and combined arms availability for pre-mobilization collective training, and are able to accomplish state missions. The third measure is to develop an associated resourcing strategy that allocates additional 'operations tempo' resources to the ARNG 'critical' organizations that ensures they are ready to alert, assemble and deploy consistent with contingency timelines. Finally, the ARNG must also rebalance its force structure across the 54 States, Territories and the District of Columbia to account for the relative manning and associated readiness disparities when selected states have consistently more or less 'faces' than 'spaces'.

Establishing a "TTHS-Like" Account in the ARNG

The Chief of Staff of the Army has voiced on numerous occasions that the Reserve Components bring unique capabilities to the Army Total Force concept. In a September 11, 2015, speech to the National Guard Association of the United States he said:

Much of America's Army capacity is resident in the National Guard. I expect demand to increase in the future, and we must rely more heavily on our National Guard to meet that demand. I've only been on the job a couple of weeks, but it's obvious to me that I need to employ more of the Guard, not less.¹¹

For the ARNG, these are powerful and welcomed words, but resourcing and manpower shortfalls will hamper efforts to provide increased numbers of units at the right levels of readiness to meet emergent requirements. The long pole in the tent is not training, but manning. To achieve high levels of training readiness requires units to train with the personnel who will eventually deploy with that unit. Without the requisite manning to achieve personnel readiness levels of P1 or higher, units will not be in the position to achieve an overall readiness level that will allow them to deploy without cross

leveling personnel from other units. Cross leveling is an effective tool when required, but has an overall detrimental impact to unit cohesiveness and collective training proficiency. In addition, it adds to post-mobilization training time of the deploying unit and hinders the subsequent deployment of the source units that provided the Soldiers. It generally reduces the readiness of the many non-deploying source units at a time when the Army is expanding its dependency on much of the capability resident within the ARNG. A November 2006 report commissioned by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs found that:

Personnel readiness in the units receiving those personnel (cross leveled) clearly went up but for every unit fixed there were multiple units broken. This factor alone has major implications for Army Transformation, ARFORGEN, and the ability of the Army to build and maintain ready, deployable units.¹²

Soldier Availability Challenges in the ARNG

The personnel management policies of the ARNG contribute to its manning challenges. By statute, when a soldier enlists in the ARNG he or she must be placed into a valid MTOE or TDA slot while they are awaiting training and continue to occupy that same slot while they are in training, essentially making them non-deployable. In addition, over the course of the last fifteen years, the Army National Guard endured four major transformation efforts including the Army Division Redesign, Modular Transformation, Rebalance and Grow the Guard, and Sequestration. Additionally, numerous other Force Design Updates were implemented in order to garner economies and efficiencies.¹³ Each of these force structure initiatives and management efforts introduced turbulence into the force and caused the displacement of trained and ready Soldiers from billets, which they were considered qualified and available, into billets where they were made immediately unavailable for deployment due to incomplete

training/qualification. The resulting force design changes and force structure reductions associated with Sequestration alone introduced more than 40,400 instances of personnel turbulence into the force; many of which required a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) reclassification.¹⁴ Between training new Soldiers, reclassifying old Soldiers displaced by force structure changes, and a host of other factors affecting non-availability of soldiers, the ARNG has an average non-availability rate of 20 percent, making it extremely difficult to achieve and maintain a P1 manning level.

The AC has similar challenges as the ARNG: they must continuously train and integrate new Soldiers into their formations and also experience some of the same turbulence issues that come with a dynamically changing force. However, the AC has two mechanisms which allow them to better manage that change. First, when a force structure change impacts a Soldier, the AC can reassign that Soldier to another location where his or her skillset is needed. Within the ARNG's community-based force, a reassignment within the state to another position is often problematic without either double slotting a soldier in a billet for which he or she is qualified thus leaving a vacancy elsewhere; or assigning the Soldier to a billet for which he or she is not qualified. Both of these options have an overall impact on personnel availability and negatively influence the personnel or "P" readiness ratings.

Second, the AC has a TTHS account that constitutes 13 percent of their overall end strength. This TTHS account allows for Soldiers in the training base to be carried administratively against the Army's overall end strength without impacting the "P" ratings within their units. There has always been controversy over the Army's use of a TTHS account, especially one that allocates 13 percent of its end strength when the

demand for its capabilities is high. “However, this line of reasoning misses an important point--personnel readiness in units is not based solely on the total number of Soldiers, but the number of qualified (trained) Soldiers.” To continue to meet both operational requirements and the long-term health of the Army, an appropriate balance between Soldiers within units and Soldiers in the training base must be achieved.¹⁵ The AC has continued to resource a TTHS account to support the overall health and readiness of their force; however, the Reserve Components have failed to embrace this concept.

Challenges to Implementing TTHS in the ARNG

The simplest solution to integrating a TTHS account in the Army National Guard would be to set aside 13 percent of the ARNG’s end strength in the same way as the AC. There are two methods to accomplish this set aside. First, the ARNG’s end strength could be increased by 13 percent (43,550 spaces) from 335,000 spaces to 378,550 spaces. Second, the ARNG’s force structure allowance could be reduced by the same 13 percent so that its end strength remains at 335,000 with a force structure allowance of 291,450 spaces. In either case, the 13 percent increase in Soldiers within the TTHS account would help offset the 20 percent of RC Soldiers routinely not available and ensure a personnel level fill in each of the ARNG’s units of between 90 and 100 percent (P1).

There are significant challenges with both of the approaches. An increase in end-strength for the ARNG to 378,550 spaces would require an increase in the total obligation of \$679.9 million that is not feasible within the current constrained budget environment.¹⁶ The second approach would require a reduction of force structure which would challenge the ability of the Army to meet Combatant Commander demands in an environment where there is already a strategy-to-resource mismatch, and impair the

ability of the Adjutants General to support their Governors in fulfilling state domestic support missions. However, there is an alternative approach that could meet General Milley's readiness priorities, maintain the status quo budget levels and preserve capabilities for use by the Combatant Commanders and the Adjutant Generals for contingency operations. This alternative is to establish a "TTHS-Like" account within the ARNG that can function as needed while avoiding some of the challenges of a traditional TTHS account.

An Alternative Approach to Establishing a TTHS Account in the ARNG

The strength of the Reserve Component is the inherent value that it brings to the Army's total force from both a fiscal and capability perspective. The Chief of Staff of the Army has recognized that strength as discussed above. However, the ARNG cannot continue along the same path as it has over the previous fifteen years and deliver both the capabilities expected by the Chief and retain its competitive advantage as a cost-effective provider of critical capabilities. To remain viable, the ARNG must become more efficient in how and when it supports critical Combatant Commander capabilities. The nation can no longer afford to pay for excess readiness nor can it afford to let any of its remaining force structure deteriorate to a level that would require extensive post mobilization training prior to deployment.¹⁷ The ARNG must be able to segregate its forces into bins that correspond to the criticality of the capability and when that capability is required in the force-deployment sequence specified in the war plan. The Army must also account for the nation's strategic lift capacity and when transportation assets will be available to move units from home station to port of embarkation. It is fiscally not supportable to keep a unit at increased readiness levels when it is not needed or cannot be transported to the point of debarkation in a timely manner. If

capabilities not critical to the early fight are kept at reasonable levels of readiness (C-3), they will be able to build deployable level readiness in a post mobilization status in a short period as they await transportation based upon their latest arrival date as dictated within the war plan.¹⁸ Lieutenant General Kadavy highlighted this approach best in testimony before the National Commission on the Future of the Army when discussing ARNG TTHS:

The Adjutants General (TAGs) agree with a “TTHS-like” account, but not at the expense of force structure. The ARNG does not need every unit to have an overage for their trainees, but rather we need to manage the trainees for certain units to have those units filled with personnel available to conduct collective training for their available year. The appropriate number is somewhere between 10,000 – 15,000 total ARNG spaces focused on the right units, the right Military Occupational Specialties, at the right time.¹⁹

To address the Army’s critical capability needs, the ARNG should implement a “TTHS-like” program that focuses additional personnel resources consisting of 115 percent fill of “critical units” by harvesting manpower from less critical units not required early in the war fight. This approach could easily be implemented and adjusted through targeted manning guidance in each state and adjusted as requirements and senior leader priorities change. By focusing this manning guidance within each state at the individual Military Occupational Specialty level of detail, this approach could be accommodated without the need to reclassify soldiers or cross level personnel outside of state lines. It will also allow the Nation to retain all its current capabilities that support the “Four Plus One” challenges and provide immediate response capabilities to the Governors in the event of a domestic crisis. This approach would leave a stable level of fill, based on manning guidance, of less than 80 percent (P3) in some less critical later deploying units; however, those units would still maintain a minimum of a C3 level of

readiness. Personnel shortages could be easily accommodated through wartime growth or by re-directing soldiers that are in the training pipeline (a fairly large proportion of the 20 percent unavailable) to fill unit vacancies post mobilization.

The choice being laid out here is simple: either have all units manned with an average availability rate of 80 percent (P2) or ensure the most critical units are manned at an average availability rate of about 93 percent (P1). Without this type of adjustment in manning policy, the ARNG would be forced to cross level to “critical units” early in a contingency creating “wide spread deficiencies in those units being cannibalized to produce the personnel to fill the other units requiring cross leveling.”²⁰ This cross-leveling process was repeated multiple times over the last fifteen years and, once begun, it is difficult to recover from because it becomes self-perpetuating. Each subsequent deployment requires progressively more cross-leveling. The proposed TTHS-like approach, requires the relatively accurate determination of the critical ARNG force requirements.

Assessing the Requirement – Development of Critical ARNG Capabilities

Today’s Army force balance across the three components is driven by four important interwoven concepts: what has become known as the Abrams Doctrine; the Army Total Force Policy; the risk informed, budget constrained assessment of force requirements provided in the annual *Total Army Analysis* (TAA) process; and the directed guidance provided by Army Senior Leaders. These concepts have evolved since the end of the Vietnam War and, when married together, specify the force mix that meets the Geographic Combatant Commander requirements and frames the shape of the Army’s total force across the three components. This force and its current acknowledged risk provides the outline for where the ARNG needs to focus its efforts to

enable increased readiness and rapid response in an era of reduced and uncertain military budgets.

Abrams Doctrine

“The Abrams Doctrine is widely interpreted as an expression of General Creighton Abrams’ determination to maintain a clear linkage between the employment of the Army and the engagement of public support for military operations.” “Following the Vietnam War, Abrams was determined to ensure that the nation would never again go to war without the Reserve Component and the support of the American People.”²¹ His philosophy was to intertwine the force mix of the AC and RC to such an extent that the ability of the Army to execute a major combat operation would be impossible without the inclusion of the capabilities in the RC. Then-Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird further capitalized on the Abrams’ doctrine by instituting a Total Force Concept as a reaction to the existing budget and strategy imbalance in which Laird saw the Total Force “as a means to provide sufficient troops for the nation’s security needs without the costly burden of maintaining a large standing-army.”²²

Investing resources within the RC allowed the DOD to maintain critical capabilities to meet a cold war strategy at a fraction of the cost. As Secretary of Defense Laird was replaced by James R. Schlesinger, the Total Force Concept continued to pick up momentum when Schlesinger allowed Abrams to grow the decreasing post-Vietnam force to sixteen divisions, which would not have been possible without reliance on the RC to fill the gaps within the enabling force structure needed to support the sixteen divisions.

The Total Force concept and Abrams Doctrine instituted in the early seventies could also be viewed as a failure in that it did not produce the requisite readiness and

integration required to fully capitalize on the RC. The failure was caused in large part by a lack of resources available to train the total force and the lack of an effective policy to fully integrate all three components (Active, Guard, and Reserve). This lack of readiness and integration was evident when mobilizing and employing RC capabilities during Desert Storm and the early stages of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. However, the Abrams Doctrine was extremely successful in ensuring that the post-draft era force structure was sufficient to meet an affordable cold war strategy, even if major portions of the force were unready, and provided the basis for today's Army Total Force Policy.²³

Army Total Force Policy

In the last six budget years, force structure and the associated force requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan have continued to decrease. However, with the rise in extremist organizations in the Middle East and with Russian provocations in Europe, the Army is once again finding itself in the same position it was post-Vietnam: with a National Security Strategy and budget mismatch. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates foresaw the future decrease in budgets and the need to increase readiness and fully integrate the Reserve Components into the force structure mix beginning in 2008 when he published the Department of Defense Directive 1200.17, *Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force*. In this Directive, Gates established the foundation for Army Total Force Policy, stating that “the Active Components and Reserve Components are integrated as a total force based on the attributes of the particular component and individual competencies.”²⁴ “In this era of continuous conflict, the operational demands placed upon the Active Component require National Guard (Reserve Component) integration as a paramount component of national security.”²⁵ The Army Total Force Policy picked up where the Total Force Concept had faltered; it

produced the requisite trained and ready capabilities to meet post 9-11 requirements.

Correspondingly, the Army Directive 2012 – 08 (*Army Total Force Policy*):

...establishes policy for the integration of the Army's active component (AC) and reserve component (RC) as a "Total Force." DOD policies require the military departments to organize, man, train and equip their active and reserve components as an integrated operational force to provide predictable, recurring and sustainable capabilities. The Total Force must be part of Army strategy and planning to fulfill national military needs.

The policy further stipulates that as a Total Force, all three components provide operating and generating force capabilities in support of the National Military Strategy. It also directs that all capabilities be organized, trained, sustained, equipped and employed to support Combatant Commander requirements as force packages tailored to achieve anticipated objectives.²⁶ Between the Total Force Concept and the changes made with the Army Total Force Policy, the stage is set to fully integrate the RC with the requisite resourcing needed for the total force to accomplish the Nation's Defense Strategy. The question that remains is where RC efforts should be focused to achieve the best result within given resources.

Risk Informed Total Army Analysis (TAA)

The Army shapes its force structure through a process called the TAA. For the Army's operating force, this process determines the best mix of capabilities needed to accomplish the myriad force requirements through a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis. The process focuses heavily on determining the requisite number of enabling capabilities to support the directed combat force (Corps, Divisions, and Brigade Combat Teams) through modeling of multiple scenarios over a thirteen-year time span. The modeling produces an unconstrained assessment of the size and composition of the force needed to support the directed combat force. The Army must then conduct a risk

assessment to determine the requisite capabilities and at what capacity those capabilities should be resourced within the total manpower constraints directed by the budget. The resulting force constitutes the Army senior leaderships' best assessment of force mix within the given resources across the Active and Reserve Components to meet the Combatant Commanders' demands over the five-year program cycle. This analysis is conducted annually and the numbers and types of capabilities retained within the Army's force structure are adjusted based on emerging threats, changes in doctrine, and changes dictated by the National Security Strategy.²⁷

An assessment of the TAA results generated in 2014 highlight several capabilities that the Army is short in meeting modeled war plan requirements for both early entry capabilities and total contingency war plan requirements. Table 1 provides a summary of that assessment as it relates to capabilities currently resourced in the ARNG.

Table 1. TAA 17-21 War Plan Shortfalls²⁸

Capability	Number in ARNG	Early Shortfall	War Plan Shortfall
Ground Ambulance Company	7	1	0
Multifunctional Medical Battalion	8	2	0
CBRN Company (Maneuver Support)	15	6	0
CBRN Brigade	1	1	0
CBRN Battalion	7	1	0
Engineer Support Company	8	6	9
Mobility Augmentation Company	10	9	4
Sapper Company	36	5	0
Multirole Bridge Company	11	3	0
Firefighting Team	42	5	0
Human Resources Company	5	2	0
Theater Gateway R5 Team	3	1	0

Regional Trial Defense Team	8	1	0
EOD Battalion	2	1	0
Aerial Delivery Support Company	2	1	0
Quartermaster Company (Water)	12	5	0
Medium Truck Company Cargo Line Haul	33	9	0
Petroleum Truck Company 5K	4	14	13
Composite Truck Company Light	5	3	0
Composite Truck Company Heavy	3	3	1

Based on an assessment of the data in Table 1, the Army faces several challenges. Early deploying requirement shortfalls can be mitigated through decreased mobilization timelines and increased readiness in the Army National Guard. War plan shortfalls are more difficult to manage because they are accepted as risk by the Senior Leadership because of the strategy-to-resource mismatch. However, ensuring that those capabilities are ready and available for immediate mobilization helps to mitigate some of the risk. Although the TAA process is a qualitative and quantitative assessment of requirements against the directed force, Army Senior leaders also provide a qualitative assessment of resourcing based on their priorities and overall strategic assessment.

Directed Guidance from Army Senior Leaders

The Army's force structure and readiness priorities are also shaped based on a qualitative assessment of worldwide force structure requirements and readiness priorities articulated by Army Senior Leaders. On September 7, 2016, the Chief of Staff of the Army approved an enhanced readiness initiative package for the Army National Guard known as Decision Point 58. This initiative included provisions for operationalizing several multi-component units known as the Associated Unit Program

and focused on all ARNG Armored Brigade Combat Teams (ABCTs) and Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs). The intent of this initiative is to reduce post-mobilization timelines and create an operational reserve force.²⁹ In addition to these enhanced readiness initiatives, provisions also are being made to enhance the readiness of the ARNG's four Attack Reconnaissance Battalions (ARBs) based on their high demand in current and future operations. Table 2 provides an overview of those capabilities prioritized for increased readiness by Army Senior Leaders.

Table 2. Senior Leader Readiness Priorities³⁰

Capability	Number in ARNG	Number Prioritized
Armor Brigade Combat Team (ABCT)	5	5
Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT)	2	2
Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB)	4	4
Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT)	19	2
Airborne Infantry Battalion	1	1
Light Infantry Battalion	60	1
Transportation Company Light/Medium	27	2
Transportation Company Medium PLS	35	2
Engineer Mobility Augmentation Company	11	1

Summary of ARNG Critical Requirements

The capabilities listed in Tables 1 and 2 are existing critical capabilities based on available information and published Senior Leader Guidance. However, the Army needs to conduct an annual assessment of these capabilities along with a detailed analysis of the time phased requirements within each of the modeled war plans. The analysis should be done in conjunction with the TAA process and include the review and approval of the Army senior leadership to ensure both the recognition of associated risk and required resourcing. Although forces listed in Tables 1 and 2 will likely be refined

along with increasing analytical rigor, the force list provides a good start point for formulating an associated TTHS-like account concept. These lists of critical capabilities are instructive within the ARNG for developing a resourcing strategy that includes force groupings, force mix and manning guidance necessary to establish the TTHS-like account for these ‘critical organizations’. Table 3 provides a summary of the capabilities and manning levels required to ensure an available population of between 90 and 100 percent required to achieve P1 within the “critical organizations.”

Table 3. Summary of Critical Requirements and Manning Levels³¹

Capability	Critical Requirement	Number of Spaces	TTHS Required
Armor Brigade Combat Team (ABCT)	5	4,182	3,137
Stryker Brigade Combat Team SBCT	2	4,388	1,316
Infantry Brigade Combat Team	2	4,216	1,265
Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB)	4	396	238
Infantry Brigade Combat Team	2	4,216	1,265
Airborne Infantry Battalion*	1	641	96
Light Infantry Battalion	1	641	96
CBRN Company (Maneuver Support)	6	148	133
CBRN Brigade	1	75	11
CBRN Battalion	1	69	10
Ground Ambulance Company	1	65	10
Multifunctional Medical Battalion	2	78	23
Engineer Mobility Augmentation Company	1	116	17
Engineer Support Company*	8	145	174
Mobility Augmentation Company*	10	116	174
Sapper Company	5	93	70
Multirole Brigade Company	3	183	82
Firefighting Team	5	7	5
EOD Battalion	1	37	6
Aerial Delivery Support Company	1	264	40

Quartermaster Company (Water)	5	127	95
Human Resources Company	2	79	24
Theater Gateway R5 Team	1	9	1
Regional Trial Defense Team	1	4	1
Medium Truck Company Cargo Line Haul	9	168	227
Petroleum Truck Company 5K*	4	165	99
Composite Truck Company Light	3	275	124
Composite Truck Company Heavy*	3	290	131
Transportation Company Light/Medium	2	167	50
Transportation Company Medium PLS	2	165	50
Total	94	21,525	8,969

* Constitutes 100 Percent of ARNG Inventory

Establishing Balanced 'Unit Groupings of Excellence'

The ARNG has a well-balanced force structure portfolio spread across the fifty-four States, Territories and the District of Columbia. When balancing its force structure, ARNG senior leaders adhere to the principle of the Essential Ten capabilities that seek to ensure that each state contains a Joint Force Headquarters, Civil Support Team, Maintenance, Aviation, Engineer, Medical, Communications, Transportation, Security and Logistics capabilities. The purpose of providing this balanced force structure within each state is to ensure that the right mix of capabilities are available to support both collective training and the Governors in the event of a domestic crisis.³² As we begin to evaluate the need to support 'critical' early deploying requirements we cannot lose sight of that fact. Placing too much burden on one state to resource critical capabilities limits the flexibility of commanders to provide the resources necessary to collectively train the force and jeopardizes the ability of the Governor to respond to a domestic crisis with the right capability. Therefore, we must identify and focus on "unit groupings of excellence"

for “critical” capabilities that are predictable, sustainable and feasible so that the maximum levels of readiness can be attained and maintained for collective training and state missions.

Manning Guidance

As highlighted in Table 3 above, the ARNG would need to reprioritize 8,969 faces within existing units through manning guidance to ensure that the currently identified ‘critical’ capabilities are manned at P1. Straight math would indicate that one could allocate those faces based on an even tax of 166 for each state ($8,969/54 = 166$), or by percentage of end strength equating to ~2.6 percent for each state ($8,969/335,000 = 2.6$ percent). However, neither of these methodologies would ensure that both commanders and Governors retain the flexibility required to appropriately train and employ the force for state missions. A better option is to capitalize on synergies within the force to garner the requisite personnel to augment ‘critical’ unit manning levels. Some states, because of their size and diversity of capabilities, can absorb a greater decrement than others. It is conceivable that some small states would not be impacted at all.

As an example, when referring to Table 3 above, the Army has a “critical” need for two Light Medium Transportation Companies early in the force flow and the ARNG has a total of twenty-seven of these on the books. Of those twenty-seven Companies, two are in a single state thus creating a synergy where manning guidance could be focused at 85 percent fill in one of the companies and 115 percent fill in the other. A second means to easily accommodate overmanning for a second Light Medium Truck Company would be by transferring the same MOS qualified soldier from a different type of unit. For instance, in another state that has one of the twenty-seven Light Medium

Truck Companies there could be a total of five other truck companies and a battalion headquarters. The Military Occupational Specialty for truck drivers is common among different types of companies and could easily be transferred through manning guidance.

The advantages illustrated by both examples could be expanded to any number of related state force groupings and allow the commanders and Governors maximum flexibility to increase the manning levels of 'critical' organizations. This could also allow soldiers willing and able to transition between high operational tempo and low operational tempo units within the same general geographical proximity the ability to do so without the need to reclassify to another Military Occupational Specialty. This methodology can just as easily be applied to engineering, chemical and quartermaster capabilities.

However, the ability to accomplish internal overmanning levels becomes more difficult with larger units such as Brigade Combat Teams, but it can still be accomplished when looking at the force holistically. For instance, one state has two Brigade Combat Teams allocated within its force structure – one Infantry and one Stryker. The Stryker is listed as a critical capability as depicted in Table 3 above and could rely on reduced manning within the Infantry Brigade to ensure the Stryker Brigade maintains a P1 manning level. All the Armored Brigade Combat Teams are considered critical capabilities and would require ~627 additional soldiers to maintain a consistent P1 level of fill. Synergies can be created by relying on states with Armored Brigade Combat Teams focusing heavily on ABCT readiness while maintaining only P3 levels of personnel fill within their other enabling capabilities. For four of the five Armored Brigade Combat Team States, the total average end strength for each state is 9,991

faces. After removing the ABCT from the total end strength count and assuming an average unit size of 150 spaces for each of the remaining capabilities, directed manning guidance would fill each unit at approximately seventeen less faces - that is still an 88 percent fill rate. When compounded by an unavailable rate of 20 percent, units would still be able to maintain an available fill rate of over 71 percent - a P3 level of manning readiness. This simple assessment is meant to illustrate the order of magnitude of the manning adjustments necessary to achieve the required readiness for ABCTs.

However, the bottom line is that there is nothing simple about calculating the manning guidance for a unit as large as an ABCT because each of these units is split between multiple states. The process to determine these synergies and focus on balanced “unit groupings of excellence” is beyond the scope of this paper; however, the examples above demonstrate the feasibility of doing so while retaining the ability to maintain a consistent level of manning at P3 or better across the board.

Refining Manning Guidance – The Right Soldiers

When establishing the balanced “unit groupings of excellence” to support the Chief of Staff of the Army’s readiness priorities, there is one more factor that must be considered as part of the manning guidance: placing soldiers with the right specialties in the right spaces. This factor is a complex challenge that lends itself to detailed analysis for each of the critical capabilities and each of the states selected to resource them; since the challenge varies for each unit and state. As the Director of the Army National Guard indicated in his testimony to the National Commission on the future of the Army, a TTHS-Like account “must focus on the right units and the right Military Occupational Specialties.”³³

As manning guidance is applied, it is not sufficient to rely on raw numbers to achieve a P1 rating. Based on Army Regulation 220-1, soldiers must be 100 percent military occupational specialty qualified with 85 percent of the senior grade positions being filled. However, readiness for critical occupational specialties requires going beyond military occupational specialty qualification to the more specific duty military occupational specialty qualification levels. As mentioned above, an ABCT requires ~627 additional personnel in order to be filled at 115 percent and maintain an available P1 level of fill. Allowing a unit to fill all 627 spaces with infantrymen would certainly get there in the aggregate, but would not ensure the critical specialty and senior grade positions would be filled with the necessary qualified over strength soldiers should those senior grade/low density MOS personnel be among the non-deployable. Therefore, the manning guidance would have to include manning over strength profiles developed through the analyses of historical data. The manning strategy could then be tailored not only to fill the unit in the aggregate, but fill the unit with the right rank, right MOS and at the right time to ensure true readiness is maintained. This analysis cannot be done in the aggregate for the entire ARNG, but must be focused individually on each state and each individual unit to ensure success.

Applying Additional Operations Tempo Resources

To achieve the readiness priorities outlined by the Chief of Staff of the Army, it will not be enough to focus on attaining the required manning levels alone. Although the manning levels of the identified critical organizations provide the baseline for achieving the readiness goals, collective training proficiency is required to ensure true deployable readiness. In Headquarters Department of the Army Execution Order 205-16, the Chief

of Staff of the Army laid out a strategy to achieve high readiness in the Associated Units Pilot Program. This guidance dictates that:

Reserve Component units in the pilot will employ a modified training strategy to sustain higher collective level proficiency in order to reduce post mobilization training requirements and timelines. Reserve Component Associated Units will aim to achieve and sustain T2 readiness (T3 threshold) through field training exercises during inactive duty training periods, integrated training with Active Duty units during Annual Training, increased training days, increased Combat Training Center rotation frequency, prioritized resourcing, and modified pre-mobilization training authority in accordance with the association relationship. Reserve Component Associated units will conduct Annual Training at the gaining unit station or with the gaining unit whenever feasible.³⁴

General Milley's guidance provides a framework that can be used not only for the units included in the Associated Units Pilot, but the entire list of capabilities provided within Table 3. However, establishing a viable framework is not enough to ensure success.

As discussed earlier, Total Force Policy and the Abrams Doctrine could be considered a failure – not because the concept of force integration across the components was not viable, but because the necessary resourcing to ensure its success was not put into place. In this same way, what is critical to ensure the viability of increased readiness and the use of a TTHS-like account is the resourcing associated with it: manning alone will not produce the desired readiness. Each of the major tenets of the strategy proposed in Execution Order 205-16 – including but not limited to increased training days, increased Combat Training Center rotations, and integrated training with Active Component units – comes at a cost. The resources to pay for these increased readiness initiatives are scarce within the current resource constrained environment. As it stands, the FY 2017 President's Budget resourcing levels for the Army National Guard are at 76.9 percent of the critical requirement for Ground Operation Tempo, 75.9 percent for Depot Maintenance, 87.6 percent for the Flying Hour

Program and 82.9 percent for Base Operations Support.³⁵ Based on these resourcing levels, the ARNG is already challenged in resourcing the statutory minimum of 39 training days per year for each of its Soldiers.

Correspondingly, distending an already under resourced budget to pay for additional readiness within the critical organizations in the ARNG is a challenge, but the Army must find a way if it is going to make-up for the current strategy-to-resource mismatch. Assuming the ARNG can pay for this increased readiness internally by gaining economies and efficiencies is likely not a viable alternative as it will introduce additional risk and dramatically reduce the readiness of nearly every non-critical ARNG organization.

This approach reflects the under-resourcing of the RC that led to the poor mobilization performance of units in Desert Storm and the early deployments following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. As outlined above, the nation can no longer afford to pay for excess readiness nor can it afford to let any of its remaining force structure deteriorate to a level that would require extensive post mobilization training prior to deployment.³⁶ For a TTHS-like account to be successful within this environment, efficiencies must be garnered across the entire force, not just within the RC. Any additional resources that may be received in future years must be prioritized based on the critical needs of the Army, as outlined in Table 3 and based on existing force mix, the time-phased war plan requirements, and the strategic lift capacity of the United States Transportation Command. Resourcing AC capability requirements instead of the identified “critical” RC capabilities would add further risk of meeting the Four Plus One strategic demands across all three components.

Rebalancing ARNG Capabilities across State Lines

The final area that must be shaped to ensure the success of establishing a TTHS-like account is with the distribution of force structure within the Army National Guard. As of November 2016, out of the fifty-four States, Territories and the District of Columbia, there were a total of twenty-five states who had less end strength than force structure, eleven of them with shortages of 150 personnel or more. The overall shortfall across the twenty-five states accounts for a total shortage of 4,823 spaces of unready force structure.

When compounded by the unavailable rate of 20 percent primarily attributed by absences associated with the training pipeline, the shortage of only a few Soldiers can push a unit from P2 to P3. At the same time, of the remaining twenty-nine states that attained an end strength that met or exceeded their force structure allowance, four states exceeded their force structure allowance by more than 1,000 soldiers totaling 6,395 excess personnel. Overall, as of November 2016, the ARNG total personnel exceeded their congressionally mandated end strength.³⁷

The message this conveys is clear: the ARNG cannot continue to maintain force structure in states who do not have the demographic capacity to man it. The distribution of forces and the TTHS-like manning concept requires the groupings of capable forces within each state manned at levels that both allow P1 manning of critical organizations and the P3 manning of other donor units able to both provide collective training functional capabilities for the critical units and accomplish state missions.

On the surface this seems like an easy challenge to resolve by moving force structure between the states. Actually, the solution is complicated by the Soldier availability challenges laid out above that is compounded by deployments, demographic

shifts, civilian employment changes and myriad other factors that contribute to recruiting efficiency. When a decision is made to move a unit from one state to another it has automatic impacts to the force resulting in turbulence for both the gaining and losing state. This turbulence requires the allocation of additional resources to resolve and will ultimately compete with the resources necessary to provide increased operations tempo to “critical” organizations.

As the appropriate methodology is developed to make the necessary rebalance across the ARNG, it should not be done hastily and should include a cost-benefit analysis to determine if the second and third order effects of the move are greater than the original problem that the ARNG is trying to solve. What is clear is that the ARNG must be able to resolve the personnel shortfall of 4,823 faces (~32 companies, or more than a single Brigade Combat Team) within an end strength total that exceeds existing force structure. One option that should be considered is capitalizing on the current force structure to end strength imbalance to provide a head start for establishing 115 percent manning in critical units. As an example, in one of the Armored Brigade Combat Team states that would require ~627 spaces to achieve the P1 operationally available level, their end strength already exceeds their force structure allowance by more than 2,000 spaces. This overage could easily be codified into manning guidance with little turbulence to both the gaining state, since the Soldiers are already on the ground, and the losing state, since the Soldiers are not on hand. This recommended approach should be considered in conjunction with the establishment of “unit groupings of excellence” as described above to further solidify the synergies that need to be created and identify the right states to resource critical enablers.

Conclusion

Readiness challenges are detrimental to the overall effectiveness of the force during the best of times. However, those challenges are significantly aggravated at a time when there is a strategy-to-resource mismatch and the requirements for a shrinking force structure are increasing. The Chief of Staff of the Army recognized this in his initial message to the Army when he said, “readiness for ground combat is and will always remain our number #1 priority.”³⁸

The most critical readiness challenge within the ARNG is the fact that it does not possess a TTHS account that would allow for the required manning of its “critical” war fighting capabilities at an operationally available strength of P1 or greater. This readiness challenge is exacerbated by ever decreasing budgets, which preclude increased manning levels, and due to the overall unacceptability of additional force structure reductions. To resolve this challenge without impacting the budget or decreasing the Army’s overall force structure capacity, this paper proposes a strategy that would establish an alternative TTHS-like manning approach. The Army can focus manning resources on the critical capability requirements associated with confronting the Four Plus One National Security Challenges and achieve a measure of flexibility by manning the remaining RC force at P3 or higher.

For this strategy to be successful, the Army must continue to focus on assessing emergent strategic requirements and identifying related critical war fight requirements on which the ARNG will focus its TTHS-like manning efforts. The ARNG must also identify the right units, in the right place, with the right Soldiers to effectively resource these requirements while also ensuring that the balance of force structure within each state is commensurate with its ability to recruit and retain its Soldiers. Finally, the Army

must ensure that requisite levels of funding are available to resource the ‘critical units’ to achieve an overall readiness level consistent with their mission requirements. What is being proposed here is not that different from the Total Force Concept developed by Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird in the early 1970s. As an Army, we can learn from what he did and capitalize on the shortfalls of the Total Force Concept by holistically focusing the Army on resolving the ARNG’s most critical readiness challenges.

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