

Major General Arnold Punaro, USMC (ret)
Chairman, Reserve Forces Policy Board
Speech to the National Guard Association of the U.S. Annual Convention
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Thank you General Ashenhurst—I am honored to speak at another NGAUS convention. This is a battle-tested organization supporting one of our nation's oldest and most important institutions—America's National Guard. The role of the Guard is enshrined in our Constitution, and just as the Minutemen of the Revolution were essential to yesterday's victories, today's Guard is just as essential. We are reminded of that as members of the National Guard still stand watch in New York's Penn Station on the 15th anniversary of 9/11. It's important for all of us to recognize that whatever we accomplish as individuals we stand on the shoulders of those who went before us—the great Guard and NGAUS leaders in the audience today and their predecessors.

And a special shout out to Major General Gus Hargett, completing a highly successful tour leading NGAUS. Gus, we salute you.

The assessment I will provide of today's circumstances is a far cry from the one I gave this same convention in Hawaii 25 years ago in 1991. At that time the Pentagon leadership was recommending drastic cuts in the Guard and Reserve ignoring their major contribution in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, despite the mobilization of over 228,000 guardsmen and reservists to support combat operations in the first gulf war. NGAUS went into action; Congress blocked the Pentagon, making the case that the Guard and Reserve would be essential to the threats our nation would face into the future. A little more than a decade later, the Guard and Reserve would at one point constitute over 45% of the forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan with over 930,000 deployed since 9/11 while supporting hundreds of events at home.

Not only have the Guard and Reserve deployed into harm's way, they have performed at the same level of excellence as the active forces. Because some recently retired military leaders had questioned that performance, as Chairman of the Reserve Forces Policy board, I asked one of the nation's premier analytical think tanks, the Institute for Defense Analysis, to do an objective and analytical study of the Guard and Reserves' operational effectiveness in wartime as compared to the active forces. IDA looked at all available data to include the Defense Manpower Data Center, safety mishap data, Combat studies Institute archived interviews, after-action reports, theater history of operations reports, mobility databases and significant activities data. In addition, IDA interviewed over 50 of the most senior military leaders who were active duty commanders and had guard and reserve force assigned to them.

IDA then developed a coding methodology to translate this into measureable and comparative data, with hundreds of thousands of data points.

We could spend hours on this subject- but let me give you the results. There was no—I repeat no—measurable difference in the performance of the active, guard and reserve

forces. And the active component leaders at both the strategic and operational level were pleased with the overall contributions and performance of the reserve components.

This is the first time this kind of study has EVER been done. We no longer have to deal with stray voltage from some who said the Guard really didn't do that well or their assignments were easier. The data is convincing and compelling and proves the naysayers flat wrong. And again, the complete study will shortly be available to anyone and everyone on the RFPB website, at RFPB.defense.gov.

So *thank goodness* we rejected the plans by the Pentagon in 1991 to put the Guard and Reserve on the shelf. Without the availability of the Guard and Reserve since 9/11, we would not have been able to conduct operations in Iraq and Afghanistan at the required levels or to deal with challenging man-made and natural disasters at home.

And I am always amused when I hear from time to time the suggestion that the active Army can substitute for the Guard as first responders at home. I respond by saying, "it's a miracle how fast the soldiers from the 82nd airborne got from Ft. Bragg to the bomb blast at the Boston Marathon. Wait—those were not soldiers in uniform from the 82nd Airborne who were at the point of attack in 10 seconds—that was the Massachusetts National Guard."

Today's Pentagon leadership is far different from those in charge in September 1991.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter is a true believer and strong supporter of the total force approach to the All-Volunteer Force. Just ask the Governors who were on the recent call with him on the Army Commission results. At OSD, we enjoy similar support from the Deputy Bob Work, the acting USD P&R Peter Levine, and the ASD for Manpower and Reserve Todd Weiler and his team. We could not have a more positive circumstance as we transition to a new Administration in January 2017.

You may be asking – have I forgotten the fact that we had to have an Air Force Commission and then an Army Commission to solve disagreements between the military departments and their reserve and guard components? No- but the results of both those commissions have been endorsed by the OSD and Military Department leadership and those leaders are moving out smartly in terms of their full implementation.

I know that when General Mark Milley spoke to this group last year pretty soon after being sworn in as Chief of Staff of the Army his words were a marked departure from those of his predecessor. As you heard from him Saturday, General Milley is firm in his belief that there is *one Army*—18 divisions, 60 brigades and 980,000 soldiers. With Eric Fanning as Secretary of the Army and Patrick Murphy as the Undersecretary, we have two powerful civilian champions. Secretary Fanning has joined General Milley in involving TAGs in decisions and in making the decision that the future Army will have 54% of its end strength in the Guard and Reserve.

Eric Fanning was also Undersecretary of the Air Forces when the Air Force Commission provided their recommendations and he championed them with General Mark Welsh and Secretary Debbie James, who you also heard from. Secretary James had a previous commendable tour as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and with General Mark Welsh they provided a strong foundation for General David Goldfein who you heard from yesterday who has picked up right where General Welsh left off.

The Air Force has now been so successful with total force integration that a recent paper from the Congressional Budget Office on military force structure noted: “more than the other services, the Air Force integrates the personnel from its active and reserve components very tightly- in many cases it is misleading to treat the Air Force as composed of separate active and reserve components.”

And the Guard’s relationship with Northern Command has become a true partnership. LtGen Steve Blum established the first beachhead before the welcome mat was fully out and Gen. Frank Grass as Deputy with a succession of thoughtful commanders has created what is now a model for civil support. The newest commander Gen. Lori Robinson has already proven she is making it even better.

Many of you may have seen the change of responsibility with General Lengyel and General Grass in August. I was present for that really inspiring event. I was struck by the comments of our Secretary of Defense Ash Carter. The Secretary said, “Today’s Guard is battle tested- an agile, flexible, deployable force with combat experience and a broad range of skills gained both on the battlefield and in civilian life. The National Guard is a critical component of our total force, bringing to bear the experience and skills of our citizens warriors where ever and whenever needed to confront the challenges of a complex world.”

This is a powerful statement from the civilian leader of the world’s largest and most complex organization, with over 3 million employees, including 1.3 million active duty personnel and 818,000 guard and reserve, over 5,000 facilities on over 30 million acres of land worldwide, and an annual budget of over \$580 billion.

Carter went on to say: “the more deeply integrated the Guard becomes in all facets of planning and execution, the better prepared the nation becomes. The presence, skill and readiness of citizen warriors across the country give us the agility and flexibility to handle unexpected demands, both at home and abroad. It is an essential component of the total force and a lynchpin of our readiness.” Let me repeat that—the lynchpin of our readiness.

However, all is not sweetness and light—ensuring that day to day operational readiness—that lynchpin- is the challenge we face. That operational readiness is at the mercy of one of the worst public policy decisions I have seen in my 40 plus years in the national security field—the mindless sequester which is disconnected from the growing threats we face at home and abroad and the simultaneous requirements to modernize our forces while maintaining our war fighting readiness to respond quickly. The Pentagon

leadership has also been shackled by the sequester as well as a lack of permission to get rid of excess infrastructure and modernize their internal business processes.

And the sequester has not cut one nickel from the parts of the federal budget that are growing like the kudzu in Mississippi—the entitlements which account for \$3 trillion in annual spending and will grow by \$9 trillion in the next ten years.

The leadership of the Defense Committees have joined the Pentagon in fighting the sequester but the votes have not been there. When a new Administration and Congress are sworn in in 2017, they should immediately work on a grand compromise that addresses all elements of spending, revenues, and entitlements.

And we need to ensure that DOD resources are sufficient and stable to deal with the current chaotic strategic environment, and are not driven by the sequester, an approach to budget control that has few merits and even fewer advocates. While the sequester remains the law for Fiscal Year 2018 and beyond, it should be given a quiet burial as soon as possible.

Let me close by giving you an update on some of the ongoing work of the Reserve Forces Policy board that I have been privileged to chair for three Secretaries of Defense- Panetta, Hagel and Carter. By statute, we report directly to the Secretary of Defense and also make an annual report to the Congress. Our terrific executive director is Major General Walt Lord, Army National Guard and leads our superb staff of experts from all the reserve components. Walt is here today with his wife Grace and his son, 2nd Lt. Drew Lord, along with my son, 1st Lt. Dan Punaro, a platoon leader in the Delaware National Guard. With its legendary TAG Gen. Frank Vavala.

Since 2012, the board has produced 16 reports with 54 recommendations to the SecDef in the following areas: ensuring a ready, capable, available and sustainable operational guard and reserve; creating a true continuum of service, enhancing DOD's role in the homeland, supporting service members, families and employers, and maximizing the bang for the buck.

We currently are preparing a publication for the upcoming transition to a new Administration to educate the incoming leaders on both the reserve components in general and in particular the important of maintaining the National Guard and reserves as an operational force and what that entails in terms of changing outdated policies and providing needed budgets.

We are emphasizing the need for funding to be included in the annual budgets to maintain the Guard's operational readiness and inclusion in today's Army and Air Force rotational deployments. One idea that has been brought to our attention is creating a special account for operational funding just like we have for equipment in the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account. It's important that as the leadership address future force structure, they recognize the true bargain of the Guard and reserve.

In summary, we could not be in a stronger position to make this case given the stellar results of the Guard at home and abroad and the support of our senior military leaders who will remain as the civilian leadership changes.

Thank you.

Disclaimer: I appear here today as a private citizen and do not represent the Defense Reserve Forces Policy Board, which I chair, or the Defense Business Board, of which I am a member, or any other element of the Department of Defense.