

The Army National Guard Beyond 2030

*Director, Army National Guard Paper #1:
Asking the Right Questions*



Army National Guard Directorate
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Preface

“When the threat to national security is clearly serious [...] volunteers will be plentiful. For a limited conflict in a distant and alien land, there will be less enthusiasm. Willingness to volunteer also depends on the character and terms of military service, on casualty rates, and on the public esteem such service enjoys. Most importantly, the flow of volunteers depends upon the level of military compensation.”

United States President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Forces, 1970.

In my time as 22nd Director of the Army National Guard, I have had the opportunity to speak with leaders throughout the 54 States and Territories (the 54). Certain trends and tensions have been raised repeatedly. This series of papers is an effort to capture some of those trends and tensions, explore them, and use them as a vehicle for creating a shared strategic direction for the Army Guard beyond 2030.

Historical Context.

The Army National Guard (ARNG) and Regular Army (RA) form the immutable core of America's identity and security, embodying the State and Federal Government's shared responsibility to protect liberty from internal and external threats. Since the introduction of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) Model in 1973, the RA and ARNG have also been participants in the competitive labor market. The value proposition of the ARNG is providing integrated Army capabilities at lower employment cost and similar experiences with less opportunity cost to members. The first two decades of the 21st Century have seen unprecedented demands placed on the ARNG. As we transition into the 2030s and 2040s, changing labor market conditions generate tensions with expected demand for the ARNG.

The Guard's story is one of adaptation to changing needs at the turning points of history. At the Nation's founding, the long-established English militia system adapted into a uniquely American system. This new system included an organization that transcended individual towns and cities of the colonies and designated militiamen who would be “ready at half an hour's warning” — the Minuteman — who remains a symbol of the National Guard. Eventually, the U.S. Constitution codified the shared security system of Regulars and Citizen-Soldiers, granting Congress the power to call forth the militia to “execute Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions.” Many of these adaptations remain the core of our uniquely American system today.

This system remained essentially unchanged for nearly a century. By the 1890s, Guard officers, State leaders, and Federal officials all recognized the need for the Guard to adapt to meet a turning point in history. They worked together to pass landmark legislation in 1903 and 1916, which codified the National Guard as the U.S. Army's primary combat reserve and allowed Guardsmen to hold dual status as members of the State National Guard and National Guard of the United States. “All [Guardsmen] must now keep three hats in their closets - a civilian hat, a State militia

hat, and an Army hat – only one hat is to be worn at any particular time.”¹ These adaptations allowed the Guard to contribute to success in two World Wars, the Korean War, throughout the Cold War, and into the present era.

The 1973 elimination of the draft and conversion to the AVF fundamentally shifted the paradigm for Active Component manning. The ARNG, which has always relied on volunteers, was less directly impacted. Indirectly however, the AVF introduced massive shifts in employment of the ARNG. Many of these shifts were codified in Total Force Policy, which modified force structure and introduced concepts like tiered readiness, mirror imaging, and cascading modernization principles which still impact ARNG today.

How the total force operates in the future is not a settled question. The first quarter of the 21st Century saw the ARNG reacting to changing Federal and State demands from unprecedented events like 9/11 and COVID-19. These events changed how we viewed readiness and tested the ARNG as part of a truly integrated Total Force. Concurrently, rapid advances in technology changed how we view modernization in the connected battlespace. As the first quarter of the 21st Century ends, labor market trends and demand tensions have become clearer. This allows the ARNG to take a more proactive stance, maximizing opportunities and mitigating tensions through the remainder of the 21st Century and into the future.

The DARNG Papers.

The first two decades of the 21st Century forced the ARNG to react to overwhelming and overlapping demands. As we approach 2030 with a clearer view of the tensions and trends, the ARNG has an opportunity to proactively identify a strategic direction reaching beyond 2030. To adapt a proactive stance, we must first understand ourselves and our environment. This is the purpose of DARNG Paper #1, which explores the fundamental institutional challenges the ARNG faces in the 21st Century. Paper #1 also identifies research gaps. Gaps exist where anecdotal data can be replaced by data-driven decision making. Paper #1 identifies key questions and tensions to be further explored and used to inform the problem statement in DARNG Paper #2. Fully understanding our challenges requires input from multiple stakeholders, and DARNG Paper #1 is the primary vehicle for soliciting those inputs. DARNG Paper #1 will be heavily socialized to develop shared narratives of the ARNG beyond 2030.

DARNG Paper #2 summarizes research findings from questions posed in DARNG Paper #1 and gathers input and vignettes from the 54 about these tensions. The focus is on how those tensions have impacted the ARNG, and how the ARNG has attempted to mitigate the impacts of those tensions. Paper #2 provides a problem statement and begins to transition the narratives into a shared strategic direction for the Guard beyond 2030. DARNG Paper #3 concludes the series, articulating a research-based shared strategic direction for the ARNG.

The purpose of this series of papers is to articulate a shared strategic direction, assist in advising leaders while guiding States on ARNG employment, and identify

¹ Perpich v. Dep't of Def., 496 U.S. 334, 348 (1990)

environmental indicators of anticipated changes and broad options for future DARNGs. In this first paper the quality of the questions we ask ourselves is most important. There are suggested questions and tensions here, but they are not final, and feedback is welcomed on critical questions the ARNG must ask itself.



Jon A. Jensen
Lieutenant General
Director, Army National Guard

The 21st Century Army Guard Environment

“We don’t go anywhere or do anything without the National Guard. Every time we have asked the National Guard has been ‘Always Ready, Always There.’”

*General James McConville,
40th Chief of Staff of the Army, August 2022*

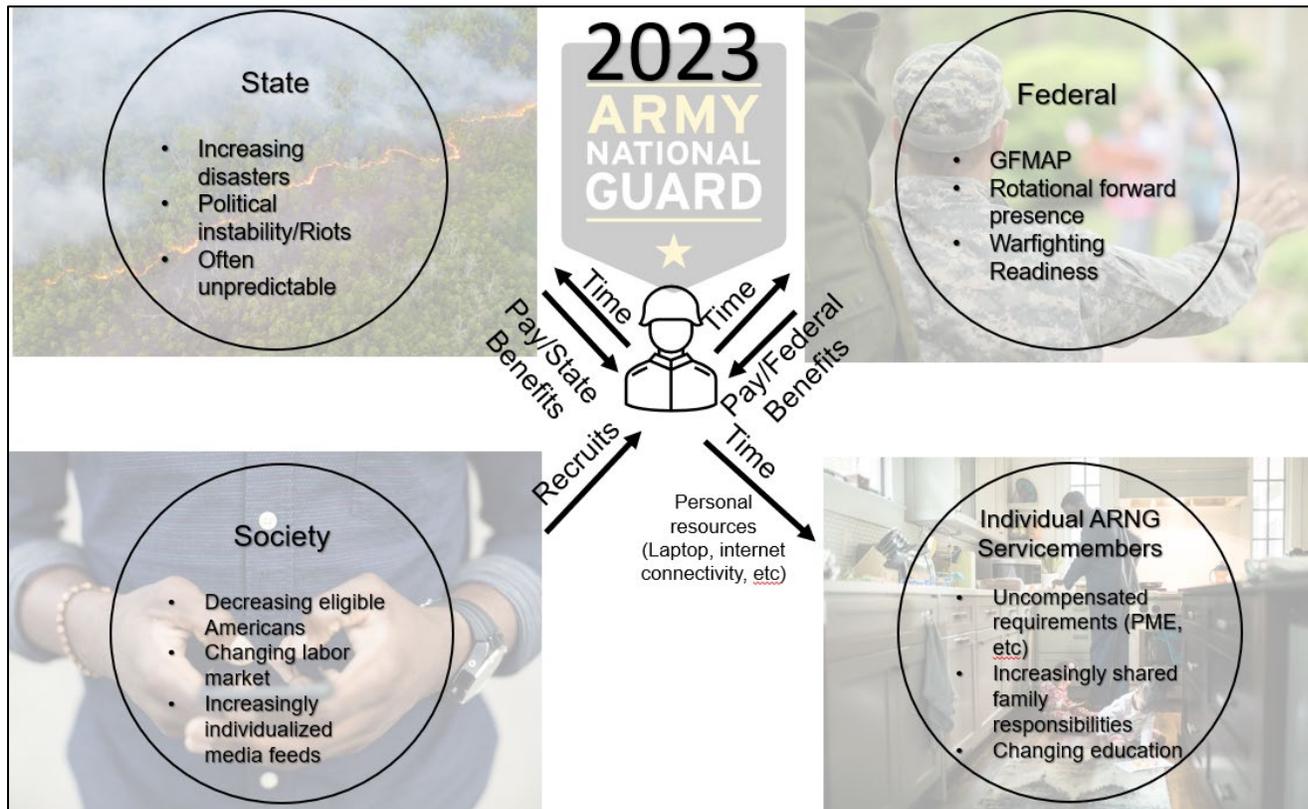


Figure 1 – Current Demands on the ARNG

A Challenging Environment

The ARNG of 2023 faces an unprecedented combination of demands. The force has dealt with high Federal operations tempo and periods of increasingly high and often sustained State demand. It has never been at the nexus of such overwhelming, concurrent, and distinct demands from its State and Federal stakeholders. With their “State militia hat”, units are meeting new and divergent demands in their communities. Concurrently, with their “Army hat” units are meeting sustained Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP) needs with training requirements as the Army’s primary combat reserve. Concurrently, demographic and generational changes in the labor market reduce the recruiting pool from which all services – and other community employers — draw. This leads to a supply and demand tension that shows no signs of abating in the near term.

A More Challenging Environment to Come

Operational demands placed during the first two decades of the 21st Century defined the role and employment of the ARNG. Reacting to these demands shifted ARNG policy, processes, and programming. This transition began at the end of the 20th century, with the advent of Guard unit support and augmentation of Regular Army units during peacetime operational rotations, such as Operation Desert Spring in Kuwait. Concurrently, senior leaders have identified increasing demands from State leaders. Because external demands shaped the ARNG’s identity, the messaging supporting its identity has also largely been externally controlled. As Figure 2 shows, the overall trend points to increasing demands on the ARNG.

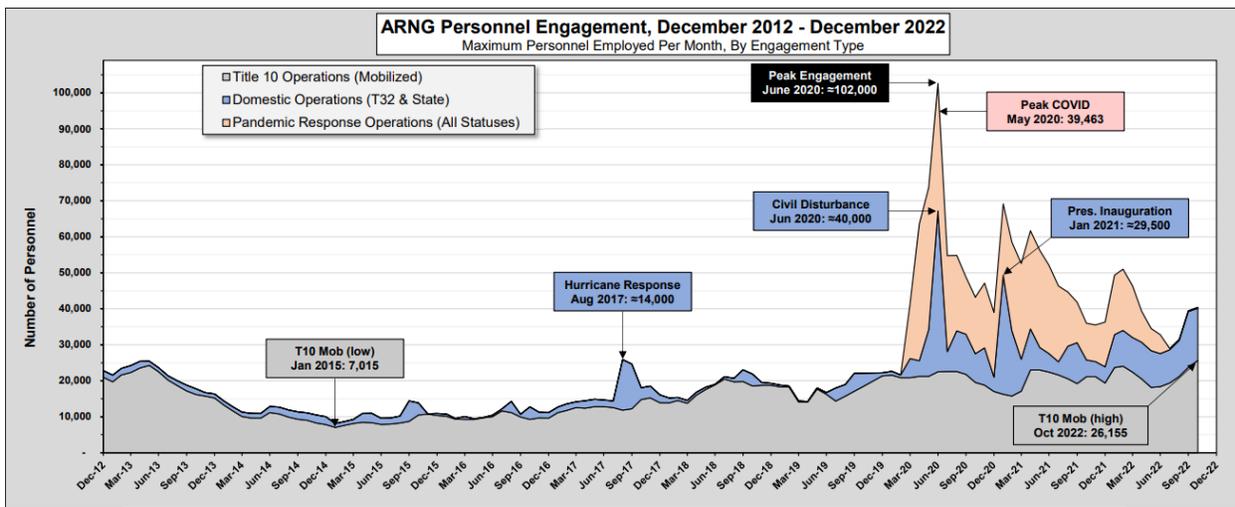


Figure 2 – “Sands of Time” chart showing activation over the last 10 years.

With clear messaging and a shared strategic direction, our leaders can properly guide States and advise Federal authorities on ideal ARNG utilization in the face of these accelerating demands. This is especially true as the Army pivots toward Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO), which have historically challenged the AVF construct. Further complicating this, the ARNG has not recently trained for LSCO as

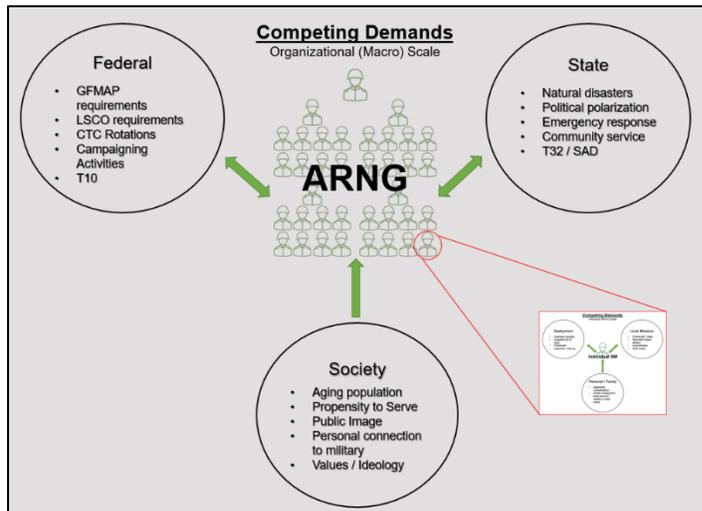


Figure 3 – Framing Current Demands on the ARNG

as evidenced by the Army’s early 2000s doctrinal shifts toward counterinsurgency. Without clear messaging, the ARNG is unable to coherently communicate its unique value proposition to potential candidates. This exacerbates an increasingly challenging recruiting environment. How we should craft these messages is not clearcut. There are inherent tensions between our resourcing as the primary combat reserve of the Army, and our mission for the States.

Many of the ARNG's challenges are not new. The late 1990s saw the ARNG beginning mobilizations during peacetime. For decades, there was ongoing belief that increased operational employment would damage retention. However, since 2002 studies reveal a more nuanced relationship.² As we move forward, we must better understand this relationship in our current environment.

At the time, the relationship between peacetime mobilizations and retention proved more complicated, with most actually leading to modest retention increases. Major factors found to damage retention in context of operational deployments were individual in nature, such as spousal disapproval. As we explore these issues, more research is needed on the relationship between these mobilizations and retention.

Understanding our future environment requires looking through multiple lenses. Figures 3 and 4 show how these lenses impact individual Servicemembers. The next section explores the key tensions that exist in the context of these four frames: Federal, State, Society, and the individual ARNG Servicemember.

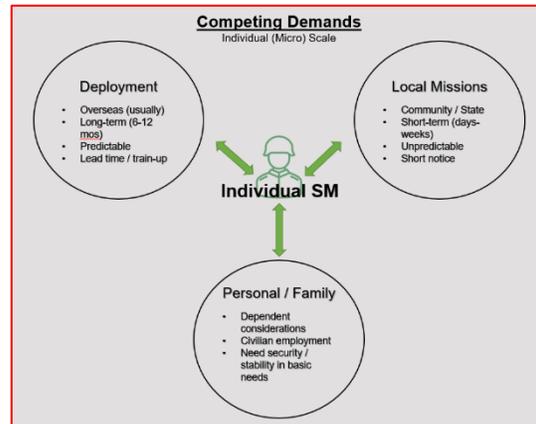


Figure 4 – Framing Current Demands on Individual ARNG Servicemembers

The Tensions

“The National Guard and Reserve will continue to play an expanded role in all facets of the Total Force. While we ask our people to do more, we must never lose sight of the need to balance their commitment to country with their commitment to family, and to their civilian employer.”

*Mr. Craig Duehring,
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, February 2002*

We have a responsibility to advise our Federal leaders and guide our State leaders, while providing policies, processes, and programming to support the ARNG. Ingrained in our DNA is the drive to simultaneously meet all these divergent missions. The culture of the Army is to say yes, and we are going to continue to be tasked by our States and by our nation, and we're going to say yes. However, our responsibility also includes educating our leaders on the benefits and risks of ARNG utilization. We need coherent messaging to navigate these tensions. All these factors combine into the tensions impacting us:

² James R. Hosek and Mark Totten, *Does Perstempo Hurt Reenlistment? The Effect of Long or Hostile Perstempo on Reenlistment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1998).

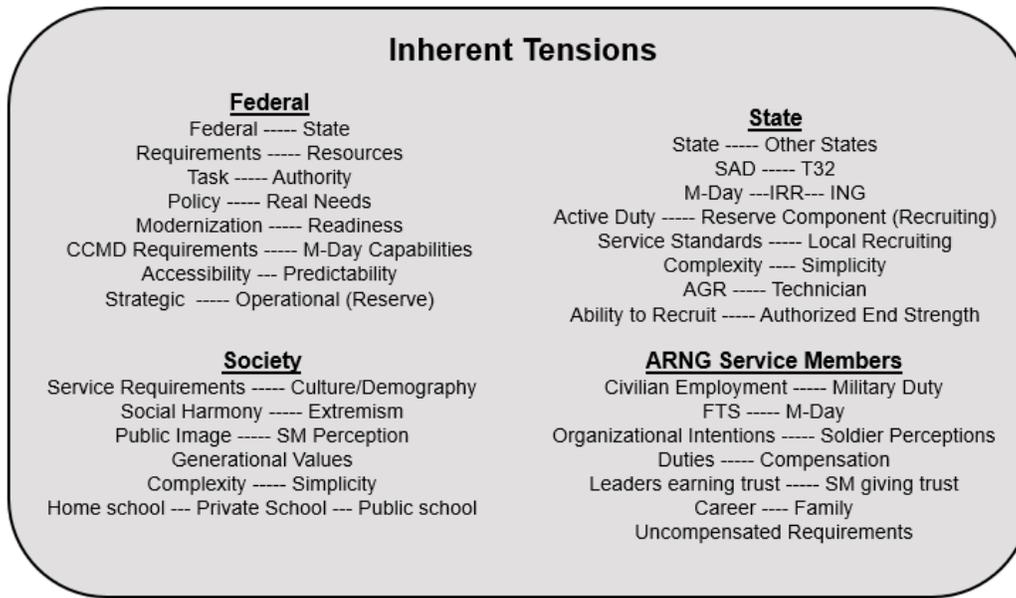


Figure 5 - Inherent Tensions

This list of tensions is not all-inclusive. It is meant to guide future discussion on identifying which factors are most critical in adapting a proactive stance. Identifying key tensions and potentials will allow us to identify indicators of coming change and explore how to build an ARNG postured to respond to those changes. These tensions are explored in the frames of our main source of demands- the Federal and State frames. We also consider the main supply of our workforce- society, from which we recruit, and our current ARNG Servicemembers, which we retain.

Key Questions About Our Environment

- (1) What are the major challenges facing our Servicemembers State leaders, and Federal leaders?**
- (2) What challenges are reasonably anticipated?**
- (3) What challenges cannot be resolved through resourcing?**
- (4) How do we define organizational sustainability in terms of OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO?**
- (5) What are the relationships between days on duty (T10, T32, and SAD) and retention?**
- (6) What impact will geopolitics have from a State, Federal, societal, and individual Servicemember perspective?**

Federal Frame

The “Army hat” of the ARNG remains the role most critically tied to resourcing and readiness demands. The ARNG is resourced to build readiness as the primary combat reserve of the United States Army. Previous ARNG communication has expressed that if we build readiness, we must then “spend” that readiness, typically through mobilization. However, it may be time to revisit the purpose of building readiness.

The ARNG must maintain interoperability with the Regular Army.³ Since 2016, this has included training for LSCO as part of an integrated Army. However only a limited number of formations have formally trained on LSCO, and very few members of the ARNG possess first-hand knowledge on this topic. When the Army previously focused on LSCO, readiness was built without the expectation of immediate employment. Rather, enduring readiness was built to prepare for unexpected mobilization and for the professional development of leaders.

The ARNG has some flexibility in how it interoperates as part of the Total Force. Modernization, readiness, and force structure in the ARNG have historically adapted to meet changing needs of the Total Force. The ARNG beyond 2030 and will continue to do so, especially when the size of the total force changes, or when there are significant challenges to recruiting or retention. Taking a proactive stance means anticipating these changes and identifying potential external messages and internal changes to meet those evolving needs.

Key Questions in the Federal Frame

- (1) Are we building readiness for the purpose of consuming readiness or for enduring readiness in a LSCO environment?
- (2) Can we develop a cycle, overlaid on Unit Lifecycle Management, that moves units along a spectrum between Strategic Depth and Operational Availability?
- (3) Are we a Strategic Reserve, an Operational Reserve, or both? Are these terms still helpful for us?
- (4) Is Strategic versus Operational Reserve a function of resources, or what a unit is designed to do?
- (5) Will the ARNG be capable of providing proficient formations on short notice?
- (6) What is the future role of the State Partnership Program?

The State Frame

An ARNG Servicemember may be deployed once every few years. The rest of the time the “State militia hat” often has the most profound impact on day-to-day experiences with the ARNG. The first quarter of the 21st Century has seen drastic changes in ARNG utilization at the State level. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 led to the

³ T10 USC 10105

establishment of statutory response forces within the ARNG. The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with widespread political and civil instability led to unprecedented National Guard activations to reinforce State emergency and public safety services. There appears to be a concern that climate instability may fuel a growth in activations due to increasing wildfires, storms, and other extreme weather events. These perceptions need to be validated through future research, and trends may be different across states. Understanding what makes some Governors more likely to activate their ARNG than others is a research gap. Additionally, these activations have a relationship with retention, but our understanding of that relationship is currently anecdotal and would benefit from formal study.

One undeniable factor impacting operations and installations at the State level is our changing climate. Increasing wildfires, storms, and temperatures change how and where we can train and work. Further study is needed on the extent of these impacts and how to best mitigate them.

My conversations across the 54 and inside the beltway lead me to believe these activations will generally continue to occur with higher frequency, even if they do not rise to the same level of the early 2020s. Factors leading to this include increasing natural disasters, ongoing political instability, and recent successful ARNG employment to resolve complex and novel State-level problems beyond our current statutory role. We need a coherent message to properly guide State leaders on the risks and benefits associated with utilization. Further research is indicated on the relationship between retention and state utilization.

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Key Questions in the State Frame

- (1) What is the future role of ARNG units in CST/CERF/HRF/Counter-drug and Youth ChalleNGe programs?
- (2) What is the future impact of the State Partnership Program on retention and state utilization?
- (3) How do TAGs communicate with State leaders in balancing Federal mobilization readiness against demands within their communities?
- (4) What is the ARNG's role in the homeland?
- (5) What types of crises are most appropriate for employing the ARNG and for how long?
- (6) What are installation needs of the future ARNG? How does the changing climate impact our current installations and training areas?
- (7) How do TAGs communicate with State leadership when balancing Federal mobilization readiness against demands within their state?

Societal Frame

The “civilian hat” impacts both our current Servicemembers’ families and civilian careers, as well as the labor market where future Servicemembers come from. Society is in a constant state of change, and these changes impact our potential ARNG Servicemembers. Birth rates impact demographics, demographics change the workforce, and workforce changes impact labor practices. As a participant in the competitive labor market, the ARNG must consider these changes as it develops its institutional strategy. The Army is less directly connected to labor market trends than for-profit corporations. Corporations may see an increase in resignations when employees see better opportunities. The Army will generally only see this impact once a Servicemember is not retained at the end of their service obligation. However, this presents an opportunity for the ARNG to identify trends in the private sector and project future expectations for challenges to retention and recruiting.

As of the writing of this paper, an economic trend is that employees are gaining significant power through collective bargaining in numerous sectors of the economy. Additionally, compensation is broadly trending upward. This trend is partially due to disconnects in availability of workforce, supply chain disruptions, and industry demands. Due to service obligations, these same factors are impacting the Army, but at a slower pace. This insulation from these changes may prevent the ARNG and Army from adequately considering the impacts of these changes until they are actively felt, such as through decreased retention or failure to meet a recruiting mission.

Additionally, there are current societal trends that impact both the availability and quality of potential recruits. The decriminalization of marijuana and rampant spread of obesity continue to reduce the pool of recruits due to disqualification for military service. These trends may indicate a tension between our eligibility standards and our personnel needs. I am also concerned about the impacts of decreasing societal contact between non-Servicemembers with neighbors, friends, or families who serve in the ARNG as military service is borne by a decreasing percentage of American families. Increasingly personalized media feeds and home and private schooling may further exacerbate this.

This increasing civilian-military divide means many Americans’ knowledge of the military, and ARNG by extension, is primarily sourced from media. How Americans consume media has also changed dramatically. Increasingly, media consumption is from an increasingly individualized feed of media that may prevent someone not already interested in the military from being exposed to it. The ARNG has a unique advantage here, as its recruiting is typically decentralized and local to the communities. However, that connection is only as strong as the community's trust and link to the ARNG, and the ability of the ARNG to penetrate that personalized media feed.

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The average recruit for the ARNG beyond 2030 is currently in elementary school. They are being raised in an era of persistent connectivity, automation, political polarity, and economic and supply chain uncertainty. They likely conducted some portion of their primary education via virtual or distributed learning. This generation will likely have a very different set of expectations and experiences relating to technology, public service, and patriotism compared to the current generation.

Concurrently, machine learning and artificial intelligence are changing how we think about work. Many tasks that previously required human input can now be quickly and cheaply automated. Automation often means increased accuracy and decreased cost, especially when combined with artificial intelligence. Many tasks currently carried out by headquarters personnel may be better accomplished by automation in the very near future. ARNG units may be ideal candidates for testing how the Army can automate our business processes, especially how we hire, pay, and deploy the ARNG.

Taking a proactive stance must include identifying the societal and technological trends which impact our future force. These present both opportunities and threats to the future of the ARNG. Awareness of these is critical in shaping the ARNG beyond 2030.

Key Questions in the Societal Frame

- (1) What demographic, societal, and technological trends most impact potential members of the ARNG?**
- (2) Does the ARNG accurately represent today's communities? This question refers not only to diversity, equity, and inclusion but factors like locations of our Armories or civilian employment of our members. In what ways does it differ? What are the impacts of this?**
- (3) How do factors like individualized media feeds and changing family structures impact the future of ARNG service?**
- (4) What societal and demographic changes are being seen by TAGs in communities which will likely continue?**
- (5) What indicators should the ARNG monitor to proactively respond to labor market changes?**
- (6) How do motivations for service change across different demographics?**

The ARNG Servicemember Frame

ARNG Servicemembers are at the intersection of the societal, State, and Federal frames listed above. The impact of changing societal pressures and increasing demands from both the "Army" and "State militia" roles of the ARNG lead to significant tensions on our current Servicemembers. These impact ARNG Servicemembers families, civilian employers, and the stories that potential future ARNG Servicemembers are exposed to.

The current ARNG workforce has responded to the unprecedented level of demand with a high degree of success and professionalism. Many communities have come to appreciate the ARNG as an answer to many complex problems, however, this utilization has had an impact on Servicemembers' families, education, and careers. The extent of this impact is currently a research gap.

One trend that will not change is how our business practices impact Servicemembers. Paying and promoting personnel on time, making the barrier between traditional and full-time service more permeable, and making it easier for Servicemembers to access their benefits will positively impact recruiting and retention across multiple generations.

Another ongoing trend is an increase in uncompensated requirements for ARNG Servicemembers. These includes professional military education conducted as distance learning. It also includes commanding and leading in an era of persistent connectivity. At every echelon ARNG Servicemembers conduct administrative tasks, participate in professional development, and respond to teammates' crises, often without being in a duty status or with appropriate compensation. The impact and extent of these uncompensated requirements is currently a research gap.

Key Questions in the ARNG Servicemember Frame

- (1) What are the relationships between mobilization and recruiting/retention?**
- (2) What are the current experiences and sentiments of ARNG Servicemembers?**
- (3) What does a future drill weekend look like? How do we capture risks and benefits of alternative drills, innovative training approaches, and use of automation/adaptive simulation capabilities?**
- (4) How should we recruit and retain in the future? How do we retain families and employers?**
- (5) How does the ARNG address the impacts of uncompensated requirements on Servicemembers?**
- (6) Motivations for service differ; how can we create a ARNG that is appealing to both those who primarily want to go overseas and those who primarily want to serve their communities?**

Conclusion

Awareness of our own paradigm is critical. The Army National Guard Directorate has a unique perspective on the ARNG of the 21st Century, sitting between State and Federal stakeholders, and overseeing the flow of resources. However, the ARNG Directorate does not influence Combatant Commanders' use of ARNG personnel. Policy, process, and programming are the key levers the Directorate uses to affect change and will be the primary tools available to proactively respond to changes.

Where you sit impacts what you see. We must understand how our own perspective limits our ability to perceive challenges in the other frames. This paper attempts to build awareness of our own way of seeing the world. Are we at a turning point of history? Will ARNG service look fundamentally different in the coming years? Can we see problems the way our Servicemembers see them? The way we understand these questions is influenced by our experiences and assumptions. Discussing the key questions in this paper with members of the ARNG Enterprise will help us to identify biases that may prevent the Directorate from understanding the environment. This step is critical in allowing us to adapt to the changing world. This is an ongoing process and will continue in the coming papers.

Key Questions for future DARNG Papers

(1) Based on our current resources, training and mobilization models, and legal authorities, what can we do to proactively adapt to the future?

(2) What are the most significant coming tensions? What authorities do we lack? What parts of our reserve component construct should be retained, re-thought, or changed?

(3) How do we become more adaptable, innovative, and responsive?

(4) What narrative best explains the ARNG of 2030 and beyond?

Understanding ourselves and our environment is critical to adapting a proactive stance. This paper seeks to ensure we ask the right questions. We will aggressively

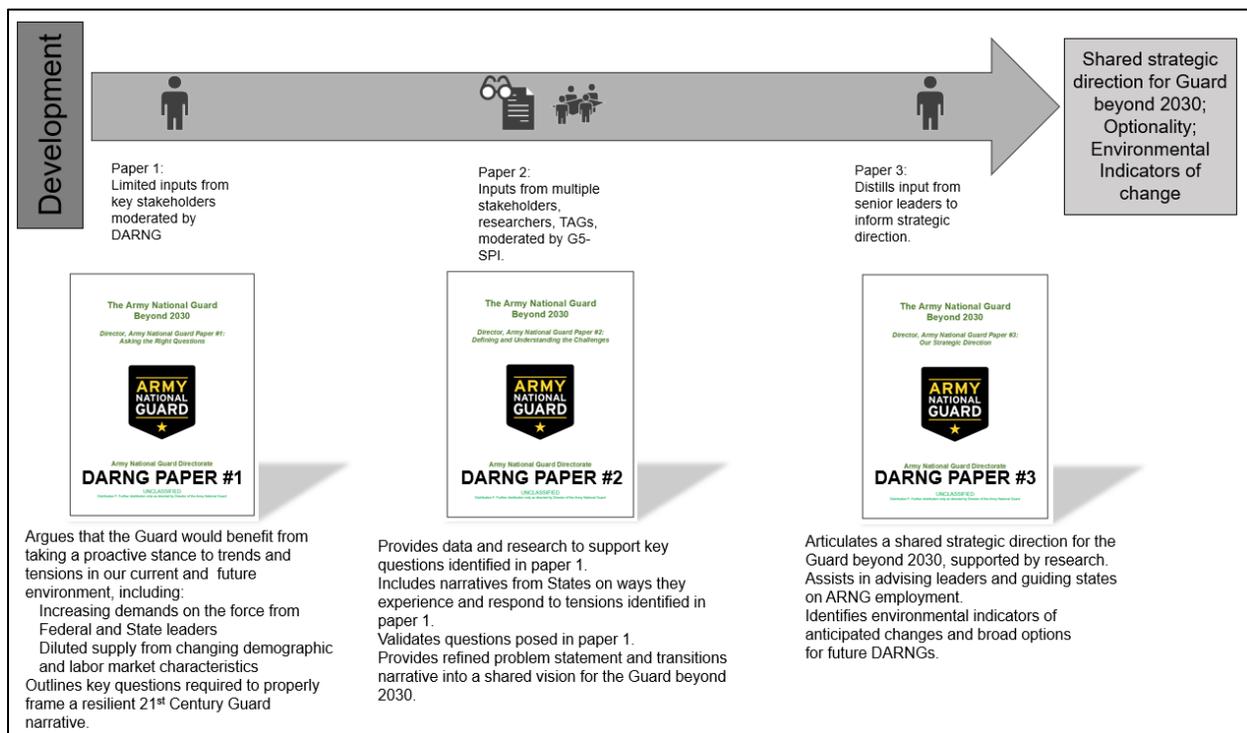


Figure 6 – DARNG Papers Way Ahead

research, socialize, and validate these questions as we develop a self-concept that enables the ARNG to anticipate and maximize opportunities in the coming century.

I welcome comment, feedback, and perspectives from all echelons of the Guard Enterprise as we pursue this aim. The key challenge for our senior leadership is ensuring that our ARNG can meet its requirements without inflicting long-term damage. If we cannot develop a coherent self-concept that effectively communicates to and resonates with all stakeholders, our ability to participate as a full member of the U.S. Army team is threatened. If we cannot communicate the risks inherent in utilization, we may risk exacerbating supply and demand tensions that threaten our ability to meet end strength.

The ARNG's story is one of over 300 years of adaptation. We remain a vital and integral partner in our shared national security. In the coming months we will develop our self-concept, refine our understanding of our environment, and conduct necessary research on the questions identified here. DARNG Paper #2 will continue to develop these questions, identify evaluation criteria for options we will establish in DARNG Paper #3, and bring supporting data to help leaders make informed decisions about the future of the ARNG. Feedback on the tensions, questions, and frames identified in this paper is critical, and will be solicited through numerous governance forums in the coming months.

The proponent for this paper is the office of the Director of the Army National Guard. The consolidation point for feedback is Mr. Scott Sharp, Deputy G-3/5/7 (Force Integration and Plans) at scott.c.sharp.civ@army.mil.

