

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD: ENHANCING PUBLIC AND EMPLOYER SUPPORT

BY

COLONEL HUNT W. KERRIGAN
United States Army National Guard

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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Colonel Hunt W. Kerrigan
United States Army National Guard

Dr. Dallas Owens
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, more than 274,000 Army National Guard Soldiers have been deployed around the world. In many cases, Army Guard Soldiers are on their second and third deployment. To date, 469 Guard Soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice. When the nation calls out the Guard, it calls out America. However, with no end in sight for Army Guard deployments and with dwindling public and employer support for overseas deployments, senior Army National Guard leaders must increasingly engage the American public and employers in a strategic, systematic, professional and productive manner to ensure the Army National Guard remains an effective combat force. This paper highlights the critical importance of this strategic communication for senior Army National Guard leaders and provides a number of recommendations to generate and maintain public support. Furthermore, this paper examines the myriad of problems facing employers as their military employees leave on prolonged and repeated deployments and explores practical options to address these problems to ensure employer support into the next decade.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD: ENHANCING PUBLIC AND EMPLOYER SUPPORT

General Craig McKinley, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, recently announced to senior National Guard leaders, “The National Guard will likely continue to play a significant role in overseas contingency operations for the foreseeable future . . . just like we have been in Kosovo for 14 years and in the Sinai and the Horn of Africa, I think the National Guard will be asked to stay longer (overseas).” Referring to Iraq and Afghanistan, the general added, “There is going to be some pretty rough days and months ahead...men and women who make up the National Guard are contributing greatly on the battlefield.”¹

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, more than 274,000 Army National Guard Soldiers have deployed. Many of these Soldiers are on their second and third deployment. This increased operations tempo has put a tremendous strain on families and employers. As General David McKiernan noted during a recent presentation to the U.S. Army War College, “Domestic support is wavering for the war in Afghanistan. This will have a tremendous impact in the future.”² This wavering public support for the war in Afghanistan was also recently highlighted in the *Patriot Newspaper’s* article “No Results Yet” by Deb Riechmann of the Associated Press. Riechmann contends that “public support for the war (in Afghanistan) is slipping in the United States and Western Europe. The Netherlands had pulled out its troops, the first NATO country to do so. The Canadians leave next. Patience is running out...”³ With General McKinley’s announcement that there is no end in sight for overseas deployments and with dwindling public support for overseas operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is a growing sense of fatigue and frustration among the American public and employers.

Since the Army National Guard's overseas deployments may continue indefinitely, it is critical for senior Army National Guard leaders to address these issues head on, communicate their vision for the future and offer support and effective relief to employers. This senior Army National Guard leadership engagement of the American public and employers must be in a strategic, systematic, professional and earnest manner.

The first aspect of this paper examines the critical importance of strategic communication for senior Army National Guard leaders. It also highlights the need for command emphasis on strategic communications that encourage a culture of media engagement across the Army National Guard. This paper closely examines, as a model for senior Army National Guard leaders, the highly successful strategic communications engagement plan of a Wyoming Army National Guard brigade commander who deployed more than 2,000 Soldiers to the Middle East in 2009. This paper also outlines three strategic communications recommendations for senior Army National Guard leaders as they engage Soldiers, families, employers, the American public across the nation and around the world.

The final aspect of this paper examines the myriad of problems facing employers as their military employees leave on prolonged and repeated deployments. This paper concludes by closely examining three recommended options to address employers concerns to enhance employer support into the next decade.

Strategic Communications: A Combat Force Multiplier

Strategic communications is a combat force multiplier when used thoroughly, thoughtfully and aggressively. As Abraham Lincoln noted in the months leading up to the Civil War, "Public sentiment is everything, with it nothing can fail, without it nothing

can succeed.”⁴ Given our current complex strategic environment and the omnipresent 24-hour news cycle, President Lincoln’s wisdom is just as applicable today as it was in the 1860’s. Harry Noyes, in *Army Times*, also highlighted the importance of public opinion:

In an era in which public opinion is vital in deciding the outcome of wars the press can be as important as weapons and troops. All wars are public-opinion processes, in which combat is but one factor and not the most important...War depends on more than just what happens on the battlefields...without public backing, war fails.⁵

Our enemy’s senior leadership is also acutely aware of the impact of world-wide public opinion and the influence of the media. On July 9, 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of Osama bin Laden’s closest adviser wrote to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, “I say to you: that we are in a battle and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media...we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma [the Muslim people].⁶ The senior Al-Qaida leadership understands the importance of the media in their fight. Therefore, it is now even more critical that our senior leadership engage and outmaneuver our enemies on this field of battle as well.

The Army National Guard is made up of Soldiers from more than 3,000 communities across our nation. Therefore, it is vital that Army National Guard leaders at all levels communicate directly to the public in order to effectively “tell the Army National Guard story.” Every Soldier in the Army National Guard from private to general serves as a spokesperson and plays a role in engaging the American public. However, it is especially important for senior Army National Guard leaders to set the example both in their communities and at the national level.

According to Dr. Stephen Gerras, “One of the clear priorities of strategic leaders is to serve as communications agents for their organizations.” Gerras notes that, “not

only do these leaders need to engage internal audiences to ensure alignment between vision and execution of organizational strategies, they also need to manage external stakeholders to facilitate access to resources, encourage support, and to monitor changes in the external environment.”⁷ The Army National Guard cannot continue as an operational force without the support of these ‘external stakeholders,’ which include families, employers, community leaders, etc., Direct, honest and consistent communications gives ‘these centers of influence’ an understanding of the Army National Guard’s mission and the vital role they play in the success of that mission.

Those serving in the Army National Guard are acutely sensitive to public opinion especially since favorable opinion can lead to local support and state funding. Whereas the frequent relocations of those in the Active component tend to make them a step removed from the community, Army National Guard Soldiers come from the community and return when they are not on duty. Therefore, the success or failure of the Army National Guard is impacted even more by local public opinion. If local communities turn against supporting their state’s Army National Guard deployment, the state governors may put pressure on the President and the Pentagon to limit their use or in an extreme case, even attempt to block the use of their National Guard forces altogether.⁸

Command Climate: Engaging the Media

In my almost two decades as a Army National Guard public affairs officer, it is apparent that successful strategic communications is only possible when senior Army National Guard leaders establish a culture of media engagement from the company to the Joint Forces Headquarters level. These leaders, whether a company commander in Bethel, Alaska or the Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, must engage local communities across the nation to sustain support for the Army National Guard.

To foster a command climate of engagement, leaders must engage both the local and national media to build relationships through mutual understanding and trust. Many Army National Guard leaders know their local reporters on a first name basis and have given them their personal phone numbers for immediate access.⁹ Major General James F. Fretterd, the former Adjutant General of the Maryland National Guard, built long-lasting relationships with local and national reporters. During his more than fifty years of service, General Fretterd consistently engaged media and the public and built a culture of engagement among his senior leaders. “I expected every leader to seize every opportunity to tell the great success story of the Maryland National Guard,” said General Fretterd. “Part of my evaluation of Maryland National Guard leaders was their persistent engagement of citizens across our state.”¹⁰

Thom Shanker, a Pentagon correspondent for the *New York Times*, commented on the importance of the military engaging the media. He noted, “If a military officer talks to reporters, I can’t guarantee your story will be told in the way you want it. But if you don’t speak with reporters, I can guarantee your side of the story will not be told at all.”¹¹ Shanker highlighted the importance of this engagement in his interview with retired General Hal Moore. Shanker was impressed with the general’s media savvy and the great example the general set for all his troops during the Battle of Ia Drang in November 1965:

[General Moore] had mutually beneficial relationships with correspondents in a war for which that was not a norm. I asked him his secret. General Moore said: ‘I told reporters not to get in the way. And don’t give up my plans.’ And I told my troops, ‘Talk from your level-don’t speak for higher. And tell the truth.’ General Moore knew that he was the most important public affairs officer in the entire unit. He set the commander’s intent, from the top.¹²

General George Casey, during his address to the attendees of the 2009 Worldwide Public Affairs Symposium in Washington, D.C. also emphasized the importance of engaging the media. He stressed the importance of “building your relationships early with the media” and “creating a culture of media engagement.” General Casey pointed out that leaders should “get to know the media and lead the media engagement.” He emphasized that leaders must understand their audience and be candid and honest with the media and the American public. In a final word of encouragement, the general concluded, “You won't always get it right (with the media) but keep swinging.”¹³ Why is engaging the American public through the media so important? Since so few Americans have served in the military, their only impression of the military may be through the media. However, even with this limited exposure to the U.S. military, Americans still cherish their military. In 2009, the U.S. military enjoyed unprecedented domestic public trust and confidence, with 82% of respondents to a national Gallup poll identifying a great deal of confidence in the U. S. military, they placed it at the top of 16 institutions. This is an enormous treasure of public trust and confidence.¹⁴

Wyoming Army National Guard: A Model Information Engagement Campaign

Nothing highlights a senior leader's need for effective strategic communication more acutely than receiving a deployment notice. In 2008 when Colonel Richard Knowlton of the Wyoming Army National Guard became the Commander of the 115th Fires Brigade, the brigade had just received its mobilization order for deployment. “At that time looking at the mission analysis, what I determined was that we could perform our mission overseas.” Yet, Knowlton also remembers, “To be successful we knew we had to energize the community.” Over the next few weeks, Knowlton and his leadership

team mapped out a statewide engagement strategy to inform communities across Wyoming of the upcoming Army National Guard deployment and build support for the deploying Soldiers and their families. This support proved crucial since more than 750 Wyoming Army National Guard Soldiers, along with more than 2300 Army National Guard Soldiers from around the nation, would be deployed for more than a year.¹⁵

“My staff and I approached this community engagement as a targeting exercise,” explained Knowlton. After determining who the audience was and what needed to be said, the 115th Fires Brigade leadership team closely examined resources available to Soldiers and their families. He then anticipated the problems they would face. “Typically National Guard Soldiers don’t have many problems downrange since their support is with them. However, their families are dispersed in remote areas across the state. This causes support problems.” Knowlton added, “It is not like an active duty post where the families are together and all the supporting agencies and resources are together on post. This is a unique challenge for the Guard.”

Addressing these unique Guard challenges was the driving factor in his statewide community engagement campaign. The goal of the campaign was to “inform and educate the public regarding the unit’s deployment.”¹⁶ As the public understood the 115th Fires Brigade’s mission and its national security ramifications, it generated support throughout Wyoming.

The 115th Fires Brigade’s Information Engagement Campaign involved briefings in communities across Wyoming, from Cheyenne to Douglas. The campaign targeted a broad audience including community leaders, school principals, social workers, health professionals and clergy.” Knowlton recalls, “We developed a presentation and realized

it was important for the commander to give the presentation. Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers want to hear it from the commander himself. So in two months, I gave about fifty briefings in seventeen communities.”

The briefings were not given in armories but in local community centers to put everyone at ease. As planned, the briefings reached citizens around the state. Knowlton remembers, “we gave the presentation in Laramie three times: Once in the morning, to reach employers, city officials and other influencers within the city. At noon, we gave another presentation to clergy, behavioral scientists and other healthcare providers. That evening, we met with Soldiers and their families and other interested and supportive people.” Knowlton and his team made a point of personally greeting every guest at the door as they walked in, “we would meet them at the door, give them friendly handshake and thank them for attending. As part of our team, we had family readiness and employer support representatives as well as our chaplains and psychologists.”¹⁷

Knowlton and his team systematically reached out to local and national media. As a result, more than fifty media outlets covered the statewide presentations. Reporter Fred Baker, of *American Forces Press Service*, in his story entitled, “Wyoming Guard Commander Preps for war on the Home Front,” noted that “to help prepare (the city of) Douglas and other communities spread across the state, Colonel Knowlton undertook a massive information campaign designed to bring together community and business leaders and families and educate them on the upcoming mission and support services available.”¹⁸ Knowlton’s noble efforts were also featured on a National Public Radio’s

“All Things Considered,” which has a weekly audience of 11.5 million people on 605 public radio stations nationwide and overseas.¹⁹

Another manifestation of the success of the 115th Fires Brigade’s Information campaign was when Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal visited Wyoming Army National Guard Soldiers in Kuwait. “This is the largest deployment of Soldiers we have had from Wyoming since the onset of the war,” he said to a reporter. “This is a chance to see people that are important to us at home. We want to make sure they know that on behalf of the citizens of my state. People back home are concerned for them and their well being,” said Freudenthal. “Wyoming is a small state, it is more like a community,” he added. “I want to relay the fact that people back home care about them.”²⁰

What was the result of the 115th Fires Brigade’s Information Engagement Campaign? Did it reach its goal of educating communities around Wyoming and generating support? Knowlton remembers, “In the end the campaign turned out very good. The Soldiers and the State reaped a lot of benefits from it in terms of support and retention and recruiting. We had more than 2,000 people show up to our meetings. Wyoming is a very small rural state, so just to get people to show up is incredible...the campaign produced critical support for Soldiers and families that lasted throughout the entire deployment.”²¹

Recommendations for Senior Army National Guard Leaders

As the Army National Guard is made up of 350,000 Soldiers from thousands of communities across the nation, strategic communications clearly is essential for the Army National Guard’s success and its very survival. Therefore, senior Army National Guard leaders should systemically engage the public, the media and centers of

influence around the nation. Using the 115th Fires Brigade's Wyoming Army National Guard Information Engagement Campaign as a model of an effective strategic communications program, senior Army National Guard leaders may apply fundamentals of this plan at the strategic-national level. The following three recommendations will assist with this senior leader's engagement campaign development.

The first recommendation is to develop a Strategic Communications Plan specifically tailored to introducing and connecting senior Army National Guard leaders (at the National Guard Bureau)²² to internal and external audiences across the nation. These internal and external audiences included Soldiers, families, employers, the American public, centers of influence in Washington D.C. and in communities across the country. The goal of this engagement, via the Strategic Communications Plan, is to build trust and confidence in the Army National Guard and communicate The Army National Guard's vision for the 21st century.

The second recommendation is for Army National Guard senior leaders to foster productive, long-term relationships with local, national and international media. Senior leaders need to engage media at both the state and national level. They should consider inviting media when they visit Soldiers around the nation and overseas. For example, when these leaders are visiting Maryland Army National Guard Soldiers serving in Afghanistan, they should invite local Maryland media to join them.²³ By engaging the media this way, a culture of media engagement will permeate throughout the Army National Guard.

My final recommendation is to infuse the Army National Guard public affairs community with the best and brightest officers and non-commissioned officers and offer

them senior level promotions. Too often the bench of seasoned public affairs officers at the senior level is vacant due to a lack of command emphasis, available positions and qualified candidates. Currently, there is only one public affairs colonel in the entire Title-10 Army National Guard community.

Since thousands of Army National Guard Soldiers will likely deploy throughout out this decade, there will continue to be casualties overseas and at home. Therefore, it is essential for Army National Guard leaders to grasp the importance of strategic communication to foster a culture of media engagement across the Army National Guard. Citizen-Soldiers are part of the fabric of American society and that connection cannot be taken for granted. Army National Guard leaders need to be out “on point” engaging the American public -- whether in Wasilla, Alaska or in Waterbury, Vermont. As Larry Miller of the United States War College aptly noted, “The strategic leader who can’t communicate is akin to a weapon without ammunition ... mostly useless.”²⁴

As Senior Army leaders engage the American public nationwide, it is just as important that they also effectively engage the employers of Army National Guard Citizen-Soldiers. In 2002, *USA Today* reporter Dave Moniz noted, “For the first time since the Vietnam War, the Pentagon will keep National Guard and Reserve troops on active duty for as long as two years. More than 76,000 National Guard and Reserve troops are on active duty in the war on terrorism...the vast majority are part-time soldiers who hold full-time jobs.” Moniz added, “It’s unclear how U. S. employers will react.” While the final ramifications on employers of repeated deployments still remains uncertain after 8 years, one thing is certain, senior Army National Guard leaders need to engage employers to shore up their wavering support.

Employer Support Fatigue

During the past decade, the increased frequency of National Guard mobilizations has caused civilian employers nationwide to lose their military employees to repeated and extended deployments. Not surprisingly, this is having a negative impact on employer's bottom-lines through increased expenses, lost revenue and lost business. Therefore, if the Army National Guard is to continue to serve as an operational force, it is essential to provide relief to affected employers to prevent any decline in employer support of their military employees. Every military operation from the Balkans and Guantanamo Bay, to Iraq and Afghanistan has involved significant number of Army National Guard Soldiers as the Army National Guard comprises nearly 40 percent of the Army's operating force.²⁵ While many of these seasoned citizen-soldiers provide an immeasurable combat force multiplier for the active duty forces, there is an increasing high-price to be paid by employers at home.

Historically, the relationship between the Army National Guard and employers has been close and mutually beneficial. The military can rely on a pool of part-time Citizen-Soldiers, while employers benefited from the professionalism, experience and unique talents of their military employees. Since the establishment of the all-volunteer force and the corresponding increased reliance on the reserve forces, this military-employer relationship has increased in importance and becomes a critical aspect of national defense. This strong link between members of the Army National Guard and Reserves and their civilian employers led to the creation of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) in the early 1970's. ESGR, a Department of Defense (DOD) agency, leads both national and local efforts to promote employer support for their military employees. This employer support is established and maintained by

honoring military-friendly employers, increasing awareness of the laws regarding military employees and resolving conflicts through mediation. ESGR operates via a network of hundreds of volunteers within 56 field committees throughout the United States.²⁶

As part of its mission to strengthen ties between employers and their military employees, ESGR educates employers on the responsibilities they have under the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA). In essence, USERRA is the Federal law that establishes the rights and responsibilities of employers and their National Guard and Reserve employees. USERRA affects employment, re-employment and retention in employment of military employees. Congress provides statutory authority to the DoL for investigating alleged violations of USERRA. If DoL finds that an employer has violated USERRA, it may refer the case to the Department of Justice for legal action against the employer. Although the vast majority of employers are very supportive of their military employees, there are several current lawsuits filed by returning National Guardsmen and Reserve Soldiers who have either lost their jobs or were discriminated against by their employers. Ironically, for many years the employer with the most discrimination complaints against it was the U.S. Government – particularly the United States Post Office and the Department of Corrections.²⁷

The U.S. Government uses a carrot and stick approach with civilian employers. On one hand, the government encourages employer support by appealing to employer's patriotism even when it affects their bottom-line. On the other hand, if an employer fires a military employee or in any way retaliates against a military employee, that employer

faces legal action by DoL under the USERRA law. This carrot and stick approach has worked well for the past three decades when reserve forces were used as a strategic reserve. However, with more than 75,000 National Guard members currently deployed around the world, both patriotic incentives and the threat of repercussion may not be enough to motivate employers. A decline in employer support can lead to lost jobs for returning Citizen-Soldiers, which in turn may lead to drug and alcohol abuse, divorce and even suicide.²⁸ Clearly employers play a vital role in supporting the Army National Guard and Reserve forces that total more than 1.3 million members.

In 2004, the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) prepared a report entitled "Analysis of Costs to Employers Due to Reserve Component Mobilizations."²⁹ This report estimated the costs employers incur from losing a military employee for a prolonged military deployment. These costs included hiring and training replacements, decreased productivity and, at times, loss of business; for example, a deployed Army National Guard lawyer may lose several clients. Some businesses took several months or even years to return to the previous level of profitability following a military employees' return. A follow-on IDA report published in 2008 calculated that many small businesses, losing a military employee to a deployment, faced costs of more than \$30,000 while some government agencies faced costs of almost \$40,000.³⁰ Still, the report showed that 40 percent of employers went "above and beyond" what USERRA required. For example, many employers paid part or all of the employee's salary while the employee was serving overseas. The report also highlighted that employers overwhelmingly rated their military employees as valuable employees.³¹

These reports suggest that some employers, particularly small businesses which make up 70 percent of all businesses across the nation, experience lost revenue and substantial increased costs when their military employees deploy. However, they still value their military employees and often go out of their way to support them and their families. These two reports provide an important snapshot in the 2004-2008 timeframe. However, they do not reflect the state of employer support since the economic downturn beginning in late 2008. It would be reasonable to believe that many of these small businesses, facing cost of \$30,000 or more to replace each of their military employees, may not have survived the depressed economy if their Guard employees deployed.

It is essential not only to recognize employers for their sacrifices or take action when they fail to comply but to provide financial relief to prevent any decline in employer support of their military employees. Clearly employers, particularly small businesses, are dealing with burdens that are becoming more onerous as their military employees deploy over and over again. This reality has not escaped the notice of General McKinley who recently emphasized in a report to Congressional leaders and governors that multiple National Guard deployments cause problems for employers who carry a significant portion of the nation's defense burden.³² The general highlighted that if the Army National Guard is to continue to serve as an operational force, it is essential to provide recognition and financial relief to employers.

Recommended options to Assist Employers

The following are three recommended options to strengthen employer support for the Army National Guard. Each option is closely examined, and the major advantages and disadvantages are reviewed. Also the likelihood of each option being approved by Legislators, supported by the American public, and being favorably covered by the

media is taken into account. Finally, after closely examining all options from several perspectives, the best option for assisting employers is highlighted.

The first option would be to provide tax credits to employers affected when their military employees are mobilized for more than 30 days in support of domestic or overseas operations. This tax credit option helps lessen the financial burden of employers supporting their absent employees. This option would only provide tax credits to employers affected by National Guard deployments and mobilizations and not simply to employers who hire Guardsmen. Some have suggested across-the-board tax credits for all employers who hire National Guard and Reserve Soldiers. However, across-the-board tax credits could reward employers who incur none or minimal deployment-related costs and possibly fail to fully compensate highly affected small businesses. Therefore, this tax credit option requires that military employees deploy in order for their employer to receive the tax credit. This option is feasible, but has its drawbacks. On one hand, these tax credits support employers who are partners in defending our nation. On the other hand, the American public is very concerned about excessive government spending and the ballooning national debt. Although this tax credit policy option would provide financial support to most employers, a potential problem with this option is timing. Since debt reduction and spending decreases recently played a pivotal role in the results of the recent mid-term U.S. elections there may not be the political will in Congress to champion any policy initiative that is perceived as adding to the national deficit.

The second recommended option would be to provide grants to employers to offset the cost they incur when their military employees deploy. There are several

advantages of a grant option. First, grants positively affect civilian employers bottom-lines and, from the employers point of view, that is the most important benefit.³³ Since the cost of losing an employee to a deployment is typically \$30,000, a grant to the employer offsetting that cost would be appropriate and effective. Second, grants would also be beneficial to government agencies that employ a significant number of National Guard Soldiers. Funds from grants could be used to hire temporary employees to cover the jobs left vacant by deploying military employees. Finally, grants would not be onerous to administer. Employers would document the costs associated with their deploying military employees and they would be compensated. Although this grant option is feasible, there is a potentially significant roadblock. As recent mid-term elections showed deficit hawks sweep incumbents from power and swing control of the House of Representatives to the Republicans, there may not be the political will to provide any grants to businesses regardless of the reason. The longevity of this option would hinge on the nation's financial well-being and the resolve of Congress to maintain these employer grants. Although this grant option would provide financial support to both private and government employers, a potential problem with this policy is that, like the first option, there may not be the political will in Congress to champion any policy initiative that adds to the national deficit. Finally, there is a risk that the media may portray this grant as "just another government handout to businesses."

The third recommendation option to assist employers would be to establish, under the auspices of the Department of Defense, "The Patriot Business Enterprise." This initiative would provide businesses that hire National Guard and Reserve employees exclusive bid opportunities on selected DOD contracts. This policy option

would greatly benefit small businesses.³⁴ However, this policy option would not be helpful for businesses that do not work with the DOD and would have little effect on non-profits and government agencies. However, this Patriot Business option is feasible and would be popular with politicians since it would have minimal costs. Congress would most likely support this option since it would not add to the national deficit.

Although this Patriot Business option is limited in impact since it only affects businesses that work with the DOD, support for this option would probably be broad, including the media, The National Guard Association of the United States, Reserve Officer's Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. This Patriot Business option meets the objective of encouraging employers to support their military employees as they deploy worldwide for the foreseeable future. For those employers affected by this policy option, it would be suitable. However, this option leaves many business, non-profits and government agencies unaffected, which in turn, would not encourage them to support their military employees. If administrated correctly, this policy option has the potential to have a very positive impact on certain businesses.

Best Option to Assist Employers

Of all these options, the grant option would be the most effective since the outcome produces tangible results for employers. With employers facing on average \$30,000 in expenses to support a deploying military employee, providing relief to offset that expense is not just the prudent thing to do, it is the right thing to do. For years, employers have quietly carried the financial burden of long and repeated deployment by their National Guard and Reserve employees. If our objective is to ask employers to continue to support their military employees for future worldwide deployments, then we must provide relief to their bottom-line. There is no employer support of the Guard and

Reserve if businesses lose several military employees to long deployments and the resulting financial strain causes the businesses to go bankrupt.

Although the grant option has the highest risk due to the current budget concerns in Congress, with the right support, this policy option could be implemented by Congress. If this grant option is chosen, it must gain support from a strong base of members of Congress who have a military constituency or a military background. For example, Representative-elect Tim Griffin (R-Ark) a U.S. Army Reserve major and Representative-elect Adam Kinzinger, an Air National Guard pilot. Both are incoming congressmen with first-hand experience of the importance of employer support to their part-time military careers. Finally, this grant option would cost the government very little compared to potentially losing the service of more than 1.3 million members Army National Guard and Reserve forces.

Conclusion

As the global war on terrorism goes into its 10th year, a poignant *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper article, "Gap Growing Between Military and Civilians," described the emerging divide growing in the United States between civilians and those serving in the military. "American civilians continue to love what veterans represent – duty, sacrifice, strength and leadership - but they have less and less true understanding of the veteran experience...veterans have become increasingly marginalized, accounting for a dwindling share of the middle class and public life."³⁵

Senior Army National Guard leaders as well as *all* members of the military should address in a strategic, systematic and effective manner the growing divide between the American public and the military as well as the dwindling public and employer support for overseas deployments. This is not a bridge too far. The National Guard, with more

than 3,200 armories scattered nationwide, is deeply embedded in American society. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to tell the “great success story of the National Guard.” Through engagements with the public, media, employers and centers of influence across our nation, we can substantially rebuild the public support essential to the Army National Guard as it continues to serve as a world-wide operational combat force. As General Craig McKinley aptly noted, “the only thing that can take our nation down is the loss of our will to fight.”³⁶

Endnotes

¹ Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill, “McKinley tells Guard enlisted force to prepare for prolonged overseas role,” *National Guard*, August 2010, <http://www.ng.mil/news/archives/2010/08/080910-McKinley.aspx> (accessed 8 October, 2010).

² Retired General David McKiernan, “Strategic Leadership,” lecture, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, July 23, cited with permission of Gen. McKiernan.

³ Deb Riechmann, “No Results Yet,” *Patriot News*, 8 October 2010.

⁴ David Zarefsky, “Public Sentiment Is Everything”: Lincoln's View of Political Persuasion,” *History Cooperative*, 1994, <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jala/15.2/zarefsky.html> (accessed 9 October, 2010).

⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Harry Noyes, “Like it or Not, the Military Needs the Media,” *Army Times*, February 1992, 33.

⁶ *THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE Home Page*, <http://www.proconservative.net/PCVol7Is227CarubaUmma.shtml> (accessed 9 October, 2010).

⁷ Dr. Stephen J. Gerras, “Communications with External Audiences – A Stakeholder Management Approach,” *Strategic Leadership*, U.S. Army War College, (AY11), 76.

⁸ During the 1980s several governors tried to stop National Guard Soldiers training in Central America.

⁹ The author, while serving on the National Guard Bureau Public Affairs (NGB-PA) media desk, noted that during the early phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom, some newspaper reporters were contacting senior National Guard leaders directly rather than going through the NGB-PA.

¹⁰ Major General James F. Fretterd, former Adjutant General of the Maryland National Guard, interviewed by author, 9 October, 2010.

- ¹¹ Shanker and Hertling, "The Military--Media Relationship. A Dysfunctional Marriage?" 8.
- ¹² Thom Shanker and Major General Mark Hertling, "The Military--Media Relationship. A Dysfunctional Marriage?" *Military Journal* (September 2009): 9.
- ¹³ General George W. Casey, "Information Engagement," briefing, The 2009 World Wide Public Affairs Symposium, Washington, DC. 5 May, 2009.
- ¹⁴ Colonel Lee DeRemer, "Stewardship: What's In It for You?," *Strategic Leadership*, U.S. Army War College, (AY11), 301.
- ¹⁵ Colonel Richard Knowlton, former Commander of the 115th Fires Brigade, Wyoming Army National Guard, interviewed by author, 3 September, 2010.
- ¹⁶ Wyoming Army National Guard, "Executive Summary of 115th Fires Brigade Information Engagement Plan," memorandum for BG Olin Oedekoven, Assistant Adjutant General (Army), Cheyenne, WY, 15 April 2009.
- ¹⁷ Colonel Richard Knowlton, former Commander of the 115th Fires Brigade, Wyoming Army National Guard, interviewed by author, 3 September, 2010.
- ¹⁸ Fred Baker, "Wyoming Guard Commander Preps for War on Home Front," *Armed Force Press Service*, 16 January 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=52726> (accessed 9 October 2010).
- ¹⁹ Jacki Lyden, "Embedding Mental Health In the National Guard." National Public Radio, April 18, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/rundowns/rundown.php?prgId=2&prgDate=4-18-2009> (accessed 9 October 2010).
- ²⁰ John Stimac, "Four Governors visit Gaud Troops in Iraq." National Guard News, 14 November, 2009, <http://www.ng.mil/news/archives/2009/11/1111809-Four-print.aspx> (accessed 11 October, 2010).
- ²¹ Colonel Richard Knowlton, former Commander of the 115th Fires Brigade, Wyoming Army National Guard, interviewed by author, 3 September, 2010.
- ²² "Senior Army National Guard leaders" is referring to those senior leaders working at the Army National Guard Readiness Center and at the National Guard Bureau, located in Arlington, Virginia.
- ²³ These media engagement would be coordinated through the state Adjutant General and the state Public Affairs offices.
- ²⁴ Larry D. Miller, Director, Communicative Arts Office Motto, United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2010.
- ²⁵ General Craig R. McKinley, Chief, National Guard Bureau, *The National Guard, A Great Value for America*, July 2010, Executive summary.

²⁶ The Employers Support of the Guard and Reserve Home page, <http://www.esgr.org/site/Home.aspx> (accessed 29 November, 2010).

²⁷ Mr. Tom Bullock, Employer Support of the National Guard and Reserve, interviewed by author, 3 September, 2010.

²⁸ CPT Paolo A. Sica, State Family Program Director, PAARNG, interviewed by author, 29 August, 2010.

²⁹ Institute for Defense Analysis, *The Effects of Reserve Component Mobilizations on Civilian Employers* (Alexandria, VA: 2004), 3

³⁰ Institute for Defense Analysis, *Analysis of Employer Costs from Reserve Component Mobilization* (Alexandria, VA: 2008), S-1

³¹ *Ibid.*, S-2.

³² McKinley, *The National Guard, A Great Value for America*, 6.

³³ LTC Michael Peeters, businessman, entrepreneur and member of the USAR, interviewed by author, 22 December 2010.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Tyson Smith, "Gap Growing Between Military and Civilians," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 19, 2010, 1.

³⁶ Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill, "McKinley tells Guard enlisted force to prepare for prolonged overseas role," *National Guard*, August 2010, <http://www.ng.mil/news/archives/2010/08/080910-McKinley.aspx> (accessed 27 December, 2010).