



**STRATEGY
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**RECRUITING AND RETENTION
IN THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD:
BACK TO THE BASICS AND BACK TO THE FUTURE**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Recruiting and retention in the Army National Guard (ARNG) represent the lifeblood of our component. Our budget and most importantly, our relevance in The Army are inextricably tied to our ability to maintain and manage personnel strength. As singularly important as this fact is, the Army National Guard has let attrition driven by leadership shortcomings denigrate the force to levels which provide credibility to a Quadrennial Defense Review Report recommendation to reduce overall strength. It is not my contention that the majority of the Army National Guard's leaders are incompetent, uncaring individuals who have fiddled while our strength burned. Just the opposite. I am constantly heartened to meet and work with a vast majority of dedicated and hard-working officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) with whom I am proud to be associated.

In retention of soldiers, I postulate junior leaders need the training and framework to build cohesion within their units to stop the hemorrhage of good soldiers. The myriad of taskers, requirements, reports, and briefings we as leaders are responsible for, have caused some to lose the basics of leadership our soldiers expect. When leaders are forced to deal with the minutia and paperwork of command instead of the personal aspects of leadership, some soldiers lose faith in us and take a silent vote with their feet.

In recruiting, I propose a revolution in the way we currently access soldiers into our units. The ARNG should treat recruiting as more of a science than an art. Recruiting is currently considered an art with the main artists being the recruiters, who are inadequately trained in some instances. A marketing/advertising strategy coupled with development of a community identity with its population base and a focused approach to prospecting for new recruits will pay dividends--even in periods of a strong economy.

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PREFACE

This paper deals primarily with recruiting and retention within the Army National Guard. I do extract from references that deal with the active component (AC), Army Reserve and other services, but only in those areas in which all share the uniqueness of the military experience. I have included excerpts from civilian human resource references in this thesis, as most Guardsmen are also a part of the private sector workforce. This paper is intended to be a handbook for Army National Guard commanders at all levels to improve their retention and recruiting efforts by analyzing the reasons which contribute to the process.

The National Guard is not as monolithic an institution as the AC or Reserve. Since National Guard units (during peacetime) serve primarily under their respective Governors and state constitutions, many *practices* are localized rather than standardized throughout the National Guard. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) at the Pentagon and the Army National Guard Readiness Center are in Arlington, Virginia, but they are primarily advisory headquarters, rather than ones with straight-line authority. Therefore, some strategies and practices may be particular to a state. I will attempt to illustrate strategies at the National (read: NGB) level or regulations to which all states adhere. In my recommendations, I will glean from successful states, components, and services to optimize strategies.

Army Reserve references are cited as they pertain to recruiting and retaining part-time soldiers from of the civilian population base. The concepts advocated in this paper cannot be used interchangeably with the Army Reserve however, due to inherently different missions.

**RECRUITING AND RETENTION IN THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD:
BACK TO THE BASICS AND BACK TO THE FUTURE**

The time has come for the Army to think and act more like a business in selecting, structuring, managing, training and equipping our own recruitment force.

The Honorable Louis Caldera
Secretary of the Army

The National Guard, a significant part of The Army, is competing to maintain relevance in the "Brave New World" of the single superpower. In a period of ever-increasing prosperity it is ironic that the National Guard is working hard not to let their share of the Department of Defense (DoD) budget suffer from the so-called "Peace Dividend." One would think it duplicitous of the National Guard to ask for more force structure if it could not fill all the spaces it currently has. However, that is what it seems to be doing.

The National Guard is facing an ever-increasing problem of filling its ranks with a sufficient number of qualified, motivated people in order to meet the challenges of such ventures as Enhanced Brigades, Division Teaming, and its proper place in The Army—not to mention the future of the Guard in Joint Vision 2010 (JV2010). The paradox is that as the National Guard struggles for relevancy and receipt of a war-fighting mission, it sees scarce training resources. This scarcity in training resources ultimately plays out by not being able to send soldiers to courses and units to execute tactical training. Individuals can get bored and frustrated at not training (a major reason for joining the National Guard), and start to attrit. This causes a drain of manpower and resources that must be mitigated by recruiting new or prior service people into the Guard. *The stark reality is recruiting in the National Guard cannot keep up with the attrition, and the organization is struggling to maintain strength.*

Strength equals dollars in the minds of Congress and the consequences of this "death spiral" are the National Guard could stand to lose force structure, more training funds, and most importantly, relevancy as the reserve combat component of The Army triad. I don't paint this bleak scenario with a defeatist mentality; nor do I think that this is the inevitable destiny of the Guard. But unless the National Guard again emphasizes the basics of leadership coupled with a modern, well-thought out recruiting strategy, it could slip into the role of being solely the state militia or "Governor's army," with the attendant loss of resources and stature that accompanies this reduced status.

I submit that many of the strength problems the National Guard faces are symptomatic of a larger deficiency in our inability to retain soldiers, as well as an antiquated and simplistic recruiting strategy.

In the area of retention, it is almost criminal that the Army National Guard usually loses proven, MOS-qualified (Military Occupational Specialty), experienced soldiers for two basic reasons: poor leadership and a lack of meaningful training. The reason I qualify losing these soldiers as a near-criminal act is

elementary. One only needs to speak to a recruiter to find out how hard it is to find a young person who is a high school graduate, bereft of any felonies or drug record, with a reasonable aptitude score who can not only make it through Basic and Advanced Individual Training (AIT), but has the ability to graduate from the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC), et al. After the recruiter finds this person, ask he or she how many of these great prospects can take the time off their full time job to accomplish just the Basic and AIT courses? And yet, the Guard loses proven soldiers thru the back door for the two reasons listed above, according to a survey conducted by the Arizona Army National Guard.¹

There is no magic pill or panacea to correct this vital area of retention. The solution is found in some basic tenets of leadership and an old concept called the Commander's Golden Rule. The ARNG is losing sight of the basics of leadership by focusing on such concepts as "zero defects, report card items, and total quality management," instead of focusing on soldiers and their need to be exposed to and be a recipient of good leadership.

Recruiting is a far more complex problem requiring a well thought out strategy, statistical analysis, science, and a "revolution" in how we recruit in the changing environment of the present and in the future. The statistical analysis and science do not have to be cutting edge. Much of what the National Guard needs to know is in open source references. Indeed, much of the science is not science as much as common sense and is practiced to a fine art by many capable military tacticians. What the National Guard must accomplish is to scientifically assess the recruiting environment, the target audience, the competition, and the principles of marketing/advertising. A principle of marketing, which many do not understand, is that advertising is not intended to sell the target audience on the National Guard. Advertising's mission is merely to drive leads—it is the recruiter's job to sell the program. But selling an intangible (i.e. a job or way of life instead of a product) is the toughest type of sale there is. A marketing plan must have a defined target audience, and in the case of the National Guard, must have a defined area to target. To date, I believe the National Guard has not taken advantage of niche demographics, has focused on the wrong metrics for recruiters, and has not properly screened or trained recruiters. Overall, my feeling is the Army National Guard has not taken recruiters or the science of recruiting seriously enough to make a difference in motivating them or by giving them the proper tools to supply the high quality, dedicated young people we need. And the most disturbing news is according to the Census Bureau's demographic projections, their job is going to only get tougher.

A "back to basics" emphasis on commanders must be practiced at every level in order to stop the hemorrhaging of our National Guard units and their precious treasure of dedicated, experienced soldiers who only ask to be led competently and to train to their wartime mission. This, coupled with an all-out bottom up review and modernization (back to the future) of our recruiting program by a combination of outside consultants and experienced soldiers will stabilize and grow the strength of the Army National Guard and lay the foundation for relevancy and its rightful role in the Army.

CURRENT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD RECRUITING STRATEGY

The National Guard media recruiting strategy for non-prior service (NPS) soldiers feeds off the active component advertising campaign. This is done on purpose as the Guard does not have as large an advertising budget as the active component. It is a symbiotic relationship as the National Guard receives exposure from these advertisements simply because they display uniformed soldiers in action sequences. The AC, Reserve, and National Guard recruiters trade the NPS leads these commercials generate as prospects, depending on what they want: the active duty full time job or (in the case of the National Guard/Reserve) a part time job filled with opportunities for education, income, or excitement. The broadcast media primarily helps the National Guard in recruiting NPS soldiers, as the advertisements do not target prior service people.

Prior service recruits for the National Guard are usually accessed in one of two ways. First, the AC counsels personnel who have reached the end of their enlistments (and have opted not to reenlist) to continue serving their country and earn military retirement as a member of the National Guard or Army Reserve. Secondly, and the most prolific source, is via word of mouth from a Guardsman or a friend. To the unit commander, the prior service person is a highly sought individual. The reasons are fairly evident. The prospect knows what the military is like, has shown the aptitude to graduate from Basic and AIT, is MOS qualified, and does not have to take large amounts of time off his civilian job to go through the aforementioned training. A possible glitch can occur if the prospect is in an MOS which is not compatible to a nearby unit, or the MOS has no paragraph and line accommodation.

The main drawback to building units with primarily prior service personnel is the Guard does not receive a constant inflow of younger soldiers.

A proven draw in enlisting soldiers are educational benefits. The number of options the National Guard can offer makes it conducive for the recruiter to sign both first-termers and prior service individuals who join because of the lure of money for college. This "carrot" offered by all components and services is a very real incentive. Money for college is the main reason for choosing the Army. Forty-two percent of the new Army College Fund (ACF) takers report that they would not have enlisted without ACF.²

The desire for education money is not confined to the military services. Many civilian employers have discovered that sending their employees for education or training, paying tuition and other expenses, and giving pay raises associated with an employee's self-improvement education are proven strategies for recruitment and retention. In today's society, the average worker has certain expectations of his or her employer: wages commensurate with experience; medical, dental and life insurance; two weeks of vacation plus holiday, and sick and personal days; annual raises; and possibly, a retirement plan.³ This benefit package looks very close to what the active component military can offer. It even looks better to the National Guard prospect if his or her fulltime job provides the package while the Guard offers further incentives of money for college.

This is borne out empirically in a study conducted by the Saratoga Institute of Santa Clara, California. The organization interviewed 60,000 employees who had quit their jobs in 1998, to discover their motivation to work and choose a specific organization. "We found that there is an emergent population that defines loyalty differently. They tell us that their loyalty is tied to their confidence in their ability to do the work required in the company in the future. They're saying, 'Teach me the things that will keep me employed here.' As a result, their motivation is tied to education, mentoring, and growth opportunities. This is probably the first time since World War II that training and human capital competence are the leverage."⁴

Although this study may not be 100 percent transferable to the National Guard model because the Guard is normally a part-time job, it identifies the cognitive processes many go through when considering a job with a particular organization. The study *does* bear out that continuing to train in MOS and leadership, mentorship, and to grow in their military careers, are important factors for joining or staying.

Thus, the data available from both military and civilian sectors indicate that using educational benefits as an incentive are strong determinants of employment as well as retention. The National Guard as well as the other services must retain this benefit, as it remains viable.

As mentioned earlier, the media plan for the National Guard recruiting is primarily national in scope, and feeds off the AC advertising campaign. The Army Reserve and the Army National Guard capitalize on the theme of doing exciting things during training vice a rather boring full time job. Simultaneously, it brings up the possibility that employers can find value in the skills one acquires in the military. The college benefit is always a component of the message. In each case, the people in the advertisements are actors in a "sanitized" setting with helicopters and/or tanks imploring the target audience (17 to 21 year olds) to "be all that you can be."

The recruiter uses almost any reasonable means necessary to garner leads. The recruiting force seeks prospects in four major ways: telephone canvassing, area canvassing, office traffic, and home visits. The preponderance of new accessions is generated by telephone and area canvassing.⁵ As in many sales jobs, rejection is overwhelmingly the name of the game. Hundreds of phone calls are made with a very small percentage showing any kind of promise. It is a day-in, day-out series of rejections that bear heavily upon a soldier ostensibly selected for this tough job because of his previous successes.

After an individual is identified, the recruiter starts him on an obstacle course. First he must close the initial sale by getting the prospect to enter the testing and evaluation phase. A careful screening of the applicant's history is completed to discover if there are any disqualifying factors. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test is next, followed by scheduling a physical for prospects that score high enough. Both are administered at the closest Military Entrance and Processing Station (MEPS). The ASVAB is a typical aptitude test administered at an authorized test site. Four of the ten ASVAB tests comprise the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), which determines a ranking in a quality factor called Test Score Category (TSC). The most demanding and time consuming portion of the recruiter's regimen is to "herd" their applicants through this veritable minefield of requirements, knowing at

any time one of these precious individuals may fail, or worse, develop a terminal case of "buyers remorse."⁶

The National Guard, unlike the AC, puts unit strength management on the shoulders of its commanders and senior NCOs. Embedded in the strength management requirement is a de facto message of recruiting. I can assert with a high confidence level that the vast majority of commanders, platoon leaders, and senior NCOs request their soldiers provide leads for recruiters or better yet, names of prior service soldiers who want to join. As an Aviation Battalion Commander (1996-1998) my most closely tracked statistic was unit strength. This metric included total strength, available strength, officer/NCO fill, and MOS qualification. A portion of my Officer Evaluation Report (OER) Support Form dealt with my unit goals in strength and how I was going to achieve and maintain those goals.

In reality, the reasons that I was successful in achieving a strength level of 104% fill (vice the Division goal of 85%) would not make an impressive Support Form or improvement plan. They were simply: to insist on good leadership throughout the Command and train realistically to standard. Recruiting happened as word spread about how the unit trained and what the command climate was. I will go into the particulars later in this paper.

The typical commander at all levels of a National Guard Division is so overwhelmed by administrative requirements, mandated events, short-fused suspenses, and the entire spectrum of meetings crammed into the two-day drill, he has scant time to participate in recruiting activities with his troops. He barely has time to request his troops bring a buddy to the next meeting. At first glance it seems unfair for a Guard commander to be responsible for recruiting while his AC brethren have this aspect done for them. However, the strength of the National Guard is that it is community-based in the civilian population of our country. Commanders accept this requirement as literally "part of the territory."

The dark side of commanders being responsible for strength management is that because of the intense pressure to recruit and retain, some may manipulate the numbers. They allow recruiting and retaining non-MOS qualified personnel, retain AWOL personnel on the books, do not prosecute non-performers with legal actions or do not allow transfers of personnel for reasonable cause, (i.e. moved to another city).

CURRENT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD RETENTION STRATEGY

The current ARNG strategy for retention is centered primarily on the metric of total strength, rather than a comprehensive program. There is a reenlistment bonus program for certain high demand, low density MOS personnel but it does not cover most of the rank-and-file soldiers. The ARNG has a codified procedure of interviewing soldiers at certain milestones as they approach their ETS (End Time in Service) dates commencing one year out. Interviews escalate up the chain of command as the ETS date gets closer and the soldier fails to reenlist. However, the metrics that are tracked other than raw strength figures are the turnover and retention rates.

The preponderance of responsibility and technique lies at the foot of unit commanders at all levels. In most cases, only at Battalion level and below does the guidance and tracking get specific enough to formulate one's own tactics, techniques, and procedures. At this level and below, the leaders make a dramatic difference whether a soldier stays or leaves. Sadly, many young company grade officers do not realize their part, directly or indirectly. They are normally too busy trying to do the multitude of tasks to keep their unit administered, trained, and generally out of trouble. In most units I have observed in my state of California as well as others, the junior leaders do not realize that the way they lead and train is the most important determinant on whether they retain or lose soldiers. This is a failing in most cases because of a lack of effective coaching and mentoring. All leaders say they know the importance of taking care of their people. We have no reason to doubt their sincerity; they genuinely feel that they care. Unfortunately, they too often assume their intentions and heartfelt personal concerns are enough and are obvious to other members of the unit. Too often these intentions and concerns are neither enough or obvious. Too often the perceptions of troops in the unit are the opposite of what the leader says and feels.⁷ *An example of this might be the platoon leader who rushes up to the young sergeant and says, "Sergeant Snuffy, I just heard that this is your last drill and you are going to ETS! I really think you are one of my best soldiers, and I've come to rely on you! Are you sure you want to get out this weekend?"*

I don't have to explain what the young sergeant is thinking, but I would bet that when the company commander asks about Sergeant Snuffy's ETS, the young platoon leader will reply sincerely, "Gee, I don't know why he left, sir. I *told* him how good he was and how important he is to the platoon!"

In most cases, these company grade officers need little more than the mentoring from their Battalion Commander who explains to them how important retention is to him for the unit to complete its mission. This vitally important communication rarely happens. The drill—specifically the Officer Development Program is the perfect setting to do this, but the Battalion Commander is invariably tied up with a meeting or the latest crisis from the Brigade Commander. Such rudimentary guidance such as asking the soldier to reenlist goes unsaid. The civilian world is full of former soldiers who would have been great assets to the Army had someone simply asked them to stay.⁸

Employer support (or lack thereof) is a very real determinant in current retention of soldiers in the National Guard. I believe that for the vast majority of ARNG soldiers, the one weekend a month and two weeks of Annual Training (AT) during the year are not points of contention with their employers. These, for the most case, are recurring and scheduled in advance. I further believe that employers accept bonafide state emergencies as a mission their employee is subject to get activated for. Indeed, many employers are direct or indirect recipients of the relief effort.

Ironically, it is the extended mission in support of an AC operation such as Bosnia or Kosovo that causes the greatest angst among employers. The irony is that these are the missions in which the ARNG can best demonstrate its capability and relevancy as a vital reserve component. The long duration (normally 9 months), as well as the perceived notion that this is more of a "vacation" because there is no fighting, wreaks havoc with employers. It gets untenable when the soldier is a sole proprietor or part of a

very small company operating on a hand-to-mouth basis. Currently, a program called Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) addresses employer/Guardsman/Reservist issues and relationships. It primarily seeks to mitigate employment issues through a program of education and exposure to the Reserve Components (RC) and is administered by the NCESGR (National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve). In the 25 years since NCESGR was established and the Total Force concept was instituted, the mission of NCESGR has intrinsically remained the same, but the demands on employers have increased.⁹

The current remedy to employer conflicts is to first have the unit commander at the lowest level contact and appease/educate the employer by verifying the soldier's duty requirements. If unsuccessful, the next step may be to tell him about the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act. It may escalate and require involvement of a Judge Advocate General (JAG) representative to further stipulate the legalities of service upon activation. Generally, it is the soldier who loses in this situation since the employer will probably not break the law, but he may institute subtle recriminations upon his return to work. It is obvious what effect upon retention this vignette can produce.

It has been known for many years that leadership and tough, realistic training are the most important factors to retention in the ARNG. So why do commanders at all levels let 18% attrition continue in an era of tougher recruiting from a smaller pool of prospects? I believe it is because of a lack of training for the company grade level of officers and NCOs and a defined program of retention (instead of charging commanders with the retention mission without tools or training).

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD RETENTION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

BACK TO BASICS

The most important factor for retaining soldiers is to engender in all soldiers cohesion, esprit de corps, and a sense of being an essential part of their unit. Empirical research reveals that the two most statistically significant factors are a sense of belonging and training.¹⁰ The camaraderie and cohesion of a unit are almost exclusively "Green Tab" issues, primarily at the company level. The chain of command comes closest to the individual soldier in a company. This being the case, coupled with the importance of retention of soldiers, it follows that training in unit cohesion and retention is required by all commanders. Untrue.

In most states, strength maintenance is a key metric by which commanders are evaluated, but little actual training is offered to the people most in need of it—company grade leaders. In fact, the subject is not covered by many of the Officer Basic Courses (OBC). It is covered tangentially in diversity training, but not in its true form of unit team building. Cohesion is an area in which the commanders at all

levels have almost total control. The data are clear: *the chief influence on unit cohesion is leader behavior*. Units in which leaders behave like they value people and express concern for their welfare, score high on measures of cohesion.¹¹

This subject should be mandated for all branch OBC schools. The course syllabus is not difficult to conceive, as it is mostly leadership at the grassroots level. Principles such as teambuilding, career and performance counseling, rewards and punishment systems, communicating to subordinates, coaching, mentoring, normative (or non-monetary) motivation, managing a family support program, et al, should be taught. The list is not full of new concepts, but it is a *basic* list of skills which junior officers and NCOs are currently expected to pick up by osmosis.

If these courses are not mandated as subjects at OBC, then the ARNG must put together a standardized course to administer in an exportable package format. This course should be taught using adult learning techniques versus platform lecture. Group discussions, brainstorming, and facilitation are the proper format. Other important facets of the training are role-playing and utilization of vignettes to let the participants get a hands-on feel of how to deal with these situations in an interactive mode.

Xerox Corporation produces an excellent program that deals with these matters in a civilian business setting for its own personnel as well as a product for sale and export. If the ARNG does not have the expertise or does not want to spend the time and human resources on this training, it can be purchased off the shelf and, with moderate modifications, make it National Guard compatible.

This training will not come without costs. Program development or site licenses, media requirements, and trainer certification and logistics would be just the start. I strongly advocate this training not be given during drills, Annual Training, or utilizing additional training assemblies (ATA). The ARNG must determine the number of personnel, the density (reach), and how to ensure all those who ultimately need it will receive it. The training expense should be expensed out to include incremental personnel costs, travel and per diem, and facility costs (if required). Using these funds rather than money already allocated would not take these key leaders away from their troops and otherwise decrement the already tight unit resources.

As usual, resources (read: money) are the insurmountable hurdles that kill many good ideas. In the case of this "Retention Training," I submit the Army National Guard cannot afford *not* to execute this training. The investment in both basic training and advanced skill training is hefty. In fiscal year 1998, the average cost of recruiting an enlistee was \$6,732, and the average cost of training was an additional \$28,800, for a total of \$35,532...these figures demonstrate the magnitude of the cost of recruiting and training hundreds of thousands of recruits each year and the loss to the services when attrition rates are high.¹² Other cost considerations are those associated with lost force structure and attendant resources if the Army National Guard is not able to maintain current mandated force levels.

I believe that junior leaders feel they lack the time to properly work to retain personnel. It becomes easier to punish poor performers and show them the door rather than work with them. The aforementioned training can give them some tools to work on their retention, but their chain of command needs to

give them the time. This certainly does not mean commanders dictate a period of time to address retention, but instead ensures unplanned, unsourced requirements are kept to the absolute minimum. This is very easy to plan, yet extremely difficult to execute. As an adjunct to the training given to company grade leaders, an executive version must be cobbled and administered to ensure the colonels and lieutenant colonels understand their part in retention. The most important facet of senior officer participation in this program is willingness to coach and mentor subordinates. Senior field grade officers possess much knowledge that will be taught in the initial educational portion. They have dealt with non-performers, they have worked tough personnel issues, and they have the experience young leaders need. It is important to ensure the entire chain of command is involved in order to reach success. A plan for retention should be discussed and agreed upon among rater, senior rater, and rated officer and entered on the OER support form. Retention, or lack thereof, may be an indicator of a subordinate's leadership ability and his unit's command climate. Initially, execution of the program and not actual retention or turnover should be the standard of performance. This program cannot be instituted quickly, but will be a major paradigm shift in some cases.

It cannot be stated more strongly: the key to retention is senior officer buy-in to the training, resources, time, and support given to his subordinate leaders. The payoff for this program will be huge. First of all, retention of good soldiers will increase, enabling recruiters and unit commanders to recruit a growing force instead of only recruiting to replace attrition. Morale, cohesion, and all of the positive groupthink that accompanies this will result in exponential growth in training, productivity, and readiness.

The program for improvement in retention stated above is not a panacea or magic pill that alone will cure the problem. One needs to realize that today's junior leaders are dealing with a Generation Y soldier who in most cases has a job and who lists time and his most precious commodity. Senior field grade officers cannot just superimpose their style of leadership based on their experience during the seventies, eighties, and early nineties. But there are many leadership basics and truths that do not change. Respect, recognition, and a sense of accomplishment are just a few. These basics and how to prosecute an effective leadership style is what today's junior leaders of today need to retain this part-time group of soldiers. Today's young soldier looks to the Army National Guard to give them excitement, camaraderie, a sense of accomplishment, and a part in defending our way of life in trade for their time and loyalty. The Guard must deliver.

COHORT II

The U.S. Army participated in an experiment called COHORT (Cohesion Operational Readiness Training) in which prototype test battalions were kept together from Basic and AIT to assignment to a unit. It was based on the British regimental system whereby units were built and rotated duty together vice the U.S. system of individual replacement.

The ARNG is ideally suited to resurrect the COHORT program. The preponderance of soldiers stay with the unit simply due to the proximity to their residence, with only the more senior NCOs and offi-

cers transferring units for promotional opportunities. The cohesion in these units who drill together, work together, train together and live in the same area could be harnessed to strengthen group and individual norms, create a strong sense of unity and belonging, and engender an affiliation with the community. Outreach programs to schools, youth organizations, and civic groups can build outside cohesion with the community and a sense of pride and ownership in the unit.

This energy can easily be transferred into pride in the community's National Guard unit, a legacy of families and friends serving in the unit (and a ready source of leads for local recruiters). I experienced this sense of community while on active duty with the 101st Airborne Division. My unit, Company A, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, was "adopted" by the city of San Mateo, California, during the Vietnam War. It started with a soldier from San Mateo who wrote home saying how his fellow soldiers in Vietnam wanted letters from home most of all, but some had not received any. The soldier's sister organized a letter writing campaign in which people from San Mateo would "adopt" a soldier to write. The campaign grew from a platoon to the whole company. Soon the unit was known as the "Sons of San Mateo." I personally took a composite platoon to California in 1974 from Fort Campbell to march in a parade in honor of A Company. The pride and emotion for soldiers they did not even know was palpable.

I do not advocate the ARNG units try to replicate this. I am merely illustrating how a unit and a community can create a bond over thousands of miles. The ARNG should try to outline programs whereby units can reach out to the community.

A REVOLUTION IN ARMY NATIONAL GUARD RECRUITING

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Recruiting in the new millennium will be infinitely more difficult than in the past. There are many factors working against the recruiters and the military services:

1. A strong economy with full employment is forecast into the foreseeable future, directly impacting on recruiting.
2. The post-Cold War retrenchment of the military, with dramatic reductions in force, suggesting to youth that job security, which is one of the most important job characteristics for young Americans, may be less characteristic of the contemporary American military than it was during the Cold War.¹³
3. The number of individuals in the target audience for NPS recruitment has declined.
4. A declining percentage of Americans in the target audience of NPS recruits (17-21 year-olds) reporting a propensity to enlist. The results of the 1997 Youth Attitude Tracking Survey (YATS), a computer-assisted telephone interview commissioned by the DoD, show fewer young men and women are interested in military service than in years past. The trend is alarming, showing a steady and consistent decline from 17% to the current 11% since the end of the Gulf War.¹⁴

5. A pay gap exists between civilians and the military, between 14%-19%, depending on whose numbers is quoted.

These factors are at first disheartening, but the hard reality is that even considering all the factors above, the ARNG still needs to recruit NPS soldiers in order to maintain strength and the balance of personnel. The good news is that because of the nature and modus operandi of the Army National Guard, it may mitigate if not totally counteract some of the negative data shown above. First of all, the National Guard is a second job for the vast majority of its soldiers, so a strong economy, job security, and even the pay gap do not impact the organization as much as it does full-time employment in the AC. Secondly, the National Guard can make up *some* of its strength in the force by recruiting prior service (PS) experienced, trained soldiers. Thirdly, virtually all of the recruits in the National Guard know where they will be stationed (their home city, or nearby), which adds to the perceived stability to the soldier.

The point is the National Guard is going after a somewhat different niche of people than is the active Army. The strategy of NPS recruitment in the National Guard should reflect this, as should its advertisements and recruiter procedures. However, it does not. The ARNG targets the prototypical, monolithic high school graduate without great regard to ethnic target audience (except in highly ethnic areas), does not actively recruit foreign speaking recruiters, does not provide in-depth sales training to recruiters, and rewards quantity over quality in its evaluation system.

In order to put together any marketing strategy, an organization must identify its product, delineate what makes its product different and better than the competition, determine the market for the product, and then put together an advertising and marketing strategy to sell the product. Many people might dispute that National Guard service is a "product," but in a broader context it is. I believe that a soldier does not drill with the National Guard primarily for the extra income, or patriotism, or even for the college benefits. Although the preceding are significant factors in his participation, I believe one of the primary reasons for joining the Army National Guard is for the camaraderie and the excitement of doing "Army stuff." Furthermore, I think a real motivation for being a Guardsman is having the chance to directly help out your community thru involvement in a state emergency.

The paradox in the current strategy is the ARNG is selling money for college or skills for employment. The Army National Guard has a unique product that it does not even mention—the chance to be a hero in one's own community. It may sound trite, but one only need to hear comments from individuals who had their property or possessions protected by National Guardsmen; or people who have been evacuated or rescued by National Guard helicopters during a flood; or people who would have lost their house and all their worldly possessions to wildfire but for the brave National Guard helicopter pilots flying over the blazes dropping water on them. One hears the term "hero," and the phrase, "Thank God for the National Guard," time and again. Although I am not advocating this be the new advertising theme yet, it would be a powerful statement if a National Guard recruiting commercial showed some actual footage of one the scenarios described above, short interviews with people who were affected by ARNG efforts and a closing line of, "*Your citizen-soldiers at their best—THANK GOD FOR THE NATIONAL GUARD! If you*

are a high school graduate, motivated, and are looking for a challenge at least one weekend a month, enlist today and join the ranks of California's proud citizen-soldier heroes!!!!" This imparts a clearer and more emotional call to arms than "Be all that you can be."

A source of high quality recruits for the National Guard is JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps). Guard units could affiliate with these high school cadets or sponsor them and provide instructors, equipment to train with, and role models to observe. If a strong cohesion is built up with JROTC members, it can roll over into a ready recruit for the unit.

Diversity is also important in the marketing of the Army National Guard. An example is showing Asian soldiers in a commercial or print ad in California. Asians are one example of an ethnic niche that has not been tapped. Census statistics in 1997 show that Asians have the highest percentage of high school graduates (84.9% v. 82.1% total) of any major ethnic group in the United States. In addition, they have the highest percentage (42.2% v. 23.9% total) of completing 4 or more years of college.¹⁵ What this illustrates is that this ethnic group should: 1) have the highest propensity to complete their first term of enlistment; and 2) they should be a receptive target audience for the Army College Fund benefits. This high payoff target is not pursued in ads, or by recruiters who can speak their language and the language of their most important influence, the parents.

Another revolutionary concept in recruiting may build bridges with employers and improve retention at the same time. Employers are always looking for trained, reliable people to hire into their businesses. If the National Guard were to offer a new recruit who successfully graduates from Basic and AIT a job interview with an employer in a field akin to his MOS (based on a prearranged agreement between the recruiter and the employer), all three parties would "win." A scenario might be that an agreement would be struck thru which UPS would let the local recruiter know that it had projected openings for vehicle mechanics in the next year. The recruiter could use this as an incentive that UPS (a highly sought company to work for) is granting priority interviews to National Guard soldiers holding 63B MOS (wheeled vehicle mechanic). If the soldier is hired under this program, the government would issue a tax credit to the company equaling the soldier's pay (may be his UPS pay or his Guard pay, or both). All three entities would come out ahead—the soldier would get an excellent job, the employer would get a (ostensibly) reliable employee, and the National Guard would get a good recruit.

RECRUITING THE RECRUITERS

The ARNG does not rely solely on volunteers for positions in recruiting. Many recruiters start out as soldiers who are seeking a Title 32 AGR (Active Guard/Reserve) active duty tour. They may be interviewed and ultimately receive focused recruiter training, but many are more motivated to obtain the security of a full time AGR position versus yearning for a recruiting assignment.

The current screening process has more to do with the prospective recruiting NCO's personal history and success in his unit than his potential in the arduous job of recruiting for the Guard. A seasoned

recruiter does not screen the prospective recruiters, and communicative skills are not evaluated. Successful recruiters must be able to effectively communicate with a variety of people in the civilian community and convince them of the benefits of military service. These people include not only potential recruits but also include parents, teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school administrators, and others who may influence potential recruits. However, we found only the Air Force's screening process has measurable criteria to evaluate the communication and interpersonal skills of prospective recruiters.¹⁶

Selling is a highly interpersonal science *and* art that relies almost entirely on verbal communication. In my personal business experience in retail and franchise sales, I learned the salesperson must first sell *himself* before he sells the product. Only people with highly developed interpersonal skills can be successful in this, the hardest sales category there is—the sale of intangibles. A potential recruit cannot actually see, feel, smell or taste the product the ARNG recruiter is selling. The recruiter must help the prospect to envision himself as a soldier, completing training and returning as a member of his National Guard unit. He must be able to illustrate to the potential recruit how it is in his interests and will be a self-improvement. The ability to communicate with the prospect and his entire support system will determine the NCO's success as a recruiter.

Recruiter production is measured in terms of quality and quantity. The fixation on short-term hard numbers results in recruiters being rewarded more for their production rather than whether the recruit has the ability to successfully complete his training. In FY98, the U.S. Army National Guard missed its quantity mission by about 1,200 (55,401 vs. mission 56,638) and met one of its three quality missions. In quality achievement, 84.8 percent were high school diploma graduates (with the remainder alternate high school graduates); 54.5 percent TSC IIIA category; and less than 2 percent TSC IV.¹⁷ With the DoD attrition rate within the first six months at 11 percent,¹⁸ it is imperative that quality of recruits be emphasized more. Research confirms that soldiers with higher AFQT test scores perform better. A 1986 study by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the behavioral and Social Sciences found "a statistically significant and positive relationship exists between AFQT scores and performance measures...across a wide range of military occupational specialties."¹⁹

CONCLUSIONS

Recruiting and retention hold much more impact than just the soldiers it accesses or retains. The very future of the Army National Guard and what role it will play in The Army is heavily dependant upon the abilities of its leaders to ensure the component can bring its share of combat power to the table. The quality of soldiers in the ARNG is as important, if not more so, as we look forward to Joint Vision 2010. In the future scenario of battle, fewer, better-trained men will win, if they are the right men.²⁰ JV2010 portends a high-tech and digitized battlefield where quality soldiers assess situations based upon processing and prioritizing information in order to make the right moves to win battles. Recruiting and retention of the best soldiers the ARNG can attract will dictate the acceptance and level of participation in The Army.

The ARNG must retain force structure through good leadership and setting the conditions that will make service in the Guard rewarding and productive. A total review of current practices from NGB down to the company level must be made. A leadership program must be administered to the leaders with the most clout on retention—the company grade level. It is ironic that many states have done away with company level pre-command courses ostensibly due to lack of funds. We do not think it important enough to educate those very leaders who have the most contact with our soldiers, yet brigade and battalion pre-command courses are centrally funded. We must reevaluate what is really important and where we should spend the money to make a difference.

The research on what makes people stay with a particular organization is available. We must utilize it, decide its applicability to the ARNG, design programs to train people how to retain, and execute.

Recruiting the force is the “bone marrow” of the Army National Guard. The ARNG has too few resources not to spend them wisely in the areas and targeted toward the people we can recruit into the Guard. Focusing on what works not only for the ARNG, but for all services is cheap knowledge. In addition we must look to the future to seek out innovations that might not work *today*, but will be the techniques and procedures of tomorrow.

Screening, training, and supporting our recruiting force will shape the employment battlefield of the future. The Army National Guard must not be shy in touting its success, its heroes, and its purpose. Americans want to be proud of their own. One only need look to the excitement, headlines, and publicity the U.S. Hockey Team generated in an American non-sport at the time. I can go down the list to include the euphoria of Just Cause, Desert Storm, and most recently, the U.S. Women’s World Cup Soccer Team. Americans *want* something to be proud of. Why not let it be the Army National Guard?

Word Count: 7219

ENDNOTES

¹ COL Thomas T. Galkowski, "Factors Affecting Army National Guard Retention of Enlisted Soldiers," Strategic Research Project, 10 April 1999, 26-27.

² MG Jack C. Wheeler, "In Recruiting, Quality is All," ARMY, September 1991, 36.

³ Jennifer Dolce, "Companies Use Tuition Assistance to Strengthen Retention Rates," HR Focus, December 1999, S4.

⁴ Margaret Olesen, "What Makes Employees Stay," Training & Development, October 1999, 49.

⁵ Capt Troy M. Hull, "Manpower: The Sharp End of the Spear," Marine Corps Gazette, January 1994, 26.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ LTC Larry H. Ingraham, "Caring is Not Enough—An Uninvited Talk to Army Leaders," Military Review, December 1987, 45.

⁸ CPT Mark L. Kimmey, "A Commander's Job: Keeping Army's Best," ARMY, November 1992, 38.

⁹ John B. Rosamond, acting director, NCESGR, speech 22 Oct 1997 at the Naval Enlisted Reserve Association's 40th Annual National Conference, North Charleston, S.C., transcript appearing in article "QDR, Employer Support: Challenges for Guard and Reserve," Defense Issues, Vol. 12, No. 50.

¹⁰ Galkowski, 26.

¹¹ Ingraham, 45.

¹² General Accounting Office, Military Attrition: Better Data, Coupled with Policy Changes, Could Help the Services Reduce Early Separations (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, September 1998), 5-6.

¹³ David R. Segal, Jerald G. Bachman, Peter Freedman-Doan, & Patrick M. O'Malley, "Propensity to Serve in the U.S. Military: Temporal Trends and Subgroup Differences," Armed Forces & Society, Spring 1999, 410.

¹⁴ Lieutenant Colonel John P. Mikula, "The Challenge of Manning the Post-Cold War Army," Strategic Research Project, 6 Mar 1999, 6.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998, Educational Attainment, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1960 to 1997 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, September 1998), 170.

¹⁶ General Accounting Office, Enhanced Recruiter Selection and Training Could Improve the Recruiting Process (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, January 1998), 15.

¹⁷ "Challenges in Recruiting and Retention," The Officer 75 April 1999: 61.

¹⁸ General Accounting Office, Military Attrition, 4.

¹⁹ Wheeler, 35.

²⁰ Ian G.G. Curtis, "Too Few Good Men: Recruitment Is Down, But Demands Increase," Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy, 31 May 1996, 7.

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