

Running Head: The National Guard Mission Today

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MSG Shaun Vincent

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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SGM Rodolfo Garza

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....3

Introduction.....4

Guard Units Alerted.....4

Dwell Time.....4

Tour Length.....5

Counter Point.....6

Conclusion.....7

References.....8

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the National Guard's deployment frequency, length of deployments, and their dwell time. The Army National Guard is a subordinate entity of the United States Department of Defense. Many decry the current manner in which the National Guard is being used to fight the War on Terror. Their argument is that the Guard wasn't meant to fight overseas for extended periods, or their home state mission is suffering greatly with their Soldiers and equipment overseas. The fact is that the Global War on Terror outweighs a natural disaster, or civil unrest. The Guard's workload in terms of deployment time in a combat zone is only a fraction of their active components brothers. The active component is fulfilling their role, and Guardsmen were also aware that they could be called to duty in defense of the nation at any time, at home and abroad.

Introduction

The Army National Guard has an excellent deployment tempo in regards to frequency and length of deployments versus dwell time. Their operational tempo is very manageable and supports the ability of its units to deploy in support of the Global War on Terror and redeploy for a respectable amount of dwell time. Since the National Guards inception with the Militia Act of 1903 they have stood as a supplemental component of active duty forces to defend our Nation in a time of war.

Guard Units Alerted

In October 2007 eight National Guard brigades were alerted for deployment to Operation Iraqi and Enduring freedom. Of the eight units notified in October the first units to leave are slated for May and June of 2008, the others for later in 2008 and some in 2009. Four of the eight units deployed last from 2004 to 2005, one brigade deployed two battalions to Iraq in 2003, one brigade deployed a battalion to Germany in 2002 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, one brigade has sent small units to support Iraqi Freedom, and one brigade will be deploying for the first time. Since the Global war on terror and the deployment of National Guard Soldiers overseas many guard units have had to cross level personnel to other units to fill shortages so no doubt in many of the units slated for deployment in October 2007 there are Soldiers headed for their second tour of duty.

Dwell Time

Of the four units who deployed to combat from 2004 through 2005, 3 will have 3 years dwell time and the fourth will have had 4 years dwell time. The two battalions from Oklahoma's 45th Fires Brigade who deployed to Iraq in 2003 will also have 4 years dwell time. The one battalion from Decatur, Illinois' 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team will have had almost 6

years dwell time when they deploy to Afghanistan in the autumn of 2008. In January of 2007 tour extensions from 12 months to 15 months were announced to support the President's plan to increase troop strength in Iraq to 168,000 Soldiers. The major reason for the tour extension to 15 months was to enable Army leadership to ensure active duty Soldiers were getting at least 12 months dwell time before deploying again in support of the Global War on Terror. The 12 months of dwell time is somewhat misleading in that it an active duty Soldier is not at home with his family for 12 months relaxing. He will get approximately 45 days to recover his equipment and complete administrative requirements, take 30 days leave and then ramp back up for his next deployment. The train up for the next deployment will undoubtedly take him away from home along with any career progression schools he or she must attend. After pre-mission training a Soldier will get a brief opportunity to take leave before heading back overseas for another year of combat operations only to redeploy and to it all over again. I highlight these points only to bring an appreciation for both the active duty Soldier's sacrifice, and the National Guardsmen's time at home with his family. The dwell time a National Guard Soldier has compared to the active duty Soldier is as it should be in relation to the job one signed up for fully knowing the implications.

Tour Length

In most cases barring a tour extension the units recently alerted will only spend a maximum of 12 months actually deployed in a combat zone compared to 15 months for the active duty component. From the outside, a three month difference may not be all that much. From the inside three months can be an eternity. The thought that one will be deployed for 15 months in a combat zone away from their spouse and children is very hard. Compounded with the knowledge that you'll be home for a scant 12 months before going back to combat and leaving your family again can be crushing. In January of 2007 Secretary of Defense Robert

Gates directed that reserve component units would mobilize for no longer than one year. If the 50th Heavy Brigade Combat Team from the New Jersey Army National Guard mobilizes in May of 2008 and doesn't deploy to Iraq until the Autumn of 2008 that will have them away from home for approximately 16 months which is comparable to the active components time away from home. That is if they're in combat for 15 of those months, and also keep in mind this is the 50th's first deployment in support of the Global War on Terror.

Counterpoint

The active duty Army component is charged to fight and win our nation's wars. Our Army National Guard as it is comprised today was formed out of a post cold war era mentality that viewed the National Guard as a strategic reserve to be used in the later stages of a war after being fully trained and equipped prior to deployment to make up for its everyday operating strength of about %70 of men, weapons and equipment. Your data above only takes into consideration the eight units recently alerted and makes no mention of the units activated over the past six years. Additionally, many of the National Guard's younger soldiers joined for the enormous educational benefits never actually believing they'd be called to war. Their understanding was they'd be called up for state and local emergencies or at a time of natural disasters. Many of our National Guard citizen Soldiers have professional careers that can't afford to be left unattended for 18 months, or the salary difference between their civilian income and military base pay will cause their families standard of living to drop dramatically. The National Guard is not capable of sustaining its home state mission while simultaneously supporting the Global War on Terror. The toll on the Citizen Soldier's home life and the inability to support disaster relief operations such as those needed for hurricane Katrina are just a few reasons why the Army National Guard can not sustain its current support level to the nation.

Conclusion

The Army National Guard's deployment tempo versus dwell time is excellent. Their operational tempo is very manageable. Their mission, first and foremost is to protect our nation against all enemies foreign and domestic. In light of the deployment versus dwell time ratio discussed above, the subject of National Guard deployment time bares no merit. There is no such thing as a "citizen Soldier" you're either a Soldier or you're a civilian. Soldiers that don't want to deploy to combat should serve their community as civil servants, eliminating the fear of deploying.

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