

EANGUS NEW PATRIOT

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It has never been clearer that America's Army needs
the National Guard—
not just for wartime missions, but also in peace.

By Gen. Carter F. Ham, USA Ret., and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston, USA Ret.

And it has never been clearer that the National Guard is up to the task, even as it juggles everyday real-world deployments to Europe and the Pacific, an unending demand for humanitarian and rescue missions, and an Armywide push to improve combat readiness that includes having a least one-third of Guard brigades at the highest state of readiness by 2028.

Today's National Guard isn't the force of the Vietnam War, in which only a few thousand Guard soldiers were involuntarily mobilized. It isn't the National Guard of Operation Desert Shield, when mobilization was slowed as units completed training and other requirements before they were ready to deploy.

Today's National Guard has fought alongside the active Army and the Army Reserve for almost two decades in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a force that has deployed to the Sinai and Kosovo, led training exercises in the Pacific, responded to devastating storms at home, stood up cyber protection teams to fight the nation's enemies online, and trained at the National Training Center to face a near-peer adversary on the battlefield.

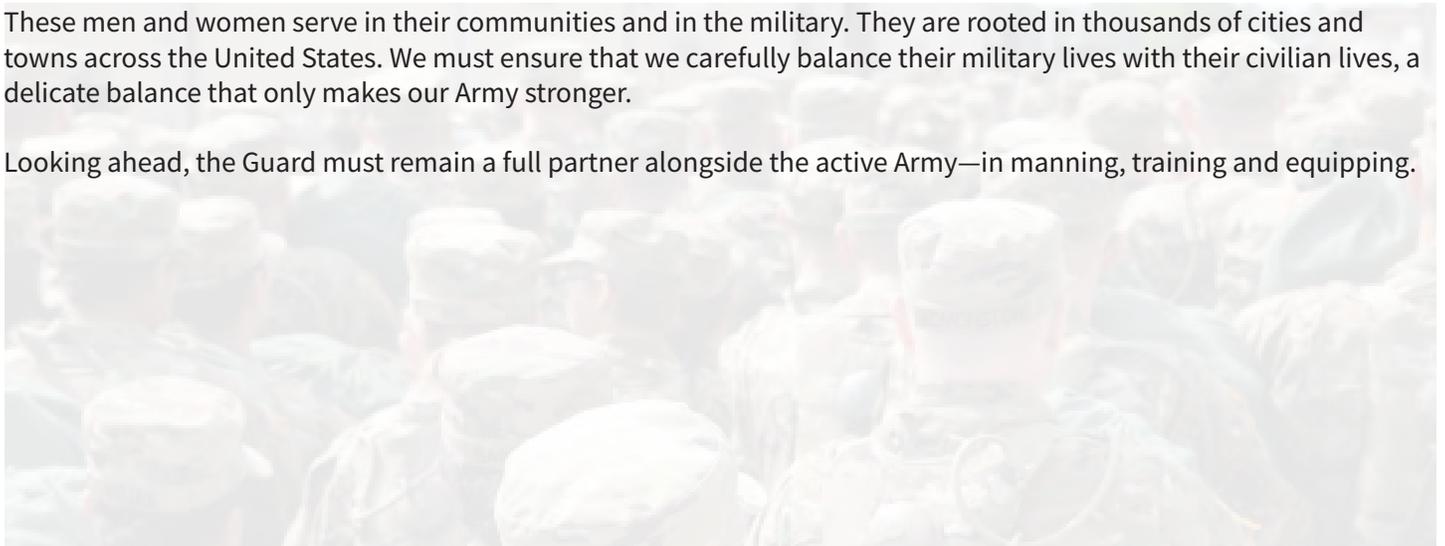
The U.S. Army will never again fight alone. To win, it needs the Total Force and its partners and allies. It doesn't hurt that Army Secretary Mark T. Esper served in the Regular Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard, making him a strong advocate for combined energy. It also helps that Gen. Mark A. Milley became the Army's 39th chief of staff after commanding Army Forces Command, where he worked closely with the adjutants general and senior Army National Guard leaders.

Having the National Guard remain a deployable, sustainable and fully integrated component of the Total Army has never been more important, and it's clear that the National Guard will continue to play a critical role at home and overseas.

But achieving higher levels of readiness in the Guard requires careful planning. Most National Guard members have civilian jobs that are integral to their local communities. Many are police officers or firefighters. Others are engineers, teachers, doctors, scientists, coaches, artists and more.

These men and women serve in their communities and in the military. They are rooted in thousands of cities and towns across the United States. We must ensure that we carefully balance their military lives with their civilian lives, a delicate balance that only makes our Army stronger.

Looking ahead, the Guard must remain a full partner alongside the active Army—in manning, training and equipping.



Manning

Readiness is the Army's top priority, and there's no doubting the Army National Guard's dedication to that goal. Its 89% individual medical readiness rating, accomplished by requiring certain soldiers to make time for medical appointments, is the highest level achieved in the Army components.

To meet the demands placed on the Guard, the component needs to recruit about 50,000 people a year, a task made more difficult by competition from the Regular Army, Army Reserve and the other services. But adding more than 400 recruiters last year may help, as might new approaches to recruiting to better connect the military with today's young people.

Equipping

Air Force Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, the National Guard Bureau chief, talks about equipment parity in the Guard with the active Army, something we fully endorse. The Guard needs to benefit from the same modernization at the same time as the Regular Army, but it needs more than just updated gear. We agree with him that it needs adequate full-time staff, top-notch facilities and predictable, timely and robust funding.

Training

The National Guard also has been a full partner in discussions about the Army's future, with about 50 Guard members joining the U.S. Army Futures Command by the time it becomes fully operational this summer. As the Army moves to reorganize for the future, it is not yet clear what capabilities will remain or be added to Army Guard responsibility.

It is clear from listening to people like Lt. Gen. Eric J. Wesley, Futures Command deputy commanding general and Army Futures Concept Center director, that the Army has no plans to move forward without the Guard.

The future also holds changes in training for the Guard as the Army refines and implements its Multi-Domain Operations concept. The driving force behind the Army's modernization push, MDO will prepare the Army for the future fight.

To make sure the Army Guard is fully ready, certain Guard units must have the same access as Regular Army troops to top-of-the-line training simulators that allow for wide, immersive training experiences.

What's next?

The National Guard remains a busy and vital part of the Total Force, both overseas and at home. Soldiers with the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team of Mississippi and Kansas National Guard members returned in March after nine-month deployments in support of Operation Spartan Shield in the Middle East. In April, the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment of the Tennessee National Guard completed a tour in Ukraine.

National Guard troops from Maine are deployed to Poland in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, where they'll be until early 2020.

The National Guard also makes an impact around the world through its State Partnership Program. The program—now with 83 partner nations—is a critical part of our national security and foreign policy efforts at a time when a new Cold War has emerged and the U.S. needs to continually work with and reassure its allies and partners.

Through the long-term State Partnership Program, about one-third of the nations in the world are partnered with a National Guard from some state.

Here at home, it was heartening to see the Army National Guard participate in March testing of history-making ground-based ballistic missile interceptors. Soldiers from Alaska, California and Colorado were part of the flight test of a state-of-the-art exo-atmospheric kill vehicle that can strike targets before they can reenter the atmosphere.

Winter Storm Wesley was the second time this year the Army Guard Snow Response Team was activated because of an intense winter storm known as a bomb cyclone.

Fighting both March blizzards and April wildfires, the Colorado National Guard showed the need for the Guard to be ready anytime for any situation. The state's 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, was already practicing water bucket training when it was called to suppress a fire near Las Animas. Seventy-eight buckets, containing a total of 41,000 gallons of water, were dropped on the early season fire.

In Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri and elsewhere, Guard units in March dealt with the problem of too much water, rescuing and feeding the stranded, an effort that served both humans and cattle.

AUSA's role

At the Association of the U.S. Army, we are doing our part to build and maintain a cohesive and balanced Total Force. Our professional development forums and publications are designed to appeal to and help current and former members of all the Army components, industry and community partners, and Army supporters.

Our panel discussions on major Army topics include the Army Guard perspective, and one of our best-attended Institute of Land Warfare breakfast events last year featured Lt. Gen. Timothy H. Kadavy, the Army National Guard director, talking about the transformation of the organization through increased overseas rotational deployments and more time spent at combat training centers.

We at AUSA supported Kadavy's Army National Guard 4.0 readiness plan for increased annual high-intensity training because we know the Total Army needs that capability and expertise. We've supported critical modernization and recapitalization efforts so the Guard is ready to defend our nation, if needed, and respond to emergencies. And we joined six other organizations—including the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States—to get congressional support for the reserve component, including expanded health care coverage, the elimination of equipment shortfalls and an increase in full-time personnel support.

Special relationship

AUSA has a special relationship with the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, which is one of our association partners. As our partner, EANGUS members receive the digital editions of our award-winning monthly magazine, weekly newspaper and other professional publications, are eligible to apply for members-only scholarships, and have access to other member benefits and services, including many discounts.

We have worked closely with retired Sgt. Maj. Frank Yoakum, executive director of EANGUS, who has engaged with us and carried EANGUS' message to our chapters. He has encouraged us as we have supported National Guard members, their families and their employers on legislative and policy issues that enhance Guard readiness and the quality of life of Guard soldiers.

We believe a strong, ready and resilient National Guard is critical to the U.S. Army and the nation, and we are pleased to partner with EANGUS in support of the Guard.



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Photo on page 21 source: *AUSA Extra* http://extra.USA.org/06-06-2019/docs/AUSAExtra_June-6.pdf?reload=1559837857586 - (U.S. ARMY/SGT. PHILIP MCTAGGART)