



Commission On The National Guard and Reserves, One Year Later

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IT has been just over one year since the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR) released its final report to Congress and the Secretary of Defense.¹ This work marked the completion of the first independent, comprehensive formal assessment of the National Guard and Reserves since World War II. In filling such a large gap in formal study, it is not surprising that this report represents a significant body of work: six major conclusions and 95 recommendations, supported by 163 findings.

The CNGR Final Report was released 31 January 2008. Secretary Gates immediately directed action to review the recommendations in their entirety. During the subsequent months, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) divided the 95 recommendations among eight working groups to facilitate a timely, but thorough review and ensuing response. The groups were categorized to address the following areas:

- Mission
- Personnel Management
- Readiness and Utilization
- Compensation, Benefits and Support
- Equipment and Logistics
- Institutional and Organizational
- Reserve Structure and Management
- Medical Readiness and Benefits

The results of the working groups were then briefed to Secretary Gates in July. Shortly thereafter, in October of 2008 the President signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2009. The NDAA contained provisions indicating where Congress thought a legislative response was warranted to take action on some of the CNGR recommendations. In some instances, Congressional action either reiterated the findings in the

CNGR Final Report, resolved the issue that resulted in the recommendation or placed additional requirements on DoD as appropriate. Once the information from the working groups had been effectively compared to the new legislation, the SecDef directed the development of implementation plans from the many agencies in DoD.



In a 24 November 2008 memorandum, Secretary Gates informed the DoD of his decision on a way ahead to resolve the 95 CNGR recommendations. He directed action be taken to develop implementation plans and identified lead agencies within the department for 53 of the 95 recommendations. Additionally, the SecDef informed DoD that 29 of the 95 needed no further action as a process was under way or had already been implemented to address those recommendations. Of the remaining recommendations, two were referred to other Federal agencies. Finally, no action was taken regarding 11 of the recommendations as he did not agree with the Commission's findings, providing a brief justification as to his reasons for disagreement.²

In an immediate response to the memo, Arnold L. Punaro, Chairman of the CNGR responded by saying:

"The CNGR served two valuable purposes: serving as a catalyst for change and raising awareness of the contributions made every day by the Reserve Components. It provided a

comprehensive look at where the Reserve components were, where they are today and what needs to be done in the future to ensure relevancy and to continue contributing as an effective member of the total force. As a recent DoD directive on Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force” (DoDD 1200.17) attests, we have moved further down the path toward integration at all levels and in achieving a truly integrated force.³


So where does that leave us today; more than a year after release of the final report? OSD is continuing to resolve the remaining CNGR issues, including the implementation of those related actions directed in NDAA 09. In a 29 January 2009 memo, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England directed an update be provided in April 2009, then every six months thereafter.⁴ Many issues near and dear to guardsmen and reservists are still being resolved. Such issues include, but are not limited to those dealing with Civil Support and Homeland Security, funding an operational reserve, transparency and equipping of the RC, mobilization, joint education, and numerous benefit and quality of life matters for RC members, their families and their employers. The bottom line is that the DoD is moving forward to act on these recommendations in a well thought out and coordinated fashion with a clear focus of affecting long-term change.

CNGR members understood the enormity of the task levied upon DoD when they issued their Final Report. They also understood that disagreements on how best to solve a particular issue might arise. An excerpt from the report illustrates this point:

These issues are extremely complex, and people of good character and conscience will disagree with some of the solutions we propose. That is to be expected. No significant reforms have been undertaken in the laws affecting the reserve components for more than half a century. The last major Defense reform effort—the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986—made fundamental adjustments to the roles of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and combatant commanders, but did not affect the structures or policies of the reserve components. We hope and anticipate that this report will generate lively debate among the institutions and key policymakers responsible for protecting U.S. national security.⁵

The CNGR served a valuable purpose, that of being a catalyst for change. It provided a comprehensive look at where the Reserve Components were, where they are today and what needs to be done in the future to ensure relevance and to continue to contribute as an effective member of the total force. As the recent DoD Directive 1200.17

directs the management of an operational reserve, we have moved further down the path toward integration at all levels and in achieving a truly integrated force.⁶

The DoD must act, and will act to ensure each implementation plan considers budgetary implications both near and long term. The Office of the Assistants to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Guard and Reserve Matters (OACJCS NGRM), in concert with OSD/Reserve Affairs, will continue to monitor the progress of CNGR implementation, providing essential support to the Chairman, the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, the National Guard Bureau and the Chiefs of each Title 10 Reserve Component. OACJCS NGRM is committed to thinking about and planning for what the future holds beyond the CNGR and how our office can better support you, the warfighters of the RC, both home and abroad. 

Footnotes

¹ See http://www.cngr.gov/Final%20Report/CNGR_ExecutiveSummary.pdf Commission on the National Guard and Reserve, Final Report, 31 Jan 08

² See http://www.militarytimes.com/news/2008/11/military_gates_guard_reserve_112408/ for William H. McMichael article “Gates: Active force, reserves must integrate”, SecDef calls for Congress to mandate that Guard, Reserves have lead in DoD ops in the homeland, Wednesday Nov 26, 2008 – Military Times on-Line

³ See http://www.militarytimes.com/news/2008/11/at_punaro_112508/ for a statement by Arnold L. Punaro, Chairman of the CNGR, Posted: Tuesday Nov 25, 2008 7:21:13 EST. Military Times on-Line

⁴ Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England memo dated 29 January 2009, Number OSD 00640-09

⁵ See http://www.cngr.gov/Final%20Report/CNGR_ExecutiveSummary.pdf Commission on the National Guard and Reserve, Final Report, 31 Jan 08

⁶ DoDD 1200.17, Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force, 27 October 2008, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

