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Thank you for the opportunity to talk about Warrant Officer issues in today's Army National Guard (ARNG). The key topics I will discuss today will be the annual conference for the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS); Warrant Officer Professional Development; Warrant Officer Candidate School for the Reserve Components; Issues affecting Warrant Officers in the ARNG; and Warrant Officer strength challenges.

Our military is facing a unique, unknown future. It faces leaner times, as well as political instability throughout the world. Just look at how rapidly the political climate changed in North Africa and the Middle East. We are unsure as to how all this turmoil will affect us in the days to come. We must remain strong, both politically and militarily, to face these uncertain times.

For more than 375 years the Army National Guard of the United States has proven to be our country's greatest value. It continues to be a ready and relevant force in support of today's missions throughout the world. We have over 45,000 Soldiers deployed overseas and thousands of others called out at any time by their State's Governors to support a variety of state emergency missions and in support of homeland security.

The NGAUS was created in 1878 for the purpose of providing united National Guard representation before Congress. Today, just as then, NGAUS seeks to obtain better equipment, standardized training and a more combat-ready force by petitioning Congress for resources. More than a century later with the backing of nearly 45,000 members and other supporters -- NGAUS continues that mission.

In August, over 100 warrant officers attended the NGAUS conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There were a number of exceptional national and Department of Defense (DOD) speakers addressing national issues affecting the role and responsibilities of the National Guard, both Army and Air. Speakers included the Governor of Wisconsin, Governor Scott Walker; Chief, National Guard Bureau, Gen Craig McKinley; Commander NORTHCOM, GEN Charles H. Jacoby, Jr.; Commander AFRICOM, GEN Carter F. Ham; COS, USAF, Gen Norton A. Schwartz; Vice-Chairman, JCOS, Admiral James A. Winnefeld, Jr.; Director, Air National Guard, Lt Gen Harry M. Wyatt III; and the Acting Director, ARNG, MG Raymond Carpenter.

A separate Warrant Officer Caucus was held. CW5 Gene Touchstone, CCWO Mississippi ARNG, presided over the meeting, which included elections for area representatives. Major General Raymond Carpenter, Acting Director of the Army National Guard, National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA, was the guest speaker.

Several States conducted a Warrant Officer Professional Development (WOPD) day that focused on personal and professional development. Common topics for these WOPDs included:

- a. Preparation of Officer Evaluation Report (OER);
- b. Required military education for promotion;
- c. Review of military personnel files (PERMS);
- d. Leadership development and training;
- e. Warrant Officer strength management issues;
- f. ARFORGEN and mobilization readiness.

There were several other warrant officer issues discussed at these WOPDs.

Again, the WOCS-RC program was established in 2006. It is designed for ARNG and USAR warrant officer candidates (WOC). There are three separate phases to the program: Phase 1, Distance Learning (DL) phase; Phase 2 attend five IDT weekends; and, Phase 3 is conducted for two weeks at Camp Atterbury, Indiana or Fort McClellan, Alabama. The WOCS-RC program is meeting, if not exceeding, the training standard established by the school house. The program has been fully accredited by the Warrant Officer Career College. Giving our enlisted Soldiers the opportunity to attend either the resident Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOCS) at Fort Rucker or the Reserve Component (RC) Warrant Officer Candidate School through the ARNG Regional Training Institute (RTI) has been a continuing success story.

Strength challenges continue with critical shortages identified in a number of Warrant Officer MOSs. ARNG Warrant Officer appointments are continuing to exceed losses. However, there continues to be a significant delta needing to be fixed. We cannot slow down identifying and qualifying high quality enlisted Soldiers to fill current and projected Warrant Officer vacancies. The hiring of Warrant Officer Strength Managers in 2005 has proven to be a key to success in this program. The good news is that we are headed in the right direction but, we cannot breathe easy yet.

This year the largest issue facing ARNG Warrant Officers is the Fiscal Year 11 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) commissioning Warrant Officer 1's (WO1s). This became a conundrum for Department of the Army, National Guard Bureau, the States, and especially for our Warrant Officers. Policies and procedures have been implemented that will hopefully eliminate the situations that arose this year.

As a member of the NGAUS Board of Directors other Legislative issues being worked:

- a. Oppose the federal spending reduction plan that would reduce cost of living adjustments for military retiree pay.
- b. Authorizing Veteran Status for National Guard and Reserve Members Entitled to Reserve Retirement.
- c. Authorizing Space Available Travel on Department of Defense (DOD) Aircraft for National Guard and Reserve Members and Gray Area Retirees on the Same Basis as the Active Component.
- d. Modify the Fiscal Year Requirement to the Aggregate 90 Days of Qualifying Service to Reduce the Age to Collect Reserve Retirement Pay.
- e. Army National Guard Black Hawk Modernization.

As I have mentioned before, one of the most critical issues facing our returning soldiers is suicide. As leaders we need to stay more focused on our subordinates, peers, and superiors. As a part of the management and command team, it is our responsibility to observe our soldiers. We know them, we live with them, we mentor them, and MOSTLY it is our responsibility to take care of them. We as leaders help create the environment where soldiers feel it is okay to ask for help. It is Leadership in Action.

The National Guard remains a ready, reliable, relevant and indispensable force. Our Warrant Officers remain the leaders, advisors, mentors, and educators for the force as well as being the technical experts we have always been.

Professionals join Professional Organizations. Be active in your associations. Your voice means much. Thank you again for this opportunity to talk to the United States Army Warrant Officer Association about what is happening in the Army National Guard and it's impact on fellow Warrant Officers. The Army National Guard continues to be "Always Ready – Always There" with Warrant Officers taking the lead as well as being the greatest value in the Department of Defense. Let me know if there are any questions I can answer for you on where we are at and our focus for the future.