

Firefighters, police, military personnel, and civilians, Ground Zero.



U.S. Navy (Preston Keres)

U.S. Northern Command and the National Guard

By RAYMOND E. BELL, JR.

The catastrophe of 9/11 marked the beginning of earnest mobilization and reconstruction operations but with a new twist. Such operations became just as cogent for active duty soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and coastguardsmen as operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo. At the same time, 9/11 highlighted a

role for the Army and Air National Guard that has always been key to the existence of those organizations: functioning as a state or territorial Governor's first responders to domestic emergencies and calamities.

The National Guard was quickly on the scene in New York City helping police, fire, and emergency medical personnel to secure order. 1st Battalion, 101st Cavalry (Tank), with headquarters on Staten Island just across the bay from the crumbling Twin Towers, reacted automatically, being immediately

Brigadier General Raymond E. Bell, Jr., USA (Ret.), has served in all three components of the Army as well as in joint assignments. He has been widely published on military subjects and is a former editor of *National Guard* magazine.

thrust into a stabilization and reconstruction operation. Not tanks but troops on foot rapidly cordoned off the soot-choked area. They entered a battlefield so wasted as to defy imagination—and one that required quick and effective action. The Guard, ready and able to do its duty, went to work.

The terrorist attacks of 2001 will not soon fade from memory. But the mission of stabilization and reconstruction (emergency repair) in New York City has long since been turned over to civilian authorities. The state Army National Guard has gone on to other stabilization missions as well as participating in Iraqi Freedom. Today almost every Army and Air Force establishment is protected by Guardsmen who check identification, inspect vehicles, and control traffic. Army Guardsmen secured Air Force bases in a joint mode. These are basic stabilization operations that are key to protecting personnel, equipment, and property.

A National Guard Billet

The Federal Government has recognized the vital contribution the Army and Air National Guard make to homeland defense and its inherent stabilization and emergency repair missions. A National Guard officer has been assigned to U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM). The major general serves as chief of staff to the commander of NORTHCOM, who is an active duty Army or Air Force four-star. It is clearly intended that the Guard play a vital role in executing the responsibilities of this joint command. It is possible that this form of stabilization will become the exclusive mission of the National Guard. There will be resistance in the Guard community to such operations becoming its sole task; in any case, that seems unlikely in light of operations in Iraq.

This essay does not debate the efficacy of National Guard roles but rather delineates proposed participation in NORTHCOM, and in doing so advocates making the command a four-star Army or Air National Guard general officer billet.

Such an assignment may seem ludicrous to the active community, but when considering qualifications for this command position, the proposal



Headquarters,
NORTHCOM.

U.S. Air Force (Larry Holmes)

makes better sense. It is a given that both the Army and Air Guard will be the major contributors to homeland defense, so the NORTHCOM commander must know both organizations. Few active duty generals, especially Army, have experience with both the Army and Air side of the National Guard. On the other hand, the state adjutants general must deal with both components daily.

A second qualification is the ability to interact with state and territorial governors. Politics are anathema to

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most of the military but are a fact of life in the Guard. Indeed, many will contend that once an individual reaches flag rank in any component, politics of some kind are involved in getting things done.

Because there are 54 National Guards representing the 50 states and Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Washington, D.C., the pool of Guard generals with these joint qualifications for being NORTHCOM commander is large. The selection of a fully qualified individual should be easy on the basis of such availability alone.

A third requirement is the ability to interface with both state and Federal military and civilian bureaucracies. National Guard generals who work full time in their respective organizations must be adept at balancing conflicting requirements. Active duty generals rarely have to interface with such bureaucracies outside their own components.

National Guard generals are usually appointed to a position for at least four years, in contrast to active duty generals, who rarely serve more than

two years and often little longer than a year. The stability and continuity required to command NORTH-

COM calls for a sufficiently long tour of duty for effective preparation and adequate response to crises.

The above qualifications highlight the unique nature of NORTHCOM. The fact that a Guard general has already been appointed chief of staff recognizes the need for high-ranking Guard representation. A further step would be reversing the command relationship by making the National Guard general the commander and an active duty major general his chief of staff.

From the National Guard perspective, the elevation of a Guardsman to a command on the same level as out-of-country joint commands has special merit. Active generals or admirals command these geographic organizations. In theory, these commands are headquarters only and are resourced by service-specific commands such as U.S. Army Forces Command for the Army or U.S. Special Operations Command, a joint command in its own right. U.S. Central Command also drew on Army combat units from U.S. European Command as well as Forces Command. Some forces in place, such as those in Korea, are dedicated to a particular unified command.

Gaining Acceptance

While the Air National Guard can claim to be well integrated into the three-component Air Force, there is a perception that the Army National Guard can never be as professional as the active Army and drains resources from its active counterpart. At the

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same time, there is a subliminal feeling that a competition exists between the active and Guard components that could lead to the Guard assuming the active component's most cherished missions. Real or not, the Army Guard has a history of believing there is an active Army bias against it. Appointing a National Guard four-star may not entirely assuage the tension, but it would recognize a new measure of equality despite possible active Army resistance.

The situation in Bosnia is representative of how Guard competence is viewed by the active community. While a National Guard headquarters commands the American effort, it has not been a completely Guard endeavor. To "stiffen" the Guard formation, an active Army unit has often made up part of the complement. Once on the ground, however, the components have been seamlessly integrated. Only the shoulder patches betray any differences between the

components. Since all components are now made up of volunteers, only unit performance differentiates quality.

If an Army National Guard general were to command NORTHCOM, there could be rancor over losing an active duty four-star slot. The relationship between the active Army and Guard could suffer. But because command would rotate between services, the loss would perhaps be felt only periodically by either active component.

A major argument not only for a National Guard general commanding NORTHCOM, but for the command to become primarily a Guard organization, is that most of the units, both air and ground, would come from the Guard. Fighter aircraft flying patrols within the continental United States, for example, are primarily from Air National Guard units. By law, Federal military units are not automatically deployed to either natural or terrorist disasters. They must be invited into a state as would have been the case with the World Trade Center attacks.

The New York National Guard was a primary responder, and no active duty Army units were deployed to assist in the city. In the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, although the

active Army was eager to assist, it had to await authority from the Governor of Florida before sending Federal troops, either active Army or mobilized Army Reserve.

This does not mean that active Army soldiers, for example, are not first responders. As in the ice storm of 2000, soldiers from 10th Mountain Division quickly took the field to assist distressed civilians in the vicinity of Fort Drum. But the primary responsibility has rested with state forces in the past, and no change is foreseen. The bulk of operations involving natural disasters will continue to rest with the National Guard on a state duty status.

The Guard will play a major role in counterterrorist operations as it did in airport security. The President requested that Governors place their Guardsmen on airport duty until the Transportation Security Administration hired sufficient security personnel,

with the Federal Government bearing the cost. How such operations will be paid for in the future remains undetermined, but this is one of the easiest to accommodate of all the ramifications of establishing the Guard as an effective homeland defense organization.

Organizing and Enhancing

The major challenge to NORTHCOM in accepting National Guard formations for defense and security operations is how to organize them. Cries are frequent for such units to "reorganize" to meet operational requirements. But it appears not to be well understood that most states and territories have current formations that already meet stipulated requirements. Many, designated as troop commands or state area commands, are structured to perform homeland defense and security operations.

In Guam, for example, a force of 767 Army and 306 Air Guard personnel could be considered insignificant, yet the Guam Territorial Command speaks for itself. Its Army Guard has an infantry battalion suitable for physical security duties for both natural disasters and terrorist incidents. There are also engineer, quartermaster, and military intelligence detachments. Appropriate homeland security and defense missions for these units are self-explanatory. In the Air National Guard, there are no flying units but rather an air base group and services flying squadron. Both formations work with the active Air Force at Anderson Airfield, but in their own right they service visiting Air National Guard aerial units assigned to protect Guam's skies. Finally, the civil engineering squadron has a vital role, along with its Army Guard engineering component, in homeland defense.

The example of Guam demonstrates how carefully the National Guard Bureau (NGB) has structured state and territorial forces over the years. Guam's force structure is no accident. Engineer-type units are vital to helping the island recover its vital services after typhoons. The infantry battalion not only contributes as a combat formation but can help preserve law and order and prevent looting after a storm.



354th Communications Squadron (Joshua Strang)

The National Guard in Guam does not have major combat, combat support, or aerial units. New Mexico, on the other hand, has an air defense unit (Army Guard) and a fighter unit (Air Guard). The air defense brigade has a proud history dating back to combat in the Philippines in 1942. Its subordinate units are also located near White Sands Missile Range, allowing the firing batteries easy access to live fire areas. The fighter wing is one of the most proficient Air Force aerial units. The weather in New Mexico is consistently ideal for maintaining flying proficiency. Holloman Air Force Base is close to Mexico, allowing the wing to fly patrols over the border. Since the NORTHCOM area of responsibility now includes Mexico, aircraft based in New Mexico are ideally located to deploy south of the border. The state also has an organization that encompasses units not assigned to active service roles, 93^d Troop Command. These units, with no designated role in the

organizational schemes of the active Army, would be placed under NORTHCOM command in homeland defense operations even as New Mexico's major Army and Air Guard elements could be called upon.

Of the 54 National Guards in the United States, 49 have both state area commands and numbered troop commands. Alaska, Idaho, Nevada, and Pennsylvania have only state area commands, while Guam has the aforementioned territorial command. These specialized Army Guard troop commands do not include any of the Army Guard combat divisions, enhanced readiness brigades, or other major combat or combat support units. State area commands, however, are really headquarters that serve the Governor's state emergency response needs and can draw on other National Guard organizations as needed.

The 49 troop commands would be the most appropriate for placement under NORTHCOM command and control. If the command were required to deploy federalized National Guard

units to the Mexican border, for example, it could ask for the authority to send units from Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

The capability of the command to task these troop commands (and certain state area commands) helps overcome one of the Guard's greatest fears: that homeland defense and security will become its sole mission. There would, for instance, be no programmed requirement for the Army Guard's major combat formations, such as its armored, mechanized, and infantry divisions as well as its combat brigades, to engage in homeland defense. These units would continue to be dedicated to reinforcing the active Army in performing its global responsibilities. It is foreseen that the eight National Guard divisions and the fifteen "enhanced" combat brigades would therefore not be drawn into the homeland defense and security role except in an additional reinforcing capacity for short surges. The integration of the Air Guard into the active Air Force is so complete, and its nature is so different from the Army Guard, that

there is little danger that it would be singled out for exclusively homeland defense duties.

Specifically for Homeland Defense

The future role of NGB has lurked in the background throughout this discussion. The bureau has recently transformed into a joint headquarters. The chief, Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, has also recently called on the states and territories to reduce the 162 state National Guard headquarters by two-thirds, making the remaining 54 offices joint. This move, as part of National Guard transformation, is designed to bring together the Air and Army Guard headquarter elements in each state and territory (to include the District of Columbia) to provide a more effective intercomponent synergism. The objective is to add agility and versatility to the Guard's capability to respond to terrorist attack, natural disaster, or war.

The National Guard Bureau's relationship with NORTHCOM is easily defined. NGB serves as a force

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provider, as it does for the other major combatant commands. At the same time that many elements of the troop commands would be considered dedicated to NORTHCOM, the bureau would still resource many troop commands to meet other requirements such as humanitarian missions to South and Central America.

While the deployment of presently organized units of the troop commands is theoretically a good idea, organizational shortcomings remain. Thirty-two states now have civilian support teams and more are being organized, but many states need to have their troop commands augmented by units specifically organized for homeland defense. Some of these units now exist only in the active Army and Army Reserve, such as civil affairs and psychological operations. Derivations of such units should become troop command components.



Chief of the National Guard Bureau at press conference.

DOD (R.D. Ward)

Civil affairs units are in great demand in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo. They could serve similar functions in the NORTHCOM area of responsibility, where the civilian administrative structure is obliterated by a natural or manmade catastrophe.

These organizations are made up of those who in civilian life are mid-level executives who know how to assemble assets, direct civilian operations, make assessments, and coordinate with civilian authorities. Each troop command should have one of these units, preferably a battalion that consists of a few hundred personnel. While civil affairs units do not ordinarily have subordinate units, there is no reason why they cannot. In a state with a small National Guard, the civil affairs battalion might be the major element of the troop command and head signal, engineer, medical, aviation, military police, and service support detachments. It could also command a psychological operations element. Such units were especially useful in helping the stricken population of southern Florida after Hurricane Andrew in stabilization and reconstruction (emergency repair)

operations. Such units have mobile printing facilities and loudspeaker-equipped vehicles. Where the rapid and widespread dissemination of critical information is necessary and the telephone network and Internet are impaired, psychological operations units become more important. A variation of current psychological operations units is essential in the war against terrorism and in the interest of national security and defense.

Placing a Guardsman at the pinnacle of NORTHCOM appears viable. With the present troop command structure, modified as described, the National Guard as the principal component of the command thus becomes the major military player in homeland defense operations. At the same time, the jointness of the National Guard, which is so vital to accomplishing the Guard's mission—protecting the integrity of the United States—is enhanced. As it is, the National Guard stands ready to respond to events that might be a repeat of 9/11 at the same time it pursues jointness as its new mantra.

JFQ

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