

"National Guard"

General Craig McKinley

16 September 2009

General McKinley: Thanks Mike, I appreciate it. It's great to be with everybody today.

Off script for a second to say thanks for being here. I know many of you are here with an educational experience and learning as much as you can and professionally developing yourself. I think that's great. As Mike said, I've had an opportunity at the chapter and the state and the region and serving as an AFA under 40 Director at one time, had some great experiences with John Schaud who I saw earlier. I don't know if John's still in the room. I worked with Monroe Hadstone Peterson and now with Mike. Some great leaders. And on the elected side, of course, Tom McKee, Gene Smith, Olly Crawford and Bob Largent. So for those of you who are kind of just sampling the fare here, you're around some very, very great leaders who have done an awful lot for both the industry and the military.

Again off script, I mentioned earlier to be the fourth Chief of the National Guard Bureau who wears this color uniform. A previous Chief of the National Guard Bureau and former Director of the Air National Guard is John Connoway, I'd certainly like you to stand and be recognized, sir. Thank you very much.

[Applause].

We've got a great stable of past Directors of the Air National Guard who have worked very closely with the Air Force and the Air Force Association throughout the years. Of course General Connoway goes back and General Killey followed him from South Dakota, General Shepard followed him from Massachusetts, General Weaver followed Shep from New York, General James from Texas, and then I had the opportunity to follow Danny for a few years and I worked with John Cotton who has I alluded to in my remarks is the former Chief of the Navy Reserve and we have a very collegial and congruent group of Reserve Chiefs who meet a lot. And we work now with Dennis McCarthy who is the Office of the Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs and we have some really strong advocacy in the building. From all the Service Chiefs and from our civilian leadership.

So for all of you in the room today, those of you who served in the National Guard, those of you who are serving in the National Guard, or those of you who just want to learn a little more about it, thanks for the opportunity to speak today.

I have a short video because I think listening to somebody with a monologue at the podium sometimes doesn't capture the true reflection of an organization so I have a short video. If it's queued up please show it and then we'll chat a little bit about what we're doing other than this.

[Video Shown].

So that's kind of a quick review of current events. We don't define our history beginning on September 11, 2001. We define our history before we were a nation. And then as our nation found itself and built its Constitution, the Founding Fathers said we should have a militia; we should have Governors of our states, territories appoint the officers in the militia. And so members of the National Guard carry two commissions -- one in the Army and the Air Force, the federal force of the United States; and a commission in the state or territory in which they live.

General Connaway coined the phrase that we are America's "community based national defense force". I think it's as applicable today as it was when General Connaway coined the phrase as the Director of the Air National Guard and subsequently as Chief. It's a balance.

As Secretary Gates talked about today, we are a balanced force. We do not have all the resources that we would like or necessarily that we need, and so the Army and the Air Force are our major resourcers. We work with Nordy Schwartz and Secretary Donley and Pete Geren and George Casey to make sure that the National Guard can fulfill both its mission in the Title 10 role serving overseas and also representing the Governors of the states, the territories, Puerto Rico, and Guam and our District of Columbia.

So that in a nutshell is the constitutional rooting of why we have a National Guard. The apparent disagreements or agreements that we have through time, throughout history, have all been usually around the resourcing of the organization, not the value or the necessity of the organization.

Our citizen Soldiers and Airmen must have the support of their families, as we talked about on the panel, and we

have a little unique situation with the other reserve components, is that we have to have the support of the employers. Most of our members -- both Army Guard and Air National Guard -- have other jobs. Seventy-five percent of our force have other civilian skills. And it's ironic that this week the President declared this the National Employers Support of the Guard and Reserve Week. President Obama has put out a message on that, and I would say with the Patriot Awards tomorrow night that the Employer's Support of the Guard and Reserve are giving out, our industry partners who I know AFA turns to for support, for we in uniform turn to for support. We thank the employers for contributing their members in this time of crisis at a time when we're been in persistent conflict for over eight years in the nation but as an Air Force for almost two decades of persistent conflict so that these citizen Airmen, these citizen Soldiers can go participate in these federal missions.

Now you also add on top of that the natural disasters here at home and the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001 and we are living in a new age. And so we are creating and crafting with our services the 21st Century version of what the National Guard was to Washington and subsequent presidents from that.

I could go on and on. I'm not going to do that. I'll answer some questions but I've got to close with a letter that I think brings it as close to home for me as anything I've done as Chief. I know all of our leadership try to express their personal thoughts to the members, the families of the fallen. Rarely do I get an answer from one of those families but I did in this case. And I would like you to listen to the words of a mother who lost a son in Iraq, and the father.

"My wife and I thank you for your kind letter of condolences. We are so proud that Eric was part of such an honorable group men and women of the military of the United States and the National Guard.

"You all have been amazing during this most difficult time. Our Casualty Affairs Officer was outstanding and met every need. Captain Darrell Hall is now our friend and we consider him family. Second Lieutenant Tim Butner escorted our son home and stood by our side during the services. First Lieutenant Tom Bolin was our son's best friend and came home from Basra on emergency leave to escort us and care for us.

"We consider all these fine young men as our own now. From the Adjutant General to the privates we were treated

with compassion and respect at every moment. Eric loved his platoon and proudly spoke of them and he would have wanted to be the one to die if he had his way.

"We heard from his driver, Corporal Adam Perish last week. He was seriously wounded the day Eric was killed and after 20 surgeries he's doing well and looking to come to Fort Campbell to finish his recovery. We look forward to visiting him.

"Our hearts have been lifted by these young men and women and I know that you are very proud to be the Chief of the National Guard Bureau."

And they thanked me for our service, to my service and I've got to tell you that when you get those kinds of letters in this nation at war which we will probably be in for the foreseeable future, it renews my spirit, it renews my drive, and my commitment to the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, members of our Coast Guard, to do this work.

So God bless you all for being here today, and Mike I can certainly take any questions that anybody might have.

Thank you.

[Applause].

Moderator: Thanks a lot.

You know we've got a small enough crowd that if you have an abiding question maybe I could ask you to stand and state your question or I can -- go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]?

General McKinley: The role of the National Guard in homeland defense is significant, obviously. Some of the new 21st Century constructs will lend ourselves well to supporting some of the other federal and state agencies that are responsible for that.

You know it was September 11, 2001 that created the Department of Homeland Security. Secretary Napolitano is a former Governor of Arizona, has already reached out through the Department of Defense and Secretary Gates to see what type of liaisons and relationships we can have with the National Guard and other military forces to ensure the safety and security of our American citizens.

The department has said that defending our homeland is our number one priority and we focus a lot on taking the fight to the enemy and denying sanctuary overseas. I want to make sure that we in the National Guard contribute equally to the fact that if, God willing we don't have this happen, if something happens here at home we're prepared to handle that situation which today could be as extreme as a weapon of mass destruction going off in one of our major cities. So we have to be constantly prepared, we have to be trained and equipped and organized to fall in immediately, fully respecting the sovereignty of our Governors and our states and our first responders.

So we'll continue to apply the template that has worked for centuries and we'll continue to do that work, but it's going to take a whole of government approach to making sure each and every American citizen gets the service he or she deserves as a taxpayer.

Moderator: This one's on a card and it's actually a pretty good one because we don't think about it very much, at least I don't, could you speak to the fiscal and cultural challenges related to BRAC total force integration and joint basing?

General McKinley: You know for 60 years the Air National Guard has existed with its Air Force in a delicate balance and whenever we have a Base Realignment and Closure Commission, and there will be others in the future, obviously. This past one that was rendered on September 13, 2005 -- I remember that day very well -- realigned the Air National Guard in a way that we had not been exposed to before and that was our first signal that this transformation of our Air Force and the four structure priorities were going to affect our community basing strategy that had lasted through the 20th Century.

General Connaway built and maintained facilities in 3200 communities across the nation. They are small, small footprint, low infrastructure cost, nevertheless they are facilities. So whenever a closure commission looks at every base we were going to take our fair share of the cuts and that happened.

Out of that Base Closure Commission the Chief of Staff, Secretary of the Air Force decided we needed to have a mechanism by which we transfer the capabilities of those organizations into new and emerging missions, that's the Total Force Initiative. It used to be called Future Total Force, it's still there. It's still looking at the types of transformation that we in the National Guard can do to

become as relevant in this century as we were last century, knowing as all our speakers have said that we'll be a smaller platform centric Air Force but we will still carry the same throw weight as we did when we flew airplanes.

Moderator: The Air Surveillance Alert Mission, modernization, F-35, there seems to be some holes going forward. What kind of plans can you reveal to us to modernize the fighter forces of the Air Guard going forward?

General McKinley: The great leaders who have served in our Air Force previously know that at one time we had almost 2,000 fighters in Air Defense Command and that was to counter a former Soviet threat of a manned bomber attacking the United States after World War II and into the '50s, '60s and '70s. On September 10, 2001 we were down to six alert sites because the conditions presented themselves to downscale to that point. September 11th changed everything for me because those are my roots. I was an Air Defender from way back. And to see what happened on September 11th concerned me greatly.

I try to put myself in the minds of the terrorists who actually hijacked the air planes, and there probably were only three or four of those people who actually knew what their mission was that day, but I wonder in their minds if they ever thought that they would reach their intended target. The greatest nation on the face of the earth, the greatest military, surely we would have been able to counter that threat. Surely maybe not the first time, but at least the second attack, the third attack and fourth. I just can't imagine in their minds that they ever thought that they would actually reach their intended target.

The reason for that is we took risk. We took risk in the defense of our nation from an atmospheric threat. Now those threats are still there.

Gene Renuart at United States Northern Command charged with the responsibility of making sure that doesn't happen again, has said that in his calculus we still need up to 16 alert sites and the tankers that would support them, the AWACS on alert that would be needed to see the targets if we ever were attacked and the targets were low altitude, and the command and control facility through the numbered Air Force called First Air Force that does this for us.

As long as Gene says the requirement's there, we believe the Air National Guard is a cost efficient way of providing those resources in those metropolitan areas that defend against a tactic critical infrastructure.

We are wearing out. It's not about politics, it's about the physics of the actual aircraft wearing out. So if we need X number of sites, then we need X amount of capability to sit alert at those sites.

I would contend that General Schwartz and General Wyatt are working on a strategy to apply a modernization calculus to air sovereignty alert. It's going to be complicated, it's going to be difficult. I certainly support General Wyatt and General Schwartz working towards that solution. I know Members on the Hill are very concerned about this and that's why the interest today of preserving as many legacy fighters as we can, to try to work through the solution to get us to a fighter solution that will give us the greatest coverage and the greatest protection of not only aircraft, manned aircraft, but soon to be at your local theatre unmanned vehicles such as cruise missiles being launched that we've got to be able to see, detect, and destroy before they would hit a city.

Moderator: I have a whole series of these questions but this will be the last one unless General Connaway wants to ask a question to put his colleague on the spot. Would you like to ask a question sir?

General Connaway: I think they'd be interested in recruiting and retention [inaudible].

Moderator: Did everyone hear that? Recruiting trends, force structure trends up or down and supporting the National Guard.

General McKinley: That's why I answered Mike Dunn's question of if I had another dollar I wanted to invest it in recruiting and retaining I think our most precious resource which is our young American youth.

We've obviously, like the other services, fluctuated up and down but we in the Air Guard had a little bit of a problem following BRAC when many of our peoples saw that the flying missions were going away and they kind of didn't join at the propensity that they had been during the '60s, '70s, and '80s. So our recruiting strength actually went below our end strength requirements for about four and a half years. And now TFI, Total Force Initiatives, have brought back the energy and enthusiasm, and now we're back to where we need to be.

On a similar scale, the Army National Guard went from its assigned strength of about 360,000 Soldiers down to

about 330,000 Soldiers. So this balance and the leaders in this room know that recruiting and retention is a delicate balance.

We've got to maintain our emphasis because if the economy returns to normalcy, which I certainly hope, we're going to have competition for the youth of America. I think I've heard General Schwartz refer to the fact that only one out of a hundred youth today qualify to join the United States Air Force, one out of a hundred either through mental, physical, other disqualifiers. So if that's our target base then we're going to have to spend some serious time thinking about how we maintain this all volunteer force and take care of the families that support the member because we always say recruit the member and retain the family.

So if we can do that and do it as successfully as prior leaders like General Connaway, General Killey did, we'll be okay. But I know our Air Force has always been a service in which you get a lot of draw from high school, college kids. But I don't take that for granted and I certainly don't assume that we will get the prior service people that we got when I joined the Air National Guard after a tour on active duty. They're staying in the service longer. They are more career centric than I was in the '70s. So the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve provide a wonderful venue not only to capture the prior service member which we need to have, but also to bring in the youth of America.

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