



have watched the Guard mature from a good, solid, and competent contributor to one now that is able to deploy anywhere in the world immediately with our Active component joint force partners. We can play any role that we are asked to play; we have the capacity as a Guard Force contributor to do that.

There is nothing like 16 years of continuous combat to put discipline into the training process. Everything stems from the responsibility to come when the Nation needs us. I know that the current discussion is on readiness, and we want a ready force, but as a Reserve component, I am not disappointed with where we are. We are an operational force that regularly and routinely contributes to warfighting. Consequently, I am sitting in this seat, probably with the best relationship I have ever witnessed between the Reserve component (in my case, the National Guard) and the Army and the Air Force. Because the Army and the Air Force get so much value from the Guard—which to them is real combat capability when they want it, when they need it, when they plan for it—they are willing to invest in us and give us upgraded equipment and bring us to training and develop our leaders and give us assignments that broaden and develop the senior leaders of the Army and Air National Guard. Currently, about 18,000 people are mobilized on average by the Guard, down from 60,000 or 70,000 mobilized 10 years ago.

The homeland priority is uniquely ours, and when bad things happen, everybody contributes to fixing the problem; we think about it, we plan for it. We are where things happen—we are at the local and state levels where things get solved for domestic consequence management, whether it is storm-driven, natural disaster-driven, or imposed on us by some bad actor. Whether it's cyber or bombs in Boston at the marathon, we are uniquely postured, present, and connected to make a real impact on whatever might be happening.

The partnership priority is new and emerging and tied to warfighting and the homeland. Our relationships continue to grow, with currently 80 partner countries. With Malaysia, for example,

## An Interview with Joseph L. Lengyel

*JFQ: When you became chief of the National Guard Bureau, you stated that your focus would be on three priorities:*

*warfighting, homeland security, and partnerships. What is your assessment of how well the Guard is meeting these priorities?*

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General Joseph L. Lengyel, USAF, serves as the 28<sup>th</sup> Chief of the National Guard Bureau and as a Member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**General Joseph L. Lengyel:** I have never seen a more capable organization that does those kinds of things in our business model. As for the warfighting priority, I

we just signed the newest partnership with our state partner piece and have a strategic impact well beyond what I think people envisioned. When you look at the relationships and the trust that it builds, you realize that the program is morphing from “Hey, go make friends, build trust, work for interoperability” to real employment and training.

*JFQ: It is a far different world than when you joined.*

**General Lengyel:** Absolutely. I joined a unit that was good, but now it is every bit as, and should be expected to be, ready, capable, and competent as an Active component unit.

*JFQ: Given the Chairman’s stated security challenges, the so-called four plus one, how is the Guard preparing and sustaining its units to meet the requirements of warfighting after 16 years of war?*

**General Lengyel:** When I testified before Congress, Representative [C.A. Dutch] Ruppensberger [III (D-MD)] asked me, “The National Guard is in the Baltics. What do you think the Russians see when they look across and see the National Guard?” I replied, “Sir, I do not think they see the National Guard; I think they look across and see the United States Army.” And that’s exactly the way it should be. We have ascended to a place where there is one standard for training, and we meet it and deploy in it. When we look at the full array of threats, and there are many, the “four plus one” are the *named* threats, but those are an umbrella under which all the other nations that we interact with, protect, and build partnerships with are present. In a four-plus-one world, problems are not regional, they are global. Problems are not restricted to any one domain, they are multidomain. Problems are multifunctional as we engage with them. The National Guard is just plugged in at every level throughout the spectrum of threats. What I am learning and watching is how the character of war is changing. It is true. Who would

have imagined the impact of cyber and space on the battlefield and how we need to play in that arena and be there as part of the joint force? We are evolving, just like everybody else.

*JFQ: How do you see these threats affecting U.S. security domestically and the role of the Guard in defending the homeland?*

**General Lengyel:** As I mentioned earlier, we plan for things happening on the home front. For the first time in a long while, we look at our nation as vulnerable to external threats. We’re vulnerable to some degree to some near-peer state actors who would want and could do us harm. We have to be ready for that. Moreover, internal threats—transnational criminal organizations, counterdrug threats, terrorism—are all things our nation has to be ready to face as well. The National Guard is, first of all, unique in that it is present in every area of our nation.

Wherever anything bad is happening, we will be there. When there is some requirement for a local sovereign state to deal with, that state can call us to augment the organic response. We bring what the Department of Defense brings. We bring mass, training, leadership, organization, communications; we bring all of our essential capabilities to help us deal with it. We are, in a sense, more vulnerable than we used to be, but we are better prepared. We learned a lot over the years on how to deal with consequence management through the national response framework. But we are more plugged in on the [intelligence] side, the interagency side, the network side to help maintain the national security piece of homeland security.

*JFQ: How has the elevation of the chief of the National Guard Bureau to being a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff affected the Guard? Has it helped you balance the competing needs of the states of the Active force because that tension has always been there?*

**General Lengyel:** Yes, that tension has always been there, but I feel fully integrated. As any other member of the Joint Chiefs, I am empowered to give my opinion, to engage and interact in every conceivable event in the building as a member. My ability to tell the Guard story is stronger. I often ask how I can bring value as a senior Service leader who is outside the specific reins of the Army and the Air Force. The thing that I think about a lot, maybe more than others, is homeland response. It is the dual-use piece, and it is the connection with America that is uniquely National Guard. The same question was asked of me by one of the Members on the Hill. I said that in the Pentagon I am treated like any other Joint Chief, but when you have folks up here to give testimony, I was wondering why you didn’t include me. You had the other folks up here, and I thought that’s okay if you want to talk Title 10 and specific Service topics. But when you start asking the Services about specific National Guard questions, it’s something that I would think you’re paying me to answer. But in the end, I think it’s more omission than commission. For a long time, there was no discernible difference between somebody saying, “We’re going to have the [Joint Chiefs] come together and we’re going to have the Service chiefs come together.” That is a big difference. Who are you talking to? The Joint Chiefs? The broad perspective? Or are you talking about the specific Service lanes of Title 10 organization, equip, and train?

*JFQ: How would you characterize your relationship with the combatant commanders?*

**General Lengyel:** I am chartered to have a specific and direct relationship with each of the combatant commanders. We do provide things to combatant commanders in Title 32 status; that means while we’re in our state, nonmobilized status, we’re able to do some things that facilitate our training and enhance the mission for the combatant commanders. One thing we have is a process called the



North Carolina Army National Guardsmen from C Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 252<sup>nd</sup> Armored Regiment, prepare for next event in General Gordon Sullivan Cup Best Tank Crew Competition, May 2, 2016, at Fort Benning, Georgia (U.S. Army/Jon Soucy)

Federated [Intelligence] Program. Some of our targeting and intelligence units, as they come in and train, have learned to reorient to intelligence work for some of the combatant commanders. Providing targeting information to commanders has enhanced the mission while we are training in state status. All the combatant commanders have come to rely on the state partnership program, and they want more of it. They do all the right things to make sure that these partnership programs are well aligned with their commands, goals, and strategic objectives. They know what the states are doing when we are there, and they know what the host nations and partner nations are doing when they are here.

*JFQ: As you have mentioned, the National Guard has a long-established relationship with the Army and the Air Force, but now you have the Marines and the Navy sitting*

*at the same table with you, and they may or may not have had a direct relationship with you, or even a reason to talk to you, in the past. What kind of new opportunities for joint operations and projects have appeared across the Services for the Guard?*

**General Lengyel:** Because of our evolution as this operational force, we do a lot of training now. For instance, the Marine Corps comes to exercises at Camp Grayling in Michigan. There is a great exercise called Northern Strike. It is a joint certified exercise run by the Guard. Last year, we brought hundreds of Marines to participate in this exercise. They have live-fire air exercises, Army infantry on the ground and Marines on the ground—I mean *collaborative* training. It was predominantly Reserve component training last year, but it's an ever-growing thing. Interactions with the commandant of the Marine Corps have been great, and for me to get a better understanding of

how we can support all the Services helps us interact together. Maybe one day I will have the Marine Corps in a joint billet on the National Guard staff.

*JFQ: How have the states reacted to the National Guard's more global viewpoint? The states are understandably more concerned with their National Guard members being around to help with a natural disaster, for instance, but you might have them in Bosnia or some other place. How does that balance work?*

General Lengyel: The National Guard has changed, and it has changed forever. The days of “39 days a year” are no longer the standard. What we owe National Guard and Reserve component members is important, and we have to realize that it is a different business model. These people do have two lives, so the business model fails if we can no longer

train and be ready for the warfighting mission while we sustain and get the preponderance of our compensation from some other source. We have an array of talented people with civilian experiences in nonrelated military jobs. I have people who are accountants who want to be an artillery battery commander. I like to tell this story to illustrate: The best tank crew at the Sullivan Cup was a National Guard crew from the North Carolina Army National Guard. It was made up of a college student, a police officer, and a truck driver—and the tank commander was an insurance adjuster. This guy could blow up your house and come settle the claim!

*JFQ: Can you discuss the efforts that are under way to make sure that Guard members are receiving equal benefits to the Active-duty force?*

**General Lengyel:** That is a hugely important issue. I just got back from a trip visiting the transfer of authority in the Sinai Peninsula. The multinational force is an observer mission that has largely been supported by the National Guard force structure for a while. It is an ongoing journey to assure that the pay status, entitlements, and benefits are commensurate with the duty one is doing. While we need to keep a flexible training process and plan available and pay status to allow people to move and work around their civilian lives, we need to make sure that when we have a helicopter and it's got seven people from two different Services in it, if tragedy happens and they crash and perish, that they all get the same kinds of benefits and entitlements for their families—and for members going forward. There's been a realization that the 820,000 people in the Reserve component deserve a standardization of benefits and entitlements, so that when they deploy, they are entitled to post-9/11 GI benefits and medical care, all the things that their counterparts next to them, who happen to be Active-component Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, or Airmen, get, which the country has committed.

*JFQ: How long do you think it will take to reach compensation and benefit equity for the Reserve forces?*

**General Lengyel:** Big kudos are owed to OSD [the Office of the Secretary of Defense], the Services, and Reserve components, and the Hill for coming together and realizing that all of these statuses in the Reserve component were kind of created one at a time, and they were created kind of “Okay, we only have this much money, so how do we build it within the budget constraints that we have?” The current timelines that people talk about are 2 to 6 years to undo the legislation and align this stuff. The key is that we have to stay committed to it and focused to it—fix the big ones first and the little ones later. The current mobilization authority that is given to the two Service secretaries, [Title 10, U.S. Code] 12304b, is one way the Service secretary can deploy you in a predictable fashion to a named exercise in a unit-based construct that you then get the same kinds of pay and benefits that you would get under Presidential or voluntary mobilization. I think those can be done pretty quickly. We have to find the money to fix it. We have to just make it right and then the fallout is whatever the fallout is; we have to adjust it. Some of the other ones may be harder. It's not going to happen overnight, but I think a decade is a reasonable term to fix it.

*JFQ: Why is the National Guard interested in remaining an operational reserve, and to that, what efforts will be required to stay at that level of capability that you gained over the last 16 years?*

**General Lengyel:** I think the biggest reason we should stay an operational reserve is that it is good for the country. We provide real combat capability and have the ability to surge quickly. The second reason is almost everything works better with the Services when we are an operational reserve. When the Services are using us, when we are deploying, when we are taking on a real-world mission, the relationships with the Services work better, and we get new equipment, training, and we train together. The Services build an understanding and a trust with us, so they

know what they're getting when we show up—whether it's at an exercise or whether we show up at an operation. They say, “I know that commander, I know that leader, I know that force, they are just like us,” and off we go. When we're an operational force, those things work together.

*JFQ: Many conflict zones are nontraditional and labeling them has become a popular industry with names such as “gray zones,” “asymmetrical warfare,” and “competition short of war.” What role does the Guard play in these environments, and can you gauge the demand signal for these efforts going forward?*

**General Lengyel:** That's what the job is—to figure out what you need the military to be able to do. As we look across the character of warfare and the threats that we might face, obviously it's not as simple as it once was during the Cold War where we were going to have to fight those guys or these guys. Now we are going to have to fight nonstate actors, we are going to have to fight differently because we have been a victim of our own success. The U.S. military became one that you would have to be crazy to want to engage, so you have to compete in such a way that you don't engage that big, massive, well-equipped, and technologically superior force. The Guard plays in it as part of the Air Force, part of the Army, and part of the joint force. That's one way we play in it.

The other way we play is that events happen and we shape the environment through our engagements around the world. We have partnerships in 80 countries with regular and routine interactions annually where people get to know each other and trust each other. We get to understand the threat, we get to understand each other, we get to build partnerships and commitments that support our alliances. Any future military force will have to be flexible, adaptable, and agile. The Guard brings another unique piece to the joint force. Wherever we go, we bring our civilian skill sets that we plug in and now it's not military to military, it is American to Latvian, it is real civilian



Arkansas National Guardsman completes confidence course of 2017 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition, July 18, 2017, at Camp Ripley Training Center, Minnesota (Minnesota National Guard/Paul Santikko)

skill sets because these are bankers and doctors and lawyers and teachers and policemen. We bring all of those skill sets when we go. It helps us deal with the full range of threats.

*JFQ: How do your experiences, particularly your time in Egypt, help you understand how to best position the Guard to contribute to partnership approaches both here and around the world?*

**General Lengyel:** My part in Egypt was kind of an out-of-the-box experience for me. It is one that I never foresaw, but it gave me a window into the political-military development that I had never expected to get. As with anything, you realize the importance of relationships. I just went over to Egypt to visit some of my old friends when I went to visit the troops over there. I saw that I still had a connection with these folks from having been there and having worked with the Egyptians. If I learned anything, it was

not about the money or force structure; it was about the relationship. The Guard is good at building relationships. I do not have a command and control relationship with the 54 adjutants-general in the 450,000. I am not a commander of them, so by nature, we collegially operate, we convince, we cajole, we discern which way we are going, and in kind of a collective body, we go that way. I think working in Egypt helped me see a lot of that.

*JFQ: How do you define jointness and the Guard's role in fostering it since you are now a part of the joint team?*

**General Lengyel:** I think that joint understanding and joint operations are the only way we are going to do business going forward. That's the way we fight wars. It's a joint coalition operation now. As part of the operational force, for the last 15 years for sure and really for the Air Guard, you go back to 1991, we've flown combat sorties every day since

then. The need and the requirement to understand the joint force, how it integrates, how it operates, to be able to have networks across all the Services, not just the Army and the Air Force is extremely important. Joint also includes the interagency community. Sometimes the National Guard brings a good perspective on how to work with first responders and interagency partners, particularly in the homeland, but not just here. We had [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and [the Federal Bureau of Investigation], we had all kinds of agencies working together. Who's herding all of these people and who understands it? Joint is the way of the future, it's the current way we are doing it, and it is only going to become more and more joint going forward. The Guard's going to be a part in it, and if we are going to play in it, particularly at the Joint Chiefs staff level, we've got to be steeped in it, just like everybody else. JFQ