



# Strategic Viewpoint

## Preserve and strengthen military readiness: restore & build force structure

### Issue

The 2011 Budget Control Act/Sequestration forced reductions in personnel and reduced force structure. Congress halted the reduction of personnel, but force structure reductions continue as planned for the ARNG. Current planned reductions will exacerbate existing readiness challenges and impede the National Guard's ability to provide ready forces to meet our dual state and federal missions.

### Recommendation

**Suspend force structure reductions and, as part of the total force, authorize and fund an Army National Guard of 360,000 with 20% full-time support and an Air Guard of 110,000 with 35% full-time support.**

### Background

Military Readiness remains the number one priority in DoD, as set by Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and reiterated at every level of command – including the Wisconsin National Guard. Previous decisions regarding end-strength and force structure constrain our ability to meet requirements domestically and abroad, and challenge our capacity and capability for future conflicts.

Secretary Mattis wrote in a Jan. 31, 2017 budget guidance memorandum that, “The ultimate objective is to **build a larger, more capable, and more lethal joint force**, driven by a new National Defense Policy.” While opinions differ on what that size is, service leaders testified Feb. 8, 2017 to the SASC Subcommittee on Readiness & Management Support on “Current Readiness of our U.S. Forces” on their recommendations. U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff General Daniel Allyn estimated that a **1.2M man Army** would be necessary to respond to the contingencies and operational plans at the COCOM level with a **moderate level of risk**. U.S. Air Force Vice Chief of Staff General Stephen Wilson stated that the Air Force is 50% ready today, and that it is the smallest it has ever been. The desire is to grow to **325K end strength with a goal of 350K**, which would fill 100% of the manning documents **for current missions, but not future missions**. The 2017 NDAA has restored some cuts by authorizing, but not yet funding, a total Army of 1,018,000 soldiers, to include **343,000 in the Army National Guard**, and a total Air Force of 495,700 airmen, to include **105,700 for the Air National Guard**. To meet today's demands and begin preparing for future threats, the Army Guard needs at least 360,000 soldiers with 20% full-time support and the Air Guard needs of 110,000 airmen with 35% full-time support. The equivalent force structure to support an end strength of 360,000 Soldiers and 110,000 Airmen in the National Guard is vital. The National Guard is the primary combat reserve of the U.S. Army and Air Force, and the first military responder in the homeland. It is in the nation's interest to assign each soldier and airmen in the National Guard to a unit that supports the national defense strategy and provides capability for Governors to call upon during a domestic emergency.

At FY16 levels the Wisconsin Army National Guard's authorized strength is 7,475 and Wisconsin Air National Guard's end strength is 2,278. Between 2001 and January 2017, the Wisconsin Army Guard alone has lost 423 Army (8.5%) positions, and further force structure reductions include the inactivation of the 724th Engineer Battalion, which will result in a loss of at 36 fulltime positions and 274 traditional Guard positions.

### Importance

At a time when Congress is striving to stop sequestration and has halted the military draw down, it is imperative that the National Guard pause, preserve force structure and retain in our ranks our battle-tested Guard members and await further direction from Congress and DoD.

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