



RESERVE FORCES POLICY BOARD

CHAIRMAN

Reinstatement of Reserve Component General and Flag Officer Statutory Rank

Final Report to the Secretary of Defense

October 15, 2020



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
RESERVE FORCES POLICY BOARD

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CLEARED
For Open Publication

Oct 15, 2020

Department of Defense
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

CHAIRMAN

ACTION MEMO

FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: MajGen Arnold L. Punaro, USMCR (Ret), Chairman, Reserve Forces Policy Board

SUBJECT: Reinstatement of Reserve Component General and Flag Officer Statutory Rank

- The RFPB met on 11 Dec 2019 and discussed General and Flag Officer changes made in the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, eliminating the statutory requirement of O-9 for the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Chiefs of each Reserve Component.
- **Recommendations:**
 - 1) **Direct a follow-on to the RAND study titled *Realigning the Stars: A Methodology for Reviewing Active Component General and Flag Officer Requirements* to include a review of Reserve Component General and Flag Officer positions and requirements in order to ensure consistent, proven leadership for the Total Force.**
 - 2) **Direct the Services to maintain current O-9 rank requirements for the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Chiefs of each Reserve Component positions until the study is complete.**
- With your approval of these recommendations, the Undersecretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness will take the actions necessary to direct a follow-on to the RAND study mentioned above, to include Reserve Component General Officer Requirements.

TAB A includes background on the subject.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve a follow-on RAND study for Reserve Component General/Flag Officer Requirements and require the Services and NGB to maintain current O-9 rank requirements until the study is complete.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____ Other _____

Attachment(s):
As stated

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TAB

A

BACKGROUND and DISCUSSION

Previously, the RFPB met on 15 September 2016 and discussed recommendations pertaining to General and Flag Officer (G/FO) reductions and changes as outlined in S.2943 Sections 501, 502, and 925. Of particular note, S.2943 Section 502 eliminated the statutory requirement of O-9 rank for the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Chiefs of each Reserve Component (RC).

On 23 December 2016, S.2943 was signed into law as the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017. As a result, significant changes were made to General and Flag Officer authorizations. Section 502 repeals or amends various provisions that specify a general or flag officer's grade for certain positions in the Armed Forces. There is no longer a statutory requirement for the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, or the Chiefs of each Reserve Component to hold the rank of O-9.

After the September 2016 meeting, the Board voted to recommend the Department work to retain the statutory requirement of O-9 for the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Chiefs of each Reserve Component (RC). The recommendation was not subsequently submitted due to the political environment at the time. Later, during the March 2018 Quarterly Board meeting, Chairman Punaro recommended and the Board unanimously voted to postpone submission of the recommendation.

This change does not prohibit the position from being filled by an officer with the same, higher, or lower grade than the law currently requires. However, *it would reverse the decision from the 2001 NDAA, which directed that the RC Chiefs and the Directors of Guard components be promoted to O-9 after the Services failed to exercise their discretionary authority to promote them granted in the 2000 NDAA.*

Impact of Changing Statutory O-9 Requirement for Reserve Component Chiefs as Directed by the FY 17 NDAA

Since 9/11, the reserve forces have transitioned from a purely strategic role to both an operational and strategic role, it is even more critical that changes in the rank structure for RC leaders only be made after deliberate and careful analysis. The O-9 ranks of the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Chiefs of each Reserve Component should be retained. If reductions must be made, they should be aligned with similar reductions in the active force to retain parity on command structure and organizational relationships.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2001, Section 507 directed that the RC Chiefs and the Directors of the Air and Army National Guard be promoted to O-9. This was done after years of study and advocacy.¹ In the 2000 NDAA, the Services had been given authority to

¹ Offenhauer, Priscilla, Alice R. Buchalter. General and Flag Officer Authorizations for the Active and Reserve Components: A Comparative and Historical Analysis. A Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress under an Interagency Agreement with the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves. December 2007. Pages 40-42.

promote these positions, but they did not. Congress recognized that the positions carry responsibility and authority commensurate with the rank and equivalent to, and sometimes exceeding, that of their AC counterparts.

The RC Chiefs are dual-hatted as Component Chiefs and commanders. The O-9 rank for RC Chiefs and Directors is important within the Department of Defense to provide parity with Chiefs and Commanders who are their counterparts. The loss of O-9 positions for RC Chiefs will only result in a loss of influence in their respective service headquarters staffs, undoing years of progress in obtaining parity.

Without the statutory requirement of O-9 for National Guard positions, specifically the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, achieving the rank of O-10 and Chief of the National Guard could become substantially more difficult. Further, the pool of prospective candidates for that position would be reduced. Although the National Guard Bureau could still compete to have the Service Secretaries designate one or more of these positions as O-9, the number of O-9 positions will be extremely limited due to corresponding reductions in G/FO grade positions.

In an era of the Total Force and an Operational Reserve, it is even more imperative that Reserve and National Guard leaders are aligned with their AC counterparts, commensurate with the duties they perform and responsibilities they hold. Ensuring the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Chiefs of each Reserve Component retain the rank of O-9 ensures we have the depth and breadth of leadership necessary to lead the armed forces during a time of constant conflict. This provides our Military with greater transparency, flexibility and choice in selecting the right leader with the right skills in a time of global power competition. Retain the rank of O-9 for the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Chiefs of each Reserve Component.