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FILE TITLE: Background Paper on a Historical Perspective of The Air National Guard
Noncommissioned Officer Academy

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Feb 19-11-7
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BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF
THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER ACADEMY

The Air Force Noncommissioned Officer Academy (AF NCOA) level of enlisted professional military education (PME) has historically provided the Air Force with the finest noncommissioned officers (NCOs) in any branch of the United States (US) Military. Within the Continental United States (CONUS), the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy (ANG NCOA) has the honor of being the elder statesman in this arena of PME. This background paper will provide a topical history of the ANG NCOA to explain its roots, outline the many changes it has experienced to reach the present, and give just a peek at its projected future. To describe its history, I'll begin by explaining the need for an ANG NCOA, outline its initial organization, introduce each enlisted Commandant, describe factors affecting the staff, discuss the curriculum, outline the organizational structure, and preview the future. For any organization to have a history, it must first be born; so the question is, "why did the ANG need Noncommissioned Officer Academy?"

Even though Air Force NCOs had been graduating from NCO Academics for a number of years, ANG NCOs had very limited opportunity to do the same. In 1966, MG I.G. Brown, Director of the ANG, visited the Air Defense Command (ADC) NCOA in California, and was extremely impressed with the motivation and education of its graduating class. He saw that if he could provide the NCO PME experience for ANG NCOs, they could help make the ANG an integral part of the Total Force concept and better integrate the Guard into the Air Force structure. He also felt this would be an excellent opportunity for the Air Force Reserve (USAFR), since they suffered from the same limitations as the Guard. As a result, he had his staff research the potential for ANG and USAFR attendance at one or more of the Air Force NCO Academics. They found that since the curriculum was six weeks long, the part-time force of the ANG and USAFR couldn't afford the time away from their civilian employers to attend an already established NCOA. Something needed to be done.

It was decided the Air National Guard would need to establish a NCO Academy for itself. Thus began a search for an Air National Guard location to establish the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy. MG Brown himself found and chose the location of McGhee Tyson AB, Knoxville, TN, to establish the ANG NCOA. Finding the right location however, wasn't enough, because the next major hurdle was the length of the curriculum. Through coordinated efforts between the ANG and the Air Force, the ADC NCOA staff was tasked to develop a NCOA curriculum that could be taught in two separate two-week phases spread out over a two year time frame. These two-week phases (Phase I and Phase II NCOA) lined up with annual training requirements of the ANG and selected NCOs were able to attend these two separate phases in lieu of attending annual training. This opened a window of opportunity for guardsmen and reservists. During the summer of 1967, two separate Phase I classes were taught by the ADC NCOA staff at March AFB, CA. However, to be able to continue this program, the ANG had to organize its own NCOA.

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MG Brown knew that to organize a viable NCOA he must have the right person to form a nucleus for this challenging undertaking. Knowing a good thing when he saw it, MG Brown chose CMSgt Paul H. Lankford, then Deputy Commandant at the ADC NCOA, to become the first Deputy Commandant of the ANG NCOA. Chief Lankford had been instrumental in helping develop the two Phase I classes held at March AFB in 1967 and was therefore the premier choice as the nucleus in organizing the Guard NCOA. Knowing that AF NCOAs at that time all had a CMSgt as their Deputy Commandant and an officer as the Commandant, General Brown selected Major Edmund C. Morrissey from the Texas ANG to be the first Commandant at McGhee Tyson. During an interview with Chief Lankford (3:-), he explained how he and Maj Morrissey, along with a teaching staff of six instructors and two administrative specialists, opened the doors of the ANG NCOA in the summer of 1968. For the first graduating Phase II Class in July 1968, this staff was augmented with instructors from the ADC NCOA. This ensured continuity in the program and provided additional training for the newly formed ANG NCOA staff. As other courses were added, including a Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School (NCOLS), the teaching staff grew and duty titles changed for Maj Morrissey and Chief Lankford. The NCOA became a Professional Military Education Center (PMEC), the Major became the Commander, and the Chief became the first enlisted Commandant.

Chosen as the first enlisted Commandant of the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Chief Paul H. Lankford is a veteran of World War II and a survivor of the Bataan Death March. After being released from a Japanese POW Camp, Chief Lankford soon resumed his military career. As MG Brown's handpicked choice for Deputy Commandant at the ANG's new NCOA, Chief Lankford separated from the Air Force and began his Guard career as a civil service employee in July 1968. Chief Lankford has the distinction of serving as a Deputy Commandant and Commandant at a Noncommissioned Officer Academy longer than any other individual. His total career with the ANG NCOA extended from July 1968 until his retirement in November 1981. Upon his retirement, the NCOA dormitory was renamed Lankford Hall in his honor.

When Chief Lankford retired, CMSgt George A. Vitzthum, from the Tennessee Air National Guard, was chosen as the new commandant. During Chief Vitzthum's tenure as Commandant, the ANG NCOA continued to grow. In addition, the first Commander, Maj Morrissey, now a Colonel, retired. It was also under Chief Vitzthum's guidance a portion of the teaching staff was deployed during the summer of 1984, to Camp Robinson in Little Rock, Arkansas to conduct a NCO Leadership School. The remainder of the staff remained at McGhee Tyson to continue teaching the NCOA class currently in session. Chief Vitzthum was Commandant from November 1981 until November 1984 and at the completion of his tour as Commandant returned to duty with the Tennessee Air National Guard.

CMSgt Gordon E. Kniskern became the next Commandant in November 1984. Chief Kniskern was a member of the Illinois ANG and had once been an officer in the Illinois Army National Guard. As a former high school teacher and principal, CMSgt Kniskern brought a strong academic background to his new position. In addition, with his Army background, Chief Kniskern had some unique military credentials. As he explained to me during an interview (2:-), PME stood for Professional Military Education, and he wanted to ensure the Military part of Professional Military Education wasn't forgotten. In 1988, under his guidance, plans were put into action to increase the size of the school and the

number of staff members. This plan was designed to allow a Noncommissioned Officer Academy and Leadership School to be taught during the same time frame. In June 1988, Chief Kniskern increased the size of the teaching staff by using graduate assistants and held a NCOA and NCOLS on campus at the same time. This proved it could be done and set the tone for continued growth.

In July 1988, CMSgt Richard A. Moon replaced Chief Kniskern as Commandant. Originally from the Iowa Air National Guard, Chief Moon had previously served a tour at the ANG NCOA; starting as a member of the instructor staff, he also served as a director of curriculum. After completing a tour as the Air National Guard Liaison at Lackland AFB, TX, Chief Moon returned to McGhee Tyson as the fourth Commandant. As the new Commandant, CMSgt Moon was presented with a tremendous opportunity. This first step in this opportunity was to increase the size of the teaching staff from ten to twenty-eight. The second step was to begin conducting NCOA and NCOLS classes simultaneously. During an interview (4:-), Chief Moon stated his goal was to develop a teaching staff that would be the envy of all other NCOAs. Well on his way to achieving his goal, Chief Moon was asked to accept the position of Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Director of the Air National Guard. As he said, "when the General calls, you answer." (4:-) So, in September 1990, Chief Moon departed the NCOA for Headquarters, National Guard Bureau.

Chief Master Sergeant Jayne E. Shorey became the ANG NCOA's next Commandant in September 1990. Chief Shorey was a member of the Alaska Air National Guard prior to becoming Commandant. With an educational background including a Master's Degree in Adult Education, she was extremely well qualified to assume the Commandant's position. Believing strongly in the education of NCOs, Chief Shorey stated her position as being one that ensured "our NCO Academy will be more like a Community College with starch." (6:-) In this way she could ensure NCOs attending the ANG NCOA would receive the sound education necessary yet at the same time not lose sight of the military aspect. She shared Chief Moon's goal of developing a staff second to none in the NCOA business and under her tutelage and guidance this goal was reached. As the first, and to date the only woman to serve as Commandant, Chief Shorey completed her tenure in September 1993.

The current Commandant, CMSgt Samuel P. Neale, assumed the position of Commandant during a Change of Commandant Ceremony at a NCOA Graduation in September 1993. Chief Neale's selection was unique in that it marked the first time a Commandant was not directly chosen by the Director of the Air National Guard. Chief Neale was selected from an interview process that included representatives on the interview panel from the PME arena. Included was a delegate from the Air Force College of Enlisted Professional Military Education (CEPME), and the four Senior Master Sergeants currently serving as Directors of Curriculum at the ANG NCOA. Chief Neale's comments on being interviewed by prospective subordinates included, "who else would know better what qualifications are necessary in a Commandant than the current staff?" (5:-)

Looking at the current staff we see a total of thirty-one funded positions authorized on the manning document. This is quite an increase from the original manning of ten personnel. The initial manning included the Commander, the Commandant, six NCOA instructors, and two administrative specialists. In 1970 with the advent of the NCOLS at McGhee Tyson, the Commander and one administra-

tive specialist were removed from the NCOA manning document but three additional instructors were added and hired. For the NCOA/NCOLS that was the extent of any growth until additional manning was authorized and hiring began in 1988. It was through this new hire the current strength of twenty-eight instructors and three administrative specialists was reached. Throughout this rapid growth standards remained high and qualifications to become an instructor were actually toughened.

Initially, the primary qualifications for being an instructor at the ANG NCOA were being a graduate of an in-residence NCOA and a member of the Air National Guard. Once the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) began granting college credits for in-residence attendance at a NCOA, instructors were required to have an education level equivalent to what they were teaching. This meant adding the additional qualification of having at a minimum an Associate's Degree. To be a PME instructor, one must also be a graduate of the Air Force's Academic Instructor School (AIS). For the ANG, unless special circumstances exist, in order for anyone to be hired at McGhee Tyson as an instructor, they must be able to qualify for world wide active duty and complete a minimum of twenty years total active federal military service (TAFMS) prior to age sixty.

When the ANG NCOA was first established, all its employees were hired as Government Service (GS) employees. These individuals were also required to maintain their status as members of the Air National Guard. However, GS employees are pretty much locked into their jobs unless they elect to leave. It became apparent this could lead to stagnation within the ANG NCOA teaching staff, and in 1979, instructor and administrative positions were converted to active duty status. For those individuals eligible for active duty this change of status was accomplished as soon as possible. Those individuals ineligible for active duty retained their GS positions until eligible for retirement, at which time their positions were then converted to active duty. Since all positions at the ANG NCOA are now active duty for the Guard, a change in the selection process was needed.

The original staff was selected for "excepted civil service" positions as outlined in Title 32 United States Code (8:709). This meant that in order to have their GS job, they had to be a member of the Air National Guard. All these GS positions were converted to active duty under Title 10 United States Code (7:1121) which meant that to be hired, an individual had to qualify for world-wide extended active duty. With this thought in mind, a selection process was developed to obtain the best qualified individuals to fill vacancies at McGhee Tyson. This selection process is outlined as follows:

- a. An announcement of the vacancy is advertised nationwide throughout the Air National Guard. This announcement lists the minimum qualifications and is open for sixty days.
- b. Once the announcement closes all applications are forwarded to the Commandant who reviews them and has each Director of Curriculum review them independently. Once this is done, these individuals meet and determine if any of the applicants will be offered an interview.
- c. Interviews are conducted with the Commandant and Directors of Curriculum being present. A matrix is used to individually rate each applicant being

interviewed. The matrix was designed to consider the "whole person concept" and normally one or two applicants clearly stand out. The matrix is completed by considering the consequences of hiring any person given serious consideration for the job. Taking into account the final rating and considering the consequences, the Directors of Curriculum make a recommendation to the Commandant who makes the final decision on who to hire. If no one is selected, the vacant position is reannounced in an attempt to obtain additional applicants.

One primary consideration in selecting new instructors is their perceived potential to teach all areas of the curriculum.

As directed by AFR 53-39 (1:23), the NCOA curriculum is divided into four primary areas: Commandant's Time, Communication Skills, Military Citizenship and Supervision. The Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for this regulation is CEPME, located at Maxwell AFB, AL. When changes are made to the curriculum, input is solicited from the ANG NCOA to ensure input from a Reserve Force.

Due to differences in the structure of the ANG and USAFR, they have several unique requirements. First of all, since about 75% of the ANG manning consists of part-time individuals, called "Traditional Guardsmen", the standard six-week length for NCOAs has prevented large numbers of Guardsmen and Reservists from attending a Noncommissioned Officer Academy in residence. As a result the Air National Guard conducted a Phase I and Phase II program from the very beginning of its operation in 1968.

This Phase program condensed the six-week program into two separate two-week Phases. Each Phase was actually conducted over a fifteen day time frame and students normally had only one day off (the middle Sunday) during the entire fifteen days. In addition, some assignments normally completed during attendance to the long course had to be completed prior to returning for Phase II. These assignments were primarily writing assignments requiring research. Designing or changing this unique Phase program was a challenge, particularly when remembering the curriculum would still need to meet educational objectives as outlined in AFR 53-39 (1:27-48).

Approval to conduct a Phase NCOA program required Air Force approval. This approval was granted by the forerunner of CEPME, the Center for Professional Development (CPD) at Air University (AU) on Maxwell AFB, AL. To ensure the academic integrity of the program, CCAF validated the curriculum so that Phase graduates could receive the same number of college credits as graduates from the six-week program. The Phase program served the Air National Guard well, but it was eliminated at the end of fiscal year 1992 because of changes in the curriculum.

Prior to elimination of the Phase program, a number of significant changes had taken place in the curriculum of the ANG NCOA since its 1968 beginning. In 1980, the curriculum underwent a major rewrite as did the curriculum of all other AF NCOAs. This rewrite was based on an Air Force study on educational needs of the noncommissioned officer. As this was an Air Force wide requirement, each NCOA was responsible for its own curriculum. In 1989, the ANG NCOA again did a complete rewrite of its curriculum, this time self-directed. By the

end of calendar year 1991, the Air Force recognized the need for a standard NCOA curriculum and due to another rewrite, the ANG Phase program was eliminated. For this rewrite a team was gathered at CPD to write a new curriculum which each NCOA would be required to put into effect by January 1993. Two members of the ANG NCOA instructor staff, SMSgt Dave Tussey and MSgt Jim Ford were included on the rewrite team. This ensured Guard input and gave the ANG NCOA an opportunity to exhibit the quality of its staff.

The quality of the staff of the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy is enhanced by the organizational structure. As explained earlier, the ANG NCOA was originally organized with an officer as Commandant and a NCO as Vice-Commandant. Within a couple of years, this structure evolved into the Officer position being retitled the PMEC Commander and the NCO position becoming the Commandant. This evolution carried over into the different curriculum areas as well. Initially there were three distinct areas in curriculum, i.e., the Communicative Skills Department, the Leadership and Management Department, and the Military Studies Department. There was a fourth department called the Evaluative Services Section. However, as times changed so did this structure.

With the new 1993 curriculum there was a need to reorganize into an Operations Section, an Education Section, and two separate teaching teams named the Blue Teaching Team and the Silver Teaching Team. Operations was responsible for all resource accountability, Dinings-In, graduation activities, administrative functions, and protocol. Education assumed responsibility for faculty development, testing, student critiques, and the ANG version of Airman Leadership School (ALS). The two teaching teams were set-up to perform the majority of instructional duties. During this period the ANG NCOA was able to overlap two separate NCOA classes by starting one class a week or two after the start of another. This allowed a more flexible schedule which prospective students could use for planning purposes when choosing class dates for attending the school. This organizational structure was used for only one year because it soon became apparent it was a logistical nightmare requiring twice as many guest speakers for Dinings-In and Graduations. It was also apparent Education was overburdened with trying to monitor the ANG ALS program.

To solve these problems, the school again reorganized. The Operations Section remained intact with no change in responsibilities. Education was dissolved and the two separate teaching teams were combined into one. This reduced the number of classes held during the year but kept the number of students the same. Class size was simply doubled. The new teaching team was renamed Education and assumed all the duties of the old Education Section except those associated with the Leadership School. A new and separate section was formed to monitor and run the renamed ANG Airman Leadership School. In addition, another new section was formed to develop a program to replace the discontinued Phase program. Each department is headed by a Senior Master Sergeant each of which reports directly to the Commandant. As stated, a new section was formed to develop a Phase replacement program. Named the Distance Learning Section, this area began developing a program designed to provide Traditional Guardsmen with increased opportunities for a NCOA education.

For the future, as in the past, the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy prefers to be in the forefront of enlisted PME. This NCOA has

ensured its place in the ranks of Air Force NCOAs and at the same time provided part-time members of the ANG and USAFR new opportunities for in-residence PME by developing its Distance Learning (DL) program. This new program was designed to roughly equal the time required for one semester of college. Its design includes two nights of school per week for about four and one-half months. This DL Phase of the program will be taught at the students home unit via satellite and video tape and will equate to the first four weeks of the in-residence program. Upon successful completion of this DL Phase, students will be required to attend the final two-weeks in-residence at McGhee Tyson. It's programs such as this that will ensure the ANG NCOA will remain a vibrant player in the NCO PME arena.

This background paper has provided you with a historical perspective of the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy. It has done so by first explaining the reason for its existence, that reason being ANG NCOs had very limited opportunity to attend enlisted PME. You've also been provided an outline of its initial organization describing the selection of its first Commandant, first Deputy Commandant, and the number of initial staff members. This was followed with an introduction to each of its enlisted Commandants and included some of the significant events each was responsible for. Next on your plate was a description of factors affecting the size of the staff, their required qualifications, their duty status, and the process by which instructors have been selected. A brief discussion of the curriculum followed and included the fact the ANG NCOA's curriculum is governed by the same Air Force Regulation as all other Air Force NCOAs. The organizational structure was then outlined to provide information on the initial structure, significant changes through the years, and how the most recent reorganization streamlined this NCO Academy. Finally, a brief preview of the future provided you with insight into the ANG NCOA's Distance Learning program designed as a replacement for the Phase program. Just as all former members of the ANG NCOA have left a legacy, the current staff members are aware that today is tomorrow's history, and they plan to add to this history by leaving a legacy worth remembering.

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