

Air National Guard Mobilization and Deployment

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Does the Air National Guard (ANG) mobilization concept meet ANG deployment requirements? That is, can the ANG guarantee the mobilization and deployment of forces to meet the needs of combatant commanders? In order to answer this, we must be familiar with (1) basic joint military planning concepts, (2) why and how the ANG is mobilized, and (3) basic Air Force deployment requirements.

A Unit Type Code (UTC) is the building block for determining detailed manpower and logistics support requirements for joint military operations.¹ Under the Joint Operation and Planning Execution System (JOPES), combatant commanders identify the UTCs required to support a plan. Time-Phased Force and Deployment Data (TPFDD) is the JOPES database that contains this list of UTCs and associated movement planning data. At plan activation, the TPFDD becomes the basis for the scheduling and movement of UTCs from home station to the area of responsibility (AOR).² MAJCOMs then task active duty and ANG units to deploy the required UTCs according to the movement planning data provided by the TPFDD.³

ANG provision of UTCs can occur by volunteerism or mobilization. The intent of volunteerism is to meet immediate requirements for augmentation and is usually a bridge while awaiting mobilization.⁴ During the early stages of the Persian Gulf crisis, volunteerism worked very well.⁵ However, the very nature of volunteerism is a reliance on the goodwill of individual ANG members that will always be a calculated risk for deliberate planning purposes. When the nation absolutely needs an ANG capability, mobilization is the answer.⁶

The decision to mobilize belongs to the Secretary of Defense (SecDef).⁷ Federal law limits total mobilization numbers for other than full mobilization. The SecDef may also set additional limits, for economic or political concerns. Within these limits, the various military departments are the primary executors of mobilization.⁸ Mobilization methods differ among the various services. Mission specific UTC forces are a key component of Air Force planning.⁹ Headquarters Air Force, MAJCOMs, and ANG work together to identify ANG units that will provide UTCs to fill TPFDD requirements. Headquarters Air Force then issues the mobilization authority to the MAJCOMs who in turn issue orders for individual units to mobilize the specified UTC.¹⁰ Only under extreme circumstances are individual members mobilized. From an accounting standpoint, this policy makes perfect sense at a headquarters level. In an effort to stay below mobilization ceilings set by federal law and the SecDef, MAJCOMs mobilize forces to meet TPFDD requirements. Accounting and audit trails clearly show a deployment need and a mobilization/deployment that precisely fits that need. At headquarters level, this may make perfect sense. At ANG unit level, problems may arise when a unit begins the actual process of deploying those mobilized UTCs.

AFI 10-403, Deployment Planning, outlines the unit actions necessary to deploy UTCs. A unit must be capable of 24/7 operations to deploy all deployable UTCs. Required deployment workcenters include the following:

1. Essential workcenters staffed by AFSC qualified personnel – Logistics Plans, Personnel, Unit Deployment Manager, Transportation, Medical, and some others.
2. Key workcenters staffed by AFSC qualified personnel – Legal, Public Health, Security, Chaplain, Public Affairs, Finance, Services, and some others.
3. Other required workcenters staffed by trained augmentees provided by any functional area include: Cargo Processing Terminal, Passenger Terminal, Personnel Processing Function, Deployment Vehicle Operations, and Deployment Control Center.

In order to meet AFI 10-403 requirements, my wing has identified a need for approximately 150-175 deployment workcenter personnel. Other wings are similar. Even very small deployments will still require many of the same deployment workcenters to be staffed the same as a larger deployment because the same processes are required whether one or 500 individuals deploy. For years, Operational Readiness Inspections (ORIs) tested a unit to perform its worst-case deployment scenario – the requirement to conduct 24/7 operations and deploy every deployable UTC as outlined in AFI 10-403. The assumption has always been that the base populace will be available to work the deployment infrastructure. Our active duty counterparts do not have a problem with this assumption because their people are only a moment's notice and verbal order away. ANG units have been able to meet ORI requirements only because they could plan months and years to have the base populace available. This advance planning is not possible for a real-world contingency.

For a real-world contingency, volunteerism and/or mobilization are the only means to effectively staff the majority of an ANG unit's deployment workcenters. An ANG unit's full-time manning is at minimum levels to accomplish daily peacetime activities and training. This full-time manning cannot support a large deployment operation because (1) full-time staffing does not include certain required functions and, (2) the total number of personnel available is insufficient to meet requirements. Insufficient or non-existent staffing for one or more deployment workcenters will impede or prevent the deployment of UTCs. The Air Force makes a decision to use mobilization versus volunteerism to ensure that a TPFDD tasked UTC is deployed. However, even with mobilization, we cannot ensure a UTC deployment because we are relying on volunteerism to provide the necessary deployment infrastructure. One example would be the availability of Logistics Plans, an essential workcenter. Although full-time civilian technicians staff this position, there is no guarantee that, when off-duty, the same logistics planners will volunteer to report to work to deploy mobilized UTCs. Another example would be Medical. In most cases, the required personnel are drill status guardsmen who may not volunteer. We can criticize or justify those who would not volunteer. The fact exists that we are risking failure when relying on volunteerism to accomplish an essential and required mission.

Allow me to cite two additional challenges and the possible result of relying on volunteers to staff our deployment workcenters as augmentees. First, relying on volunteers assumes that people are as ready to volunteer for an additional duty, as they would be to perform their primary AFSC duties – duties that are part of the reason they joined the ANG in the first place. (This would be an interesting survey question for all ANG members.) My experience and conversations with counterparts at other units has shown that (1) very few people volunteer to be a deployment augmentee, and (2) commanders are reluctant to release their people to train and serve as augmentees because of the short time that the people are available for duty. Second, relying on volunteerism means that our worst-case scenario is not the same as our active duty counterparts (24/7 operations to deploy all UTCs). An ANG worst-case deployment scenario would be to deploy a large UTC package without essential personnel and/or insufficient deployment workcenter staffing. If we continue to rely on volunteerism to staff our deployment workcenters, we have to accept the possibility that the required personnel will not volunteer and UTCs will not deploy on time or at all. We can debate the ability and willingness of ANG personnel to accomplish any mission, but we need to accept the fact that we may not. We also have an obligation to ensure that others are aware and understand the potential problems that could affect our war fighting capability.

The ANG is a force based on volunteerism. On September 11, 2001, terrorists struck the USA and many of these same volunteers stepped forward. Individual volunteerism met many of the units' initial needs but mobilization was still required. Volunteerism bridged the gap while the mobilization process ramped up and it continued to be encouraged to limit the total mobilization numbers. We had never planned for the large number of UTCs mobilized for home station operations in support of Operation Noble Eagle (ONE). If they did not know already, units quickly learned that, although volunteerism was by individual, mobilization was by UTC. Units were required to identify individuals for mobilization, identify AFSCs of these individuals, determine which UTCs contained those AFSCs, and then request mobilization of these UTCs (either in whole or tailored). Different ANG units with similar missions had varying mixtures of mobilized individuals vs. volunteers depending on individual unit member and commander preferences. As planned, MAJCOMs mobilized UTCs to deploy overseas in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). However, the limited mobilization and deployment by ANG units in support of OEF was insufficient to expose deployment workcenter manning problems. Many units found an overlap of essential personnel mobilized to support ONE at home station who could also assist with OEF deployment support. From a unit perspective, the entire mobilization process was complicated and confusing. At the 2002 ANG Planners' Conference, the consensus of several briefers was that the mobilization process needed extensive work. A brifer from Air Combat Command cited the fact that there are no management tools available to understand the impact of volunteerism on our units.¹¹ I would add that there are no management tools available to understand the impact of volunteerism on the Air Force.

How can we fix this problem and guarantee the ability to stand up a deployment infrastructure at unit level to deploy mobilized UTCs? Assume for a moment that the rules are changed and we will mobilize personnel to staff deployment workcenters. What UTCs would we mobilize to ensure deployment workcenter staffing? Many workcenters such as Logistics Plans, Personnel, Finance, Legal, etc. have clearly defined UTCs capable of providing the needed personnel. However, the majority of our deployment workcenter personnel are augmentees from any area

on base who perform deployment functions as an additional duty. These same individuals probably have UTC assignments that meet their primary AFSC function. So how could ANG units mobilize to staff deployment workcenters? The first option is to mobilize those existing UTCs that provide required skills such as Logistics Plans or Legal. This option will provide certain key players, but it will not provide staffing of all the required workcenters. Here are four possible alternatives to provide the augmentees required to staff deployment workcenters.

- 1) Allow ANG units to mobilize individuals and not UTCs.
- 2) Use nonstandard UTCs and allow units to fill as needed.
- 3) Develop one or more UTCs with the sole purpose to provide deployment workcenter capabilities. These UTCs would require the capability to use any AFSC to fill positions
- 4) Require ANG units to maintain deliberate planning documentation to pre-identify the primary duty UTCs that augmentees fill so that the unit can quickly identify and mobilize those UTCs.

An associated issue regards our current method of training deployment workcenter augmentees. AFI 10-403 requires that adequate numbers of augmentees receive periodic training to meet a worst-case deployment scenario that, by Air Force standards is 24/7 operations to deploy all deployable UTCs. As stated earlier, an ANG worst-case deployment scenario is a lack of deployment workcenter augmentees. If we cannot mobilize our trained augmentees when needed, why should we continue to train them when there is no guarantee that they will volunteer when needed? One answer might be to train even more unit personnel so that there is a better chance that anyone who volunteers has received training. Providing adequate deployment augmentee training for a minimum of persons is difficult enough for the following reasons:

1. The average guardsman is only available for two days/month and fifteen days/year.
2. During this time, he/she is expected to train in AFSC skills and attend numerous ancillary training classes required for their functional area and deployment readiness.
3. In addition, during this time he/she is expected to deploy in support of unit deployments and Aerospace Expeditionary Force deployments.

We cannot train massive numbers of people to function as deployment augmentees because we simply do not have the time available. Should the ANG plan to deviate from the AF expectations of a worst-case deployment scenario? Rather than train individuals with no guarantee that they will be available when needed, why not spend valuable time developing the best checklists possible to hand over to whoever does volunteer? This is obviously not an ideal answer and only addresses those deployment workcenters staffed by augmentees versus required AFSC-trained personnel. Certain AFSCs such as Logistics Planners or Medical personnel cannot be augmented

and must be available to staff deployment workcenters. ORIs for the ANG would need to change to assess the effectiveness of these "train when needed" procedures. Overall, this may benefit a unit by not spending limited man-hours and resources on a continual basis to train individuals who will never use the training. However, it does not provide an answer for the availability of the overall deployment infrastructure.

In summary, I would like to answer the question asked earlier, "Does the Air National Guard (ANG) mobilization concept meet ANG deployment requirements?" I believe that it does not. The entire process of mobilization through deployment consists of the proper execution of a complex chain of events. This chain is only as strong as its weakest link and that link is the very infrastructure required to deploy. If we do not have the infrastructure available, we cannot deploy. Deliberate plans should not rely on the unpredictable nature of volunteerism. If circumstances require that volunteerism is our only option, we should identify and plan for these potential shortfalls to avoid stumbling at the starting block for the next challenge.

Notes

1. AFMAN 10-401, Volume I, Operation Plan and Concept Plan Development and Implementation, 1 May 1998
2. User's Guide for JOPES (Joint Operation Planning and Execution System), 1 May 1995
3. AFMAN 10-401
4. AFH 10-416, Personnel Readiness and Mobilization, 22 December 1994
5. Joint Pub 4-05, Joint Doctrine for Mobilization Planning, 22 June 1995
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. AFH 10-416
10. Personal observation during an ANG/CAT tour, November 2001-January 2002
11. 2002 ANG Planners' Conference, Kansas City, MO, July 2002

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