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For more than 372 years the Army National Guard of the United States has proven to be our country's most enduring institution. It continues to be a ready and relevant force in support of today's missions throughout the world. We have over 60,000 Soldiers deployed overseas and thousands of others called out at any time by their State's Governors to support a variety of missions in support of homeland security.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about Warrant Officer issues in today's Army National Guard (ARNG). The key topics I will be covering today will be the ongoing operations of the Warrant Officer Senior Advisory Council (WOSAC); the annual conference for the National Guard of the United States (NGAUS); Warrant Officer Professional Development; Warrant Officer Candidate School for the Reserve Components; Warrant Officer strength challenges and new opportunities for the State Command Chief Warrant Officer (CCWO).

The Army National Guard Warrant Officer Senior Advisory Council (WOSAC) continues to evolve and mature as a professional leadership team. The WOSAC is composed of all the State Command Chief Warrant Officers (CCWO) and the ARNG CCWO from the National Guard Bureau (NGB). The Council provides advice and assistance through national and regional committees on matters affecting policy, plans, programs, resources, training, readiness and professional development of ARNG Warrant Officers. Throughout the year the WOSAC has met at the national and regional level.

The WOSAC Executive Committee represents each of the six regions in the United States. They meet three to four times a year to address issues that need to be resolved at the national level but without needing to convene the entire WOSAC. They focus on a variety of topics that emphasize specific warrant officer issues, while supporting the mission and objectives of the WOSAC.

Currently I am the acting WOSAC Chair while CW5 Richard Ernest, WOSAC Chair and CCWO for the North Carolina ARNG, performs the duties of acting ARNG CCWO at the National Guard Bureau (NGB), due to the recent retirement of CW5 Tommy O'Sullivan. The selection of a new ARNG CCWO is expected later this year.

The WOSAC annual conference was conducted last March in Charleston, South Carolina. There were a variety of briefings provided by senior ARNG leaders and policy personnel from the National Guard Bureau. Additional briefings were provided by MG William E. Ingram Jr., current Chairman of the Army Reserve Forces Policy Committee (ARFPC) and Adjutant

General for the North Carolina ARNG; COL Jones, Commandant of the Warrant Officer Career College; and, proponent guidance was provided by senior active Army Branch Chiefs. The proponents represented included Field Artillery, Special Forces, Ordnance, Military Police (CID), Signal Corps, Quartermaster, Military Intelligence, and Engineer branch. Key topics presented and discussed within the WOSAC included: Warrant Officer education initiatives; Warrant Officer recruiting; and a strategic discussion on the “way forward” for the WOSAC, addressing their long term goals and objectives as a leadership team.

Many warrant officers attended the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) conference this past September in Nashville, Tennessee. There were a number of exceptional speakers addressing national issues affecting the role and responsibilities of the National Guard, both Army and Air. A separate Warrant Officer Caucus was held. CW5 (Ret) Larry Massey is the Warrant Officer Representative to the NGAUS Board but was unable to attend. CW5 (Ret) Howard Haider presided over the meeting, which included elections for new board members. CW5 Gene Touchstone, CCWO Mississippi ARNG, was elected as the Warrant Officer Representative to the NGAUS Board. CW5 (Ret) Massey’s many years of support to the NGAUS Board are greatly appreciated. CW5 Richard Ernest, NGB ARNG Acting CCWO, was the guest speaker and addressed a number of “hot topics” affecting Army National Guard warrant officers at the national level as well as programs and issues being addressed by the WOSAC.

Immediately after the NGAUS conference, the National Guard Bureau hosted a Warrant Officer Senior Leaders Seminar (WOSLS) at the ARNG Readiness Center in Arlington, Virginia. CW5 Ernest hosted this training event and had a number of senior leaders from the NGB Joint Staff and ARNG senior leaders speak to the attendees. The WOSLS was composed of the entire WOSAC and ARNG senior warrant officers from throughout the country. The leadership addressed issues affecting the Army National Guard today and how warrant officers are an integral part of its success. The topics addressed during the WOSLS were: Warrant Officer strength strategy planning; “Yellow Ribbon” reintegration programs; National Guard role in homeland defense and civil support; NGB joint staff operations; reserve retirement guidance; and NGB ARNG Warrant Officer Branch operations. It was an excellent experience to be briefed as senior leaders on issues affecting us at the national and international level.

Giving our enlisted Soldiers the opportunity to attend either the resident Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOCS) at Fort Rucker, Alabama or the Reserve Component (RC) Warrant Officer Candidate School through the ARNG Regional Training Institute (RTI) has been a continuing success story. As a reminder, the WOCS-RC program was established in 2006. It is designed for ARNG and USAR warrant officer candidates (WOC). There are three separate phases to the program: Phase 1, Distance Learning (DL) phase; Phase 2 attend five IDT weekends; and, Phase 3 is conducted for two weeks at Camp Atterbury, Indiana or Fort McClellan, Alabama. After the initial test year, the school has been averaging over 200

graduates a year. The WOCS-RC program is meeting, if not exceeding, the training standard established by the school house. The program has been fully accredited by the Warrant Officer Career College.

Strength challenges continue with critical shortages identified in a number of Warrant Officer MOSs. ARNG Warrant Officer appointments are now exceeding losses for the first time in years. There is still a significant delta we need to fix. We cannot slow down identifying and qualifying high quality enlisted Soldiers to fill current and projected Warrant Officer vacancies. The hiring of Warrant Officer Strength Managers in 2005 has proven to be a key to success in this program. The good news is that we are headed in the right direction but, we cannot breathe easy yet.

A new leadership opportunity has been made available to state Command Chief Warrant Officers (CCWO). Recently NGB granted the State Adjutants General (TAG) the options of having either their State Senior Enlisted Advisor (State CSM) or their State CCWO participate in senior leadership visits of their deployed units supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The first week of September I had the privilege of being the first CCWO to travel to Afghanistan with my TAG, Major General Thomas Cutler. We traveled to Bagram and from there visited four separate Forward Operating Bases to meet deployed ARNG Soldiers. It was an opportunity I will never forget. It gave me invaluable insight as to how our Soldiers are doing, the environmental conditions they work in and their professionalism. This trip was not based on my position as a Warrant Officer focusing on just Warrant Officer business. It was recognition that the CCWO is a key member of the State's senior leadership team. Michigan does not have any Warrant Officers in Afghanistan; however, while visiting FOB Orgun-E we met Soldiers from the New Mexico ARNG where everyone was quite pleased to have me meet CW3 Dominic Esparza. He is a great example of our Warrant Officer Corps today. CW5 Delynn Gibson, CCWO for the Kentucky ARNG, had a similar opportunity as me with his recent trip this past August traveling to Iraq with his Adjutant General. We both know what a privilege it was to participate in these senior leadership visits.

It has been a busy year but one that shows us making progress in the right direction. As with anything, the WOSAC continues to evolve and grow embracing their role and responsibilities as senior leaders for their State and the Warrant Officer community.

Thank you again for this opportunity to talk to the United States Army Warrant Officer Association about what is happening in the Army National Guard and it's impact on fellow Warrant Officers. The Army National Guard continues to be "Always Ready – Always There" with Warrant Officers taking the lead. Let me know if there are any questions I can answer for you on where we are at and our focus for the future.