Summary of the Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative and Why it Should NOT Be Executed

* The Army’s Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI) is designed to save just under $1 Billion annually.
* It divests the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior (KW) and TH-67 basic training helicopter (both variants of the Bell Jet Ranger civilian helicopter).
* ARI reduces the number of Combat Aviation Brigades (CAB) in the Active Component (AC) and the Army National Guard (ARNG) from 21 to 10 (Currently 13 AC and 8 ARNG) .
* The OH-58D KW is a light Scout/Reconnaissance aircraft in service since the late 80s. Rather than make large expenditures on a Service Life-Extension Program, the Army proposes to divest this airframe and its related logistics train without having a replacement scout aircraft.
* To fill the void in its CABs created by this divestiture, the Army proposes to move all AH-64D Apaches from the ARNG and US Army Reserve to the AC. The light scout platform will be replaced with the heavily armed, complicated and expensive AH-64 Apache.
* The plan will also move half of the LUH-72 Lakotas from the ARNG, combine them with those in the AC to replace the TH-67 at Ft. Rucker. The TH-67 is the same basic airframe as the TH-57 which the Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard use as a basic training helicopter.
* Net effect of ARI: $1 billion in savings per year at a cost of half the number of the CABs, elimination of all Apaches from the RC and the loss of the light scout helicopter and the Army’s basic training aircraft.
* **This same $1 billion per year could be saved** by moving 2 CABs from the AC to the ARNG (AC CAB costs $666 million/year vs $204 million/yr in the ARNG - net savings $462 million per CAB).
* Although ARI is a budget decision, the AC justifies the plan by stating the ARNG Attack/Recon Battalions (ARB) are not sufficiently accessible for deployment and their maintenance readiness rates are too low. Both these statements are not accurate.
* The ARNG ARBs deployed all 12 times the AC requested them during OIF/OEF. The AC controls all factors that affect the accessibility of these units. If they wanted them more they should have asked for them more.
* Readiness rates are a factor of funding more than any single point. For the past 12 years of OIF/OEF, both at home station and in theater, the AC has purchased their rates through contractor maintenance. They did not achieve their rates by using Soldiers organic to the unit.
* The ARNG uses its unit Soldiers to do Apache maintenance with little support from contractors. Also, the ARNG only has 20% of its force working full-time compared to 100% of the AC force.
* The ARNG does not have the same access as the AC for replacement parts, the brigade Aviation Support Battalion and government Logistics Assistance Representatives (maintenance and logistics subject matter experts).
* Given these differences in maintenance resources, ARNG units **should not** have the same readiness rates as the AC. A better measure would be dollar in for readiness rate out.
* The real question is what were the readiness rates of the ARNG while deployed when all factors were the same as the AC? The answer: ARNG units met the Army standard in theater.
* ARI extracts a heavy cost through reduction of Army Aviation capability, 10 CABs not 21. It also eliminates part of the ARNG’s constitutionally mandated mission to defend the nation by taking all its Apaches and CABs.
* The plan leaves the Army with an expensive, complicated attack helicopter to replace the light scout aircraft. It uses the more expensive LUH- 72 Lakota as a basic training aircraft, eliminating a multi-service commonality in a basic training aircraft.
* **ARI should be shelved** until a congressionally appointed commission can independently study and recommend the way forward for Army Aviation.