**The Emperor’s New Clothes**

The latest round of justification by the Active Component (AC) for their flawed and self-serving Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI) is their current attempt to convince themselves and anyone they can get to listen that the Emperor really IS wearing clothes. Much like the unscrupulous tailors in the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, the AC is looking to intimidate anyone who doesn’t buy their half-truths, inaccuracies, and misrepresentations. But, like the innocent young child in the crowd, anyone looking at their plan from a logical and rational vantage point can clearly see “… he isn’t wearing any at all!”

One Senior National Guard Aviation officer with over 30 years experience (in both Active Duty and in the National Guard) said the following when he saw their latest justification for ARI:

*“I cannot adequately explain my disgust with their clearly unfounded and unsupportable ‘answers’– as disingenuous as anything I've seen in over 30 years of service to our country....”*

Rather than look at other possible solutions and genuinely engage the Reserve Component (RC), in particular the National Guard – and not just token representatives from NGB (bound by Title 10 loyalties and a non-disclosure statement) – in a cooperative joint effort in finding a solution, the AC has made statements that have little to no basis in fact. Let the Emperor know that he is, in fact, naked. Consider the following counterpoints:

* First and foremost, it took 20 CABs to fight OIF/OEF. Cutting the number of Combat Aviation Brigades (CABs) to 10 puts national defense at risk. Assuming away the enemy because we can’t foresee today the conflict we could be in tomorrow is very short sighted. Eliminating CABs from the National Guard leaves the nation with no Army Aviation reserve. The tax payer is being short changed. The total Army doesn’t have to shrink to cut budgets. Cut the expensive component and grow the inexpensive component.
* The fact is that AC manpower costs are 3 times that of the National Guard, on a like unit-per-unit comparison. Manpower costs are the single largest expense in any unit, even with high cost of equipment units found in an Apache Battalion. If the RC were comparable in cost or even close, the taxpayer would be wasting every dime spent on the RC. Any assertion that the RC is just as costly as the AC is absurd.
* The AC cannot maintain their Apaches in a fiscally constrained environment. They rely on contractor maintenance. Their “green suit” organic Soldiers do not have sufficient experience. In 2012 there was a change in aviation maintenance contractors from L3 to AECOM in Afghanistan. A large portion of the experienced civilian aircraft mechanics left due to dramatic salary cuts. This put the AC maintenance into crisis. Organic D Companies and Aviation Support Battalions could not meet the demand. AMCOM had to move Reset teams into country as a stop gap to keep the fleet flying. Guard units continued to conduct scheduled heavy maintenance with their organic Soldiers, on their own aircraft as well as helping the AC with their Apaches.
* There is a large difference between the accident ratio of the AC and RC. Look at the last 5 years of data at the Army Aviation Safety Center and see the number of Class A accidents where pilot error was a causal factor for AC vs National Guard accidents; 10 to 0 with 2 more under investigation. Those 2 are AC accidents and appear to be due to pilot error. This would make 12 Class A accidents due to Active Duty pilot error,in the period FY09-13; with none in the National Guard.
* The AC assumes that only units that are 100% compatible with supporting the state’s natural disaster or homeland defense mission (MEDEVAC, UH, Engineer and Medical etc.) should be in the National Guard. The constitutionally mandated mission of the militia, the Reserve Component, is to defend the nation. This is its first and most important mission. Support to the Governor is only a last resort when civilian resources are exhausted. The Guard has never failed to successfully complete a disaster support (natural or man-made) mission with its combat force structure, manning and equipment. If the AC assumption were accurate there would be no unit from the Combat Arms in the Guard, no tanks, artillery, cavalry fighting vehicles, or fighters such as the A-10,F-15 or F-16.
* The fact is an Apache Battalion is a great Domestic Operations unit. It has 400 Soldiers, dozens of trucks, trailers, generators, communications equipment, ground maintenance capability, medical personnel and equipment. The Apache itself can conduct aerial reconnaissance – day or night (with infrared) - videotaping for disaster damage analysis and assistance in Search and Rescue as well as aerial command and control, freeing UH and CH assets to do the heavy lifting.
* To say that the Guard can operate UH-60s less expensively than the LUH-72 is a contradiction in the very reasoning that brought the Lakota to the Army. At the time, the Army wanted the UH-60s for combat deployments and needed a cheaper Off-the-Shelf aircraft to cover the CONUS missions that don’t require the expense and capability of the MilSpec Blackhawk. Otherwise, the Army should have just purchased additional Blackhawks if they are cheaper to buy and operate.
* It is true that an Apache can conduct the light armed scout mission. This is why the Apaches are in Attack/Recon Battalions and Squadrons, it is dual mission capable. That does not mean it is the best or most economical airframe for this mission. Using a heavily armed attack aircraft in lieu of a light armed scout is like using a 10lb. sledge hammer to kill a fly. It is serious, expensive overkill.
* Can Ft. Rucker meet its IERW training mission with the LUH-72? Yes it can, but we’re pulling out another 10lb. sledge hammer. The TH-67 is the same basic airframe as the TH-57, which the Navy uses to train all of the other services’ helicopter pilots (Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard). There is a military-wide commonality and the logistics train will be there with or without the Army using the TH-67. The decision to divest the OH-58D does not have to be tied to the divestiture of the TH-67.
* With their plan, the AC has said they can provide sufficient Air-to-Ground integration training to the RC ground units. They will use their Apachesin a regionally aligned multi-compo partnership. How is it then that the Guard is constantly asked to train with the AC ground units now? If the AC can’t train its own, how will it train with the Guard in the future?
* Likely the most ridiculous and insulting argument the AC uses is that the National Guard Attack/Recon Battalions are more expensive and less capable than the AC. Total cost, maintenance capability,and safety figures do not lie. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that on deployment AC CAB commanders love their attached National Guard ARBs. Even DES indicated in their 2012 month long inspection of all aviation units in Afghanistan that the National Guard Attack Reconnaissance Battalion in country was an excellent unit for either Compo (AC or RC). Where is the data showing less capability?

Rather than continuing to convince themselves that their plan is the only means to provide sufficient Army Aviation capability within the shrinking budgets of the near future, the AC should spend the same effort and time working with the total force to come up with a viable solution that the entire Army can support.