



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE AIR FORCE

SUITE 200, JAMES POLK BUILDING
2521 SOUTH CLARK STREET
ARLINGTON, VA 22202
(703) 545-9113

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Contact: Barry Willey, Chief, Media Relations
703-545-9123; Mobile: 703-965-4741

Selfridge ANG on Drill Weekend Offers Guard Perspective For Members of the National Commission on Structure of the Air Force

WASHINGTON, D.C.— During their visit to Selfridge Air National Guard base in Michigan Saturday morning, members of the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force saw firsthand how National Guard members utilize their civilian career skills in carrying out their military duties. The commissioners also witnessed interagency cooperation at work in various national security missions.

In the afternoon the Commission conducted a public hearing, taking statements from state and local government officials and emergency response authorities as well as commanders and supervisors from Guard units around the state. The hearing and site visit were part of the Commission's congressionally mandated mission to comprehensively study the U.S. Air Force and its three components—the active, the Reserve, and Air National Guard—for an independent analysis that will determine if and how the Air Force's structure should be modified to best fill current and future mission requirements with available resources. The report and recommendations are due to the President and Congress on Feb. 1, 2014.

These site visits allow the commissioners to get outside the nation's capital and into the world of the airmen where they serve. Commissioners on this visit were the Vice Chairwoman, the Honorable Erin Conaton; Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Harry "Bud" Wyatt, ANG; and Dr. Janine Davidson.

Guard leaders stressed the Air Guard's role in both national and state missions. "We are the value for America," Michigan Adjutant General Maj Gen Gregory J. Vadnais told the commissioners at the hearing. "And as you travel the country and deliberate your findings, please keep one thing in mind: the structure of the Air Force and the military as a whole comes down to how much capability and readiness you are able to purchase."

The commissioners were looking for frank feedback, and they got it from Chief Master Sergeant Raymond Carroll of the 127th Mission Support Group's Civil Engineer Squadron at Selfridge. "I appreciate your desire for candor," he said before replying to the commissioners' questioning why a state governor would need ground-support attack aircraft like the A-10 or air refueling tankers such as the KC-135. "I don't care about airplanes," CMSgt Carroll continued. "But the

governor needs the support groups that come with those airplanes. The Mission Support Group wants to be ready and relevant, and we are.” The commissioners also heard testimony that aircraft such as the A-10 have capabilities that could be used for responding to natural disasters.

Colonel Sean Southworth, commander of the 217th Air Operations Group, referred to the Guard’s federal mission when he told the commissioners, “If we don’t have the same equipment, we’re not relevant.” Retired Brigadier General Mike Peplinski, former 127th Wing commander at Selfridge, debunked what he said is a persistent but unfounded belief that Guard members would have lesser combat skills than active personnel. “After 20 years of the operational reserve, why would you expect to see a difference?”

The day started with the commissioners sharing breakfast with airmen on the base, a moment of interaction with enlisted personnel that has become a standard practice on these site visits. The commissioners then received a briefing on Michigan Air Guard units from Maj. Gen. Vadnais and heard from leaders of the other tenant entities at Selfridge representing the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, and Customs and Border Protection Agency. Each briefer highlighted the interagency cooperation that allows them to reduce operational costs while sharing expertise.

Commissioners observed activities across the spectrum of missions performed by the Air National Guard’s 127th Wing, from the Security Forces Squadron to the flightline operations of the wing’s A-10 and KC-135 units. Commissioners also examined the Joint Reserve Intelligence Center on the base. Airmen of all ranks stressed their willingness to take on more deployments if they were legally able. “Our people are very flexible at flexing,” one Guardsman said. Unit leaders described the talent that Guard members bring from their civilian careers. “We pay them for two days a month, but they bring a great amount of support to the fight,” said Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Sierakowski, commander of the 127th Civil Engineering Squadron.

At the hearing, in addition to Maj Gen Vadnais, the commander of the Michigan Air National Guard, Brig Gen Leonard Isabelle, addressed the commissioners. Also testifying were the senior commanders of Michigan Air National Guard units: Col Michael T. Thomas, commander of the 127th Wing at Selfridge; Col. Ronald W. Wilson, commander of the 110th Airlift Wing at Battle Creek Air National Guard Base; and Col Bryan J. Teff, commander of the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center. Air Guard squadron commanders and superintendents as well as community leaders, including Alpena’s Mayor Matt Waligora, also addressed the Commission.

For more information on the Commission and its mission, visit the website, <http://afcommission.whs.mil>. Send comments and inputs to Marcia Moore, Designated Federal Officer, by mail at the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force, 1950 Defense Pentagon, Room 3A874, Washington, DC 20301–1950, by email at dfoafstrucomm@osd.mil, by phone at 703-571-7057, or by fax at 703-692-5625.