

Discrimination in the Alaska National Guard: Board of Inquiry says systemic problems led to racial bias

Printed on these pages is the full set of recommendations made by the Board of Inquiry that investigated racial bias in the Alaska National Guard.

Ongoing investigation by *Tundra Times* indicates that some Guard members are skeptical about whether the widespread bias discovered by the board will in fact be remedied. Reasons for this lingering doubt vary. Some feel the military culture is simply too resistant to change and that the tendency to retaliate against those who blow the whistle will discourage lower echelon Guard members from taking advantage of Adjutant General Jake Lesten-kof's invitation to report bias. Others point to apparent limitations placed on the

Discussion	Recommendation
Loss of Alaska Native Guard Members due to: Downsizing Stricter Attendance Educational Requirements 100% Drug Testing	Alaska Army National Guard should immediately implement an intensive recruitment and retention effort aimed at increasing Alaska Native Members; village-by-village, incorporating Elders.
Education Waivers enabling Alaska Native membership to increase and advancement in the ARNG to a certain level, which "opened the door for eventual failure."	The ARNG should work with the State Department of Education and village/regional corporations to make increased training opportunities available to rural Guard members. A full-time position of education assistance officer be created within the ARNG. This position would assist individuals to find and apply for funding to attend educational programs necessary for advancement in the Guard. Also, TAG (*(****) should pursue funding for: 1) training for Guards members who are deficient in English or math for entrance into officer education programs; and 2) tuition assistance for officers and officer candidates. The ARNG eliminate the waiver of the Army Standard Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) testing within two years. ASYAB testing of enlistees should begin immediately, and be evaluated for impact on enlistees. Similarly, TAG should examine the rural officer education waiver, with the view toward eliminating this waiver in the near future.
Lines of communication have fallen. Reporting of complaints have been blocked or forgotten.	There be increased informal access to the ARNG command through avenues such as a telephone and a fax "hotline."
Inaccessibility and invisibility of ARNG command.	TAG visit the remote units, and be visible to all Guard members. Command staff should meet regularly with battalion, group, and unit commanders to confer regarding management of the ARNG. There should also be a tracking system for directives to make sure that word really does filter down from the top to every unit.
EEO and IG	The ARNG EEO position be full-time, and travel throughout Alaska assessing the EEO climate.
Ineffective Chain of Command	A clear, announced and understood chain of command developed in accordance with State law and military principles be implemented. That there be periodic commander conferences (involving staff) to insure that the course of the organization is understood The ARNG Command Sergeant Major hold periodic NCO conferences to insure that all understand policies and procedures and to enhance the problem solving process.
The rural education system generally is not preparing its graduates to function in modern American society as shown by ARNG NCO Education System results.	Schools in the rural areas increase emphasis on basic reading and writing skills. The Board also recommends that the legislature appropriate sufficient money to the Department of Education for a pass-through grant to DMVA for the purpose of providing individual, remedial instruction to Guard members.
Widespread drug use in rural Alaska. Lack of drug testing notification.	Rural schools implement an intensive drug education program directed at alleviating illegal drug use. Also, notice should be provided to all ARNG members in the urban and rural areas <i>before</i> blanket drug testing occurs. The ARNG expand the Resilient Warrior Program to include other units if the program receives a favorable evaluation in July 1995. Guard should network with existing regional non-profit corporations which have viable substance abuse programs, including village aftercare.
Senior staff interests have taken priority over command issues and care for soldiers. Soldiers tend to become names, numbers and problems instead of people.	Care for soldiers once again become a command priority.
Diminishing role of the ANG in economic and individual development in rural Alaska. Changes in Alaska Natives in rural Alaskan society. Lack of understanding and appreciation for the true value of what scout members have contributed in terms of loyalty, dedication, tradition, and special skills. Failure to attract top graduates from rural schools.	Guard increase its efforts to attract highly qualified high school graduates.
Lack of cross-cultural awareness.	The ANG establish bona-fide orientation programs for urban officers who might be brought into command and senior NCO positions in rural areas, and also for rural officers who are assigned to serve in urban areas. Also, the Guard should establish a mentorship program to ensure that senior personnel are training junior personnel for advancement in the Guard. This type of program, should include cross-cultural awareness training, and interpersonal communications training.

Board which seem to preclude recommending disciplinary action against officers responsible for bias. Finally, Lestenkof's continued reliance on some of those same officers is a source of serious concern and confusion to some with whom we spoke.

To a certain extent, the dispatch with which the Administration and the Legislature act to implement these recommendations will be a test of what some view as a risky decision not to discipline officers accused of serious incidents of racial discrimination in the Alaska National Guard.

Discussion	Recommendation
Importance of Guard units in rural Alaska.	Governor and the legislature support TAG's efforts to integrate the Scout Battalions into the world wide mission of the Alaska National Guard, and that a secure place is found for these battalions within the force structure.
No response to complaints filed; nor notification of results of inquiries.	ARNG make a special effort to quickly respond to complaints, conduct inquiries as necessary, and inform complainants of the results of the inquiries to the extent allowed by applicable regulations.
Insufficient family support.	ARNG institutionalize the family support program outlined in current directives.
Quality training support: urban vs. rural; bigger organization vs. people issues.	ARNG place a higher priority on the quality of training in rural areas, and that this training be augmented by outside resources, wherever available. The Board further recommends that training be made exciting and meaningful to stimulate attendance at drills, and retention in the Guard.
Delays in Officer Efficiency Reports (OER) and the effects on promotions.	ARNG's processing of OERs be improved to achieve a goal of quick evaluations to prevent bad impressions.
Insufficient progressive discipline prior to non-retention status.	TAG should explore the feasibility of applying the state version of Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) in situations where discipline is necessary.
Reid Report*	Continued implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Reid Report, and that these be widely distributed through the Guard.
Effective Social Actions Program of the Alaska Air National Guard, but no similar project in the Army National Guard.	TAG establish a formal program from top to bottom that will encourage a strong human relations climate in the ARNG.
Promotion standards within the ANG, hiring of active military officers, and no orientation procedures.	State statutes be enacted to establish qualifications for appointment as Adjutant General beyond those that now exist. As a minimum, the appointee should have served for at least five years as a Field Grade Officer in the Alaska National Guard and have completed Air or Army Command and Staff College.
Attitudes of staff at the State Headquarters Office. Lack of trust and credibility among rural units.	TAG restore Assistant AG's to the status of component commanders, also serving as Deputy Commissioners. To insure fresh, well-rounded leadership, the Board recommends that staff and command positions should rotate on a regular basis, in a manner similar to the rotation of regular army officers.
Indecision about having units in remote villages and having responsibility for those units.	TAG should take positive action to assign commanders that are willing to reside or already reside in the local area; recognizing that rotation for rural tours must take place.
Gaining credibility in rural communities.	The establishment of a citizen's advisory committee to advise commanders and the AG staff on ways to recruit and retain members or on appropriate policy matters.
Role of the Command Sergeant Major.	The State CSM work for the commander of the Alaska ARNG, and be on call to the Adjutant General.
Women in Rural Units.	TAG consider a force structure that would allow greater participation of women in rural units.
NCO Academy.	A higher priority be placed on support to the NCO Academy, that the staff be returned to its previous size, and that the leadership be returned to the NCO Commandant and the State CSM.
No scapegoats. Excuses used for downsizing.	The Board recommends against the use of changing missions and drug abuse as reasons for units failing.
Lack of investigation of discriminatory acts and inequitable treatment.	All open EEO and IG complaints be fairly and expeditiously pursued to closure. The Board further recommends that TAG issue a strong policy statement against reprisal or retribution with sufficient definition so all parties clearly understand and can act accordingly.
State Disaster Mission	The Board recommends that the Governor and TAG consider the adverse effect of eliminating rural units on state disaster response statewide.