



# In the Beginning of AAAA Fifty Years Ago

## Army National Guard Aviation, AAAA and the Total Force Policy

By Dr. Michael D. Doubler

*Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from a forthcoming article by Dr. Mike Doubler on AAAA's relationship with the Army National Guard and support for the citizen-Soldiers. Watch for this article in the 50th Anniversary Special Edition of ARMY AVIATION magazine in the spring of 2007.*

Since 1636, the National Guard has provided a wide range of capabilities in support of the nation's defenses. This has never been truer than with the development of the Army National Guard (ARNG) aviation force.

An important aspect of that story has been the close ties between AAAA and ARNG aviation. This relationship has flourished under the Total Force Policy, a Department of Defense program that relies upon citizen-Soldiers just as much as active duty personnel to defend the country.

The ARNG aviation program was born in 1948, almost a full decade before the start of AAAA in 1957.

The same year AAAA was organized ARNG aviation included only 1,154 qualified pilots with an inventory of 640 fixed wing aircraft and 107 observation helicopters.

No one has been more responsible for the development of ARNG aviation than retired COL John J. Stanko. A member of the Army Air Corps in World War II, he became a light aircraft pilot in the Pennsylvania National Guard in 1954.

Since the day he volunteered, Stanko loved serving with the Guard until his civilian retirement in 1993 as chief of the ARNG Aviation Division.

By the time of his retirement, ARNG aviation was arguably the largest, separate military aviation

force in the world, consisting of 2,800 helicopters, 150 fixed wing aircraft, and 6,800 aviators.

Advocacy of AAAA was a constant theme of Stanko's long aviation career. Stanko is quick to point out a unique aspect of AAAA's founding; of the 45 charter members, 13 were Guard state aviation officers.

MG Raymond F. Rees, the current Adjutant General of Oregon, personified the close cooperation between ARNG aviation and AAAA in the 1980s and 1990s. Following a combat tour in Vietnam, he became rated in the OH-58 and AH-1 during a tour of duty with the 82nd Airborne Division.

In addition to multiple tours as the Adjutant General of Oregon, Rees' most recent senior assignments include: director of the Army National Guard; vice chief of the National Guard Bureau; and chief of staff of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command.

All through these key assignments, Rees has advocated the important role of AAAA to ARNG aviation.

"AAAA is very helpful and supportive for the Total Force Policy, not just superficial things, but real substance," Rees said.

When the Army began the planning and execution of the Army Aviation Modernization Plan in the 1990s, Rees served as the chairman of a Guard task force to consider the program. As a result, AAAA proved helpful in insuring that Guard aviation assets were equally distributed across the country.

In recent years, retired COL Robert E. Godwin has come to the forefront as a citizen-Soldier aviator who has strengthened the ties between the Guard and AAAA while advancing the Total Force Policy. Under Godwin's leadership, ARNG aviation and AAAA have collaborated to promote simulations technologies for all of Army aviation.

A clear example of the Total Force Policy in action came with the can-



ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU PHOTO

Alaska Army National Guard troops from +a Long Range Surveillance Detachment rappel from a UH-1H helicopter during winter training in 1996.

cellation of the Comanche, when the Guard and AAAA worked together to provide funding for recognized ARNG shortfalls.

Today, as many as 20 AAAA chapters have a majority membership of Guard aviators.

With the war on terror, the ARNG aviation community can clearly declare, "We are there!"

Whether flying high altitude missions in Afghanistan's eastern mountains, conducting combat and support missions over Iraq's urban centers, or rescuing American citizens from Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters; ARNG aviation has indeed proven that it is a full partner in the Total Force.

If the last fifty years are an indicator, ARNG aviation and AAAA will certainly enjoy a supportive and mutually beneficial relationship in the decades to come.



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