General Mark A. Milley
Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army
1500 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-1500

Dear General Milley:

This letter is in response to the invitation you extended to us at the MSO/VSO Army Leadership meeting of 2 November 2015 to provide you with our suggestions regarding the Army Guard and Reserve and also how the Army-oriented MSOs might be of assistance to you.

Leadership of the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, the National Guard Association of the United States, and the Association of the United States Army concur on the below recommendations, many of which were also noted in the recent report of the Commission on the Future of the Army. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute and are prepared to engage with you to address suggestions and issues you would like to share with us.

Specific suggestions.

1. Embrace the Army Total Force Policy and the logical conclusion that the Army’s Reserve Components be developed and used as operational reserves. Expanding the ability to use the 12304B mobilization authority is essential, but it is also necessary to guard against over-use of the RC either in training or mission support.

2. Issue a guidance letter of support for military associations. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh, did so in a letter of 7 January 2013. General Grass has recently signed out a similar letter.

3. Follow up on prior SecDef, SecArmy and CSA guidance allowing proper access to installations for non-federal entities. Implementation is ongoing and should be monitored in coordination with MSOs and VSOs to ensure that the intent of the guidance is fulfilled.

4. Integrate Guard and Reserve senior officers into the Army Staff and other command positions for which they are qualified, including senior positions in the COCOMs.

5. Integrate Regular Army personnel into appropriate Reserve Component units.

6. Enhance educational opportunities across the educational spectrum for RC Soldiers. A specific need exists to find a more flexible way for Guard and Reserve officers to achieve JQO status, e.g. by giving full credit for experiential joint service by Guard and Reserve officers rather than the half credit they now receive, and by seeking ways in which non-resident students at the USAWC might attain credit toward JQO.
7. Request that a Guard and Reserve brigadier general be named to the “select” senior leader development program of BGs that the previous CSA brought together annually at the USAWC. No Guard or Reserve flag officer has been represented in this group.

8. Include a block of instruction at pre-command courses on how to legally engage and leverage professional associations, and provide guidance to TJAG on how to help commanders work with MSOs. Add the same block of instruction at the Staff Judge Advocate courses as presented at pre-command courses on legally and ethically engaging and leveraging professional associations. We perceive an unproductive, risk-averse bias by the lawyers providing counsel to Army leaders against providing access; behaviors won’t change unless the JAG advisors to commanders are on board.

9. Suggest creation of a Military Associations Advisory Board that can meet with the CSA or your senior staff and provide insights and advice. The current quarterly MSO/VSO meetings with the CSA/Army Staff have value. However, many of the attendees at these meetings are VSOs whose issues understandably broaden past those of a national security nature.

10. Encourage Army leadership (military and civilian) to customarily solicit input from the military associations on key issues; add us to your brain trust. It could prevent misunderstanding and smooth the way toward resolution of major policy issues, e.g. ARI or proposed modifications to Goldwater-Nichols law and policies.

It is our goal to build trust with the Army leadership, so that we can provide value. Our members are located in every state and have broad latitude to convey communications to influential audiences. We understand we can’t always be asking for things for which the taxpayer cannot pay within a tough budgetary regime, be it benefits or operational resources.

We hope that through constructive use of the Military Associations Advisory Board we can prove ourselves valuable partners and that a two-way street of communications can be fully developed.

Sir, we appreciate your leadership, your statements and your actions that reflect an understanding of and esteem for the Army’s Reserve Components – and their use within our One Army.

This We’ll Defend!

MG Gus Hargett, USA (Ret.)
President
National Guard Assn.

GEN Gordon Sullivan, USA (Ret.)
President and CEO
Assn. of the United States Army

Jeffrey E. Phillips
Executive Director
Reserve Officers Assn.