

McKinley: Diversity critical to National Guard success

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By Army Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

Diversity is critical for the National Guard to compete in today's global environment, the chief of the National Guard Bureau said today.

"Our nation needs the most diverse workforce it can have to be the most efficient and effective ... that it can be," Gen. Craig McKinley told the Military Leadership Diversity Commission that met here in Crystal City.

"It's incumbent upon our [National Guard Bureau] team to create the atmosphere, to create the resources, to create the vision to work with the adjutants general ... to make sure that our diversity programs are in line with the Department of Defense instructions and regulations," McKinley said.



Under the provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Congress established the Department of Defense Military Leadership Diversity Commission, according to the commission's Web site at <http://mldc.whs.mil>.

The commission will review issues regarding diversity in the military services and evaluate policies that provide opportunities for the promotion and advancement of minority members of the armed forces, including minority members who are senior officers.

"This is a subject that never can be declared victory upon," McKinley said. "It is a journey that must be continually applied to leadership across the services."

The Military Leadership Diversity Commission must submit a report to Congress and the president. The report will include the findings and conclusions of the commission; the recommendations of the commission for improving diversity within the armed forces; and other information and recommendations considered appropriate by the commission.

The commission meets at a time when McKinley said some of the focus on diversity may have faded because of the operations tempo since the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Diversity has become a more subtle and sophisticated issue than merely counting numbers by gender and race. "It's about the art - of the science - of dealing with individuals," McKinley said.

For example, operations in Afghanistan and Iraq highlight a need for troops to have a high level of cultural awareness.

"This whole subject of diversity takes on whole new meaning," McKinley said. "How we train, organize and equip our forces requires new thinking, bold approaches, bold looks so that we can be competitive in today's marketplace."

The National Guard faces a unique challenge when it comes to measuring diversity and setting standards.

"The National Guard is a decentralized organization," McKinley said. "Each state, each territory and the District [of Columbia] have different goals, aspirations and vision for how diversity is applied in each state."

He also said he is concerned that trends in the way the National Guard is geographically structured may have caused unwonted demographic changes.

"As I look around the country and I see the pockets that we recruit from, I'm a little nervous that in many of our major cities, that many of our United States Army National Guard armories have been displaced from the inner city, not allowing us therefore to recruit that demographic that we did in the 40s, the 50s, the 60s and the 70s," McKinley said. "We've moved out into the more rural areas of our states, thereby creating less of an advantage for inner city youth to take advantage of the military experience."