

1. After briefly describing your biographical information, please describe how your experience speaks to your abilities both in supervisory and managerial roles.

- I have been in the military, either active duty or as a traditional Air or Army National Guard member, for 35 years. For the past 20 years of commissioned service, I have worked at every level of command, in multiple directorates within the VTNG. With Task Force Saber, I was on an 18 month mobilization, inclusive of a 12 month deployment to Ramadi, Iraq, managing the combat operations of the Battalion for a year in a very kinetic environment, during which we lost 15 of our Soldiers and one of our Marines. As a staff officer, recently back from Iraq, I served as the tactical operations center mentor for a trilateral NATO level engagement – Adriatic Aurora – 2500 Soldiers and Airmen from three Adriatic nations and three states conducting two weeks of collective training to showcase interoperability with NATO. I have built a team as the Recruiting Battalion commander that recruited nearly 1600 new members of the Vermont Army National Guard in four years, and fixed our personnel discharge policies. As the Deputy Commander for our Regional Training Institute, I led our schoolhouse through a Training and Doctrine Command accreditation, earning an institute of excellence. Following graduation from the Naval War College, I was assigned as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, inheriting, again, mismanagement of discharges and retirements. I presented solutions to MG Cray and again corrected this issue. But any of these accomplishments are not mine alone. It is the opportunity this organization provides and the teams I have worked with that accomplish the missions for Vermont. It is our people that get things done, I just had the good fortune to help them build an effective team.

2. Please offer your insights into the current workplace culture at the Vermont Guard. We are particularly interested in your views about whether the Guard currently fosters an inclusive work environment free from discrimination or harassment. Where you observe weaknesses or room for improvement, please describe how you would address them if you become the Adjutant General.

- As the Human Resources Officer, I am made aware of harassment and at times discrimination that remains an organizational challenge – so currently, no, our workplace environment is not immune or free of these issues. And given my current position, I also understand for every incident that is reported, there are many that go unreported – incidents of both sexual harassment and sexual assault. We focus a great deal on metrics and statistics, but we have to remember metrics are people, not just percentages or historical data. Each one has a story to tell, and too often the emotional stress that comes with it. One transgression is too many, and erodes the trust and readiness of the organization. To correct this, I offer the following:

- After we spoke with the Women’s Caucus, someone questioned my plan of having a meeting with every woman in the VTNG, something we have not done since 2011 – “why only the women?” While my intent is to present a safe

environment, non- attributional - for candid discussion with women employees about their experiences with harassment, discrimination, opportunity and gender bias – someone looking through a different lens shows me it should incorporate men – who are also victims. By bringing in subject matter experts like Ted Bunch, co-founder of A Call to Men, and from organizations like Vermont Works for Women, we can educate our force to develop a culture of respect, equity and value for every member of the VTNG. We all have a responsibility to take action, but sometimes not the authority. We need to provide our organization a climate where our members feel they can bring concerns forward for action.

- Upon being assigned as the HRO, I realized our hiring practices were inconsistent, and not aligned with policy and regulation. This exposes the organization, and applicants, to an unfair process and risk. To remedy this, I have directed the revision of hiring practices into the full-time workforce to be competency based and aligned with law and regulation, currently in the process of being implemented. By focusing on competencies, we are better serving applicants by hiring the best qualified for the job, and enabling the Human Resources Office to review hires to ensure fairness in the process.

- We don't have enough women in leadership positions. But, in order to provide more opportunity, we need to recruit more women. I know that when women are in leadership positions, there is a marked reduction in sexual harassment and sexual assault. But we need more women to be competitive, and ensure an equitable process for selecting leaders for both the Air and Army National Guard. I know 67% of young women join the National Guard for educational benefits. Thanks to the legislature, we have that. Now we need to do a better job telling our story.

- Most importantly, Vermont is not such a large state that an Adjutant General can't be a more visible presence. As a leader, the importance of presence and sensing cannot be understated. Although it is historically underutilized based on operational tempo, it is also my preferred approach to understanding the needs of the people that serve our organization. I believe in the impact of an Adjutant General walking into an armory without all the straphangers and rigid schedule. Or visiting the full-time staff at an outlying armory just to see how things are going and to help prioritize the demands placed on them. If an Adjutant General engages at every level, it will become evident where the priorities lie – with our people.

3. Vermont needs both the Army and Air Guard units to be strong and supported by Vermont Guard leadership. Do you believe the two divisions are currently supported on equitable terms? How would you ensure all Guard members are valued on equal terms?

- Support for both organizations is strong, and although resources come from different funding, are adequate to execute assigned missions. We have outstanding leaders in the VTNG. There are some, however, that need to remember that people are the center of gravity. Not equipment, not training events, not inventory or budgets. Without qualified personnel, all of those things won't matter, because we won't be able to field a ready force for the Governor or National Command Authority

in time of need. For both organizations, the critical need is filling our vacancies. We have nearly 450 vacancies across the VTNG, and the Army National Guard in particular – 2/3 of our force - has suffered from a lack of focus on production recruiting and retention of qualified personnel. For six years we have not legitimately made our recruiting or assigned personnel strength missions. What that means is Vermont is at risk of losing our force structure to a growth state – that means the loss of equipment, resources, funding and full and part-time jobs. It is a business decision from National Guard Bureau to move positions to states that can fill them. We are, at this juncture, teetering on the edge of being a state that loses Army National Guard force structure. I have a plan to fix this for both Army and Air National Guard – a whole of Vermont approach inclusive of the VTNG, Federal partners, our state colleges and universities, Vermont Principal's, Directors, Superintendents and Guidance Counselor associations, and the Governor's workforce development committee. Last week, National Guard Bureau learned of my initiative, and are very interested in pursuing a like program nationally.

- Recruiting is not the only challenge we face. Retaining our qualified Soldiers and Airmen is critical to the success of the organization. It takes an average of two years to have fully trained Soldiers and Airmen in our organization, and every time we lose one we start over. I conduct exit interviews with Soldiers at quarterly retention events, and find a number of Soldiers are departing the service because they don't feel valued or "feel like a number." That indicates to me, as mentioned, some of our members need to either start taking better care of our most vital resource, or find something else to do. I know the Air Guard has a solid program of conducting retention interviews, but whether Army or Air, the Adjutant General should review the results.

4. Guard members returning from overseas deployments are vulnerable to mental and physical injuries, as well as potential job discrimination. How would you insure that these injuries are not ignored and that service members and their families receive the support they need throughout the deployment cycle?

- While we have a number of programs in place to help Veterans upon returning from deployment, Family Programs, Yellow Ribbon, Post-Deployment Health screening – what happens when they separate from the service? BG Mike Heston, Dr. Wayne Caroleo, MSG Jon Smith, died of pancreatic cancer. SFC Santiago Navarette, and MAJ Mel Wilson died of brain cancer. SGM Mike Cram and SSG Jeff Sollace, died of metastasized prostate cancer and six members of their same platoon have prostate issues before age 50. But besides the physical ailments, behavioral health is also a problem, one that remains stigmatized and under resourced. The VA in Vermont does a good job working with our deployed Veterans, but when it comes to behavioral health, the network of providers in Vermont is lacking, especially those that accept Tricare. How many do we lose to behavioral health issues because they didn't seek help? Josh Pallotta and Gordon Lewis took their own life four years after returning from deployment. We lost track of them. And too many others. My approach is straightforward. First, the Adjutant

General should send a letter through our robust Family Programs network, to all Airmen and Soldiers who have deployed, whether currently serving or separated from the service. That letter should encourage enrollment in the burn pit registry, and encourage a release of medical information from their primary care physicians to the VA to establish any potential linkage to deployment related conditions – which could lead to assistance in employment as disabled Veterans as well as life-long health benefits. Second, work with our Congressional Delegation and Tricare to grow the number of behavioral health providers within the Tricare network in Vermont. There simply aren't enough.

5. Please provide an experience from your service in which a fellow Guard member exhibited the traits you most hope to exhibit if you are elected Adjutant General.

- There are many I have worked with, irrespective of rank, that exhibit admirable leadership and character traits. One that stands out is BG Mike Heston, who I knew for nearly 30 years between law enforcement and the VTNG. Mike was one of the most resilient, candid, professional, and stubborn people I have ever worked with. He never quit. Mike always saw something in me that I perhaps didn't see in myself, and consistently challenged me to take on more responsibility – even when it was uncomfortable. It is that type of transformational leadership I hope to emulate.