

Army National Guard MQ-1C Gray Eagle-25M Procurement



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Fiscal Year 2024 Requirements for the Army National Guard



The Issue

The Army's Active Component currently operates the MQ-1C Gray Eagle and MQ-1C Gray Eagle-25M while the Army National Guard does not. The Army has chosen the Gray Eagle-25M as its new Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) version to modernize the Army MQ-1C fleet. It is critical this aircraft is fielded to the Army National Guard as the primary combat reserve of the Army to meet National Defense Strategy (NDS) and doctrinal requirements for the 8 Army National Guard Divisions.

◀ A General Atomics MQ-1C Gray Eagle in flight.

Background

The MQ-1C-25M aircraft is a dedicated, multi-mission, medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aircraft system (UAS) that provides enhanced, real-time targetting for long range precision fires, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance capabilities to the warfighter. The Active Component Army currently operates the Gray Eagle in each of its 11 Combat Aviation Brigades (CABs), while the National Guard is at a disadvantage without this capability when training and deploying alongside their Active Component counterparts.

The Army needs to continue to concurrently and proportionally field new equipment to the Army National Guard to increase interoperability with the Active Component, as recommended by the National Commission on the Future of the Army. This ensures the Army National Guard Divisions are structured like the Active Component and provide depth and modular structure to the Total Force in order to meet global demands.

Army National Guard Divisions also provide opportunities for transitioning Active Component Army personnel to continue their military service in a part-time capacity in the Army National Guard. Many highly trained Gray Eagle operators depart the Active Component after their service obligation is complete for other opportunities. The Army National Guard could capture the combat experience of these soldiers while allowing them to seek other career opportunities, which significantly reduces the Army's challenge of training and retaining highly skilled operators, as well as providing a better return on investment for the Army and the nation.

Additionally, while the primary focus of Army National Guard Gray Eagle-25M utilization remains on the warfight, U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) has validated plans to utilize the Gray Eagle-25M. Providing the Army National Guard MQ-1C Gray Eagle-25M assets would allow support for civilian authorities for domestic emergencies and disaster response, as the Department of Defense (DoD) has done with other UAS assets in the past.

Recommendation

ARNG Designation



Designate at least one division company MQ-1C Gray Eagle-25M aircraft to the Army National Guard within defense authorization and appropriations legislation.



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