

# **MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS**

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## **MODERNIZATION OPTIONS FOR LIGHT UTILITY HELICOPTER FORCE STRUCTURE IN THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD: FACTORS AND INFLUENCES AFFECTING FORCE STRUCTURE DETERMINATION**

**James R. Bittner-Captain, Pennsylvania Army National Guard  
B.A., Kutztown University, 1989**

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**Advisor: Harold Trinkunas, Department of National Security Affairs**

**Second Reader: R. Mitchell Brown, Naval War College**

This thesis assesses the different options for modernizing Army National Guard light utility helicopter aviation assets for future roles and missions. It will review the political process by which Army National Guard aviation structure and modernization are determined. The United States military forces are continually deployed to various regions of the world to perform different missions, in a period characterized by increasingly austere defense budgets. A major budgetary challenge for defense planners is to balance operational costs, in terms of equipment modernization programs, with operational capabilities. The post-Cold War period, with its potential for redefining roles and missions, continues to evoke situations requiring a thorough and nonpartisan examination of military force structure for the United States Army and the Army National Guard. The objective of such an examination should be for optimizing force structure throughout the Army, in both active and guard units. Army National Guard aviation, with its dual federal and state role, requires a careful analysis to determine the optimal force structure and modernization strategy that will best suit the Guard for both roles. In brief, this thesis provides a careful examination of modernization and conversion options necessary to evaluate what constitutes maximum operational and cost effectiveness with regard to army aviation force structure.