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Blurred Strategy and the Destruction of the Citizen-Soldier

Throughout American history military response in time of crisis was dependent upon a small regular force and reliance upon irregulars. This is no longer true. The hazard faced today is an unprecedented reliance on irregulars in a time of peace. In the late 1980's irregulars spent less than one million mandays on active duty; in 1999 over thirteen million mandays were spent in support of active duty operations. "This isn't a one-time reliance," Secretary of Defense William Cohen claims, "We cannot sustain an operation anywhere in the world today without the Guard."¹ In this era of peace the Army is deploying the Guard as if it were a time of war. America must clearly understand the inherent danger of this policy; it threatens to destroy the citizen-soldier force and loss of the citizen-soldier threatens the democracy.

The risk that confronts the Army National Guard is a threat with dual blades of keenness - it will slash both the Guard and the Army with equal devastation and thus affect the security of the United States. A sensible deployment strategy is as important for the Guard as it is for the Army. The health and welfare of one impacts the other and affects the level of security provided. America's military structure was developed to place a minimum burden upon the people of this nation while providing a reasonable

defense. Defense policy and strategy is built upon the checks and balances, the risks and the securities, of a mixture of full-time and part-time professional soldiers.

Extensive non-crisis deployment of the Guard threatens the nation's foundational dependence on the citizen-soldier. This risk is analyzed through a cursory review of American history, then by examining the current operational tempo of the army, outlining the role of citizen-soldiers within society, and by defining a citizen-soldier. Once the threat has been identified a number of recommendations are then outlined to stem the flow of this potentially mortal policy.

Before the Declaration of Independence there was a militia. Even at that point in American history there was a strategic distinction between duties and responsibilities of the colonial militia. Defense forces consisted of both minutemen and the militia. The primary difference between the two was that minutemen would be ready at a half an hour's warning and militia would serve as a follow-on force. It is an American myth that British Regulars were defeated at Concord by a rabble of colonists who dropped their plows and grabbed their muskets. The British forces were in actuality defeated by an organized and drilled force consisting of both minutemen and militia. ²

When George Washington took command of the army, he described it as "a mixed multitude of people, under very little discipline. The men saw as their first obligation their families and farms at home, and they were reluctant to enlist in the Continental Army."³ Although General Washington implored Congress to raise a professional army, and Congress authorized 110 battalions, Washington was rarely able to muster even 15,000 regulars at any one time and thus depended heavily upon the militia. Consequently, the experience at Concord was repeated many times in the Revolution as

the militia was called to arms to give the army superiority on the field of battle. Military historian Maurice Matloff notes that "the militia system enabled many able-bodied males to perform part-time military service and still remain most of the time in the labor force that kept the economy going. It is doubtful whether the American economy could have sustained such an army as Washington proposed."⁴ The triumph of the Revolutionary War is the epithet to effectiveness achieved when the unique strength and character of regulars and irregulars is combined.

After the War, President Washington submitted a written report to Congress. This report proposed a small regular army supported by a well-regulated militia. In response, Congress enacted the Basic Militia Act of 1792. This Act preserved the strategy of a nation protected by citizen-soldiers. The strategy created a dual dependency - a dependency based upon regulars and irregulars to ensure the security of the nation in times of crisis.

Over 200 years later the United States Armed Forces once again wrestle to define strategy and fight military reductions. With little direct threat to national security \$305 billion is requested for a year of defense. General Henry Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, addressing an audience at Harvard stated: "Over the past decade, we've seen our armed forces used over and over again. For example, the U.S. Army's usage is up three hundred percent since 1989."⁵ But this increase in usage was not accompanied by a corresponding increase of resources; in fact the opposite is true. Within this same decade the army experienced substantial reductions: from 18 to 10 divisions; from 781,000 soldiers to 495,000 soldiers; and a budget that has been decreased by 39%. According to Shelton, "elements of the force are stretched thin. The current tempo of

operations continues to have a significant impact on service members and their families. Deployments stress the force."⁶

Trapped between the Scylla of numerous deployments and the Charybdis of critical shortages, the United States Army is redefining the role of the Army National Guard in peacetime operations. The strategy emerging is cause for concern -- for the Guard, for the Army, and for American citizenry.

Considerable attention is focused on the growing gap between civilian and military culture. Media commentators, academic elite, and presidential candidates voice their apprehension that the military is becoming increasingly foreign to American society. This concern is directly attributable to our society's lazy dependence upon a large standing professional armed force, contrary to the fears of those who framed the Constitution. Matloff reminds us that "the Second Amendment asserts the ideal of liberty against an old nemesis, the tyranny of large standing armies, by providing for the maintenance of a citizens' militia."⁷

Constitutional brilliance is reflected within the Clausewitzian trinity of war. Some scholars view the Clausewitzian trinity as consisting of the people, the army and the government. In this format governments make war through the army and victory is dependent upon the support of the people. Thus, American society should have a critical role to play in formulating military policy. General Shelton believes that "the decision to use force is the most important decision that our nation's leaders can make. A decision that is based, hopefully, on sound military advice, but one that is ultimately made by our political leaders on behalf of the American people."⁸ Within this context, every American citizen should ponder the increasing deployment of our armed forces and ensure that the

escalation concerns our national interest. Colonel (Retired) David Hackworth echoes this sentiment by adding, "...only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can couple the proper meshing of defense with peaceful goals so that security and liberty may prosper together."⁹

The lesson of America's failure to deploy a large number of citizen-soldiers during the Vietnam War was not lost within the context of combat in Iraq. More than 265,000 citizen-soldiers were called to active duty to support the Persian Gulf War. The citizen-soldier, with one hand on the plow and the other on the musket, provided the critical link from strategic national interest to community personal interest. The lesson of American history, recalled in the deployment of citizen-soldiers to Desert Storm, verifies that when citizen-soldiers are deployed, national will is mobilized.

A vibrant National Guard, maintaining the foundation of citizen-soldier, is the bridge over the abyss between the army and American society. The military, derived from a democracy, must be a true reflection of society. Without conscription the National Guard is the most effective barometer of society we possess within our armed forces. America maintains contact with her military through the National Guard.

The operational tempo of the Guard threatens to rip asunder the citizen-soldier concept. A Pentagon study predicts the demand for Guard forces will remain high for the next twenty years. Recently 700 Texas National Guardsmen were deployed to Bosnia for a nine-month tour, commanding American forces of the NATO operation. These citizen-soldiers, whose lineage includes Sam Houston and the Alamo, will serve with distinction and honor as they have always done. Yet, this type of deployment is not the reason that citizen-soldiers enlist in the National Guard; they enlist to serve in time of State and

National emergencies. These citizen-soldiers are great Americans only too willing to serve their country and most would be ashamed to question their deployment.

Yet someone needs to ask the question! Why hasn't America and American leadership -- regulars, irregulars, citizens and politicians -- questioned the increasing peacetime deployment of citizen-soldiers? The reason may be too obvious - Americans can no longer discern the difference between Army and Guard. The timeworn strategy of national reliance upon a small regular force and a large irregular force to serve in a moment of crisis has been misplaced. A recent change of command ceremony, conducted at Fort Lewis Washington, provides an anecdotal example of this blurred strategy.

On January 12, 2000, a Vermont National Guardsman assumed command of the 1st Battalion, 33rd Armor and was lauded as the first Guardsman to ever command an active army battalion. When Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Audino took command he commented, "It is a challenge and an exciting opportunity for me and these soldiers to be with this unit during this historical event for the army." Major General Roger Schultz, Director of the Army Guard, noted that, "it is a great way of integrating the army and it offers us great promise for this most significant issue of developing confidence in one another. I want to contribute to the army's success and contribute to the army's mission." Lieutenant General James Hill, First Corps Commander, added: "This is one more important step toward a fully seamless army."¹⁰ Clearly this event was viewed as momentous - a victory obtained by all. But in retrospect what does this historic event bode? Does a seamless army mean that there is no longer a distinction between Guard and Army?

A constant in the 364-year history of the National Guard has been a steadfast commitment to the concept of the citizen-soldier. What is a citizen-soldier? The definition is blurred to many Americans as the forces of the National Guard also contain military technicians and Active Guard and Reserve soldiers. These two entities, for all practical purposes, are full-time soldiers of a Guard unit. Whereas, citizen-soldiers are members of a specific community and typically serve as a soldier one weekend a month and two weeks of annual training per year. They are doctors, lawyers, farmers, loggers, teachers, construction workers, students and more; they encompass the entire social fabric of America. They are also members of the National Guard. Love for their country is the common bond and they share a willingness to serve in time of national, state and local emergencies.

Therefore can Lieutenant Colonel Audino, a Guardsman, be categorized a citizen-soldier? By all accounts he is an exceptional officer complete with a West Point education and six years of active duty. He was also a citizen-soldier, for a while. This distinction occurred while practicing environmental law in Montpelier and serving in the Vermont Guard. Audino forfeited the title of citizen-soldier when he opted for full-time duty with National Guard Bureau, claiming that he "missed being in uniform full-time, missed being in the military community full-time."¹¹ The National Guard has ventured onto a slippery slope when it proclaims a victory through the integration efforts of a full-time Guardsman assuming the command of an active component battalion. The Guard was seduced onto this precipice and compromised the true meaning of the National Guard -- the Army was allowed to define a Guardsman.

There is little value in offering this criticism without advocating a policy that the Guard should have demanded. In this mythical scenario, the Colonel who assumes command of the 1st Battalion, 33rd Armor is a Washington National Guardsman. This officer is a graduate of the Officer Candidate School from the Washington Military Academy. He has a solid armor background based upon an immaculate service record with the 81st Infantry Brigade (Mechanized), Washington Army National Guard. This new battalion commander, a true citizen-soldier, is also an engineer with Boeing and will continue his civilian career as he takes on the challenges of the command!

Perhaps this solution is unrealistic, and if so - then it helps solidify the point that the Army and the Guard are vastly different entities. Perhaps it is not a ruse to claim the present commander of the 1st Battalion, 33rd Armor is a National Guardsman, but the deception of calling him a citizen-soldier cannot be tolerated -- and there is a world of difference.

The future outlook for the citizen-soldier is grim. The amplified use of the Guard for peacetime deployments is hurting recruitment and retention. "It may well be that the increased use of the Guard in the post-cold-war world has made it harder to attract people," warned Charles Cragin, Assistant Secretary of Defense. That same concern is echoed by Major Jerry Mendez, a citizen-soldier deployed to Bosnia: "The repercussions are more severe than people think. People are going to have to choose between military service and family. Guess what they are going to choose? That is why the Guard is losing quality people."¹² These are words and predictions that mirror those of General Washington when he observed, "The men saw as their first obligation their families and farms at home, and they were reluctant to enlist in the Continental Army."¹³ These are

not words of damnation; they are the foundational strength of the citizen-soldier and a powerful source of strength for the nation. Guard Vision 2010 annotates that "quality citizen-soldiers will underwrite the future of the Army National Guard. People are our core enabler to ensure we retain the vital link between the Army and the American people."¹⁴

We are risking the loss of the vital link between America and America's Army. What then is to be done? There are a number of viable options that may salvage the citizen-soldier:

* Colonel (Retired) Daniel Whiteside implores citizens to "get the country's process for going to war back to its rightful place in the Congress and with the American People."¹⁵ It is against the Constitution of the United States (Article I) for the executive branch to wield control of the military in a non-emergency situation. Congress is the voice of national representation. Congress cannot send citizen-soldiers into harm's way without the support of the American people. We should not commit national treasure without American approval.

* Follow the Law enacted by Congress. By law the President of the United States can activate reservists for a maximum of 270 days. Some members of the 49th Armored Division spent as many as 150 days getting ready for their nine-month deployment. "The law says you can only serve for 270 days, but we couldn't perform this mission if we didn't break that mold," said Colonel Garry Patterson, the division Chief of Staff.¹⁶ The beauty of the law is that lengthy deployments of guardsmen require congressional approval. Congress is the voice of America, and when we project force it should be with American approval.

* Designate the army division structure with a rotating schedule for deployments as outlined in the Congressional Report (January 2000). This action would shift the role of non-emergency operations back to the active army.

* Add a force of 20,000 soldiers to the army as outlined in the Congressional Report. These soldiers would be dedicated to deploy for peacekeeping operations.

* Reorganize the army and identify 20,000 soldiers from within the existing force. As Hackworth notes "at the end of World War II when the United States military had 13 million men and women in uniform, there were 25,000 people in the Pentagon. Today when our military is down to 1.5 million there are 26,000. We have more generals now than we had during World War II."¹⁷ The hierarchical structure of the Department of the Army impacts the number of soldiers that can deploy in both peace and war.

* Give the Guard back to citizen-soldiers. Within the National Guard, numerous key jobs and assignments are preferentially given to full-time military technicians and AGRs. Nothing will protect the concept of citizen-soldiers better than having true citizen-soldiers hold critical positions within the Guard.

* Place this debate back on the front burner of the postponed 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review Board. Required action cannot be allowed to percolate until the deferred decision of September 2001. Not making a decision has a negative impact on citizen-soldiers.

* Look back to the Constitution, to the foundation of this nation, to re-establish the strategy for the Militia. That strategy is the guiding principle that emboldens the motto, "Citizens in Peace ... Soldiers in War."¹⁸

It is critical to the survival of this nation that the historical struggle between regulars and irregulars is acknowledged -- understand the reason for its existence -- and celebrate the diversity of the United States Army. The United States Army should never be a seamless force; there are too many differences, too many years of history, too many years of ascendancy to succumb to a slogan, or a blurred strategy for a singular force. The Guard however must be a true partner in The Army. Guard Vision 2010 states that "in the future, as in the past, citizen-soldiers will remain committed, if called upon, to provide the decisive, expansible warfighting land force to demonstrate the national will as the community-based component of America's Army and America's joint warfighting team."¹⁹ America must protect the legacy of the citizen-soldier. The survival of the nation, as designed by our founding fathers, is at risk.

Endnotes

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