

Taking Center Stage

The Reserve Components Will Assume a Growing National Role in the Years Ahead.
Are They Up to the Challenge?

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As the nation's military embarks on its journey into the new century, it is confronted by an unparalleled degree of uncertainty. Gone are the days of the relatively comfortable Cold War calculus. In their place, the United States is faced with a dilution, if not outright dissolution, of the nation-state; the continuing resilience of non-state actors; and a real shortage of old-fashioned, stand-up wars to fight. On the surface, of course, this is a good thing. The physical destruction and enormous human cost resulting from the conflicts of the mid twentieth century will hopefully never be revisited. Nonetheless, it is the very decrease in the frequency and severity of conventional conflict that now causes the military such consternation.

It is not that the world is a less settled place than it was a decade ago, however, but that much of the military's resulting uncertainty is itself largely unnecessary. Even as the military leadership grapples with the manifold requirements of humanitarian assistance, nation building efforts, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, low-intensity conflict, conventional war, and a variety of other requirements, much of its inability to meet these challenges is based on its own bureaucratic imperatives rather than any fundamental lack of resources. The root cause of this strange reality lies in a resistance on behalf of the military leadership to shift missions to the Reserve Components, a hesitancy based on budgetary and "turf" issues as much as anything else.

Although the use of the Reserve Components has become more commonplace in

recent years, a variety of influences will combine to take this shift of missions and resources far beyond that currently envisioned by Army leaders. These influences range from increasingly scarce resources to the changing nature of conflict itself. Taken as a whole, these changes will result in Reserve Components that are increasingly central players in the implementation of the National Military Strategy over the next quarter century.

The coming changes will affect the Army's two Reserve Component organizations – the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve – in different ways, reflecting the differences in the organizations themselves. The Army Reserve, lacking any direct affiliation with the state governments, will be more vulnerable to short term adjustments made by the Active Component – a trend that has prevailed throughout the 1990s. The Guard will be better positioned to play out its role in the years ahead, in part because it possesses the political muscle to resist Active Component efforts to save money at the expense of the Guard. In addition, by virtue of its combat oriented force structure, the effects of the Army's burgeoning transformation will be felt much sooner in the Guard than will be the case in the Army Reserve. Regardless of their respective futures, both organizations will find themselves working more closely together than at any time in their history, due in large part to their increasing expertise in the conduct of Stability and Support Operations (SASO).¹

Causes and Effects – the Decline of the Active Component Role in SASO

The greatest single impetus for increasing use of the Reserve Components in the years ahead will come not from the Guard or Reserve, but from a constantly shrinking Active Component. The decrease in force structure will in turn be caused by a continuing push for expensive high technology systems that make standing Active Component formations increasingly unaffordable. Dramatically increasing expenses, coupled with an unwillingness on the part of the Federal Government to significantly increase defense spending, mean that smaller Active Component force structure will be the only option left open to military planners. This process, which will accelerate as the Army digitizes some formations and transitions others to a medium structure, makes increased use of Reserve

Component force structure largely inevitable.

The role played by resources in the decline of Active Component force structure cannot be overstated. Despite clear indications that cost must play an important role in the development and fielding of new technologies, the Army research, development and acquisition community continues to emphasize technical factors to the virtual exclusion of cost issues until late in the development process.² The failure to emphasize cost adequately in system acquisition comes at a critical time in the Army's modern history, with a variety of major systems needing replacement or substantial upgrade. Efforts to provide Active Component forces with a full range of digital technologies also play a role, requiring billions of dollars each year for the fielding of these systems. Worse still, the fielding of the new medium brigades under Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) General Eric Shinseki's Transformation Strategy will place its own heavy financial burden on an already overloaded budget.³

Two additional examples serve to make the point regarding the procurement challenge currently afflicting the Active Component. In October 1999, the leadership of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) projected at its annual meeting that the Army will be underfunded by \$6.5 billion annually over the next five fiscal years.⁴ When one considers that the entire Army procurement budget for FY2000 is just \$8.57 billion, the magnitude of the problem becomes apparent.⁵ Worse still, the significant outlays associated with fielding of medium brigades under the Transformation initiative announced at the same AUSA conference do not figure into the shortfall. With the stress of existing shortfalls and the costs of medium brigade fielding, it is quite possible that the enormous shortage in procurements resources will actually grow in the coming years.

Ironically, the high technology procurement strategy that makes decreasing Active Component structure so inevitable actually contributes to increasing Reserve Component relevance, usage and perhaps even end-strength in the coming years. In the first place, although the Active Component will see a gradual shift to digital technologies over the next ten years, plans to field these technologies to the Reserve Components are not being

seriously considered.⁶ Indeed, the same process by which the Active Component receives its digital equipment will see older technologies cascaded to the Guard and Reserve, which are often a generation behind the Active Component in many technology areas.⁷ The eventual fielding of the Crusader Field Artillery system, now envisioned almost solely for Active Component forces, will cascade current-generation M109A6 Paladin howitzers to the Guard, allowing Reserve Component formations to eliminate older models. The end result of this cascade of equipment to the Reserve Components will be Guard and Reserve formations that are both relatively modern and increasingly affordable.

Although technology certainly plays an important role in shrinking Active Component force structure, the day-to-day cost effectiveness of Guard and Reserve Formations relative to their Active Component counterparts must also be taken into account. Currently, estimates of annual Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funding needed to operate a Reserve Component Division versus its Active Component counterpart range from 33% to as little as 20%.⁸ An example of this cost effectiveness is provided by comparing the annual operating costs associated with the 1st Cavalry Division as opposed to the 49th Armored Division (Texas Army National Guard). Although the two formations are quite similar structurally, the 1st Division costs over \$1.2 billion annually to operate, whereas the 49th Division requires just \$165 million by comparison.⁹ Added to the cascaded technologies reaching the Reserve Components, this disparity in annual operating costs makes Reserve Component force structure increasingly attractive to budget-conscious decision makers.

Another reason for the accelerating transition of resources and missions to the Reserve Components lies in the nature of the threat itself. Though the Army of the twenty-first century will continue to face high intensity enemies in some quarters, the majority of missions will involve threats on the lower end of the spectrum. It is a trend that argues strongly for increased use of Reserve Component forces - although preparing a Guard brigade for high-intensity combat would take as much as 90 days following its mobilization, missions like peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and nation building are well within the capability of Reserve Component formations deploying with relatively minimal post-

mobilization training. In a recent example of this trend, fire-support elements from all eight of the Army National Guard divisions have performed duty as peacekeepers in Bosnia since 1996, each deploying with only a few weeks of post-mobilization preparation.¹⁰ More recently, headquarters elements from the Texas Army National Guard's 49th Armored Division deployed to the Balkans in February and March, 2000 to exercise command and control over all U.S. troops – Active and Reserve – stationed in northern Bosnia. Members of the Army National Guard's two Special Forces Groups, the 19th and the 20th, routinely deploy in support of nation building activities like the Partnership for Peace initiative without any mobilization call-up at all.¹¹ The demonstrated ability of Reserve Component formations to accomplish many lower-intensity missions presents a compelling argument for an accelerating shift of these responsibilities to the Reserve Components.

The changing nature of likely conflict has ramifications extending beyond the burgeoning ability of the Reserve Components to deploy in a timely manner. Although high-intensity conflict is becoming rapidly more technology driven, SASO are typically characterized by an overriding need for manpower as opposed to technology. It is a trend that makes Reserve Component participation in SASO unavoidable and quite appropriate in many ways. With 58% of Army combat manpower, 37% of Combat Support units, and 33% of Combat Service Support personnel in the Guard alone, the match between manpower needs and availability is obvious.¹² The Army Reserve, possessing over 90% of the available Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations force structure, makes this point even more compelling.

Another, less-obvious argument in favor of the continuing transition of the SASO mission profile to the Reserve Components lies in the mindset that these troops bring to the job. Active Component troops and their leaders are trained for high-intensity combat, and their approach to SASO reflects this orientation, to the extent that their activities can be ineffective or even counterproductive. Reserve Component soldiers and their commanders are characterized by flexibility in dealing with SASO that reflects their civilian experience. This difference was especially notable during the early period of U.S. peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans, where an Active Component focus on combat often impeded efforts to

implement the non-military aspect of the 1995 Dayton Accords.¹³

Although the reasons for the continuing mission shift to the Reserve Components are numerous, one factor militating *against* this transition is turf – along with the missions go both resources and opportunities for command. Even today, Army National Guard soldiers deploying to Bosnia are issued equipment that they might otherwise have waited years, even decades, to receive. As the shift from Active Component to Reserve Component in SASO continues, so must the shift in resources, a controversial idea in an era of stagnant defense budgets. Like the movement in resources, many Active Component officers resent the loss of leadership opportunities to Reserve Component officers – command in Bosnia pales in comparison to leadership in Desert Storm, but it represents the only game in town for any officer with ambition. Thus, although senior Army leaders maintain that they do not welcome missions like Bosnia, other, lower-level leaders recognize these contingencies for what they are – the steppingstones to senior rank - and are understandably loath to give them up.

Active Component End State 2020

With resources increasingly, and inevitably, driving events, the Active Component in the second decade of the century will bear only a superficial resemblance to today's force. The structure will likely consist of six to eight division equivalents, each broken down into semi-autonomous brigade sized organizations. Although it will be changed structurally, however, it's primary mission will be much the same as it is today – early entry and high-intensity conflict. These Active Component formations will represent the ultimate in ground combat capability, easily able to achieve combat overmatch against any potential adversary.

The primary functional difference for the Active Component in 2020 will lie in its virtual exclusion from mission profiles other than the high-intensity fight and early entry operations. Active Component combat forces will still provide early entry support to contingency operations like those in Bosnia and Kosovo, but their commitment will be brief and their place taken by Reserve Component forces as soon as the area has been properly

secured and Reserve assets can arrive in the area. Aside from this relatively limited SASO role, Active Component combat forces will devote their attention almost entirely to the high-technology, maximum-intensity conflict for which they are best suited.

Meeting the Looming Challenge

If the shift of missions and resources from the Active to the Reserve Components seems inevitable, the preparedness of the Reserve Components to meet these growing requirements is anything but guaranteed. The Reserve Components, and the Army National Guard in particular, must come to grips with a wide variety of issues including readiness, professionalism, internal structural changes, and endstrength maintenance, to name only a few, if they are to shoulder the added responsibilities lurking around the corner. This does not mean that the Reserve Components will not receive these new missions if they prove unwilling or unable to execute them properly – far from it. The Reserve Components will receive these new missions because the Active Component will be increasingly incapable of performing them. The real issue, for the Guard and Reserve, is the relative effectiveness with which they will meet the challenges ahead.

The issues affecting the relative ability of the Guard and Reserve to play out their growing role in the execution of the National Security Strategy are numerous and, to a certain extent, cultural as well as organizational in nature. The issues involved not only touch upon virtually every organization and function of the Reserve Components, but the nature and function of the National Security apparatus as a whole. The principal pressing issues are (1) to maintain endstrength; (2) to maintain structural relevance (modernization); (3) to clarify Reserve Component readiness requirements; and (4) to craft a coherent Reserve Component deployment doctrine. There are certainly other necessary steps, including increased resources for training and the modernization of outdated equipment, but the four initiatives listed represent the most important steps of all. Failure to meet these challenges will mean a steadily eroding national capability to deal with the world's predominating form of conflict.

Maintaining Endstrength

A central point made by Army Guard Director Major General Roger Schultz in virtually all of his presentations is simple: the Guard is People. If this is true in 2000, it will become even more so by 2010-2020. This people-focused approach to defense policy resonates with leaders at the state and national levels of government, making the Guard lobby at the federal level among the most powerful in the nation.

Despite this support, force structure reductions in the wake of the Cold War have reduced the Guard from 440,000 to 350,000 during the decade of the 1990s.¹⁴ The downward trend reflects both the reduced demands of a post-Cold War world and an accompanying downward budgetary spiral. In many ways, the Guard, with its powerful lobby on Capital hill, has escaped in better condition than its sister components. The Active Component was hardest hit, dropping from 670,038 in 1989 to 480,000 by 2000, a loss of 28%. The Army Reserve also suffered drastic cuts, falling from 310,071 in 1990 to 208,000 by 1998, a 32% decrease.¹⁵

The key issue, however, is not how the components have arrived at this point, but where they are going from here. At just 208,000 personnel, the Army Reserve has already arguably bottomed out in strength. The Guard, continuing its focus on people, has served notice that it will not go below 350,000 without a fight. The Active Component, on the other hand, for all of the reasons noted earlier, will likely see continuing drops in endstrength as it attempts to modernize and “transform.” Even as the Active Component completes its transformation, however, the vast majority of future military activity will consist of SASO, where endstrength equals relevance. In a very real sense, the Guard already possesses the requisite mindset to ensure and even enhance its relevance during the first quarter of the new century.

Structural Relevance

Following closely on the heels of endstrength maintenance is the absolute necessity to ensure that Reserve Component forces – and the Army National Guard in particular - maintain structure relevant to mission requirements. Fortunately, two factors will combine to facilitate this process. With the increasing rationalization of SASO missions to Guard and Reserve capabilities, the need for expensive state of the art technologies will be less acute. Second, the fielding of the new medium brigades to the Army National Guard will serve to significantly enhance its effectiveness in the SASO arena for which the new formations are ideally suited.

Even as the Army leadership contemplates the future, however, anticipated structural changes and the Army Transformation Strategy must take into account the unique characteristics of the Army National Guard's community-based, state-controlled forces. Fortunately, though it may not be immediately apparent to members of the Guard, General Shinseki's Transformation process actually presages more positive changes for the their organization than for the Active Component itself.¹⁶ This is particularly true given the inevitable rationalization of missions and capabilities, though it will be some time before these changes become reality.¹⁷

Historically, there has been a certain degree of structural disconnect between the Active Component Army and the Army National Guard, in no small part because of the Guard's dual state/federal mission. Although the Army presents the Guard with various warfighting requirements, the governors, to which state guard organizations routinely report, are faced with different missions and requirements at the local level. The disconnect is both understandable and, to a large extent, inevitable, as are the differences in force structure needed to accomplish these disparate missions. Although an M1A1 Main Battle Tank performs splendidly in combat, for example, its utility in fighting floods, dealing with forest fires, and providing relief in other state emergencies is nearly non-existent. Until recently there appeared to be little alternative to this structural disconnect, because federal officials mandated both the structure and the composition of the forces commanded by the state governors.

Enter the transformation strategy. Although the CSA's focus is firmly set upon making Active Component brigades more deployable and therefore more relevant, he has opened the door to a revolution in Guard capability at both the federal and state levels. Simply put, the new Interim Brigade Combat Teams are as relevant to disaster relief as they are to the performance of peacekeeping or humanitarian assistance missions around the world.¹⁸ With the fielding of these new formations on the horizon, only cost concerns hold the Guard back from a transformation every bit as important as that currently affecting the Active Component.

Rationalizing Readiness

Perhaps the greatest concern surrounding the ability of the Reserve Components to shoulder a greater part of the national defense burden regards the ability of these organizations to perform adequately in an operational environment. Although this concern applies to SASO, the Reserve Components' support for Active Component units in high-intensity combat will also be the subject of scrutiny. Guard combat units and their readiness for high intensity conflict were the source of controversy throughout the 1990s, and the issue must be resolved if the Guard and Reserve are to contribute effectively in the arena of high intensity conflict.

Guard readiness for combat remains a contentious issue, but it need not be, because much of the debate can be put to rest simply by reviewing existing plans for Guard usage in the event of a Major Theater War (MTW). MTW planning is based overwhelmingly upon a central constraint – available lift. There exists only enough strategic lift to move five divisions to a MTW at once (best case). As former Senator Gary Hart noted in his book, *Minuteman*, lift for Guard divisions would only be available at the 90-day point, after the initial lift of Active Component formations had been completed.¹⁹ The unavoidable 90 day wait for overseas deployment, an integral part of U.S. MTW planning, is more than sufficient to adequately train Guard combat units to an acceptable level of post-mobilization readiness.

Though some argue that a ninety-day train-up would still be insufficient to ensure adequate combat readiness, this suggestion has no basis in fact. The ultimate refutation is provided by the much-maligned 48th Mechanized Brigade of the Georgia Army National Guard. Mobilized in October 1990 along with two other Guard brigades for OPERATION DESERT STORM, the 48th spent six grueling weeks at the National Training Center revalidating its training from the ground up. Despite its difficulties, the brigade was declared ready for overseas deployment on 28 February 1990, the day the war ended, and 91 days after mobilization.²⁰

With MTW planning and recent training readiness trends taken into account, it is clear that the Guard should be at least nominally ready for the missions it will receive in the next decade and beyond. Indeed, lift available for overseas deployment will almost certainly decrease in the years ahead, making the early deployment of Guard combat units even more problematic. In a similar vein, Guard combat readiness will itself improve as increasing resources and equipment reach these units as a result of their increased usage in SASO missions. The result, through 2020, will be a Guard that is prepared for short-term SASO deployments and increasingly capable of participation in a MTW.

Roles and Missions: The Need for a Coherent Reserve Component Deployment Doctrine

As the shift in mission responsibility from the Active Component to the Reserve Component accelerates, so too does the need for a coherent doctrine governing the employment of these troops. Although considerable thought has been devoted to establishing conditions for U.S. military involvement overseas since Vietnam, the Reserve Components have received relatively little attention. A coherent doctrine governing the duration of deployments, the idiosyncrasies of the citizen-soldier, and the recognition of the policy implications of Guard deployments must be adequately addressed before the Guard and Reserve can take the stage as central players in the National Military Strategy.

Although efforts to codify deployment duration limits for Reserve Component

personnel are already underway, much remains to be done in this critical arena. The late 1990s saw deployments of up to 270 days for Guard and Reserve personnel deployed in support of the Bosnian peacekeeping effort, a lengthy period that saw many returning soldiers unemployed, federal laws notwithstanding. More recent attempts to limit deployments to six months represent critical movement in the right direction. The desired endstate will see Reserve Component deployment duration capped at three months, a standard already used successfully by Air Force Reserve Components.

Along with deployment duration limits, increased understanding of the uniqueness of the Reserve Component soldier must also increase. Reserve Component formations trace their lineage directly to the militia regiments established over 360 years ago, and the democratic traditions that played an important role then continue to do so today. If a Guard soldier is dissatisfied with the way he is treated by his leadership, he may transfer to another unit of his choice. On the other hand, Guard and Reserve personnel have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to meet any challenge so long as their leadership does the same.

Sea Change: Reserve Components and National Military Policy

Shortened tours of duty and effective retention policies, however, represent symptoms of a much larger issue: determining when, and under what circumstances, Reserve Component personnel may be deployed. Troop deployment preconditions like the so-called Weinberger and Clinton doctrines do not adequately address the ingredient that Reserve Component forces add to any deployment debate – restraint.²¹ Indeed, the greatest effect of Reserve Component use in SASO will be a dramatic shift in the usage of U.S. troops in the defense of non-vital interests around the world.

Although the Administration has used Active Component forces throughout the world in pursuit of policy goals in recent years, this practice will be dramatically impacted as the Reserve Components, complete with their tremendous political support, come to the fore. The Federal Government will be forced either to validate public sentiment for deployments or to develop this support before undertaking large-scale overseas missions. The transition of

SASO missions to the Reserve Component will have as a largely unintended outcome the return of U.S. foreign military policy to the hands of the people and away from Washington policy elites.

The Future Is Now

Increasing Reserve Component participation in all aspects of the National Military Strategy is already a fact of life. Driven by budgetary pressure and its effects on the Active Component force, the shift toward increasing Reserve Component force usage will accelerate over the course of the coming decade. The year 2010 will see SASO force packages composed primarily of Reserve Component troops from the outset, and almost exclusively following early entry operations.

With scarce resources as the driver, most of the aforementioned predictions are hardly open to question. What is open to debate, however, is the readiness of the Reserve Components to take on these new tasks. The answer to this vexing question will undoubtedly be mixed. Many structural reforms like deployment limits will likely be firmly in place within the next five years. Other needed reforms, including the professionalization of the Reserve Component officer corps, will take far longer, if indeed they take place at all. One thing, however, is clear: the transition of roles and missions from the Active Component to the Reserve Component is already taking place, and the Reserves must rise to the challenge.

Notes

1. Until recently, Stability and Support Operations (SASO), were referred to as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). These operations can range from humanitarian assistance to low-intensity conflict
2. Typically, one sees cost arise as a serious issue only when the acquisition of the system enters the five-year Program Operating Memorandum (POM) stage. Faced with putting money against requirements, systems that were cost irrelevant during the

first years of their development suddenly find themselves dramatically reduced in numbers (Crusader 1138 to 480) or cancelled entirely (Armored Gun System).

3. SSG Jack Siemieneic, "Army Releases 2001 Budget Proposal." *ArmyLINK News*, (Washington: U.S. Army Office of Public Affairs). According to the proposal, the FY2001 budget contains approximately \$1.0 billion dollars for medium brigade fielding, with a total of \$12.7 billion projected for the entire program.
4. The \$6.5 billion figure does not represent the true shortfall, only the amount that AUSA officials' felt was supportable in Congress.
5. AUSA, *Army Budget, Fiscal Year 2000*, (Arlington, VA: Institute for Land Warfare, 1999), 49.
6. Comments made to the author by LTG STEEL during an address to CAS3 students at Fort Leavenworth, Kans., September 1999. LTG Steel noted that the ARNG ESB and Divisional maneuver battalions would lose their forth companies as a part of the Division XXI initiative, but would not be digitized in the near future.
7. Cascade of the SINCGARS tactical radio provides one example of this process. When the AC formations receive their new tactical digital radio, the Guard will receive the excess SINCGARS, allowing them to replace their 1960s vintage ANPRC 46s and PRC 77s.
8. A 1986 RAND Study placed the estimate at 21%, a figure also arrived at by Brookings analysts. The lowest estimate, 20%, resulted from a 1995 Study conducted by the Department of the Army Program Analysis and Evaluation Division (DA-PEAD).
9. Army National Guard Division Commander's Conference, 1997.
10. Army National Guard, Fiscal Year 2000 Posture Statement, (Arlington, Va.: Army National Guard Directorate), 3.
11. The Partnership for Peace initiative involves exchange activities with nations of the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact
12. Army National Guard briefing to German CGSOC students, April 1999.
13. The author was deployed to Bosnia as a Civil Affairs Direct Support Team Leader in late 1996. Efforts to reunite the country routinely suffered from an exaggerated focus on military force protection and combat force projection, despite decreasing tensions on the ground.

14. LtCol (Ret.) Sol Gordon, ed., *1998 Reserve Forces Almanac*, (Fall Church, Va.: Uniformed Services Almanac, Inc., 1998), 120.
15. Ibid.
16. One positive change would be the replacement of heavy armor with light wheeled or tracked platforms in some units. Light wheeled and tracked vehicles are often more useful in the accomplishment of state missions than are Main Battle Tanks and Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFV).
17. If one follows the rationalization of missions with capabilities to its conclusion, it becomes clear, for example, that the new Interim Brigade Combat Teams would be better fielded to the Guard rather than the Active Component. Unfortunately, organizational imperatives will prevent this, at least in the near term.
18. The humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping mission profiles possesses many characteristics in common with state missions, including the maintenance of public order and providing assistance in the wake of natural disasters.
19. Gary Hart, *Minuteman*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).
20. MG (Ret. James Delk, The Army's Deployment deception. *National Guard Magazine*, June 1998. This guidance was only revealed following the retirement of MG Delk in 1996.
21. This restraint is due in large part to the fact that Army Guard formations in particular possess powerful political constituencies, forcing accountability on the part of national leaders making deployment decisions. Active Component formations do not benefit from this characteristic.

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