

**TOTAL FORCE and RESERVE INTEGRATION:**

**A Brief Review**

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## **TOTAL FORCE and RESERVE INTEGRATION**

Because reserve components (RC) can provide substantial capability within a smaller defense budget, they have been called upon increasingly to contribute within the Total Force. These elements of the Total Force must be seamlessly integrated with their active component (AC) counterparts to achieve the new levels of readiness required to successfully conduct joint and combined operations – now and in the future.

– 2000 Annual Defense Report<sup>1</sup>

### **INTRODUCTION**

The term Total Force is often used in situations discussing both the active and reserve components of the military. The intent is usually to affirm what's commonly referred to as seamless integration between active and reserve personnel or units, and to present the impression of one unified force accomplishing the mission. Yet military doctrine and practice frequently differentiate between a service's active and reserve components, suggesting that the components are still not perceived as one integrated force. If the U.S. military holds the Total Force concept as a policy, why, then, are so many disparities still evident in doctrine and practice? Examples of continued distinctions between active and reserve components suggest a need to examine the criteria applied in measuring the Total Force Policy's success. However, it is also necessary to examine the Total Force Policy's definition before concluding that the required success criteria have been met.

Determining the desired end-state under the Total Force concept is the requisite first step in identifying the policy's intent and creating an accurate definition. This then provides a way to measure progress towards that identified goal. Making a determination between policy failure and success should focus first on the desired end-state and intent of the Total Force concept, and then look at the ways leading to that end-state and the available means for

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted by Edward Zawislak in NPS Thesis, "United States Policy and Budgeting for the Reserve Component," December 2000, p. 1.

success. This paper looks at how Total Force is defined and measured with regard to reserve components, identifies some key areas of disparity between practice and definition, and offers some general recommendations for change.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Total Force concept first emerged in 1970 under Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, who directed that both active and reserve forces be considered when planning, programming, manning, and equipping Department of Defense (DOD) forces. As the United States military began its shift to an all-volunteer force, Secretary Laird and other national security leadership recognized the need for a reliable source of the extensive manpower deemed necessary to deter the Soviet threat. The Cold War sustained visions of a European conflict between large mechanized militaries, with additional concerns of involvement in Asia fed by Korean tension and recent experiences in Vietnam. Keeping a large, standing military on active duty had become too expensive and politically difficult, however, and thus Secretary Laird began to look beyond the historical paradigms in defining his military's force.

Various forms of the citizen-soldier had evolved over the preceding 200 years, however the role of the reserves essentially remained augmenting the active components in time of war and providing a quick method of citizen-to-soldier transformation. In 1970 Congressional testimony the Defense Secretary outlined a new reality motivating the Pentagon towards revitalizing the Reserve Forces and redefining their roles and missions. Outlining a precursor to the modern buzzwords "force multiplier," Secretary Laird presented the need to "examine the balance of force mix and force levels among Active, Guard and Reserve elements in order to achieve maximum economies in maintaining adequate national

security.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, this new “Total Force” concept would encompass the active and reserve components [including the National Guard] as well as the civilian personnel of all the services. In 1973 Defense Secretary James Schlesinger reinforced the policy by directing each service secretary to provide the manning, equipment, training, facilities, construction, and maintenance needed to assure that Guard and Reserve units could meet deployment times and readiness levels required by contingency plans.<sup>3</sup>

### **DEFINING TOTAL FORCE TODAY**

From its official endorsement Total Force remained important, although some hold that by the early 1990s Total Force proved “inadequate to meet the need for increased use of reserve components (RC) in response to challenges posed by a smaller military, more diverse missions, and more frequent deployments.”<sup>4</sup> All the services have effected numerous changes over the past decades, providing increased RC support to active component (AC) missions during contingency as well as peacetime operations. Thus, one accepted definition of Total Force is the amount of RC support, or simply the physical presence of reserves alongside active personnel. Contributory support is not the only definition, however, as offices like that of the Secretary of Defense have added more detail, providing a measure of success beyond looking just at the amount of RC support to the AC.

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<sup>2</sup> Congress. House of Representatives. Armed Services Committee. “Final Report to the Congress of Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird.” 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 8 January 1973, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Reserve Forces Policy Board. “Fiscal Year 1999 Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board,” March 2000, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Dallas D. Owens, Jr, AC/RC Integration: Today’s Success and Transformation’s Challenge. U.S. Army War College, 2001, p. 1.

Defense Secretary William Cohen issued a memorandum on the integration of reserve and active components in September 1997 that provided four principles prerequisite to Total Force becoming a reality:

- Clearly understood responsibility for and ownership of the Total Force by the senior leaders throughout the Total Force
- Clear and mutual understanding of the mission for each unit – Active, Guard, and Reserve – in service and joint/combined operations, during peace and war
- Commitment to provide the resources needed to accomplish assigned missions
- Leadership by senior commanders – Active, Guard, and Reserve – to ensure the readiness of the Total Force<sup>5</sup>

In February 2000 Secretary Cohen added an emphasis on education regarding Total Force in a memo that stated:

“In order to make the integration a reality and to function effectively as a Total Force, there must be a greater understanding of each of the components beginning early in one’s career. Relevant information about Active, Guard, Reserve, and Civilian components should be embedded in the content of the course curriculum from basic training and pre-commissioning through the most senior level schools, commensurate with the students’ rank, level of responsibility and appropriate professional development. In short, more effective education is the key to effective integration.”<sup>6</sup>

The Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) report of 2000 also provided principles defining Total Force, although they differ somewhat from the others. The RFPB report defined Total Force success primarily by amount of contributory support, similar to other

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<sup>5</sup> Reserve Forces Policy Board. “Fiscal Year 1999 Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board,” March 2000, p. 7.

definitions. However, in outlining the roles, missions, and operations the RFPB added that, “To enhance national defense, the Reserve components must be fully integrated ready forces with relevant missions, able to operate across the entire spectrum of military requirements.”<sup>7</sup>

It then discussed eight guiding principles necessary for Total Force, including:

- The nation should place maximum reliance on the Reserve components. When used, Reserve components should fight as part of the Total Force.
- Using Reserve components to counter threats to national security helps promote the national will. It also enhances public support of the military because it draws members from the local civilian community.
- To be a credible force, each Reserve component must be given the equipment, resources and training on the primary weapons systems of its parent service. Reserve components must be prepared to assume their role in the Total Force.
- [Combatant Commanders] must outline their requirements and then allow the services and their Reserve components the flexibility to satisfy these requirements.
- Reserve components must maintain their combat capability. They should get the necessary training and resources at the unit level to meet mobilization readiness requirements.<sup>8</sup>

What is clear from both the OSD memos as well as the RFPB report is that there is disagreement in determining not only the intent or desired end-state of Total Force, but also

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<sup>6</sup> Reserve Forces Policy Board. “Fiscal Year 1999 Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board,” March 2000, p. xxxii.

<sup>7</sup> Reserve Forces Policy Board. “Fiscal Year 1999 Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board,” March 2000, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Reserve Forces Policy Board. “Fiscal Year 1999 Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board,” March 2000, p. 3.

in determining the measurement criteria for success. This lack of clarity is what leads to the differing views regarding the success level of the Total Force Policy.

### **DECLARING SUCCESS FOR TOTAL FORCE**

The DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM (DS/DS) Lessons Learned provides one example of ambiguity. The Navy report states that, “DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM clearly validated significant aspects of the Navy’s total force concept.”<sup>9</sup> The report then lists various RC missions for the two operations, all of which lend credence to the capabilities of the RC. However, the report’s emphasis on RC augmentation as Total Force validation leaves potential for oversimplifying the measurement of Total Force success. In fact, it implies that the RC remains a separate force only to be called on when necessary. This philosophy sells short the full potential and intent of Total Force.

The Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) report for fiscal year 2000 provides another example. The report implies success of the Total Force Policy by declaring, “The nation’s seven Reserve components now represent an integral part of the Total Force, due in large part to the course charted by Defense Secretaries over the past three decades and the continuing leadership of Defense Secretary Cohen.”<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the RFPB’s success statement gives no indication as to whether the RFPB-defined Total Force principles were met or not.

Thus, both documents leave some ambiguity as to what exactly defines the success of Total Force. What is clear from both DS/DS lessons learned and the RFPB report is that there is a danger of oversimplifying the desired Total Force end-state as merely a measurement of the amount of RC contributory support. An argument is easily made that the more accurate definition of intent for Total Force would be the effective and efficient use of all resources

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<sup>9</sup> “Desert Storm: Lessons Learned,” Naval Historical Center, Homepage, accessed 24 May 2002.

available, including the reserve components. Assuming this to be the true goal, barriers to capturing the true value of the RC as well as opportunities for change, become more obvious.

## **CHALLENGES**

Failure to capture the full value of the RC is a longtime weakness of the military, and it spans a variety of activities from administrative and fiscal efficiency to planning and operations effectiveness. A review of documentation such as mission statements supports this claim. Reviewing the services' Internet resources, the Air Force best captures the essence of Total Force in its Reserve component's mission statement. The statement provides that the RC,

“Plays an integral part in day-to-day Air Force missions, extending the Active component's capability to meet peacetime operations such as humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and disaster response, as well as providing additional units and personnel in traditional war fighting roles and for routine military operations.”<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, the Navy identifies the function of the Naval Reserve as supplying “trained and qualified personnel and units to provide swift augmentation to the Navy.” It continues to explain that “the Naval Reserve is an integral part of the Navy's total capability across the full spectrum of conflict and is available for crisis response and contributory support.”<sup>12</sup> The statements' action verbs specify that the reserves are “available,” but do not indicate routine interaction with the Active forces. Only calling upon the Reserves when needed, the active forces are squandering a viable resource by not integrating them better into day-to-day operations. A simple review of past contingencies and operations shows clear examples of situations that may have been altered with deeper Reserve involvement.

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<sup>10</sup> Reserve Forces Policy Board. “Fiscal Year 1999 Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board,” March 2000, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> LCDR Stan Degeus, USN. “FORCES/CAPABILITIES HANDBOOK,” Naval War College, January 1999, p. 62.

For example, one of the key problems identified with the “DESERT ONE” mission to rescue the Iranian hostages was lack of experience. “There was no useful contingency plan, no planning staff with the required expertise, no joint doctrine or procedures, and no relevant cross-service experience.”<sup>13</sup> The Joint Task Force Commander, while a distinguished combat veteran, had no experience in operations with other services. Participating units trained separately and met for the first time in the desert in Iran. Operations such as DESERT ONE benefit from fully examining and using the RC pools of expertise, particularly for the planning and training phases, and greatly enhance the probability of mission success.

DESERT STORM also provides an interesting observation. It included the largest activation of Reservists since President Johnson mobilized Reserve forces during the Tet offensive in 1968, with the Navy alone calling up over 21,000 Reservists of the mobilization authorization of 44,000. The Reserves provided Navy’s only capability in several areas, including dedicated combat search and rescue, mobile inshore undersea warfare and logistic air transport. Nearly 50 percent of the Naval Reservists were involved in health care.<sup>14</sup>

Such operations during DS/DS validate the RC capability to provide independent and distinct mission support. In some cases RC assets are tasked as the sole force providers, such as the Navy’s airlift capability, which is 100 percent RC-provided. The success of such roles provides evidence that RC can provide mission capability independently of AC, going beyond the traditional perception of RC existing merely to backfill AC capabilities and missions.

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<sup>12</sup> LCDR Stan Degeus, USN. “FORCES/CAPABILITIES HANDBOOK,” Naval War College, January 1999, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Locher, James R. III. “Has it worked? The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act,” Naval War College Review, Autumn 2001, Volume LIV, Number 4, p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> Joint Maritime Operations, AY 2001-2002, Block 3.2. U.S. Navy Doctrine and Capabilities Brief. Slide Navy 53.

Equally important to effective use of the RC asset is efficient funding and administration. For example, resource allocation often involves intra-service turf battles and competition between the active component and its respective reserve counterpart. This results in the two sides touting exclusive mission requirements and attempting to outbid each other for such things as hardware upgrades or replacements. Fully meeting the intent of Total Force would preclude such division of fiscal resources, and provide collaboration that would lead to increased mission readiness through an effective division of labor for mission responsibility.

Efficient use of resources is not limited to department-level budget debate, however. It also applies to the mundane events such as basic personnel administration. For example, a 139-day Navy Reserve recall rates pay and entitlements similar to an equivalent-length period of Temporary Additional Duty (TAD) for an Active Duty sailor. However, written orders and personnel documentation for the Reserve recall use formats different from the Active Duty TAD that, despite the fact they have similar data fields, fail to use common text codes. This creates confusion and hardship for pay clerks processing travel reimbursement documents, who then must be familiar with the separate codes for each type of travel despite the fact that the same travel claim form is used by RC and AC personnel.

Education, in addition to resource efficiency, is another critical challenge in the “ways and means” towards Total Force. One of the essential Total Force prerequisites discussed earlier is understanding, and one tool to increased understanding is education. While memos and policy statements may direct integration and cohesion, much documentation still touts old policies, perceptions and views that reinforce the paradigms regarding the purpose of reserve forces. Reserve doctrine holds:

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“Today, members of the Reserve components keep alive the honorable tradition of taking on the responsibilities greater than those required of most citizens. They unselfishly give up many weeknights, weekends, and vacation periods to learn, train, and prepare for the day when their country might call upon them. As a vital partner of the Total Force, reservists are a reflection of society, centered on enduring values and core competencies. Clearly the days when citizens could put aside their tools and pick up firearms to provide for our nation’s defense are long past. Modern warfare and weapons require continuous training and preparation. The commitment of the Reserve components must therefore be focused and powerful. Reservists willingly sacrifice to serve on their nation’s behalf. As in the past, they form the vital link between the government, the Armed Forces, and the people. The citizen-soldier is, in the final analysis, the glue that holds the nation together in time of crisis.”<sup>15</sup>

While this paragraph emphasizes the strength of commitment and suggests that the reserves are in fact the crucial link in the Clausewitzian trinity, it also fails, with the exception of the one tiny reference to the term Total Force, to mention interaction with the active component. This paragraph, taken from the text of a current Joint Professional Military Education course, reinforces old paradigms of the reserve component as a reactionary asset to be brought into the force only when crisis has dictated that active forces can no longer sustain. Few descriptions could be further from the reality of reserve component purpose and capabilities today.

## **VALUE OF THE RESERVE COMPONENT**

The Air War College’s Maxwell Paper Number 6 identifies three pillars on which the Total Force policy relies, each of which represents an inherent strength of the reserve component. The first of these is cost, and, as Maxwell Paper Number 6 points out, “direct unit comparisons by the DOD indicate the National Guard military units cost between 25 and

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<sup>15</sup> Joint Maritime Operations, AY 2001-2002, Block 3.1. “Excerpts from the Reserve Component Doctrine,” p. 5.

40 percent less to operate than regular military units.”<sup>16</sup> This cost level is representative of all the reserve components, making them one of the most cost-effective resources available to the military. Efficient use of fiscal resources is a true force multiplier in an era of limited budgets and increasingly expensive technical platforms and systems to challenge the asymmetric threat.

The second pillar is the experience level of the reserve component, which the Maxwell Paper states is “higher on average than active duty units because of the stability of the units and the recent experience of members from active duty service.”<sup>17</sup> In an example provided by the Maxwell Paper, approximately 70 percent of the Air National Guard pilots have previous experience in active components. Further, since these pilots fly their whole careers vice interjecting periods of staff assignments like their active counterparts, the average experience level in the cockpits is eight to 10 years greater than the active component.<sup>18</sup>

Related to this pillar is the civilian skill set the Reservist brings to the force. However in many cases, civilian skills are not aggressively exploited. Quite often Reserve personnel are assigned to their unit specialties based on military background vice civilian education, training and experience. For example, an E-4 supply clerk may fill an administrative billet in a Navy Reserve unit, but may have completed her master’s degree in network management. This technical skill is a valuable resource not to be wasted, but rather used at either an active duty command or perhaps even at the Reserve activity itself. This makes both the military and civilian skill sets additional force multipliers to be exploited.

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<sup>16</sup> Mark P. Meyer, Colonel, ANG, “The National Guard Citizen-Soldier.” Air War College, The Maxwell Papers, No. 6. November 1996, p.21.

<sup>17</sup> Mark P. Meyer, Colonel, ANG, “The National Guard Citizen-Soldier.” Air War College, The Maxwell Papers, No. 6. November 1996, p.21.

The third pillar is the tradition of the citizen-soldier and their strong bond with community. Because these military members come from “Hometown, USA,” they bring a certain level of clout, public trust and support that does not exist anywhere else. Even a major military base, although it certainly enjoys some significant level of close relations with the local community, still represents a group of outsiders who rotate through the community every 18-36 months. The Reservists, however, are the community, and thus have that extra connection essential in stimulating support for all the armed forces. The Maxwell Paper supports this point by pointing out that both tradition and the Constitution serve to guard the individual rights of Americans, “and the citizen-soldier fulfills that protection. He has both direct an indirect influences on his elected officials, which gives him and his community a stake and position in policy decision making.”<sup>19</sup>

Given the challenges of making Total Force a reality and the value of the RC, what is the best road to achieving a truly integrated force? One alternative process is more clearly defining Total Force end-state and measurement criteria, increased inclusion of the RC, and better identification and full exploitation of RC value.

### **ACHIEVING TOTAL FORCE SUCCESS**

Without a single, agreed upon end-state and set of measurement criteria, there can be no conclusive declaration of Total Force concept success. The original Total Force concept and policy statements provide sufficient definition of the desired intent of Total Force – a fully integrated military force making the best use of all its available resources.

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<sup>18</sup> Mark P. Meyer, Colonel, ANG, “The National Guard Citizen-Soldier.” Air War College, The Maxwell Papers, No. 6. November 1996, p.21.

<sup>19</sup> Mark P. Meyer, Colonel, ANG, “The National Guard Citizen-Soldier.” Air War College, The Maxwell Papers, No. 6. November 1996, p.29.

Documentation and statements since provide concurrence with and support of that definition. However, defining Total Force is only the first step.

Establishing specific criteria to gauge the progress of Total Force is also vital. However, measuring Total Force success merely by the level of RC contributory support does not meet the intent of the original concept, nor does it lead to a single, integrated force. The principles outlined in the various Defense Secretary memos as well as reports such as the RFPB provide a much more comprehensive tool for measurement. Consistency in applying these criteria is also important, however. Disparities in practice as well as disagreements over the success of the Total Force policy prevent a solid conclusion, and further complicate when a lack of clarity occurs in a single agency or report, such as the RFPB. Effective measurement criteria require consistent application.

Finally, more efficient use of resources implies the use of *all* resources, and the RC is a valuable asset and greatly under-utilized force. If the military is truly implementing the Total Force concept, then the Reserves must also be considered an integral part of these resources. While it is unarguable that Reserve forces play an invaluable role in supporting numerous operations, legislative and AC leadership still focus too heavily on the RC as a reactionary asset to simply be available to support AC missions. This is not to discount the value of the RC as an additional response force, however, such a perception greatly sells short the full potential of the RC and leads to misuse or abuse of RC capabilities.

The latest Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) addresses, indirectly, a future need for the Reserve component to be as fully integrated into the Total Force as possible. It places significant importance on “combat-credible forward-deployed U.S. forces” and suggests major areas of concern around the globe. “Of particular significance, the report indicates that

forward forces must be capable of ‘swiftly defeating an adversary’s military and political objectives with only modest reinforcement.’”<sup>20</sup> In fact one of the strategic goals of the U.S. according to the QDR, is to “deter aggression and coercion by deploying forward the capacity to swiftly defeat attacks and impose severe penalties for aggression on an adversary’s military capability and supporting infrastructure.”<sup>21</sup>

In this age of asymmetric threats, the military must maintain the capability to focus on multiple areas of concern, and this requires taking advantage of every available resource on a routine basis. The RC is a true force multiplier that will support these challenges, but the RC must therefore be involved fully in routine operations to provide timely and significant support. This requires a fully transparent integration, not simply a “separate but equal” status.

Achieving this means a shift away from traditional training and mission definition for the RC. Sustained major or multiple theater operations can well require additional RC resources that begin a 30-90 day pre-deployment training cycle after a crisis has already erupted. However, even these forces must remain combat ready in all but major force maneuver operations if they are to be most useful for high intensity-limited duration combat operations. Revising mission assignments between AC and RC forces would eliminate unnecessary redundancy, and provide for more effective and efficient use of resources. The Army has made some progress in this area through the application of such programs as its Multi-component Units Program and the Integrated Division Program.

Every RC unit has a treasure of talent that should be used more effectively. The latest QDR identified six operational goals on which DOD investment resources will be focused, to

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<sup>20</sup> RADM Michael McDevitt, USN (Ret). “The QDR and East Asia.” US Naval Institute Proceedings, March 2002, Volume 128/3/1,189, p. 88.

include ensuring information systems in the face of attack and leveraging information technology and innovative concepts.<sup>22</sup> Reserves bring added value to the military in that each member has certain civilian skills, experiences, and backgrounds that supplement military ratings. In fact, those civilian skills may often be of more value than the member's military specialty

One alternative to help unleash the full potential of the RC in the Knowledge Age is to scrub RC units for special skills, training, and education that may become a force multiplier for the new electronic battlefield. The services have all completed the first step in this by identifying, through various means, the civilian skills and backgrounds on the drilling Reservists. For example, the Navy has a specific civilian skills and occupation form that is completed by each member, with the information then funneled to a database. Since this baseline of information already exists, it should be maintained and used in making decisions and assignments for personnel, as well as identifying roles, missions and capabilities for units.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Reserve component is significantly involved in major operations, particularly in the post-September 11, 2001, world. For example, the commanding officer of NSGA Fort Gordon, Georgia holds that

“The reservists are integrated into all phases of our operation. They are in every room at the Gordon regional Security Operations center – and the reservists

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<sup>21</sup> RADM Michael McDevitt, USN (Ret). “The QDR and East Asia.” US Naval Institute Proceedings, March 2002, Volume 128/3/1,189, p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> VADM Mike Mullen, USN. “Capture the Vision.” US Naval Institute Proceedings, April 2002, Volume 128/4/1,190, p. 38.

who stand watch on the GRSOC floor are indistinguishable from my Active Duty Sailors...We could not perform our mission without them.”<sup>23</sup>

The services can no longer afford to delay full implementation of the true Total Force. The size of the Naval Reserve specifically is projected to remain nearly constant for the next five years, whereas the active duty forces will drop slightly and navy civilians are projected to drop even more. This means an increasing percentage of the force will be in the Reserve component, while mission requirements for the military will remain widespread and varied. Consuming only eight percent of the total defense budget,<sup>24</sup> there is no more cost-effective resource available to the Active forces.

Effectively and efficiently using the RC means increased application of Reservists’ capabilities identified through both military and civilian skills; revising mission statements to take advantage of RC capabilities, particularly as a sole-source provider; and transparent involvement of the RC in all operations, including the day-to-day functions. The desired ends of the Total Force policy are established, and the means to achieve the ends are readily available. All that remains is to modify the ways by modifying those already tested, and creating new ones as necessary.

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<sup>23</sup> RADM James B. Plehal. “Naval Reserve Security Group.” Naval Reserve Association News, March 2002, Volume 49, No. 3, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Joint Maritime Operations, AY 2001-2002, Block 3.1. “Excerpts from the Reserve Component Doctrine,” p. 10.

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