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THE OPERATIONAL FORCE

SOCIAL CONTRACT

by

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Carlin Williams is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He received his commission through the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Texas Christian University in 2001. Williams is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic Course, Airborne School, Ranger School, Engineer Captains Career Course, and Intermediate Level Education and Advanced Operations Course of the Army Command and General Staff College. Williams served six years on active duty assigned to operational units at the platoon, company, and battalion levels with two deployments to Afghanistan and one to Iraq. Williams joined the Kansas Army National Guard in 2007 serving at the division and below, deploying to Afghanistan as the Executive Officer for an Agribusiness Development Team and to Kuwait as the Commander of a Combined Arms Battalion supporting Operation Spartan Shield. As a traditional Guardsman, he has a dual career in healthcare IT project management and holds a Master's in Public Administration and Project Management Professional Certification.

Abstract

The Army National Guard has provided operational forces and strategic depth throughout the majority of its existence; however, the relationship between the Army National Guard and society has evolved. Policymakers, uniformed leaders, and historians started referring to the “operational reserve” when discussing the contemporary reserves shortly after the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism. Of growing concern over the last fifteen years is a challenge to the social contract between the military and society concerning reserve soldiers. The Army National Guard is both an operational force and a strategic reserve that is essential to national defense. The operational evolution creates friction between the need for available and trained forces and the social contract between society and a part-time Army. We must redefine service in the reserve component and how it looks for an operational force providing strategic depth. To redefine the social contract, we must adopt changes in how we care for service members and their families, what we provide to employers, and how we communicate the message.

Introduction

The modern Army National Guard traces its history back to continental militias but evolved during periods of utilization and neglect into the operational force it is today. Policymakers, uniformed leaders, and historians started referring to the “operational reserve” when discussing the contemporary reserves shortly after the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).¹ The Army National Guard provides operational forces and strategic depth and has throughout its existence; however, the relationship between the Guard and society evolved. Of growing concern over the last fifteen years is a challenge to the social contract between the military and society concerning reserve soldiers.² Soldiers join with an expectation of utilization. Student soldiers expect to conduct training outside of the school calendar. Businesses employ soldiers knowing they have service obligations. Families accept the advertised one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer. The reality now rarely fits this social contract. Former Chief of Staff of the Army Peter Schoomaker raised concerns that the “increased use of the reserve component challenged the very nature of being a citizen-soldier.”³ “Being involuntarily called to serve repeatedly was a major disruption to civilian careers, and was something few reservists had anticipated. Repeated tours of active duty came as an equal shock to families and employers.”⁴ Training requires progressively lengthier periods of engagement at collective levels in addition to the demands of professional military education and new equipment fielding. Training now extends beyond how employers and families view the social contract, creating a conflict within the support network. The increased demand for responsiveness also challenges the contract. The five-year cycle of Army Force Generation intended to project force utilization and provide predictability. The 2008 *Commission on the National Guard and Reserves* noted that the DoD failed to provide greater predictability to

soldiers and employers.⁵ The Sustained Readiness Model attempts to provide the same predictability. There is no guarantee that it will not fail under the same pressures. To maintain an operational reserve, the commission recommended the DoD support employers and families.⁶ To do this, we must rewrite the social contract between society and the military, redefining what our Nation, families, employers, and soldiers expect.

This monograph will examine the historical evolution of the social contract and challenges tied to operational utilization with a focus on personnel policies relating. The historical review will consider significant reports, studies, policies, and legislation. Equipping the force is intentionally excluded to limit the scope of the effort. The included select history provides context and insight to issues that persist today and provides the framing for the conceptual pull between strategic and operational roles and the social contract. The history completes with a brief look at the current operating environment and recommendations to improve the force.

Thesis

The Army National Guard is both an operational force and a strategic reserve that is essential to national defense. The operational evolution creates friction between the need for available and trained forces and the social contract between society and a part-time Army. We must redefine service in the reserve component and how it looks for an operational force providing strategic depth. To redefine the social contract, we must adopt changes in how we care for service members and their families, what we provide to employers, and how we communicate the message.



Operational Evolution of the Social Contract

The Early Years

Early on, militias and volunteers supported the Army during the Mexican-American War and Civil War. Post-Civil War militias converted to state-controlled National Guard units. The formation of the National Guard Association in 1878 led to the establishment of the phrase “reserve force” and the concept of the National Guard’s role supplementing the regular Army.⁷ National Guard units volunteered en masse to support the Spanish-American War and Philippine-American War.⁸ Both engagements demonstrated the requirement to expand the regular Army to fight and win wars.

Early conflicts generated several reforms. The Militia Act of 1903 allowed for greater federal control of the National Guard in exchange for equipment, federal funds, and access to regular Army schools.⁹ The requirements to meet federal standards in commissioning officers and recruiting enlisted men were coupled with annual requirements of a minimum of 24 drill periods and summer field training to begin the professionalization of the National Guard. The Act was the foundation for creating the strategic reserve.¹⁰ The Militia Act of 1908 allowed the federalization of the Guard to support missions within and outside the United States. It also required the mobilization of the National Guard before soliciting volunteers. The 1908 Act served to make the National Guard the “preferred source of military forces to augment the regular Army.”¹¹ After the National Defense Act of 1916, the National Guard grew to over 400,000, increased the drilling periods to 48, and formalized officer training programs. The 1916 Act allowed National Guard units to serve an unlimited duration.¹² Thus, the United States poised itself to test its military on the world stage.

World War I marked the end of volunteer militias as the “nation would increasingly rely on a larger standing army and a larger and increasingly better-trained National Guard and Reserve.”¹³ The National Defense Act of 1920 established a modest regular Army backed up by a larger National Guard and small Army Reserve. However, the lack of funding throughout the 1920s limited the full manning of the components and annual training opportunities.¹⁴ Leading up to World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a national emergency expanding training for National Guard from 48 to 60 drill periods, and annual training from 15 to 21 days. In 1940, Congress authorized the mobilization of the National Guard and Reserve for one year of active duty and initiated the peacetime draft.¹⁵ The World Wars required a massive expansion of the Army well beyond the operational and strategic reserves.

The Cold War

The Cold War further shaped the role of the Army Reserves and Guard. The Selective Service Act of 1948 provided the first presidential call-up authority authorizing the President to order reservists to active duty without their consent for up to 21 months without a declaration of war or national emergency. The Act also established the Reserve Component retirement system.¹⁶ Recruits joined the Guard without initial entry training, relying on the diminishing skills of war veterans for training inside the units.¹⁷ In 1948, the “Gray Report” served as the first comprehensive review of the Reserve Component. A critical implemented recommendation was that Reserves should include pre-trained forces, a novel concept at the time. Additionally, it proposed rotating reserve units and personnel through periods of active duty to maintain proficiency.¹⁸ During the Korean War, a partial mobilization of the National Guard federalized four divisions, which reported for duty understrength and underprepared. The 21-month mobilization proved sufficient to mobilize, fill the formation with conscripts, train, and deploy,

but insufficient to fight the war. In January 1952, four additional National Guard divisions activated to serve as the strategic reserve stateside. Large numbers of recalled World War II veterans filled the ranks of units going overseas. Meanwhile, most reserve forces remained in a drilling status to maintain a strategic reserve. In total, Army Guardsmen comprised five percent of the combat forces with active and draftees making up the vast majority of the 2.8 million personnel involved in the Korean War.¹⁹ The Korean War manning strategy created uncertainty and confusion, and Reserve members experienced employment discrimination out of employer fear they would receive orders.²⁰ The uncertainty disrupted the social contract, affecting current and former service members. The Armed Forces Reserve Act of 1952 consolidated various statutes and regulations affecting the reserve components, provided increased standardization in composition, duties, and regulation, and a more equitable promotion system. The act also created new reserve categories of Ready, Retired, and Standby. By the end of the 1950s, the reserve components standardized initial entry training and increased participation across the force. The initial framework established a capable total force and corrected violations in the social contract.²¹

During the Berlin Air Lift, several Army units mobilized stateside as a strategic reserve. These activations highlighted the need for time between notification and activation to prepare personal affairs. It also highlighted significant manning issues. Units required large numbers of fills, sometimes up to 50 percent, and as many as one-third of soldiers were unqualified in the jobs of their assigned slot.²² During the Vietnam War, President Johnson relied on the draft as opposed to the reserve components. Despite the draft being unpopular, there was a higher risk of political backlash by deploying whole National Guard units out of communities across America.²³

In 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird established the Total Force concept, which placed the role of the reserve forces as the primary source to expand the active force. In 1972 he testified that “we are placing increased emphasis on our National Guard and Reserve components so that we may obtain maximum defense capabilities from the limited resources available.”²⁴ The Total Force concept organizationally established reliance on the reserves for specific force structure and to rapidly expand the active component. Guard and Reserve units rounded out every active Army Division, and the Army provided additional funding and oversight to maintain a higher level of readiness.²⁵ While still serving as the strategic reserve, the new role placed additional operational requirements on specific units long before a total mobilization.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the strategic reliance on the reserve components increased while the force declined in size and capability. Pay and benefits failed to keep pace with the civilian economy and strength fell by 15 percent in the Army National Guard and 30 percent in the Army reserves.²⁶ In 1972 the DoD established the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to address the employer tension from the growing demands on the all-volunteer force.²⁷ In 1978, President Jimmy Carter recognized that “[u]nder the total force concept reserve forces would perform critical missions.”²⁸ Congressional efforts mirrored the sentiment, and round out units began modernization schedules aligned with their parent divisions.²⁹ Mobilization authorities expanded, and Reserve Component participation in training center rotations, overseas training, and exercises multiplied. The expanding requirements were not without issues. The Reserve Forces Policy Board noted tension with both private and public employers, with employer issues accounting for a third of first term losses.³⁰ During these two decades, the Army Reserve and Guard declined in capability, grew in

strategic importance, reversed the decline with increased training, and began to test the usage limits on the part-time force.

Post-Cold War

The First Gulf War thoroughly tested the Cold War reforms and the total force concept. Despite high hopes and years of rhetoric, the relatively short notice deployment to the Persian Gulf verified readiness issues, low maintenance rates, unqualified soldiers filling key positions, medical and dental readiness issues, and a lack of standardized training requirements.³¹ Despite all the reforms, the Army National Guard was unable to field an operational force to supplement the Active Component in the time required.

As part of the post-Cold War peace dividend, the Active Force shrunk, but members of Congress pushed back on the reduction of the Guard and Reserves.³² The 1992 and 1993 National Defense Authorization Act mandated an independent review on the composition mix of Active and Reserve forces.³³ RAND released the report in January of 1992, which included a review of the Total Force policy and set into motion the beginning of an era of reports with incremental fixes driven by compromise amongst multiple stakeholders.

In 1993 a “bottom-up” review influenced reserve policy. An Army concept developed calling upon the early mobilization of National Guard combat brigades to provide security and flexibility for a second conflict. The concept also identified Guard brigades for rotational forces during prolonged operations. The position of “periodic rotation” and the use of Guard combat brigades pushed the reserves closer to the “operational force.”³⁴ In addition to the review, two key documents resulted from the effort. The first was the 1993 Offsite agreement on Army force structure, giving the Army National Guard combat formations at the division level and below, and the Army Reserve mostly support units.³⁵ The second was the 1995 Commission on the

Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces. The 1995 Commission was a comprehensive review of the DoD. The report highlighted skepticism in the operational use of the reserves and included recommendations and areas for further research. As one of many steps to improve integration, the report recommended joint training and personnel exchanges for professional development.³⁶ Throughout the 1990s, the Guard and Reserves expanded its role to include peacekeeping and training missions.

Global War on Terror

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) preparation produced an assessment that the National Guard should reorient to become the leading role in responding to terrorist attacks within the United States and support contingency plans as a secondary mission.^{37 38} The events of September 11, 2001, solidified the need to focus on homeland security, but resistance erupted to making it the singular mission of the Guard.³⁹ The changes in strategy combined with modernization would soon result in an increased reliance on the Army National Guard. Events overshadowed the QDR and, while predictive, failed to receive vigorous attention as the Nation went to war.

By the end of 2002, a Stop Loss applied to mobilizing reserve units to prevent retirements and cross-leveling individuals.⁴⁰ By March of 2003, the Army National Guard deployed more Soldiers to CENTCOM than the entire Korean War.⁴¹ Medical readiness remained a significant obstacle as the number of reserve forces grew. As many as “30 percent of the recently mobilized...were initially nondeployable due to dental problems.”⁴² Deployment length created additional pressure. Throughout the 1990s, the average period of activity duty was 156 days, but the demand for 12-month deployments pushed the average beyond 300 days.⁴³ Demand for readiness pushed units to increase training before mobilization. In January 2004, the Pentagon

issued implementing guidance to rebalance forces between the components to “reduce the need for involuntary mobilization during the initial 15 days of a rapid response operation and limit involuntary mobilization to not more than one year in every six.”⁴⁴ The guidance interpreted the Title 10 statutory requirement limiting involuntary activation of no more than “24 consecutive months” to be cumulative for a single mobilization authority.⁴⁵ Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld supported the decision to ensure the long-term health of the Reserves, and during his tenure, no individuals in the Reserves served beyond 24 months involuntarily. The attempt to reduce reliance on the Reserves and Guard was also a point that President George W. Bush argued for during his presidential campaign. He was a critic of the Clinton Administration’s expanded use of the Reserves around the world and made statements acknowledging the impact of repeated mobilizations on families and employers. By early 2005, only 15 percent of the Army Reserve was eligible for involuntary activation. Approximately 25 percent of the soldiers were cross-leveled amongst deploying units before mobilization, leaving those remaining soldiers spread across multiple units.⁴⁶ Due to low unit strength, the Army National Guard also cross-leveled on average 20 percent of the mobilized soldiers.⁴⁷ Both struggled with the retention of Soldiers and recruitment of prior service Soldiers to fill their formations. The prospect of multiple deployments and the active-duty stop-loss souring the recruitment pipeline contributed to the reserve component crisis.⁴⁸

The surge in Iraq further highlighted the crisis of continuous operational use of the Reserves. Between 2004 to 2006, more than 40 percent of the deployed forces were from the reserve component.⁴⁹ In 2006, 45 percent of the Selected Reserves were currently or had been mobilized, with over 30 percent of personnel mobilized that year having been cross-leveled to deploying units to meet operational strength. In addition, the dwell time requirements for reserve

soldiers of one year activated in six applied to individuals, resulting in the need for greater cross leveling to achieve deployable units.⁵⁰

The 2006 QDR called for a more accessible operationalized Reserve Component.⁵¹ The report requested increased presidential reserve authority for 365-day activations and for select units to be available on shorter notice, which Congress approved in 2007.^{52 53} At the end of 2006, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates assumed his role and issued the policy on “Utilization of the Total Force” dated 19 January 2007. The memorandum outlined six key areas of policy to adjust in order to manage the reserves better. It set the length of involuntary mobilization at a maximum of twelve months and emphasized mobilizing ground forces on a unit basis instead of by individual soldiers. It reaffirmed the ratio of one year of mobilization followed by five years of dwell time as a planning factor, not policy. It created a program to compensate members who deploy early, often, or beyond established rotation goals. Finally, it emphasized a greater focus on a proper review of hardship waivers and decreased use of a stop-loss.^{54 55}

Despite the reforms, concern was spreading across Army leadership. In 2006, Lieutenant General Jack C. Stultz, Jr., Chief, Army Reserve, stated, “[w]e’re a federal operational force, [t]he old Army Reserve was a strategic force and we advertised it as such.”⁵⁶ In November 2007, Army Chief of Staff General Casey testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee that the reserves were “performing an operational role for which they were neither originally designed nor resourced.”⁵⁷ In January of 2008, a Congressionally chartered Commission released its final report for the *Commission on the National Guard and Reserves: Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st-Century Operational Force*. The Commission acknowledged “the evolution of the reserve components from a purely strategic force...to an operational force.”⁵⁸ The report’s primary conclusion is that there is “no reasonable alternative”

to continued reliance on the Guard and Reserves as an “operational force at home and abroad.”⁵⁹ The report challenged military leaders and policymakers to break from the Cold War posture and update antiquated policies and processes as well as to enact legislative reforms across a broad spectrum to ensure the Reserve Component is available and ready for both operational and strategic purposes. The report highlighted the recurring theme of cross-leveling personnel and equipment hurting unit cohesion and lowering readiness.⁶⁰ It also stated that the DoD needs to engage in public discussion and debate and formally adopt a concept for the operational reserve.⁶¹ This report was significant for highlighting a large number of issues and challenging Congress and DoD to define the roles and fund the Reserve Component accordingly.

In October of 2008, Secretary Gates released DoD Directive 1200.17 titled *Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force*. This directive set in motion several policy changes. Released in February 2010 and updated in April 2012, DoD released DoD Instruction 1235.12. The instruction titled *Accessing the Reserve Components (RC)* established procedures and reiterated previous guidance such as mobilization of a maximum of one year at any one time, a dwell ratio of one mobilized to five years at home, alert notifications 24 months prior to mobilization, orders approved 180 days out, and minimum 30 days notification.⁶²

In 2009, the Government Accountability Office issued two reports to Congress that emphasized the need for continued reforms.^{63 64} The reports collectively addressed training and mobilization of an operational reserve force and highlight continued stress on the dwell between deployments. Furthermore, they underscored the cost of readiness and the current policy: “Army’s reserve component forces are deploying more frequently and spending more time away from home in training when they are not mobilized.”⁶⁵ Additionally, a policy change in 2009 around training allowed the Reserve Component to consolidate training days rather than the

standard one weekend a month, in effect, enabling units to front-load yearly training days before the start of mobilization training.⁶⁶

The 2010 QDR accepted the growing demands on the “operational reserve.”⁶⁷ When discussing the Reserve Component, the review attempted to strike a balance between “maintaining operational capabilities and strategic depth...as an integrated force.”⁶⁸ It stated that Guard and Reserve units are required more frequently, and thus “we must ask more of the Reserve Component.”⁶⁹ It reiterated the policy of “managing the deployment tempo” to “five years demobilized for every one year mobilized for Guard and Reserve units.”⁷⁰ The 2010 National Guard Posture Statement echoed the theme of transformation from a “once in a lifetime, strategic reserve” to the “operational force,” providing depth for the active force.⁷¹

In April 2011, the *Comprehensive Review of the Future Roles of the Reserve Component* opened by recognizing that “the Reserve Components...have been transformed, both practically and philosophically, from a strategic force of last resort to an operational reserve that provides full-spectrum capability.”⁷² The “fundamental conclusion” supported the 2010 QDR; the only way to resource the National Security Strategy with an all-volunteer force is to deploy the Reserve Component with “appropriate frequency and duration, across all mission sets.”⁷³ According to the review, the Reserve Component provides the nation an operational force that delivers vital capabilities for national defense, provides combat and support forces for large-scale conventional war, augments the Active Component, balances stress across the total force, preserves readiness gains, spreads the burden of defending American interests across the population, and preserves the all-volunteer force.⁷⁴ The report acknowledged that medical and dental readiness still required attention, a repeating historical trend. It also resurfaced Lieutenant General Stultz’s 2006 comments on marketing the reserves and the need for a strategic

communication plan to “keep Active and Reserve Component members informed of obligations and opportunities in the All-Volunteer Force and make them, their family members, their employers, and the general public aware.”⁷⁵

In 2012 the Army released Army Directive 2012-08 titled *Army Total Force Policy*. The policy codified the commitment to ensure the Total Force is organized, trained, sustained, and equipped to support the National Military Strategy.⁷⁶ Criticism developed from congressional and military leaders that the requirements were “unrealistic and unachievable.”⁷⁷ The Reserves were essentially tasked to continue all domestic responsibilities while also serving as an operational force. The Reserve units and Soldiers were expected to meet the same standards and training despite the limited time and resources.⁷⁸ The criticism would find an audience over the coming years.

The 2014 QDR continued to identify the need for a trained Reserve Component to support the Active Component.⁷⁹ The report called for a comprehensive review of the “ability to mobilize its existing reserves” and to consider potential rebalancing of the Active, Guard, and Reserve forces based on “unique attributes and responsibilities.”⁸⁰ A late 2015 RAND report titled, *Demystifying the Citizen Soldier*, followed the QDR. It conducted a thought-provoking review of the history of the National Guard with the focus on historical participation, the Reserve Component as a check on overseas wars, and the sociological aspects of service through the evolution of the militia, to volunteers, to strategic reserve, and finally to the operational reserve.⁸¹ The author contends that despite the professionalization of the force, the National Guard and Reserves remain more representative of society and are more broadly distributed across the country.⁸² The author concluded that the shift to an operational reserve undercuts the civilian dimension of service and does little to restrain overseas conflict.⁸³

With the 2015 NDAA, Congress and the Military struggled to define a vision under budgetary constraints. However, The DoD continued the trend of reliance on the Reserve Component “as an operational reserve in order to maintain...expertise and experience.”⁸⁴ The NDAA also set into motion the National Commission on the Future of the Army.⁸⁵ The January 2016 report stated that the “Army National Guard and Army Reserve play both an operational and strategic role, providing operational capabilities and strategic depth across the full range of military operations.”⁸⁶ The report contends that “operational employment and strategic depth” are part of every unit “regardless of component, based on specific assigned mission requirements.”⁸⁷ This author assesses that the report furthered the operationalization of the Reserve Component through a slow but continuous evolution of small changes and was also very similar to the 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces.

Additionally, two RAND studies released in 2017 further supported the assessment of the operational evolution of the Army National Guard and Reserves. The first is the *Review of the Army Total Force Policy Implementation*.⁸⁸ The second is *Sustaining the Army’s Reserve Components as an Operational Force*.⁸⁹ The first study finds that while making progress, the Army Total Force Policy revisions are fiscally constrained and required additional attention and creative solutions to implement fully.⁹⁰ Leadership education and attendance in cross-component schools remain low but could assist in improving the Total Force culture.⁹¹ The study identified three challenges requiring additional attention: cultural barriers, a continuum of service, and access to modernized equipment.⁹² While an excellent review of the Total Force policy, the report lacked any novel recommendations. However, the second RAND study addressed difficult questions and provided some unexpected recommendations. Policy recommendations included continuing operational employment of the Reserve Component, reconsidering of cyclical force

generation models (revert to tiered readiness), extending deployment durations, reconsidering the premobilization training emphasis, continuing to equip and modernize, embracing nonstandard force packages, and reexamining medical readiness.⁹³ Together, these reports call for increasing the use of the Reserve Component as an operational force with no mention of the strategic reserve.

Future Direction of the Army National Guard

In 2017 the Trump administration released a new National Security Strategy (NSS), followed by the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the 2018 National Military Strategy (NMS). The Army National Guard released a revised vision and strategy document in 2017 to align with the NSS and NDS. Unlike QDRs of the past, the unclassified summary document for the 2018 NDS makes no mention of Reserve Component, no comments on the Total Force, no mention of the operational reserve or strategic reserve, and no mention of sustaining the all-volunteer force.⁹⁴ The NMS summary carries the same message and tone.⁹⁵ In contrast, the previous NMS released in 2015 called for deterrence through “maintaining Active, National Guard, and Reserve forces prepared to deploy and conduct operations of sufficient scale and duration to accomplish their missions.”⁹⁶ It clarified that “war against a major adversary” required “a full-spectrum military that includes strong Reserve and National Guard forces.”⁹⁷ The Reserve Component was further mentioned for providing a “critical bridge to the civilian population,” and essential to support Civil Authorities to “mitigate the impact” of man-made or natural disasters.⁹⁸ Perhaps the Total Force concept is now so ingrained that the Reserve Component did not require mentioning in the 2017 to 2018 strategy documents.

The National Guard lists three priorities or core missions that support the NDS: “The Guard fights America's wars, it secures the homeland, and it sustains enduring partnerships.”⁹⁹

The 2020 National Guard Posture Statement’s three core missions “directly support the NDS’s three lines of effort: building a more lethal force; strengthening alliances and attracting new partners; and reforming the DoD for greater performance and affordability.”¹⁰⁰ These core Guard missions have essentially remained consistent since the 2012 Posture statement.¹⁰¹ The 2017 Army National Guard Vision and Strategy provides understanding around the implementation of the NSS, NDS, and NMS. Readiness is critical to provide available and capable forces for combat or defense of the homeland and is the number one priority within the Army National Guard Vision.¹⁰² The strategy calls for continued rotational use of forces for predictable mission and emerging contingency operations of specific units and requires a reduction in post-mobilization training to create faster and more responsive capabilities through 2025.¹⁰³



Recommendations

The following recommendations address avenues to rewrite the social contract around part-time service to reinforce the effectiveness of the Army National Guard. Taking a new approach to education benefits, health insurance, employer relations, and strategic communication will preserve the force into the future. Changing manning policies will further enhance the effectiveness of the organizations and reinforce social contract initiatives.

Education

Education opportunities are a historical component of the social contract. The Montgomery GI Bill, created for post-World War II veterans, enabled millions of veterans to attend college. The GI Bill was equally open to the Reserve Component, unlike the Post 9/11 GI Bill, which tied the education benefit to active service after 2001.¹⁰⁴ With multiple mobilizations, many Reserve Component soldiers qualified for some level of the benefit. In 2016, the Guard and Reserve accounted for \$1 billion of the \$11 billion spent on the Post 9/11 GI Bill and 17 percent of the beneficiaries.¹⁰⁵ Regardless of component, transfers of benefits to spouses or children accounted for another \$2 billion in 2016. The Congressional Budget Office assesses that the GI Bill “attracts additional high-quality military recruits but makes retaining service members more difficult.”¹⁰⁶

State and Federal Tuition assistance programs further expanded educational funding for service members. In addition, contracts often included student loan repayments to entice enlistment. States can also extend other benefits, and some are electing to provide free in-state tuition for drilling National Guard Soldiers. Within the last couple of years, Kansas¹⁰⁷, Montana¹⁰⁸, Mississippi¹⁰⁹, and New Jersey¹¹⁰ all offered free tuition to Guardsmen while serving. Meanwhile, 16.8 million borrowers below the age of 30 and another 12.3 million

between 30 and 39 shoulder student loan debt.¹¹¹ Collectively that debt exceeds \$1.5 Trillion with at least a third of those dollars federally provided.¹¹² The opportunity presented is worth consideration. Therefore, expanding and reinforcing the existing social contract around education can occur with relative ease. For example, the federal government should tie more of the money currently appropriated for student loans to military service. At a minimum, it would create a conversation about military service and entice a larger population to consider military service as a tradeoff for education funding. It would expand the population willing to serve and help tackle the student debt crisis while reinforcing the social contract. It will create a public conversation about education and military service, expanding the dialogue. DoD should commission a detailed study to look at the effects of different education efforts by states to recruit and retain soldiers. Legislative efforts to forgive the massive student loan debt should be opposed and countered with opportunities for service. The current student loan crisis is ripe for commandeering and shifting the narrative to that of service and reinforcing the social contract.

Healthcare

Another area of the social contract is how we provide for the health of soldiers. Historical trends highlight poor medical readiness upon activation. During deployments, mobilized Reservists struggled with healthcare due to the lack of familiarity with TRICARE, and disruption in family coverage was problematic.¹¹³ After deployment, healthcare access was also lacking. In October 2006, congress established TRICARE Reserve select and expanded coverage to the Reserve Component. The optional enrollment in 2009 was over 100,000 and grew to 240,000 in 2011 and is projected to increase as the premium is favorable to health insurance exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act.¹¹⁴ By 2008 Department of Veterans Affairs Health coverage extended to five years post any mobilization for any component of service regardless of

a disability claim to address the gaps in care.¹¹⁵ Continuity of care remains a concern because of the participation of providers in areas away from military populations. Switching from a provider covered by private employer health insurance to a TRICARE provider breaks the continuity of care.¹¹⁶ Families find TRICARE “difficult to navigate and not user-friendly,” which is exacerbated by a sudden change in health insurance as a reservist changes status.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, they noted that there are no protections concerning healthcare re-enrollment under current laws, which is complicated if a Service member uses the Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) for healthcare.¹¹⁸ In a 2006 study, when not mobilized, over 30 percent of reservists lacked health coverage, including 42 percent of junior enlisted.¹¹⁹ Medical readiness issues in 2010 necessitated TRICARE coverage expansion for a reservist to provide coverage 180 days prior to activation.¹²⁰ Servicemembers' medical readiness is hindered by deployment notification lead times and “lack of incentives for Reserve Component service members to maintain medical readiness.”¹²¹ A 2017 RAND report challenged the effectiveness of the current programs, including annual Preventative Health Assessments (PHA) and dental screenings.¹²² However, they noted that expanded medical care improved personnel readiness.¹²³ While there is little debate that medical readiness is significantly better than any point in the Reserve Component history, medical readiness remains an essential factor for the availability of Soldiers and caring for families. There is room for improvement in the healthcare coverage of reservists.

Healthcare is a powerful tool. The 2006 Commission discussed using healthcare coverage as a component of an “Enhanced Compact with Employers.”¹²⁴ In this situation, activated reservists could receive a stipend to continue family coverage with their civilian employer’s insurance program to ensure continuity of care. This creative proposal would utilize healthcare to

expand the social contract and improve readiness. With all the changes since 2006 in VA benefits, TRICARE Reserve Select, and the Affordable Care Act, the initial proposal is dated. In 2019 the Reserve Officer Association made a case for improved continuity of care and readiness through expanding TRICARE.¹²⁵ Combining these arguments provides a compelling position. Extending TRICARE Reserve Select would improve readiness, continuity of care, and act as an enhanced compact with employers covering their Affordable Care Act mandated costs. The greatest argument against such a proposal is cost. However, considering the Reserve as an operational force with unit mobilizations every five to six years, most service members could receive coverage under the VA, and funding could shift to support the change. Costs could be managed by still charging a premium for family coverage consistent with civilian employment practices. Providing consistent, comprehensive medical coverage is a necessary change to reflect the strategic to operational transformation and supports the higher demands placed on the reserves.

Employer Relations

Maintaining a positive relationship with employers is vital to maintaining the social contract. Employers greatly influence continued service.¹²⁶ Civilian employers are responding negatively to the increased utilization of the reserves. Prior to 2003, 33 percent of employers surveyed paid a full salary to reservists on active duty, with 69 percent providing some form of compensation. By 2005 only 15 percent paid a full salary, and only 50 percent provided any compensation at all.¹²⁷ Public sector employers are challenged by the changing nature of the operational reserve as well, representing 16 percent of all USERRA claims.¹²⁸ The utilization of the Reserve Component has stabilized for now. The National Guard alone averages 30,000 Soldiers mobilized per year or almost 11 million duty days.¹²⁹ The current reserve utilization is

well below the peak of 68.3 million duty days in 2005 but consistently above the 5 to 13 million duty days per year between 1992 and 2001.¹³⁰ Each of these duty days represents a day of productivity lost to an employer. These days are in addition to annual training (8 to 10 million days) and schools and training centers. In 2012 testimony in Congress highlighted “stealth discrimination” where reservists unemployment was 8 percent higher than nonaffiliated veterans.¹³¹ In 2017 a study confirmed that reservists were 10.7 percent less likely to receive a job interview when listing reserve affiliation.¹³² We are witnessing an erosion in support, reluctance in hiring, and increasing demands. We must factor employers in every aspect of the Reserve Component and the renewed social contract.

There are several areas for improvement. The first is to incentivize employers. General tax credits for hiring veterans provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the American Tax Payer Relief Act of 2012 encouraged employment and mitigated stealth discrimination.¹³³ The 2011 Hire Heroes Act and Work Opportunity Tax Credit in 2007 and 2009 are other examples passed to encourage the employment of service-connected disabled veterans. A detailed review of the 2007 tax credit demonstrated both a rise in employment in the targeted population and a 40 percent increase in wages.¹³⁴ These tax credits all had a single purpose: employment. A better option is providing healthcare coverage for reservists, effectively providing a tax credit for every reservist they employ, and improving the readiness of the force.

Another area for employer relations improvement is in the utilization of the force. Utilization includes the frequency of use and notification. A unique aspect of the Guard is that events are planned a year or more out to afford employers predictability and allow “employers to visualize when they lose their employees.”¹³⁵ Changes to the schedule, additional training before training center rotations, or even last minute military education availability damage the

relationship. The 2008 Commission highlighted challenges as reserve personnel expressed concerns and difficulties with the return to civilian employment. Employers also noted that the current laws were written with a Cold War strategic reserve in mind, and now they have an unfair burden with increased utilization.¹³⁶ The National Defense Act of 1916 established the one weekend a month and two-week annual training, or 38 days, believed necessary for a strategic reserve. However, the NDS requires an available, trained, and responsive force structure. To meet demand, current Armored Brigade training templates call for 53 days the first year, 62.5 days the second, 74 days the third, and 65 days or a 365 day mobilization the mission year.¹³⁷ The Active component must understand that both the frequency of utilization and flexibility is “a societal anchor of the National Guard.”¹³⁸ This foundational structural difference in the National Guard must be a consideration in the Army Total Force Policy. Any utilization must be highly predictable at the Soldier level to maintain employer support.

Communication

One final area for improving the social contract is creating a shared understanding. Clear and honest communication is critical and, if lacking, undermines the social contract. The Guard 4.0 “initiative designed to prepare the National Guard” for the evolution embraced the effort by creating presentations and fact sheets directed at uniformed leaders, government and community leaders, employers, families, and the general public.^{139 140} It is impossible to measure the impact, but a quick internet news search for “Guard 4.0” delivers ten articles from various military publications, three other media articles, and an equal number of articles about basketball and other random topics. The message is not reaching very far. Historically the QDR provided direction, but as mentioned, the NDS and NMS do not, which results in less discourse and transparency.

A combination of actions could improve communication and mend the social contract. First, a new congressional requirement for the NDS and NMS is to explicitly define the roles and missions of the Reserve Component in the unclassified summary documents. Second, uniformed leaders should engage legislative leaders and media to communicate the specific tradeoffs made by assigning roles and missions to the Reserve Component and utilizing them as an operational force opposed to expanding the Active Component to a size capable of fully supporting the NDS and NMS. Third, require truth in advertising during recruitment.

Force Manning Changes

A different area that requires consideration is force structure and manning. The Army National Guard evolved its force structure over the years to align the Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) units to match active Army structure for similar units. Today like units share the same or similar manning documents, regardless of component. Outside of MTOE units, Table of Distribution and Allowance (TDA) structure exists for non-deployable units such as the State Headquarters, recruiting, regional training centers, Title 32 specific mission teams such as Cyber and Civil Support Teams, and others. In 2018 the Army National Guard TDA structure comprised just 11 percent of the force.¹⁴¹ The remainder of the force structure fulfills the operational role, provides strategic depth, and fulfills State missions. Unlike the Active Component, the part-time, traditional Guardsmen fill the majority of the TDA and MTOE positions. No force structure exists to account for the institutional training pipeline or special missions. Additionally, the Army National Guard is often called upon to perform non-MTOE missions overseas that have specific deployment manning requirements. These unconventional missions can be peacekeeping, agribusiness development, partner nation training, or anything imaginable. They often call upon civilian workforce skills and experience or fill

strategic gaps. In these cases, Mobilization TDA (MOBTDA) establishes the mission, organizational structure, personnel, and equipment requirements for the teams.¹⁴² The effort to standardize the MTOE and limit TDA fails to consider the uniqueness of the Army National Guard or position it for operational and strategic roles. To overcome this, an Augmentation Table of Distribution and Allowance (AUGTDA) can address several issues from unique missions, training pipeline management, and cross leveling of soldiers. Additionally, full time manning must reflect the range of missions.

An Augmentation TDA augments an MTOE unit and establishes the organizational structure, personnel, and equipment required for the unit to execute functions beyond the capabilities of the MTOE that can include military, civilian, and standard or commercial equipment.¹⁴³ To illustrate the proper use of an AUGTDA, imagine an infantry battalion that a state would also like to utilize for riot control, a typical Military Police function. The AUGTDA accounts for the civilian riot control equipment. A second example is that of an air assault aviation battalion that must also provide hoist operations for water rescue for the state. The AUGTDA can account for the non-standard military hoists for the helicopters. These examples illustrate how the MTOE can match that of similar active-duty units, and still adequately resource state or unique missions in a consistent way that ensures accountability of equipment. The application of the same concept works for personnel.

Creating an AUGTDA provides a more accurate accounting of unit strength. Currently, organizations divide the training pipeline into two categories: initial entry and career. The initial entry training pipeline consists of second lieutenants and junior enlisted. Unlike the Active Component, assignments of these soldiers occur from the day they raise their right hand. This practice creates a false unit strength number that requires the unit to identify and individually

code a soldier to indicate non-availability and non-deployable status due to the lack of training, which provides misleading indicators of unit readiness.¹⁴⁴ The career training pipeline accounts for the rest of the force as they progress through the ranks or individual assignments that require professional military education (PME). Promotions link to the grade of the position. The result is that every leader holds a position while they attend training for that position or as they prepare for the next position. The National Commission on the Future of the Army highlighted that the Army National Guard must “choose between soldiers and their leaders attending schools or annual training periods where collective unit training is paramount.”¹⁴⁵ This situation is unacceptable due to the importance of PME in supporting “high operational tempo and continual deployments.”¹⁴⁶ MTOE manning impacts recruitment, retention, and promotions. Units can only recruit to open slots. Under the old personnel system, these positions could be assigned to multiple people to account for unqualified personnel and leave a slot open to recruiting. After completing training, the unit must move soldiers into available slots or risk them not being able to re-enlist or promote; this required careful management of unit manning documents and still disguises the truth. For noncommissioned officers and officers captain and above, promotions can only process if they hold the slot. In effect, they begin doing the job of the next grade and wait for the promotion, which often disrupts the PME timeline. A properly crafted AUGTDA can resolve these issues by acting as a training pipeline management tool like how TDA institutional training works for the Active Duty.

Using an AUGTDA to manage the training pipeline will reduce the cross-leveling of soldiers and the associated adverse effects. Cross-leveling occurs when deployable soldiers transfer to units filling either vacant slots or slots of non-deployable soldiers, including those still in training. One study found that between 2003 and 2011, “half of all the officers and 40 percent

of the noncommissioned officers arrived in their units within a year of the deployment.”¹⁴⁷ A different study found that across Reserve Component units, “40 percent to 50 percent of the soldiers who deployed had been in the unit for less than one year.”¹⁴⁸ The same study uncovered that “about 30 percent to 50 percent of the officers and 25 percent of the noncommissioned officers move to different units or separate from service every year.”¹⁴⁹ From the point of unit deployment notification, “30 percent of the officers and 20 percent of the noncommissioned officers” do not deploy.¹⁵⁰ In 2011 the Army National Guard produced a white paper that stated the “ARNG has consistently met all...contingency, state,” and Homeland defense “requirements levied over the last decade,” but “the manning methodology” of individual cross-leveling consumed overall readiness in order to achieve mobilization requirements.¹⁵¹ The net effect is that the movement negatively impacts unit cohesion and collective training. An AUGTDA can improve this situation in a couple of ways. First, leaders could move into the AUGTDA when they enter the PME training pipeline and only return to the MTOE position when they become fully qualified by rank and schooling. Second, non-deployable soldiers and leaders could also move into the AUGTDA while the medical conditions or administrative issues resolve, or they process out of the Army. By implementing these two actions, it would allow a unit only to have fully qualified and deployable soldiers on the MTOE. Over time it would allow better management and timing of the PME and promotions.

The AUGTDA cannot solve all cross-leveling issues. A review of Army National Guard Brigade Combat Team deployments between 2003 and 2006 showed pre-alert average available strength at 72 percent. Twenty-three percent of those slots were cross-leveled from within the state, but this number varied from 1 percent to 40 percent across the 12 units.¹⁵² States must still recruit to fill the units that are in demand, but if cross-leveling is needed, then it must begin from

unit notification to maximize the unit cohesion and training.¹⁵³ However, this highlights the opportunity and workspace for the AUGTDA. Opportunity is limited in an environment where once a unit or MOS is filled, even if with unqualified soldiers, the State can no longer accept more. The AUGTDA would, in this case, represent an overflow based upon the personnel market for a specific skill or geography in a state. This change would allow a state to recruit to its total authorized size even if it was unable to fill specific skills or geography. It also represents an available pool for non-standard missions and state emergency missions, which is often not dependent on MTOE constraints. It further provides a real-world human capital supply picture to realign, close, or grow force structure as populations change. Having an AUGTDA for units represents a shift for the National Guard and resembles the Individual Mobilization Augmentation program within the Army Reserves. “Assigning Soldiers as IMAs allows these individuals to be used as augmentation or replacements” and also “volunteers who are readily and immediately available to meet individual mobilization requirements and contingency operational needs” without breaking MTOE units.¹⁵⁴ The AUGTDA for the National Guard will provide a new level of flexibility that will better support the modern operational force with fully manned and trained MTOE units. Strategic depth through AUGTDAs can support non-conventional missions or provide manpower, while better supporting their Title 32 state missions.

Conclusion

The Army National Guard believes that the “most precious resources” are the people and that “we must do all we can to invest in, protect and preserve the strength of our Army.”¹⁵⁵ The erosion of support from employers and families will continue unless action is taken. Failing to adopt an AUGTDA structure accepts that readiness reporting and actual readiness do not matter. Maintaining the status quo accepts the shortfalls of manning systems and fails to take advantage of the diversity in communities to create an optimized force for domestic and overseas missions. The ability to preserve the experience in uniform is at risk as the pressure builds while civilian careers progress and families grow. The success of the Army National Guard requires the involvement of mid-grade and senior leaders that matured and educated within the part-time system. Continuing on the uncorrected course, those same leaders are pulled away by stressed families and unsupportive employers. We require a renewed social contract and adjustments to manning in order to provide the best operational force that can also offer strategic depth when called.

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- ¹⁴⁹ Schnaubelt et al., 79.
- ¹⁵⁰ Schnaubelt et al., 85.
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- ¹⁵⁵ “2017 Army National Guard Vision & Strategy,” 9.