

Running head: ARMY RESERVE TRANSFORMATION

Army Reserve Transformation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	3
I. Army Reserve Transformation	4
II. Efforts to Transform	4
A. The Dick Act	4
A. The Call Up	4
III. Reserve Component During War	5
A. World War II	5
B. The Korean Conflict	6
IV. The Total Force Policy	6
A. Abrams Doctrine	7
B. Meeting the Challenge	7
V. Strategic versus Operational	8
A. Strategic Reserve	8
B. Operational Reserve	8
Conclusion	9
References	10

Abstract

Transformation of our the Reserve Component from a strategic force to a more operational force is required to meet the needs of the Army as it continues to become a smaller force, lighter, faster, and the global threat becomes more lethal. The annals of history can attest to the Army Reserve proving itself vital to the military and protection of the nation. The citizen-soldier is a critical part of America's Defense team meeting today's challenges. The United States Army has relied on citizen augmentation, during times of conflict, throughout her history. Now, more than ever the Reserve Component continues to distinguish itself through the actions of its Soldiers. Transformation of the active Army must also lead to transformation of the Army Reserve.

Army Reserve Transformation

April 23rd of this year will mark the 100th Anniversary of United States Army Reserve. Throughout its proud heritage, the Reserves have been tested in every major war or conflict in which this great nation has been involved. Today, as the most powerful military in the world continues to restructure, our commitment to lead and protect the free world remains steadfast. The citizen-soldier is a critical part of America's Defense team meeting today's challenges. In a world made smaller by technological advances in travel; a game in which the stakes are higher, "few will question the idea that American military strength is vital for the defense of all free nations" (Stern, 1957, p. 3). America's reserve force must be ready to respond and respond quickly. Not in its traditional role as a strategic reserve used to back-up forces, but instead as an operational part of the first units to deploy in case of an emergency. Our ability to project and sustain forces is more reliant today on our United States Army Reserve than ever before. Transformation of our the Reserve Component from a strategic force to a more operational force is required to meet the needs of the Army as it continues to become a smaller force, lighter, faster, and the global threat becomes more lethal.

Efforts to Transform

"The United States Army Reserve, the largest component of the Department of Defense with nearly one million men and women, was officially created in 1908. Historically, the citizen-soldier can be traced back to colonial America. (Stern, 1957). The United States Army has relied on citizen augmentation, during times of conflict, throughout her history.

The Dick Act

After the Spanish-American War, Elihu Root, then Secretary of War proposed that an active and reserve force be formed. "Root wanted to be able to expand the standing 60,000 man

Army to 250,000 well trained men instantly upon declaration of war” (Crossland, 1984, p. 12). Working with Congressman Charles W. Dick, Root helped draft what became known as the “Dick Act”. This act allowed federal funding to the National Guard to purchase equipment for training. This training was the responsibility of Army Officers to ensure that standards were met. Later legislation was passed to create the Medical Reserve Corps, the humble beginning of the Army Reserve.

The Call-Up

“Pancho” Villa’s 1916 raid on Columbus, New Mexico, strained the relationship between Mexico and the United States. Following this raid, BG John J. Pershing led an expedition to track down Villa. To aide him in his efforts, The National Guard was called into action for the first time. These reserve Soldiers added strength and expertise to the active Army in the event of war between Mexico and the United States.

Reserve Component during War

The Reserve Corps added 89,500 officers during World War I (Global Security, 2008). The most well known were CPT Eddie Rickenbacker, the first American Ace fighter pilot and COL Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. The doughboys of 1917 and 1918 displayed a dedication to duty and selfless service that has set the tone for today’s Army Reserve Soldier. This would prove to be true in future generations of Reserve Soldiers.

World War II

The Organized Reserve Corps was called upon again in June 1940, shortly before the United States entered the war in December 1941. During World War II, the Army Reserve again would distinguish itself through the actions of its Soldiers. Then BG Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. “was the first general to land on a Normandy Beach on D-Day” (Theodore Roosevelt Association,

2008, p. 2). LTC James Rudder charged the Point du Hoc cliffs leading “Rudder’s Rangers” (Ambrose, 1998). LTC Jimmy Doolittle led the air strike against Japan that would eventually end the war. Another reservist, who would become well known for other reasons, was CPT Ronald Reagan. The actions of these men were in the operational environment rather than as a strategic force.

The Korean Conflict

After victory in World War II, reserve forces would answer the call once again. The Korean Conflict included Organized Reserve serving with active duty units. More Army Reserve units were mobilized to serve in Korea, reflecting the need for well trained and organized personnel to deploy quickly and efficiently. During this time, changes to the structure of the Reserve Component were of vital importance to the nation. Army leaders and Congressmen addressed both the force structure and their responsibilities in the National Defense Strategy. These changes resulted in what is now known as the United States Army Reserve (USAR). The Army Reserve became increasingly combat support oriented during the 1950s (Global Security, 2008). The change came as a result of Army reorganization. This transformation divided roles between the USAR and the National Guard. The two would provide supplemental support forces to the Army. The USAR transitioned to Combat Support and Combat Service Support while the National Guard was to shift to Combat Arms units.

Total Force Policy

“In 1973, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger implemented the Total Force Policy which had been developed by his predecessor, Melvin Laird” (Fact Sheet, 2008, p. 1). The policy viewed the active component and the reserve component as a single force to protect the nation both at home and abroad. The result of this policy would transfer some active duty roles and resources

to the USAR. “Those forces would be reinforced, when necessary by a trained and equipped Reserve Component” (Global Security, 2008, p. 4).

Abrams Doctrine

Former Army Chief of Staff, General Creighton Abrams recognized the similarities of civilian careers and how they relate to military career fields in support operations. The Army Reserve force structure was adjusted and modified to meet circumstances. The majority of the Army’s peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, civil affairs, medical, and engineering, military police, and transportation capabilities reside in the reserve component. Abrams believed that the use of citizen-soldiers would enhance national support for military operations (Fact Sheet, 2008).

The premise of a strategic force held in reserve is no longer a viable strategy for the defense of this nation. “The days when this country could be defended by men who put down their plows, picked up their rifles, and went off to meet the enemy are gone forever” (Crossland, 1984, p. 267). Soldiers of today’s Reserve Component train together monthly and attend service schools with their Active duty counterparts. The training provided enhances readiness for operational roles in the military. Warfare today is simply too complicated, weapon systems are too sophisticated, and the necessity for rapid response no longer allows us the mobilization and train-up time of the past.

Meeting the Challenge

America’s National Strategy will continue to rely heavily on Army Reserve participation. The days when a reserve force was formed to augment or back-up the active component during times of war are gone forever. As our force becomes smaller, lighter, and faster, and the threat becomes more lethal, so must our Reserve Component. America’s ability to meet these challenges depend more on our reserve component than ever before. At an address on Army

issues to the United States Sergeants Major Academy, United Army Reserve Command, CSM Caffie stated, “The Reserve Component is being used more today than ever before in our history” (2008). This emphasized the critical role the reserve component plays in the total force structure.

Strategic versus Operational Force

Transforming the Army Reserve from a strategic force to an operational force will allow the Army Reserve to reshape itself and to adjust to the changes made in active forces. In doing so, they will be able to better align force rotations with the Army’s ARFORGEN cycle.

Strategic Reserve

The result of this transformation will make units available for deployments once every five years. These requirements are a clear indication of the dramatic change in the role of the Army Reserve. Just as importantly, they are also a clear indication of the Army Reserve's place on the Army's first team and of its increased importance to the nation's defense. No longer can we be considered a part-time Soldier to back-up the first string.

Operational Reserve

No matter how you slice it, Reserve Component Soldiers are operational. As history proves, Soldiers have been called to duty to defend this great nation. Transformation for the Reserve Component will involve more training to the so called “weekend warrior”. An operational reserve force must form relationships with their active duty counterparts, gain their respect, and learn from their expertise.

Conclusion

Transformation of our the Reserve Component from a strategic force to a more operational force is required to meet the needs of the Army as it continues to become a smaller force, lighter, faster, and the global threat becomes more lethal. The days when a reserve force was formed to augment or back-up the active component during times of war are gone forever. Warfare today is simply too complicated, weapon systems are too sophisticated, and the necessity for rapid response no longer allows us the mobilization and train-up time of the past. Though previous policies and reorganization of military forces have been adopted to change the face of our Army, more changes are necessary to meet the demands of the nation. Transforming the Army Reserve is vital to the United States to continue defending the nation at home and abroad.

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