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The Evolution between Active Duty and Reserve Forces in Combat

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the United States Army June 14th 1775, it has always carried the concept of One Army, One Team, and One Fight. For the most part this is true, however during the past 234 years we the Army as a whole have lost the concept that the Active Duty was built on the foundation of the State Militia. In my 26 years, four activations, and two training tours, I have witnessed the division between Active Duty and the Reserve Component soldiers. I will be the first to admit that it has improved dramatically, but as we like to say we can always improve our foxhole. The following Personal Experience Paper is the evolution that I have witnessed.

Little did I know that when I was 17 and signing my initial enlistment contract that my life would witness the beginning of change. It was August 21st, 1983, and as I was reading the contract, I asked the recruiter SFC Jacob Ralie about the part on federal activation. SFC Ralie laughed and stated, "Do you realize how screwed up the world would have to be for the active duty to call on the Army Reserve or National Guard?" I did not realize then that almost 7 years to the day that moment in time would happen.

I first heard the name of Saddam Hussein and the fighting in the Middle East in 1990. I really did not pay much attention to it, until I got a call from my older brother DuWayne who was in the Air Force. DuWayne told me he was leaving for Saudi Arabia for the Gulf War. He was in a communications unit that was being sent in first to start setting up all the satellite communications as the rest of the force soon followed. It was then that I started to pay close attention to world events.

December 3rd, 1990 it was my turn. I received a call from the State Area Readiness Command. MSG Rocky Jahner stated that my old MP Company, the 191st MP CO, received an alert notification. They were about to get activated to head to what was later called Operation Desert Storm. I had left the MP Company three months earlier to pursue a military career in aviation medicine as a flight medic on a helicopter. When I answered the phone and was told about the company deploying, I asked why he had called me. I was informed that my MOS has not been awarded yet, and the MP's were extremely short. I could volunteer, hold off, or risk being command directed with as little as two days notice. I asked for an hour and immediately called my old unit.

As could be expected, things were total chaos. When I spoke with the Unit Administrator, he laughed when he heard my voice. "I figured you would be calling soon," stated SSG Kevin

Hopfauf. I asked for the quick skinny, and immediately asked if I could get my old squad back. SSG Hopfauf stated it was still open and was mine if I wanted it. I called MSG Jahner backed and told him I was in. That is when I would start realizing the difference between Active Duty and National Guard.

December 7th I reported for duty at the armory. Being I was only gone a little over four months, nothing had really changed. December 10th the unit departed for mobilization station and on January 3rd, 1991, I was standing in the middle of Saudi Arabia as a squad leader. As I sat on the tarmac, waiting for a bus at 0300 in the morning, for whatever reason I thought of that day back in 1983 and SFC Railie's voice saying, "Do you know how screwed up the world would have to be for active duty to call the National Guard?" Well I guess I do now.

Once we hit Saudi Arabia we had a crash course in hurry up and wait. Fort McCoy mobilization station happened so quickly that we did not get any of the new DCU's, desert boots, parkas or other personal equipment. The supply system was out of stock on everything at Fort McCoy and we were all told, "Don't worry you will get it in country." We deployed with our weapons, ammunition, and basic necessities to get going. However it was the extras like uniforms and boots that we were still lacking.

Being the type of leader that cannot tolerate just sitting around, I always volunteered my squad to assist the supply sergeant. SSG Greg Randich was a younger supply sergeant that portrayed the image of a grumpy 30 year veteran. My squad enjoyed the little trips and staying busy. We would take SSG Randich to pick up items, but it did not take us long to realize that we were not going to be getting much. If we continued to follow the army supply channels and file the proper paperwork with higher we would become a liability. It was probably the third or fourth attempt at picking up the new DCU's and boots for the company and being told, "Yeah,

sorry we're fresh out, Check back in a couple of days," I could see the frustration in SSG Randich as we walked out empty handed yet again.

The next time we came back, SSG Randich and I went over early just to sit and watch. We sat for an hour or two and watched trucks come and go. Greg would walk over to incoming supply sergeants, and talk about supply sergeant issues, just to see what they were picking up. When he finally found someone picking up uniforms he pounced. After the other unit picked theirs up, Greg jumped in with all the paper work, and yes as you can believe, they were magically out of stock again. I had known SSG Randich for a lot of years, we drank more than our share of beer together, but I had never seen him that visibly mad.

SSG Randich and I turned around and walked out the door. He sent my guys to go find some chow and come back in a couple of hours. Greg and I set up down the street and began watching again. I knew sooner or later, some poor unsuspecting active duty supply sergeant was going to show up to get their uniforms and all hell was going to break loose.

I decided that I was going to use my interpersonal communications skills to see what I could find out about the supplies. I thought that if I could somehow talk some sense into these supply people about how we are one team and so on, that maybe I could keep Greg from losing his cool. After all I had been a cop for the past five years, I know how to talk to people and get them to see my point of view, or at least I was going to get the first shot in on this supply guy before SSG Randich got a hold of him.

I walked into the supply area, put on my friendly face and struck up a conversation with the crusty looking E-7 behind the counter. I told him that the unit was between a rock and hard place seeing as we had mobilized rapidly and had never received most of our uniforms, boots, and parkas. I thought I was doing a really good job of winning this guy over until he stopped me

dead in my tracks. He looked me straight in my eyes and said, "Look, this gear is for the real soldiers, not the weekend warriors." I stood there in total disbelief at his remarks. I said, "You got to be kidding, right?" He stood straight up and snapped back pointing to his face and said, "Does this face look like I have any sense of humor?"

It was all I could do not to reach across the counter and smack him right in the mouth. The only thing that was stopping me was two small things, fear and common sense. Common sense said he was not worth a UCMJ action and the fear was the three other guys standing with him. I gathered my thoughts, and having nothing smart to comeback with, I about faced and walked out and back to the truck to sit with Greg.

The more I sat there, the madder I became. Knowing that I could not do anything to the E-7, we headed back to the company area. We lost the battle but we sure as hell were not going lose the war. We soon found out that it was not just the uniforms that we were not going to get support on, but vehicle and weapons as well. Desperate times called for desperate measures. For the rest of the time, when we needed something we just took it, and we made sure that it was from an active duty company.

Fast forward to 2003 Operations Joint Forge, Bosnia. My division had been tasked to act as a task force headquarters in Tuzla, Bosnia. Part of that tasking was to provide a Protective Service Detail for an active duty 3-Star General. I was selected as the NCOIC due to my 18 plus years in law enforcement. The warning order came out one year prior, with plenty of time to select, train and deploy for this mission that the National Guard had never before performed. Contacts were made with our active duty counterparts; however I could immediately feel the bad vibes once again. One of my least favorite comments that was told to me was, "Hey remember that this is not your annual training, leave your beer coolers at home." Very soon I decided that I

was going to prove to everyone that the National Guard was as good if not better than any other active duty unit around.

The mission came and went off with no surprise to me. I had selected a very motivated team that held themselves to a higher standard than I ever could. We were the first team to go through the mission with no UCMJ actions or blemishes to our principal. We must have done something really well, because five weeks after we had returned home, I received an email from the General's Chief of Staff asking me to call him on a secure line. Living close to an Air Force base, it was not big issue and the call was made. The boss had fired half of his new team and wanted to know if we would come back over for another nine months until he left. I was amazed at how fast nine out of thirteen of the team agreed to go. I was never so proud of how the team had performed. All the awards that we as a team received did not measure up to honor of having the team called back to protect an active duty general.

When Operation Enduring Freedom and, shortly thereafter Operation Iraqi Freedom kicked off, the Active duty soon learned that they could not perform the missions handed to them, without the support of the National Guard. Many National Guard units were quickly activated and sent over. Time and time again, the stories came back of how the negative comments flew in the beginning of the deployments about the National Guard soldiers being slackers. What most of them never knew was that we come with a whole diverse background of civilian occupations. Plumbers, electrician, cops, mechanics and the very best of all heating and air conditioning repair technicians.

However our active duty counter parts soon realized that the guard had the best of everything. We could fix and maintain items due to our backgrounds and what we do in the civilian world. I was amazed how the comments seemed to go away. Unit after unit departing

theater, the active duty changed their comments to “Hell ya I will go to war with you guys.” The perceived gap between the active and the guard forces was closing quickly, and I was ecstatic.

The unique thing that active duty had to understand is that the guard soldiers perform because they want to. It is not just a job to them, rather to most soldiers it is a passion to serve and do well. Now don't get me wrong, we may have our share of bad units just as the active duty does, but I truly believe that the ratio is much lower than on the active duty side.

In 2005, the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division was activated in support of OIF. We mobilized in September of 2005 and deployed overseas in April 2006. It was not known at that time, that BCT would set a record that no other BCT had ever done before. The BCT was notified during the surge that they would be extended for an additional 4 months, setting the record for the longest deployment in support of OIF or OEF at 17 months in country.

In February 2009, a similar call came yet again for another deployment. I had since been promoted to Sergeant Major and I was now the Division Provost SGM and Protection Cell SGM. The 34th Infantry Division was called upon to command the Multi National Division-South. A National Guard Division was going to command active duty forces; this was going to be interesting. Mobilization started as usual with typical rah rah speeches talking about one team one fight and Army of One. We quickly learned that this was not so true.

It seems that the Army has two sets of rules, one for active duty and one for reserve component soldiers. Active duty soldiers preparing for deployment work Monday thru Friday, and have weekends and holidays off. At the end of the duty day they change into civilian clothes, jump into their cars and do whatever they please. A reserve component soldier reporting for active duty works seven days a week, only allowed to wear ACU's or PT's, and is not allowed to leave post or have a alcoholic beverage of any type. One army one fight, yea right!

We made it through mobilization and deployed into Iraq. I was shocked and surprised by the positive reception that we received from our active duty counterparts. I began to think that maybe it is just because we are relieving them, but I soon realized that this was not true at all. My counterpart SGM Julius Gonzales was excellent and made sure that I had everything I needed to succeed. We did battle field circulation that included going to Baghdad to meet the other division, brigade and battalion CSM's and SGM's. When I met the various SGM's I was floored; all of them were open, honest and gave me all their personal contact information. Everyone said, "Never hesitate to call with questions." I quickly learned that SGM Martin Traylor 1st Cavalry Division and SGM Julius Gonzales 10th Mountain were my new best friends.

The deployment continues and yes, I have found some of the "Old Timers" that still think less of the guard. I have realized that I am not going to change the army, but I can instill the pride in the National Guard by my performance and how I carry myself. I recently had the misfortune of dealing with a certain unnamed SGM from an unnamed BCT in MND-S. A typical old timer, that still thinks that the army does not need the guard. I tried three or four times to have a decent conversation with the man, but it fell on deaf ears. I soon realized that I was never going to change his mind. My last parting comment to him was I hoped that he enjoyed the desert environment because without the guard, active duty was going to be spending a lot more time there.

The evolution continues every day. I don't expect miracles over night, but I do enjoy small victories. I recently met a commander from CID. This LTC and I were stranded in the Baghdad passenger terminal awaiting a flight. We started talking cop talk and when I told her that I was a guard soldier, she perked up and made a comment that just about knocked me over. She made comments that CID loves their reservists and wishes that they had more of them. She

talked about that most, if not all of the reservist that she has dealt with possess more investigation skills than most active duty agents. She stated that the level of training that reservist possess is far beyond what active duty can offer, as most CID reserve agents are civilian police officers and have more training and real life experience than active agents. The one thing they lack can be fixed with a brush up in the Army writing style.

I know that I no longer have to steal doors and tires off a crusty curmudgeon old E-7 supply sergeant's vehicle because I have too. Ok, I have to admit, sitting around the next morning just to watch the expression on his face was priceless. I see that the evolution is farther along than I realized. I don't have any false hopes that it is gone forever, but it is a step in the right direction, and I plan on being on the team that takes the National Guard in that direction.