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THE ROLE OF RESERVE FORCES IN U. S.
MILITARY STRATEGY

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THE ROLE OF RESERVE FORCES IN
US MILITARY STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

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After a study of the history of the Reserve forces of the United States it was found that the citizen soldier has been the backbone of this country's national defense since before it became a sovereign nation. Most of the time the militia has performed with distinction; but there have been times, because of a lack of unity of command, when its performance lacked the elements of a well disciplined and effective force. Then after a study of the national laws and Army Regulations governing the organization and training of the Reserve Components, it was found that they have evolved into a useful and potent instrument for national defense. However, because there is no longer a military draft, the Armed Forces must rely on an all-volunteer Reserve Force as well as an all-volunteer Active Force. Moreover, because of the increasing reliance that has been placed on the Reserve Components in the total force structure, the Reserve needs to find ways to increase its readiness more rapidly. One solution to improved Reserve readiness would be for the Secretaries of the respective defense departments to be able to call Reserve Components to active duty for short periods of training before mobilization rather than after.

It was unfortunate for the United States that the Continental Congress did not take George Washington's advice when he recommended to that body in 1783 the establishment of a "well organized militia, upon a plan that will pervade all states, and introduce similarity in their Establishment Manoeuvres, Exercise and Arms."¹ Coming from Washington, this seems like a strange recommendation. He had had so much trouble with the disciplining of the various colonial militias during the Revolutionary War that one might come to the conclusion that he was fed up with militias.

However, Washington could see many advantages to a well-trained militia. One very important advantage was that it was economical. He realized that the country could not support a large standing army, and the country's major armed strength must come through the martially organized citizen soldier.

To overcome the command and training weaknesses that he had experienced during the war, Washington recommended that the militia have common training and organization and that its officers be federally appointed. He had had too much trouble unifying his command when each of the governors of the various colonies had appointed their own officers.

RESERVE COMPONENT ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

It was not until 1912 that this country finally officially recognized the need for a federal militia. Prior to 1912, the militia was under the control of the respective states. The recog-

dition of a need for militia officers to be federally appointed came with a rider to the Appropriation Act of 24 August 1912. Then, with the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916, the Federal Reserve force was established.

With the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916 and the subsequent related laws, the Congress acquired a very good law² governing the command, conduct, and training of the Reserve Component forces of the United States. Incorporating Washington's national defense philosophy, the present law provides for common training and structure of both the federal and state militias. The problem of command that Washington experienced has been overcome. The officers of the federal reserve force are appointed by the national executive; and although the officers of the state militia, or National Guard, receive their appointments from the various state governors, they are called to active duty under federal recognition. Until an emergency comes that requires the service of the state militia, that force remains under state control.³

The reserve forces which must support the Regular Army when a national crisis emerges are now the National Guard and the Reserve. These two components evolved slowly through trial and error, and this slow evolution has been costly to the nation in lives and money. The first seed of today's Army Reserve sprouted with Roger's Rangers in 1755 - 1761. This was one of the Reserve's better hours. From then on it experienced varying degrees of success and failure through the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the

Mexican War. It was during the Mexican War that the provision was made that the President, not the state governors, should appoint the militia officers.

During the Civil War, the nation could not make up its mind whether the troops were to be federal or state; but during the Spanish-American War, the Federal volunteer was again recognized. The National Defense Act of 1916 provided for a better command and control of the Army, including the militia. This may have made some contribution to the fine showing that the Army of the United States made while fighting two World Wars and the Korean War.⁴

In 1946, during an address to the Secretaries of War and Navy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other military and civilian officials of the Armed Forces at the Pentagon, Winston Churchill made this comment while expressing his admiration for the formation of the American Army during World War II:

. . . It remains to me a mystery as yet unexplained how the very small staffs which the United States kept during the years of peace were able not only to build up the Armies and the Air Force units, but also to find the leaders and vast staffs capable of handling enormous masses and of moving them faster and farther than masses have ever been moved in war before. . . .⁵

General George C. Marshall suggests that the large build-up of the Armed Forces was enhanced by the Reserves, a Corps that was mostly an officer corps. He stated: ". . . Just what we could have done in the first phases of our mobilization and training without these men I do not know. . . ."6

Fortunately, the Korean War was able to call on the World War II veterans -- Reservists who were fully trained and combat experienced -- to meet the mobilization requirements of that war. There was some injustice in this call-up because most members of organized Reserve units remained in reserve status. Most of the requirements on the Reserve was placed upon the individual Reservist. But his performance during the Korean War was outstanding.⁷ As long as the United States fought a war every five years, there would be plenty of experienced and trained reservists. But this policy of calling on the veteran Reservist in any future limited wars would bring about an injustice upon the citizen soldier that would not be experienced by the other segments of the population.

MAINTAINING RESERVE STRENGTHS AND READINESS

The war in Vietnam weakened the Reserve Components. They became a haven for draft dodgers. The few units that did see service in Vietnam did an excellent job, however. Now that the Vietnam War is over, those Reservists who were in Reserve units in order to escape the draft are now leaving their units, and the challenge of recruiting to fill the unit vacancies left is upon the unit commander. He is also faced with the responsibility of training his unit to a new state of readiness that is higher than has ever before been expected of the Reserve Component. General Creighton W. Abrams, Army Chief of Staff testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee:

. . . obviously, we rely heavily on Reserve Component forces. We can make no plan to fight in a major conflict without considering their early mobilization and commitment. Generally, if forward deployed forces were to be reduced, our strength in the United States would have to be increased and we would also need improvements in our strategic mobility capability. . . .⁸

At the Mid-Winter Conference of the Reserve Officers Association, Representative George H. Mahon, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, summed up the problem precisely when he said:

There was a time when it was not absolutely vital for the reserves to be fully equipped and fully trained. That time is over. It was a slower moving world.

From henceforth the reserve must be fully equipped, fully trained, and ready for combat. In the height of a smaller active force, that has to be the name of the game from here on out. The number of units in the reserves that do not relate directly to combat must be held to a minimum. Note this: It is important that we have adequate strength in both the combat and support units.⁹

Additionally, Secretary of the Army Callaway, during his appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee, gave added emphasis to the need to meet the challenge when he stated:

We are aware of the need for the highest possible state of readiness in the Reserves. Today Reserve forces must be ready within two or three months or they may be too late to participate. However, on the scale now envisioned, this level of readiness has never before been achieved by the Reserve Components.¹⁰

According, then, the preceding statements of these eminently qualified public officials, Reserve readiness is an imposing challenge to Reserve unit commanders and their Active Army advisors. The Reserve has done well at times, particularly in recent history, but the defense requirements of the past was based upon

the concept of having time to develop readiness after mobilization. In the future, according to Secretary Callaway, the Reserve must be ready to deploy within a very short time. At the present, the Reserve is maintaining its strength. It ended the month of June 1974 with a strength of 102 percent.¹¹ Now the Reserve must get trained and ready and be able to perform its mission at the time of mobilization for any future emergency.

Current Army Regulations require that "The objective of Reserve Component training is to attain the highest levels of individual and unit proficiency that are achievable in a premobilization status."¹² Reserve Component units have a primary requirement of being operationally ready. They must be ready to mobilize and accomplish their mission. The minimum operational readiness that they must attain is to be able to operate and accomplish their Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) mission at company level proficiency.¹³

RESERVE TRAINING

Like the Active Army, the Army Reserve has four formal training programs. When an individual first enters the Army through a Reserve Component unit, he goes on active duty for approximately six months. During this time he is given eight weeks of basic combat training. This training is the same for every soldier. It is training that equips the individual with the basic training requiring him to be able to defend himself and become proficient in basic military subjects and the fundamentals of infantry

combat. From Basic Training the new Reserve recruit goes into Advanced Individual Training. This usually lasts approximately eight to ten weeks. It is training that will train him for the military occupational specialty (MOS) for which he was recruited in his local Reserve Component unit. If his local unit is an infantry unit, he will receive more specialized training as in infantryman. If he returns to an engineer unit, he receives engineer training. The same applies to all of the other combat, combat support, and combat service support units of the Army. After the soldier completes his advanced individual training, he is given an MOS and sent back to his Reserve Component unit.

So long as the Reservist remains in the unit for which he was trained, he continues to improve his proficiency as an individual and as a member of his squad, section, or platoon. He must fit in with the other members of the unit and learn to function as a team. If the unit is newly organized, or if it has a high rate of personnel turn-over, it will be required to go through two phases of unit training. This training consists of Basic Unit Training and Advanced Unit Training. The training for most of the soldiers, including their individual training, is outlined in detail in the various Army Training Programs. Each type unit has a training program tailored to its specific requirements. The time to complete this unit training varies, but it usually takes about six to eight weeks for Basic Unit Training and a similar amount for advanced Unit Training. Unit training

is conducted by the unit and is designed to train the unit to perform its TOE mission. Basic Unit Training is team training on a squad, platoon, and company level; and when completed, the unit should be ready to be deployed as a company. Advanced Unit Training is training that usually accompanies battalion level training.

Because Reserve Components have a minimum requirement to acquire and maintain proficiency at company level, upon mobilization, they would only need to be given time to complete Advanced Unit Training. Although Reserve Components are encouraged to train to the highest levels of individual and unit proficiency possible, they are generally programmed to complete some of their training after mobilization. According to Secretary Callaway, the plans are to have the Reserve Component units ready to deploy much sooner than they have traditionally been expected to deploy.

This poses some real problems for those Reserve unit commanders and other Reserve officers and non-commissioned officers who are in charge of training. Although the Reserve Components' strength is up, many of the new enlistments come from prior service personnel. If a man were released from the service with an infantry MOS, and the only unit in his community available to him is a medical unit, the the unit commander has the responsibility of not only providing the new prior service individual the necessary Unit Training, but he must also provide the new man training in his new MOS. This MOS training must be given

concurrently with Unit Training.

The Active Army Readiness Groups have been working hard to help the Reserve unit commander to gain the sophistication necessary to train his unit under these circumstances. They are beginning to meet with some success. It is difficult, however, for the unit commander to have to break away from the concept of every member of his unit performing the same kind of training. If all of his unit were new recruits and they came back simultaneously from their initial six months active duty tour, they would be able to train in a more traditional way. They could do this because the new Reservist recruit is trained in his respective MOS upon completion of his Advanced Individual Training.¹⁴

Sometimes the TOE of the unit is changed. When this occurs, the unit commander has the responsibility of getting his whole unit MOS qualified. This often results when the force structure is changed radically to meet changing world conditions. The commander then must take his unit through Advanced Individual Training, Basic Unit Training, and when applicable, Advanced Unit Training.

TRAINING TIME

The Reserve Component commander has the equivalent of a thirty-eight day training year. To relate this to the various Army Training Programs, one must again be reminded that the Reserve Component commander is generally responsible for two phases of training: Basic Unit and Advanced Unit Training. A separate

company may or may not be required to complete both. Some Army Training Programs require Advanced Unit Training at the separate company level and some do not, but almost all Army Training Programs require this training of battalions.

Assuming that an average Army Training Program requires eight weeks Basic Unit Training and eight weeks Advanced Unit Training, or a total of sixteen weeks for both phases, then this training time amounts to a total of 640 hours of training. The law¹⁵ requires that Reserve Component units train for 48 scheduled drills of four-hour duration and perform Annual Training for fourteen days each year. During the two weeks Annual Training the unit is expected to train for a minimum of eighty-eight hours. Therefore, with the eighty-eight hours of training performed during Annual Training plus the forty-eight four-hour or Inactive Duty Training periods which equal a total of 192 hours, the total yearly training time for Reserve Components comes to 280 hours per year. If the total hours of training time were based on thirty-eight training days, the total Reserve Component training time amounts to 304 hours. Therefore, a Reserve Component unit will spend between 280 and 304 hours of training each year. In three years, the unit will complete between 840 and 912 hours of training. It takes, then, about two to three years for the Reserve to do what it normally takes the Active Army to do in sixteen weeks.

The Reserve commander is getting more skillful in paring out all but the most essential elements of the unit's respective

Army Training Program requirements, thanks again to the help being rendered to him by the various Readiness Regions and Groups. With their continued assistance, this two and one-half year period of time required to get through Unit Training should be reduced considerably.

The actual United States' Reserve Component training time compares very favorably with the requirements of other countries' reserve component training time. Switzerland requires twenty training days¹⁶ per year for its reserves or about 160 hours. Israel requires from fourteen to thirty-one days per year, plus one day per month.¹⁷ This would average about thirty-two days per year or a total of 256 hours. Both Switzerland and Israel also require additional training for reserve officers and non-commissioned officers.

United States' laws provide an excellent system for training its Reserve Component forces assuming that there will always be sufficient time for mobilization when confronted with a national emergency. However, if Reserve Component training is to be accelerated so that readiness may be achieved on a "scale that has never before been achieved," the law needs some modification.

A RECOMMENDATION

This author recently had the experience of observing a Reserve Component unit that had seen service in Vietnam take an Army Training Test (ATT). This unit passed the test with ease.

It was one of the few Reserve Component units that had been activated and experienced service in Vietnam. Before it took the test, it had a considerable turn-over in personnel after its return from active duty, but an excellent cadre was still with the unit. However, the commander himself had not been with the unit during its active duty. Prior to going over-seas, the unit had had six months of excellent post mobilization training. The cadre that remained with the unit was able to maintain the skills that it had acquired over a period of three years that had helped the unit pass its ATT, thus demonstrating its ability to maintain its readiness in spite of a considerable turn-over in personnel. It was the consensus of most of the cadre that it was the post mobilization training that was so valuable in helping them maintain their readiness and not so much their combat experience. This hypothesis may not be able to be proven, but it does recognize the value of the very excellent post mobilization training that the unit had.

If this kind of training could be more available to Reserve Component units, Reserve readiness could be greatly improved. The present law,¹⁸ however, will not permit the mobilization of Reserve Component forces except in time of emergency as declared by Congress or the President. This means that the Reserve cannot accelerate its training except in time of national emergency; and by the time the emergency is prepared for, it may be too late.

Therefore, the present law needs to be changed so that the Secretaries of the various defense departments may call certain

Reserve Component units to active service for periods of 60 to 180 days, depending upon the respective unit's ATP, every five years in addition to the normal thirty-eight day annual training period. If this were done, there would always be a very highly trained Reserve cadre. The Reserve Components would be able to respond quickly to any emergency, and the United States would always have a large army available, but it would be maintained at a cost much less than would be required if the same size force were maintained full time.

All units would not have to be given this training. Some units, because of the force structure, would not be required to maintain the high state of readiness that others would. However, for those Reserve Component units whose priority in the force structure requires early deployment, a high state of readiness could be maintained if from time to time they were able to get intensive training for a short period of time.

Would calling a unit to active service every five years make recruiting more difficult? Would unit members be reluctant to stay with the program if they thought they would be called to active duty that often, even if it were for training and for a few extra months? There are ample laws that protect the Reservist from losing his civilian job when serving his country, but there are also subtle ways that an employer might discriminate against a Reservist employee. The Reservist might not be given the promotion opportunities that other employees might receive. This is a valid objection. However, most career Reservists have gener-

ally worked these problems out with their employers already. The Reservist is a special type citizen just as a professional soldier is a special type citizen. All citizens do not elect to be in the Army, but many do. The same reasoning applies to the Reservist. Most Reservists adjust their lives so that they may keep proficient in two professions -- their civilian and military. They find having two professions both challenging and rewarding.

Some new effort may need to be made to encourage all employers to be liberal with their employees who are members of the Reserve Components, but the main recruiting incentives are already with the Reserve -- liberal retirement, pride, extra money, and citizenship responsibilities. An added recruiting aid would be enlistment bonuses, particularly with certain kinds of MOS's. Reservists also need to be given limited Commissary privileges based on the same plan that PX privileges have been given.

There are a number of measures needed in order to meet the needs of the Reserve Components in the total force structure, some of which have been listed. No one recommendation or action is a panacea for developing readiness on a "scale that has never before been achieved," but the need to grant the Secretaries of the respective defense departments the authority to give additional readiness training through occasional calls to active duty for the purpose of additional readiness training is apparent.

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FOOTNOTES

1. George Washington, as quoted from Origins, History, and Accomplishments of the US Army Reserve, p. 96.

2. US Laws, Statutes, etc., United States Code, 1970, Vol 2, Title 10, Sec 261 - 280, Chpt 11, pp 1260 - 1268. (hereafter referred to as "U.S.C.").

3. Ibid.

4. A Report prepared for Ketchum, MacLeod, and Grove, Inc., Under Order Number 5-35667, dated 23 March 1965, Origins, History, and Accomplishments of the US Army Reserve, pp. 91 - 94

5. Winston S. Churchill, The Hinge of Fate Vol IV of The Second World War, p. 387.

6. George C. Marshall, as quoted from Origins, History and Accomplishments of the US Army Reserve, p. 94.

7. A Report prepared for Ketchum MacLeod, and Grove, Inc., Under Order Number 5-35667, dated 23 March 1965, Origins, History, and Accomplishments of the US Army Reserve, pp. 91 - 94.

8. General Creighton W. Abrams, as quoted from The Officer, p. 14, May 1974.

9. George H. Mahon, as quoted from The Officer, p. 8, April 1974.

10. Howard Callaway, as quoted from The Officer, p. 14, May 1974.

11. "Volunteer Army a Success", The PentagonNews, 11 July 1974.

12. US Department of the Army, Army Regulations 350-1, p 3-1.

13. Ibid.

14. U. S. C.

15. Ibid.

16. John Paxton, Editor, The Statesman Year-Book, p. 1361.

17. Colonel T. M. Depuy, US Army Ret, The Almanac of World Military Power, p. 172.

FOOTNOTES

18. U. S. C.

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(An informative work on the development of the Israeli army.)

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7. "Army Reserve," The Officer, April 1974.
8. "Army Reserve," The Officer, May 1974.
9. "Volunteer Army A Success," Pentagram News, 11 July 1974.
10. US Laws, Statues, etc. United States Code. 1970 ed. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1970. Title 10, Chapter 11, Sec 263.
11. US Department of the Army. Army Regulations 140-1: Army Reserve: Mission, Organization and Training. April 1974.
12. US Department of the Army. Army Regulations 220-1: Unit Readiness Reporting. Washington: July 1973.
13. US Department of the Army. Army Regulations 350-1: US Army Training. Washington: October 1973.