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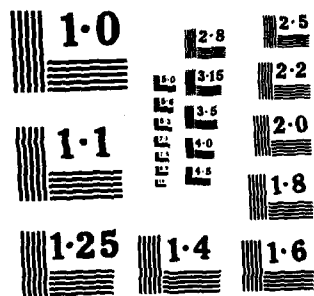
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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Reserve Forces -- Can Our Defense Dollars Be Extended		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED STUDENT ESSAY
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC John H. Smith		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 15 April 1985
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 22
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The role that our Reserve forces play as part of the total force policy has never been greater than it is today. Much of the combat power and combat support for US forces is vested in the Reserve forces. This paper examines several issues related to our total force policy. Because of the author's experience in the Air National Guard, the primary thrust of the report emphasizes the air component of the reserves. In the broadest sense, this paper seeks to ask questions about the optimum utilization of our limited		

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RESERVE FORCES--CAN OUR DEFENSE DOLLARS BE EXTENDED

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

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15 April 1985

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
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ABSTRACT

The role that our Reserve forces play as part of the Total Force policy has never been greater than it is today. Much of the combat power and combat support for US forces is vested in the Reserve forces. This paper examines several issues related to our Total Force policy. Because of the author's experience in the Air National Guard, the primary thrust of the report emphasizes the air component of the Reserves. In the broadest sense, this paper seeks to ask questions about the optimum utilization of our limited resources. It examines the impact of the all-volunteer force on the Reserves, then deals with the issues of cost-effectiveness and force structuring.

Additional keywords:
deployment; strategic force; tactical force

The debate over the level of military spending in the US has often prompted a great deal of public scrutiny on certain defense issues. The debates on the B-1 bomber and the MX strategic nuclear missile in the current Congress and during the 1984 Presidential election are good examples. One issue, the role of Reserve forces, has never proffered up much public scrutiny or critical examination. It is, however, receiving a lot of attention within DOD and the services today. The All-Volunteer Force (AVF) and the associated costs of maintaining an AVF have made a tremendous impact on the role that Reserve forces will play in the grand scheme of total force and military strategy. This paper examines the role of the Reserves in an all-volunteer force. In its broadest sense, it seeks to ask questions about the optimum utilization of our diminishing resources. It is an attempt to look at the issues from several perspectives rather than to make serious indictments about the management of the Reserves within the AVF. This author has neither the knowledge nor the experience to offer either a panacea or concept of solutions to our national and international problems.

Perhaps no other event, other than a war itself, has impacted on the Reserve forces more than the decision to move from conscription to the all-volunteer system. The fact that this move occurred as we disengaged ourselves from the Vietnam war attests to the political forces emanating from that conflict. But if the AVF is the most significant

event to occur as a result of our experiences in that war, then it can be said that we accepted the political realities of the world in a wise manner. In my opinion, this country was ripe for a return to isolationism. Yet, the American people and our Congress avoided this "danger." In fact, a greater lesson was learned--we have become more wary of military involvement. Yet, we have refused to irresponsibly avoid our role as a major power in the world.

Needless to say, it is a complex interrelationship that exists between our society and its military forces. There is, however, a need for a close and truly organic relationship between them. Without it, the military establishment will inevitably be weakened through benign neglect. The fundamental character and needs of military forces as human organizations have to be understood, or else these forces would be something less than what will be required for our national security. It is important, therefore, that the issues concerning the AVF be debated and discussed within our society. In reviewing the performance of the AVF since its inception nearly twelve years ago, it has progressed from a downward to a rather lofty and elevated position. Services are able to meet authorized strength levels. Desertion and first-term attrition rates are down considerably as compared to the 1970's. The racial mix of the Army has stabilized at about 21 percent for blacks from its high of about 25 percent in the middle to late 1970's. Still, there are other issues to be debated. The role of

women as combatants has not been convincingly argued one way or the other. The tendency of the services to employ management techniques which tend to emphasize efficient peacetime forces at the cost of wartime effectiveness and questionable strategic premises, especially regarding the role of Reserve forces, are all issues that need to be debated concerning the AVF.

In preparing this paper, it was necessary to make some key assumptions. Although these assumptions were chosen to limit the scope of this essay, they were also chosen because of the existing realities of our national military strategy as we know it today. It is reasonable to assume that the AVF will be a matter of policy for this country through the remainder of this century. That does not mean that one could not make a cogent argument for a return to conscription or some form of national service. It is simply an acceptance of the reality of the AVF today and the seemingly reluctant efforts of our political and military leaders to ever change it. And since this author is attempting to deal with the status of our Reserve forces, the impact of a return to conscription would have significant effects across the entire spectrum of force projection. It may return as a result of a major shift in our strategy due to changing influences in the world or as a result of severe economic pressures. But that is a subject for another paper.

Since 1967, the US has followed a strategy of flexible response and forward-deployed forces to protect our interests and to honor our commitments to our allies. Although the US does have major interests in many parts of the world, it is safe to assume that we will continue to deter our adversaries by forward-deploying forces where we have vital interests. Also, except for an actual outbreak of hostilities involving US forces, I would expect the defense budget to remain proportional in size to its percentage share of GNP for the last five years. In summary, then, the assumptions are complements of the force structure today. Except for an outbreak of hostilities, the AVF will remain in effect; the strategy of forward-deployed forces will be a significant feature of protecting our vital interests; and our leadership will have to contend with limited resources in developing the optimum force.

Besides the AVF, one other policy that was adopted in 1973 has made a dramatic impact on the Reserves. The Total Force Policy (TFP) implemented in 1973 directed that our Guard and Reserve forces would need to play "an increasing role in the defense of our nation."¹ The Air Force and its Reserve components, the Air National Guard (ANG) and the US Air Force Reserve (USAFR) have developed towards TFP faster than any of the services.² The fundamental question that applies to all the service branches, however, is this: given that the US continues with its AVF policy, how can we maximize

our military forces to insure that we are able to safeguard our national interests within the economic constraints imposed by our budget system? Since the implementation of the AVF and Total Force policies twelve years ago, the personnel costs for those forces have increased sharply. The huge deficits accumulated through the first half of the 1980's are not projected to diminish substantially during the second half of the decade. Conversely, there is a definite requirement to counter the Soviet threat, particularly in Europe and the Middle East. Throughout the 1970's our military forces were reduced substantially, yet the Soviets continued to deploy and develop massive amounts of new armaments, particularly strategic missiles and aircraft. Unlike the American and other Western societies, the Soviets have always made their defense interests the first priority. If we accept the fact that our military force must be substantive enough to counter the Soviet forces, we can state that force modernization and restructuring will have to continue through the 1990's. These efforts will, if for no other reason than economic necessity, compel this country to more heavily rely on our Reserve forces to fulfill defense needs. In view of the huge personnel costs associated with enlarging the active duty force, there will continue to be great emphasis on increasing the Reserve role.

One has to be particularly careful when talking simultaneously about national interests, military requirements

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and cost-effective forces. In our society, however, there is probably no other choice. It is unlikely that this country will forsake other economic alternatives to satisfy the military's requirements to counter the Soviets one-for-one. What will be required is to optimize within the allowed budget for improved forces to meet the threat.

The first issue that needs to be debated is the cost of military personnel. These costs have grown significantly since the implementation of the AVF. Military compensation, not unlike other federal retirement programs, has grown enormously over the past twelve years. If this nation continues to accumulate the massive deficits of the early 1980's, there will be a continued discussion and movement to reform military retirement. On the other hand, our political and military leaders will look to the Reserves to offset some of the economic burden in this area. This offset could include not only increased responsibilities and activity for existing Reserve units, but also could include increasing the number of Reserve units. Within the Air National Guard, authorized strength has been achieved and often exceeded since about 1977. The increased participation of ANG units since that time has not had an appreciable effect on retention. In fact, the reverse is probably true.

Most Reservists view their role within the ANG as a rather fulfilling job. Admittedly, the compensation for a part-time job is a big attraction, but they also derive a

great deal of satisfaction in fulfilling a role as part of the nation's defense structure. In my estimation, there is room for additional Air Reserve units in this country. Two related phenomena are working in favor of increasing the Reserve role. The first one is structured unemployment. During the last recession, particularly the period from 1980-1982, our unemployment averaged nearly 11 percent across the country. Many states, such as the industrial mid-west, were particularly hard-hit. Today, when many of the corporations are making record profits, our unemployment is still holding above seven percent. So while many of the industries, especially the automotive industry, made significant cost factor changes, they did so by reducing the number of employees. Even during the recovery times of the past two years, many of the industries did not return to the employment levels they had prior to the recession. Consequently, there is a large part of the American labor force that is not employed. There is probably a large segment of the adult male population, ages 18-32, that do not even show up in these statistics. They exist on the fringes, getting by with part-time labor, perhaps holding down two or three part-time jobs.

Statistics indicate that our male population, ages 18-25, has diminished appreciably since 1977. It will diminish even more through 1992, before it is expected to bottom out. The question is often asked, "Can the Guard and the Reserve attract a significant number of people to meet their authorized

strength levels?" There is no doubt that the Active and Reserve forces face stiff competition in meeting their demands. Compensation will be a big factor. However, the Reserves, particularly the Air and Army National Guard, have a slight advantage. In many states, compensation in the form of tuition assistance is offered to those who enlist in the Guard. This assistance, in many cases, includes full tuition at a state school. Consequently, an individual can enlist in the Guard and satisfy two requirements without having to enlist for two to four years. He or she can attend college on a full-time basis and receive tuition assistance while they simultaneously receive compensation for training days in the Guard.

Several studies have been done examining the relationship between cost-effectiveness and compensation. The first study, the Reserve Compensation System Study (RCSS), was started in 1976 and took nearly two years to complete.³ This study does not agree with the foregoing paragraph. However, the RCSS study was conducted before the Reserves had addressed a compensation system to meet the impact of their manning requirements with an AVF. During the draft, compensation never played as great a role because of the attraction of enlisting in the Reserves in lieu of extended active duty.⁴ The study also elaborated on the major differences in the labor market in which the Reserve and Active forces compete. The authors found, not too surprisingly, that the primary competition for manpower were part-time employers in the civilian sector and

not th Active forces. Their limited study showed that Reservists, in general, share the characteristics of personnel that participate in civilian secondary labor markets. Therefore, the biggest incentive to this secondary labor force is cash income. They were not particularly motivated by any "benefit base," but they are motivated by drill pay that compensates them to work beyond the normal five-day work week. As a motivator, this compensation is related more to the civilian wage rate than it is to Active duty pay.⁵ The significance of this study showed that the Reserves can compete in the labor force for qualified individuals, but the competition must be geared to the civilian sector and not the Active forces. A viable compensation element is an important factor for maintaining a ready Reserve force. The objective of the RCSS was to recommend a cost-effective compensation system. Once again, the feature of cost-effectiveness is being emphasized. That emphasis, however, refers back to our critical assumptions associated with maintaining a credible defense posture. Those assumptions keyed on the realities of a costly AVF constrained by limited resources. It would be expected, then, that more responsibilities would shift to the Reserves. However, compensation by itself cannot and will not guarantee a mission-effective force. There are other factors, such as meaningful training and strong unit leadership that are important characteristics within any Reserve organization.

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From a broad perspective, then, the Reserve forces have generally been successful in meeting their authorized strength levels. A compensation system that is designed to attract the critical 18-25 year group of the population is an important factor. However, both the Army and Air National Guard within certain states have been extremely successful. The Reserve forces could possibly be expanded to satisfy both our military objectives and the cost factor. But serious consideration by our political and military leadership must be given to two related issues. First, growth within the current Reserve structure might be possible, but many of the Reserve units have already reached a saturation point because of contingency tasking and training requirements. In many of the Air National Guard units, for example, it is not simply training one week-end a month and a fifteen-day period of annual training (AT) within the year: many units have commitments that average one-to-two weeks of temporary duty each quarter. Furthermore, unit training is conducted during the week and on week-nights to reach a satisfactory level of combat proficiency. But Air Reserve units can conduct compartmented training much of the time. In the case of tactical fighter units, most of the training requirements are accomplished in flight configurations of two-to-four aircraft. Airpower is similarly employed in combat. Tactical airlift and tactical reconnaissance units can be even more selective. Often their aircraft are employed individually, even during exercises

where combined forces training is being accomplished. Units participate with only a portion of their forces, unlike many of the ground forces which require larger amounts of participation in order to receive the proper training. Again, however, many units are currently tasked at the saturation point. Assigning additional mission roles or increasing the training requirements to achieve greater combat versatility could be an exercise in futility. This issue must be carefully considered. Diminishing returns may have already set in, and spending resources on the existing Reserve structure would be a waste of valuable defense dollars.

If growth within the Reserves were to go another way, i.e., to increase the number of Reserve units, it might be possible to achieve significant increases in military strength and preparedness. This second choice is also "loaded" with political and economic consequences. If additional units were to be created within the Reserve structure, the decisions should be based on demographics and the type of mission. As stated earlier, there are some portions of the country vastly underemployed. Having the available personnel is perhaps the most important consideration. In addition, however, the type of missions or role being assigned to the Reserves is also an important factor. For the Air Reserve role, airfield facilities and training areas are often limiting factors. These examples and considerations are important to the overall issue of force restructuring.

Force Restructuring

The constant US search for cost-effective solutions could cost more over the long run than paying the price initially. This sentiment is echoed frequently by strategists and defense planners who attempt to structure our forces on a global military strategy basis rather than on a political or national interest basis. Once again, it is necessary to state that this paper will not attempt to revise our strategy with respect to vital US interests. However, there are some issues that need to be discussed regarding the Total Force policy and our Reserve forces. Some innovations with respect to our force structure could possibly enhance our overall capabilities.

Total Force concepts rely heavily on the Reserve components. Even so, many of the Reserves are not prepared for their contingency missions.⁶ Conversely, several Reserve components such as the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve have achieved a level of readiness comparable to their Active duty counterparts. An exhaustive comparative analysis of readiness within the Reserve components will not be attempted. Instead, we will examine some issues of force restructuring to include certain types of missions for the Reserves. Most of the emphasis will be on the Reserve components of the Air Force, specifically the Air National Guard.

As was mentioned above, many factors need to be considered in the decision process before roles and missions are assigned to the Reserves. In the case of the Air National

Guard, it is not only demographics but facilities and training areas as well. There are probably many areas within the US that could provide the proper demographics, an available runway, and maybe even a portion of the facilities to house the unit. But what about the suitable training areas? If it is a tactical fighter unit, are there suitable ranges within an appropriate flying distance to complete training requirements and satisfy a level of combat readiness commensurate with the contingency role of the unit? On the other hand, maybe there are certain missions or roles that are more compatible to the Air Reserve function. If one were to consider the entire spectrum of various missions within the Air Force, for example, it becomes intuitively obvious that certain missions are more compatible than others.

Strategic forces are generally considered to be those forces associated with the US strategic triad of bombers, missiles, and submarines. In addition, our refueling aircraft are put in that category because they are a force element of Strategic Air Command. This categorization will be excepted; only airpower roles will be examined, not missiles and submarines. Strategic offensive forces--aircraft and missiles--have always been the exclusive preserve of the active forces, and the missile forces should remain there. They are less manpower intensive than bomber and tanker units, and their remote locations would make it difficult to recruit the available manpower. Strategic flying units, however, could

be substituted into the Air Force Reserve Air National Guard. Thirteen KC-135 air refueling units currently exist in the Air Guard, and the Air Force Reserve utilizes the associate program to achieve manpower levels with the KC-10. The mission is extremely compatible to the Reserves. Unique training areas are not required; the forces do not deploy for long periods of time; and the units can coexist very harmoniously on large metropolitan airports. From an overall defense standpoint, dispersion of forces is achieved at a reduced manpower cost. There are fewer full-time personnel required and for Reservists, the retirement compensation does not begin until age 60. Of course, there would be strong opposition to moving the strategic bombing role to the Reserves.

Many would argue that the high technology and training proficiency required for a bomber crew would preclude the use of Reserve forces. However, there is ample evidence to argue the other way. Many ANG units currently fly aircraft in both the Air defense and tactical fighter role that require a level of proficiency for pilots that is greater or at least commensurate with any level of proficiency within a bomber crew.

The airlift role has been shared with the Reserve forces for many years. Airlift is usually defined as either strategic airlift, C-5 and C-141, or tactical airlift, C-130's. Both missions are compatible with the Reserves, but more of the strategic airlift could be shifted to the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. The Air Force has established

a goal of 66 million miles per day to be achieved by 1990 to increase the strategic airlift capability for US forces. Regardless of the aircraft acquisitions associated with that goal, the Air Force should consider more participation by the ANG in the strategic airlift role, particularly for units that could be located closer to some of our Army installations, such as Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Fort Carson, Colorado.

Total Force policy is a realistic description of our tactical fighter forces. Although a larger percentage of the airlift role is in the Reserves, it is more difficult to argue that more of the fighter forces should be shifted to the Reserves. Available facilities and adequate training areas nearby are important considerations for Reserve and Air National Guard units. However, there are certain missions within the tactical forces that are perhaps more compatible to the Reserves than others. The two that are most compatible are strategic air defense and air superiority. Nearly 70 percent of the air defense forces are currently assigned to the Air National Guard, and that mission should remain with the Guard even as we modernize our air defense forces. These units remain within the continental US and are rarely involved in lengthy periods of temporary duty outside the country.

The air superiority mission differs from the air defense role in terms of the territory it is trying to defend. As stated above, the mission of the air defense units is to defend the continental US from attack by enemy bombers. The

air superiority mission, on the other hand, involves defense of US/allied forces and bases in or near potential battlefields. Typically, these units are tasked on a contingency role outside the continental US, often as part of a theater command. Nonetheless, this mission can be compatible for the Reserves, provided the units tasked for this mission are used to augment US forces that are already forward-deployed. Currently, there are several Reserve and Guard F-4 units that have an air superiority mission. How fast other existing units are to be converted with newer-type aircraft like the F-15A will depend largely on the defense budget and aircraft acquisitions in the out-years. Again, there will always be some opposition to assigning high technology aircraft to the Reserve forces. However, that should not be the issue because Reserve tactical fighter units have already demonstrated that they can maintain high levels of readiness with complex and sophisticated aircraft. What makes the air superiority mission compatible for Reserve forces is that the mission does not require large ground impact areas for training. Adequate airspace is an important factor for training, but there are Reserve and Guard units situated near adequate training areas. Joint and composite force training is an important requirement for combat readiness within this mission. Units would be required to deploy frequently to conduct important phases of this training. However, Air National Guard units have demonstrated that they can deploy for short periods of time on a

frequent basis. What is most important about this role, however, is the fact that the mission can be part of the Total Force. It is not mean that most of the air superiority missions should be in the Reserve forces. Rather, the argument is that any increases in this part of our forces could be shifted to the Reserve and the Guard because of the reasons stated above.

Much of the rationale for air-to-ground forces in the Reserves is similar to the air superiority mission. This mission is probably more demanding because of the diverse nature of the mission. Not only must the aircrews be skillful in air-to-ground tactics, but in various levels of air superiority as well, depending on the versatility of the aircraft. In addition, air-to-ground units must be proficient in low-level navigation, and many are tasked to be proficient in night delivery of ordnance. In total, it becomes a large training requirement, and is self-limiting for many units in the Reserves. Training areas, for example, are a very important consideration. To assign this role to units that do not have a convenient access to training areas does not make sense.

In the development of force structures for airpower, TFP can improve our combat capability for a given amount of dollars. What sea and land forces could do with regard to TFP has not been examined here. However, regardless of the color of the uniform, neither the Active or Reserve component of any service can look at force modernization or improved combat

capability without the overall consideration of total force. Neither component should be allowed to pursue their own interests at the exclusion of the other. This consideration is especially important for our political leaders, particularly at the national level. For many years, critics of our defense policy have advocated the abolishment of the Reserves as part of the all-volunteer force. John B. Keely of the University of Virginia argued that the Reserves constituted a high cost, low return investment in national security. Most of his criticism focused on the Army and its inability to mobilize needed support forces in time for the European theater.⁷ His sweeping generalizations were applied to all the services, however. He failed to understand the magnitude of the problem for the Army as it responded to force-restructuring within an all-volunteer Army. To integrate combat forces on the ground against a formidable foe in Europe is exceedingly more difficult than with either the projection of sea or air power. Even today the Army is grappling with this problem. But the same cannot be said for the Air Force. Air National Guard units are as combat-ready as many of their Active counterparts. They are an integral part of much of our tactical fighters, our strategic refueling capability, and the airlift requirements for all services. To advocate that the Reserve function should be eliminated is tantamount to advocating that we dismantle our national defense. The question that should be asked first is this: "To what extent do the

existing systems contribute to our national defense?" In the case of US Air Forces, the Reserves are a viable component of the Total Force policy. In fact, any examination of our Reserve forces within the all-volunteer force should be done based on the following dictum: To the extent that they contribute, they should be preserved and strengthened. To the extent that they do not, they should be restructured or else eliminated. Given this guidance, it is inconceivable to me that this country could provide for our national defense within an all-volunteer force without the Reserves.

ENDNOTES

1. Reserve Forces Policy Board. The Reserve Forces in the 1990's, Washington: Pentagon, 1981, p. 4.
2. Ibid.
3. Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs). Reserve Compensation System Study, Washington: Department of Defense, 1978, p. xi.
4. Ibid., p. x.
5. Ibid., p. v-1.
6. John M. Collins. U.S. Defense Planning: A Critique, Boulder: Westview Press, 1982, pp. 161-162.
7. John B. Keeley. The All-Volunteer Force and American Society, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, pp. 166-167.

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