

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**INCREASED AND PROTRACTED OPERATIONAL
TEMPO OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE:
SOME STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

by

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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ABSTRACT

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Continued mobilization of Army Reserve personnel in support of the National Military Strategy will eventually degrade U.S. Army Reserve Command's (USARC) personnel readiness. In the past decade, the Army Reserve has contributed significantly to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, to Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom – along with various peacekeeping missions. Further, the Army Reserve is heavily engaged in the on-going War on Terrorism. So this continuing demand for active participation of the Army Reserve is jeopardizing the Army Reserve's readiness status. Senior leaders must seek short-and long-term solutions to these protracted, extraordinary demands on the USARC's personnel – our citizen soldiers. Otherwise, the inevitable, deterioration of USARC personnel readiness will adversely impact our ability to execute the National Military Strategy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
INCREASED AND PROTRACTED OPERATIONAL TEMPO OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE: SOME STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS	1
BACKGROUND	1
THE AFFECT OF ARMY'S NEW ROTATION POLICY ON THE ARMY RESERVE PERSONNEL DEPLOYMENTS	5
ANALYSIS THE CURRENT SITUATION	7
COURSES OF ACTION:	8
COURSE OF ACTION 1 – INCREASING THE ARMY END-STRENGTH, ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENTS.....	8
COURSE OF ACTION 2 - A FULLY INTEGRATED ROTATION POLICY	10
COURSE OF ACTION 3 – EMPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY RESERVE IN SUPPORT OF MAJOR CONFLICTS AND WARS	10
RECOMMENDATION	11
CONCLUSION	11
ENDNOTES	13
BIBLIOGRAPHY	15

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INCREASED AND PROTRACTED OPERATIONAL TEMPO OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE: SOME STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

This SRP analyzes implications of increased operational tempo and extended deployments on Army Reserve personnel supporting the current National Security Policy through execution of the National Military Strategy. It will recommend viable courses of action to reduce the current burden on Army Reserve personnel and alleviate the short-and long-term stress these deployments are exerting on the U.S. Army Reserve Command's personnel readiness. Each course of action is assessed. This SRP concludes with a recommended course of action to reduce the problems associated with the current policy of employing Army Reserve personnel in support of our National Military Strategy.

The analysis and recommendations of this SRP are supported by responses to a questionnaire seeking senior leaders' firsthand comments on the impact (if any) of the increased operational tempo on Army Reserve personnel. Nine senior Army Reserve General Officers in the grade of brigadier and major general responded. These generals held key leadership positions at Reserve Readiness Commands and at the strategic staff levels. Their responses and commentary significantly shaped the recommendation and conclusion of this SRP.

BACKGROUND

The national policy for employing Reserve forces in support of National Military Strategy changed in the 70s when senior leaders decided to assign greater responsibility for the nation's security to U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC) and the National Guard.¹ This decision came after the Vietnam War because both President Lyndon B. Johnson and President Richard M. Nixon decided not to mobilize the Reserve forces in support of the war.² Both believed mobilization of reserves would create more opposition to an already unpopular war. Other leaders believed differently, such as General Creighton W. Abrams. As the Army Chief of Staff, he reconfigured the nation's military capabilities between the active and reserve components after the war. He wanted to ensure that during the next war, America's citizen soldier would not be left behind and that we would not go to war without public support. General Abrams's position led to the "The Laird-Abrams Doctrine."³

Enactment of this doctrine currently means reserve personnel are deploying with, and in some cases without their active component counterparts. The effect of this policy can easily be seen though comparing the employment of the Army Reserve personnel in the Vietnam War and the first Gulf War: Approximately 6,000 Army Reserve personnel were mobilized in 1968, and about 3,500 actually deployed to Vietnam.⁴ In contrast, during the first Gulf War, the

Department of Defense mobilized 84,000 Army Reserve soldiers and 65,000 deployed to the Gulf.⁵

Without doubt, the Laird-Abrams doctrine has led too much more active participating of Army Reserve units and personnel in current military operations. But did these post-Vietnam leaders anticipate such demands on the Army Reserve? Accordingly, the following question was asked in the questionnaire pertaining to applications of the Laird-Abrams Doctrine: "Is the Laird-Abrams doctrine being applied as intended?" Out of the nine general officers that participated in the questionnaire, eight concurred with the current use of the doctrine, some with considerable reservation. They afford the following comments.

- America must use its Armed forces with the support of its citizens. It is the only option that achieves the end.
- The Laird-Abrams Doctrine was designed to stop the United States from engaging in a war (Vietnam) without involving the public (political expectation). It has been effective.
- Using Reserve Component to fight terrorism has taken it to the extreme!!!
- The "Citizen Soldier" is actively engaged to the point of being "over tasked."
- The Laird-Abram Doctrine is currently being used as intended – however, there appears to be an attempt to dilute it with a rebalancing initiative.
- We are at war and the United States Army Reserve should be an important part of the effort.
- The Army Reserve has been over-extended because the "demand seemed to be exceeding the supply." We should not eliminate the use of the Reserve Component; just refine how it is used, so we can sustain what we're doing.

The questionnaire then posed a related question: "What is the long-term implication of the increased operational tempo on the Army Reserve personnel." The majority of generals believed that in the longer term (two to five years) the increased operational tempo would impact retention and recruitment. Listed below are some of their comments:

- Reservists joined the Reserve for a variety of reasons, but they did not join to be part of a full-time Army. They joined to be called for "in case of" war, not to be re-called on a regular basis.

- I would expect to see these effects 2-3 years. Hence, we have in effect changed the “contract” with the Reserve personnel when we started to actively plan to rotationally mobilize every 5 years to a “hot” area...
- When we get to the 3rd and 4th iteration of mobilizations, the Reserve forces will be tapped out. A lot of soldiers will be “off tours”, less than 5 years.
- The major impact on personnel readiness: Available soldiers i.e. retention, recruiting, and support issues. The Army Reserve funding needs to increase to hire more fulltime manning Active Guard Reserve & Department of the Army Civilians and Military Technicians. I expect employer support to wane – this will have impact on retention.
- Not the same since 9/11 - affecting families and employers. It will change the method of training, mobilization and other process due to the increased operational tempo.
- In general, employers were in support of round 1, but they are asking questions about “how much more.”
- If operational tempo continues, it may impact on people’s willingness to serve and hurt recruiting.
- Hopefully, the increased operational tempo should increase USAR readiness... Not sure how it could not, like any other profession where significant increase in training and operations takes place. It “re-greens” the Army Reserve .

Military peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, and humanitarian operations increased throughout the 90's, so Reservists mobilized and deployed more frequently.⁶ As a result, the Army Reserve deployed ten times in the past 12 years, compared to only nine similar operations during the entire 75 years of the Cold War.⁷ As of 15 September 2003, the Army Reserve had deployed 1/3 (65,000) of its force of 210,000 in about 80 different countries, with the bulk of Reservists supporting CENTCOM Operations in Iraq.⁸ The Army has increased its deployments by 16 percent following the Cold War. During the same time period, the Department of Defense reduced the Army end strength by 30 percent.⁹

With the increase in deployments, the majority of the results from the questionnaire revealed that most participants felt that the Army Reserve was not presently over-tasked. Nevertheless, effective use of the Army Reserve was in question, as reflected in the following comments.

- One-third of the USAR is mobilized today and I see little relief in the future. Therefore, while the USAR is almost “at war,” the country is not. This is a long-term problem.

- No, it is not being effectively used. The Reserve component (RC) has to be consulted and trusted by the Active component (AC) for the system to work better. USAF and USMC models for employment of the reserve work better than Army model.
- It is over-tasked as a Reserve force. USAR is now a fulltime 2nd job versus a 1 weekend a month and 2 weeks a year job.
- It is not too bad now, but we can't sustain.
- Either over tasked, or under resourced (end strength). To remain relevant the USAR needs to be tasked, however we appear to turn our Reserve Component into a fulltime, part-time force. This is not what the Reservists signed up for.

The post-Vietnam downsizing of the Armed forces significantly contributed to the increased demands placed on the Army Reserve. The downsizing started at the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet empire. This left the United States as the only remaining superpower in the world. This resulted in changes in the National Strategy: The goal of stopping the spread of communism changed to a goal of promoting global economics, free trade, and spread of democracy throughout all hemispheres. No longer was the nation's primary interest in eliminating the spread of communism. So a large standing Army was no longer needed to execute the National Strategy. Consequently, in the early 1970s the DOD began downsizing the Army's end strength of approximately 1.55 million to 777,000 by 1986.¹⁰ President George Bush's administration continued reducing the forces in the 90s to further align them with the post-Cold War threat¹¹. During President Clinton's Administration the Army forces were reduced down to approximately 484,000. All in all, the Army retired four active and two reserve divisions from its force structure.¹²

In order to support the National Military Strategy despite this reduction of active component personnel, the Army placed 80 percent of medical brigades and psychological operations units, two-thirds of the its military police, and a 100 percent of its water distribution and chemical units in the Army Reserve.¹³ General Myers, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, as the military leadership was preparing military forces for Operation Iraqi Freedom, stated simply and directly: "You cannot even do some of the things you need to do day to day without calling up the reserves" because critical missions were assigned to the Reserve forces during post-Vietnam era¹⁴. Now the Reserves make up approximately 50 percent of the deployable forces in the Army and play a critical part in National Security. In the past decade, the Army Reserve has contributed significantly to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, to Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom – along with various peacekeeping missions. Further, the Army

Reserve is heavily engaged in the on-going War on Terrorism. So this continuing demand for active participation of the Army Reserve is jeopardizing the Army Reserve's readiness status.

Most military analysts are not concerned about present recruitment and retention efforts, but they are concerned about the future. They believe that retention and recruitment will become a challenge in the years to come. In a recent interview, Major General Michael D. Rochelle, Commander of Recruiting Command, reported that all services, with the exception of the Army National Guard, will meet their recruiting and retention goals for 2003.¹⁵ According to General Rochelle, Operation Iraqi Freedom is not currently jeopardizing recruiting. But he attributes the recent recruiting success to a sluggish economy. According to Frank Shaffery, Deputy Director, Army Recruitment Operations, the issue is "How long people continue to be deployed will ultimately have some effect on retention."¹⁶ This concern grew even more in November 2003 when the Army extended the tours of 20,000 Army and National Guard Reservists in Kuwait and Iraq to 12 months in implementation of its new rotation policy.¹⁷ In all probability, repeated and extended Reserve tours of active duty will adversely affect recruiting and retention. Time will tell. But we must anticipate predictable problems. The recent Army NG recruiting shortfall may well be a harbinger.

THE AFFECT OF ARMY'S NEW ROTATION POLICY ON THE ARMY RESERVE PERSONNEL DEPLOYMENTS

Department of Defense released a new troop Rotation Policy on November 6, 2003 in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF).¹⁸ A notification process launched on 5 November 2003 alerted approximately 75,000 Active and Reserve personnel of assignment to duty in Iraq. Approximately 43,000 Reservists, including 3,700 National Guard personnel, were alerted.¹⁹ These soldiers will spend 12 months "boots on the ground" in these operations. The first rotation for the Army Reserve will start in the Spring of 2004.²⁰

Citizen-soldiers are asking whether the new rotation policy will reduce the frequency of deployments. According to Secretary Rumsfeld and General Meyers, revision of the previous deployment process was needed to ease the impact of personnel mobilizing. So a primary purpose of the rotation policy was to provide predictability and stability to the Armed forces. The new plan thus provides advance notification for active and reserve components.²¹

At a minimum, all reserve personnel will receive 30 days or longer notification prior to mobilization. This will give service members time to get their affairs in order prior to deployment. This plan will also ensure Reserve personnel are not frequently mobilized. Only 720 of all Reservists, including Marines, who have been notified under the new rotation policy,

have mobilized in the past six years. Also the number of boots on the ground in Iraq will decline from 130,000 to 105,000.²² Finally, the new rotation plan will increase the Reserve tour to 18 months, rather than 12. This will give the Army Reserve more train-up, mobilization and demobilization time, which conforming to the new rotation plan of 12 months “boots on the ground.”²³

Secretary Rumsfeld made it clear that the new rotation policy was not going to cure all the problems with deployment. He admitted that some units and individuals in high demand specialties would mobilize again and some would be extended. Secretary Rumsfeld also addressed issues with the notification process: “Some of the units being notified will have several months to prepare before they receive mobilization orders, while others will receive orders soon. But while there will be imperfections along the way, the services have made every effort to ensure that the Guard and Reserves are dealt with respectfully, just as each of them has demonstrated their respect and love of our country by volunteering to serve our country.”²⁴

The Army’s new Rotation Policy closely aligns with the Army Federal Reserve Restructuring Initiative (FRRRI), Building Rotational Depth, Army Reserve Rotational Forces. This plan was briefed in February 2003 to the senior leadership, to include the VCSA and CSA. The U.S. Army Reserve Command designed the FRRRI to restructure the Army Reserve forces and improve the mobilization process to support a five-to-six year rotation plan.²⁵ Under this plan, personnel would deploy up to 270 days. The plan would provide predictability and stability for soldiers, families and employers. The Army’s new rotation policy seems to implement FRRRI. Another major element of the plan is to transfer personnel from low-demand units to high-demand units that is, to units more frequently mobilized. The FRRRI plan should help improve readiness by reducing deployments for the entire Reserve force, thereby reducing some of the stress on the soldiers and their families. This could improve future readiness.

The disadvantage to the new Army Rotation Policy is that it applies only to deployment rotations in support of two operations, OEF and OIF. So it does not address the fully integrated rotation policy recommended in the Army Reserve Federal Reserve Restructuring Initiative (FRRRI), Building Rotational Depth. The FRRRI proposes a rotation plan for Army Reserve personnel and units in support of all deployments, to include OEF and OIF. So the new Army rotation policy falls short. It does not cover the full spectrum of Reserve deployments. Since the Army is implementing a rotation policy that only addresses a fraction of the problem, the Army is avoiding the problem of frequent and extended deployments of Army Reserve personnel. Additionally, the new rotation policy has extended Reservists’ deployments from approximately

12 to 18 months.²⁶ This change ignores another major complaint of Reservist's family members - that the current deployments are too long.

The majority of respondents to my questionnaire supported a fully integrated rotation policy as a means of reducing the frequency of deployments of the Army Reserve's personnel. Most responding senior leaders noted prior to Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom the Army Reserve was already burdened by frequent deployments in support of peacekeeping and law enforcement operations. Results of the questionnaire revealed that most support a fully integrated rotation policy:

- The majority agreed that a fully integrated rotation policy for the Army Reserve is needed to reduce the burden on frequently mobilized units/personnel in the Army Reserve.
- Collectively they cited key issues in the new Rotation policy: provide stability and predictability to the Reservists.
- They noted that Reservists did not sign-up to be part of the active force on a regular basis.
- Several generals concurred with one respondent's assertion: "We have effectively changed the contract with the Reserve soldier by going to a Rotation Policy."

ANALYSIS THE CURRENT SITUATION

The drastic post-Vietnam reduction of the armed forces and the significant increase of contingencies and peacekeeping operations have resulted in an increase of operational tempo for mobilized Army Reserve personnel in support of the National Strategy. These frequent and extended deployments are having a significant impact on Reservists' morale. They are also creating a public outcry, not only from family members and employers, but from their congressional representatives. If operational tempo continues at the current pace, the USARC's readiness will decline in the future through retention and recruitment shortfalls. Senior leaders must develop an immediate plan to reduce the demands placed on the United States Army Reserve Command's (USARC) personnel. If not, the possible deterioration of USARC personnel readiness will have an adverse effect on the Army Reserve's ability to sustain the same level of support and to support the National Military Strategy.

The Army Reserve Plan to restructure its forces to create more depth in high demand units/specialties will not be fulfilled in time to provide short-term relief to the Reserve personnel. The new rotation policy does not address the total issue of deployments of the Army Reserve personnel in support of all on-going missions that could impact the Army Reserve's future

readiness. The new rotation policy should provide predictability and stability for operations in support of Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and reduce the burden of frequent mobilizations on the Army Reserve personnel.

COURSES OF ACTION:

COURSE OF ACTION 1 – INCREASING THE ARMY END-STRENGTH, ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENTS

Decrease the frequency of Reservists deployments by increasing the active and reserve components' personnel end- strengths to offset the current demands placed on individuals and unit deployments. This option would increase the active duty end-strengths and reduce some of its reliance on the Army Reserve. It would also provide the Reserve with more personnel and increase its organizational structure, thereby reducing the frequency of deployments. To make this work, senior military leaders must abandon the post-Vietnam realignment of putting the bulk of service support capabilities, law enforcement, civil affairs, chemical decontamination, and water distribution in the Army Reserve.²⁷ Reassigning these specialized units to the active Army would significantly reduce the operational tempo of Reserve personnel because 93 to 100 percent of these capabilities currently reside in the Army Reserve.²⁸ Returning these specialized support units to the active Army will reduce the frequency of deployment for individuals and units and increase the capabilities of both the Active and Reserve components. Many military senior leaders will support this increase of personnel strength if it is properly budgeted by Department of Defense (DOD) and does not come at the expense of precious dollars allocated to improve the standard of living for soldiers.

There are several factors that would make this Course of Action difficult to execute. Currently, Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers do not support an increase in troop end-strength.²⁹ They believe that there are other alternatives that Army senior leadership and DOD needs to address before increasing the size of the Army. Some of these alternatives that Secretary Rumsfeld addressed are as follows: 1) DOD needs to eliminate some of its on-going peacekeeping operations. 2) DOD could employ over 300,000 civilians to fill non-combat service support positions that are currently being filled by military personnel. They will perform security functions at installations and some peacekeeping duties. 3) Finally, the Army senior leadership needs to assess alignments of current forces to determine ways to improve its organizational efficiency.³⁰

Increasing the Army's end-strength will not provide immediate relief to the Reserve's frequent deployments; however, it should provide some long-term relief. During an interview

with ABC's Good Morning America, one frustrated Reserve sergeant, expressed his concerns after several peacekeeping duties by unprofessionally stating that if Secretary Rumsfeld were there, "I'd ask him for his resignation."³¹ Nevertheless, many other Reservists feel the same frustrations in supporting numerous on-going peacekeeping missions. But fortunately they are not resorting to the sergeant's behavior. However, they may quietly refuse to re-enlist or request early release from their Reserve obligations.

Secretary Rumsfeld assigned Marine Corps General Peter Pace, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to assess the Army's need to increase troop strength based on the current operational tempo. The current findings indicate that an increase in the Army's end strength is not needed.³² To increase Army end-strength, DOD would need to increase the budget through Congressional approval or realign current and future funding to support an increase of manning. This would take dollars away from the Army's transformation projects. Secretary Rumsfeld argued that funding for transformation is essential and that transformation will reduce the number of military personnel in the future through enhanced technology.

Adequate funding is not available in the DOD budget to support 20 to 50 thousand additional personnel that many senior military leaders would probably agree that we need to execute our Military Strategy and to reduce the current burden on our service members. DOD's yearly budget is approximately \$400 billion a year and is projected to increase to \$500 billion in 2007.³³ Some analysts predict that increasing the DOD budget for hiring additional troops would have a significant impact on an already troubled economy. Rebuilding Iraq will continue to have a significant impact on current and future DOD budgets, because there is no clear-cut estimate of the total cost. All of this means that getting dollars to support this Course of Action would be a tough sell to Congress and the American people. Furthermore, this option would not have a short-term effect of reducing the Reserve burden because of the lengthy process of recruiting, training and then integrating these personnel into current operations. By the time this takes place, the damage to the USARC's readiness may well have already taken place.

If Congress and DOD support a personnel increase, recruiting qualified personnel to fill these authorizations will not be easy. The 2001 report from the Pentagon on the state of its forces indicates that on-going peacekeeping operations are already affecting recruitment and retention.³⁴ This report indicates that long-term family separations and frequent deployments are primary issues. The on-going missions in Afghanistan, the War on Terrorism and Operation Iraqi Freedom will only intensify future recruiting problems.

COURSE OF ACTION 2 - A FULLY INTEGRATED ROTATION POLICY

This COA action supports the USARC's FRRI. The USARC should establish a policy that prohibits any unit or personnel from mobilizing more than one time within five years, unless they volunteer. Such a change in the mobilization policy would provide reassurance of stabilization and predictability, thus reducing family stress from frequent separations. Likewise, employers would probably support citizen-soldier more during and after deployments. This course of action also accounts for peacekeeping operations that have prompted frequent Reserve deployments during the past twelve years. Under this plan, Reserve soldiers know they will be called to serve during major conflicts.

There are several shortfalls associated with this COA. First, the USARC must restructure its force based on the current capabilities in the reserve. We have noted that Reserve owns 70 percent of support capabilities and up to 93 to 100 percent of the total Army capability in several specialties.³⁵ So this plan would require the Army Reserve to convert a few of its less deployable units to frequently deployed units. This plan could also jeopardize readiness. It is difficult to find applicants that qualify, especially in the chemical and civil affairs fields. Because these units are so specialized, less is better for overall readiness. Only a small pool of the recruitment population will qualify for these military specialties. Maintaining these types of units at a high personnel readiness level is a challenge.

COURSE OF ACTION 3 – EMPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY RESERVE IN SUPPORT OF MAJOR CONFLICTS AND WARS

Change the current National Security policy so that the Army Reserve would be deployed primarily in support of Homeland Defense and major conflicts. This COA would require the United Nations to conduct the peacekeeping operations. The United Nations would need to require other member nations to assume the bulk of the responsibilities for out-breaks or conflicts in their regions. This should reduce U.S. military personnel requirements. The active duty forces would provide personnel when required. This should reduce the mobilization of the Army Reserve and improve the morale of soldiers who were frequently deployed.

The peacekeeping mission would fall on the shoulders of the active component. This would require reassignment of certain military specialties back into the active component and would require increasing Active Component end-strength, which the Secretary of the Defense currently does not support. But this COA would only transfer the problem, not fix it. The Active component does not have the personnel to maintain peacekeeping missions along with its on-going operational tempo.

RECOMMENDATION

Implement the Fully Integrated Rotation Plan, which requires hiring 300,000 civilian contractors to provide some short and long-term relief. Additionally, the Active and Reserve must change their current mix to reduce the burden placed on the Army Reserve personnel in high demand specialties. The Army Reserve must change its current structure by converting some of its low demand units into high demand units to relieve some of the burden placed on its own personnel. DOD must increase resources to fund more Reserve units at higher authorized organization levels, especially high demand units.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the general officers that participated in the questionnaire reported that the Army Reserve was not over-tasked. But some believed that the Army Reserve was not being properly used or properly resourced. The majority warned that the current deployments of the Army Reserve would have an adverse affect on readiness in the future, if the increased operational tempo continues. As one general observed, "Either the Army is over-tasked, or under resourced (end-strength). To remain relevant the USAR needs to be tasked, however, we appear to turn our Reserve Component into a full-time part-time force. This is not what the Reservist signed up for." Another general noted that, "It is not too bad now, but the Army Reserve cannot sustain it."

With the on-going War on Terrorism, Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, along peacekeeping operations, the military needs both a short-term plan and long-term plan to sustain needed operations and to maintain national security. The USARC is headed in the right direction with its FRRI, as is the Army with its new Rotation Policy. But their plans do not provide short-term relief for frequent deployments of Reserve personnel. However, employment of 300,000 civilians to fill some of the non-combat jobs that are currently being done by military personnel and the reduction of a few long-standing peace-keeping operations will provide quick relief.³⁶ Then, the Army Reserve and the Active Component will have more personnel to place in the rotation pool, thereby, reducing the current demands on Reserve and Active personnel.

Some claim that the Reservists signed up for their current duties, but that is not entirely true. Most Reservists signed up to defend their country in the time of war or major crisis. They did not sign up to be policemen. If these issues of frequent and extended deployments are not addressed, we may not be able to depend on an all-volunteer Army to support our national security. We may indeed become a nation at risk.

WORD COUNT= 4,565

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³³ USA Today, *Reassess U.S. Security Policy, Opposing View: Troops indeed are overcommitted, but boosting forces is not answer*, Christopher Preble, August 7, 2003. pg. A. 10

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Thom Shanker, New York Times, *U.S. Considers Limits on the Role of the Reserves*, Jan 26, 2003. pg. 1.1

³⁶ Bradley Graham, *Rumsfeld Not Sold On a Bigger Military; Secretary Says He is Open-Minded on Idea*, The Washington Post, Aug 6, 2003. pg. A.02

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