

Using the Citizen Soldier in Operation Iraqi Freedom

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Using the Citizen Soldier in Operation Iraqi Freedom
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Issue.

The U.S. Army National Guard currently comprises a third of the forces deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This extensive use of the National Guard has caused debate over using citizen soldiers instead of the more extensively trained professional active duty forces in a location as dangerous as Iraq. Due to the organization of the Department of the Army, the large involvement of the National Guard in OIF is an efficient use of available U.S. Combat Power, and is consistent with the historical employment of the National Guard.

Background.

The Army National guard is the oldest military branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and traces its roots back to the Colonial Militia that formed when England failed to protect frontier towns in the 1630s. "In the absence of military assistance from Great Britain, the militia system alone guaranteed the success of early English colonization."¹ The colonial militias became more organized and were the first

¹ U.S. Department of the Army, *I am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, 2002 (Headquarters Army National Guard, Washington D.C.)

units to fight the British during the American Revolution. The U.S. Constitution, in addition to the formation an Army and Navy set provisions for each state to organize, train, and equip a militia that could be called into Federal Service. Article 1 Section 8 in the constitution states:

"To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress"

The constitution also mandates that it is illegal for states to wage war with their militia unless they are being invaded. The National Guard has consistently used in every major conflict (with the exception of Vietnam), and the states have called upon them for numerous emergencies.

Historical State Missions.

George Washington, after the revolutionary war suggested that the U.S. keep a small regular Army and each state maintain an organized militia, under the control of the governor, that could be called to complement the Army in time of war.² He was trying to break a stale mate between Federalists who wanted a large Regular Army and

².Department of the Army, *I am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, 2002 (Headquarters Army National Guard, Washington D.C.)

Non-Federalists who wanted only militias. This led to the formation of the Modern National Guard. Although the governor is the Commander in Chief of his state's National Guard, the specific powers a governor has over the National Guard is from differs from each state. outlines for distinct areas that states can call on the National Guard, they are: Military Support Operations (disaster relief), Loan and lease of equipment, Civil Disturbances, and Terrorist Counter Action.³ In the past 20 years states have almost solely called on their National Guard for disaster relief and firefighting. One exception of this was the Los Angeles Riots where the California National Guard was used in a civil disturbance role.

Historical Federal Roles.

The National Guard is trained, organized, and equipped for their federal role which is to augment the regular Army in combat. The National Guard has been heavily involved in combat in every major conflict (except Vietnam) that the U.S. has fought in. Long, arduous, and dangerous

³ Departments of the Army and Air Force, *Emergency Support of Army and Other Resources: Military Support to Civil Authorities*, 1996 (Washington, D.C.: NGR 500-1/ANGI 10-8101)

deployments like the National Guards current mission in Iraq is a traditional role for the National Guard. During the Spanish American War, the National Guard fought in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and spent a year fighting in the Philippines against guerrillas.⁴ Another example of extended deployments was during the Mexican Border Crisis in 1916 over 100,000 guardsmen were mobilized to protect the our Southwest border. A year later the United States entered into World War I, and many of these units were sent directly to Europe.

At the declaration of war on April 6th, 66,694 Guardsmen were still on active duty from the Mexican border mobilization. Most of these Guardsmen would remain away from their homes and jobs until the middle of 1919.⁵

The Army National Guard comprised forty percent (18 divisions) of the combat units fighting on the Western Front in France during the war. During World War II and the Korean War the National Guard produced large combat units that fought as an integrated part of the regular Army. After the Korean War, the National Guard was reorganized by an initiative led by Robert McNamara. He changed the Department of the Army by maintaining a large

⁴ Department of the Army, *I am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, 2002 (Headquarters Army National Guard, Washington D.C.)

⁵ Department of the Army, *I am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, 2002 (Headquarters Army National Guard, Washington D.C.)

regular Army, changing the Army Reserve so that it was comprised almost entirely of Combat Support, and Combat Service Support Units, and changed the National Guard so that it was comprised mainly of large combat units.⁶ During the Vietnam War, President Johnson refused to Mobilize the National Guard for service in Combat because his administration felt that it could escalate the conflict in Vietnam and start World War III. The Guard also participated in Operation Just Cause and had over 60,000 soldiers mobilized for the Gulf War.⁷ Throughout the National Guard's long history they have participated in combat alongside active duty forces.

National Guard Organization.

After the Berlin Crisis of in 1961 Robert McNamara made sweeping changes in the Department of the Army. His changes resulted in the National Guard becoming a large combat force to bolster the regular Army. That has not changed today and the National Guard has 56% of the Department of the Army's combat structure to include 44% of combat divisions, 45% of the mechanized infantry forces,

⁶ Department of the Army, *I am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, 2002 (Headquarters Army National Guard, Washington D.C.)

⁷ Department of the Army, *I am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, 2002 (Headquarters Army National Guard, Washington D.C.)

41% of the Combat Engineers, 51% of the infantry battalions, and 70% of the field artillery units.⁸ Only 30% of the National Guard are Combat Service Support. The McNamara reforms also changed the Army Reserve so that it is mainly Combat Service and Combat Service Support units. With this structure organization the National Guard represents a large portion of the U.S. conventional land force and is the only force (other than the Marine Corps) that can augment Army Combat units. With the continuous rotations to Iraq, commitments in South Korea, and other deployments, the Department of Defense has no other choice, save increasing the active duty strength of the military, but mobilize the National Guard.

Counter Argument.

With current commitments the Department of Defense could do three different actions other than employing the National Guard in Iraq. The first action is to increase the size of the Active duty military. This option would take time, and could have drastic public consequences. The Army could mobilize the National Guard and have them fill

⁸ The Army National Guard, *Fast Facts*, 2005, <<http://www.arng.army.mil>> (5 Jan 2005)

other commitments, but this would mean extending deployments of active duty units currently deployed, and some National Guard units would still be used in Iraq. Another option is to reverse the McNamara reforms and reorganize the department of the Army so the Army reserve has more combat units, and the National Guard can concentrate state and homeland security missions. That would take an act of Congress and take a lot of time. The current need for combat troops in Iraq leaves the DOD with little options and the National Guard is the most efficient solution.

Conclusion.

The National Guard has a proud history of fighting in almost every conflict alongside active duty forces. Throughout its history it has been able to help America when it's conflicts. In fact the conflict the U.S. lost, Vietnam, is the only conflict the National Guard did not participate in. Because of the National Guards organization, it is the only major reserve combat reserve for the Department of Defense. The National Guard's current participation in OIF is an efficient use of the force and is consistent with their history.

