

Total Force Restructuring Under Sequestration and Austere Budget Reductions

by

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Abstract

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The United States Army is at a strategic crossroads wherein dramatic decisions with generational impacts will have to be made. In addition to the uncertainty generated by sequestration, the Army will have to balance a shift in the National Security Strategy all while entering a post-war era with a personnel drawdown to be completed by Fiscal Year 2017. Ultimately, the Army must decide the right size and types of force structure that meet national-level objectives. Alternatives are explored with the intent to provide senior Army leadership with options involving all three components of the Total Force assertive enough to adapt the force within an austere budget environment. There is a tremendous opportunity for change, but it will require the Army to adopt an approach that maximizes the operational reserve capability offered by the Reserve Components while accepting a significantly decreased Active Component.

Total Force Restructuring Under Sequestration and Austere Budget Reductions

The United States Army is at a strategic crossroads wherein dramatic decisions with generational impacts will have to be made in the very near future. Our forces withdrew from Iraq just over a year ago and recent discussions between Presidents Obama and Karzai resulted in an increased pace to the change of the U.S. force mission in Afghanistan to training, advising, and assisting. Concurrently, a significant shift in strategy has been delineated in the 2011 National Security Strategy. Sequestration remains a looming dilemma resulting from the Budget Control Act of 2011 with likely significant ramifications for the Department of Defense budget. As the Department of Defense wrestles with the final determination to our budget, the impact that is ultimately to be decided is the right size and types of force structure that meet national-level strategic objectives. The Army must attempt to balance these competing mission requirements, strategy advances, and budgetary uncertainty all while entering a post-war era with a personnel drawdown to be completed by Fiscal Year (FY) 2017.

This paper will present options for restructuring the U.S. Army Active Component and Reserve Forces, including an option for a modification of the Operational Reserve, to meet the evolving security environment and impending budget reductions that have not been experienced since the end of the Cold War. This paper begins with a brief historical background on the patterns of U.S. defense budgets and some of the implications for the Army. Next, a review of the authorities and missions of the Reserve Components and current Army guidance are presented to provide specific insights into how the future Army force structure can be realigned. Lastly, alternatives will be explored with the intent to provide senior Army leadership with options assertive enough to adapt the force within an austere budget environment. The U.S. Army is facing a

tremendous opportunity for change in terms of force structure, but this paper will demonstrate that this requires bold initiatives involving all three components of the Total Force.

Brief History of Defense Drawdowns

Department of Defense drawdowns following the conclusion of major conflicts are nothing new. After the Korean War, Vietnam, and the Cold War, the Department of Defense budget underwent reductions on the order of 30% or more in the years following those conflicts. (See Figure 1.) “From 1999 to 2011, annual U.S. defense spending increased from \$360 billion to \$537 billion in constant dollars, not including an additional cumulative \$1.3 trillion spent on operations in Afghanistan and Iraq,”¹ so one would expect significant defense spending cuts if history is an indicator of things to come. Reductions under the most austere budget cut scenario still place Defense spending at roughly the 63-year average of \$461 billion. The issue then becomes not only applying such budget reductions to a force that has seen only growth for the past decade, but also putting them into context with the broader economy. If one compares the percentages of Defense spending to gross domestic product, it becomes apparent that Defense spending is much less and will be significantly less than historical precedents.² (See Figure 2.)

The historical evidence regarding military manpower within this construct also attests to the complexity of the problem facing the Army. The nation has continued to rely on a smaller force, down from a high of 2.5 million following the Korean War to approximately 1.4 million today. That smaller force has become increasingly more expensive since implementing an all-volunteer force, with each service member costing 68% more than those during the last conscription period. Lastly, that smaller, costlier

force is also one that sees an ever-decreasing share of the defense budget, from a high of 42% during the Korean War to approximately 25% in recent budgets.³

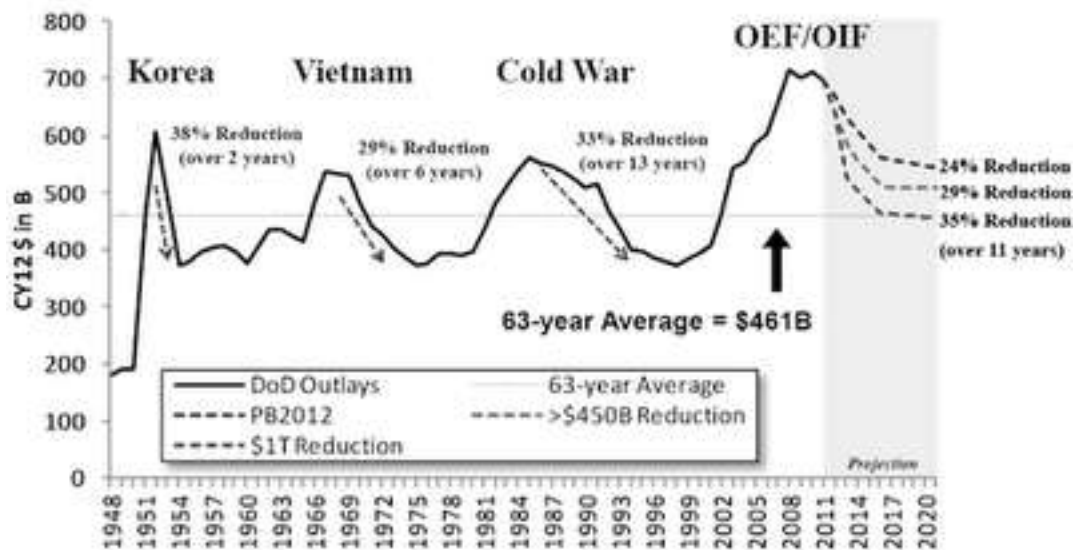


Figure 1: Department of Defense Annual Budget Authority, FY 1948-2016⁴
(Measures in Billions of 2012 Dollars)

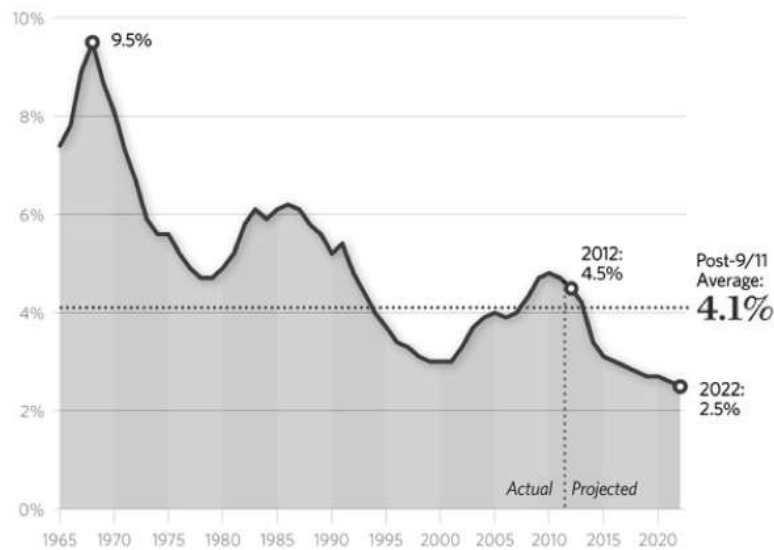


Figure 2: U.S. National Defense Historical Spending as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product⁵

The Department of Defense (DoD) issued guidance in the *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices*, released in January 2012, to begin to conform to the 2011 Budget Control Act's requirement to reduce future defense spending. The Budget Control Act (BCA) called for \$2.1 trillion in deficit reduction by setting 10-year discretionary spending caps, equating to \$917 billion in savings. The BCA required DoD to reduce future expenditures by approximately \$487 billion over the next decade or \$259 billion over the next five years. When Congress failed to find the additional \$1.2 trillion in savings, automatic cuts to discretionary and mandatory spending, known as sequestration, were to be enforced in January 2013. More importantly, half of those automatic cuts were directed at the Department of Defense. Keep in mind that the Department had already planned a significant drawdown before the BCA was enacted. Not only is the Army facing certain stated drawdown effects, but it most likely will have to contend with deeper and more significant cuts caused by sequestration.

Recent Congressional efforts have not provided much fidelity in terms of future defense spending. The American Taxpayer Relief Act, signed by the President on January 2, 2013, postponed sequestration by two-months - until March 1st - and lowered the FY 2013 required sequester amount to \$85 billion. The only reference to Defense spending is language in the National Defense Authorization Act for 2013 related to the President's notifications and certifications to Congress regarding strategic weapons delivery systems.⁶ The implication for the Department of Defense is that it will continue to operate for the near-term in an environment of significant budgetary uncertainty.

Review of Budgetary and Force Structure Guidance

DoD's initial guidance provides some insights to force restructuring that must occur in light of sequestration. Readiness will not come at the expense of a hollow force, yet the force structure must adapt to provide future capabilities to meet the President's strategic guidance over a wider range of capabilities beyond the counter-insurgency fight of the past decade. Specifically, the force must be able to project power rapidly to engage in one major combat operation while confronting a second aggressor. Our ground forces will not be sized for long-term stability operations. Army leaders will seek to retain the experience of a more senior force and design a force that capitalizes on that experience to rapidly expand the force if necessary. The resulting effect is to reduce the size of the active Army from a post-9/11 peak of approximately 570,000 to 490,000 soldiers by the end of 2017, along with the removal of eight brigade combat teams.⁷ As an acknowledgement to the concept of reversibility provided by the Reserve Component, only modest reductions will be sought across the Army Reserve and National Guard.⁸

Similarly, the Army is also trying to operate in this uncertain fiscal environment. The Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army jointly released guidance on January 16, 2013 that addresses near-term expenditure reductions in an attempt to mitigate future risks.⁹ Guidance from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Financial Management and Comptroller) is focused on checking spending so we can "maintain our ability to adapt to fiscal pressures and preserve the most vital capabilities."¹⁰ One insight related to force structure is that planners should, "to the extent possible, protect programs associated with the new defense strategy" under the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) portion of their budget.¹¹ The implication for the Army is that the

force structure decisions are still forthcoming and will bear much risk directly related to future levels of spending. Knowing that the military compensation for salaries and benefits has increased nearly 50% over the past decade¹² means that the portions of the budget dedicated to systems procurement and O&M must be executed with an understanding of the generational impacts they will impart.

Review of Reserve Component Roles and Missions

An analysis of the roles and missions of the Army's two Reserve Components (RC), the Army National Guard (ARNG) and U.S. Army Reserves (USAR), and how they pertain to this uncertain budgetary environment is necessary. The Army views these components under the lens of a "Total Force". The Total Force Policy, signed by Army Secretary John McHugh on September 4, 2012, integrates the Army's active component and reserve components as a "Total Force" and aligns the Army with DoD guidance that the services manage their reserve as an operational force. All three components will constitute one force that provides operating and generating forces to support Army commitments in support of the National Military Strategy. Key outcomes stemming from this policy include an annual analysis of force structure options among the components and the need to simplify RC mobilization procedures with the goal of leveraging the scalability of Army capabilities and providing additional force package options.¹³

In his 2012 Posture Statement, General McKinley states that on average 63,000 Guard members are deployed or mobilized at any given time for federal missions. The inherent value of the ARNG lies in its ability to recruit, train and retain soldiers with valuable civilian skill sets across diverse fields and its ability to provide long-term engagement benefits via programs such as the State Partnership Program and the

Afghanistan Agribusiness Development Program. General McKinley attests that the National Guard should be made “stronger, more capable, and more ready” and that utilization rates of Guard personnel are “appropriate” given deployments are programmed with long lead times.¹⁴ From the Army perspective, the ARNG accounts for approximately 32% of the total Army personnel, while receiving 10% of the Total Army Budget.¹⁵ However, a caveat needs to be stated that the National Guard does receive benefits from other pay accounts of the Active Component, such as procurement and education, that when factored in, would suggest that they receive a slightly larger portion of the overall budget than those specifically allotted to them. Given the cost-effectiveness of the ARNG, it is understandable that the Army would want to preserve and leverage the operational experiences of this force as we seek transformation in a fiscally constrained environment.

In providing a vision for the future ARNG, one of the key imperatives is to “transform ARNG programming, policy, institutions and resources to ensure balance and sustainability as part of the operational force for the 21st Century.”¹⁶ Some relevant ARNG mid-term objectives include employment in predictable and recurring events, maximizing efforts to transform the generating force to better support the operating force, and increased utilization among mission sets supporting building partner capacity, theater security cooperation and Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIIM) efforts.¹⁷ A key long-term objective is the expansion of capabilities supporting combatant commanders security cooperation efforts, a task deemed ideal for ARNG soldiers, while also maintaining the same types of force structure as the AC.¹⁸ The implication of the preceding discussion is that the Guard sees itself not only as an

extension of the operating force, but wants to capitalize on operational phase zero shaping activities.

A review of U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) strategic documents provides themes similar to the National Guard's. The 2012 United States Army Reserve Posture Statement reveals emphasis on the elemental roles that the Reserves provide to the Total Force: critical enablers such as engineer, military police, medical and civil affairs units that provide strategic and operational depth while allowing the AC to focus on more complex unit structures. Reserve priorities include the creation of an enduring operational force and sustaining the readiness of deployable units to continue to support the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model with increased access for missions other than war.¹⁹ The United States Army Reserve 2020 Vision and Strategy Statement also states that the USAR provides flexible sources of manpower. They are able to respond in the homeland or abroad and can be "employed operationally at costs comparable with the Active Army, yet maintained at much lower expense during reduced operational tempo."²⁰

A key component of the strategy acknowledges the unique benefit Reserve Component forces²¹ can bring to future steady-state theater security cooperation requirements. This provides a means to retain the RC operational culture, ensure a constant utilization during ARFORGEN cycles and sustain operational relevance in the absence of assigned contingency requirements.²² Additionally, RC units can support the Active Army's generating force by augmenting or replacing AC forces in the training base using Institutional Training or Training Support units beyond their traditional 15-day Annual Training periods.²³ Efforts to restructure the force can leverage the unique

options set forth in USAR guidance that seek to maintain a relevant and ready operational force in an era of evolving future conflict.

Previous Efforts to Transform the National Guard and Reserves

Since the end of World War II, efforts to reorganize and potentially merge the National Guard and Reserve forces as well as rebalance capabilities across the components occurred under almost every Administration. Many of these efforts occurred during a period of post-conflict adjustment, with an eye toward increased combat readiness, streamlined management and processes all while executing within the same declining budgetary restraints currently faced by DoD. Beginning with the Gray Board convened by Assistant Secretary of the Army Gordon Gray in 1947 and then followed by Secretary of Defense John McNamara in 1964 was a recommendation to merge the National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve, both of which were rejected by Congress.²⁴ The focus after Vietnam was how to implement the Total Force Concept wherein the reserve and active forces were integrated into a “total force” and reserve forces would augment their active counterparts.²⁵ Following Desert Shield/Desert Storm and into the War on Terrorism, most reorganization efforts looked at increased efficiencies from command and control restructuring, size reductions and readiness improvements.²⁶

The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CONGR) completed a more recent and comprehensive review on January 31, 2008. The CONGR recognized that reserve forces are now truly an operational force that must be readily available to support overseas contingencies and homeland emergencies and that they must be fully integrated with the AC, now supported by the Army’s Total Force Policy.²⁷ The DoD recognizes a “focused reliance” on the ARNG and USAR for homeland civil support

missions and the dual skill set of the RC, those achieved via military service and civilian careers, complement both overseas contingency and domestic missions.²⁸ Given that an AC soldier costs more than a RC soldier when not activated,²⁹ they represent a significant return on investment for the Total Force capabilities and offer a valid option to expanding the AC

Given these historical and recent attempts to reorganize the Army's Reserve Components, there is also evidence of thoughtful consideration on how to avoid past mistakes. The Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) has stated that one major flaw in previous drawdowns was the inability to create a continuum of service wherein service members can transition from the AC to the RC. The resulting effects were that readiness suffered from a lack of trained service members in critical skill sets and the opportunity to preserve skill sets and experience in the RC, particularly among mid-career non-commissioned officers and senior Company Grade officers, was missed.³⁰ In a follow-up report, the RFPB explored the cost elements necessary to compute the "fully burdened" cost of AC and RC soldiers in order to provide the most informed answer on balancing the AC/RC mix. Previous analyses have failed to account for some of the cost savings achieved via the RC such as a reduced need for commissary, housing and DoD schools, minimal Permanent Change of Station costs and smaller retirement payments.³¹

Future Operating Environment Considerations

A review of long-term strategic analyses also provides useful input to future force structure development. The Atlantic Council's report, *Envisioning 2030: U.S. Strategy for a Post-Western World*, acknowledges the historically significant period we are about to enter, with unprecedented technology-enabled transformation having impacts across

the spectrum of economic growth, political rivalries, nationalistic desires and state competitions. One of the ways to deal with this complex future scenario is improving collaborative leadership with our partners and allies, leveraging existing international institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Gulf Cooperation Council. In *Contested Commons: The Future of American Power in a Multipolar World*, an argument is posited that America's traditional military dominance, which has secured access to the global commons since World War II, will be increasingly tested as new powers rise and globalization empowers the acquisition of cheap, but advanced military technologies.³² While most of the recommendations are air and maritime domain focused on countering adversary anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, the one area that is relevant to the Army is the need to develop cyber warfare capabilities that allow for rapid responses, yet are increasingly less dependent upon the Internet.³³ These essays on future strategic trends and challenges highlight the increased reliance on partnerships, and for the military, increased reliance on building partner capability via theater security cooperation activities.

Army strategic guidance is the final piece of input to be analyzed prior to discussing option development. The 2013 Army Strategic Planning Guidance describes the Army of the future as one that is "characterized as a regionally aligned, mission tailored force."³⁴ Regionally aligned forces meet requirements of combatant commanders by being responsive to theater security cooperation and contingency responses. Mission tailored forces will be aligned against a particular mission outlined in the strategic document *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*.³⁵ Relevant near-term objectives include: maintaining a global stabilizing

presence via sustainable pace of presence operations abroad; institute Army Total Force Policy by organizing, manning, training and equipping AC and RC as tailored force packages to meet combatant commander requirements; and balancing AC and RC readiness using a mix of capabilities between the components and an enduring operational use of the RC.³⁶

Similarly, the Training and Doctrine Command's *The U.S. Army Capstone Concept* (ACC) functions as the conceptual basis for future force development within the doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) domains.³⁷ An applicable assumption from this concept is that the Army will continue to rely on the RC to meet future requirements.³⁸ This concept provides a description of the future operational environment and the future Army solution to address those challenges under the “prevent, shape, win” construct.³⁹ It is also noteworthy that the ACC defines a seventh warfighting function for shaping activities conducted with special operations forces, host nations, regional partners and indigenous populations.⁴⁰

Option Development and Alternatives

Taking all of the previous analysis presented to this point, it is obvious that the need for change is clearly understood by DoD and Army leadership. The historical precedence for a budgetary and force structure drawdown is well known and acknowledged, as are the impending budget cuts that may be executed under sequestration. Army strategic guidance offers insights on force structure revision, but does not provide specifics on how to implement significant moves across the Total Force that might be necessary under austere budget conditions. The alternatives presented below will attempt to address this area of concern.

The alternatives will attempt to capture what is most important to the Total Army components as previously described. The force must have the ability confront future threats by possessing the capability to prevent, shape and win conflicts. Options must be able to preserve the operational experiences learned and won over the past ten years of conflict as well as support homeland defense and defense support to civil authorities missions in the post-9/11 era. They must be able to accommodate revisions to the ARFORGEN model that provides for the overall schedule of training and deployment rotations while addressing the regionally aligned concept of force posture. Options must allow for the reset of the Total Force, with potential variations as to how the force is actually refurbished or reconstituted. Equally important is to leverage the strengths that each component provides to the Total Force. The AC is capable of quickly assimilating young recruits into the force structure with experienced officer and non-commissioned officer corps. The RC also has an unprecedented level of operational experience as well, but provides distinct cost savings and grows long-term units with diverse civilian skills suited to engagement missions. In essence, these defining characteristics of the alternatives become the evaluation criteria to evaluate their benefits and risks.

The alternatives are also underpinned by assumptions that are designed to enhance their scope and not provide limitations that narrow the scope. These alternatives are designed to go beyond the established guidance as a means of providing liberal options should the Army be faced with austere budget conditions, whether constraints come from sequestration or “routine” fiscal guidance from the President’s budget. Therefore, it is assumed that they are developed in an

unconstrained environment seeking radical reductions and refinements and not provided as ways to enact the current guidance. It also assumed that these options are not provided as a way to validate the stated strategic shift to the Asia-Pacific, as outlined in the DoD guidance document *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*⁴¹, nor are they designed to suggest strategy revisions. Lastly, the alternatives do not attempt to account for potential criticism, parochial backlash nor regulatory or policy changes that might be needed to actually enact them.

Alternative #1: “Maximize the Strategic Reserve Option”

The first alternative is termed “Maximize the Strategic Reserve Option.” This option accepts the AC endstrength reduction to 490,000 and also maintains the RC levels as is consistent with stated guidance. However, additional savings are sought within the construct of how the RC can be mobilized and deployed. The concept of an operational reserve is defined in DoD Directive 1200.17, *Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force*. The Secretaries of the Military Departments are charged to “manage their respective RCs as an operational force such that RCs provide operational capabilities while maintaining strategic depth to meet U.S. military requirements across the full spectrum of conflict.”⁴² Additionally, the concept of maintaining the ARNG and USAR as an operational reserve is something that has been emphasized by DoD leadership, including the previous Chief of the National Guard Bureau General McKinley and the previous Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Flournoy.⁴³ The understanding is that the ARNG and USAR will continue to be relied upon as part of the operational force along with the accompanying readiness levels associated with that status and not revert back to the strategic reserve mission following the Cold War.

The impact of sequestration may force a change to this desired utilization despite all of the stated intentions of our leadership. Cost may become such a prohibitive factor that the Army may need to re-look options that provide for more flexibility in maintaining portions of the RC in more of a “strategic reserve” role. In a purely strategic role, the ARNG and USAR should cost less because they would incur a lower training tempo, continue to receive part-time pay and benefits and smaller infrastructure costs such as housing and commissary expenditures. In a study by Strategic Analysis, Inc., three separate cost approaches were utilized to determine the cost of the reserves. What the study revealed is that a traditional method of just looking at the overall portions of the Guard and Reserve budget against the total force structure supports what the Reserve and Guard leadership have stated in their formal guidance documents; that they are a cost effective option. However, that effectiveness is best achieved when used in a strategic reserve role without a high operational tempo.⁴⁴ In other words, the more frequently you mobilize an RC unit, the more closely its long-term fully-burdened cost approaches that of a similar AC unit. The study also evaluated the cost of the individual reservists and found that the more duty days an individual reservist served, the lower his cost per day because costs are spread out over more days.⁴⁵ When unit costs are considered, particularly when they are part of rotational force that requires a pipeline of reserve units in the queue to be trained and then deployed, the same cost effectiveness is not achieved. The cost of reserves is tied to the level of readiness and rotational policies, so it is possible to lower their cost by deploying them quicker, i.e. maintaining higher readiness levels, and thereby utilizing them longer in a deployed status.⁴⁶ That must be balanced against funding that higher level of readiness, which will almost

certainly be in danger under sequestration as well as the potential to erode retention rates and the support of employers and families.

Possible options for implementing a shift to a utilization model more akin to a strategic reserve can be attained by adding flexibility to the current categories of Reserve status. RC soldiers might benefit from distinct categories where they are in an operational reserve status with all of the associated additional training readiness and deployment implications and then transition to a pure strategic reserve status with lower readiness, expectation of mobilization and compensation.⁴⁷ Another option is to create units that are manned by a cadre force that is capable of standing up new units with sufficient lead-time to recruit and train a deployable unit. This would lower the number of RC units that are indefinitely maintaining readiness levels in support of operational requirements. Obviously, this necessitates a sufficient number of AC and RC units that can provide the operational forces necessary to meet combatant commanders force requirements. The current ARFORGEN requirement of one deployment every five years suggests that this might be a viable option given the requisite infrastructure and capability to maintain cadre proficiency.⁴⁸

A benefit of a strategic reserve aside from the cost perspective is that it offers predictability for service in the RC. This is consistent with one of the underlying tenets of the ARFORGEN model and allows for commanders and families to plan for important events.⁴⁹ A strategic reserve model also provides benefits along a more traditional approach. It provides for a dependable ready force that allows the nation flexibility to deal with unforeseen problems arising from bad assumptions or intelligence. By activating a strategic reserve force we send a strong signal to our level of commitment

to our allies and a corresponding message to our adversaries. A true strategic depth is gained in campaigns marked by extended operations, such as those recently executed in Iraq and Afghanistan, or those requiring the civil-military skill sets abundant in the RC. “The essential capabilities for the RC to effectively perform their domestic missions are also useful for many foreign operations.”⁵⁰ It is worth noting that the RC provides frequent domestic mission support and by maintaining an operational focus for supporting warfighting requirements would suggest incongruence. Rather, allow the RC to focus on its domestic mission as a strategic reserve, able to leverage their inherent skill sets and equipment that are easily transferrable when augmenting AC forces in stability or peacekeeping missions abroad and more importantly, gain the necessary leadership and experience to better support those overseas missions when called upon.⁵¹

Assessing this option in terms of feasibility and acceptability, it is apparent that reverting back to a strategic reserve may imply a loss of operational experience for the RC and a risk to meet ARFORGEN requirements. This option does not suggest the entire RC revert to a strategic reserve, but only a portion large enough to account for the impact of severe budget restrictions. It allows those units designated to support operational requirements the proper funding for training, equipping and compensation to seek true gains in maximizing the length of their utilization, while allowing for decreased readiness and operational tempo for those units and individuals in the strategic reserve. Creating cadre units could be construed as creating a hollow force, although the intent would be to preserve operational experience in the force. RC units in the strategic reserve would rely on frequent domestic support and crisis response missions to

maintain their leadership skills and experiential learning, which could then be leveraged in times of operational support or overseas deployments. Predictability can also be found in this option, which can potentially lead to higher recruiting and retention success.

Alternative #2: “Maximize the Operational Reserve Model”

A second alternative is termed “Maximize the Operational Reserve Model.” This option accepts the decreased AC force structure, but seeks to leverage the operational reserve capability offered by the RC that has been so prevalent in the last two major conflicts and in recurring stability and peacekeeping missions. A significant portion of the AC force structure would be transferred to the RC with the intent that it satisfies the definition of an operational reserve force while providing budgetary relief for the AC. The RC would most likely experience increased rotational deployment opportunities for those missions that are best suited for these operational forces such as Korea, Germany, Kuwait and the Horn of Africa while maintaining the current RC presence in Sinai, Bosnia, and Guantanamo Bay. Some of the force structure that could be transferred from the AC is Division and Corps Headquarters positions along with select protection and sustainment functions that already reside within the Reserves such as military police and engineers. Another possibility is to move combat-focused units such as Brigade Combat Teams (BCT), Fires Brigades or even Special Forces units with the understanding that the Army will not be able to maintain a force that is constantly prepared to deploy across the full-spectrum of operations as a direct result of the looming austere budget conditions. As the AC sheds force structure, it becomes regionally aligned in concert with the Chief of Staff’s guidance and can become more expeditionary in nature to meet national strategic interests abroad. Additionally, the RC

may prove to be the best keeper of the emerging cybersecurity force structure, as the Army may want to seek a new generation of computer network specialists recruited from academia and civilian information technology jobs that can maintain relevancy via their civilian jobs. Taken together, the RC would then be employed both as whole units that can be trained and employed as part of a regularly scheduled ARFORGEN cycle, or as specialized enablers that support an AC BCT in a particular mission requirement.

The idea of a decreased AC force structure is not as outlandish as it might appear at first blush. Notable defense industry analysts advocate for conceptually dramatic reductions in the AC force structure as a means to achieve savings beyond the rhetoric that has focused on achieving efficiencies. One approach is to make significant changes above and beyond the currently scheduled cuts to the defense budget in the out years, which have the potential for being offset by higher than expected costs in other sections of the budget. An example of this type of cut is to reduce the Army beyond the stated objective of 490,000 personnel to approximately a 1990-level of 450,000. A second approach is a more severe reorientation of America's global role, reducing the Army to a force level below 400,000. This approach assumes risk in a traditional two-war strategy, but would seek to retain the Army's prestige as a preeminent global land power and more importantly facilitate global foreign engagement during times of peace.⁵²

The role of the AC should also change to reflect a new threat environment. Two of our greatest potential adversaries, Russia and China, have shown a propensity and expressed a strategic shift towards utilizing irregular and asymmetric tactics in conjunction with conventional forces should a conflict break out.⁵³ Another notable

defense analyst advocates for a strategy of assured access. Given the limited resources the DoD will have at its disposal, our objectives must also reflect a more limited vision. “The current and future challenge to stability in the western Pacific and the Persian Gulf is not a cross-border invasion but the spread of A2/AD capabilities, which will make it increasingly difficult for the United States to operate freely in those areas.”⁵⁴ Our force should not be optimized for regime change via invasions, but rather achieve forward defense by deterring regional aggressors and protecting the global commons. This strategy allows us to leverage several U.S. advantages including our nuclear options, the strength of our network of alliances and partnerships and our lead among military technological systems.⁵⁵ Similarly, our comparative advantage in stability and counterterrorist operations lies in the quality of our personnel, not quantity. Therefore, we can seek to avoid interventions and emphasize allies’ and partners’ ability to confront security threats via our training, advising, assisting and equipping role.⁵⁶ The emerging threat and shift in strategy support the notion of a significantly reduced AC.

The idea of shifting emphasis to the RC is likewise supported. One argument being proffered by a European analyst is to “look at increasing reserve forces as a way to boost capacity without breaking the bank.”⁵⁷ A substantial warning period would likely exist for European nations to call up reserves in a traditional homeland defense scenario and the argument is posited that the bulk of heavy forces could be transferred to the reserves.⁵⁸ Another troubling problem confronting the U.S. is the defense spending gap that has become apparent across NATO. Since the end of the Cold War, defense spending among European members has declined 20% despite the fact that their gross domestic product has grown by 55%. This is also reflected in the burden of

defense expenditures of European members within NATO, which declined from 33% during the Cold War to 21% in recent years.⁵⁹ One option being explored to mitigate these challenges involves the use of pooling and sharing of assets to offset the impact of cuts, although the concept could be more appropriately applied to either similar joint capabilities or those reinforcing or duplicative capabilities between the AC and RC.⁶⁰

An assessment of this option reveals that it is the most consistent with senior leader guidance issued to date concerning the use of the RC as an operational force. The impact of growing the RC would require complete transparency not only in terms of the budget, which may prove infeasible, but all DOTMLPF considerations. Similar to the first alternative, the increased rotational aspect for the RC may prove to be detrimental to recruiting and retention for those RC soldiers who desire fewer deployment opportunities inherent in a strategic reserve role. However, this alternative provides a great amount of flexibility in employing both the AC and RC to meet recurring requirements and to adjust to our future threats and strategy. Using the RC as an enabler force to help tailor regionally aligned AC forces for specific conditions-based missions will prove to be “a more effective and appropriate response to the complex, hybrid challenges of irregular warfare and conventional operations.”⁶¹ This balanced approach also supports a Total Force model. The AC can remain trained and ready to deploy to meet conventional and irregular threats, while the RC is employed on rotational deployments that support peace and stability operations as well their traditional State and Federal missions of responding to emergencies.⁶² Additionally, with a large enough lead time, heavy RC forces such as BCTs and Fires Brigades can be mobilized, trained and deployed as additional operational forces.

Alternative #3: “Revolutionary Capability Shift”

A third alternative is termed “Revolutionary Capability Shift.” This option offers a complete shift in the types of missions the AC and RC execute and a revolutionary approach to the way each is employed. The AC remains focused on high intensity conflict and is prepared to execute forcible entry missions in order to defeat or destroy an adversary in support of national objectives. In response to this focus, the AC sheds most of its peacekeeping, peace building and stability capabilities external to the BCTs that can be supplemented by partners, allies and host nation forces such as military police. Additionally, some functions and branches would be subject to transfer to the RC assuming they could be better served by that component of the Total Force. Examples of these could include recruiting, finance, personnel management, space operations and cybersecurity. Concurrently, the RC would transition and grow into a stability force. This entails removing the dual use of the RC as an operational fighting force, but maintains the capability to support Federal and State in disaster or crisis response given the inherent nature of their personnel. Potentially the RC would grow in civil affairs, military police, engineer, psychological operations and medical capabilities that support stability operations, building partner capacity and post-conflict phases of an operation. Special operations forces dedicated to the train, advise and assist mission set could also be part of this growth, leaving the direct action mission sets, e.g. hostage rescue or high value target capture, to the AC special operators. As previously mentioned, cybersecurity forces may be another potential growth option under this alternative. This option also relies on the strategy of “leapfrogging,” taking heavy defense cuts today while investing in new future capabilities. This could be appealing to Army leadership by using the RC to maintain current capability sets while seeking to reinvigorate the AC

with key technological advances targeting future threats.⁶³ Agile acquisition initiatives and organizations such as the Rapid Equipping Force already provide the foundations for such dramatic equipping strategies to be realized.

The notion of distinct mission sets or purposed forces has been a topic of recent deliberations. A particular solution is to divide our forces into a “leviathan force” and a “system administration” force, with the former being an event-focused fighting force and the latter a capacity building, preventative force.⁶⁴ Another solution set that has been offered is to grow dedicated peacekeeping units with essentially a new Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) devoted to this type of operation. They would be employed with the help of allies and host nations assisting in refugee operations, aid distribution and enforcement of peacekeeping standards, legitimized under the auspices of the United Nations and backstopped by combat formations if necessary. Some other options offered include the formation of an advisory corps, increased high-demand/low-density units as mentioned above, i.e. military police, engineer, civil affairs and a dedicated homeland defense force that resides within the National Guard.⁶⁵ Corresponding arguments have been made to retain and even improve the skills and capabilities to execute major combat operations, something this alternative would dedicate to the AC. Maneuver organizations may have atrophied in their ability to coordinate and direct large volumes of indirect fire, execute combined arms breaching or conduct unit gunnery to proficient levels simply because our current non-commissioned officer corps and mid-grade officers have not had the opportunity to execute these types of missions on a large scale since the invasion of Iraq or Afghanistan.⁶⁶ All of these options support the notion of providing distinct mission

focuses for the AC, high intensity combat operations with leapfrog technologies, and for the RC, stability operations and homeland defense.

Similar to the other alternatives offered, an assessment of this option reveals some risks and benefits. One of the drawbacks to this alternative is that the future threat is likely to be a combination of conventional forces executing irregular or asymmetrical tactics. Our forces could potentially be mismatched if they are solely focused on conventional operations. Also, revolutionary equipping and technology fielding across the AC force could be problematic in terms of the budget and execution. The Future Combat System Program of Record provides a cautionary tale for trying to encompass too many system-of-systems changes across multiple platforms with multiple technology interdependencies and levels of readiness. However, this alternative does offer flexibility in terms of mission-focused training and equipping between the AC and RC. The AC can capture and then rebuild upon its conventional fighting capabilities, while the RC maintains the legacy capability structure during transformation to a stability-focused force. This new mission set can be viewed as consistent with the Total Force guidance that has been recently promulgated because the RC will be employed with a different mission set as part of the total operational force, not as a static strategic reserve.

Recommendation

A comparison of the alternatives yields a recommendation to pursue the second alternative - "Maximize the Operational Reserve Model." The "Revolutionary Capability Shift" alternative offers an alignment along mission sets, but bifurcates the AC and RC. While RC leadership may prefer to execute stability and peacekeeping missions as it best aligns with their inherent skill sets and expertise, it also negates the idea of a

reserve force that provides strategic depth. Should the nation find itself in a protracted conflict, we would have no supplementary forces to augment the operational force and we lose the ability to project our commitment levels by mobilizing a reserve force.

Leapfrogging technological advances to the AC while using the RC to maintain current capability sets is likely to take an unsatisfactory amount of time to implement and would confound the growth of the RC mission set and fundamental benefit of seeking distinct mission focuses. The RC would be trying to fulfill two roles until the transition is complete and no component of the Total Force should be subjected to that. Distinct mission sets also imply distinct training, facilities, personnel management systems and other DOTMLPF considerations that come dangerously close to invalidating the Total Force policy.

In some aspects, the “Maximize the Strategic Reserve Option” is very appealing and appears feasible. Loosening the readiness status of select units, and thereby decreasing training and benefit costs, appears to provide a quick solution to address the tighter fiscal constraints the Army will have at its disposal. Returning to a strategic reserve creates a slippery slope wherein additional units could be placed in this status as an easy fix to address future budget reductions or stave off unit or base closures. Maintaining leadership experience among the strategic reserve and managing the personnel flows back into the operational force with sufficient proficiency is likely to be problematic along the same lines as previous post-Cold War mobilizations. Misperception among the American public and even among the components as to what the strategic reserve is and how it would maintain an equal footing with other portions of

the Total Force (e.g. being put in the strategic reserve equates to poor performance or being second class) could be a strategic communication challenge as well.

“Maximize the Operational Reserve Model” appears to offer a sufficiently fresh solution that is congruent with and even extends current strategic guidance regarding the Total Force. Recurring themes across all of the alternatives are that the RC will continue to be called upon to execute homeland defense and domestic crisis response missions. Their skills and experience in domestic missions are easily transferable to overseas deployment missions and there will remain a need for the RC to be employed overseas. Given these themes, it is logical to conclude that this option provides the greatest flexibility to the Total Force by incorporating the largest force mix in the RC. The RC becomes the repository for all necessary capabilities that the AC cannot afford to possess such as enablers, heavy forces and operational support units. This option leverages the inherent strength of the RC- the skills and experience of our citizen-soldiers - and allows the Army to preserve the operational experiences of the previous two major conflicts. This option also best allows for the AC to reduce in size as part of our current drawdown, or even further if necessary, yet not lose the competitive advantage to engage the enemy across the spectrum of operations.

Conclusion

Our nation is at a strategic crossroads concerning our security posture. A unique confluence of conflict termination, defense drawdown, looming austere budget cuts and a new threat environment have made the time ripe for dramatic revolutionary change with generational impacts. The decisions regarding the Army Total Force structure will attempt to address one fundamental question: Is our reserve force truly a reserve or is it a surrogate for the Active Component? There is tremendous opportunity ahead for

transformation despite the significant challenges we are confronting. A viable alternative is to adopt an approach that maximizes operational reserve capability offered by the Reserve Components while accepting a significantly decreased Active Component. Our military leadership is committed to not repeating mistakes of previous drawdowns. Our nation can respond in kind by exhibiting the same commitment to change.

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