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Reserve Force Training After the Gulf War

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The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the manifest bankruptcy of the communist ideology have caused a severe degradation of the former Soviet military machine and whatever force that survives it, regardless of denomination. The loss of forward basing in Eastern Europe for these forces and the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization are evidently permanent. It is uncertain, however, whether arms reductions and the rise of democracy will be lasting or all-too-transitory.

Nevertheless, the United States and its NATO allies are reducing their military forces, partly in response to the perceived threat reduction, partly because of arms reduction agreements, and partly because of economic constraints. A smaller but still potent military force is evolving to meet new missions of lesser scope than during the Cold War.

One mission has already been accomplished: the liberation of Kuwait by Operation Desert Storm, a coalition war which tested in part the contingency plans and forces developed during and principally for the Cold War. Upon the war's successful conclusion, the reduction of the armed services resumed, with new lessons and insights emerging based upon that victory.

Unfortunately, acrimony has developed between the services and their various reserve components as the eternal struggle for funds has grown in intensity. Amidst the near-universal acknowledgement of the success of the deployed reserve force units[1] during the Gulf Crisis is the unresolved dispute over the delayed mobilization and nondeployment of three National Guard combat brigades. Accusations were leveled and misinformation proliferated as

the debate raged regarding their actual levels of preparedness. Army Chief of Staff Gordon R. Sullivan probably muted this acrimony at the September 1991 General Conference of the National Guard Association in Honolulu when he reviewed the success of the Gulf War mobilization. While noting areas of concern for further attention, he stated that the roundout brigades "demonstrated upon mobilization a higher readiness level than any reserve component formation ever," and expressed regret that that fact has not been fully recognized.[2]

It is our position, based on overwhelming evidence, that the Total Force policy is a success and that most reserve force units approach desired levels of readiness. It is in the realm of training that some adjustments are required. Having achieved considerable success in manning and equipping reserve units, the Army must now devote more attention to training, which is probably the largest readiness detractor confronting both active and reserve units.

Unlike active units, reserve force units typically train collectively only 39 days per year; many Reservists and Guardsmen devote additional time during the year to individual training both in their specific military specialties and in broader professional development. Some Army missions cannot be adequately trained in that time and should not be assigned to reserve force units. Beyond that problem, the critical variable for reserve units is *time management*: using the available training time better to improve unit readiness. This article will offer proposals to improve reserve training through better time management.

Background

Historically, the US Army has experienced significant difficulties in addressing the gap between reserve unit capabilities and mobilization requirements. This is not to denigrate the efforts of reserve component soldiers, but simply reflects the shortage of resources to support reserve preparedness. As

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warfare has increased in sophistication during the past century, considerable attention has been devoted to these problems.[3] Reserve component training management has improved markedly over the decades through the concerted efforts of Congress, the Department of the Army, and the reserve forces themselves.

The Vietnam years, however, launched a period of unprecedented attention to reserve training management:

- The new force structure, established by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in 1965 and 1967, and modified by Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams in 1973, fully integrated both active and reserve combat forces.[4]
- The 1970 mobilization policy of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and the Steadfast Reorganization of 1972 made the reserve forces the full partners of the active Army for future wars.[5]
- The 1976 CAPSTONE program provided a gaining-command concept for noncombatant reserve units. This allowed the wartime command and control structure to establish various training requirements for peacetime reserve units.[6]
- In the late 1970s the Battalion Training and Management System together with the Individual Training Evaluation Program established a decentralized system of training individual reserve soldiers and units based upon an assessment of actual capabilities against wartime mission requirements.
- The decade of the 1980s provided a substantial flow of new resources to reserve units, plus a serious effort by the US Army Training and Doctrine Command to raise reserve unit readiness through the FM 25-series of training management manuals.[7]

These measures produced a reserve force unprecedented in readiness and proficiency.

The Gulf War

The 1990-91 Persian Gulf crisis provided an excellent opportunity to assess the Total Force concept envisioned by the Steadfast Reorganization of 1972.[8] It also permitted the first real post-Vietnam test of a large mobilization and rapid overseas deployment of US military forces from all services and all components. While there were several unique characteristics of the Gulf War which make absolute comparisons with a NATO scenario impossible, there are sufficient parallels to assess with some reliability the efficiency of the Total Force policy.

The overwhelming success of the US-led coalition on the battlefield certainly indicates that the composition, manning, and equipment of the Total Force is on track. The decision by the President on 23 August 1990 to mobilize selected reserve force units and the subsequent decision on 8 November to

475th QM Group

Among the support elements mobilized for missions in the Gulf War were 99th USAR Command quartermaster units. Above, soldiers from the 475th Quartermaster Group unload fuel bladders.

expand the mobilization to one million, coupled with the support of Congress in extending the call-up period from 180 to 365 days, mark the establishment of a significant precedent about when, where, and why the United States mobilizes its modern reserve forces. Questions linger, however, about the current status of where we are in the area of reserve component training and where we are going.

Remarkable progress has been achieved since the commitment was made two decades ago to have a reserve force trained and ready. However, the notion of one Army and one standard for all active and reserve units is simply not achievable in the 39-day training year as now conducted. This is not to slight or question the dedication or quality of reservists. It is simply a question of how much a reserve unit can train and sustain in 39 days compared to an active force which, in theory at least, has 365. No one expects an athlete who works out once a week to compete on equal terms with an athlete of comparable ability who trains twice a day. The analogy holds for reserve and active forces.

Reserve component units mobilized for participation in Desert Shield and Desert Storm were generally credited with an acceptable readiness posture in the area of collective or unit mission training. Emphasis during post-mobilization training in the United States was therefore placed on

improving individual soldier skills in the short period between mobilization and deployment to Saudi Arabia.[9] With the exception of the roundout combat brigades, this was probably the correct approach. Collective training in peacetime is more visible, it is where commanders earn their pay, it is where soldiers have more fun, and it is usually evaluated more closely by higher headquarters than are individual soldier skills. Given the limited time available, it makes sense for reserve units to focus on mission training and the administrative requirements for mobilization at the expense of individual survival skills. But the reserve force noncommissioned officer, charged by FM 25-100 and FM 25-101 with responsibility for individual training[10] (just like his active counterpart), is prioritized right out of business due to the attention given collective training. This is an Army-wide concern addressed in recent years by the rejuvenation of the reserve component NCO corps, and it was a primary stimulus to the development of FM 25-101.

The most notable shortfalls we saw at the Gulf Crisis Mobilization Stations were in marksmanship; nuclear, biological, and chemical training; physical fitness; and maintenance training.[11] These were clearly the less glamorous areas that, despite being included in every unit's training schedule, are often neglected in order to focus training on "more important" tasks.

Enabling reserve component units to meet or exceed their mobilization standards in the next decade may not require the allocation of *more* training time, however; the crux may lie in better managing the training time already available. Now let's look at four ways to do that.

Better Training Through Better Time Management

Reserve component units typically train one weekend (16 hours) per month,[12] for a total of 192 authorized training hours per year of inactive duty training, plus two weeks per year of active-duty training. Discounting two hours of administrative tasks per day leaves 12 hours per training weekend, or 144 hours per year of potential subject-matter training. These hours must be devoted to high-quality, performance-oriented training which simulates as much as possible actual wartime conditions.

The training resources to perform 144 hours per year of *high quality*, performance-oriented training are simply not available today in the typical reserve component unit. Full-time unit support personnel are fully committed to ever-increasing administrative tasks and have little time to prepare or supervise training. To expect part-time soldiers to provide this amount of training at the required level of quality is unrealistic. Even with the few additional training assemblies authorized, the task is overwhelming to most NCOs or junior officers who are responsible for it. The training therefore typically takes the form of classroom lecture and discussion with occasional

practical experience. That won't do. It does not meet the requirement for today's high-tech Army.

No matter how demanding the senior commanders nor rigorous the training schedule, there is probably not a single reserve component unit in the Army which provides high-quality training every hour of the training year. (The same is doubtless true of active units, but they have more time available to compensate.) The resources are not now present in the typical reserve unit to optimize time management. Yet several innovations are available to enable us to meet contemporary and future reserve force training requirements.

- First, we must increase, not decrease (as may be the current trend), the active/reserve interface, most importantly the active component's participation in and responsibility for the quality of reserve component training. Shortly after the Steadfast Reorganization of 1972, an active/reserve affiliation program between comparable units was initiated. This association, now called Directed Training Association, encompassed training assistance from the active unit to the affiliated reserve unit throughout the year, culminating with a thorough, high-quality annual training evaluation administered by the active unit.[13] This partnership has often been driven by the commanders' personalities, but by and large it has been a valuable training resource for the reserve component commander, while providing numerous spin-off benefits for the active commander's training program.

As the Army force structure shrinks, the Directed Training Association is already showing signs of relegation to the back burner, but the direction should be just the opposite. One can plausibly argue that it is every bit as important for a division commander to ensure the training of his roundout or affiliated brigade as it is to push his active brigades through the National Training Center. This highly effective program should not be allowed to slip away. It should be revamped, revitalized, and reemphasized to ensure that training an affiliated reserve unit is as important to the active commander as his annual general inspection and external ARTEP[14] evaluation.

Another valuable tool to promote the active/reserve interface has been the CAPSTONE program, which links reserve force units with their projected wartime active organizations. The planning and training association

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created by CAPSTONE has provided the impetus for many active/reserve coordinated training exercises, as well as the joint development of war plans. CAPSTONE, however, appears to have become mired in a morass of bureaucratic and political changes, which have stalemated and cast into serious doubt the value of what has been a very effective training tool. While we recognize that the new world order is changing the CINCs' requirements, thus causing CAPSTONE alignment turbulence, we must take care to preserve and stabilize CAPSTONE associations.

Still another way to improve the active/reserve interface is to detail reserve component officers and NCOs to active units in lieu of annual training. Obviously, this cannot be done every year for every reserve NCO. But it could be done for some each year. Thus each reserve NCO would have an opportunity once every few years to "bird dog" an active-duty NCO for two weeks in order to get an updated feel for day-to-day leadership and doctrine. We must recognize how unnatural and uncomfortable it must be for reserve NCOs, many of whom work as civilians in non-supervisory roles, to be expected two days per month, and two weeks per year, to metamorphose overnight into primary leaders, trainers, disciplinarians, and all the other things that "Ol' Sarge" is to his men in the active force. Observing an active-duty role model daily for two weeks every few years might well serve to demonstrate to our reserve NCOs exactly what is expected of them.

- Second, we should modify the role of readiness groups to provide Mobile Training Teams to assist reserve units. Although these teams are within the present readiness group charter,[15] this proposal would formalize the procedure, with priority given to reserve units not involved in a Directed Training Association with active units. The reserve unit commander would develop the unit's training program a year in advance based on training guidance from higher headquarters, in accordance with FM 25-100 and 25-101. The commander would coordinate with the readiness group for blocks of training, which might comprise 50 to 75 percent of the 144 inactive duty training hours per year. The Mobile Training Teams would arrive, set up the training, and work with assistant instructors from the unit before the assigned training begins. Bringing with them the necessary videotapes, computer software, and evaluation instruments, they would ensure that each block of instruction is conducted with quality, and that unit soldiers are trained and evaluated to standard. An ancillary benefit of this approach is that unit trainers (primarily the NCOs) charged with the other 25 to 50 percent of the yearly training program would observe properly prepared, executed, and evaluated training.

- Third, computer-assisted instruction, which is routinely used in industry, can be used to train individual soldiers on many common subjects and MOS-specific technical tasks. It could be used in conjunction with videotapes to enhance the realism associated with battlefield requirements. Installed in

mobile simulators, computer-assisted instruction provides an inexpensive method of conducting crew and small-unit training on weapons and other major equipment systems. Simulators for aircraft, tanks, artillery, antitank weapons, and other systems can easily be installed in tractor trailers or expansible vans, and driven to reserve unit sites for high-quality, realistic weekend training. Investment in these simulators would provide a cost-effective method of raising the proficiency of reserve force soldiers, crews, and units.

• Fourth, reduce the administrative burden on reserve units. While the increase in full-time unit support personnel by approximately 75 percent over the past decade was supposed to help, the new slots have been unevenly distributed. Senior headquarters have often experienced a doubling or tripling of full-time unit support manning during this period, while subordinate units have experienced only a 25- to 50-percent increase. However justified, increased full-time support staffs at senior headquarters generate substantial *new* administrative requirements for subordinate units and do little to improve training.

Part-time unit commanders and full-time unit support personnel are swamped with paperwork requirements, for which failure to comply will get a commander fired much more quickly than a training weakness. That reality represents a deplorable inversion of priorities! While doctrine encourages unit commanders and senior NCOs to be with their troops during training, paperwork often prevents this. The magnitude and intensity of the administrative requirements continually force reserve component commanders to compromise their training supervision. This will persist until we either sharply reduce these administrative requirements on operating units or move the full-time unit support personnel from senior headquarters to the subordinate units. We've heard a lot of talk in the past decade about paperwork reduction, but we've seen little progress.

Another (arguably controversial) method of enhancing full-time training support for reserve units would be to assign more active soldiers directly to them. Air National Guard units are generally considered to be on a readiness level comparable to that of their active counterparts. They are 30 percent manned with full-time unit support personnel. This high manning level compares to 12.1 percent for the Army National Guard and 9.5 percent for Army Reserve units (FY 1989 figures). If Army reserve component units were authorized a full-time unit support contingent equal to 20 percent of total assigned strength, or approximately 155,000 such personnel for the two components, an additional 68,500 full-time unit support soldiers would be available. Assigned as trainers, they would significantly improve the training and readiness of reserve component units and could provide a valuable training association for active soldiers. If these soldiers were allocated principally to units rather than major headquarters, the impact upon reserve force mobilization preparedness would be dramatic.

Conclusion

The Gulf War clearly demonstrated the need for highly trained reserve force units, ready to be mobilized and deployed. It is unlikely that Congress or the American people would have supported Desert Storm to the extent they did without the deployment of home-town reserve units. This may seem perplexing to active-duty soldiers, but it is a common aspect of community attitudes.

If Army reserve component units are to attain higher levels of readiness in the next decade within the present model of 39 training days per year, improved time management is essential. Having invested so much and so successfully in our reserve components over the past two decades, it would seem only sensible to invest a little more and close the gap between present and attainable levels of readiness.

NOTES

1. It is important to note that there are significant differences between the Army National Guard and the US Army Reserve, including statutory, organizational, and funding distinctions. Nevertheless, both components today provide units to the Total Force structure on a fairly equal basis, as viewed from the gaining command level, and are measured by the same performance standards as active component units. Therefore, they will be coupled in this article as "reserve force units" or "reserve units" with largely comparable strengths and weaknesses in training management.

2. "Partners in Defense: What They Said," *National Guard*, 45 (December 1991), 17-18.

3. For an account of the early years of reserve forces see *Reserve Forces for National Security*, a Report to the Secretary of Defense by the Committee on Civilian Components (Washington: GPO, 1948); and Marvin A. Kriedberg and Merton G. Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the U.S. Army, 1775-1945* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1955). See also Jim Dan Hill, *The Minuteman in War and Peace* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Co., 1964); Eilene Galloway, *History of United States Military Policy on Reserve Forces, 1775-1957* (Washington: GPO, 1957); William H. Riker, *Soldiers of the States* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1957); and Irving Heymont and E. W. McGregor, *Review and Analysis of Recent Mobilizations and Deployments of U.S. Army Reserve Components* (McLean, Va.: Research Analysis Corporation, October 1972).

4. "The Role of Reserve Components," address by the Honorable William K. Brehm to the 96th General Conference of the NGAUS, 23 September 1974.

5. Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense, *Memorandum* to the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Other Defense Officials, 21 August 1970; and *Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird's Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1973* (Washington: GPO, 1972), pp. 10-12.

6. See *Annual Reports of the Reserve Forces Policy Board*, FY 1977 to FY 1982 (Washington: GPO). The Army CAPSTONE program aligns active and reserve component units to meet wartime requirements and establishes peacetime planning and training associations. The CAPSTONE program incorporates peacetime command and control relationships, wartime mission relationships, and directed training associations.

7. Ibid., FY 1984 to date.

8. For a more comprehensive assessment of the Gulf Crisis mobilization, see US Senate, Committee on Appropriations. *Hearings on the Department of Defense Appropriations* (Washington: GPO, 1991), 102d Cong., 1st sess., pp. 725-848.

9. FORSCOM Message 232115Z October 1990. SUBJECT: Unit Validation and Deployment Criteria.

10. US Department of the Army, *Training the Force*, Field Manual 25-100 (Washington: GPO, November 1988), p. 4-3.

11. Discussion with Mobilization Station Commanders and First Army Readiness Group Commanders, April 1991.

12. Some units are authorized additional training time each year beyond the 39 days in view of their mission requirements.

13. FORSCOM Regulation 350-4, *Training Under CAPSTONE*, 30 September 1991.

14. ARTEP stands for Army Training and Evaluation Program.

15. FORSCOM Regulation 10-42, *Organization and Functions, Mission Assignments, Forces Command*, 15 October 1989.