



Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force

October 2008

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Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs
1500 Defense Pentagon, Room 2E220
Washington, DC 20301-1500

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The Reserve components provide operational capabilities and strategic depth to meet the nation's defense requirements across the full spectrum of conflict. While these roles are not new, the degree to which the military services have relied upon the National Guard and Reserve to support operational missions has changed.

During the Cold War the Reserve components principally operated as a force in reserve. Members generally served 39 days a year—one weekend a month and an additional two weeks, typically during the summer. If a major war broke out, it was expected that the Reserves would be called upon to augment the active forces in an operational role, principally in combat support or combat service support, and the mobilization lead time would likely be months, not weeks or days.

The first Gulf war, in 1990–1991, was conducted along different lines. Large numbers of Reserve forces were engaged. They were deployed quickly, early in the conflict, alongside the Active component forces, serving across the entire mission spectrum. These Reserve forces proved effective in their operational role during this conflict. But given the short duration of the war, its impact was relatively contained for many reservists—the strategic role still dominated in large measure. Yet this event did serve as a catalyst for thinking about using the Reserves in a more operational capacity.

Since then, the Reserve components have been used in different ways and at unprecedented levels, most significantly after September 11, 2001, and the onset of the global war on terrorism. The demands of the persistent conflicts of the past seven years have been high—beyond

the ability of the Active component to meet alone. The Reserve components have been relied on heavily to fill operational requirements—comprising close to 40 percent of forces in theater at the height of the mobilization. The role of the Reserves in the total force changed fundamentally.

Today, the Department of Defense is asking much more of its Guard and Reserve members. Being in the Reserves is no longer about deploying once in a career, or maybe not at all. Today's reservist might deploy three or four times over the course of a career. This is a different type of commitment, based on different expectations—for members, their families, and employers. The military services are asking for more time from their reserve members—for more training and more frequent deployments. Greater use of the Reserves in turn means higher resource requirements for time, for training, and for equipment.

Effective management of the Guard and Reserve as an operational force will require changes in how they are recruited, trained, equipped, compensated, and resourced. Over the past decade and a half some changes in force management have been made in support of the evolution of the Reserve components as an operational force. New management approaches evolved as the Department gained a better understanding of the demands of the new operational environment and the role played by the Guard and Reserve as part of an integrated total force.

Yet the need for change has accelerated—the result of a nation at war. The Department is faced with a sea change in how the Reserve components are being used as part of the total force. This change is not temporary; it is not business as usual. Rather, it reflects a fundamental shift from the past. As such, a new approach to management is needed—one that also reflects a new way of doing business for the future. Incremental changes at the margin will no longer be enough.

The intent of the accompanying directive is to codify this new approach to managing the total force—established until now largely through

policy memoranda—to ensure that the military Services foster closer integration between the Active and Reserve components, provide the most efficient training opportunities for all personnel, and allow for shared use of resources. The directive establishes a comprehensive set of principles for managing the Reserve components as both a strategic and operational force over the long term. Its goal is to provide a concrete foundation for institutionalizing management of the Reserves as an operational force and as a basis for developing and evaluating future policies.

The directive addresses nine key areas that fall into three broad categories as detailed below.

Roles of the Reserve Components

Operational Capabilities and Strategic Depth

The Reserve components provide operational capabilities and strategic depth to meet U.S. defense requirements across the full spectrum of conflict.

In recent years, policy debates have focused on whether the reserves should be an operational force or a strategic force. We believe the Reserve components should support both roles, and in fact they always have. The Guard and Reserve still serve as an expansion force—that is, as a strategic reserve—but they also serve as an operational force. However, the Department has not always considered these two distinct roles in managing the Reserve components within the total force. As such, this directive distinguishes between these different roles and specifies the associated management responsibilities.

As an operational force, the Guard and Reserve participate in a full range of missions at home and abroad providing operational capabilities according to the national defense strategy, their Service force generation plans, and operational requirements. Since the end of the Cold War, the Guard and Reserve have served in operational roles across the world—in the first Gulf war; in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo; in Afghanistan and Iraq. They have responded to disaster relief at home and abroad. They have become more integrated into military exercises along with the Active component. Managing the Reserves as an operational force means ensuring that the force is ready—that it is trained and equipped to fight in an era of persistent conflict and global engagement against adaptive adversaries. It means devising individual and unit rotation policies that respond to the needs of the mission while offering predictability for the combatant commands, the Services, service members, their families and employers.

At the same time, the Reserve component provides the nation strategic depth and must as well be staffed, trained, and equipped for this mission according to the national defense strategy. As resources are not unlimited, the force must be flexible and agile so that it can transition between strategic and operational roles as needed. Because the Reserve component is a part time force, its use in war and peacetime must be coordinated so that the force is not overused, in order to preserve its value to the nation. The importance of this factor—the part time nature of the force—must be fully considered along with the operational and strategic roles of the Reserve component in devising Department policies underlying the organization and use of this force.

One could argue that the distinction drawn here between strategic and operational roles applies to the total force—to the Active and Reserve components alike—not just the Reserve component. Forces that are engaged in current missions are operational forces; the rest serve as a force in reserve, as strategic depth, regardless of component. While the discussion in this paper centers on the Reserves, it is also important to note this distinction in the context of the total force.

Homeland Defense and Defense Support to Civil Authorities

Homeland defense and defense support to civil authorities are total force missions. Unity of effort is maintained consistent with statutory responsibilities in operations involving Federal and non-federalized National Guard forces with Federal forces under Federal command and control and non-federalized National Guard forces under State command and control.

Defense of the homeland has always been a priority mission area for the Department of Defense. Since the events of September 11, 2001, however, defense of the homeland has received renewed focus, spurred by a realization that Americans are vulnerable to attack on U.S. soil. In this context, the nation faces fundamentally different challenges from those faced during the Cold War. The Department of Defense will help provide for the security of the American people and its territory in various ways. While the Department will have the lead for homeland defense, it will also play a role supporting other Federal agencies and civil authorities for homeland security missions such as civil support and emergency preparedness and response.

Homeland defense—protection of U.S. sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and critical defense infrastructure against external threats and aggression—is the responsibility of the Department of Defense. In addition, DOD is called upon to provide support to civil authorities for domestic emergencies, designated law enforcement operations, and other activities such as drug interdiction missions and many natural disasters. While homeland defense and defense support to civil authorities are total force responsibilities, particular component and individual competencies resident in the Reserve are important contributors to these missions. National Guard forces can support these activities under different statutes—under state authority, as designated in U.S. Code, Title 32, or under Federal authority, as designated in U.S.

Code, Title 10. In such an environment, the Guard and Reserve must unify their efforts with Federal forces and other interagency partners, as required.

In addressing these missions, the Department must balance requirements for homeland defense with traditional warfighting requirements. The Reserve component should be resourced, staffed, trained, equipped, and sustained for both wartime and domestic support missions. Resource requirements for domestic missions must be given separate consideration, as appropriate, so that the force has the flexibility and agility to respond to all elements of homeland defense and homeland security across the full spectrum of operations.

Underlying Philosophy

The roles of the Reserve components in operational and strategic missions derive from the total force concept and the Abrams doctrine.

Total Force Concept

The Active and Reserve components are integrated as a total force based on the attributes of the particular component and individual competencies.

The total force concept emerged through a series of policy memoranda—the first of which was signed in 1970 by then Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. The total force policy had a significant impact on the use of the Reserve components; it emphasized increased reliance on the Reserves, initially for warfighting and later for full spectrum requirements. The initial total force doctrine directed that all departmental planning, programming, budgeting, and execution deliberations consider the Active and Reserve force together.

The total force concept was put to its first real test when the United States responded to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The performance of the Reserve components during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm demonstrated that they were a capable and reliable force—an important milestone in shaping the use of the Guard and Reserve in the decade to follow.

The total force concept has proven to be an effective means to rapidly expand military capacity to meet changing national security requirements. The military Services can expand the capabilities of the total force by taking advantage of the attributes and individual competencies of the Active and Reserve components. Changes can be made to provide a full spectrum of capabilities in each component, increase force agility, and enable better management of operational tempo.

Connection to the American Public

The Reserve components provide connection to and commitment of the American public.

In the aftermath of Vietnam, former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Creighton Abrams, asserted his belief that the American armed forces must not go to war again without calling up “the spirit of the American people,” which meant calling up the National Guard and Reserve. By involving the Guard and Reserve, the will of the people is brought to the fight. This philosophy has become known as the Abrams Doctrine.¹

1. For further discussion of the Abrams Doctrine see: Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Plewes, “Reserve Duty Changed Forever,” American Forces Press Service, Washington DC, January 22, 2002 and The Annual Report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board, Manpower, Personnel, and Force Structure (Washington DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense), May 2001, Chapter 3.

In response to the global war on terrorism, members of the Reserves have been called to serve in unprecedented numbers. In Vietnam 3,000 reservists were called to duty. By Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, 267,300 members of the Reserves were called up. Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have involved more than 650,000 reservists to date. The contributions of the Reserve components have been essential in the conduct of these operations and in the ability of the military services to meet their missions worldwide.

The global war on terrorism is a war that is close to home. It is a war of long duration. It requires enduring support of the American people. This need, along with the continued need for reservists in support of current operations, validates the concept set forth by General Abrams. It also supports the nation's resolve to maintain an all volunteer force.

Management Principles

Continuum of Service

The continuum of service is utilized to enhance the effectiveness of and sustain the all-volunteer force with flexible service options that are attractive to a broad population.

Over the past decade, the use of the Reserve components has undergone significant change. Not only has operational tempo increased overall, but some capabilities traditionally resident in the Reserve components also have been in near-continuous use. As a result, an increasing number of reservists perform duty more than the traditional 39 days each year. The increased use of the reserves since the end of the Cold War, pointed to the need for a new approach to managing the all volunteer force that better reflects how the force is being used. The continuum of service responds to this need.

The continuum of service is a set of management policies that provide variable and flexible service options and levels of participation that could make military service attractive to a broad population—options that are consistent with DOD manpower requirements and an individual’s ability to serve over the course of a lifetime of service. The continuum of service aims to facilitate, to the extent possible, transparent movement of individuals between active military, reserve military, and civilian service. Such policies offer the Department greater flexibility in accessing the variety of skills required to meet its evolving requirements—particularly highly technical and civilian-acquired skills that are difficult to sustain full time in the force.

More flexible force management tools are needed to support the continuum of service. This means a flexible compensation system, benefits, and incentives that are commensurate with the service provided and that will encourage service members to continue to serve. Flexible management tools required encompass recruiting, career development, promotion, and separation and retirement. Another consideration is ensuring benefits and entitlements are consistent for all members, with the goal of equitable compensation and benefits for a day’s work. Still another is developing an approach to medical benefits that ensures continuity of health care for reservists and their families. It is essential that the system enable service at any point along the continuum of service by eliminating complexity, which will yield greater efficiency.

A continuum of service offers the Department more flexibility in accessing and managing personnel over a lifetime of service. It recognizes that the support provided by military members can vary substantially throughout a career. It also addresses the fact that military requirements vary in duration, creating a fluctuating but continuous demand over time for augmentation and support. Thus, implementation of the continuum of service would enhance the effectiveness of and sustain the all-volunteer force.

Utilization Rules

Utilization rules are implemented to govern frequency and duration of activations. Since expectation management is critical to the success of the management of the Reserve components as an operational force, these rules enhance predictability and judicious and prudent use of the Reserve components.

Requirements of the post September 11 era have demonstrated the need for the Reserve components in support of ongoing operations and the potential for repeated deployments during the course of a career. The use of Reserve forces will vary depending on type of mission, individual service utilization policies, and the availability of a Reserve member. Utilization rules are important in order to successfully manage the Reserve component consistent with operational requirements. They also provide expectations of how often and for how long Reserve members may be activated during the course of their careers. Such information is important not only to members, but also to families and employers. Being able to predict absences from family and the work place is perhaps one of the most critical factors in retaining support from members, their families and employers.

In January 2007, the Secretary of Defense established total force utilization guidelines that included the planning objective for involuntary mobilization of National Guard and Reserve units and individuals of a “one year mobilized to five years demobilized ratio.” This guideline does not mean that every Reserve member will serve one year out of every six years. But this is the expectation that the Department is setting forth. The perception that a Reserve member will be activated once in a career is no longer valid. It is against these guidelines that the military services need to align their force structure. If global demands require a number of selected Guard and/or Reserve units to be remobilized sooner than this goal, those exceptions should be temporary. The policy also includes accommodations to compensate individuals who are involuntarily mobilized beyond the established frequency.

Voluntary Duty

Voluntary duty is encouraged to meet mission requirements.

Voluntary duty is duty performed by reservists who request or indicate willingness to accept orders for active duty beyond any active duty obligation. The expanded operational use of the Guard and Reserve is built on a construct of voluntary service, in which Guard and Reserve members are able to serve more frequently or for varying periods to support operational missions, and predictable periods of involuntary service (as described previously). The continuum of service structure fosters volunteerism by providing greater opportunities for Guard and Reserve members to tailor service commitments to their availability, consistent with military requirements.

A system that is flexible and agile encourages members to perform military duty beyond minimum participation requirements. For such a system to work, both monetary and non-monetary incentives may need to be established to increase participation to meet mission requirements, even on short notice, and for varied periods of time. Flexibility in the system is essential to allow the Services to accomplish force management objectives according to individual preferences. By promoting volunteerism, the services can better position themselves to meet some of the sudden requirements that emerge during times of national emergency.

Many skills that are useful to the uniformed military are difficult to acquire through traditional accession policies, are challenging to obtain on short notice, or are only needed for a limited duration. These skills might include cutting edge, technical skills such as those possessed by engineers, scientists, or information technology professionals, as well as specialized skills such as languages and cultural understanding. Flexible affiliation options allow the Services to meet requirements with individuals who may be willing to volunteer for some form of military

service for short periods of time or in response to specific emergencies, but for whom traditional affiliation programs are not of interest. Thus, removing barriers that limit Reserve members from contributing more to defense missions is an ongoing and necessary process.

Unit volunteerism is another concept that can be facilitated by a more flexible force management system and by the principles established in the accompanying directive. Reserve members could voluntarily participate in units with higher readiness levels and deployment requirements, without being constrained by the current structure of the traditional 39-day training program for reservists. Mission areas such as early responder units, stability operations, reach back operations, and homeland defense requirements could be met, at least in part, by such units. Promoting both individual and unit volunteerism can have significant payoffs for the military services. Without this flexibility, the military services would have to rely primarily on involuntary service.

Readiness

The Reserve components are resourced to meet readiness requirements. Reserve components resourcing plans shall ensure visibility to track resources from formulation, appropriation, and allocation through execution.

One of the most critical elements of managing the Reserves as an operational force is ensuring that the force is adequately resourced to meet readiness requirements—properly trained on current generation equipment; properly equipped; and physically, medically, and operationally ready to accomplish assigned tasks. Standards for training and equipping the force must be consistent for Active, Guard, and Reserve. Reserve component resourcing plans must be designed so that funding can be tracked and evaluated throughout the planning, programming, budgeting, and execution process. Such visibility helps to ensure that

resources can be justified, that they are distributed in a timely fashion and for the use intended, and that shortfalls can be quickly identified.

In concert with the utilization guidelines established by the Secretary of Defense in early 2007, the Reserve components embarked in earnest on developing a new mobilization model—referred to as “train-mobilize-deploy”—that pushes a significant amount of training into the period before mobilization. The underlying concept is to enable a longer period of deployment in the theater of operations by reducing the amount of training that occurs between the time a member is activated and deployed.

This new construct of train-mobilize-deploy is the basis for resourcing the Reserves. Force generation plans for the Reserve components should be developed and maintained to provide ready and available forces in support of operational requirements. These plans should be developed in concert with the objectives, established by the Secretary of Defense, that define the frequency and duration of use for involuntary mobilization. The plans should be resourced by allocating personnel, training, and equipment to ensure Reserve forces are ready when needed. Funds for training and equipment are provided to coincide with the Services’ force planning cycles, enabling an effective pre- and post-mobilization training and deployment cycle.

Another important aspect of readiness is having the right mix of full-time support personnel to enhance integration and promote readiness. This mix would include active personnel, active Guard and Reserve personnel, military technicians, and other federal civilian employees—all of which need to be considered in the resource allocation process. Other requirements include resources to support medical and dental readiness, so that Reserve component members comply with medical and dental standards pre-activation through deactivation. Facility and training areas must be resourced to support Reserve component training opportunities—of even more importance under the new mobilization model. And legal resources are also needed to support activation of Reserve personnel.

The bottom line is that adequately resourcing all aspects of the Reserve component is essential to sustaining the Reserves as a ready, operational force.

Outreach

Outreach services are established and available for Reserve component members, their families, and employers from pre-activation through reintegration.

Throughout a member's career, the military services need to stay connected to its Guard and Reserve members and keep them informed of obligations and opportunities in the all-volunteer force. Outreach services for members, families, and employers are critical from pre-activation throughout the training, activation, deployment, deactivation, and reintegration cycle. Family readiness is a critical issue for the Department of Defense. Quality of life and family matters are priority issues for the Secretary and the Services. The Department's ability to assist servicemembers and their families to prepare for separations during short- and long-term deployments is paramount to sustaining mission capabilities and mission readiness. Integrated family readiness and support programs provide information and services to all members, regardless of parent service or component—whether Active, Guard or Reserve.

Equally important is sustaining support of employers during this new era. Economic status and job security of Reserve component members is integral to the Department's manpower strategy and can only be assured with strong employer support. Employer support is also critical to recruiting and retaining high quality men and women in the Reserve components. Building employer support requires a strong network of both military and civilian-employer leaders who are capable of fostering communication, education, and an exchange of information. Employers have offered sustained support during this era of high

operational tempo—even beyond what is legally required. There is every expectation that such support will continue as long as Reserve members are used at reasonable levels and employer relationships are nurtured through appropriate outreach programs.

In an era of persistent conflict with heavy reliance on the Reserve components, the Department is taking deliberate steps to manage the Guard and Reserve as an operational force. Toward that end, the principles described herein will serve to institutionalize the Reserve as an operational force and, in turn, further the sustainment of an all-volunteer Guard and Reserve.