



FOREWORD

The citizen soldiers of the National Guard and reserves have long been a vital part of the U.S. military. Over the last several years, however, the roles and responsibilities of guard and reserve forces have changed. No longer just a strategic resource designed to supplement the active force during a major war, today's guard and reserve forces are critical and integrated components in all U.S. military missions.

This shift to a more operational role for the reserve components has created new challenges and opportunities that must be addressed if the reserves are to perform to their full potential. Further complicating the transition has been the increased operational tempo associated with the global war on terror. Not only are reservists and guardsmen being used differently, they are also being used more frequently.

For those of us in the Department of Defense (DOD), effective management of this new reserve force is a priority. Our task is clear—we need to define what an operational reserve really means, and identify the issues associated with this new paradigm. The transition to an operational reserve affects every aspect of force management, including recruiting, training, equipping, and mobilizing reservists, as well as maintaining positive relationships with reservists' employers and families. We must develop guiding principles that enable us to better manage a part-time force that serves in both strategic and operational roles. Progress has been made in some areas, but much remains to be done.

In terms of recruiting, the military needs to clarify the responsibilities of serving in today's reserves to potential recruits, including the likelihood of mobilization while the nation remains at war. Yet while we must be frank about the burdens of reserve service, we must also highlight the values and rewards of serving one's country. We need to tell our service members and the American public how critically important

the contributions of the reserves are to security here at home and in many countries around the world. Members of the reserves should know that their fellow countrymen value their service and sacrifice and are proud of their achievements.

With reserve forces increasingly serving alongside their active duty counterparts in challenging or hazardous settings, reservists need to be rigorously trained and appropriately equipped. We need to fundamentally change the way we train this force—in terms of both overall readiness for a wide range of demanding military operations, as well as the logistics of the training process. One possible reform in this area, for example, would be to use more home station training instead of centralized training.

As the frequency and complexity of reserve deployments have increased, so too have reserve force equipment needs. We need to identify where we have equipment deficits and commit the resources necessary to address those deficits, including upgrading obsolete equipment, and repairing or replacing damaged inventory. The safety and effectiveness of our troops depend on it.

The duration and frequency of reserve mobilizations have also increased in recent years, and that higher operational tempo is likely to continue. But the reserve forces are not an unlimited resource, and we must be careful not to exhaust them. Members of the reserves are part-time assets that we share with their employers, their families, and their communities. To the extent possible, reserve mobilization schedules should be designed in a way that allows the military to meet its operational needs, and reservists to keep their commitments to family and career.

This balancing act is a difficult one to achieve during wartime, but the department is working to develop a viable mobilization cycle that can be sustained over the long term. Whether that rotational cycle is one year of deployment for every six years of service, or one year for every five years of service, we need to cut back on the lengthy deployments that some reservists have experienced. We cannot continue 18- to 22-month mobilizations and expect to maintain the support of reservists, their employers, and their families.

Clearly there is much work to be done. Yet it is important that we also acknowledge the many changes that have already been implemented to improve the way we manage the reserves and to ease the burdens that reservists face. There is sometimes a tendency to dwell on the problems with the reserve system; and those problems certainly deserve and are receiving our full attention. But bringing to light the improvements that are ongoing shows reservists that their concerns are heard and that steps are being taken to fix the problems.

In fact, in recent years, Congress has enacted numerous legislative changes that have altered the way we do business in the guard and reserve. Many of these changes targeted longstanding practices that had become incompatible with managing the reserves as an operational force, such as elimination of the 179-day rule. Others have expanded payments and benefits to reserve members, their families, or their employers in recognition of their increased responsibilities and sacrifices.

This is a challenging and exciting time for reserve force managers. The transition of the guard and reserves to a more operational force will require many more changes in the way we do business—changes that will ultimately result in a more agile and flexible force that is better prepared to participate fully in increasingly varied and complex military operations. Reforms will also ensure that this valuable part-time resource is maximized, but not exhausted.

The chapters in this book provide valuable research that will assist DOD with the continued transformation of the reserve components. Unlike earlier work on U.S. reserve forces, this research is the first conducted in the context of a more operational role for the reserves. The authors touch on a wide range of issues related to the transition to an operational force, but there are certain themes that echo through all of the chapters, and reinforce what our own experience in the department has revealed:

- Those who serve in the guard and reserve are volunteers. We must structure the force in a way that encourages the best and brightest to join and remain in service. This means we must be upfront with our recruits about what will be expected of them if they enlist. It also means establishing sustainable mobilization schedules that do not make unreasonable demands of reservists, their families, or their employers.
- If we expect the new reserves to serve alongside active duty troops and participate in the full range of U.S. military operations, we need to make sure that they receive comparable training, equipment, and compensation.
- Just as each reserve component is different, each individual reservist brings different skills, needs, and aspirations to the force. Our management system should be flexible enough to handle these differences, and assign force components and individual personnel where they will perform best. A one-size-fits-all approach that does not account for—nor take advantage of—this variation should be avoided.

As we address the range of issues facing the reserves, it is all too easy to be dragged down by the details. But if we do that, we will be lost. We need to look at these issues more broadly, and keep in mind the principles laid out throughout this volume. They will help us develop the strategies we need so that our “total” force—reserve and active duty alike—is comprised of top quality men and women who perform to the highest standards in a wide range of military operations.

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