

This letter is forwarded in response to Land Warfare Paper 139, The Reserve Component Crisis Necessitates Re-Examining the Total Army Concept. Author - Unknown

The author begins his article by saying the emergency use of the National Guard over the past two years highlights significant shortcomings in the Army's Total Force concept. In my opinion, the use of the National Guard over the past two years VALIDATES the Army's Total Force concept.

The nation, in an emergency, called on the Guard, and as the author pointed out, over 26,000 Guardmembers from 28 states were deployed to the National Capitol Region and provided security and stability in one of the most fragile situations in the history of our country. This deployment cost the United States, not the National Guard, \$521 million. National leaders made conscious decisions in accordance with their positions to utilize the money from the National Guard budget in order to meet mission requirements and maintain deployable forces within the Department of Defense to meet other mission and readiness requirements across all components and based on current threats. As discussed, Army Guard leaders, as they should, provided testimony on the impact of not reimbursing the dollars spent on the unprogrammed deployment. Will this one time budgetary issue impact short term readiness? Absolutely. Will it have potential negative effects on long-term strategic efforts as opined by the nameless author? Absolutely not!

And yes, over 86,000 Guardmembers mobilized and deployed in 2020-2021 to assist civil authorities in maintaining order and for COVID response. The author points out that this utilization of the force is "out of accordance with its natural order." I would argue that the utilization is exactly in accordance with the natural order of the National Guard. Were these mobilizations and utilizations unprecedented, as pointed out by General McConville in his congressional testimony? Yes, they were and the Guard performed magnificently, as he also pointed out!

The author also opined that there are "inherent challenges" within the Total Army Concept. I would agree there are challenges, but not in the way presented by the author. Army leaders will always wrestle with the proper force structure mix within the Army and the components, as threat analysis and budgets are constantly changing and provide the true inherent challenges. During General Mark Milley's tenure as the Chief of Staff of the Army it was determined that more heavy forces were required to face the immediate threat and that our Army was dramatically behind in modernizing the force. Tough decisions had to be made on what component those forces would be assigned to and what would be sacrificed for modernization. General Milley committed funds to the National Guard to enhance the readiness of the ABCTs within the National Guard to address the current threat and deployment timelines. Should we examine the current threat and determine if that high OPTEMPO is still required and realistic? Yes! Should we abandon current force structure allocations within the components? I would argue no! Operational tempo for the reserve components should always be based on the current threat analysis and the projected number of days available during post mobilization training to reach required proficiency. The author sites the \$910 million a year requirement for the operations and support costs for a National Guard ABCT, but he fails to show that the same reference he sites shows the operations and support costs for an active ABCT is over \$3 billion! Trading ABCTs for IBCTs may save dollars within the National Guard budget, but, assuming the heavy force mix is required within the Total Army, where does the money come from to add that force structure to the Active Army?

The author states there has been a breach of trust with Guardmembers concerning their training and deployments. I believe nothing is further from the truth. Guardmembers joining after 9-11 joined with the complete and full knowledge that they would train and deploy. Are the training requirements and deployments hard on families and civilian employment? As a former Soldier who has deployed, I say absolutely! However, programmed and predictable deployments are expected. Based on current deployment rates, a Soldier entering the National Guard today will deploy one time in a twenty year career. That is not unreasonable and arguably welcomed by Guardmembers. Are the unprogrammed deployments more difficult? Absolutely, but to assume that the elongated unprogrammed events will continue at the same rate as in 2020 and 2021, in my opinion, is an extremely poor assumption. Utilization of the National Guard in exercises and training events around the globe are welcomed by Guardmembers and enhance readiness and preparation for deployment as the combat reserve of the Army. Planned and predictable utilization of Guard units truly enhances readiness and retention and strengthens the relationship between the three components of the Army and makes a stronger fighting force.

In conclusion, I completely disagree with the author's conclusion. The budget issue faced by the National Guard this year is a challenge and a problem, but it is certainly does not create a crisis. To say that the National Guard is "all but unable to continue operations because of the inordinate strain that has been placed on it" is completely untrue. Don't you worry, Sir! We got this! We are "always ready, always there!"

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