Army Total Force Policy: Fully Integrating the Operational Reserve

As one total force, the active Army, Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve provide operating and generating forces to support the National Military Strategy and Army commitments worldwide. The Army will ensure that the total force is organized, trained, sustained, equipped and employed to support combatant commander requirements as force packages tailored to achieve anticipated objectives.

Honorable John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army, Army Directive 2012-08 (Army Total Force Policy)

Introduction

For more than a decade, overseas contingency operations required significant numbers of Soldiers and the rapid acquisition and deployment of new equipment. To meet the demands of a high operational tempo, the Army committed reserve component (RC) Soldiers to the fight—where they performed superbly—in numbers not seen since World War II. Just as their role required, RC units were manned, equipped and trained deliberately to augment operational endstrength in support of major named conflicts and deployed seamlessly alongside their active component (AC) counterparts.

The Army Total Force Policy, signed by Secretary of the Army John McHugh in September 2012, is a significant step in the evolution of the all-volunteer force. The policy lends greater official and institutional permanence to what Soldiers and commanders on the ground have already been doing—fighting as one operational force and providing predictable, recurring and sustainable capabilities.

Lines of Effort

Army Total Force Policy will align the Army with Department of Defense (DoD) guidance that requires the military services to manage their reserve components as an operational force. It establishes guidance that will help ensure that the nation benefits from the hard-won combat experience gained over more than a decade. To this end, the new policy identifies numerous initiatives that will more uniformly govern the total Army.

Regular examination of force structure options. Implementation of Army Total Force Policy requires amending Army regulations to establish a formal annual analysis of force structure options that specifically includes consideration of the mix of operating and generating force capabilities between the AC and RC. A new regulation requires that the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) and the Department of the Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7 report any military capabilities that are insufficiently resourced to meet Secretary of Defense planning objectives for the total force.

Uniform readiness procedures. Another amendment to existing regulations directs that available forces (mission force and surge force) be prepared to deploy as integrated expeditionary forces to the maximum extent possible. Within the parameters of global security conditions and the requirements of combatant commanders, the Army will employ a common deployment cycle and will develop a single set of standards and procedures for the validation of readiness.

Streamlining RC mobilization. The Army Mobilization Operations, Planning and Execution System must adapt to meet 21st century requirements. New policy requires that...
Army leaders streamline the mobilization process so that RC capabilities can be delivered rapidly in support of the total force. The goal is to preserve and expand the existing scalability of Army capabilities and provide additional options in times of crisis.

**Adapting Army equipping strategy.** The Army’s equipping strategy will ensure that procurement and equipping processes enable the total force to perform all missions of the Department of the Army. The reiteration of this directive reinforces DoD guidance that homeland defense and defense support to civil authorities are total force missions.²

**Integrating personnel management.** The Army is developing a personnel management and pay system designed to incorporate total force values. The structure of the reserve component provides a unique, valuable connection between the Army and the American public. Army policy aims to recognize the importance and effectiveness of the all-volunteer force by increasingly enabling Soldiers to move between AC and RC roles during their careers of service. The standardization of business practices, consolidation of personnel data and increased access to secure, reliable information help create flexible service options that are attractive to a broad population—thereby ensuring that the Army has access to a ready, capable reserve when needed.


**Creating common standards.** Standards for qualification and professional development will be the same for AC and RC personnel. Army commands and Army service component commands will ensure that the procedures and processes for validating predeployment readiness are uniform for AC and RC units and Soldiers. As appropriate, the Army will integrate AC and RC forces and capabilities at the tactical level; this will sometimes include predeployment collective training, particularly for organizations such as sustainment brigades that routinely deploy as multicomponent forces. In addition, the Army will consolidate or eliminate some RC training publications and procedures to conform with guidance that ensures commonality but still retains the uniqueness of each component and its subject matter expertise.

**Conclusion**

Ever since the American Revolution, when colonial militiamen met the British at Lexington and Concord, the Army has relied upon its reserve component. Today it is clear that the nation needs the diverse and flexible skills of its citizen Soldiers more than ever as it confronts new strategic and tactical challenges. The Army Total Force Policy embraces this reality and formalizes several institutional initiatives that will help guarantee that the Army has tailor-able, scalable and expeditionary capabilities.

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**Key Points**

- The Army Total Force Policy, signed by the Secretary of the Army in September 2012, provides guidance for the continued integration of the Army’s active and reserve component units and Soldiers.

- The Army National Guard and Army Reserve today have invaluable experience as an operational reserve and provide expert capability that is indispensable in current and future conflicts. The new policy guidance demonstrates that the institutional Army recognizes this value and is taking serious steps to preserve and leverage it.

- The numerous initiatives driven by the policy are aimed at ensuring that the entire Army is tailor-able to the needs of combatant commanders, rapidly deployable when the nation calls and scalable as strategic and tactical mission requirements dictate.