
Defense Report

AUSA



The Active Army, the National Guard and the Army Reserve — An Inseparable Team

Historically, the United States has operated under the assumption that if war came the regulars of the active Army would bear the initial shock and then be reinforced by the call-up of the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Each element of this triad was a rounded-out force, complete with combat units and the necessary support. But as the size of the active Army has shrunk there has been severe pressure to focus that reduced force more completely on combat units and to shift support capabilities into the Guard and Reserve. This concept enabled the active Army to build up from 13 to 16 combat divisions within a steadily shrinking manpower base, but it also made those divisions more dependent on the capabilities of the Guard and Reserve. This interlocked group of forces is called the Total Army. It reflects a concept which should give the United States the best possible ground combat force for the money invested.

Two recent announcements by the Department of the Army have served to reemphasize this close interrelationship. First, the Army announced a program called "Capstone" which will establish permanent relationships between active Army and reserve components units for training. The units will be matched according to common missions and types of equipment; reserve armored units with active armored divisions, for instance. The second announcement described an increase in the number of reserve components units that will be sent overseas each year for the period of active-duty training. This will permit the Reservists and Guardsmen to become familiar with the units and the terrain they would encounter if they were deployed in wartime.

The criticality of having the Guard and Reserve in an advanced state of readiness becomes more apparent when we learn that the two reserve components combined have half of the Army's combat power, that the Guard alone has 38 percent of the total fighting capability and that the Reserve alone has more than 60 percent of the needed support forces. We are clearly in a situation where the elements of the Total Army will have to march off to war *together*, not in increments.

All three elements of the Total Army have manpower problems, with those in the reserve components being the worst. All three also have equipment problems and, here again, they are worst in the reserve components. All three have problems with getting enough gasoline and ammunition for meaningful training. Aviators in all three components are held to a woefully small allotment of flying hours so that fuel and repair parts can be conserved.

The time has long since passed when we can slight the funding for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve in the expectation that they can be trained and equipped at the last minute before being committed to combat. The active Army should not be put in the position of taking equipment away from the reserves because there are insufficient quantities to properly equip both the active and reserve forces. If the truly outstanding potential of the Total Army is to be realized it must be supported, totally.