
Defense Report

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A National Guard Brigade Gets New Equipment—A Hopeful Sign

When an Army National Guard unit gets some new equipment it is a red letter day. It is so special, in fact, that a full-scale military ceremony was held recently at Ft. Stewart, Ga., to mark the arrival of new M60A3 tanks and TOW antitank missile launchers for the Georgia Guard's 48th Infantry Brigade. A high-priority unit, the 48th is getting the new equipment before some active-duty elements.

But, while it was a happy day for the men and women of the 48th, the fact that the arrival of a first increment of 16 tanks and 51 missile launchers deserved such an observance is a sad commentary on the ability of the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve to play their full role in what has expectantly been called the "Total Army." The 48th, for example, is a "round out" unit for the active-Army's 24th Infantry Division and, at the ceremony to welcome the new equipment, the division commander reminded everyone that wherever the 24th Division went the 48th Brigade had to be ready to go along. Unfortunately, the largesse for the 48th Brigade is just a very small drop in a huge bucket of equipment shortages in the Army's reserve components.

The shortage of tanks runs into the hundreds in the National Guard alone, as does the need for aircraft. The combined shortage of armored personnel carriers for the Guard and Reserve is over 5,000. Together they need almost 10,000 trucks of all sizes and close to 1,000 artillery pieces.

The Total Army is an excellent concept designed to get the greatest possible combat power from a relatively small active force by having well-trained, fully manned and fully equipped Guard and Reserve units integrated into the required combat and support structure.

Other active-Army commanders at all levels would like to celebrate the arrival of new equipment for a veritable host of reserve units—from tiny detachments to major combat units—that are needed to make the Total Army work. Unfortunately, there has never been full budgetary support for the concept and the prospects for an early reversal are not very good.