
Defense Report

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Full-Time National Guard and Reserve Manning—A Must for the Total Army Concept

One of the major recent efforts to reduce the military personnel costs of our armed forces has been to place radically increased reliance on National Guard and Reserve, including the transfer to the reserve components of significant combat and support functions from the active forces. These actions have placed unparalleled demands on the Army National Guard and Army Reserves, requiring that they obtain and maintain in peacetime, higher levels of proficiency and readiness than ever before.

Since many Guard and Reserve units are linked with early-deploying active-Army units for wartime assignment, it is obvious that part-time Guardsmen and Reservists need help in the form of full-time personnel to meet their greatly increased responsibilities. In the past, those full-time personnel authorized have been primarily administrators or technicians: maintaining unit and personnel records, for example, or performing vehicle maintenance.

Now, however, with the advent of the Total Force policy, commanders can no longer expect to have three or four months to train between mobilization and combat. Army Guard and Reserve units assigned to the Rapid Deployment Force can count on little or no training time between mobilization and arrival in the combat zone.

They need help—and soon—in the form of full-time soldiers with training experience to enable them to reap full benefit from the limited training their status as part-time soldiers affords. These NCOs (at company level) and officers (at battalion and higher levels) work during the month to plan the unit's training in detail. They may even go to training sites in advance of training weekends to draw equipment so that units can concentrate on training during the limited time available.

Army officers, active and reserve, agree that training a National Guard or Reserve maneuver battalion to combat-ready status with only 38 training days a year is a most challenging assignment. Unless additional full-time manning of those units, with experienced trainers as well as technicians and administrators, is authorized it is a task that will prove to be, almost certainly, impossible.