
Defense Report

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Trained Manpower for Mobilization — The Weakest Link in the Total Force

Today, the Army's plans to meet emergency wartime contingencies place greater reliance on the National Guard and the Army Reserve than ever before. For even a small regional conflict, some level of reserve component call-up would be necessary in order to deploy a balanced, adequately supported force. To assure the required levels of readiness of early deploying reserve component units, the Army program of increased full-time manning of these units is absolutely necessary.

In addition to needed additional strength in the units of the active and reserve components, the Army faces the daunting prospect of running out of replacement personnel for casualties sustained in the front-line units before the training base could mobilize. Only one element of the Army has the specific responsibility to provide these replacements — the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

The IRR is composed of trained people who have served, some relatively briefly, who still have obligated service remaining. But the problems with the IRR are substantial: it is more than 300,000 people understrength, and it has insufficient numbers of the combat specialists most needed to replace casualties in the fighting divisions.

Although there have been efforts to correct the deficiencies in the Individual Ready Reserve, there are no truly viable alternatives outside of drafting men to fill the IRR combat skill shortages. Otherwise, should deterrence fail, the Army would be required to strip needed follow-on active and reserve forces of trained manpower to fill deployed units, thus delaying the shipment or service of these units by reducing their own combat effectiveness.

The availability of trained manpower for immediate use as combat replacements while the country mobilizes is every bit as vital to our defense as adequate supplies of weapons, ammunition and fuel. This is a problem that only Congress, charged by the Constitution to "raise and support armies," can solve — and a solution must be found now.