
Defense Report

AUSA



The Total Army—Inspiring Concept, Still Unfilled!

The manner in which the mobilization of thousands of Reserves and National Guardsmen for duty in Operation Desert Shield was carried out has touched off some heated debate between Congress and the Pentagon. The controversy concerns the decision not to call up certain Army National Guard "round out" units when their associated active duty divisions were deployed to the Persian Gulf. Specifically, the Army's 24th (Mechanized) Infantry and the 1st Cavalry Divisions are each composed of two active and one National Guard brigades. But when ordered to ship out, each division was rounded out by adding a third active duty brigade, leaving the National Guard units at home.

The reasons for doing this are understandable. The law limits the call-up to 90 days with provision for another 90-day extension. Barring the declaration of a national emergency, there simply wouldn't be time enough to execute the mobilization of a 2,500-man combat brigade; perform necessary training; load and ship their equipment (including two tank battalions each); and still have sufficient time in the Middle East before having to return home. The short time in the operation area is a particular issue since soldiers of the active units who are deployed for at least six months would be there to see the Guardsmen arrive and still be there when they departed.

The U.S. Army National Guard and Army Reserve now play a much more important role in the defense of the nation than they have at any other time in our history—except perhaps in the earliest days when "the militia" was almost the sole line of defense. Guard and Reserve units have performed magnificently in the deployment of Desert Shield and continue to be highly effective in performing many critical support functions. Still, it doesn't seem to make much sense to call up major combat units knowing they would be of use for only about three months.

The solution, now being considered in Congress and supported by the Defense Department, is to double the period of the Reserve call-up to 180 days with a 180-day extension. Passage of legislation to that effect would put teeth in the Total Force policy and would greatly enhance our national security structure.