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National Security Watch

The Army's Unsung Heroes: Full-Time Support to the Army National Guard and Army Reserve

by Charles Lathrop

Today, I declare that we are THE Army, totally integrated with a unity of purpose—no longer the Total Army, no longer One Army. We are THE Army, and we will march into the 21st century as THE Army.

GEN Eric K. Shinseki
Chief of Staff, United States Army

The bottom line is that we cannot overuse our reservists without seeing a corresponding increase in attrition and a decline in readiness.

Charles L. Cragin
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

Introduction

Since the Persian Gulf War, the use of the Army's reserve components (RC) for "real world" operational missions has grown dramatically. Since 1989, there have been an unprecedented seven Presidential Selected Reserve Call-Ups. These included Operation Just Cause, Operations Desert Shield/Storm and Haiti. Today there are three Presidential Selected Reserve Call-ups running concurrently—Bosnia, Kosovo and Southwest Asia. Called upon to support the explosion of overseas commitments ranging from Somalia to Kosovo, the Army National Guard (ARNG) and Army Reserve (USAR) play a vital and expanding role in our nation's National Security Strategy. Besides the traditional role of the reserve components as forces earmarked for major conflicts, Guard and Reserve forces are increasingly found all over the world supporting the national strategy of "engagement and enlargement." In addition, the Guard and Reserve are being asked to take on new roles such as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) support and national missile defense.

Army Reserve soldiers continue to provide vital support to both Balkans missions as well as real-world deployments to such far-flung regions as sub-Saharan Africa, Central America and Southeast Asia. The key role of the Army Reserve in Army operations cannot be overstated because certain critical high-demand/low-density specialties such as Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations are found almost exclusively in the Army Reserve. Without them, the effectiveness of the Army's deployed forces would be severely diminished.

The recent deployment of the Texas Guard's 49th Armored Division to Bosnia is a prime example of the expanded role of the reserve components in today's Army. Future deployments, such as the Virginia Guard's 29th Light Infantry Division's assumption of the Bosnia command, will include even more RC personnel.

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Full-Time Support: A Force Multiplier

The United States military has a long history of fielding trained and ready Guard and Reserve units when required by the National Military Strategy. Key to timely use of these forces is the premobilization status of the units called. Trained and equipped reserve component forces require less time following mobilization to be made ready for deployment and actual mission accomplishment. But these citizen-soldiers would have a difficult time accomplishing their mission without Full-Time Support (FTS). These full-time soldiers and technicians, known as Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) and Military Technicians (MilTechs), are the essential link to maintaining readiness in the Guard and Reserve. Unfortunately, there are far too few of these critical personnel because of a lack of funding and unrealistically low manning requirements.

FTS personnel are force multipliers who enable RC commanders to devote maximum time to training soldiers. AGRs and MilTechs ensure unit readiness throughout the Guard and Reserve. These full-time soldiers and civilians perform vital day-to-day functions, ranging from maintenance to essential leadership and staff roles. Full-timers are responsible for organizing, manning, recruiting, training, equipping and sustaining RC soldiers, as well as stationing RC units and soldier life-cycle support and management. An example of this critical role is sustaining and maintaining over \$46 billion of RC equipment. This allows traditional part-time Guardsmen and Reservists to concentrate on training for their warfighting and peacetime missions during drill weekends and Annual Training.

To support the expanded role of the Guard and Reserve, both of the Army's reserve components need more full-time help. This can only be accomplished by providing more money as well as increasing the required number of full-time personnel to a level that reflects the day-to-day real-world mission of the Army Guard and Reserve and the critical roles both play in today's Army.

Impact on Readiness

Inadequate numbers of full-timers—both AGRs and MilTechs—degrade unit readiness and quality of life for Guard and Reserve soldiers and their families. This directly affects readiness in a number of ways. Lack of sufficient FTS results in poorly planned training events, delays in salary payments and lost opportunities for schooling, among other problems. Any shortage of FTS personnel significantly reduces the ability to perform these functions and often forces part-time soldiers to spend valuable training time on tasks such as paperwork and equipment maintenance more properly done by full-timers. Furthermore, drilling reservists are often left with no choice but to work extra hours on their own time, usually in an unpaid status.

When citizen-soldiers have to resort to doing the work that should be performed by AGRs and MilTechs, it results in a further strain on families and employers, often negatively impacting retention. In addition, military education requirements for officers and NCOs, so critical to professionalism and career development, are also affected by making it more difficult for these citizen-soldiers to justify the extra time away from work and family.

Furthermore, inadequate FTS constrains high-priority RC units that are the first to deploy. The Army National Guard's 15 enhanced Separate Brigades (eSBs), a critical part of the nation's two-major-theater-war (MTW) strategy, rely on sufficient FTS to maintain combat readiness. In a recent General Accounting Office (GAO) report, eSB commanders cited shortages of FTS as the most important problem undermining readiness—*ahead of recruiting and retention*. The same GAO report stated that as recently as March 1999 the average eSB had only 177 of 282 full-timers required—and the eSBs are staffed at a higher level than other RC units. The shortfall in FTS staffing represents an unacceptable level of risk to our National Security Strategy.

Finally, the lack of sufficient full-time staffing limits support to new initiatives and missions the RC is being asked to perform. New initiatives include multicomponent units, AC/RC (active component/reserve component) Integrated Divisions, Division Teaming and Training Support Brigades. New missions jeopardized by the lack of adequate FTS include information operations, military assistance to civil authorities for WMD attacks, and national missile defense. This latter category will be primarily staffed by full-timers; this represents an unfunded increase in the demand for full-time manning.

Historically Underfunded

Despite the indispensable role of FTS personnel, they have historically been underfunded. The most recent example of this is the Senate Armed Services Committee's failure to recommend an increase in funding for FTS despite Congress' own mandate to increase the role of the Guard and Reserve with such missions as WMD support and national missile defense. Early-deploying Guard and Reserve units are manned at only two-thirds or less of their already constrained FTS requirements, while late-deploying units are lucky to have one-third of needed full-time personnel. The Army Guard's enhanced Separate Brigades—critical to fighting and winning major theater wars—have only 55 percent of FTS requirements. In order to provide the bare minimum of FTS to lower-priority units, these first-deployers are sometimes resourced at lower levels. Lower-priority units, in turn, are lucky to have even one out of five required full-time personnel assigned.

While all of the services are underresourced in this area, the Army is in the worst shape, with even lower FTS manning ratios than its sister services. The Department of Defense (DoD) average in 1999 for full-time personnel as a percentage of total reserve manpower was 17.21. In fact this number is skewed downward by low Army RC full-time manning ratios. The Air National Guard is manned with full-timers forming 33.67 percent of its force; the Air Force Reserve is 22.49 percent full-timers; and the Naval Reserve is 26.29 percent. In contrast, the Army National Guard was 13.29 percent while the Army Reserve was at the bottom of the list with only 10.17 percent of its total forces comprising full-timers.

Authorizations vs. Requirements

A further unique distinction of the Army Guard and Reserve is that of authorized full-time manning levels versus actual requirements. While the Army RC is manned at close to authorized FTS levels, the Department of the Army (DA) has recognized that the current level of authorization is totally inadequate to the Army's needs. The need for more FTS has resulted in DA recommendations for higher authorized levels.

These recommendations are based on a zero-risk requirement for AGRs and MilTechs of over 84,000. The Army National Guard requires a minimum of 23,500 AGRs and 25,500 MTs to start down the road to recovery from the shortfall in full-time support and meet DA maximum acceptable risk levels. Similarly, the Army Reserve needs to increase its authorization to around 34,000 to reach a zero-risk full-time manning level. To meet maximum risk levels, the Army Reserve needs around 25,000 AGRs and MilTechs.

However, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 Pentagon budget provides funding to the Army Guard for only 23,957 MilTechs and 22,430 AGRs. This represents a shortfall of 1,543 and 1,070, respectively—well below the DA definition of maximum risk. Ultimately, to address the impact of the shortage of full-time support it will be necessary to authorize and fund FTS at 100 percent for early-deploying units, 90 percent for units deploying in 90 days or less, and a minimum of 75 percent for all remaining units.

Conclusion

Today's expanded role for the RC does not come without a price. For Guard and Reserve units to be capable of taking on such missions as WMD support and national missile defense, and providing a rotational base for stability and support operations, in addition to more traditional roles, requires more resources, especially full-time manning. During the Gulf War, Marine Reserve combat units were used successfully. This success has been attributed to the 20 percent manning level of full-time personnel in Marine Reserve units. At half this level, the Army RC has a long way to go. Congress must provide additional funding to the Army National Guard for the addition of 1,543 Military Technicians and 1,070 Active Guard/Reserve personnel. Comparable increases for the Army Reserve should also be authorized.

In a security environment where the Army can expect neither an increase in endstrength nor a reduction in deployments, the role of the RC can only grow. To make this work, an increase in Full-Time Support is essential. Failure to do this at a time when increasing RC deployments are accompanied by an increase in employer complaints and strain on family members is risky at best.

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- Seven reserve call-ups since 1989, three concurrently today; the ARNG and USAR are a vital part of the Army's day-to-day real world operations.
- Full-Time Support personnel—AGRs and MilTechs—make it possible for part-time drilling reservists to devote the maximum time to training and thus to the overall readiness of the U.S. Army.
- A lack of full-time staffing negatively impacts the readiness of the Guard and Reserve; the Army has historically been underfunded in this respect, especially when compared to the other services.
- Inadequate Full-Time Support affects retention, professional development and quality of life for Guard and Reserve soldiers and their families and jeopardizes employer support.
- Authorized levels of Full-Time Support are woefully inadequate compared to actual Department of the Army validated requirements; authorizations must reflect requirements.
- With the expanded role of the Guard and Reserve in today's uncertain security environment, an increase in Full-Time Support is essential.

(Charles Lathrop is a National Security Analyst with the Institute of Land Warfare.)

