



REBALANCING THE FORCE: WEIGHING THE ROLES OF THE COMPONENTS

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“The balance of capabilities in the Active and Reserve Components today is not the best for the future. We need to promote judicious and prudent use of the Reserve components with force rebalancing initiatives that reduce strain through the efficient application of manpower and technological solutions based on a disciplined force requirements process.”

Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense

July 2003

BACKGROUND

Conduct of the Global War on Terrorism has raised the involuntary mobilization of Army Reserve and National Guard forces to their highest levels since World War II. This increased reliance on the Reserve Components (RC) prompted the Secretary of Defense to direct the Services, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Under Secretaries of Defense to examine whether and how to “rebalance forces” in order to reduce the need to involuntarily mobilize the Guard and Reserve. The Army’s mission analysis is well underway, and the resulting AC/RC force structure will impact how the components provide appropriate and ready forces in support of the entire spectrum of missions overseas and for Homeland Security.

PURPOSE

The Army War College’s Center for Strategic Leadership hosted 75 participants at a workshop conducted December 2-4, 2003 at the Collins Center, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania to examine current issues surrounding emerging defense strategy, RC contributions to both operating and generating forces, and the role of the RC in Homeland Security.

Workshop attendees included members of the Active Army, Army Reserve, and the Army and Air National Guard, as well as individuals from a variety of Department of Defense (DOD) organizations and non-governmental agencies. Representatives from Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, Joint Staff Strategy Plans and Policy, Army G3 Strategy and Plans and Force Management, and US Northern Command (NORTHCOM) provided updates on key issues, current initiatives and other ideas on Active Component vs. Reserve Component (AC/RC) rebalancing and repositioning. The participant workshop groups examined the unresolved issues brought forth by the presenters

and developed recommendations that were presented to a Senior Leader “blue-ribbon panel” of 10 General Officers, chaired by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense. Significant issues, observations, and recommendations put before the panel included the following:

TOTAL FORCE POLICY

Should the Army’s Total Force Policy (the Abrams Doctrine) be revised, and if so how? There was unanimous agreement that during lead-up-to and execution of war, the bond between active and reserve forces, and between the American military and the American people must be maintained. The group was less certain what the exact mechanisms for ensuring those ties actually were now, or what they ought to be in the future. Thus, whether the specifics of the “Abrams Doctrine” or existing “Total Force” policies should be retained, revised, or discarded requires a careful assessment of National objectives and desires. With that said the principle objectives of the rebalancing proposal as presented by the Army G3 are to effectively meet the Defense Secretary’s guidance to structure the AC/RC mix so as to reduce the need for involuntary mobilizations, establish a more rigorous process for reviewing joint requirements and capabilities, and make the mobilization/demobilization process more efficient. The participants cautioned that we must be cognizant of the impact any new “restructuring initiative” will have on soldiers lives, and should insert as much predictability into policy and procedures as possible. Waiting for or counting upon new legislation is not the best means to this end. Lessons learned from recent RC deployments indicate that any “new” policies will have to address “old” problems, including diversity in equipment, unfulfilled training requirements, and the challenge of personnel rotation. Finally, a “rebalanced force” will have to introduce innovative management to assist in resolving the challenges of early responsiveness and stressed career fields. Recommendations towards these ends included:

- Maintain the Total Force Policy. Ensuring balance of priority units (early deployers) and combat elements in both the AC/RC. Increase the personnel and training readiness of selected RC units as required. Complete an effective analysis by looking ahead at future expectations and requirements such as warfighting, stabilization, and recovery operations.
- Encourage additional programs such as financial incentives for multiple deployments, employer tax incentives, medical malpractice relief, civil service hiring preferences, and retirement credits.
- Collect meaningful data to support RC volunteerism by defining the demand and requirements (numbers, skill sets, etc). Explore innovative use of pools of volunteers, the transfer of legal enforcement for Reemployment Rights from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice, designate RC members as a “protected category” by law to prevent employment discrimination, and develop an expedited re-entry program for retirees and separated soldiers.
- Support the mindset toward rapid response operations by transforming “mobilization” to “transition to active duty.” Structure and resource a majority of RC units to full personnel and equipment levels to create and maintain the appropriate high state of readiness. Accept RC unit chain of command certification of Soldier Readiness Processing and pre-deployment training, while maintaining overall training readiness oversight with the AC.

Should the RC be structured for full spectrum operations or designed and apportioned for less than full-spectrum capabilities? There was agreement that the RC is an integral part of the Total Force and provides a cost effective and ready capability for the Combatant Commanders. That said, some participants argued for a force structured with units designed to handle multiple missions. Other participants suggested that general purposes forces trained on “core tasks” could, with mission specific training, better meet emerging threats or mission requirements. Either “multiple mission” approach, it was argued, provides a full spectrum force to support the National Security Strategy, and mitigates risk by being flexible enough to respond to uncertain or

currently unforeseen threats or crises. A third group of participants felt a force with units structured to address specific threats may be easier to train -- both individually and collectively--, and therefore is less likely to stress the institutional training base. They held that the individual elements of this force could be most effectively used in domestic defense, or deployed for specific phases in overseas operations, respectively. Some specific recommendations ensuing from the discussion included:

- Maintain warfighting roles in the RC. However, conduct an “RC-in-Homeland Security (HLS)” study examining the concept of a “domestically focused element” in the RC, specially trained and equipped for the civil support component of homeland security. Contrast this “RC-in-HLS” study against another study devoted to “multi-functional divisions (MFD),” e.g., divisions structured and trained to be capable of many traditional warfighting functions, but also capable of rapid, flexible “reconfiguring.” Such reconfiguration might be for homeland security in support of a designated lead federal agency, or for stability and support operations overseas. From these two studies, determine which approach or combination of approaches best serves the requirement for National defense, including protection of the homeland.
- Continue to resolve high-demand/low-density imbalances in the current force structure such as civil affairs and military police through AC/RC rebalancing and/or increased personnel and training readiness.
- Encourage developing and sustaining specialized CBRNE capabilities for “the domestic front” within DHS, not DOD. Existing NG WMD CSTs may remain an exception to this preferred approach. DOD CBRNE is required to support expeditionary missions as required by the Combatant Commanders (COCOMs). This would, of course, not preclude the introduction of DOD assets in support of a WMD incident beyond the capabilities of available local, state, and DHS responders, in consonance with the Stafford Act and the National Response Plan.

RESERVE COMPONENT ROLE IN HOMELAND SECURITY

For the Reserve Components, what are the appropriate roles and relationships for Homeland Defense to include DOD, external agencies, and the states/territories? With unique exceptions, participants felt that current force apportionment for Homeland Security does not take full advantage of National Guard and Army Reserve capabilities. Recommendations included:

- Determine which HLS/HLD missions are so specific (e.g., non-lethals?) that they need unique or specially structured DOD organizations dedicated to those missions.
- Establish formal relationships between Combatant Commanders (PACOM and NORTHCOM) and the state-JFHQs in order to promote unity of effort. Although the current draft of the FY04 “Forces for” Memorandum establishes coordinating authority between COCOMs and National Guard forces not in Title 10 status, it remains extremely challenging to achieve unity of effort without more formal relationships.
- Make Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) a primary mission of the National Guard. The National Guard, under the command and control of the governors, provides the best geographical “awareness” for the mission and is unencumbered by the provisions of the Posse Comitatus Act. A tiered approach for critical infrastructure protection should be considered, with DOD Title 10 forces retaining their traditional security responsibilities for defense installations and National Guard forces (under either Title 32 or State Active Duty status) providing security for portions of the Defense Industrial Base and other identified critical infrastructure in the public and private sector.

CONCLUSION

The Reserve Components have long been essential elements of total U.S. military power. However, current and projected requirements in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Global War on Terror have stressed U.S. total military capabilities in new ways. Thus, “Rebalancing the Force” is critical to executing the National Security Strategy. Any “rebalanced” Army must be capable of rapid strategic deployment and must be capable of achieving victory in both decisive combat and sustained stability operations overseas. At the same time it must become equally prepared to defend the homeland, directly and through civil support operations. Successful management of change will demand that the Army’s leadership weigh carefully the desired and designed contribution of each component to achieve these vital ends, and the provision of sufficient resources to those components to ensure the required high levels of readiness.

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