Colloquium Brief Strategic Studies Institute

U.S. Army War College and
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STATE OF THE U.S. MILITARY RESERVE COMPONENTS

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KEY INSIGHTS:

- Without significant participation by the Reserve Components (RC), effective current and near future military operations and domestic emergency response would not be possible.
- The current debate about designation of the RC as operational or strategic is largely artificial and unproductive; the RC have periodically performed major operations, constantly conducted domestic operations, and been part of all past war plans; the difference now is that the current high operational tempo makes obvious the centrality of these forces for successful operations.
- Leveraging the civilian capacities and knowledge of the RC in missions abroad while making domestic and foreign missions more congruent will ensure that the National Guard and Reserve continue to add strategic depth and operational flexibility to the active force.
- The continuum of service goal is to make the transition between active and reserve statuses seamless. Achieving this goal will require implementation of several approved personnel management initiatives and adoption of additional proposals.
- The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves recently released a report that offers recommendations on many of the same issues discussed by colloquium participants. Some recommendations appear consistent with participants' opinions, while others only partially agree or totally disagree.

The "Future Defense Dilemmas" seminar series is a partnership between the 21st Century Defense Initiative at the Brookings Institution and the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. Its goal is to bring together defense experts and policy leaders from academia, the military and defense community, other governmental organizations, and nongovernmental institutions for discussions on looming defense questions and dilemmas.

On March 6, 2008, the 21st Century Defense Initiative and the Strategic Studies Institute held the third seminar of the series. Entitled "The State of the U.S. Military Reserve Components," this seminar focused on the future mission sets and priorities, personnel policies, and deployment of National Guard and Reserve troops.

The seminar consisted of two panels and a luncheon speaker. The first panel explored missions for which the National Guard and Reserve should be trained, equipped, and deployed, and their priority. The morning panel included Major General James Kelley, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; Christine Wormuth, Senior Fellow with the International Security Program at the

Center for Strategic and International Studies; and Dr. James Carafano, Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

Lieutenant General Steven H. Blum was the featured lunch speaker and addressed the question of whether or not the concept of *strategic reserve* is still viable and the consequences for the National Guard and Reserve in terms of end strength, recruiting, training, equipment, and deployment.

The afternoon panel considered the issue of adapting the personnel policies of the RC in light of mission requirements, current recruiting environment, and the generational change in attitudes towards serving in the military. The experts on this panel were Dr. Michelle A. Dolfini-Reed, Senior Research Analyst, CNA Corporation; and Mr. Kevin Crowley, Deputy Director, Manpower and Personnel, National Guard Bureau.

Professor Douglas Lovelace, Director of the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College, and Dr. Peter W. Singer, Director of the 21st Century Defense Initiative at Brookings, provided introductory remarks. Dr. Singer also introduced the panel speakers and moderated the discussions.

Participants generally agreed about the future security environment and demands placed on the U.S. defense system. The country's military capabilities must be able to honor traditional security commitments such as those with Korea, NATO, and Japan. Recent armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere have highlighted the need for additional capabilities in irregular, asymmetric, and counterinsurgency warfare, including stabilization and reconstruction operations. The U.S. military must also retain the capability to intervene in any contingency situation that threatens its national interests abroad. In addition to these demands, the RC face security, defense, and disaster response requirements at home, which have grown substantially since September 11, 2001 (9/11). As a result, the National Guard and Reserve will continue to be essential segments of the U.S. military, particularly in areas such as transportation and medical services, where they deliver 80 percent and 75 percent, respectively, of U.S. military capability. Without the RC, current and future military operations and domestic emergency response would not be possible.

The increased use of the RC was foreshadowed by their deployments to Bosnia during the early and mid 1990s, and was further accelerated to unprecedented levels in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many experts have described this increase as a shift from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve. Participants disagreed about the definition of these terms, but many argued that the difference is artificial—that past war and operations plans have always relied on the RC and not just in case of a shortage of active duty units. The difference then was that the operational tempo was not high enough, or as high as in Iraq or Afghanistan, for anybody to notice the centrality of these forces in operations.

Participants agreed that the question was not whether, but rather how and to what extent to use the RC, specifically in foreign operations. The central question was how to equip, train, and organize the RC to perform their missions effectively and in a sustainable way.

The discussion highlighted our inability to sustain the RC at the current operational tempo, which has created challenges for recruiting and retention, and has placed a tremendous burden on families and businesses. The need for counterinsurgency capabilities has left RC units training for little else, including domestic emergency response. In addition, materiel on hand at many nondeployed National Guard units is barely 50 percent because much of their equipment is being used in Afghanistan or Iraq, or has been destroyed or damaged there. Lack of unit cohesion is another problem that has emerged as the result of cross-leveling of equipment and personnel with other units that are deploying. It will take 2-3 more years before the RC, as ready units, can be mobilized.

One answer to the increased demands placed on the U.S. military has been the growth in endstrength of the Active Duty Army and the Marine Corps by some 65,000 and 27,000 troops, respectively. This decision, however, was not primarily intended to relieve the RC, which will continue to be relied on heavily, but reflects the simple need for more boots on the ground to conduct operations in the current and anticipated security environment. The decision to increase the RC by some 9,200 troops by 2013 is targeted to relieve

the strain on the National Guard and Reserve.

Another approach, debated in the afternoon panel, to make use of the RC sustainable is to change personnel policies. The primary goal of these changes is to make National Guard and Reserve service attractive options in recruiting, to stabilize retention rates, and to bring some predictability and stability to RC soldiers, their families, and immediate environment, including the business community.

The debates about whether or not and to what extent to use RC troops abroad and at home, what roles and missions they should have, and whether they should be operational or strategic are popular but simplistic, addressing what appear to be clear-cut national security issues. However, as the discussion highlighted, no doubt the RC will be used at home and abroad, they will be performing roles and missions across the spectrum of conflict, and they will remain a central element of operational planning. Accommodating these realities into a holistic military and defense structure requires two things: money and trust. Neither is politically easy to obtain. Politicians avoid raising military and defense spending and evade decisions on budget allocations, where money for more visible, politically attractive, but less relevant projects is cut and transferred to less attractive but more useful programs for current and future conflicts. However, additional resources are exactly what will be needed to create RC that are capable of responding in a sustainable and cost effective way.

Many in the reserve community fear that additional funding for capabilities to conduct stability and reconstruction operations or civil support operations may reduce funding for their current greatest source of income, Title 10 warfighting. An active Army trust issue seems to be the source for resisting reforms in command and control structures which propose to place active duty Army under the command of an Adjunct General or another National Guard general officer for Title 10 operations (as has been proposed under some circumstances by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves).

At the heart of the debate is how to cost-effectively sustain reliance on the RC. Although enlargement is necessary and will relieve some of the operational pressures, it is only part of the solution and will necessarily cost money—spending will have to increase. The Administration and Congress must be willing to fund the National Guard at the appropriate levels, not just for personnel increases but also for equipment readiness and training.

Sustainability and cost effectiveness must be further enhanced by formulating missions that integrate the strengths of the RC, specifically the skills that members retain from their civilian jobs. Support to Afghan farmers (about 70 percent of the population) is an example of where the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) needs supplementing. The Missouri National Guard had soldiers who were farmers and leveraged their skills to help Afghans develop modern agribusinesses.

Leveraging civilian skill sets may also be useful in areas such as information technology (IT) and communications technology. The cyber world is increasingly important for national security, and many RC members have extensive experience that can be used in military operations. Contracting and contract oversight offer another possibility. Experience with contractors in Iraq illustrated that the U.S. Government lacks the capabilities to diligently manage its contracting, including writing contracts, assessing progress, and acting in case of contract breaches. The National Guard could provide a skilled and scalable expeditionary contracting force to oversee private sector support.

Finally, when possible, RC home missions should be congruent with those abroad. Stability, or Phase IV, operations are missions where domestic and foreign training and equipment requirements converge. Many requirements in Baghdad are not that different from those in New Orleans. The missions that one would expect the military to perform in stability operations, whether they involve rebuilding critical infrastructure, public safety, civilian capacity building, or humanitarian assistance, are also essential tasks in domestic emergency response and civil support missions. Some argue that rather than using the RC for stabilization missions, military and police training, and counterinsurgency, Special Operations Forces (SOF) should be used. However, maintaining the necessary SOF forces would be more expensive and less easily scalable.

Focusing RC units on stabilization operations, a long-term mission, could increase predictability for their mobilization. However, many RC capabilities, including SOF, logistics, and transport, are also necessary to move military forces into theater and support their combat operations in the early phases of conflict. These capabilities will continue to be needed and, to the degree that strategic unpredictability remains, units that perform these vital tasks will retain uncertainty in their demand.

On the home front, the RC could focus more on civilian support missions, a need that was illustrated by Hurricane Katrina. Current training, equipment, and organization of the RC, however, are geared toward traditional warfighting, a shortcoming that was highlighted in Commission of National Guard and Reserves (CNGR) report. The Department of Defense (DoD) has only recently acknowledged the importance of civil support missions, after decades of considering them as a less important subset of traditional military capabilities. One approach to facilitate the transition to civil support operations at home would be to regionalize RC forces in terms of planning, training, and exercise, congruent with FEMA regions.

DoD and politicians continue to debate the important issue of command and control for civil support missions, specifically with regard to mixed Title 10, or federalized, military forces, Title 32, and even State active duty forces operating together domestically. A number of missions, including border security, airport security, and firefighting are performed by some combination of these mixed forces. Some these missions are under the command authority of NORTHCOM or other federal agencies, and, in other cases, the governor may retain command. More exploration is necessary to assess which arrangements and authorizations make the most sense, depending on the type of mission and other circumstantial aspects.

Strategic Versus Operational Reserve.

The discussion among military services, defense experts, and the media often frames the high operational tempo of the RC today as a shift from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve. It is difficult to have a fruitful discussion about this dichotomy without a common starting point provided by a clear and shared vision or definition that stipulates the difference between the two. The presentations and discussion during all three panels highlighted the various approaches that civilian agencies, military branches, and defense experts take.

Some link the concepts to how the military forces are positioned, operationally or strategically, depending on the severity of the threat to national interests. This could be labeled as a force posture approach. Others view it as a force mobilization issue, where operational forces allow for more responsiveness because they can be deployed more quickly in cases of emergencies.

The report of the CNGR includes in its definition of the operational reserves all members of the Selected Reserve, that is, members of units that drill and selected individuals such as Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMA), the Individual Ready Reserves, and potentially other individuals who are mobilization assets. This definition combines aspects of a readily available mobilization force and force depth. The very inclusiveness of this definition is what others point to as its weakness.

A more restricted definition, supported by some, is based on RC status; operational reserves are those that are mobilized for employment or deployment in an operation. Accordingly, all forces that are not deployed would be a strategic reserve. Others contend that any forces included in a war plan or rotational plan cannot be part of the strategic reserves. These approaches have their limits, though. If the criteria for strategic reserve is "not deployed" assets, then most of the active duty Army, the National Guard, and the Reserve would be strategic. If inclusion in the war planning is the criteria, than most of the military forces in the United States would have been operational during the Cold War because every single military asset was spoken for in the plans for a possible military engagement with the USSR.

For all the differences in definitions and approaches that were mentioned in the discussion, two common themes stood out. First, everybody agreed that the RC will be used at a high opera-

tional level, at least in the near future. Second, everybody thought that a strategic reserve, whatever its nature, is still necessary to provide the nation with the ability to deal with uncertainty, inexact intelligence, and bad presumptions. The underlying ideas of a strategic reserve combine various elements of the approaches mentioned above: mobilization, albeit a slower tempo, adding depth to the force not only for emergencies but as a dependable ready force, and creating flexibility for planning and execution of war plans.

The national mobilization program has long defined the concept of strategic reserve as much more than the military. Only in recent years has the strategic reserve debate been seriously extended to reserve capabilities of other government agencies, most frequently the State Department, international partners and organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. As the recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan has shown, such an interagency and international approach is necessary.

Rather than discussing the strategic or operational nature of the RC, the central and more important issue is whether or not the RC are funded, equipped, and trained for their assigned missions. As many others highlighted during the seminar, the United States has long relied on the RC as a central element for its warfighting capabilities, while domestic operations have been constant.

With the end of the draft in 1973 and the downsizing of the Army, the centrality of RC participation in military operations was guaranteed. Since then, the operational tempo for RC missions abroad has increased, especially in the 1990s, when the military conducted the first large combat ground operations since Vietnam. The current campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have taken this trend to a higher level.

The shift to continuous operational participation was not accompanied by the necessary changes in funding, training, equipment, and personnel policies. For more than 30 years, the RC was used as part of the operational force in international missions, while at the same time being organized around pre-1973 principles. For wars overseas, the active component of the military must remain the largest portion of the "tip of the spear." It is able to deploy significant combat power quickly and is trained to engage immediately. The RC provide some assets to the quick response, but the much larger balance of their forces are more suited to adding strategic depth to a campaign. This added value becomes especially apparent in extended, soldier-intensive, and difficult to sustain operations, such as stabilization and reconstruction.

The United States has the necessary financial and manpower assets to resource a strategic reserve that can, when required, contribute significantly to an operational, expeditionary force. However, we discovered that the 15-month deployment cycle could not be sustained. More than 60 percent of the Army National Guard has deployed for at least a year since 2003, 60 percent of NCOs and officers currently serving are war veterans, not including Vietnam, and every single combat formation of the ARNG has been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Mobilization lengths should ideally be between 9 and 12 months to ensure continuous and effective RC participation in operations; the 12 month mobilizations can be sustained for many years. In addition, a 12-month RC mobilization places the RC and active duty army into similar rotation cycles and offers some predictability for their families and employers. Over 95 percent of RC members hold civilian jobs, and a 12-month mobilization will make sure that employers still support their employees' service.

On the home front, however, the roles are reversed. Since the formation of militia units in 1636, the National Guard has been at the center for planning and, when necessary, conducting domestic operations. Today, more than 10,000 National Guard soldiers are active, providing services in their communities and responding to emergencies. They are the first military responders domestically.

By focusing the RC for the operational role of fighting wars, they become less than fully equipped for the leadership role in domestic missions; they have deficiencies in command and control mandates, communications equipment, general purpose aviation assets, and trucks. For their domestic mission, the RC are unlikely to need attack helicopters or tanks, but are likely to need heavy lift transport helicopters, as well as heavy trucks, engineer equipment, and medical

supplies. With equipment availability levels at around 50 percent for most National Guard units, additional resources to enhance critical domestic capabilities obviously are required.

The essential capabilities for the RC to effectively perform their domestic missions are also useful for many foreign operations. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and reconstruction, and other missions require the same capabilities and equipment as domestic emergencies. The skills and equipment (trucks, airplanes, and helicopters) used for disaster response at home are also used in Talil, Iraq, and Bagram, Afghanistans, augmenting the effort of the active component military.

Leveraging the civilian capacities and knowledge of the RC in missions abroad as well as making domestic and foreign missions more congruent will ensure that the National Guard and Reserve continue to add strategic depth and operational flexibility to the active force. It is essential, however, that the RC be equipped, funded, and trained in a way that makes such deployments sustainable and affordable. The domestic mission requirements and essential capabilities would provide an excellent starting point in preparing the RC for a leadership role at home and a supporting role abroad. Together with the right personnel policy and deployment rotation, the RC can field an effective operational force that provides strategic depth and flexibility at the same time.

Personnel Policy.

Despite the recent high operational tempo, the National Guard has been able to recruit and retain more people than planned. Historically, Guard recruits came from active service; 50 percent of today's enlistments are nonprior service individuals. The Army National Guard is currently about 5,000 members above the authorized 350,000.

One of the recruiting challenges faced by the military is the shrinking demographic base of individuals eligible for service. While the Active Army is having difficulty meeting its recruiting goal of qualified people from the reduced pool, the Guard is succeeding. The percent of Guard recruits that are classified as CAT IV (about 2.4 percent) and who have high school diplomas (91.2 percent) are at targeted levels.

The National Guard attributes its success partly to its Full Spectrum of Care approach that offers five programs. The Army calls the first one the Army Integrated Family Support Network. It offers access to more than 450 Family Assistance Centers and other facilities. It leverages National Guard facilities, Joint facilities, and services provided by the Marine Corps and the Navy.

The second program addresses the issue of providing personnel information to the service members in a timely and accurate manner. For this, the National Guard has established the Transition Assistance Advisor Program. Through this program, reserve soldiers returning from active duty are informed about their benefits and entitlements when they arrive at the demobilization site. If mental or physical injuries are reported or assessed, the program will put them on the right path for treatment.

Because of the high operational tempo and long deployment times, the National Guard placed much effort into creating an Employer Support program. There is now an employer support advisor in all 50 states and four other jurisdictions, providing information and guidance to employers who have Guard members as employees.

Another issue important to the military, including the National Guard, is sexual assault. The Guard has created a mandate to provide sexual assault prevention and response programs, and someone is always on call to take care of sexual abuse victims, including forensic examination, counseling, and treatment.

Finally, the National Guard has adopted a program to reintegrate soldiers after deployments to areas of conflict. The program assists and facilitates the transition from a war environment back into civilian life; assistance is available for 5 years.

Congress has approved or continues to consider a number of other changes in personnel policies that target the quality of life in the AC and the RC. The transition from one status to the other requires going from one management system and its set of benefits to a completely different system. Many argue for a simpler approach, often referred to as "continuum of service," that allows for easy

transition among varying levels of participation in the military.

This continuum of service goal would be to make the transition between active and reserve statuses seamless, with a blended pay system that accommodates varying levels of service under one management program. The system would also blend benefits and entitlements, removing another barrier to transition between statuses.

The continuum of service aims to increase flexibility and predictability with regard to deployments and mobilization, and to expand opportunities for military service by attracting skilled and talented individuals who otherwise would not volunteer. By creating one system that manages all levels of participation with seamless transitions, the Army can maximize management efficiency and reinforce its Army of One concept by capitalizing on the total force integration concept.

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