

# **Reserve Component Transformation: Opportunity for Real Change**

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**D**espite a number of studies and recommendations conducted in the last several years on potential changes to the size, shape, and focus of the National Guard and federal Reserves, the Department of Defense (DoD) has generally made only gradual changes to the Reserve Component. While the transformation of the Guard and Reserves has been particularly gradual in the area of homeland defense and civil support, DoD and Congress now have the opportunity and the responsibility to make real changes that will ensure the future health of the National Guard and Reserves.

Since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the spotlight has been shining brightly on the National Guard and Reserves. In the aftermath of the attacks, the nation relied heavily on the Guard and the Reserves to help protect the homeland. National Guard troops provided airport security and critical infrastructure protection in the weeks following the attacks until they could be replaced with civilian security. The Air National Guard flew extensive combat air patrols in the months following September 11<sup>th</sup> and has continued to play a key role in the air sovereignty mission for the past five years.

The DoD has also mobilized Reserve Component units extensively to serve in overseas operations as part of the war against Islamic extremism. Reserve units were quickly mobilized and deployed to Afghanistan in

the fall of 2001, and since 2003 nearly every combat brigade of the National Guard has been deployed as well.<sup>1</sup>

Since the beginning of combat operations in Iraq, thousands of soldiers from the Army and Marine Corps Reserves have also deployed. Currently, Navy and Air Force Reserve personnel are performing what many call “boots-on-the-ground” missions to relieve some of the pressure on Army and Marine soldiers that make up the bulk of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. In October 2006 the U.S. Marine Corps announced that it was planning to deploy certain reserve combat battalions for a second tour in Iraq to enable DoD to maintain sufficient numbers of troops in the Middle East.

Reserve Component forces also play a critical role at home in the United States. In September 2005, the National Guard sent 50,000 soldiers to the Gulf Coast to assist in the response to Hurricane Katrina. Although federal Reserve forces could not be mobilized involuntarily by law at the time of Hurricane Katrina, many reserve soldiers volunteered to help with response and recovery operations in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama.

The prominent role of the National Guard and federal reserves both at home and overseas during the last several years has generated a great deal of media attention. The broader defense community also has focused more closely on Reserve Component issues, recognizing that Guard and Reserve forces have become an important part of the military’s operational force. As part of this enhanced focus on the Reserve Component, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) released a comprehensive study analyzing how the National Guard and Reserves can best be organized, trained, equipped and employed in the future.<sup>2</sup> Congress also has called for more attention on Guard and Reserve issues. The FY05 National Defense Authorization Act

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1. David M. Walker, “RESERVE FORCES Army National Guard’s Role, Organization, and Equipment Need to be Reexamined,” testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, the U.S. House of Representatives, at [www.gao.gov/new.items/d06170t.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06170t.pdf), p. 1 (November 19, 2006).
  2. Christine E. Wormuth, *The Future of the National Guard and Reserves: The Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Phase III Report*, July 2006, pp. 136-145, at [www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn\\_ph3\\_report.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn_ph3_report.pdf).

chartered an independent Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR) that presented recommendations on recent legislation relating to the Reserve Component to Congress in March 2007 and is expected to release a final report in July 2008.

Making real changes to the Reserve Component requires not only serious study to generate thoughtful recommendations about how to best reshape the Guard and Reserves, but also the political will to implement good ideas. The potential for real change may be greater in the next few years than it has been for some time. While Robert Gates will likely spend most of his time focused on the situation in Iraq, as the new Secretary of Defense he may also bring a new perspective to the challenges facing the nation's ground forces, both active and reserve. The 2006 election returned control of both houses of Congress to the Democratic Party, which may also create new opportunities to examine important issues relating to the health of the Guard and Reserves. Finally, the presidential election in 2008 will bring a new occupant to the White House, and regardless of which party wins the presidency, a new President may have new ideas about how to use the Reserve Component.

### **Fix the Army First**

While the National Guard and Reserves could play an even greater role in homeland defense and consequence management, before the Reserve Component can do more in those areas, fundamental changes must be made to ensure the overall health of Reserve Component forces. In particular, the Army—both active and reserve—is overstretched and must be fixed, or the health of the all-volunteer force could be at risk.

It is clear that even if the United States begins to reduce its military footprint in Iraq in the next few years, the demand for military forces in the future will remain relatively high. The demands of ongoing operations coupled with the need to respond to unforeseen events—such as a potential coup in Pakistan or aggression on the Korean peninsula—means there will be a continuing need to ensure sufficient numbers of combat-ready troops are available at all times. The Army today is too small to be able to do all that it is asked to do as part of the nation's national security strategy. Recent reports that the Pentagon is

preparing to change the mobilization policy for National Guard and Reserve units in order to increase access to these soldiers is further confirmation that the Army cannot sustain its current pace at its current size. Remobilizing Reserve Component forces would not be a small shift in policy. Under existing policy, Guard and reserve soldiers can be involuntarily mobilized for no more than 24 cumulative months. In essence this means that most mobilized Guard and Reserve troops serve one time overseas in places like Iraq or Afghanistan. If the Pentagon revisits this deployment policy, Guard and Reserve troops could be mobilized involuntarily more than once per partial mobilization order, as long as each specific deployment is less than 24 months at a time. While this re-mobilization would be permissible under law, it would represent a dramatic change in practice from how the Pentagon has historically mobilized members of the Reserve Component, which has been one involuntary deployment per Presidential Executive Order. If the active Army were sufficiently sized for its mission, the Pentagon would not be forced to contemplate mobilization policies that clearly go beyond what can reasonably be expected of volunteer, citizen-soldiers who have full-time lives as civilians. This proposed policy change could have significant negative consequences for recruitment and retention during a time in which it is already challenging to sustain Reserve Component end-strength.

Current troop rotation cycles are a further indication of the strain on the Total Army. A sustainable active Army spends two years at home for every one away so that its soldiers can rest, train and get ready for future deployments. Similarly, the Defense Department has determined that Guard and Reserve forces need to spend four to five years at home for every one year deployed. Currently, most active-duty Army soldiers are spending only about one year at home before going back overseas, and Guard and Reserve troops are spending only three years at home in between deployments. The Army cannot maintain this operational pace and expect to recruit and retain the high quality troops on which the all-volunteer force depends. If the Army is going to meet its goal of keeping active soldiers home for two years between deployments and Reserve Component soldiers home for four to five years between deployments, the Defense Department needs to expand the active Army by about an additional four to five combat brigades

and associated support forces. This relatively modest expansion would ease the strain on the current force and allow the Army to maintain an adequate balance between the amount of time soldiers spend at home and overseas.

Not only is the current Total Army too small for its mission, it also is facing very significant equipment shortfalls. This problem is particularly acute for the Army Guard and Reserves as they transition from being a strategic reserve to part of the operational force that is employed on a regular basis. Battle damaged and worn-out equipment from extensive use, coupled with the legacy of equipping National Guard and Reserve units as a strategic reserve rather than part of the operational force, have left the Guard and Reserves ill-equipped for current and future missions. In October 2005, the Government Accountability Office reported that Army National Guard units left behind more than 64,000 individual pieces of equipment, worth \$1.4 billion, in the Iraq theater in order to ensure incoming units from the United States would have sufficient equipment when they arrived in theater.<sup>3</sup> Army Reserve units also have left behind and transferred large numbers of equipment in order to equip deploying units adequately for their missions overseas. While understanding the need to have adequately equipped troops overseas, governors and legislators have expressed considerable concern about whether National Guard units returning home from operations in Iraq have sufficient equipment left to respond to domestic emergencies as a result of the leave-behind policy. If the United States plans to continue using the National Guard and Reserves as part of the operational force, the Pentagon needs to develop a new equipment strategy to ensure the Reserve Component can execute this role effectively.

Equipping the Reserve Component to serve as part of the operation force will not come cheaply. In its study on the future of the National Guard and Reserves, the CSIS report recommended that DoD spend at least an additional \$13 billion over the next five years, on top of the \$21 billion already included in the current five-year budget, to

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3. David M. Walker, "Government Accountability Office, Reserve Forces: Army National Guard's Role, Organization, and Equipment Need to Be Reexamined," testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform, October 20, 2005.

adequately equip the Army National Guard and Army Reserve.<sup>4</sup> Although its shortfalls are not as dramatic as those the Army faces, the Marine Corps Reserve also needs substantial funding to reset equipment in need of repair and replacement. Without this additional funding, Reserve Component ground forces will be unable to function as part of the operational force over time.

## **The Reserve Component in Homeland Defense and Civil Support**

When it comes to homeland defense and civil support, the National Guard and Reserves are a tremendous resource. The National Guard of the several States, as the state militia envisioned in the Constitution, exist in all 54 states and territories and work routinely with members of local communities. National Guard soldiers are a part of their local population, they have extensive experience working with municipal authorities, and they have considerable flexibility in terms of the missions they can conduct if they are employed in state active duty or Title 32 status. Reserve soldiers are also forward deployed throughout the country, and Congress recently gave the President broader authority to mobilize these soldiers involuntarily in the event of a catastrophe. With this new authority, it will be easier for DoD to leverage the capabilities resident in the federal Reserves that could make a real difference in managing the consequences of a natural or man-made disaster.

Not only do the National Guard and Reserves offer substantial operational capabilities relevant to homeland defense and civil support missions, they also have the potential to form part of a more regional approach to homeland security. In recent years there has been a growing realization that more needs to be done at the regional level to properly prepare for future disasters. Recently, the government has taken steps toward strengthening the regionalization of homeland security policy, particularly in the White House Katrina after-action report, which called for greater regional cooperation, exercising, and training. The FY07 Homeland Security Appropriations Act also contained a provision

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4. Wormuth, "The Future of the National Guard and Reserves..." p. 10.

aimed at strengthening regional structures inside the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).<sup>5</sup>

## **Establish Regional Civil Support Forces**

The National Guard in particular offers a substantial capability that if used to maximum effect could both improve the nation's ability to respond rapidly and effectively to major catastrophes and build a more regional approach to homeland defense and civil support. Although in recent years the National Guard has taken a number of steps to focus more intensely on these mission areas, more can and should be done to ensure the nation is truly prepared to address the domestic security challenges it faces in the post-September 11 environment.

To ensure that governors have the resources they need to respond effectively to major catastrophes, the National Guard could be organized to form the backbone of Civil Support Forces (CSF) in each of the ten Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions. These CSFs would be drawn from existing National Guard units and would have two primary functions. Each CSF would serve as a coordinator and facilitator for developing regional response plans for catastrophes. The regional CSFs also would serve as one of the initial military responders in the wake of a disaster or attack. They would have the ability to deploy rapidly in order to bridge the gap between when the local first responders arrive on scene and the arrival of federal assets more than 72 hours later.

A major focus of the CSF would be helping to facilitate better working relationships between the wide range of stakeholders in each FEMA region, including state and local governments; Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and Army North (ARNORTH); DHS/FEMA offices; Coast Guard elements in the region; and even key players in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector who might play a part in a regional response. All of these organizations have important roles in responding to a terrorist attack or disaster. The best disaster response would be one in which all the organizations

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5. The White House, "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned," (Washington, DC: February 2006), p.124, at [www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/) (November 19, 2006).

work together, using their different areas of expertise to provide the most effective response, but all too often today the representatives of these diverse organizations are meeting each other for the first time in the middle of the crisis. The headquarters element of the CSF could play a major role in establishing working relationships among these stakeholders on a steady-state basis so that if and when a disaster occurs, key players already know how they will interact during a response.

Establishing CSFs in the National Guard would not require building new force structure. The DoD and National Guard could build on the new state Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ), selecting one state in each region to serve as the CSF headquarters and designating it as a focal point for civil support planning, exercising, and training. That JFHQ-state would then work with other states in the region to identify the response capabilities needed for that particular region and determine which National Guard unit elements from each state could be drawn on virtually to serve as the CSF for the region.

Each CSF would be primarily comprised of combat support and combat service support units (e.g. security, engineer, transportation, CBRNE and medical assets) consistent with the capabilities that are most likely to be needed to respond to a disaster. The National Guard, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Steven Blum, has already established ten Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, or High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFP) that bring together these types of forces for use in consequence management. The CSF proposed in the CSIS report would be comprised of very similar types of forces, but unlike the CERFPs, they would be drawn from units throughout an entire region vice a single state, and they would be fenced from overseas deployment so that state governors would be guaranteed a ready and equipped response capability 365 days a year.

Using the National Guard more intensively for civil support is frequently presented as an either-or option: the Guard can be deployed overseas for warfighting or it can be used at home to respond to disasters. In fact, the DoD's new rotational model for the Army presents an opportunity to better use the National Guard for civil support without jeopardizing the critical role it now plays as part of the operational force. The Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model envisions deploying Guard

units overseas once every six years. When not deployed overseas, Guard units will spend five years gradually ramping up their training and exercising to prepare for the next deployment. During the early years of the rotational cycle, Guard units will be largely focused on individual training and will not yet be engaged in the higher end field exercises that are necessary to be fully combat ready to go overseas. Guard units in the third year of the ARFORGEN cycle will have sufficient equipment and personnel to function effectively as CSFs but would still be early enough in the cycle so that service as part of a CSF would not significantly disrupt preparation for more intense overseas missions. Fencing certain support units (both personnel and equipment) in the National Guard from overseas deployment during the third year of the ARFORGEN cycle to serve as regional CSFs would give the nation a dedicated and capable response capacity without undermining the ability of the National Guard to serve as part of the operational force.

Units serving as part of the regional CSFs during any given year would focus their annual training exercises on civil support missions, build relationships with the full range of other organizations that would be part of a regional response operation, and be on alert to respond to an actual disaster for the year in which they are “in the box” as part of the CSF. Units making up the CSF would report to their respective governors on a steady-state basis, but could be chopped to the command of the headquarters state adjutant general through Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMACs) for annual exercises.

Command and control arrangements for the CSFs reflect the inherent flexibility the National Guard offers in the area of homeland defense and civil support. In the event of an actual catastrophe, governors throughout the region could decide whether they would be willing to release control of component units to the governor of the state most in need of aid. Troops released to the command of another state governor could serve in either state active duty or Title 32 status. If the circumstances of an attack resulted in a presidential decision to federally mobilize Guard troops, the CSF would fall under the command of NORTHCOM and the Secretary of Defense. To ensure that CSFs are able to function effectively under the full range of command and

control scenarios, CSFs would conduct two exercises each year; one in which the CSF reports to a state governor, the other in which they report to NORTHCOM.

In order for the CSFs to respond rapidly to a disaster and bridge the gap between local first responders and the arrival of federal response assets, the CSFs would need reliable access to prompt airlift. The CSIS study on the National Guard and Reserves recommended that the Air Force recognize the requirement for civil support-related airlift and put air crews and planes on soft alert to ensure that CSFs could be deployed quickly and efficiently.<sup>6</sup> One way to do this would be to associate the ten FEMA regions with the ten different Air Expeditionary Forces (AEFs). This would allow the alert requirement to be rotated, so that at any given time, active, Guard and Reserve airlift assets from only two AEFs would be on alert. Although this would constitute a new requirement for the Air Force, and is one that the Air Force to date has argued is not necessary, if the nation is truly facing a real threat to the homeland, the time has come to develop a consequence management capability that is reliable and can actually respond fast enough to make a real difference.

Regional CSFs would focus National Guard units more intensely on homeland missions, and provide a set of dedicated, trained and practiced response forces to assist in managing the consequences of a major catastrophe. These forces would advance regional planning efforts and build working relationships among states and a wide range of federal agencies. By drawing on units in the third year of the ARFORGEN cycle to man the CSFs, DoD could provide a more robust civil support capability than it currently offers without undermining the important role the National Guard plays in overseas missions.

## **The Guard Role at NORTHCOM and the National Guard Bureau**

There are several important areas where transformation is needed to strengthen the homeland defense and security capabilities of the Reserve Component. Although NORTHCOM is working hard to

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6. Wormuth, "The Future of the National Guard and Reserves..." p. 98.

build bridges to the states, relations between the command and state governors continue to be strained. Given that the Guard is likely to play a major role in any response to a catastrophic event, it makes sense to appoint a National Guard general officer as the Deputy Commander of NORTHCOM, at least for immediate future. Placing a National Guard general officer in the actual chain of command would demonstrate NORTHCOM's recognition of the Guard's key role in homeland security, would help to build bridges to the states, and would bring the upper echelons of NORTHCOM an accurate understanding of the Guard's strengths and limitations. If NORTHCOM and the Guard are to work effectively with one another, they must understand each other's capabilities.

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau (NGB) and the Bureau itself also need a greater voice in homeland defense and civil support issues. In the specific area of the role of the National Guard in homeland defense and civil support, the Chief of the NGB should be empowered to directly advise the Secretary of Defense. When the National Guard is called to serve in state active duty status or under Title 32 for domestic missions, it is fulfilling its role as the nation's militia rather than serving as part of the federal Army and Air Force. For such missions, it is wholly appropriate for the Chief of the NGB to advise the Secretary of Defense directly, just as the Army Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Army would advise the Secretary on matters concerning the Army, for example. Any revision of Title 10 would need to be crafted carefully to make clear the roles and responsibilities of the Chief of the NGB in this area relative to the roles and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense. Unlike the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, the Chief of the NGB would not have the responsibility to represent the DoD as a whole on homeland matters, including military assistance to civil authorities. Representing the Department on homeland defense and civil support matters to the Executive Office of the President, DHS and other federal departments and agencies, as well as State and local authorities should continue to be the role of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense. The Chief of the NGB would have a more limited role focused on advising the Secretary of Defense on how the National Guard can contribute to homeland defense and civil support,

and would execute this role in close coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense.

Similarly, Congress should consider revising the statute outlining the functions of the NGB so that the Bureau could play a more direct role in advising the Combatant Commands and working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) to develop plans, policies, and programs with respect to the Guard's role in civil support missions. While the Army and Air Force should remain responsible for developing doctrine and training requirements for its personnel, if the NGB's charter were revised to include this new function, the NGB would be able to advise the Army and Air Force on development of doctrine and training requirements for National Guard forces participating in defense support to civilian authorities operations. As part of this new responsibility, the NGB would be the primary adviser to OSD and the combatant commands for developing joint requirements for civil support missions that would draw on Guard forces and for advising OSD and the combatant commanders as they translate those requirements and the associated military capabilities resident in the National Guard into operational plans for these missions.

Finally, while the Guard gets most of the attention when it comes to responding in a crisis, there are many capabilities in the federal Reserves that also could be put to good use in consequence management. Particularly now that members of the Reserves can be involuntarily mobilized by the President during a catastrophic disaster, NORTHCOM and the Reserve commands should work with Joint Forces Command to ensure that NORTHCOM has real visibility into the kinds of Reserve Component capabilities that are available in the homeland and where these assets are at any given time. Such visibility would make it easier for NORTHCOM to plan for civil support missions using the full range of active and reserve capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

The U.S. Reserve Component has numerous capabilities that will be needed to respond effectively to future catastrophes, whether a natural disaster or a terrorist attack. While Guard and Reserve forces have already played key roles in responding to disasters such as Hurricane

Katrina, they are not being used to their maximum potential. If organized more systematically to focus on homeland defense and civil support missions, National Guard troops in particular could be part of a major step forward in improving the nation's emergency preparedness.

The Hart-Rudman Commission argued years ago that civil support should be a primary mission of the National Guard. Although their recommendations in this area were not embraced by the DoD, they were right then and they are right today. Organizing National Guard elements into virtual, regional Civil Support Forces during the third year of the Army's new rotational cycle and focusing those forces on planning, exercising and training at the regional level can be done without jeopardizing the critical role of the National Guard as part of the operational military used overseas. Such forces would provide governors with a rapidly deployable, trained and guaranteed disaster response capability—something the nation does not have today.

No matter how the nation, the governors and the DoD ultimately choose to organize the National Guard and Reserves for homeland defense and civil support missions, the Reserve Component must be given the funding and equipment it needs to execute its full range of responsibilities. In order to perform missions at home and abroad effectively in the future, the Reserve Component will need the funding required to serve as part of the operational force and DoD will need to take steps to mobilize Guard and Reserve forces in a manner that is consistent with their new role and the constraints they face as citizen-soldiers.

