Homeland Security and the United States Army

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27 November 2007
Abstract

The United States Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve are not involved enough in Homeland Security because our armed forces are overly committed to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). After successful terrorist attacks on 9/11, the Bush administration created the Department of Homeland Security, and the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) as the civilian and military arms of the government charged with detecting, preventing, and deterring any domestic threats to the United States with an emphasis on terrorism. USNORTHCOM is primarily a headquarters command and does not maintain the active duty assets needed to fulfill various mission requirements. The global commitments by the active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserves to GWOT, both directly and indirectly, have not left enough units available to support USNORTHCOM’s efforts.
Abstract ............................................................................................................................................2
Evolving from Homeland Defense to Homeland Security ..............................................................4
Department of Homeland Security Organization and Mission........................................................4
The U.S. Military's Role ..................................................................................................................6
U.S. Army Support to Domestic Homeland Security .....................................................................7
U.S. Army Support to Domestic Homeland Security Outside of USNORTHCOM .......................8
United States Army Overseas Commitments to the Global War on Terrorism.............................9
The Army National Guard: Activating More Soldiers .................................................................11
Army National Guard Support to OIF/OEF...................................................................................12
Humanitarian Missions and Natural Disasters.............................................................................12
Defending Our Borders and Coasts ...............................................................................................13
The Army Reserve .........................................................................................................................14
Army Reserve Direct Support to GWOT.......................................................................................14
Army Reserve Indirect Support to GWOT ....................................................................................15
Army Reserve Commitments to Homeland Security ....................................................................15
Secondary and Tertiary Affects of GWOT on Army Reserves ...................................................16
Army Transformation Efforts ........................................................................................................16
Fighting GWOT is Homeland Security .........................................................................................17
Conclusions ....................................................................................................................................17
References ......................................................................................................................................19
Evolving from Homeland Defense to Homeland Security

The United States government has always been concerned with homeland defense. In 1947, at the beginning of the Cold War, President Truman authorized the National Security Act with the intent of reorganizing the military and government entities that dealt with foreign policy and homeland defense. This included the creation of the National Security Council (NSC), which advises the President on National Security Affairs and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who advises the President on all intelligence matters. In the late 1940s and 1950s however, the only attack the American public was worried about was a one Russian nuclear strike. This justifiable fear would affect homeland defense development for the rest of the century. That thought process changed on September 11, 2001 with the death of over 3,000 Americans due to terrorist attacks on American soil. Now that terrorists had infiltrated our borders, and we were at war, there were new concepts of combat called Asymmetric Warfare and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), which are driving Homeland Security Developments into the 21st Century.

Department of Homeland Security Organization and Mission

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), established in November 2002, initially consisted of four main components: Information and Infrastructure Protection, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Countermeasures, and Border and Transportation Security. Some of the agencies that are not task organized in Homeland Security, and have a devastating effect in the collection of intelligence, include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the National Security Agency (NSA), the latter two of which rely heavily on military manpower.
The primary mission of Homeland Security is to prevent, protect, and mitigate any terrorist threats or attacks on United States soil. These protection measures must encompass the private sectors that run our infrastructure in the United States. Today, the borders of the United States are more secure than they ever have been. Technology ranging from airport screening to sensors that detect movement on the border of Mexico allows us to sleep better at night.

Homeland Security is still in its infancy and improvements need to be made in intelligence gathering, preparedness, integration of federal, state, and local law enforcement to include first responders so that there is a unity of effort at all levels battle against worldwide terrorism.

The mission of the Border and Transportation Security is to ensure that the borders, to include the Gulf of Mexico, and transportation systems are secure and maintain stability. They are responsible for the Coast Guard, Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Border Patrol to include the Transportation Security Administration. The Emergency Preparedness and Response department are responsible for the training and coordination of first responders and they assist with disaster issues. Lastly, they are responsible for the integration of emergency plans into one unified plan (The White, n.d.). The Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Countermeasures department leads the efforts in preparing for possible threats involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). In addition, they are broken down into smaller divisions of Nuclear Terrorism, and Science and Technology. Nuclear Terrorism focuses its efforts on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear terrorism. Science and Technology gives us an advantage with their research capabilities to keep Homeland Security and all other agencies involved at State and local levels up to date on current standards. Lastly, the Intelligence Community (IC) is also included which consists of sixteen organizations that cover the full spectrum of intelligence for the United States Government (The White, n.d.).
The U.S. Military’s Role

The Department of Defense’s (DoD) primary responsibility is homeland defense, a subset of homeland security. For decades, the U.S. military concentrated its efforts in fighting battles overseas. The events of 9/11 changed how the military employs assets in the Continental United States (CONUS) in Homeland Defense and Security. Immediately after the attacks on 9/11, the Army and Air National Guard played a crucial role in supporting security of our borders, to include flying air patrols over Washington, DC. The only stipulation when activating these units was to ensure that violations of the Posse Comitatus Act were not committed and that the personnel chosen to pull security detail had enough training in law enforcement to conduct the mission successfully.

The United States Army has always taken the leading role in defense of the nation, and on 1 October 2003, when the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), the first ever Combatant Command for North America, was created as the operational arm of DoD’s efforts to combat terrorism at home, the U.S. Army took the lead in developing the organization. USNORTHCOM’s mission is to deter, prevent, and preserve the United States to include Canada, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Alaska and the Virgin Islands against any terrorist threats. Headquartered in Colorado, it is the military’s newest Combatant Command and is responsible for the Command and Control and training in support of any civil support missions to include reacting to terrorist threats, counter-narcotics missions, and assisting in natural disasters such as hurricanes, fires, floods, earthquakes.

USNORTHCOM’s leadership has continued to develop operational plans and its own architecture since inception. It continues to integrate not only the active Army, but also the Army National Guard, and Army Reserve as well as sister service units into the larger Defense
Homeland Security networks and operations to improve homeland defense efforts. Currently, USNORTHCOM consists of only headquarters elements, but the National Command Authority can assign other forces to them as needed (Cecchine, 2004, p.15). Current subordinate commands to USNORTHCOM are: Joint Forces Headquarters National Capital Region (JFHQ-NCR), Joint Task Force Alaska (JTF-AK), Joint Task Force Civil Support (JTF-CS), Joint Task Force North (JTF North), Standing Joint Force Headquarters North (SJFHQ-N), U.S. Army North (ARNORTH), and Air Force North (AFNORTH). While all the other headquarters titles are self-explanatory, JTF North provides direct support to federal law enforcement agencies in the interdiction of suspected transnational threats within and along the approaches to the continental United States (USNORTHCOM, 2007). USNORTHCOM is still developing and integrating itself and the Army into a more cohesive working relationship with other government and civilian agencies to improve homeland security.

U.S. Army Support to Domestic Homeland Security

The U.S. Army has led the Nation’s homeland defense and homeland security efforts since 1775; even before there was a homeland to defend. The Army also has a well-established Research and Development program that should accelerate homeland defense and security development efforts. The Army’s efforts in network-centric warfare and desire too quickly identify, analyze, and act against threats in a decisive manner is applicable to the same situations civil counterparts in homeland security face. New organizations such as the Defense Homeland Service could accelerate their own development processes by mirroring time vetted Army methods (Committee, 2004, p.5). The logical choice is to include the Army in domestic homeland security plans, developments, and operations.
Since 2003, USNORTHCOM and the active duty Soldiers assigned to its command and task force organizations have participated in numerous national and regional exercises to increase the nation’s homeland defense and conducted various joint symposiums to further homeland security efforts. USNORTHCOM was a focal point for Army support efforts following natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, and massive forest fires in Idaho and California; and high profile protection efforts for events such as the annual Super Bowl, the Olympics, and visits from various heads of state and foreign dignitaries. USNORTHCOM has demonstrated its worth in creating task forces to react to crises and planning for high risk events by coordinating the use of active Army assets and other sister service and reserve units to meet mission requirements. The issue that continues to arise with USNORTHCOM’s activities is not their success, but that they do not maintain the forces to meet crises internal to their command and must rely on external units, units that may not always be available, to meet mission objectives.

U.S. Army Support to Domestic Homeland Security Outside of USNORTHCOM

Not all Army commitments to Homeland Security rest with USNORTHCOM. Active duty U.S. Army Soldiers are also filling roles as engineers, intelligence analysts, medical specialists, transportation specialists, chemical and biological detection and response teams, and a myriad of other duties in support of homeland defense and homeland security. They are assigned as members of other DoD and Army Commands such as: the Defense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC), U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM). Unfortunately, there is no clear way to track Army
resource allocation specifically for homeland security, as the missions accomplished by these Soldiers are often multipurpose and or classified.

United States Army Overseas Commitments to the Global War on Terrorism

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 committed the United States to an asymmetric conflict that has no clear end in sight. This is a war the Army will continue to fight until all the terrorists of the world are brought to justice or killed. The Army is committed to this Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and continues aggressively seeking out the enemies of the United States on foreign soil to preempt attacks on our homeland. As of 30 April 2007, the total size of the active duty military, to include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard, is 1,367,426 (Straus, 2007). Of this number 506,556 are U.S. Army active duty Soldiers representing about 37 percent of the total active duty force (Defense, n.d.). There are currently 138,351 active duty Soldiers deployed in support of the war on terror, 27 percent of the total number of active duty Soldiers in the Army (Statistical, 2007). This number does not reflect the approximate 150,000 Soldiers that are training and preparing to deploy in order to relieve the Soldiers currently serving. These statistics reflect the fact that more than 55 percent of active duty Soldiers are deployed or getting ready to deploy in support of the war on terror at any given time. The numbers do not reflect the Soldiers who have recently returned from a tour of duty and will soon begin training again for the next deployment. The fact that the Army is overly committed to the Global War on Terror is the main reason why there is not enough active duty Army involvement in Homeland Security.

On 7 October 2001, the United States along with Great Britain began a bombing campaign against the country of Afghanistan in response to the 9/11 attacks. Over the coming months, this coalition assisted the Afghanistan Northern Alliance in combat operations
throughout the country to overthrow the Taliban government that was in power. The current military mission is to hunt down Osama Bin Laden and his network of Al Qaeda terrorists as well as help stabilize the new democratic government and assist it in protecting their own country. Approximately 14,000 Soldiers initially deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) a number that steadily increased to almost 20,000 (Statistical Information Analysis Division). This includes the 8,000 Army Soldiers that are part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Command in Kandahar. While these 20,000 Soldiers are just under four percent of the active duty Army, this does not include the support services these Soldiers need such as intelligence, logistics, and transportation to fight OEF.

In March of 2003, the United States invaded Iraq with 179,320 Soldiers and a total force of 237,235 service members representing all of the armed forces (Statistical, 2007). Although the invasion was a success resulting in the capture of Baghdad and internal exile of Saddam Hussein, military commanders soon realized the mission was going to be more complex than originally planned. Since that time the Army has maintained an average force strength of about 125,000 Soldiers, approximately 25 percent of the active duty force (Statistical, 2007) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This enormous strain on active duty Army units resulted in increased deployment lengths to fifteen months with some units rotating once every other year.

The Global War on Terrorism is not only limited to Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States also has troops deployed to Africa and the Philippines where troops are actively engaged fighting terrorism on a daily basis. Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa was established in the country of Djibouti on 12 December 2002. The mission of the task force is to detect and disrupt terrorist organizations that pose a threat to coalition partners in the region (Globalsecurity.org, 2005). The task force consists of members from all branches of the military
and the troop numbers have increased over the years from about 800 at the beginning of the mission to 2,038 as of June 2007 (Statistical, 2007). The mission in Africa promises to increase in numbers as the Army’s new African Command (AFRICOM), currently standing up, prepares to occupy the continent within the next year. Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines trains and advises the Philippine Army in counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism tactics. The exact number of American Soldiers participating in Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippine Islands is classified, but force estimates are less than 1000. The combined operations tempo from GWOT, and specifically OIF and OEF, is having a detrimental affect on the active Army’s capability to support homeland security efforts in CONUS.

The Army National Guard: Activating More Soldiers

Homeland Security and disaster response within CONUS were Army National Guard responsibilities since its inception. Secondarily, but no less important, was supporting active Army missions overseas during times of war and on a piecemeal basis in peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Kosovo and the Sinai, as well as serving on individual deployments in other countries around the world. Since 9/11, the Nation’s military focus has changed from being the “world police” to executing the Global War on Terrorism and increasing security measures in the homeland. This change in mission has had a profound affect on the Army National Guard and the strategic thinking of our nations’ leaders. The United States Army National Guard is the logical choice of primary Army assets to invest in Homeland Security. Our citizen Soldiers are already the first responders in most domestic crises and natural disasters, and have already gained significant specialized training in missions such as Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo that makes them the perfect candidates. Unfortunately, at a period where the nation needs a larger National Guard force the total number of Soldiers between 1991 and today has gone from 446,121 to an
estimated 343,000 (National, n.d.). The difficulties associated with this force reduction are compounded by their increased use in a deployed manner to support Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Army National Guard Support to OIF/OEF

Since April 2003, an average of four Army National Guard Brigades mobilizes, deploys to Iraq or Afghanistan, and then demobilizes annually (Oates, 2007). Soldiers are on active duty for approximately 18 months to support a 15-month deployment. Two of the units actually deployed twice in a three-year period and the 76th Infantry Brigade only had about two months to reintegrate with their families before remobilizing and redeploying again. This is not what most National Guardsmen or their families expected from their service. Every National Guardsman deployed is one less available for CONUS homeland security efforts.

Humanitarian Missions and Natural Disasters

The only component of the Armed Forces with a dual role of both Federal and state responsibility is the National Guard. During Hurricane Katrina, one third of the Louisiana National Guard force and almost half of the Mississippi National Guard force were supporting OEF/OIF while their cities, towns, homes and neighborhoods were being destroyed by this natural disaster. The total death toll is not known or the number of the many American citizens that might have lived if the thousands of trained National Guard Soldiers were available to respond to this crisis. This event crystallized for the government the risk associated with committing National Guard forces to GWOT efforts outside of the Continental United States (OCONUS). This was reinforced by the recent efforts of the California National Guard’s, task organized under USNORTHCOM, response and assistance to civil agencies battling intense forest fires and leading recovery efforts. Their assistance included fighting the fires, providing
orderly staging areas, protecting burned/vacant homes from looters, and the safety and security of displaced residents throughout the ordeal. A quick comparison of the disastrous efforts, or lack of efforts, associated with Katrina and those associated with the California wildfires, albeit on a different scale, shows the importance of National Guard forces in responding to homeland crises.

Defending Our Borders and Coasts

In addition to the deployments overseas, Army National Guard forces extensively support current Homeland Security efforts at home. While many of the initial response requirements following 9/11, such as airport security, have been alleviated by other government agencies and civilian organizations, the National Guard, as it should be, remains the initial plug put into any hole found in our homeland defenses. President Bush has sent as many as 6,000 National Guard troops to the U.S. border with Mexico to help stop the flood of illegal immigrants (Gregory & O’Donnell, 2006). This makes sense when utilized as engineer assets and intelligence support to supplement U.S. Border Guard efforts, in coordination with DHS through USNORTHCOM via JTF NORTH, but again not as a sustained effort. The Border Patrol force is recruiting and training more agents and need a reliable back up force to assist during these periods of build-up. The National Guard Soldiers are providing that support until the border patrol forces have expanded. In accordance with the Posse Comitatus Act, the Border Patrol will still be responsible for catching and detaining illegal immigrants. Army National Guard Soldiers are also assisting the U.S. Coast Guard in guarding oil deposits, and other key maritime and port facilities.
The Army Reserve

The design of the Army Reserves is as a strategic force to support the nation’s warfighting capability. Supporting active duty commitments during times of conflict and homeland defense have always been their main missions. Prior to 9/11, the Army Reserve streamlined its mission to assist the Army’s active component primarily as a provider of echelons above corps combat support and combat service support elements. Their mission was to augment the Army’s ability to prepare forces for deployment and to deploy them to a theater of operations. However, since post 9/11 the Army Reserve commitment has drastically changed from planning, managing, and executing staging missions within CONUS to increasingly deploying forces forward to support the Global War on Terrorism. The troop strength needed to support OEF and OIF has created a strain on reserve forces to support needs OCONUS and CONUS at a rate inconsistent with previous planning.

Army Reserve Direct Support to GWOT

The Army Reserve has remained steadfast in supporting the active Army’s mission in fighting the Global War on Terrorism abroad and has units and individual augmentees deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and other overseas locations. Since Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom began, there have been more than 136,363 Army Reserve Soldiers called to active duty (Gilmore, 2007). The majority of Army Civil Affairs units, an essential element of the current OIF mission, are Reserve Units activating and rotating through deployments at a rate coinciding with most Active Army units. The Army Reserves also play a very important role in their own mobilization in which they are responsible to mobilize and train their units to deploy and defend our nation in the Global War on Terrorism. Army
Reserve forces liberated substantial active duty forces by taking over the mission in Kosovo and allowing those active duty units to deploy elsewhere.

**Army Reserve Indirect Support to GWOT**

The Reserve mission includes staffing critical medical facilities in the event active components deploy abroad to defend our nation or assist our allies. However, the strain on the active Army due to deployments results in a ripple affect on the Army Reserves to backfill specific CONUS positions beyond previously identified critical ones, and not just temporarily. Reserve forces are augmenting active duty forces in job specialties such as Drill Sergeant and Instructor, allowing critical active duty forces, with critical skills specialties, to return to their career field in the event of personnel shortages. This has also eased the strain on the active duty force in trying to fill slots that are critical in training and retention of an evolving all volunteer force.

**Army Reserve Commitments to Homeland Security**

Before 9/11, the Army Reserve demonstrated it is commitment to assisting the Nation during natural disasters such as hurricanes, and providing cargo to help move food and supplies to the unfortunate. Aviation is a critical factor in search and rescue missions and just as important to get supplies out to stranded people during disasters. Reserve aviation units are also activating to support OIF and OEF reducing this homeland security capability. The Reserves provided the Army’s foundation for response teams in the event the Army needed to counter a biological or chemical attack (Pike, 2004), but some of these units are already on active duty and deployed to provide homeland defense capabilities to U.S. allies, such as South Korea, in support of GWOT.
Secondary and Tertiary Affects of GWOT on Army Reserves

A secondary affect of recalling reservists to support GWOT either in CONUS or OCONUS assignments has also detrimentally affected the Army Reserves ability to train as a unit to meet their other homeland defense and homeland security missions. Since the individual augmentees the Active Army activates are usually in critical skill specialties, an internal ripple affect is wearing out the people the service and nation need most. Active duty Soldiers are also seeing this trend and it is affecting their retention decisions when they separate from the service; often electing not to remain in the Reserves and risk being called back to active duty, a resource degradation that will assuredly affect the Army and the Nation in the future.

Army Reserve focus on Homeland Security issues has deteriorated due to GWOT missions and the DoD and DHS have contracted large portions of pre 9/11 missions out to private contractors. This too is having detrimental secondary and tertiary affects on the Army. With the bulk of America’s Homeland Security contracted out to the civilian sector, the Army Reserves are not being fully exploited for their intended use. Skills that the Reserves bring to Homeland Security in the event of an attack on our nation would be very vital to the response to a catastrophic event. This is drawing some of the Reserve’s critical work force, which it retained due to mission assignment satisfaction into the civilian sector never to return, reservists are choosing stability.

Army Transformation Efforts

The Army is obviously committed to supporting homeland security efforts, but it is still debatable whether it has transformed enough to meet the nation’s needs. The Army has been hesitant to commit forces and resources to strictly homeland security activities in the past “for fear that this would suggest that they did not need what they currently had for the warfighting
contingencies” (Davis, 2003, p.64). The Army’s transformation efforts must include homeland security in all Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) upgrade assessments (Kelly, 2003, p.38) for Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve forces. This mission must become a routine part of Army long-term objective planning. The majority of recent training events involving Army assets in support of homeland defense were command post level exercises involving USNORTHCOM’s subordinate commands. Lessons learned from previous experience demonstrate that for Soldiers to be successful in joint operations with sister services and other nation’s forces there must be some form of joint exercise at the micro- as well macro-level this should apply to civil defense efforts as well.

Fighting GWOT is Homeland Security

The counter argument to the thesis that the Army is not involved enough in homeland security is that every threat countered overseas is one less threat to the homeland. This premise is valid and justifiable when addressed specifically to the active Army, and even Army Reserve, but loses credibility when applied to Army National Guard forces. A primary tenet of the Army National Guard is specifically homeland security as demonstrated by their responsibility to state governments as well as federal. The counterpoint also only hold weight until the inevitable attack does reach CONUS at which point the questions the American people will be asking is why did USNORTHCOM do nothing to prevent the incident or prepare to react to it. In an asymmetric environment, the Army must be prepared to execute offense and defensive maneuvers both at home and abroad.

Conclusions

Terrorist activity, WMD, and asymmetric warfare are not going away, and will continue to be the greatest threat the United States homeland security in the coming decades. The creation
of the Department of Homeland Security and United States Northern Command were excellent first steps in improving homeland security, but they must be followed up. The Army, including the National Guard and Reserve forces, is the largest organization available to combat these threats. However, the Army is not involved enough in Homeland Security because of its overseas commitments to the Global War on Terrorism. This is blatantly evident in the number of Soldiers deployed on an annual basis to Iraq and Afghanistan alone. There are not enough troops in the Army to withstand the overseas deployments and have enough resources available to dedicate to homeland security. Units supporting most of USNORTHCOM’s missions are identified on an, “as available,” volunteer basis. This is in direct conflict with an organization designed to be proactive, not reactive; and does not bode well when the need arises to react to a crisis that requires trained forces that have rehearsed their interaction with other civilian agencies to immediately respond. The logical leading military organization for homeland security is the United States Army National Guard, but current commitments to support GWOT and other active duty missions is deterring their accession of that role. In order for the Army National Guard to focus on their homeland security role, the overall end strength of the active Army needs to increase by 50,000 Soldiers and the Army Reserve by 25,000 Soldiers. This will facilitate the removal of Army National Guard forces from overseas deployments in order to support USNORTHCOM’s mission. Exactly how vulnerable we are due to our over commitments in support of the Global War on Terrorism is something only another devastating attack will show.
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