TRANSFORMING THE ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATION PROCESS

by

Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Trounson
United States Army Reserve

Colonel Randy Pullen
Project Advisor

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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ABSTRACT

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As the Army’s federal reserve force in providing critical support, force protection, and augmentation, it is imperative that the Army Reserve can mobilize when called upon – without delay. However, given today’s fast-paced military environment and the uncertainty of future U.S. military operations, is the current mobilization process adequate? While the Army Reserve is currently meeting its mobilization requirements, there are some concerns. Though varied, they focus primarily on the uncertainty of today’s mobilizations – from short notification times to longer-than-anticipated and multiple deployments. As a result of these uncertainties there is grave concern that retention and recruiting will suffer, jeopardizing the Army Reserve’s overall ability to support the Army as needed. This paper will address those concerns and offer a solution that provides better predictability and efficiency for future mobilizations of Army Reserve forces. It is based on the creation of a “Rotational Structure,” supported by a revised mobilization process, establishment of Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Students accounts and changing the Army Reserve force mixture.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................ iii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ........................................................................................................................ vii

TRANSFORMING THE ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATION PROCESS ................................................ 1

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AFFECTING ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS ........ 1

INCREASED OPERATIONS ......................................................................................................................... 2

OVERALL FORCE REDUCTION ................................................................................................................. 2

AC/RC FORCE STRUCTURE MIX .............................................................................................................. 3

CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS ....................... 3

SHORT NOTIFICATIONS ........................................................................................................................... 4

EXTENDED LENGTH OF MOBILIZATIONS ............................................................................................. 4

MULTIPLE MOBILIZATIONS ...................................................................................................................... 4

FUTURE FACTORS AFFECTING ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS ......................... 4

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH CURRENT ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS ........ 5

PREDICTABILITY ....................................................................................................................................... 5

MORALE ...................................................................................................................................................... 5

RETENTION/RECRUITING .......................................................................................................................... 6

POTENTIAL INTERNAL FIX TO TRANSFORM THE ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATION PROCESS ......................................................... 6

ROTATIONAL STRUCTURE ....................................................................................................................... 7

Re-engineer the Mobilization Process .................................................................................................. 9

Create TTHS accounts .......................................................................................................................... 10

Rebalance the Army Reserve force mix ................................................................................................. 10
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE 1. TOP 21 CRITICAL MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTIES FOUND IN THE ARMY RESERVE .....................................................................................................................................3

FIGURE 2. PHASES OF ROTATIONAL STRUCTURE ...........................................................................8

FIGURE 3. ARMY RESERVE FORCES AVAILABLE BY PHASE .................................................................8
TRANSFORMING THE ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATION PROCESS

As the Army’s Federal Reserve force in providing critical support, force protection, and augmentation, it is imperative that the Army Reserve can continue to mobilize when called upon – without delay. However, given today’s fast-paced operational environment and the uncertainty of future U.S. military operations, is the current mobilization process adequate? Can the Army Reserve mobilization process provide the necessary trained and ready forces to the Army when they are needed – now and in the future? According to Lieutenant General James R. Helmly, Chief, Army Reserve (CAR), the time has come to address such questions: “Our mobilization processes were not designed for the continuous mobilizations we have had since the Gulf War and were certainly not designed for the timelines demanded in the days and weeks after 11 September.”

While the Army Reserve is currently meeting its mobilization requirements, the Chief’s concerns cannot be overlooked. Though varied, these concerns focus primarily on the uncertainty of today’s mobilizations – from short notification times alerting Reservists for duty to longer-than-anticipated and multiple deployments. Because of these uncertainties, there is grave concern that retention and recruiting will suffer. According to the Washington Post this past January, “Analysts inside and outside the military say these long overseas mobilizations could have the effect of driving Reservists out of the military in droves once they begin returning from Iraq over the next several months. After that, the service will lift the ‘stop-loss’ provisions that prohibit soldiers from quitting the reserve when their hitches are up.”

As the nation relies increasingly on the Army Reserve, U.S. strategists and decision-makers must carefully consider the objective of mobilizing Army Reserve forces, the process of getting them to the fight, and the required number of forces necessary to accomplish the mission.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AFFECTING ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS

This traditional “force in reserve” is currently mobilizing with more frequency and in greater numbers than ever before in its history. Since its first call-up in 1916, to join the punitive expedition of the Mexican bandit Francisco “Pancho” Villa, the Army Reserve has been deployed over seventeen times in support of critical U.S. Army operations, the majority of which have been in the past thirteen years. This increase in number of Army Reserve mobilizations can be attributed to three primary issues: increased operations, force reduction and Total Army force structure.
INCREASED OPERATIONS.

Since 1995, starting with deployments to the Bosnia conflict, the Army Reserve has been virtually in a continuous state of mobilization. During this time the Army Reserve has mobilized an average of 9,300 soldiers a year; in the two years following September 11, 2001, over 80,000 have been mobilized — nearly one-third of the total Army Reserve force. Currently, more than 60,000 Army Reservists are actively engaged throughout the world, with over 30,000 of those deployed in Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Noble Eagle (ONE). Additionally, the new round of rotations for Iraqi Freedom II will increase the number of National Guard and Reserve soldiers from the current 22 percent to over 40 percent of total forces. It appears that the requirement for more and more “Drilling Reservists” — traditional Army Reserve soldiers who serve one weekend a month and two weeks of annual training — apparently will not diminish anytime soon. Indeed the days of the Army Reserve being used only occasionally as a short-term supplemental force is over.

OVERALL FORCE REDUCTION

As the international military environment has continued to change over the past 30 plus years -- from Vietnam and the Cold War to the events of 9-11 -- so has the size of the U.S. Army. This succession of events and ensuing threat assessments has resulted in a current overall reduction in active and reserve component forces. The active component has declined from just over one million in 1971 to its current strength of 482,000. Accordingly, the Army Reserve has seen its 1990s numbers which were approaching 319,000, decrease to a level of 205,000 today.

Prior to the war on terrorism, these numbers proved adequate to meet U.S. military requirements. However, as the fight in Iraq and Afghanistan proves to be more difficult -- and longer -- than anticipated and as this nation’s commitment to the war on terrorism continues, forces are stretched severely thin. This is true especially for Army Reservists. Although ready to serve, they were not prepared for these longer than expected deployments that have become the norm.

In order to somewhat reduce this overall strain on U.S. forces, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has authorized the temporary increase of 30,000 more active duty troops over the next four years. Pentagon analysts contend that this increase is needed only as a temporary measure to handle the “spike” of today’s need for additional troops while other measures are being formalized.
AC/RC FORCE STRUCTURE MIX.

Following the Vietnam War, many critical Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) were moved from the active force structure into the Army Reserve. Our leaders believed that these specialties were no longer needed on a full-time basis and they could easily be called up from the Army Reserve if and when needed. However, several of these critical units and capabilities found in the Army Reserve are now in high demand for the type of operations the U.S. is fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo and the Global War on Terrorism. As Figure 1 depicts, many key capabilities are either exclusively, or primarily in the Army Reserve.

![Figure 1. Top 21 Critical Military Occupational Specialties Found in the Army Reserve](image)

CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS

Currently the United States is in the midst of its largest military operations since the Vietnam War – from OEF and OIF to fighting terrorism around the world – with no clear end in sight. This situation has required the unprecedented mobilization of Army Reservists on short notice, for extended periods of time, and -- for some -- multiple tours.
SHORT NOTIFICATIONS
Mobilizations immediately following 11 September -- an extremely unpredictable event that the U.S. was not prepared for -- were understandably done on considerably less notification time than normal. However, in the ensuing months, Reservists continued to encounter problems with adequate notification time as these citizen-soldiers were called to active duty. Indeed as many as 10,000 Army Reservists had less than five days notification. Further, an additional 8,000 were called up, on short notice -- then were demobilized before ever being used. Of those same forces, nearly 5,000 were once again mobilized -- shortly after being demobilized.

EXTENDED LENGTH OF MOBILIZATIONS
Most Army Reservists deployed to Iraq last year believed that they would be in country up to six months -- the length of a typical overseas tour. However, due to "the worse-than-expected situation in Iraq," they were informed of a new Pentagon policy: Their tours would be extended to a total of 12 months in country. Later Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reiterated this requirement while announcing the Pentagon’s goal was to limit tours of duty to a total of 18 months. Responding to this decision and to ensure Reservists are administratively supported prior to and after their required time in country, the Chief of the Army Reserve has ordered that all mobilization orders for Army Reservists will be for 18 months.

MULTIPLE MOBILIZATIONS
Most Army Reservists -- approximately 64 percent -- have been mobilized at least once since 1990. Of those forces, four to five percent have been mobilized more than once, and one percent has mobilized three or more times. Further, some 20,000 Army Reservists have been mobilized two or more times between 2000 and 2003. Many of these mobilized Reservists have High Demand/Low Density (HD/LD) specialties such as civil affairs, military police, psychological operations, mortuary affairs, and air traffic control.

FUTURE FACTORS AFFECTING ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS
Following the terrorist attacks of 9-11, President Bush announced, "We are at war!" He then proclaimed that the Global War on Terrorism would last a long time. Given this presidential proclamation and the on-going difficulties in Iraq, it is highly likely that Army Reserve forces will continue to mobilize to meet these challenges. Although it is difficult to predict the extent of future mobilizations, the Army Reserve must plan for them.
According to the *Washington Post* in January 2004, [Army Chief of Staff, General Peter] Schoomaker disclosed that he has ordered his staff to plan for how the Army, which is now replacing it forces in Iraq with an entire set of fresh units, would rotate another force of similar size into Iraq in 2005 – and again in 2006. But other Pentagon officials said any decisions on the size of future rotations are months away. Until these decisions are finalized, the Army Reserve can only speculate on future mobilizations – Yet it is very likely that they will be numerous and ongoing – in one form or another.

**PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH CURRENT ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATIONS**

The problems associated with the Army Reserve mobilization process tumble against one another like dominos – the unpredictability issue has in fact created morale problems, which in turn could cause retention/recruiting problems. This in of itself could ultimately and significantly affect the Army Reserve’s ability to provide the necessary forces when needed. The Army Reserve must acknowledge this chain of events in order to prevent a failed mobilization capability.

**PREDICTABILITY**

Although Army Reservists drill on a part-time basis, they acknowledge that there is a good possibility that they may be mobilized at some point in their Reserve career. But given the numerous and on-going operations of today, it is no longer a question of ‘if.’ Rather, it is a question of ‘when’ and how often. However, the Army Reserve currently has no official guidelines for determining when a soldier may be mobilized. Mobilizations are based entirely on the needs of the Army and can change at any given time. For Reservists who have full-time commitments outside of their military responsibilities, this unpredictability is a major concern. They are faced with a tough dilemma of performing their patriotic duty and maintaining their civilian life. Their civilian obligations generally entail putting food on the table for their family. They will need to continue to meet such obligations when they return from call-ups.

**MORALE**

Lack of predictability is a major cause of morale problems among Army Reservists. U.S. leaders should seriously consider this issue. This situation can be largely attributed to the fact that the Army Reserve currently has no guidelines or predictability in the manner in which it calls up its forces. So short and unpredicted notifications have characterized current Army Reserve call-ups. This uncertainty is further complicated by the fact that Army Reservists in OIF were ordered to stay up to 12 months in country (Iraq) while their active-duty counterparts were
rotating out in much less time. Although this inequity between active and reserve components has been resolved -- all personnel are now required to fulfill one-year tours -- these extended tours were not what traditional Reservists were initially told, nor what they anticipated. Reservists' concerns are documented in a survey conducted in December 2003 by Charles Moskos, a Northwestern University sociologist specializing in military issues. After listening to, interviewing, and surveying the concerns of forces deployed to Iraq, he found the morale of the Reservists was markedly lower than those of the active components. During this time when Army Reservists are being relied upon more and more, something must be done to correct this problem – real or perceived – to prevent an exodus of this critical force.

RETENTION/RECRUITING

These problems of predictability and morale are best expressed by the Chief, Army Reserve, “Retention is what I am most worried about. It is my No. 1 concern. This is the first extended-duration war the country has fought with an all-volunteer force.” His concerns are further validated by reports of morale problems from Army Reserve soldiers currently mobilized for OIF. According to the New York Times in October 2003, “A survey of U.S. troops in Iraq, meanwhile, found that one-third described their morale as low and half did not plan to re-enlist.” Asked about this survey, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers indicated that only in the Army Reserve were recruiting and retention falling off. This situation has not gone unnoticed in Congress. Senator John McCain (R-Arizona) asserted, “If we don't ease the burden on the Guard and Reserve, we're going to have retention problems.” These and other similar views lend credibility to the claims of problems with the current mobilization process. If these concerns are not constructively addressed, could lead to the loss of thousands of trained and seasoned Army Reservists in the near future.

Nonetheless, it is not yet certain that a catastrophic exodus will occur. The ‘actual’ impact on retention and recruiting within the Army Reserve is yet to be seen. This uncertainty is due in large part to the current stop-loss orders preventing soldiers from leaving the service while they are deployed to Iraq. However, once they start returning over the next several months and they become eligible to leave, then the Army Reserve will start to see the impact of these reported problems and their effects on retention.

POTENTIAL INTERNAL FIX TO TRANSFORM THE ARMY RESERVE MOBILIZATION PROCESS

By virtue of policy, structure and its historical role, the Army Reserve is a vital component in the U.S. national defense. In support of planned contingencies or to respond to unforeseen
emergencies, the Army Reserve must be prepared to mobilize when and where needed. This fundamental requirement offers the truest measure of the Reserve’s effectiveness.

In order to assess the Reserve’s readiness, it is necessary to consider what the Army Reserve can and cannot do. Two issues critical to the mobilization process remain beyond the control of the Army Reserve: 1) The use of Army Reserve forces is determined by the needs of the Combatant Commanders, and 2) the means used for deploying the necessary number of Army Reserve forces is determined by federally mandated mobilization statutes based upon the needs articulated by the Combatant Commanders. Yet one critical issue does lie within the control of the Army Reserves: the way the Army Reserve mobilizes, or the mobilization process.

First and foremost in this process is the need to create a structure that provides better predictability and efficiency for mobilizing our Army Reserve forces. The proposed design for accomplishing this is a plan called a “Rotational Structure.” It entails a refined mobilization process; the establishment of Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Students (TTHS) accounts; and changing the Army Reserve force mixture.

**ROTATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Even on Capitol Hill, there is considerable concern about the lack of mobilization guidance given to Army Reservists. This past fall Senator Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) declared, “I’m getting uneasy on how much we’re calling on our Guard and Reserve units. You have to have some sort of rotation scheme for the men and women that are over there that’s a limit on how long they’ll stay.” For several months, various plans have been suggested to address this concern – both within and outside of the Army. In general, it is based on a proposal outlined by the Chief, Army Reserve, with the objective to provide Reservists with more predictability in their lives. The Chief’s proposal formalizes the likelihood that they can expect to be mobilized a minimum of nine months every five to six years. However, this author argues that in order to provide the Army with current and anticipated future mobilization needs, it is necessary to adjust the proposed rotation to four years. This proposal is divided into three distinct phases.

1. The first phase is called the Recovery Phase; it covers a one-year period. Color-coded Red, this phase designates the period coming off of high alert status (the Ready Phase). It is a time for general recovery and to fulfill individual training requirements. Although not its primary purpose, the Red Phase serves as a buffer period for any remaining mobilizations not completed in the previous phase.
2. The second phase is called the Train-Up Phase; it covers a two-year period. Color-coded Amber, this phase allows for conclusion of individual training. It then aggressively focuses on unit training requirements.

3. The third phase is called the Ready Phase; it covers a one-year period. Color-coded Green, during this phase ‘the rubber meets the road.’ Individuals and units in this phase must be ready at all times. They will be the first to mobilize, if needed – on as little as five days notice.

At any given time, one-quarter of the total Army Reserve force will be in the Ready Phase prepared to go. Half will be in the Train Up Phase, preparing to go. The remaining quarter will be in the Recovery Phase, regrouping from their year in the Ready Phase.

Based on an end-strength of 205,000 Army Reservists, minus an estimated average of ten percent that are non-deployable, this plan should provide roughly 46,125 Army Reservists that are immediately prepared for mobilization.

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FIGURE 2. PHASES OF ROTATIONAL STRUCTURE

This structure provides a great deal more predictability in the lives of the Army Reservists than ever before. Although, Reservists in the Ready Phase should expect to be mobilized --
there will always be the possibility they are not. Concurrently, those in the Recovery or Train-Up Phases could be unexpectedly called up due to an extreme emergency. But in the final analysis all Army Reservists should expect to be mobilized up to a year every four years spent in the Army Reserve.

**Re-engineer the Mobilization Process**

The current mobilization process must be modified to support the proposed Rotational Structure. The current process consists of four phases: Alert, Mobilize, Train, then Deploy. First soldiers are alerted for mobilization. Next, depending upon the unit, they are instructed to report to either their normal duty station or a pre-determined mobilization station within a given period of time. During this time they complete requisite training. Then they are deployed as instructed.

Three of the phases—Alert, Mobilize, and Deploy—are beyond the control of the Army Reserve, however, the Army Reserve maintains responsibility for the fourth phase—training. Prior to Desert Storm, Reservists did not experience a great deal of urgency to be trained or prepared to go to war. During Vietnam, President Johnson waited until 1968 before authorizing the limited call-up of Army Reservists—three years after the commitment of major combat units.\(^4\) Because the Army Reserve was not often called to active service, many units predictably became complacent in their level of training and preparation. Why not? After all, they were merely a force in reserve. Moreover, if they were ever called-up, they would have time during the mobilization phase to complete the training they needed prior to the actual deployment -- normally a minimum of two to three weeks. Additionally, if commanders had soldiers in their units who were non-duty qualified, all they had to do at this time was send them off to the appropriate school. It didn’t matter for how long, the non-qualifiers no longer belonged to the units. So they were no longer the unit’s problem.

This system, although it has historically supported the Army when and where needed, can no longer serve current needs. It relies too much on training after the fact (the need) instead of training prior to mobilization. In today’s fast-paced and uncertain environment there is no time to train-up after being notified. The Army cannot wait for the Reserve to play catch-up ball. Combatant commanders must incorporate Reserve forces into their contingency plans. To plan effectively, these commanders rely on accurate readiness reports. After their plans are implemented, it is too late to learn that Reserve soldiers are unqualified for the mission. Such failures jeopardize the mission, infuriate commanders, and demoralize unprepared Reserve soldiers. There has to be a better way.
The proposed mobilization process, designated as the “Re-engineered Mobilization Process,” is to Train, Alert, then Deploy. As with the current process, the steps of Alert and Deploy remain outside control of the Army Reserve. But Reserve leaders can and should focus on training.

Create TTHS accounts

The next issue is to prepare non-deployable soldiers for mobilization or to process them for discharge. The Army Reserve’s primary contribution to transformation is their commitment to maintain a well-trained Reserve force that is ready when needed. Reserve transformation has begun with establishment of “Individuals Accounts” to provide a real time picture of the training needs of soldiers who are non-Duty Military Occupational Skill Qualified (DMOSQ) or otherwise non-deployable. These individual accounts classify Reservists as Trainees, Transients, Holdees, and Students (TTHS). Soldiers are assigned to either a TTHS account or a Troop Program Unit (TPU) and can move back and forth as needed. This is not a black hole for deadwood soldiers to get lost in. Indeed, there are several advantages to the TTHS process. It significantly increases unit readiness by taking non-deployable soldiers out of the TPU, which enables commanders to focus more effectively on their collective training. Additionally, this structure allows them to fill unit positions with soldiers who are deployable assets and eligible to mobilize, thereby improving their mission readiness. The soldiers themselves realize numerous benefits. While soldiers are assigned to a TTHS account, they can focus on their training requirements. This is in sharp contrast to a TPU assignment, during which soldiers attempt to complete individual training while being assigned unit tasks that they are either unprepared to do, or are outside of their specialty altogether. In addition, soldiers assigned to a TTHS account should no longer be concerned about being a liability to their unit. They understand that the time they are away to train is necessary and is eventually beneficial to their unit and to the nation.

Another significant advantage to soldiers while assigned to a TTHS account is predictability -- they are considered non-deployable and cannot be mobilized during this time. The goal is for Army Reservists to accomplish TTHS account issues during the Recovery Phase in which they are aligned. By doing so, they will maximize their ability to mobilize.

Rebalance the Army Reserve force mix
In order to provide the necessary forces for current and anticipated future operations, the Army Reserve is working to improve its capability by providing better rotational depth to its current structure. This will be accomplished primarily by reducing and reorganizing nearly 2,100 units to more accurately reflect the needs of today’s mission. The Chief, Army Reserve, recently declared “We will in fact inactivate units beginning next year specifically to harvest the strength to man fully our remaining units.” He went on to explain that the Army Reserve will start to reduce such units as maintenance and water support and redirect those assets to create more high demand personnel and units – such as military police, civil affairs and heavy truck transport detachments.

ANALYSIS

This SRP does not address issues outside the Army Reserve’s authority. So it has not considered; the number of military operations U.S. forces are involved with, the number of forces in uniform – active or reserve component -- or the AC/RC force structure mix. It does, however, address key issues that are within the Army Reserve’s scope of responsibility to its soldiers – predictability, morale and retention/recruiting. It presents a plan that will increase the Army Reserve’s overall readiness and lessen the need for external adjustments by the Army, DOD, or Congress.

POSITIVE AFFECTS

Overall this proposed plan establishes a window so soldiers will know whether they are likely or not likely to deploy. Thereby eliminating arbitrary call-ups for undefined periods of time. It realigns the mobilization process to place training where it is most needed – prior to being alerted. It greatly improves the Army Reserve’s ability to prepare non-deployable soldiers for mobilization or to process them for discharge by creation of TTHS accounts. And it will restructure the organization so that more of the right kinds of units are available. This will reduce the need to call-up HD/LD specialists repeatedly. Such a structure will greatly enhance much-needed predictability to the Reservists, their families, and their employers. Such predictability should in turn improve moral and it in turn should improve retention and recruiting. The objective is to continue to build and maintain a fully manned force that is prepared to mobilize when called upon.

NEGATIVE AFFECTS

This proposal could precipitate some repercussions affecting both retention and recruiting. It is not certain whether current Reservists will continue to serve past their current obligation, or
whether prospective recruits might choose not to join if they know they could be mobilized up to twelve months for every four years they serve in the Army Reserve. The top soldier of the Army Reserve has indeed noted such concern. According to Lieutenant General Helmly: “There will be some people who say, ‘I will [no longer] be part of the force.’ But it’s a lot better to deal with that upfront without painting a rose garden.” This concern, although extremely valid, will clarify with time.

CONCLUSION

In order to effectively meet the current and future mobilization needs of the Army, the Army Reserve should aggressively pursue the proposed imperative; “Transformation of the Army Reserve Mobilization Process.”

To meet current and future demands of national security, it is essential that the Army Reserve take advantage of the proposed process. As laid out, it positively addresses several areas: more predictable mobilizations based on implementation of a four-year rotational structure; improved unit readiness by changing the mobilization process to conduct training prior to being alerted; establishment of TTHS accounts to improve individual training levels while units take care of unit training; and, lastly, building better rotational depth to provide for more predictable use of troops with high demand specialties. This proposal will better provide the active component and its combatant commanders with the necessary reserve forces that are ready when needed.

Its success depends on the Army Reserve’s ability to provide Reservists with a substantially greater degree of predictability regarding call-ups. Knowledge of the likelihood of mobilizations and the length of time they will be deployed will greatly benefit the Army Reservist, their families, and their employers. They will have ample time to get their personal affairs in order; their families will know what to expect; and their employers will be prepared for their absence.

The Army Reserve is no longer a “just in case” force that operates in a reserve vacuum. It is an integral player in America’s national defense – in peace and in war. Army Reservists must plan to serve accordingly.

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ENDNOTES


12 Bradley Graham, “30,000 More Soldiers Approved by Rumsfeld.”


18 Ibid.

19 To mobilize Army Reserve resources the Combatant Commander must submit a “Request for Forces.” With concurrence by the Secretary of Defense the Department of Defense (or the Joint Staff) issues a Deployment Order (DepOrder) to the Chief, Army Reserve (CAR). At this point he is authorized to mobilize his forces.

20 The methods used are one of the six Mobilization Statutes available: Reserve Component Volunteers, 15-day Statute, Presidential Reserve Call-up, Partial Mobilization, and Full Mobilization - Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

21 “Pentagon To Call On More Support Troops.”

22 David R. Bockel, “Helmly Plots Course on Waves of Change,” The Officer, March 2004, 46.

23 Based on the current number of mobilized Army Reservists (over 60,000) and the Army Reserve’s end strength of 205,000 (minus an estimated 10% non-deployable); a six-year rotation provides 30,750 forces, a five-year rotation provides 36,900 forces, and a four-year rotation provides 46,125 forces. The proposed four-year rotation better reflects the Army Reserve’s ability to meet current and anticipated needs.


25 Example - once an officer is commissioned they are assigned to a TTHS while at the basic course, comes out is assigned to a TPU, goes off for the advance course while re-assigned to a TTHS, then returns to and is re-assigned to his TPU position.

26 Black Hole refers to an assignment where a soldier is generally forgotten about for whatever reasons. Deadwood soldier is one who is considered a non-asset of a unit, but has not been processed out.

27 “Army Reserve Chief Fears Retention Crisis.”

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