



Army Reservists, 1993.

U.S. Navy (Dewitt Roseborough)

The Continuum of Reserve Service

By DENNIS M. MCCARTHY

Faced with the competing demands of providing an affordable national defense and maintaining the all-volunteer character of the military, defense policymakers on every level must seek innovative solutions. Transformation is the order of the day. An approach that permits the Nation to maintain a relatively small active force by providing a ready and inexpensive expansion force may sound too good to be true. It is not.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is at a turning point in its use of the Reserve components and the National Guard. Driven by the unique requirements of Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the Secretary has challenged the entire department to transition away from a Cold War approach in many areas of national security policy and action, particularly employing the incredibly rich resource of 1.2 million Guard and Reserve members.

Circuit Breakers

The policies and procedures applicable to Guard and Reserve administration and employment over the last

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fifty years might be compared to a circuit breaker. A Reserve component member is either *on* or *off* active duty. Throwing the lever to effect that transition is a deliberate, laborious, and time-consuming procedure reserved for the gravest emergencies. The structure and policy reforms of the mid-1970s that led to Secretary Melvin Laird's Total Force policy and to the Army doctrine attributed to General Creighton Abrams reflected an intentional decision to place key capabilities inside the Guard and Reserve to assure a sizable mobilization in the event of major conflict. These policies assumed that mobilization of those components would be a rare event. The changing national security situation has undermined these assumptions and others. However, many policies and procedures governing Guard and Reserve employment have remained largely unchanged.

Under the Cold War approach, an individual's duty status is polar—another circuit breaker. One is either active or Reserve—on or off active duty.

today's systems cannot meet the nuanced requirements of the global war on terrorism

One either serves on weekends or full time. Pay systems, entitlement of allowances, medical care, base privileges—the list of opposites based on active or Reserve status goes on and on. The manpower management system that has evolved over decades to implement these policies and procedures is therefore a crude tool. Generations of servicemembers have had to muscle the systems into compliance or find workarounds and cosmetic solutions. The system can be considered fully capable only as long as the circuit breaker will be thrown about once a generation, and when it is thrown the result will be mass mobilization of vast numbers of replacements who are not needed in the early stages of a conflict and will remain on active duty for a fixed period.

In short, today's systems are sufficient to employ a Guard and Reserve



Marine Reservists conducting live-fire drill, Afghanistan.

U.S. Marine Corps (Rusty Baker)

that is a blunt instrument appropriate for the Cold War but cannot meet the nuanced requirements of the war on terrorism. Because the Department of Defense and its force providers have only a blunt instrument to mobilize augmenting and reinforcing Reserve resources, an inflexible and unwieldy resource is what the gaining commander often gets. It is not what the 21st century commander needs.

The post-Cold War reality of Guard and Reserve service is radically different—for the member, force provider, and gaining commander, who will lead a joint and Total Force comprised of active, Guard, and Reserve personnel in battle. In the past decade, and most acutely in the past two years, it has become increasingly obvious that the Guard and Reserve cannot fulfill their potential as a true partner in a Total Force with current manpower, personnel, and administrative policies and systems. The circuit breaker is worn out.

The Guard and Reserve components must replace the circuit breaker with a device that allows for adjusting the flow—a rheostat. They must replace today's blunt manpower instruments with a kit of flexible, precise tools that allow Reserve members to move back

and forth along a continuum of service that reflects both the needs of Reservists and those who employ them. This continuum is a way of describing the full spectrum of availability, ranging from members of the Individual Ready Reserve who do not routinely train as members of units and who may never be recalled to active duty, to individuals who perform short-term active service during the course of a year, to Reservists who volunteer for active duty for up to 365 days. It thus spans the range of possible employment up to a year and encompasses all categories of duty from drills, to annual training, to active duty in support of specific requirements and contingencies, to full mobilization.

The Continuum of Reserve Service

Conceiving of Reserve service as a continuum helps match the member's capacity for service with operational requirements. It recognizes that an individual's capacity for service will probably change many times throughout his career and that there is value to the Nation at every point along the continuum. Finally, such an approach recognizes that gaining

The Continuum of Reserve/Guard Service Since 1988

Man-days				
0	39	100	179	365
	48 Drill/Active Training	48 Drill/Active Training, plus Additional Duties Special Work	Additional Duties Special Work, Temporary Duty, etc.	Presidential Reserve Special Callup, etc.
Individual Ready Reserve	Selected Reserve	Unit Leader	Operational Tempo	Special Duty
Emergency Force		Contingent Force		

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Personnel).

commanders have a vast array of requirements that are amenable to a Reserve component solution.

A brief review of Guard and Reserve employment over the last fifteen years reflects a growing awareness of their capabilities and potential utilization. This portrayal of man-day contributions is evidence that members represent a source of both emergency and contingent manpower, useful in the full range of requirements facing commanders in both war and peace.

The distinction between emergency and contingent manpower is another aspect of the continuum and is useful in understanding resources and requirements. The need for emergency manpower is characterized by the once-in-a-generation requirement to build up the force for a major contingency such as Desert Storm or Iraqi

Contingent manpower can be employed across the spectrum of military operations—as complete units, smaller detachments, or individual augmentees. Such resources provide augmentation in such missions as exercise support, daily operations, theater engagement, peace support and enforcement, and low intensity combat. These requirements represent differing points on the continuum of service, with emergency requirements being filled by forces whose usual mode is at the lower end of the activity scale, while contingent requirements will mostly be filled by personnel who have greater availability and thus serve at the middle or higher regions of the scale.

Some members can fill both contingency and emergency requirements because their capacity changes over time, thus flexible and precise manpower systems are necessary. Such systems offer a scalable force that can be tailored to the needs of gaining force commanders. The challenge for today's Guard and Reserve leaders is to build a new

manpower management system—a rheostat—that will support the continuum of service concept.

Consider an illustration. Corporal Smith is in the first semester of his third year at State. He is taking his highest academic load to date. He wants to remain in good standing with his unit but is only available one weekend a month for training. He can attend his two-week annual training

provided it is in the summer. Unless a national emergency is declared and his unit is activated, that will be the extent of his commitment to corps and country for the year, for he is a part of the emergency manpower force. Having graduated after two years, however, he wishes to take a break before graduate school and volunteers for duty in a composite unit that will deploy to Okinawa for six months. Now a sergeant, he has shifted to the right on the continuum scale, the contingent manpower pool. When the deployment is over, he must immediately shift back left, either returning to Selected Reserve status or joining the Individual Ready Reserve—available for mobilization but primarily focused on school and work. At each of these points on the continuum, he represents a unique national resource, provided his leaders know how to use him and make it feasible for him to serve. These leaders will need systems and processes to seamlessly shift this asset back and forth across the continuum of service. Sergeant Smith is too valuable to lose.

The Corporate Experience

Retailers, manufacturers, and other concerns with fluctuating business cycles long ago recognized the value of a scalable, pretrained work force composed of loyal members who have the standards and values that make up their unique corporate culture. The use of contingent manpower in the corporate world has already moved well beyond the idea that such a workforce will be comprised only of low-wage, low-skill, temporary employees. Today corporations use contingent manpower to perform a range of functions such as engineering, information technology, legal services, and marketing. The American Staffing Association, an industry advocacy group, claims that the fastest growth in this workforce segment is in professional and technical occupations. This model offers not only a cost-saving measure for private enterprises, but also an efficient means to conserve and maximize the use of valuable employees.

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Freedom. The emergency portion of the force comprises the vast majority of Guard and Reserve members. The contingent manpower force, much smaller, can be applied against ongoing requirements ranging from individuals who augment service or joint staffs for days or weeks, to scheduled unit rotations, to such locales as the Sinai or Kosovo.



Naval Reservists returning to Norfolk from Iraqi Freedom.

U.S. Navy (Angela M. Noell)

Contingency aero-medical staging facility comprised of active duty Airmen, Air Force Reservists, and Air National Guard members, Iraq.

347th Communications Squadron (Rob Jensen)

The Department of Labor defines *contingent work* as the use of independent contractors and part-time, temporary, seasonal, and leased workers. According to a survey by the American Management Association in cooperation with the Institute of Work at Seton Hall University, 93 percent of American firms employ some type of contingent workers and 73 percent place the need to attract specialized talent as a rationale.

Although the priority is to provide highly trained individuals and units to the gaining commander and devise the supporting establishment to accomplish that mission, cost cannot be ignored. Guard and Reserve forces have always been a cost-effective way to meet national security manpower challenges. Not only are premobilization Reserve manpower costs significantly less than a full-time force, but these forces do not require the extensive and expensive tail, such as housing, base facilities, and DOD schools, active forces need.

Actions Required

What must Congress, DOD, and the services do to discard past conceptions of Reserve duty and embrace the continuum of service concept? The first step will be to break down the systemic administrative, manpower, and personnel barriers that prevent Guard and Reserve members from efficiently moving back and forth across the continuum of service.

- Revise outdated pay and personnel systems that are unduly complex to administer and fail to provide accurate pay and entitlements. Members who serve from 30 to 179 days (other than standard drills and annual training) routinely encounter administrative problems that are time-consuming and harm morale and willingness to serve. A modern integrated pay and personnel system with a single military identification card is long overdue. A fast food employee who begins work on Wednesday will receive an accurate paycheck Friday, with tax deductions and documentation of hours

worked. The Guard and Reserve have not yet mastered that level of personnel support.

- Change the paradigm for Reserve pay, which assumes that a member of the Selected Reserve requires an administrative action to trigger a payment. Adopt the active component model, which assumes that a person is on duty and is entitled to pay and allowances unless an administrative action is taken showing the contrary. Selected Reserve personnel should be paid for 48 drills per year unless an administrative action shows they were not on duty.

- Address transitioning medical coverage from civilian insurers to TRICARE. Adequate health insurance and the ability to move smoothly from civilian plans in and out of government-funded TRICARE are critical to servicemembers and their families. Facilitate continuous family enrollment in the defense enrollment eligibility reporting system regardless of active or Reserve status.

- Add flexibility to the management of authorized personnel strengths. Statutory limitations on end strength and controlled grade counting, as well as rules governing sanctuary protection and removal of personnel from the active status list, remain

Validation deployment
of Army Reserve unit,
Desert Shield.



DOD (Lynn S. Beiran)

impediments to the continuum of service concept. Policy change on the DOD level and legislative action will likely be required to allow the Guard and Reserve components the flexibility to use the right servicemember at the right time. The artificial barrier that counts personnel on temporary active duty for more than 179 days against active component authorizations is the biggest obstacle to use of volunteers.

- Legislate changes to permit qualified personnel who retire or leave active duty with a severance payment to serve in the Guard and Reserve component without jeopardizing accrued benefits. This expansion and extension of the manpower pool makes sense at a time when work life expectancy is increasing.

- Change the paradigm that describes a servicemember leaving active duty as *separation*. Unless the member is leaving under circumstances that render further Reserve service impossible, the end of active duty should be seen as *transition*, signaling to all involved the opportunities for continued service.

- Ensure that those responsible for recruiting, retaining, and promoting Guard and Reserve members understand that over a career it is acceptable to move back and forth across the continuum of service for both personal reasons and the operational needs of the service. Leaders, both active and Reserve, must recognize that there is value at every point.

- Guarantee family readiness programs. They play an important role in both

recruiting and retention. On another level, the support of families is of strategic importance. Unhappy family members who publicly voice frustration with a unit that does not meet their needs affect the willingness of national leaders to employ the Guard and Reserve. Family readiness programs ensure that families fully support their members. The programs must serve individual augmentees as well as unit members.

- Create flexible systems to permit force providers to efficiently and effectively build composite units—temporary groupings of volunteers formed for specific missions who on completion will return to another unit or to Individual Ready Reserve status.

Perceptions and Practices

Implementing the continuum-of-service concept will require the Guard and Reserve components to change. The Department of Defense, services, and combatant and gaining force commanders must also change. Active component leaders must recognize that the Reserve is the true all-volunteer force and must be managed differently from the active component, in a complementary manner rather than forcing members and units to utilize systems designed for their active counterparts, who volunteer to serve the

day they enlist. At that point, contractual obligations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice bind them to their commitments. Reservists are not similarly bound but effectively volunteer every time they report for duty. Nothing beyond a desire for service, sustained by an appreciation of the quality of that service, causes a member to join or remain.

Even if all of the actions outlined above are taken and the continuum of service becomes a reality, active component officers and civilian leaders must come to view employment of the Reserve differently.

First, skillful Reserve employment must become a core competency. The commanding general of an infantry division would never accept a battalion commander's acknowledgment that he knew little about fire support or logistics. No senior DOD leader would tolerate a general or flag officer who had no knowledge of joint operations. Yet although the Guard and Reserve comprise a significant portion of the Nation's overall combat capability, and critical skills and capabilities are found in them, it is still common to hear senior officers and leaders acknowledge that they know little about the Reserve. Worse, there is little desire to learn. Competence in using Guard and

Issuing equipment
to security force
augmentee.



355th Communications Squadron (Christina D. Kinsey)

Reserve forces must be viewed as comparable to professional qualification as a joint specialty officer.

Second, the Reserve component must not be viewed as the force of last resort, to be employed only when the active component has reached its breaking point. Guard and Reserve members have shown that they will come when called, stay as ready as resources allow, and bring skills and capabilities that not only augment but enrich the joint force. Such a force deserves the respect accorded an all-volunteer force in readiness. Anyone who views employment of that force as a sign of national weakness rather than strength wastes the investment that has created it and denigrates those who comprise it.

Lastly, the need to maintain the linkages between our professional,

largely career military and the American people must be recognized. Isolation of the active component from the values and experiences of their countrymen can only lead to problems. The Reserve potential to maintain that connectivity is immense. Presence in communities around the country and the interjection into military culture of the civilian values held by most Americans have historically kept the Armed Forces well grounded, responsive to national leadership, and worthy of the support of their fellow citizens. Losing confidence in the militia tradition puts those attributes at risk.

The idea that Guard and Reserve service can be a continuum and not a succession of polar opposites will require fundamental changes in both substance and perceptions. Its increased use has been a reality for many years. However, administrative, personnel, and manpower systems have

failed to keep up with the increase and the changing nature of Reserve service. If the corporate world can revise its views about the shape of its work force and devise efficient and effective mechanisms for employing their pool of both full-time and contingent talent, those responsible for shaping and preparing the Armed Forces can do the same. There are no insurmountable bars to the development and implementation of similarly flexible tools to maximize use of citizen-warriors. These steps will provide a key element of the affordable national defense that taxpayers seek.

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