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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED RESERVE
FORCES SYSTEM

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20 October 1970

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BY

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(Essay)

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SUMMARY

This essay discusses the Selected Reserve Force which was formed from Army National Guard and Army Reserve units from across the nation 27 September 1965 and was discontinued 30 September 1969. Most units successfully completed an accelerated training program and achieved a high level of combat readiness in record time but did not maintain the high level of readiness for an extended period of time. This essay recommends a system of training similar to that employed by the Selected Reserve Force to enable Army National Guard units to achieve and maintain an enduring high level of readiness.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED RESERVE FORCES SYSTEM

As the tempo of the Viet Nam War increased during 1965 and the Johnson administration put the process of escalation into motion it was necessary to increase the size of the active army. Additional units and personnel were required without delay by the active army to support the strategy of escalation. The decision was made that the build-up would be achieved by activating new units with additional manpower being furnished by increased Selective Service calls and active army transfers rather than by placing existing Army National Guard and Army Reserve units on active duty.

Before new active army units could be organized, equipped and trained, additional units were urgently needed in South Viet Nam. To meet this requirement, substantial Strategic Army Force units were deployed. This resulted in a serious gap in the defense readiness of the United States which was expected to continue to exist until new units could be formed and made ready for deployment.¹ In view of these circumstances, the decision was made to place heavy reliance on the reserve components of the Army. This was a new concept and served as the basis for forming the Selected Reserve

¹Major General Winston P. Wilson, Departments of the Army and The Air Force National Guard Bureau, letter to The Adjutants General of all States, including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, 14 October 1965.

Force (SRF) which was announced to the public 27 September 1965.²

U.S. Department of the Army Army Regulations 310-25 (Dictionary of United States Army Terms) dated October 1967 defines SRF this way:

Selected Reserve Forces (JA) -- Those units and individuals within the ready reserve designated by their respective services and approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as so essential to initial wartime missions as to require priority over other reserves.

The SRF was a 150,000 man force formed from Army National Guard and Army Reserve units across the nation. The combat units, consisting of approximately 119,000 men were furnished by the Army National Guard. The Army Reserve contributed combat support and combat service support units, with a total strength of approximately 31,000 men. Major Army National Guard units designated SRF were:

1. One division base and one brigade from the 28th Infantry Division of Pennsylvania, one brigade from the 29th Infantry Division of Maryland, and one brigade from the 37th Infantry Division of Ohio.
2. One division base and one brigade from the 38th Infantry Division of Indiana, one brigade from the 33rd Infantry Division of Illinois, and one brigade from the 46th Infantry Division of Michigan.
3. One division base and one brigade from the 47th Infantry Division of Minnesota, one brigade from the 32d Infantry Division of Wisconsin, and one brigade from the 45th Infantry Division of Oklahoma.

²"SRF Born: 27 September 1965, Died: 30 September 1969, it accomplished its mission," The National Guardsman Magazine, XXIII (September 1969), pp 12-16.

4. One infantry brigade from the 36th Infantry Division of Texas, one infantry brigade from the 49th Infantry Division of California, one infantry brigade from the 41st Infantry Division of Washington and Oregon.

5. The 67th Infantry Brigade (Sep) from Nebraska and Iowa, the 69th Infantry Brigade (Sep) from Kansas and Missouri, the 29th Infantry Brigade (Sep) from Hawaii and California.

6. The 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment of Ohio.³

The various Army and State National Guard headquarters lost no time in issuing publications outlining the mission, objectives, and plans for execution of the SRF program. One of the most concise mission statements was issued by Headquarters Fourth U.S. Army:

MISSION.

a. SRF units will conduct accelerated training in appropriate Army training programs (ATPs) to permit units to mobilize, complete training, and prepare for deployment within eleven (11) weeks or less depending upon size of the unit.

b. The training level objective for SRF units is to complete battalion level ATPs to include Army training tests (ATTs) prior to 1 July 1966. SRF units of company or smaller size will complete ATP and ATT prior to completion of AFT 66.⁴



The training objective of SRF units was to achieve and maintain the highest possible level of training which could be accomplished

³Wilson, 14 October 1965

⁴LT GEN Colglazier, Headquarters Fourth U.S. Army, Letter of Instruction for Accelerated Training of Selected Reserve Forces (SRF) 26 October 1965, Annex B.

at home station without mobilization. The requirement for increased readiness was not a prelude to mobilization but a precautionary measure in light of existing world conditions. However, commanders were required to complete many mobilization actions prescribed in AR 135-300.

The overall objective for logistic support was to have tables of organization and equipment (TOE) and tables of allowance (TA) levels of equipment available and in combat serviceable condition. The objective of the personnel program was to bring all SRF units to 100% TOE strength of fully qualified personnel.

Army National Guard SRF units were requested to initiate an accelerated training program as soon as possible which all units did by the end of November 1965. Most states were obliged to reorganize before the crash training program could be initiated. In some states major reorganization actions were required while only limited adjustments were needed in other states.

Major requirements of the new program included these provisions:

1. Authority to increase unit strengths to full TOE strength.
 2. Authority to hire additional full time technicians.
 3. Additional training assemblies were authorized; a 50% increase for all units and a 100% increase for staff personnel.
 4. Completion of annual field training during April, May or June 1966.
 5. Updating personnel records and partial completion of certain others, insofar as possible, in accordance with AR 135-300.
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6. Completion of final type medical examinations for those who had not had an examination of this scope within the previous twelve months.

7. Completion of immunizations.

8. Updating of personnel security clearances.

9. Special emphasis on maintenance of equipment.

10. Training of supply personnel in active army supply and accounting procedures.

11. Issuance of winter clothing and equipment.

12. Additional Federal funds were made available.⁵

The foregoing are the essential conditions under which the SRF entered an accelerated training program geared at achieving at least battalion level training with all units capable of responding to mobilization orders within seven days of an alert.

As time transpired and the training pace intensified, huge quantities of clothing, supplies and equipment of the various types, together with the usual quantities of paper work, were received, processed and put into use. With the wholehearted support and understanding of Guardsmen of all ranks, their families, friends, employees and employers throughout the land, the many inevitable

⁵Major General Winston P. Wilson, Departments of the Army and The Air Force, National Guard Bureau, letter to The Adjutants General of all States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and The District of Columbia, 8 October 1965.

problems and trying circumstances were conquered and the SRF soon reached the level of readiness necessary to assure an adequate strategic reserve.

During the summer of 1966 most Army National Guard units had reached their peak and had met readiness objectives. As a means of evaluating training progress, Army Training Tests (ATTs), were administered to 699 of the 744 SRF units. Forty five units were not required to take an ATT. Major General James F. Cantwell, President of the National Guard Association of the United States in his annual report of 17 October 1966 to the members of that Association had this to say:

It is to the great credit of everyone involved that by 1 July 1966, the target date for attaining the readiness level, 88% of our SRF units had passed their training tests and were, in fact ready to respond. The few that did not will have done so by early November and at that point the citizen-soldiers in those units will have achieved a level of combat-readiness inconceivable little more than a year ago.⁶

The training objectives for SRF units during the following training year of 1966-67 was to increase proficiency in all phases of training but for most units the fast pace was reduced somewhat.⁷

⁶National Guard Association of The United States, official proceedings at the Eighty-Eighth General Conference, 17-20 October 1966, p 43.

⁷General Freeman, Headquarters USCONARC, Letter of Instructions for Accelerated Training of a Selected Reserve Force (SRF), 22 October 1965, Annex B.

Before many months, it appeared doubtful that mobilization would be required and it was recognized that the units which had already achieved such a high state of readiness should not be required to bear the SRF training burden for an indefinite period of time. Therefore, the decision was made to designate the existing force as SRF I, designate an interim SRF IA and create a scaled down SRF II. The Army National Guard provided 95,000 men to 55,000 from the Army Reserve for SRF II. The Guard portion consisted primarily of two Infantry Divisions and three separate brigades.

During May 1968, the long expected mobilization did come for a limited number of SRF I and SRF II units. The remainder of SRF II continued until 30 September 1969 at which time SRF training program was terminated.

Thus ends a brief summary of how the SRF came into existence 27 September 1965, flourished for a limited period of time, and then expired slightly over four years later.

For a considerable period of time the news media has reported stories of Soviet naval vessels in the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Mediterranean; and more recently construction of a submarine base in Cuba by Russia.

It is a matter of common knowledge that Soviet influence is expanding in the Middle East, Latin America, and other parts of the World. No one knows what the future may hold for the United States with regard to her relations with other Nations of the World, but

predictions have been made that by 1975 the Soviet Union will have matched or exceeded the United States in most categories of military power and that by that time Russia will be the only superpower left in the World.⁸ There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that Russia is dedicated to dominate the entire world and has only the United States to conquer to accomplish that purpose. With these considerations in mind, the conclusion can be drawn that the United States has declined as a world power and unless action is taken to regain strategic superiority at the earliest possible time, this downward trend will continue over the next several years while the Soviet Union continues to maintain a standing Army in excess of two million men, builds mammoth missiles and a powerful new Navy.

Since the discontinuance of the SRF program, various restrictions on training, equipment, strength, and Federal funds have been imposed on Army National Guard units. As a result the levels of readiness are too low to be responsive to rapid mobilization, and in view of the steady decline in the active forces of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, the future role of the National Guard and the other reserve components should be of vital concern of all American citizens.

On 21 August 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird issued a memorandum to the Secretaries of the Military Departments, Joint

⁸"Is U.S. Forfeiting the Arms Race to Russia?" U.S. News and World Report LXIX No. 16 (October 19, 1970) pp 21-24.

Chiefs of Staff and other senior officials in which he stated that reduced expenditures during fiscal year 1971 "will require reductions in overall strengths and capabilities of the active forces, and increased reliance on the combat and combat support units of the Guard and Reserves."⁹ In view of the growing Soviet threat to the United States, it is indeed regrettable that the strengths and capabilities of the active forces must be further reduced. However, the decision to place increased reliance on the Guard and Reserves and assurance that they will be the initial and primary source for augmentation of the active forces in any emergency requiring a rapid and substantial expansion of the active forces is heartening to National Guard officials across the nation. This should be the beginning of a substantial increase in support by the active forces and a challenge to the Guard and Reserve to attain and maintain a much higher level of combat readiness than ever before achieved.

In Mr. Laird's memorandum, certain specific responsibilities were assigned to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). These responsibilities included increased readiness and responsiveness of combat and combat support units, maintenance of strength, issuance and maintenance of equipment, a construction program, support of training programs, additional

⁹Melvin R. Laird, The Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director, Defense Research and Engineering, Assistant Secretaries of Defense, Department of Defense Agencies, August 21, 1970.

technician support, programming of resources and establishing priorities to achieve appropriate readiness levels as rapidly as possible. If adequate support in all these areas are provided there should be no question about the readiness of the Army National Guard in the future.

All the details as to how the additional support will be rendered to achieve the intent of Mr. Laird's memorandum are not yet discernible but National Guard commanders across the nation look forward with anticipation to receipt of more and better equipment, increased support from the active Army, and the assignment of additional missions. The objective to "Increase the readiness, reliability, and timely responsiveness of the combat and combat support units of the Guard and Reserves and individuals of the Reserves,"¹⁰ will be a major undertaking and will be a challenge to not only Guard and Reserve members at the grass roots level but also to those in the higher echelons of command who are responsible for initiating, coordinating and monitoring the program. Unless this particular objective is achieved, the remaining portion of the memorandum will have little meaning.

As we enter an era when members of the Guard and Reserve will be required to fulfill a heightened role in the defense of the United States, the best possible approaches to administration,

¹⁰
Ibid.

logistics and training requirements must be employed to carry out the new policies announced by the Secretary of Defense. An examination of the recent SRF program reveals that many excellent procedures were used to very good advantage and will be helpful in formulating new directives, programs and plans. Some SRF procedures were ineffective and should be avoided.

There has been no information received which indicates that an increase in the strength levels of the Army National Guard will be authorized but surely there will be some adjustments in the Army National Guard troop lists to offset reductions in active army forces. Once a decision is made on the constitution of the Army National Guard troop list, one of the most practical ways to initiate the new program would be to divide the combat, combat support and combat service support units into three separate groups of approximately equal numbers, and assign each group specific levels of training. As an example, the present Army National Guard troop list, which consists of eight divisions, eighteen brigades, and various other units could be divided by assigning three divisions and six brigades to the first two groups with the remaining two divisions and six brigades assigned to the third group. Additional smaller combat, combat support and combat service support units could be grouped as required to achieve three well balanced forces. Conceivably this could result in three Army National Guard forces at three separate levels of training with an authorized strength of each force at approximately 119,000 which



would be equal to the authorized strength of the recent Army National Guard SRF.

On a rotational basis, each of the three forces could be assigned a special training mission to be achieved within one year. The training mission should be patterned after the SRF program but the objectives should be achieved at a slower, sustaining rate without a prevailing atmosphere of a crash training program.

Group one would initiate a special training program at a given time. One year later as group one achieved its training objectives, group two would enter the special program with the purpose of achieving its training objectives one year later at which time group three would enter the program and group two would be relieved. When group three reaches its training objectives, group one would reenter the program for the second time to be followed by groups two and three at one year intervals. The group scheduled to be rotated out could be retained in the program for an additional period of time if the international situation dictates.

A method of rotating all units by groups every third year is a practical and reasonable way that a viable, responsive Army National Guard can achieve and maintain, over an extended period of time, a level of training significantly higher than it has ever achieved in the past. There is no question that the SRF attained unprecedented levels of combat readiness but it did not maintain the high level of readiness after elimination as an entity. Apparently it was never

intended that the SRF maintain high levels of readiness over an extended period of time short of mobilization, but the "new" Army National Guard must maintain a high level of readiness at all times and be capable of responding to contingency requirements on very short notice.

Rotation of all Army National Guard units into a special training program, similar to that prescribed for the SRF, every three years will provide a definite cycle for refresher training and at the same time afford members gained by attrition an opportunity to receive training as members of their unit. During the two off years members will have an opportunity to "reduce their rate of March" but the responsiveness of the unit should not be impaired to an unacceptable level.

Units being rotated out of the special training program must be permitted to retain all authorized equipment and authorized personnel strength must remain unchanged. This is absolutely essential to keep requirements for reorganization and rebuilding every third year to an absolute minimum.

One of the major problems encountered during the crash training program of the SRF was the requirement that members devote many additional hours of work at night and on weekends to attend extra training assemblies and to accomplish administration, supply, and training tasks. Because of the heavy demands on their time, many highly qualified and experienced officers and non-commissioned

officers found it necessary to resign from the Guard. The pitfall of demanding more time than the average young man is willing to devote to part time soldiering must be avoided. It is very doubtful that the average Guardsman, his family, his business associates or the general public would look favorably upon a permanent increase in the number of regularly ordered training assemblies now required of members of the Army National Guard. Nevertheless, it is recognized that training time afforded by 48 unit training assemblies and fifteen days annual training each year will be insufficient if the Guard is to attain and maintain over an extended period of time the high levels of combat readiness that the security of the United States requires. A most practical plan for acquiring additional training time would be to extend annual training from fifteen days per year to twenty one days per year. The general public and those directly involved in Guard activities would probably favor an extension of annual training periods over an increase in the number of unit training assemblies per year. More substantial training results can be achieved during one additional week at annual training than by an increase of twelve to fifteen unit training assemblies per year. A permanent increase of sixteen or more unit training assemblies per year would not be acceptable because an excessive number of weekend training assemblies would be required. The proposal of extending annual training periods an additional seven days



could be authorized under existing regulations.¹¹

Much progress has been made during recent years to minimize the administrative tasks required for mobilization. Many personnel forms and records formerly required only in case of mobilization are now being maintained by Army National Guard units in the course of routine day to day administration. During the SRF program units were required to partially complete many mobilization personnel forms and records. Due to the constant turnover of personnel and the inevitable changes in personal data, a requirement for partial completion of personnel records and forms currently required only on mobilization would be extremely expensive and wasteful and would be of doubtful value. Further streamlining of administrative tasks required on mobilization is needed. ✓

The effectiveness of a system of rotating units into a special training program every third year would be enhanced by the roundout program which was initiated earlier this year.¹² Under the roundout program five Army National Guard battalions (and one USAR battalion) attended annual training during 1970 at Ft Hood, Texas where they ✓

¹¹U.S. Department of the Army, National Guard Regulations 45: Training Army National Guard (Washington: 15 April 1968) p 13. The writer knows from personal knowledge that annual training periods have been extended beyond the customary fifteen days in past years because he attended 21 days annual training as a member of an Oklahoma Army National Guard unit during 1939 and again during 1940.

¹²"Roundout", The National Guardsman Magazine, XXIV (October 1970) pp 12-17. LTC Jean M. Traski "One Army Serves" Army Digest, Vol 25. No. 10 (October 1970) pp 10-11.

were integrated into the training program of the 1st and 2d Armored Divisions. The year of special training for each group should include attendance at annual training under the roundout program. This would give the active army commander an opportunity to keep a critical eye on his roundout units and to render professional judgement on how they are accomplishing their training mission.

Modern weaponry has removed all except a slight possibility of a slow and orderly mobilization in case of a future National emergency. In the event of a threatened or actual attack on the United States it is highly probable that mobilization must be accomplished with little or no advance notice. Therefore, each mobilization entity of the Army National Guard and the other reserve components must be fully prepared to enter on active duty and immediately perform its Federal mission. As soon as resources and time permits, a very high level of readiness must be achieved and then maintained over an extended period of time.

The first essential step toward achieving a very high level of training was taken when Mr. Laird issued his memorandum dated 21 August 1970. It is with a great deal of anticipation and confidence that Guard leaders await instructions and guidance on implementation of the new policy. In the meantime, careful attention must be given to ways and means of utilizing the forthcoming additional equipment, manpower and other resources to the best possible advantage to

achieve the desired levels of training.

It is concluded and therefore recommended that the high levels of readiness of the Army National Guard that the security of the United States requires can best be achieved over an extended number of years by conducting training programs in accordance with this guidance:

1. Prepare a special training program for all Army National Guard units. The training mission will be similar to the SRF training mission, the essential portions of which are discussed in this essay, and should be achieved within one year.

2. Authorize a total of 21 days annual training, including necessary travel time. Consider authorizing up to twelve additional unit training assemblies per year for selected personnel in company sized units and staffs of battalion and larger headquarters.

3. Divide combat, combat support and combat service support units into three groups and then rotate each group through the special training program every three years.

4. Give priority on procurement and distribution of equipment to the group engaged in the special training program.

5. Insure that units being rotated out of the special training program are permitted to retain all authorized personnel and equipment.

6. Carefully examine all mobilization procedures to eliminate or modify all unessential administrative requirements.


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