

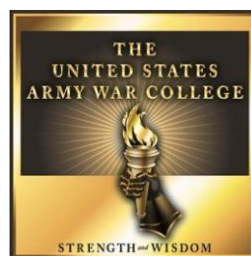
Research Project

“Paper TigIRR: The Army’s Diminished Strategic Personnel Reserve in an Era of Great Power Competition”

by

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Abstract

The Russo-Ukrainian War highlights the intensity of Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) and its staggering personnel requirements. This demands an urgent examination of the U.S. Army's strategic depth to fight and prevail in conflicts with significant casualties that disproportionately impact leaders. The Army's Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is shrinking, and this trend is compounded by a persistent recruiting crisis across all Army components. In a full mobilization scenario, the undersized IRR will be nearly exhausted filling vacancies in authorized force structure, leaving little for casualty replacement, reconstitution, or expansion requirements. The timely activation of the Selective Service System (SSS) cannot be assumed, and the first trained personnel inducted through SSS will not be available for deployment until at least 270 days after the draft's resumption. In the interim "valley of death", the depleted IRR and Retired Reserve would constitute the Army's only substantial strategic pool of pretrained individual manpower for approximately nine months. The IRR must be revitalized, and the current mobilization and expansion timelines shortened to account for anticipated LSCO personnel requirements. This can be accomplished through a suite of feasible policy changes: 1) priority expansion of the IRR; 2) restoring SSS' initial delivery date for inductees to its pre-1994 standard (M+13); and 3) enhanced management of the Retired Reserve's Category I personnel.

Key Words

Individual Ready Reserve, Mobilization, Draft, Selective Service System, Manpower, Recruiting, All-Volunteer Force, Large Scale Combat Operations, Great Power Competition

Paper TiglRR: The Army's Diminished Strategic Personnel Reserve in an Era of Great Power Competition

Russia's military actions since February 2022 have upended many long held assumptions about the U.S. Army's capacity to decisively engage in prolonged large scale combat operations (LSCO) against a great power.¹ Despite its unexpectedly poor operational performance in the initial invasion of Ukraine, the Russian military continues to learn from its severe, early setbacks and adapts in ways that still surprise Western observers.² Russia's ability to successfully mobilize, train, and employ over 300,000 inactive reserve personnel as well as more than 80,000 new volunteers in under five months showcases an underappreciated strategic manpower capacity that has profound implications for the United States and its NATO allies.³ Simply put, Russia demonstrates that mass still matters in 21st century warfare where it carries great coercive and deterrent effects.⁴ A nation's ability to mobilize is one of the most important methods of conveying its resolve to both allies and adversaries.⁵

¹ Michael Peck, "Losses in Ukraine Are 'Out of Proportion' to what NATO has been Planning for, the Alliance's Top General Says," *Business Insider*, February 5, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/ukraine-war-scale-out-of-proportion-with-nato-planning-cavoli-2023-2>

² Dara Massicot, "What Russia Got Wrong: Can Moscow Learn from Its Failures in Ukraine?," *Foreign Affairs* 102, no. 2 (March/April 2023): 78-93, 89-91; and Simplicius the Thinker [pseud.], "The BTG is Dead, Long Live the BTG!," *Simplicius the Thinker* (blog), February 28, 2023, <https://simplicius76.substack.com/p/the-btg-is-dead-long-live-the-btg>

³ Douglas Macgregor, PhD., telephone conversation with author, December 7, 2022.

⁴ Raphael S. Cohen, and Gian Gentile, "Is the U.S. Military Capable of Learning from the War in Ukraine?," *Foreign Policy*, February 2, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/02/us-military-lessons-war-ukraine-russia-weapons-tactics/>

⁵ Dan Altman, "Advancing Without Attacking: The Strategic Game Around the Use of Force," *Security Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): 58-88.

The United States is now at a strategic crossroads facing both an expanded Russian military with additional mobilization capacity still in reserve as well as China's formidable People's Liberation Army (PLA).⁶ While there is growing media and political attention concerning the health of America's defense industrial base,⁷ there is comparatively little focus on the U.S. Army's current strategic manpower depth and its precarious ability to mobilize and sustain adequate personnel for conflicts with peer or near-peer competitors.⁸ The war in Ukraine highlights the intensity of LSCO and its staggering personnel requirements.⁹ This reality must spur long overdue discussions about how the U.S. Army can expand and reconstitute units in scenarios with daily casualty estimates in the thousands that disproportionately impact seasoned leaders.¹⁰

Fifty years ago, at the dawn of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the Army launched a series of transformative doctrinal and procurement initiatives to capitalize on the lessons learned from the 1973 Yom Kippur War between Israel and an Arab coalition

⁶ In early 2022, it was estimated that Russia had over 2 million soldiers in its version of the IRR, the Mobilization Human Resource. Kateryna Stepanenko et al., *Explainer on Russian Conscription, Reserve, and Mobilization*, (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, March 5, 2022), <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/explainer-russian-conscription-reserve-and-mobilization>; and Marcus Clay and Dennis J. Blasko, "People Win Wars: The PLA Enlisted Force, and Other Related Matters," *War on the Rocks*, July 31, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/07/people-win-wars-the-pla-enlisted-force-and-other-related-matters/>

⁷ Alex Vershinin, "The Return of Industrial Warfare," *RUSI*, June 17, 2022, <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/return-industrial-warfare>

⁸ Lawrence Korb, PhD., Center for American Progress, telephone conversation with author, December 15, 2022.

⁹ Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Michael Kofman, "Russia's Dangerous Decline," *Foreign Affairs* 101, no. 6 (November/December 2022): 22-35, 33.

¹⁰ For LSCO, FM 4-0 states theater medical planners may anticipate a sustained daily casualty rate of 3,600 with a sustained daily casualty replacement requirement of around 800. Department of the Army, *Sustainment Operations*, FM 4-0 (Washington DC: Department of the Army, July 2019), 4-4.

force.¹¹ This deep, organizational introspection following a foreign conflict was unusual and marked an inflection point requiring adaptation and change to prevail in future wars.¹² 1973 was arguably the last great inflection point for the U.S. Army and the enterprise-wide innovation it spurred remains highly influential.¹³ Likewise, the Russo-Ukrainian War may represent a similar turning point in the evolution of warfare.¹⁴ One of the most important observations from the battlefields of Ukraine is the value of maintaining a deep pool of previously trained military manpower to fill existing vacancies, replace casualties, and expand force structure in an emergency.¹⁵

For a variety of reasons that will be discussed throughout this study, the U.S. Army allowed its strategic manpower reserve to dwindle to today's dangerously low level. This alarming shortfall is compounded by a persistent recruiting crisis across all three components that guarantees an even smaller strategic reserve without corrective action to arrest its decline.¹⁶ As a necessary first step, Army senior leaders and civilian

¹¹ John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982*, VA TRADOC Historical Monograph Series (US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, VA June 1984), 3; and David Barno and Nora Bensahel, *Adaptation Under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 104-105.

¹² John Nagl et al., "U.S. Army War College Integrated Lessons Learned from the Russo-Ukraine War" (PowerPoint presentation, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, March 15, 2023).

¹³ John Nagl et al., "U.S. Army War College Integrated Lessons Learned from the Russo-Ukraine War."

¹⁴ Peter Warren Singer, *One Year In: What are the Lessons from Ukraine for the Future of War?*, (Washington, DC: New America, February 25, 2023), <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/briefs/lessons-from-the-ukraine-war/>

¹⁵ Franz-Stefan Gady, "For Europe, Military Conscription Is No Answer to Russia's War," *Foreign Policy*, February 14, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/14/europe-nato-military-russia-war-ukraine-conscription-draft-reserves-training-manpower/>

¹⁶ James Dubik, "Recruiting in the Face of Global Security Challenges," *Army*, February 2023, 49-52.

policymakers must recognize the magnitude of this problem and its dire implications for national security.

To adequately frame the United States' growing strategic manpower dilemma, this monograph will briefly familiarize readers with the U.S. Army's Individual Ready Reserve, its organization, and history. The introductory overview is followed by a summary of six, high-level findings about the Army's current strategic personnel depth identified through extensive research during the 2022-23 academic year. Finally, three key recommendations are presented for revitalizing the IRR and deepening the Army's strategic personnel depth in an uncertain era of Great Power competition.

The Individual Ready Reserve

The Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is the United States' primary strategic manpower pool to fill understrength units in the early phases of mobilization and provide replacements for casualties until new volunteers or draftees inducted through the Selective Service System (SSS) can be trained and deployed.¹⁷ In an earlier era of great strategic uncertainty, the IRR was called the "most important category" of pretrained military manpower by the 1982 Presidential Manpower Task Force Report.¹⁸ Despite common misunderstandings about the IRR within today's Army, IRR soldiers

¹⁷ US General Accounting Office. *Report to the Congress of the United States: Can The Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?*, FPCD-79-3, (Washington, DC: GAO, June 28, 1979); and G.V. Montgomery, "Individual Ready Reserve: The Potential for Improvement," in *The Anthro Factor in Warfare: Conscripts, Volunteers, and Reserves*, ed. Lee Austin (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 380-381.

¹⁸ James R. Engelage and Bennie J. Wilson, "What Pretrained Individual Manpower Is," in *The Anthro Factor in Warfare: Conscripts, Volunteers, and Reserves*, ed. Lee Austin (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 69.

remain among the most experienced and readily available pre-trained personnel in a national emergency to augment active duty or reserve component units.¹⁹ In other words, this month's new IRR soldier was last month's highly trained and proficient active duty soldier.²⁰

Most IRR soldiers have at least three years of prior active duty experience and honorably completed their contractual term of service in the Regular Army, Army National Guard (ARNG), or Army Reserve (USAR) but have not fulfilled their statutory eight year military service obligation (MSO).²¹ Some soldiers who complete their MSO voluntarily elect to remain in the IRR to continue their Army careers in a highly flexible program with few mandatory requirements.²² Current Army doctrine explicitly states that IRR personnel are considered the principal source of pre-trained individual manpower to fill active duty vacancies and provide casualty replacements.²³ The IRR's critical role in future LSCO scenarios was reiterated to the Total Army in a March 18, 2021 All Army Activities message.²⁴

¹⁹ James R. Engelage and Bennie J. Wilson, "What Pretrained Individual Manpower Is," 68.

²⁰ John B. Keeley, "United States Reserve Forces: A High-Cost, Low-Return Investment in National Security," in *The All-Volunteer Force and American Society*, ed. John B. Keeley (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 175.

²¹ "IRR Control Groups" (PowerPoint presentation, US Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, KY, July 24, 2018); and Senior Leader Development Office, Office the Chief Army Reserve, email message to author, March 17, 2023.

²² Department of the Army, *Army Mobilization and Deployment Reference 2020*, (Washington DC: Department of the Army, April 9, 2020), 1-7.

²³ Department of the Army, *Army Mobilization, Manning, and Wartime Replacement Operations*, AR 600-8-11 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, August 25, 2019), 3-1.

²⁴ ALARACT Message 023/2021, "Individual Ready Reserve Management," March 18, 2021, 1:28 PM.

Despite its vital strategic role for a range of future conflicts, the IRR has long suffered from what one author characterized as “calculated neglect” by the Army enterprise.²⁵ This contrasts sharply with the U.S. Marine Corps’ policy of allocating significant human and financial resources to maintain a comparatively high level of IRR readiness.²⁶ Since the end of the Cold War, no military component or personnel category experienced as steep a drawdown as the Army’s IRR which in March 2023 stood at less than 17% of its 1994 size.²⁷ Since its’ ranks are is overwhelmingly comprised of junior enlisted soldiers and company grade officers who generally see their military service as “behind” them, it lacks a natural constituency within the Army to fight for an appropriate share of resources and “seat at the table” in a rapidly shifting strategic environment.²⁸ The current security threats posed by Russia and China demand a reassessment and revitalization of the IRR in order to meet anticipated LSCO personnel requirements, credibly demonstrate U.S. military resolve, and mitigate a persistent recruiting drought. Furthermore, the Army’s long-standing expectations for

²⁵ Corrina M. Boggess, “Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change” (Strategy Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2004), 1.

²⁶ Christine E. Wormuth et al., *The Future of the National Guard and Reserves: The Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Phase III Report*, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, July 2006), 97, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/bgn_ph3_report.pdf

²⁷ Corrina M. Boggess, “Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change,” 3; and Senior Leader Development Office, Office the Chief Army Reserve, email message to author, March 17, 2023.

²⁸ Garri B. Hendell, “The Individual Ready Reserve: Reforming America’s Hidden Legions,” *Military Review*, July-August 2012, 53-57, 55-56.

the IRR must also be revised to ensure they are aligned with its far smaller, and declining endstrength.

Categories Within the IRR

The U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC) classifies IRR personnel by the recency of their training experience in one of three categories: Recently Trained 12 (RT12), RT24, and RT36. The number assigned to each category refers to the number of months since a soldier participated in a training event. For example, RT12 soldiers have completed training, served on active duty, or served in a USAR or ARNG unit within the past 12 months.²⁹ The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) uses IRR soldiers' "RT" dates to calculate the anticipated "yield" for mobilization availability. It is estimated that recalled RT12 personnel will have an 80% yield and RT24s and RT36s will have a 60% yield.³⁰ Despite this significant difference in forecasted mobilization availability, HRC does not manage RT12 soldiers differently from the rest of the IRR population.³¹

The HRC Commanding General maintains administrative jurisdiction over three IRR control groups: Control Group (Reinforcement), Control Group (Annual Training), and Control Group (Officer Active Duty Obligor).³² Control Group (Reinforcement) is the

²⁹ Corrina M. Boggess, "Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change," 8.

³⁰ "IRR Training Information/Decision Brief" (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA, January 9, 2023).

³¹ LTC Lisa M. Dummitt, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, telephone conversation with author, January 24, 2023.

³² Department of the Army, *Army Reserve Assignments, Attachments, Details, and Transfers*, AR 140-10 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, July 16, 2021), 4-2.

largest within the IRR and numbered 63,266 soldiers in March 2023. These personnel are credited with three or more years of prior active duty service or two years of active duty with at least one additional year in a drilling USAR or ARNG unit. They may or may not have a remaining MSO. Control Group (Annual Training) numbered 10,744 in March 2023 and consists of soldiers with a remaining MSO and a mandatory training requirement who have not completed three years of active duty. Finally, Control Group (Officer Active Duty Obligor) is primarily comprised of 1,830 commissioned officers whose active duty or reserve component service is delayed for the following reasons: Reserve Officers' Training Corps graduates on delayed entry, medical personnel delayed for completion of education or residency, and chaplain candidates.³³

Brief Historical Overview of the IRR: 1950-2023

1950 -1973: The Hybrid Era of the Citizen-Soldier

The IRR as we know it today did not exist at the outset of the Korean conflict, but the large number of World War II veterans with residual National Guard and Army Reserve obligations provided a substantial personnel expansion pool, especially for officers and noncommissioned officers. Over 640,000 World War II veterans were recalled to service during the Korean conflict and most returned to active duty

³³ Department of the Army, *Medical Readiness Procedures*, DA PAM 40-502 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, June 27, 2019), Table 4-5; "IRR Control Groups" (PowerPoint presentation, US Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, KY, July 24, 2018); and Senior Leader Development Office, Office the Chief Army Reserve, email message to author, March 17, 2023.

involuntarily.³⁴ This searing experience catalyzed Congressional resolve to improve strategic manpower readiness for future conflicts.

The Armed Forces Reserve Act of 1952 was heavily informed by the initial mobilization challenges for Korea in 1950. This statute assigned all National Guard and Reserve personnel into one of three categories still in use today: the Ready Reserve, the Standby Reserve, and the Retired Reserve.³⁵ An entity called the “Ready Reserve Manpower Reinforcement Pool” was established as a precursor to today’s IRR and 15,234 of its soldiers were mobilized on August 1, 1961 for the Berlin crisis.³⁶ The 1968 Reserve Forces Bill of Rights and Vitalization Act established the IRR in its current form and designated it primarily for soldiers serving out the remainder of their MSO after fulfilling an enlistment contract on active duty, in the ARNG, or USAR.³⁷ 2,752 enlisted IRR soldiers were recalled to active service for Vietnam under these new authorities with 1,692 assigned to mobilizing ARNG and USAR units and 1,060 assigned to Regular Army organizations.³⁸

From 1952 through 1973, the Ready Reserve Manpower Reinforcement Pool and, later, the IRR were massive in size due to the continuous flow of soldiers that

³⁴ Andrew A. Brown, “Personnel Mobilization for Sustained Large-Scale Combat Operations: The Future is in the Past,” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2021), 33.

³⁵ Peter R. O’Connor, “Mobilization of the Army’s Individual Ready Reserve: A Critical Review,” (Strategy Research Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1992), 35.

³⁶ Peter R. O’Connor, “Mobilization of the Army’s Individual Ready Reserve: A Critical Review,” 35.

³⁷ Peter R. O’Connor, “Mobilization of the Army’s Individual Ready Reserve: A Critical Review,” 4.

³⁸ Peter R. O’Connor, “Mobilization of the Army’s Individual Ready Reserve: A Critical Review,” 36.

entered and left service via the draft or as draft-induced volunteers.³⁹ This reservoir of pre-trained military manpower was aligned with contingency mobilization plans for high intensity combat operations that were expected to require significant individual augmentees and combat casualty replacements.⁴⁰ For example, 492,000 soldiers separated from active duty in Fiscal Year (FY) 1971 with the overwhelming majority completing their six-year MSO in the IRR.⁴¹ During the last full year of the draft in 1972, the Army's IRR stood at 1,060,000 and this number would drop to 759,000 in 1973 at the dawn of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF).⁴²

1973-1984 Manpower Crisis

Following the end of the draft in 1973, the ARNG and USAR entered a period of severe recruiting challenges as their traditional source of high-quality, draft-motivated enlistees disappeared.⁴³ These trends also impacted the IRR as the overall military became smaller, fewer soldiers entered and departed service, and enlistment lengths generally increased. By 1978, the Army's IRR had dwindled to only 178,000 as the final cohort of draftees completed its six-year MSO.⁴⁴ This prompted significant alarm within

³⁹ *Death of the IRR*, AUSA Defense Report 76-14, (Arlington, VA: The Association of the United States Army, 1976).

⁴⁰ *The Individual Ready Reserve – How Big Must It Be?*, AUSA Defense Report DR-185, (Arlington, VA: The Association of the United States Army, 1979).

⁴¹ John Brinkerhoff and David Grissmer, *The Reserve Forces in an All-Volunteer Environment*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1984), 30, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA152756.pdf>

⁴² John Brinkerhoff and David Grissmer, *The Reserve Forces in an All-Volunteer Environment*, 46.

⁴³ John Brinkerhoff and David Grissmer, *The Reserve Forces in an All-Volunteer Environment*, 10-14.

⁴⁴ John Brinkerhoff and David Grissmer, *The Reserve Forces in an All-Volunteer Environment*, 46.

the Department of Defense (DOD) and Congress as the Army IRR had 490,000 fewer soldiers than mobilization plans called for.⁴⁵

It appears that the 1970 President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (commonly known as The Gates Commission) and the Army's own 1971 All-Volunteer Force Study overlooked the predictably severe reduction in IRR manning following the transition to an AVF.⁴⁶ This oversight had significant second order effects as the Army's 1971 study said that the IRR was expected to provide the bulk of all individual manpower requirements in the event of war.⁴⁷ To stabilize the IRR's size to meet wartime mobilization requirements, a host of imaginative policy proposals were advanced and some of these will be discussed later in this monograph. The primary lever ultimately used to revitalize the IRR was the controversial extension of servicemembers' initial MSO from six to eight years in FY 1984 and this lengthened service obligation grew the IRR by approximately 168,000 soldiers.⁴⁸ The Army also introduced IRR reenlistment bonuses to keep more experienced soldiers available for

⁴⁵ GAO, *Can The Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?*, i.

⁴⁶ In its 211 pages, the Gates Commission report makes a single oblique reference to the IRR as "unpaid reservists in the Ready Reserve Pool who may be called up as individuals." To this author, it seems clear that the report's authors did not fully contemplate the unique national security role of the IRR or the implications for it during the transition to the AVF. One can only wonder how the commission may have approached their work if they knew the IRR in 2023 would be 7% of its 1972 size, the final full-year of the draft. The President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, *The Report of The President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*, (Washington, DC: President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, February 1970), 98; and Larry Landrum, "Manning Shortfalls of the Individual Ready Reserves [sic] in Providing Combat Support and Combat Service Support Personnel for the Total Army (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1996), 12.

⁴⁷ Larry Landrum, "Manning Shortfalls of the Individual Ready Reserves [sic]," 12.

⁴⁸ Larry Landrum, "Manning Shortfalls of the Individual Ready Reserves [sic]," 15.

contingency mobilization and this retained significant numbers of personnel who would have been otherwise discharged at the end of their MSO.⁴⁹

Operation Desert Storm (1991)

In January 1991, the IRR had 317,000 assigned personnel and the Army authorized the activation of 20,277 IRR soldiers for Operation Desert Storm. Most soldiers had less than 10 days to report to their assigned mobilization site following notification.⁵⁰ 85% of notified soldiers reported for duty and this high yield rate is attributed to the fact that all recalled IRR personnel were classified as “RT12s”, which means they had trained on active duty or in a reserve component within the preceding year.⁵¹ 71% of the IRR soldiers recalled were ultimately classified as deployable, but they did not deploy to the theater of operations.⁵² Based on long-standing mobilization doctrine, the IRR soldiers were mobilized to serve as casualty replacements for deployed units if needed.⁵³

Post-Cold War Era

⁴⁹ James R. Engelage and Bennie J. Wilson, “What Pretrained Individual Manpower Is,” 71-75.

⁵⁰ Peter R. O’Connor, “Mobilization of the Army’s Individual Ready Reserve: A Critical Review,” 4-5.

⁵¹ Peter R. O’Connor, “Mobilization of the Army’s Individual Ready Reserve: A Critical Review,” 15.

⁵² Peter R. O’Connor, “Mobilization of the Army’s Individual Ready Reserve: A Critical Review,” 18.

⁵³ Larry Landrum, “Manning Shortfalls of the Individual Ready Reserves [sic],” 6.

The IRR's ranks swelled in the early 1990s as the Regular Army shed soldiers due to force structure reductions.⁵⁴ Many of these personnel departed active duty early and transferred to the IRR for the remainder of their MSO.⁵⁵ In 1994, the Army IRR reached 450,000, which marked its highest endstrength since 1974 when it still contained former draftees inducted into active duty between 1969 and 1972.⁵⁶

In the immediate post-Cold War era, the Clinton administration embarked on a sweeping relook of military structure, planning assumptions, and acquisition programs following the collapse of the Soviet threat.⁵⁷ The 1993 Bottom-Up Review's strategic assessment spurred numerous changes in the way the United States approached mobilization.⁵⁸ One of the most significant changes came in November 1994 when the DOD revised its standing guidance to the SSS prescribing the delivery timeline for new inductees if the draft was statutorily resumed.⁵⁹

Before November 1994, standing DOD guidance directed SSS to deliver the first inductees for classification and examination within 13 days of mobilization notification

⁵⁴ The Active Army's strength fell from 765,287 in October 1990 to 572,000 in October 1993. Kathryn Roe Coker, *The Indispensable Force: The Post-Cold War Operational Army Reserve, 1990-2010*, TRADOC Historical Monograph Series (US Army Reserve Command, Fort Bragg, NC, 2013), 67.

⁵⁵ Kathryn Roe Coker, *The Indispensable Force: The Post-Cold War Operational Army Reserve*, 72-73.

⁵⁶ Corrina M. Boggess, "Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change," 2; and John Brinkerhoff and David Grissmer, *The Reserve Forces in an All-Volunteer Environment*, 46.

⁵⁷ Mark A. Gunzinger, "Beyond the Bottom Up Review" (Individual Research Paper, National War College, Washington, DC, 2004), 1-8, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA430015.pdf>

⁵⁸ The 318 page Bottom-Up Review does not mention the IRR once. Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1993); and Thomas Devine, Deputy Associate Director for Operations, Selective Service System, telephone conversation with author, January 25, 2023.

⁵⁹ F. Pang, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management, "Updated Mobilization Requirements" (official memorandum, Washington DC: Department of Defense, November 16, 1994).

(M+13) with a target of 100,000 inductees by M+30. The new guidance moved the initial delivery date for inductees to M+193 with a target of 100,000 by M+210.⁶⁰ Although never explicitly stated, the IRR was now expected to serve as the strategic personnel bridge to the draft for an additional six months – the longest timespan in its history.⁶¹ Like the Gates Commission’s 1970 recommendation to initiate the AVF, the revised 1994 DOD guidance to SSS was issued against the backdrop of a large and robust IRR that recently exceeded expectations during Operation Desert Storm. The 1970 IRR brimmed with hundreds of thousands of draftees completing their MSO and the sizeable 1994 IRR was temporarily inflated due to steep post-Cold War reductions in active duty endstrength.

Due to the vicissitudes of military service lifecycles, the abnormally large 1994 IRR was a historical anomaly that steadily decreased in size. In 1996 the Army IRR contained 350,000 soldiers and would fall to 180,000 in 2000.⁶² Despite these significant declines in size and capacity, the IRR remained saddled with the recently assigned strategic role of providing an approximately 270 day manpower bridge for a full mobilization until the first inductees delivered by SSS complete their initial training.⁶³

⁶⁰ US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Congressional Committees: National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System*, GAO-12-623 (Washington, DC: GAO, June 7, 2012), 4-5.

⁶¹ In 1988, U.S. Representative G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery (D-MS), a long-time champion of Army IRR preparedness explicitly stated that the IRR’s main purpose is to fill a 90-120 period while new recruits [or draftees] are being mobilized and trained. G.V. Montgomery, “Individual Ready Reserve: The Potential for Improvement,” 381.

⁶² Larry Landrum, “Manning Shortfalls of the Individual Ready Reserves [sic],” 6; and Corrina M. Boggess, “Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change,” 2.

⁶³ The HRC estimated in 2018 that in a full mobilization scenario where the Selective Service System was statutorily activated, the initial trained soldiers inducted through SSS would be available for deployment at

Global War on Terror (GWOT) – The AVF’s Limits Are Revealed

The IRR’s use during the early years of the GWOT was highly controversial and departed from its doctrinal role of providing individual fillers for deploying units and combat casualty replacements. In 2003-2004, civilian leaders elected to use widespread cross-levelling between units to fill individual vacancies for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) rather than use the IRR, even though sufficient IRR soldiers with the required skills were available.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Army officials prohibited the mobilization of any IRR personnel released from active duty in the preceding 24 months. In practice, these restrictions prevented the use of most IRR soldiers with the highest level of prior active duty skill retention.⁶⁵

As OIF unfolded, an Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)-level policy shift further restricted the use of the IRR by requiring the Army to demonstrate that all other sources of manpower had been exhausted. This had widespread effects on the Total Army and sacrificed the readiness of organizations identified as “donors” to avert the potential political fallout of mobilizing IRR soldiers.⁶⁶ Many units in the first years of OIF deployed at reduced readiness levels and the U.S. Central Command’s first casualty

277 days following SSS activation. “Replacement, Reconstitution, and Rotation Operations (R3O) Process Map for LSCO” (PowerPoint presentation, U.S. Army Human Resource Command, Fort Knox, KY, November 6, 2018).

⁶⁴ Corrina M. Boggess, “Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change,” 13.

⁶⁵ Corrina M. Boggess, “Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change,” 13.

⁶⁶ US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate: Military Personnel: DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces*, GAO-03-921 (Washington, DC: GAO, August 2003), 42.

replacement “shelf package” for OIF was comprised of active duty soldiers stripped from follow-on units, rather than the IRR as long-standing doctrine prescribed.⁶⁷

By the Summer of 2004, these highly restrictive policies became untenable as recurring troop requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan grew unsustainable. The Army’s first significant IRR mobilization for OIF occurred in June 2004 to fill understrength units because no other manpower source was available. Between June 2004 and November 2005, 6,535 IRR soldiers were mobilized. Of those only 3,300 reported, approximately 3,000 requested exemptions, and another 400 never reported or sought exemptions.⁶⁸ This anemic response was a far cry from the 85% yield rate for the 1991 IRR recall and may be a harbinger for future mobilizations in support of politically divisive operations. Critics lambasted the OIF IRR recall as a “back door draft” and opposition simmered until declining troop requirements for Iraq allowed it to be wound down in 2010.⁶⁹

The initial reluctance in 2003-04 to utilize the IRR in its doctrinally correct role, set off a cascade of personnel shortfalls across the Army which took years to rebalance. The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that using the IRR as a “first sourcing option” for individual replacements avoids many subsequent cross-levelling transfers where four or more like units are degraded to fill a single deploying one.⁷⁰ Sidestepping

⁶⁷ Corrina M. Boggess, “Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change,” 13

⁶⁸ Ann Scott Tyson, “Army to Halt Call-ups of Inactive Soldiers,” *The Washington Post*, November 18, 2005.

⁶⁹ Mark Cancian, Center for Strategic and International Studies, telephone conversation with author, October 18, 2022.

⁷⁰ GAO, *Military Personnel: DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces*, 42.

the IRR for political reasons created even more shortages in the formations called to provide fillers. By April 2005, 53,000 USAR soldiers were cross-levelled from their home units to fill vacancies elsewhere.⁷¹ The ARNG was also required to perform extraordinary personnel contortions and by mid-2004 it cross-levelled more than 74,000 soldiers from their home units to fill individual requirements.⁷²

In late 2004, the USAR and ARNG were buckling under the severe strain of Iraq manpower requirements. That December, LTG James Helmly, the Chief of Army Reserve, penned a sharply worded memorandum to the Army Chief of Staff arguing that the USAR's capabilities were severely limited by "a successive series of restrictive mobilization policies and controls" that "failed to encompass a longer range, strategic view of operational requirements and Army capabilities."⁷³ In 2005, the ARNG began requesting 200 IRR soldiers to provide individual fillers for each of its deploying brigades and quickly became the "IRR's biggest customer" in order to cover its own troop requirements.⁷⁴ An HRC analysis from June 2006 estimated that the Army only had 22,372 remaining IRR soldiers available for future sourcing and there were significant grade and occupational specialty imbalances when compared with requirements.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Forrest L. Marion and Jon T. Hoffman, *Forging a Total Force: The Evolution of the Guard and Reserve*, (Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC, 2018), 135.

⁷² Forrest L. Marion and Jon T. Hoffman, *Forging a Total Force*, 136.

⁷³ Forrest L. Marion and Jon T. Hoffman, *Forging a Total Force*, 134.

⁷⁴ Forrest L. Marion and Jon T. Hoffman, *Forging a Total Force*, 144.

⁷⁵ LTC Melvin Fleming, "'What's Left' – Mobilization and Deployment," (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Reserve Command, Fort McPherson, GA, January 2007).

In hindsight, the relatively limited conflict in Iraq nearly exhausted the Army's strategic personnel depth when it contained 50,000 more IRR soldiers than today.⁷⁶ At the time, LTG James Hemly sounded a prophetic alarm by saying that the Army's "failure to use the inherent authorities of involuntary mobilization during this threatening period in our Nation's history will set a difficult, dynamic precedent for future involuntary use."⁷⁷ Meeting short term operational manpower requirements required extraordinary cross-levelling that degraded units and destroyed readiness elsewhere leading General Peter Schoomaker, the Army Chief of Staff, to describe the practice as "evil."⁷⁸ Although the Army ultimately muddled through its experience in Iraq through the use of widespread cross-levelling, deployment extensions, IRR recalls, active duty "stop loss," and lowered recruiting standards; the fragility of the AVF's surge manpower capacity was exposed. If the comparatively modest operational requirements for OIF required the wholesale degradation of follow-on units and nearly depleted the IRR, the Army must soberly assess its current strategic personnel depth for a LSCO scenario or war with peer or near-peer competitors.

Research Findings: The U.S. Army's Strategic Personnel Depth in 2023

The massive scale and scope of the Russo-Ukrainian war has exposed significant shortfalls in the United States Army's strategic personnel depth for full mobilization and LSCO. This presents an acute vulnerability that requires priority study

⁷⁶ LTC Melvin Fleming, "'What's Left' – Mobilization and Deployment;" and Corrina M. Boggess, "Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change," 3.

⁷⁷ Forrest L. Marion and Jon T. Hoffman, *Forging a Total Force*, 139.

⁷⁸ Forrest L. Marion and Jon T. Hoffman, *Forging a Total Force*, 135.

and action. The following findings are the result of extensive research conducted between August 2022 and April 2023, attendance at four conferences and panels focused on topics related to mobilization, participation in the U.S. Army War College's Ukraine Integrated Research Project, and correspondence with a variety of experts in government, academia, and policy oriented think tanks.

LSCO Will Quickly Exhaust the U.S. Army's Pool of Trained Manpower

The Army has growing personnel shortages across its existing force structure in all three components. The IRR and Retired Reserve are the only strategic sources of significant trained manpower to fill individual vacancies, replace combat casualties, and provide personnel for both force structure and training base expansion.⁷⁹ FM 4-0 states that sustainment planners should anticipate a steady combat casualty replacement requirement of 800 soldiers per day in LSCO environments.⁸⁰

Brigadier General Hope Rampy, the U.S. Army's Director of Military Personnel Management, recently observed that "the speed and lethality of LSCO will produce tens of thousands of casualties and a corresponding need for thousands of replacements."⁸¹ She further forecasted that most active-duty forces would deploy in the opening weeks of a conflict leaving a limited pool of available replacements within the active component.⁸² Such a scenario would present the Army with an individual replacement

⁷⁹ Stanley J. Horowitz and Jean W. Fletcher, "Problems of the Pretrained Individual Manpower Program," in *The Anthrope Factor in Warfare: Conscripts, Volunteers, and Reserves*, ed. Lee Austin (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 127-132.

⁸⁰ *Sustainment Operations*, FM 4-0, 4-4.

⁸¹ BG Hope Rampy and William C. Latham, "The Individual Replacement Process: Will It Work?," *Military Review*, September-October 2022, 42-47, 43.

⁸² BG Hope Rampy and William C. Latham, "The Individual Replacement Process: Will It Work?," 46.

challenge at a scale unseen since at least the Korean War, and possibly World War II.⁸³

Paradoxically, today's available pool of replacement and expansion manpower is smaller than at any point since 1940 before President Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act.⁸⁴

The IRR Stands at ~75,800 Soldiers and Cannot Fill Current Force Structure Gaps.

No Army personnel category has shrunk as severely as the IRR and many enduring strategic personnel policies were enacted when it was more robust. In 1973, the Army IRR stood at approximately 759,000 soldiers at the dawn of the AVF;⁸⁵ in 1994, it had roughly 450,000 soldiers when the DOD revised its planning guidance to the Selective Service System (SSS) for initial inductee delivery from M+13 to M+193.⁸⁶ Today's IRR cannot fill the existing vacancies in numerous combat arms career management fields (CMFs) leaving nothing for casualty replacement or expansion.⁸⁷ To put this in context, the current IRR in its entirety cannot fill Arrowhead Stadium, home of

⁸³ BG Hope Rampy and William C. Latham, "The Individual Replacement Process: Will It Work?," 47.

⁸⁴ The enlisted strength of the Regular Army was 242,000 in May 1940 and 365,440 on October 31, 2022. George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940-1973*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 10; and "Active Duty Military Strength Report for October 31, 2022," (report, Defense Manpower Data Center, Seaside, CA: October 31, 2022).

⁸⁵ John Brinkerhoff and David Grissmer, *The Reserve Forces in an All-Volunteer Environment*, 46.

⁸⁶ Corrina M. Boggess, "Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change," 3.

⁸⁷ The shrinking IRR cannot keep pace with the growing vacancies across authorized force structure. In January 2023, TRADOC estimated that a mobilization will yield the following number of IRR personnel for specified Military Occupational Specialties: Infantryman (11B), 6,180; Cannon Crewmember (13B), 830; Fire Support Specialist (13F), 630; and Combat Engineer (12B) 1,105. At approximately the same time, the Army National Guard reported the following vacancies in its authorized force structure: 11B, 6,846; 13B, 1,865; 13F, 1,267; and 12B, 1,246. The Army Reserve reported 767 additional vacant 12B positions. In each of these specialties, the reserve component vacancies alone exceed the estimated available IRR strength for mobilization. "IRR Training Information/Decision Brief" (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA, January 9, 2023); "ARNG Auth Assign Vacancy by MOS as of 21 MAR 23," (report, National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA: March 21, 2023); and "Weekly VAC_RPT 20230103," (report, U.S. Army Reserve Command, Fort Bragg, NC: January 3, 2023).

the Kansas City Chiefs.⁸⁸ TRADOC estimates that only 65% of all IRR personnel (~49,300) are available for deployment and this cannot fill Busch Stadium, home of the St. Louis Cardinals.⁸⁹

Acute Combat Arms Recruiting Shortages Will Further Strain the Shrinking IRR.

While the Total Army faces a significant recruiting crisis, its consequences are most acute across the combat arms CMFs.⁹⁰ The Army missed its FY 2022 enlisted recruiting target for CMF 11 (Infantry) by more than 50% and barely achieved 50% of its enlisted recruiting goal for CMF 19 (Armor/Cavalry).⁹¹ In many combat arms formations this practically translates into one new soldier arriving to replace every two departing service. The Army's reliance on the IRR for many contingencies grows daily but TRADOC estimates it can only generate a minimal bench in the enlisted combat arms CMFs: CMF 11 (~6,960); CMF 19 (~1,840); and CMF 13 (Artillery), (~1,795).⁹² Recent

⁸⁸ The IRR's total strength on March 17, 2023, was 75,840. Senior Leader Development Office, Office the Chief Army Reserve, email message to author, March 17, 2023; and Dan Treacy, "Inside Arrowhead Stadium: Capacity, Crowd, Noise, GEHA Meaning & More to Know About Chiefs Stadium," *The Sporting News*, October 16, 2022, <https://www.sportingnews.com/us/nfl/news/arrowhead-stadium-capacity-geha-crowd-noise-chiefs/grhflhzu9ihq49o94mbsxgkx>

⁸⁹ "TRADOC Mobilization Update" (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA, December 16, 2019); "IRR Population FY 22," (worksheet, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA: November 24, 2021); and "Busch Stadium," St. Louis Cardinals, Major League Baseball, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://www.mlb.com/cardinals/ballpark>

⁹⁰ MG Johnny K. Davis, "Solving America's Military Recruiting Crisis," interview by Thomas Spoehr, The Heritage Foundation, November 29, 2022, 0:50:26 to 0:52:15, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/event/solving-americas-military-recruiting-crisis>.

⁹¹ Unattributed, "U.S. Army War College Senior Leader Day" (lecture, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, November 17, 2022).

⁹² These numbers reflect the estimated "yield" of IRR soldiers for mobilization. Note: the CMF 13 number only includes the following MOSs: 13B, 13D, and 13F. "IRR Training Information/Decision Brief" (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA, January 9, 2023); The total number of IRR soldiers at the start of FY 2022 in these CMFs are larger, but do not represent

conflicts demonstrate that these CMFs will generate the highest casualty replacement requirements.⁹³ Missed combat arms recruiting goals must be viewed longitudinally across a soldier's statutory eight year MSO because accessions shortfalls in 2022 and 2023 will result in a further diminished IRR pool for contingencies in 2030 and 2031.

Cross-levelling Units for Individual Replacements is Unsustainable in Expanded Partial or Full Mobilization Scenarios

Great Power competition with the escalatory potential for LSCO cannot rely on the predictable "patch chart" unit rotation policy practiced in Iraq and Afghanistan because readiness must be maintained throughout the depth of Army force structure.⁹⁴ Cross-levelling individual replacements from ARNG or USAR units will degrade the readiness of required follow-on forces in an expanded mobilization of unknown duration.⁹⁵ Cross-levelling will further introduce an extended mobilization delay before the reinforcing or "donor" units can be rebuilt with individual replacements and retrained.⁹⁶ In LSCO, the IRR and Retired Reserve must fill the doctrinal role they were designed for: the provision of trained manpower to fill vacancies, replace casualties, and provide expansion cadre. Only the IRR can provide substantial junior enlisted and

the significantly lower estimated "yield" for deployment. "IRR Population FY 22," (worksheet, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA: November 24, 2021).

⁹³ Data from 2008 showed that 91-95% of all casualties in Brigade Combat Teams were combat MOSs and 3-5% were medics. Patrick M. Rice, "Transforming the Army's Wartime Replacement System" (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2008), 41-42.

⁹⁴ Joseph Whitlock, "The Army's Mobilization Problem," *War Room – U.S. Army War College* (blog), October 13, 2017, <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/armys-mobilization-problem/>

⁹⁵ Larry Landrum, "Manning Shortfalls of the Individual Ready Reserves [sic]," 2.

⁹⁶ William G. Stewart, "Use of Selected Reserve Units as Fillers and Replacements," in *The Anthro Factor in Warfare: Conscripts, Volunteers, and Reserves*, ed. Lee Austin (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 431.

company grade officer individual replacements without jeopardizing the readiness of supporting units.

Furthermore, a large contractor presence cannot be assumed in a contested, non-permissive LSCO environment due to security considerations demanding dispersion, concealment, and rapid movement.⁹⁷ With a reduced contractor footprint, military personnel will perform many logistics tasks they did not widely execute during the GWOT which enabled policymakers to minimize the total number of deployed soldiers. The Russo-Ukrainian War provides the U.S. Army with a window into the type of future conflict it may be called to fight and logistically sustain. The Army mortgaged much of its logistics structure in the GWOT era that permitted the widespread presence of contract personnel;⁹⁸ however, today's IRR cannot provide sufficient support personnel to cover the massive vacancies in current sustainment force structure, let alone expand this capacity for LSCO considerations.⁹⁹

DOD's Current Guidance to SSS Does Not Reflect Today's Strategic Environment

⁹⁷ Martin J. Hendrix, "Unintended Consequences: The Loss of Army Logistics Officer Functional Experience" (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2018), 18.

⁹⁸ Martin J. Hendrix, "Unintended Consequences: The Loss of Army Logistics Officer Functional Experience," 10.

⁹⁹ The IRR is unable to provide sufficient sustainment soldiers to cover vacancies in authorized force structure. In January 2023, TRADOC estimated that mobilization will yield the following number of IRR personnel for critical sustainment specialties: Motor Transport Operator (88M), 1,560; Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic (91B), 1,850; Culinary Specialist (92G), 795; and Petroleum Supply Specialist (92F), 725. At approximately the same time, the Army National Guard reported the following vacancies in its authorized force structure: 88M, 4,155; 91B, 2,277; 92G, 3,147; and 92F, 1,597. The Army Reserve reported additional vacancies in the same specialties: 88M, 4,993; 91B, 1,600; 92G, 1,439; and 92F, 2,822. The reserve component sustainment vacancies vastly exceed the estimated available IRR strength for mobilization. "IRR Training Information/Decision Brief" (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA, January 9, 2023); "ARNG Auth Assign Vacancy by MOS as of 21 MAR 23," (report, National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA: March 21, 2023); and "Weekly VAC_RPT 20230103," (report, U.S. Army Reserve Command, Fort Bragg, NC, January 3, 2023).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the DOD revised its planning guidance to the SSS. In 1994, it changed SSS' initial delivery date for inductees from M+13 to M+193.¹⁰⁰ The Army's IRR stood at roughly 450,000 when this decision was made, and no great power competition was on the horizon. Today's IRR is less than 20% of its 1994 size and must still serve as a strategic "thin green line" for LSCO scenarios until the first trained, entry-level personnel inducted via the SSS can deploy at approximately M+270.

Mobilization and Expansion Timelines for LSCO Must be Aggressively Shortened

The Army's current personnel mobilization and expansion timeline is inadequate for a contingency like the Russo-Ukrainian War. The IRR cannot currently fill existing force structure vacancies, let alone provide sufficient casualty replacements to meet baseline LSCO planning assumptions. DOD's current guidance for SSS to provide initial inductees for training at M+193 is 29 years old and creates an approximately 270 day "valley of death" where the IRR and Retired Reserve are the only strategic sources of trained manpower until the first trained draftees are available for assignment to units.¹⁰¹ This mobilization and expansion timeline must be shortened. It can be accomplished through a suite of feasible policy changes explained below: 1) increasing and revitalizing the IRR; 2) restoring SSS' pre-1994 initial delivery date for inductees to M+13; and 3) strengthening management of the Category I Retired Reserve.

¹⁰⁰ F. Pang, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management, "Updated Mobilization Requirements" (official memorandum, Washington DC: Department of Defense, November 16, 1994).

¹⁰¹ HRC estimated in 2018 that in a full mobilization scenario where the Selective Service System was statutorily activated, the initial trained soldiers inducted through SSS would be available for deployment at 277 days following SSS activation. "Replacement, Reconstitution, and Rotation Operations (R3O) Process Map for LSCO" (PowerPoint presentation, U.S. Army Human Resource Command, Fort Knox, KY, November 6, 2018).

Recommendations: A Critical Investment in Preparedness for an Uncertain Era

During the Cold War, a much larger IRR was expected to serve as a short duration personnel bridge through full mobilization and activation of the draft.¹⁰² While the evidentiary justification for DOD's 1994 decision to revise its' inductee delivery guidance to SSS is limited, it was made at a time when the IRR had approximately 450,000 soldiers.¹⁰³ Under current Army mobilization planning assumptions, today's far smaller IRR of less than 76,000 soldiers is still expected to fill the breach as a strategic manpower reserve for about 270 days (M+270) until the first trained soldiers inducted through SSS reach their units.¹⁰⁴ Many experts believe that even this extended timeline is wildly optimistic given that SSS operates with a skeleton full-time staff and has not inducted anyone since 1973.¹⁰⁵

Considering developments in Ukraine and Russia's successful partial mobilization, post-Cold War planning assumptions from 1994 are no longer valid for an era of Great Power competition. Today's IRR is simply too small to fill the growing number of unit vacancies exacerbated by an unending recruiting crisis across all Army components and still provide the steady stream of casualty replacements expected in a LSCO conflict for 270 days. Furthermore, the preferred method of filling individual unit

¹⁰² US General Accounting Office. *Report to the Congress of the United States: Can The Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?*, FPCD-79-3, Washington, DC: 1979).

¹⁰³ Corrina M. Boggess, "Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change," 3.

¹⁰⁴ "Replacement, Reconstitution, and Rotation Operations (R3O) Process Map for LSCO" (PowerPoint presentation, U.S. Army Human Resource Command, Fort Knox, KY, November 6, 2018).

¹⁰⁵ LTG Thomas Spoehr, USA (Ret.), Heritage Foundation, telephone conversation with author, December 14, 2022.

vacancies for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan through the cross-levelling of personnel assigned to other units is inapplicable in full mobilization scenarios because it degrades the capability of follow-on units which must also prepare for deployment.¹⁰⁶

To face the personnel challenges likely to emerge in full mobilization and LSCO, the Army must look to its past and restore the strategic depth and redundancy it maintained before 1994. These actions cannot wait because the ongoing recruiting crisis shows no signs of abating and its shortfalls heavily impact the combat arms specialties that will disproportionately require individual augmentees, fillers, and replacements in a manpower intensive LSCO conflict with a peer or near-peer power.¹⁰⁷ The following three recommendations can improve America's capacity to credibly deter future aggression while reassuring allies of its resolve and military depth to repel adversaries and prevail: 1) priority expansion of the IRR; 2) revising DOD mobilization guidance for SSS to an M+13 delivery of initial inductees; and 3) strengthen management of the Category 1 Retired Reserve.

Options for Priority IRR Expansion

Enhanced IRR Management

Despite re-entering an era of Great Power competition, the Army continues to allocate minimal administrative resources to the IRR, its strategic manpower shelf with an outsized role in LSCO. The ratio of HRC career managers to IRR soldiers does not

¹⁰⁶ Larry Landrum, "Manning Shortfalls of the Individual Ready Reserves [sic]," 2; and GAO, *DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces*, 42.

¹⁰⁷ MG Johnny K. Davis, "Solving America's Military Recruiting Crisis," interview by Thomas Spoehr, The Heritage Foundation, November 29, 2022, 0:50:26 to 0:52:15, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/event/solving-americas-military-recruiting-crisis>.

afford any meaningful engagement or career guidance.¹⁰⁸ The only regular contact most IRR personnel have with the Army is from Army Reserve retention NCOs seeking to coerce transfers into USAR Troop Program Units.¹⁰⁹ These quota-driven outreach efforts, of widely varying efficacy, have the paradoxical impact of marginalizing the strategic role of a robust IRR and further depleting its inventory through the reassignment of combat arms qualified IRR soldiers to non-combat arms positions in Army Reserve units. Voluntary training and professional military education opportunities for IRR soldiers have been repeatedly slashed since 2014.¹¹⁰ In 2016, IRR soldiers were prohibited from earning retirement points for Army distance education.¹¹¹ These short-sighted decisions practically inhibit IRR soldiers from easily earning retirement

¹⁰⁸ The HRC web page shows only seven talent manager positions for the entire IRR and Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) populations (excluding Army Medical Department and Judge Advocate General's Corps officers). "Individual Mobilization Augmentee and Individual Ready Reserve Division," U.S. Army Human Resources Command, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/Individual%20Mobilization%20Augmentee%20and%20Individual%20Ready%20Reserve%20Division>

¹⁰⁹ "IRR-Reserve 'Recruiter' Full Disclosure," Reddit, February 4, 2016, 06:53 p.m., https://www.reddit.com/r/army/comments/448upk/irr_reserve_recruiter_full_disclosure/; and "Reserve 'Recruiter' Trying to Pull the Wool Over My Eyes (I'm an Active Duty Vet)," Reddit, January 26, 2016, 10:53 a.m., https://www.reddit.com/r/army/comments/426ym9/reserve_recruiter_trying_to_pull_the_wool_over_my/

¹¹⁰ The sweeping elimination of longstanding training and career development opportunities for IRR soldiers is best demonstrated by comparing the U.S. Army Human Resources Command's 2007 and 2020 orientation handbooks for IRR personnel. The 2007 document exhaustively discusses the myriad programs that existed at the time for IRR soldiers to train, earn retirement credit, and maintain readiness in the IRR. The 2020 document is almost solely focused on steering IRR soldiers elsewhere in the Total Army. "Individual Ready Reserve, Did You Know ... An Orientation Handbook for IRR Soldiers," (handbook, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, St. Louis, MO, May 2007), <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/7283542/orientation-handbook-for-irr-soldiers-united-states-army-japan->; and "Individual Ready Reserve Orientation Handbook," (handbook, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, KY, June 2020), <https://www.hrc.army.mil/asset/19023>

¹¹¹ The author strongly asserts that this decision was the most short-sighted and counterproductive of the many recent cuts to IRR training opportunities. It eliminated the primary way most IRR soldiers could realistically earn a creditable retirement year. It further removed a highly effective means of keeping IRR soldiers engaged with their Army careers if they need to temporarily transfer to the IRR for civilian career or family responsibilities. United States Army Reserve, *Army Reserve Retirement Points Information Guide*, (Fort Bragg, NC: US Army Reserve Command, May 14, 2008), 8.

credit, disincentive them from investing in their Army careers, and appear to discount the IRR's strategic necessity.

Recent mobilization planning efforts have not properly accounted for the IRR's indispensable role given the Army's persistent accessions crisis.¹¹² Mobilization tabletop exercises for LSCO scenarios convened by Army G-1 have explicitly omitted the IRR from the exercise scenario.¹¹³ This omission sidesteps the true personnel situation across the total Army – particularly in the lower enlisted grades.¹¹⁴ It further assumes the United States' ability to dictate the optimal timeline for mobilization force flow in high-intensity combat. Russia's recent experiences in Ukraine casts doubt on this just-

¹¹² In December 2019, TRADOC generated the following highly unrealistic assumptions about the IRR's use in a mobilization: 1) TRADOC assumed that it would have a 51 day "strategic warning" to prepare for recalled IRR personnel; and 2) TRADOC assumed that IRR soldiers would not be used as individual casualty replacements. Given the IRR's historic role of providing casualty replacements, the precarious manning situation across the Total Army, and LSCO casualty projections, these assumptions were highly flawed. "TRADOC Mobilization Update" (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA, December 16, 2019).

¹¹³ LTC Lisa M. Dummitt, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, telephone conversation with author, January 24, 2023; Mr. David C. Smith, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, telephone conversation with author, November 3, 2022.

¹¹⁴ The Army witnessed an alarming drop in entry-level, junior enlisted personnel throughout FY 2022 and much of this decline may be attributable to the persistent recruiting crisis. On August 31, 2021 the Regular Army reported having 56,504 soldiers in the E-3 paygrade, 22,865 in the E-2 paygrade, and 14,000 in the E-1 paygrade. On October 31, 2022 the Regular Army's strength in these paygrades had declined to 47,570, 15,595, and 11,613 respectively. "Department of Defense Active Duty Military Personnel by Rank/Grade and Service," (report, Defense Manpower Data Center, Seaside, CA: August 31, 2021); and "Department of Defense Active Duty Military Personnel by Rank/Grade and Service," (report, Defense Manpower Data Center, Seaside, CA: October 31, 2022).

in-time approach to personnel mobilization and deployment.¹¹⁵ As Marine General James Mattis often said, “the enemy gets a vote.”¹¹⁶

The Army must recognize the importance of the IRR for the Total Army in a host of plausible mobilization and LSCO scenarios. This requires communication from Senior Leaders and Army-wide leader awareness.¹¹⁷ Mobilization planning for LSCO needs to fully integrate the IRR and realistic casualty projections grounded in recent observations from Ukraine. Finally, management of the IRR must be elevated in importance and resourcing. As Ready Reserve personnel facing potential recall for ground combat, IRR soldiers should be afforded training, education, and retirement credit opportunities commensurate with traditional Reserve service.

Incentivize Continued IRR Participation

Based on the disparity of available training and career opportunities compared to those offered just a decade ago, it is reasonable to assume that the Army does not properly appreciate the importance of a robust and resilient IRR. To effectively support a Nation at war, the IRR requires some portion of soldiers to voluntarily continue service

¹¹⁵ David Vergun, “Official Says Just-in-Time Deliveries Fail in High End Competition,” *DOD News*, March 16, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3331657/official-says-just-in-time-deliveries-fail-in-high-end-competition/>

¹¹⁶ Jon B. Alterman, “The Enemy Gets a Vote,” Commentary, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, May 16, 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/enemy-gets-vote>

¹¹⁷ A 2021 study by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences reported an abysmal report rate for IRR soldiers who received orders to attend one-day readiness musters. In 2018, 84% of IRR soldiers failed to comply with their muster orders and this non-response rate has a direct impact on overall readiness. The researchers found that most IRR soldiers knew little to nothing about the IRR, their obligations, or continued service opportunities. The research team concluded that the education of soldiers entering the IRR and leaders could improve muster rates and overall engagement. Ava Santos et al., *Improving Muster Rates for the Individual Ready Reserve: Army Reserve Career Counselors Survey*, Research Report 2033 (Alexandria, VA: US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, October 2021).

as senior NCOs and field grade officers. This demands new incentives beyond the restoration of recently eliminated training and retirement credit opportunities because the IRR population was declining long before their termination.¹¹⁸ Extending TRICARE Reserve Select healthcare eligibility to IRR Soldiers and issuing them Common Access ID Cards are promising first incentives; the former requiring legislative authorization from Congress. IRR affiliation bonuses are another area overdue for consideration but will require the Army's institutional culture to overcome its monomaniacal focus on coercing IRR soldiers into traditional reserve units rather than maximizing the total number of personnel in the IRR inventory for full mobilization and LSCO requirements.

IRR-only Enlistment Option

An IRR-only enlistment option is one feasible way of growing junior enlisted and company grade IRR endstrength short of compulsory service. The Army piloted a very limited IRR-only enlistment program in 1979-80, but it was not implemented nationwide.¹¹⁹ In practice, an IRR-only enlistment contract would include new soldiers who receive initial entry training in a priority MOS with follow-on service in the IRR and minimal subsequent training requirements. This could be further incentivized through a

¹¹⁸ The Army's IRR has continued to decline since 2000, but these trends appear to have accelerated. Here is its strength at various points: 2000 (161,622); 2005 (115,000); 96,736 (2017); 79,304 (2021); 75,840 (2023). US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate: Military Personnel: DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces*, GAO-03-921 (Washington, DC: GAO, August 2003); Ann Scott Tyson, "Army to Halt Call-ups of Inactive Soldiers," *The Washington Post*, November 18, 2005; "Mob 101 (in Plain English) Deputy Director of Mobilization Brief" (PowerPoint presentation, US Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Washington, DC, December 14, 2017); U.S. Congress, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report: "Reserve Component Personnel Issues: Questions and Answers," Lawrence Kapp, RL30802, Updated November 2, 2021; and Senior Leader Development Office, Office the Chief Army Reserve, email message to author, March 17, 2023.

¹¹⁹ US General Accounting Office, *Report to the Congress of the United States: Personnel Problems May Hamper Army's Individual Ready Reserve in Wartime*, GAO/FFPCD-83-12 (Washington, DC, GAO, January 31, 1983), 10.

modified Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefit or TRICARE Reserve Select eligibility. In 1979, the Army estimated that an IRR-only enlistment/extension option without any education or healthcare incentives could attract approximately 9,000 volunteers per year.¹²⁰ It is reasonable to assume that a similar program with enhanced incentives could attract a comparable number of volunteers today.

While some in the Army will reflexively discount the efficacy of an IRR-only enlistment option, research suggests that it may disproportionately attract high quality volunteers due to the short duration of active service that can easily fit into a “gap year” experience with minimal disruption to civilian education.¹²¹ Some of these volunteers may enjoy their training experience and elect to commit to a more intensive active duty or reserve component assignment after initial entry training. This could have the salutary impact of expanding the population propensed to serve by eliminating one of the biggest barriers to enlistment for highly qualified young people: the negative perception of lengthy service obligations.¹²² It may also attract soldiers with unique civilian-acquired expertise that wish to serve in an emergency but are unwilling or unable to commit to more time intensive service arrangements.¹²³

¹²⁰ GAO, *Can the Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?*, 19.

¹²¹ Charles Moskos, “Patriotism-Lite Meets the Citizen-Soldier,” in *United We Serve: National Service and the Future of Citizenship*, eds. E.J. Dionne Jr., Kayla Meltzer Drogosz, and Robert E. Litan (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 35-39.

¹²² Charles Moskos, “Patriotism-Lite Meets the Citizen-Soldier,” 37-39; and CPT Stephen K. Trynosky, “Lengthy Enlistments in the Long War: What Are the Costs for Servicemembers and Their Families?” (presentation at the 138th American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Denver, CO, November 9, 2010).

¹²³ In 2006, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) recommended that the Army explore a significantly expanded direct entry program into the IRR. The authors specifically identified the following

Limited Activation of the SSS to Rapidly Grow the IRR

In the current strategic threat environment, there is great value in discussing the feasibility of using the SSS to expand the IRR to its Cold War level. With a significantly smaller Total Army and persistent recruiting challenges, the Army may be unable to attract sufficient volunteers to rapidly grow the IRR to meet future mobilization requirements. The primary benefit of this seemingly provocative proposal is cutting the current lag time between mobilization and the availability of trained and deployable personnel from M+270 with new draftees under current SSS guidelines to M+30 (or less) with previously trained IRR soldiers. In September 1979, when the Army struggled to man the AVF, legislation authorizing an IRR-only draft received considerable support in the U.S. House of Representatives where it garnered 166 votes.¹²⁴ In March 1979, General Bernard Rogers, the serving Army Chief of Staff, endorsed the concept of an IRR draft and categorized it as the only viable means of ensuring a sufficient manpower base for mobilization.¹²⁵ Furthermore, both the Association of the United States Army and National Guard Association of the United States appear to have backed this legislative initiative out of concern for the Army's capacity to mobilize for LSCO.¹²⁶ While the General Accounting Office did not explicitly recommend this proposal, it

specialties for such a program: linguists, Civil Affairs, engineers, IT specialists, and country and regional specialists. Christine E. Wormuth et al., *The Future of the National Guard and Reserves*, 97.

¹²⁴ Bernard D. Rostker, *What to Do with the Selective Service System?: Hard Lessons and Future Posture*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 9, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1084777.pdf>

¹²⁵ Major General William J. McCaddin, "The Army Chief of Staff -- And the Virtues of Saying What Needs to be Said," *National Guard*, May 1979, 1.

¹²⁶ Major General William J. McCaddin, "The Army Chief of Staff -- And the Virtues of Saying What Needs to be Said,"; and *The Individual Ready Reserve – How Big Must It Be?*, AUSA Defense Report DR-185.

identified it as a plausible option for Congress to increase the IRR to meet pre-identified wartime requirements.¹²⁷

The 1979 House proposal called for a limited IRR draft of 200,000 men per year for initial entry training with a short, 8-month post-training liability for recall to active duty in the event of a mobilization scenario.¹²⁸ Its champions highlighted the practical benefit of exercising the SSS' system and identifying gaps well in advance of its activation to induct men for active duty service.¹²⁹ Although the mere mention of conscription is highly controversial in today's political environment, an IRR-only draft with short duration mobilization liability is probably the most politically palatable use of the SSS to increase Army strategic depth in advance of a war. Any proposal of an IRR draft regime will likely face significant political and public opposition; however, many of the usual critiques of conscription would be blunted by making the active duty term of service for training approximately 120 days instead of the 24 months required under the draft that operated from 1948-1973.¹³⁰

Reverse DOD Guidance to SSS for Initial Inductee Delivery

The DOD must reevaluate its 1994 guidance that changed SSS' initial delivery date for inductees from M+13 to M+193. This guidance has not been updated in nearly

¹²⁷ GAO, *Can the Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?*, 27-28.

¹²⁸ GAO, *Can the Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?*, 27.

¹²⁹ G.V. Montgomery, "Individual Ready Reserve: The Potential for Improvement," 381-382.

¹³⁰ GAO, *Can the Individual Reserves Fill Mobilization Needs?*, 27-28.

29 years despite a fundamentally altered strategic security environment.¹³¹ DOD made this policy change following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact in an era characterized by the very low probability of armed conflict with a great power.¹³² This modification also occurred at a time when the Army's IRR stood at 450,000 soldiers.¹³³ One can only speculate whether policymakers in 1994 would have made this sweeping change knowing that the IRR would atrophy to 17% of its size less than 30 years later amidst heightened tensions with Russia and China.

Changing the SSS' delivery timeline for inductees in the event of a draft back to M+13 can eliminate approximately 5 months from of the current, 270 day "valley of death" where a small and beleaguered IRR must provide all junior enlisted and company grade officer replacements for deploying unit vacancies, combat casualty replacement, and expansion cadre requirements. In January 2023, TRADOC conservatively estimated that the available IRR population of Infantrymen (11B), Combat Engineers (12B), and Combat Medic Specialists (68W) would be exhausted in six, three, and four months respectively at very low monthly requirement rates.¹³⁴ The

¹³¹ Thomas Devine, Deputy Associate Director for Operations, Selective Service System, telephone conversation with author, January 25, 2023.

¹³² The 1993 Bottom-Up Review's strategic assessment cemented the assumptions that guided many of the DOD's personnel, acquisition, and force structure decisions during the decade following its release. This included the revision of DOD's standing policy guidance to the SSS. Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2013); and Thomas Devine, Deputy Associate Director for Operations, Selective Service System, telephone conversation with author, January 25, 2023.

¹³³ Corrina M. Boggess, "Individual Ready Reserve: Its Relevance in an Era of Strategic Change," 3.

¹³⁴ These estimates only analyze surge training base capacity to train and process IRR personnel recalled to active duty for mobilization. As discussed earlier, existing force structure vacancies in many specialties would exceed the total available IRR inventory at the very outset of a major war leaving nothing additional for casualty replacement or expansion until the arrival of trained draftees at approximately M+270. "IRR

prudent strategic insurance policy of adjusting SSS' induction timelines to their pre-1994 standard is an extremely low-cost option that requires only modest additional resources. It is a small price to pay in exchange for accelerating the availability of trained, deployable personnel by five months when the Army's most optimistic forecasts suggest it has insufficient manpower inventory to cover initial LSCO or full mobilization requirements in most CMFs.

Strengthen Management of the Retired Reserve

The Retired Reserve will play a significant role in any full mobilization or LSCO scenario; however, like the IRR, this key population is not managed commensurate to its strategic importance. Mobilization guidelines call for the allocation of Category I retirees to a host of existing Army generating force requirements as well as expansion tasks.¹³⁵ Category I retirees are those under age 60, without disabilities, and retired for less than five years.¹³⁶ The Retired Reserve forms the Army's only significant strategic reservoir of senior NCOs and field grade officers, and this pool is essential to supporting the expected institutional expansion in a full mobilization scenario.¹³⁷

Training Information/Decision Brief" (PowerPoint Presentation, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, VA, January 9, 2023).

¹³⁵ In November 2018, an HRC working group identified a potential initial requirement for 13,000 senior NCO and field grade officer retirees to support a sustained LSCO scenario. "Replacement, Reconstitution, and Rotation Operations (R3O) Process Map for LSCO" (PowerPoint presentation, U.S. Army Human Resource Command, Fort Knox, KY, November 6, 2018).

¹³⁶ "Recall to Active Duty," Project AIR FORCE, Rand Corporation, accessed April 6, 2023, <https://www.rand.org/paf/projects/dopma-ropma/retirement-and-separation/recall-to-active-duty.html#:~:text=Military%20retiree%20categories%20are%20defined,retired%205%20years%20or%20more>

¹³⁷ Robert R. Rumph and Barbara A. Hensler, "Military Retirees: Enhanced Management for Mobilization," in *The Anthro Factor in Warfare: Conscripts, Volunteers, and Reserves*, ed. Lee Austin (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 108-111.

The War in Ukraine highlights the vulnerability of senior and mid-grade leaders to devastating strikes guided by advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.¹³⁸ Both Russia and Ukraine have witnessed the disproportionate loss of officers and this trend signals the heightened role of the Retired Reserve to provide seasoned individuals to offset these anticipated losses of leadership and expertise.¹³⁹

Under a 1997 Memorandum of Understanding, the Army will provide 1,500 retired noncommissioned officers to activate SSS within 72 hours of the draft's reauthorization (M+3).¹⁴⁰ It is highly doubtful that the Army can meet this requirement in the designated timeline or for many other positions that will require recent retirees for an expanded training base or new unit structures. As with IRR reform proposals, the enhanced management of retirees demands a focus on closing the "valley of death" of extreme strategic vulnerability between the emergence of a crisis and the availability of full mobilization manpower.

Recognizing the importance of Category I retirees, the Army must manage this special population more closely than it does. Ideally, Category I retirees should be subjected to periodic screening musters like those used for IRR personnel. Given the

¹³⁸ Douglas Macgregor, PhD., telephone conversation with author, December 7, 2022.

¹³⁹ Dan Sabbagh, "Ukraine's High Casualty Rate Could Bring the War to a Tipping Point," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/10/ukraine-casualty-rate-russia-war-tipping-point>; and Jan Kallberg, "Leader Loss: Russian Junior Officer Casualties," Center for European Policy Analysis, December 23, 2022, <https://cepa.org/article/leader-loss-russian-junior-officer-casualties-in-ukraine/>

¹⁴⁰ Dr. Steve Sellman and COL Justo Gonzalez Jr., "Amendment to Memorandum of Understanding between the Selective Service System and The Department of Defense for Support and Assistance During Mobilization, January 1, 1996" (official memorandum, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, July 25, 1997).

expected disease and disability burden among an older population, prudence may dictate the prioritization of Category I retiree screening over the much younger IRR population in a constrained fiscal environment.¹⁴¹ Screened retirees found eligible for recall, could be incentivized to volunteer as pre-designated augmentees in an emergency. Some of this population can be pre-aligned in advance against known mobilization requirements, a practice the Army used extensively during the 1980s.¹⁴² The 1,500 Retired Reserve positions required to activate SSS in an emergency are ideal to test the feasibility of a pre-mobilization alignment of select Category I retirees.

Conclusion

The 2022 National Security Strategy explicitly states that “the post-Cold War era is definitively over and a competition is underway between the major powers to determine what comes next.”¹⁴³ In accordance with this pronouncement, it is time for the Department of Defense to reevaluate many of its foundational mobilization

¹⁴¹ The GAO expressed skepticism about previous Army mobilization plans that called for the widespread use of retired personnel under age 60 to fill LSCO requirements. The Army planned to pre-assign 100,000 retirees against mobilization requirements by the end of FY 1982. GAO calculated that within one year of mobilization 9,000 of this population would require one or more days of hospitalization, 3,000 would become disabled or reach age 60, and 2,300 would die. Given these actuarial realities, heightened medical and readiness screening for the Category I retiree population is perhaps more important than annual health assessments for young IRR soldiers under age 30. US General Accounting Office, *Report to the Secretary of the Army: Army's Ability to Mobilize and Use Retirees as Planned is Doubtful*, GAO/FPCD-83-6 (Washington, DC, GAO, October 15, 1982), 3-4.

¹⁴² In 1981, the Army implemented an extensive plan to pre-assign Regular Army retirees under age 60 to pre-identified mobilization positions. This measure was prompted by an overall shortage of available personnel with the goal of freeing younger active duty and reserve component personnel for deployment. Retirees received pre-assignment orders and were expected to report to their designated installations within 7 days of a full mobilization. GAO, *Army's Ability to Mobilize and Use Retirees as Planned is Doubtful*, 1-2.

¹⁴³ Joseph R. Biden, Jr., National Security Strategy (Washington, DC: The White House, 2022), 6, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

assumptions that originated during the early 1990s. A series of decisions driven by the 1993 Bottom-Up Review dismantled much of the U.S. military's mobilization infrastructure, divested redundant force structure capabilities deemed obsolete at the time, and more than doubled the timeline for force expansion in a full mobilization contingency.¹⁴⁴ The Russo-Ukrainian War demonstrates that many long neglected Cold War era mobilization and personnel processes have renewed relevance in 21st Century conflicts.¹⁴⁵

Despite its history of achievement and resilience on the battlefield, the AVF has never confronted a Great Power or been stressed by more than a partial mobilization.¹⁴⁶ With rising competition from China and Russia, a full mobilization is more probable than at any time since the Cold War.¹⁴⁷ Significant actions are underway to expand the capacity of the defense industrial base,¹⁴⁸ but there are no corresponding discussions to stabilize strategic personnel depth. The failure to confront the growing gap between potential operational requirements and available manpower could have serious repercussions in a future conflict with peer or near-peer adversaries.

¹⁴⁴ Raphael S. Cohen, "Ukraine and the New Two War Construct," *War on the Rocks*, January 5, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/01/ukraine-and-the-new-two-war-construct/>

¹⁴⁵ LTC Stephen K. Trynosky, "What's Old is New: The Unexpected Return of Mass and National Mobilization as Decisive Principles in the Russo-Ukrainian War and Possible Implications for the NATO Alliance" (PowerPoint presentation at the 2023 Telos-Paul Piccone Institute Conference, New York, NY, March 31, 2023).

¹⁴⁶ Olen Chad Bridges and Andree Navarro, "Mobilizing for Major War," *Parameters* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2017), 88-89.

¹⁴⁷ Olen Chad Bridges and Andree Navarro, "Mobilizing for Major War," 88-89.

¹⁴⁸ Cynthia Cook, "Reviving the Arsenal of Democracy: Steps for Surging Defense Industrial Capacity," Report, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, March 14, 2023), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/reviving-arsenal-democracy-steps-surging-defense-industrial-capacity>

Adversaries may simply attempt to outmaneuver ossified strategic mobilization timelines that cannot generate a steady flow of additional military manpower in under nine months.¹⁴⁹ All LSCO planning assumptions to defeat peer or near-peer adversaries require employing substantial portions of the Total Army simultaneously;¹⁵⁰ however, there are serious and growing manpower gaps throughout today's Total Army. The long overlooked IRR will play an indispensable role in full mobilization scenarios but is excluded from key mobilization exercises. If operational plans are not informed by realistic national resource assessments, they cannot provide senior strategic and policy-level decisionmakers with a complete picture of the tradeoffs and risks inherent with their execution.¹⁵¹

The IRR was an integral part of U.S. defense planning throughout the Cold War and must be viewed the same way in today's environment of renewed Great Power competition. In an earlier era, Regular Army and National Guard senior leaders astutely recognized the importance of a healthy and robust IRR to generate sufficient contingency manpower in a time of great peril.¹⁵² We are at a similar juncture today, but

¹⁴⁹ Neils J. Abderhalden, "Risk Hindered Decision Making: How the DOD's Faulty Understanding of Risk Jeopardizes its Strategy," *The Strategy Bridge*, March 11, 2022, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2022/3/11/risk-hindered-decision-making-how-the-dods-faulty-understanding-of-risk-jeopardizes-its-strategy>

¹⁵⁰ Randall Griggs, Jacob Haider, and Luke Flatebo, "The Small Team Replacement System: Wartime Replacement Operations in Large Scale Combat Operations," *Military Review*, January-February 2020, 22-28, 28.

¹⁵¹ Brandon J. Archuleta and Jonathan I. Gerson, "Fight Tonight: Reenergizing the Pentagon for Great Power Competition," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 100 (1st Quarter 2021), 81-87.

¹⁵² Major General William J. McCaddin, "The Army Chief of Staff -- And the Virtues of Saying What Needs to be Said,"; and *The Individual Ready Reserve – A Dwindling Asset*, AUSA Defense Report DR-76-47.

with different adversaries who possess growing manpower capabilities while ours decline. Will current Army senior leaders step forward to ensure a robust IRR is resourced to close the widening gap in our mobilization capability for LSCO?