

Validating the Total Force

Executive Summary

The way in which the U.S. Armed Forces are apportioned between Active duty, Reserve, and National Guard owes more to economic and political calculation than it does to military efficiency. The two primary factors behind the remarkable transformation to a bifurcated, all-volunteer force were President Richard Nixon's commitment to end the draft and the staggering expense of a large force structure needed to meet the threats of the Cold War. In the intervening years, the professionalism, esprit de corps, and unprecedented effectiveness exhibited by the Reserve and National Guard have eroded past distinctions between the Active and Reserve Components and confirm the efficacy of what we call the Total Force.

The economic and social pressures on Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird (1969–1973) in the face of a global security threat are similar to the restraints and constraints present today. Then, as now, America faced an enemy with global reach intent upon subjugating entire populations to the caprice

of an oligarchy. Then, as now, many countries in the world found their interests best served through less than energetic security contributions and diplomatic support, placing a disproportionate burden on the United States. And then, as now, those Americans who were asked to shoulder the greatest risks in combat and who performed with exceptional distinction and valor were far removed from the elite of society. Indeed, just as in Vietnam, those who lead do not bleed.

Since 1971 and the transition to Secretary Laird's Total Force methodology, which made it impossible for any large or lengthy U.S. military operation to be conducted by the Active Component alone, the individual Service branches have incrementally integrated the Reserve Component. Arguably, the inability to distinguish between the Active and Reserve Component owes much to high operational and personnel tempos that some believe the Total Force concept was crafted to inhibit. In the interview and articles that follow, *Joint Force Quarterly* seeks to underline the skilled adaptation of the Reserve Component to the challenges of the Long War against Islamic radicalism and the manner in which the Reserve Component is transforming to meet other emerging threats, both natural and manmade.

Our first Forum article is an interview with the Honorable Thomas Hall, Assistant

Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. In addition to asserting that the Department of Defense is "expanding and building" on the Total Force concept, he outlines numerous Guard and Reserve transformation issues, from administration to joint training and force deployment. He speaks about the rebalancing of high and low demand forces to meet tomorrow's needs more efficiently and predicts that the Reserve Component will remain about the same size in the years to come with less legacy equipment. The Assistant Secretary concludes with his assessment of the current crop of Guardsmen and Reservists, as well as the employers who support them.

In the second article, Lieutenant General Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, outlines his vision for the National Guard as it transforms to "a more

joint and effective organization.” Notable in this transformation is the creation of a Joint Force Headquarters in every state and territory, capable of 24-hour integrated operations with a common operating picture that one day should be linked to a domestic security network. This article tells the compelling story of how the Guard has moved from the moniker of weekend warriors to a true operational force.

The U.S. Air Force Reserve is the focus of our third Forum feature. Here, Chief of the Air Force Reserve, Lieutenant General John Bradley, states that the mission of the Air Force Reserve is identical to that of the Active Component and that the (happy) difficulty in distinguishing between Active and Reserve forces has had the negative effect of making it harder to validate Reserve contributions to the Total Force. He further notes that there is a natural tension between the desire of regional combatant commanders for the continuity of longer tour lengths in theater and the ability of part-time Reservists to remain for 120 days or longer. He concludes with his priorities for the future of our 76,000 “Unrivaled Wingmen.”

The fourth essay in the Forum comes from the Commander of the Marine Corps Reserve, Lieutenant General Jack Bergman. General Bergman is dual-hatted as Commander, Marine Forces North, the Marine component of the U.S. Northern Command

with the mandate to conduct homeland defense and provide support to civilian authorities. In parallel with the Navy, the Marine Corps Reserve has made great strides in rebalancing the Total Force to meet the challenges of the future while winning the war on terror. Perhaps the most interesting of the numerous transformation initiatives that he outlines is the assignment of civil-military missions to artillery regiments and battalions in order to balance mission demand while preserving force capability.

Our final article in the Forum holds an unusual argument: the Total Force concept should be strengthened further by increased Federal support to volunteer military organizations at the state and local levels. Colonel Brent Bankus makes the case that state defense force organizations are important assets in crisis and that small investments in training and education would pay great dividends. He identifies legal impediments to closer cooperation of these state entities with the Department of Defense and makes recommendations to

use this resource better. In the final analysis, Colonel Bankus is convinced that we are squandering a time-tested opportunity to improve national security, especially in the area of homeland defense.

The following articles share themes of transformation success and operational achievement that are just as compelling as any discussion dealing with joint interoperability. The dynamics of technology and transformation are destined to alter the Total Force formula. As revealed in the interview that follows, however, America can count on one constant: we find our greatest generation in the Reserve and National Guard.

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