

Recent Experience in Reserve and Guard Readiness, Mobilization, and Operational Employment

PURPOSE: Explain Army's recent experience regarding Reserve and Guard readiness, mobilization, and operational employment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In 2004 the Army created the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) system which aligned operational demand with the rotational supply of Army forces from all components. Units were typically alerted one year in advance of their deployment (for Regular forces) or mobilization (for Reserve and Guard forces), although changing theater demands sometimes significantly changed when forces were required to arrive in theater, the mission set they were expected to perform, the duration of a deployment, the type of unit required, and even the theater to which the unit was to be deployed.

Reserve and Guard units focused their post-alert (pre-deployment) days on preparing (including training) for their specific deployment. The number of days utilized by Reserve and Guard units to prepare for deployment varied depending on several factors, including time available, quality and quantity of support available (e.g., trainers and training ranges, ammunition, modernization level of currently issued equipment), echelon of deployment/employment (e.g., brigade vs company), complexity of the mission set (e.g., combined arms maneuver vs security force), starting readiness level of the alerted unit (including its individual skills readiness and personnel/equipment fill), and type of unit itself (i.e., maneuver vs combat service support).

In general, smaller support units required considerably less time to prepare for deployment than their larger maneuver force counterparts, including brigade combat teams and aviation brigades. Again, in general, units whose capability is largely based on individual skills were able to prepare for deployment sooner than units whose capability is largely based on the integration and synchronization of unit capabilities across multiple echelons (e.g., fire support, medical, close air support, maneuver, and logistics from platoon through brigade combat team).

First Army, a subordinate command of US Army Forces Command, worked with alerted Reserve and Guard units to shape and assist their pre-deployment training plans. As First Army and the Army's entire mobilization system gained experience, predeployment preparations improved and were typically completed in fewer days.

For much of the first half of the past decade, Reserve and Guard units were mobilized for however much time was determined to be necessary to prepare the unit for its assigned

operational mission, and then deployed for one year or more. This created considerable concern among Governors, employers, and Families, which requested additional predictability in the periods over which Reserve and Guard Soldiers would be away from their civilian jobs, communities, and Families. On 19 Jan 07, the Secretary of Defense clarified defense policy associated with “Utilization of the Total Force” (Enclosure 1). This memo limited involuntary mobilizations for members of the Reserve Forces to “a maximum of one year at any one time” and specified that “the planning objective for involuntary mobilization of Guard/Reserve units will remain a one year mobilized to five years demobilized ratio.” This caused the Army to generally limit post-mobilization to 60-90 days to enable a 9-month operational deployment within a 12-month mobilization. However, some units could not reasonably be expected to complete their predeployment training preparations in the shortened post-mobilization period.

To focus limited paid days on those Reserve and Guard Soldiers who were actually going to be mobilized and deployed, the Army instituted “contiguous training.” This concentrated the pre-mobilization training in the weeks and months immediately prior to mobilization, vice spread out over the entire post-alert period. While this accomplished the Army’s intent of focusing preparation days on deploying Soldiers, it also served as a de facto mobilization of Reserve and Guard Soldiers.

To further clarify defense policy on this issue, the Secretary of Defense issued guidance on 14 Mar 11 on “Reserve Component Contiguous Training” (Enclosure 2). This guidance further limited collective unit training conducted within 90 days of a unit’s mobilization date to 45 days for an aviation unit and 30 days for all other types of units.

The effect of these two memos was to provide predictability to Reserve and Guard Soldiers and their Families, communities, and employers, as well as limit the total effective mobilization time (i.e., contiguous training plus post-mobilization training).

There are no known instances of a Reserve or Guard unit failing to complete its pre-deployment preparations on time to fulfill operational demands.

Once deployed, most Army support units (e.g., engineer, transportation, medical) were similarly employed, regardless of component. Maneuver forces, however, were used for the largest variety of roles: combined arms maneuver, counterinsurgency (COIN), security force (SECFOR), and train/assist. About 80 percent of deployed Regular BCTs were employed in combined arms maneuver or COIN, while about 80 percent of Guard BCTs were employed in SECFOR and train/assist roles. This delineation of roles enabled the Army to fulfill operational demands, while adhering to defense policy on the duration of involuntary mobilizations and contiguous training.

ARMY PERSPECTIVE:

Army units and individuals from all components were integrated in a rotational/progressive readiness model (i.e., ARFORGEN) over the past decade to fulfill the operational demands of two theaters of war.

Reserve and Guard support units typically required less predeployment preparation (including training) than did larger maneuver forces (e.g., brigade combat teams and aviation brigades).

Operational employment of Reserve and Guard units was typically tailored to the time available for pre-deployment preparations.