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RESHAPING THE ARMY RESERVES AFTER THE COLD WAR

INTRODUCTION

America always has had difficulty preserving its military strength after winning wars. Immediately after World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War, the United States quickly cut its armed forces, in some cases drastically, and the result was to leave America militarily unprepared for the next conflict. Now that the U.S. has won the Cold War, today's military planners again must reduce the size of the U.S. Army. However, they should avoid the mistakes of the past. They should not cut too much too quickly and create what experts call a "hollow" force—one that looks good on paper but is unable to fulfill its mission because of shortages of manpower and equipment as well as insufficient training. Above all, they should not think that slashing active forces, while retaining a large reserve force, will give America sufficient military strength to meet tomorrow's threats. Rather, the Pentagon should protect as much as possible from congressional budget cuts those forces which do most of the fighting—the highly trained and well-equipped active Army forces—while shrinking the size of the National Guard.

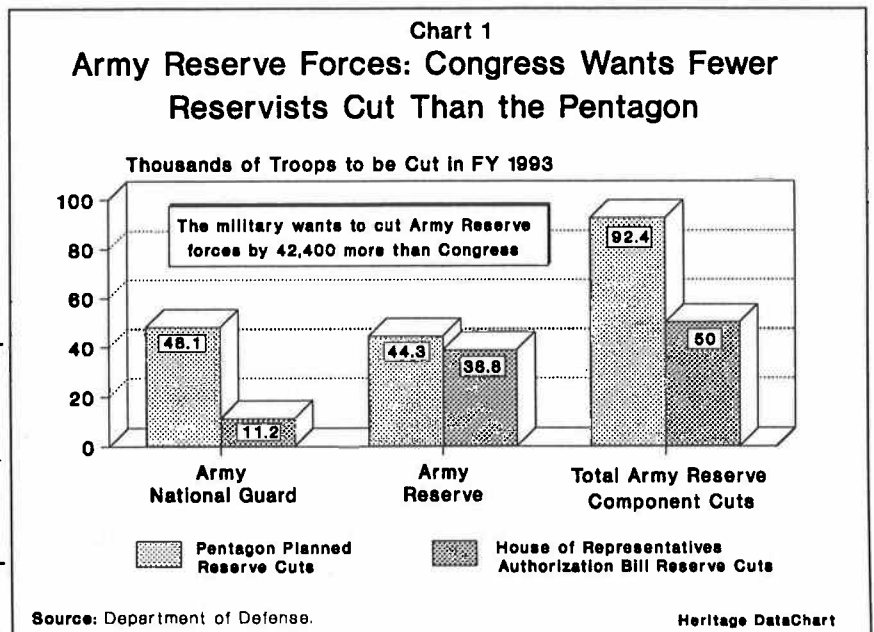
Expendable Element. The passing of the Cold War has made a large National Guard no longer necessary. With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in March 1991, the justification for American forces designed to halt a Soviet attack on Europe has disappeared.¹ At its peak in 1989, America's huge National Guard numbered 457,000 troops and was designed primarily for reinforcing NATO in the second stage of a European war. It now has become one of the most expendable elements of U.S. military power. The war against Iraq, moreover, underscored the need for combat-ready, active forces, and revealed the problems of mobilizing the Guard for fast-breaking regional contingencies. Three National Guard brigades mobilized for the Iraq war never made it

1 General Pavel Grachev, the newly-appointed Russian defense minister, announced on May 22, 1992, that the Russian Army would be reduced from its current strength of 2.8 million to 1.5 million by 2000. His stated goal is "to create a smaller, more professional force with rapid deployment capabilities and a purely defensive character."

to the front because of deficiencies in training. Considering that Guard units train fewer than forty days a year, no one should have been surprised by their weaknesses.

The Pentagon recognizes that an overreliance on Army reserves will produce a hollow force. The Defense Department's plan for cutting the size of the U.S. armed forces, known as the "Base Force," acknowledges the declining usefulness of the National Guard, which makes up the bulk of the Army's reserve combat forces. As a result, the Bush Administration wants to shrink the Guard by 48,000 positions, from 431,200 to 383,100. The Base Force plan calls for a 6 percent drop in the number of all active Army forces and an 11 percent reduction of the National Guard. By 1995, the Guard would be trimmed by nearly 100,000, from 431,200 today to 338,000.

Unfortunately, Congress may choose to ignore America's unhappy historical experience with hollow forces. The U.S. House of Representatives on July 2 voted 328 to 94 to reduce the Guard by a mere 11,200, rather than by the 48,000 requested by the Pentagon. The Pentagon's Base Force calls for twelve divisions in the active Army, six in the National Guard, and two Guard "cadre" divisions, which are command staffs at the division level that train in peacetime without the troops assigned to them in wartime. The House bill mandates nine active Army combat divisions and a National Guard of roughly twelve divisions. The Senate is scheduled to vote on the fiscal 1993 Defense Authorization bill on August 11.



Where's the Pork? There are two likely explanations for the House vote. Members may have been convinced by the arguments contained in a May 7 memorandum from Representative Les Aspin, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.² Aspin invokes several myths to make the Guard appear far more useful in today's new strategic environment than it really is. It is more likely, however, that Aspin's arguments serve as a smoke screen for the real reason: Congress fears the loss of weekend jobs and the Guard's \$5.4 billion budget, most of which is spent in members' home districts. But good pork makes for bad strategy. Despite congressional claims to the con-

2 Les Aspin, "Combat Effectiveness for the Army Guard," memo, House Armed Services Committee, May 7, 1992. These arguments were further amplified by the House Armed Services Committee in its *FY '93 Defense Authorization Bill: Summary of Major Actions*, Committee markup, May 13, 1992.

trary, the National Guard is ill-equipped to meet the military threats America faces for the foreseeable future.

To reshape Army reserve forces to meet post-Cold War U.S. security requirements, the Bush Administration should:

- ◆ **Ask the Senate to reverse the July 2 House decision and endorse the Pentagon's Base Force plan.** Since the active forces will do the bulk of the Army's fighting in any conflict, the Pentagon prudently wants to shield them from unnecessary reductions. The Senate should put national security ahead of job security and reverse the action of the House.
- ◆ **Reduce total National Guard troop strength to one-third that of active Army forces.** A Guard of this size is sufficient to support the Army's active forces if they should be called upon to fight in a regional conflict. Since no major war requiring huge amounts of manpower looms anywhere in the world today, the Guard can be safely cut.
- ◆ **Reorient the Army's reserves to provide primarily medical, transportation, and logistics support.** During the Cold War, the main purpose of the Army's reserves was to supply huge reservoirs of manpower for a super-power conflict in Europe. Since this no longer is necessary, the Army reserves' main purpose should be to satisfy the Army's critical medical, transportation, and logistical needs during wartime.
- ◆ **Require a higher level of combat readiness from a smaller National Guard.** Although smaller in size, the Guard should be better trained and equipped than it now is. To support active forces properly in wartime, the Guard also must be able to mobilize faster.

THE ARMY RESERVE TODAY

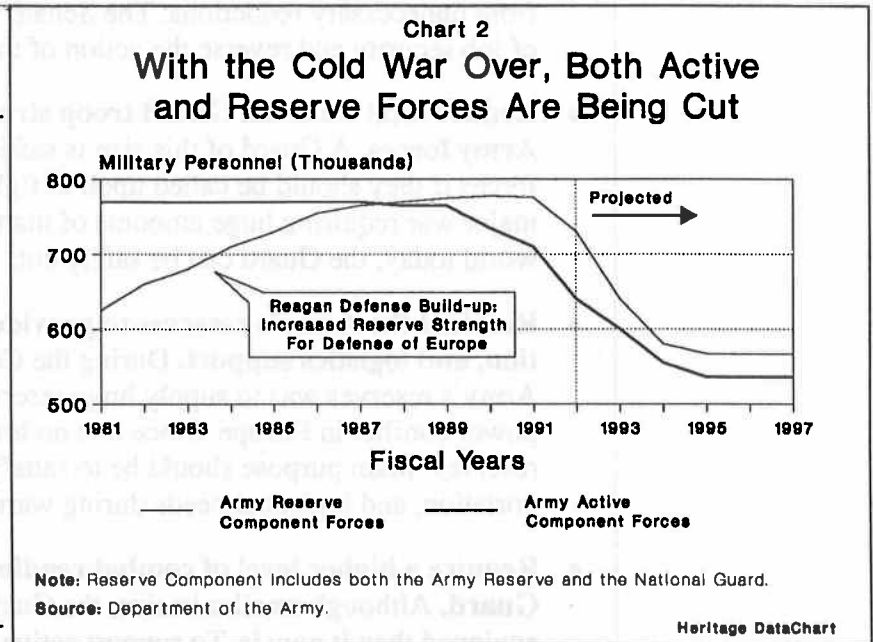
The National Guard and the Army Reserve comprise what is known as the Army's Reserve Component. This is distinguished from the Regular Army, or Active Component. The National Guard makes up the bulk of the Army's reserve infantry, mechanized, and armor combat forces. It is organized into relatively large units, such as divisions (which are roughly 15,000 strong) and brigades (which are about one-third the size of a division). The National Guard today contains ten divisions and twenty brigades, as well as a number of smaller combat units. In wartime, the Guard would be mobilized to fight in these large configurations, either independently or attached to regular Army formations. In peacetime, Guard units are based in each of the fifty states, where they are available to state governors for disaster relief and other emergency duties. The Guard currently numbers 431,200 men and women.

The Army Reserve also is organized into brigades and divisions, but except for a handful of combat units of brigade size and smaller, they are classified as "training" units and are not designed for combat. Army Reserve units will mobilize during wartime to augment active units. Army reservists also are dispatched to active Army units as individual replacements in wartime. Today there are 654,300 soldiers in the Army Reserve.

The Reserves in Desert Storm. The Army's reserves performed logistical, medical, and other support functions in the Persian Gulf War. They proved to be an indispensable force in that war. National Guard combat forces, however, did not fare as well. According to a September 1991 General Accounting Office report, one-third of the personnel in Guard units activated for the Gulf war were medically unfit, and many non-commissioned officers lacked "basic soldiering skills" necessary to train their troops.³ Moreover, three National Guard Roundout brigades—called this because they are intended to join or "round out" active Army units—failed to meet their combat readiness requirements and were not deployed with their assigned divisions. Army evaluators found that Guard leaders had overstated their units' peacetime readiness, underestimated their training needs, and failed to send their personnel to required schools. Since the Guard was unprepared, the Army tripled the number of days required for post-mobilization training

from 40 to 120, and devoted nearly 9,000 active Army trainers to the task. Despite this additional effort, the Army determined that the Roundout brigades were unprepared for combat, and had to substitute active brigades instead.

Some advocates for the National Guard, including Representative Aspin, cite the performance of Guard artillery units in Desert Storm as proof of their combat readiness. True, they performed satisfactorily, but they were not seriously tested. The Guard's artillery forces faced minimal fire from Iraqi ground forces and no threat of air attack. Moreover, they had the luxury of substantial and unobstructed logistical support, and their biggest challenge was keeping up with the allied advance. It remains unknown how these units would have fared if they had been confronted with strong and determined enemy resistance. To cite the Gulf War as a case where Guard artillery performed well, therefore, is misleading. Desert Storm should not be used as a planning model because military planners cannot assume that U.S. troops will face such light resistance or enjoy such strong allied support in the future.



³ "National Guard: Peacetime Training Did Not Adequately Prepare Combat Brigades For Gulf War," Report to the Secretary of the Army, U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C., September 1991.

ARE RESERVE FORCES NEEDED?

Proponents of maintaining a large National Guard subscribe to several myths. They are:

Myth #1: Cutting active forces while maintaining large reserves will save money without diminishing national security.

National Guard units are cheaper than active forces because they train less, shoot less ammunition, burn less fuel, and cost less to equip. But for the same reasons, Guard forces are considerably less prepared to fight. Therefore, retaining a large National Guard while shrinking active forces inevitably will weaken the Army's overall combat capability and thus diminish national security. In a crisis, rapid victory can be achieved only by active forces which are kept at peak readiness. A large Guard may save money, but it will cost lives in a war if it is funded at the expense of active forces.

Congress should not jeopardize the readiness of America's active Army forces by giving the National Guard a disproportionate share of a shrinking budget. Projecting American military power abroad will require rapid deployment of highly trained troops with advanced weapons and technology. This is not a job for a part-time militia. For this reason, most of the Army must be on active duty, and not waiting for a call-up from the National Guard or Army Reserve. Nor should Congress jeopardize the lives of America's active duty soldiers by trimming their budget to avoid deeper reductions in the National Guard. The American people will pay for a defense which minimizes the duration and casualties of any military action. The U.S. has a moral obligation to its soldiers to provide for an adequate defense.

Myth #2: The National Guard is necessary to defend specific regions.

Aspin's May 7 memo advocates the formation of certain "special brigades" to meet needs which clearly are nonexistent. These include a light Guard brigade in Puerto Rico and an Arctic brigade in Alaska.

The purpose of the Puerto Rico brigade would be to provide security for the island and to serve as a language resource throughout Latin America. This perceived need for Spanish language skills is well founded. Such skills are needed, for example, to allow the U.S. to help train the armed forces of Latin American nations to defend themselves. However, this capability needs to be spread among all of the forces slated for possible operations in Spanish-speaking countries: U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and Special Operations Command (SOCOM). A combat brigade where every rifleman speaks Spanish would be a needless overconcentration of valuable resources. While some commanders may need interpreters to communicate with local forces and civilians, U.S. Army units communicate in English. Aspin does not specify what the threat to Puerto Rico is, but its present security needs are more than met by existing SOUTHCOM forces based in Panama and Navy capabilities in the Caribbean.

As for the Arctic brigade, the Aspin memo acknowledges that "no current threat projection suggests a need for arctic expertise in the active force." Why then is there a need for an entire Guard brigade's worth of these skills? This proposal, moreover, shows a misunderstanding of the exceptionally demanding nature of combat in arctic

conditions. It requires weeks of adjusting to cold climates, and the mastery of complex techniques just to survive, let alone to fight and to win. It is certainly not a one-week-end-a-month proposition. Cold-weather environments require a rapid response by elite troops which only active forces can provide.

Myth #3: Without the National Guard, America will lose its tradition of the citizen-soldier.

The citizen-soldier reflects an important American tradition, but it does not rest solely with the National Guard. The military has programs and forces outside the National Guard which keep this tradition alive: Reserve officer commissioning programs and specialized reserve units that provide critical medical, transportation, and engineering support for active combat units. These units must be mobilized to support even a small operation. America can preserve the role of the citizen-soldier through these programs, without paying for a bloated National Guard.

The reserve's greatest contribution is to ensure that the military reflects as broad a spectrum of the society it serves as possible. When more civilians pass through the military, more citizens have some sense of the capabilities and limitations of the military they control. Conversely, the regular infusion of ordinary citizens helps the military to reflect the values of society at large.

Reserve commissioning programs like the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Officer Candidates School (OCS) offer commissions to well-qualified graduates of civilian academic institutions. These programs have produced superb career officers like General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Lt. General William "Gus" Pagonis, who directed the huge supply effort behind the Gulf victory. Reserve officer programs also traditionally have linked the military to a broad spectrum of American undergraduates, enabling civilians to serve a brief tour of three or four years on active duty and then return to civilian life.

Today, the military is neglecting this important resource. Instead of drawing so many officers from the military academies, the Army should rely more on ROTC programs. The problem is that the ROTC is threatened by Pentagon policies and campus politics. The Pentagon has reacted to manpower reductions by reducing the number of ROTC scholarships by 21 percent, from 27,500 to 21,700 between 1987 and 1991,⁴ despite the fact that ROTC programs produce quality officers far more cheaply than the \$155,000 to \$230,000 it costs to graduate a student from a service academy.⁵ ROTC programs around the country also face growing hostility from campus activists, who oppose, for example, the military's well-founded policy that excludes homosexuals. The Universities of Virginia and Rhode Island, Dartmouth College, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and many other schools have taken steps to restrict campus ROTC programs.

⁴ Keith Bradsher, "R.O.T.C. Doesn't Want You," *The New York Times*, January 6, 1991, p. A36.

⁵ Eric Schmitt, "Service Academies Grapple With Cold War Thaw," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1992, p. A12.

Myth #4: A large National Guard cautions against hair-trigger wars.

Advocates of a large National Guard argue that the need to activate the Guard makes a President think twice about going to war. Activating the Guard is a huge undertaking, and tests the popular support for a war effort. However, it is a waste of the taxpayers' money to fund a large National Guard simply to provide a wake-up call for the American people in time of war. This is not the proper use of the Guard. The Congress, not the Guard, is supposed to be the main constraint on the President's decision to go to war. Besides, activating the Army Reserve would serve the same function as activating the Guard.

Myth #5: The National Guard is a "reconstitution" force.

"Reconstitution" is the military term for forming, training, and fielding a new and much larger fighting force in case America faces a new and major military threat. If Russia or some other major power were to become a threat to Europe, for example, a U.S. force would have to be "reconstituted" to deal with the new danger. Aspin and others in Congress believe that the National Guard is a reconstitution force, providing, as Aspin says, a "hedge" against "threats that could be dangerous but are unlikely to develop in the predictable future."

Nevertheless, Aspin neither identifies these threats nor adequately explains what he means by reconstitution. The term itself is misleading because it implies that a large U.S. Army can be built simply by filling out the existing force structure. However, any likely reconstitution of the Army will take years to accomplish, and will require that a large active force be built from scratch. No currently existing combat forces, whether they be active or Guard, will play much of a role in reconstitution at all. Aspin, therefore, is wrong. The Guard alone is inadequate as a reconstitution force.

The Pentagon's Base Force plan provides a sensible, albeit partial, solution to the challenge of reconstitution: creating two "cadre" Guard divisions, which are complete division staffs that train in peacetime without combat troops. These divisions maintain their command and control skills through special training without the expense of fielding full combat units. They would be filled out in a national emergency with regular combat troops. Since the staffs already exist, the divisions could be reconstituted relatively quickly and efficiently.⁶

It is easier to preserve existing strength than it is to reconstitute it. The best solution to the problem of reconstitution is to avoid cutting forces to a dangerously low point in the first place. By mandating a National Guard which is too large, Congress will force the Pentagon to compensate by reducing the Army's active forces.

⁶ Aspin's alternative is to replace these cadre divisions with "reduced versions" of divisions, which would include some fully-manned parts of a division but would completely cut away critical "support" staffs. But while Aspin mistakenly calls artillery, aviation, and combat engineering units "support" forces, the infantryman who needs close-in fire support would not consider the skills of soldiers responsible for overhead fire support, close air support, or minefield breaching and obstacle demolition any less important than his own. The staff responsible for what Aspin calls "support" must be fully integrated and trained with combat units; any infantry forces which train without them would be ineffective, or worse, self-destructive.

Myth #6: Combat skills are maintained easily with minimal practice.

The House Armed Services Committee argues that peacetime Guard training should focus on "individual and small unit skills, leaving larger unit training for the period after mobilization." This recommendation is based on the assumption that combat skills can be maintained with a minimum of practice. Its authors assume, incorrectly, that small unit skills can be perfected by using them fewer than forty days a year in training.

This is not enough time for adequate training. Combat support functions, such as medical, legal, cargo handling, transportation, heavy engineering, and similar activities, indeed can be maintained by civilians who perform these or closely related skills in their civilian positions. But such combat skills as patrolling and the effective use of artillery and other fire support are not ordinarily practiced by civilians and thus require many weeks of training. In fact, these skills must be exercised constantly if they are to be mastered.

A VITAL BUT SMALLER ROLE FOR THE NATIONAL GUARD

As America reshapes its armed forces for the post-Cold War world, it will need the reserves and the National Guard to protect its security. However, it will not need a National Guard as large as it is now. The military value of the Guard is far less than Aspin's May 7 memo and the House Armed Services Committee's May 13 report have suggested. Moreover, the most effective role of the reserve stems not from its capability to provide active combat forces, but from the ability of reserve combat service support units to perform medical and other functions which can be easily practiced in civilian life.

To maximize the Army's effectiveness, the Bush Administration should:

- ◆ **Ask the Senate to reverse the July 2 House decision and endorse the Pentagon's Base Force plan.** Congress must put military preparedness ahead of pork-barrel politics. It should support the Pentagon's efforts to reshape U.S. forces without compromising their effectiveness. The Pentagon's Base Force plan places the National Guard in its proper role, by cutting the Guard at twice the rate at which it cuts active Army forces. It should be supported by the Congress.
- ◆ **Reduce total National Guard troop strength to one-third that of active Army ground forces.** Future threats will either be immediate, requiring a rapid response by active forces, or they will emerge slowly, demanding the reconstitution of a force as large as that built during the Cold War. National Guard forces cannot be a rapid reaction force. They must train extensively after being activated, so they are not suited for rapid deployment. And reconstituted forces will be built up over several years, and thus will require only trained Guard unit cadres, not whole Guard divisions. Therefore, since they will not be needed as much as before, Army reserve forces can be cut substantially — to one-third the size of existing active Army forces. This troop strength for the reserves will be sufficient to sustain medical, transportation, and other important support functions. It will allow for two to four standing

Guard divisions, and enough Guard combat division cadres for reconstituting a large army if a major new threat should emerge. These forces should continue to be dispersed across the fifty states to assist in civil emergencies and disaster relief.

- ◆ **Reorient the reserves to provide primarily medical, transportation, and logistical support.** It is necessary for the Army reserves to have plenty of on-hand skills in medical care and cargo handling. No war can be fought without medical doctors or cargo handlers. The Army has little need for these skills in peacetime, but they are very necessary in wartime. Reservists who are doctors or cargo handlers in civilian life can easily sharpen their skills without formal military training. This being the case, the reserves are the logical place for developing the Army's many combat service support capabilities. A large National Guard, organized to fight in large combat units, is not necessary to provide these skills.
- ◆ **Require a higher level of combat readiness from a smaller National Guard.** The Guard should be smaller, but it should also be better. Peacetime medical readiness and training in tank gunnery for three National Guard Roundout brigades was inadequate in Operation Desert Storm. The Army must raise these standards and devote more time for training to achieve them. Before joining the Guard, officers and non-commissioned officers should be required to serve more time in active units. Currently, fewer than half of all Guard officers have served even two years on active duty. By requiring a minimum of two years of active duty for all Guard officers, the Army can enhance their combat skills and leadership ability. The Army must also better integrate the personnel, logistics, and weapons procurement systems of the Guard and active Army forces so the two components can operate together smoothly in a crisis. In one case, the Roundout brigades activated for Desert Storm ordered the wrong replacement parts for their tanks because they were unfamiliar with the active Army's procurement procedures.

Such remedies could do much to counter the perception throughout the military that the National Guard is merely a motley collection of "weekend warriors." More important, they would make the Guard a far more effective military tool.

CONCLUSION

There is a National Guard unit in almost every congressional district. This fact alone accounts for much of the congressional effort to save the Guard from needed cuts. Congress is treating the National Guard as a domestic jobs program while demanding that active forces do more with less funding.

While not for a moment denigrating the motivation of Guard members themselves, the Congress and the Pentagon should, when reaching budget decisions, favor active over reserve forces. Active forces are America's offensive sword and defensive shield. They will bear the brunt of any combat the nation faces. Therefore, they must be given absolute spending priority over the National Guard. Instead of inflating the importance of the National Guard's strategic value to mask its pork-barrel interests, Congress

should support the Pentagon's plans to back up active forces with a smaller, less costly, but better-trained Guard.

Learning From History. This approach best suits the new strategic environment in which the U.S. finds itself. With the Cold War over, Congress is cutting the defense budget and the Pentagon is scaling down its forces. Yet, it is important for the U.S. to avoid past mistakes. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, American troops initially were mauled because the U.S. armed forces had been weakened in the post-World War II rush to disarm. After the Vietnam War, slashing the U.S. defense budget produced the justly maligned "hollow force" of the 1970s. At this time, aircraft and tanks were sidelined because of spare parts shortages, experienced personnel left the service because they were underpaid, and combat readiness was very low.

Reducing the size of active combat forces while retaining a large Guard and reserve structure would once again give America a hollow force—one that looks large enough to do the job, but which lacks the training and equipment to respond decisively to regional conflicts. History shows that the country cannot afford this. America does not need a peacetime militia. It needs an active force capable of winning wars.

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