

Iraq – The Impact on the National Guard and Army Reserve

The following remarks represent my personal thoughts and views and should not be construed as representing the views of my employer or the Army Reserve.

It is a great pleasure to be with you once again at a time of intense and fascinating change in our respective countries. It seems that each year I open my remarks to the CDA Annual General Meeting with a substantially similar observation. For once, however, it's genuinely true. As General Swann pointed out yesterday, our respective militaries are indeed undergoing a potentially momentous transformation. The US Army of tomorrow will not look like Army of today

The presence of combat veterans in both the US Army and Canadian Forces is a treasure that must be preserved. Those who have served in theater are the leaders and mentors of tomorrow's soldiers. As we grapple with recruiting issues we cannot lose sight of the importance of retaining those whose experience will be invaluable in the future.

My focus today, as it has been each time I've been privileged to address you, is an update the current state and potential future developments associated with US Reserve Components – the National Guard and federal reserve. Each year, I have portrayed a somewhat gloomy portrait of the US Reserve Components. Unfortunately, my assessment this year is even bleaker than it was last year. In fact, I will argue that we are now seeing the beginning of the end of the "Total Force Policy" as we have come to know it. We can even ask if the US has a "reserve" any more.

The blueprint for changing direction in US force structure is of course the recently released Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Before focusing on Guard-Reserve issues,

it is worth pointing out that the QDR heaps praise upon the UK and Australia as “key partners in ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.” Not only is Canada excluded from praise for its role in Afghanistan, Canada is not even mentioned at all in the text of the document. From the Pentagon’s perspective, that oversight cannot have been intentional and I think unfairly ignores the critical role you are playing in the Long War.

My main theme is the significant and well-documented challenges facing the Guard and Reserve. The issues include:

- a. massive and sustained deployments associated with Operation Iraqi Freedom, the so-called “Long War,” as well as continued operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia and domestic contingencies such as the response to Hurricane Katrina;
- b. serious recruiting and retention challenges;
- c. new challenges to the role of the Guard and Reserve arising from the recently completed Quadrennial Defense Review.

The Reserve Components are at a crossroads. In order to understand where we are and we may be going, it is useful to review how we got here.

As we all know, the US Army is based upon a long and storied militia history. Although the National Guard and the federal Reserve were critical components of the national defense structure, President Johnson consciously decided not to mobilize the Guard and Reserve during the Vietnam War. As a result, Vietnam was primarily a conscript war. The failure to mobilize the Guard and Reserve not only deprived the Army in the field of their expertise and experience, that decision severed the connection between hometown America’s citizen-soldiers and the war effort. As you in Canada well

know, the Reserves are the military's "footprint" throughout the nation and the essential link between military and civilian societies.

After the war ended and conscription was replaced by the All Volunteer Force, military planners led by Army Chief of Staff Creighton Abrams sought to ensure that when America next went to war, hometown America would go to war as well. Accordingly, significant and critical force structure was embedded within the Army Reserve and National Guard, ensuring that the Army could never go to war without the Guard and Reserve.

Accordingly, ever since the invasion of Grenada, Guard and Reserve personnel have been deployed and fought whenever their Active Component counterparts have deployed. In fact, over the past 25 years, Guard and Reserve leaders have sought increased responsibility and missions within the war fight. Securing increased missions means increased relevance which translates into increased resources.

The Guard and Reserve are to some extent "victims of their own success." Because they are so inextricably interwoven into the fabric of US force structure, the US military can hardly move, shoot or communicate at all without mobilizing the Guard and Reserve.

Since September 11, 2001, the Pentagon has made full use of the Reserve Components. More than 192,000 of the Army Reserve's 205,000 soldiers have served on active duty since October 2002 and more than 41,000 remain on active duty today. As the Chief of the Army Reserve said earlier this month at the Reserve Officers Association convention, if you "haven't been deployed, it'll only be a matter of time. Those who have been deployed, your family should worry when you'll go again."

The percentage of use for the National Guard is comparable. Moreover, the Guard is the first responder to any emergency or natural disaster, adding further burdens to the force. For example, 50,000 National Guard personnel deployed to the Gulf in response to Hurricane Katrina. Although the Pentagon has announced that the percentage of troops drawn from the Reserve Components for the next Iraq rotation will be significantly lower, it is unclear (and I believe highly unlikely) that the trend toward lesser use of the Guard and Reserve overseas would continue.

A White House report released in late February 2006, recommended that the Guard and Reserve forces modify their organization and training to make homeland security their "priority mission." Because the Guard and Reserve would still be missioned for overseas deployment, it is unclear how the Reserve Components will balance the two requirements or even if the Pentagon will pursue the report's recommendations. Of particular interest is the contrast between the dual-missioning of US Reserve forces and DND's plan to create Reserve Forces focused exclusively on the domestic response mission.

Over the past quarter century the notion of a "reserve" has all but become moot. Units are no longer held in reserve as that concept is traditionally defined. They are fully operational and committed, not different than their active duty counterparts. The only distinction today between an active duty unit and a reserve unit is training days per month; the former train full time, the latter do not. Distinctions as to frequency of usage have all but been eliminated. In this environment, it is fair to ask if the US even has a traditional "reserve" anymore.

The Army of the future will consist of a “global force pool” out of which forces are generated for the field commander. Active and Reserve units are both in the pool. The former deploy once every three years, the latter units once every six years. Since their organization, equipment and standards are the same, the only distinction that remains between an active duty unit and a reserve unit is planned frequency of deployment and training days per month. Remember – this is the steady state for the future not the plan for responding to an emergency or surge situation. Given that conflict is the expected steady state, units are not in reserve waiting for deployment but simply in the queue waiting their turn. Accordingly, it is fair to ask if the US has a traditional “reserve” anymore.

In the face of these challenges, the Army Reserve is transforming itself into an Army Reserve Expeditionary Force (AREF) which organizes units on a five year cycle. In years 1 and 2, units focus on individual and squad/crew/team level training. In year 3, units focus on collective training. The following year, units conduct training at the battalion level at Combat Training Centers. Finally, in year 5 units are available for mobilization and deployment on an operational mission. Because Reserve enlistments are typically five years in length, the AREF structure could ensure that soldiers are only deployed once per enlistment. The AREF concept works provided the world situation does not change and there are sufficient numbers of high demand low density skills such as civil affairs, PSYOPS and doctors. Both are highly debatable assumptions.

As a result of the extensive operational tempo, a major debate currently rages in Washington over whether the Army as an institution is healthy, stressed or even broken. On the one hand, the Pentagon claims that the Army is busy but not in duress. Although

DOD has used emergency war powers to increase troop levels temporarily by 30,000, the Pentagon opposes permanent increases in Army end strength. As Secretary Rumsfeld notes, the total American military consists of 2.6 million active, Guard and Reserve personnel of all services. That ought to be enough to maintain 150,000 troops in Iraq, particularly if the military is transformed into more agile, smaller, independent forces with fewer soldiers filling garrison positions or trained in Cold War-related skills.

On the other hand, studies conducted for the Pentagon by the Defense Science Board and the Congressional Budget Office conclude that the size of the Army is too small to execute current and anticipated missions. Some analysts argue that the Army is approaching the breaking point. At the very least, it is safe to say that ground force capabilities are stretched and may be “maxed out” in that it would be problematic if the Army were to undertake another sustained large scale operation while current troop levels remain constant in Iraq.

In part as a result of the war in Iraq, the Army and its Reserve Components are suffering well-documented recruiting challenges. The Army missed its Fiscal Year 2005 recruiting goals, the first time it did so since 1999 and suffered its biggest shortfall in 26 years. The Army National Guard met only 80% of its recruiting goal and the Army Reserve met only 84% of its goal. Major General Michael Rochelle, the recently departed head of the Army Recruiting Command, has described the recruiting challenge as “one of historic proportions” that poses the greatest challenge since the All Volunteer Force was established in 1973.

As of late February, the Army and its Reserve Components have met their recruiting quotas for the fiscal year. However, it at least a few months this year, the

Army revised its monthly quota downward and satisfied the lower quota. Second, the winter months traditionally have the lowest recruiting quota. The key recruiting months with significantly higher quotas are in the summer when potential recruits are graduating high school. Finally, the Army began the year with far fewer soldiers in the Delayed Entry Pool (DEP) than it normally wants. This is the pool of soldiers who enlist in one year and will ship out to basic training the following year. Although the Army wants to have 1/3 of its soldiers in the DEP for the next year, the Army shipped as many recruits as it could find last year, leaving a severely undermanned DEP.

Any soldier enlisting today is committing to at least one, if not two years of duty in Iraq. In addition, the U.S. economy is doing fairly well, with relatively low unemployment. Accordingly, young men and women who are not entering college after high school have other attractive options. Those who enroll in college have access to a wide array of loan and scholarship programs that offer an alternative to joining the Army in order to qualify for educational benefits. As a result, the "propensity to enlist," the percentage of young Americans willing to consider Army service, has dropped from 11% last year to about 7% this year.

A major problem for the U.S. Army is that so-called "influencers," parents, coaches, teachers, etc., are not recommending military service. According to a Department of Defense survey, only 25% of parents in November 2004 recommended military service to their children, down from 42% in August 2003. Shortly after the September 11 attacks, 22% of all other "influencers" recommended the military as a career option. Earlier this year, that figure dropped to 14%. In an effort to appeal to these influencers, the Army is launching a series of patriotic television ads urging parents

to encourage their children to enlist to fight the war on terrorism. Given that the vast majority of the influencers are not themselves veterans, it remains to be seen if this program will make a difference. In fact, less than 6% of all Americans are veterans and the percentage is decreasing as the World War II generation passes on.

The Army's challenge is compounded by the fact only 30% of the key 17 to 24 year old age group is qualified to serve. That cohort represents 2/3 of all recruits. Of that age group, 2% are incarcerated, 40% are high school drop outs or fail the mental tests, 20% have disqualifying physical or moral attributes, and more than half are in college.

The US Army's problem is not lack of access. The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to give military recruiters the same campus access offered to other recruiters. Schools are required to provide the military with students' home phone numbers and addresses, unless parents opt out. Failure to comply can result in the withdrawal of federal funds. Nevertheless, recruiters face an uphill battle. General Rochelle of Recruiting Command said earlier this year that parental resistance could jeopardize the survival of All Volunteer Force. When parents and other influential adults dissuade young people from enlisting, "it begs the question of what our national staying power might be for what certainly appears to be a long fight."

Moreover, there are no role models who are veterans. Gone are the days when the likes of Ted Williams, Elvis Presley and Jimmy Stewart took up arms. Significantly, the media is replete with stories that few leading American policy makers have children who serve in the military. While a handful of Members of Congress have children who are officers, only Democratic Senator Tim Johnson of South Dakota has a child who currently serves as an enlisted soldier. As leading military sociologist Charles Moskos

points out, the propensity to enlist would rise dramatically if Jenna Bush were to enlist. Some commentators note a sense that military service is for somebody else's child, particularly during a war that has never been popular.

I would cite another factor contributing to declining enlistment. In every prior American war, the government appealed to its citizens to sacrifice for the common good. For some Americans sacrifice meant military service. For all Americans sacrifice meant a rise in taxes to pay for the war effort. For the first time in history, however, the U.S. government not only did not raise taxes during a war, but actually cut taxes. As a result, virtually all Americans, particularly those at the upper end of the economic spectrum, have been insulated from any sacrifice for the common good of the war on terrorism. U.S. policymakers may have inadvertently created an environment where most families do not have a connection to the war on terrorism. Suggesting, even inadvertently, that the war is not important enough to pay for makes it unlikely that Americans would find the war important enough to fight for. As several commentators have noted, "America is not at war; only America's Army is at war." Even General Swan's slide during yesterday's briefing was titled, "An Army at War," not "A Nation at War."

In order to enhance recruiting, the Army has accepted recruits who would not have been allowed to join just a few years earlier. For example, according to the Baltimore Sun, 15% of all Army recruits required waivers for medical or criminal misconduct issue. In addition, the Army has raised the age limit for service from 35 to 40, taken more recruits who lack high school diplomas and will accept recruits who are overweight, hoping that basic training will mold them into fighting shape. Just last week, the Army announced that it would accept twice as many soldiers who score at the bottom

of entrance exams as it has in the past. Remarkably, the Army is now spending about \$60,000 for each recruit it brings into the force, reflecting recruiter salaries, bonuses, hundreds of millions of dollars in annual advertising costs, etc. Each recruiter must process 100 leads before one soldier is enlisted.

Thus far, retention has been adequate. It has been well-documented that units returning from combat have very high retention rates because members feel pride in what they have accomplished together. However, soldiers now face deployment to Iraq every other year and the Pentagon is bracing for a shortage of 3,500 combat-savvy active duty captains and majors. Unfortunately, those are the very officers whose counterinsurgency experience will be critical in the future both in Iraq and next year. The Pentagon is planning to increase bonuses and incentives to stem the loss of experienced personnel.

Traditionally, personnel leaving active service are a major resource for the Guard and Reserve. Because Guard and Reserve are deploying at rates comparable to their active counterparts, experienced personnel leaving active duty are not joining the Guard and Reserve as they have in the past. This trend further exacerbates the recruiting shortfall.

The larger question, however, is whether the recently completed QDR heralds an erosion of the Total Force Concept. Over the course of his tenure, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has stated that continued heavy reliance on the Guard and Reserve limits the Pentagon's options. He has been particularly concerned that the cumbersome process to mobilize Reservists before an operation can commence precludes strategic surprise and delays the start of an operation. Accordingly, the Secretary has been a proponent of shifting responsibilities from the Reserve to Active Components.

I submit that the QDR charts a course toward decreasing reliance on the Guard and Reserve. The QDR distinguishes between “steady-state demands and surge activities over multi-year periods,” specifying that steady-state operations, including operations against terrorism, associated rotation base and sustainment requirements, will be the main determinant for sizing US forces. This construct returns US force management to its traditional origins. Steady-state, day to day operations, ought to be the responsibility of full time, active duty forces because they are anticipated and can be planned for in advance. Surge operations, which require a ramp up beyond steady-state forces would logically require significant augmentation of Reserve forces.

In sizing for future operations, the QDR assumes a “higher level of contributions from international allies and partners ... in surge operations ranging from homeland defense to irregular warfare and conventional campaigns.” This statement ought to be of interest to Canada as future operations unfold.

The QDR specifically seeks to blur the distinctions between active and reserve forces and reduce the unique aspects of service in the Reserve Components. The QDR directs that DOD have easier and more frequent access to Reserve units for longer periods. The QDR describes a continuum of service where “reservists and units are more accessible and more readily deployable than today.” In addition, it calls for development of reserve units that train more intensively for longer periods and are available for no notice deployments. In other words, the goal is to create a pool of operational forces from whom a joint commander can draw without traditional distinctions as to component. The traditional strategic reserve and weekend warrior has no place in the future plans. In

fact, it is open to question as to whether the AREF is sufficiently accessible for mobilization and deployment under the QDR model.

While the QDR construct makes sense from a force management and organizational standpoint, it remains to be seen if it will be viable from a personnel standpoint. America has a strong citizen-soldier militia tradition wherein citizens leave home and take up arms when needed. As the US moves further along a continuum that imposes significantly greater obligations on reservists, it remains to be seen if sufficient numbers of individuals will enlist for this new paradigm. The QDR force structure likely means that reservists will spend ever increasing times in uniform as opposed to in the civilian economy. At some point, as individuals spend more time as soldiers than as civilians, they will ask whether they should just be on active duty as opposed to juggling two full time careers. Guard and Reserve recruiting shortfalls suggest that the jury is at best still out as to whether the Pentagon can staff this new force paradigm.

Moreover, a fully operational Reserve has potentially important societal implications. Many commentators have noted a disconnect between military and civilian society. The absence of conscription and closure of installations means that many young people grow up without knowing or seeing a soldier except on television. The Reserves remain the footprint in society because they simultaneously live in both the military and civilian environments. The Reserves are, therefore, the key link between the home front and the battlefield. When children see their teachers or doctors return home from weekend drill in uniform, they see tangible evidence of one of the most important obligations of citizenship. To the extent the unique presence of reservists in the civilian economy is reduced because reservists are always on deployment, the gulf between

military and civilian society will widen. Moreover, recruiting will become an even greater challenge as teenagers lose role models in the community who can articulate the benefits of service. Unfortunately, the QDR does not contain even a single word about this vital Guard and Reserve role.

Most controversially, the QDR calls for a reduction in size of the Guard and Reserve by 17,000 soldiers apiece. Clearly, these reductions were proposed in order to save money. The QDR does not suggest that a smaller Guard and Reserve are necessary to execute the military strategy. Instead, the QDR claims that it is merely reducing each component to the number of soldiers it recruited last year. As would have been expected, Congress objected to the reductions in Guard structure and the Pentagon backtracked slightly. The Army now claims that it will fund however many soldiers the Guard can recruit up to the pre-QDR ceiling. As of March 2006, Guard recruiting is running ahead of last year. This issue will remain a constant problem, however, as the Army will have to find additional funds each year to buy back the 17,000 reduction if the Guard brings in enough soldiers to fill its pre-QDR ranks. There has been no word from the Pentagon on whether it will buy back the Army Reserve reductions.

As distinctions between service on active duty and in the reserves increasingly blur, we may come to no longer recognize the reserves that we once knew. Many talented individuals whose skills could contribute greatly to the military will no longer be interested in a part time job which requires full time hours. That would be a tragedy as the militia tradition has served the United States and Canada well.