
*Assessing the Structure and Mix
of Future Active and Reserve
Forces: Effectiveness of
Total Force Policy
During the Persian Gulf Conflict*

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Summary

Introduction

The Persian Gulf Conflict provided the first major test of Total Force Policy. It was

- The first large scale call-up and use of reserve forces since the Korean War;
- The first major conflict under the Department of Defense's (DoD) Total Force Policy; and
- The first call-up using the new authority to access reserves provided by the Congress in 1976.

Consequently, Operation Desert Shield/Storm (ODS/S) provides unique empirical data about calling up, mobilizing, and deploying the reserve military forces that were the products of Total Force Policy.

Our approach in evaluating the effectiveness of Total Force Policy in the Persian Gulf Conflict was to focus on the availability and readiness of the reserve components in ODS/S. This focus is consistent with a statement of intent made by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel):

We plan to support military contingencies with Guard and Reserve *units* and *manpower* when they can be *available* and *ready* within planned deployment schedules¹ [emphasis added].

To evaluate the availability and readiness of the reserve component, we used past studies of Total Force Policy, histories and commentaries about reserve forces, the congressional record, and annual reports of the Secretary of Defense and of the Reserve Forces Policy Board. Information and data about the reserve components in the Persian Gulf Conflict came from the numerous

¹Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel), cited in National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993, Report 102-114, U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, p. 202.

after-action reports and lessons-learned commentaries prepared by the DoD, the military services, Congress, and such organizations as the General Accounting Office, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Congressional Research Service. We drew on the first-hand experiences of various RAND staff members conducting research for their respective service sponsors within RAND's Project AIR FORCE and Arroyo Center on the call-up; mobilization; and deployment of forces at headquarters, at mobilization stations, at the National Training Center, and in Southwest Asia (SWA). We also conducted our own interviews with people who were in strategic positions to observe the working of the Total Force Policy during the Persian Gulf Conflict.

Background

Congress authorized the president to call reserve units for operational missions in limited numbers and for limited periods in Title 10 U.S.C., Section 673b. Prior to this Section 673b authority in 1976, the president had to declare a national emergency for mobilization in order to gain access to reserve units. Having a new mechanism enabled substantial military capability, especially support, to be placed in the reserves under Total Force Policy. The new authority for making reserves available better accommodated international and domestic political needs while the older authorities for partial or full mobilization better accommodated the military and its planning processes by making more units and individuals available and for longer periods. The new authority was perceived as useful to the military in certain circumstances but, unless it was only a step to a larger mobilization, meant that the contingency would need to be of short duration and limited in size.

A contingency of the type fought in ODS/S was not the most demanding one for which the military planned. The U.S. force structure available to the president in the summer of 1990 had been built, trained, and equipped to face the Soviet Union in a global conflict. Military planning for use of reserves in such a global conflict directly influenced expectations by reserves for mobilization and deployment.

When the Total Force Policy was first formulated, the Selected Reserve end-strength was 28 percent of the active and reserve component end-strength. By the time of the Persian Gulf Conflict, it was 36 percent overall and 55 percent in the Army. The 1980s decade of investment in active and reserve component forces had a pay-off in a very robust, well-trained, and modern military structure. In 1990, there were over 2,000,000 active duty people and 1,100,000 selected reservists. Conventional forces were sized and equipped

to fight with an aim of being able to win quickly and decisively. A priority throughout the 1980s was to maintain high levels of readiness supported by operating tempos at levels sufficient to provide challenging training. The Total Force Policy provided the president—through a mix of assets including active, Selected Reserve, and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)—with options for employment of force.

The Availability of the Reserve Components

There were three phases of reserve mobilization in ODS/S: (1) the volunteer period (August 2–22, 1990) (2) the period of Selected Reserve unit activation (August 23, 1990–January 17, 1991) when Section 673b (presidential call-up) was used in three separate and limited increments, and (3) the final period of partial mobilization (January 18, 1991–end of hostilities). This represented a slow, incremental call-up of some 225,000 reservists over seven months.

Individuals

The large number of reservists who actively tried to volunteer for duty in ODS was unprecedented and unanticipated. However, there were some problems associated with using volunteers. One problem is the lack of explicit policies and plans for using volunteers. Also, for long deployments, voluntarism can be expected to decrease as the pool of those able to volunteer is depleted. In ODS/S during December 1990 and January 1991, volunteers were also being discouraged, and most were placed in an involuntary status in anticipation of hostilities. Another problem is that those who volunteered were not always those who were most needed. Consequently, voluntarism cannot always be counted on to fill critical needs in the absence of a call-up. Further, when individuals volunteer, their units may lack critical skills and have degraded readiness if later mobilized.

Prior military planning had assumed that individual reservists would be available involuntarily early in a conflict. However, under the measured call-up in ODS/S, Individual Ready Reservists were not available until January 18, 1991, when partial mobilization was declared. When called, these reservists, most of whom had recent active duty experience, “showed” at a greater rate than had been expected.

Units

On August 22, 1990, the president implemented Section 673b for the first time since its enactment, and on the next day Secretary Cheney authorized the initial call-up of Selected Reserve units. But Section 673b was not implemented the way most military planners had envisioned that it would be used.

The emphasis in the August 23 call-up was on *minimum essential augmentation*. The full 200,000 call-up authority was not used at once because there was not a need to do so. The types of units called reflected the commander in chief's (CINC's) priority to establish an initial deterrent force of combat units with minimal support structure. This guidance translated into plans for Selected Reserve units from the Army that were primarily combat support or combat service support (CS/CSS) that could assist in the deployment of the active combat forces. Only a small number of specific CS/CSS units with critical skills were initially deployed to SWA. The Air Reserve Component (ARC) provided capabilities for expansion of critically needed strategic airlift, logistics/maintenance support for refueling, and high-priority in theater support.

The first call-up did not include any combat forces. The Secretary of Defense had precluded the Army from using the initial call-up for combat units. The Secretary of Defense's initial decision and response to the Congress sparked a continuing debate. Members of the Army National Guard (ARNG) expressed concern that their expectations of being mobilized and deployed with their active-component parent division had not been met.

Ultimately, the Army, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC), and Air Force each activated reserve component combat units. The Army mobilized three ARNG roundout brigades and two field artillery brigades. The roundout brigades entered into a period of extended post-mobilization training. The artillery units were scheduled for deployment in late December 1990 and early January 1991. The Air Force activated three ARC combat squadrons (two Air National Guard F-16 units and one Air Force Reserve A-10 unit) to demonstrate the Total Force Policy concept. The USMC called up combat elements of the 4th (Reserve) Marine Aircraft Wing and Division, which included infantry, artillery, and tank units to augment forces already deployed.

During the five-month period during Operation Desert Shield when the reserve call-up was based on the authority in Title 10 U.S.C., Section 673b, the law was used as intended to access needed reserve forces while maintaining

political and diplomatic leverage. Further, the reserve components were available and reported promptly when called to duty. However, several problems did emerge:

First, the lack of a validated operational plan (OPLAN) caused planners many problems. For example, Army reserve component units were deployed through an *ad hoc* process that was not generally based on pre-existing affiliations with active units under the CAPSTONE program. This required that new relationships be forged in the tense environment of contingency planning and execution.

Second, plans were based on the assumption that the presidential Selected Reserve call-up would take place at the beginning of a crisis. The delay in initial authorization, the phased call-up of reserve units, as well as the restriction of how many could be activated, affected the deployment and organization of forces in the theater. Some Army reserve component units that could have been used for logistics in early August were not available.

Third, by not moving quickly to partial mobilization, the call-up did not give planners access to individual reservists in the IRR. In ODS/S, the IRR was not available until January 18—long after many reserve units had mobilized and deployed. Thus, for those units that were understrength and needed additional personnel prior to deployment, added strength before mobilization came from other Selected Reserve units and individuals and after mobilization from active personnel. Cross-leveling in this fashion allowed some units to deploy but degraded the readiness of remaining units. Other understrength units were deployed at the lower manning levels consistent with minimum deployment criteria.

Fourth, Section 673b states that the activation of Selected Reserves is by *unit*. Prior to ODS/S, the administrative interpretation of “unit” was commonly taken to be any organization possessing a unit identification code (UIC). But during the Persian Gulf Conflict, the strict limit on the number of activated reservists and the provision that only units could be activated caused services to alter their pre-ODS/S mobilization plans. A unit was interpreted as any collection of two or more with a common mission. This definition, consistent with the original Section 673b legislation but not necessarily with military administrative practice, gave the services much greater flexibility but at the price of losing a degree of control over unit integrity.

Fifth, there was consternation about why some reserve component combat units were called and others were not called. This intensified long-standing

animosities between active and reserve personnel and resulted in political tension between the administration and Congress. Reserve members were convinced that they were being discriminated against. The controversy over the ARNG roundout brigades underlined the tensions between competing schools of thought about when to use reserve forces:

- Should reserve component units be activated during a contingency because they are part of the total force? or
- Should reserve component units be activated only when a clear need can be anticipated?

The issue was not settled by either the Army's decision to call up the three roundout brigades and send them for extensive post-mobilization training or the Air Force's decision to call up a small number of ARC fighter squadrons.

In ODS/S, the numbers and types of reserve units that were needed were available through use of the existing authorities. That need was predominantly for reserve support units. By and large, the active combat forces were sufficient to meet the need for combat units in ODS/S—although this sufficiency varied across services. With the threat in Europe greatly reduced and with the defense drawdown only beginning, U.S. active military forces that would have been required to remain in Europe or other geographical areas during regional contingencies or which would have been disestablished during the drawdown were available. While one might speculate about the entire Persian Gulf Conflict had the Warsaw Pact still been a military threat, the availability of trained and ready U.S. forces stationed in Europe diminished the "need" for certain types of reserve component forces. In ODS/S, reserve forces were "called as needed" against regional commander requirements and emerging OPLANs while decisionmakers considered the international and domestic political ramifications of making them available through the several authorities.

The Readiness of the Reserve Components

Individuals

Operationally ready, as applied to individual military personnel, means available and qualified to perform assigned missions or functions. Measurement of readiness for individuals includes preparedness against deployability criteria such as medical and dental and against qualifications to perform individual jobs within units—MOSQ or skill qualification. Individual readiness deficiencies affect unit readiness to the extent that they

must be overcome prior to accomplishing needed unit training. In general, the reserve components began early in the conflict to prepare for possible call-up by alerting and cross-leveling individuals in units. Many reservists were initially unable to meet deployability standards because of medical and dental problems, but improvements accelerated as deficiencies were fixed or standards were waived. The readiness of individual reservists was generally high in ODS/S.

Units

Readiness is not easily measured. The most quantitative indicator in the complex evaluation of a unit's ability to go to war is the "C-rating" under the Status of Resources and Training System (SORTS), which is not acknowledged as an adequate readiness assessment system. The C-rating of a unit was the initial consideration in selection of units for ODS/S. Also, particularly for the Army, the C-rating was the primary standard for validating a unit for deployability.

Taking deployment as an indication that the units were considered ready, our review showed differences across services and types of units. In the Army, many reserve component CS/CSS units were quickly mobilized and deployed. ARC units were similarly deployed early. ARNG artillery units and Marine Corps Reserve infantry and armor units were activated and deployed quickly.

Prior to ODS/S, the minimum Army standard for deployment for active and reserve units was C-3, which means a unit is able to accomplish a major portion of its wartime mission. The Army continued this standard in ODS/S for deploying CS/CSS units. Mobilization and deployment of CS/CSS units was fairly straightforward. Minimum collective training was provided except where units were modernized or provided added equipment. Pre- and post-mobilization actions and a deployability standard of C-3 made Army reserve component CS/CSS units deployable without unacceptable delay. Readiness of these units was not a detriment to meeting in theater arrival times.

About 80 percent of all Army combat units, active and reserve, were rated C-3 or higher prior to ODS/S. Large maneuver units in the ARNG were not initially mobilized. When Secretary Cheney announced the call in November 1990 of the ARNG brigades, he cited the opportunity to train to active component standards, which had been raised in the Army to C-1 for combat units. The issue of post-mobilization training to the SORTS C-1 standard

against the expected tasks and conditions of the Persian Gulf became dominant for the ARNG brigades. Prior to ODS/S and based on SORTS data, 30–40 days of post-mobilization training was expected. However, Army training is based on achievement of standards. Actual training time became a function of need for the unit as well as readiness against training standards as judged by the validating officer. Ninety-one days after call, and as the war ended, the 48th Brigade was judged to be combat ready after observation of its performance at the National Training Center. This was an unprecedented achievement, compared to previous mobilization experience, but seemed something less, compared to pre-ODS/S rhetoric and expectation. The critical question remains the reality for the future.

Air Reserve Component units were quickly deployed and performed successfully in ODS/S. The Air Force holds its Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve units to the same readiness standards expected of active units. In general, the Air Force resources (provides funds, equipment, and personnel) its reserve components for greater training opportunity, which should result in greater performance. The air mission lends itself to being ready, and this was seen in ODS/S. ARC units, crews, and support personnel required little to no post-mobilization training before accomplishing their missions. Unlike the Army, there was not a formal post-mobilization validation process as part of the deployment paradigm. Rather than after-the-fact validation, acceptance up front of their stated readiness was typical. Flying units mobilized in 24 hours or less and were prepared to deploy in less than 72 hours, which the Secretary of the Air Force states as the minimum goal for them.

How Effective Was the Total Force Policy in the Persian Gulf Conflict?

Our evaluation of effectiveness in the Persian Gulf Conflict asked two questions: Did Total Force Policy make the numbers and types of reserve forces needed in ODS/S *available* to the National Command Authority? Were those forces *ready* to carry out their assigned missions? Under Total Force Policy, the reserve forces are intended to be available and ready as the initial and primary augmentation of the active forces in any contingency. Judged by these criteria, Total Force Policy, while not without some problems and not without some controversy, was effective in the Persian Gulf Conflict.

What Did We Learn That Is Useful to Consider for Total Force Policy in Future Conflicts?

What did the Persian Gulf Conflict teach us about Total Force Policy that might help us set policy for future conflicts? We believe that the following are some of the concerns and lessons that need to be considered.

Contingency plans should acknowledge the need for volunteers from the reserve components early in operations. These plans should identify the missions for which volunteers would most likely be needed and establish a minimum length of participation for volunteers. Some degree of voluntarism probably can always be counted upon early in a contingency.

Extended and incremental use of Section 673b needs to be factored into planning. The Section 673b authority allows the president to augment the active forces with the Selected Reserve and has two important effects. It gives the president greater flexibility to use mobilization as an instrument of diplomacy. It is the complement to Total Force Policy: Assuming that the Section 673b call-up authority will be used to meet deployment requirements in major contingencies should make planners more comfortable in reducing the size of the active forces and putting more of the emergency capacity in the reserves.

Whether reserve component units should be activated during a contingency because they are part of the total force or should be activated only when a clear need can be anticipated was not resolved. The purposes and criteria for activation of the reserve components need to be decided. Expectations of many reservists of use in a major contingency were unmet in a less demanding contingency than the global one on which forces had been sized. In future, the military will plan for the most demanding scenario as in the past. If the ODS/S model of calling reserve forces only as needed is continued into the future, reserves may never be used in lesser scenarios no matter their availability or readiness. The DoD needs to clarify and communicate the basis on which reserve component forces will be used in the future. These concerns are intertwined with the robustness of the force. Smaller future forces may require early use of both components for almost any contingency. This needs evaluation.

There are two lessons that military planners can learn from the use of partial mobilization as played out during ODS/S. First, the planning model that assumed an early implementation of partial mobilization was incorrect. The late implementation of partial mobilization in ODS/S meant that individual

fillers, particularly for the Army, were not available from the IRR for the first five months. This required cross-leveling at home station to obtain individuals with the needed skills. In the future, planners need to account for the possibility that IRR personnel will not be available. Second, once partial mobilization was invoked, IRR members were available at greater “show” rates than had been expected. The Army particularly called RT-12 from the IRR, and these recently separated personnel should be the focus of explicit plans in the future.

Deployment of Army CS/CSS units against higher standards than the C-3 minimum SORTS standard was not observed in ODS/S. Both the USMC and the Air Force use a higher standard for all reserve component units and resourced those units in peacetime to achieve the standard readily in war. The effect of deploying support units at readiness levels lower than combat units they are supporting should be assessed.

While actual train-up time of the Army’s roundout brigades took longer than expected, there are many uncertainties that affect estimates of future train-up time. Among them are the General Accounting Office contentions that the lack of objective validation criteria and the many active trainers used in the post-mobilization process make the Persian Gulf experience not generalizable. If validation after mobilization is a useful practice, then clear standards for pre- and post-mobilization training and proficiency against mission essential tasks are needed. Other variables include deploying the brigades at a C-2 standard (able to accomplish the bulk but not all of their wartime missions) similar to the standard of the Air Force and USMC; resourcing the brigades at a higher level in peace to accomplish the standard more quickly at mobilization; and training at mobilization under the time pressures of early deployment. Analysis of post-mobilization train-up time is central to any decisions about active/reserve mix and is one of the centerpiece tasks for another part of this congressionally mandated study. As seen in ODS/S, for these and all reserve units, the date of call-up also directly affects the date of deployment.

In the Army, some active units were sent in place of reserves, and integration as envisioned under the CAPSTONE program did not occur. CAPSTONE alignments, based largely on the global conflict scenario, were generally not followed in ODS/S. The level and logic of directed training associations under the existing CAPSTONE program, such as roundout and roundup, also need evaluation for effectiveness in new scenarios.

Our conclusions about individual readiness should be tempered by three facts. The first is that a tremendous amount of effort was made to ensure that individuals were deployable prior to call. The incremental call-up and the robust reserves allowed this to occur. Smaller future forces or more rapid deployment might impede this flexibility. The second is that, because of lift constraints, units remained at mobilization stations beyond the time needed to reach unit deployment and readiness standards, which allowed added time for correcting individual deployability problems. The third is that access to the IRR did not occur until January 1991. Earlier access would have allowed "more" ready individuals, particularly in skill qualification, to be assigned to called units.

Reforms have merit but solutions to reserve readiness problems in the Army, particularly, have been difficult to achieve because of: (1) the lack of resources and (2) inconsistencies with the limited time that reservists are able to devote to military training. While many good ideas have come out of the ODS/S experience, there was no shortage of good ideas before the Persian Gulf Conflict. History cautions us not to assume that just because a proposal has been made, improvements will follow quickly, or ever follow.

Reforms would only be expected to have a marginal improvement on the readiness of the Air Reserve Component and Army reserve component CS/CSS units *as seen in ODS/S*. The question of "reform" for units that met their deployment dates in ODS/S may be moot *except under changed assumptions in the future, such as the need to deploy sooner or at higher standards or given less robust overall active and reserve forces*. However, reforms could lead to significant improvement for Army reserve component combat forces under any assumptions to include those of ODS/S. The range for improvement seems much larger especially under the condition that these units must improve to a C-1 SORTS standard before deployment. Given the expected length of time to accomplish this, there is greater opportunity to gain meaningful time savings. The effect of reform given new illustrative planning scenarios and changed conditions needs to be considered.