

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Potential for Using Reserves in OOTW Missions

We have analyzed the potential for using the RC in peacetime contingency operations based upon a demand versus supply relationship and considered the factors that shape and integrate the forces selected for employment. It appears that the RC have the capabilities needed to accomplish many of the tasks commonly associated with these peacetime missions and are competent to perform them. Various operational, institutional, and resource factors can impede the use of RC forces when the demand for forces raises the issue of RC participation. Easing these constraints may facilitate using the RC in the face of demand, but these changes will not increase the operational demand.

Recognizing this central axiom, we summarize the factors, identified within our analytic framework, that are potential impediments to the selection or use of reserves in peacetime contingencies.

Summary of Impediments to Using Reserves in OOTW

In general, the joint crisis action planning process does not directly consider how capabilities are to be obtained, but the manner in which some of the operational planning factors are applied limits appreciation of RC capabilities. Unified commands and their staffs are primarily concerned with identifying the needed capabilities to force providers, whether a supporting unified command or a Service component command. Usually Service component commands, in both the supported or other force provider commands, focus on capabilities needed to respond to the tasks of a peacetime contingency operation. These Service force providers make RC sourcing decisions based upon a force selection decision process that uses criteria shaped by institutional and resource factors related to their respective Service cultures. These Service cultures are appropriately biased to employ the active, full-time, forces first. Furthermore, these cultures differ significantly across the four military Services.

The planning factors discussed in Section 3 shape the demand for operational capabilities. The required capabilities and forces for a peacetime contingency

operation may be found in the RC but may not be used if active forces are available and the contingent nature of the operation requires a rapid response. However, other operational factors may require capabilities that are found only or largely in the RC, which enhances the likelihood of RC employment in such operations. For example, lengthy operations tend to provide opportunities for RC forces because they increase the demand for backfill and, later, rotation of active forces.

At the unified commands, the sourcing of mission capabilities is largely a choice of which Service has the appropriate assets, with the Service-specific force providers subsequently deciding the components of needed forces. However, it is worth repeating that from the perspective of the staffs of the unified commands, there have been no reported adverse operational impacts caused by any of the impediments to accessing the RC for peacetime contingency operations cited in this report.

The force selection decision process discussed in Section 4 describes the method and criteria used by various force providers to determine the source of supply for needed capabilities and forces. Review of these criteria indicates that availability and responsiveness generally favor the active forces. The rather recent advent of early planning consideration of and decisions to employ nonmilitary sources for needed capabilities in contingencies, often at high cost, seems to preempt further consideration of RC forces. The accessibility, public support, and mission importance criteria are of concern only if volunteer reserves are to be sought. Obtaining volunteers may be impeded by the complex and differing Service RC orders and funding processes.

Of all these criteria, the lack of and inability to locate Service funding was the most often cited impediment to the use of RC volunteers. This again may be attributed to cultural bias—to include programming and allocation of resources.

Service cultures affect the use of the RC in peacetime contingencies and are indicative of the broader institutional and resource biases imbedded in the Services. Attempts to remove Service impediments to the use of reserves in peacetime operations may be inappropriate, since the institutions conform to the general intent of national defense policy—to use the full-time active force whenever possible so as not to incur the added costs of an expanded force, particularly for peacetime operations, either routine or contingency.

Of potential significance is the combined impact of a smaller defense force and the increasing frequency of U.S. involvement in peacetime contingency operations. This combination may have uneven influences on the demands for the RC within each of the military Services. The operational and institutional

factors particularly affect the Army, which has a higher potential for increased employment in larger numbers and for longer durations than the other Services. Last, the increased reliance on volunteers in some peacetime operations has not yet received universal acceptance from all the unified commands or Services.

Finally, we discussed a range of options for improving the military capability to conduct peacetime contingency operations. Although each Service has differing considerations, moving selected capabilities out of the RC and into the active force would in general improve overall responsiveness to contingencies. Such a move would lessen the reliance on RC forces in peacetime contingencies. In certain functional areas, such as civil affairs, this alternative may be impractical since development and retention of these skills does not easily conform to an active military career. Alternatively, we found nonmilitary or contract civilian capabilities to be a viable, but often more costly and operationally restricted, substitute for RC capabilities. However, in cases where RC participation must rely solely on volunteers, contract civilian capabilities may be more politically attractive regardless of their cost. Generally, we found that changes in the force mix to improve peacetime contingency capabilities did not favor increased use of the RC.

Recommended Actions

Our recommendations to remove impediments to RC use in peacetime contingencies address the three aspects in our analytic framework: the planning process at the combatant commands; the force selection decision process at the Service force provider commands; and institutional and resource aspects of the Service cultures in the military departments. Many of these recommendations require added resources or the reallocation of existing defense or Service resources. Others affect policies, administrative procedures, and processes. In all cases, we discussed with appropriate staff members the feasibility of implementing our recommendations, but we did not attempt to determine implementation costs.

Recommended Changes to Improve the Planning Process

The keys to removing or reducing planning impediments to the use of the RC in peacetime contingencies seem to lie in increased staff knowledge of RC capabilities and limitations, broader consideration of RC use early in the planning process, and enhanced involvement of full-time RC members in key staff elements. Specific recommendations are:

- Explicitly anticipate operational tasks that are well suited for or require the use of the RC, such as backfill and rotation of forces, in the planning process and consider using RC units from the outset. Often these tasks are the subject of follow-on planning for subsequent phases of an operation and delay consideration of needed RC capabilities.
- Challenge routine assumptions made about accessibility, urgency, threat, and duration of an operation that could limit the use of RC forces and routinely adopt alternative assumptions during the planning process. This recommendation is intended to eliminate unintentional limitations to RC use.
- Make available to unified command level planners more information on RC capabilities and limitations and ensure it is given early consideration in the development of the concept of operations. Planners should recognize the implications of providing a capability from the RC.
- Improve organizational and communications interfaces between commands so that staff planners have information on RC capabilities, accessibility, and limitations.
- Increase the numbers of full-time RC staff members and Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs) available to serve on unified and Service component command staffs in operational planning organizations. Where possible, this should be done with additional RC full-time support (FTS) but based upon validated staffing needs. IMAs are a pool of knowledgeable volunteers that can expand unified staff resources during peacetime contingencies, and their numbers could be increased.
- Ensure that planning peacetime contingencies does not exclude key RC staff personnel. Compartmented planning must include RC staff personnel knowledgeable in capabilities and limitations.
- Extend the deliberate planning process to develop standing organizational linkages with selected RC units, without requiring complete Time-Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD), that are identified as potential sources for regional concept plans (CONPLANS) for future contingency capabilities (the Army's civil affairs organizational affiliation seems an appropriate model for this purpose). Coordination with these RC units during planning would also assist in early identification of needed RC volunteers.

Recommended Changes to Improve the Force Selection Decision Process

Aspects of accessibility, responsiveness, and the comparative evaluation of needed capabilities with civilian contractor sources can ameliorate impediments to RC use. Implementation of these recommendations requires authority within the purview of Congress, DoD, and the military Services.

- Clarify, make visible, and administratively link the various internal Service mechanisms that provide funding and orders to active duty for reserve volunteers. Assigning responsibilities for funding and issuing orders to a single entity in those Service commands that identify and match RC volunteers to operational requirements will improve responsiveness and respond to the concerns of RC volunteers.
- Request authority from Congress to fund a DoD-level RC personnel contingency account to support reserve volunteers for use in peacetime contingency operations. Annual funds in the amount of \$25–30 million appropriated exclusively for the use of RC volunteers in operational contingencies and allocated by OSD, with unused amounts returned automatically to the treasury, would seem sufficient to ensure needed reserve manpower without the need for reprogramming internal Service funds needed for other operations. The funds in the RC personnel contingency account should be in addition to existing Service programmed funds for use of RC personnel to support routine AC peacetime operations (See Table 5.5) and Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) Reserve Affairs funding of CINC RC personnel for peacetime support.
- Identify and link selected RC units and potential volunteers with high-demand requirements in emerging theater regional CONPLANS for quicker response times in peacetime contingency operations. Early designation of specific RC units to respond to peacetime contingencies in selected theaters reduces planning times and improves coordination.¹
- Require cost analysis comparisons between similar RC and recent civilian contracted capabilities as a basis for policy guidance. Determine if a cost consideration needs to be added to planning and if the reserves are a competitive option to civilian contracting.

¹An example is found in the FORSCOM and USARC standing list of medical reserve volunteers for peacetime contingencies during a specific year. This allows planning to be based upon known assets for a given time period.

Recommended Changes to Remove Institutional Impediments

These recommendations address actions that the individual military Services could implement as demands require.

- Assign higher readiness levels and resources to selected RC units that have capabilities in high demand in recurring peacetime contingency operations. This will allow for pre-operational identification and improved responsiveness. Post-mobilization activities could be completed prior to mobilization and sustained with the added resources. The intended purpose is to ensure the selected RC units have essential resources to allow for rapid deployment.
- Increase the full-time support for selected RC units that have skills and capabilities often sought by soliciting individual volunteers for peacetime contingencies. This is intended to expand the pool of potential RC volunteers in specific skills and realize benefits similar to the current Air Force process where full-time reserve members, with no conflicts with civilian employers, often volunteer for peacetime overseas deployments.
- Review existing mobilization policies and plans to change existing priorities for the use of various sources of RC forces and volunteers to improve support for peacetime operational contingencies. The intent is to ensure that the Services have policies that reflect the current national strategy and operational environment and that sourcing priorities are appropriately established.