

# Summary

## Background and Purpose

The end of the cold war and demise of the Soviet Union left the United States as the only superpower. Its new status conferred on it new responsibilities, including requirements to lead and participate in global operations that require military forces but do not involve armed conflict. Commonly referred to as Operations Other Than War or OOTW, these operations span a range of activities, including disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and peacekeeping. The frequency and diversity of these operations have taxed the capacity of active component (AC) forces, and policymakers have looked to the reserve components (RC) both to lift some of the burden from the AC and to provide capabilities needed in OOTW.

This study analyzes how forces are selected for OOTW to determine how use of the RC may be affected. It examines not only formal force selection procedures, but also informal and potent influences that we call Service cultures.

## Approach

OOTW can differ enormously across many dimensions. Few OOTW missions begin with the same objectives. Further, any given operation can change dramatically during its course in response to military or political considerations. Thus, to identify impediments common to many different operations requires a broad framework. Providing forces for OOTW can be thought of as a simple economic model using concepts of demand and supply. Setting OOTW in an economic framework, we identify three sets of influences on the decision to employ RC forces: processes, players, and factors.

The **processes** supporting operational decisions to employ forces are the mission planning process that determines the demand; the force selection process that identifies the sources of supply; and Service policies and cultures that define the environment for integrating the supply to meet the demand, particularly as it applies to the reserve components.

The **players** are the unified combatant commands that define the demand for an operation, the force providers that decide which forces to supply, and the

military departments that shape the environment in which the Services will use reserve forces.

Three major **factors** influence the decisions: operational, resource, and institutional. They are not unique to a single process or one of the players. These factors shape the tasks that determine the demand for forces and capabilities derived from the specific operational mission, affect aspects of the supply (the selection of forces), and reflect the effect of the Service cultures on the ultimate ability of forces to be selected and used.

## **Results**

Selecting forces for operations is a complex activity. Although we can separate selection process into component parts to identify discrete influences, the process does not unfold in a clear, sequentially segmented manner.

### ***What Affects Demand for RC Forces?***

We examined the demand side of the equation by dissecting the mission planning process. Eight operational factors identified by the analysis commonly shape the demand for forces in OOTW:

- Task-resource requirements
- Scope of the operation
- Urgency
- Duration of operations
- Level of threat
- Level of control
- Treaty, policy, or mandate restrictions
- Involvement with nonmilitary organizations.

Most of these factors, by themselves, neither work for nor militate against selection of RC forces. However, three generally work against use of the RC: urgency, duration, and level of threat. An operation that requires a rapid response (hours or days), is short, or poses a high level of threat generally favors the use of AC units and tends to exclude RC. Other factors may work either way. For example, an operation may require a capability (a task-resource requirement) available only in the RC, or the terms of an international agreement (such as a

treaty restriction) may be such that only AC forces are feasible (e.g., level of training, time required).

### ***What Affects Supply?***

Two major influences affect the supply of forces: factors and Service cultures.

**Institutional and resource factors** have potential for restricting the supply of RC forces because they affect the criteria planners use when identifying and selecting forces. We identified six criteria that providers use to select forces to meet the demand established in the mission planning process. These appear in Table S.1.

Force providers apply the criteria sequentially. Generally, if forces are available within the command and have the functional capabilities required, the command provides them. Or it can choose to purchase them, if a contractor can provide the capability. Because most active forces are assigned within the unified command structure and the commands look within their own structure first, AC units tend to supply most contingency demands.

As the search for forces moves outside the unified command structure, forces controlled by the military departments, including those in the RC, receive consideration. Again, availability and functional requirements play roles in the decision, but responsiveness and risk also factor into force selection, particularly for the RC. The political factor or perceived importance of the operation and public acceptance or support pertain almost exclusively to RC units. For an active unit, the perceived importance was established once the National Command Authorities (NCA) approved passing the mission to the commander-in-chief (CINC). If the Services are considering meeting the operational demand with RC volunteers, then the political factor weighs heavily.

**Table S.1**  
**Force Selection Decision Criteria**

| Demand Criteria        | Explanation   |
|------------------------|---|
| Availability           | No competing mission  |
| Functional requirement | Can do what the operation requires  |
| Responsiveness         | Can meet deployment timeline  |
| Level of risk          | Likelihood of hostility and success   |
| Political factor       | Perceived national importance and public acceptance—the degrees to which national security is threatened and the public supports the military operation |
| Accessibility          | What authority has been granted; what funds are available   |

Accessibility pertains only to RC forces and has two dimensions: authority and funding. If no presidential call-up authority has been issued, then use of RC forces will depend on volunteers, and for many peacetime operations, some Services, and some specific RC skills, the reliance on volunteers would limit access to RC capabilities. Conversely, granting call-up authority would ensure access, all other things being equal. Additional funding for peacetime employment of RC forces would also encourage their use; failure to provide it would have the opposite effect.

Considered in light of institutional and resource factors, most of the criteria favor the AC. Only in the case where the functional requirement does not draw on a capability unique to one of the components is the effect neutral.

### ***Service Cultures***

Service cultures are institutional relations that often have historical roots and that determine the particular assignments given to individuals and units within the Services. The basic characteristic that separates Services from each other is perhaps that the Army and the Marine Corps man, equip, and train *operational units*, whereas the Navy and the Air Force largely man and train on *weapons systems* or platforms. This difference leads the Army and the Marine Corps to plan primarily for mobilizing units and integrating them into larger force structures, such as the brigade- and division-sized units that constitute the basic fighting elements of the ground forces. Hence, the Army and the Marine Corps stress *unit integrity*, in peacetime as well as during operational deployments.

On the other hand, the Navy and the Air Force have great flexibility in combining weapons systems into force structures specially tailored to an operational commander's requirements, and therefore concentrate their planning on *weapons systems availability*, such as the sortie generation capability of a ship or an air wing or the ability of a platform to perform to its design capabilities. This leads the Navy and the Air Force to plan for guaranteeing that key platforms or *systems are adequately manned*.

Clearly, this characterization is an oversimplification. Both the Army and the Marine Corps have aviation units that share the qualities found in Air Force and Navy aviation units. The Air Force and the Navy have fighting units that function very much like ground forces in that unit integrity is a primary factor in determining mission effectiveness (e.g., Navy SEAL units). That said, the fundamental difference does exist and shapes the primary mobilization concept employed by each Service for its reserve component.

The **Army** relies on a basic system of postmobilization train-up time that saves considerable resources by not having all units fully resourced or trained in peacetime. The Army relies on its reserves to support active combat units, and has structured its Guard to contain largely combat units, the overwhelming majority of which will be used only in wars not currently included in contingency plans. The Army provides low levels of full-time support for its reserve elements and few resources for reserve support of active operations.

The **Navy** has a relatively small reserve component, and bases its mobilization concept primarily on individual augmentation of active units. It gives its reserve units sufficient resources to attain a high readiness standard in peacetime. The Navy also devotes significant resources to bringing reserve individuals on active duty in support roles.

The **Air Force** active and reserve forces are so highly integrated in both peacetime and wartime that the distinction between active and reserve often is virtually meaningless. The Air Force provides substantial resources for full-time support of reserve units, ensures that they are all at a high level of readiness, budgets for reserve support of active operations, and can integrate reserve units and individuals into all active operations apparently quite seamlessly.

The **Marine Corps** reserve component mirrors the active. It plans to mobilize its reserve only in a major contingency, primarily a major regional conflict (MRC).<sup>1</sup> Because the Marines aim to be ready for rapid deployment, both active and reserve units are resourced to high readiness standards in peacetime. The mobilization doctrine is based on unit augmentation, but units do not require long train-up times. While there is a large commitment of active duty personnel assigned to full-time support of reserve units, the Marines do not budget many resources for reserve support of active peacetime operations.

The sum effect of these cultural differences is that the Army has more impediments to the use of RC combat forces. The shift of so much support to the RC increases the likelihood of using RC support units. The Marine Corps is similar to the Army, but its willingness to use smaller units to augment its active force and the high level of peacetime support provided to the RC make their use more likely. Integrating individuals in units poses fewer challenges, so the Air Force and the Navy have the highest potential for drawing on their RC for peacetime operations.

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<sup>1</sup>Major regional conflicts are now known as major theater wars (MTWs) in a recent change in DoD terminology.

## **Recommendations**

Our recommendations for removing impediments cluster in three areas: the planning process, the force selection process, and institutional, or cultural, considerations.

### ***Recommended Changes to the Planning Process***

- Structure the planning process so that it considers tasks well suited for the RC from the outset and challenges routine assumptions about RC responsiveness.
- Enhance staff interfaces to improve information flow about RC capabilities and accessibility.
- Increase the number of personnel knowledgeable about RC on planning staffs and ensure they are included in the planning process.
- Expand the deliberate planning process to include specific RC units in regional concept plans.

### ***Recommended Changes to the Force Selection Process***

- Link Service offices and mechanisms that provide funding and orders for RC volunteers.
- Establish a DoD-level personnel contingency account to pay for RC volunteers—these funds to be in addition to existing Service funds that support the programmed use of RC personnel to support active force operations.
- Identify, in advance, personnel and units with skills normally in high demand for peacetime contingency operations.
- Compare costs of similar RC and civilian contractor capabilities and provide policy guidance requiring cost as a specific consideration in the force selection process.

### ***Recommended Institutional Changes***

- Assign higher readiness levels to RC units with capabilities in high demand during peacetime contingency operations and provide the necessary additional resources.

- Increase full-time support for units often sought for contingency operations.
- Change existing mobilization priorities for use of RC volunteers and forces.