

# A Strategic Approach to Reserve Joint Officer Management

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 sought to shift the U.S. military from one that emphasized the individual strengths of its four constituent armed forces to one that placed greater emphasis on joint, integrated action across the services. Military successes over the last 15 years testify to the effectiveness of the joint military force that has since been evolving. However, the rise in importance of counterinsurgency operations and irregular warfare illustrate the need for joint force responsiveness to changing threats.

In particular, joint officer management strategies are needed to supply officers in the requisite quantities and with the appropriate qualifications. Independent studies have pointed out the lack of such strategies and the need for a strategic framework to guide responsive changes in policy and practice. In 2005, the RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) took the first steps toward creating a strategic framework for active component officer management.<sup>1</sup> A new NDRI study proposes the elements of such a framework for reserve component officers—an important extension, given the increased use of reservists in complex joint environments in the global war on terrorism.

## Determining Demand

The central elements of a strategic approach to reserve component joint officer management are determining the demand for such officers, assessing the supply, and instituting the means of dynamically matching the two. There are currently no data sources that can provide the information needed to create an estimate of the demand for reserve officers with education or experience in joint matters.<sup>2</sup> The study team formulated some expectations, however, which may prove useful in the planning process:

### Key findings

The Department of Defense can implement a strategic approach to the management of active-status reserve officers with joint education and experience by taking the following steps:

- Collect the data necessary to determine the demand for such officers.
- Fill out lists (already mandated by policy) of positions providing joint experience.
- Institute a process to acknowledge and record joint expertise or experience on an individual basis.
- Compare current and projected inventories of joint officers with the demand for them, and adjust policies to compensate for shortages or overages.

- Demand for prior jointness is likely to vary across categories of reservists. With few exceptions, the typical unit staffed by drilling reservists is unlikely to require joint education and experience. Such units include more than 70 percent of all reserve officers ranked at O-4 (major, lieutenant commander) and above. However, individual mobilization augmentees—reservists who are not part of a drilling unit—are generally assigned to active units, and some of these positions are in joint organizations. This is also true of active guard/reserve officers who are assigned to organizations outside the service reserve component, such as the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff, and the unified combatant commands.
- Demand for prior jointness is also likely to vary across the service reserve components. For example, National Guard units have both federal and state missions and may be called up to coordinate homeland defense or disaster relief with a number of state and federal agencies. It is very likely that officers in these units would benefit from education and experience in joint matters, especially with regard to interagency and intergovern-

<sup>1</sup> Harry J. Thie, Margaret C. Harrell, Roland J. Yardley, Marian Oshiro, Holly Ann Potter, Peter Schirmer, and Nelson Lim, *Framing a Strategic Approach for Joint Officer Management*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-306-OSD, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> In the following discussion, we refer primarily to reserve component officers on the reserve active-status list. We typically omit this qualifier for simplicity's sake. The concerns about jointness are not limited to cross-service issues but extend to effective action across multinational coalitions and, for operations within the United States, across elements of various agencies of government at the federal, state, and local levels.

mental matters. This may be less true of components such as the Air Force Reserve or Marine Corps Reserve.

- For those categories in which joint education or experience are pertinent, demand for it is likely to be quite high. According to a survey published in 1998 by the Logistics Management Institute, 45 percent of the supervisors of 4,400 reserve officer billets in joint organizations said that those billets required Joint Professional Military Education (JPME). In a 2005 NDRI survey of active-duty joint positions, more than 80 percent of 679 reserve officers ranked O-4 through O-6 who were serving in these positions said that prior joint education or experience would be desirable for their billets.

## Determining Supply

DoD policy mandates the establishment of a Joint Duty Assignment-Reserve (JDA-R) list; that is, a list of all reserve positions providing a valid joint experience, including those in OSD, the Joint Staff, and the combatant commands. However, the JDA-R has yet to be created. Without it, it is difficult to systematically identify the officers who have had a valid joint experience and then estimate the total inventory of reserve officers with joint education and experience. For this reason, little can be said at this point regarding the supply of joint reserve officers. Of the 679 reserve officers in joint positions in the NDRI survey, 89 percent verified that their billet provided significant joint experience. With almost 500 reservists completing advanced JPME by the end of 2006, there are at least some hundreds of reserve officers *with* joint education or experience, as against possibly some higher number *requiring* it.

The JDA-R should be populated, but it need not include all positions that might possibly provide a joint experience. Instead, a minimal JDA-R list (including all positions that definitely provide joint experience) could be supplemented with a process to identify reserve officers who otherwise have acquired joint experience or expertise. The benefit of a JDA-R list is that the administrative burden of individually identifying all instances of officers gaining joint experience is

reduced. The benefit of a supplemental process is that it will accommodate individual circumstances and the evolving context of assignments during the global war on terrorism.

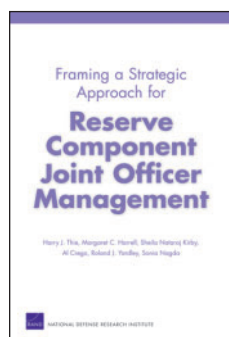
There are also difficulties in accounting for joint educational achievement. In 2003, the Joint Forces Staff College instituted an advanced JPME program for the reserves that was designed in consideration of most reservists' part-time status. This advanced program is a 40-week course, but enrollees are required to be in residence for only three weeks; the remainder of the course is administered through distance learning. Unfortunately, personnel database systems have not been updated to include graduation from this program. Moreover, there is no mechanism to identify reservists on active duty who have had any kind of joint education or experience.

## Recommendations

- Collect data about requirements by having the services update their databases; while this is under way, the Joint Staff should design a stand-alone database for organizations external to the services and populate that database through a one-time data collection effort.
- Populate a supply-oriented database such as the JDA-R list documenting the positions that provide joint experience.
- Supplement the JDA-R with procedures for capturing information about joint knowledge and experience beyond that captured by the JDA-R. These procedures should be developed by OSD, the Joint Staff, and the services.
- Project the future supply of qualified reserve active-status list officers using modeling of advanced JPME seats, JDA-R positions, assignment duration, qualification by other means, and likely promotion and retention rates.
- Compare current and projected inventory with the demand to determine where shortages and overages exist; formulate policy alternatives to align the availability of jointness with the demand. ■

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