



The reserve component of the US Army

military-Earth thinking notebook

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Expériences alliées

In these troubled times of drastic budget cuts, the US Army, like the rest of the Department of Defense, is led to wonder about the future to be given to its reserve. The question is sensitive from many points of view and reveals a situation that is difficult to compare with that of France.

The Army's reserve forces are composed of two entities with very distinct characteristics: the Federal Reserve, under the orders of the President of the United States, and the National Guard, under the orders of the state governors. In less than a quarter of a century, these two components have gone from an exclusive status of strategic reserve to a recognized experienced task force that wants to maintain this new status.

In order to fully understand this issue, it is necessary to provide a brief history of the United States Army, in which the reserves have played an essential role. An overview of the current situation will then precede a discussion of the challenge facing the Army through the use of its reserves in the coming years.

Preamble

The National Defense Act of June 4, 1920 organizes the U.S. Armed Forces into three components: a regular (active) army, a reserve army (called the Organized Reserve until 1950) and the National Guard. Component 1 is the active force, component 2 is the ARNG (Army National Guard) and component 3 is the Reserve, a federal reserve that the reader should be careful not to confuse with the reserve component, thanks to italics and capitalization.

Before brushing up on the origins of the United States National Guard and the Reserve, and for the sake of a proper understanding of the situation, it should be noted that the US

active army was for a very long time reduced to its simplest expression. Created in 1775 to oppose the British in the War of Independence, it increased in strength from time to time, especially during the Civil War (one million men mobilized) and decreased just as quickly (11,000 troops one year after the end of the war). This is also the case for the Spanish-American War (1898), where mobilization was also chaotic.

At the time of the conquest of the West and the Indian wars, only 25,000 men served in the armed forces. By the time the United States entered the First World War, there were no more than 75,000 (a continent-wide figure).

This concept was formalized as MajorGeneral Emory Upton's "expandable army" in 1904 : a force of relatively small assets, combined with a reliance on militias and volunteerism whenever the situation called for an increase in strength.

A bit of history

- **The National Guard**
- A name that smells good in France

Salem, a small town of 40,000 inhabitants in Massachusetts, is not only famous for its witches, it is also, since January 10, 2013, the official cradle of the National Guard. Indeed, **even if the origins of the NG** can be traced back to the militias of the various countries of the old continent at the **beginning of** the 16th century, the ^{creation of} the Guard is commonly dated in December 1636 at the time of the war against the Pequots Indians. The Massachusetts Bay Colony then organized its militias (the minute men) into three regiments, the Northern, Eastern and Southern regiments. The date of the first effective assembly of troops is not known, but membership in these units required one training session per week and a night watch every night to prevent any Indian attack.

Subsequently, more than 12 similar units were listed even before the birth of the United States. These units took part in every conflict on the North American continent, including the Seven Years' War (1754-1763), known in the United States as the French and Indian War, whether alongside the English or the French.

The name "NationalGuard" itself dates back to the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette to New York City in 1824. He received the honours from the 2nd ^{Battalion} of the 11th Artillery Regiment which, in memory of the National Guard of 1789, was then called the Battalion of National Guards.

- Towards federal employment

Almost a hundred years later, the National Defense Act of 1916 formalized the name and extended the role of the NG to the defense of the country, marking a major step forward in theThe National Defense Act of 1916 formalized the name and extended the role of the NG to the defense of the country, marking a major step in the federal government's interference in the training, funding, equipment, employment and missions of the Guard. The Guard remains, however, the tool of the Governors within the limits of their states.

The National Guard Status Act of 1933 followed the dispatch of 17 divisions (out of a total of 43) to Europe in 1917, and gave ARNG permanent status as an integral part of the American forces in times of peace as well as in times of war. It introduced a difference in

subordination to the federal state by creating a State National Guard - only at the orders of the governors - and a Federated Guard - only at the orders of the governors. The US National Guard thus officially becomes a component of the US Army Reserve and can be activated either by order of the governor of the state to which the unit belongs or by order of the president.

1940 saw the full mobilization of the NG. 18 divisions took part in the fighting, equally divided between Europe and the Pacific. It should be noted that by the end of the war, the air component, 29 observation squadrons, had been greatly expanded, and the 84 flying squadrons in operation in 1945 would form the nucleus of the Air National Guard when the Air Force was created as a separate army in 1947.

Unlike the Korean War, the NG did not participate in the Vietnam War, an absence due to the political decision not to mobilize the reserve for the conflict. It was only after the Tet offensive in 1968 that a small number of NG units were used, mostly as support or sustaining units.

In 1991 (Desert storm), the majority of support and sustainment units belonged to the reserve component. The first National Guard units mobilized were transport, headquarters and military police units. Artillery will then make its appearance.

More recently, operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Mount Sinai are armed exclusively by National Guard personnel.

- The Reserve
- A more recent creation

The official birth of the Reserve dates back to 1908, with the creation of the Medical Reserve Corps.

But the concept of non-state-affiliated reserve forces is much older and emerged during the Seven Years' War. Later, during the War of Independence, General Washington's unit did not claim to be state-owned and Washington decided to create a reserve force that was not affiliated with a state. A later argument is that in times of peace, a well-managed reserve can provide an important source of economic activity.

In 1912, the reserve was no longer exclusively medical and was extended to other specialties with the creation of the Officers Reserve Corps and the Enlisted Reserve Corps. The interested reader may refer to the article written on this subject by Colonel Roux in the monthly [3] of September 2013. But it is especially 1916 which sees the strength of the Reserve growing in importance. The reasons are multiple: the situation in Europe, the troubles at the border with Mexico, and the growing mistrust of militias from states considered not very competent and, above all, legally impossible to engage outside the borders.

During the Second World War, the USA mobilised 26 divisions belonging to the Reserve (200,000 soldiers).

The Korean War and the activation of 240,000 reservists led Congress to make major changes in the structure and role of the Reserve, giving rise to the United States Army Reserve, divided into Ready Reserve, Stand by Reserve and Retired Reserve. These

concepts will be explained later.

In 1973, Congress introduced the Total Force Policy, which clarified the role of the Reserve as the strategic force of the military, a force originally intended for use in large-scale warfare.

Fifteen years later, in the 1990s, the Reserve began a transition to become an integral component of task forces and to consolidate its role as a provider of support and sustainment units. After 2011, the evolution accelerates to a robust, operational expeditionary force with its own projectable headquarters and a strong military culture.

- Today

Currently, the Reserve is a set of units and individuals capable of providing surge capacity in the ARFORGEN cycle (the cycle that governs the use of US units). But it is not only a strategic reservoir.

The interest lies in the fact that the qualifications of reservists, often different from those of their active comrades, are necessary for the Army to respond to the complexity of the warendvironments of the 21st century.

Thus, the contribution of the Reserve to the system takes two different forms:

- The ArmyReserve Operating Force: the Reserve is structured to be able to provide forces for any full spectrum operation outsideand any mission inside the country at any time;
 - The ArmyReserve Generating Force: the reserve units ensure the build-up and activation of reservists by arming and setting up training units (initial or specialized training) and support units. The Reserve appears to be well calibrated for this mission given its structures, geographic distribution and personnel experience. This Generating Force is also used in more operational functions in the context of training foreign armies or in support - if the federal level is involved - of disaster management on national territory.
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- What is the difference at present?

There are many characteristics that differentiate the two components of the Army Reserve.

First of all, the geographical distribution is not the same. The maps below show that National Guard units are present everywhere in the United States and are not concentrated only in historically populated areas.

Moreover, without mentioning the numbers of personnel, which will be seen a little later, the two components are not qualitatively similar.

The Reserve assumes its medical past by arming primarily support units (Combat Support) andsupport units(Combat service Support). The Reserve thus provides the backbone of the Army's medical corps, butalso of Civil Affairs, Military Information Support Operations and Transport, to mention only the main ones. The US Army is not able to arm these capabilities without the contribution of its Reserve, while ARNG's profile

is closer to that of the active Army, with eight combat divisions and 28 BCTs. It is worth noting the existence of two Special Force Groups which are an integral part of the USASOC (Special Operations Corps).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the different subordination (single for the Federal Reserve, dual for ARNG) affects the employment of units. The National Guard, under the orders of the various governors, is much more frequently employed because it is called upon to intervene on American territory, most often as a first line of response to emergencies, whether natural, technological or terrorist. This is where it traces its origins to the Massachusetts Minute Men.

The two entities are activated by different texts: Title 10 of the US code, which encompasses most of the laws concerning the armed forces, provides for the Reserve to provide, in times of war, national emergency, or more simply when the security situation in the country requires it, trained units and qualified individuals available for activation.

Title 32, on the other hand, simply states that the National Guard may be placed under federal command for as long as necessary, so long as Congress deems it necessary.

The Relative Importance of the Reserve Component

Even if, since the beginning of the 20th^{century}, the proportion of the active component has been growing steadily within the Army, the reserve component remains just as crucial in terms of its numbers as in terms of the complementary capabilities provided to the active component.

Explanations are varied and cultural aspects seem to be paramount in explaining the importance of the reserve component in US military and civilian culture.

- Numerical Importance

Currently, the National Guard and the Reserve make up 32% and 18% of the Army respectively, with the remainder represented by the Active.

The following table provides an overview of the different capabilities that the US Reserves bring to the Army. The data is as of January 2012.

The importance of the contribution of the Reserve component to the Army units as well as the difference of this contribution according to the specialties are highlighted in the graph below.

- The reality of the figures

But these figures do not reflect a slightly more complicated reality. Indeed, the reserve component is in fact composed of three groups according to the degree of preparation and availability of the staff concerned:

- The Ready Reserve

This group corresponds to staff who can be mobilized immediately for a question of degree of preparedness or legislation. It is itself subdivided into three groups:

- The Selected Reserve, made up of personnel considered indispensable to defence by their qualification or experience. They are therefore members of units that are either Troop Program Units (TPU) or Active Guard Reserves (AGR). Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs) are highly qualified individuals assigned, in the event of recall, to positions considered crucial within a federal staff or agency;
- Selected Reserve personnel are, of course, up to date with their training periods (a minimum of two weeks per year and one weekend per month);
- The Individual Ready Reserve and the inactive National Guard are categories that concern Ready Reserve personnel who cannot be classified in the Selected Reserve, either because they are not up to date in terms of training periods, or for a variety of other reasons, such as distance from the home centre, which makes mobilization times incompatible with those of the Selected Reserve.

It should be noted that it is mostly the Ready Reserve's workforce that is taken into account in the statistics and presentations. They account for more than 2/3 of the reserve's overall strength.

- Stand by Reserve

The staff concerned have all the sacraments to belong to the Ready Reserve, but for health reasons, serious personal reasons, or for professional reasons (civil servants in charge of the Ready Reserve), they are not allowed to be members of the Ready Reserve. Such as federal judges, congressmen, or students, they cannot be mobilized except in the event of a duly declared emergency.

Its numerical importance is not significant.

- The Retired Reserve

This category concerns personnel who have acquired the right to be a reservist (and who have applied for it), after 20 or more years in the reserve (Reserve and NG). These are therefore the retirees who are associated with active retirees. This is up to the 30th year of service. The personnel concerned are not subject to training and can only be mobilized in the event of war or national emergency.

The Retired Reserve represents 1/3 of the active personnel.

The current debate

- The reserve is a task force

The switch from a strategic reserve component - designed to increase the number of personnel and units - to a task force is a step in the right direction. The shift from the reserve component of a strategic reserve - designed to increase the size and number of units - to a rational operational force began some 30 years ago, but the last two major conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have greatly accelerated the process. No one, both in the

units and at the top, denies this development. The figure of 860,000 reservists projected for a mission in these two countries is generally advanced, representing, depending on the period, between 30 and 40% of the posts in theatre.

The figures below give an idea of the ratio of projected reservists to active personnel.

In October 2008, a Department of Defense White Paper entitled "Managing the Reserve components as an Operational Force" states that the Department of Defense must adapt to a significant change in the way the reserve component is used as an integral part of the force: "The Department is faced with a significant change in how the Reserve components are being used as part of the total force. This change is not temporary; it is not business as usual. Rather, it reflects a fundamental shift from the past. As such, a new approach to management is needed - one that also reflects a new way of doing business for the future. Incremental changes at the margin will no longer be enough".

The reserve component is therefore an experienced, operational, employed entity, which has demonstrated its paramount importance to the US Army and defence.

The end of external interventions and the need for drastic budget cuts bring new challenges. After ten years of total commitment to the active side, the current struggle of those in charge of the reserve is twofold: it is a question of not having to pay the price for the inevitable dissolutions and reshuffles caused by the contraction of defence budgets. But it is also and above all a question of keeping this job operational and not seeing the return of a reserve that is little used and therefore little considered.

- Not to pay the price of budget cuts

Indeed, many senior managers in the field would like to see the reserve absorb the bulk of the staff cuts required by budget constraints. They point to the fact that the Reserve structure was born out of the Cold War and that a Reserve division no longer makes much sense today.

They also rely more specifically on the fact that the Army, wanting to be expeditionary in its employment logic, wants to strengthen its ability to be projected on short notice. This capability requires units that are immediately available and therefore belong to the active service.

But in this period where every dollar is counted, the reserve component has serious arguments to oppose. The main one is that the part-time military is an affordable way to maintain the army's responsiveness.

Indeed, several studies have shown that reserve troops are cheaper to maintain, not only when they are in training, but also when they are mobilized at This is in part because reserve retirements are lower than those of active personnel, and the reserve is not subject to the pace of transfer of active personnel (one transfer every two years in most cases).

It is this same financial logic that is put forward by the defenders of the mixed brigades, i.e., units composed of active and reserve personnel. Recent studies put the annual cost of an active soldier at \$384,000, compared with \$123,000 for a reservist, with the result

that the reserve component, which represents 38% of DoD personnel, consumes less than 20% of the budget. 10,000 conversions from full-time to part-time positions therefore represent \$2.6 billion in savings[4].

In this fight, the Reserve, and especially the National Guard, can count on strong political support, since the geographical distribution of the units primarily involves the elected members of Congress, who are ready to defend the economic life and activity of their constituency against the decisions of the Pentagon[5]. Yet, according to the Pentagon's financial officials, cuts in the reserve, even if it has the ear of the politicians, will be necessary. The argument put forward is one of fairness and balance.

- Towards a Merger of the Reserve Component?

The Reserve and the National Guard are, therefore, quite distinct entities, created at different times to meet different needs. Today, after fifteen years of external operations, the two components provide a service that could be described as equivalent with identical capabilities. Indeed, they often find themselves in competition with each other in many areas.

The recruitment programmes are completely independent. Moreover, there is no shortage of examples where, at one point in time, two co-located units, one belonging to the Reserve and the other to ARNG, carried out the same mission, but without being able to share equipment, facilities and staff procedures. This duplication gives rise to a certain form of competition in terms of funding, equipment, recruitment and the assignment of missions.

There is therefore a problem of efficiency as much as of savings to be made. And the argument carries weight in these lean times.

Some thoughts therefore put forward the solution of merging the NG and the Reserve.

It is indeed far from the real - and well-founded at the time - concern of the leaders of the active army at the beginning of the 20th century about the level of operational readiness of NG ^{units}. This mistrust had led to the reinforcement of the importance of the Federal Reserve. Now that the Guard has proven its ability to carry out all missions, including war operations outside the country, and now that the federal laws dealing with the mobilization of the reserve component are the same for the Reserve and the NG, the reasons for making a distinction are increasingly difficult to find.

The primary difference between the two entities lies in the character of the mission, whether it is single for the Reserve (federal mission) or dual for the Guard (federal and state).

This difference now essentially plays on subordination, and state governors - through their adjutant-general - can have on the spot a troop trained and equipped by federal means to deal with natural or technological disasters, including acts of terrorism.

The intervention of the Reserve in such cases is subject to fairly stringent, even restrictive, federal conditions and procedures.

Therefore, merging the two components and converting all the units concerned into dual-purpose units would create additional first-response resources at the disposal of the Governor and would represent a considerable asset for the protection of citizens and property on the national territory.

The idea is not entirely new. A Congressional study in 1997 established that the merger would result in savings of over \$500 million per year. For some, it is time to put this idea into action. The Pentagon doesn't have the upper hand on this. It is up to Congress to start the process and to amend section 8 of article 1 of the constitution.

But without waiting for the amendment of the constitution, the movement is already under way. The most flagrant proof of this is the Total Force Concept, a concept initiated by the Army TotalForce Policy, signed in September 2012. The latter document follows a DoD directive issued in October 2008 and establishes the policy of integrating the reserve component into the active component of the Army ... without any distinction between the Reserve and the National Guard.

The Army's reserve forces, consisting of the Federal Reserve, under the President, and the National Guard, under the governors, have been transformed in less than a quarter of a year from a reserve force to an active one, with no distinction between the Reserve and the National Guard. from an exclusive strategic reserve mission to an experienced and recognized task force that wants to maintain this new status in a constrained budgetary environment.

1) In this study, only the US National Guard will be discussed.

2) The National Guard exists only for the Army and the Air Force.

[3] Review of Liaison Officers in the United States

4) See the author's brief in the April 2013 issue of the monthly magazine.

5) see the author's brief in the monthly magazine of October 2013.

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