

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Military Personnel and
Compensation, Committee on Armed
Services, House of Representatives

December 1989

RESERVE FORCE

DOD Guidance Needed on Assigning Roles to Reserves Under the Total Force Policy





United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

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The Honorable Beverly B. Byron
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military
Personnel and Compensation
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Dear Madam Chairman:

This report responds to your request that we examine processes within the Department of Defense and the military services for deciding what missions to assign to reserve components.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 15 days from its date. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services and on Appropriations; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

This report was prepared under the direction of Richard Davis, Director, Army Issues, who may be reached on (202) 275-4141 if you or your staff have any questions. Other major contributors are listed in appendix IV.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Frank C. Conahan'.

Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General

Results in Brief

GAO's November 1988 report pointed out the need for Department of Defense policy guidance in force mix decision-making. GAO's most recent work reinforces a belief that additional guidance is needed to provide basic parameters for force mix decisions. Although all the services cite force mix decision criteria, GAO could not determine the relative influence of the various factors on force mix decisions or the thoroughness of the decision processes. This is because decisions on the use of reserve components usually occur as by-products of overall force structure decision-making under planning, programming, and budgeting processes in each service. There is little documentation of decision-making regarding reserve components within those processes.

During these decision processes, marginal changes are often made concerning the use of reserve components—changes that can take several years to implement—making it impractical to develop extensive documentation. Cumulatively, over time, these changes have resulted in a significant reliance on reserve components. GAO found, however, that the Department of Defense does not have a way to assess the effect of cumulative changes on war-fighting capabilities. If the United States is reluctant to call up reserves in an emergency, the services could face a dilemma when key capabilities are needed, but all or nearly all are in the reserves.

Principal Findings

Guidance Needed to Provide Basic Parameters for Force Mix Decisions

GAO's November 1988 report pointed out that the Department of Defense had not provided guidance for deciding what portions of the force would be in the active and reserve components and what missions the reservists should perform within that mix. In its current review, GAO found the criteria used by the services in decision-making to be largely informal in nature, and there were no clearly established parameters for the use of the reserves. There were indications of a lack of agreement among the services and between active and reserve components on criteria to govern force mix decisions.

For example, philosophical differences exist between the Army's active and reserve components on the merits of having less-than-fully-resourced reserve units. The reserve components are more willing than the active force to activate new units even if resources are not adequate to fully man and equip them. They believe that even less-than-fully-

reserves' availability should be a fundamental pillar of force mix decisions to better ensure that decisions are made giving appropriate weight to threat, risk, and the capabilities needed in contingencies in which mobilization may be delayed or does not occur.

An August 1989 draft Total Force Policy developed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense recognizes the need for force planning to consider various levels of conflict under varying degrees of reserve activation. It also calls for reviews every 4 years of the mix of active and reserve components. GAO believes that such reviews are important to tracking the cumulative effect of changes made on war-fighting capabilities.

Recommendation

GAO's November 1988 report noted that force mix decisions should be made using criteria that address costs, force capability, training and recruiting requirements, and personnel availability and recommended that the Secretary of Defense improve the comprehensiveness and specificity of policy guidance. The Department agreed with GAO's suggestion to develop guidance and cited a project that was underway to do just that. Accordingly, GAO is not making recommendations in this report.

Agency Comments

The Department of Defense generally agreed with GAO's findings. It recognized that more definitive guidance is required from the Office of the Secretary of Defense on assigning roles to reserve components. The Department indicated that it is in the process of formulating this guidance. The Department suggested that GAO had difficulty identifying force mix criteria because it is embedded throughout the force development process. While GAO agrees that force mix considerations occur throughout the services' force development processes, it could not readily verify the application of force mix criteria, given the nature of those processes and the absence of documentation. However, GAO did obtain and report information concerning criteria, mostly informal, that decisionmakers indicated they use. GAO believes that the absence of formal guidance, along with periodic staff turnover in all services, contributes to a lack of institutional knowledge and may limit the consistent application of criteria most important to force mix decisions.

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PPBS	planning, programming, and budgeting system
TAA	Total Army Analysis

Mobilization Authority/Constraint

The planning scenario in Defense guidance for making force structure decisions presumes the mobilization of reserves. The most readily available authority for such mobilization is found in 10 U.S.C. 673b, which authorizes the President to activate up to 200,000 Selected Reservists for up to 90 days, with a permissible extension for an additional 90 days.³ Other legislation also provides the President with authority to call up reserves to meet domestic and military emergencies.⁴

Despite this mobilization authority, the United States has been historically reluctant to activate its reserve units for military operations under its mobilization authority for fear of adverse domestic reaction and/or giving a stronger-than-intended signal internationally of impending military action. The continuing absence of reserve call-ups reinforces the public's perception of their use as a measure of last resort despite the Total Force Policy.

Growth of the Reserve Components

In recent years reserve components have become an increasingly larger part of the services' total force. From fiscal years 1980 through 1988, Selected Reserve units grew by 289,000 persons, with most of this increase occurring in the Army. Table 1.1 shows the personnel increases of active and Selected Reserve components by service from 1980 through 1988 and the contribution of Selected Reserve components relative to the combined components of each service.

Table 1.1: Growth in the Active Force and Selected Reserves From Fiscal Years 1980 Through 1988

Service	Active growth	Percent change	Reserve growth	Percent change	Reserves as a percentage of fiscal year 1988 total force
Army	-5,000	-0.6	+188,000	+32	50
Air Force	+18,000	+3.2	+41,000	+26	25
Navy	+76,000	+14.7	+52,000	+54	20
Marine Corps	+9,000	+4.8	+8,000	+22	18

Note: The active duty end strengths of the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps were reduced by 9,000, 31,000, and 3,000 respectively in fiscal year 1988, while the Navy's end strength increased by 6,000 persons. A complete summary of active and reserve end-strength changes from fiscal years 1980 through 1988 is included as appendix II.

³"Selected Reserve," the focus of this report, generally refers to individuals who are assigned to organized reserve components and engage in monthly and yearly paid training. The Selected Reserve includes the Reserve components of each of the services and also the National Guard components of the Army and the Air Force.

⁴See appendix I for a summary of this authority and an indication of how many and for how long reservists may be activated to expand the active force.

Air Force

Air Force reserve components made up of Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve now comprise 25 percent of the total force, up 4 percent from fiscal year 1980. The end strength of the reserve components increased by 41,000 from fiscal years 1980 through 1988, with more limited growth projected in future years. After several years of growth, the active force's end strength has declined since fiscal year 1987, with fiscal year 1988 end strength only 3 percent greater than fiscal year 1980's.⁶

The Air Force reserve components play a large role in the total force. The Air National Guard performs primarily a combat role with some support missions, while the Air Reserve performs mostly support missions. Air Force reserve components provide nearly all U.S.-based air interceptor capability, over half of the airlift capability that would be needed in wartime, and a majority of the service's communications and combat engineering capabilities. Table 1.3 indicates the percentages of selected capabilities found in the reserve components.

Table 1.3: Examples of Air Force Capabilities in Reserve Components

Mission capability	Percentage of Air Force capability in reserves		
	Air National Guard	Air Force Reserve	Total
Aeromedical evacuation (crews)	24	69	93
Aerial port material handling (personnel)	12	59	71
Combat communications (units)	68	0	68
Theater airlift (aircraft)	34	25	59
Combat logistics support (squadrons)	0	59	59
Tactical reconnaissance (aircraft)	50	0	50
Strategic airlift (crews)	0	50	50

Source: Fiscal Year 1988 Annual Report From the Reserve Forces Policy Board. Data is as of September 30, 1988.

The Air Force has increased the reserve's role in strategic or long-range airlift capability in recent years with the transfer of C-141 and C-5 aircraft to the reserves. While there had been reserve participation in the strategic airlift mission for over a decade, this transfer marked the first

⁶The Air Force's active duty end strength was reduced from a high of 608,000 in fiscal year 1986 to 576,000 in fiscal year 1988, a cut of 32,000 persons. Moreover, as part of recent budget reduction decisions, the Air Force is in the process of trying to reduce the number of its tactical fighter wings from 37 to 35 to maintain a ratio of two-thirds active to one-third Guard and Reserve.

The Navy, according to its most recent total force report, notes that it has placed a significant percentage of its war-fighting capabilities in the Naval Reserve.⁷ Some unit mission capabilities are exclusively, or nearly exclusively, assigned to the Reserves. Table 1.4 shows the percentage of selected capabilities found in the Naval Reserve.

Table 1.4: Examples of Navy Capabilities in Its Reserve Component

Mission capability	Percentage of capability in Navy Reserve
Combat search and rescue (squadrons)	100
U.S.-based logistics airlift (squadrons)	100
Light attack helicopter (squadrons)	100
Undersea warfare surveillance (units)	100
Naval control of shipping (routing personnel)	99
Cargo handling (battalions)	93
Ocean minesweepers (ships)	82
Mobile construction (battalions)	65

Source: Fiscal Year 1988 Annual Report From the Reserve Forces Policy Board. Data is as of September 30, 1988.

The Naval Reserve contains units designed to be independently deployed as well as units designated to augment existing active component units. Independently deploying units, which have their own ships, aircraft, or construction equipment, are tasked to report as complete operational entities at mobilization. Augmenting units are designed to reinforce and sustain active units. It should be noted, however, that reserve ships have full-time manning equal to 55 to 65 percent of regular operational requirements; often 50 percent of that number are active duty personnel assigned to the reserve ships.

In increasing the use of its reserves, the Navy has engaged in what it terms "horizontal integration," the modernization of reserve ships and aircraft by class and type, and the concurrent introduction of new equipment into the reserves as it is brought into the active force. At the same time, older equipment has been transferred from the active to the reserve component. Today, Navy officials say that force mix changes are minimal, and the Chief of Naval Operations has stated for the past 2 years that he is satisfied with the current mix of active and reserve forces.

⁷ A Report on the Navy's Total Force, FY 90, p. 1-3.

Table 1.5: Examples of Marine Corps Missions Assigned to Its Reserve Component

Unit type	Percentage in Selected Reserve
Civil affairs groups	100
Damaged equipment salvage platoons	100
Force reconnaissance companies	50
Tank battalions	40
Beach and port cargo-handling companies	40
Heavy artillery batteries	35
Light antiaircraft missile battalions	25
Forward area air defense batteries	25

Source: Fiscal Year 1988 Annual Report From the Reserve Forces Policy Board. Data is as of September 30, 1988.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report responds to an October 13, 1988, letter from the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel and Compensation, House Committee on Armed Services, requesting that we review processes within DOD and the military services for deciding what missions are assigned to reserve components. Our objectives were to identify the processes, factors, and variables individual military services use in making these force mix decisions; to examine the thoroughness of the decision-making processes; and to identify improvements needed. We also wanted to determine how the decision factors used in recent years might affect future force mix decisions. This review was designed to build on our November 1988 report on reserve policies and programs, which cites the need for DOD policy guidance in force mix decision-making.⁹ Specifically, we sought to obtain more in-depth information on force mix decision-making processes within each of the military services—a matter of continuing congressional interest.

For the purposes of this report, we are defining “force mix” decisions as decisions concerning the use of active and reserve forces, recognizing that on a broader basis force mix also includes civilian and contractor personnel as well as overseas host nation support. Since decisions concerning the mix of active and reserve forces are essentially made at the service level, we focused on how such decisions are made within the Army, the Air Force, the Navy, and the Marine Corps (we did not examine force mix decisions in the Coast Guard). We identified decision-

⁹GAO recommended in a November 1988 report that the Secretary of Defense take steps to ensure the timely development of guidance on making force mix and mission assignment decisions. See *Reserve Components: Opportunities to Improve National Guard and Reserve Policies and Programs* (GAO/NSIAD 89-27, Nov. 17, 1988).

authority. (DOD defines “mobilization” as preparation for war during a national emergency.) Unlike other reserve activation options, a 200-K call-up does not require the declaration of a national emergency. DOD also pointed out that service secretaries have the authority to call up reservists.

We do not draw as fine a distinction as does DOD in our use of the term “mobilization.” As we are defining it, “mobilization” need not necessarily take place in a formally declared national emergency. Each of the reserve activation categories, including the 200-K call-up, is codified in title 10 of the U.S. Code dealing with military law and the use of reserve components. The Code does not indicate that the 200-K call-up should not be considered a form of “mobilization.” Even within DOD, the 200-K call-up is sometimes referred to as a form of “mobilization.” Further, the historic reluctance to activate reserve components under any of these activation categories, other than for domestic emergencies, suggests that the general public might see little to distinguish one call-up from another.

DOD essentially concurred with our description of growth in the reserve components. It stated that our term “Air Force Reserve components” should be changed to the “Air Reserve Component,” which is made up of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. Our report, when recognizing the two components collectively, refers to them as “reserve components.” DOD also noted that growth in the Naval Reserve has occurred because of mobilization requirements, directed by Defense guidance, to support the war plans of the unified Commanders-in-Chief, budget decisions, and congressional direction, in addition to our referenced expansion toward a 600-ship fleet. Our report recognizes these general factors as affecting the Navy as well as the other services.

The Army has increasingly relied on its reserve components for growth in its force structure. The Army's decision to increasingly rely on its reserves is largely driven by three factors: (1) an early 1980s self-imposed cap on active end strength to contain costs while providing for equipment and modernization needs, (2) a decision in the 1970s to concentrate combat capabilities in its active forces and support capabilities in its reserves, and (3) Defense guidance that calls for planning to fight a large-scale war that assumes reserve mobilization.

The Army's decision to essentially cap growth in its active force at around 780,000 personnel and direction provided by Defense guidance required that any force structure expansion take place within the Army's reserve components. Therefore, the growth of certain capabilities within the active force requires reductions elsewhere or the examination of alternatives involving the reserve components. For example, the need to add a new unit overseas or add support capability could necessitate downsizing or shifting other units or capabilities out of the active force to stay within the authorized active duty end strength or overseas troop ceilings. If little or no growth is also occurring in the reserve components, options become even more limited. Some requirements may be left unfilled or only partially filled, or trade-offs may be made within the available reserve end strength. Decisions to assign missions to the Guard and Reserves are by-products of broader force structure decisions; changes in reserve components' roles and missions occur on an incremental basis with marginal rather than wholesale changes.

Force structure and mix decisions, once made, are factored into upcoming Army budgets. It is important to note that decisions concerning force structure and mix can take several years to implement, particularly when they involve the activation or conversion of new units in either active or reserve components. Even then, the implementation can be adversely affected by funding problems, equipment shortages, and other delays.

Since changes to force mix can take several years to implement, it is difficult to gather complete information concerning all factors in these decisions. Army officials indicated that, with the advent of a biennial budget process starting with fiscal year 1988, they have been able to put in place processes for reviewing the status of prior TAA decisions to see whether they still make sense and to make adjustments as needed. We did not examine the implementation of these processes to determine their adequacy. However, Army officials did note that these reviews have been used to delay the activations of some units that were not able

reserve components as they do on adding to or changing the basic missions of reserve units.

Congressional interest in increasing the role of Air Force reservists has encouraged the Air Force to look at ways to expand the roles of the reserves. Various Air Force documents we examined pointed to considerable congressional interest in Air Force active/reserve mix issues during 1983 and 1984. This interest has fostered some broad efforts by the Air Force to identify missions or systems that could be transferred to the reserve components. One of these efforts occurred as part of the service's efforts to prepare its Program Objective Memorandum for the fiscal year 1986 budget. The Air Force asked its major commands, in developing their program proposals, to identify candidate missions for transfer to the reserves.

More recently, another effort has resulted from a requirement in the Conference Report for fiscal year 1989 Defense authorization legislation, which directed the Secretary of Defense to evaluate the capability and desirability of reassigning portions of the flying missions, such as airlift, to the Guard and Reserve. This reassignment was intended to save money while offsetting the loss of active-duty pilots. The study report, while not definitive regarding any changes to be made, noted that the program review conducted as part of the previous budget cycle had addressed force mix issues and alternatives.

A third effort, which was initiated in February 1989 by the Office of the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations, tasked all major commands with reviewing the force mix. This effort, too, was prompted by continuing congressional interest in the subject. Some questions the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff asked the commands to consider were

- whether the force mix in each major weapon system was valid,
- whether too many missions had been assigned to the active or the reserve components,
- how a change in force mix would affect combat capability,
- what kinds of stress the current force mix placed on active forces, and
- what benefits accrued from the current force mix.

These efforts indicate that, while force mix reviews or changes are considered within the broader context of force structure or budget decision-making, congressional interest has provided impetus for some of these reviews.

The Marine Corps Reserve Experiences Relatively Few Changes

While the Marine Corps Reserve has undergone relatively few changes compared to reserves of the other services, changes in its force mix—like changes in the other services—have normally occurred during its programming and budgeting cycles. Reviews of force structure and manning issues are conducted through a multitiered committee structure as part of the Navy's PPBS process, and from these deliberations recommendations are submitted to the Marine Corps Commandant. Typically, force mix changes are based on reevaluations of the force structure with considerations of the threat, war-fighting tactics, force modernization, and proposed funding levels.

With legislation stipulating that the Marines must maintain a minimum of three divisions in the active forces,³ a broad parameter for the use of the reserve component has been established, although the legislation does not stipulate the composition of these units. Since, as with the Army, fiscal constraints prevent the active manning of all units in peacetime, reserve units are designated to satisfy planned wartime organizational requirements.

Conclusions

The services have much in common in their approaches to decision-making on the use of reserve components. Decisions concerning the roles and missions for reserve components are made within the context of service force structure and budgetary decision-making and are by-products rather than principal focuses of that process. They are often driven by fiscal constraints, along with congressional interest in a greater reliance on reserve forces. At the same time, each of the services has its own unique approach to the process. These include the Army's extensive Total Army Analysis, the Air Force's board structure, the Navy's warfare appraisal process, and the Marine Corps' committee approach. Given the nature of these processes, we believe that separate and independent reviews or assessments of what missions and capabilities are or should be assigned to the reserve components are not likely to be normal parts of those processes.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD generally concurred with our findings regarding each service. It pointed out that assigning missions to the reserve components is an integral part of the services' force structure decision-making processes and

³The National Security Act of 1947, as amended, requires that the Marine Corps have at least three active combat divisions, along with three active air wings, and associated support.

Force Mix Decisions and Recent Budget Cuts Show a Lack of Consensus on Criteria for Decision-Making

All the military services cite force mix decision-making criteria; however, the use of such criteria is largely informal and not well documented. Although a range of factors was cited by Army officials, little is written on the subject in the Army. The Air Force developed several criteria statements in 1984, but no criteria were formally adopted, and there is no consensus on what those criteria should be. The Navy cites several general decision factors in its annual reports on Total Force; however, the extent to which these factors are used is not clear. Like the Navy, the Marine Corps also cites general factors affecting its decisions. Finally, budget reduction measures in the Army and the Air Force show a lack of agreement concerning criteria for making force mix decisions.

DOD has efforts underway to begin developing force mix policy; it recognizes the need to develop force mix decision criteria.

Circumstances Determine the Importance of Particular Criteria in Army Decision-Making

Army officials stressed the situational nature of force mix decisions and applicable criteria. However, they did provide insight into factors considered important to decisions affecting new or increased mission assignments to Guard and Reserve components. These factors—not intended to represent a rank ordering—include

- whether reserve components are interested in the mission,
- whether the mission is already in the reserves,
- what personnel strength projections and trends indicate,
- whether the geographic locations required for reserve units would affect the recruitment and training of persons for the mission,
- what degree of readiness and quickness of deployment are required,
- what equipment distribution and future deliveries are planned,
- what new facilities are required, and
- what the Congress requires.

These factors represent an aggregation of the views of those we interviewed; they are not meant to suggest a systematic process in force mix decision-making.

Army officials stated that it is very hard for those not involved in the process to see how force mix decisions are made; there is little written guidance on the subject, and there is little documentation. These officials indicated that each decision can be unique in terms of the variables involved; decisions flow from the informal give-and-take among persons involved in meetings and conferences related to the TAA process. Thus,

which there is inadequate funding or requirements for which capabilities can be quickly acquired when needed. These decisions involved several months of deliberations, with differences in philosophy between the active force and the reserve components over the desirability of having structure in the reserves, even if it is not fully resourced. The reserve components have favored partially resourced structure, as a basis for future expansion to meet operational requirements. The decisions reached were based on a number of factors, including an examination of the contribution of the units to war-fighting needs and an assessment of whether the unit requirements were still valid and of how long they would remain valid. The decisions reached involved trade-offs within the reserve structure, not trade-offs between the active and reserve forces.

Various Air Force Decision Criteria Identified but Not Formalized

We found more written on the subject of force mix decision-making in the Air Force than we did in the other services. However, none of the criteria have been formally adopted by the Air Force for use on an ongoing basis. Further, the multilayered nature of the biennial decision-making process and limited available documentation restricted our ability to assess the use of specific criteria in making decisions.

DOD and congressional interest in force mix issues from 1983 to 1984 fostered efforts within the Air Force to define criteria applicable to force mix decisions. Consequently, several documents prepared during that time described factors important to force mix decisions. However, the criteria were not given any degree of permanence: they were not incorporated into a regulation or circular, and generally these criteria were not known to Air Force officials we spoke with, including some current participants on the Board.

One of the most authoritative Air Force sources of force mix criteria was a paper on the active/reserve force mix developed in 1984 at the request of the Chief of Staff, as part of a plan to request increases in active end strength in fiscal year 1985. Factors cited in the 1984 Air Force criteria paper as affecting the use of reserve components included

- determining whether functions required full- or part-time personnel,
- deciding whether demographic factors were conducive to recruiting reservists,
- attempting to recruit 70 percent of reservists from a pool of previously trained and experienced active duty personnel, and

Chapter 3
Force Mix Decisions and Recent Budget Cuts
Show a Lack of Consensus on Criteria
for Decision-Making

Another Air Force paper on force mix decision-making, prepared in 1984, focused on many of the criteria identified above and provided a discussion of the application of these criteria to four Air Force mission areas. However, this paper, too, has not gained wide circulation or use.

Air Force officials provided somewhat differing views on factors they deemed important in those decisions; a consensus did not seem to exist. One official told us that the criteria developed in 1984 were not always known or applied and that these criteria appeared to have been informally handed down. Other officials told us that force mix decisions were driven by particular circumstances; no formalized criteria exist to guide force mix decisions; and any criteria that one might find are designed to justify what is already in place. An official who serves as a panel chair within the decision-making corporate board structure emphasized the situational nature of force mix issues. Another panel chair said that he did not want his hands tied by definitive criteria.

During an Air Force briefing given to DOD in the spring of 1988, officials noted that an Air Reserve Force Policy Committee had convened a special subcommittee to review and validate the current force mix decision process and to conduct a study of mission requirements and force mix. On the basis of the work of this study group, the Acting Secretary of the Air Force approved a study report containing updated criteria for force mix decision-making in April 1989. However, it is unclear to what extent these criteria will be formally adopted as a directive ensuring their continued visibility and use.

Recent Budget Cut
Demonstrated a Lack of
Consensus on Decision
Criteria

A recent budget reduction effort affecting the Air Force demonstrated the lack of consensus concerning force mix criteria and their application. In fiscal year 1988, the Air Force, to meet a mandated budget cut, made plans to reduce two active tactical fighter wings and to reduce the number of primary authorized aircraft from 24 to 18 in individual reserve fighter squadrons. Several officials told us that the prevailing view was that the active and reserve forces had grown together and therefore should be taken down together. However, these officials expressed disagreement with this view, believing that the decision to reduce the number of aircraft in the reserve squadrons did not recognize that the Air National Guard and the Air Reserve could perform the mission at less cost, without a degradation of capability. These officials believed, therefore, that the reserve components should not have been

We were able to document instances in which new proposals to increase the roles of the Reserves had been evaluated for cost-effectiveness and the geographical availability of trainable manpower. For example, in February 1985, the Center for Naval Analysis published a study addressing the cost and manpower availability of helicopter combat-support units, aerial mine countermeasure squadrons, and land-based tanker units.² Data provided us on the study did not indicate the extent to which these proposals or any others had been evaluated to determine the impact on force availability of shifting such functions to the reserves during peacetime contingencies. Conversely, Navy officials told us that the Navy had not conducted an aggregate analysis to determine its ability to respond to contingencies and commitments short of a Reserve call-up.

Marine Corps Has Generalized Force Mix Criteria but Recognizes the Importance of Reserve Availability

While the Marine Corps does not have formal, written criteria for making force mix decisions, officials did describe general factors important to those decisions. Force mix decisions are the result of deliberations among different committees and staffs within the Corps' decision-making structure, but little documentation exists to indicate the basis for particular decisions or to provide a frame of reference for future decisionmakers. We were told that force mix decisions were based on military judgment and included the consideration of such factors as cost, peacetime operational requirements, forward deployment requirements, force projections, and to a lesser extent reserve accessions and rotational base needs.

The Marine Corps stated that its mission requires it to be forward-deployed and able to provide rapidly deployable forces to areas of potential conflict. Thus, the Marine Corps believes that the capability to carry out these missions must reside primarily in its active force. Further, it seeks to maintain a rotational base providing alternating assignments for its forward-deployed units. The Corps' perspective is that certain skills can best be obtained while personnel are on active duty and that these trained personnel provide an important resource pool for reservists. Additionally, the numbers and types of reserve units that can be fielded to meet requirements are dependent on the Reserve's ability to recruit personnel with appropriate skills within given geographical areas.

²Analysis of Geographic Manpower Availability and Costs for Fiscal Year 1986 Active/Reserve Mix Initiatives, February 22, 1985.

DOD agreed with our recommendation and indicated that it was working toward developing force mix guidance. In December 1988, DOD circulated for informal review a draft Total Force Policy, in an attempt to fill what an official referred to as a “policy vacuum” caused by the absence of formal guidance. In March and subsequently in August 1989, DOD issued for formal review and comment drafts of its policy document. It outlines roles and responsibilities of various DOD offices under the Total Force concept. The August draft policy provides some broad guidance for force mix decision-making and calls for developing standardized criteria and methodologies for assessing alternative force mixes. However, it does not stipulate a timetable for developing that guidance. As of August 1989, the initial policy guidance was still under development within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and according to one official, it was still several months away from being finalized.

Conclusions

Decisions concerning the roles and missions to be assigned to reserve components are largely decided by the individual military services. Within the Army, force mix decisions represent efforts to minimize the negative consequences of making needed force structure changes. In the past, a capped active end strength resulted in much growth in the Army’s reserve components. More recently, the decreased growth planned in the reserve components has required the Army to rethink planned changes in its reserve forces. In addition, it has caused some debate over the desirability of having unit structures in the reserves even if they cannot be fully resourced. The active and reserve leadership have differing views on this issue.

Events surrounding a recent Air Force budget reduction effort also point out the lack of consensus between Air Force active and reserve officials concerning force mix issues and point to a lack of clear, consistent criteria for decision-making. While the Navy cites some general criteria governing force mix decisions, it is difficult to see how well these criteria are followed.

Overall, criteria for making force mix decisions are mostly informal, arising within the context of broader decision-making processes that, due to their nature, are not likely to be well documented. The lack of agreement on criteria suggests the need for a greater focus on criteria to provide a framework for force mix decision-making. DOD is moving in this direction.

Periodic Review of Force Mix Needed to Assess the Effects of Cumulative Changes on War-Fighting Capabilities

Force mix decision processes for all the services recognize to some extent the importance of planning for contingencies for which the reserves are not mobilized. However, since a large percentage of certain capabilities are in the reserves and the emphasis is on structuring forces for large-scale warfare scenarios that presume mobilization of the reserves, it does not appear that the services have given adequate attention to how their increased reliance on reserve components might hamper operations for contingencies in which reserves are not mobilized or mobilization is delayed. Force mix changes occur incrementally with marginal rather than wholesale changes being made to force structure at any one time. As a result of these incremental changes, each of the military services now has important capabilities largely or exclusively in its reserve components and thus assumes varying degrees of risk in contingencies in which reserve call-up or mobilization is delayed or does not occur. Periodic assessments are not routinely made concerning the impact of these cumulative changes on war-fighting capabilities.

DOD's draft Total Force Policy recognizes the importance of planning for non-mobilization contingencies and calls for periodically reviewing the mix of active and reserve forces.

Army Reserve Components Are Vital to Meeting Early Support Requirements

Of all the services, the Army relies the most on its reserves, assigning them not only combat missions but also most of its support missions. The Army relies on National Guard and Reserve units to "round out" some active component units and to deploy at the same time as the active Army units or shortly thereafter. For instance, a division may only have two of three brigades active in peacetime with the third brigade in the National Guard and expected to be activated when needed.

Of the units scheduled to deploy to Europe in the event of a conflict, reserve forces represent about 63 percent of the combat units, 80 percent of the combat-support units, and 81 percent of the combat service-support units. Many of these units have deployment dates that rival those of the active components. Unless the Army is able to call on these reserve forces, it must reconfigure its active force units to meet operational needs. For example, conventional ammunition companies—now largely in the reserves—are needed to store, transport, and issue ammunition to combat forces. Without these ammunition companies, other active forces will have to be redirected from other duties to fill this need.

extent to which this could be done and for how long are not clear. We found no studies that support such a determination.

On the other hand, the Air Force response to an OSD draft study indicates that the Air Force may have some concerns about its dependence on reserves for non-mobilization contingencies. The Conference Report to the fiscal year 1989 Defense authorization legislation directed that DOD determine how the Air Force could achieve savings by moving more aircraft into the reserve components. The draft DOD study proposed various options to transfer forces to the reserve components and to close Air Force bases.³ A February 1989 memo from the Acting Secretary of the Air Force to the Secretary of Defense expressed concern over the study's approach and cited perceived shortcomings of the report, including the view that it failed to address how locking up more capability in the reserve components would affect the Air Force's ability to deal with contingencies not involving reserve call-up. The final report, completed in May 1989, contained no proposals for transferring forces or aircraft to the reserve components beyond those already planned and programmed.

Navy Now Expressing Concern About Non-Mobilization Contingencies

Our review of the Navy's Total Force reports submitted to the Congress shows an evolution of thinking on the subject of Reserve availability. The Navy's 1984 Total Force report assumes that Reserve call-ups would occur in future conflicts; the two most recent reports anticipate potential difficulties when call-ups do not occur.⁴ The Total Force report for fiscal year 1990 strongly highlights the problems involved in having a large percentage of Navy capabilities in its reserve component where they would not be available without mobilization.⁵ The Navy recently reduced its planned number of reserve mine warfare ships by assigning five new ships, previously slated for the Reserve, to the active component. This change of plans follows the lack of a sufficient number of available ships in the active force for Persian Gulf operations in 1987.

By assigning significant amounts of force capabilities to its reserve component, the Navy assumes some degree of risk that these capabilities may be needed to meet operational commitments but not be available

³Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 4481, 100th Congress, September 28, 1988.

⁴Report to the Congress on the Navy's Total Force, February 1984, p. II-6.

⁵A Report on the Navy's Total Force, FY 90, p. 2-2.

The Navy's fiscal year 1990 Total Force report also places emphasis on mission exclusivity. Although, as already noted, the Navy's fiscal year 1989 Total Force report cited four mission areas of concern, at the time of our review the only changes made had to do with retaining additional minesweeper ship capability in the active force. The 1990 report notes a Navy dilemma regarding the heavy concentrations of capabilities in the Reserve. It states that

"in crisis situations short of mobilization, those assets are not readily available for operational employment. Navy is left to rely on volunteer Reservists, as was done with the frigates and minesweepers deployed to the Persian Gulf, to meet contingency requirements. This is a tenuous situation at best, and makes planning for the use of Naval Reserve forces for short-fuzed contingency operations almost impossible; this at a time when the probability of periodic U.S. involvement in contingency, crisis-response situations around the globe appears high."⁹

Marine Corps Focusing on Non-Mobilization Contingencies but May Be Dependent on Navy Reserves for Deployment

The Marine Corps has undertaken efforts to strengthen its ability to deploy and meet contingencies involving low-intensity conflict without relying on its reserve component. At the same time, however, it is dependent on the Navy for deployment and support, with much of that capability in the Naval Reserve. On the basis of an initiative of the Marine Corps Commandant, the Corps reviewed its active force capabilities in 1988 and is revising some of the missions it has placed in both the active and reserve forces. This effort responds to the now generally accepted higher probability that future conflicts will be of low- to mid-intensity and involve third-world countries rather than large-scale NATO-centered warfare.¹⁰ For example, three active infantry battalions in the active force have been deactivated in order to increase the active manning of the remaining battalions. Portions of some capabilities, such as bulk fuel capability and general support for artillery units, are being moved out of the active force and placed in the Reserve; the Corps believes that these capabilities are more likely to be required for higher intensity contingencies that would involve mobilization. Marine officials told us that the goal in restructuring the force was to permit the equivalent of two

⁹A Report on the Navy's Total Force, FY 90, p. 1-4.

¹⁰A "mid-intensity conflict," according to the Army, involves the use of military power that does not include the use of nuclear weapons. It is characterized by the use of armed forces in combat but may include some or all of the techniques and characteristics of low-intensity conflict, where greater constraints exist on weapons, tactics, and levels of violence.

assessments by the services regarding this issue was recently highlighted by the Navy's experience in the Persian Gulf and the Army's recent examination of its capabilities without relying on its reserves. Historically, for political and foreign policy reasons, the United States has been reluctant to call up its reserve components. This reluctance could create a dilemma when key capabilities are all or nearly all in the reserves. Our work indicates the importance of planning for non-mobilization contingencies and for periodically reviewing the degree of reliance on reserve forces. We believe that OSD's treatment of these issues in its draft policy guidance is an important step in addressing what an OSD official described as a "policy vacuum."

If future cuts in force structure occur, there could be an even greater reliance on reserve components. Thus, it becomes even more important to have a policy that provides guidance on maintaining an active force capability to respond to contingencies for which mobilization may not be desirable or may be delayed.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD concurred with our findings concerning the degree of the services' dependence on their reserves and the need to periodically assess the cumulative effects of force mix changes on war-fighting capabilities. However, it disagreed that the Air Force and the Office of the Secretary of Defense had disagreed over a draft report to the Congress on the use of the reserves, which was prepared in response to fiscal year 1989 Defense authorization legislation. DOD stated that the draft, prepared by an official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, did not represent DOD's official position and that the actual final report reflected no disagreement between the Air Force and DOD. We recognize that the draft report might not have represented the official view of the Department and that the final report showed DOD and the Air Force in agreement. We believe, though, that the Air Force's concerns over the original draft illustrated the difficulty of articulating a clear policy on force mix issues.

Active/Reserve End Strength for Fiscal Years 1980 to 1988

In thousands									
Component	Fiscal year								
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Active									
Army	777	781	780	780	780	781	781	781	772
Air Force	558	570	583	592	597	602	608	607	576
Navy	517	529	542	558	565	571	581	587	593
Marine Corps	188	191	192	194	196	198	199	200	197
Total	2,040	2,071	2,097	2,123	2,138	2,151	2,169	2,174	2,138
Selected Reserve									
Army National Guard	367	389	408	417	434	440	446	452	455
Army Reserve	213	232	257	266	275	292	310	314	313
Air National Guard	96	98	101	102	105	109	113	115	115
Air Force Reserve	60	62	64	67	70	75	79	80	82
Naval Reserve	97	98	105	109	121	130	142	148	149
Marine Corps Reserve	36	37	40	43	41	42	42	42	44
Total	869	917	975	1,005	1,046	1,088	1,130	1,151	1,158

Note: Numbers reflect totals at the end of each fiscal year and may not add to totals due to rounding.

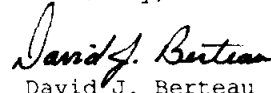
Source: Secretary of Defense's Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1990

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The detailed DoD comments on the report findings are provided in the enclosure. The Department appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report.

Sincerely,



David J. Berteau
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Resource Management & Support)

Enclosure:
As Stated

FINDING B: Growth of Reserve Components. The GAO observed that, in recent years, Reserve components have become an increasingly larger part of the Military Services' total force. The GAO noted that, from FY 1980 through FY 1988, Selected Reserve units grew by 289,000 persons--with most of this increase occurring in the Army.

The GAO found that the Army has increasingly relied on its Reserve components for growth in its force structure. According to the GAO, the Army's Selected Reserve components, which grew by 188,000 personnel from FY 1980 through FY 1988, now equal the size of the Active Force. The GAO estimated that the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve provide one-half of the Army's combat-support and about two-thirds of the Army's support capabilities.

The GAO indicated that the Air Force Reserve components (made up of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve) now comprise 25 percent of the total force--up 4 percent from FY 1980. The GAO pointed out that, after several years of growth, the end strength of the Active Force has declined since FY 1987, with the FY 1988 end strength only 3 percent greater than FY 1980. The GAO explained that the Air Force Reserve components play a large role in the total force. According to the GAO, the Air National Guard performs primarily a combat role with some support missions, while the Air Force Reserve performs mostly support missions. The GAO explained that the Air Force Reserve components provide (1) nearly all United States-based air interceptor capability, (2) over half of the airlift capability that would be needed in wartime, and (3) a majority of the Military Service communications and combat engineering capabilities.

The GAO observed that the Navy experienced much growth in both its Active and Reserve components between FY 1980 and FY 1988--as it expanded toward its goal of a 600-ship fleet. The GAO estimated that the Naval Reserve currently comprises 20 percent of the Total Force. According to the GAO, the Navy's reliance on its Reserve Force has grown in recent years. The GAO pointed out that the Navy has historically had comparatively fewer Reserves than the other Services, due to the proportionately greater forward deployment requirements of its maritime strategy. The GAO explained that, while still a small part of the Navy's total force, the Naval Reserve grew by 54 percent between FY 1980 and FY 1988. The GAO also indicated that, during this time, the Active force end strength grew by 15 percent.

The GAO found that the Army has increasingly relied on its Reserve components for growth in its force structure. According to the GAO, the Army's decision to rely increasingly on its Reserves is largely driven by three factors as follows:

- an early 1980s self-imposed cap on active end strength to contain costs while providing for equipment and modernization needs;
- a decision in the 1970s to concentrate combat capabilities in its active forces and support capabilities in its reserves; and
- Defense guidance that calls for planning to fight a large-scale war that assumes reserve mobilization.

The GAO concluded that (1) the Army's decision to essentially cap the growth of its Active Force at around 780,000 personnel and (2) the direction provided by Defense guidance required that any force structure expansion take place within its Reserve components. According to the GAO, decisions to assign missions to the Guard and Reserves are by-products of broader force structure decisions--with changes in Reserve components' roles and missions occurring on an incremental basis with marginal rather than wholesale changes.

The GAO further pointed out that, since changes to force mix can take several years to implement, it is difficult to gather complete information concerning all factors in these decisions. The GAO referenced comments by Army officials that, since the advent of the biennial budget process starting with FY 1988, they have been able to put in place processes for reviewing the status of prior analysis decisions to see whether they still make sense and to make adjustments as needed. (pp. 3-6, pp. 24-27/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Partially concur. It must be pointed out that the assigning of missions to the Reserve Components is an integral part of the Total Army Analysis process and not a by-product. For purposes of clarification, in the discussion of the three factors that have driven the Army to increased reliance upon the Reserve Components, it should be noted that the decision to concentrate combat capability in the Active Component was one based upon the deterrent value of combat forces. The Army National Guard has a significant percentage of combat forces, while the Army Reserve provides the bulk of combat service support.

See pp. 2-5 and 18-20.

the GAO, the Navy budgeting process is conducted through an iterative review of war-fighting needs--with a key ingredient in the initial programming efforts being a series of assessments and summary appraisals performed annually for key functional and warfare areas, such as readiness and antisubmarine warfare. The GAO observed that these appraisals include a review of force structure-related issues and problems on which decisions will be made shaping the future force structure.

The GAO stated that the appraisals of war-fighting needs provide basic building blocks in the programming process and it is within this process that Naval force mix changes are evaluated. The GAO explained that the principal products derived from this process are requirements for manpower in the active Navy and for full-time ship manning. The GAO concluded that, because of this emphasis, decisions to change Reserve manning and force mix become secondary.

According to the GAO, the Navy described force mix changes (such as the increased reliance on the Reserves) as resulting primarily from fiscal constraints and ensuing congressional concern over the growth of the Active Force. The GAO referred to the Navy's establishment of a flag rank officer to serve as the "Total Force Advocate"--who plays a role throughout the force programming process. The GAO noted, however, that the "Total Force Advocate" does not make force mix decisions, but rather participates in deliberations that may lead to changes in force mix. (pp. 3-6, pp. 29-31/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Concur. The Navy has been responsive to congressional concerns to balance the growth of its Active and Reserve forces and has taken steps in the planning, programming, and budgeting process to ensure that its goal of a balanced force is met--that is, an Active Duty force sized to meet normal peacetime requirements, reinforced by a Reserve component trained and equipped to make up the difference between peacetime and wartime requirements. The existence of the Total Force Advocate and his participation in the force programming process is testimony to the degree of importance that the Navy has placed upon this critical facet of force development.

FINDING F: The Marine Corps Reserves Experience Relatively Few Changes. The GAO observed that, while the Marine Corps Reserves has undergone relatively few changes compared to the Reserves of the other Services, changes in its force mix--like changes in the other Services--have normally occurred

See pp. 4 and 22.

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- what new facilities are required; and
- what the Congress requires.

The GAO described statements by Army officials to the effect that (1) it is very hard for those not involved in the process to see how force mix decisions are made, (2) there is little written guidance on the subject, and (3) there is little documentation. The GAO further learned that force mix decisions are also driven by the Army's preference for combat over support forces in the Active component--the Army argues that combat rather than support capability provides greater deterrence.

The GAO concluded that, within the Army, force mix decisions represent efforts to minimize the negative consequences of making needed force structure changes. The GAO noted that, in the past, a capped Active end strength resulted in much growth in the Army Reserve components. The GAO explained that, more recently, the decreased growth planned in the Reserve components has required the Army to rethink planned changes in its Reserve Forces. The GAO further noted that the recent decreased growth has caused some debate over the desirability of having unit structures in the Reserves even if they cannot be fully resourced--with no agreement on this issue between the Active and Reserve leadership. (pp. 3-6, pp. 33-36, p. 45/GAO Draft Report)

See pp. 3-4 and 25-27.

DOD POSITION: Partially concur. The conclusion that force mix decisions represent efforts to minimize the negative consequences of making needed force structure changes is incomplete. Force structure decisions are made with the intent of providing maximum support to the warfighting Commanders in Chief, within recognized constraints. An important consideration within the decision-making process is the minimization of adverse impact upon the Army.

See comment 2.

FINDING H: Various Air Force Decision Criteria Identified but Not Formalized. The GAO found more written on the subject of force mix decision-making in the Air Force than in the other Services. The GAO pointed out, however, that none of the criteria have been formally adopted by the Air Force for use on an ongoing basis. The GAO further found that the multilayered nature of the biennial decision-making process and limited availability of documentation restricted its ability to assess the use of specific criteria in making decisions.

According to the GAO, from FY 1983 to FY 1984, the Department

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absolute, but that maintaining the readiness of all forces and sustaining the Active Force were of primary importance because readiness represented operational, or war-fighting, capability and force sustainment was necessary to maintain an adequate number of experienced people in both operational and managerial positions.

The GAO found that Air Force officials provided somewhat differing views on factors they deemed important in those decisions--according to the GAO, a consensus did not seem to exist. The GAO referred to one Air Force official's statement that the criteria developed in 1984 were not always known or applied and that these criteria appeared to have been informally handed down. The GAO further referenced other officials, who stated that (1) force mix decisions were driven by particular circumstances, (2) no formalized criteria exist to guide force mix decisions, and (3) any criteria that one might find are designed to justify what is already in place.

The GAO identified an Air Force briefing given to the DoD in the Spring of 1988, in which Air Force officials noted that an Air Reserve Force Policy Committee had convened a special subcommittee to review and validate the current force mix decision process and to conduct a study of mission requirements and force mix. The GAO noted that the subcommittee had not yet produced a written report and that Air Force officials told them that the subcommittee was unlikely to do so.

The GAO concluded that events surrounding recent Air Force studies (1) expose the lack of consensus between Active and Reserve officials concerning force mix issues and (2) point to a lack of clear, consistent criteria for decision-making. (pp. 3-6, pp. 36-40, pp. 45-46/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Partially concur. The written report referenced by the GAO was completed subsequent to the GAO on site audit work and was approved by the Acting Secretary of the Air Force on April 21, 1989. The report reflects an update of the 1984 Total Force Mix criteria to provide the framework for use during force structure deliberations. Consensus on force structure policy options is reached between Active and Air Reserve Components in the corporate Air Force decision-making process (i.e., Air Force Board Structure). Application of adopted force mix criteria is dynamic and dependent on the force structure issue being addressed.

See pp. 27-30.

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in several editions of the Navy's Total Force Report to Congress.

FINDING J: Marine Corps Force Mix Criteria Are Limited To a Few General Factors. The GAO observed that, while the Marine Corps does not have formal, written criteria for making force mix decisions, officials did describe some general factors important to decisions. The GAO explained that force mix decisions are the result of deliberations among different committees and staffs--but found that little documentation exists (1) to indicate the basis for particular decisions, (2) to support the thoroughness of the process, or (3) to provide a frame of reference for future decision-makers. According to the GAO, Marine Corps force mix decisions were based on military judgement and included the consideration of factors such as the following:

- cost;
- peacetime operational requirements;
- forward deployment requirements;
- force projections; and
- to lesser extent, Reserve accessions and rotational base needs.

The GAO indicated the Marine Corps stated that its mission requires it to be forward-deployed and able to provide rapidly deployable forces to areas of potential conflict. The GAO concluded that the Marine Corps, therefore, believes that the capability to carry out these missions must reside primarily in its Active Force. The GAO also found that the Corps seeks to maintain a rotational base, providing alternating assignments for its forward-deployed units. The GAO noted that the Corps perspective is that certain skills can best be obtained while personnel are on active duty and that these trained personnel provide an important resource pool for Reservists. The GAO pointed out that the numbers and types of Reserve units are dependent on the Reserve's ability to recruit personnel with appropriate skills within a given geographical area. (pp. 3-6, pp. 42-43/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Partially concur. The numbers and types of Reserve units is based upon the needs of the Fleet Marine Corps Commanders who provide Marine forces to the warfighting Commanders in Chief. The location for these units requires

See comment 3.

See pp. 4 and 31-32.

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concluded that the lack of agreement on criteria (evidenced by events in some Services) suggests the need for a greater focus on criteria to provide a framework for force mix decision-making. The GAO acknowledged that the Department is trying to move in this direction. (pp. 3-6, pp. 43-46/GAO Draft Report)

See pp. 5 and 32-33.

DoD POSITION: Partially concur. Concerning the comment about the Office of the Secretary of Defense draft policy, it is not entirely accurate to say that the current draft Directive (dated August 2) "does not itself provide guidance for force mix decision-making." Based on written and oral comments, the draft Directive has been updated to provide broad decision rules for when to plan to use Active or Reserve component units and personnel. Additionally, a list of criteria to consider in making Active/Reserve mix decisions is provided. Still, the Department recognizes that more work is needed to develop the analytic tools to assist in making these trade-off decisions. An update on the coordination of the Directive itself is in order. The Directive, as stated above, has been updated. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) is currently briefing senior level officials within the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff in order to gain support and consensus prior to sending the Directive out for final coordination.

See comment 4.

FINDING L: Army Reserve Components Are Vital To Meeting Early Support Requirements. The GAO observed that the Army relies the most on its Reserves--assigning them not only combat missions, but also most of its support missions. The GAO explained that the Army relies on the National Guard and the Reserve units to "round out" some Active component units and to deploy at the same time as the Active Army units or shortly thereafter.

The GAO pointed out that of the units scheduled to deploy to Europe in the event of a conflict, the Reserve forces represent about (1) 63 percent of the combat units, (2) 80 percent of the combat-support units, and (3) 81 percent of the combat service-support units. The GAO found that many of these Reserve units have deployment dates that rival those of the Active components. The GAO concluded that, unless the Army is able to call on these Reserve Forces, it must reconfigure its Active Force units to meet operational needs.

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including the view that it failed to address how locking up more capability in the Reserve components would impact the Air Force ability to deal with contingencies not involving Reserve call-up. The GAO concluded that this lack of resolution further illustrates a lack of agreement between the OSD and the Air Force on what capabilities might be needed for contingencies, for which a Reserve call-up might be delayed or might not occur at all. (pp. 6-7, pp.49-50/ GAO Draft Report)

See pp. 36-37.

DoD POSITION: Partially concur. While the facts presented in this finding are essentially correct, the conclusion drawn by the GAO (citing a lack of agreement between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Air Force) is not. The cited DoD draft study did not represent the Office of the Secretary of Defense position; that position, as reflected in the May 1989 report to the Congress, reflects no disagreement between the Air Force and Office of the Secretary of Defense.

See comment 5.

FINDING N: Navy Now Expressing Concern About Nonmobilization Contingencies. The GAO reviewed the Navy's Total Force reports submitted to the Congress and found an evolution of thinking on the subject of Reserve availability. The GAO observed that the Navy's 1984 Total Force report assumes that Reserve call-ups would occur in future conflicts--but the two most recent reports anticipate potential difficulties when call-ups do not occur. The GAO pointed out that the Total Force report for FY 1990 strongly highlights the problems involved in having a large percentage of Navy capabilities in its Reserve components, where they would not be available without mobilization. The GAO noted that the Navy recently reduced its planned number of Reserve mine warfare ships by assigning five new ships to the active component--ships that were previously slated for the Reserve. The GAO stated that this change of plans follows the lack of a sufficient number of available ships in the Active Force for the 1987 Persian Gulf operation.

The GAO emphasized that, by assigning significant amounts of force capabilities to its Reserve component, the Navy assumes some degree of risk that these capabilities may be needed to meet operational commitments, but not be available without mobilization. According to the GAO, concerns about the availability of the Reserves were realized in 1987, when minesweeper ships were needed for Persian Gulf operation and only two were available for deployment from the Active Force. The GAO noted that, while five minesweepers were sent from the Naval Reserve, they were 90 percent manned by Active Duty

See pp. 4 and 39-40.

adversely affect the operational requirements of another and (2) in prompting any needed adjustments in force structure, based on periodic reassessment of the mix of active and reserve forces. (pp. 6-7, pp. 53-55/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Concur. These missions that the Marine Corps is dependent upon the Navy for are employment (off-loading) missions. The Marine Corps can deploy two Marine Expeditionary Forces through a combination of amphibious transports and the Maritime Prepositioning Force; it must, however, rely upon the Navy for adequate off-load forces to support operations.

FINDING P: DoD Recognizes The Importance of Planning For Nonmobilization Contingencies. The GAO observed that in its project to develop guidance to assist in force mix decision-making, the DoD has recognized the importance of planning for nonmobilization contingencies. In this regard, the GAO pointed out that the draft DoD Total Force Policy calls for force planning to consider various levels of conflict in non-mobilization contingencies and varying degrees of Reserve activation. The GAO noted that the DoD draft also calls for a comprehensive review of the degree of reliance on Reserve Forces every 4 years.

The GAO concluded that the issue of Reserve Force availability should be a fundamental pillar of force mix decision-making--and should not be used unilaterally to reject the increased reliance on Reserve Forces. The GAO further concluded that the issue of Reserve Force availability should, instead, be used to make balanced decisions considering threat, risk, and capabilities needed for contingencies in which Reserve call-up or mobilization may be delayed or does not occur. The GAO pointed out the importance of Defense guidance to ensure uniform and balanced assessments by the Military Services regarding this issue was recently highlighted by the Navy's experience in the Persian Gulf and the Army's recent examination of its capabilities without relying on its Reserves. (pp. 6-7, pp. 55-56/GAO Draft Report)

See pp. 5 and 40.

DoD POSITION: Concur.

* * * * *

RECOMMENDATIONS

o None

Major Contributors to This Report

**National Security and
International Affairs
Division, Washington,
D.C.**

Charles J. Bonanno, Assistant Director, Army Issues
Barry W. Holman, Project Manager
Rodell Anderson, Evaluator
Laura Talbott, Evaluator

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The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Defense's letter dated October 16, 1989.

GAO Comments

1. We have modified the report to clarify our discussion of the context of force mix decision-making.
2. We have modified the report to clarify our discussion concerning minimizing the adverse effects of force structure changes.
3. We have modified the report to better reflect the criteria and nature of Marine Corps force structure decision-making.
4. We have revised the report to reflect this updated information.
5. We have revised the report to reflect the completion of DOD's report to the Congress.

personnel. The GAO concluded that, since that time, the Navy seems to have become more concerned about placing mission capabilities largely in its Reserves.

The GAO pointed to the Navy's FY 1989 Total Force report, which notes that "mission exclusivity" has created a problem when all or most of a particular capability resides in the Naval Reserve. Similarly, the GAO referred to the Navy's FY 1990 Total Force report, which also places emphasis on "mission exclusivity." (pp. 6-7, pp. 50-53/GAO Draft Report)

See pp. 4 and 37-39.

DoD POSITION: Concur. The Navy has been, and continues to be, concerned about the availability of its Reserve forces for use in crisis/contingency response, short of mobilization. This issue has been highlighted by the Navy's leadership in several Total Force Reports to Congress as well as during congressional hearings and remains a high priority matter which is addressed throughout the force development process.

FINDING O: Marine Corps Focusing On Nonmobilization Contingencies But May Be Dependent On Navy Reserves For Deployment. The GAO observed that the Marine Corps has undertaken efforts to strengthen its ability to deploy and meet contingencies involving low-intensity conflict without having to rely on its Reserve component. The GAO found, however, that the Marine Corps is dependent on the Navy for deployment and support--with much of that capability in the Naval Reserve.

The GAO indicated that, in 1988, the Corps reviewed its Active Force capabilities and, as a result, is revising some of the missions it has placed in both the Active and Reserve Forces. According to the GAO, this effort responds to the now generally accepted higher probability that future conflicts will be of low- to mid-intensity and involve third-world countries--as opposed to a large-scale NATO-centered warfare. The GAO stated Marine officials indicated that the goal in restructuring the force is to permit the equivalent of two Marine Expeditionary Forces to be committed to a conflict without having to mobilize the Reserve.

The GAO concluded that, while the Marine Corps hopes to be capable of quickly responding to contingencies without using its Reserve, its dependence on the Navy for certain functions could impede its ability to meet this goal. The GAO also concluded that increased OSD involvement in providing guidance and oversight could be important (1) in ensuring that limitations in the capabilities of one Service do not

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See pp. 4, and 35-36.

The GAO pointed out that the importance of periodically examining the cumulative impact of force mix decisions is highlighted by a recent study mandated by the Army Chief of Staff. The GAO noted the Army Chief of Staff directed that a study be undertaken to determine whether a three-to-five-division contingency could be supported without calling up the Reserves. The GAO reported the study found that an operational contingency employing three to five Active Army divisions could be supported without Reserves but would require a redeployment of forces from other areas. The GAO noted that the Army concluded that the study showed how close to the margin the Army is in relying on its Reserve Forces. (pp. 6-7, pp. 47-49/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Concur.

FINDING M: The Extent of Air Force Capabilities In Non-Mobilization Contingencies is Unclear. The GAO observed that, in some mission assignments, the Air Force seems to have recognized the importance of maintaining a balance between its Active and Reserve forces, but the extent to which this recognition has shaped decisions is unclear. The GAO found that the Air Force 1984 Airlift Total Force Plan called for some of each aircraft type and no more than 50 percent of any specific weapon system to be assigned to Reserve components. The GAO pointed out that, at that time, a large share of the Air Force's airlift capability was in the Reserve components. The GAO noted that the situation has not materially changed today--with 59 percent of the Air Force theater airlift capability in the Reserve components. According to the GAO, officials spoke with great confidence of the Air Force ability to meet nonmobilization contingencies with the Active Force, reinforced with Reservists who volunteer their services.

The GAO also found, however, the Air Force response to an Office of the Secretary of Defense draft study indicates that the Air Force may, in fact, have some concerns about its dependence on Reservists for nonmobilization contingencies. The GAO indicated that the Conference Report to the FY 1989 Defense authorization legislation directed that the DoD determine how the Air Force could achieve savings by moving more aircraft into the Reserve components. The GAO noted that the DoD draft study proposed various options to transfer forces to the Reserve components and to close Air Force bases. The GAO obtained a copy of a February 1989 memo from the then Acting Secretary of the Air Force to the Secretary of Defense, which expressed strong concern about the study approach and cited perceived shortcomings of the report--

assessments of a recruiting base to support the unit within a specific geographical area.

FINDING K: DoD Efforts To Develop Force Mix Policy. The GAO observed that, since 1983, the DoD has worked to develop coordinated policy guidance dealing with the issue of the Total Force and force mix decision-making. The GAO pointed out that, while a draft policy was issued for formal comment in March 1989, there is still some uncertainty about when the policy will be finalized and fully implemented.

The GAO explained that, in a January 1983 memo, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics noted that there was a problem in total force mix policy and criteria to help with decisions on force mix. The GAO also emphasized that congressional and DoD focus on force mix issues in 1983 and 1984 encouraged the Air Force and the Navy to specify some force mix criteria and to examine missions that might be assigned to reserve forces. The GAO found, however, that little was done within the individual Services or within the DoD to establish criteria or policy guidance to govern future decision-making. According to the GAO, the DoD neither elaborated on its Total Force Policy nor provided additional guidance concerning how force mix decisions should be made. In addition, the GAO advised that separate force mix guidance is also not provided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The GAO noted that, in a prior report ^{1/}, it recommended that the Department take steps to ensure the timely development of guidance on making force mix and mission assignment decisions to ensure the consistent consideration of relevant factors pertaining to these decisions. The GAO stated that, in March 1989, the Department issued its draft policy document--which outlines roles and responsibilities of various DoD offices under the Total Force concept. The GAO found, however, that while the draft policy does not, itself, provide guidance for force mix decision-making, it does call for developing standard procedures and criteria for allocating and evaluating the Active and Reserve mix of military personnel.

The GAO concluded that overall criteria for making force mix decisions are mostly informal, arising within the context of broader Service decision-making--which, due to its nature, is not likely to be well documented. The GAO further

^{1/} GAO/NSIAD-89-27, "RESERVE COMPONENTS: Opportunities to Improve National Guard and Reserve Policies and Programs," dated November 17, 1988 (OSD Case 7628)

FINDING I: Navy Force Mix Criteria Identified but Not Easily Tracked. The GAO explained that, while the Navy has identified some criteria used in force mix decision-making, the extent to which these criteria are followed is not totally clear. The GAO found that the availability of Reservists seems to be gaining in importance as a factor in force mix decisions--but the extent to which this new emphasis will result in changes in strategy is not yet clear.

The GAO noted that some Navy-developed criteria applicable to the availability of Reserve Forces had recently gained in importance. The GAO pointed out that, although the Navy's reliance on its Reserve Forces has grown some in recent years, the Navy has historically relied less on its Reserves than most of the other Services. The GAO explained that the Navy's basis for this practice is its maritime strategy, which stresses the extended forward deployment of a major portion of its fleet--with both ships and aircraft requiring primarily a full-time, readily available force. The GAO concluded that this strategy has limited the increase in the role of the Navy Reserves.

The GAO identified Navy documents that indicate that force mix decisions focus on the interrelated criteria of readiness, demographics, and cost. The GAO explained that readiness depends on distribution of resources to ensure that transfers within the total force will not cause overall readiness to decline. The GAO learned that demographic considerations related to the availability, quality, and quantity of reservists at the places and times they will be needed. The GAO described the cost consideration as including the recognition that savings in transferring functions to the Reserve vary and do not automatically occur in the short term. The GAO further stated that savings may not be as great as anticipated due to added costs associated with the transfer--such as (1) the construction of new facilities, (2) the increase of shore maintenance support, and (3) high full-time manning requirements.

The GAO concluded that, while the Navy cites some general criteria governing force mix decisions, it is difficult to see how well these criteria are followed. (pp. 3-6, pp. 40-42, p. 46/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Concur. The Navy has established general criteria for making force mix decisions. However, the complexity of the decision process still makes it difficult to reconstruct past decisions on a step-by-step basis. The criteria and the force mix decision logic have been explained

See pp. 30-31.

and congressional interest in force mix issues fostered efforts within the Air Force to define criteria applicable to force mix decisions. The GAO found that, as a result of that effort, several documents prepared during that time described factors important to force mix decisions. The GAO pointed out, however, that the criteria were not given any degree of permanence--they were not incorporated into a regulation or circular and, generally, these criteria were not known to Air Force officials interviewed during the review.

The GAO observed that one of the most authoritative Air Force sources of force mix criteria was a paper on the Active/Reserve force mix developed in 1984, at the request of the Chief of Staff--as part of a plan to request increases in active end strength in FY 1985. The GAO described the factors cited in the 1984 Air Force criteria affecting the use of Reserve components as including the following:

- determining whether functions required full- or part-time personnel;
- deciding whether demographic factors were conducive to recruiting Reservists;
- attempting to recruit 70 percent of Reservists from a pool of previously trained and experienced Active Duty personnel; and
- determining whether the activities needed to be performed exclusively overseas or involved extensive temporary duty that could be supported by rotation plans divided among several units.

According to the GAO, the paper went on to cite factors affecting the responsibilities of the Active Force, thus also impacting on the Reserve components. The paper noted, for example, that the previous Air Force emphasis on implementing the Total Force policy and the large number of mission transfers to the Air Force Reserve components during the post-Vietnam reductions had now left minor adjustments to be made in major mission areas.

The GAO explained that, in September 1984, the Air Force published what it termed a "Total Force Plan" for its airlift mission area. The GAO noted that this plan detailed a long-term effort to transfer aircraft to Reserve components and described how the Air Force had arrived at its force mix decisions in this area. The GAO stated that the airlift Total Force Plan stated that no single criterion was

Appendix III
Comments From the Department of Defense

See pp. 4 and 23.

during its programming and budgeting cycles. The GAO found that reviews of force structure and manning issues are conducted by various committees as part of the Department of the Navy's program planning and budgeting system process--and it is from these deliberations that recommendations are submitted to the Marine Corps Commandant. The GAO explained the force mix changes are based on the reevaluations of the force structure with due consideration of (1) the threat, (2) the war-fighting tactics, (3) the force modernization, and (4) the proposed funding levels. (pp. 3-6. pp. 31-33/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Concur. It should be pointed out that the evaluation of the threat includes a determination of the type and number of units required by the warfighting Commanders in Chief. That is true for all the Services, not just the Marine Corps.

FINDING G: Circumstances Determine the Importance of Particular Criteria in Army Decision-Making. The GAO found that the Army cited the situational nature of force mix decisions and applicable criteria, although little was written on the subject. According to the GAO, the Army did provide insight into factors considered important to decisions affecting new or increased mission assignments to National Guard and Reserve components. The GAO identified these factors, as follows:

- whether Reserve components are interested in the mission;
- whether the mission is already in the Reserves;
- what personnel strength projections and trends indicate;
- whether the geographic locations required for Reserve units would affect the recruitment of persons for the mission;
- what degree of readiness and quickness of deployment are required;
- how personnel projections and trends affect Reservist training and skill qualifications levels;
- what equipment distribution and future deliveries are planned;

FINDING D: Congressional Interest Prompts the Air Force to Increase the Role of the Reserves. The GAO observed that the forum through which changes to the mix of Active and Reserve forces are formally considered within the Air Force is its corporate review body, the "Air Force Board Structure." The GAO describes this body as a forum through which senior Air Force officials apply their collective judgement and experience to major programs, objectives, and problems--and provide the decision-making framework for the Air Force planning, programming, and budgeting system.

The GAO pointed out that the number of Reserve unit activations and conversions has been relatively stable in the Air Force, compared with the number occurring in the Army. The GAO found that, since the Air Force structure is primarily made up of wings of limited types of equipment (such as C-130 aircraft), rather than troop units (as in the Army), force mix decisions in the Air Force focus as much on the modernization and transfer of equipment to the Reserve components as they do on adding to or changing the basic missions of Reserve units.

The GAO explained that congressional interest in increasing the role of Air Force Reservists has encouraged the Air Force to look at ways to expand the roles of the Reserves. According to the GAO, there was considerable congressional interest in Air Force Active/Reserve Force mix issues during FY 1983 and FY 1984. The GAO explained that this interest has fostered some broad efforts by the Air Force to identify missions or systems that could be transferred to the Reserve components. The GAO concluded, however, that the Air Force force mix changes are considered on an ad hoc basis and that they are secondary to regular force structure decisions. (pp. 3-6, pp. 27-29/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Partially concur. Just as with the Total Army Analysis process, the Air Force has integrated the force mix determination process into its force development process--i.e., the Air Force Board Structure. The Air Force Board Structure provides systematic, ongoing review of the Air Force ability to meet both peacetime and wartime requirements with all forces available regardless of which component the forces belong to (Active, Guard, Reserve).

FINDING E: The Navy Responds to Congressional Concern in Balancing the Growth of Active and Reserve Forces. The GAO found that Navy force mix decisions are made within its planning, programming, and budgeting process. According to

See pp. 20-21.

According to the GAO, the Marine Corps has the smallest Reserve component, with a FY 1988 end strength equal only to 6 percent of the Army's Selected Reserve. The GAO indicated that the Marine Corps Selected Reserve now equals 18 percent of its total force--up 2 percent from FY 1980. The GAO pointed out that the Marine Corps Selected Reserve grew by about 8,000 personnel during FY 1980 to FY 1988, slightly less than the growth of the active Marine Corps. The GAO learned that, in recent years, this growth in the Corps' Reserve component has resulted in some increased mission assignments and some additional Reserve units--but no significant shifts in reliance on the Reserve for mission capabilities. (pp. 2-3, pp. 13-21/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Concur. The term Air Force Reserve Components should be properly addressed as the Air Reserve Component, which is made up of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. Additionally, growth in the Naval Reserve has not been solely related to the expansion to a 600-ship fleet. Increases can also be attributed to (1) mobilization requirements directed by Defense Guidance to support the Commanders in Chief's warplans, (2) budget decisions, and (3) congressional direction.

FINDING C: The Army's Increased Reliance on the Reserves Is Influenced by a Capped Active End Strength. The GAO explained that changes to the Army's force structure occur through an elaborate process known as the "Total Army Analysis." The GAO observed that, within that process, incremental adjustments are made to Reserve component roles and mission as by-products of structuring the Active Force. The GAO learned that Force Program Reviews, conducted biennially as part of the analysis process, provide the basis for cyclically reexamining the numbers and types of forces needed to support the Army's combat forces. The GAO pointed out that, although final decisions are made by the Army Chief of Staff, the review process leading to these decisions involves many organizations, hundreds of persons, and thousands of staff-hours.

The GAO explained that, while Force Program Reviews can identify excess personnel spaces in some areas and the need for personnel spaces in others, these reviews usually show a greater need for manpower than is available. Therefore, the GAO noted that tradeoffs are made by shifting units, capabilities, and manning among the Active Forces or between the Active and Reserve components--and sometimes result in decisions to leave some requirements unresourced.

See pp. 2 and 9-15.

Appendix III
Comments From the Department of Defense

GAO DRAFT REPORT - DATED AUGUST 25, 1989
(GAO CODE 393320) OSD CASE 8108

"RESERVE FORCE: DOD GUIDANCE NEEDED ON ASSIGNING ROLES TO
RESERVES UNDER THE TOTAL FORCE POLICY"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS

* * * * *

FINDINGS

FINDING A: Mobilization Authority/Constraint. The GAO observed that the planning scenario in the Defense guidance for making force structure decisions presumes the mobilization of Reserves. The GAO explained that the most readily available authority for such mobilization is found in 10 U.S.C. 673b, which authorizes the President to activate up to 200,000 Selected Reservists for up to 90 days, with a permissible extension for an additional 90 days. The GAO noted that other legislation also provides the President with authority to call up the Reserves to meet domestic and military emergencies.

The GAO pointed out that, despite this mobilization authority, the United States has been historically reluctant to activate its Reserve units for military operations under its mobilization authority for fear of adverse domestic reaction and/or giving a stronger-than-intended signal internationally of impending military action. The GAO concluded that the continuing absence of Reserve call-ups reinforces the public's perception of their use as a measure of last resort despite the Total Force Policy. (pp. 2-3, pp. 11-13/GAO Draft Report)

DoD POSITION: Partially concur. The law cited is for Presidential 200K Selected Call-Up Authority; this authority is not considered a mobilization authority. The statute was intended to provide accessibility to Reserve Forces without mobilization, thus allowing forces not required for routine peacetime purposes to be placed in the Reserves. Further, Service Secretaries have the authority to voluntarily or involuntarily recall Reservists. Rather than being seen as a measure of last resort, whose impact may be seen as sending a stronger than intended signal, the deliberate activation of the Reserve Forces intentionally demonstrates national resolve and determination.

Enclosure

See pp. 2 and 9.

Comments From the Department of Defense

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



FORCE MANAGEMENT
AND PERSONNEL

THE OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-4000

OCT 16 1989

Mr. Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General
National Security and International Affairs Division
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This letter is the DoD response to the GAO draft report entitled "RESERVE FORCES: DoD Guidance Needed on Assigning Roles to Reserves Under The Total Force Policy" (GAO Code 393320, OSD Case 8108), dated August 25, 1989. The Department generally concurs with the report.

The Department agrees that more definitive guidance is required from the Office of the Secretary of Defense on the assignment of roles to the Reserve Components. As the report correctly points out, the Department is in the process of formulating such guidance. The formulation and dissemination of this guidance is a very detailed and lengthy process, complicated by the varied nature of the Services and the wartime missions they perform.

The Department does, however, take exception to the generalizations made about the existence and adequacy of Service criteria used in making force mix decisions. The report would lead one to conclude that assignment of missions and roles to the Reserve Forces is made after the Active Force is developed and resourced, primarily as a result of the lack of clear and documented decision criteria. In reality, the difficulty the GAO investigators encountered in trying to identify the force mix criteria is indicative of the extent to which these criteria are embedded throughout the entire force development process. Regardless of the branch of Service surveyed, each has a detailed force development process; the difficulty encountered with identifying force mix criteria varies among the Services. Admittedly, the formulation of detailed Department and Service guidance will allow for a more detailed and rigorous review of these decisions. It is unclear, however, whether force mix decisions will be significantly different.

See comment 1.

National Mobilization Authority

The Congress has authorized several mobilization categories for calling reserve units and individuals to active duty, expanding the active force, and meeting domestic and military emergencies. These mobilization categories include

- “selected mobilization,” activating reservists to meet the requirements of domestic emergencies that are not the result of an enemy attack;
- “partial mobilization,” activating up to a million reservists under presidential authority, or more than a million by congressional action, to meet the requirements of war or other national emergencies involving an external threat to the national security;
- “full mobilization,” involving the activation of all reservists to meet requirements for wartime or national emergency involving an external threat to national security; and
- “total mobilization,” involving an expansion of the active forces beyond those already in the active/reserve forces to meet wartime or national emergency needs involving an external threat to national security.

The Congress has also authorized the President to activate up to 200,000 reservists (commonly referred to as a “200-K call-up”) to meet operational requirements, subject to congressional reporting within 24 hours on the circumstances surrounding the call-up and anticipated use of the forces. This call-up is limited to an initial 90 days with a permissible extension for an additional 90 days.

Each type of mobilization is predicated on action initiated by the President or the Congress or both. Presidential action involves proclaiming a national emergency and issuing an Executive Order, except in the case of a 200-K call-up, which does not require the proclamation of a national emergency. Congressional action involves either a Joint Resolution of the Congress or the passage of a public law declaring war or a national emergency. Table I.1 summarizes these types of mobilization.

Table I.1: Mobilization Categories

Type	Contingency	Duration	Authority
Selected	Domestic	Open	10 U.S.C. 331, 332, 333, 3500, and 8500
Presidential 200-K Call-Up	Military	90 days	10 U.S.C. 673b
Partial	Military	24 months	10 U.S.C. 673a
Full	Military	Extended	10 U.S.C. 672
Total	Military	Extended	10 U.S.C. 672

Marine Expeditionary Forces¹¹ to be committed to a conflict without having to mobilize its reserve.

While the Marine Corps hopes to be capable of quickly responding to contingencies without using its Reserve, its dependence on the Navy for certain functions could impede its ability to meet this goal. The goal of being able to commit two Marine Expeditionary Forces to battle without using the Marine Reserve could require the use of the Naval Reserve to meet associated amphibious shipping requirements. The Navy Support Element, vital to the smooth off-loading of the amphibious force, is largely in the Naval Reserve. The ability to deploy two Marine Expeditionary forces simultaneously could require active and reserve amphibious ships unless the Maritime prepositioned force is used. Marine Corps officials told us that they rely on the Navy's promise to have the support available when needed. Increased OSD involvement in providing guidance and oversight could be important to ensuring that limitations in the capabilities of one service do not adversely affect the operational requirements of another and in prompting any needed adjustments in force structure, based on periodic reassessment of the mix of active and reserve forces.

DOD Recognizes the Importance of Planning for Non-Mobilization Contingencies

In its project to develop guidance to assist in force mix decision-making, DOD has recognized the importance of planning for non-mobilization contingencies. In this regard, its draft Total Force Policy calls for force planners to consider various levels of conflict in non-mobilization contingencies and varying degrees of reserve activation. It also calls for the comprehensive review every 4 years of the degree of reliance on reserve forces.

Conclusions

The issue of reserve force availability should be a fundamental pillar of force mix decision-making—not to be used unilaterally to reject the increased reliance on reserve forces—but to make balanced decisions considering threat, risk, and capabilities needed for contingencies in which reserve call-up or mobilization may be delayed or does not occur. The importance of Defense guidance to ensure uniform and balanced

¹¹ A Marine Expeditionary Force may range in size from less than one division to multiple infantry divisions and air wings, together with an appropriate combat service-support organization. It is capable of conducting a wide range of expeditionary operations and sustained operations ashore. This force can also be tailored to a wide variety of combat missions, including full-scale amphibious assaults in any geographic environment.

Chapter 4
Periodic Review of Force Mix Needed to
Assess the Effects of Cumulative Changes on
War-Fighting Capabilities

without reserve mobilization. The Navy's 1984 Total Force report cautions about increased reliance on the Reserve and notes that "[t]he Navy cannot use its Reserve without mobilization in substantial numbers to support the strategy of forward deployment because two weeks active duty [annual training requirement] are insufficient to sustain long cruises...."⁶ In 1984, the Navy already had large percentages of certain capabilities in its Reserve, including the operation of 86 percent of its minesweeping vessels, and was planning to add more. Yet the 1984 Total Force report also noted that

"[t]he past several years have seen a dramatic rise in worldwide mine warfare threats. The few remaining active mine warfare units have been ready to deploy on short notice during this last year to react quickly should irresponsible, terrorist-oriented countries carry out threats to mine international waterways such as the Straits of Hormuz."⁷

Concerns about the availability of the reserves were realized in 1987 when minesweeper ships were needed for Persian Gulf operations and only two were available for deployment from the active force. Five were sent from the Naval Reserve, but they were 90-percent manned by active duty personnel. Since that time the Navy seems to have become more concerned about placing mission capabilities largely in its reserves. The Navy's fiscal year 1989 Total Force report notes that

"[a] vexing problem facing Navy planners is that of so-called 'mission exclusivity,' when all or almost all of a particular capability resides in the Naval Reserve. Examples are: (1) Combat Search and Rescue (helicopter), (2) U.S.-based Fleet Logistic Support. . . squadrons, (3) Naval Control of Shipping and (4) Mine Warfare ships. Although these capabilities may not be required in peacetime and could be sourced by Naval Reserve personnel, crisis and non-mobilization contingencies could require these capabilities on short notice. The nub of the issue is: 'How available is a certain capability to fleet commanders?'"⁸

The report goes on to state that three main factors must be considered: (1) the deployability of Naval Reserve units, (2) the interoperability of equipment, and (3) the peacetime availability of the Naval Reserve without a presidential call-up. It notes that crew integrity and some level of readiness are lost if members who have been operating and training together are replaced.

⁶A Report to the Congress on the Navy's Total Force, February 1984, p. II-6.

⁷A Report to the Congress on the Navy's Total Force, February 1984, p. II-12.

⁸A Report on the Navy's Total Force, FY 90, p. 6-3.

The importance of periodically examining the cumulative impact of force mix decisions is highlighted by a recent study mandated by the Army Chief of Staff. In January 1989, the Chief of Staff directed that a study be undertaken to determine whether a three-to-five-division contingency could be supported without calling up the reserves. The study found that such a contingency could be supported without reserves but that it would require a redeployment of forces from other areas. An Army official told us that the Army's recent study showed how close to the margin the Army is in relying on its reserve forces.

While Army officials told us that they did not think such an assessment had been made before, a DOD report to the Senate Committee on Appropriations on the Total Force in 1983 noted that "[i]f the Army had to deploy more than one active division to a conflict, it would need many Army Reserve and Guard units to support those divisions unless it chose to accept the risk of drawing down its support forces in other theaters."¹ The report also noted that the active force should maintain most force capabilities that are needed in peacetime or in contingencies that might not justify mobilization. Any force structure reductions that entailed an increased reliance on the reserves would need to consider to what extent this situation might be exacerbated.

The Extent of Air Force Capabilities in Non-Mobilization Contingencies Is Unclear

In some mission assignments, the Air Force seems to have recognized the importance of maintaining a balance between its active and reserve forces, but the extent to which this recognition has shaped decisions is unclear. For example, the Air Force's 1984 Airlift Total Force Plan called for some of each aircraft type and no more than 50 percent of any specific weapon system to be assigned to reserve components.² At that time, a large share of the Air Force's airlift capability was in the reserve components. This situation has not materially changed today, with 59 percent of the Air Force's theater airlift capability in the reserve components. An Air Force official attributed this reliance on reserve components to congressional pressures.

On one hand, Air Force officials spoke to us with great confidence of their ability to meet non-mobilization contingencies with the active force reinforced with reservists who volunteer their services. However, the

¹A Department of Defense Report to the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, The Guard, Reserve and Active Components of the Total Force, June 30, 1983, p. 26.

²USAF Airlift Total Force Plan, The Active/Air Reserve Force Mix, September 17, 1984.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD suggested that we clarify our descriptions of force mix criteria used by individual services. It suggested that our conclusion that force mix decisions in the Army represent efforts to minimize the negative consequences of making needed force structure changes is incomplete: it must be recognized that the Army seeks to maximize support to war-fighting commanders-in-chief within recognized constraints. We agree and have modified our report to more clearly present this perspective.

DOD also noted that the Acting Secretary of the Air Force had approved criteria in April 1989 for use during force structure deliberations. We have some concern, however, that these current criteria, as with previously written Air Force criteria, may not be widely disseminated or used over time unless they are given permanent status, by being codified in the form of a policy directive or by being incorporated into a handbook to be used by those participating in the board structure. This concern is reinforced by the fact that, despite several contacts with cognizant Air Force officials between April and August 1989, we were not made aware of the new criteria until they were provided in September in response to our draft report. DOD concurred with our description of Navy criteria but noted that the complexity of the decision process makes it difficult to reconstruct past decisions step by step.

DOD generally concurred with our comments regarding Marine Corps criteria but expressed some concern that our treatment of the Corps' decision-making process and criteria might be interpreted as saying that the process is less extensive than it actually is. After our initial contacts, Marine Corps officials provided us with additional information reflecting a more substantive force structure decision-making process and criteria than we had previously been provided. We made appropriate revisions to reflect this information.

DOD also provided updated information concerning the status of its draft Total Force Policy directive, most recently revised in August 1989. This updated information is reflected in our revised report.

The Corps commandant's recent emphasis on being able to conduct operations across a low to medium intensity spectrum of conflict, where reserves may not be available, recognizes an important principle of force structure decision-making. This principle is discussed further in chapter 4.

DOD Efforts to Develop Force Mix Policy

DOD has worked since 1983 to develop coordinated policy guidance dealing with the issue of the Total Force and force mix decision-making. While a draft policy was issued for formal comment in March 1989, there is still some uncertainty about when the policy will be finalized and fully implemented.

In a January 1983 memo, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics noted that

"[d]uring this year's program review it became obvious to me that this Administration has inherited a Total Force mix of military units without an overall policy or plan for improving that mix. Moreover, we don't seem to have even a good list of criteria to help with the decisions on whether newly needed units should be activated in the Guard, Reserve or active force...."

During this time, DOD also recognized that to inactivate a unit, perhaps even more criteria would need to be considered.

Congressional and DOD focus on force mix issues in 1983 and 1984 encouraged the Air Force and the Navy to specify some force mix criteria and to examine missions that might be assigned to reserve forces. Little was done, however, within individual services or within DOD to establish criteria or policy guidance to govern future decision-making. DOD neither elaborated on its Total Force Policy nor provided additional guidance concerning how force mix decisions should be made. Separate force mix guidance is not provided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

We recommended in our November 1988 report on reserve components that the Secretary of Defense take steps to ensure the timely development of guidance on making force mix and mission assignment decisions to ensure the consistent consideration of relevant factors pertaining to these decisions.³ We said that, at a minimum, the guidance should address such factors as cost, capability, personnel, training, and equipment requirements.

³See *Reserve Components: Opportunities to Improve National Guard and Reserve Policies and Programs* (GAO/NSIAD 89-27 Nov. 17, 1988).

targeted for a cut. The Air Force met with strong congressional opposition to its plan and was directed to restore the aircraft to the reserve squadrons.

Navy Force Mix Criteria Identified but Not Easily Tracked

While the Navy has identified some criteria used in force mix decision-making, the extent to which these criteria are followed is not totally clear. The availability of reservists seems to be gaining in importance as a factor in force mix decisions, but the extent to which this new emphasis will result in changes in strategy is not yet clear.

The Navy's Total Force Reports outline factors important to force structure decisions affecting the Naval Reserve; discussions with Navy officials provided us with additional perspective. However, given the iterative nature of the decision-making process and the absence or unavailability of decision-making documents, we were unable to fully assess the application of these criteria. At the same time, we found that some Navy-developed criteria applicable to the availability of reserve forces had recently gained in importance.

Although the Navy's reliance on its reserve forces has grown some in recent years, the Navy has historically relied less on its reserves than most other services. The Navy's basis for this practice is its maritime strategy, which stresses the extended forward deployment of a major portion of its fleet, both ships and aircraft requiring primarily a full-time, readily available force. This strategy has limited the increase in the role of the reserves.

Navy documents indicate that force mix decisions focus on the interrelated criteria of readiness, demographics, and cost. Resources must be distributed in a way that ensures that transfers within the total force will not cause overall readiness to decline. Demographic considerations relate to the availability, quality, and quantity of reservists at the places and times they will be needed. According to the Navy, a consideration of cost includes the recognition that savings in transferring functions to the Reserve vary and do not automatically occur. Also, savings may not be as great as anticipated due to added costs associated with the transfer, such as the construction of new facilities, the increase of shore maintenance support, and high full-time manning requirements. Between 55 and 65 percent of the manning of reserve ships during peacetime consists of full-time personnel, who are drawn about equally from the active and reserve components.

Chapter 3
Force Mix Decisions and Recent Budget Cuts
Show a Lack of Consensus on Criteria
for Decision-Making

- determining whether the activities needed to be performed exclusively overseas or involved extensive temporary duty that could be supported by rotation plans divided among several units.

This paper went on to cite factors affecting the responsibilities of the active force, thus also affecting the reserve components. Some of the factors included

- maintaining a sufficient pool of active-duty servicemen in the United States to provide an adequate rotation base for overseas assignments and
- ensuring that operational requirements could be accomplished with active-duty personnel, only requiring the use of reservists during their available training.

The paper noted that the Air Force's previous emphasis on implementing the Total Force Policy and the large number of mission transfers to the Air Force reserve components during the post-Vietnam reductions had now left minor adjustments to be made in major mission areas.

In September 1984, the Air Force published what it termed a "Total Force Plan" for its airlift mission area.¹ This plan detailed a long-term effort to transfer aircraft to reserve components and described how the Air Force had arrived at its force mix decisions in this area. This document cited a number of criteria similar to those noted above. It also pointed out that

- some of each aircraft type and no more than 50 percent of any specific weapon system would be assigned to Air Reserve force units,
- the current number of reserve units would not decrease,
- the readiness of all forces and the sustainment of the active force would be emphasized, and
- cost-effectiveness would be considered.

The Airlift Total Force Plan stated that no single criterion was absolute but that maintaining the readiness of all forces and sustaining the active force were of primary importance because readiness represented operational, or war-fighting, capability and force sustainment was necessary to maintain an adequate number of experienced people in both operational and managerial positions.

¹USAF Airlift Total Force Plan: The Active/Air Reserve Force Mix, September 17, 1984.

the extent of use and relative impact of each of these factors in force mix decision-making are unclear.

While we recognize that force mix decisions often involve trade-offs, actions to achieve higher priority force structure goals can have less-than-optimal effects on lesser priorities. One Army official described the force mix decision-making process as the seeking of a solution that will create the minimum adverse impact. Thus, some decisions can result, for example, in the assignment of missions with high training requirements to reserve components for which training time is limited. In recent congressional testimony, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Special Forces noted the inherent difficulties in training reservists for special operations. He suggested that future adjustments in the mix of active/reserve special operations forces may be needed.

Force mix decisions are also driven by the Army's preference for combat over support forces in the active component; the Army argues that combat provides greater deterrence than support capability. Further, force mix decisions are driven by Defense guidance, which specifies that an expansion of forces should occur in the reserve components unless active forces are needed for forward deployed/overseas stationing, rapid deployment, or the maintenance of an adequate rotation base to minimize the length of overseas tours of duty.

Curtailment of Growth in Reserve End Strength Requires Changes in Army's Planned Reserve Structure

In prior years, with growing defense budgets and continuing increases in budgeted reserve end strength, additional missions could be assigned to the reserve components with new requirements likely to be provided for in future budgets. However, with the more constrained budgets of recent years, planned growth has been significantly curtailed. At the time of our review, Army officials were faced with a reduced growth in reserve component end strength over the next several years that would cause them to fall some 37,000 manpower spaces below what the Army has already authorized for the reserve components between now and 1992. Thus, the Army, faced with the possibility that its reserve structure might not be manned to desired levels, established a special task force to study the problem and develop solutions. The solutions, scheduled to be implemented over the next several years, include delaying or canceling some unit activations and conversions, shifting priorities to add some units, and taking other requirements out of the reserve components and leaving them unresourced—such as requirements for equipment for

Chapter 2
Force Mix Decisions Occur Within the
Broader Context of Force Structure and
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not a by-product. We agree that mission assignments for reserve components are part of the broader force structure process. It is for that reason we stated that these force mix decisions are a by-product of that process rather than the principal focus of decision-making. Consequently, force mix decisions may not be periodically reexamined to assess cumulative changes over time and the impact on war-fighting capabilities in non-mobilized contingencies.

DOD stated that the Army's decision to concentrate combat capabilities in the active component was based on a belief in the more significant deterrent value of combat forces. However, it did not say that the Marine Corps forces have less deterrent value because of their emphasis on a greater balance between combat and support capabilities in both active and reserve forces.

The Navy Responds to Congressional Concern in Balancing the Growth of Active and Reserve Forces

Navy force mix decisions are also made within its planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS) process. The Navy's PPBS process involves an iterative review of war-fighting needs. A key ingredient in the Navy's initial programming efforts is a series of assessments and summary appraisals performed annually for key functional and warfare areas such as readiness and antisubmarine warfare. These appraisals include a review of force structure-related issues and problems on which decisions will be made shaping future force structure.

Appraisals of war-fighting needs provide basic building blocks in the programming and budgeting process. It is within this process that force mix changes are evaluated. The principal products derived from this process, according to a Navy official, are requirements for manpower in the active Navy and for full-time ship manning. Decisions to change reserve manning and the force mix thus become secondary.

Force mix changes, such as the increased reliance on the reserves, are described by the Navy as resulting primarily from fiscal constraints and ensuing congressional concern over the growth of the active force. With congressional emphasis on increasing the use of reserve forces, the Navy in 1983 established a study group that identified areas in which active duty functions could be transferred into the Reserves or new missions could be established for the Reserves. In addition, in 1984, the Chief of Naval Operations designated a flag-rank officer to serve not only as the Director of Plans but also as Total Force Advocate. As Total Force Advocate, he was to oversee a small staff established to evaluate force mix issues and provide related input to the Navy's PPBS process. His office, which is unique among the services, is also responsible for providing annual reports to the Congress on force mix issues.

The Total Force Advocate plays a role throughout the force programming process. In addition to presenting an appraisal of the Navy's Total Force and raising force mix issues that need to be addressed, he can advise mission area programmers in developing their program proposals. The Total Force Advocate does not make force mix decisions but rather participates in deliberations that may lead to changes.

to achieve the desired degree of readiness by the scheduled activation dates. The Army recently adopted a policy stating that a new unit must achieve a C3 readiness rating when activated.² Exceptions do occur, but they require approval by the Department of the Army.

Congressional Interest Prompts the Air Force to Increase the Role of the Reserves

The forum through which changes to the mix of active and reserve forces are formally considered within the Air Force is its corporate review body, the "Air Force Board Structure." The Air Force describes this body as a forum through which senior Air Force officials apply their collective judgment and experience to major programs, objectives, and problems and provide the decision-making framework for the Air Force planning, programming, and budgeting system.

The Board structure, resembling a pyramid, provides five levels, or tiers, of review. The bottom tier, which provides the starting point or initial review for force mix decisions, is supported by 15 mission area panels, generally chaired at the level of colonel. One such panel, for example, is the mobility panel. It is responsible for reviewing readiness, requirements, force structure, plans, and programs. It examines issues, plans, forces, programs, and technical proposals related to mobility. It is within this panel process that initial deliberations occur; program proposals developed by major Air Force commands are examined in accordance with budget guidance. Further discussions and judgments work their way up succeeding tiers of the board structure, with final decisions made at the level of the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff. From this process the Air Force derives the integrated program it uses in formulating its budget request. Officials with whom we spoke indicated that documentation of these proceedings was limited and that discussions within each level were closely held, even to persons within the service, in order to foster open communication among the participants.

The number of reserve unit activations and conversions has been relatively stable in the Air Force compared with the number occurring in the Army. Further, since the Air Force is primarily made up of "wings" centered around various types of equipment such as C-130 aircraft, rather than troop units (as in the Army), force mix decisions in the Air Force focus as much on the modernization and transfer of equipment to the

²A "C3" readiness rating indicates that the unit possesses the resources and has accomplished the training necessary to undertake major portions of the wartime mission for which it has been organized or designed.

Force Mix Decisions Occur Within the Broader Context of Force Structure and Budget Decision-Making

Force structure decisions affecting the reserve components are made within the broader context of service force structuring as part of the planning, programming, and budgeting processes. As such, decisions concerning reserve roles are by-products rather than the principal focus of these processes. Each service has its own approach to these processes, but they share certain common features regarding the way they make decisions affecting the reserve components. Decisions to increase the use of reserve forces are often driven by fiscal constraints along with congressional emphasis on the greater use of reserve forces.

The Army's Increased Reliance on the Reserves Is Influenced by a Capped Active End Strength

Changes to the Army's force structure occur through an elaborate process known as the "Total Army Analysis" (TAA). Within that process, incremental adjustments are made to reserve component roles and missions. Force Program Reviews, conducted biennially as part of the TAA process, provide the basis for cyclically reexamining the numbers and types of forces needed to support the Army's combat forces. Although final decisions are made by the Army Chief of Staff, the review process leading to these decisions involves many organizations, hundreds of persons, and thousands of staff-hours.

In conducting Force Program Reviews, the Army applies doctrinal criteria to identify how many and what types of units are needed to structure and support war-fighting units.¹ These reviews focus on requirements specific to a given theater of operation, changes in requirements due to modifications in doctrine, the introduction of new equipment, and so on. The reviews include an analytical process that makes use of computer warfare simulations to help identify force structure excesses or shortfalls. The process generates voluminous planning information that is used to diagram individual organizational requirements and to identify excess or additional manpower requirements. The results require qualitative assessments based on human judgment.

While Force Program Reviews can identify excess personnel spaces in some areas and the need for personnel spaces in others, these reviews usually show an overall greater need for manpower than is available. Thus, trade-offs are made by shifting units, capabilities, and manning among the active forces or between the active and reserve components. These trade-offs also result in decisions to leave some requirements unresourced.

¹"Military doctrine" is defined as the fundamental principles by which the military forces guide their actions in support of national objectives.

making processes, criteria, and other factors influencing the mix. We obtained and reviewed applicable Defense Department and service guidance, if available, pertaining to force mix and force structure decision-making, including drafts of DOD's Total Force Policy, which have been circulated for comment within DOD.

We interviewed knowledgeable officials within DOD and the services. Within DOD, we interviewed officials of the Offices of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Force Management and Personnel, and Program Analysis and Evaluation. We also interviewed officials at several Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps offices in Washington, D.C. These offices included the Army's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans and the Office of the Chief of the Army Reserve. We visited the National Guard Bureau and spoke with both Army and Air National Guard officials. Also, we visited the Air Force's Office of the Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Programs and Resources, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations, and the Office of the Air Force Reserve. Within the Navy we contacted Offices of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Naval, Warfare, Navy Program Planning, and Plans Policy and Operations); the Office of the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations, Surface Warfare; the Center for Naval Analysis; and the Office of the Director of Naval Reserve. We contacted the Marine Corps Offices of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Plans, Policies and Operations; for Requirements and Programs; and for Reserve Affairs.

Because of the limited available documentation upon which to base an independent assessment of force mix decision-making and criteria, we had to rely heavily on interviews with cognizant agency officials for relevant information. Even then, we encountered some constraints due to limited institutional memory and the turnover of personnel due to normal rotations in military assignments.

Our review was conducted from September 1988 to April 1989 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

The Department of Defense provided written comments on a draft of this report. These comments are presented and evaluated in each chapter and are included in appendix III.

DOD generally concurred with our findings. It pointed out, however, that the 200-K presidential call-up authority is not considered "mobilization"

Marine Corps

The Marine Corps has the smallest of the services' reserve components, with a fiscal year 1988 end strength equal to only 6 percent of the Army's Selected Reserve. The Marine Corps Selected Reserve now equals 18 percent of its total force, up 2 percent from fiscal year 1980. The Corps' Selected Reserve grew by 8,000 personnel during fiscal years 1980 to 1988, slightly less than the growth of the active Marine Corps. This growth in the Corps' reserve component in recent years has generally not resulted in significant shifts in reliance on the reserve for mission capabilities.

The Corps has three active divisions along with three Marine Air Wings and associated support groups, as well as one reserve division. The reserve division accounts for 25 percent of the total ground combat Marine force structure. It provides the total Marine Corps force with one-third of the manpower and one-fourth of the organizational structure available upon mobilization. The Selected Reserve is designed to deploy as independent units or to augment cadre active units. For example, some active units, such as military police units, may only staff one platoon in each company in peacetime, relying on its reserve component to round them out if needed for operational purposes, upon mobilization.

The Marine Corps' reserve force structure generally mirrors the active force structure, as the Marine Corps has sought more of a balance in its combat and support capabilities between the active and reserve components than have other services. Therefore, the Marine Corps has ground, air, and support missions in its active and reserve components. Also, in contrast with the active Army, which is depending on reserve support for non-peacetime contingencies, the Marine Corps is much less dependent on its Reserve and is taking steps to be able to respond to low-intensity contingencies without having to rely on its reserve forces for needed capabilities.⁴

Missions assigned to the reserves generally range from 25 to 40 percent of the Corps' mission capabilities, although some mission capabilities do reach the 50- to 100-percent level. Table 1.5 shows the percentages of selected capabilities in the Marine Corps Reserve.

⁴The term "low-intensity conflict" generally refers to conflict that is confined to a geographic region and is often characterized by constraints on weapons, tactics, and levels of violence.

time that these aircraft were both flown and maintained entirely by reserve units. The Air Force Reserve and National Guard have seen their largest growth in the support areas, with the most dramatic increase occurring in communications, medical support, and civil engineering.

Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units, as part of the Total Force, also perform peacetime missions, such as airlift and air medical evacuations, as part of their reserve training. Further, the Air Force has a Reserve Associate Program, begun in 1968, in which Air Force airlift units are collocated with active airlift units. The reserve personnel work side by side with their active counterparts, sharing the active units' aircraft and maintenance facilities.

The reserve unit structure and missions have been relatively stable in the Air Force in recent years compared with the Army. While new units have been created in some support areas in recent years, more emphasis has been placed on upgrading and modernizing existing reserve units and expanding their roles within their existing missions. Further, since the Air Force's organizational structure primarily revolves around aircraft rather than personnel units (as in the Army), force mix decisions have had more to do with the modernization and transfer of equipment than with adding to or changing the basic missions of reserve units. For example, in the tactical air and strategic defense areas, there have been no new missions added, but the existing force is being modernized, with newer aircraft like the F-15s and F-16s replacing older aircraft like the F-4.

Navy

The Navy experienced much growth in both its active and reserve components between fiscal years 1980 and 1988, as it expanded toward its goal of a 600-ship fleet. The Naval Reserve currently comprises 20 percent of the total force. The Navy's reliance on its reserve force has grown in recent years. Yet, according to Navy officials, the Navy has historically had comparatively fewer reserves than the other services due to the proportionately greater forward deployment requirements of its maritime strategy.

While still a small part of the Navy's total force, the Naval Reserve grew by 54 percent, or 52,000 personnel, between fiscal years 1980 and 1988. During this time, the active force end strength grew by 76,000 personnel, or 15 percent. Through fiscal years 1989 and 1990, the end strength of the active force is expected to grow, while no growth is expected in the reserve force.

Army

The Army has increasingly relied on its reserve components for growth in its force structure. The Army's Selected Reserve components, which grew by 188,000 personnel from fiscal years 1980 through 1988, now equal the size of the active force. The number of Army combat divisions increased somewhat during the 1980s with the addition of two divisions in the active force and two in the National Guard. Increases in the number of active combat units were accomplished within the existing end strength by reorganizing, restructuring, and downsizing existing units; moving some support capabilities out of combat units and locating them at other organizational levels; and increasing reliance on reserve components. The Army National Guard provides a significant combat capability, while the Army Reserve contains much of the Army's combat-support and combat service-support capability.⁵ Together, the Army's two reserve components provide one-half of the Army's combat and about two-thirds of the Army's support capabilities. Table 1.2, shows examples of specific unit capabilities that are found largely or exclusively in the reserve components.

Table 1.2: Examples of Army Capabilities in the Reserve Components

Unit type	Percentage of total Army capability in reserves		
	Army Reserve	National Guard	Total
Infantry scout groups	0	100	100
TOW light antitank infantry battalions	0	100	100
Heavy lift helicopter companies	0	100	100
Psychological operations units	87	0	87
Heavy equipment maintenance companies	10	76	86
Petroleum, oil, and lubricant companies	59	18	77
Engineer battalions (combat)	25	52	77
Conventional ammunition supply companies	43	18	61
Special operations forces	25	25	50

Source: Fiscal Year 1988 Annual Report From the Reserve Forces Policy Board. Data is as of September 30, 1988.

It is important to note that, while some support capabilities are maintained in active component divisions to sustain peacetime operations, these capabilities are inadequate for large-scale or extended operations.

⁵"Combat support" refers to fire support and operational assistance such as artillery and combat engineering. "Combat-service support" refers principally to logistics and administrative support such as supply, transportation, and finance.

Introduction

The early 1970s marked the end of the draft and the beginning of the All Volunteer Force. At that time the Department of Defense (DOD) adopted the “Total Force Policy” under which active and reserve forces are considered a homogenous whole. Early policy statements on the subject indicate that the National Guard and Reserve units were expected to be the initial and primary source used to augment the active forces in any emergency requiring a rapid and substantial expansion of active forces under mobilization authority.¹ Despite an historical reluctance on the part of the United States to call up reserve components, the extent to which some mission capabilities have been assigned to reserve units since the adoption of this policy has increased the likelihood that the reserves could be essential to meeting future operational requirements, not just a force to be held in reserve or used for augmenting active forces. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs stated in March 1988 congressional testimony that

“Under the Total Force Policy, we are increasingly basing the national security interests of our nation on our ability to rapidly mobilize, deploy, and employ combat ready Reserve component units and members anywhere in the world. Today, many of our military contingency plans simply cannot be executed effectively without committing National Guard and Reserve Forces in the same time frame as our Active Forces.”

Decisions concerning the mix of active and reserve units that will comprise a service’s force structure have been made against the backdrop of that policy.² The reserve forces of most services have expanded greatly in recent years with only general guidance from DOD governing that expansion. DOD’s general guidelines are provided in force planning guidance, which specifies that the expansion of force structure should occur in the reserve components unless increases are needed in the active components to station forces overseas, to rapidly deploy them, or to maintain an adequate rotation base—that is, a pool of U.S.-based personnel who can, through periodic overseas tours of duty, minimize the length of individual assignments.

¹Legislation defines presidential authority to mobilize forces and limitations on when, how many, and for how long reservists may be activated to expand the active force. See appendix I for a summary of this mobilization authority.

²“Force structure” refers to the numbers and sizes of units comprising the defense forces, e.g., divisions, ships, and air wings.

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resourced units provide a basic structure that is easy to expand upon in time of need. Also, the Marine Corps' philosophy is different from the Army's in that the Marine Corps relies less heavily on its reserves for support capability. While the Army has placed a major portion of its support capabilities in its reserves, the Marine Corps has more of a balance between combat and support forces in its active and reserve components and is seeking to become even less dependent on its reserves for support. At the same time, the Marine Corps is dependent on the Navy and the Naval Reserve for deployment capability.

Periodic Review of Reserve Component Missions Needed

Department of Defense and service officials all describe force mix decision-making as occurring within the context of broader force structure and budget decision-making. Changes take place over several years with marginal rather than wholesale changes to force structure at any one time. Thus, periodic assessments of cumulative changes in the use of reserve components are warranted, with guidance from and oversight by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

The Army, the Air Force, and the Navy all have varying mission capabilities largely or exclusively in their reserve components. Some examples include the Army's infantry scout groups, heavy lift helicopter companies, and ammunition supply companies; the Navy's minesweeping ships and its combat search and rescue squadrons; and the Air Force's aeromedical evacuation crews and aerial port cargo handling personnel.

Problems resulting from the Navy's assignment of its minesweepers to the Naval Reserve are largely responsible for the increased focus on the issue of reserve availability. Navy minesweepers, which were placed primarily in the Reserve, were presumed to be needed only after mobilization. However, when they were needed in the Persian Gulf in 1987, reserve call-up did not occur, and the ships had to be deployed largely with active duty personnel taken from other assignments. The Navy seems concerned about this situation, and the other services have also recently given some increased attention to the issue of reserve availability. The Army recently examined its ability to function without its reserves. It found that it could support three to five active divisions for an operational contingency without reserves but that it would require a redeployment of forces from other assigned areas. An Army official told GAO that the Army's study showed how close to the margin the Army is in relying on its reserve forces. GAO believes that the issue of the

Executive Summary

Purpose

The reserve components of the U.S. military services are expected to play major operational roles should large-scale conflict or war break out.¹ The part-time nature of reserve forces makes it imperative that assigned missions be well suited to them, considering that the reserves are not as readily available and do not have as much time to train as the active forces. In the currently constrained budget environment, options that shift more missions into the reserves are likely to be considered. GAO identified force mix decision-making problems in a recent report on reserve component policies and programs² and, at the request of the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel and Compensation, House Committee on Armed Services, conducted this follow-up review to focus on what decision-making processes and criteria were followed by individual military services in assigning missions to reserve components, whether these processes were sufficiently thorough, and whether any improvements were needed.

Background

The Total Force Policy initiated in the early 1970s, with the end of the military draft, views active and reserve forces as a singular fighting force. Since that time, the reserve forces of most services have grown and assumed increasingly greater responsibilities as part of the total U.S. military forces. Many reserve forces are tasked to deploy with or soon after early deploying active forces in wartime to provide needed combat and combat support.

More importantly, each of the services has important mission capabilities largely or exclusively in its reserve components. The extent to which some mission capabilities have been assigned to reserve forces since the adoption of the Total Force Policy has made the reserves integral to future war-fighting efforts, not just a force to be held in reserve or used for augmenting active forces. The reserves have become essential to meeting future operational requirements despite an historical reluctance on the part of the United States to mobilize reserve units for military operations.

¹This report focuses on the "Selected Reserve," which generally refers to individuals who are assigned to organized National Guard and Reserve units and engage in monthly and yearly paid training.

²See Reserve Components: Opportunities to Improve National Guard and Reserve Policies and Programs (GAO/NSIAD 89-27, Nov. 17, 1988).

