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*“ . . . More important even than the size of the navy is the question of its institutions, favoring a healthful spirit and activity, and providing for rapid development in time of war by an adequate reserve of men and of ships and by measures for drawing out that general reserve power . . . ” – CAPT A. T. Mahan, USN, *The Influence Of Seapower Upon History*, 1889.*

When reading to prepare for my upcoming Strategy & Policy course at the U.S. Naval War College, I could not help but become captivated by these intriguing words, written more than a quarter of a century ago, even before the official establishment of our Naval Reserve. CAPT Mahan was discussing the character of a government, as one of the elements of a nation's sea power, which influenced the sea career of its people. *Naval Power 21 . . . A Naval Vision*, as signed by the Secretary of the Navy, the CNO, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps in October 2002, further stated, “. . . Ready, rapidly responsive Reserve forces will continue to be a vital part of the Navy-Marine Corps Team and provide unique capabilities, depth, flexibility, and sustainment . . . ”

Both classical strategic thought and contemporary doctrinal guidance agree on the need to maintain a reserve force, healthy, responsive, and capable, both in men and materials, to protect our nation's maritime interests and security. Nevertheless, we've witnessed a continuing drawdown of the end strength of our Naval Reserve Force to roughly half of what it used to be a decade and a half ago, taking into account the current round of ZBR. The Reserve's organic assets, such as ships and aircraft, have

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also come under a similar cut. Those of us who remain actively engaged in the Naval Reserve have been ever more in frequent demand to support our Navy's missions. The old business model of one-weekend-a-month and two-weeks-a-year has long been in the past. I, myself, cannot remember the last fiscal year in which I did just 48 drills and 12 days of AT.

Of course, more than just simple end strength and hardware, CAPT Mahan eloquently articulated the strategic importance of the institutions in promoting a nation's sea power. A Naval Reservist is much more than an able body plugged into a mobilization billet to augment the active component in time of war or national crisis. We, as citizen sailors, even in time of peace or inactivation, represent a homeland presence and promotion among our people of our Navy. CAPT Mahan developed such an enterprising concept as the aptitude of a people toward the sea, a very essential and integral part of a nation's sea power. Our families know when we're away for our drill weekends, giving up on birthdays or little league games; many of us traveling at our own expense. Our civilian employers, and employees, know when we're away on AT or recall; most of us may take a pay cut or a career setback, putting aside our businesses or private practices.

As such, might we dare say that the model citizen sailors are charged, perhaps quietly and unknowingly to some, with the virtual mission of mobilization of the will of the people in this protracted war called the Global War on Terrorism? Strategic enough of a mission? We'd like to think so. Throughout history, few nations have been able to win protracted wars without the people's support. Unique enough of a capability? We'd like to think so. For the few fleet concentration areas whose constituency and local economy benefit largely from the Navy's presence, the people's *aptitude toward the sea* will always be self-evident. But what about the many landlocked states, especially without

any naval activity except for that little Naval Reserve Center perhaps hosting a Sea Cadets detachment or a recruiting office? I'd heard a fellow JO call it *doing God's work*.

How do we help our Navy recruiters, faced with the daily challenge of speaking with the young men and women and their parents, sustain the Navy's institutions, and thus, our nation's sea power? It takes many years to grow Sailors, and even many generations to develop a seafaring people. We can hardly afford to wait until a national or international crisis hits us in the face and then reactively recruit, hoping to meet and to maintain the required end strength . . . just ask any Army Reserve or Army National Guard recruiter nowadays.

When our leaders spoke of *depth* and *sustainment* in *Naval Power 21 . . .*, we'd hope to think beyond the tactical or operational levels, but further, at a strategic level. How do we sustain the will of the people, their support and industry? How do we sustain awareness with the present and future generations of young Americans of our value and status as a maritime power and of what it takes to ensure success of our nation's sea enterprises, in terms of a sustaining flow of manpower with the appropriate aptitude and bent? In our humble estimation, the Naval Reservists are in a unique position to be the executing agents of this long-term mission. During times of manpower cutback, especially that of the active component, it should make strategic and even fiscal, dare we say, sense to maintain a robust reserve component, as a relatively inexpensive and immediate pool from which the active force can be readily and rapidly reconstituted in time of crisis. We have to implement swiftly and continuously better business processes to be a more efficient fighting force. We have to modernize our fleet with ever more effective capabilities to maintain our decisiveness and dominance in battle. But neither any process nor technology can ever replace the heart and soul of a people toward the sea. ⚓