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Is It Time *Really* to Study the Reserve Forces Overall?

Active Forces into smaller strike groups, with different deployment plans to meet surge capability requirements. These are only a few factors that point out that it is time to study the Guard and Reserve Forces for the 21st century, in order to achieve a true Total Force.

What would a Commission on Guard and Reserve do for our nation? It would establish a base line for continued Guard and Reserve Forces for the 21st century. It could lead to real efficiency and effectiveness. The commission, if membership were in fact impartial and spread across several governmental and non-governmental departments, would be a guide for Congressional actions on Guard and Reserve matters, and would also serve as a strong guide for the Executive branch on military matters that affect Guard and Reserve Forces. The most compelling thing this commission would do is to provide a guideline for Congressional staffs and DoD staffs when considering the multitude of pending changes to the Guard and Reserve Forces.

At this time, we have numerous changes started for the Naval Reserve Forces. We have heard many calls for different versions of the Naval Reserve Forces. Several members of the Naval Reserve Force are calling for change. We may have forgotten how we acquired the current missions that the Naval Reserve Force has. All missions and requirements that are currently in the Reserve Force are requirements that the Active Force wanted in the Reserve Force. Not one single

requirement that exists in the Reserve Force today was created by the Reserve Force. Those requirements were in response to worldwide national security strategy and national military strategy. So, what has changed? The United States is the sole super power; and, with that, come different missions and requirements, whether we like it or not. Defining requirements in this age of asymmetric warfare and unknown threats is not easy. Defining threats is a full-time process for different agencies and institutes. I am not sure one single agency or department can define the threats to the United States.

It would seem to me that we may need to review the entire scope of Guard and Reserve Forces that are under such pressure in today's world. If the need is there and the requirements are there, then we perhaps need a total look at what is needed and what is not needed, vice letting one agency make the total decision. I suggest that it is time for you and me to take the question of Guard and Reserve missions and requirements to an independent commission, created by Congress, with Executive Branch involvement.

The Naval Reserve Association is pushing for this type of commission to study the entire range of questions about the Guard and Reserve for the 21st century. If you support this initiative, which is one of our newly adopted resolutions, we need you to provide your inputs to your Representatives and to us.

Very few organizational managers, executives, or military service members like studies or reviews. These studies are disliked, mainly, because they slow down the implementation process or the execution process of a program. However, it appears that this period of our national security strategic time frame may, in fact, be the time to conduct a thorough review of Guard and Reserve Forces. Additionally, studies and reviews are a part of the checks and balances of our democratic system. Like it or not, the checks and balances to our democratic system work in the long run, and in the short tactical sense.

Why do we need a Commission on the Guard and Reserve to study the issues? Consider the following just part of the reasons. For the latest conflict, we activated or mobilized over 217,000 Guard and Reserve members. This does not include those who voluntarily returned to active duty for the recent conflict. The Guard and Reserve have been used at a higher rate than ever before. Additionally, just this FY legislative process has produced several reviews and studies, on a smaller scale: TRICARE beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinators (Health); aircraft performance of aerial refueling mission (AF); Navy/Marine Corps Tactical Aviation Integrations (Navy/ USMC); family surveys (Health); report on mobilization of Reserves; Aircraft Beddown Plan, Reserve-Employer Relations; AF Health Study; and Civilian Personnel System Changes, to name just a few from this year. The Secretary of Defense has asked all service chiefs to rebalance the Reserve Components. According to the House Armed Services Committee, the Reserve Forces contribute support to the National Security Strategy equivalent to 33,000 full-time active duty personnel annually per year as of the beginning of 2003! This is equivalent to two full Army divisions. The nation is recalling two more National Guard brigades at this writing, and another brigade may be needed. The Navy is reorganizing

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

- FY 04 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):
 - House passed the NDAA on 7 November, Senate action pending the week of 11 November.
 - Full Commissary Access provision – should be a part of the NDAA, unlimited access.
 - Concurrent Receipt, SASC/HASC negotiated a 10 year phase in period, for those 60% and higher, or Purple Heart members. Provides for a VA health care review.
- Military Fairness Tax Bill – HR 1307 – Congress passed the Bill, provides for tax breaks on: sale of primary home, break on death gratuity, and allowing Guard and Reserve a tax break on travel expenses to drill.

As of Oct 03, proposed legislation in the Iraqi Supplemental (S 1689), that may or may not have been passed:

- Senator Bond-Mikulski amendment to provide \$1.3 billion in emergency funding for the Department of Veterans medical care account, did not pass. This will be taken up in the HUD/VA appropriations. The VA health care system is already \$1.8 billion short; NRA strongly supported this amendment with delegations. NRA strongly supported with letters.
- Senate Amd 1816, TRICARE for Guard and Reserve PASSED! – allows Reserve and Guard members to purchase health care in the TRICARE systems, or option of cost share of private health care systems during mobilization. NRA sent letters to conferees and signed on to support with other Associations, we need to thank those members that supported.
- Senate Amd 1858, provides funding for the support of Guard-Reserve family readiness programs. These are essential to morale, retention, and military readiness of Guard and Reserve. This passed in the supplemental.

NOTE: Your communication to your Representatives may assist in getting these through Congress, even next year, if they do not make it this year. To write or e-mail your rep: <www.house.gov>, or <www.senate.gov>.