

February 12, 2003

Honorable Duncan Hunter
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter:

Codel McHugh, a bi-partisan delegation, traveled to Germany, Italy and France during the period 15-24 January 2003, focusing its principal attention on the employment of individuals and units of the reserve components in support of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM). The delegation sought to assess current implementation of the Total Force Policy and the necessity for potential statutory and policy change. A report of our major impressions and findings is presented here. We are also providing a copy of this report to Representative Ike Skelton who accompanied the delegation for a portion of its trip.

Background and Context

At the outset, the delegation structured its approach to obtain information and perspectives in-depth at four distinct levels: from the senior command levels of EUCOM; from the reserve component advisors throughout EUCOM; from the leadership of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps components of EUCOM; and from the reserve unit commanders and individual reservists deployed to that combatant command. In visiting deployed reserve component units in the EUCOM area of operations, the delegation met with more than 200 reserve component personnel in small group sessions to discuss issues related to their employment and mobilization.

The delegation undertook the trip in the context of a Total Force Policy and active-reserve component integration that are being implemented in an extraordinarily complex, challenging environment which impacts both active and reserve component

forces. The background and the context in which our trip took place are highlighted by the following three interwoven developments.

First, the Total Force Policy has fundamentally changed since it was first crafted in the 1970s in the wake of the Vietnam War. Then the policy stipulated the close integration of the active and reserve components to ensure that the American military would never again go to war without the reserve components. Today there is a new reality: even in peacetime, U.S. military operations in support of the national security strategy cannot be accomplished without significant reserve component involvement. As a result, the reserve components have for the last seven years been providing annual **peacetime** support equating to that of 33,000 active duty personnel, and replaced active component units in carrying out missions that previously had been the exclusive domain of the active forces.

Second, the Global War on Terrorism, an open-ended commitment of U.S. military resources worldwide to eliminate terrorists' threats and to actively defend the U.S. homeland, has not only added new dimensions and requirements for the Total Force Policy, but also has made clear that increased, heavy reliance on the reserve components in peacetime will continue indefinitely. At the time of the delegation's visit to EUCOM - 15 months after the start of the Global War on Terrorism and just prior to mobilizations to support a possible war with Iraq - more than 56,000 reservists remained on active duty worldwide, committed to fighting the Global War on Terrorism, with thousands entering a second year of active duty.

Third, the mobilization of the reserve components for a potential second war with Iraq differs materially from the mobilization for Desert Shield-Desert Storm in 1990-1991. The current mobilization comes in a context of a reserve component already heavily engaged and deeply committed to sustaining a twelve-fold increase in peacetime support requirements, while simultaneously contributing more than 56,000 personnel on active duty to prosecute the Global War on Terrorism.

In short, the Total Force Policy is being implemented in ways never anticipated by those who articulated and implemented it some thirty years ago. Today, the Total Force Policy, as exemplified by the current substantial, unremitting, open-ended, three-way pull on the reserve components, presents extraordinary management and resource challenges for DOD and the military services, and imposes significant stresses on the individual members of the reserve components, their employers and their families.

Key Findings and Observations

Reliance on the Reserve Components – High and Going Higher:

Not surprisingly, the consistent, unequivocal message from all levels of EUCOM command was that the reserve components were essential to accomplishing

the command's peacetime and wartime missions. For example, on any given day in fiscal year 2002, the reserve components provided the equivalent of 7,000 active duty personnel in support of the command. Reservists are integrated and essential across the full range of EUCOM operations playing important roles in contingency operations, state partnership programs with numerous nations, training exercises, humanitarian and civic assistance and support to headquarters staffs. The Global War on Terrorism greatly expanded the EUCOM requirements for capabilities like intelligence, or presented entirely new ones like force protection and port security. Mobilized reserve component personnel were and remain crucial in meeting them. With regard to a potential war with Iraq, Army and Air Force planners repeatedly stressed to the delegation the crucial role reservists would play in enabling EUCOM to support combat operations.

From the EUCOM perspective, efforts to rebalance the active-reserve component mix – especially in mission areas where high and frequent demands were repeatedly placed on low-density reserve units and capabilities – were needed and welcome, but not expected to provide any near term relief.

Ability of the Reserve Components to Sustain the Level of Effort – EUCOM Leadership Perspectives:

Given the significant reserve component contribution to EUCOM's missions, EUCOM senior officers and the senior Army, Navy and Air Force leaders in each of EUCOM's service components were engaged in efforts to help sustain reserve component support over the long term. Such efforts included:

- Contributing to DOD studies and reviews that are assessing the proper mix of active and reserve component forces, particularly which missions and units should be shifted from reserve components to the active components, and vice versa.
- Eliminating or reducing the scope of some missions filled by the reserve components – the most striking example being the recent agreement for German military forces to assume the EUCOM installation force protection missions that for the last year have been performed by 2,000 mobilized National Guardsmen in six-month rotations.
- Increasing reliance on reserve component volunteers and Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs), instead of involuntarily mobilizing entire units, to meet extended mission requirements, especially those associated with the Global War on Terrorism that are carrying over into a second year.

Notwithstanding these efforts by the command to ease the impact on the reserve components, the consistent message from EUCOM commanders was that reliance on the reserve components would increase, particularly in sustaining a war with Iraq and the post-war aftermath there. For example, National Guard combat units and

commanders for the first time will assume full responsibility for the U.S. mission in Kosovo beginning in June 2003 for at least a year. Moreover, since October 2002, and for the foreseeable future, National Guard and Army Reserve units will meet U.S. force requirements in Bosnia.

While the delegation heard no explicit statements that the reserve components would be unable to sustain the level of support EUCOM was requiring of them, the delegation came away with these perspectives:

- Recent U.S. history is that temporary military missions become more or less permanent. As a result, the EUCOM experience is that the missions being performed by reservists today are above a rate that is sustainable simply through the use of reserve component volunteers.
- The implication clearly is that reservists today, and for the foreseeable future, will face the risk of repeated involuntary recalls to active duty.
- A war with Iraq and its aftermath will add new short and long-term requirements. These requirements, unless the Nation decides to continue to rely on the involuntary recall of reservists, should cause a rethinking of its active component end strength requirements and the mix of its active and reserve component forces.

Ability of the Reserve Components to Sustain the Level of Effort – Reservists’ Perspectives:

The overriding message that the delegation received from reservists was that individually and collectively they were dedicated to accomplishing the missions given them and were willing to sacrifice civilian jobs and many comforts of family life to that end. One measure of that dedication was the fact that in each group the delegation met with as many as 80 percent of the reservists had served multiple tours of active duty in the last five years. Many of the 200 reservists who talked to us were volunteers.

That said, even these highly motivated reservists were concerned about their ability and the ability of other reservists to sustain participation in the reserves at the levels of their previous experience. In that context, reservists told the delegation:

- The increasing chance of multiple involuntary, short-notice mobilizations introduces a level of unpredictability into reservists’ personal, family, economic and professional lives that pose many difficulties. As a result, leaving the reserves is an increasingly attractive option.
- Being identified as a reservist is becoming a liability with some employers, and some reservists are omitting from their resumes any mention of their reserve involvement. One reservist, whose wife continues operating his small business while he is on active duty, said he puts aside resumes of job-seeking

reservists because he knows reservists can be called away unexpectedly and he has to be able to count on people being available for work.

- The high operations tempo and frequent deployments, coupled with the economic and family impacts, makes it more difficult for NCOs and others to recommend that people join the reserve components. Some reservists are even telling people not to join the reserves.
- Although many reservists would like to volunteer for active duty tours, they have already used up their employers' goodwill and cannot afford such further service.

From the delegation's perspective, such sentiments about the price reservists are paying for serving, while anecdotal, are cause for concern. They echo comments heard from active component personnel several years ago who were attempting to deal with the impact of increasingly high operations and personnel tempos with reduced resources. Delays in heeding those active duty comments contributed to reduced retention.

Seamlessness of the Total Force – Some Cracks and Crevices:

Implicit in the Total Force Policy is a presumption that the active and reserve components will be able to come together smoothly and seamlessly, as equal contributors, to carry out whatever missions are assigned. In a number of ways, the delegation explored the seamlessness of the current Total Force and found issues of concern.

EUCOM commanders were candid in acknowledging that the reserve component mobilization following September 11 and the subsequent influx of reservists into the theater created a range of problems for which the command was not prepared. The Reserve Forces Policy Board identified many of these problems in its March 2002 report following a visit to EUCOM. The Total Force Subcommittee will follow-up with DOD to determine the status of DOD's corrective actions on those issues.

Reservists in EUCOM also raised a number of issues with the delegation that, in their perception, needed to be addressed. Among those issues are:

- **Incompatible Pay Systems:** The inability of active, reserve and National Guard pay systems to communicate effectively caused significant hardship for some upon mobilization. The delegation heard from reservists who had received no pay for weeks to as long as six months after coming on active duty because the pay systems could not communicate. Correcting pay problems was facilitated when commands appointed ombudsmen, or reserve advisors, able to serve, in effect, as translators between and among the various pay offices. DOD has known about such problems since

Desert Storm in 1991 and has been working since then to develop common pay and personnel information technology systems for the active and reserve components; however, field implementation across all services remains a distant reality, tentatively being scheduled for the Army in 2005, the Navy in 2006 and the Air Force in 2007.

- **Accessibility by Reservists to the Department of Defense Dependents Schools System:** EUCOM, as well as other combatant commands, solicited a significant number of mobilized reservists to volunteer to serve a second year of active duty. Despite this commitment of significant additional time, such reservists, who must bring their families to Europe at their own expense under current policy, are unable to enroll them in the DOD school system without paying a substantial tuition. These reservists argue that since active duty families serving more than one year in theater are allowed to have their children attend DOD schools without paying tuition, reservists should be afforded the same consideration.
- **Use of Space-Available Travel on Military Aircraft:** Mobilized reservists deployed overseas, unlike active component personnel assigned permanently overseas, are not authorized to have their dependent children travel from the United States overseas on military aircraft when space on those aircraft is open. As a result, mobilized reservists are spending significant amounts for commercial airfare to bring their families over to Europe to visit.
- **Inconsistent Household Goods Baggage Allowances:** The Air Force and the Navy permit individual service members to ship 600 pounds of household goods overseas to assist the individual in setting up personal living spaces in a new assignment. The Army allows only 120 pounds. This difference creates an inequality between personnel, including reservists, of different services serving in the same location.
- **Authorizing Reservists the Use of Pay Allotments:** Unlike active duty personnel, mobilized reservists told the delegation that they are not allowed to establish allotments – regular pre-determined deductions from their paychecks to cover known payments to creditors or to savings accounts, for example.
- **Pre-mobilization Support for Individual Mobilization Augmentees:** With DOD putting more emphasis on mobilizing individuals, as opposed to whole units, a number of the mobilized individuals who talked to the delegation felt they were not as well educated and briefed during the pre-mobilization and mobilization station phases about their benefits and

protections, especially those related to employment and reemployment rights and responsibilities.

Overall, the delegation came away from EUCOM awed at the dedication and professionalism of the active duty, National Guard and reserve personnel we met throughout the theater. Moreover, we were impressed that the U.S. European Command is committed to improving the implementation of the Total Force Policy, but that it is faced with several challenges that are not within its power to totally address. There is concern that unless changes are made in the active-reserve component mix, including an increase in the size of the active components, the strains placed on the reserve components may lead to retention and other problems. There are also a number of policy and statutory issues related to improving the seamlessness of the active and reserve components that the Total Force Subcommittee will specifically address in an oversight capacity, and possibly with legislative initiatives in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal year 2004.

We look forward to working with you on these and other Total Force issues.

Sincerely,

John M. McHugh
Chairman
Subcommittee on Total Force

Robin Hayes
Member of Congress

Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress

Jeff Miller
Member of Congress