Volunteer Military Organizations
An Overlooked Asset

Virginia Defense Force

Maryland Defense Force

Photos left to right: **Connecticut Militia Governor's Guard; Members of the Virginia Defense Force communications unit complete field training exercise at Fort Pickett, Virginia; Cavalry Troop A of the Maryland Defense Force performs mounted drills at Antietam National Battlefield**

By **BRENT C. BANKUS**

With the current operations tempo for Federal forces, the availability of manpower for homeland security is a major concern. Today's missions are full spectrum: traditional operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, peacekeeping in the Balkans and the Sinai, and defense support to civil authorities in hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

President George W. Bush's National Security Strategy makes it clear that "defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government."[1] With the gradual reduction in force and increased deployments, however, commanders are asked to do more with less. As troops engage in overseas operations, for example, they are tasked with additional short-notice contingencies that further exacerbate the problem.

Given the needs of the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Northern Command, the increased use of National Guard and Reserve units, and the many and varied asymmetrical threats confronting the Nation since 9/11, it is questionable whether sufficient forces will be available.[2] Therefore, a serious study of expanding the use of legitimate volunteer military organizations is long overdue.

These groups are not new in America and are divided into state and Federally sponsored organizations. State-sponsored organizations include State Defense Forces (SDFs) and Naval Militias, while elements such as the U.S. Air Force Civil Air Patrol and the Coast Guard Auxiliary are sponsored by the Armed Forces.

History

From the colonial period through the early 20th century, militia or volunteer units shouldered much of the responsibility for national defense since the regular, or full-time, U.S. military was comparatively small. Militia units augmenting Active forces sufficed until the Spanish-American War in 1898.[3] As the 20th century dawned and the United States became increasingly involved in overseas operations, decisionmakers began to reassess the capabilities of such units.

Several pieces of landmark legislation were passed to enhance the militia (for example, the Dick Act of 1903 and the National Defense Act of 1916). Through this legislation, the organized militia was renamed the National Guard, given the official role of America's second line of defense, and provided Federal funds for training and equipment. Consequently, the Federal Government had a better-trained and more capable militia at the beginning of the 20th century than ever before.[4]

Federal service was quickly tested as most National Guard units were mobilized for the Mexican border campaign in 1916, and then all were activated for World War I. However, the prior legislation was a curse and a blessing. With the entire National Guard deployed, states were ill prepared for either self-defense or response to natural or manmade contingencies.

But the mobilization of the National Guard for World War I was not an insurmountable problem because 34 states organized Home Guard or State Guard units as replacements, allowed under Section 61 of the National Defense Act of 1916. These volunteer units used prior service personnel (Spanish-American War and Civil War veterans) as training cadre, performing duties mostly in a nonpay status. For example, well-trained Home Guard units from Connecticut and Massachusetts provided valuable manpower, transportation, and medical assets during the Spanish influenza outbreak in 1918.[5] Texas also organized State Guard cavalry and infantry regiments to patrol the Mexican border. In all, State Guard units provided an additional 79,000 troops for state duty; however, they were never called up for combat operations in World War I and were quickly disbanded after the Armistice.[6]

Volunteer military organizations were especially important early in World War II. As with our British colleagues, every available resource was used due to the huge mobilization effort, including Home or State Guard units and the fledgling Coast Guard Auxiliary and Army Air Force Civil Air Patrol. These latter two elements represented a phenomenon not seen before: volunteer military organizations sponsored by Federal branches of the U.S. military. Nonetheless, World War II represented a high-water mark for the use of voluntary military bodies, particularly the Home or State Guard.

By the fall of 1940, all National Guard units were again called to Federal service. Recognizing the impending dilemma,

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Washington State Guard

Alaska Defense Force

Georgia State Defense Force

Photos left to right: **Georgia State Defense Force soldiers participate in WMD training; Members of the Washington State Guard attend civil protection training; Members of the 492d Coastal Command conduct patrol training.**

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the State Guard Act on October 21, 1940.[7] Consequently, Home Guard units, composed of retired or prior service personnel, were again mobilized in all but four states. They were charged with protecting critical infrastructure sites under the direction of each state adjutant general.

Additionally, the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Army Air Corps Civil Air Patrol provided value-added assets in the event of either prolonged air or amphibious attacks by submarine. As recently released archives prove, the Axis powers considered both concepts. Regardless, both state and Federal volunteer military organizations were valuable assets. In fact, the Civil Air Patrol was credited with sinking several German U-boats, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary rescued hundreds of stranded sailors.

While there are differences between present operations and those in World War II, there are also similarities. During the 2005 flood season, a substantial portion of the Louisiana Army National Guard was unavailable, so state and Federal assets from neighboring states were used in disaster recovery. In addition, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Civil Air Patrol, and at least five states contributed their State Defense Forces to the relief effort, and all indications are that the volunteers were effective. Thus, to prepare for future contingencies, regardless of location, the increased use of volunteer military organizations seems a common sense approach to provide additional capable assets.

Civilian Authority Support

Since homeland security is the major focus of volunteer military organizations, missions may include meeting domestic emergencies, assisting civil authorities in preserving order, guarding critical industrial sites, preventing or suppressing subversive activities, and cooperating with Federal authorities.

For example, when National Guard units are mobilized, SDFs often assume control of their armories and assist with their mobilization.[8] The Alaskan SDF also routinely provides security for the Alaskan pipeline and the harbors of Anchorage and Whittier, using four armed patrol craft. With an instructor cadre of current or former state troopers, graduates of the Alaskan SDF Military Police Academy have the same credentials as Alaskan state troopers. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Albany utilized the New York Guard Army Division's Military Police Brigade as perimeter and infrastructure security at Camp Smith and within New York City. Similarly, Air Force SDFs in Texas and New York routinely augment base security forces along with assisting in administrative duties. In addition to the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Naval Militias add another dimension to state-sponsored volunteer military organizations, providing waterborne patrol assets for security missions.

With many retired or former National Guard personnel in their ranks, SDF assets represent an experienced force knowledgeable in local and state emergency operations policies and procedures. The Louisiana SDF, for instance, provides a team of Soldiers as desk officers for each county emergency operations center, consisting of subject matter experts in operations and logistics. Being an integral part of the Georgia Department of Defense, the Georgia SDF was also active during hurricanes Katrina and Rita and provided desk officers for the National Guard Joint Emergency Operations Center at Dobbins Air Force Base near Atlanta. Local volunteer organizations are indigenous to the area and therefore more effective than contract forces.

Today's volunteer military organizations also provide manpower and specialized expertise as several SDFs have robust search and rescue, medical, religious, legal, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) naval and air capabilities. SDF search and rescue capabilities vary from state to state but routinely include emergency medical technicians and enhanced search capabilities such as horses and fixed-wing aircraft. The Tennessee SDF, for example, with former Special Forces and Ranger members, has a robust search and rescue organization somewhat modeled after a Special Forces "A" team. Its members include licensed paramedics, civilian structural engineers, and communications specialists, all both airborne and scuba qualified, as well as a canine section.

Several SDFs have privately owned fixed-wing aircraft detachments in their force structure. Virginia uses its aircraft extensively as drones for WMD scenarios and assists the Virginia Fish and Game Commission by flying reconnaissance missions over the Shenandoah Valley. While predominantly a ceremonial organization, the Connecticut SDF has occasionally used its cavalry detachment for cross-country search and rescue missions.

The Georgia SDF shares robust chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear and explosives capabilities with the Centers for Disease Control and several hospitals in the Atlanta area. The force has acquired the skills of chemists, medical doctors, and other professionals to fashion an organization to advise, assist, and train with the specialized Georgia National Guard Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team.[9]

Alternatives to Service

The expanded use of volunteer military organizations provides an opportunity for increasing numbers of citizens to serve in a less demanding military environment than the Federal Active or Reserve military. Of those who enter the Active military, 14 percent leave during the first 6 months and over 30 percent before their first term is complete. Reasons for this attrition include inadequate medical and preentry drug screening. Moreover, recruits fail to perform adequately because they are in poor physical condition for basic training or lack motivation.[10] Routinely, State Guard units during World War II took advantage of National Guard discharges from Active service due to stringent physical standards associated with overseas deployments. Approximately 3,400 National Guardsmen were discharged

prior to deployment, providing trained resources capable of State Guard service.[11]

Professionals in the legal and medical fields who desire continued service are finding SDF organizations particularly attractive. As doctors and lawyers often have their own practices or are part of small consortiums, the prospect of an extended deployment as part of a Federal force represents a significant loss of income, if not bankruptcy. Participation in an SDF represents a viable alternative, as units are designed strictly for state service and are not subject to deployments.[12]

Border Security Issues

The U.S. Border Patrol, part of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Service, is responsible for detecting, interdicting, and apprehending those who attempt to enter the United States illegally or smuggle people or contraband, including weapons of mass destruction, across U.S. borders. These boundaries include official ports of entry in 20 sectors of the United States, both on the northern border with Canada (4,000–5,000 miles long) and the southern border with Mexico (over 2,000 miles long). Illegal immigration has received increased attention. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Robert Bonner stated that some 10,800 agents currently are in the field, and the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol is exploring the use of volunteer organizations as augmentation.

In April 2005, a volunteer civic organization, the "Minutemen," conducted a month-long surveillance along the Arizona-Mexico border. These volunteers from various parts of the United States provided an "extra set of eyes" to the Customs and Border Patrol. Commissioner Bonner reported that the Minutemen facilitated the apprehension of over 300 illegal immigrants with no incidents or threats of vigilantism. The Minutemen were observers only and reported illegal crossings to the Border Patrol for action.

Cost Effectiveness

Since all land SDFs are strictly state organizations, their operating budgets are comparatively minimal. Moreover, today's volunteers receive no pay or allowances for training and drill attendance, and, unless called to state Active duty, mission support is also conducted in a nonpay status. Even when called to state Active duty, SDF personnel are paid a rate that is often not commensurate with normal pay for a Federal force, depending on rank.

During 2002, for example, the Georgia SDF contributed more than 1,797 days of operational service, saving the state $1.5 million. In 2001, their service saved over $754,000.[13] During the 9/11 crisis, the 244th Medical Detachment of the New York Guard provided medical services not available from other organizations and saved the state $400,000.[14] These are a few examples that prove that expanding the use of volunteer military organizations is economically attractive. Since SDFs possess little equipment, overhead costs are relatively small. Table 1 provides a comprehensive list of SDFs and their funding levels.

Challenges

While attractive, expanding the use of SDFs requires resolving several issues, such as the lack of Federal recognition of state-sponsored volunteer military organizations. Although SDFs were designed for state service, the lack of Federal recognition has other effects. First, current laws prohibit SDFs from purchasing excess Federal field equipment of all types, such as uniforms, affecting unit morale. Second, SDFs lack an active authoritative command and control headquarters to provide strategic direction on unit types, table of distribution and allowances, readiness reporting, missions, training, and personnel policies. Standardizing policies and procedures is essential to ensure interoperability with other state or Federal agencies. Although the National Guard Bureau is the DOD executive agent for SDFs, and though National Guard Regulation 10–4 provides guidelines, the regulation lacks authoritative language to ensure compliance.[15]

Most World War II State Guard units, for instance, were modeled after either a light infantry or military police organization. Today, some SDFs mirror that traditional structure, yet there is substantial derivation of unit types that demonstrates a strategic lack of interest. Conversely, the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Air Force Civil Air Patrol are well established and seemingly enjoy a better working relationship with their parent Federal service. They do not appear to suffer from the same fickleness of state politics that affects SDFs and Naval Militias. As state entities, and if allowed to exist at all, SDFs and Naval Militias function at the behest of each Governor and often are stifled by being at the mercy of the state adjutant general, a political appointee.

As demonstrated by the 2002 anthrax attacks against domestic targets, the ease of WMD acquisition causes constant questioning of whether sufficient manpower exists to defend against attacks. Information technology tampering is also a concern and is increasingly difficult to locate and eradicate. The importance of information technology cannot be overstated, as threats to computer security are a great concern. Again, questions regarding sufficient numbers of trained personnel are voiced at every level.

The lack of codified missions and unit types impacts SDF doctrine and training. It is essential to have a clearly established universal task list, approved mission-essential task list, and associated doctrine. To date, all 23 SDF organizations offer military training courses but are without established standards. For example, the Tennessee SDF's basic noncommissioned officer and basic officer courses are approved through the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Courses offered by the New York Guard Army Division are also well organized and designed by former nonresident Army Reserve instructors. However, SDFs are prohibited from participating in some nonresident training (for example, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff

Table 1. State Defense Forces—Army

State	Active Strength	Budget in $	Type Unit	Prior Service	Age Range
Alabama	600	30K	Support HQs	75%	22–69
Alaska	274	26.5K–1 Mil	Military Police	75%	20–72
California	500	225K	Support HQs	80+%	18–62
Connecticut	275	0	Infantry/Cavalry	40%	20–60
Georgia	500	0	Infantry	40%	18–64
Indiana	315	40K	Support HQs	70%	21–75
Louisiana	108	0	Admin HQs	96%	50–65
Maryland	194	0	Support HQs	75%	17–70
Massachusetts	60	0	Admin Det.	60–75%	18–65
Michigan	130	0	Support HQs	80%	20–70+
Mississippi	185	0	Infantry	85%	18–78
New Mexico	200	7K	Military Police	75%	18–65
New York	1,200	75K	Support HQs	75%	18–65
Ohio	650	14K	Military Police	50+%	17–67
Oklahoma	28	0	Support HQs	75%	21–75+
Oregon	184	0	Infantry	50%	18–65
Puerto Rico	1,630	300K	Support Det.	30%	16–65
South Carolina	1,500	100K	Infantry	45–50%	17–75
Tennessee	990	53K	Light Infantry	80%	18–70
Texas	1,518	103K	Infantry	60%	17–79
Vermont	326	0	Infantry	90%	17–70
Virginia	774	0	Light Infantry	70%	18–70
Washington	95	0	Infantry	90%	18–64

College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas).[16] To educate their officers, then, states such as California and Georgia enroll their personnel in the U.S. Marine Corps Command and General Staff College.

Due to the homeland security focus of SDFs, another training venue is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Web site. In fact, several states require FEMA courses as a prerequisite for promotion. Again, however, no standards exist to ensure a base level of education in military support to civilian authority subjects. Table 2 provides a comprehensive list of military courses that SDFs offer.

Recommendations

Volunteer military organizations are older than the United States itself and have proven themselves time and again. Their infrastructure already exists, and the process works despite political pressures. With the growing concern for securing the homeland, common sense should be applied to use these assets to their fullest extent. To do so, several actions are recommended.

Current laws must be changed to grant Federal recognition to state-sponsored SDFs. Denying volunteer access to basic equipment and necessities makes little sense. Also, the lack of Federal recognition impacts the ability to tap into existing nonresident military courses.

Since SDFs and several Naval Militias are strictly state supported, partial Federal funding should be initiated through the National Guard Bureau and the planning, programming, and budgeting system. Some civilian organizations (for example, the Citizen Corps and the USA Freedom Corps) already have access to Federal funding, and all legitimate volunteer military organizations should enjoy the same privilege. Trained volunteer organizations provide manpower and professional services that permit Federal forces to concentrate on other critical areas.

As the DOD agent for SDFs, the National Guard should be more proactive in providing guidance in conjunction with the Department of the Army and each adjutant general. Standardization would add further legitimacy to these organizations. Moreover, the National Guard Bureau should have an office staff to handle SDF matters that cannot be accomplished as an additional duty.

While volunteer military organizations present challenges, evidence suggests that their expanded use makes sense for several reasons. First, with the current high operations tempo, trained Federal forces are at a premium. By actively supporting volunteer military organizations, especially State Defense Forces, Governors have an alternative to provide a trained force at least in cadre strength.

Table 2. State Defense Forces—Schools

State	Basic Training	PLDC	BNCOC	ANCOC	Sergeant Major	Officer Basic	Officer Advanced	CGSC	OCS	Warrant Officer
Alabama	X									
Alaska	X	X								
California	X	X	X	X		X	X			X
Connecticut			X							
Georgia	X									
Indiana	X	X	X	X		X	X			
Louisiana	X									
Maryland	X									
Massachusetts	X									
Michigan	X									
Mississippi	X									
New Mexico	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
New York	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Ohio	X	X	X	X		X	X			
Oklahoma	X									
Oregon										
Puerto Rico	X	X	X	X		X	X			
South Carolina	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Tennessee	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Texas	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Vermont	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Virginia	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Washington										

Key: PLDC = Primary Leadership Development Course; BNCOC = Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course; ANCOC = Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course; CGSC = Command and General Staff College; OCS = Officer Candidate School

Currently, SDF units operate in 22 states and Puerto Rico, with another handful maintaining a volunteer Naval Militia in addition to Coast Guard Auxiliary and Air Force Civil Air Patrol units nationwide. A volunteer force costs much less to maintain than a Federal force and provides trained personnel for state contingencies.

In the case of SDFs, their organization and use have too often been an afterthought. From the Mexican border expedition through the Korean War, and from the bombing of Pearl Harbor to the 9/11 attacks, State and Home Guard use has been a last-minute reaction to unexpected circumstances. With today's increase in asymmetric warfare, exploring the use of all existing force structures and expanding volunteer military organizations and SDFs are steps in the right direction. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* September 2002 (Washington, DC: The White House, Executive Summary).

[2] For more details, see Citizen Corps, available at <citizencorps.gov/about.shtm>.

[3] Edmund Zysk, "Stay Behind Forces for the National Guard, Soldiers or Policemen?" unpublished thesis, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, May 1, 1988, 3.

[4] Ibid., 13.

[5] "U.S. Home Defense Forces Study," Department of Defense, Historical Research and Evaluation Organization, Washington DC, April 27, 1981, 22.

[6] Barry M. Stentiford, *The American Home Guard: The State Militia in the Twentieth Century* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 51.

[7] Zysk, 7.

[8] Department of the Army, National Guard Bureau Regulation 10–4, Washington, DC, September 21, 1987, 3.

[9] Kathi Heaton, National Guard Bureau, "National Guard Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams Overview and Update," Information Paper, September 24, 2002.

[10] "Military Attrition: DOD Could Save Millions by Better Screening Enlisted Personnel," GAO/NSIAD-97-39, January 6, 1997, available at <www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?NSIAD-97-39>, 1.

[11] Stentiford, 94.

[12] David W. Fairbanks, Virginia State Defense Force, interview by author, October 20, 2003.

[13] Ibid., 3.

[14] After Action Review, Headquarters, Army Division, 244th Clinic, New York Guard, January 9, 2003.

[15] Department of the Army.

[16] Michael Turner, Chief, Non-Resident Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, interview by author, June 29, 2003.