

The Total Force Policy and Integration of Active and Reserve Units (Multiple Component Units - MCU)

In August 1970, Secretary Laird directed the secretaries of the military departments and other activities to incorporate the total force concept into all aspects of planning, programing, manning, equipping, and employing reserve forcesⁱ. The Total Force concept was motivated by a combination of Congressional cuts in defense spending, the pending abolition of the draftⁱⁱ and subsequent need to increase Service Member pay, and the need to maintain a credible capacity to deter threats. Secretary Laird also stated in the memorandum to look for the most advantageous mix of components of what he called the “total force,” so “reserve units would be prepared to be the initial and primary source for augmenting active forces in any future contingency requiring rapid and substantial mobilization.” Given national pressure to cut the defense budget quickly, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird contended that “manpower is the place where you save dollars the fastestⁱⁱⁱ” as conventional forces at the time accounted for roughly 60% of the defense budget. The new policy would allow a larger total force for a given budget or the same size force for a smaller budget since reserve units incurred lower costs in peacetime than active units did.^{iv} Thus began an era of experimentation in methods to, at the lowest possible cost, maintain the force size deemed necessary for immediate threats while ensuring the depth and expansibility needed for potential over-the-horizon concerns.

In 1973, the year the draft was abolished, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger announced that the Total Force concept had become the Total Force Policy.^v Yet only two years later, Secretary Schlesinger began to express doubts about the just-implemented policy because in his words, “In the aftermath of Vietnam and the changeover to the all-volunteer force, we basically went too far in reducing our active-duty ground forces.”^{vi} Some critics complained about a “hollow” army, which suffered from poor readiness in both active-duty and reserve forces.^{vii}

History of Army Expansibility and MCU Efforts

Over the past 45 years, the Army has explored several techniques for expanding on the Total Force Policy and maximizing the capacity (number of units) of the Army through use of Multi-Component unit (MCUs). A MCU is a unit “made up of sub-units from two or three manned components, with one component designated as the “flag” holder.”^{viii} In response to concerns in the early 1970s about a hollow force, the army adopted the first MCU approach, known as the Round-out Strategy. It aligned several guard maneuver brigades with active divisions. The concept provided a division headquarters structure to oversee the training and readiness of an associated guard round-out brigade, which was to deploy with the division in the event of a contingency. The reserve brigades had equal priority to the active units for equipment.^{ix}

In 1979, the Army launched a training and readiness initiative known as the Army CAPSTONE Program (short title: CAPSTONE). CAPSTONE was an attempt to provide a focused purpose for unit training and readiness that formalized a means of total force integration with five major objectives: (1) to align all active, reserve, and guard units to meet US Army Europe (USAREUR) wartime requirements and the needs of the Continental United States (CONUS) sustaining base; (2) to provide the basis for developing training and planning associations for the units in each package so that a unit can train and plan in peacetime with the organization it will operate with in wartime; (3) to provide a clearly defined organizational format for force planning; (4) to provide the basis for developing active Army and reserve component programs for Prepositioning Of Materiel Configured in Unit Sets (POMCUS), modernization, training, and increased readiness; and (5) to define the basis for mobilization stationing of deploying and non-deploying units. US Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) distributed implementing instructions to the field in August 1980 with all organizational associations formalized by the end of the fiscal year.^x

Another method used to expand Army capacity was to adjust a unit design by changing the authorized level of organization (ALO). This was accomplished by authorizing only a percentage of the required personnel and equipment. This allowed room for expansion but had its critics who associated ALO with the terminology “hollow Force”. Almost immediately after the attacks of 11 September 2001, the Army eliminated the use of ALO and made all authorizations equal requirements in the operating force. Arguably, ALO was probably a useful tool to maintain peacetime expansibility, but in time of national emergency, its lower readiness levels become impractical.

In the 1990s, the Army also instituted an MCU concept known as the Round-Out unit in order to expand Active Component (AC) capacity. In Round-Out units, a larger organization, such as a Brigade, from one component would have one or more sub-units (Battalion or Company) completely composed of Soldiers from a different component. As with changing a unit’s ALO, the Round-Out concept fell out of vogue as units attempted to adhere to a rotational sourcing methodology with differing investments in readiness and utilization rates in the AC and Reserve Components (RC). The Round-out concept, the Army National Guard Combat Readiness Reform Act (Title XI program) of 1992, and other initiatives designed to integrate and increase readiness of all components eventually succumbed to obstacles which emerged in these concepts and the application of the programs.

In 1998, General Dennis Reimer published a report titled, “One Team, One Fight, One Future - Total Army Integration” which states “Total Army integration is not about how Reserve Component units can supplement or replace Active units - it is a process of combining the three components to create the force our Nation needs - it is all about quality, ensuring we have the best mix of forces available to get the job done^{xi}”. The report focused the Total Army integration as a theme to include “creating multi-component units as a key enabler in building the Total

Army leaders and agile, dynamic forces we will need in the 21st Century. This will fundamentally change the way we do business.^{xiii}”

Fiscal constraints drove a recent decision to reduce the size of the Corps and Division Headquarters (HQs), creating operational gaps in mission command as well as the ability of the headquarters to rapidly transition to Joint Task Force HQs. To overcome these gaps, the Army directed Forces Command and the RC to conduct a MCU pilot at the Corps and Division levels. Under the MCU Corps HQ pilot, the Army Reserve provides 56 Soldiers to be organic to the staff and co-located with the XVIII Corps Headquarters at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The MCU Division HQ pilot integrates a 123-Soldier Army National Guard element not co-located (from Utah and Wisconsin) with the 101st Airborne Division HQs at Fort Campbell, Kentucky and 5 Army Reserve Soldiers co-located with the division. The former Chief of Staff, US Army (CSA), GEN Odierno, provided refined guidance to the Army Staff directing the Division and Corps MCU efforts (1) provide the multi-component structure necessary to ensure there is an AC expeditionary Command Post with early entry capabilities and (2) utilize the RC for the main Command Post, both to provide reach-back support and depth at the Division or Corps Headquarters home-station location and to deploy with the headquarters if the entire element is required. Since the pilots were resourced and near execution, the Army decided to precede with the original two, more traditional, MCU pilots to capture current information on the effects of laws and policies while at the same time developing RC plugs for the remaining Division and Corps Headquarters to meet the CSA refined guidance. Both pilots are currently in an assessment period in which Forces Command will look at implementation, legal authorities, policy implications, effectiveness, coordination, ability to recruit, train, and qualify Soldiers.

Future of Multi-Component Units

As the above historical overview demonstrates, the U.S. Army has a rich history of experimenting with MCUs, mostly on a small scale. Currently, there are thirty seven MCU units in the Army. A majority of the units are sustainment and support units (Military Intelligence, Contracting, Space, and General Support Aviation). The central question the Army must answer if it wants to ensure success of a MCU design is, “What is the purpose of creating a MCU?” Is the purpose to save active Army spaces, increase readiness of the unit, educate the components and/or change culture, or a combination of reasons? Each MCU will potentially have a different design, execution parameters, and costs based on the Army’s intent, the location of the Soldiers, and the complexity of skills involved. This will guide the Army to establish designs based on realistic expectations on what that MCU can do.

The Operational Subcommittee believes the most important role of MCUs is to foster integration of the Total Force. As multiple reports, studies, and assessments of previous MCU attempts make clear, successfully developing and employing MCUs with this purpose requires significant support from Army leadership to change the cultural incentives that drive division

among the Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard. The Army will not achieve integration without adjusting existing internal Army cultures, attitudes, and bias.

MCU design is not the only means of achieving Total Force integration. The Army should explore other means to develop integration of Regular Army and RC forces such as creative personnel assignment options to better educate individuals. One approach the Army should pursue is to create a pilot “Individual Reciprocal Exchange” program between Active and Reserve Component personnel (Sergeant through General Officer) tied to a deployment or culminating training event such as Combat Training Center (CTC) training opportunities. This could go a long way toward fostering a shared Army culture while enhancing interoperability through habitual execution using war plan or even round out relationships. As with any attempt to integrate activities between or among the Components, the Army must fix the systemic problems with the personnel and pay systems and all Army Leaders must take ownership of those integration activities they wish to have a meaningful and positive impact on the shared total Army culture. Statute does not currently permit the Secretary of the Army to assign Regular Army Officers and Enlisted Soldiers to Army National Guard positions to execute Full-Time Support functions. Congress should enact legislation to allow assignment of Regular Army officers and enlisted Soldiers to Army National Guard positions to execute Full-Time Support functions including taking the State or Territory Oath of Office without prejudice to their Federal standing. The legislation should also permit the assignment of National Guard officers and enlisted Soldiers to Regular Army units. Assignment to another component should be considered a key developmental experience and could be considered criteria for promotion.

The Operational Subcommittee has observed the success the Army can have with Active and Reserve Component unit partnerships where units of different Components train together to enhance readiness and strengthen leader development. The success of these efforts is largely due to leader involvement and commitment, commitment that must be nurtured and rewarded. As Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen said in a September 4, 1997 memorandum that Total Force integration can only be a reality when there is “...a clearly understood responsibility for and ownership of the Total Force by the senior leaders throughout the Total Force...” and “...Leadership by senior commanders –Active, Guard and Reserve – to ensure the readiness of the Total Force.”^{xiii} The Operational Subcommittee recommends the Army develop an overarching plan to guide Army Total Force integration efforts. The Army’s plan should have clearly defined purpose and goals in order to measure and fully evaluate the effects of these integration efforts.

(100th Missile Defense Brigade (Ground-based Missile Defense) MCU vignette)

The 100th Missile Defense Brigade (Ground-based Missile Defense), a multi-component unit defending the continental United States against ballistic missile attack, demonstrates the strengths and challenges of Total Force integration.

Based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the 100th Brigade commands a battalion in Alaska, a detachment in California, and early warning radar batteries in the Pacific Command, European Command, and Central Command areas of operations. Authorized a total of 567 soldiers (284 AC and 283 ARNG), the 100th Missile Defense Brigade falls under U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC), which supports U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM). Operationally, the 100th Brigade is part of a joint, global network of space, sea, and ground-based sensors and missile systems designed to defeat intercontinental missile threats. Legally, the brigade's chain of command reflects the complexities of state and federal authorities embodied in Title 32 and Title 10 of the U.S. Code.



(Photo taken from SMDC public website)

The 100th Brigade benefits from being a MCU because Regular Army Soldiers facilitate planning, training, and integration with the rest of the Army. In 2014, when the Army began to transition the brigade's detachments to batteries and convert its operations and maintenance from contractors to soldiers, one of the brigade's Regular Army officers coordinated new equipment training at Fort Bliss, Texas, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma for the brigade. Meanwhile, Guard members provide long-term stability to the brigade's small, highly technical force.

The 100th Brigade also demonstrates the Army's shortfalls in computer network integration because the active and reserve components use separate human resources networks and data systems. The Army is working to integrate these systems in the Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army (IPPS-A), but the service will not complete system fielding until 2020. In the meantime, the chain of command still relies on separate systems to manage Regular Army and ARNG Soldiers.

(“FORSCOM partnership” at Camp Shelby vignette)

The 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), Mississippi Army National Guard and the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (3/1 CD) recently demonstrated a multicomponent partnership at a combined arms, joint live fire exercise at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. The partnership began when COL Jeff Van, Commander of 155th ABCT called COL Matthew Van Wagenen, Commander of 3/1 CD, to implement the partnership established by FORSCOM’s training partnership program more than a year prior to the event. As the two commanders worked to develop the training plan, they found key enabler units were eager to join in the training exercise.



“The lessons learned here about successful partnerships—how BCT Commanders who are “all in” backed up by two-star leaders who value partnership enough to provide funding to ensure proper coordination occurs – this must be codified fully into policy.”

COL Jeff Van, Commander, 155th ABCT, Mississippi Army National Guard

"This is a tremendous opportunity for both units to operate together in a stressful, yet safe environment; we are mutually building capacity. While we cannot predict when we will need to answer our nation's call to action, exercises like this XCTC help ensure we are ready to work alongside one another as a fully-integrated, effective and lethal force."

COL Matthew Van Wagenen, Commander, 3rd ABCT, 1st Cavalry Division

The active Army’s 1-12 CAV served as the Opposing Force during the force on force portion of the Exportable Combat Training Center using MILES gear and visually modified vehicles and uniforms. Each unit performed its mission essential tasks using common graphics and a common scenario driving day and night operations. The 155th ABCT progressed through the tank tables qualifying individual gunners, crews, sections, and culminated with a tank table twelve platoon live fire exercise. The 142nd Battlefield Surveillance Brigade (ARNG) identified targets moving and called for indirect fire as four M1A1 tanks rolled into positions. The 2-114th Field Artillery (ARNG) delivered fires disrupting the enemy advance while Ravens flew in

support of their company intelligence collection plan and Shadow assets fed live video of the impacting artillery rounds. Battalion mortars from 1-155th Combined Arms Battalion engaged with 120mm mortars. An Attack Weapons Team of Apache helicopters from A/1-149th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARNG) engaged dismounted targets. Then the tank platoons maneuvered and engaged stationary and moving targets while the Apaches provided over the shoulder direct fire support for the tanks. Joint Tactical Air Controllers (JTAC's) from the Air National Guard's 238th ASOS controlled the airspace and sustainment functions were provided by the 143rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command (USAR).

(101st Airborne Division MCU vignette)



Yesterday's patching ceremony continued the progress the Army has made over the last 14 years of completely integrating Army Active, Army Reserve and Army National Guard components, as we continue to prepare to deploy, to fight and to win. The Soldiers joining us from the Wisconsin National Guard will be assigned across the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) staff and train with us for our next 'Rendezvous with Destiny.'

Pursuant to HQDA EXORD 062-15 Corps and Division Multi-Component Unit (MCU) Headquarters Pilot Implementation, in mid-2015, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) began integrating Soldiers from the Utah and Wisconsin Army National Guard along with a small number of Army Reservists into their headquarters.

During NCFA's July 2015 visit to the 101st Airborne Division, the division commander, Major General Gary J. Volesky was asked about the MCU Division Headquarters pilot program and how this initiative was proceeding. MG Volesky stated that he recently visited Soldiers from National Guard units in Utah and Wisconsin for a "patching" ceremony. [\(Photo and caption taken from the 101st Facebook page\)](#)

He stated the Soldiers were very enthusiastic about their mission and membership in the 101st Airborne Division. However, some expressed concern mainly on the geographic separation and the training time available for reservists.

Though geographic separation limits the amount of time the Soldiers can physically train together as a team, one initiative to overcome this limitation is the Division G-2's coordination with the Utah Army National Guard to ensure Division G-2 Soldiers attend monthly drill assemblies as a Mobile Training Team (MTT).

Meeting the 54 days necessary for staff collective training proficiency level requires detailed coordination between the 101st Airborne Division, Army Reserve, Utah and Wisconsin Army National Guard. MG Volesky stated that the 101st Airborne Division fully intends to meet these challenges and deploy for our next 'Rendezvous with Destiny' in 2016.

ⁱ Memo, Laird for Service Secretaries et al., 21 Aug 1970

ⁱⁱ Assessing the Structure and Mix of Future Active and Reserve Forces, summary

ⁱⁱⁱ "SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE HISTORICAL SERIES, Volume VII, MELVIN LAIRD and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military 1969–1973" Richard A. Hunt, Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC, 2015 (Page 274)

^{iv} Memo, Laird for Service Secretaries et al., 21 Aug 1970

^v Assessing the Structure and Mix of Future Active and Reserve Forces, 32

^{vi} Memos, Laird for Nixon, 30 May 1970, folder Strategy 5-8, box 28, Laird Papers, Ford Library; Kissinger for USecState et al., 13 Jun 1970, folder DPRC & Def Budget 1970 vol. 1, box 235, Agency Files, NSC, Nixon Library

^{vii} George C. Wilson, "Senators Cut Arms Funds \$1.3 Billion," Washington Post, 16 Jul 1970, A1; William McGaffin, "27 Lawmakers seek defense budget cut," Chicago Daily News, 15 Jul 1970, 1

^{viii} Army Regulation 71-32, Force Management, 2015

^{ix} White House Press Release, 18 Jul 1970, Nixon Public Papers 1970, 600–02; telcon, Kissinger and Laird, 4 Aug 1970, folder 4, box 6 HAK Telcons, NSC, Nixon Library

^x "Department of the Army Historical Summary: FY 1980", Chapter 8, Page 158

^{xi} "One Team, One Fight, One Future, Total Army Integration", GEN Dennis Reimer, 1998, Page 3

^{xii} "One Team, One Fight, One Future, Total Army Integration", GEN Dennis Reimer, 1998, Introduction

^{xiii} Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen Memorandum, "SUBJECT: Integration of the Reserves and Active Components", dated September 4, 1997.