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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

11.
THE RESERVES--CAN THEY EFFECTIVELY
AUGMENT THE ACTIVE FORCES? 11
Department of Defense

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D I G E S T

Although Reserve components have high-priority, early-response missions under the total force policy, the Army and Navy components may not have the capabilities to mobilize and deploy combat-ready forces in the time required.

Unless their contingency planning for the Reserves' role in an emergency is in line with the Secretary of Defense's planning guidance and unless resources are distributed in accordance with deployment requirements, the total force policy may not be feasible. (See ch. 2.)

Even if the Reserve components could deploy in time to meet a major contingency, many units would not be able to fully meet assigned missions. Problems which caused this low readiness posture were:

- Equipment shortages and inadequacies.
- Personnel and skill imbalances.
- Training deficiencies. (See ch. 3.)

GAO is bringing this matter to the Congress' attention because until the Reserves' readiness improves, our national defense strategy may be in jeopardy.

Because of inaccurate readiness reporting, military officials at all levels have not been able to evaluate adequately the Reserves' readiness or take corrective actions where necessary. In view of the Reserves' low readiness status and their large role in the total force policy, it is essential that officials know where and when resources are needed. (See p. 16.)

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DOD could more effectively use money, manpower, and material by eliminating nonessential organizations and transferring men and material to combat or combat-support units. By doing so, DOD could realize large savings without impairing its ability to meet mobilization requirements. The 12 Army Reserve training divisions are the most evident examples of organizations exceeding needs. The Army could save \$7.2 million a year for each training division eliminated. (See ch. 4.)

The Government budgets over \$4 billion annually for Reserve Forces, yet most Reserve units cannot carry out missions for which they were organized. Problems plague Reserve components in practically all areas--people, equipment, and training. Some problems, such as equipment shortages, can be corrected if enough money is available. Others, however, such as delays in mobilizing and training Reserve Forces, may be inherent.

In any event, if visible improvements are to be forthcoming and if the total force policy is to become a reality in the near future, DOD and the military services will have to make decisive and far-reaching changes to the Reserve system. (See p. 27.)

Several alternatives for improving the Reserves' readiness follow.

- Placing more emphasis on military occupational training, rather than unit training, and then using reservists only as fillers for the Active Forces.
- Training more reservists with active personnel on active equipment.
- Having several Reserve units share facilities and equipment for training purposes.
- Putting more emphasis on brigade- or division-level training before mobilization to reduce the time between mobilization and deployment.

--Centrally locating Reserve equipment and having it maintained by a full-time staff.

--Assigning reservists to units within a geographical area on the basis of the units' deployment dates and the reservists' skills. (See ch. 5.)

The Secretary of Defense should insure that the military services:

--Establish mobilization and deployment objectives which accurately reflect the Secretary's contingency requirements.

--Establish priorities for the various Reserve units and man and equip the units according to these priorities.

--Redistribute equipment already issued to the low-priority Reserve units to high-priority Reserve units to fill equipment shortages.

--Reevaluate the need for certain Reserve units and eliminate those units of marginal value in meeting initial mobilization requirements.

With the exception of chapter 4 on the training divisions, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed with GAO's conclusions and recommendations. He said that for the most part DOD's total force study released to the Congress in June 1975 covered many of the same areas as the GAO report and that as a result remedial actions are now being taken. He invited GAO to evaluate these actions in about a year, and GAO expects to do that. (See pp. 10, 17, and 24.)

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) did not agree with GAO's conclusion that the Reserve training divisions and their personnel were in excess of the Army's mobilization needs. The Assistant

Secretary said that the Army's post mobilization training capability is essential to support the national strategy. GAO believes DOD should periodically reevaluate the situation to insure that the training structure is kept to a minimum, thus freeing people and materials for higher priority assignment.