

U.S. ARMY RESERVE COMPONENTS AND HOMELAND DEFENSE AND SECURITY

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The Austrian Army Law signed on 18 March 1920 established three missions for the army organized under the provisions of the 10 September 1919 Treaty of St. Germain.

One of these was defense against an external enemy which was interpreted under the treaty as being protection of the new Austria's borders. A second mission was to provide assistance in protecting the populace from the ravages of nature. The organization of the only unionized professional army in history reflected how these missions were to be executed. For example, in the case of the second mission cited above, the engineer (pioneer) battalions were key to performing tasks relating to flooding on the Danube River and ice blockage on other major Austrian waterways. They were thus stationed in cities close to where they might be required in the case of floods and ice jams. Likewise infantry battalions were required to be able to provide assistance to civilian authorities in the event of forest fires, earth quakes, and heavy Alpine snows.

Today as the reserve components of the U.S. Army look to the decline of commitment in Afghanistan, they are turning more and more to potential missions in the continental United States. So as in Austria between the two world wars, the National Guard and the federal Army Reserve will become even more and more involved in the missions of defending the nation's borders and protecting the populace from the ravages of nature than they are today. The latter mission indeed has already been expanded to include protection against the effects of the employment of weapons of mass destruction.

This article will therefore describe how the two reserve components of the U.S. Army, the Army Reserve and the Army National Guards of the various states, are fulfilling the homeland defense and security missions in conjunction with the active army, the other armed services, and civilian counterparts. This is to be done under the aegis of the U. S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).

U. S. NORTHERN COMMAND (USNORTHCOM)

The primary military headquarters in the United States charged with homeland defense is that of the U.S. Northern Command, the commander of which is an Army or Air Force four star general or navy admiral. His, or her, headquarters is located at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado while the ground force component, U.S. Army North (Fifth Army) which, in time of need controls committed Guard and Army Reserve assets, is headquartered at Fort Sam Houston at San Antonio, Texas. The command interfaces with many civilian agencies affiliated with the Department of Homeland Security such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency as well as the Departments of Transportation, Energy, Justice, and Treasury.

There are essentially three areas of major defense and security concern in which USNORTHCOM is involved. First, are the incidents involving a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attack upon the United States which includes not only the states on the American continent but Hawaii and island dependencies such as Puerto Rico. Second, is reacting to natural disasters such the effects of Hurricane Katrina and periodic forest fires, snow storms, tornadoes, and river flooding. Third, is the security of its borders, particularly with the United States and Mexican border across which people from Central and South America attempt to gain entrance to the United States.

All these areas are not the exclusive realm of USNORTHCOM. The security (or technically the defense) of borders, for example, is the primary responsibility of U.S. Immigration and Border Patrol which operates with the U.S. Coast Guard on land and water respectively. Within USNORTHCOM, however, certain specific tasks are assigned primarily to one of the military's components. The Army National Guards and Air National Guards of the various states, mostly those in the United States southwest, for instance, have been in the past and are available today, to provide personnel on a rotating basis to assist the Immigration and Border Patrol in identifying, but not apprehending, those people trying to cross the United States/Mexican border.

The Air National Guard participation with its Army Guard counterparts is closely integrated in many cases where the governor of a state or territory is required to mobilize his or her military forces to handle natural disasters. A Guard airman and an army engineer may find themselves working side by side to fill sandbags to reinforce a levee threatened by a local river flooding. The governor has the option of deploying his or her military forces as he or she sees fit because the governor is the commander in chief of both the state's or territory's National Guard components.

U.S. ARMY NORTH (FIFTH ARMY)

The commander of the ground force component, U.S. Army North, also designated as Fifth Army, is a lieutenant general. He commands a small staff manning the headquarters for land operations in support of three functions. They are homeland defense, defense support of civil authorities, and, a relatively recent one, theater security cooperation with the armies of Mexico, Canada, and the Bahamas. U. S. Army North is not assigned any specific subordinate troop units, but can draw on a wide array of U.S. Army organizations of its three components as are required. Thus the commanding general can call upon not only active army units, but those of the states' Army National Guard and the federalized Army Reserve.

The commanding general thereby provides resources to those command and control entities mobilized for active military service to fulfill assigned homeland defense or security tasks. He also supervises training and plans readiness exercises in cooperation with other armed services and civilian agencies. He reaches across state and national borders to plan and conduct international conferences as well as coordinate exercises. He makes available personnel for training allied forces particularly those of the Mexican Army which could participate in the defense of the United States border. In recent years the "outreach program" with the Mexican Army has resulted in a multitude of training programs. Of special note was a recent intensive four month training course for Mexican Army intelligence personnel.

PAST AND PRESENT PERFORMANCE

When the first colonists arrived on American shores in the seventeenth century, a militia consisting of all able bodied men and the predecessors of today's Army National Guard, bore the responsibility for the defense and security of the country's homeland. Not until during the American War of Independence was a regular national defense force, the Continental Army, organized. Thereafter, through the nineteenth century, state militias, constituted the nation's only ground reserve component. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the militia became the National Guard and remained the sole ground force reserve component until after the Army Reserve was organized after World War I.

Prior to the entrance of the United States into the war, in 1916 several state National Guards were called into active service to protect the country's southern border from cross border raids by revolutionary Mexican troops and insurgents against American ranchers. It was a situation akin to that faced by the Austrian government in the 1921 incursion of the Burgenland by Hungarian paramilitary organizations.

On the outset of American participation in the World War I these state troops were brought into federal service and fought as divisions in France. After the war the units reverted to state control. At the beginning of World War II, all the state National Guards became components of the U.S. Army were committed to battle. National Guard divisions also participated in the Korean conflict while army reserve component units and individuals served in Vietnam.

With the onset of the "Cold War," because the major threat to United States territory was from the aerial forces of the former Soviet Union, air defense of the North American continent from the United States border of Mexico north took precedence in homeland defense planning. While Air National Guard aircraft provided protection in the air, Army National Guard missile units ringed major cities and targets of strategic importance. At one time during the period of continuing tension, Army Guardsmen manned some 82 air defense batteries. A full time cadre of Guardsman on active duty status kept the batteries in readiness while part time soldiers augmented the units in time of crisis and in the event of Soviet aerial attack. Today there is no need for such anti-aircraft employment, which if were required would be performed by active army formations. At the same time, the First Air Force, composed of Air National Guard aerial air defense squadrons, is responsible for dealing with threats to United States air space which is done by fighter interceptors on continuing alert status.

NATIONAL GUARD EMPLOYMENT IN HURRICANE SANDY RECOVERY

Traditionally the Army National Guard, available in the various states has been on the front line for state natural disaster emergencies. Early in October 2012, for example, the governors of the states of New Jersey and New York had placed elements of both their Air and Army National Guard on alert and deployed them in anticipation of the arrival of Hurricane Sandy on the thirtieth of the month. Four hundred Guardsmen were alerted for duty on Long Island and two hundred for employment as required on the island of Manhattan in New York City. The Army Guard had available high multi-purpose mobile wheel vehicles (HUMVEEs) and heavy trucks with high body ground clearance to use in response to emergencies where evacuation of persons stranded by high water was required.

The hurricane, with its very high wind and heavy sea surge of water, devastated large coastal portions of the states of New York and New Jersey as well as affecting almost all the states on the United States eastern seaboard. Under an authorization known as dual status command which empowered National Guard general officers to command both National Guard and federal forces to include the active army and the Army Reserve, the governors of the states most affected by the hurricane activated their Army and Air National Guards. Their general officers thereupon took control of both federalized Army Reserve and active duty army troops employed to support the massive recovery effort. Thus it was possible to achieve unity of command by placing the various rescue and restoration efforts under one commander.

Because the entire operation was conducted under the aegis of the different state National Guard commanders, when the active army's 10th Infantry Division (Mountain) provided a large number of fuel trucks, light tactical vehicles, and ambulances for the effort, they were assigned to National Guard units already engaged in recovery work. Fuel for civilian vehicles was in very short demand, not because it was not available, but because the gasoline stations had no electricity with which to dispense the gas. Thus, the military fuel tankers operated by Guardsmen were then employed to execute the civilian refueling task.

Up to the time of responding to Hurricane Sandy, the Army Reserve had never been activated for a natural disaster in the United States. But the Army Reserve has capabilities that the various state National Guards do not possess. These capabilities are to be found in Army Reserve combat service support units, principally in the logistics field. One of the assets not in the force structure of the New York and New Jersey National Guards is a portable tactical water distribution team which in the case of Hurricane Sandy could be effectively employed to help alleviate widespread flooding. Each team has pumps which are able to move 600 gallons of water per minute per pump. U.S. Northern Command, to assist with relief efforts, therefore called three such Army Reserve teams to active duty with each team deploying two pumps. The 401st Quartermaster Team came from nearby Pennsylvania. The 431st traveled from North Carolina and the 402nd arrived from as far away as Florida.

Guard combat units from New York and New Jersey also furnished relief assistance. Three battalions of New York's 27th Brigade Combat Team located around New York City were heavily involved in all manner of relief support activities, for example. But the affected states were not to only ones to mobilize their forces. Some nine neighboring states such as Massachusetts, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, and those from as far away as Ohio, provided military police, transportation, and truck units. More than 700 out of state Guardsmen and 300 vehicles deployed to the affected states.

A VARIED RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS

Response to hurricanes is but one of the domestic situations where the Army's reserve components have been involved. Snow removal, levee reinforcement, ice jam breaking are common tasks performed by Guardsmen just as they were, and are, for missions performed by Austrian Army troop units. In states such Colorado, with its heavy snowfall in winter, Guard engineers can expect to be on call to help civilian state transportation crews clear routes to rescue stranded automobiles stuck in snow.

The National Guard's response to floods year 2011 is indicative of the amount of effort devoted to the problems floods engender. In North Dakota that year, for example, where rivers overflow yearly, 3047 North Dakota Guardsmen teamed with civilians to spend least one day on flood duty. 1,990 Guardsmen reported for duty in the largest single day call up to fill sand bags to strength levees as well as perform rescue duties. The state's Army Guard aviation units flew 169 missions in support of flood response incidents for a total of 328.4 hours spent flying.

In the summer there are frequent forest and prairie fires which demand strenuous and time consuming efforts to fight and control. Not only do Guardsmen fight fires on the ground but Army Guard helicopters are used to transport fire fighting crews and dump fire retardant on critical hot spots. Between August 31 and September 7, in 2011, for instance, eight Black Hawk and three Chinook helicopters of the Texas Army National Guard dumped some 1.5 million gallons of water and fire retardant in fighting a large blaze in southeastern Texas. Besides fire charring thousands of square meters of ground cover, more than 1,500 homes were destroyed and two people killed before the wild fire was brought under control. During that September, on the ground in other state areas, to combat such fires, the Texas Army Guard deployed a fleet of bulldozers and other vehicles.

While Army National Guard troops are widely employed for the above tasks, Army Reservists generally are not. Only when the president of the United States, answering a request for a state or territory governor will he, through NORTHCOM, order reservists to active duty in support of the governor (called federalizing the Army Reserve). So for duty during Hurricane Sandy, the Army Reserve engineers of the 411th Engineer Brigade headquartered in the small town of New Windsor, New York, they would have had to wait the call of the president, at the request of the state governor, before they were called to assist New York's Army National Guard by deploying their engineer specific equipment.

Where Army Reserve units could be employed without express presidential authority is when they are conducting their annual two or more weeks of active duty training. Thus in 1982 during the mass exodus of refugees from Cuba to the United States, the Army Reserve's 5th Psychological Operations Group was deployed for two weeks to Indiantown Gap Military Reservation in the state of Pennsylvania. Located just outside Washington, D.C., the group headquarters moved quickly to the nearby camp to help civilian authorities to administer the temporary lodging of the refugees. With the Pennsylvania Army National Guard performing security functions around the perimeter of the reservation, Army Reservists inside the camp dealt with the many families and single persons seeking asylum in the United States. While the duty did not have strict relevance to the group's war time mission, the Army Reserve ability to employ its person to person capabilities made their employment effective.

DEALING WITH WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

As opposed to dealing with natural disasters occurring in the states and territories where the National Guard is the normal responder, in incidents involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD), both the Army Reserve and Army National Guard have key roles to play. While there no such disasters have to date taken place, organizing and training for such occurrences is an on-going process. Here state and territory boundaries become irrelevant as destruction is anticipated to be wide spread over a large area.

A national military structure is in place to deal quickly and effectively with such a WMD disaster. The structure is closely tied to an extensive civilian response based on the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) which has subordinate command and control nodes in ten nationwide regions. FEMA, for example, responded on a large scale most recently in providing direction and assets to the victims of last year's Hurricane Sandy. Matched with each FEMA region which consists of one or more states and territories is a Homeland Response Force (HRF) of some 566 personnel of whom 150 are full time Guardsmen drawn from the various states in the particular region. Their function is to provide command and control of other response organizations in the region. The HRF also is responsible for immediate live-saving responses and site security. It has the capability of its advance teams responding to an incident within six hours and the main body within twelve hours.

The HRF is guided in responding to an incident by Weapons of Mass Destruction – Civil Support Teams (WMD-CST) of which there are 57 in the country. The WMD-CSTs report to the HRF which provides the over arching direction of the incident response. Their function is to identify chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear substances. They have an assessment role as well as advising incident commanders on response measures. They are also available to assist in making requests for follow-on action.

As first responders, each state has at least one WMD –CST made up of full time Air and Army National Guardsmen who are capable of deploying within ninety minutes of an incident. An example of such a team is the 22 member 45th WMD-CST commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Brown of the Tennessee National Guard. In July and August 2012, with the 45th WMD-CST as the lead key element, some 9,000 civilian and military service personnel took part in training Exercise Vibrant Response under the direction of U.S. Northern Command led by U. S. Army North.

The 45th as the lead responding team had the responsibility to evaluate the extent of the simulated nuclear disaster. It was followed into action by a Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear High Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Package of which there are 17 nationwide and drawn from state Army and Air National Guardsmen. The package is manned by 186 specially trained personnel who are capable of arriving within six hours. Based on WMD-CST assessment the members of the package form a medical triage team, a decontamination team, and fatality search and recovery team.

BORDER SECURITY

A third aspect of homeland defense and security which involves both the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard is assisting the securing of the nation's southern border from the intrusion of illegal immigrants and drug dealers from Mexico and other countries south of the United States border. The Army Reserve participates during periods of annual training with construction and maintenance of border barriers such as fences and walls to prevent illegals crossing into the United States. Army Reserve soldiers, however, are prohibited by law from making apprehensions whereas Guardsmen, under state control, are not so restricted although they have not participated in apprehension proceedings. The forces involved in border security missions therefore work closely with the federal civilian border control personnel in a support and surveillance role.

The major National Guard effort began in June 2006 with Operation Jump Start and lasted until July 2008. Then President George W. Bush deployed six thousand Guardsmen to the southwest border states. Their task was to assist the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency in illegal entry identification and build security fences, towers, and roads. The assistance given by the troops had a major impact on the ability of the CBP to perform its apprehension mission along the 1,952 mile United States border with Mexico. But it became obvious within two years that additional help would have to be given the civilian authorities in securing the states' borders and deterring illegal border crossings.

A National Guard contingent of some 1200 Army and Air National Guardsmen were therefore again called upon to perform service on the southern borders of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in June 2010. This deployment known as Operation Phalanx conducted by Task Force Sierra is on going until at least January 2014. The task force's employment quickly brought results. For example, as early as on 18 October 2010 there was a 17 percent drop in arrests made by the CBP. The drop was a strong indication that increased law enforcement activities were effective in discouraging illegal border crossing.

During the deployments the Guardsmen have been, and are, employing increasingly more effective state of the art technology in detection operations. In 2013, three hundred Guardsmen, working in small teams of one to four individuals are using such equipment as mobile radar trucks, manned aerial observation craft, photo imagery, elaborate communications systems, and infra-red night detection devices to identify those persons attempting to cross into the United States. It is anticipated that even more sophisticated surveillance means such unmanned aerial vehicles will be in the future mix of deployed identification equipment.

THE PRIMARY ROLE

While the small professional Austrian Army between the world wars was the lead element in securing its national borders and being first responders in natural disaster incidents, the primary military ground role in performing such functions in the United States has rested, and still does, with the reserve components of the U.S. Army. Of the two components, the Army National Guard is the most significant element, especially when it comes to state specific natural disaster incidents. The Army Reserve, on the other hand, is constrained by law from being first on the scene of both natural disasters and weapons of mass destruction incidents. Nevertheless, both army reserve components, through USNORTHCOM, are available for deployment as the need arises. While natural disruptive incidents and illegal border crossings are daily real world happenings, great efforts are currently being made to prevent weapons of mass destruction from being employed. To be sure, in the event major natural or WMD disasters should be visited upon the United States, it is the U.S. Army's reserve components, the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, which stand at the forefront of those which will swiftly answer the call to action.

