

Advance Questions for
Thomas Forrest Hall

Defense Reforms

Almost 15 years have passed since the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Special Operations reforms.

Do you support full implementation of these defense reforms?

Yes, I support the implementation of the defense reforms.

What is your view of the extent to which these defense reforms have been implemented?

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 enhanced our overall readiness and warfighting capacity. The clear chain of command from the unified and specified combatant commands through the Secretary of Defense to the President has greatly improved both the efficiency of the system and the decision-making process. The reforms have strengthened the chain of command and improved the ability to execute joint operations, improved communication, and integrated planning and interoperability.

What do you consider to be the most important aspects of these defense reforms?

Clearly, the goals in section three are the most important aspects of these defense reforms. Each of the goals has enabled the Department of Defense to perform more efficiently, allow increased flexibility, and carry out assigned responsibilities.

The goals of the Congress in enacting these defense reforms, as reflected in section 3 of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act, can be summarized as strengthening civilian control; improving military advice; placing clear responsibility on the combatant commanders for the accomplishment of their missions; ensuring the authority of the combatant commanders is commensurate with their responsibility; increasing attention to the formulation of strategy and to contingency planning; providing for more efficient use of defense resources; and enhancing the effectiveness of military operations and improving the management and administration of the Department of Defense.

Do you agree with these goals?

Yes, I support the goals of the Congress in enacting the reforms of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation.

Recently, there have been articles which indicate an interest within the Department of Defense in modifying Goldwater-Nichols in light of the changing environment and possible revisions to the national strategy.

Do you anticipate that legislative proposals to amend Goldwater-Nichols may be appropriate? If so, what areas do you believe it might be appropriate to address in these proposals?

I do not personally know of any plan to modify Goldwater-Nichols, nor do I have any opinion that it should be modified. Therefore I have no proposals to submit or discuss.

Duties

What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs?

If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary, I will perform those duties as stated in law (Title 10 USC Sec 138) and DoD directive 5125.1, "Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs." I will perform as... "the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense for Reserve component matters in the Department of Defense." I will be responsible for overall supervision of all Reserve component affairs in the Department of Defense.

What background and experience do you possess that you believe qualifies you to perform these duties?

I successfully completed 34 plus years in the Navy, was the Deputy Director of the Naval Reserve, and later the Chief, Naval Reserve and have had ten plus years' experience with Reserve component matters. While Chief, Naval Reserve, I developed close working relationships with the Chiefs of the other Reserve components. As the Executive Director of the Naval Reserve Association, I have also worked closely with all members of the Military Coalition, and have developed an understanding of the relevant issues.

Do you believe that there are actions you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs?

If confirmed, I intend to travel widely, as I did as Chief of the Naval Reserve, and talk to those Guard and Reserve members "on the ground," whether deployed or at home station. I also intend to seek advice and counsel from my peers, and from others to gain perspectives that I might not have, focusing on the total force, mobilization, de-mobilization, readiness and training.

Assuming you are confirmed, what duties and functions do you expect that the Secretary of Defense would prescribe for you?

I've already mentioned those duties prescribed in law and regulation and I would assume like all other positions I've held, there will be "other duties as assigned," and I will perform those to the best of my ability.

In carrying out your duties, how will you work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Commander in Chief of Northern Command, the Assistant Secretaries in the military departments who are responsible for Reserve Affairs, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Chiefs of Reserves of each of the Services, the Assistants to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Guard and Reserve Matters, and the Reserve Forces Policy Board?

If confirmed, I intend to work within the P&R framework, as I will report directly to Dr. Chu. The full range of NORTHCOM's responsibilities are still in development, but I will work through the chain of command within the Department to ensure Guard and Reserve matters are dealt with successfully. The office has monthly information interchange meetings with the Reserve Component Chiefs now, and I would certainly continue those meetings. The JCS Assistants and the RFPB are represented in those monthly meetings. I would also consult with the Service Assistant Secretaries for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to ensure our mutual interests are covered.

Major Challenges and Problems

In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs?

I believe the most pressing issue is the current mobilization and the follow-on demobilization of the Guard and Reserve personnel involved in all the various operations. The continued use of the Guard and Reserve in the current partial mobilization as well as other contingency operations and Presidential Recalls and their impact on families and employers, is probably the major challenge I'll face.

Assuming you are confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?

I intend to work with all interested and affected parties, acknowledge the challenges, address their concerns and work toward successful solutions.

What do you consider to be the most serious problems in the performance of the functions of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs?

I know of no serious problems in the performance of those functions. I see a very professional staff that acts in the best interest of the Total Force and national defense.

If confirmed, what management actions and time lines would you establish to address these problems?

I intend to be both vigilant and proactive in addressing any problems I might encounter now or in the future.

Priorities

If confirmed, what broad priorities will you establish in terms of issues which must be addressed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs?

I believe that the major challenges and issues listed above will drive the priorities that I will set, if confirmed. I am aware of the Active Component/Reserve Component Comprehensive Force-Mix Review that Reserve Affairs is conducting, and would certainly see it through to a successful completion. In addition, there are compensation, health care, accessibility, and other Reserve component-related studies that must be reviewed and I intend to follow through there also.

Recruiting and Retention

Some have expressed concern that the current mobilization of Reserve Component members for lengthy deployments will have an adverse effect on retention in the Reserve Components.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to enhance retention of experienced members of the Reserve Components?

While similar concerns were expressed during the Persian Gulf crisis, Reserve component retention has remained quite stable over the last 15 years. I believe appropriate, meaningful use of Reserve members will have a positive effect on retention. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that we use our dedicated Reserve component members appropriately; that we offer meaningful, quality training; that adequate incentives are available to allow us to retain skilled individuals; and that we strengthen our connection with the families and employers of our Reservists to minimize the personal and financial impacts of using the Reserve components.

Historically, the Reserve Components have successfully recruited prior service personnel as they leave active duty. With the downsizing of our active duty forces, the pool of prior service personnel is shrinking. Additionally, service members who have been held on active duty because of “Stop-loss” may be less interested in continuing service in the Reserve Components when they are finally released from active duty.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to assist the recruiting efforts of the Reserve Components?

I know the Department has a number of ongoing force integration initiatives that may enhance the ability of the Reserve components to attract personnel separating from the Active component. It is important to continue efforts to facilitate the transition from Active to Reserve service. We need to ensure adequate incentives are available to retain our valuable trained human resources. Also, I intend to work with the Reserve components to ensure that high quality non-prior service personnel continue to be recruited. One area in which I believe we may be able to focus more effort is in the college market.

Use of Guard and Reserves

Today's total force concept relies heavily on National Guard and Reserve forces for both day to day and contingency operations. The role of the reserves is so integral in the total force that military operations involving major, extended missions are required to include reserve participation. Members of the National Guard and Reserve forces are performing more and more duties that have been traditionally performed by active duty forces.

In your view, is such extensive use of National Guard and Reserve personnel for duties that have historically been performed by members of the active components appropriate?

In my view, the use of the Reserve components has continued to evolve since the advent of the All-Volunteer Force and the Total Force Policy of the early 1970s. It is clear that the Reserve components are no longer just a force in reserve, but are involved in military operations at many levels. The Department's recent Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) emphasized that "DoD will continue to rely on the Reserve components forces." This seems to me to be both necessary and appropriate.

Do you see a need to change the legal authorities used to order members of the Reserve Components to active duty?

From my vantage point it would seem that this mobilization was far more successful than the last one in which I was involved (Desert Shield/Desert Storm). The Department has nearly six months of effort expended on the Active Component/Reserve Component Comprehensive Force-Mix Review. It is important to consider the results of this review, which will examine Reserve component roles and missions and force mix. If confirmed, I intend to review the study thoroughly before recommending any changes to existing legal authorities

If confirmed, what actions will you take to enhance the support of civilian employers of members of the Guard and Reserves?

While the use of the Reserve components has increased significantly over the past decade and a half, we have only anecdotal evidence that indicates there might be a problem with employer support of the Guard and Reserve. I intend to make every effort to strengthen the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and to foster better communications with employers, in order to capture more thorough and timely information on reservist-employer issues and on the attitudes and concerns of employers toward participation of their employees in the Guard and Reserve.

Homeland Security

The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century (Hart-Rudman Commission) report on homeland security recommended that the National Guard be given homeland security as a primary mission.

What do you see as the appropriate role of the National Guard in homeland security?

The use of the National Guard to respond to domestic threats is well founded in law and history. I believe the National Guard would have to play a major role in any homeland security effort. I don't think this should be termed a "primary mission," but rather an additional or ongoing mission.

How would this affect the use of the National Guard for overseas missions?

I believe the National Guard should continue to participate in the full range of missions that are currently assigned to the United States military forces.

Employment of Full Time Support Personnel

Under current National Guard Bureau and Department of the Army guidance, National Guard Title 32, Active Guard and Reserve soldiers providing full time support are prohibited from performing state active duty missions even in emergencies or disaster situations. On occasion, this can deny an important resource, e.g., aviation capability, to a state Governor in need of assistance.

Do you think that, as a matter of policy, AGR members should be prohibited in all cases from performing state active duty missions?

I believe the balance between federal and state missions of the National Guard has worked well over the years. I am not fully conversant with the authorities surrounding Title 32 and the case law involved. Therefore, I feel uncomfortable commenting on this issue until I have a chance to study and be briefed on the legal aspects of the question before making any definitive statements.

Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe such use should be authorized?

Certainly, AGR members should be employed with the National Guard unit they are assigned to support. Other circumstances may derive from the Guard's role in homeland security and homeland defense as a result of the September 11 attacks, but I have not had an opportunity to fully evaluate the impact of the Global War on Terrorism on the role of the National Guard. Again, I need to defer until I have some knowledge based on the analysis that the General Counsel could provide me, if I am confirmed.

STARBASE Program

One of the key recommendations from the Secretary of Defense's Defense Strategy Review is to engage the American public by expanding citizenship and community outreach programs. The Department of Defense STARBASE program is a very effective community outreach program that exposes youth, parents, and teachers to the value of military service. It currently operates at 39 locations associated with active, guard, and reserve commands throughout the United States.

What are your views about the STARBASE Program?

The STARBASE program provides an excellent opportunity for youth within the community to participate in a variety of learning experiences designed to increase interest in and knowledge of math, science and technology. These activities also help students to develop positive self-esteem, focus on setting and achieving personal goals, and develop a drug free life-style.

Do you believe that Guard and Reserve personnel should be involved in the STARBASE program?

Yes. I believe that the unique position that the Guard and Reserve have as the hometown force of the Department of Defense creates the opportunity to give back to the local community through programs such as STARBASE. It should also be noted that several active duty installations have a STARBASE program that adds value and enhances the relationships between the military and the local community.

Do you believe that it is appropriate to fund this Program through the Department of Defense budget?

I believe that the current funding approach is working well. The STARBASE program supports the Department of Defense outreach efforts to actively engage students in applied science and math through real-world applications.

National Guard Youth Challenge Program

In 1993, the National Guard, as part of their community mission, established the Youth Challenge Program to help at-risk youth improve their life skills, education levels, and employment potential. In 1998, the federal share of funding for this program was reduced to 75%, with a subsequent annual decrease of five percent each year through 2001, so that the federal share is now 60%. Advocates for Youth Challenge have urged restoration of the 75% federal and 25% state cost sharing for this program in order to increase the number of youths who are able to participate and to facilitate more states offering programs.

What are your views about the National Guard Youth Challenge Program?

The National Guard Youth Challenge Program is an outstanding community-based program that leads, trains and mentors at-risk youth so that they may become productive citizens in America's future.

Do you believe this Program should be funded through the Department of Defense budget, or through some other means?

I feel that the current funding approach is working well. This enables the Department to ensure the money is applied to the program as the Congress intended. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs provides oversight of the execution of the program.

What is your recommendation about the appropriate level of federal (versus state) funding of this program?

I am aware of proposed legislation to change the state matching funds requirements. If confirmed, I intend to review the funding of the Challenge program.

Reserve End Strength

As Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Naval Reserve Association you have been a strong critic of reductions in end strength for the Naval Reserve.

Do you believe the current end strengths for the National Guard and Reserve are adequate for the missions they are assigned?

I do believe that the National Guard and Reserve are being tasked quite heavily, at the current time, to support Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle, and other operational and peacekeeping commitments. The ongoing Active Component/Reserve Component Comprehensive Force-Mix Review should provide greater insight into the best use of the Reserve forces needed to accomplish future commitments.

Pay and Benefits

Are the pay and benefits for reserve personnel appropriate for the types of service they provide?

In general, yes. However, in light of the increased use of Reserve component members to accomplish Service missions, and in keeping with the Total Force goals of parity in all areas, I plan to continue the ongoing review of various pays and benefits to determine whether any change is needed, if confirmed.

Would you recommend any changes to reserve personnel compensation policies and statutes?

While I do not have any to recommend today, I will continue the current initiatives designed to more closely align Active and Reserve component compensation. If confirmed, I plan to look closely at special and incentive pays, retired pay, and allowances for housing and travel.

Selected Reserve Montgomery GI Bill

Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB) educational benefits for members of the Selected Reserve under chapter 1606 of Title 10, United States Code, are an important recruiting and retention incentive. However, the level of the monthly benefit has not risen proportionately over time with that of MGIB benefits payable to eligible veterans under chapter 30 of Title 38, United States Code.

What is your view of the adequacy of the current monthly benefit levels under the Selected Reserve MGIB?

It is my understanding that the Reserve components are meeting their end strength objectives and that the MGIB – Selected Reserve has been one of the most effective recruiting and retention tools available. While I am aware that there are some differences between the Active and Reserve programs, I would want to look very closely at the effectiveness of current benefits and do a cost-benefit analysis before recommending any change.

Would you recommend any changes to this program?

I believe that extending the period of eligibility for the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve from the current 10-year period may merit consideration.

Health Care for Reservists

Members of the Reserve and National Guard who are called to active duty under Executive Order 13223 in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks are eligible

for the same health care and dental benefits under TRICARE as other active duty service members. In addition, the Department has offered newly enhanced health benefits for activated Reservists' families under a demonstration program which waives deductibles, provides authority for higher payment rates, and waives the requirement to obtain a non-availability statement for inpatient care. This demonstration program seems to go a long way toward eliminating problems experienced by members of the Reserve Components in transitioning from a civilian health care plan to TRICARE and back.

What are your views on the adequacy of reserve health care? Do you have any suggestions for improving continuity of care for reserve members and their families?

For the Reserve component member, I believe two of the most important considerations in determining adequacy of Reserve health care are the degree to which our Reserve component members are medically ready for mobilization and deployment, and the extent to which they are provided adequate protections and required treatment, in the event of injury, illness or disease while serving on duty. Adequate health care is one of the hot topics concerning families and their quality of life. I know the Congress has addressed health care needs and I appreciate that the TRICARE Demonstration Project initiated during the current national emergency provides considerable flexibility for families of mobilized Guardsmen and Reservists to remain under their civilian health care provider. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing these types of initiatives.

Equipping the National Guard and Reserve

Position papers available from the Naval Reserve Association indicate that the Services are not adequately addressing Reserve Component requirements in their budget requests. Unfunded equipment and training requirements lists, analogous to those of the active forces, have been compiled by the Reserve Components. In addition, the Naval Reserve Association has called for independent advocacy to "educate and assist Congress in identifying and funding the real requirements of the Naval Reserve and other Reserve Components."

What are your personal views about the adequacy of the programming and budgeting process as it pertains to the Reserve Components?

During each programming and budget process, it's the job of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs to review the Services' budget submissions to determine the adequacy of their support to Guard and Reserve requirements. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing that oversight and review process and making recommendations for change when necessary.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the modernization and recapitalization of the equipments needs of the Reserve Components are being addressed in the DoD budget process?

I believe the budget process works to fund the most critical priorities. The Services have made progress in establishing equipment requirements that are equitable across all components—Active and Reserve. However, the challenge is to continue that progress. If confirmed, I intend to work actively with the Services, DoD staff, Guard and Reserve components to ensure the Reserve components are equipped to do the missions we assign them.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress?

Yes.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs?

Yes.

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate Committees?

Yes.