Past as Prologue

The Guard, Desert Storm, and War on Terrorism

by

Gregory A. Pickell
As the 1990s drew to a close, the leadership of the National Guard could look back with a mixture of surprise and satisfaction. In an irony not lost on these leaders, the end of the Cold War had brought with it an operational tempo rarely seen in the peacetime history of the organization. Beginning with Desert Storm and following up with peacekeeping operations around the world, the Guard in the 1990s found itself increasingly involved in a rapidly evolving strategic environment. Just as significant was an increasing domestic op tempo, which saw Guard soldiers take on new and diverse roles including border security and consequence management planning for potential Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) attacks.

With the 1990s as a training ground of sorts, the events of September 11th, 2000 found the Guard better positioned to play a key role in maintaining National Security than many would have believed possible. In addition to its efforts in fielding WMD Civil Support Teams, the Guard possessed built-in advantages that placed it on the front line of the War on Terror. With its community-based force, the Guard was ideally positioned to provide security for critical infrastructure on short notice. The Guard's connection with State civilian leaders meant that it was not only available it was trusted. In a host of ways, large and small, the events following the September 11th attacks vindicated the direction taken by the Guard in the last decade of the 20th century.

Even as the mission requirements of the War on Terror validate the Guard and its mission, however, one lurking challenge has gone virtually unheeded. Unit mobilization for a Major Theater War, still ostensibly the primary mission of the Guard, has been virtually overlooked in the rush to resolve individual and small unit mobilization issues following the September 11th attacks. This oversight comes with consequences potentially far more severe than the bureaucratic snafus associated with the Homeland Security mobilizations. If the U.S commits its conventional forces to battle against the nation-state supporters of terror, a large-scale mobilization of Reserve Component forces is inevitable. Unfortunately, the data suggests that the Guard and the Army are ill prepared for the challenge.
This study examines the current state of the Army National Guard as it pertains to the mobilization of combat maneuver units in support of a Major Theater War somewhere in the world. Using the Desert Storm mobilization and environment as a point of departure, this study concludes:

- The AC/ARNG relationship has never fully recovered from the events of 1990-1991
- This dysfunctional relationship manifests itself in a variety of ways in today's mobilization readiness environment

**Background**

In the days immediately following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, relations between the Army National Guard and the Active Component seemed better in many ways than ever before. Guard Combat Support and Service Support units mobilized quickly and deployed to the region with minimal difficulty, playing a vital role in the U.S. build-up. Though the Guard's round-out combat brigades were not initially mobilized, their activation was expected in the very short term.

Guard combat units waited months for their marching orders, and when they were mobilized the deck was quickly stacked against them by Service policy. In his 1996 article, “The Army’s Deployment Deception”, Retired Colonel Delk said, "the NTC staff was told that it was important to show why the roundout concept was not feasible". This was accomplished over the course of three months, as these units struggled to meet constantly increasing AC expectations. Of the three ARNG maneuver brigades mobilized for Desert Storm, only the 96th from Georgia was ever declared combat ready, and none was deployed overseas.

In the months following the end of the Gulf War, the Army was faced with a need to take action in the wake of the demonstrated failure of the ARNG combat brigade
mobilization process. Incapable of accepting that it had created the failure in the first place, the Army seized upon the failure of the brigades to achieve validation of pre-mobilization training activities as the problem. They then identified a structural relationship - the roundout brigades - as the symptom. In fact, elimination of the roundout brigades, taken in order to 'fix' the mobilization problem, actually represented the first step on a path that leads directly to today's dysfunctional mobilization system.

Having identified the roundout brigades as the source of the mobilization problem, the Army searched for answers. The solution was the creation of Training Support Brigades and Battalions, staffed and led by Active Component personnel. These TSBs and TSBNs were tasked with monitoring and validating the Guard brigade's pre-mobilization readiness activities prior to arrival at the mobilization station. The theory went that, with pre-mobilization validation by AC officers, officials at the mobilization stations would be more likely to accept these activities as validated. In fact, this theory was not reflected in practice. The Army did far more harm than good in its attempts to rectify its perceived mobilization problem.

**Mobilization Readiness Today**

The elimination of the Roundout Brigades has manifested itself in a variety of negative ways. First, elimination of the roundout brigade relationships severed the integrated training and mobilization support relationships that existed between the Guard brigades and their AC parent divisions. In the absence of this connectivity, the Guard brigades have fallen back on existing regulations and the newly created TSBs and TSBNs, with generally negative results. Lacking the support of a parent division, Guard units mobilized in support of recent contingencies have received little if any credit for extensive pre-mobilization training and readiness activities. Finally, lacking a single source for higher headquarters command and control, Guard units arriving at mobilization stations are subject to a myriad of often unnecessary training and reporting requirements as they attempt to prepare for deployment.
The first and most severe manifestation of the roundout brigades’ demise was the elimination, at a stroke, of training and readiness support relationships that had developed over years of effort. Guard roundout brigade leaders routinely attended Divisional Quarterly Training Briefings (QTB), Annual Training Conferences and a host of related activities in the same manner as did members of the parent division’s AC brigades. Apportionment of training facilities, troop billets, and other resources for training and mobilization was conducted based on a unified divisional plan. In short, Guard brigade leaders were included in their parent divisional planning processes as a matter of course.

The elimination of the roundout brigade approach created a relational void which the newly minted TSBs and TSBNs were unable to completely fill. Lacking the comprehensive training and mobilization guidance that only a bona fida divisional headquarters can provide, the Guard roundout brigades, now christened enhanced Separate Brigades (eSB), fell back upon existing Forces Command regulations. The TSBs and TSBNs, lacking the context provided by a war-traced AC division, also fell back on the limited guidance provided by available regulations. The primary regulation for mobilization of the eSBs is FORSCOM Regulation 500-3, or FORMDEPS.

Unfortunately, while FORMDEPS was and is exhaustive in its mobilization guidance, its creation in the roundout era meant that it fell short of meeting the needs of the eSBs in several crucial respects. Most importantly, the regulation stipulates that Guard units coordinate with their assigned mobilization stations once every three years. Though it is not known where the three year requirement originated, it is reasonable to assume that the framers of this document, recognizing the close relationship between the Guard roundout brigades and their parent divisions, saw no reason to codify a more stringent relationship. The functional result, unfortunately, is a virtual non-relationship between most Guard eSBs and the mobilization stations tasked to prepare them for war.

The negative impact resulting from the three year FORMDEPSs coordination requirement would be difficult to overstate. In a mobilization environment in which constant coordination between state, brigades and the mobilization station officials is
critical, many Guard Brigade leaders are barely familiar with their opposite numbers at the mobilization sites and some have never even met their opposite numbers. Worse, the triennial meetings stipulated in FORMDEPS require familiarization activities only; no detailed planning or coordination takes place during these infrequent forums\(^3\). In a very real sense, the elimination of the roundout brigades and the use of existing regulations has largely destroyed meaningful coordination between guard combat units and those assigned to mobilize them.

In view of the non-functional mobilization relationship between the Guard eSBs and their designated mobilization sites, it comes as little surprise that the centerpiece of the post-mobilization process, the Post-Mobilization Training Support Requirements (PTSR) process, is equally dysfunctional. Guard brigade leaders across the force place little faith in the effectiveness of the PTSR, which is designed to provide mobilization stations with Guard brigade requirements upon their arrival in the event of a mobilization. In a perverse testimony to the professionalism of the eSB leaders, most units continue to submit PTSR documentation to their respective mobilization stations despite the knowledge that these requirements will never be coordinated or even acknowledged.

Finally, the lack of eSB coordination with the mobilization station and the failure of the PTSR process combine with the lack of an AC parent organization to all but eliminate credit for pre-mobilization training conducted at home station. The situation is exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of the TSBs and TSBns, which are severely limited in their ability to force validation of eSB training activities by mobilization station officials. In essence, because there is no AC divisional 'ownership' of the eSBs during the post-mobilization validation phase, there is no incentive for mobilization station officials to accept pre-mobilization activities as valid. Not surprisingly, few if any eSB officials believe that any of their pre-mob activities will be accepted as valid when they arrive at the mobilization station; most fully expect that they will be required to revalidate all required training activities following arrival. This, of course, brings into question the validity of pre-mobilization training activities generally.
While the loss of connectivity between the brigades and their mobilization stations is ominous, fallout from the roundout brigades’ debacle does not end there. The elimination of the integrated Command and Control (C2) that accompanied the roundout brigade relationships means that Guard units arriving at their mobilization stations are now subject to a vast array of uncontrolled post-mobilization training and reporting requirements. One brigade, mobilizing for a Stabilization Force (SFOR) rotation in Bosnia, found itself reporting the same training data to as many as six different agencies. Adding to the confusion were training requirements, many either superfluous or outdated, which streamed in to the brigade from all directions. These excessive reporting requirements and unnecessary training validation tasks can be attributed in large part to the absence of an identified higher headquarters G-3, which would typically field these requirements.

In summary, the loss of the roundout brigades has created a disconnect in the coordination process designed to facilitate these units' mobilization. With the TSBs and TSBns unable to force acceptance of pre-mobilization activities by the mobilization stations and the loss of higher headquarters C2 at the mobilization sites, the mobilization process today is in considerable disarray. ESBs mobilization in support of the War on Terror can expect to receive little if any pre-mobilization guidance or post-mobilization validation. Ironically, the only argument favoring a successful mobilization of the eSBs in the near term is the compelling need for these formations in the fight, a motivation absent during the Gulf War.

**A Light at the End of the Tunnel: The Integrated Divisions**

While the current state of combat unit mobilization planning is almost fully non-functional, there exists a construct which provides a ray of light at the end of the tunnel. Though intended only as a general means of achieving improved AC/ARNG integration in general, the advent of the Integrated Divisions represents the greatest hope for a reversal of current mobilization trends. A large volume of evidence suggests that the Integrated Divisions can be quite effective in filling the void left by the loss of the
roundout brigade relationships, though the solution is imperfect. The 90th Brigade provides a look at one manifestation of the new AC/ARNG relationship.

The Case of the 90th Brigade

As recently as 1999, members of the 90th eSB, began preparations for a SFOR rotation in Bosnia. As a part of this effort, these personnel underwent a variety of pre-mobilization readiness activities. Among these activities was dental screening. Though most Guard soldiers view the dental screening process as routine, the presence of the senior dental officials from Headquarters, 7th Infantry Division, was not usual. Not surprisingly, when the 90th eSB traveled to Fort Carson for their mobilization, dental processing went without a hitch.

Later, as the members of the 90th settled into their post-mobilization training routine, a host of competing requirements – some valid, some not – began to flow into Fort Carson. The flow quickly became a torrent of training and reporting requirements readily familiar to most Guard units attempting to prepare for overseas deployments. The similarity ended quickly, however, as the 7th ID G-3 stepped in, decreeing correctly that all candidate training validation requirements pass through that office. This strict policy, entirely in keeping with the 7th ID status as the higher headquarters for the 90th eSB, eliminated significant numbers of unnecessary and conflicting training reports and requirements.

Members of the 90th eSB viewed the activities of the 7th ID and the ease of processing for deployment as a matter of routine, when in fact quite the opposite was true. The case of the 60th eSB mobilizing troops during the same period makes the point.

The Case of the 60th Brigade

In late 1999, members of the 60th eSB were notified of their upcoming participation in the SFOR 8 rotation. In attempting to be as prepared as possible, unit personnel slated
for deployment arranged for dental screening to be conducted by dental personnel at Fort Bragg. This screening having been successfully completed, unit personnel proceeded to the mobilization station at Fort Stewart, Georgia. To their surprise, Fort Stewart dental personnel rejected the screening conducted by Fort Bragg personnel and re-screened all unit members. Stewart dental personnel then generated a wholly new standard for dental readiness; one that required as many as six tooth extractions from a single service member.

Delayed significantly by the dental issue, brigade personnel began their post-mobilization training, only to find that none of their pre-mobilization training activities were accepted by mobilization station officials. Unit personnel were even required to view an environmental awareness video that all of the soldiers had previously viewed at their home station. Arguments by mobilization station officials that training validation documentation did not apply to filler personnel suggests a double standard in deployment; AC units training for overseas deployment are not scrutinized in the same fashion. In the end, the 60th eSB units were required to re-validate many training events, despite the fact that the vast majority of unit personnel were needlessly repeating the training.

**Flies in the Ointment**

While the Integrated Divisions may provide solutions to the current dysfunctional state of affairs in the mobilization world, there are drawbacks. In the case of the 60th Brigade, as well as the 96th eSB, each of these two units confronted significant challenges during their mobilization processes despite being members of Integrated Divisions. The primary difference between these units and the 90th eSB was both simple and vitally important. In the case of the 90th eSB, the 7th ID Commander was also the Fort Carson mobilization station Commander. Both the 60th and the 96th Brigades mobilized at Fort Stewart, which was not controlled by their parent 24th Infantry Division. Because they had no means to control mobilization activities, 24th ID personnel were unable to significantly assist members of either the 96th or the 60th Brigades in their mobilization.
activities. Indeed, the presence of the 24th's forward headquarters personnel on Fort Stewart actually added to the problems encountered by these units by creating two additional reporting agencies (Division Forward at Fort Jackson South Carolina and Division Main at Fort Riley).

While the pitfalls of mobilizing at bases not controlled by the parent Integrated Division have been demonstrated, an even greater potential problem involves obtaining the appropriate synergy between the AC and ARNG commanders involved. If, for example, an AC Integrated Division Commander fails to appreciate the unique relationship of the Governor and the STARC in the training and resourcing of the eSBs, the chance for a successful relationship is slim. Similarly, if the Adjutant General and other State leaders do not fully appreciate the advantages the Integrated Division brings to the table, these advantages will almost certainly not be realized. In short, integration of State and Divisional leadership must occur before the eSBs can fully benefit from the new relationship.

The implications of the eSB experiences in recent mobilization activities and in the sensitive realm of personal synergies are clear. In order to fulfill the potential demonstrated by the 90th eSB experience, Integrated Divisional eSBs must mobilize at posts controlled by their higher headquarters, even if the Integrated Divisional mobilization station is farther away. Recognizing this, 60th Brigade is attempting to change its mobilization station from Fort Bragg, NC to Fort Riley Kansas, home of the 24th ID Headquarters; this despite the fact that Fort Bragg is virtually next door to 60th Brigade Headquarters. Confirmation of the wisdom of this approach comes from the 90th Brigade, which recently switched from Fort Sill to Fort Carson as its mobilization station, despite the geographic convenience of Fort Sill as a mobilization site. The experience of 90th eSB personnel during their SFOR mobilization strongly supports the wisdom of this approach.
Conclusions/Recommendation

The challenges witnessed in recent combat unit mobilization activities suggest that the damage done to the AC/ARNG relationship in the wake of the Gulf War has been far greater and longer lasting than previously realized. The elimination of the roundout brigades and the integrated training and mobilization readiness relationships that went with them have had a disastrous effect on the ability of the Guard to effectively execute its primary Federal mission. If the War on Terror requires the mobilization of ARNG combat units, the process will be difficult, inefficient, and enormously frustrating to all parties involved. Ultimately, the inability to quickly and efficiently mobilize ARNG combat brigades could adversely impact the ability of the Army to rapidly achieve victory on the ground. Though victory would still be the likely result, it could come at greater cost in time and in the lives of U.S. soldiers on the ground.

This need not be the case. The essence of the roundout concept – the close working relationship between a gaining AC division and a mobilizing ARNG brigade, has been realized once again in the Integrated Divisions. Though not a perfect solution, the Integrated Divisions provide a model for use by most or all of the enhanced Separate Brigades. One potential solution to the current dysfunctional state of affairs would be 15 eSBs assigned to five AC Integrated Divisional Headquarters, whose very existence is inextricably tied to the eSBs they support. The result, assuming the lessons of the 96th and 60th eSBs are heeded, would be eSB mobilizations on posts dedicated to the processing of these units, with oversight by a Divisional Headquarters prepared to deconflict the myriad of training requirements that accompany any large scale mobilization. Though far from easy, a shift to an eSB structure with AC Integrated Divisional oversight is the only realistic solutions to the current state of affairs. It is a solution that must be implemented in the near term. Time is running short and lives are at stake.

In one notable example of this dysfunctional state of affairs, one Bosnia bound brigade was saddled with requirements from U.S. Army Europe, which lacked any jurisdiction. Worse, state-side training support personnel fell back on Implementation Force (IFOR) training guidance to fashion a training validation plan, failing to realize that IFOR had not existed for over three years. Appropriate guidance eventually arrived, fittingly enough, from the unit tasked as the brigade’s higher headquarters on the ground in Bosnia – an AC infantry division.

Unit names have been changed where possible in accordance with Army policy. Integrated Divisional names were not altered.

Some Guard officials argue that, because there is no funding for corrective action, dental screening in pre-mobilization is pointless. This is not entirely correct, but it is true in the case of units not scheduled for mobilization in the near term. In other words, crisis dental readiness is funded; routine soldier dental readiness is not.

The difficulty comes not in the designation of these units, but in the logistics associated with the re-designation of unit mobilization stations and the resourcing issues that could result. Additionally, standing up of three additional Integrated Divisions would present tremendous challenges in the current manpower starved environment.