
Sent: Monday, 29 September 2008 13:15
To: White Paper
Subject: WWW Submission: 7. Reserves [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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Submission: Background: I attended the community consultation in Bendigo 17th September. The host of the evening Peter Collins urged me to make a submission based on those discussions. I have served in the Army Reserve from 1991-1997 then again from 2001-2006 as a soldier. I was fortunate enough to be part of A Company 5th /7th Battalion RAR and deployed with AUSBAT VII to East Timor 2002-2003. I served as lead scout and platoon signaller. My view is from the bottom up and subject to the trickle down flow of information.

Submission

Threats are increasing and the ADF must expand to meet these threats. Threats are also likely to be develop and disappear more rapidly than in the past and the ADF will need the capacity to expand equally rapidly to meet those threats whether they be direct threats on Australia, regional threats or as we have seem post-9/11 global threats. The Asia-Pacific region is like to be subject to greater pressure caused by population growth, expanding resource needs of region giants- China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia, growth in power of China and India, global warming and cultural fault line conflicts.

The deployment to East Timor as part of the 5th/7th RAR was the highlight of my reserve service and from my point of view highly successful. Although it was marred by the overwhelming sense of being treated as outsiders, usurpers and second rate defence members. I believe that this must be over come to allow greater integration of reserve and regular forces. It is my belief that the Reserve can and will needed to be a vital part of the ADF providing it with the ability to expand rapidly when required as well as providing a vital link between defence and the community. The Reserve needs a definite role and the ability to be deployed in conjunction with regular forces otherwise it is like training for a game which you never get to play.

The Reserve has many and vital skills which if integrated better can complement the skill and professionalism of the regular forces. These skills include technical and professional training in areas from the trade to information technology. An example of this was at one FOB in East Timor the plumbing and sewage system failed although there was engineering elements present it was two reserve members (plumbers) who directed the repairs and improved the system. We had similar experiences while guarding the Australian Embassy where we were complimented by the embassy staff on the way we dealt with people who we came into contact with on a daily basis in comparison to other elements that had performed the similar role.

The area of conflict between regular and reserve elements held fault on both sides. From my point of view was inflamed and exacerbated by the command elements both reserve and regular and the decision they made concerning A Company. The major problem was that A company was kept as separate as possible this increased the resentment of the regular battalion members as we continued to be an unknown quantity. When we did get to operate with B Company during our deployment both elements worked well together and gained an appreciation of the others abilities strengths and weaknesses. Similar experience occurred when operating with the armoured and engineers elements attached to the battalion.

Returning to the command elements during the pre-deployment and first half of our deployment we perceived the battalion command as viewing us as an unwanted political encumbrance with the right things being said at the right time to the right audience. There was a definite improvement when Col. Lean took over command mid way through the deployment. There were problems, as perceived by the soldiers, with the company command as first was the OC appeared more interested in securing his next position and was given command for political reasons. There was a lack of depth and command experience in the junior officers. This may have been avoided by a greater lead time for the platoon command teams or more careful selection of officers and sergeants' to enhance the leadership of the platoons. The use of regular junior officers may have been a possibility.

The Reserve provides two other vital services; first it has become a fertile ground for recruiting soldiers to the regular forces. Up to a third of the new reserve

soldiers in the unit I was a member of have gone from reserve to regular service; second the reserve should provide a pool of manpower which can and should be regularly used to enhance the capacity and capability of the regular forces. For this to work requires organisational change in the regular and reserve forces. The reserve to be truly useful needs access to the same equipment as regular units. Reserve and regular units need direct links to each other and participate in joint training exercises on a regular basis. Reserve training programs need to be coordinated and supported to enhance linkages with the regular units. One of the reasons I am no longer in the reserve is that on return I was faced with poorer standard equipment, uncoordinated and lack lustre command at subunit level. The transfer between the two elements should be made easier. Reserve conditions will probably need to be changed, employment safe guards improved and the business and employers made more aware of the employer payment assistance scheme. My service and time as a member of the ADF reserve and regular has been extremely positive and beneficial. I believe the ADF will have an increasingly important role in protecting our national interests. It will be subject to rapidly developing and a wide range of threats therefore be required to fulfil an increasing number of deployments. The Reserve and its integration with the regular forces is vital to meeting the future needs of the army and the nation. I am happy to be contacted or provide further information if required.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report