

The Army National Guard and Reserve— Past and Present

By Sergeant Major Charles Barber



The Army National Guard predates the founding of the nation and a standing military by almost a century and a half—making it the oldest component of the United States armed forces. In 1636, the Massachusetts Bay Colony organized America's first permanent militia regiments, among the oldest continuing units in history. Since that time, the Guard has participated in every U.S. conflict from the Pequot War of 1637 to our current deployments.

The Army Reserve traces its origins to the creation of the Medical Reserve Corps in 1908. In 1916, Congress passed the National Defense Act which created the Officers' Reserve Corps, Enlisted Reserve Corps, and Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). In April 1917, after the United States entered World War I, 89,500 officers from the Officers' Reserve Corps participated in the war. About one-third were medical doctors. More than 80,000 soldiers of the Enlisted Reserve Corps served, with 15,000 assigned to medical units.

After the war, the Officers and Enlisted Reserve Corps were combined into the Organized Reserve Corps, a name that lasted into the 1950s. The years between the world wars were austere, with few opportunities for training. An opportunity for service, however, was created during the Great Depression. One of Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), placed young men in barracks and military-styled organizations to work in national forests and other outdoor projects. Between 1933 and 1939, more than 30,000 officers from the Organized Reserve Corps served as commanders or staff officers at the 2,700 CCC camps.

In these times of ever-diminishing resources for the Active Component, the dependence on the Army Reserve is at an all-time high. Today, 70-plus percent of the chemical assets for the total force are comprised of Reserve-Component personnel. The Reserve Component also is capable of deploying in much shorter times than

the old 6 to 8 months required for WWII; it is now "come as you are."

Technology has brought about a faster, smaller world that has become susceptible to threats by terrorists and fanatics who would use almost any means to achieve their goals. This is evident by the use of chemical weapons in Japan and Iraq. Saddam Hussein used them against his own people. These are the most dangerous times in history for the use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States.

The best offense is a strong defense; however, maintaining a strong and ready defense requires a trained and ready force. The Reserve-Component soldiers are training hard to master the skills needed to be ready at a moment's notice, but many positions go unfilled.

The Chemical Corps is a prime factor in the defense of our homeland, but there are not enough assets to fill the need. The loss of any chemical soldier is a serious loss to our nation. As you know, not every soldier can be a chemical soldier; we are specialized, highly intelligent, and highly motivated. Dragon Soldiers are at the forefront of our nation's foreign and domestic defense.

The Reserve Component of the Army needs you to sustain your skills and America's defense by continuing to serve after active service. It only requires one week-end a month and two weeks during the summer of your time. If you have decided to leave active service and would like to find out what is available, go to the Internet and look for <http://www.1800goguard.com/> or <http://www.goarmyreserve.com> to find all the benefits, programs, and opportunities available.

As a member of the Army Reserve Component, you can further your education with the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education Support (DANTES), and distance learning. There are also bonuses for reenlistment, affiliation, and staying in service.