

Senior Officer Professional Military Education as an Equalizer

By JAMES T. CURRIE

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When the congressionally chartered Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR) issued its report in 2008, two of the recommendations that jumped out for many of us who had spent years in the Reserve Components (RCs) were numbers 81 and 84, both of which addressed the need to eliminate cultural differences and prejudices that still exist between Active Component (AC) and RC personnel.¹ Many Reservists said, “It’s about time.” The reaction on the part of at least some members of the AC was different: “What prejudice?”

Indeed, after the report was issued, I engaged my students at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) in discussions on some of its findings, and these discussions, which were totally informal, led me to understand that there remains a cultural divide between AC and RC personnel that will not soon be erased but that changes in law, policy, and procedures would go far toward eliminating. In at least one of the discussions was an Army Reservist who tried to relate to his AC counterparts the difficulty of being a Soldier—which he was to the core of his being—while also trying to pursue a civilian

career. “I wish I could only concentrate on being a Soldier,” he said in effect, “but I work for the Federal Government, and even the most supportive boss is not always totally supportive of what I do for the Army and the time it takes away from my government job.” This individual attended ICAF in a civilian capacity, but his presence in the discussion made all the difference for his fellow students who had not juggled the demands of the combined military-civilian world.

Even after a bracing and sometimes passionate discussion, some of his fellow students from the Active side of the house still did not

National Defense University



Industrial College of the Armed Forces

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National Defense University's joint professional military education program is complemented by research institutes and centers

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National War College



Active, Reserve, and foreign officers receive professional military education at Service war colleges

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fully understand how this individual, who had deployed to Bosnia and then to Iraq within a 10-year period, could maintain that there were cultural prejudices against him and his cohorts in the Reserves. But any of us who have served in the Reserve Components could probably offer quite a list—which I will not attempt to do here. Please bear with me and accept my contention that there are prejudices and allow me to address the issue of how these prejudices and misconceptions can be eliminated.

Changing law and regulation and practice is a start, and one place I would start is with in-residence attendance at senior Service colleges, where future generals and admirals are groomed every year.

Diversity of Opinion

I taught at ICAF for 18 years. Most years there were no more than four to six Reservists in attendance officially, plus about the same number who slipped in as civilians. That is a maximum of a dozen or so RC officers out of over 300 students in attendance at ICAF. Two years ago, the college even had a senior non-commissioned officer (NCO) Army Reservist (E-7) in residence as a civilian, the first time

to anyone's knowledge that an NCO had attended a "war college" in residence.

There are 20 seminars at ICAF, carefully balanced among the Services, though for many years there was a dearth of Marines, such that many seminars were without a USMC presence. The college persisted in badgering the Pentagon and Marine Corps, however, until each seminar had a Marine because the school's leadership saw the value of someone who could express a "Marine point of view"—assuming there is such a thing. ICAF is unique, too, in that it has what are called "industry fellows," whose corporations pay large sums in tuition to the National Defense University so one of their promising executives can get the exposure and education offered by attendance at the 10-month curriculum. Federal law limits the number of such fellows to 10 per class, but the college's leadership is constantly trying to get the law changed so there can be one industry fellow per seminar—just like with the Marines.

ICAF leadership saw immediately and intuitively the value of having a diversity of opinion in each seminar, as represented by a Marine and a fellow from industry, in addition to a good mix from the other Services.

Not so with the Reserves. Time and again, I suggested to the college's leadership that it increase the number of Reservists in residence for the 10-month program. The response was always some variation of "We take who they send us." Well, that is not the way it worked with the Marines—and it is not how the college leadership wants it to work with industry fellows. Only on the Reserve side is there a failure—always on the part of an AC

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or retired AC officer—to see the value of this particular type of diversity in the classroom. And as I read through the Department of Defense (DOD) and Service responses to the CNGR recommendations, this lack of appreciation of the value a Reserve point of view would bring to any discussion came through loud and clear.

For example, instead of addressing the CNGR recommendation to increase

the “fully-funded slots allocated to reserve component officers at the National Defense University, senior war colleges, and 10-week [joint professional military education (JPME)] . . . in-residence course,”² DOD seems to be looking for ways to extend JPME nonresident opportunities for Reservists. While this is admirable, it is also cheap and unresponsive. There is a tremendous difference between residence and nonresidence courses. As any graduate of an in-residence course would testify, one of the most valuable aspects of such a course is the connection among the students as they carpool to class, participate in a free-flowing classroom exchange, or engage in after-class discussion in their study rooms. Such connections build not only knowledge of each other, their components, and their Services, but also confidence in professional competency. Moreover, they contribute to the informal networks that are so valuable when crises occur. In other words, they help eliminate the cultural prejudice between AC and RC.

One of the charts that accompanied the DOD response to this recommendation was especially illuminating. For academic year 2009–2010 (AY09–10) and fiscal year 2009 (FY09), the table indicates the total number of quotas allocated for attendance by the Army at the various colleges and schools and the types and number of individuals filling these quotas.³

Reservists’ Views Needed

As mentioned above, ICAF generally has half a dozen to a dozen Reservists in attendance out of a class of over 300, counting civilian students who are also in the Reserves. The National War College averages two to three Reservists per class, plus perhaps one more who attends in a civilian capacity.⁴ The Air War College does better with 16 or so Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard officers in a given class, plus perhaps 5 to 10 other RC personnel, including civilian students in the Reserves.⁵ As indicated in the table, Air War College also had one person from the Army National Guard in attendance this past year. The AWC Reserve advisor also said that this was the first student from the Army National Guard to attend the Air War College in 7 years.⁶

The Naval War College has a limited number of RC personnel in attendance at its senior Service college (10-month) course. For the past 3 years, the college has enrolled

an average of two Army Reservists and two Marine Corps Reservists per year. This past year (AY10), it also enrolled two Air Force Reservists.⁷

For AY09–10, the Army War College had a larger percentage of Reservists in its resident class than did any other senior Service college, probably because of the large number of Reservists (Army Reserve and Army National Guard) in the total Army

DOD



Reservist testifies before Commission on the National Guard and Reserves

force. In fact, of the 336 students who graduated from the Army War College in-residence program this past year, 43 were members of the Army’s Reserve Components (21 Army Reserve and 22 Army National Guard). In addition, the class contained three members of the Air National Guard, four from the Air Force Reserve, three Navy Reserve, and three Marine Corps Reserve.⁸ With one-sixth of its in-residence class representing the Reserve Components, the Army War College might well be seen as an example for the other senior Service colleges to emulate. One fact that comes through clearly in the table below is

that the Army’s RC officers are given a disproportionately small opportunity to attend one of the senior schools in residence, despite the fact that the Reserve Components make up just over 50 percent of the total Army force.⁹

The National Defense University’s CAPSTONE program for general/flag officers presents problems of a different sort when it comes to RC attendance. The program itself is only 6 weeks long, which largely eliminates, for this author at least, the argument that Reservists cannot attend because they cannot spare the time away from their civilian positions, though the Marine Corps argued to the contrary in its response to CNGR Recommendation 13.¹⁰ The program is roughly split in half, with approximately 51 students attending lectures and discussions together for 3 weeks, then dividing into three equal cohorts and traveling to overseas locations for 3 weeks.

CAPSTONE is not required for RC general officers as it is by Goldwater-Nichols for AC officers. According to informal discussions with individuals who are familiar with the program, the usual CAPSTONE class has 7 or 8 RC personnel in attendance, out of the 51 or so total. Increasing either the number of classes in a year (from four) or increasing the number of students (from 51) is not viewed favorably by those associated with the program. They make the argument that class size cannot increase because of limitations on travel and suggest that the high-level speakers who give their time to CAPSTONE would not want to do more than four such presentations per year. While recognizing somewhat the validity of these arguments, it seems that there is in part an artificiality to these limitations. ICAF and the National War College (NWC), for example, take 300 (ICAF) and over 200

Army Quotas and Attendance at Various Service Colleges

	Quota/Attended		
	Reserves	National Guard	Active
Army War College	17/21	17/23	165/143
National War College	2/2	4/4	37/37
Industrial College of the Armed Forces	1/1	1/2	58/57
Naval War College	1/1	1/1	30/30
Air War College	0/1	0/1	24/22
Marine Corps War College	0/0	0/0	2/3
Joint Advanced Warfighting School	1/1	0/0	4/8
Advanced Joint Professional Military Education	104/63	48/36	0/0
Joint Forces Staff College	0/4	0/15	335/335

(NWC) students and faculty on international travel for 2 weeks each year with minimum logistical problems. It is difficult to believe that there is a hard limitation of 51 or so CAPSTONE students for its version of international travel or for its local Washington, DC, field trips. (Take two buses rather than one.)

Attendance at CAPSTONE affords some of the same opportunities for interaction and confidence-building and prejudice-reduction that in-residence attendance at a senior Service college does, but it is definitely of a more limited nature. That said, if one wished to increase the number of Reservists attending

Components into its course of instruction. While its curriculum does not have a “Reserve 101” section—meaning a basic introduction to the RC as a stand-alone piece—it does even better, incorporating material on the Reserve Components into discussions of homeland security and defense and force generation.¹¹

The Naval War College also incorporates discussion of the Reserve Components into its courses. According to the Dean of Academic Affairs, “We routinely—in multiple contexts—refer to the Reserves in class discussion, resulting in most students leaving with a richer understanding of the strengths and limitations of the Reserve force.” In the course on Joint Military Operations, he stated, “Reserve recall/mobilization and selected capabilities are discussed in general during strategic mobility and operational logistics sessions.” Additionally, the National Security Decision Making course “also refers to the Reserves, as students are required to develop a national military strategy for the outyears.” The Naval War College does not offer an elective course on the Reserve Components.¹²

ICAF, in contrast, does little to integrate material on the Reserve Components into its curriculum. This was brought home vividly a few years ago during a joint ICAF–NWC wargame exercise. The scenario included tens of thousands of Mexicans streaming across the southern U.S. border to escape drug-related violence in Mexico. An AC colonel who was playing the role of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to a question during a mock congressional hearing by stating that she would call out the “Air National Guard” to deal with the refugee problem. Asked whether she intended to strafe the refugees, she exhibited total perplexity, making it clear that she had no idea of the difference between, or respective roles of, the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. Even the RC elective that is sometimes offered at ICAF was generally, if not exclusively, populated with RC students—precisely the individuals who were least in need of such knowledge augmentation.

The National War College does not offer an elective on the Reserve Components, nor does it have any stand-alone section on the Reserves in its core curriculum or incorporate Reserve-focused material.¹³ The Air War College, on the other hand, does offer an RC elective, taught by the Reserve advisor, and controls enrollment so only a limited number of Reservists are allowed in.¹⁴ The Army War

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Secretary Gates addresses students at U.S. Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

Likewise, even if one assumes that the Secretary of State or Director of National Intelligence or a particular four-star commander might not want to offer CAPSTONE more than four time slots per year, it is not a given that every CAPSTONE class must hear from exactly the same individuals at the same political and military level in order to have a successful program. It was my experience sitting in the college auditorium for 18 years and listening to literally dozens of speakers every year that a number two or number three in a department might be more knowledgeable—or at least present a different type of knowledge—than a number one. Indeed, everyone

Air War College student questions Secretary Gates at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

CAPSTONE, the first step would be to identify more joint positions a Reservist could fill. Second would be to pass legislation requiring CAPSTONE attendance for the individuals in these billets. Third would be to increase the program’s carrying capacity, by increasing either the size of the class, its frequency, or some combination thereof.

Calling Out the Air National Guard

Another area where cultural prejudice—or perhaps just lack of information—can be addressed by incorporating material on the Reserve Components into the curriculum of the senior Service colleges. On this topic,

the National Defense University’s CAPSTONE program is only 6 weeks long, which largely eliminates the argument that Reservists cannot spare the time away from their civilian positions

likes to say that the Secretary of Defense spoke to his class at CAPSTONE, but I believe one would be hard pressed to make the case that the class is much less valuable if the Secretary does not show up. I would also venture that on occasion there is a high-level cancellation and that the high-ranking person is not rescheduled. I am confident that such a CAPSTONE class would not be considered a failure.

the colleges have a distinctly mixed record. Though one might assume that learning about the structure, composition, mobilization requirements, and employment of over 900,000 trained military personnel would automatically be a part of the curriculum for a “war college,” this is simply not the case. The Army War College seems to be doing the best job of integrating the Reserve

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College elective, entitled “Reserve Components: Organization, Roles, and Missions,” is also populated by a mix of RC and AC students and is team-taught by officers from the Army Reserve and Army National Guard.¹⁵

In fairness, the core curricula of the various war colleges are full of required materials, covering everything from foundational concepts in the Constitution to strategic thinking to military planning to current operations in Afghanistan. Mandatory curricular requirements are set for the colleges by the Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP), which prescribes the topics that have to be taught for the school to be accredited by the Joint Staff.¹⁶ The document

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is extensive, with specific guidance for each of the senior Service schools. The OPMEP, however, is ultimately created by the colleges themselves, so blaming a lack of curricular emphasis on Reserve matters on the dearth of OPMEP requirements is little more than circular reasoning. The other source of guidance for the colleges is the Chairman’s “Special Areas of Emphasis” (SAE), which are suggested by the Joint Staff and considered by senior Service college faculty at 2-day meetings each summer. In the many years that I was a faculty member at ICAF and sat in on these sessions and voted on proposed SAEs, there was never a suggestion that study of the Reserve Components be an SAE.

Increasing In-Residence Attendance

Another issue not directly addressed by the findings of the commission and the responses from the Services is the type of Reservist sent to senior Service colleges in residence. In my experience, the few RC members sent to senior colleges, whether Federal Reserve or National Guard, were almost always the full-time Active-duty Reservists, rather than troop unit personnel. There was the occasional exception, but at ICAF and NWC, at least, full-time Reservists

were the norm as students.¹⁷ These comments are not intended to cast aspersions on the full-timers, but such Reservists are not usually the individuals who rise to the level of general/flag officer in the Reserve Components. These highest level positions, whether in one of the Federal Reserves or in the National Guard, are almost always filled by drilling, troop unit Reservists, and not by personnel from the ranks of the Army and Air Force’s Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) program or the Navy’s Training and Administration of the Reserves (TAR) program. Given the few billets available for RC personnel to attend these colleges in residence, sending an AGR or TAR to a senior Service college is probably not the most effective use of resources.

In discussions with one of the Chiefs of the Army Reserve (CAR) during the late 1990s, I raised the issue directly. The response from the CAR was that troop program unit (non-full-time) Reservists could not spare the 10 months away from their civilian jobs to attend senior Service colleges. This rationale, of course, has been totally eliminated by the near-constant deployment of Reservists overseas since 9/11 and the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003. The CAR’s rationale is even less persuasive when one considers that in-residence attendance at a senior Service college is a voluntary matter on the part of the officer. If officers do not wish to take 10 months away from their civilian position to attend a senior Service college, there is nothing in law or regulation that could compel them. Credit for senior Service college completion can still be gained through the Army War College’s distance education program, though such an experience does not afford the intangible benefits of in-residence schooling.

As to specific next steps that might be taken, I suggest that focusing on greater Reserve in-residence attendance at senior Service colleges would pay the greatest immediate dividends and would go furthest toward reducing cultural prejudice between AC and RC personnel, while working with the Joint Staff to put RC knowledge into the OPMEP would have the second greatest effect. Increasing attendance of Reservists at CAPSTONE is the third leg of the triangle, but it is of lesser import than the first two.

In my opinion, based on a careful reading of the DOD and Service responses to the CNGR recommendations, as well as my 18 years as a war college faculty member, cultural

prejudice still exists between Active Component and Reserve Component personnel, primarily because of misconceptions about, and misunderstanding of, the RC by the AC. Such cultural prejudice weakens us as a fighting force and should be addressed and eliminated. This country will inevitably continue to rely on its Reserve Components for both homeland defense and overseas assignment for the foreseeable future, and it is critical that we create a Total Force in reality, as well as in theory. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ *Commission on the National Guard and Reserves: Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st Century Operational Force; Final Report to Congress and the Secretary of Defense, January 31, 2008. Recommendations #81 and 84, 331.*

² *Ibid.*, Recommendation #13, 20.

³ Commission on the National Guard and Reserves Implementation Plan, Recommendation #13.

⁴ Email from Mark Pizzo, National War College, to James T. Currie, July 8, 2010. These numbers differ slightly from those in the chart, but they represent averages and not a specific academic year.

⁵ Telephone interview with Colonel John Paul, USAF, Air War College, July 7, 2010.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Email from John F. Garofano, Naval War College, to James T. Currie, July 9, 2010.

⁸ Telephone interview with Colonel James D. Scudieri, USA, U.S. Army War College, July 7, 2010.

⁹ *Army Demographics: FY09 Army Profile* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, September 30, 2009). Army Reserve Components (Army National Guard and Army Reserve) numbered 564,000; the Active Army force was at 549,000.

¹⁰ Having more Marine Corps Reserve general officers attend CAPSTONE, stated the Corps, would be difficult because “by the time General officers reach that point in their Marine Corps career, they are probably also working equally hard to achieve such pinnacles in their civilian careers. As a result, their ability to commit six weeks away from a civilian career may be limited.” Navy response to CNGR Recommendation #13, April 27, 2010.

¹¹ Telephone interview with Scudieri.

¹² Email from Garofano.

¹³ Email from David Auerswald, National War College, to James T. Currie, July 8, 2010.

¹⁴ Telephone interview with Paul.

¹⁵ Telephone interview with Scudieri.

¹⁶ For the current OPMEP, see <www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/1800_01.pdf>.

¹⁷ Email from Pizzo.