

Army Reserve Marks Century of Service to Nation

Apr 19, 2008

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army Reserve celebrates its 100th birthday on April 23, marking a full century of service in which Army Reserve soldiers have continuously answered the nation's call.

Army Reserve soldiers served in both world wars, the Cold War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War and the ongoing global war on terrorism. They also helped respond to countless other crises, emergencies, disasters, operations and expeditions.

That busy century of service to America all began when Congress established the Army's first federal reserve force on April 23, 1908. President Theodore Roosevelt signed Senate Bill 1424, creating the Medical Reserve Corps. The Reserve medical officers in the corps could be ordered to active duty by the secretary of war during times of emergency.

In June 1908, the first 160 medical professionals received Reserve commissions. This number grew to about 360 by 1909 and to 1,900 by 1916. The concept of bringing civilian professionals into the Army in a disciplined and quickly-accessible manner also expanded beyond the medical profession and beyond just officers.

In 1912, the Regular Army Reserve was created, a federal reserve outside of the Medical Reserve Corps. It grew much more slowly than its predecessor; by 1913, there were only eight enlisted men in it. Three years later, some 3,000 Army Reserve soldiers would be called up to serve beside their Regular Army and National Guard comrades along the southern border of the United States.

This first mobilization of the Army Reserve was due to tension between the United States and Mexico caused by the actions of the Mexican revolutionary, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, and the subsequent punitive expedition after him led by Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing. A second Mexican-American War was averted, but this mobilization provided invaluable experience for America's Army in the greater war soon to come.

As World War I raged on in Europe, major changes were taking place in the Army's

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

structure.

The National Defense Act of 1916 established the Officers Reserve Corps (into which the Medical Reserve Corps would be merged in 1917), the Enlisted Reserve Corps and the Reserve Officers Training Corps. When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, these organizations – as well as the entire Army – would expand dramatically. For example, by June 1917 there would be 9,223 Army Reserve doctors, dentists and veterinarians -- a huge increase from the original 160 only nine years earlier.

More than 170,000 Army Reserve soldiers served on active duty during World War I. The Reserve doughboys of the Great War served in every division of the American Expeditionary Force in France, whether those divisions were Regular Army, National Guard or National Army.

Among their ranks was President Roosevelt's son, Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who served in the 1st Infantry Division; Maj. Charles Whittlesey, who led the 77th Infantry Division's "Lost Battalion" during its heroic battle in the Meuse-Argonne, and Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, "America's Ace of Aces." All three would receive the Medal of Honor, Whittlesey and Rickenbacker for World War I heroism, Roosevelt for his courage in World War II. Their example and those of all the citizen-soldier doughboys set the standard that Army Reserve soldiers have followed ever since.

The era between the world wars was a difficult one for the Army. There were few incentives for service, active or reserve, other than dedication to duty and patriotism. In the Organized Reserve (as the Army Reserve was called at this time), which was primarily an organization of Reserve officers because few enlisted men served, there was no pay for unit drill and no retirement plan. With the national economy in tatters during the 1930s, training became even rarer. No year in that decade saw more than 30 percent of Reserve officers undergo annual training; in 1934, only 14 percent did so.

Despite these and other hardships, the Army Reserve continued to answer the call to serve in emergencies, such as the national emergency of the Great Depression. Between 1933 and 1939, more than 30,000 Organized Reserve Corps officers were involved in running some 2,700 Civilian Conservation Corps camps. The CCC was one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's key New Deal programs that provided jobs to unemployed young men across the country.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and especially with the fall of France in June 1940, the United States began rearming in earnest. The nation began calling on its long-neglected Reserve as a key element in rebuilding its armed forces. There were some 2,700 Reserve officers serving on active duty in mid-1940; within a year, there were 57,000 on active duty. About 90 percent of the Army's company grade officers in June 1941 were

recently-mobilized Army Reserve officers.

The Reserve presence in World War II was considerable. In a typical Regular Army combat division during the peak war years, Reserve soldiers occupied most of the mid-grade officer positions. By the end of the war, more than 200,000 Reserve soldiers were on active duty, serving on every front. Roughly a quarter of all Army officers serving during the war were Army Reserve officers.

Most of them were in the grades of first lieutenant through lieutenant colonel. They included Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder who led Rudder's Rangers up the Pointe du Hoc cliffs on D-Day; Lt. Col. Strom Thurmond who crash-landed in a glider with the 82nd Airborne Division on D-Day; Lt. Col. Henry Cabot Lodge who resigned from the U.S. Senate to serve in North Africa, Normandy and Italy; and Capt. Ronald Reagan who used his civilian-acquired skills as a movie star to make Army Air Force training films.

A number of these officers progressed to general officer rank. In April 1942, Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle led 16 Army B-25 bombers off the aircraft carrier Hornet on the first aerial attack against Japan. For leading what was immortalized as "the Doolittle Raid," he received the Medal of Honor and a promotion from lieutenant colonel to brigadier general. He would go on to command the Eighth Air Force and end the war as a lieutenant general.

Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan had received the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross and three Purple Hearts while leading a battalion of the 165th Infantry Regiment (the old "Fighting 69th" regiment from the Civil War), 42nd Infantry Division, in World War I. Recalled to active duty as a colonel in 1942, Donovan headed the nation's espionage and sabotage agency, the Office of Strategic Services, known as the OSS, the World War II predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Another hero from the First World War who also fought in the Second was Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who returned to duty as a colonel in 1941 and was soon promoted to brigadier general.

After combat in North Africa and Sicily with the 1st Infantry Division, Roosevelt led the 4th Infantry Division ashore on Utah Beach, the first general officer to come ashore on a Normandy beach on D-Day. For his leadership and courage on June 6, 1944, he received the Medal of Honor. He died of a heart attack on July 12, 1944, never learning that he had been selected for promotion to major general and command of the 90th Infantry Division.

One Reserve officer reached the highest position possible: commander in chief. Harry S Truman, who commanded a Field Artillery battery in combat during World War I, joined the Organized Reserve in 1920 and rose to the rank of colonel. He was elected U.S. Senator from Missouri in 1934. When the war began, Truman requested to be called to active duty

but was turned down by Army Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall, who said Truman was more valuable to the country in the Senate than he would be in the Army.

Marshall, as usual, was correct. As head of a special sub-committee, Truman investigated wastefulness in the nation's defense programs and saved the government billions of dollars from fraud and mismanagement. His new national prominence helped gain him a spot as President Roosevelt's running mate in 1944. When Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, Vice President (and Organized Reserve Col.) Truman became the President of the United States and led the nation to final victory in World War II.

Five years after the end of World War II, Army Reserve men and women -- women were authorized to join the Organized Reserve in 1948 -- were called to duty again, this time for war in Korea. More than 240,000 Reserve soldiers were eventually called to active duty, some as individuals, and others with the 971 Reserve units that were mobilized. Fourteen Reserve battalions and 40 separate companies actually went to Korea, and seven Reserve soldiers -- men like Capt. Raymond Harvey and Cpl. Hiroshi Miyamura -- received the Medal of Honor for their combat heroism.

In the 1960s, the Army Reserve stood ready to answer the Nation's call during the Berlin Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War. Only Vietnam resulted in an armed conflict and, because of decisions made by the administration of President Lyndon Johnson, only a small Reserve mobilization was authorized, resulting in a call-up in 1968 of 42 Army Reserve units with fewer than 5,000 soldiers.

Army Reserve soldiers actively participated in Operation Just Cause, the United States' intervention in Panama in 1989, with military police and civil affairs support.

The biggest deployment of Army Reserve soldiers overseas since the Korean War took place in 1990-1991 with Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. More than 63,000 soldiers from 647 units were activated to accomplish both continental U.S. and overseas missions. Thousands of Individual Ready Reserve soldiers, Individual Mobilization Augmentees and 1,000 retirees volunteered or were ordered to active duty as well. In all, almost 84,000 Army Reserve soldiers answered their country's call.

In 1993, Army Reserve soldiers participated in Operation Restore Hope, the Somalia relief expedition. They included more than 100 Army Reserve volunteers who made up the 711th Adjutant General Company. Other Army Reserve civil affairs and public affairs soldiers also served in Somalia until U.S. Forces departed there in March 1994.

Since 1995, thousands of Army Reserve soldiers have conducted peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as to support those operations from Hungary, Germany, and Italy.

The Kosovo conflict resulted in a stateside mission in 1999 at the Fort Dix Army Reserve Installation in New Jersey. There, Army Reserve soldiers led and were part of the Operation Provide Refuge Joint Task Force, giving relief and assistance to more than 4,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and a field in Pennsylvania. About 3,000 Americans were killed as a result of these attacks.

Army Reserve men and women were on the front lines of this first war of the 21st century from its outset, with a number of Reserve soldiers among the killed at the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. Army Reserve units and individual soldiers responded to the attack immediately and carried out a host of missions to support rescue and recovery operations and to secure federal facilities nation-wide.

Less than a month after the attack on America, America struck back at the base of the attackers in Afghanistan. Within a few months, Afghanistan's repressive Taliban regime, which had supported and given sanctuary to the al Qaeda terrorists who had launched the 9-11 attacks, had been driven from power and, along with the foreign terrorists, were in hiding in the rugged south and east of Afghanistan.

Army Reserve soldiers contributed significantly to this victory. Army Reserve public affairs soldiers went into the mountains of eastern Afghanistan with the 101st Airborne Division during Operation Anaconda. Army Reserve engineers improved facilities at Kandahar, while medical citizen-soldiers treated casualties at Bagram air base. Army Reserve civil affairs soldiers operated throughout Afghanistan to help the Afghan people recover from decades of war.

On March 20, 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom began, with Army Reserve soldiers in action right from the beginning and fighting their way to Baghdad alongside their comrades-in-arms from the other U.S. services and coalition allies. The 459th Engineer Company, for example, built bridges across the Diyala and Euphrates rivers under fire to support the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force's advance to Baghdad.

declared to be over on May 1, 2003, combat did not cease. A difficult guerilla campaign continued, one waged by loyalists of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqi insurgents and foreign fighters. Army Reserve soldiers in a multitude of units served, and continue to serve, in numerous capacities during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Not all of the Army Reserve's battles in the early 21st century were against armed foes. Nature was also a tough adversary.

In 2005, for example, Army Reserve soldiers kept busy providing assistance to the victims of numerous natural disasters at home and abroad. Especially valuable were the Army Reserve helicopter units that provided assistance to the people of the U.S. Gulf Coast in September following Hurricane Katrina and to the people of Pakistan following a devastating earthquake in October.

As the Army Reserve ended its first century of service, it remained heavily committed to the continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, Army Reserve soldiers were decisively engaged in helping the emerging Afghan democracy. They served as part of the coalition forces building a 70,000-man strong Afghan National Army and helping the Afghans set up a modern defense establishment under the control of a democratically elected civilian government.

In Iraq, Army Reserve soldiers continued to battle Iraqi insurgents while laying the groundwork for Iraq's security forces to take over this mission themselves. A key development in accelerating the training of the new Iraqi Army was the deployment of the 98th Division to Iraq in late 2004 to speed up the new Iraqi Army's training. This was the first time since the U.S. military began training Iraqi security forces that an Army Reserve unit took on this important mission.

The Army Reserve's only remaining ground combat unit served in Iraq from 2005-2006.

The 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry, deployed there as part of the Hawaii Army National Guard's 29th Separate Infantry Brigade. The Army Reserve soldiers of the 100th/442nd come from Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and Saipan.

In Iraq, they proudly upheld the heritage inherited from the original 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team of World War II, the most decorated U.S. Army units of their size in American history. During its year in Iraq, four soldiers from the battalion were killed and 45 wounded.

At the beginning of 2008, the number of Army Reserve soldiers killed in both Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom had grown to 153. More than 1,250 had been wounded in action.

The Army Reserve that embarks on its second century in 2008 is one of its most battle-tested and experienced forces since its creation.

More than 180,000 Army Reserve Warrior-Citizens have been called to duty since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, with more than 41,000 having been mobilized more than

once. No longer a strategic reserve, the Army Reserve of 2008 is an operational reserve, with some 25,000-30,000 soldiers – from a force of about 190,000 – mobilized routinely and deployed in 18-20 countries around the world, to include the combat zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the United States.

Not only conceptually but throughout its first 100 years, the Army Reserve changed from a force that was a smaller mirror image of the Active Army to one that complemented the Total Force with combat support, combat service support and training capabilities.

Many of these capabilities were and remain either exclusively or primarily in the Army Reserve.

Though the Army Reserve has undergone many changes over the past century, one thing that hasn't changed are the quality of citizen-soldiers who continue to distinguish themselves serving their country.

Today's Warrior-Citizens remain as dedicated, professional and courageous as their predecessors.

Spc. Jeremy Church of the 724th Transportation Company received the first Silver Star awarded to an Army Reserve soldier in Iraq for battling insurgents and rescuing other soldiers and civilians during an ambush on his convoy in April 2004.

Staff Sgt. Jason Fetty, a 339th Combat Support Hospital soldier attached to the 364th Civil Affairs Brigade, received the first Silver Star awarded to an Army Reserve soldier in Afghanistan after hand-to-hand combat with a suicide bomber that foiled his attack on the Khost Hospital in February 2007.

They and their fellow Army Reserve comrades serving today show by their commitment and actions that they are worthy successors to the Organized Reserve doughboys and G.I.s who preceded them.

As the Army Reserve continues to evolve and transform throughout its next 100 years, it will do so, as it always has, in the capable hands of those men and women who choose to be "twice the citizen."

(Retired Army Col. Randy Pullen, a former Army Reserve public affairs officer, wrote this article for the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve.)