



U.S. Army Reserve: A Century of Service

Army Reserve: A Century of Service

The year was 1908. Harvard Business School opened its doors... General Motors Corporation was founded... The FBI was born as a corps of Special Agents under the Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt... The first African-American sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, was founded at Howard University... The National Press Club was formed in Washington, D.C.... and “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” one of America’s most well-known and well-loved songs, was written.

That same year, another organization key to the fabric of our nation was created, the Army Reserve. On April 23rd, 1908, the Army Reserve was established by Congress as the Medical Reserve Corps. This group of 160 doctors was formed to provide medical capabilities to the Army. Over the past 100 years, the Army Reserve has significantly expanded beyond its medical mission to become the successful organization that today leverages civilian skills and patriotism to support our nation’s military campaigns and missions.

FORERUNNERS OF THE ARMY RESERVE

The idea of an Army Reserve force in the United States dates well before 1908. The “Minutemen,” who played a crucial role in the Revolutionary War and earlier conflicts, were a part-time elite force which was required to assemble quickly and be highly mobile. Their name originates from their ability to march with a minute’s warning.

The United States Constitution of 1789 and the Militia Act of 1792 officially confirmed the reliance of the new nation on Citizen-Soldiers for defense. All citizens held the responsibility to defend and preserve their rights by serving in the armed forces. These American Citizen-Soldiers became the backbone of the armed forces from the very birth of the nation.

THE FIRST FEDERAL MILITARY RESERVE FORCE

At the start of the Civil War (1861-1865), the nation’s regular Army consisted of just over 15,000 men. As casualties mounted, both the North and South started turning to state militias, and in 1863, the Federal government created the first Federal military reserve force - the *Veteran Reserve Corps*.

The corps grew to include 24 regiments and 155 companies, and held combat service roles similar to those of today's Army Reserve, such as clerks, recruiting officers, guards, and medical personnel. Over 60,000 men served in the corps, but once the war ended, the corps became inactive.

CREATION OF THE ARMY RESERVE

While the United States emerged victorious after the Spanish-American War, America learned that it needed an Army Reserve force of Soldiers that could answer the call to arms at a moment's notice. The idea of "federal" Citizen-Soldiers was reborn.

On April 23, 1908, Congress established the Medical Reserve Corps—a group of 160 doctors in reserve status who could be called upon to provide a reservoir of trained Officers in times of war. The Army Reserve force was expanded in 1916 and again in 1920.

100 YEARS OF SERVICE AND STRENGTH

Since 1908, the Army Reserve has served with excellence and honor in every major military and humanitarian engagement of the past 100 years, playing integral roles in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, the Iraq War and the Global War on Terror.

World War I

Without the Army Reserve, the United States would not have been able to fight the First World War. More than 160,000 Army Reserve Soldiers served on active duty during World War I. This included about 80,000 enlisted Army Reserve Soldiers and almost 90,000 officer Army Reserve Soldiers, who served in every division of the American Expeditionary Force, including the Regular Army, the National Army and the National Guard.

The Army Reserve's importance to Army medicine, its original specialty, was particularly striking during World War I—Army Reserve medical officers (29,299) outnumbered Regular Army doctors (920) more than three to one. Of the Army nurses on active duty, almost half (170 out of 403) were Army Reserve Soldiers.

Army Reserve heroes of World War I included Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. and America's "Ace of Aces" Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, who set the standard of dedicated service that Army Reserve Soldiers have followed ever since.

The Great Depression

One of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the *Civilian Conservation Corps* (CCC), created an opportunity for Army Reserve service during the Great Depression. The CCC was a work and relief program that sent mostly young,

unemployed men to work on conservation projects in camps in rural areas. Between 1933 and 1939, more than 30,000 Army Reserve Officers served as commanders or staff officers at 2,700 CCC camps, gaining valuable leadership experience.

World War II

At the start of the Second World War, only 2,700 Army Reserve Officers were serving on active duty. Within one year, that number jumped to 57,000. By the end of the war, more than 200,000 Reserve Soldiers were on active duty, serving on every front. Roughly a quarter of the Army Officers serving during the war were Army Reserve Officers.

Among the notable Army Reserve heroes of World War II were Lieutenant General James H. Doolittle, who led the first air attack on Japan in April 1942; Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan, who headed the Office of Strategic Services – the predecessor of the CIA; and Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., the World War I hero who returned to duty and was the first general officer to come ashore on Normandy beach on D-Day.

Korean War

Five years after the end of World War II, more than 240,000 Army Reserve Soldiers were called to duty for war in Korea (1950-1953). Fourteen Army Reserve battalions and 40 separate companies actually went to Korea. Seven Army Reserve Soldiers, including Corporal Hiroshi Miyamura, received the Medal of Honor for their heroism in combat.

For the first time, female Organized Reservists were called to active duty in the Korean War. Army Reserve nurses served in hospitals close to the front lines in Korea, including the famous Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals—or MASH units. Many female Army Reserve Soldiers took the places of male Soldiers needed in combat units. The women Army Reserve Soldiers of the Korean War answered the call to duty and performed well, setting the stage for an increased role for women in the Army Reserve.

While the Korean War was underway, Congress began making significant changes in the structure and role of the Army Reserve. The Organized Reserve became the Army Reserve, which was divided into a Ready Reserve, Standby Reserve and Retired Reserve.

Cold War and Vietnam

More than 69,000 Army Reserve Soldiers were called to action in response to the Berlin Crisis in 1961. The Army Reserve also stood ready to answer the nation's call during major events, including the Cuban Missile Crisis. Forty-two Army Reserve units were mobilized in 1968—35 of these units went to Vietnam.

In earlier years, the mission of the Army Reserve was to serve as a “strategic” force; however by the end of the Cold War and Vietnam War, the role of the force was quickly evolving into an “operational” ready force.

Persian Gulf War

Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm led to the largest call for Army Reserve forces since the Korean War. More than 84,000 Army Reserve Soldiers from 647 units helped liberate Kuwait. Army Reserve Soldiers contributed significantly to the total Army’s success by providing the bulk of water purification and distribution. In fact, the Army Reserve’s 316th Quartermaster Company distributed 8.4 million gallons of water during the Persian Gulf War.

The Army Reserve also provided civil affairs support, enemy prisoner-of-war handling, postal work, petroleum handling, military history, and psychological operations. Other participating Army Reserve units included chemical decontamination, transportation, military police, maintenance, and engineering. Army Reserve Soldiers were among the first to fight and were among the last to leave the desert.

Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia

A key step in the development of the Army Reserve took place in 1991 with the establishment of the U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC), located in Atlanta, Georgia. The USARC has responsibility for command and control of Troop Program Units nationwide. The Chief of the Army Reserve commands the USARC.

Since 1991, the Army Reserve has been engaged almost constantly around the world in combat, humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. Army Reserve Soldiers provided support during the Gulf War and Somalia from 1992 to 1994, and went to Haiti in 1995 to restore democracy. More than 13,000 Army Reserve Soldiers have been mobilized for the Bosnia operations Joint Endeavor, Joint Guard and Joint Force.

Global War on Terror

Less than a month after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States struck back at Al Qaeda in Operation Enduring Freedom. Army Reserve Soldiers were on the front lines from the very beginning of the Global War on Terror.

Army Reserve Soldiers served alongside active component Soldiers to drive Afghanistan’s repressive Taliban regime from power. When Operation Iraqi Freedom began on March 20, 2003, Army Reserve Soldiers fought their way to Baghdad with other U.S. forces and coalition allies and took down Saddam Hussein’s regime.

The Army Reserve remains heavily committed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Army Reserve Soldiers have been engaged in the development of the emerging Afghan democracy and the Afghan National Army. They continue to battle Iraqi insurgents while laying the groundwork for Iraq's security forces to take over the mission.

More than 190,000 Army Reserve Soldiers have been mobilized since the terrorist attacks of September 11th. Ninety-eight percent of Army Reserve units have provided mobilized Soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan and 18 other countries. More than 140 Army Reserve Soldiers have lost their lives during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Global War on Terror has proved that the Army Reserve is no longer a “strategic” force in reserve, but rather an “operational ready” partner with the active Army. According to the Chief of the Army Reserve, *“Wherever the Army commits forces in the world – Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, the Philippines and anywhere else – Army reservists are an integral part, providing critical support, force protection and augmentation...Today the nation is asking Army Reserve Soldiers to be prepared to serve on active duty when called.”*

From the “Minutemen” to Citizen-Soldiers, today's Army Reserve Soldiers are prepared and available to rapidly deploy anywhere in the world when the nation calls. They are meeting the challenges of today's war on terror, while simultaneously supporting various missions at home and around the globe. In its 100th year, the Army Reserve celebrates its proud history and century-old commitment to readiness.

For expanded information about the Army Reserve's history [click here](#).