# MOBILIZATION FOR THE VIETNAM WAR:

## A POLITICAL AND MILITARY CATASTROPHE

by

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The United States has relied extensively on its Militia, National Guard, and Reserves in every major war in its history, except for the Vietnam War. That only a diminutive mobilization occurred for the Vietnam War was a remarkable departure from American military history. This article briefly reviews the reliance on the citizen-soldier in major American wars, then examines the extent to which the President and his civilian and military advisers considered mobilization during the first three years of the Vietnam ground war and the rationale behind nonmobilization during that period. We then focus on the 1968 call-up of Army National Guard and US Army Reserve forces for the Vietnam War and the characteristics and problems of that partial mobilization.

The United States has never maintained nor seriously considered maintaining during peacetime a Regular Army of sufficient size to meet the needs of war. The United States has engaged in nine major wars, and extensive reliance has been placed on the citizen-soldier in the first eight of them. That reliance is made clear in the following table.[1] The first column of figures shows the strength of the Regular Army at the beginning of the wars listed; the second column shows the number of Militia, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve troops mobilized for each.

| | Initial Strength | Mobilized |
|---|---|---|
| Revolutionary War[2] | 0 | 250,000 |
| War of 1812 | 6,744 | 458,000 |
| Mexican War | 7,365 | 73,532 |
| Spanish-American War | 28,183 | 170,954 |
| World War I | 127,588 | 208,000 |
| World War II[3] | 187,893 | 377,000 |
| Korean War | 591,487 | 382,900 |
| Vietnam War | 970,000 | 22,786 |

The proposition that the National Guard and Reserve would be called into active federal service had been proven prior to Vietnam in every major war. Even the Berlin Crisis of 1961 had witnessed the call-up of 119,622 Guard and Reserve members. Because of this historical perspective, there was an unquestioned readiness to believe that mobilization of the Guard and Reserve would provide citizen-soldiers for the Vietnam War.

### NONMOBILIZATION IN 1965

The first momentous year of the Vietnam War regarding Army manpower was 1965, when 44 combat battalions of the United States and its allies were deployed to South Vietnam, beginning 8 March. When this buildup of ground combat forces began, the Army National Guard (ARNG) and US Army Reserve (USAR) had a Ready Reserve paid strength of 695,000, organized into 23 divisions, 11 separate brigades, and some 8000 units.[4] The Regular Army had a strength of about 970,000 (with 42 percent of its personnel deployed overseas), organized into

16 divisions, four regimental combat teams, seven separate brigades, and seven special forces groups.[5]

During the first three years of the Vietnam ground war (1965-67), mobilization of the National Guard and Reserve was a major topic of consideration by President Johnson and his military and civilian advisers. From the onset of the buildup of ground combat forces in South Vietnam, mobilization was favored by the Secretary of Defense, the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the National Security Adviser, the Secretaries of the military departments, many members of Congress, the National Guard and Reserve leadership, and others.

On 2 April 1965, the JCS asked the Secretary of Defense in JCSM 238-65 for an increased ability to wage the war by removing "all administrative impediments that hamper us in the prosecution of this war." This request included authority to extend military terms of service and to conduct consultations with Congress on mobilizing the Guard and Reserve.[6]

Paul H. Nitze, Secretary of the Navy, reported that both he and Secretary of Defense McNamara favored mobilization in 1965: "We also thought that there should be a greater commitment of support by Congress, and that the way you could get that would be to put a bill into the Congress asking for the power to call up the Reserves."[7]

On 15 July 1965, Secretary McNamara stated that if increased numbers of American troops were to be sent to South Vietnam, "it will be necessary to consider calling up reserves, extending tours, and increasing the draft."[8] Two days later, Deputy Secretary of Defense Vance informed Secretary McNamara (by cable since the Secretary was in South Vietnam) that President Johnson was favorably disposed to the call-up of reserves and extension of tours of active duty personnel.[9]

Secretary McNamara returned to Washington on 20 July and reported immediately to the President. Among his recommendations was one to ask Congress for the authority to call up 235,000 members of the National Guard and Reserve. He also proposed increased recruitment, larger draft calls, and extensions of tours to raise the size of the regular armed forces by 375,000.[10]

The President considered McNamara's proposals very carefully: he met with his top advisers at the White House on 21 July; with the JCS and Secretaries of the military departments the following day; and with other advisers on 22 July at the White House and on 25 July at Camp David. The President assembled the National Security Council on 27 July and laid out five options. In his own words,

> We can bring the enemy to his knees by using our Strategic Air Command, I said, describing our first option. Another group thinks we ought to pack up and go home.
>
> Third, we could stay there as we are—and suffer the consequences, continue to

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lose territory and take casualties. You wouldn't want your own boy to be out there crying for help and not get it.

Then, we could go to Congress and ask for great sums of money; we could call up the Reserves and increase the draft; go on a war footing, declare a state of emergency. There is a good deal of feeling that ought to be done. We have considered this. But if we go into that kind of land war, then North Vietnam would go to its friends, China and Russia, and ask them to help. They would be forced into increasing aid. For that reason I don't want to be overly dramatic and cause tensions. *I think we can get our people to support us without having to be too provocative and warlike* [emphasis added].

Finally, we can give our commanders in the field the men and supplies they say they need.

I had concluded that the last course was the right one. I had listened to and weighed all the arguments and counterarguments for each of the possible lines of action. I believed that we should do what was necessary to resist aggression but that we should not be provoked into a major war. We would get the required appropriation in the new budget, and we would not boast about what we were doing. *We would not make threatening scenes to the Chinese or the Russians by calling up Reserves in large numbers* [emphasis added]. At the same time, we would press hard on the diplomatic front to try to find some path to a peaceful settlement.

I asked if anyone objected to the course of action I had spelled out. I questioned each man in turn. Did he agree? Each nodded his approval or said "yes."[11]

The President also reported in his memoirs that even then (27 July 1965) the nonmobilization decision was not final. He next met with leaders of Congress on the evening of the same day. Following these sessions with key civilian and military advisers, the President held a press conference on 28 July at which he explained the US commitment of ground combat forces to resist communist aggression in South Vietnam. In his prepared statements he said:

First, we intend to convince the Communists that we cannot be defeated by force of arms or by superior power. They are not easily convinced. In recent months they have greatly increased their fighting forces and their attacks and the number of incidents. I have asked the Commanding General, General Westmoreland, what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. We will meet his needs.

I have today ordered to Vietnam the Airmobile Division and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately. Additional forces will be needed later, and they will be sent as requested. This will make it necessary to increase our active fighting forces by raising the monthly draft call from 17,000 over a period of time to 35,000 per month, and for us to step up our campaign for voluntary enlistments.

After this past week of deliberations, I have concluded that it is not essential to order Reserve units into service now. If that necessity should later be indicated, I will give the matter more careful consideration and I will give the country due and adequate notice before taking such action, but only after full preparations.[12]

Whatever was personally felt by the political, military, and intelligence players in 1965, and by observers, they all had one thing in common: they recognized that deploying 44 combat battalions to Vietnam in 1965 was the crossing of an important threshold and the beginning of a major new course whose end was not in sight. General Westmoreland's plans called for increasing the troops in Vietnam and included the expectation that the war would last well beyond a year. The authors of *United States-Vietnam Relations* ("The Pentagon Papers") made the following conclusion pertaining to mobilization and the length of the war in the 1965 period:

The decision not to call up the Reserves, which was made some time during the week just prior to the President's press conference

of 28 July, indicated that the President also expected the war to last in Vietnam well beyond a year. No doubt the Secretary of Defense told him that without a declaration of national emergency—a move the President found politically unpalatable—the Reserves as an asset would be fully expended in one year, leaving the military establishment in worse shape than before if the war still continued.[13]

US military contingency plans for Indochina, which were being drafted as early as the 1950s, were based upon the campaign in Korea, upon the fundamental concept of the massive use of force—air power, naval power, and ground power—and upon concurrent mobilization of the Guard and Reserve. Mobilization was a cornerstone of the planning. Douglas Kinnard wrote that "contingency planning viewed the Active Army and Reserves as one force, and war plans were drawn up accordingly."[14] James Gavin, who was Chief of Plans of the Army Staff in the mid-1950s, wrote about war planning for Vietnam, "We believed it would be necessary to call up the Army Reserve and National Guard."[15] General Donald V. Bennett, Director of Strategic Plans in the Joint Staff, reported that he was probably the most shocked man in the world upon hearing of the 1965 decision not to mobilize.[16]

Even though the President rejected the recommendations of his Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and others, the Department of Defense nevertheless clung to a hope that mobilization would occur for the Vietnam War. The President did not foreclose that possibility. In August 1965, Secretary McNamara reported to Congress that "the buildup of the active Army and the improvement of the readiness of a portion of the Reserve Components were necessary to offset planned deployments to Southeast Asia, to provide additional forces for possible new deployments, and to be able to deal with crises elsewhere in the world."[17]

President Johnson presented only one reason for nonmobilization in 1965: his fear that such a warlike action might trigger a greater war with China and Russia. Doris Kearns tells of other reasons:

> In private conversation, Johnson admitted two other considerations: His fear of "touching off a right-wing stampede" and his concern for the Great Society. Convinced that McCarthyism was dormant but not defeated, Johnson feared that if the full extent of our difficulties in Vietnam were known, the political right—a force of undetermined size whose power Johnson almost certainly overestimated—would seize the initiative and demand an invasion of North Vietnam and the bombing of Hanoi. Johnson was much more concerned with the kind of furor that men like John Stennis, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and others might have created than he was about any dove opposition. This reflected his knowledge of the sources of congressional power. Dissembling was the only way to keep the stampede from beginning. By pretending there was no major conflict, by minimizing the level of spending and by refusing to call up the Reserves or ask Congress for an acknowledgement of acceptance of the war, Johnson believed he could keep the levers of control in his hands.[18]

Chester L. Cooper wrote that the nonmobilization decision was a balance between military requirements in Vietnam versus political consequences at home:

> The announced increase to 125,000 men was almost certainly substantially less than either the Joint Chiefs or Westmoreland had requested and expected. Johnson was determined to fight the war with minimum disruption at home, and the troop increase was not based on the estimated number required, but rather on the maximum number that could be deployed without having to call up the Reserves. Doling out additional forces with a view to balancing off military requirements in Vietnam and political consequences at home typified the President's approach. He wished to avoid giving the impression that the United States was, in fact, "at war."[19]

Another, similar explanation of the President's decision is given by Kearns: "Johnson recoiled from the dramatic display

of presidential action of a presidential declaration, asking Congress for higher taxes to pay for the war, and ordering a mobilization. The alternate strategy—which was Johnson's strategy—was to tell Congress and the public no more than absolutely necessary."[20]

David Halberstam's analysis of President Johnson's decision not to mobilize in 1965 is also particularly revealing:

> If there were no decisions which were crystallized and hard, then they could not leak, and if they could not leak, then the opposition could not point to them. Which was why he was not about to call up the reserves, because the use of the reserves would blow it all. It would be self-evident that we were really going to war, and that we would in fact have to pay a price. Which went against all the Administration planning: this would be a war without a price, a silent, politically invisible war. The military wanted to call up the Reserves.
>
> He was against a call-up of the Reserves for other reasons as well. It would, he thought, telegraph the wrong signals to the adversaries, particularly China and the Soviet Union (frighten them into the idea that this was a real war) and Hanoi, which might decide that it was going to be a long war (he did not intend to go into a long war), and he felt if you called up the Reserves you had to be prepared to go the distance and you might force your adversary to do the same. He also felt that it would frighten the country, and he had just run as a peace candidate; similarly, he felt it would be too much of a sign that the military were in charge and that the civilians would turn over too much responsibility to the military. Finally, and above all, he feared that it would cost him the Great Society, that his enemies in Congress would seize on the war as a means of denying him his social legislation.[21]

John K. Mahon has written that there were three major reasons for President Johnson's refusal to mobilize the Guard and Reserve in 1965: (1) to conceal America's military commitment in Vietnam from the American people; (2) to avoid sending a belligerent message to the North Vietnamese, Chinese, and Soviets; and (3) to preserve the reserves for other contingencies.[22]

Whatever President Johnson's motivations were to not mobilize the Guard and Reserve in 1965, one of his objectives is now clear: he wished to conceal the expanded American participation in Vietnam from the public at large, from Congress, and from most of his own government. This policy of concealment was made explicit in National Security Action Memorandum 328, 6 April 1965.[23] Calling up the National Guard and Reserve would have destroyed the duplicity.

## NONMOBILIZATION IN 1966 AND 1967

By the autumn of 1965, the infiltration of North Vietnamese units into South Vietnam had increased substantially. General Westmoreland requested additional forces on 22 November 1965, and following another trip to South Vietnam, Secretary McNamara recommended troop deployments totaling 74 battalions and 400,000 US personnel by the end of 1966, with possibly 200,000 more in 1967.[24] The Joint Chiefs continued to advocate a call-up of the reserves. They believed that commitments to NATO and elsewhere, as well as General Westmoreland's troop requirements for Vietnam, could not be met without a mobilization. The JCS also felt that only a massive deployment of troops and firepower would end the war in the least time and with the least cost. They did not share with President Johnson any illusion of wishful thinking about the length of the war or its requirements.

On 1 March 1966, the JCS forwarded their recommendation regarding 1966 deployments (Phase II A [R] forces—later named Phase 3) to Vietnam and reconstituting the Strategic Reserve. They stated that to satisfy further force requirements in Vietnam and to reconstitute the Strategic Reserve would require "a selective call-up of Reserve units and personnel and extension of terms of service." The JCS also recommended that if the reserves were not called up nor terms of

service extended, then the deployments for 1966 (Phase 3) should be extended into 1967. On 10 March 1966, the Secretary of Defense rejected this advice and directed the JCS to plan for deployment of forces without either a call-up or extension of terms of service.[25]

On 7 October 1966, the JCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense their analysis of the worldwide US military posture in light of meeting the 1966 and 1967 deployment requirements for Vietnam. This analysis concluded that without a call-up of reserves, with no change in rotation policy (from the one-year tour), and assuming that resources for the proposed 1967 deployment to Vietnam would be taken from existing US worldwide structure, the Army would have a force deficiency of three and two-thirds active divisions.[26]

In November 1966, the President made his decision on force deployments for Vietnam through FY 1967 (Program 4). The forces programmed were to be significantly less than requested by the field commander: a ceiling of 470,000 to be reached by June 1968, as opposed to the request for 542,000 by the end of calendar year 1967. However, there would not be a mobilization of the Guard and Reserve.[27] The Program 4 decision met with disagreement, for various reasons, on Capitol Hill and in the press. Many political leaders spoke out against the restricted force levels. Senator John Stennis, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, argued for meeting General Westmoreland's troop requests "even if it should require mobilization or partial mobilization." The JCS also sharply disagreed with the ceiling of 470,000.[28]

In May 1967, considerable attention was focused on determining capabilities of the services to provide troops and units without calling the reserves or a further drawing down of units in Europe. A Systems Analysis Office study of 5 May concluded that the services could provide only 66,000 of the additional 186,000 troops requested by MACV, and only 19 combat battalions of the 42 requested.[29]

Significant attention was devoted in the fall of 1967 to accelerate deployments of Program 5 and to find new approaches to military operations in Vietnam. Calendar year 1967 ended with the Program 5 combat elements either closing in Vietnam or on their way there, with mobilization continuing to be a major issue, and with a continuing presidential decision not to mobilize.

## EVENTS AND MOBILIZATION IN 1968

When calendar year 1968 began, American Army combat units had been fighting in Vietnam for 34 months (since March 1965), and no mobilization had been permitted by the President. The approved force levels in Program 5 totaled 525,000, with an Army portion of 351,618, which was a net increase of 26,983 over Program 4.[30]

In January 1968, the Army National Guard and Army Reserve had a combined Ready Reserve unit strength of approximately 680,000, organized into some 7000 units, plus an Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) strength of over 540,000. The force structure of these Army reserve components included eight combat divisions, 13 training divisions, 21 separate combat brigades, two engineer brigades, seven support brigades, 250 separate combat battalions, and other units. The Regular Army structure in January 1968 included 19 numbered divisions, with a total active Army strength of about 1.5 million: five divisions were located in the United States, two in Korea, five in Europe, and seven were in the Republic of Vietnam.[31]

On 25 January 1968, President Johnson directed, by Executive Order, a partial call-up of some Guard and Reserve units as a result of the USS *Pueblo* incident. He refrained from declaring a national emergency, which would have permitted him to bring up to one million Ready Reservists on active duty for a period of up to one year. The legal authority actually used by the President for the mobilization was Public Law 89-687 (the 1967 DOD Appropriation Act), which included the following key language: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, until June 30, 1968, the President may, when he deems it necessary, order to active duty any unit of the Ready Reserve of an armed

force for a period of not to exceed twenty-four months."[32]

Twenty-eight units involving 14,801 unit members were mobilized under the January order: six units with 593 Navy Reserve members; 14 units having 9340 members of the Air National Guard; and eight units having 4868 Air Reserve members. No Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, or Coast Guard Reserve units or individuals were called. Although the 25 January mobilization was not ordered at the time specifically for Vietnam, four of the Air National Guard units (tactical fighter squadrons) were deployed to RVN in May 1968. All six of the activated Naval Reserve units were demobilized by the end of calendar year 1968, as were seven of the eight Air Reserve units. By December 1969, all of the units mobilized under the 25 January 1968 order were deactivated.[33]

Although the 25 January 1968 mobilization did not include Army reserve components, the Army Staff nevertheless began formal planning for a partial mobilization of the ARNG and USAR on 25 January in response to a directive from the Secretary of the Army to do so. The Army had developed in 1962 a Partial Mobilization Plan, based on the experience of the limited mobilization in 1961 during the Berlin Crisis, but the plan was not kept current following the 1965 decision to not mobilize the reserve components for the Vietnam War. The Army conducted no serious mobilization planning between 1965 and 1968.[34]

The new planning in 1968 was oriented initially toward the buildup of US Army forces in Korea and reconstitution of the Strategic Army Forces, but later was expanded to include the need for additional Army forces in Vietnam.[35] The Army mobilization planning phase lasted from 25 January to 10 April 1968 and consisted of two types of planning: (1) intensive, specific, close-hold planning characterized by minimal guidance, restriction to a few selected persons on the Army Staff, short suspense dates, lack of staff coordination, changes in the type of units and strength of the force which might be authorized, and secrecy; and, (2) general planning, which included a review of the 1961 mobilization during the Berlin Crisis, updated personnel procedures, and preparation of a congressional information plan. This general planning was well coordinated within the Army Staff and with US Continental Army Command (CONARC) headquarters.[36]

The first type of planning (intensive, close-hold) focused on developing troop lists, and lasted 11 weeks (25 January to 10 April). This planning was actually accomplished in two distinct subperiods: the period 25 January to 9 February concentrated on developing plans to reinforce the Eighth US Army in Korea and to reconstitute the Strategic Army Forces; during the period 10 February to 10 April, planning for deployment of additional forces to South Vietnam was added to the task. Approximately 75 force packages were developed during the 11-week period. Revisions in lists of selected units occurred almost daily. There was no coordination in developing troop lists between the full Army staff, CONARC headquarters, the Continental US Armies, State Adjutants General, or Reserve commands.[37]

Planning was thus restricted and hampered. Further, the Army Guard and Army Reserve were undergoing substantial reorganizations that began 1 December 1967 and were not completed until 31 May 1968. Current unit readiness data were not available at HQDA because the readiness reporting system of reserve components had been suspended by the Undersecretary of the Army in 1966.[38]

The enemy's Tet Offensive began on 31 January 1968, only eight days after the USS *Pueblo* was seized. As the large-scale Tet operations continued, Secretary McNamara asked the JCS on 9 February to provide plans for emergency reinforcements. A formal request by General Westmoreland for reinforcements was made on 12 February.[39]

President Johnson met with his advisers (Rusk, McNamara, Clifford, Wheeler, Taylor, Helms, and Reston) on 12 February to discuss General Westmoreland's request for reinforcements. Calling up reserves was discussed. The President approved rein-

forcements but again rejected mobilization. President Johnson wrote of the 12 February mobilization question: "Wheeler was in favor; McNamara was opposed. I asked them to study the problem further and to agree on a recommendation."[40] The meeting continued the following day, and the President reported the following in his memoirs about the discussion:

> My advisers still disagree on whether Reserves should be called, and, if so, how many and in what categories. I told McNamara and Wheeler there were many questions I wanted them to answer. I remember the complaints about the call-up of Reserves during President Kennedy's administration and, more recently, the failure to use effectively those who had been called up during the *Pueblo* crisis.
>
> Why, I asked, is it necessary to call up Reserve units at this time? If we decided on a call-up, how large should it be? Could we reduce the numbers by drawing on forces stationed in Europe or South Korea? Could we avoid or at least postpone individual Reserve call-ups? If Reserves were called, where would they be assigned? How long would they serve? What would be the budgetary implications? Would congressional action be necessary? I said that I would take no action until I received satisfactory answers to these and several other questions.[41]

On 13 February, the reinforcement decision of the day before was being implemented, to consist of the deployment of one brigade of the 82d Airborne Division and one Marine regimental landing team, for a total emergency reinforcement of 10,500 men. Responding to this decision, the JCS immediately forwarded their recommendations for a call-up of reserve forces: the minimum call-up, which would replace deploying forces, would require 32,000 for the Army, 12,000 for the Marine Corps, 2300 Navy Reserves, and none for the Air Force. In addition, the Joint Chiefs stressed that it would be both prudent and advisable for a larger mobilization of 136,650: 58,000 Army, 51,000 Marines, 5150 Navy, and 22,500 Air Force. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also reiterated their recommendation that legislation be sought for mobilization and extension of terms of service.[42]

General Westmoreland also saw the need for a mobilization at that time in order to provide reinforcements and to increase the Strategic Reserve. He reported, however, that General Wheeler had informed him on 24 March, under the President's direction, that "making a major call-up of Reserves and contesting the enemy's geographical widening of the war was politically infeasible."[43]

On 29 February, Secretary of Defense designate Clark Clifford (sworn in as Secretary on 1 March) initiated, at the order of the President, a complete reexamination of US strategy in Vietnam which became known as the "A to Z" reassessment. The last week of February and first week of March 1968 were characterized by frantic preparation, discussion, consultation, and writing. On 4 March, the President was presented with the "A to Z" reassessment, which contained a recommendation to mobilize 262,000 Guardsmen and Reservists for the war.[44]

## MOBILIZATION DECISION AND POLICIES

On 13 March, the President made the decision to have a mobilization, but the specific size of the mobilized force was not then decided. The Office of the Secretary of Defense began planning on 14 March for a call-up of 96,000 personnel, of which 43,500 were to be deployed to Vietnam.[45]

On 28 March, the President made the decision that mobilization would be limited to about 24,500 personnel. On 2 April, the final troop list submitted by the Army to the JCS totaled 54,000. Two days later, the Secretary of Defense decreed that 54,000 was too high because of cost.[46] It is pathetic that after all the debate and arguments about the need for a mobilization, all the planning and consideration about the size and composition of the mobilized force, despite the requirements for forces to be deployed and to reconstitute the Strategic Reserve, and regardless of the

money spent on the war over the previous several years, in the end the size of the mobilized force was decided by financial and political considerations and not operational requirements.

On 31 March 1968, President Johnson addressed the nation on television. He summarized his efforts to achieve peace in Vietnam over the years, and made the following brief comment about a call-up of the Reserves:

> In order that these forces [the 10,500 emergency reinforcements] may reach maximum combat effectiveness, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended to me that we should be prepared to send—during the next five months—support troops totalling approximately 13,500 men.
>
> A portion of these men will be made available from our active forces. The balance will come from Reserve Component units which will be called up for service.[47]

The President then reiterated US objectives in Vietnam, and closed his address with the startling announcement, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."[48] Thus, two of the major decisions of the Johnson presidency were made in March 1968. It is interesting to speculate on the possible linkage of these two decisions, although there is no recorded evidence of any.

President Johnson signed an Executive Order (No. 11406) authorizing the mobilization for the Vietnam War. The actual mobilization authority exercised by the President (and delegated to the Secretary of Defense) was contained in the 1967 DOD Appropriations Act, which was the same authority utilized for the 25 January 1968 partial mobilization resulting from the USS *Pueblo* incident. The mobilization was based neither on a declaration of emergency nor on a declaration of war.[49]

At 1000 hours on 11 April 1968, Secretary of Defense Clifford announced at a news conference that 24,500 men in some 88 units from the reserve components of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and 3600 members of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) would be mobilized.[50] The mobilization order was dated that same day, and directed the call-up to occur on 13 May (M-Day). Seventy-six ARNG and USAR units, with a strength of 20,034, were actually mobilized. In addition, 2752 members of the IRR were called up. There were two objectives for the 13 May 1968 mobilization: (1) to provide troops for actual deployment to Vietnam, and (2) to provide troops to build up the strategic reserves in the United States. Forty-three units were deployed to Vietnam, and 33 units remained in the United States.[51]

Selection of the 76 ARNG and USAR units to be mobilized was made by the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development in frantic consultation with the Chief, National Guard Bureau, and the Chief, Army Reserve. No other Army staff, major Army commands, or states were involved in the unit selection determination.

Although 74 of the 76 needed types of units were in the Selected Reserve Force (SRF) in 1968, or had recently been in the SRF, only 59 units were selected from the SRF category for mobilization.[52] Thus, the primary criterion of highest operational readiness was applied to only 66 percent of the unit selection. Other criteria which influenced selection were geographic distribution (34 states provided units), proportionate contribution by the ARNG and USAR (68 percent and 32 percent, respectively), and the civil disturbance threat (no state was denuded of its ARNG).[53]

Because the mobilization of units was small, only 3069 enlisted IRR fillers were required. From a total IRR paper strength of 540,000, only 4132 of its members were eligible for call-up because the 1967 DOD Appropriations Act prohibited calling up IRR members who had completed two or more years of active service and those who had fulfilled their statutory military obligations. No officers in the IRR were recalled because the number eligible was too small to deal with; only 93 were eligible from an initial projection of 2400. The number of IRR personnel actually mobilized was 2752, which

was only one-half of one percent of the IRR. Of these, 1060 were assigned to the active Army and 1692 went to mobilized ARNG and USAR units.[54]

HQDA attempted from the onset to manage mobilized personnel (unit members and nonunit members) in the same manner and under the same regulations as Regular Army personnel. It didn't work. Personnel actions and problems associated with the 1968 partial mobilization for Vietnam included reassignments, promotions, delays, exemptions, deferments, separations, medical exams, proficiency pay eligibility, personnel accounting, reporting, and control.[55] These problems and issues had occurred with every mobilization in US history.

As was the case with mobilization planning in general, the preparation of stationing plans did not begin until 25 January 1968. Considerable difficulty was encountered because of the many changes in the type and number of units in the troop lists during the mobilization planning period of 25 January to 10 April. Developing stationing plans was difficult also because the planners did not know what units would be mobilized, when the mobilizations would occur, what active Army deployments would be made, or the length of time between alert and movement to mobilization stations.[56]

Determining the Army's capability to equip mobilized ARNG and USAR units was impossible during the mobilization planning period. In addition to problems similar to the ones encountered by those attempting to develop stationing plans, the DA staff did not know the true equipment status of the units that were on the final list to be mobilized.

The incredible assumption was made that units scheduled for deployment were in a combat-ready status. In fact, every one of the 76 mobilized units was rated C-4 (not combat-ready) in equipment readiness. In many cases the DA analysts did not know the TOE under which the mobilized units were organized. Following M-Day there were serious problems with assumptions, equipment status reporting, distribution, and redistribution. A consistent feature of every mobilization in US history has been the requirement to provide equipment for the mobilized units.[57]

Unit training at mobilization stations was adversely affected by the large number of personnel who were not branch- or MOS-qualified, by understrength units, by equipment shortages, and by the issuance of equipment not previously used by the ARNG and USAR. The major reorganization of the reserve components immediately before the mobilization degraded readiness, as had the inclusion of civil disturbance training in the Guard's inactive-duty training program. The requirement to conduct individual training as well as unit training to overcome these problems resulted in an extension of the postmobilization training beyond that prescribed in the Army Training Program for 58 of the 76 mobilized units.[58]

That mobilized units had to undergo a complete unit training program in 1968 to achieve deployability readiness was no different from the experience of earlier mobilizations. Whenever mobilized units have a readiness condition of C-4 in equipment, which all had in 1968, a postmobilization training program will be required. Whenever units are less than C-1 (combat-ready, no deficiencies) in personnel, which all were in 1968, a postmobilization training program will be necessary. Even if mobilized units were C-1 in both personnel and equipment, the question of operational readiness from a training perspective would arise. The historical experience with mobilizations demands the realization that postmobilization training will be mandatory, and that it will take at least several weeks to achieve operational readiness. Peacetime training and the peacetime equipment status of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve have never, in US history, been sufficient for immediate deployment.

The question of how to use mobilized units of the Guard and Reserve has historically been an issue and became controversial again during the Vietnam War. Unit integrity was not maintained either with the units that deployed to Vietnam or those that were not deployed. For example, of the 12,234 mobilized Army National Guards-

men, 2729 reported to Vietnam with their Guard units, but many were subsequently transferred to other units. Of the 9505 Guardsmen whose units remained in the United States, 4311 were sent to Vietnam as fillers.[59]

Unit history and unit integrity are matters of great pride and intense concern within the National Guard and Reserve. Those forces have been built on the basis of units, beginning with the initial militia system. Training, equipment, organization, tactics, and readiness are all based on cohesion of units. Using unit members as fillers and individual replacements always causes considerable dissatisfaction, and the use of the reserve component units as some sort of individual recruiting preserve is neither proper nor wise.

The mobilization of reserve components, however large or small the call-up, is never a routine matter. In addition to strategic considerations and purely military events and activities in conducting the mobilization, there will always be political and public affairs implications—particularly with partial mobilizations. The media, Congress, and the public will rightfully direct a barrage of inquiries to the White House and the Pentagon. There will initially be considerable excitement and attention to the topic, and if DOD is properly prepared for the inquiries, the public attention may soon wane. Of the many questions asked about mobilization, the most important one to answer is "Why?" The next questions will be: "Where are the mobilized troops now and what are they doing?" Three months after the January 1968 mobilization, the media reported that mobilized Reservists were "just waiting around," which was mostly true. The same can be said of the May 1968 mobilization. The charge of unsuitable use of mobilized reserves will always occur when the mobilized units are not deployed and when unit integrity is violated.

The 76 units mobilized on 13 May 1968 served on active duty between 14 and 19 months. During the first half of that time, many unit personnel were assigned to other units as fillers, resulting in their being scattered all over the world. During the last half of the period, the Army attempted to plan and execute a system to reestablish unit integrity in order to demobilize the units.

Demobilization of units was accomplished by 12 December 1969, after which one unit was eliminated from the structure and three were reorganized. The Army's demobilization was characterized by poor planning, inefficiency, disinterest, terrible policy, poor execution, and ill-timing. Nearly everything about the demobilization was cause for complaint. Of the numerous problems, the most serious was the loss of unit integrity. The strong feeling was widespread within the Guard and Reserve that a breach of good faith had been committed by the Army.[60] Thus, after years of neglect and receipt of equipment which was not considered appropriate for active Army use, the Guard and Reserve forces were shunted even further into the background of full and equal treatment as a viable component of the national force structure.

## PURPOSE AND MEANING OF MOBILIZATION

Mobilization is a military and a political event of crucial importance. The purpose and meaning of mobilization to the military can be expressed concisely: the central concept of strategy is force; the central concept of force is manpower; and the central concept of manpower is mobilization. Mobilization increases the options and the capabilities of the Defense Department to carry out national military policy, and it directly affects the timing, size, and composition of deployments to a theater of war. In addition, mobilization affects other potential theaters, as well as the strategic reserves. The decision to mobilize is vital to actual and potential military operations and capabilities, as well as to policy, strategy, and tactics.

The other element of mobilization can be stated as a fundamental proposition: mobilization is an act of political will. It makes commitment and determination real and visible to friends and foes alike. It is a conscious, concrete demonstration of firm

resolve to achieve political objectives over a recognized and acknowledged enemy or threat.

As an unambiguous political statement, mobilization is immensely significant to the American people. The response to a mobilization by Americans will be immediate: it may be negative, but then it may be gratifying to the decision-makers; in any event, it will be illuminating and not oblique.

Mobilization is a symbol of commitment, and symbolism is often as important as substance. Mobilization is also a substantive act, and therefore it is a political and military event having mutually supportive purpose and meaning. It follows without amplification that nonmobilization for a war is also of critical importance and may be viewed as a disregard for military and political prudence.

Thirty-eight months after the ground war began for the United States in South Vietnam, President Johnson made the belated decision to mobilize a small portion of the National Guard and Reserve. Never before in US history had a president refused to use early in a major war the military force of the reserve components. And never before had a mobilization for a major war been so miniscule. The 13 May 1968 mobilization for the Vietnam War occurred far too late and was far too small to be of any political or military significance.

The mobilization itself, once ordered by the Commander in Chief, was conducted by OSD and HQDA in a manner of gross ineptitude: the preparation for a mobilization was impudently unsuitable; the conduct of the mobilization was contemptuous; the demobilization was a comedy of errors. And once the forces were mobilized, countless problems were inflicted by the Regular Army—as has been true throughout US history.

## NOTES

This article is drawn from the authors' larger study "Mobilization of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve: Historical Perspective and the Vietnam War," published by the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 7 September 1984.

1. The Civil War is omitted from the table owing to its uniqueness.
2. The mobilized number includes the Continental Army. Statistics that show the number serving who were not members of the Organized Militia are unavailable.
3. Strength of the Regular Army was as of September 1939, when President Roosevelt declared a "limited national emergency" and began increasing the strength of the Regular Army as a result of war in Europe.
4. US Department of Defense, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense on Reserve Affairs* (Washington: GPO, FY65) (hereinafter referred to as *Annual Report*); US Department of the Army and the Air Force, *Annual Report of the Chief, National Guard Bureau* (Washington: GPO, FY65), pp. 28-29 (hereinafter referred to as *Annual Report CNGB*); US Department of Defense, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense and of the Secretary of the Army, Secretary of the Navy, and Secretary of the Air Force* (Washington: GPO, FY65), p. 406 (hereinafter referred to as *DOD Report*).
5. *DOD Report*, FY65, pp. 116, 131, 394; *Annual Report*, FY65, pp. 116-25.
6. US Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, (Washington: GPO, 1971) Book 4, Part IV C. 5., p. 16. (Popularly known as "The Pentagon Papers.")
7. Paul H. Nitze, "The Evolution of National Security Policy and the Vietnam War," in W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, eds., *The Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1977), p. 7.
8. Chester L. Cooper, *The Last Crusade* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), p. 280.
9. *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 4, Part IV C. 5., pp. 31, 110.
10. Lyndon Johnson, *The Vantage Point* (New York: Popular Library, 1971), p. 146.
11. Ibid., p. 149.
12. *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 4, Part IV C. 5., p. 31; Johnson, pp. 151-53.
13. *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 4, Part IV C. 5., p. 121.
14. Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1977), p. 118
15. James M. Gavin, *Crises Now* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 48.
16. BDM Corporation, *A Study of the Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam* (McLean: BDM, 1980-81), V, 3-24.
17. *DOD Report*, FY66, p. 175. Accordingly, the Army created the Selected Reserve Force (SRF) to enhance premobilization readiness of a portion of the ARNG and USAR.
18. Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 295-96.
19. Cooper, p. 286.
20. Kearns, p. 294.
21. David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 593-94.
22. John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), p. 242.
23. Philip Geyelin, "Vietnam and the Press—Limited War and an Open Society," in *The Legacy of Vietnam*, ed. Anthony Lake (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 166-93.
24. *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 5, Part IV C. 6. (a)., pp. ii and 25.
25. Ibid., pp. 38-41.
26. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
27. Ibid., pp. 101-27.
28. Ibid., Book 5, Part IV C. 6. (b)., pp. 22-24.
29. Ibid., p. 133.

30. Ibid., p. 213.

31. *DOD Report*, FY67, pp. 21-22; *DOD Report*, FY68, pp. 150-57; *Annual Report*, FY67, pp. 8-9; *Annual Report*, FY68, pp. 8-10, D-6.

32. *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1967), I, 1160-61; *Annual Report*, FY68, p. A-11.

33. *Annual Report*, FY68, appendix C.; *Annual Report CNGB*, FY68, p. 10; Mahon, p. 243.

34. J. Heymont and E. W. McGregor, *Review and Analysis of Recent Mobilization and Deployments of US Army Reserve Components* (McLean, Va.: Research Analysis Corporation, October 1972), Ch. 5; Richard P. Weinert, *CONARC and the 1968 Reserve Mobilization* (HQ, US Continental Army Command, Fort Monroe, August 1970), pp. 8-14.

35. US Department of the Army, Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, *After Action Report, Mobilization of Reserve Forces, 1968* (Washington: GPO, 1971), pp. 1-1, 1-2 (hereinafter referred to as *After Action Report*).

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., pp. 1-2, 1-3.

38. The first readiness report for the ARNG and USAR after suspension in 1966 of previous reporting was not established until April 1969. Ibid.; *Annual Report*, FY 69, p. 41.

39. William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Dell, 1976), p. 462.

40. Johnson, p. 386.

41. Ibid., p. 387.

42. *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 5 Part IV C. 6., (c), pp. 6-12.

43. Westmoreland, pp. 467-72.

44. For a detailed treatment of the Clifford Task Force reassessment, see Herbert Y. Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), ch. 7; and *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 5, Part IV C. 6. (c), pp. 16-64.

45. *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 5, Part IV C. 6. (c), pp. 51-52, 71-73.

46. Ibid., pp. 76-78; *After Action Report*, p. 1-5.

47. *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 5, Part IV C. 6. (c), pp. 80-85.

48. Johnson, ch. 17; Kearns, ch. 12; *United States-Vietnam Relations*, Book 5, Part IV C. 6. (c), p. 90.

49. *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News*, 1968, III, 4698.

50. "Army Reserve Units Respond to Call-Up," *The Army Reserve Magazine* (May 1968), p. 6.

51. *After Action Report*, p. 2-1; Heymont and McGregor, ch. 5.

52. The Selected Reserve Force (SRF) was created in 1965 to increase greatly the readiness of selected units to mobilize within seven days after alert and enter active duty at 93 percent. The initial ARNG and USAR contribution to the SRF was 976 units. The SRF was abandoned on 30 September 1969.

53. *After Action Report*, pp. 1-7, 1-8, 3-15.

54. Ibid., pp. 2-2, 2-3, 2-4, 3-3, 3-10, 3-11.

55. Ibid., chs. 2, 3, and 4.

56. Ibid., pp. 4-14, 1-15, 1-16.

57. Ibid., ch. 3; Heymont and McGregor, p. 1-4; Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., *Vietnam Studies: Logistics Support* (Washington: GPO, 1974), pp. 27-29.

58. *After Action Report*, ch. 3.

59. *Annual Report, CNGB*, FY 69, p. 9.

60. US Department of the Army, Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, *After-Action Report on Demobilization of Reserve Component Forces, 1969* (Washington: GPO, 1 August 1970), pp. 3-4, 3-7, 9-15; *Annual Report*, FY69, p. C-2; Heymont and McGregor, pp. 5-10, 5-11; *Annual Report*, FY69, p. C-2; *Annual Report*, FY70, p. A-8.