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The Army Reserve through the prism of the current commander of the 2nd Division



an address to the Institute on 26 July 2011 by

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Craig Williams explains the current role and tasks of Australia's Army Reserve, especially its 2nd Division, and describes how that will change as Army develops a more effective and efficient total force tailored for Australia's needs over the next 20 years.

Key words: Australian Army Reserve, peacekeeping, border protection, domestic security, disaster relief, humanitarian operations, East Timor, Solomon Islands, total force concept, Plan Beersheba.

I am delighted to address the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales in my capacity as one of its vice-patrons. The Institute has long contributed to the Defence debate, and I hope what I say will assist the Institute to form its perspectives on Defence's service to our nation into the future, and especially the part the Army Reserve might play in that future.

In preparing this paper, I looked at recent papers presented to the Institute by my colleagues, Major Generals Mark Kelly, then the Land Commander, Greg Melick, Head of Reserve and Employer Support Division, and David Morrison, then the Forces Commander, and now Chief of Army. In many respects, the papers chronicle Army's development since the mid 2000s and set the scene for our future.

General Kelly in 2008 described challenges in generating forces for operations within the context of the newly formed Joint Operations Command (Kelly 2008). Operational tempo at the time included Afghanistan, Iraq, the Solomons, and East Timor; and he mentioned the 2nd Division element deployed in 2007 to lead the Solomons operation.

General Melick in 2009 spoke soon after the tragic Victorian bushfires, where the military response was largely from the Reserve (Melick 2009). His paper discussed Reserve aspects of the Defence white paper (Australian Government 2009), including greater integration, greater consideration of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) as a total workforce, greater use of civilian skills, rebalancing Army, and a better preparedness model.

Last year, General Morrison discussed the formation of Forces Command; the new 36-month, readying-ready-reset force-generation cycle; and how manoeuvre brigades would use that cycle to develop warfighting capability against training levels and standards (Morrison 2010). He explained 1st Division's role in preparing and

certifying forces as "ready" against mission-specific requirements.

2nd Division

2nd Division has around 12,000 personnel. It is an integrated formation, with 1000 Regulars and 11,000 Reservists. From 2009 to mid-2010, it grew by over a thousand Reservists, largely through increased retention. Numbers have stabilised, with eased recruitment in balance with greater retention.

About 65-70 per cent of active Army Reservists serve in 2nd Division. Outside 2nd Division, there are about 1000 Reservists in various headquarters and elements such as:

- the Regional Force Surveillance Units;
- the 1st Commando Regiment, within Special Operations Command;
- logistics elements in 17th Brigade; and
- an engineer squadron, two artillery batteries, and logistic elements in 7th Brigade.

2nd Division has six brigades, each with a regional footprint. The four east coast brigades (4th, 5th, 8th and 11th Brigades) each have 2000 to 2400 personnel. 9th Brigade (South Australia/Tasmania) and 13th Brigade (Western Australia) each comprise 1500. Growth is largely consistent Division-wide, but is least in 13th Brigade.

2nd Division commands all university regiments. They deliver 85 per cent of career training for Army Reserve officers and soldiers. This arrangement mirrors the Forces Command merge of individual and collective training. The quality and contemporary relevance of this training is protected through active technical governance, overseen by Director-General Training at Forces Command. This governance, combined with a blend of Regular trainers and Reservists recently returned from operations, ensures all of Army trains to one set of standards, across the whole force, Regular and Reserve. Significant benefits and efficiencies are emerging through this construct.

The Army Reserve age and length of service profiles are remarkably similar to those of the Regular force. On average, Reservists are just over 3-years older than their

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Regular counterparts². The length-of-service profile differs early, due to Reservists not having a 4-year Initial Service Obligation, but is otherwise much the same. Age, length of service, and marital status of deploying troops are also similar. In 2003, 5th/7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, deployed to East Timor with a company of Reservists under command. After 6 years, retention of Reservists from that deployment is 75 per cent, versus less than 50 per cent of Regulars from the same deployment (Orme and Kehoe 2011). The retention of Reservists after Solomon Islands service is tracking slightly better than for the Reservists on the 2003 Timor rotation.

2nd Division's Contribution to Current Operations

Contributions to operations from the 2nd Division have grown. In 2005, 50 personnel deployed for Operation Relex (Border Protection), aggregating to about 8 person-years deployed; plus a company deployed to Rifle Company Butterworth. In 2008, I estimate about 900 individuals deployed, aggregating to 250 person-years deployed. This year, 1850 should deploy, representing nearly 400 person-years deployed. These assessments exclude consideration of time in preparation. These represent either individual deployments, or collective deployments to battle group³ (minus) in size. Of these person-years, 80 per cent are off shore; and the rest are domestic, in support of communities impacted by natural disasters, like the recent Queensland and Victorian floods, or domestic security, like the Commonwealth Heads-of-Government Meeting in Perth next October.

The domestic disaster response is provided at virtually no notice, and some planned deployments have relatively short notice. For our first rotation to East Timor, from when the decision was made to deploy a force from 2nd Division, we had only 6 weeks in which to arrange concentration of our force.

The combined tempo of operations and major activities is high. 2nd Division currently has troops deployed on Operation Astute (Australia's commitment to the International Stabilisation Force in East Timor) and Operation Anode (Australian military support to the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands).

Considering Operation Astute this month, the soldiers of our first rotation, which has returned to Australia, are on leave or finalising post-deployment administration. Our second rotation deployed to East Timor in June and is on operations there now. Aspiring members of our third rotation are on Exercise Talisman Sabre, an international exercise in Queensland involving 22,000 personnel from Australia and the United States. This is part of their in preparation – the next step in the competitive selection process. In total, we have 600 soldiers directly involved in Operation Astute; and many others are enabling these preparations.

Four Anode contingents are active. Rotation 23 will soon be reassigned to us having completed its deployment. Rotation 24 is currently deployed and will return in early August. Rotation 25 should shortly be certified to Chief of Army as ready for deployment and fully administered. Rotation 26 is finalising personnel selection, and doing foundation training and administration ahead of concentrating for mission-specific training in 6 weeks. All up, 2nd Division has 350 deploying personnel in various phases, and well over 200 personnel directly supporting preparation or dismount.

All these rotations are 'integrated' (*i.e.* comprise both Regular and Reserve personnel). Reservists comprise 45 per cent of Operation Astute and 85-90 per cent of Operation Anode rotations.

Regarding major activities, 550 soldiers from 2nd Division are deployed on Exercise Talisman Sabre. This exercise is part of the readying phase of the Forces Command force generation cycle. Such an activity will remain an enduring annual commitment. This year, 2nd Division is providing the following integrated elements, 90-95 per cent Reservist in make up:

- 250 personnel based on a high-readiness reserve combat team⁴ under command of 7th Brigade, the formation being evaluated in the exercise;
- a combat services support team of 50 personnel providing real-time logistic support over 5 weeks;
- 80 personnel over 5 weeks providing the enemy force with a communications node – satellite communications, 15 radio nets, line, and information systems (*e.g.* secret, restricted and unclassified internet (the last allowing deployed soldiers to connect with the outside world));
- over 100 personnel providing two-thirds of the role-player force, which engages with non-combatant populations in urban environments bringing exercise scenarios to life; and
- 50 observer-trainers evaluating 7th Brigade's performance.

In individual training, 350 personnel are engaged on Reserve First Appointment (officer) training; and 40 sappers, 80 signallers and 60 infantrymen are completing initial employment (soldier) trade training.

In total, therefore, excluding ongoing unit-based training on Tuesday nights, weekends or fortnights, I estimate that as I give this presentation, well over 2000 soldiers from across the Division are engaged on operations, playing important parts on major activities, or participating on career courses.

Reserve soldiers are keen to serve their nation. There is no shortage of volunteers for operations, despite the increasing tempo, and deployment lengths of up to 8 months off-shore. The soldiers prepare enthusiastically and well for their missions. The Division responds with agility, and is generating a track record as a responsive, reliable provider of sustained, relevant capability for the ADF from a Reserve raise, train and sustain organisation⁵.

²Army Workforce Pocket Brief, October 2010

³'Battle group' is a term used to connote a unit-sized (infantry battalion-group or equivalent) force, incorporating the integral combat, combat support and logistic support elements needed to sustain it. 'Minus' connotes that the unit has less than its establishment number of sub-units (*e.g.* three rifle companies rather than four)

⁴A combat team is a rifle company group or equivalent-sized sub-unit.

⁵A raise, train and sustain organisation is one that: raises (recruits) combat forces and provides their individual and collective training, including preparing them for deployment. The sustainment function involves providing reinforcements when required, and a succession of follow-on forces for future rotations of the deployed force.

The Future

Internal to 2nd Division, the major initiative is to implement a training design framework, which drives far greater alignment between our planning for training, our resource allocation, and the delivery of our directed outputs. At its heart, the training design framework will cause unit collective training to be more effective.

Every collective training activity, at every level from section to battle group, will be evaluated for its achievement of training levels and standards against the mission-essential tasks specified by Forces Command. Brigades will analyse these evaluations to assess and implement priorities for recruitment, for attendance at individual or collective training, and for soldier and officer career progression.

The training design framework will minimise, if not eliminate, the allocation of resources to low-priority activities, eliminate attendance at courses not directly aligned to the immediate and long-term capability priorities of the force, and generate far better value for money from our scarce resources. The process was prototyped in 2010 and the first cycle of evaluation of collective capability will conclude in October. All brigades will have developed and costed strategic training frameworks by December.

Plan Beersheba

At a whole-of-Army level, Plan Beersheba is being developed. Plan Beersheba is Army's plan for the next phase of the 'adaptive army campaign'. It follows formation of Forces Command, and establishment of the Army 'training continuum' and the 36-month force generation cycle. The plan will create three, similarly-structured multi-role manoeuvre brigades, based on 1st, 3rd and 7th Brigades.

Plan Beersheba places Army within the ADF, within a whole-of-government framework; and is based on a thorough appreciation of the total capabilities available to the government – the "total force" concept. The Reserve is an integral part of that "total force". "Total force" sees no separation between Regular and Reserve – Reserve and Regular must be fully complementary in order to maximise capability.

The Reserve role and tasks developed through the Reserve Modernisation Working Group process are integral to Plan Beersheba and are summarised as follows:

Role: to deliver specified capability to support and sustain ADF preparedness and operations.

Tasks: The four core tasks are to deliver:

- specified warfighting capabilities, focused on stability operations⁶ (main effort);
- humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and domestic security as part of a whole-of-government approach;
- specialist individual capabilities; and
- surge capabilities.

Specified warfighting capabilities for the Reserve include supporting tasks such as:

- providing specified round-out⁷, reinforcement and rotations for prolonged deployments, including
 - force-protection operations (points of entry, headquarters, and vital installations),
 - focused contributions to operations, and
 - individuals or 'bricks'⁸ in specialist capabilities; and
- raising, training and sustaining units to
 - provide long lead-time, low readiness capabilities,
 - optimise the use of civilian skills, and
 - support experimentation for new capabilities.

Plan Beersheba increases emphasis on the operational capability of the Reserve. 2nd Division, as part of Army's force-generation cycle, will deliver defined capability-outputs in direct support of the manoeuvre brigades. The Reserve warfighting focus will be on stability operations.

In practical terms, what might this mean for 2nd Division?

Firstly, it is appealing that Plan Beersheba involves greater consultation, especially in relation to Reserve matters. I comment that the paper from this Institute was a valuable input to that process. The Beersheba process also extensively engaged senior commanders of the Reserve with their full-time counterparts via Army modernisation steering groups. Reserve modernisation workshops focused on providing Reserve inputs to the steering groups, also drawn from a wide cross-section of senior Regulars and Reservists.

One of the challenges of Plan Beersheba, accentuated by the Strategic Reform Programme is the great pressure on allocation of full-time resources across the total force, not just the Reserve component. From an insular perspective, it cannot be said that the Reserve by itself is better off with a smaller full-time component. On the other hand, the recent high operational tempo has generated a significant population of Reservists with operational experience. Also, ex-Regulars are finding transfer to the Reserve an increasingly attractive proposition, given the operational tempo, the accumulating reputation of the Reserve as a successful organisation reliably providing relevant capability, and unit training increasingly focused on relevant outcomes. On this basis, the Reserve has never been better placed than it is now to deal with these pressures and sustain itself as a viable organisation. What is clear, though, is that the pressures are being carried across the total force, and I am optimistic the art of Plan Beersheba will result in these pressures resting in appropriate proportions across the whole of the force.

Our focus now will be on stability operations, *viz.* tactical operations that impose control over an area, while employing military capabilities to restore services and support civilian agencies⁹. They include military tactical

⁷Round-out involves providing fully-qualified individuals and sub-units as required from non-deploying units to bring a unit preparing to deploy to full establishment strength prior to deployment. Reinforcement involves providing fully-qualified personnel from non-deploying units to replace combat casualties and other personnel losses from deployed units while they are on operations.

⁸Small teams of usually no more than half-a-dozen personnel

⁹*Tactical Lexicon 2010*, Doctrine Wing, Land Warfare Development Centre, December 2009

⁶Stability operations are tactical operations that impose control over an area, while employing military capabilities to restore services and support civilian agencies.

operations. What we see in the Solomons and Timor at present might be described as the lower end of stability operations. The high-readiness component of 2nd Division already trains to the foundation warfighting standards, which are the basis for stability operations.

This focus on stability operations is good for the enhanced development of 2nd Division as a valuable part of Army. 2nd Division will concentrate now on producing unit-level combined arms organisations based on three infantry companies with other capabilities; whereas the focus in recent years has been on producing company groups, notwithstanding that larger-sized operational force elements, such as for the Solomons and Victorian Bushfires have been generated based on this platform of training limited to sub-unit level.

2nd Division brigades will adopt the 36-month readying-ready-reset cycle which will necessitate little adjustment to our current procedures. Brigades may be paired to deliver capability and be synchronised with one of the manoeuvre brigades. Our capability output will be evaluated annually against the specified training levels and standards at Exercises Hamel or Talisman Sabre.

Plan Beersheba is still developing. I expect, however, it will firmly embed 2nd Division and the Reserve into the total force, a force in which there is no separation between full-time and part-time components. I expect the plan, through its synchronised force-generation cycle across the total force, will see greater generation of integrated effect by various forms of combinations of Regulars and Reservists.

Army is currently developing its internal processes to ensure that the total force concept is integral to its planning for future structures. It is also closely involved in developing evidence-based tools for costing Reserve service and for understanding the most effective conditions of service for influencing workforce behaviour for Reservists. Together with Beersheba, these initiatives will provide for even more effective use of Reserves in future.

In developing its organisations, Plan Beersheba must consider approaches to integration of Reserve and Regular components. Many wrongly consider integration as a singular solution. At least three forms of integration should be contemplated:

- integrating individual Reservists into otherwise “Regular” units – this dominates Navy and Air Force employment of Reserves and can be successful for Army, especially in specialist areas, like medical specialists;
- retaining sub-units populated by Reservists, within units that are otherwise “Regular” – some units established this way experience challenges in maintaining alignment in focus and tempo under unitary command, which results from the different availability paradigms between Reserve and Regular components, and thus differences in training achievement; and
- generating an integrated effect, where forces generated from the Reserve integrate for deployment with components from the full-time force, e.g. force-elements from 2nd Division for the Solomons, Timor and other collective deployments are successfully generated this way.

Plan Beersheba will be put to the Minister for Defence later this year. The plan presented will be phased to ensure flexibility is retained and that decisions are not locked in that cannot be adjusted for a changing environment or future government decisions.

Conclusion

I am especially proud of the ongoing achievements of all ranks within the 2nd Division. The Division is agile, and is reliably delivering force-elements of Australian soldiers who are consistently delivering success on operations domestically and off-shore. The Division has the capacity to rapidly generate forces, especially for, but not limited to, disaster relief. The Division stands ready for the challenges ahead, be they related to the generation of capability or to dealing with organisational change. Despite the challenges, the Division has come a long way, and the future is bright. Plan Beersheba will be an important part of that future.

The Author: Major General Craig Williams was born and school educated in Perth, Western Australia, before attending the Royal Military College, Duntroon, graduating as a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil). He was commissioned in 1978 into the Royal Australian Engineers, and filled a range of regimental postings, mainly within the Army’s construction stream. In 1991, he transferred to the Army Reserve, and continued his career in Army construction, while being employed with a civil engineering contractor in Sydney. Thereafter, he joined infrastructure advisory firm, Evans & Peck, where he is a principal. His regimental service culminated in command of the 21st Construction Regiment. His further military career included command of the 5th Brigade in New South Wales, and senior officer staff appointments. He became Commander 2nd Division in January 2009, and was appointed as a member in the Military Division of the Order of Australia in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list in 2008.

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