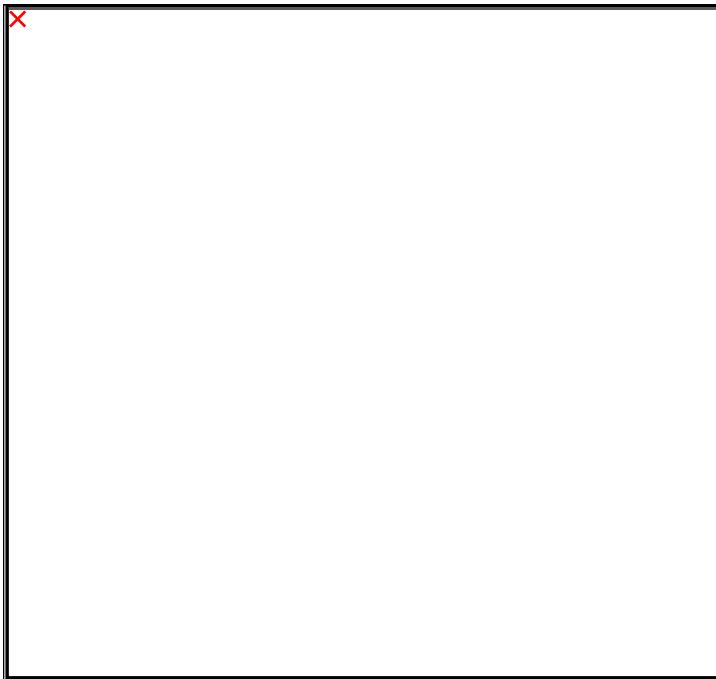


Ten years later: Army War College students reflect on changes to Army Reserve

Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos, USAWC Public Affairs

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After leading the assembled audience in a chorus of “Happy Birthday Army Reserve,” Col. Greg Martin, senior Army Reserve advisor to the commandant, Maj. Gen. William Waff, commander of the 99th Regional Support Command, and Army War College student, Lt. Col. Vanessa Gattis, cut the birthday cake on April 13, at the LeTort View Community Center. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos.*

Gone are the “weekend warriors” who put their uniforms on two days a month and a couple of weeks in the summer. Today’s Army Reserve Soldier has the same demands as an active-duty counterpart, with the additional demands of working at a civilian job or school.

On April 13, members of the Army War College class of 2011 gathered at the LeTort View Community Center to celebrate the 103rd birthday of the Army Reserve, and to reflect on how much it has changed.

“When I joined the Reserve in 1992, we were a strategic reserve that operated with the ‘In case of war, break glass’ mentality. The mindset of the Soldiers in the Reserve was, it’s a part time job,” said student Lt. Col. Adam Roth. Prior to coming to the Army War College, Roth served as an Active Guard/Reserve officer with the 844th Engineer Battalion in Knoxville, Tenn.

Roth has spent the majority of his Army career as a Reserve Soldier. After being commissioned in 1988, he spent four years on active duty before transferring to the Reserve force. For 10 years Roth had a typical Reserve career in which he put on his uniform only for weekend drills and yearly training exercises.

That all changed on Sept. 11, 2001. A member of Columbia Engine Company #1 in Oceanside, N.Y., Roth spent the days after 9/11 at Ground Zero.

“After having come up from underneath what was left of Tower 2, I realized that I needed to be back in uniform,” said Roth. An Army reservist with the 411th Engineer Brigade at the time, he was quickly mobilized and served in New York, Fort Leonard Wood and the Pentagon. In August 2002, Roth switched to the Active Guard/Reserve and has been on continuous active duty since then.

As an AGR member he has served in various locations throughout the United States and deployed to Iraq twice.

“The Army Reserve Soldiers of today joined the Army Reserve fully knowing that they might be going to war,” said Roth. “Today, Army Reserve Soldiers can expect the potential of mobilization once every five years.”

After Sept. 11, the mission of the Army had changed. The role of the Army Reserve had transformed.

“The Reserve has changed for the better,” said Col. Greg Martin, senior Army Reserve advisor to the commandant. “Before the realignment to a more operational force we were not so good. Now there is no difference between what the Reserve and the active duty force is capable of doing.”

Lt. Col. Joyce Junior, student and Reserve officer with the 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command in Fort Belvoir, Va., is a “traditional reservist” who balances a civilian job along with the demands of a military career.

“While this is in theory a part-time job, as a commander I usually spend about 40 hours a week dealing with the various issues of command,” said Junior. “As the commander of the 942nd Quartermaster Detachment I had to make sure that all the Soldiers were current on basic soldiering skills such as physical fitness, marksmanship and medical readiness. I also had to make sure that their civilian employers had been provided with a copy of their deployment orders as well as a memorandum notifying them that their employees would be gone for 12 to 18 months,” said Junior. Unlike their active duty counterparts, the majority of the Reserve force Soldier’s training is done during their drill weekend.

The biggest challenge the Army Reserve will face in the continuing decades is balancing the challenges of multiple deployments while providing the citizen Soldiers with some semblance of a civilian career, Roth said.

“If we are to continue having an operational Reserve force we need to have predictability,” said Martin. “We owe it to the Soldiers, their families and also their employers to let them know how often they will be taken away from their civilian jobs to do their military job.”

“The Army Reserve has fundamentally changed from ten years ago,” said Roth. “It has contributed in so many ways to our overall efforts in the long war. It cannot go back to the way it was.”

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