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Only the Dead Have Seen the End of War

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1.0—USERRA generally

“Only the dead have seen the end of war.”

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, in his famous 1962 “last roll call with you” speech to the cadets at the United States Military Academy. General MacArthur attributed these words to Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher, but there is no record that Plato ever said or wrote any such thing. The 20th Century philosopher George Santayana apparently first used these words on page 102 of his book *Soliloquies in England*, published in 1924. General MacArthur was not the first person to misattribute these words to Plato. Britain’s Imperial War Museum (opened in London in 1936, just 12 years after publication of Santayana’s book) also uses these words and misattributes them to Plato.

Santayana is better known for his equally profound statement that “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” That statement first appeared in Volume I of his 1905 book titled *Reason in Common Sense*.

Q: I read with great interest your eloquent article titled “A Reasonable Burden” published on page 14 of the May-June 2013 edition of *The Officer*.¹ In your article, you pointed out that the burdens on civilian employers, caused by military service of employees, are small compared to the infinitely greater burdens (sometimes the ultimate sacrifice) made by that tiny sliver of the Millennial Generation² that currently serves in uniform, whether Active, Reserve, or National Guard.

I am a life member of ROA and a retired Army Reserve Colonel. After I was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in 1965, through Army ROTC, I served on active duty for four years, including a year in Vietnam. For the next 26 years, before I retired in 1995 with 30 years of commissioned service, my military service (and the service of the officers and enlisted members that I commanded) was generally limited to one weekend of drills per month and two weeks of annual training (usually in the summer) per year. When Saddam Hussein’s Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait in August 1990 and President George H.W. Bush drew “a line in the sand” and responded forcefully, I volunteered to come back on active duty, but the Army told me that I was too old.

Even in the “strategic reserve” days of the 1970s and 1980s, there was a lot of resistance from the civilian employers of my unit members. Civilian employers frequently asked me to reschedule unit training obligations or to excuse specific members from participating, because these obligations necessitated absences from civilian jobs that the employers found inconvenient. Now that the “strategic reserve” has been transformed into the “operational reserve” and the demands upon the individual reservist have increased exponentially, the conflicts with civilian employers must also have increased exponentially.

¹ That article is available on our website as Law Review 13062. I invite the reader’s attention to www.servicemembers-lawcenter.org. You will find 894 articles about laws that are especially pertinent to those who serve our country in uniform. You will also find a detailed Subject Index and a search function, to facilitate finding articles about very specific topics. I initiated this column in 1997, and we added 122 new articles in 2012.

² The Millennial Generation consists of those Americans who were born between 1975 and 1995 and who came of age during the opening years of the Third Millennium.

Now that our country's participation in Iraq has ended and Afghanistan is winding down, and now that the defense budget is severely constrained, perhaps the burdens on civilian employers will be substantially reduced. What do you think?

A: I think that the pace of military operations involving the National Guard and Reserve will slacken somewhat, but we are never going back to the "strategic reserve" of "weekend warriors." With the constrained budget of the Department of Defense (DoD), our nation's reliance on the Reserve Components will likely increase still further.

With a severely constrained DoD budget, the imperative for the foreseeable future is to preserve as much military power as possible with the limited resources that are available. The way to do that is to put a higher percentage of service members in the Reserve Components, where their capability approaches or equals (and in some cases exceeds) that of their full-time counterparts, at a fraction of the cost.

I invite the reader's attention to the article titled "Draft report touts reserves as bargain" by reporter Andrew Tilghman on pages 6 and 8 of the *Navy Times* issue dated May 27, 2013.³ Mr. Tilghman wrote:

"The Defense Department is preparing to send a controversial report to Congress that explains in detail how Reserve-component troops are substantially cheaper than active-duty members — an official analysis that is likely to fuel a growing debate about the future shape of the all-volunteer force.

Based on a two-year study conducted within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the report marks the military's first attempt to provide an itemized cost for the active and Reserve components in an effort to help determine what mix of forces can provide the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

According to a draft copy of the report obtained by *Military Times*, the Pentagon analysis concludes that Guard and Reserve troops not only are cheaper when in drilling status but also when fully mobilized, in part because their overall compensation is lower when taking into account noncash benefits such as retirement accrual and health care.

Moreover, the overall costs for outfitting units with reservists are lower because part-time troops do not tap many military perks such as family housing, DoD schools, installation-based family support and the moving stipends that active-duty troops get every few years when they are reassigned, according to the draft report.

For example, an Air Force master sergeant from the active component costs taxpayers a total of \$129,000 per year, while an Air Force Reserve master sergeant mobilized for a full year costs \$107,000, according to the report."

For more than 90 years, ROA has pushed for cost effective national defense through a strong and ready Reserve Component. Our purpose, as set forth in our 1950 congressional charter that was revised and reaffirmed by Congress in 2009 is as follows: "The purposes of the corporation [ROA] are to support and promote the development and execution of a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate national security." Title 36, United States Code, section 19101 (36 U.S.C. 19101).

Our promotion of national defense through a strong and ready Reserve Component goes back 28 years earlier. On October 2, 1922, General of the Armies John J. Pershing spoke to 140 Reserve officers—veterans of the "Great War" or "the war to end all wars" that had ended just four years earlier, on November 11, 1918. General Pershing and the 140 officers who attended the ROA organizational meeting at his request recognized that referring to the just concluded "Great War" as "the war to end all wars" was a dangerous conceit, and they established ROA to speak for the need for national preparedness.⁴ Indeed, an even greater war began just 17 years later when Adolph Hitler's Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.

Our country's participation in Afghanistan will likely end next year, as President Obama has promised, but Afghanistan is no more "the war to end all wars" than was World War I. Statesmen in the Continental Congress *declared* our nation's independence on July 4, 1776, but it took another five years of hard fighting by the founding

³ This article was also published in *Army Times*, *Air Force Times*, and *Marine Corps Times* and it will almost certainly appear in the *ROA SmartBrief*.

⁴ See *The ROA Story*, by John T. Carlton and John F. Slinkman, pages 18-19, published by ROA in 1982.

members of our nation's Army, Navy, and Marine Corps to *secure* our independence at the Battle of Yorktown on October 19, 1781. As we celebrate Memorial Day on Monday, let us all remember that Americans in each succeeding generation, down to our own day, have been called upon to make great sacrifices to preserve the freedom won by our founding fathers in the Revolutionary War. That process has not ended and likely never will end because *only the dead have seen the end of war*.