



# Leading the U.S. Army Reserve: A Conversation with Lieutenant General Charles Luckey, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command

By Michael J. Keegan

America's Army Reserve has always risen to meet the challenges of our time. It's evolved from a nascent force of doctors and nurses to an organized reserve, and then to a strategic reserve under federal control. Today, it is an integral element of the operational Army and a force-provider to the Joint Force.

Yet, its mission remains the same—to provide mission-critical capabilities for the Army and the Joint Warfighter whenever and wherever they are needed, anywhere on earth—forging and sustaining a capable, combat-ready, and lethal force: a force of technically and highly skilled soldiers, leaders, and units.

Lieutenant General Charles Luckey, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command, joined me on *The Business of Government Hour* to discuss topics including the mission of the U.S. Army Reserve, the essential components of force readiness, the Army Reserve's support of civil authorities and much more. The following is an edited excerpt of our discussion, complemented with additional research.



## On the History and Evolving Mission of the U.S. Army Reserve

In 1908, Congress created the Medical Reserve Corps, the official predecessor of the Army Reserve, as a way to expand the Army's medical capability and capacity in a time of war. During wartime, the Army needed access to medical specialties such as cardiothoracic and orthopedic surgeons, and emergency room technicians. The theory behind this approach was to access these skills when needed. The notion is to find places in America where the technical capabilities and talent required in the event of a war are already available, and to take advantage of that readiness. We're talking about places like Mass General Hospital or the

Mayo Clinic. At the time, it saved money and placed the onus of readiness on the community where the citizen soldier lived and worked. Though this concept has evolved, the purpose hasn't. It continues to field a broad array of capabilities, often by leveraging existing skills of citizen soldiers.

For more than a century, America's Army Reserve has delivered decisive capabilities to the battlefield, fulfilling our integral role as a force-provider for the most lethal land power in the world, with approximately 200,000 soldiers spread across twenty time zones. Our role is more critical than ever in an age characterized by the persistent presence of asymmetric threats, as well as emerging, dynamic and highly contentious challenges.

The Army Reserve comprises nearly 20 percent of the Army's organized units, almost half its total maneuver support, and a quarter of its mobilization base-expansion capacity. Its unique status as both a component of the Army and a singular command imbues it with the flexibility, agility, and unity of effort needed to respond to any mission at home or abroad, and often with little notice.

### **On Being Chief of the Army Reserve and Commanding General of USARC**

I have two roles. I'm the Chief of the Army Reserve, which focuses on policy. It's about ensuring that from a legal perspective the statutory mandates and requirements of the Army Reserve are being supervised, led, and shaped by me and the staff in the Office of the Chief of the Army Reserve. In that capacity, I report directly to the Chief of Staff of the Army serving the Secretary of the Army as a member of the Army staff.

I also have responsibilities as Commanding General of the U.S. Army Reserve Command. It's headquartered in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and is an operational headquarters under the control of U.S. Army forces. In this capacity, it's my role as a leader to build readiness and the units of action that are capable and prepared as a force multiplier.

### **On Challenges**

My most significant challenge as a leader is to drive a change in culture. It's to ensure the Army Reserve culture matches, and supports, the development of certain capabilities to deal with the emerging threats in the twenty-first century. To put it a different way, we have spent the last fifteen to sixteen years engaging in a certain type of warfare in a certain part of the world. There was a relatively predictable sense of when we would need to move the next unit or capability into that area of operations. We are now in an environment where there are potential competitors on a global scale that can challenge our military capabilities and power.

Whether it be in cyberspace, under the seas, in orbit, or with global precision strike capabilities, our supremacy in key domains is no longer assured. We need to ensure that we have the right culture in place to be able to meet the evolving threat environment. Very simply, driving a requisite cultural change is probably one of the most significant challenges I face.



Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, talks with Lt. Gen. Charles D. Luckey, chief of Army Reserve, before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Defense hearing on National Guard and Reserve Programs and Readiness, April 26, 2017. (National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Erich B. Smith/Released.)

### **On Readiness**

Readiness is a core priority. Readiness encompasses such characteristics as manning, training, equipping, and ultimately, leadership. They are all critical, and let me tell you, largely interdependent.

Manning is the cornerstone of readiness for the Army Reserve. This applies across the force in general, and all the more so in quick-turn deployable units. It begins by positioning force structure in the right locales to leverage national demographics and emerging trends. This means we can capitalize on a mixture of population densities, predisposition to service, as well as other factors that set units up for success in recruiting and retaining talent in an all-volunteer environment.

Training is the second aspect of readiness. To maintain operational readiness and to prepare for current and future threats, we're revamping our training strategy, focusing on mission-essential tasks. Soldiers and units will not only be proficient in their warrior tasks and drills, but focused

## Conversations with Leaders

collectively on the unit and occupational specialties required to win decisively in a complex and dynamic operational environment. The Army Reserve will train to Objective T standards. This means that commanders, at all levels, will ensure that units achieve participation rates and execute decisive action training in order to meet the new readiness requirements. Predictable multi-component integrated training is essential to building the readiness needed to meet short notice contingency requirements.

Equipping is the third component of readiness, and the latest equipment ensures that we remain both interoperable and readily available as a vital component of the operational force. Equipping requires sustained and predictable funding to maintain a fully operational Army Reserve. Insufficient funding widens capability gaps which jeopardize the Army Reserve's ability to support the Joint Force. And a lack of interoperability puts all Army formations at risk when deployed. Equipping, funding and fielding should ensure that the Army Reserve is ready and interoperable with deploying forces.

Leadership pervades all aspects of readiness, and serves as the ultimate force multiplier. Leaders are the most effective hedge against complexity and uncertainty, and a resource that can neither be replaced by technology nor substituted with weaponry and platforms. We have combat-seasoned force leaders, at every echelon, who have led in combat. It's this kind of leadership that makes a difference.

### On Ready Force X

With the understanding that readiness is a key priority, we also recognize that the world in which we find ourselves today is changing rapidly. This impacts our readiness efforts significantly. Given the emerging threat environment, rapid mobilization is critical to deploying and sustaining combat power. As a result, we need to build a force that can deploy on short notice to respond to contingencies when needed. Ready Force X is that initiative and is designed to focus on short-term readiness. As we continue to meet current and projected demands, we are also developing and organizing enhanced readiness. This is to ensure that the team is able to move fast (in days or weeks) to fight, survive, and communicate effectively with deployed forces.

In the last fifteen years or so, we built readiness over time, in a rotational manner. So, if a unit was informed of possible mobilization, those soldiers had several years to work their way through the training required to prepare for the mission. Today, our situation is different and we may need



Lt. Gen. Charles D. Luckey, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General, United States Army Reserve Command, flew with Soldiers from Foxtrot Company 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (Multi-Compo General Support Aviation Battalion) to Mt. Rainier, Washington, October 5, 2017. LTG Luckey discussed Ready Force X and the role of aviation assets on a lethal battlefield with the aircrew.

to deploy in less time, perhaps in months or even quicker. It's a different way to look at readiness. That said, the rotational readiness works if you have time. When that's not the case, you'll need a different approach. In the end, it's about managing expectations.

### On Supporting Families and Employers

Readiness is built and sustained by getting and keeping the support of both families and employers who enable us to serve the Army and our country. The reason for this is simple: We depend upon an all-volunteer force for our survival. We need to keep the support of our families and fellow citizens. Families who feel embraced, appreciated, and integrated are our key enablers. Similarly, the unwavering support of employers for Army Reserve soldiers often determines their ability to continue to serve the country without being forced to choose between a civilian career or continued service as a citizen soldier.

Translated into action, this reality requires a coherent and integrated approach whereby a variety of family support programs and initiatives are leveraged to support families. It also helps to sustain a sense of community and mutual support in spite of the geographic dispersion of our units and soldiers.

Sustaining employer support becomes an even more complex and demanding challenge when seen in the context of the Army's appropriate reliance on the Army Reserve to generate the combat power the nation requires. Through a variety of outreach tools, and persistent and persuasive engagement with employers and their communities is the



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key to reminding American businesses of the essential link between their “patriotism” and national security. We cannot, and will not, throttle back on this effort. U.S. Army Reserve Ambassadors, the Public-Private Partnership program, and community support initiatives at the local level are all critical enablers in this push.

I make sure that the family is comfortable, that the soldier is able to maintain good civilian employment and able to spend time at home; but at the same time, be ready and able to support our war-fighting efforts.

### On Resiliency

Resiliency is integral to readiness. We need a force that is healthy and fit, physically as well as mentally. Yet, suicide and self-harm impact our units as they do other components of the armed services. In my response, I want to advance the ball, to continue to get after this persistent challenge. I’ve tried to learn as much as I can in this area. I’ve talked to researchers at the University of Southern California in behavioral sciences departments. I was surprised to learn that suicide and self-harm tend to increase during the spring and summer months. I was always under the impression that the holiday season was the most challenging time of year for folks struggling with mental health issues. There are at least three factors that contribute to this situation:

- Ready access to lethal means for self-destruction
- A sense of burdensomeness to their team or family
- A sense of simply not belonging to a team or feeling alienated

My message to my team is: Don’t be dissuaded. Recognize that we have a mission and you are an integral part of our team. We have each other—a team of 200,000 soldiers as well as their families and employers. We are devoted to improving the resiliency of our citizen soldiers and their

families, who face stress that civilian resources cannot always address. We are there with resources and programs. We stand shoulder to shoulder in our commitment to one another.

### On Defense Support of Civil Authorities

We are structured with dual-purpose capabilities. The U.S. Army Reserve is a federal response partner, maintaining a ready posture for Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations as a resource and capability provider. Though our



Fort Dix – U.S. Army Reserve Commanding General, LTG Charles D. Luckey, attends a briefing during the 84th Training Command’s WAREX 78-17-01 at Fort McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst on March 23, 2017. Warrior Exercises are designed to prepare units to be combat-ready by immersing them in scenarios where they train as they would fight. Roughly sixty units from the U.S. Army Reserve, U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and other components are participating in WAREX 78-17-01, a large-scale collective training event designed to assess units’ combat capabilities and help build the most capable, combat-ready, and lethal federal reserve force in the history of the nation. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Philip Scaringi.)



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mission remains the same, our ability to respond to it has widened. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2012 expanded our capability to conduct DSCA response with increased mobilization authorities to rapidly activate units. The Army Reserve provides federal support to DSCA during emergencies with capabilities such as:

- Aviation lift
- Search and rescue or extraction
- Quartermaster (food, shelter, potable water, heated tents, etc.)
- Civil affairs and public information
- A significant portion of full-spectrum engineer capability

We conduct DSCA response in two ways—immediate and deliberate. These responses differ in the authorities under which they are conducted and the source of support request.

We have provided assistance (sandbagging, saving lives, protecting critical infrastructure) to towns in West Virginia in the aftermath of serious flooding. We provided aviation support in response to forest fires in Kansas. Most recently, active and reserve soldiers set up water purification systems to provide safe, potable water to the residents around Guajataca Lake in Puerto Rico after the local water treatment facility was damaged by Hurricane Maria. Army Reserve Soldiers from the 512th Movement Control Team began emergency relief operations in the U.S. Virgin Islands, responding to the immediate needs of residents affected by Hurricane Irma’s damage. Army Reserve continues assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey with the U.S. Army Reserve’s 373rd Combat Sustainment Support Brigade, assisting local authorities during the relief efforts.

### On Shaping and Growing the Future Force

Staying current with force structure changes, unit positioning, leader development, and leveraging emerging technologies, capabilities, and opportunities, are key aspects of the agility the Army Reserve will use to shape and grow the future force.

Our deep connection to the private sector is a substantial advantage in understanding and exploiting cutting-edge technology advances and capabilities, such as those in the cyber domain. We’re seizing on opportunities to draw upon our civilian skills and relationships with the private sector to meet the critical needs of the Army.



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – LTG Charles D. Luckey, Chief of Army Reserve and commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command talks to Maj. James Fager, executive officer, 1st Cavalry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade, and Maj. James (Troy) Fisher, operations officer, 1CD RSSB during his visit to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

Infrastructure is also a critical component of generating readiness. Training platforms (their location, capabilities, and limitations) must be assessed and leveraged in a way that optimizes their ability to provide relevant, combat-focused training experiences for units. ■

To learn more about the U.S. Army Reserve, go to [usar.army.mil](http://usar.army.mil).



To hear *The Business of Government Hour* interview with Lieutenant General Charles Luckey, go to the Center’s website at [www.businessofgovernment.org](http://www.businessofgovernment.org).



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To read the full transcript of *The Business of Government Hour* interview with Lieutenant General Charles Luckey, visit the Center’s website at [www.businessofgovernment.org](http://www.businessofgovernment.org).