

## **Reserve Forces are Essential to National Security and so is ROA**

By Col. Richard E. Nelson III, USAF (Ret.)

As we know, ROA's Charter requires us to “support and promote the development and execution of a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate national security”. Allow me to elaborate on some key words in that phrase as I feel they apply to our essential Reserve Forces and ROA.

**Support** – We would not be veteran members of ROA if we did not believe in supporting national security. We all took the pledge to defend our nation with our lives, if necessary. By serving as the military service organization that exclusively advocates on Capitol Hill for our Reserve Forces, ROA continues to pursue a properly funded, and equipped Reserve component, to include equal pay and benefits.

**Promote** – ROA promotes the equitable treatment for our Reserves within DoD and the US Congress utilizing our many resolutions and legislative initiatives. Concurrently, ROA has fully promoted issues that are important DOD wide (active and reserve), such as keeping the A-10 aircraft in service protecting ground troops from all services.

**Development** - Our legislative initiatives and expertise in advising on military policies are valued by members of Congress and their staff. They are known to call ROA's Legislative Staff for clarification on pending Defense oriented bills and request our staff's inputs. Over many years, ROA has established a reputation as a credible and factual source valuable to our Congressional decision makers.

**Execution** – Our operational Reserve Forces provide capabilities in nearly every skill set in the US Armed Forces. And, in many instances, the Reserves possess the only equipment and personnel tasked with important functions, such as the Air Force Reserve's “Hurricane Hunters”. The Army Reserve provides 50% of the Army's medical support, with percentages higher in several other categories. But, all of the various Reserve and National Guard units cost the American taxpayer much less than a similarly designated Active Duty unit. For example, the fully integrated Air Force Reserves perform 20% of the Air Force's missions for just 3% of its budget. Without our highly experienced, flexible (short or long tours), and “economical” Reserve Forces, the DOD budget would need to be either greatly increased or our national defense capabilities somehow reduced. ROA is proud to play arguably an essential and leading role to ensuring the cost effective Reserve Forces are properly funded, equipped, and supported.



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Adequate National Security – With the ever present constraints on our US government's annual budget, a reduction target is often DOD's “discretionary” spending. Under this umbrella, our military leaders look for cost effective and innovative methods to still maintain national security. The Reserves Forces are the logical part of that solution with their “full up round” readiness at a much reduced cost. Some pundits simply see the solution as reducing the total size of DOD to control costs. But, to be able to fund essential missions and defense postures, the Reserves provide the “best bang for the buck”. Increasing, not decreasing, their numbers to take on more will help keep us secure. They have proven themselves more than capable, particularly during the high operational tempo of the last 20+ years. But, if budget issues necessitate more workload for the Reserves, the nation needs to support these citizen warriors. Leaving your family and civilian job for long periods is stressful to all concerned. Without proper pay, medical, family support, and employer support, some Reserve members will elect to leave. We need to keep them more now than ever. To help our Reserves remain strong, ROA will continue to fight for them for at least another 100 years. To use a popular phrase, “We got their backs!”

*Note, ROA deeply regrets that Colonel Nelson passed from our ranks April 23, 2022. He is missed by us all.*