

# Mobilizing Reservists in Support of DCMA's Mission



*U.S. Air Force Reserve Col. Gray Coyner recently joined the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) as the mobilization assistant to the director, replacing Air Force Maj. Gen. John Handy, who retired. We wanted to learn more about our new addition to the DCMA community and his role.*

**Communicator (C):** Please describe your duties and responsibilities as mobilization assistant (MA) to the director of DCMA.

**Col. Coyner (CC):** As MA, I am primarily tasked with helping the director run his Reserve program. I work with all the DCMA senior leaders, making recommendations concerning their Reserve program direction, hiring Reserve senior leaders, ensuring Reservists are deployment or capability ready and mentoring Reserve members. I also sit as an advisor to the DCMA senior leadership team, bringing a Reservist's view to the DCMA decision process. In addition, I assist Headquarters in areas in which I might have specific expertise. For example, Mr. Jim Russell, who is in charge of all things financial within DCMA, has asked me to sit on the new DCMA audit committee.

This is a very challenging position, where, as a committee, we will try to provide guidance and oversight as DCMA attempts to become compliant with the Chief Financial Officers Act.

**C:** How did your military background prepare you for this assignment?

**CC:** What has helped me the most by far has been being willing to volunteer for tough assignments, being mobile and having good mentors. I, like other Reservists, have been on extended active duty a number of times since 9/11 and plan on being activated again. I have had the good fortune to have had a number of challenging positions, just coming from the number two position in Air Force contracting. However, I really can't take much credit for my success; I have just been ready, willing and blessed.

**C:** What do you do in civilian life?

**CC:** As an Air Force auditor, my civilian position and organization have not only given me a good background for acquisition management but also afforded me the opportunity to participate as a Reservist frequently. My civilian organization (the Air Force Audit Agency) is very supportive of its civilians who participate in the Reserves and do all they can to enhance their Reserve participation, recognizing that this is one of the ways it can contribute to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Currently (and I expect until I retire in a few years), I work for

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the auditor general on his Pentagon staff. I help him remain abreast of Air Force activities, work audit issues within the Headquarters and assist our field activities in working with our clients.

**C:** How does being an auditor help your contributions to DCMA?

**CC:** To be successful as an auditor, you must have an analytical mind and be able to quickly grasp new concepts. These traits, as my DCMA contemporaries will tell you, are also necessary to be successful within DCMA — a joint organization, constantly responding to the needs of four different Services and several other government agencies, all acquiring or supporting weapon systems differently.

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**C:** What do you hope to achieve as DCMA’s senior military Reservist?

**CC:** I would like to continue the good work started by my predecessor, Maj. Gen. John Handy, making the Reserve support to the DCMA wartime mission priority number one. Since 9/11, there have been over 100 Reservists activated to deploy in support of the GWOT or sustain DCMA operations in the continental U.S. We will also need to reposition our Reservists to properly attend to DCMA’s reorganization into four product divisions and address new and expanding DCMA mission requirements. In addition, as Reservists, we need to reconnect to our supporting Services both to meet training requirements and understand Service mission needs requiring DCMA support.

**(Above)** U.S. Air Force Reserve Col. Gray Coyner, mobilization assistant to the director, DCMA (DCMA staff photo)

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**C:** How many Reservists serve in DCMA?

**CC:** In rough numbers — and it changes daily — we have approximately 110 Air Force, 60 Army and 35 Navy Reservists. We have seen these numbers go up slightly in the last couple of years, and they could increase significantly if the pool of available administrative contracting officers (ACOs), property managers, engineers and rated personnel with some acquisition experience was larger. Our current Reservists are our best recruiters, as we draw our accessions primarily from personnel separating from active duty. If the fit is right, or if prospective Reservists are willing to retrain, we try and bend over backwards to get them on board. Therefore, if you know of any separating active duty personnel with the skills sets mentioned above or the willingness to learn, please do not hesitate to refer their names to our senior Reservists at each of our product divisions.

**C:** How do military Reservists contribute to the DCMA mission?

**CC:** Maybe it is because of my position, but I only hear good things about our Reservists and requests for more help. As you all know, DCMA is very involved with executing the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and helping the Services maintain ever-increasing sustainment levels. Both of these activities seem to require the additional assistance that our Reserve element provides. For example, I was recently talking to our Headquarters government flight representative personnel. We were discussing in general terms how Reservists might shore up our support for unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) contract support and refurbishment. To me, it is a Reserve natural to provide flight operations

support since Reservists operate over 60 percent of the day-to-day Air Force UAV missions.

**C:** Does DCMA have enough military Reservists? If not, what are you doing to bring more Reservists on board?

**CC:** DCMA has been very successful over the past five years in effectively using its Reservists as a force multiplier. From performing a critical industrial base review after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, to manning the Combat Support Operations Centers after every major tragedy, to deploying in large numbers to Iraq and Afghanistan and supporting our flight safety mission with highly experienced pilots and maintainers, DCMA Reservists have been involved in the fight along with their active duty counterparts. However, what is tempering any expansion is, of course, reality — all the Services are under significant budget pressure, along with restructuring caused by

the Quadrennial Defense Review and Service Transformation. In light of these factors, including the recent DCMA reorganization, we hope to perform a top-to-bottom review of our positioning and identifying requirements. We expect to query all the contract management office (CMO) commanders and major DCMA activities, asking questions and getting their input. The key question to be asked is, “How can Reservists help you to satisfy your wartime needs?”

**C:** Some DCMA Reservists are deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan — what jobs are they performing, and how are they doing?

**CC:** Since 9/11, we have had over 100 Reservists from within and outside DCMA deployed

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to or activated to backfill in support of the GWOT. I think it is safe to say our support has run the gamut, covering all areas of expertise DCMA provides in the desert, except for actual command positions. We have deployed ACOs, engineers, operations support personnel and property officers. We recently deployed Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Don Collins as the Joint Contracting Command – Iraq/Afghanistan superintendent. As the senior contracting enlisted person, one of his major responsibilities will be to oversee all the enlisted forces working in theater for our former commander, Air Force Maj. Gen. Darryl Scott. I think the Reservist’s deployment success rate is best epitomized by DCMA’s continued call for more Reserve help.

**C:** What is the greatest strength of the DCMA Reserve program?

**CC:** Whenever you have a joint organization like DCMA, where Reservists from different Services who work part time are able to function cohesively as a team to get the mission done, in my opinion you have 90 percent of the battle won. Our Reservists are our biggest “bragging point” — motivated, with a strong sense of duty to get the mission done despite numerous job and family sacrifices. I have never met a more motivated, self-sacrificing group of individuals who constantly are looking for opportunities to help our active duty counterparts.

**C:** Does DCMA have a high retention rate for its Reservists?

**CC:** Yes, too high! Within the Reserve community, DCMA is well known as being “Reserve friendly” with interesting and

challenging work. This characteristic was probably best illustrated by DCMA’s response after Hurricane Katrina. DCMA West took great pains to locate every Reservist living in the path of Katrina, working long hours to link up with Reservists who had been forced from their homes. One instance stands out especially: One of our Reservists lost his house in New Orleans and was forced to relocate for a long period of time out of the area. DCMA made certain that he had a place to continue working.

Our CMO commanders do a good job in mentoring Reservists, including them as a member of their military team. Further, our internal Reserve team uses CMO Reserve team chiefs along with District and Headquarters support, especially from our human resources management staff, to help the Reservists stay connected and knowledgeable of such areas as active duty opportunities, awards, training and other personnel changes. While there is always room for improvement, I, as the new guy, found a motivated, well-trained Reserve force.

**C:** Now tell us a little bit about yourself — family, interests, etc.

**CC:** I guess you might say my passions are prioritized as faith, family and friends, and somewhere in there fits Reserves. I have been married for over 25 years to Debbie, a medical doctor. I also have been blessed with two college-aged children, a son majoring in accounting (following in his dad’s footsteps) and a daughter majoring in biology. When off work, I enjoy traveling with Debbie, reading non-fiction, working around the house, especially with my 80-year-old dad, and volunteering. I live in Fauquier County, Va., on a small farm about 40 miles from DCMA Headquarters.

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