

Involvement of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force in the Implementation of Executive Order 70 in Region 1

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the involvement of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force (RRF) in the implementation of Executive Order No. 70 (EO 70), which institutionalized the Whole-of-Nation Approach (WONA) to end local communist armed conflict in Region 1. Using Key Informant Interviews, the research found that while the RRF has significant potential for contribution, their actual involvement remains limited due to the absence of a legal mandate, specifically the lack of Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for Republic Act No. 7077. The study assessed RRF participation across five key areas: Organization, Management and Administration, Utilization in Civil-Military Operations (CMO), Command and Control, and Mobilization. Results indicated weak linkages with local government units (LGUs), inadequate training in counterinsurgency, and a lack of formal indoctrination on EO 70. Nevertheless, the RRF's capacity in non-combat roles—such as disaster response, civic action, and information dissemination—was recognized. The study recommends revisiting RA 7077 and institutionalizing policies to integrate the Reserve Force effectively into national peace and development strategies.

Keywords: Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force; Executive Order 70; Whole-Of-Nation Approach; Internal Security Operations; Civil-Military Operations; Reserve Force Mobilization; Region 1; RA 7077; Counterinsurgency; Local Government Engagement; Reservist Policy Reform

1. Introduction

In early Philippine history, only worthy warriors were sent to battle, as seen in Lapu-Lapu's victory against Magellan in 1521—an act of heroism driven by the passion to defend one's homeland. During the Spanish colonization from 1565 to 1898, Filipinos of all ages took part in revolutions led by figures like Bonifacio, Silang, and Aquino. When the Americans took over in 1902, reforms in education, health, and governance followed, including Manuel L. Quezon's efforts toward Philippine independence and the enactment of the 1935 Constitution (Retiree and Reserve Affairs Official page).

This same constitution enabled the National Defense Act of 1935, establishing the concept of a citizen army, mandating all Filipinos to defend the Republic (National Defense Act, 1935). After WWII, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was officially formed, composed of the Philippine Army, Navy, and Air Force (Philippine Army Manual 10-00, 2007).

Due to communist unrest, Martial Law was declared in 1972. The reserve force's development was sidelined, though trainees under the "Kamagong" concept supported the regular force (Philippine Army Manual, 2007). Following the 1986 People Power Revolution, the Army Reserve Command was deactivated, although ROTC programs continued, bringing the reserve force to 528,000 personnel, albeit without a structured unit.

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The 1987 Constitution formalized the reserve force's legal basis in Section 4, Article XVI and emphasized the protection of life and liberty as a state obligation (Philippine Constitution, 1987). National defense was seen as inseparable from sustainable development.

In 1991, RA 7077 or the Reservist Act was passed, officially organizing the reserve component. This followed the creation of the Office of Reservist and Retiree Affairs in 1990 (Reserve Force Development Manual, 2007). Section 7, Article 3 of the same law defined the Citizen Armed Force's mission to assist in war, disaster response, socio-economic projects, and maintenance of essential services.

The ongoing insurgency by the CPP-NPA-NDF remains a major security issue. These groups exploit communities and extort businesses, prolonging unrest. Sole reliance on military action has led to loss of lives, pushing the AFP to adopt peaceful strategies.

The AFP's Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP) was introduced to promote collaboration among the AFP, LGUs, NGOs, and civil society groups for a holistic peacebuilding approach (AFP IPSP Manual, 2010). However, the IPSP's limited reach and lack of inter-agency coordination prevented it from fulfilling its full potential. As such, capacitating LGUs to build peaceful, resilient communities remains a critical need.

Despite the implementation of AFP's IPSP Bayanihan and DSSP, communist terrorist groups continue to pose a threat, disrupting communities and instilling fear across the nation. In response, Executive Order No. 16 s. 2017 emphasized the urgent need to end all armed conflicts through synergized development efforts, strengthened LGU capacities, and participatory governance. This led to the issuance of Executive Order No. 70 s. 2018, which institutionalized the Whole-of-Nation Approach (WNA) to address the root causes of insurgency, violent extremism, and underdevelopment in conflict-prone areas (DILG Framework Results, 2020).

EO 70 established the Task Force on Ending Local Communist Armed Conflict (ELCAC), engaging Executive branch officials in 12 clusters. The DILG leads five of these clusters: local government empowerment; basic services; localized peace engagements; E-CLIP and Amnesty Program; and sectoral unification and empowerment. The EO redefined internal security as a shared responsibility, involving all government agencies—not just the military—in confronting interconnected social issues like poverty, injustice, and inequality.

Given the Reserve Force's vital role in peacetime Civil-Military Operations (CMO), its close coordination with stakeholders, especially LGUs, is critical. As mandated to strengthen LGU service delivery, DILG recognizes the Reserve Force as a strategic partner in local peacebuilding initiatives. In this regard, the Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP) was launched to support ELCAC through community-based peacebuilding. It empowers local chief executives (LCEs) to champion peace and requires active participation from all public servants.

Although EO 70 officially expired on 30 June 2022 with the end of President Duterte's term, Hon. Roger G. Mercado filed House Bill No. 08334 on 12 January 2021 to institutionalize the Whole-of-Nation Approach. The bill passed First Reading on 19 January 2021 but remains pending in Congress (Official Website, House of Representatives). If passed into law, the EO's principles would be sustained, affirming the essential role of the Reserve Force and all sectors in nation-building under the WNA framework. The Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Reservist and Retiree Affairs, J9, provided updated figures on the Reserve Force as of 20 April 2022.

Table 1 Number of AFP Reserve Force Personnel

UNIT	NR UNITS	ACTUAL STRENGTH		
		OFFICER	EP	TOTAL
READY RESERVE	221	3,477	67, 430	70, 907
AFFILIATED RESERVE	132	1, 096	15, 556	16, 652
STANDBY RESERVE	54	9,364	1, 026, 129	1, 035, 493
TOTAL	407	13, 937	1,125, 767	1, 123, 052
AGGREGATE TOTAL	1, 123, 052			

(Source: OJ9 Data as of 20 April 2022)

Region 1 or Ilocos Region is composed of the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, and Pangasinan. The First Regional Community Defense Group (1RCDG) based in Camp Lt Tito B Abat in Manaoag, Pangasinan is the overseer of all Army Ready Reserve Units (RRU) in Region 1. Each of the provinces has an established Ready Reserve Units except for Pangasinan that has two (2) Ready Reserve Units. Added to the RRUs is the 1601st Ready Reserve Brigade also under the command of 1RCDG. The RRUs of 1RCDG are, as follows: 101st Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion (RRIBN) in Ilocos Norte; 102nd RRIBN in Ilocos Sur; 103rd RRIBN in La Union; 104th RRIBN in Western Pangasinan covering the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Congressional Districts; and 105th RRIBN in Eastern Pangasinan covering the 4th, 5th, and 6th Congressional Districts, respectively. The Community Defense Centers, under the guidance of the Group Commander, supervise the operation and mobilization of Reserve Units.

Table 2 shows the number of Ready Reserve Force strength of 1RCDG broken down per unit, by Officer Fill-up and Enlisted Reservist. As reflected in the table, there is a total of 79 Reserve Officers (RO) and 2567 Enlisted Reservists (ER) assigned in 1RCDG.

The 1601st Brigade has 10 RO and 74 ER giving a total of 84. On the other hand, 101st RRIBN has a total strength of 393 with 12 RO and 381 ER while 102nd RRIBN has eight (8) RO

and 528 ER with a total strength of 536. Relatively, 103rd RRIBN yielded 547 Reserve Force personnel with 19 RO and 528 ER as the 104th RRIBN showed 15 RO and 528 ER giving a total of 543. Lastly, the 105th RRIBN has a show of force of 543 with 15 RO and 528 ER. The total reserve force personnel of the 1RCDG showed 2646.

Table 2 Number of Ready Reserve Force Personnel per RRU under 1RCDG, RESCOM

Ready			
CDC	RO	ER	TOTAL
1601	10	74	84
101	12	381	393
102	8	528	536
103	19	528	547
104	15	528	543
105	15	528	543
Total	79	2,567	2,646

(Source: S1, 1RCDG as of May 2022)

With the involvement of the various agencies in the Whole-of-Nation (WON) approach, the insurgency in Region 1 was significantly reduced. To attest this, the Peace and Order Council of Region 1 (RPOC) in coordination with the Regional Task Force-ELCAC and the Regional Development Council 1 (RDC) issued Resolution No. 1 series 2022 declaring the whole Region 1 as under a state of **Stable Internal Peace and Security** on February 24, 2022 at San Juan, La Union. The dismantling of rebel groups, the prolonged nonexistence of the violent incidents brought by the CTGs, and the deprivation of community support to armed groups in the region led to the issuance of the resolution.

Thus, identifying the involvement of the Army Ready Reserve Force in the implementation of the EO 70 or the Whole of Nation Approach is vital in knowing their participation to the success of the RTF-ELCAC in Region 1.

1.1. Problem Statement and Research Questions

The implementation of Executive Order No. 70, also known as the Whole-of-Nation Approach (WNA), emphasizes the collective involvement of government agencies, private sectors, and non-government organizations to address local communist armed conflict. Within this national initiative, the study seeks to explore the involvement of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force in the operationalization of EO 70 and to identify the various factors that influence their participation. By understanding these dynamics, the study aims to propose appropriate recommendations to optimize the role of the Reserve Force under the Whole-of-Nation framework.

In line with this objective, the research raises the following questions: First, what is the level and nature of involvement of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force in Region 1 in implementing EO 70, specifically within the clusters managed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)? Second, what are the factors that affect their involvement in the Whole-of-Nation Approach? Third, what recommendations can be proposed to strengthen and maximize the participation of the Reserve Force in the implementation of EO 70?

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The central objective of this research is to examine and assess the role of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force in Region 1 in implementing the Whole-of-Nation Approach under Executive Order No. 70. In pursuit of this goal, the study seeks to: (1) determine the extent of involvement of the Army Reserve Force in the operationalization of EO 70; (2) identify the key internal and external factors that influence their participation and performance; and (3) develop practical and strategic recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize their contributions to the government's peace-building and development programs.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The results of this study hold substantial relevance for various institutions and stakeholders. For the Army Reserve Command (RESCOM), the study provides strategic insights into expanding the participation of Ready Reserve Forces in EO 70-related efforts. It contributes to the refinement of mobilization policies and procedures aimed at deploying the Reserve Force more effectively in promoting peace in conflict-affected areas.

For the RTF-ELCAC clusters nationwide, the findings highlight the untapped potential of the Reserve Force as community-based professionals who can contribute meaningfully to DILG-managed clusters. Their civic expertise and local familiarity can support peace and development goals. For Local Government Units (LGUs), the study offers a gateway to develop formal cooperation and coordination with the RRF in their jurisdictions, ensuring manpower availability and sustainability of ELCAC programs. It further allows LGUs to identify and mobilize reservists living within their communities for socio-economic development activities.

For Regional Community Defense Groups (RCDGs), the study serves as a blueprint for linking their units with cluster heads of NTF/RTF-ELCAC, encouraging active RRF involvement under their supervision. This could even lead to formal agreements between RCDGs and LGUs to institutionalize reservist participation. Community Defense Centers (CDCs), being the direct overseers of the RRF, may use the findings to design programs and activities that align with local peace and security goals, thereby enhancing synergy with LGUs.

For Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion Officers and enlisted personnel, the research serves as a call to action—encouraging them to collaborate with their communities and engage in Civil-Military Operations that align with ELCAC objectives. Given their embeddedness in rural communities, reservists can play a critical role in sustaining EO 70 initiatives.

Lastly, for future researchers, this study provides foundational material on the participation of the Reserve Force in the Whole-of-Nation approach and offers reference points for analyzing the implications of proposed legislation such as House Bill 08334. It presents valuable data and insights that bridge past developments with emerging trends in national security and peacebuilding.

1.4. Scope and Limitations

This research focused on five specific areas within the Army Reserve Force Capability Framework—Organization, Management and Administration, Utilization in Civil-Military Operations (CMO), Command and Control, and Mobilization. All these areas are under the purview of the DILG and were selected because the Reserve Force, composed of non-combatant civilian professionals, is more aligned with socio-economic development functions than combat operations.

The study concentrated on five Ready Reserve Infantry Units within the jurisdiction of the 1st Regional Community Defense Group (1RCDG). Respondents included all Battalion Commanders of these units and the Directors of the five Community Defense Centers. As the researcher also served as the Battalion Commander of the 105th RRIBN in Eastern Pangasinan, she was excluded from the respondent list to avoid bias. Additional inputs were gathered from the Assistant Division Commander for Reservist and Retiree Affairs (ADCRRRA) and the Group Commander of 1RCDG through Key Informant Interviews.

However, the study did not include surrendering rebels, nor did it cover employees of government agencies not involved in the implementation of RTF-ELCAC programs. The findings are therefore limited to the perspectives and activities of military-affiliated actors and institutions engaged with EO 70 clusters under the DILG in Region 1.

2. Literature

2.1. Review of Related Literature

2.1.1. Organization of Philippine Army Reserve Force

The organization of the Philippine Army (PA) Reserve Force is structured to augment the regular components in Internal Security Operations (ISO) by implementing an intensified recruitment strategy at the grassroots level. This strategy targets permanent residents, including qualified indigenous peoples, with the goal of placing a reservist in every barangay, sitio, and similar localities, enabling localized control and integration. These reservists and reservist units are intended to support regular forces in intelligence gathering, territorial defense, counter-organization efforts, and disaster response operations (HPA Ltr dtd 08 Oct 2003). To enhance this organizational approach as stipulated in LOI-94 "PAGHAHANDA" (HPA dtd 19 March 1994), ARESCOM follows a six-phase mustering and organizational process. Phase I involves identifying the sources of reservists and their disposition. Phase II focuses on building networks with local stakeholders such as LGUs, NGOs, media, civic groups, elected officials, civil registrars, the PNP, and barangay associations. Phase III emphasizes awareness and information dissemination using tri-media and reservist organizations, while Phase IV handles the actual registration, listing, and categorization of reservists by location, age, rank, physical profile, and skillset. Phase V centers on mustering reservists based on territorial levels—ranging from squads at the barangay level to brigades or divisions at the regional level—alongside orientation and confirmation of their status. Finally, Phase VI involves the formal organization of these reservists. Volunteers are grouped into ready reserve units prioritized for immediate training, while non-volunteers are designated to standby reserve units trained only when 120% of the ready reserves have been filled and trained. However, a study by LTC Joel V. Lucas (2021) on the implementation of EO 70 (ELCAC) in the Cagayan Valley Region identified several gaps in this organizational model. These include limited indoctrination, outdated organizational structures, low personnel turnout, and inadequate individual and unit training opportunities, which continue to hinder the effectiveness and responsiveness of the Ready Reserve Units (RRUs).

2.1.2. Management and Administration of Ready Reserve Force

The management and administration of the Philippine Army (PA) Ready Reserve Force is geared toward integrating it as a vital component of the future PA organizational structure. This transformation entails reducing the size of active territorial brigades and incorporating ready reserve units as part of the operational framework. Primarily composed of citizen-soldiers from the First Category of Reserves, the Ready Reserve plays a key role in ensuring rapid mobilization when national security or disaster situations arise. Under Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) policy, reservists in the First Category are eligible for promotions and assignments following the same guidelines applicable to both regular and reserve forces. Category I Ready Reserve units are expected to maintain the highest level of readiness and must be deployable within 1 to 7 days. Meanwhile, Category II units may be mobilized within a slightly extended period, not exceeding 15 days. These timelines highlight the importance of constant training, readiness, and resource availability for immediate activation. To maintain a reliable and responsive mix of regular and reserve forces, the operational capabilities of the Ready Reserve must be prioritized. This includes ensuring personnel build-up, maintaining sound force structure, and promoting unit integrity and cohesiveness (HPA Ltr dtd 15 Oct 2001). Strengthening these areas is essential to fully leverage the strategic value of the Ready Reserve Force in the country's defense and disaster response systems.

2.1.3. Utilization of AFP Reserve Force in Civil Military Operations

The utilization of the AFP Reserve Force in Civil Military Operations (CMO) is grounded in Republic Act 7077, which recognizes the Reserve Force or Citizen Armed Force (CAF) as a critical foundation of the regular military structure. The law provides that reservists may be called to expand the regular force in times of invasion, war, or rebellion. Beyond combat readiness, they are also mandated to assist in disaster response through relief and rescue operations, support socio-economic development by collaborating with stakeholders, and help in the operation and maintenance of vital public and private facilities. In alignment with this mandate, AFP reservists are expected to actively contribute to the implementation of CMO initiatives. A directive issued by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Reservist and Retiree Affairs on 12 February 2004 specified the types of CMO activities where reservists could be involved, emphasizing their role under the Civil Auxiliary Service. These roles include participation in humanitarian missions, environmental campaigns, public awareness activities, and local engagement programs aimed at enhancing civil-military relations.

Despite these clear provisions, the actual engagement of AFP reservists in CMO remains limited. Many of their diverse skills and capabilities are underutilized, leading to missed opportunities for enhanced community engagement and support. This underutilization has also placed additional burdens on regular units, affecting their overall combat readiness due to non-core operational responsibilities. As emphasized in the Operational Directive on 14 July 2005 regarding the maximum utilization of reservists in Civil Military Operations, there is a pressing need to tap the full potential of the Reserve Force to support and complement the AFP's non-combat operations, particularly in nation-building and local security enhancement efforts.

2.1.4. Utilization of the PA Reserve Force in Civil Military Operations

The Philippine Army (PA) Reserve Force plays an essential role in enhancing the military's non-traditional functions, particularly in the conduct of civil-military operations (CMO). Recognizing the need to strengthen the performance of Army units in these roles, reservists have been increasingly utilized to augment CMO efforts. Since 01 June 2003, Regional Community Defense Groups (RCDGs) under the Army Reserve Command (ARESCOM) have been placed under the operational control of Infantry Divisions or Infantry Brigades (Separate) to support Internal Security Operations (ISO) in their respective areas of responsibility (HPA Letter dated 29 January 2004). Infantry Divisions are tasked with planning and implementing CMO programs to support ISO, while the RCDGs continue to focus on developing, organizing, training, equipping, and administering the mobilizable reserve force. As an integral component of the Total Army, these reservist units also participate in socio-economic development efforts. Reservists contribute to a variety of activities under their civil auxiliary service mandate. In Military Civic Action Programs (CIVAC), they take part in Medical and Dental Civic Action Programs (MEDCAP), which offer medical consultations, surgical assistance, primary health care services, and blood donations. They also support transportation and communication operations, help manage evacuees or displaced individuals during emergencies, and perform repair and rehabilitation of schoolhouses, public utilities, roads, and drainage systems. In terms of Community Relations, reservists are involved in a broad array of cause-oriented activities, including anti-drug abuse campaigns, peace advocacy, cleanliness and beautification drives, human rights awareness initiatives, and anti-illegal activity advocacy. They also lead youth development and environmental protection programs, such as tree planting and ecological awareness campaigns. For Public Information, reservists help disseminate key messages through traditional media like press releases, radio and TV, as well as through modern platforms such as infomercials, community dialogues or pulong-pulong, and public forums. These efforts aim to build stronger community ties and promote awareness of national issues. Moreover, reservists are engaged in Psychological Operations (PsyOps) by facilitating information operations (IO), deploying special operations teams (SOT), organizing theatrical presentations like *Dulaan ng Kapayapaan* (Peace Theater), participating in speakers' bureaus, and conducting counter-organization campaigns that aim to challenge and dissuade insurgent ideologies within local communities. Importantly, the Commandant's Paper of LTC Roger G. Mercado (2021) underscored the emerging significance of the Reserve Force during the COVID-19 pandemic. It showcased the structured potential of reservists to assist in contact tracing and other crisis responses. As a result, Mercado recommended focused capacitation and continuous training of reservists to ensure their readiness and deployment in similar national emergencies, demonstrating their vital role in both defense and nation-building.

2.1.5. Command and Control of the Ready Reserve Force

The Command and Control of the Ready Reserve Force (RRF) underscores the crucial role that reservists play in both military and civilian operations, particularly during peacetime. According to HPA Letter dated 01 July 2002, the inclusion of reservists in operations other than war (OOTW) is seen as a strategic initiative that contributes to nation-building while allowing the Philippine Army (PA) to concentrate regular forces on achieving core military objectives. This dual strategy ensures that the RRF complements the PA in fulfilling its broader mission. As outlined in AFPM 3-8-1 (April 2002), selected Ready Reserve Units (RRUs) may be mobilized to provide either military or civil auxiliary services in communities affected by local threats, insurgency, or natural disasters. Military auxiliary services involve participation in activities aimed at addressing insurgency threats, while civil auxiliary services include roles in maintaining public order, assisting in rescue and relief operations, and supporting the transport and delivery of health services. These delineations guide the proper deployment of the RRF based on the specific needs of localities. The practical value of the RRF's involvement was further reinforced in the thesis of LTC Ryan N. Severo (2021), which examined the programs implemented by Regional Task Force 5 ELCAC in conflict-affected barangays, especially in the Bicol Region. His findings highlighted the effectiveness of the Local Government Empowerment (LGE) cluster and the E-CLIP and Amnesty cluster in advancing the goals of inclusive and sustainable peace under the human security framework. These clusters effectively facilitated peace and development programs aligned with the objectives of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), suggesting that with strengthened command and control mechanisms, the RRF can become an even more valuable partner in national security and local governance efforts.

2.1.6. Utilization of Reservists and Reserve Units in Disaster Management

The Ready Reserve Force plays a vital support role in disaster management under the AFP's Disaster Response Task Force. As directed by HPA (28 June 2004), Army reserve units are tasked to assist local Disaster Coordinating Councils in search, rescue, relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts during calamities. However, their participation has often been underutilized and poorly coordinated with regular forces and local agencies. To optimize their impact, the integration of reservists into all phases of the disaster management cycle is essential. This includes ensuring unity of command, better coordination, and full alignment with local disaster councils. Properly mobilized, the Ready Reserve Force can significantly enhance national efforts to save lives, protect property, and support community recovery.

2.1.7. Utilization of the Philippine Army Reserve Force During Internal Security Operations (ISO)

The Philippine Army Reserve Force plays a critical role in supporting Internal Security Operations (ISO), a primary thrust of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). As early as June 1, 2003, the Regional Community Defense Groups (RCDGs) under the Army Reserve Command were placed under the operational control of Infantry Divisions and Separate Infantry Brigades to support ISO within their respective areas of responsibility. This move emphasized the reserve force's dual mandate: to serve as a mobilizable defense component and to assist in socio-economic development efforts (HPA Ltr dated 07 Jan 2004). In alignment with Republic Act 7077, the mobilization of the reserve force in ISO can be done through three mechanisms. Full Mobilization requires an act of Congress and a Presidential order, activating both Ready and Standby Reserve units. Partial Mobilization, ordered by the President with congressional approval, activates only the Ready Reserve. Selective Mobilization, however, may be carried out solely by the President and applies to reservists within specific localities facing emergencies or imminent threats. These mobilized personnel may serve in auxiliary capacities or volunteer roles under the Department of National Defense's supervision. The Reserve Force is considered the alternate support unit to the AFP's Regular Force in addressing internal security threats, peacekeeping, and emergency response. This support is also relevant to the Whole-of-Nation Approach under Executive Order No. 70, which created the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The NTF-ELCAC, composed of Cabinet-level clusters, promotes a unified and strategic engagement of government resources to end insurgency. Of its 12 clusters, five have been specifically linked to literature-supported areas where the Reserve Force can contribute meaningfully.

2.1.8. Local Government Empowerment Cluster

The Local Government Empowerment Cluster, led by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), aims to strengthen the capacity of local government units (LGUs) in policy formulation, project development, security enforcement, and the administration of justice. Central to this mission is the cultivation of a Citizen Movement that promotes peace-building, shared governance, and national development as a collective aspiration. This movement envisions a responsible citizenry—composed of both government workers and voters—who are engaged, informed, and invested in governance and societal transformation (DILG Cluster Report, 2020). Despite these ideals, the cluster continues to face significant challenges. These include institutional gaps, conflicting or deficient policies, under-resourced devolved functions, and fragmented government initiatives. Compounding these governance issues are threats from communist-terrorist groups (CTGs), which engage in mass base building, bureaucratic infiltration, and sectoral manipulation through strategic alliances—tactics that threaten the integrity of democratic institutions. To address these concerns, the cluster focuses on several strategic solutions. These include fostering a culture of peace and conflict sensitivity, strengthening inclusive and interdependent communities, and institutionalizing mechanisms that empower LGUs. The approach also stresses the importance of mutual accountability—local officials must serve their constituents effectively, while the national government must support LGUs and remain answerable to the people they serve (National Security Plan [NSP], 2017–2022).

2.1.9. Basic Services Cluster

The Basic Services Cluster, under the leadership of the DILG, plays a crucial role in ensuring the effective delivery of essential government services such as housing, education, healthcare, electricity, and water to communities across the country. Its core objectives include securing and harmonizing programs among member agencies, addressing sector-specific issues, and fostering the development of conflict-resilient communities (DILG Cluster Report, 2020). However, the cluster encounters significant challenges in its implementation. These include institutional and policy deficiencies, and the presence of disruptive groups such as the Save Our Schools Network in education, Community-Based Health Services for health, and other insurgency-influenced movements that interfere with housing, food, and infrastructure delivery. The CTGs' socio-economic and political campaigns further complicate these efforts by fostering resistance to government initiatives and disrupting development programs. To address these issues, the cluster adopts a multi-pronged approach. It works to resolve policy gaps through agency coordination, unifies and empowers communities to collaborate with government institutions, and mobilizes residents to counteract and expose CTG infiltration.

Additionally, the cluster aims to isolate insurgent elements to safeguard service delivery. Ultimately, the cluster's goal is to establish a sustainable, responsive, and equitable system for delivering basic services, particularly to CTG-influenced and vulnerable groups such as farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, youth, urban poor, educators, and workers. These efforts align with the broader objectives of the National Security Plan (NSP, 2017–2022) in promoting inclusive development and national stability.

2.1.10. Local Peace Engagement Cluster

The Local Peace Engagement (LPE) Cluster, spearheaded by the DILG, focuses on resolving local armed conflicts through community-based peace talks and direct engagement with members of the communist terrorist groups (CTGs). This approach was adopted in response to the CTGs' strategic exploitation of national-level peace negotiations to advance their National Democratic Revolution (NDR), often at the government's disadvantage. The cluster's main objectives are to expose the CTG's deceptive peace framework and to implement localized peace initiatives. However, several challenges persist: convincing the public of the government's sincerity, institutionalizing LPE efforts, and addressing the CTG's misinformation campaigns that portray LPE as insincere or illegitimate. To address these, the cluster follows a three-phase framework—pre-localization, localization, and post-localization—which may be executed sequentially or simultaneously depending on the local context. The desired outcomes include disrupting the CTG's grassroots structures, preventing power-sharing schemes, and fostering cultural harmony and resilient communities (DILG Cluster Report, 2020).

2.1.11. E-CLIP & Amnesty Program Cluster

The Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) and Amnesty Program Cluster, co-led by the DND and DILG, oversees the reintegration of former rebels (FRs) and their families into mainstream society. Its short-term goal is to reduce armed insurgents through swift assistance, while medium-term plans aim to improve community well-being through programs like PAMANA. In the long term, the cluster envisions a permanent end to armed conflict, restored public trust, and active civic participation by FRs. Challenges in implementation include potential delays in benefit delivery and concerns over program continuity and sustainability. To address these, the DILG recommends strengthening LGU-led peace engagements, integrating E-CLIP with other development programs, promoting inter-agency convergence, and extending amnesty to eligible FRs. Ultimately, the cluster seeks to reduce CTG capabilities, ensure timely assistance to FRs and their families, align government efforts, uplift socio-economic conditions, and establish long-term peace and security (National Security Plan 2017–2022).

2.1.12. Sectoral Unification, Capacity-Building, Empowerment and Mobilization Cluster

This cluster is tasked with empowering all societal sectors, especially the marginalized, to resist CTG infiltration and build sustainable, peaceful communities. Through partnerships with national agencies, civil society, and communities, it promotes responsive governance and service delivery. The challenges it confronts include government inefficiencies, policy gaps, CTG propaganda (such as false human rights advocacy), and the CTG's sectoral strategies under the NDR's "10 Programs." The CTG's goal is to infiltrate societal structures through what they call "IPO works" and echeloned alliances. To counter this, the cluster employs a dual strategy: (1) directly addressing sectoral concerns via government interventions, and (2) building and mobilizing a proactive and patriotic citizenry. Its end goal is a unified, capacitated, and responsible public that contributes to just and lasting peace and development nationwide (DILG Cluster Report, 2020).

2.2. Synthesis and Gaps

Based on the presented literature materials, it is very evident that the Army Ready Reserve Force should have been fully organized since its reactivation in 1992. Republic Act 7077 further legalized the existence of the Reserve Force coupled with the mandate to develop, equip, maintain, and utilize them in times of calamities and disasters, during wartime, augmentation to maintenance of peace and order, and during conduct of socioeconomic activities. The Reserve Force component is most active in Civil Military Operations (CMO) when the country is at peace. However, the Task Force-ELCAC was not able to reflect the utilization of the Reserve Force in their cluster activities, more specifically those handled by DILG. CMO activities of the Ready Reserve Force may be linked and aligned with the activities of the DILG Clusters especially on the Basic Services. MEDCAP (Medical and Dental Civic Action Program) is an example of health care service delivery that could be conducted by the Reserve Force in partnership with the DILG in conflict-affected localities. In an informal interview conducted by the Researcher with the Assistant Division Commander for Reservists and Retiree Affairs of the 7th Infantry Division based at Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija, he mentioned that his office is not directly involved in the RTF-ELCAC for both Region 1 and Region 3 (the area of coverage of the 7ID). He, however, mentioned that the priority program of the 7ID in EO 70 is the cluster on Peace, Law Enforcement, and Development Support (PLEDS) effort. Nonetheless, he strongly believes that the Army Ready Reserve Force should be involved in the

Whole-of-Nation Approach by conducting information campaign in the communities; promote patriotism and love of country, and community organizing. ADCRRA further emphasized that the Ready Reserve Force were informally involved with RTF-ELCAC through information dissemination efforts, which is basically a component of CMO under Public Affairs. He perceived that the reason behind the non-involvement of the Ready Reserve Force in the ELCAC was that the Reserve Force cannot be mobilized due to the provisions stated under RA 7077 that only Congress and the President of the Philippines has the authority to mobilize the Reserve Force either Full, Partial, or Selective Mobilization. Consequently, four (4) years after the issuance of EO 70, it was quite difficult for the Office of Reservist and Retiree Affairs (ORRA) to assess the contribution of the Army Ready Reserve Force on the WNA because data on activities that were participated in or those that involved the Ready Reserve Force is not readily available. In his closing statement, ADCRRA mentioned the need to have these urgent steps to achieve the WNA involving the Reserve Force, as follows: a) properly organize the Reserve Force first; b) give them professional military trainings; and c) equip them slowly but surely. These, in a way, may contribute to the Whole-of-Nation approach – a professional group of Army Reserve Forces ready to support the government anytime, anywhere.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Whole-of-Nation Approach institutionalized through Executive Order No. 70, which led to the creation of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The conceptual framework guiding this research focuses on the involvement of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force in selected DILG-led clusters of the NTF-ELCAC. These clusters include Local Government Empowerment, Basic Services, Localized Peace Engagement, the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) and Amnesty Program, and Sectoral Unification, Capacity Building, Empowerment, and Mobilization.

The Reserve Force's participation in these clusters is viewed as a vital component of the EO 70 framework, which aims to address the root causes of insurgency through a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach. This involvement supports the ultimate goal of peace and national development by harmonizing government services and initiatives in conflict-affected areas.

Moreover, the framework ties the involvement of the Reserve Force with their capability development as prescribed under Republic Act No. 7077. This includes strengthening their organizational structure, improving management and administration systems, enhancing their role in Civil Military Operations (CMO), refining command and control protocols, and ensuring readiness for mobilization. Together, these elements form the basis for evaluating the extent and potential of the Army Ready Reserve Force's contribution to the Whole-of-Nation Approach and provide the foundation for proposing strategies to maximize their integration into national peace and development efforts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative research method through the use of Key Informant Interview as the means of gathering data. This method involved the collection of data in order to answer the questions regarding the involvement of the Army Ready Reserve Force in the implementation of Executive Order 70 or the concept of Whole-of-Nation Approach. The qualitative research sought an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. It focused on the "why" rather than the "what" of social phenomena and relied on the direct experiences of human beings as meaning-making agents in their everyday lives.

Further, the phenomenological research was the most appropriate method to be used in this study. Lester (1999) explained that the phenomenological research design identifies and clarify phenomena as perceived by the actors in a situation.

3.2. Locale of the Study

The area of study covered the four provinces in region 1 handled by 1st Regional Community Defense Group (1RCDG) based in Manaoag, Pangasinan (Figure 1). The Ready Reserve Force were from the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, and Pangasinan. 1RCDG is under the supervision of the 7th Infantry "KAUGNAY" Division located in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija thru the Office of the Assistant Division Commander on Reservist and Retiree Affairs (OADCRRA).

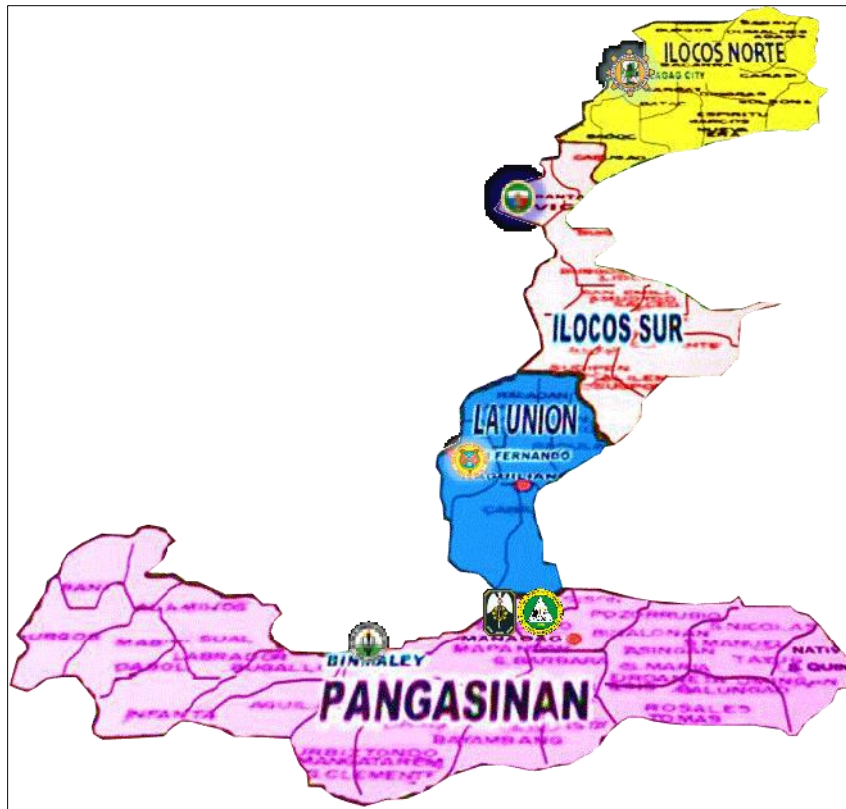


Figure 1 Locale of the Study showing the different Ready Reserve Units

Region 1 has five (5) Ready Reserve Units distributed, as follows: 101st RRIBN is based in Ilocos Norte, 102nd RRIBN is located in Ilocos Sur, 103rd RRIBN can be found in the province of La Union, 104th (PGN-W) RRIBN is housed in Binmaley, Pangasinan, while the 105th (PGN-E) RRIBN is based in Manaoag, Pangasinan. Region 1 or Ilocos Region was chosen as the locale of the study primarily because of its accomplishment as the first region in the Philippines to be declared under a state of Stable Internal Peace and Security. Second, the area is easily accessible to the researcher being a resident of Pangasinan and the same time the current Battalion Commander of the 105th RRIBN.

3.3. Unit of the Study

The study dealt with all of the Ready Reserve Units in Region 1 being supervised and managed by 1RCDG particularly the 101st RRIBN, 102nd RRIBN, 103rd RRIBN, 104th RRIBN, and 105th RRIBN.

The supposed participants to the study were the five (5) Directors of the 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, and 105th Community Defense Center (CDC) who are overseers of the Ready Reserve Force. However, out of the five (5) CDC Directors, only three (3) accommodated the request of the researcher for the conduct of the interview. One came from the 101st CDC in Ilocos Norte who was also the former CDC Director of 102nd CDC based in Ilocos Sur, one from 103rd CDC, and the other one from the 105th CDC. The current 102nd CDC Director was not included by the Researcher because he was only designated in his position last 16 July 2022 and he admittedly had no knowledge of the activities of the 102nd RRIBN relative to the EO 70 or the WONA. The CDC Director of the 104th CDC was quarantined twice and was recovering from an illness and was not accessible for interview.

Moreover, three (3) out of four (4) Battalion Commanders also from the same units were included as respondents. The Battalion Commander of the 104th RRIBN was always out of the office and did not respond to the calls and text messages of the researcher. A very significant part of the informants was the Assistant Division Commander of the Reservist and Retiree Affairs of 7th Infantry Division and the Group Commander of 1RCDG, RESCOM. Total respondents of the study were eight (8) out of 11 eliciting 72.72% accessibility rate. Key Informant Interview was done to elicit information from them being the highest approving authority on the mobilization and utilization of their Army Reserve personnel. On the other hand, secondary data was extracted from memoranda, reports, records and briefings from the AFP and the DILG as well that provided support to the data collected.

3.4. Sampling Design

This study used purposive sampling to identify the respondents in this study. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher relied on her own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in her study.

Purposive sampling is the appropriate method for a qualitative research design because only those who are directly involved, have direct information, and have the expertise pertaining to the implementation of the DILG ELCAC Clusters in Region 1 were able to provide the most accurate data for this study. Their knowledge and experience on how the Army Ready Reserve Force was incorporated into the Whole-of-Nation Approach contribute immensely to the attainment objective and goal of the study.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

While the research paper was being prepared, the researcher was able to identify the needed data, the participants who were part of the respondents, and the research instrument used in this study. An initial informal interview was conducted with the Assistant Division Commander of the Reservist and Retiree Affairs of 7ID in order to lay down the groundwork for the background of the study. From there, the researcher was able to identify the target respondents for the KII. Thus, a letter of request to conduct KII was prepared and sent to the Group Commander of 1RCDG, DILG Regional Director, CDC Directors, and Battalion Commanders in Region 1 using the pro-forma letter given by the Command and General Staff College (CGSC). The KII was supposed to have been an onsite visit, however, the earthquake in 27 July 2022 hitting Northern Luzon made travelling to the areas of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, and La Union quite unstable. Hence, the KII for the respondents in these areas was done virtually through Zoom application. But the interview conducted with the Group Commander of 1RCDG and the Director of the 105th Community Defense Center was done face-to-face and was recorded using a cellphone application. Since this is qualitative research, no survey questionnaire was used, hence, reliability testing was not required. However, there the researcher validated the Interview Guide for the KII through the assistance of G1 of the 7th Infantry "KAUGNAY" Division in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija who reviewed and edited several items in the interview guide.

3.6. Research Instrument

The instrument used by the Researcher in this study was the Interview Guide that contained items extracted from the accomplishments of the DILG ELCAC Cluster line of effort and the different areas of the Army Reserve Force Capability Development, namely: Organization, Management and Administration, Utilization in CMO, Command and Control, and Mobilization. The instrument contained pre-constructed and open-ended questions to gather information, opinions, and answers to the identified problem statements.

3.7. Data Analysis

Since the researcher employed interview guide to extract information from informants, the data collected was transcribed, coded, themed and analyzed. The principal data analysis methodology used is the Clarke and Braun's thematic analysis and value chain analysis to analyze and interpret the emerging themes and factors during interview process. Clarke and Braun's thematic analysis follows the simplified data gathering procedure and methodology.

3.8. Research Framework

This study is guided by an Input-Process-Output (IPO) research framework. The input component is grounded on three critical elements. First, the legal foundations that provide the policy basis for the study, including the National Defense Act of 1935, the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Republic Act No. 7077, the Philippine Army Reserve Force Development Manual of 2007, Republic Act No. 7160, and Executive Order No. 70. Second, it includes the specific clusters under the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) that are central to the NTF-ELCAC implementation: Local Government Empowerment, Basic Services, Localized Peace Engagement, E-CLIP and Amnesty Program, and Sectoral Unification, Capacity Building, Empowerment, and Mobilization. Third, the Army Reserve Force Capability Framework is highlighted, particularly focusing on Organization, Management and Administration, Utilization in Civil-Military Operations (CMO), Command and Control, and Mobilization. The process of the study involved the examination of relevant documents on Executive Order No. 70 and other legal mandates to design a suitable research instrument. Key Informant Interviews were also conducted with subject matter experts and field practitioners to gather qualitative insights on the actual involvement of the Army Ready Reserve Force in the implementation of the Whole-of-Nation Approach. The output of the framework identifies three primary outcomes. First, the current status of the Army Ready Reserve Force's involvement in EO 70 or the WONA as implemented through the ELCAC DILG Clusters. Second, it pinpoints the internal and external factors that influence the level of their participation. Lastly, the study proposes

strategic recommendations to enhance the integration and contribution of the Army Ready Reserve Force in sustaining and institutionalizing the Whole-of-Nation Approach. The entire cycle is reinforced through a feedback mechanism, ensuring continuous refinement of policies and practices based on the findings.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Profile of the Respondents

Respondent 1 (R1) is the Assistant Division Commander for Reservists and Retiree Affairs of the 7th Infantry Division based at Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija. He has been in the military service since 1986 as a Cadet of the Philippine Military Academy and became a member of the Philippine Army in 1990 having nearly 34 years in the service. Pertaining to handling Reservists, he was introduced to the craft in 2013 when he was assigned at the Armed Forces of the Philippines Career and General Staff College now known as the AFP Education and Training Doctrine Command (AFPETDC). He was designated as the NRI Director for three (3) years before being assigned at the Reservist Affairs in 2019 up to the present.

Respondent 2 (R2) is the current the Group Commander of the 1st Regional Community Defense Group. He was assigned at 1RCDG in 2020 occupying the position for more than 2 years now. His exposure to the Reserve Force was being Commandant of schools handling the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) and was also assigned as Operations Officer of the 9ID.

Respondent 3 (R3) is current Director of the 101st Ilocos Norte Community Defense Center under the 1RCDG. He was the former CDC Director of the 102nd Ilocos Sur Community Defense Center where he rendered a tour of duty of seven (7) months. Prior to his assignment in region 1, he was formerly the Executive and Operations Officer of the 12th Regional Community Defense Group in CARAGA Region.

Respondent 4 (R4) is the Acting Commanding Officer of the 101st Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion based in Ilocos Norte. He is a retired officer of the Philippine Army after spending 25 years in the active military service and has been a Reserve Officer for the past 2 years.

Respondent 5 (R5) is the current Officer-in-Charge of the 102nd Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion stationed in Bulag, Bantay, Ilocos Sur and is under the supervision of the 102nd Community Defense Center, 1RCDG, RESCOM, PA. He retired from the military service in 31 January 2018 and became a Reserve Officer since then.

Respondent 6 (R6) is the current Director of the 103rd La Union Community Defense Center, 1RCDG, RESCOM, PA and has been in the active military service for 20 years.

Respondent 7 (R7) has been assigned with the 103rd Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion under the 103rd La Union Community Defense Center, 1RCDG as Battalion Commander from March 2013 up to present. He was commissioned as a Reserve Officer in 31 August 2007. He also was the former Provincial Agriculturist of the Province of La Union way back in 01 July 2019 to 30 June 2022. Currently, he is the City Administrator of the City of San Fernando beginning 01 July 2022.

Respondent 8 (R8) is the Director of the Pangasinan East (PGN-E) Community Defense Center, 1RCDG, RESCOM, PA based in Camp Lt Tito B Abat, Manaoag, Pangasinan. Prior to his designation with the Reserve Force, he was Brigade S4 of the 702nd DEFENDER Brigade in 2014 and eventually assigned at the Army Reserve Command before moving to 1RCDG in March 2020.

Of the eight (8) respondents, five (5) of them are from the Regular Force while three (3) are members of the Ready Reserve Force.

4.2. Involvement of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force in the implementation of the EO 70 or the Whole-of-Nation Approach (WNA) in Region 1

4.2.1. Organization

The Reserve Force Development Manual (PAM 10-00) states that the Army force structure and organizational development is aimed to create a lean and compact ground force complemented by a large and strong mobilizable reserve force. Tactical units shall have operational control over reserve forces to include affiliated reserves when

utilized to render auxiliary service. As such, concerned tactical units may augment the reserve force with regular components for more efficient and effective conduct of its operations (PAM 10-00, 2007).

Many of the Key Informants affirmed that the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force has weak linkage with the local government units (LGUs) when it comes to issues of counterinsurgency. As R3 manifested in his statement that “we do not have such linkage with the LGUs because we are connected to the tactical units assigned in the area. Whatever they do, we are being tagged along”.

Relatively, R2 signified that the EO 70 is a Cluster membership that has its Regional, Provincial and that, as mandated, the highest-ranking officer of the Regular Force becomes a member of the Task Force in EO 70.

On the other hand, R4 and R7, both Battalion Commanders of 101st and 103rd, respectively, mentioned that there is no such participation or collaboration that existed between the LGUs in their area of coverage and the Ready Reserve Infantry Battalions (RRIBN). R5 further stressed that their linkage with the Municipalities of Pagudpod and Solsona in Ilocos Sur is due to the fact that the Mayors or Chief executives of these two localities are both members of the Reserve Force who are placed on Standby Reserve based on their political stature.

Further, R1 attested that the Reserve Force can be part of the EO 70 in partnership with the LGUs if there is a policy that is handed down from Higher Headquarters. He also reiterated the absence of a solid mandate for the Reservists to fulfill their organizational structure in relation to their participation in the Whole-of-Nation Approach (WONA).

The findings revealed that Battalion Commanders admittedly do not have a linkage or collaboration with the Local Government Units in their area relative to the EO 70 or the WONA. This is because there is no clear mandate on how the RRF will operate with their LGUs, what would be their legal basis to establish network with the LCE specifically on the counterinsurgency issues of their respective localities.

Another revelation in this area is that the RRF always has to operate under a Maneuver unit. In this context, the RRUs cannot create their own identity as a support unit of the LGUs because of their prescribed and obligated anchor on the Regular Force organizational structure. Hence, this affirms the mandate of the Reserve Force as stipulated in the Reserve Force Development Manual.

4.2.2. Management and Administration

Administration of the PA reserve force shall be the joint responsibility of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Reservist and Retiree Affairs, G10, Philippine Army as Program Director, in coordination with the other HPA staffs, and the Commander, Army Reserve Command as Project Administrator (PAM 10-00, 2007).

Pertaining to the capability of the Ready Reserve Force (RRF) to be involved in the implementation of the various activities of the RTF-ELCAC, almost all of the respondents agreed that the RRF of the Philippine Army in Region 1 is capable and has the potential.

This was affirmed by R1 when he said that “if the Ready Reserve Force will be organized and managed well just like what I did in the Information Campaign, I think they will be a big help especially in the role to perform as the supporting units in EO 70”.

Two (2) Battalion Commanders, R4 and R7, both agreed that the RRF is capable to take part in the activities of the RTF-ELCAC particularly on the conduct of CMO and intelligence gathering.

R8 stated that, “they can be very helpful in information dissemination process and program implementation activities especially if we can give the needed equipment, facilities, and other requirements.”

R3, on the other hand, reiterated that the RRF is not prepared especially in the area of Psychological Operations. But he also supports the capability of the RRUs in terms of Civil Military Operations (CMO) more specifically under the Public Affairs component.

However, R5 stressed that the RRF has no capability as of this time to be involved in the RTF-ELCAC due to the fact that the EO 70 has not yet been introduced to them. Added to this is that individual and unit trainings have not yet been fully recognized or implemented.

The EO 70 pertains to the implementation of the Whole-of-Nation Approach in ending local insurgency. The findings show that many of the respondents believe that the RF is capable of participating or getting involved with the WONA, however, not all of the RRF (Individual or Unit) have been oriented or indoctrinated with the EO 70. In this context, the capability of the

RRF to be responsive in the WONA is put into question. The proper management and administration of the RRF is going to be a challenge because of their little or perhaps no knowledge of the EO 70 or the Whole-of-Nation Approach, not only as revealed by the BATCOMs but more important to consider are the Enlisted Personnel.

4.2.3. Utilization in CMO

As stipulated in the Reserve Force Development Manual (2007), the Philippine Army envisions to expand its forces as the national security situation dictate. This shall be achieved by mobilizing its reservists nationwide directing the Army Reserve Command as Unit Primarily Responsible (UPR). Mobilization shall be decentralized in the regional level in close coordination with major Army units in the area.

Relative to the role played by the Army Ready Reserve Force (RRF) in support of the EO 70 or WONA in Region 1, seven (7) out of the eight (8) Key Informants agreed that the RRUs in their area of coverage have played a significant role under the area of CMO.

R1 mentioned two (2) strategies that the RRF can perform in the WONA, as follows: a) non-combatant roles inside the community; and 2) information campaign through the ROTC units.

R2, and R6, and R7 emphasized on the involvement of the RRF in various socio-economic activities and development aspect. This is well described in the Humanitarian and Disaster Response (HADR) especially in the far-flung areas.

R7 further added that although the WONA was not formally introduced to them, their Reservist troops have been involved in HADR operations for the longest time. This was supported by the statement of R8 when he said, "RRF can be utilized by the maneuver units where the RRIBNs were OPCON during emergencies, disasters and calamities as well as community services."

R3 and R4, both coming from the same CDC and RRU, respectively, were unison in claiming that the RRU is providing supporting role to the ground units in the tactical unit levels and that all agencies of the government work hand-in-hand to alleviate the living conditions of people in the barangay.

R5 said, "Wala. Never kami naging bahagi ng Whole-of-Nation Approach sa area namin" (None, we were never part of the WONA in our area).

Relative to the significant contributions of the RRF in the implementation of EO 70 or the WONA, out of the eight (8) Key Informants, two (2) of them stipulated on the Information Campaign activity as four (4) respondents highlighted on environmental protection, coastal clean-up, medical mission, and disaster relief operations.

Very worthy to mention are the responses of two (2) other Key Informants. R6 stated that, "The Department of National Defense (DND) cannot meet its global commitments without continued reserve participation." This was seconded by R8 by also stating, "The RRF helps a lot by providing ample amount of savings on the part of the government, reduces the demand for regular force capabilities, mitigates organic personnel capabilities, short falls and more importantly preserves the readiness of the total strength of the RRF."

Consequently, R5 underscored that "since hindi naman kami naisama, wala po ako masabi na significant contribution ng 102nd RRF sa WONA" (Since we were never included, I cannot mention or identify any significant contributions of the 102nd Ready Reserve Force in the Whole-of-Nation Approach).

As mentioned in the Philippine Army Reserve Force Development Manual (PAM 10-00) on Utilization of the RRF, they can be utilized in three ways: during peacetime, in times of crisis, and during wartime. The conduct of CMO activities is always evident in these three contexts. More importantly, the Key Informants provided sufficient support that they have been conducting CMO activities such as Tree Planting, Coastal Cleaning, Disaster Response, and Information Campaign. These are the areas where the RRF can be most effective as far as CMO is concerned. How this applies to the Whole-of-Nation Approach remains to be seen. Most of the CMO activities are conducted by the RRUs in urban areas. When the Researcher inquired from one the respondents on whether they have initiated any programs or projects that will benefit

rebel surrenderers, he answered in the negative. On one conversation topic with a CDC Director who is a respondent of this study when asked about whether they have reached out to any barangay in their area of coverage that need sustainability of security, the response was diverted back to the Maneuver units indicating that the RRF cannot do their share in the Whole-of-Nation Approach without being anchored always on the activities of the regular units.

4.2.4. *Command and Control*

In reference to Command and Control, where the Ready Reserve Force is expected to be involved in AFP activities on missions during peacetime operations, the inquiry as to the formal introduction of the WONA to the RRF was brought into focus.

All of the Key Informants who belong to the Regular Force, except for R1 responded that the EO 70 or the WONA was introduced to the Army RRF through the initiative of their partner agency, the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) in region 1.

On the other hand, all of the three (3) Key Informants who are Battalion Commander declared that nobody introduced the EO 70 or the WONA to them. R4 claimed that he just heard it from the different platforms of social media. R5 stated that he just heard about EO 70 when it was being introduced in 2018. By that time, he was just about to retire from active service. R7 declared that “parang nababanggit lang sa mga speeches ng mga Commanders, pag naimbitahan sila or napakinggan via social media, sa mga ZOOM appearances, so hindi talaga formally naintroduce ang Whole-of-Nation Approach sa aming unit – sa 103rd RRIBN” (It was just being mentioned in passing during the speeches of Commanders when they are invited to speak or we overhear it via social media, in ZOOM appearances, thus, the WONA was never really formally introduced in our unit at the 103rd RRIBN).

But it is surprisingly declared by R1, a Regular member of the Philippine Army, that his main intervention is to require the Reserve Force to be part of the Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC). He further stressed that “tiningnan ko yung Program of Instruction (POI) nila, wala ako nakita. Hindi klaro” (When I looked at their Program of Instruction, I really did not see anything. It was not clear).

In reference to the sufficiency of background knowledge and information of the Army RRF pertaining to the Whole-of-Nation Approach, all of the Key Informants proclaimed that the RRF has limited background and information on the WONA. This means that they all believe that the acquisition of knowledge on the WONA by the RRF was just done in passing.

R2 said that there is already a briefing given but still needs to be expounded further. R1 again reiterated that to date, he has not seen and does not see any program/s that mentions the involvement of the RRF and specifying their mandated roles in the WONA.

R7 claimed that there was none as that even their ROTC units do not have sufficient background on the matter.

Relative to the responsiveness of the RRUs to the current operational environment of the WONA, all of the Key Informants believed that the Philippine Army RRF can be responsive and are capable of responding to the current operational environment with their cited reasons.

R1 expressed that they can be responsive if there is a clear policy on how to utilize the RRF. “But during EO, nagagamit ba ang mga Reservists? Wala pa akong naririnig na ganun” (During EO 70, were the Reservists utilized? I have not heard of such thing).

R2 signified that only when Commanders appreciate how the Reservists are being utilized, then the responsiveness of the Reserve Force can be seen.

The three Battalion Commanders, R4, R5, and R7 strongly affirmed that the RRF in their respective units can be responsive and capable to respond since there are also activities conducted with the local government units. Further, R8 mentioned that some of the RRF are trained in the different fields, enough to provide ample aide and support to implement national policies.

On the observation of R1 pertaining to the absence of EO 70 Module in the trainings of the RRF, the Researcher secured a copy of the Program of Instruction (POI) from 1RCDG of all the trainings that were handed down by the Reserve Command, Philippine Army. And surprisingly, for Calendar Year 2022, there were 30 trainings programmed by Higher

Headquarters of the Reserve Force, as follows: Information Collection Training, Command Post Exercise (BDE), Squad Leaders Training, Platoon Sergeant Training, Command Post Exercise (BN), Platoon Leaders Training, ROTC Staff Training, Company Commanders Training, First Sergeant Training, Battalion Competency Training, FRT HADR First Responders, Battalion Staff Training, WASAR Training, Approved MOT PAARU, Approved POI Cyber Company Organizational Training, Approved CBRN, Approved POI FA Field Artillery Organizational Training, Mechanized Infantry Company Organizational Training, Mountain Search and Rescue Training (MOSART), Signal Coy Training, CMO Training, Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue Training, Infantry Bn Organizational Training, Forward Support Medical Platoon Organizational Training, CMO Organizational Training, Company Sustainment Training, Engineer Construction Company Organizational Training, Health Service Platoon Organizational Training, Platoon Integration Training, and Cavalry Company Organizational Training. When the Researcher browsed through the modules and subjects in all of these 30 trainings for the RRF, there is nothing about EO 70 nor any specific module that explains and talks about the Reservists and EO 70, Whole-of-Nation Approach, or counterinsurgency. Thus, affirming the observation of Respondent 1.

Responsiveness of RRF in any activity is dependent on how rich and how well-versed they are with the task at hand. Participating or involving themselves with the EO 70 or the Whole-of-Nation Approach without the proper orientation will greatly affect how their CDCs would command them and eventually in generating outputs that are raw, inadequate, and even incomplete. They may have performed the task but they did not understand well the objective of what they have done and what benefits it has given to the end-users and the community as well.

4.2.5. Mobilization

Among the relevant initiatives and accomplishments of the RRF in Region 1 in connection with the implementation of the WONA is the creation of the Information Operation Task Force and more importantly the Stakeholder Engagements.

The commonality of the responses from the Key Informants is that they admitted the strong engagement and collaboration with stakeholders in providing limited intelligence assistance.

This was attested by R2, when he said “we try to engage with stakeholders especially our LGUs. What we do is to sell or offer our Reservist manpower to them. That to me is Whole of Nation.”

R7 further added that the RRF are tagged and identified as First Responders because the LGUs in La Union are aware that the Reservists can be mobilized upon the request of the Local Chief Executives (LCE) and by the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Offices (DRRMO).

R8, another Key informant from the Regular Force, claimed that the RRF becomes a bridging force to implement national policy like the Disaster Relief and Rescue Operation, Blood Letting, Tree Planting, Clean-up Drive and Brigada Eskwela, among others.

However, R5, the Battalion Commander of 102nd RRIBN indicated that as of this time, their unit did not have any initiatives or accomplishments on the WONA because it was not formally introduced to them.

Another indicator that was answered by the Key Informants was on the involvement of the RRF in activities related to ELCAC in Region 1 and in what way di they participate.

R1 revealed that he can mobilize and use our Reserve Force in many forms, not only in information campaign but they could also be mobilized for socio-economic activities.

R2 and R7 are both in agreement that the RF cannot be mobilized on their own. They will always be under the command of the maneuver units.

Moreover, R4 confessed that he has no knowledge of the involvement of the RRF from his unit in the activities related to the ELCAC. This was seconded by R5 stating that they did not have any participation at all, so he could not say if the 102nd RRIBN troops are active and supportive in the EO 70. Their statements and are contrary to what their CDC Director, R3 claimed that those Reservists who are part or member of the graduate military assistance of the ROTC are directly involved in the ELCAC because they are teaching the EO 70 and the role of the RF in the WONA.

Again, the Philippine Army Reserve Force Development Manual (PAM 10-00) mentions that Mobilization of the RRUs shall be decentralized in the regional level in close coordination with major Army units in the area. Findings show that

the RRFs in Region 1 are mobilized for usual CMO activities in areas that they have already been constantly visiting and serving. There was no initiative to approach barangays that have been formerly affected by insurgents to conduct engagements and collaboration.

There is also a strong passion and manifestation on the part of the Battalion Commanders to be responsive to the call of duty for the WONA, however, it is a question of when and where to start. There is no clear cut procedures and support system for them to be mobilized.

4.3. Factors that Affect the Involvement of the Ready Reserve Force in the Implementation of EO 70 or the Whole-of-Nation Approach

In any program or project of the government, there will always be challenges and gaps that would be encountered specially in terms of its implementation. Details below show the factors that affect the involvement of the Ready Reserve Force in the implementation of the EO 70 or the WONA.

4.3.1. Organization

Under the area of organization, individual and unit training was asked from the Key Informants, if it is good enough to enhance their military skills, education, and capabilities to accomplish their mandated mission.

As revealed in the previous discussions, the RRF as a unit and individual members have yet to be exposed to the EO 70 or counterinsurgency context for them to understand the WONA.

This was affirmed by R1 when he said that EO 70 is really about ending local communist armed conflict. Therefore, there has to be a specific subject or training to be given to all Reservists nationwide connected with EO 70 - sort of a module type, Module EO 70. But then, there is none. He also added that the Reservists cannot do it on their own. There has to be the LGU with the Reservists as part of the overall team.

R4, the Battalion Commander of 101st RRU claimed that the trainings are okay but he further revealed that the reason why Reservists do not undergo the trainings and schoolings given by the RCDG was due to financial constraints. R5, seemed to support this perspective of R4 as he suggested that reservist units and personnel really need an established support system to boost their capabilities in accomplishing their mandated mission, to include personnel services, remuneration, equipment and facilities for the individual reservists and for the unit as well.

R7, also another Reserve Officer, observed that the individual and unit trainings of the RRF is not good enough. There is still a need to enhance their education and skills training.

R6, a CDC Director, supports the observation of his Battalion Commander by indicating that the only predicament in the CDC is that not many of the RRF are interested to attend these trainings.

In terms of organizing the RRF to respond to their involvement in the Whole-of-Nation Approach, the main issue identified by majority of the respondents was that of the RRU Trainings, both individually and as a whole unit. The Battalion Commanders have revealed that the trainings handed down to the RRUs is not good enough as these trainings have been the same for the past years. The only difference is the nature of the attendees, who in certain occasions do not religiously attend due to financial constraints on the part of the Reservists particularly when they are required to attend onsite. Added to the issue of Organization is the lack of personnel especially Reserve Officers in the Battalions. Many of them are holding dual, sometimes triple functions due to the lack of commissioned reserve officers.

In the 105th RRIBN alone, the incumbent S2 is also the acting S3 because the former S3 was assigned to another RRU. Aside from these two functions, said Reserve Officer is also the Coy Commander of HHqs. Further, out of the four (4) Company units of the RRIBN, two of them do have Company Ex-Os because the position requires an Officer rank. Out of the prescribed 31 quota officers for a Battalion, the 105th RRIBN only has 17. But not all of them are actively participating in Battalion activities. Same predicament with the other RRUs in Region 1.

4.3.2. Management and Administration

In this area, majority of the respondents identified the absence of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for the RA 7077 as a significant factor that limits and constraints the employment of the RRF as active elements of counterinsurgency.

R2, R4, and R5 all mentioned that the absence of the IRR for RA 7077 contributed immensely on how the RRF is to be managed and administered. According to R2, they base their utilization of the RRF on how they interpret the law. R4 supported the statement when he said, “yung wala pa tayong IRR sa RA 7077 ay isang pwede na dahilan kung bakit parang limitado ang ating kakayahan sa RRF” (The absence of the IRR for RA 7077 could be one of the reasons on the limited capability of the RRF).

Consequently, R6 identified that the possible constraints on the involvement of RRF in counterinsurgency is their personal security where they could be mistaken as a regular soldier and could be hurt by the left leaning rebel groups. This was further attested by R8 when he identified that possible reasons are due to financial constraints, busy working schedules, and inadequate equipment and facilities.

Republic Act No. 7077 has been long considered as the “Bible” of the Reserve Force. The law passed in 1992 was to give direction and guidance to the growing number of ROTC graduates. However, to date, no Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) has been crafted by concerned authorities. Identifying who will write the IRR is still yet to be determined. The AFP with its Branch of Service is still in the dark how to appropriately and legally manage and administer the RRUs and the RRF.

As shown by the statements of the Key Informants, the manner of how they handle and administer the RRF is based on their own interpretation of the law. This could create confusion for the individual reservists and even on the leadership of the RRUs. Many of them do

not also wish to put their personal security on the line in dealing with counterinsurgency. This is the reason why the RRFs are under the supervision and guidance of the Maneuver units so that there would be no mistaken identity. RCDGs and CDC Directors are very cautious in the way they handle and manage the Reservists because of the absence of a legal mandate that could serve as their guide.

4.3.3. Utilization in CMO

Another indicator that was asked from the Key Informants are those factors that would motivate or possibly deter the RRF from being involved in the Whole-of-Nation Approach on the counterinsurgency program of the government in connection with CMO.

According to the respondents, the factors that would motivate the Ready Reserve Force to be involved in the WONA are, as follows: a) political will (if you want to do something, fight for it); b) provide moral and logistical support; c) sense of belongingness; d) constant communication with them; e) provide support system; f) leadership direction; and g) competent facilities and equipment, uniform allowance and additional allowance.

However, the factors that would deter the RRF from being involved in the Whole-of-Nation Approach are the following, namely: a) lack of vision; b) lack of recognition; c) insufficient background knowledge and information; d) personal security; e) removal of the support system; f) civilian nature or work activity; g) lack of indoctrination on their mandate as Reservist; and h) lack of enthusiasm due to poor leadership.

R2 had a clear perspective on what could motivate and deter the RRF from being involved in the WONA. He claimed “We have to support them and maibigay yung kinakailangan nila para maimplement nila yung trabaho nila and makapagperform sila. Kailangan meron din silang gamit at logistical support. Equip natin sila. On the deterrence, yung hindi sila narerecognize – recognize in the sense na, hindi yung bibigyan sila ng award. And point ko doon is kinikilala sila as an important contributor” (We have to provide what they need in order to implement their work and be able to perform. It is necessary that they have the equipment and logistical support. Let us equip them. On deterrence, it is when they are not recognized. Recognition in the sense, not of the award, but the point is for the Reservists to be recognized as an important contributor).

Besides, R4 mentioned that the constant conduct of Training motivates them to participate in the Whole-of-Nation Approach, more particularly in explaining to the RRF what role are they supposed to play in the service of the nation.

The findings revealed the assessment of the Key Informants pertaining to the factors that would motivate and factors that would deter them in relation to their involvement in the WONA. From among those mentioned, the researcher believes that moral and logistical support coupled with able leadership and competent facilities and equipment would surely trigger the passion and enthusiasm of the RRF. It is a known fact that being a member of the Reserve Force does not go with it a fixed salary or remuneration. It is inspired by the concept of volunteerism. However, in order for the

RRF to be inspired and to have the driving force to exert effort to support government advocacies in their fight against insurgency.

However, insufficient background knowledge and information would be the biggest deterrence of the RRF in getting involved with the WONA. As revealed by the Battalion Commanders, the EO 70 or Whole-of-Nation Approach was never introduced to them formally. This is a blind spot as to what is expected of them and what are the outputs they are supposed to generate. This could also be fueled by lack of indoctrination as a Reserve Force member. Many of those who get into the RRF do not really understand what a Reservist is. Their only concern is how to secure a uniform, wear it proudly but when they are called to serve, a lot of alibis and excuses arise. This was one of the reiterated reasons on deterrence – their being busy at work where they are getting their source of living.

Added to this is the lack of recognition from the RCDG and even from the CDC. Many of the RF have served the unit for many years but the Military Commendation Medal or any other commendations, or perhaps even Certificates of Commendation seemed to be far from their reach.

4.3.4. Command and Control

This area reflects the perception and expert opinion of the Key Informant pertaining to the aspects of counterinsurgency where the Reserve Force can be effective.

The Key Informants gave varying aspects where the RRF can be effective, namely: a) Information campaign; b) limited CMO and intelligence; c) Public Affairs; and d) conduct of military surveillance.

R8 stated that the Reserve Force may become intelligence personnel capable of mingling with the rest of the people without being easily blown as he/she has normal ways of life activities and at the same time doing military surveillance for identified group of people contrary to the government. Added to this is the conduct of Community Services during disasters, calamities, and emergencies.

R2 mentioned that “yung sa campaign kung titingnan natin, yung task na ibibigay sa mga Reservists which is more on limited CMO and intel. Between the two, ang nakikita ko dyan is sa CMO mas magagamit itong mga Reservists” (In the campaign, if we are to look at the task that will be given to the Reservists, it will be more on limited CMO and intel. Between the two, what I can observe is that the Reservists can be more effective in CMO).

Due to the restrictions imposed by RA 7077 on the RRF, the respondents identified the capability of the RRF to perform effectively in connection with the Whole of Nation Approach to be under CMO and limited intelligence. The CMO has three (3) pillars: Civil Affairs, Public Affairs, and PsyOps Affairs. Of these three pillars, the RRF can best perform well in Civil Affairs through their Tree Planting Activities, Coastal Clean-up, Medical Mission, among others. The capability to connect with the community through Public Affairs is also identified as a strong factor exhibited by the RRF. The context of Information Dissemination especially with the ROTC program could prevent these students from being recruited by the left leaning organizations and insurgency groups.

Consequently, the information dissemination is also a way for PsyOps since the information shared down by the RRF to the communities could transform the beliefs and principles of the people on the ground. Instead of supporting the insurgents, they would inform the military and law enforcement agencies on their whereabouts. Thus, the three pillars of CMO can be accomplished by the RRF.

Relatively, the RRF is also a mirror image of the Regular Force. With the concept of Interoperability, the way of how the Regular Force is commanded and controlled is now being practiced with the Regular Force in Region 1. This is the advocacy of the 7ID when they do competitions involving the RRF and the Regular Force such as the Squad Challenge, the Command Post Exercise, and the Mobilization Exercises. In this avenue of competition, the RRF is given the chance to shine in their capability pertaining to the different challenges.

4.3.5. Mobilization

It was inquired from the Key Informants on their observations on the current status of their units in connection with the DOTMPLF Army Framework. DOTMPLF is a tool that allows senior leaders the ability to analyze their organizational capabilities from the perspective of “Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities” when making future strategic decisions. All of the respondents admitted that all of the identified areas have to be improved especially on Materiel and Facilities. With this as the foundation, the inquiry on how they manage to utilize and deploy the RRF to support the Whole-of-Nation Approach was brought into focus.

Among those that were identified as strength of the RRF are on Doctrine, Organization, and Leadership while Personnel, Training, Materiel, and Facilities were those noted as weaknesses of the RRF in supporting the WONA.

Nonetheless, in spite of the identified areas for improvement under the context of DOTMLPF framework in relation to Mobilization, the Key Informants are confident in the way they manage to mobilize and deploy the RRF to support the WONA.

Among the eight (8) respondents, the three (3) Battalion Commanders, R4, R5, and R7 all admitted that they are dependent on the orders of the proper authorities – particularly from the Higher Headquarters – when there is a need to mobilize and deploy the RRF. R5 was very specific in his statement, “With our organization, thinking to operate independently is a NO-NO for us. I believe that we still need proper guidance and maybe some procedures on how to mobilize us by the proper authorities. It is not for us to etch on how we do the procedures. It is up to the proper authorities to outline our deployment on how we support the Whole-of-Nation Approach.”

On the other hand, all five (5) Key Informants who are members of the Regular Force have varying perspectives in terms of mobilization and deployment of the RRF in reference to the WONA. R2 mentioned that aside from the resources that they provide to the RRF from the Higher Headquarters based on what was programmed for them, the 1RCDG also link with other agencies especially with the LGUs and other government organizations so that during disasters and calamities, the Reservists would be properly recognized.

R3 supported the stand of the Battalion Commanders stating that during deployment of the Reserve Units, they should be accompanied by members from the tactical units. The CDCs are not permitted to mobilize any Reservist on their own. R6 also seconded the comment of Respondent 3 when he said that the deployment of the RRF is dependent on the Regular Force. Reservists cannot be mobilized on their own.

R1, on the other hand, had another way of how he manages the mobilization and deployment of the RRF. According to him, “my strategy would be, I would have to convince my Commander to come up with our unit policy, sa amin muna, command policy in 7ID. Kapag sinabi ni Commander, I want to utilize them in EO 70, yun lang. Parang Commander’s Intent” (My strategy would be, I would have to convince my Commander to come up with our unit policy – just us, for now, command policy in 7ID. When the Commander says, I want to utilize them in EO 70, that’s just it. It is just like a Commander’s Intent).

The Mobilization of the RRF on the Whole-of-Nation Approach is no different from the perspective of Utilization. The findings revealed that there is no clear-cut policy on how the RRFs are to be mobilized in responding to counterinsurgency programs and activities of the government. Although there are 12 Clusters of the NTF-ELCAC but the revelation of the Key Informants that there is a need for the RRF to be anchored on the Regular Force is a manifestation that the RRF has not been considered as a sector or a participant in the implementation of the EO 70 or the WONA. Coming straight from the Battalion Commanders that they are dependent on Higher Headquarters on when and where they would mobilize their troops does not give them the freedom to engage stakeholders such as the DILG at their own discretion and also have to seek approval from the HHqs. It is understandably acceptable that the Maneuver units are guiding the RRF, but the Battalion Commanders cannot plan nor initiate any activity that could help the DILG in its cluster activities such as Local Empowerment Capability, the delivery of Basic Services, E-CLIP and Amnesty Program, among others.

4.4. Proposed measures to maximize the Involvement of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve in the Implementation of EO 70 or the Whole-of-Nation Approach in Region 1.

4.4.1. Organization

It was revealed in the discussion of the Researcher with the Key Informants that various directives have been handed down by the Higher Headquarters in relation to the Reserve Force and the WONA.

It is manifested that the main issue is on the directives and policies, more specifically the missing IRR of RA 7077. R2, Group Commander of 1RCDG admitted “siguro tingnan natin doon kung gusto natin ma-expand yung utilization sa kanila. Tingnan natin kung ano ang mga nandoon. Again, babagsak na naman sya sa RA 7077” (Probably, it would be best if we can see whether we really wanted to expand the utilization of Reservist. Let us see what are the embedded policies. Again, it will boil down to RA 7077).

R6 mentioned further the need to revisit RA 7077 and start crafting its IRR to standardize the operational support of the RRF. R8 manifested that there should be a unified and systematic schedule of activities that continuously improve and enhance the capability of the RF.

Significantly, R1 opened a different context: "You (referring to the RF) were organized based on World War II context. Ibang giyera na ngayon. Kapag binago mo yung organization ng Reservist, ibig sabihin, binibigyan na namin kayo ng priority. Organization ang priority ko. Dapat ma-organize yan" (You were organized based on World War II context. This is a different battle now. If we change the organization of the RF, it means that you are now being given the priority. For me, organization would be my priority. There is a need to organize the RRF).

On the perception of the Key Informant Reserve Officers, R5 was very specific in saying that there is a need for a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on how the Reservists can be utilized during the implementation of EO 70 or the Whole-of-Nation Approach. Added to this, R7 reiterated that "pag naayos lahat-lahat at na-institutionalize na, madaling magrespond ang ating forces sa ibaba" (Once everything falls into place, all will be institutionalized, it would be very easy for our forces to respond on the ground).

4.4.2. Management and Administration

In reference to Management and Administration, the RRF needs to be strengthened in Doctrine relative to the EO or the Whole-of-Nation Approach. "There is a need to introduce the EO 70 or the WONA to them," as mentioned by R2. He further emphasized that the RRF must internalize their role in the EO 70 through proper indoctrination and orientation.

R8 suggested that, for the RRU to efficiently perform in the WONA, they should be provided with competent and effective equipment and facilities with their requirements to be able to help in the implementation of national policies.

One Reserve Force Officer, R4 declared that since there is inadequate fund support for the RRU, there should be a provision for a decent office for them to work and the provision of fuel during deployment.

R5, another Reserve Officer from Ilocos Sur, signified his proposal for the Higher Headquarters to examine and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the RRU for them to be developed. Without seeing the weaknesses, RRUs are just being attended to when they are to be utilized and mobilized. Management of the personnel must continue. If they will provide support and see the weaknesses, they could try to develop the Reservists individually out from those weaknesses. Only then will their participation be evident.

4.4.3. Utilization in CMO and Mobilization

In this level of proposed measures, the Researcher combined the context of Utilization and Mobilization since, oftentimes in the practice of deployment, these two words are used interchangeably.

When the Key Informants were asked about how can the full utilization of the Ready Reserve Force as elements of counterinsurgency convergence be operationalized and institutionalized, quite a number of them identified the need to provide adequate training on counterinsurgency. Other than that, there was a mention by R4 for AFP and the leadership of Congress to have a unified stand on how to effectively utilize the RF for counterinsurgency. R7 manifested the need to revisit RA 7077 as it should specifically identify what would be the role of the Reservists and how they would be interacting with the Regular Force on the issue of counterinsurgency, thus clearing the mindset as to why there is a need for full involvement or full utilization.

R1 advocated that "all we have to do is direct all our line units in the context that when you utilize the Reservists, it should be in the context of training." This can be in the form of policy, a Commander's Intent or a CGPA's Intent.

R5 has this to say: "We need to know kung ano yung magiging part namin (RRF) in the implementation of EO 70 particularly in the Whole-of-Nation Approach. Introduce po muna sa amin yung EO 70 and how do we support the WONA. Second, mag-outline and proper authorities ng procedures on how we will be utilized. Kasi hindi naman natin pwede gawin iyan nang wala naman sila basbas" (We need to know what will be our role in the implementation of EO 70 particularly in the WONA. They must first introduce it to us – the EO and how do we support the WONA. Second, the proper authorities should outline the procedures on how we will be utilized, because we cannot perform our role without their approval).

R8 further stressed that there should be a unit of the Reserve Force that provides virtual and actual training on counter surveillance utilizing the Ready Reserve Force.

Finally, R6 opened the option to closely coordinate with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the LGUs in order to extend their participation in the various activities related to counterinsurgency.

This being said because the PNP is the local law enforcement arm of the DILG. Thus, strong engagement and collaboration with them by the RRUs and the CDCs will contribute immensely on the operationalization and institutionalization of the RF as elements of counterinsurgency convergence.

4.4.4. Command and Control

In terms of Command and Control, the inquiry on how to address the gaps and challenges to make the Ready Reserve Force more responsive and effective to accomplish their tasks in the EO 70 or the WONA was viewed in various ways by the Key Informants.

R1 was really bent in his belief that the role of the Reservists is on Territorial Defense and that there is a need to really enhance more their territorial capability. He further stressed the need to equip the RRUs of the 1RCDG through the LGUs and through the Army. This is by gaining membership in the Provincial Peace and Order Councils (PPOC).

This was also the same sentiment of R2 as he noted that the Reservists and Regular Force should both be part of the PPOC to give them a bird's eye view of what is being discussed and knowing where they could join in terms of participation and involvement.

R5 was firm in his statement that there was nothing accomplished in the Whole-of-Nation Approach because they were not involved in any way. He was optimistic that this Commandant's Paper might be the best avenue for Higher Headquarters to see the Reservists as being a part and one sector of the Defense Department that we also need to be involved in counterinsurgency or the Whole-of-Nation Approach.

R7 observed that "ang dami nang nasulat at nai-recommend pero it all boils down sa mga policymakers natin. And marami pa tayong estudyante na magiging future reservists, hindi ba nila kinokonsider yun? That is a True Force to reckon with" (Much has been written and recommended but it all boils down to our policymakers. We have a lot of students who will become future reservists, are they not considering that they can be True Force to reckon with?)

The Researcher believes that the point of R7 was that there are policymakers who are members of the RF and yet it appears that the issues and concerns of the individual reservists and the RRUs are falling on deaf ears. There is an urgent need to revisit Republic Act No 7077 or the An Act Providing for The Development, Administration, Organization, Training, Maintenance And Utilization Of The Citizen Armed Force Of The Armed Forces Of The Philippines And For Other Purposes since this law has been passed way back in 1992.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Various responses were provided by the Key Informants pertaining to the involvement of the Ready Reserve Force in the Whole-of-Nation Approach under the areas of Organization, Management and Administration, Utilization in CMO, Command and Control, and Mobilization. Though the answers given by the respondents vary between the Regular Officers and the Reserve Officers, there is a very clear message that was discovered in the course of this study and that is the Ready Reserve Force in Region 1 was never involved and is not yet ready to be involved in the implementation of the Whole-of-Nation Approach. The role of Reservists in counterinsurgency operations has not been laid down to them and they are groping in the dark on what role would they play and with what cluster of the RTF-ELCAC would they be working with. Of the five (5) identified areas, it can be concluded that Utilization in CMO is the strongest point of the RRF while Command and Control was discovered to be the area that needs to be addressed if the RRF is expected to be effective in their involvement with the Whole-of-Nation Approach.

To improve the structure and readiness of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force (RRF), concerned agencies are encouraged to revisit Republic Act 7077 and craft its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) to provide clear guidance on the organization of the RRF within the AFP structure. Under the Whole-of-Nation Approach (EO 70), reservists should be organized based on their intended functions—whether for sustainment, civil-military operations (CMO), or support roles to Maneuver units. Given the evolving security landscape, it is also crucial to refocus the organizational design of the RRF to meet current national defense needs. Recruitment efforts by RCDGs and CDCs must be intensified, particularly targeting capable individuals from local government units such as Sangguniang Bayan members. Lastly, the RRF must be organized based on operational concepts to strengthen territorial capabilities in support of EO 70.

To ensure effective management of the RRF, units should actively seek inclusion in local peace and order councils—specifically the PPOC for Battalion Commanders and MPOC for Company Commanders. The IRR of RA 7077 should include provisions allowing qualified reservists to participate in international AFP missions. Additionally, reservists must be given access to personal security benefits such as life insurance to safeguard their welfare during deployment. RCDGs and CDCs are also advised to implement morale development initiatives to boost the enthusiasm and readiness of the RRF whenever called to serve by Higher Headquarters.

Utilization of the RRF under the WONA must be aligned with strategic CMO activities in insurgency-cleared areas, distinct from routine urban CMO engagements. A capability assessment should be conducted to evaluate the RRF's operational readiness and identify strengths and weaknesses. A clear mandate must define the scope and level of RRF involvement in operations and their interoperability with the Regular Forces. Relevant training programs on CMO and counterinsurgency should be delivered to improve effectiveness. Additionally, building strong partnerships with local government units is vital to integrate the RRF into key community programs under EO 70.

To improve command structures and responsiveness, elected officials should be persuaded to pass resolutions formally recognizing the RRF as LGU partners, which would help secure necessary funding for their operations. Engagement with NGOs and other stakeholders must be intensified to address material and facility needs. Adequate office space and administrative support staff should be provided to enable efficient operations. Finally, leadership development programs must be prioritized for commissioned officers, particularly those being groomed for key roles such as Company Commanders and Battalion Staff Officers, to prepare them for the dynamic operational environment.

5.1. Action Plan and Project

To support the institutionalization of the Whole-of-Nation Approach (WONA) through Executive Order No. 70, this study proposes a comprehensive plan to strengthen the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force (RRF) across the areas of organization, management, utilization, mobilization, and command and control. Recognizing that the RRF has not been formally integrated into the EO 70 Cluster framework, the plan outlines a series of actionable strategies that will empower the Reserve Force to play a more active role in counterinsurgency and national development efforts.

In terms of organizational development, one of the initial priorities is the creation of a Technical Working Group (TWG) composed of officers from TRADOC, G9, and RESCOM, PA. This TWG will be tasked with crafting the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act 7077 to provide the necessary legal and structural guidance for the Reserve Force's involvement in WONA. Simultaneously, recruitment efforts will target local legislators, particularly Sangguniang Bayan members, to join the ranks of the Reserve Force as commissioned officers. Their involvement is crucial in strengthening the link between local government and the military reserve component. To reinforce this, a reorganization training will be conducted for all RRF personnel to streamline unit structures and align them with the current operational environment. These efforts aim to revitalize the RRF's organizational setup and ensure it is responsive to the evolving demands of national security.

Under management and administration, there is a need to integrate RRF units into local peace and security mechanisms through formal membership in the Provincial Peace and Order Councils (PPOC) and Municipal Peace and Order Councils (MPOC). This will give Reserve Commanders access to decision-making platforms and allow them to directly contribute to security planning and implementation at the local level. In support of this integration, policies will be reviewed to explore the inclusion of Reserve Officers in AFP international contingents, thereby expanding their exposure and capacity. Motivational training programs will also be introduced to improve turnout during mustering activities and foster a stronger sense of identity among reservists. To support their safety and well-being, the Reserve Command will explore partnerships with local stakeholders to provide accident insurance coverage for RRF members. These administrative reforms will enhance morale, operational readiness, and the willingness of reservists to respond to national service.

For utilization and mobilization, the Reserve Command will prioritize the planning and implementation of Civil-Military Operations (CMO) activities that are directly aligned with the goals of WONA. Rather than traditional civic activities in urban centers, future CMOs will be strategically targeted at areas affected by or vulnerable to insurgency. The development of a calendar of counterinsurgency-related engagements will guide the RRF's community involvement efforts. A capability assessment will be conducted for each RRU to map out their strengths and limitations. This will serve as a basis for future training, deployment planning, and logistical programming. Coordination with maneuver units will also be essential to ensure that the RRF operates with proper guidance and is supported during field operations.

In the area of command and control, legislative advocacy will be pursued by engaging Reserve Force members who are elected local officials. These officials will be encouraged to pass local resolutions recognizing the RRF as official partners of the LGU in security and development. Such recognition will legitimize the participation of reservists in local governance and open avenues for funding support. To address persistent challenges in working conditions, the Reserve Command will work to elevate material and facility standards across RRUs. This includes securing sponsorships and political support for infrastructure development. A flagship initiative under this domain is the construction of permanent RRU offices equipped with essential furnishings and operational facilities. These workspaces will serve as administrative hubs for reservists, improving morale and enhancing organizational identity. The proposed action plan envisions a dynamic and sustainable transformation of the Reserve Force into a capable and recognized actor in the implementation of the Whole-of-Nation Approach. Through institutional reforms, stakeholder collaboration, and capacity-building activities, the RRF will be better equipped to respond to national security challenges, support government programs, and contribute meaningfully to peace and development across the regions.

5.2. Proposal for Sustainability

Despite the growing importance of the Ready Reserve Force (RRF), previous studies have consistently pointed to the same fundamental challenge—financial constraints. The limited logistical support provided by the national government hinders the sustainability of various programs and initiatives led by the Ready Reserve Units (RRUs). With the country now seeing progress in reducing insurgent threats and internal armed conflicts, it becomes all the more necessary for the RRF to play an active role in safeguarding national peace and security. Across the country, RRUs have been calling for increased benefits and allowances, particularly during periods of mobilization. Often, Brigade and Battalion Commanders use their personal funds to sustain operations due to inadequate support. Given the dynamic operational landscape and the growing number of reservists fueled by the implementation of mandatory ROTC in schools, the need to strengthen, capacitate, and institutionalize support for the RRF is urgent. This study strongly recommends the formal recognition of the Ready Reserve Force as partners of Local Government Units (LGUs) in the implementation of socio-economic activities under the Whole-of-Nation Approach (WONA). Such recognition, ideally through a resolution passed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan or Sangguniang Bayan, would institutionalize the RRF's role in local peace and development initiatives and ensure continuous logistical support. The enactment of this recommendation would promote sustainability in the Reserve Force's involvement and affirm their position as key actors in community development and national resilience.

5.3. Strategic Implications to Development and Security

Since the beginning of this course, the researcher has already thought of how this program would help the Ready Reserve Force not just in Region 1 but all throughout the Philippines. Her experience as Battalion Commander for more than a year has been an eye opener of the plight of the RRF whenever they are called to respond to Humanitarian and Disaster Response and to other CMO activities by their CDC and by their respective RRUs. Now that the Whole-of-Nation Approach has been introduced and is proposed to be operationalized and institutionalized, the Ready Reserve Force, being the support force of the AFP has to immerse themselves in the program. The development and improvement of the plight of the RRF would greatly contribute to better and more responsive RRF because, being volunteers who do not receive any remuneration or monetary compensation from the government, their only consolation is logistical support and moral support for their full involvement in the Whole-of-Nation Approach.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Studies

Future researchers are encouraged to explore several areas related to the enhancement and institutionalization of the Philippine Army Ready Reserve Force. First, a Capability Building Assessment of the Ready Reserve Force using the DOTMPLF (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Personnel, Leadership, and Facilities) Framework can be conducted to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Reserve Units and how they can be made more responsive to evolving military operational demands. Second, a study on LGU-RRU Partnership: A Paradigm-Shift to the Whole-of-Nation Approach may examine the collaboration between Local Government Units and Ready Reserve Units in counterinsurgency-related projects, with the goal of fostering stronger inter-sectoral partnerships that support good governance and peacebuilding. Lastly, a research initiative titled Streamlining the Ready Reserve Force: A Prelude to the IRR of RA 7077 can assess the implementation of RA 7077 from its inception in 1992 up to 2022, aiming to provide concrete recommendations for organizing, mobilizing, utilizing, managing, and commanding the Reserve Force in alignment with the objectives of the Whole-of-Nation Approach.

5.5. Leadership Journey

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way." - John C. Maxwell

Honestly, I never thought that one day I would be in a military school. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be a Reserve Officer of the Philippine Army. My greatest dream was to be Medical Doctor. But I guess this is what the Lord has planned for me. Even during my high school days, I was already an active Girl Scout and was awarded the Scout Leader of the Year during my junior year. I believe my hard work and passion for learning started in the pre-school days when I was a constant Top 1 in class all the way to college. As a student, I have been in the Supreme Student Council many times occupying key positions. I guess we could say that the drive and passion to lead is innate in me.

Being the eldest of three siblings, I have always been the right-hand “man” of my father teaching me things about life and about survival. He brought out the best in me and made me his protégé. His teachings made me strong and this is where I developed my life principle – “When you make a decision, stand by it because it defines your character”.

When we opened Metro-Dagupan Colleges in 1996, I was the College Registrar but slowly I started to gain the interest, trust and confidence of the other College Registrars of Region 1 and CAR that catapulted me to be elected as Secretary of the Association of Registrars in Educational Institutions (AREI) in 1997-1999 and eventually becoming President of the Association in 1999-2001. I was the only Association President who was able to host the National Assembly of Registrars and left the Association with nearly a quarter of a million in funds.

Since then, I have handled positions in the professional associations in the Regional Level as Board of Director of the Philippine Association of Graduate Education since 2017 to present and have been elected as President of the Association of Pangasinan 2 Private Schools for two (2) terms (2017-2019 and 2019-2022).

My interest in the military started in 2014 when our college had a 3-day camp at the Camp Andres Malong in Binmaley, Pangasinan that used to be the base of the 702nd “DEFENDER” Brigade. This is where I met a Mason Captain who invited me to be a Reserve Officer after knowing that I am a holder of a doctorate degree. I said to myself, perhaps I would look good in a military uniform.

I tried my luck in processing the required documents and was able to submit them in 2015. After that, I literally forgot about it. However, in February of 2018 when I received a call from 1RCDG that my Order for Commissionship was finally released and that I will have my donning of ranks as Lieutenant Colonel the following month. Prior to the donning, I was promised by the Staff NCO to be the next Deputy Battalion Commander because of my rank. However, came the day of donning, the incoming Battalion Commander announced another officer to be his Executive Officer. And I was designated as Bn S7. Later that year, I was accepted as a Student in the Strategic CMO Officers Online Course conducted by AFPCMO together with Regular Officers from the PA, PN, PCG, and PNP where I graduated number 16 out of 64 students.

Then in May 2021, I was endorsed by 1RCDG as a Student Officer in the CMO Officers Online Correspondence Course – a 3 months online training conducted by the PA CMO School where I finished Number 2 in a class of 46 Officers from the various branch of service.

Another breakthrough came in July 2021, barely one year after being designated as Bn Ex-O, I was informed by our CDC Director that our Bn Commander has reached the allowable tour of duty of 2 years as BATCOM and will have to be relieved. With me as the next in rank, I was endorsed to RESCOM, PA as Acting Battalion Commander of 105th Pangasinan East Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion. And I asked myself, Am I ready for this? Is it not too soon? And eventually in 13 September 2021, my Designation as Battalion Commander was approved and released by RESCOM, PA. I have led several associations and several organizations but never a group of 559 military reserves coming from different sectors of society and with me being a woman officer made it quite a challenging task.

I have been hearing about the Command and General Staff Course being the highest military schooling of the AFP and I was really surprised and honored when our Group Commander of 1RCDG called me up and informed me that I was endorsed to undergo the CGSC with CL 71 and has ordered me to process the documents for pre-qualifying. After hurdling the Physical Fitness Test and the Pre-Qualifying Test in December 2021, I was informed by 1RCDG that I was accepted in CGSC CL 71 and will start me in processing in 28 February 2022. I was about to refuse the class because during that time, our college was going through difficult times with our pandemic recovery programs and activities. But I always believe that opportunities and blessings come from God for a purpose – for a reason and I submitted to His will.

Now, with more than one month to go before graduation from CGSC, I was able to grasp the world of military leadership and how strategic planners think, connive, collaborate, and work in the attainment of desired end-state. My journey with my classmates of CGSC CL 71 has been a fruitful and meaningful one and being a Reservist (NRI), I was not treated as an outcast but instead I was also enslaved by my Seminar Leader to think, act, and work like a Regular Officer. With

that, I am forever grateful of this experience and I shall carry the teachings and learnings I had in the next steps of my journey in my civilian and military life. As I tread on, the Core Values of the AFP and the Philippine Army will be my guiding torch in leading the way for the next generation of Reserve Officers to emulate and take inspiration from.

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