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Strengthen National Defense Mobilization and Reserve Force Construction¹

By Yu Yunxian and Zhang Pengxuan²

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party proposed "strengthening national defense mobilization and reserve force construction." In the face of the Era's requirements for strengthening the country and the military, the serious situation of national security, and the real existence of the risk of war, we must place the construction of national defense mobilization and reserve forces in a more important strategic position, and strive to promote the high-quality development of national defense mobilization and reserve force construction from a new starting point.

Deeply understand the significance of strengthening national defense mobilization and reserve force construction in this Era.

The deepest source of the power of war lies within the people. Looking back at history, national defense mobilization and reserve forces always provided us with strong backing as we went from victory to victory; in the New Era, national defense mobilization and reserve forces are still where our strength, foundation, and confidence lie in shaping the security situation, containing crises and conflicts, and winning local wars.

Strengthening national defense mobilization and the construction of reserve forces is an inherent requirement for striving to achieve the People's Liberation Army centennial goal.³ Striving to achieve the People's Liberation Army centennial goal is the will of the Party and the expectation of the people. National defense mobilization and reserve force construction is not only a part of the Party's military strengthening, but also an important support for winning future wars. At present, national defense mobilization and reserve force construction is in a critical stage of improving quality and efficiency. We must focus on changes in science and technology, war, and opponents, actively adapt to the characteristics and laws of information technology-based (*xinxihua*) and intelligent (*zhinenghua*) warfare, change mobilization concepts, optimize mobilization modes, enhance mobilization capabilities, innovate mobilization means, and deliver a satisfactory answer in the great journey of strengthening and revitalizing the military.

¹ 于云先 [Yu Yunxian] and 张鹏轩 [Zhang Pengxuan], 加强国防动员和后备力量建设 ["Strengthen National Defense Mobilization and Reserve Force Construction"], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 3 January 2023, p. 7.

² Both authors work at the National Defense University's College of Joint Operations.

³ The "centennial goal" (建军一百年奋斗目标) refers to development benchmarks to be achieved by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PLA (i.e., 2027).

Strengthening national defense mobilization and reserve force construction is an important measure to build a strong strategic deterrence system. A strong strategic deterrence system is the "ballast stone" (*yacangshi*) in a great power contest. National defense mobilization and reserve forces, as the solid backing for winning battles, naturally have strategic deterrence functions. Maintaining strong national defense mobilization and reserve forces demonstrates a strong will to defend national sovereignty, shows the ability to win against invading enemies, and establishes a strategic image of invincibility and awe-inspiring power. Faced with complex and severe international and peripheral situations, we must unify preparations for war and stopping war, deterrence and actual combat, continuously strengthen strategic forces, comprehensively use various strategic means including national defense mobilization and reserve forces, and build an effective strategic force system for deterring and controlling the enemy.

Strengthening national defense mobilization and reserve force construction is the inevitable choice for planning and fighting a People's War in the New Era. People's War is an important weapon for our Party and our army to defeat the enemy. Regardless of how the international situation and the form of war change, the principle that the people and the army are the foundation of victory will never change. Faced with the threat of "hybrid warfare" launched by some hegemonic powers, it is urgent to actively respond with a People's War of "comprehensive warfare." National defense mobilization and reserve forces, as important organizational forms and basic supports of the People's War, shoulder heavy and unshirkable responsibilities for winning People's War in the New Era. They must play their unique functions under the centralized and unified leadership of the Party, strengthen the linkage of the Party, government, military, and people, efficiently aggregate superior resources in all areas, activate the national war potential in all aspects, gather the mighty power of the People's War, and form an overwhelming advantage to defeat all enemies.

Strengthening national defense mobilization and reserve force construction is a practical need for strengthening the normalized and diversified use of military forces. Our country has vast land and seas, a complex security situation, and faces increasingly heavy tasks. The national defense mobilization and reserve forces are spread across urban and rural areas, familiar with the people and the land, and tightly organized. They can arrive at the scene and play a role at the first instance in the event of an emergency. In recent years, whether it is maritime rights protection or disaster relief, national defense mobilization and reserve forces have been an important new force and assault team. At present and for a period of time in the future, our country is in a critical stage of moving from being large to being strong and overcoming difficulties. Various foreseeable and unforeseeable risks and challenges will continue to emerge. We must build national defense mobilization and reserve forces that are based locally, firmly controlled, and used at critical moments. They will undoubtedly play a greater role in future military struggles.

Scientifically grasp the emphasis on strengthening national defense mobilization and reserve force construction.

In the current and future period, national defense mobilization and reserve force construction should closely revolve around the real needs of national security and preparation for military struggle, further optimize the mobilization system, enhance mobilization capabilities, innovate mobilization models, and broaden mobilization fields, striving to improve the support and contribution rates to winning future wars.

Focus on deepening reforms, and further optimize the mobilization system. Currently, deepening reform of the national defense mobilization system is advancing in depth, which is a major strategic arrangement made by the Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission focusing on the overall situation of national defense and military construction. We need to further straighten out the relationship between the leadership and management of national defense mobilization in peacetime and the organization and command in wartime, and build a national defense mobilization and reserve force system that is vertically and horizontally connected, with a sound mechanism and high efficiency. Focusing on the needs of emergency response, we need to establish a graded response system for national defense mobilization that is linked with the national four-level emergency response mechanism and adapted to the military readiness system, so that the national defense mobilization and reserve forces can better integrate with the joint operations system and align with the national emergency system.

Focus on high-end warfare and further enhance mobilization capabilities. Against the backdrop of great power competition, future wars will be high-end wars that unfold in multi-dimensional spaces and are mainly characterized by full depth (*quan zongshen*), high intensity, and new technology. We need to deeply study the essential characteristics and winning mechanisms of high-end warfare, and accurately grasp the new demands and requirements that high-end warfare puts forward for national defense mobilization and reserve force construction. We need to accelerate the development of high-tech industries, increase military and local civilian cooperation in high-tech fields, and further cultivate the potential of national defense to support winning high-end wars. We need to expand the construction of mobilization information network systems and information technology-based and intelligent command means, strengthen the case-based preparation and actual combat training of national defense mobilization and reserve forces, and further enhance national defense mobilization capabilities that cross peace and wartime, operate in all domains, and are precise and efficient.

Focus on improving quality and efficiency and further innovate mobilization models. Currently, warfare is accelerating towards being information technology-based and intelligent. National defense mobilization must shift from the general and vague mobilization model of the past of pursuing quantity and scale, to a multi-domain mobilization model that emphasizes quality and efficiency. Reserve forces must shift from manpower and material support to the front to intellectual and technological support to the military. We must increase the development and utilization of information technology-based and intelligent means, rely on military information network systems, organically integrate mobilization's main parts, potential resources, and objects of support; through real-time perception of mobilization requirements, accurately grasp mobilization potential, intelligently allocate mobilization tasks, deftly control mobilization actions; achieve military and local civilian integrated real-time linkage, efficient transformation and utilization of potential, rapid participation and support of forces for war; and effectively improve the cost-effectiveness and contribution rate to operations of mobilization.

Highlight new domains and qualities and further broaden the mobilization field. With the rapid development of a new round of technological revolution and military revolution, the pace of development of new domain and new quality forces such as space, polar, deep sea, network, and unmanned [forces] is accelerating, and their effectiveness is growing more evident. They have

become the focus of major power competition, the key to winning the future, and a new growth point for military combat power. We must deeply grasp the general trends of future war development, actively promote the expansion of national defense mobilization and reserve forces into emerging fields, focus on new quality forces, through functional integration, intelligent transformation, and innovative tactics, fully tap the potential resources of new domains and qualities, integrate high-tech cutting-edge technologies, cultivate and transform high-quality mobilization capabilities, transform advanced scientific and technological forces into combat power that supports victory, effectively enhance asymmetric balance effects, and help seize the initiative in strategic contests.

Actively promote the high-quality development of national defense mobilization and reserve force construction.

To promote national defense mobilization and reserve force construction from a new starting point, we must focus on the needs of strengthening the country and the military and winning future wars. We must always grasp the fundamental and overall issues affecting national defense mobilization and reserve force construction, and continue to work hard on Party control of the armed forces, military and local civilian coordination, talent training, and legal construction to grow stronger.

Adhere to the Party's control over the armed forces. The Party's control over the armed forces is a glorious tradition formed by our Party and our army in the long-term revolution and construction practice. It is the implementation and embodiment of the Party's absolute leadership over the army in national defense mobilization and reserve force construction. No matter how the times develop, we must always adhere to it. We need to standardize the execution of systems, improve related mechanisms, and ensure implementation. We need to improve the Party's organization in the national defense reserve forces, strengthen ideological and political education, standardize and implement the organizational life system, and ensure absolute loyalty, absolute purity, and absolute reliability. Focusing on the development of the times, we need to establish and improve the system measures for non-public enterprises to implement the Party's control over the armed forces, and ensure that wherever the militia organization is established, the work of the Party's control over the armed forces follows up and expands.

Strengthen military and local civilian coordination. National defense mobilization and reserve force construction is connected to the military on one end and the local area on the other. It must be strengthened in the overall design and in the coordinated planning of national economic and social development and preparation for military struggle, effectively achieving military and local civilian strategic planning coordination, policy system connection, and resource element sharing. National defense mobilization and reserve force construction should be incorporated into the overall planning of local economic and social development, integrating military and local civilian needs, coordinating resource allocation, clarifying responsible entities, and ensuring the orderly and powerful advancement of related work. We should fully leverage the advantages of national defense mobilization in serving military needs, getting a good grip on local civilian potential, and quickly transitioning between peace and war. We should actively pursue the path of integrated development, strive to build a mechanism for matching up potential demand, pre-storage, pre-conscripting, and pre-placement, as well as military and local civilian technology grafting, achieving mutual promotion and common improvement of military and social benefits.

Strengthen personnel. Personnel are the primary resource. To build a strong national defense mobilization and reserve force, we must create a contingent of high-quality and professional personnel. We need to focus on supporting the needs of winning future wars, scientifically plan the scale, structure, specialty, and layout of the national defense mobilization and reserve forces contingent of talent, and actively create a well-functioning and complementary talent contingent layout. It is necessary to give full play to the role of academic institution training/education (*peixun*) as the “main channel,” on-the-job training as the “main battleground,” and military professional education as the “main platform,” constantly increase the intensity of personnel training/education, and strive to improve the quality and ability to aid and win wars. We should actively create a strong atmosphere of respecting and caring for personnel, establish a clear orientation of fairness and justice, establish an incentive mechanism to compete against and strive to surpass each other and encourage progress, and truly activate the "spring water" of national defense mobilization and reserve force talent.

Perfect the legal system. The system has fundamental, comprehensive, stable, and long-term characteristics. A complete legal system is an important guarantee for the smooth implementation and healthy development of national defense mobilization and reserve force construction. Taking the opportunity to build a law-based China, we should urgently clean up mobilization regulations that are not in line with the New Era and new requirements, do a good job in the "enactment, revision, abolition, and interpretation" of existing mobilization regulations, and quickly build a mobilization legal system that is systematic, complementary, and highly operational, with the "National Defense Law" and "National Defense Mobilization Law" as the main body and supplemented by relevant local and industry regulations. We need to strengthen the supervision and inspection of mobilization regulations implementation, improve the corresponding system and mechanism of supervision and inspection, increase the investigation and accountability of illegal and irregular situations in the mobilization field, and ensure the rigid implementation of mobilization regulations.