

THE RESERVE SYSTEM AND RESERVE FORCES of COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE AND SECURITY SYSTEM OF ARMENIA

1 Strategic Context and Transformation Imperatives for the Reserve System

1.1 A New Approach to Armenia's Security Provision

The security system developed by Armenia has proven incapable of conducting a regional-scale military confrontation against a broad coalition that includes regional power centers. The coalition's capacity to project military power cannot be neutralized solely through the military potential of the Armenian state and necessitates the development of a deterrence strategy grounded in a comprehensive approach to the security of the Armenian nation and the Comprehensive Defense and Security System of Armenia (CDSS).

This new approach is based on different conceptual, philosophical, and systemic principles than those underpinning the post-Soviet-era system of military and national security in Armenia.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that Armenia, for the foreseeable future, cannot rely on military alliances and must plan the transformation of its security system relying solely on the resources of the Armenian nation. Additionally, the regional security environment in the coming years will be dominated by the logic and grammar of the gray zone and hybrid warfare.

The study of countries that have built their defense systems based on a comprehensive security approach demonstrates that Armenia's CDSS is capable of deterring regional power centers from projecting military force or threatening such projection. In the event of military aggression, it provides the basis for organizing nationwide resistance, inflicting unacceptable damage on the aggressor, and ultimately expelling them from Armenian territory.

1.2 The Evolving Role of the Reserves

Within the framework of the Comprehensive Defense and Security System of Armenia (CDSS), the role and significance of the reserve system in supporting Armenia's combat capabilities are undergoing a fundamental transformation. Whereas previously Armenia's

reserve system functioned as a replacement reserve, mobilized to replenish personnel losses upon request by the General Staff, under the new conditions, these functions must be significantly expanded and reinforced with active capabilities that guarantee the execution of tasks dictated by the changing strategic environment. The focus should thus shift to the development of the reserve system which should also include the reserve forces of Armenia.

Given Armenia's limitations in expanding the size and power of its regular forces, the importance of the reserve system and reserve forces is significantly increasing. Corps commanders and operational-level leadership of the Armenian Armed Forces must be prepared to integrate reservists into regular formations and units, as well as to deploy dedicated battalions from the reserve forces whose combat training enables them to carry out military tasks.

This approach requires a fundamental overhaul of the current system for training and maintaining the combat readiness of reservists. The Second Artsakh Campaign revealed that the majority of Armenia's mobilization resource lacked even basic firearms and military training, let alone readiness for complex combat operations. As it stands today, the reserve system of Armenia is unable to deliver the necessary level of preparedness and fails to meet even the baseline expectations of regular unit commanders.

Furthermore, the increasing complexity of modern weapons systems and the conduct of warfare across emerging domains demand that reservists achieve a level of readiness comparable to that of active-duty personnel. Specialists involved in the maintenance of missile systems and aerial platforms, as well as ICT professionals, must be trained to immediately assume operational roles without requiring additional training. Armenia's reserve system must ensure an adequate state of combat readiness for technical specialists, medical personnel, and other critical support categories.

1.3 Deficiencies of Armenia's Reserve System

Several systemic deficiencies within Armenia's reserve system severely limit its effectiveness and must be addressed within the framework of the new transformation effort:

1. Armenia's current reserve system is premised on achieving either parity or at least a comparable scale of forces and resources relative to the adversary. Under current conditions, parity is unattainable, and the security system must rely on asymmetric approaches to offset the adversary's quantitative superiority. A

reformed reserve system must become an integral element of the CDSS and support this asymmetry.

2. Modern warfare demands that armed forces possess a diverse and continuously evolving set of skills and competencies to sustain combat effectiveness. Training such specialists solely through the military education system is a challenge even for large and well-resourced states, let alone for Armenia. One solution, actively adopted by many countries, is to leverage reservists as an alternative and dynamic human resource pool. This shift inevitably redefines the role and significance of reserve forces within the overall defense architecture.
3. The quantitative logic underpinning Armenia's reserve system has resulted in its impersonality and lack of individualization. The personnel management system of Armenia's Armed Forces is currently limited to tracking only basic and general information about reservists, reflecting a legacy mindset rooted in outdated Soviet military doctrine.

As a result, the system is unable to monitor the real-time status of reservists, their career progression, or the acquisition of new skills and competencies which may be critically important for national defense. In the present context, the notion of an anonymous Armenian soldier or reservist is an unacceptable luxury. The approach to the role and place of individual service members in the combat readiness of regular forces, auxiliary forces, and reserves must be fundamentally rethought.

Modern ICT capabilities make it possible to design advanced information systems and digital platforms that can accompany each reservist throughout their full service trajectory, from pre-conscription age to final retirement and exit from the reserve system. Ideally, in Armenia's future reserve and defense system, every Armenian soldier and reservist must have a defined place, clearly understand their responsibilities, and bear responsibility for maintaining their level of combat readiness.

1.4 The Frame of the New Reserve System and Reserve Forces

The future reserve system, encompassing both the reserve structure and dedicated reserve forces, must be prepared to support the combat readiness of Armenia's regular armed forces in the context of mobilization. However, it must also be capable of addressing new tasks aligned with the implementation of a deterrence strategy against potential aggressors.

Armenia's CDSS must be equipped to make broad and effective use of reserves by accelerating the development of mixed-unit formations that integrate both regular and reserve components. There is a clear need to increase the integration of the reserve system and reserve forces with the regular armed forces to create integrated whole force. This includes further development of territorial defense and communities like Vogezen (Ոգեզէն – Weaponized by Spirit in Armenian) to better leverage the competencies, skills, experience, and capabilities of reservists.

The new reserve system must fundamentally transform the approach to the reservist, treating them as a citizen who consciously assumes responsibility for the nation's defense, and seeking to attract and retain them within its structure. The system must offer a variety of pathways that enable reservists to fulfill their duty, including:

- Enhanced motivation through opportunities to play a meaningful role in Armenia's defense and the operational capabilities of the armed forces;
- Greater choice and control over how the reservist offers their competencies to the CDSS;
- A well-developed physical and virtual infrastructure, including training and educational centers that accommodate the needs and capacities of reservists;
- Expanded use of civilian competencies and professional skills within the CDSS and the armed forces;
- Incentives that encourage reservists to take on tasks traditionally performed by active-duty personnel, including combat alert and readiness duties.

Accordingly, the new reserve system and reserve forces of Armenia must provide:

- Additional force generation capacity during the mobilization and deployment of regular units;
- A pool of specialists whose continuous presence in active service would be economically inefficient;
- The ability to rapidly scale up force size through a structured and responsive reserve system and reserve forces.

Deploying such a reserve system will require:

- Amendments to legislation introducing new categories of reserves and simplifying transitions between types of reserve status and state institutions responsible for defense and security;

- A revision of force structure targets and personnel ceilings, expanding the flexibility of military planners in shaping Armenia's defense plans;
- A reassessment of budgetary strategy, increasing defense allocations specifically for the development of the reserve system and reserve forces.

Creating a reserve system capable of fulfilling these tasks is a non-trivial, complex challenge. However, without its development within the CDSS framework, Armenia will not be able to address the core challenge of ensuring the military and national security of the Armenian state and society.

The reserve system and reserve forces intended to counter threats in Armenia's evolving security environment should be built on the following foundational principles:

- A redefinition of the relationship between the reserve system, society, and the Armenian nation;
- Expansion of the role of the reserve system and reserve forces in both military affairs and national life;
- Creation of conditions that allow reservists to realize their full potential;
- A shift in societal and national perception of the reserve system and reserve forces.

2 Changing the Relationship Between Society, the State, and the Reserves Within the Framework of the Comprehensive Defense and Security System

The deployment of a reserve system and reserve forces under the CDSS must ensure access to a broad spectrum of competencies, skills, and experience possessed by reservists, thereby enhancing the resilience of the Armenian state and society. This, in turn, raises expectations not only for reservists themselves, but also for employers, civil society organizations, the education system and academic community, state institutions, and the Church, transforming the development of the reserve system into a truly national endeavor.

The establishment of a robust reserve system and reserve forces will necessitate profound changes across state institutions, including in the cultural domain. The state must revise its attitude toward reservists and be prepared to offer improved conditions that encourage widespread participation in reserve service, framing it as a respected and attractive form of public and civic engagement.

These changes will also affect the relationship between the public, private, and broader governmental sectors. Proper calibration of these relationships will be essential to generating the capacity required for the effective functioning of the reserve system and reserve forces. This, in turn, will enhance the interaction between the defense sphere and society, contributing to the overall strengthening of Armenia's defense capabilities and national resilience.

Ultimately, the impact of the reserve system and reserve forces on Armenian society and the state is likely to be deeper than the reforms limited to the defense sector, exerting transformative influence across all dimensions of Armenian national life and society.

2.1 Society

Ensuring Armenia's resilience and credible deterrence against aggression within the framework of the CDSS and the reserve and reserve force system requires a qualitative shift in the level of cooperation between the government, regional and local authorities, the public and private sectors, the Church, and all strata of the Armenian nation. Yet the government's ability to initiate such change is constrained by a number of factors, including:

- Inefficient governance and duplication of efforts within the state apparatus;
- Limited state control over strategic assets, critical national infrastructure, and segments of the private sector;
- A lack of awareness among ordinary citizens regarding their place and role within the CDSS and the reserve and reserve force system.

The CDSS demands that public, civil, and military governance structures synchronize and align their actions, with responsibilities and functions distributed across the entire state and society, rather than concentrated solely within institutions traditionally responsible for defense and security.

From this perspective, the role of the reserve and reserve force system is both unique and dual in nature: on the one hand, it is deeply embedded in societal life, as reservists live and work within their communities; on the other hand, reserves constitute a critical component of the defense and security system. Within the framework of the new system, reservists and reserve forces can serve as a cultural bridge, helping to overcome the divide between civilian and military approaches to crisis response and national defense.

2.2 Government

Within the framework of the CDSS and based on a broader concept of national resilience, the Government of Armenia can leverage the reserve system and reserve forces to synchronize and integrate the efforts of the state, private, and public sectors across Armenian society.

To this end, the government must assume responsibility for organizing structured consultations between different sectors of Armenian society in order to determine mechanisms for mobilization and the scaling of military potential within the reserve and reserve force system in times of crisis and war.

2.3 Public, Private, Academic, and Governmental Sectors

The development of CDSS principles necessitates a shift toward a more sophisticated military security system for Armenia, one in which the existing structure of the Armed Forces is complemented by territorial defense forces, reserve forces, and other supporting elements, thereby forming balanced and integrated whole forces.

These integrated whole forces within the CDSS framework enable the diversification of defense tasks. In such a system, Armenia's regular armed forces can concentrate on executing critical combat missions, while reservists and other force components assume responsibility for complementary tasks, ensuring greater flexibility and efficiency across the defense spectrum.

2.4 Science and Education

The reserve and reserve force system envisions the establishment of formal linkages with the education system and universities, with the goal of creating specialized reserve units drawing upon the human capital of the academic sphere.

Universities can make a meaningful contribution to the development of the CDSS by engaging their faculty, students, and infrastructure, and in return, gain access to resources for research and experimentation in real-world, mission-relevant environments.

2.5 Vision for Integrating the Public, Private, and Governmental Sectors

The deployment of Armenia's integrated whole forces will require substantial effort and will ultimately lead to a cultural shift within Armenian society and the Armenian nation.

Without such a shift, it will be extremely difficult to implement a truly comprehensive approach to national security across the national, regional, and local levels.

Achieving an effective balance among regular and reserve forces, territorial defense forces, including components of local self-defense, represents only part of the challenge. Success will also depend on the integration of the public and private sectors with the broader governmental sector. The development of a reserve system and reserve forces calls for an expanded and deepened partnership between the state, civil society, and private entities in strengthening national defense capacity, including through the engagement of highly qualified professionals and the creation of incentives for employers.

The design and implementation of the reserve and reserve force system under the CDSS will enhance the contribution of reservists to Armenia's resilience and will require the formalization of reserve employment within a structured framework of civil-military cooperation. The system will improve territorial defense, strengthen the reliability of strategic site protection, and enhance the security of national infrastructure by leveraging the broader potential of the reserve corps.

The transformation of Armenia's reserve system requires the development of a unified framework and doctrine, as well as a clearly localized center responsible for managing and guiding the reform process. This center must remain insulated from the political arena and must include representation from both the private and public sectors, ensuring the resilience and continuity of the effort. Reforms associated with the CDSS and the establishment of a new reserve and reserve force system will span multiple political cycles and must be shielded from short-term partisan interests.

3 Structure, Functions, and Capabilities of the Reserve System and Reserve Forces

The persistent nature of military threats to Armenia necessitates an expanded role for the reserve system in national defense. Crucially, the reserve system must evolve from a purely supporting institution into an active component of Armenia's defense architecture, prompting the introduction of the concept of reserve forces. In this new context, Armenia's reserve system and reserve forces must assume broader functions beyond simply augmenting the military capacity and combat potential of the Armenian Armed Forces.

For example, it is increasingly important to expand access to skills, competencies, and networks present in the private and civilian sectors of Armenian society, especially in the

context of modern warfare. Reservists can serve as conduits for innovation, helping introduce new modes and methods of warfare into traditionally rigid military-security institutions.

By creating a reserve system capable of active participation in the day-to-day operations of the defense sector, Armenia can expand its capabilities, increase functional diversity, and mitigate risks associated with current personnel shortages in the Armed Forces.

The sharp increase in both the volume and complexity of tasks assigned to Armenia's military calls for the activation of reserve functions and the integration of reserve forces into routine defense operations. New functions may include:

- Engaging reservists on a short-term basis to support the operation and maintenance of technologically advanced weapons systems, such as command and control (C2) systems, missile platforms, air defense systems, electronic warfare, and unmanned aerial systems;
- Establishing reserve force units tasked with contributing to cyber defense, information operations, and psychological warfare both during duty and in their spare time;
- Deploying Local Defense Force reservists (Տեղական պաշտպանական ուժեր) within the territorial defense system to carry out military tasks, including short-term combat duty.

To fulfill these expanded roles, Armenia's reserve system requires structural transformation, whereby the traditional role of replenishing regular forces is broadened through the deployment of new reserve components. The following components can be identified within Armenia's emerging reserve and reserve force system:

- Replacement Reserve – supporting the replenishment of regular forces;
- Operational Reserve – forces held at a high state of combat readiness for immediate deployment;
- Strategic Reserve – designed to increase Armenia's national resilience by mobilizing segments of the Armenian nation that are not currently part of the formal reserve system.

Across these tiers, replacement, operational, and strategic, the reserve force system also comprises specialized functional components, including:

- Local Defense Forces within the territorial defense structure;

- Reserve units for operations in new domains of warfare and the operation of advanced weapons systems.

3.1 Replacement Reserve

Beyond its current role in staffing units of the Armed Forces and the national security system, the replacement reserve can expand its functions to actively support daily defense activities and projects. The following functions and capabilities may be envisioned:

- Providing access to the competencies, skills, experience, and networks of the civilian and business sectors, via individuals who are willing and prepared to participate actively in the defense of Armenia;
- Offering specialized expertise from the civilian domain, for example, engineering, cybersecurity, information operations or medical skills. Additionally, high-value civilian competencies such as project management, human resources, and logistics can prove extremely useful;
- Filling short-term staffing gaps in the defense sector. This would enhance personnel management stability, which would otherwise require reassignment of active-duty personnel, causing shortages in other areas of the force.

3.2 Operational Reserve

In light of the increasing scale and intensity of military threats, Armenia's regular forces will be compelled to rely more heavily on their reserves for combat operations. This necessitates the transfer of certain combat capabilities from regular forces to reserve forces. Determining whether some of these capabilities can be reliably entrusted to reserve-based formations requires consideration of several critical factors.

Foremost among these is the ability of the reserve system to maintain the combat readiness of reserve forces, ensuring they can be mobilized in a timely manner and execute assigned missions as planned. Sustaining the required level of combat capability, particularly collective capabilities at the unit level, is especially challenging. Modern weapons and military technologies require extended periods of training and familiarization, as well as significant resources for maintenance and operation.

Maintaining high-readiness postures today demands a level of professional competence and command performance that may not be feasible during reservists' limited free time.

This challenge can be addressed by establishing an operational reserve, which entails a higher standard of combat preparedness, not only for individual reservists but also for

reserve force units. The size and assigned combat functions of each operational reserve unit will be key determinants of the overall system's ability to achieve the required level of effectiveness during mobilization and wartime deployment.

Reserve forces will have a dedicated structure and will operate along geographic directions. Reserve units should be established at the brigade and battalion levels.

The reserve forces will have distinct military equipment and command structures and will function within the overall framework of the Armed Forces. The Yerevan-based reserve forces will play a unique role, taking into account Armenia's demographic profile. These forces must be prepared to execute military tasks not only in the defense of Yerevan but also along other strategic directions.

The reserve forces will include the Territorial Defense Forces. Overall command and control will be exercised by the Reserve and Territorial Defense Forces Command, operating under the authority of the General Staff.

Active Reserve. The presence of reservists of reserve system who possess an advanced level of combat readiness and can operate alongside conventional forces, special operations forces etc., with a designated status as the Active Reserve, becomes an important element of Armenia's reserve system.

Furthermore, due to the nature of the reserve system, where certain reservists cannot be mobilized for various reasons, Active reserve units must train a greater number of reservists in advance, in order to guarantee the required personnel in the event of deployment.

3.3 Strategic Reserve

The evolving nature, scale, and persistence of threats to Armenia necessitate the creation of a strategic reserve composed of individuals who express a willingness to serve as reservists, but who do not hold formal legal obligations under the reserve system. In other words, a significant portion of the strategic reserve would be made up of volunteers with a lower level of combat training and readiness.

The strategic reserve plays a crucial role in enhancing the resilience of Armenian society and the Armenian nation. For example, individual members of the strategic reserve may choose to participate voluntarily in territorial defense activities during times of emergency or war.

Participation in the strategic reserve can serve as a gateway for citizen engagement, encouraging individuals to:

- Contribute their skills and expertise to the replacement reserve;
- Volunteer in times of crisis or armed conflict;
- Serve as mentors to younger reservists and recruits.

3.4 The Technosphere in Armenia's Reserve System

To harness the capabilities of advanced weapons systems and operate effectively across the new domains of warfare, Armenia's reserve system must establish specialized reserve units composed of professionals and experts from the technosphere. These units would be capable of executing combat-related tasks, including the defense, exploitation, and attack of computer networks, as well as other traditional functions within the cyber and electromagnetic domains.

Such units could also contribute to the protection of military communications and sensor networks, provide capabilities for disrupting adversarial networks, and support intelligence collection. In addition, these specialized units could enhance Armenia's capacity for electronic warfare, unmanned aerial systems, and missile systems.

The reserve system must also prepare, deploy, and equip special-purpose reserve units with short-range surface-to-air missile systems. Integrated with the actions of regular forces, these air defense units can help deny the adversary uncontested access to Armenian airspace, thereby significantly complicating any attempts to project air power.

Given the complexity of these missions, such specialized reserve units will require non-traditional and more frequent training cycles to maintain technical proficiency and ensure readiness in rapidly evolving operational environments.

3.5 Reserve Command

The expanded roles and active functions assigned to the reserves necessitate the establishment of a Reserve Command subordinated to the General Staff. Given Turkey's possession of advanced weapon systems designed to minimize early warning time, Armenia must develop the capability to rapidly mobilize reserve forces in times of crisis or during the pre-war phase. The reserve system and reserve forces must be capable of initiating mobilization procedures within 24 hours of receiving a formal order. This demands a qualitatively stricter approach to mobilization planning and execution.

One of the core peacetime responsibilities of the Reserve Command is the development and certification of national, regional, and local mobilization plans. The Reserve Command is responsible for the planning, inspection, evaluation, and validation of Armenia's

mobilization potential. Every element of public governance, from national to municipal levels, as well as private and civil sectors must maintain and regularly update their respective mobilization plans. The Reserve Command verifies these plans at the national level through inspections and exercises.

The Reserve Command is also tasked with planning and certifying the mobilization of defense-related assets, including the preparation of defense industrial facilities, critical national infrastructure, and key companies. It also plans for the requisitioning of assets and dual-use transportation systems in support of defense needs.

While the mobilization of civilian assets to support military operations remains the responsibility of the Armenian Government, it is executed under the coordination and directives of the Reserve Command. Each ministry and cabinet-level body carries out its assigned functions, and the definition of these roles within the national mobilization framework remains a key planning requirement.

During peacetime, the Reserve Command is responsible for:

- Managing the reserve system;
- Organizing and training reserve forces;
- Re-training reservists to ensure retention of basic military skills and readiness for rapid deployment;
- Providing intensive pre-war instruction in case of emergency call-up.

The baseline assumption for Armenia's defense planning is that the country may receive only about four weeks of warning prior to an invasion. This requires significant improvements in regional military intelligence, including open-source and signals intelligence capabilities. The Reserve Command must use this lead time to implement mobilization activities, shift the country into a pre-war or wartime posture, and prepare mobilized reservists for combat operations.

In wartime, the Reserve Command is responsible not only for managing the replacement reserve, but also for generating and providing mobilized reserve companies and battalions, as well as specialized units to the General Staff and operational commanders.

Thus, in the Armenian context, mobilization must be understood as more than the activation of military capacity, it is a comprehensive national defense process involving the entire society. The Reserve Command acts as the coordinator of this whole-of-nation mobilization effort, which includes military reservists, civil defense units, and the mobilization of strategic industrial infrastructure.

The following categories of reserve units and reservists may be under the operational control of the Reserve Command, varying by unit type, weapon systems, and readiness standards:

- Operational reserve units and reservists from mountain infantry companies and battalions maintained at the highest readiness levels;
- Reserve units and reservists with baseline readiness, including local territorial defense forces;
- Special-purpose reserve units and personnel trained for warfare in new domains and with complex weapons systems;
- The replacement reserve.

During peacetime, the development of the reserve system and reserve forces is carried out by:

- The Reserve Command;
- The executive and legislative branches of government;
- Local government bodies, within the territorial defense framework;
- Private and civil society organizations.

In wartime, the General Staff assumes full command and control over the mobilization process.

The Reserve Command may be structured as follows:

1. Headquarters of the Reserve Command – responsible for force preparation, mobilization planning, and logistics;
2. Directorate for Political, Information, Cyber, and Psychological Warfare – responsible for the organization and conduct of these non-kinetic warfare domains;
3. Inspection Directorate – responsible for oversight, compliance, standard development, and legal affairs;
4. Regional Reserve Commands – overseeing training centers and managing local reserve forces;
5. Training Centers for the Reserve System and Reserve Forces;
6. Support Units – including a security company and administrative-logistics elements.

4 Motivation System and Unlocking the Potential of the Reservist. A Unified Personnel System for Comprehensive Defense and Security

4.1 Reservist Motivation System

Reservists differ from active-duty personnel both in status and mindset, and often possess specialized competencies and skills in rapidly evolving fields, such as cyber or information advantage, that are difficult for the traditional national security system to develop or sustain. In addition, many reservists bring years of professional experience and deep domain expertise, for example in industrial sectors. They may also possess personal networks that can be leveraged in times of crisis to access valuable knowledge, institutional ties, intellectual capital, and innovation.

Utilizing the full potential of reservists will significantly enhance the resilience of the CDSS and Armenian society at large. However, turning this potential into a tangible combat or strategic advantage requires a clear understanding of what motivates reservists to engage. For some, it may be about career advancement or skill development in the civilian sector, for others, the opportunity to serve during a short-term deployment, maintain combat readiness, or re-engage in a mission-driven environment.

The reserve system should offer reservists the opportunity to learn, serve, and connect, including acquiring new skills, contributing to national defense, and enjoying a sense of camaraderie among peers. Belonging to a community or team, and the chance to build relationships, are powerful motivators. The diversity of forms of participation in the reserve and the sense of belonging to a shared community can engage specialists who, under other circumstances, might not have become involved in the activities of the CDSS.

There is a need to design a diverse set of career pathways and interaction formats for reservists, ensuring the reserve system accommodates varying motivations and capabilities, rather than relying on a uniform 'one-size-fits-all' model. A carefully calibrated system of reservist categories should be designed to balance flexibility and individual preference with the operational needs of the Armed Forces. The following categories may be considered:

- Core Reserve (Replacement and Operational Reserves): Individuals subject to mandatory service obligations under national law, mobilized as needed into the Armed Forces;

- Full-Time Active Service: Reservists temporarily employed on a full-time basis within active-duty formations, with options for part-time assignment and paid leave, offering a solution to short-term personnel shortfalls in specific units;
- Part-Time Active Service: A flexible option similar to full-time service, but adapted for shorter deployments and specific operational tasks;
- Contract Service: Engagement of reservists through formal contracts for defined roles or missions;
- Off-Duty Service: Voluntary participation in defense activities during non-working hours, with financial compensation for service time but limited other obligations;
- Volunteers: Individuals serving without pay, aside from reimbursement for direct out-of-pocket expenses;
- Extended Service: Enabling reservists currently on temporary active-duty contracts to prolong their term of service, as needed by the reserve system.

4.2 Unified Personnel System

As part of a comprehensive personnel management strategy, Armenia must develop a Unified Personnel System that integrates the Armed Forces, other national security ministries and agencies, and the reserve system under the framework of the CDSS. This requires the adoption of a variable career model, allowing reservists to enter and exit active service at different stages of their professional journey.

Currently, the system is overly rigid, maintaining a strict separation between the civilian sector and active military service, effectively preventing the CDSS from leveraging the full potential of Armenia's reservists and the reserve structure.

The CDSS variable career model must allow a reservist to move flexibly between strategic, operational, and replacement reserves, and into or out of active service, in accordance with terms and conditions of service. A reservist should be able to serve for several years or months on mutually agreed terms. The system should also allow lateral access, enabling individuals to bypass standard entry mechanisms when their unique talents and expertise are required. This would allow Armenia to tap into specialized civilian competencies at a level appropriate to the individual's qualifications and experience.

To fully utilize reservists' capabilities, the reserve system must also revise the criteria for rank assignment based on position-specific requirements. This may involve decoupling rank from military hierarchy in favor of functional expertise, introducing a new

“Specialist” designation for highly technical or expert roles in the defense sector. The “Specialist” category and insignia would confer authority in a given domain without implying traditional command responsibilities or misrepresenting military experience.

A well-designed variable career system will allow reservists to serve in roles that draw on their civilian skills and experience, without requiring redundant or time-consuming retraining. The development of lateral entry pathways will facilitate rapid integration into service, reducing onboarding and training costs. Credentialing and accreditation of civilian skills for military roles will accelerate this process even further.

The creation of a robust categorization system for reservists, combined with flexible service agreements and a variable career model, will significantly improve reservist participation in the CDSS. However, these mechanisms must be supported by a flexible, decentralized personnel management system capable of quickly locating and onboarding the right individuals into the reserve force.

Addressing this challenge requires the creation of a unified digital platform for CDSS personnel, featuring advanced search capabilities and a network of recruiters capable of hiring qualified candidates in days, not months.

Australia’s Total Workforce System can serve as a useful model for such an approach. Implementing a comparable system and digital platform in Armenia will demand dedicated effort and separate strategic planning.

5 Recommendations for Reforming the Reserve System and Reserve Forces

The process of reforming Armenia’s reserve system is both complex and consequential. It demands not only institutional transformation but also a strategic cultural shift in how the nation approaches its defense and mobilization framework.

Broadly, the reform effort should be organized around several key categories of change, which collectively define the foundations of a modern, resilient, and mission-capable reserve system and reserve forces for Armenia.

5.1 Transforming the Relationship Between the Reserve System, Reserve Forces, and Society

The transformation of the reserve system will result in a qualitative shift in the relationship between the state, the public and private sectors, and Armenian society as a whole.

Managing this shift requires the development of a dedicated cultural change program that guides the institutional and societal adjustments.

Ultimately, the transformation will:

- Formalize the use of reserves within a structured framework of civil-military cooperation;
- Elevate the role of the reserve system and reserve forces during times of crisis and war;
- Strengthen the defense and resilience of critical national infrastructure and Armenia's strategic base;
- Deepen and broaden collaboration between the defense sector and the public and private sectors of Armenian society;
- Increase the overall contribution of the reserve system and reserve forces to Armenia's national resilience.

5.2 Expanding the Role of the Reserve System and Reserve Forces

As part of the reform process, research and assessment must be conducted to determine which combat roles currently held exclusively by the regular forces can be transferred to the reserve forces, with corresponding adjustments in training and readiness systems.

This will require legislative amendments to support new functions of the reserve system and reserve forces, particularly to simplify and increase flexibility in the relationship between regular and reserve components. Currently, Armenian legislation and administrative procedures impede the fluid movement of personnel between active duty and reserve status.

To support these new roles, Armenia's reserve system must be structured around a central Reserve Command and Three core components, each with defined roles and mechanisms for internal mobility:

- Replacement Reserve – Supports the regular armed forces by providing trained personnel for combat operations;
- Operational Reserve – A high-readiness force composed of both individual reservists and organized units (conventional and special), capable of immediate deployment during crises and armed conflict. These units are trained to perform

combat roles traditionally assigned to the regular forces, and their readiness is sustained through regular, comprehensive training cycles;

- Strategic Reserve – Composed primarily of volunteer citizens willing to contribute their skills, expertise, and experience to national defense. Although this segment generally has a lower level of readiness and training, it remains a critical deterrent component that must be actively maintained and periodically engaged to support national resilience.

Deploying such a structure will enable Armenia to take the next step toward building integrated whole forces, ensuring that reserve components are no longer peripheral but fully embedded within the national defense architecture.

5.3 Unlocking Reservist Potential and Establishing a Unified CDSS Personnel System

As Armenia moves toward the development of integrated whole forces, the distinction between regular and reserve personnel will become increasingly fluid and functional, rather than structural. This shift will require the CDSS to adopt a mixed personnel model, in which reservists and even civilians may be temporarily substituted for active-duty personnel based on operational needs.

Such a system demands a higher level of competence and professionalism in personnel management, especially in making real-time decisions about force composition, deployment, and task allocation. At the operational and strategic levels, force commanders must be empowered to structure their formations and distribute combat tasks between regular and reserve components based on capability, not status.

The effective deployment of the reserve system and reserve forces necessitates a complex, integrated personnel management model, directly linked to performance indicators, capability development goals, and the operational outputs of both regular and reserve forces. This system must be decentralized, flexible, and rapid, capable of generating qualified reservist capacity within days, not months.

To support this, Armenia must develop a unified CDSS personnel system, including a national-level digital platform for tracking reservist competencies, skills, and experience.

A key component of this platform will be a network of personnel specialists able to identify, recruit, and assign individuals with the right skills on demand. For this system to function effectively, new models of engagement must be introduced, ones that allow seamless and flexible entry points for reservists across the defense system.

The Unified CDSS Personnel System must:

- Develop an adaptive personnel management framework capable of locating, hiring, and deploying reservist talent, experience, and social networks to the right mission area at the right time;
- Offer a simplified and streamlined range of services, along with flexible and standardized terms and conditions of service;
- Implement a variable career model that enables reservists to move freely within and beyond the CDSS as their circumstances and the nation's needs evolve.

5.4 Elevating the Strategic Role of the Reserve System and Reserve Forces

It is critically important that Armenia's senior military-political leadership fully recognize the strategic importance of the reserve system and reserve forces. A clear and public declaration of the initiation of reserve reform within the broader framework of building the CDSS can itself serve as a deterrent signal on the international stage. The message that any future invasion of Armenia will encounter prepared and organized resistance will begin to influence the strategic calculus of adversaries.

Developing the capacity for effective, long-term strategic competition is essential to counterbalancing the qualitative and quantitative advantages held by regional power centers in projecting military force.

To enhance the deterrent perception of Armenia's reserve system, decision-makers must identify how to signal to opposing leadership that Armenian reserve system and reserve forces represent a decisive adverse factor in their war planning. The reserve system must be framed not as a passive or reactive asset, but as a core element of active defense posture.

It is essential to understand that the reserve system's deterrent effect has both objective and subjective dimensions. For example, if the adversary's leadership is unaware of the size, structure, and capabilities of Armenia's reserve forces, its deterrent value is diminished. Two key questions must therefore be addressed when assessing the strategic utility of the reserve system: what actual impact can Armenia's reserve system and reserve forces have on an adversary during a conflict, and what does the adversary know about this system, and how might that knowledge affect their perception of costs, risks, and likely outcomes of war?

Positioning the reserve system as a credible deterrent, both in substance and in perception, must be a deliberate and coordinated effort at the national level.

5.5 Outlines of a Strategy for Reforming the Reserve System and Enhancing the Strategic Value of Reserve Forces

The strategy for reforming Armenia's reserve system and strengthening the relevance and utility of its reserve forces should include the following key components:

1. Leverage the reserve system as a strategic instrument within the CDSS to deter power centers from using military force or other forms of coercion against Armenia. This includes public acknowledgment of the qualitative transformation of the reserve role, and the inclusion of reserve forces in national defense and security strategies, official messaging, and public communications.
2. Assess how the transition to more strategically significant reserve forces can erode adversary advantages in the early phases of an invasion. This may be achieved by exploiting technical specialization and geographic advantages through the preparation of specialized personnel and units.
3. Develop the structure, functions, and missions of reserve forces, including special-purpose units capable of operating in both traditional and emerging domains of warfare. Priority areas include:
 - Cyber, electromagnetic, information, and psychological operations through the formation of specialized reserve units composed of ICT and information warfare experts;
 - Denial of access to Armenia's air domain, supported by reserve units operating UAVs and air defense missile systems. These units must be trained to fight immediately, and their reservists must undergo continuous, combat-realistic training cycles.
4. Explore the creation of a civil society initiative under the Vogezen («Ոգեզն») platform, such as a Reserves Support Organization, to support the transformation process of Armenia's reserve system.
5. Establish regional military-technical training centers for reserve forces, focusing on:
 - Training and education;
 - Experimentation with new operational methods and prototype weapons;

- Facilitating collaboration between the public, private, and government sectors.
6. Develop big data analytics tools to generate readiness metrics and confidence indicators for commanders within integrated whole forces, ensuring clarity about available reserve capacity.

The transformation of Armenia's reserve system will require funding; however, increased spending alone will not be sufficient. The allocated budget must be directed first and foremost toward those elements of the system where improvements can result in a qualitative increase in the combat effectiveness of reserve forces such as the organization of basic firearms and military training for reservists and the establishment of technosphere units.

The changing character of warfare increasingly demands access to civilian society's competencies, skills, experience, and personal networks. Facilitating such access requires cultural and institutional shifts on both sides, civilian and defense, which, in turn, will drive broader societal transformation.

The reserve system must design and implement new mechanisms to attract talent and engage broader segments of society not traditionally involved in national security. It must become a system that is both materially and morally attractive to reservists, developing a wide range of competencies while ensuring Armenia's CDSS can credibly deter aggression.