

Whether flattering or not, “weekend warrior” has been used to refer to Guardmembers and other reservists for years. Some feel the term is obsolete based on a high ops since tempo since 9/11; others think it proudly defines our part-time service mandated by law. We explore that debate here.

A “sibling rivalry?”

At NationalGuard.com’s forum, a discussion of the appropriateness of the term lead to a broader debate about the reserve component compared to active duty forces. Here were some posts on that subject:

“It’s akin to sibling rivalry. In a nutshell; Envy! AD you have to be a Joe 24/7 365, live under the iron rule (UCMJ) ... Being a “weekend warrior” is the best of both worlds – being a [G.I.] Joe and civilian. As a traditional Guardsman, you get to come home after a drill and never miss a beat. Great benefits in both. But think about it: No [crummy] duty stations and details, officers/NCOs playing big daddy 24/7/365 (restricting leave & liberty), and not being homesick – close to family & friends. Either way it is a win-win.

- 7011USMC

“I love the Guard for 2 main reasons. In no particular order. (1) We handle home and away. We respond to disasters here on the home front that affects our neighbors. ... We handle missions in combat zones that help secure the freedoms of our nation. (2) We bring skills that most RA [Regular Army] guys have forgotten or don’t have. They forget we have massive civilian training on top of our military. Take a hard charging NCO or field grade officer, now he/she is great at the military stuff. Now, make that person a retail manager of large retail store handling 100+ employees with all their drama and schedule dilemmas. Now mix in the public (if you have ever dealt with the public you know what I am talking about). Have that leader manage the company, make a profit, all under stress they you have a very good multitasking individual.”

-Phantom

“I would contend that I am a warrior. Period. All day, every day. Uncle Sam just pays me for the weekend I come in.”

-mryan525, a Guard combat medic

‘Weekend

Is the term appropriate?

Let’s keep it

By Air Force Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

After writing a recent article on traditional Guardmembers, I received a comment from one of my interviewees – who had reviewed a draft of it – saying that my use of the term “weekend warrior” had a negative connotation of National Guardmembers and their families.

I was curious, because, I like the term. I like the words Weekend Warrior; as a writer I like how the words sound and look on a piece of paper, and I like the idea of someone giving up their free time to serve as a “warrior on their weekend.” Therefore, I asked some of my colleagues here: “do you think of weekend warrior as a negative stereotype for today’s National Guard?”

To my surprise, I received a mixed response: some thought that it was derogatory, while others said it was just an easy way to describe a traditional Guardmember. As for me, I would be proud to be a weekend warrior these days.

So my question to you is: do you think the label weekend warrior a negative?

If you have not been in a cave for the past nine years, you know that your average Army and Air National Guard man or woman is, by far, among the most experienced and patriotic servicemembers the military has in its arsenal. I have traveled enough as a military journalist to know this, and I have personally met and interviewed hundreds of Guardmembers, serving at all corners of the globe.

Today, I think the term no longer recalls images of those fictional mess-ups trying to get Rambo out of his hideout.

The traditional Guardmember remains the backbone of the National Guard and is more than likely serving one-weekend-a-month because he or she is on a much-needed break between back-to-back combat deployments, or from serving their governor in

state emergencies. This makes their title as weekend warrior inspiring, impressive and something tangible to the community he or she serves, and serves in. It conveys a thought of, “If he or she is a Weekend Warrior, look at how much more they are doing.”

Yes, he or she is a professional warrior and, yes, they are still spending their weekends serving their community, state and country. However, there is much more.

They are increasingly more manned, experienced, trained and equipped than they have ever been. They may be tired, and their families may want them home for the weekends (because they have not seen them much since 9/11), but they continue to come in for those weekend drills, and those annual training days that require them.

Our Citizen-Soldier and -Airmen obligation of citizenship, serving community and country, remains the core of who we are.

As the Guard grows more and more into an operational force, let us be careful not to cast aside our militia identity to become that standing force that our Founding Fathers intended us to offset. If anything else, let us continue to debate that identity.

We remain “always ready, always there.” We are proud of that, and no, we will not shy from our state and federal oaths that come with being weekend warriors, Guardmembers, Soldiers, Airmen, patriots, neighbors, dads, moms, brothers and sisters, nor the endless duties that it brings us when we “put down the plow and grab our muskets” on every fourth Saturday and Sunday.

As for me, I surely will not stop the presses over using the term. I like it. In fact, I offer a new definition, and so should you. 🗨️

**What do you think?
Click here
and let us know.**

Warrior'

Or inappropriate?

Let's let it go

By Air Force Master Sgt. Greg Rudl
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

Yes, hundreds of thousands of traditional Guardmembers drill on weekends, doing some extra-ordinary things, like fast-roping from a helicopter to building a school playground. And this is often a far cry from what they do in the civilian world during the week. But to call them weekend warriors for this reason alone is both inaccurate and inappropriate.

Being a warrior doesn't end when those Guardmembers leave the armory or base on Sunday night. In order to pass fitness tests, they have to stay in shape on their own time. In order to pass exams that will advance their careers, they have to study on their own. Maintaining Soldier and Airmen skills requires commitment beyond a weekend.

Leaders too are going above and beyond their weekend obligation. They routinely have to put in more time than just the drill weekend keep themselves and their troops truly combat-effective.

The Office of Army Reserve History said in a 2006-07 report that the term is "an anachronism. Today's Army Reserve Soldiers must be in a constant state of readiness. Consequently they must be fully trained and equipped."

At Air Force Reserve Command's glossary of terms, weekend warrior is, "an obsolete term used to describe the minimal requirement for once-a-month training for Guard and Reserve members." The key word there is obsolete.

In late 2008, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs Thomas F. Hall said that the implementation of many of the recommendations of the 2004-convened Commission on the National Guard and Reserves brings the traditional reserve role of the weekend warrior to an end and moves the U.S. military closer to a true total force. "It

means a transition from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve," he said.

Just try to tell the family of Guardmember that their loved one is a weekend warrior. Post-9/11 ops tempo now means 12- to 18-month deployments and if they're merely just WWs, why are there so many programs to ease the burden on families as the missions continue in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas?

Those that would want to degrade and demean the Guard use the term. At the time of publication, the U.S. House of Representatives is considering a probe into whether members of Washington's 41st Infantry Brigade Team returning from a 10-month tour of duty in Iraq were systematically denied benefits. Medical personnel at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., giving post-mobilization health assessments to them actually had a PowerPoint presentation labeling them weekend warriors.

Scrap the term—it's inflammatory and creates division in our armed forces, especially when they have to work together overseas. The command chief master sergeant of the 451st Air Expeditionary Wing at Kandahar Air Base, Afghanistan, took aim at the Guardmember/weekend warrior stereotype in a recent column: "... it doesn't take long working side-by-side with these professionals [Air Guard members] for that thinking to be dispelled," he said.

Luckily, the phrase is not only dying out in reference to Guardmembers, but all reserve component members.

Look what Lt. Gen. John F. Kelly, commander of Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces North, said recently: "It's a different reserve today; it's not a weekend warrior organization like it used to be. At least half of the reservists I've met have had multiple tours in Iraq or Afghanistan or the Horn of Africa. They're an operational reserve."

I say strike weekend warrior from DoD's vocabulary and replace it with Citizen-Soldier and -Airmen, as we are productive and law-abiding in peace time, and war fighters when called to duty. 🇺🇸



[Some] think we did a bait and switch on the people who joined the National Guard by forcing them to do OIF and OEF ... I say 'yes'. I say we're in the National Guard for a reason. We joined to be first-team players. We didn't join to be on the sidelines. We don't want to be weekend warriors. ... That's why not many people want to be called that anymore, because I don't think it really expresses who we are."

-Gen. Craig R. McKinley, NGB chief, during a town hall meeting at Joint Base Andrews, Md., in May

"A lot of folks joined the Army and Air National Guard to do one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer so they wouldn't have to go to Vietnam. That's sad, but that's true. But that has nothing to do with the force I'm looking at today. Because all those folks who joined for that particular reason are no longer with us. The folks we have to today ... when they sign on the dotted line, they know there's a pretty good chance they will be deployed somewhere. That's O.K.—they want to be operational. They don't just want to be a weekend warrior—they want to be a warrior all the time."

-Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, ANG director, during a town hall meeting in May

"If someone calls me a weekend warrior, I'll call them to the gym and put the boxing gloves on."

-Marine Reservist, Sgt. Richard Litto, recently called up to serve Marine Air Support Squadron 6