

Tip of the Spear for 90 Years

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ARCENT, “Patton’s Own,” is now a multicomponent organization, but it celebrates a warrior ethos dating back to World War I.

As part of its 90th anniversary celebration, U.S. Army Central (ARCENT) will stage the “ARCENT Miler.” It’s a three-mile run. “We have our own units of measure,” said LTG James Lovelace, ARCENT’s commanding general.

A three-mile mile is significant on so many levels for ARCENT, which began as 3rd Army on Nov. 7, 1918, and a quarter-century later raced across Europe under GEN George S. Patton outpacing enemy and allies alike. Today, ARCENT still leads the U.S. Army’s charge into combat. It spearheaded the drive into Iraq in Desert Storm and has remained in theater ever since, leading American forces into Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Throughout this storied history, the Reserve Components have played an important and integral role in the command. Serving in the 3rd Army under GEN Patton during World War II were the 26th, 28th, 29th, 35th, and 42nd—Reserve units all. During the first Gulf War, 37,500 Army Reservists and Guard members served in ARCENT. Since Sept. 11, 2001, 52,000 U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers have been mobilized and deployed to Kuwait, most of those assigned to ARCENT. Currently, 25 percent of LTG Lovelace’s force in theater are Army Guard and Army Reserve, he said. “There’s no way we in ARCENT could perform its mission without the Reserve Component,” he said, speaking in a telephone interview from Camp Arifjan in Kuwait. “The expandability of the U.S. Army depends on operationalizing the Reserves.”

LTG Lovelace’s father spent almost 25 years in the Army Reserve after serving in the regular Army in Europe during World War II, so the junior James Lovelace already had an inherent respect for the Reserve. Then several years ago when, stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., the artillery officer served on the evaluation team of National Guard and Reserve formations during their summer training, he observed “the best battery I saw in my military career,” he said. “I would match this unit against any we had in the whole Army.” That battery was one of the few Reserve Component units to have served in Vietnam, and its leaders therefore were battle-tested.



From Generals Billy Mitchell and George Patton to the men and women in Southwest Asia today, Third Army’s patch has always been at the front.

That “battle-tested factor” is key for LTG Lovelace as he watches in his frontrow seat the transformation of the Reserve Components from a strategic to an operational force. One National Guard brigade currently assigned to ARCENT, comprising Michigan and Ohio Guard members, is on its second deployment to Iraq. The battalion commander on its first rotation is the brigade commander now. “You see all that happening inside the units,” LTG Lovelace said. “They are bringing back experience and their understanding of the theater.”

He notes that this front-line experience began for the Reserve Components in Desert Storm and built through the Balkans conflicts and other peacekeeping missions before accelerating with the Global War on Terrorism. Now, the Reserve Components are not only battle-tested, they are “flushed with the warrior ethos,” LTG Lovelace said. “When I go into the mess hall, I can’t tell who is a Reservist. Formations that have integrated have all been very, very successful. The Guard [brigade] has no Active [unit] backing it up, so it has to do its job. And that is clear to everybody.”

That warrior ethos has a 90-year tradition for ARCENT. Third Army’s first major mission was to serve as the occupational force in Germany after the armistice ceased hostility in World War I. In World War II, 3rd Army established itself as the best training army in the United States and included in its leadership Chief of Staff GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower. But it was another leader, GEN Patton, who led the 3rd across Europe toward the destruction of the Nazi Germany war machine. In his farewell speech, GEN Patton told the troops, “The best thing that has ever come to me thus far is the honor and privilege of having commanded the 3rd Army.”

After World War II, 3rd Army had its headquarters at Fort McPherson in Atlanta, Ga., with administrative control over units in seven Southeastern states. In the 1950s, 3rd Army’s primary responsibility was training Reserve Component units, but it was replaced in this mission by U.S. Forces Command, and 3rd Army was deactivated in 1973.

However, 3rd Army returned to active status in 1982 and became U.S. Army Central, the first Army Service Component Command to associate its name with the combatant command—U.S. Central Command—it supports. ARCENT has responsibility for a geographic area ranging from Afghanistan across the Arabian Peninsula through the Horn of Africa, a theater encompassing 27 countries. In this guise, it served as the theater command for Desert Storm and has ever since.

So much of what stood up 90 years ago has changed over the years, not the least of which is the command’s components: not only Reserve and Guard involvement, but other services, too. LTG Lovelace has 500 U.S. Navy Sailors under his command, as

Celebrating 90

Third Army/U.S. Army Central (ARCENT) will celebrate its 90th anniversary at both its headquarters in Atlanta, Ga., and in Kuwait the first week of November. Soldiers in Kuwait will take part in sporting tournaments that will include volleyball, softball, golf, and basketball. The ARCENT Miler run will take place at both locations, and the cake-cutting ceremony also will be conducted simultaneously, linked by video-teleconference. ARCENT Commanding General LTG James Lovelace will preside in Atlanta; Deputy Commanding General MG Charles Anderson will preside in Kuwait. The celebration is scheduled to conclude Nov. 7 with a dining-out in Atlanta.—EM

well as Air Force and civilian personnel. "It's a joint force." But the legacy runs constant. "The patch is still there, we still have the same colors and battle standards," LTG Lovelace said. "You want to be in a unit that's a winner and capable, and that's what we have here in this organization." And getting out front—well, that hasn't changed much since GEN Patton commanded this organization.

"What we're doing now is in magnitude equal to what we've done in the past," LTG Lovelace said. Not that he equates himself with his predecessor, GEN Patton. "I would never in any way compare myself to that great man. But I realize what a privilege it was for him to serve as commanding general of this great organization at a time of the nation's great need. I've been afforded that wonderful opportunity, too."