



AUSA BACKGROUND BRIEF

THE FUTURE U.S. ARMY: OUTLOOK FOR THE 1990's



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THE U.S. ARMY AND STRATEGIC MOBILITY

SUMMARY OF REMARKS BY

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(Senate Committee on Armed Services)

The remarks of Senator Cohen were delivered on 16 May 1990 at the seventh in a series of eight guest speaker presentations to be held for members of Congress and their staffs. The series is cosponsored by the AUSA Institute of Land Warfare and the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis. The overall theme of the series is "The Future U.S. Army: Outlook for the 1990's." A separate Background Brief will be issued on each of the eight topics to be presented.

Asserting that in the view of public opinion and of most Members of Congress the Cold War has come to an end, Senator Cohen argues that some downsizing of United States armed forces is inevitable and that traditional prepositioning sites and overseas bases for U.S. forces may no longer be available. He cautions, however, that the status of reforms in the Soviet Union is so precarious that reckless cutbacks could leave the United States ill-prepared to deal with a potentially regressive regime in Moscow.

Cohen believes that Soviet President Gorbachev finds himself "caught between socialism and capitalism," and facing the disintegration of Soviet society. Widespread opposition to the concept of profit as a economic driving force and rampant alcoholism and disease give rise to apprehension about violent demonstrations or a public uprising against the Gorbachev reforms. Perceived defeats in the foreign and defense policy arenas—for example, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe—add even greater pressure on Gorbachev to find some accomplishment he can claim as his own. Senator Cohen anticipates that arms control agreements on START and CFE might provide such achievements.

With the changing international environment as background, Senator Cohen foresees increasing pressures, both foreign and domestic, for significant cuts in U.S. forward-deployed forces in Europe, Korea and the Philippines. He expects that a unified Germany with growing economic power may seek to express its national sovereignty by asking for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. If this is the case, Cohen predicts pressure in Congress to bring U.S. troops home will be overwhelming. In the interim, Cohen suggested that a level between 75,000 and 100,000 U.S. troops represents a "realistic" floor for force planning for Europe.

Despite international conditions which will make the United States ever more dependent on strategic mobility of forces, Cohen says, United States air- and sealift capacity are "real problems." He calls for a new study of the problems the United States faces in strategic mobility as a follow-on to the last examination of the subject, which was in the early 1980s.

Senator Cohen believes that the arguments in support of the C-17 transport are persuasive, noting that it can land at more fields than any other transport aircraft; that it has a shorter take-off; and that it has the ability to unload rapidly. The number of C-17s to be acquired, however, will have to be reduced from 210 to 120 because of the cost of the aircraft in a tight budgetary environment. He noted that a program to extend the life of the C-141 fleet by 10 years would cost roughly \$13 billion.

U.S. sealift options are even more limited. The United States Merchant Marine now totals only 317 ships, ranking it 11th in the world. Furthermore, Cohen contends that the Department of Defense does not support improving sealift capabilities, as demonstrated in Administration unwillingness to spend monies allocated by the Congress for this task.