



AUSA BACKGROUND BRIEF



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Army Issue: POWER PROJECTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ability to rapidly deploy military forces anywhere in the world is now a major requirement of U.S. armed forces. This requirement has been incorporated into the national military strategy as power projection.

The rationale for projection forces derives from political, social and economic unrest and concomitant local and regional conflicts. The United States will need to be able to respond to these situations as they develop.

A major question relates to the role of the U.S. Army in power projection. Associated questions relate to the size and mix of Army forces and how these forces fit into the overall joint perspective. This will be the subject of ongoing debate within the Department of Defense (DoD) and Congress. Decisions will be reached on the basis of mission requirements and affordability.

The Army's contingency mission is to be able to deploy a light infantry brigade in four days, a light division in 12 days, a heavy brigade in 15 days and two heavy divisions in 30 days. In addition, the Army must be able to deploy a corps of five divisions with supporting arms and service support to a contingency region within two and one-half months. This would be done by a combination of air-and-sealift. The Integrated Mobility Plan (Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) "Mobility Requirements Study," January 1992) is an essential part of the equation and must be fully supported if these capabilities are to be achieved.

The Army has a range of forces which can be tailored into suitable packages for contingency purposes. This includes special operations; light forces (including airborne and air assault); heavy armored forces; long range fire support (including multiple launch rocket systems and Apache helicopters with precision munitions); and extensive sustaining support capabilities (logistics, engineers, signal and medical). The Army would not expect to operate independently, but in conjunction with other military services in a joint operation.

Both the Army and the Marine Corps provide land forces for contingencies. It needs to be understood, however, that these forces are not organized the same way and are not designed for the same primary missions, although their capabilities are clearly complementary.

The Army has light forces, such as airborne and light infantry, which can move to an objective area rapidly by air, but lacks supporting firepower and sustaining capability. Marines are amphibious forces prepared to seize and hold lodgements in the littoral areas. They are considered medium forces and operate as combined arms organizations with medium fire support, including tactical air support. They lack the clout of heavy armor or mechanized forces and are limited in their long term sustaining capability without an external support base. The Army, on the other hand, is organized and equipped to provide the armored and mechanized forces needed to defeat and exploit a range of enemy capabilities, including heavy armor. The Army has extensive capabilities to establish and maintain a long term support base system for itself and other forces in the theater of operations.

Army and Marine Corps land forces are not an "either-or" question. Their combined capabilities are the source of force packages which are designed for specific contingencies. As stated in the chairman, JCS report to the Secretary of Defense ("Roles, Missions and Functions of the Armed Forces," 3 February 1993):

The capabilities of the contingency and expeditionary forces in the Army and Marine Corps provide decision makers with valuable alternatives and should be retained.

The Army plays a central and unique role in the strategy of power projection: It alone, of all the services, has the type of forces and capabilities needed for the full spectrum of diverse responses to crises on a global basis.

The Army's overall force structure permits the correct blending of forces for the situation at hand. Any large reduction beyond those currently planned would significantly degrade the depth and versatility the Army now offers and its ability to respond effectively in a crisis. Only the Army has the unique capabilities of airborne and air mobile divisions, as well as heavy armored forces. Also, it is the Army who must establish and provide the support structure to sustain land operations in a theater over the long term.

The Army has traditionally fulfilled a strategic role in the nation's military responses to international crises on foreign landmasses. While the Army's functions overlap and complement those of the other services in many areas, only the Army possesses the land power capabilities for sustained military operations overseas. Shortfalls remain, however, in strategic lift to support future Army deployments. Continued priority must be given to implementing this essential element of power projection.

ISSUE

The issue involves the role of the U.S. Army in the power projection strategy of the United States. Ancillary to this are the roles and missions of the other services, particularly the land force roles of the Army and the Marine Corps.

BACKGROUND

The new world situation has demonstrated great instability, with political unrest and ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world. This instability has generated a need for U.S. forces to be able to respond more often and more quickly than in the past.

In response to the post-Cold War security environment, the United States has developed a new national military strategy for the employment of U.S. military forces. Central to the new strategy is the concept of rapid power projection of combat power to trouble spots around the world.

The revised national military strategy requires U.S. defense forces to shift their focus from an orientation on a single major threat (i.e., the former Soviet Union) — with major U.S. forces forward deployed in areas of likely confrontation (forward defense) — towards a more global orientation — with forces principally stationed in the United States and the requirement to project power from the United States to crisis areas on short notice.

The ongoing review of roles, missions and functions and the overall question of affordability have generated serious debate on the overall size and structure of land forces. Questions have been raised in both Congress and DoD on how much total land power structure is needed, what kind of force mix (light, medium and heavy) we should have, and the appropriate complementary roles of the Army and the Marine Corps. The question is further compounded by questions of how forces should be apportioned among the active and reserve components. These are important questions because the future capability of the United States to respond effectively to contingencies is dependent on the conclusions that are reached.

The recent report by the chairman of the JCS to the Secretary of Defense, "Roles, Missions, and Function of the Armed Forces of the United States," dated February 3, 1993, is instructive in this respect. It points out both the similarities and differences of Army and Marine Corps capabilities under the heading "Contingency and Expeditionary Forces." Their complementary capabilities provide the flexibility needed to package joint forces in a way appropriate to the mission. While JCS is continuing to study force structure — and further reductions may be forthcoming — the report states:

The capabilities of the contingency and expeditionary forces in the Army and Marine Corps provide decision makers with valuable alternatives and should be retained.

DISCUSSION

The new national military strategy requires that U.S. defense forces be able to respond to two major regional contingencies sequentially so forces may be engaged in both operations simultaneously. This concept of force employment translates into Army missions which cover a spectrum of possible conflicts and includes not only the need to sustain Army forces, but also to provide major support to other services over long periods of time.

The Army's overall projection mission is to be able to deploy a corps of five diverse divisions with supporting arms and service support to a contingency region within two and one-half months. In the shorter run, the Army must be able to deploy a light infantry brigade in four days, a light division in 12 days, a heavy brigade in 15 days and two heavy divisions in 30 days.

The initial element, with a forcible entry capability, must be able to deploy within hours of notification while the other elements of the force, sized to the operational mission, deploy by air and sea. This emphasizes the need to implement all elements of the Integrated Mobility Plan ("Mobility Requirements Study," JCS, Jan., 1992), particularly with respect to sealift.

The Army can tailor forces into packages needed for an operation — ranging from humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping to conventional light or heavy combat — at the time they are needed. The Army possesses special operations forces with broad capabilities which can be employed prior to a conflict to assist allies, during conflicts in a wide variety of tasks, or after conflicts to restore order and help indigents assume civil responsibilities.

The Army possesses the nation's most rapid entry and ground force response. Army airborne forces and special operations forces led the operations into Panama and the Persian Gulf, as well as Hurricane Andrew in Florida. The Army possesses the nation's major armored forces for heavy combat against the many potential adversary nations which possess capable armored forces. The Army possesses long-range firepower in the form of all-weather Apache helicopters, multiple launch rocket systems and other precision munitions which can destroy enemy forces at long range with little exposure to enemy fire.

The Army possesses the majority of the nation's support units for projection operations: engineers for digging wells and building roads, bridges and airfields; maintenance units to keep the Army's equipment operational; and logistics support for the Army and other services. Army medical units are the backbone of theater medical support for joint and combined contingency operations. Army signal units provide the centerpiece of the joint force communications system. Army air defense units, as demonstrated in the Persian Gulf conflict, provide defense against theater ballistic missiles.

As previously indicated, Army and Marine Corps land forces are complementary. The Army has airborne, light infantry and air assault forces that can be moved to an objective area very rapidly — in a matter of days — but lack heavy fire support. These are the most strategically mobile of the forces. The Marine Corps provides an expeditionary force capability, primarily by operations from the sea and are prepared to seize, hold and defend lodgements in littoral areas. The Marines are medium forces with organic fire support, including tactical air, but with limited long-term logistics sustaining capability. Also, the Marine forces by themselves lack the heavy clout of armor or mechanized forces. The Army provides the armored and mechanized forces needed to defeat a full range of enemy capabilities, to include heavy armor. The Army also has the capability for long term sustainment on land. It is the Army's mission to establish and maintain this support, not only for itself, but for other forces in the theater of operations.

Army and Marine land capabilities, therefore, are not an "either-or" question. They fit together as an overall continuum of capabilities from which force packages will be designed. The overall

question involves the totality of forces needed from which force packages can be derived for specific contingencies. These will be done on a joint basis under the command of a designated unified commander. It is not a simple question of service roles and missions.

The Army fulfills its projection roles as a partner in joint operations. It does not seek other services' specialized roles. Rather, the Army seeks to cooperate with all other services for the benefit of the joint force.

The Army is modernizing its equipment and organizations to meet the demands of power projection requirements. The Army is revamping its ability to move forces from its home station to the contingency theater of operations. New logistical structures and automation systems are being developed to more effectively ship, receive and distribute supplies. The Army is not replacing its major items of equipment — recognized as the best in the world — at this time, but rather is incorporating new technologies to better use intelligence and target acquisition sensors and to integrate these capabilities with joint forces.

While specialized single-dimension, short-duration operations can be conducted in unique situations, such as the air strikes in Libya and more recently in Iraq, such actions are rarely decisive by themselves. Modern naval blockades have had only partial success and blockades take a very long time for the effects to be felt. The ambiguous situations of the world today are clear examples of why a single-dimension strike or action (or the threat thereof) do not produce the desired outcome.

The Army has refrained from claims that a single service can fulfill the decisive role in an operation. The Army knows that joint operations are the most effective means and expects to operate with the other services. As our nation's primary provider of landpower, the Army knows that each situation which America's military forces will be called upon to respond will be different and often unique, each requiring a specific blend of the nation's armed forces.

The Army's overall force structure permits the appropriate blending of forces for the situation at hand. Army forces provide a wide range of capabilities which can be brought to bear in contingencies ranging from humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping operations, and limited and heavy combat operations. In addition, the Army has the inherent capability to mix and integrate different types of units into the proper forces to be brought into the area of operations in the right sequence. Commanders and leaders train to develop and operate with different force mixes as a matter of routine.

Large reductions beyond those currently planned would significantly degrade the depth and versatility the Army now offers as a power projection force and its ability to respond rapidly and effectively in a crisis.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The wide range of world crises — ranging from overt military aggression to ethnic and regional unrest, chaos and starvation, and natural disasters — requires that our armed forces have a broad spectrum of capabilities which can be tailored to the specific situation. Power projection and rapid response to crises are now the major requirements of U.S. armed forces.

The Army has the mix of forces and sustainment capabilities to meet a wide range of crisis scenarios. Army combat capabilities range from unconventional warfare units to rapid response, forcible entry paratroopers, to the world's only airmobile division, to light infantry forces and the world's best heavy armored forces.

The Army has the unique capabilities needed to respond to domestic or international crisis situations. These capabilities include engineers to build roads, bridges and airfields; medical, logistic and civil affairs units; and transportation for various types of geographic and climatic situations.

The Army can position the right force for the right situation, and is the service with the breadth and depth of land power capabilities needed for the national military strategy and the world situation. Reduction of the Army below the levels recommended by JCS will begin to erode national capabilities to respond to world crises. Only the Army can provide for sustained support of joint operations on land.

There is no quick and simple high-technology solution to resolving conflicts except to put troops on the ground to reach a decision. The Army's combat forces, using high technology, will as part of the joint team, ensure rapid and dominating success with minimum casualties in future conflicts.

The Army plays a central and unique role in the strategy of power projection. While the Army's functions overlap and complement those of other services, it alone, of all the services, has the type of forces and capabilities needed to meet the full spectrum of diverse responses to crises on a global basis.

Power projection is dependent on strategic mobility. Shortfalls in strategic lift remain and the requirements spelled out in the JCS Integrated Mobility Plan need to be pursued aggressively. This means program stability and committed funding.

(This *Background Brief* was prepared by General John W. Foss, USA Ret., an AUSA Senior Fellow, and the Institute of Land Warfare staff.)

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