

Defense Report

from AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare



The U.S. Army: Too Small for the Tasks at Hand

By the end of the 1990s, it had become apparent to the Army's leadership that more active duty troops were needed. Army Chief of Staff General Eric K. Shinseki has warned that the Army is "too small for its mission profile" and that it needs more people.¹ In July 2001, both General Shinseki and Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White testified that they needed 40,000 more active duty soldiers to meet their mission requirements.² The Association of the U.S. Army has since called for an increase of 60,000 troops.³ In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks on the United States, the need for more soldiers is even more urgent because the requirements of the war on terrorism and homeland defense will further increase demands on the Army. In recent congressional testimony, several senior officers, including Army General William F. Kernan, Commander in Chief, U.S. Joint Forces Command, stated that more soldiers were needed to carry on the war against terrorism, protect the homeland, and continue to conduct other operations.⁴

Fighting the War on Terrorism

In the 1990s, the strategic requirement to support a two-major-theater-war force, primarily oriented toward wars in Korea and the Persian Gulf, led the Army to maintain a mix of ten heavy and light divisions, three armored cavalry regiments and five Special Operations groups on active duty. In addition, four corps headquarters groups and thousands of logistics and training troops supported these combat forces.

While threats to U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf and Korea endure, the danger posed by global terrorism represents a different kind of challenge. The asymmetric nature of the terrorist threat at home and abroad will require a wider range of U.S. combat capabilities than was required during the Cold War. Both the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review and the Army's Transformation strategy recognize the need for a wider range of military capabilities to meet this new challenge—a "capabilities-based" force designed to address the increasing diversity of threats to American interests. The nature of the post-9/11 threat argues for more active duty

forces, particularly light- or medium-weight infantry and special operations troops that can deploy quickly and are easier to support than heavy units. The Army must also consider adding strength to logistics and support units whose capabilities will also be needed for the war against terrorism. While the Army must maintain highly effective heavy forces, adding more support, light- and medium-weight forces would give the nation's leadership more options and more capabilities as they confront the new international security environment. Simply put, **addressing emerging threats while maintaining forces to handle more familiar dangers will require more active duty troops.**

The Army is already feeling the impact of the global war against terrorism. There are about 4,000 Army troops in or near Afghanistan now and 10,000 more in the Central Command area of operations.⁵ With operations continuing in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Georgia and Yemen, and a possible move against Iraq in the future, these numbers are unlikely to go down any time soon. It is reasonable to assume that a substantial number of troops will be constantly deployed in the struggle against terrorism for the foreseeable future. To continue to provide trained and ready soldiers to fight the war while remaining prepared to fight another major conflict, the Army must have more troops.

Homeland Defense

Since the 9/11 attacks, thousands of Army National Guard and Army Reserve troops have been mobilized to conduct a myriad of homeland defense and other missions. As of April 2002, approximately 28,000 Army reserve component troops have been called to active duty to support homeland defense missions.⁶ These missions are expected to continue for at least the mid-term, possibly indefinitely. The new homeland security missions required by the war on terrorism will increasingly keep the reserve component occupied.

As a result, **the Army's pre-9/11 strategy of using extensive support from the reserve forces to reduce the peacekeeping burden on the active force may be**



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increasingly difficult to pursue. One can imagine the reluctance of a state governor to see his or her state's Army National Guard troops placed under federal control and deployed 5,000 miles away when terrorist attacks here in the United States are a real possibility.

International Stability Operations

Since the end of the Cold War, the Army has been increasingly called upon to conduct peacekeeping and stability operations around the world. While the specific readiness impact of these missions varies based on the kind of unit deployed, for most combat-arms units the skill set required by these operations is very different from their normal combat tasks. As a result, fewer of them are fully trained for combat operations. The impact of this problem is frequently expressed as a ratio, such as "4:1" or "5:1," based on the idea that for every unit deployed, the combat readiness of several others is impacted as units cycle through the preparation, deployment, recovery and retraining phases of an operational rotation.

For example, the U.S. contingent in Kosovo consists of approximately 5,300 soldiers.⁷ Using a 4:1 impact model reveals that more than 20,000 troops' combat readiness is affected by the deployment. In a similar manner, maintaining a 3,000-strong U.S. force in Bosnia reduces the combat effectiveness of more than 10,000 troops.⁸ Out of an active force of 480,000 soldiers, this still may not sound like much. However, almost the entire rotational base for long-term deployments comes from the ten active Army divisions that comprise only 149,406 of the 480,000 active duty troops (31 percent).⁹ As a result, even small rotational deployments can have a substantial impact on the combat readiness of the Army.

In addition, among support units above the division level, there are many "high-demand/low-density" specialty units that have also been repeatedly deployed for months at a time. These units, which include military police, civil affairs, logistics, communications, transportation, engineer, maintenance and other support troops, exist in relatively small numbers in the active duty Army, but provide skills and capabilities that are in great demand for noncombat stability operations.

It is apparent that this nation will continue to deploy thousands of American troops to the Balkans and other theaters on such missions. In addition, in several key strategic locations such as the Persian Gulf and Korea, the United

States will continue to maintain significant forward-deployed forces to deter our adversaries and assure our allies. The combined requirements of these deployments, the war on terrorism and homeland security call for more Army troops. **If the Army needed more soldiers before 9/11, the need is even more urgent in its aftermath.**

The Army's leadership recently announced a goal of adding 9,600 more soldiers over the next two years. While this is a move in the right direction, it is not enough.¹⁰ Congress should immediately authorize an increase of between 40,000 and 60,000 active duty Army troops. Since the Army, given the size of its recruiting and training structure, can bring in only an additional 5,000 to 10,000 soldiers per year, the "ramp-up" process to reach this higher endstrength must begin as soon as possible. More active duty soldiers will provide much-needed depth and flexibility in training and deployment schedules, allowing the Army to simultaneously fight the war on terrorism, remain ready for additional conflicts, conduct stability operations, and defend the U.S. homeland.

Endnotes

1. "More Soldiers? – Shinseki tells Congress Army is 'too small for mission profile'," *Army Times*, 18 March 2002.
2. Hearing before the House Armed Services Committee on the Fiscal Year 2002 Defense Authorization Bill, United States Congress, 18 July 2001.
3. Association of the United States Army 2002 Resolutions. <<http://www.ausa.org/resolutions.html>>
4. "General Says U.S. Troops Tired, Backs Forces Boost," *The Washington Post*, 15 March 2002.
5. The Central Command Area of Operations (CENTCOM AOR) includes 25 nations in the Middle East, East Africa and Central Asia.
6. Department of Defense Press Release 161-02, 3 April 2002, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2002/b04032002_btl61-02.html>
7. KFOR Online, 19 March 2002, <<http://www.nato.int/kfor/kfor/nations/usa.htm>>
8. Headquarters, Department of the Army, April 2002.
9. *Army Modernization Plan 2002*, p. F-1. The ten active duty divisions include the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized), 1st Armored Division, 1st Cavalry Division, 2nd Infantry Division, 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized), 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), 10th Mountain Division (Light), 25th Infantry Division (Light), 82nd Airborne Division and 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).
10. "Army to Increase End Strength By 9,600 Over Next Two Years," *Inside the Army*, 8 April 2002.

Key Points

- The requirements of three vital missions—fighting the war against terrorism, homeland defense and continuing stability operations—demand more active duty soldiers.
- Homeland defense requirements will make the Army's pre-9/11 strategy of using extensive support from the reserve troops to reduce the peacekeeping burden on the active force increasingly difficult to pursue.
- The Army's recently announced plan to add 9,600 soldiers over the next two years is a step in the right direction, but more must be done. Congress must act now to begin the process of increasing Army active duty strength by at least 40,000 to 60,000 troops.