
Defense Report

AUSA



Net Assessment: Panacea For Military Budgeteers?

The Department of Defense has taken an old planning tool and modernized it to assist materially in improving DOD planning and budgeting so that the United States can better maintain a worldwide balance of military power.

In a little noted speech on June 17th, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Ellsworth said that the new system, called the net assessment approach, "will provide an overall framework within which our Planning, Programming, and Budget decisions are now beginning to be made and will continue to be made in the future."

Net assessment is the process of understanding and then comparing the overall balance of military capabilities between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. DOD is now looking closely at five "key balances" between these two countries, and according to Ellsworth, the best judgment on their current status is:

1. *Strategic Nuclear Balance:* Rough parity exists. The U.S. is ahead in bomber force capabilities, missile accuracy, total numbers of available strategic warheads, and discriminating use of high accuracy-low yield warheads. The Soviets lead in bomber air defense, civil defense, development of land-mobile missile systems, and overall momentum. The Soviets are catching up in technology, an area where the U.S. has had clear superiority.

2. *Naval Balance:* The U.S. is facing an adverse shift due to the great growth of Soviet naval power. However, Ellsworth said, "as of today, the U.S. Navy should be able to fulfill its assigned tasks in most areas of the world, although not without considerable losses in certain areas."

3. *Ability to Project Power Overseas:* U.S. is ahead, thanks to amphibious forces and strategic airlift advantages.

4. *Central Europe Balance:* NATO has current capability to respond adequately to Warsaw Pact attack, conventional or nuclear. But, "the balance in the long run is less secure than in the past."

5. *Defense Related Investment Balance:* U.S. aim is to maintain a sustained investment in military capabilities and research and development to: (1) counter Soviet developments, (2) efficiently devote limited resources toward attaining U.S. goals, and (3) retain necessary flexibility for proper response to future uncertainties. The rough equivalence of today will not hold if present trends, exemplified by Soviet outspending U.S. by 40 per cent in 1975, continue.