
Defense Report

AUSA



Why Are There Holes in the Army's Ranks? The Numbers Tell the Story

For several years these *Defense Report* columns have been pointing out the places in the U.S. Army where there are not enough people to go around. Within the structure of active-Army combat units there are platoons operating with fewer squads than they should have and there are companies without the proper number of platoons. Each day about 15,000 soldiers — about a division's worth of manpower — are detailed to perform jobs that could be more effectively done by civilian employees. And yet, the Army has overcome last year's recruiting shortfall and is up to full authorized strength in both soldiers and civilians.

How can the Army be at its authorized strength of soldiers and civilians and still be unable to fill its ranks? The answer is quite simple. The number of people, both military and civilian, *authorized* by Congress at the request of the Administration does not match the Army's true *required* strength. The Army today, with a force structure of 16 combat divisions has a total military and civilian strength of 1,134,000. Just prior to the Vietnam war, the Army had the same number of divisions as it does today. However, as fiscal year 1965 came to a close, the Army had a combined military-civilian strength of 1,422,493 or *more than 288,000 greater* than its numbers today and 194,000 of that greater number were soldiers.

What has happened in between those two points in time when the Army had 16 divisions? Certainly, there has been no reduction in the Army's worldwide responsibilities. Our foreign policy still demands the presence of substantial numbers of troops in Korea and in Germany, with other forces designated to reinforce those already deployed. The perils of our time insist that the Army be prepared to look at the most remote regions of the world as potential operational areas. The Army's weaponry and support equipment is advancing in sophistication, and generating needs for more training and a bigger, more responsive, support structure. And the volunteer Army happened, too, driving personnel costs upward as we endeavored to make a military career competitive with one in the civilian pattern.

So the nation set out to save money by decreasing the numbers of people in the Army's ranks and transferring many critical combat and support capabilities to the Army Reserve and National Guard. Yet, we clung to the force structure we said we needed to make good on commitments to friends and allies. Now we find ourselves in the position of having to ask whether there is enough muscle in that force structure skeleton to make it work the way those friends and allies expect it to.

Lacking any substantial source of trained individual manpower to fill the ranks quickly on mobilization, the expectation is that Army units — active, Guard and Reserve — would go to war with gaps in their ranks and do the best they could. Surely this is not the best the nation can do for its own defense. We must build manpower levels to match the structure of our forces.