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# Defense Report

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## **When It Comes to Getting to the Fight, The Army Must Depend on the Navy and Air Force**

If the United States ever goes to war again, the Navy will meet the enemy forces at sea and the Air Force will bomb enemy positions and supply lines, but it will be up to the Army to close with and defeat the enemy's ground forces and to gain control of the geography in dispute. All the Army's doctrine and training are focused on achieving this inescapable measure of victory.

The nation's military plans in support of our foreign policy envision having forces on the ground overseas only in areas of the greatest peril, such as Western Europe and Korea. Their sustainability in the event of conflict is fragile at best. Should an emergency arise in any other corner of the earth, our plans call for the deployment of troops from bases in the continental United States. This is a very logical way to employ our forces and yet, year after year, we limit our ability to make that logic work when we give short budget shrift to plans for increasing our strategic mobility assets.

The Navy has so little amphibious sealift that it can move only one of the three active Marine Corps divisions. With a maximum effort and no other emergency requirements to deal with, the Air Force could lift an Army mechanized division, but the move would paralyze other air movement for ten days or more. The dwindling U.S. Merchant Fleet could be pressed into service in a national emergency, but the bulk of its ships are not adaptable to moving cargoes through any but the most sophisticated port facilities.

The Navy and the Air Force acknowledge the shortfall in mobility assets, but while the Army has the luxury of one basic mission—to destroy the enemy on the ground—the other services must divide their attention among a multitude of missions like sea control, air superiority and the strategic battle. It is small wonder that when the Navy and the Air Force make up their budget proposals each year, they concentrate on gaining the assets that help their particular service with their top priorities. They seldom have much left to take care of the special needs of the Army.

To avoid the disastrous consequences of having to fight a war but not being able to reach it fast enough in sufficient numbers, and to sustain the soldiers we send, our national leaders must pay urgent attention to the need for strategic mobility.