
Defense Report

AUSA



A Properly Balanced Defense Budget —Crucial to A Capable Defense Establishment

A compelling corollary of the rising debate over the role of nuclear weapons in our national security policy is the virtually unanimous agreement by all debaters on the ever-increasing importance of the role of conventional forces in this turbulent and dangerous age. It is, therefore, all the more difficult to understand why it is that the U.S. Army, the core of our conventional military forces, continues to receive a portion of the overall defense budget that shrinks each year.

Surely, one might hope that the recent events in the Falklands and in Lebanon would serve to remind us all that, in the last resort, success or failure, victory or defeat in battle are ultimately decided by land forces on the ground. Although armies, navies and air forces may exist independently—and some seem at times to think they do—they can't survive alone. Navies may clear the seas for convoys of troops and supplies, air forces may gain air superiority and interdict enemy reinforcements, but the final decision will be determined on the ground by land forces.

Therefore, the Senate Armed Service Committee's recent actions to bring the fiscal 1983 defense budget within its reduced cost guidelines are hard to understand. From an original budget request in which the Army's procurement share was just under 20 percent of the DoD total the committee had first deleted almost \$900 million by its premature action to defer the AH-64 advanced attack helicopter production for two years. The committee has now eliminated an additional \$500 million from the Army program, some 37.5 percent of the total procurement reduction for all services and DoD!

We would not belittle the difficulty of the committee's task in this time of tight money and sharply competing priorities. We must, however, point out the serious disconnect between the current emphasis on the importance of conventional forces and the apparent lack of emphasis in funding them. Concurrently we must ask the committee to remember it will be the Army that will be called upon to win the final, decisive battle should the need arise.