
Defense Report

AUSA



Sustaining Our Deployed Forces—A Requirement for Strength in Reserve

One of the most perplexing problems facing our Army divisions in Europe in the event of an attack by Warsaw Pact forces is the near certainty of running out of trained combat soldiers before the draft and the training centers could begin producing replacements in sufficient numbers. Given the sophisticated nature of the modern battlefield, early casualty rates would be high. Large numbers of trained infantrymen, combat medics, engineers and tank and artillery crewmen must be available to prevent units from becoming ineffective through unreplaced combat casualties. To be prepared with sufficient numbers of trained soldiers with combat skills for immediate use as replacements while the country mobilizes is just as important to our defense as supplies of arms, ammunition and fuel.

The Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is the element of the Total Army which was established to provide a pool of trained individuals to meet emergency manpower needs in the period before new draftees and volunteers can be trained. But the problems with the IRR are considerable: (1) It is more than a quarter-million people short of required total numbers. (2) It is woefully short of junior enlisted people skilled in the combat arms. And (3) the mobilization availability of its members is estimated to be only about 70 percent. Efforts by the Army to increase the strength of the IRR, especially in the critically needed combat specialties, have met with minimal success—some will have no effect for six years.

Consequently, the only current source of the needed replacements to sustain engaged forces is the active duty and reserve component units in the Continental United States—units designated to reinforce rapidly our overseas forces at the onset of hostilities. To strip these units of trained people will delay seriously their planned deployment and jeopardize our entire NATO commitment.

This is too great a risk. Only the Congress, charged by the Constitution to “raise and support armies,” can solve this problem. They need to put away individual/regional concerns, consider national security manpower needs and induct men for training and service in the IRR.