
Defense Report

AUSA



Readiness Reports Don't Tell the Whole Story

In his annual report on the military posture of the United States, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. John W. Vessey Jr., stated that the men and women of today's U.S. forces are better led, equipped and prepared than ever before. Still, the confusion concerning the state of readiness of our troops continues. That confusion has not been lessened by the latest series of announcements, pronouncements and dissertations, all of which reflect upon some analysis of statistics associated with reports submitted by the commanders of ships, squadrons or battalions.

Years ago, recognizing that these reports do not reflect true readiness, the Army changed the title to "Unit Status Report" to create an understanding among commanders that they were reporting not on their own condition of readiness, but, in fact, on the effectiveness of the system supporting them. Thus, a ten-percent shortage of personnel is no reflection of the readiness of the 90 percent who are there to accomplish the mission of their unit. And a five-percent shortage of tanks, caused by a lack of repair parts, has no effect on the 95 percent which are not deadlined. These reports alert the personnel managers or the logisticians that action is needed to restore a unit to its designed capacity of resources.

Commanders have always known that readiness is not quantifiable, that it is, in fact, a reflection of confidence up and down the chain of command—soldiers confident of themselves, of the other soldiers with whom they will go to war and of the leaders who give them orders—combat unit commanders confident that their training programs have resulted in the collective competence of their troops and confidence that the whole hierarchy of the Army will sustain them if they go to war, and senior commanders confident that they can direct operations, provide fire support, distribute intelligence and all the other things that contribute to success on the battlefield.

Gen. Vessey's statements are a reflection of his confidence. Because of the progress made in the last four years, his confidence is to be shared. Army readiness is better than it was four years ago.