
Defense Report

AUSA



Cutting the Army's Austere Budget— A Formula for Failure

When Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger provided Congress with the fiscal year 1985 budget reduction plan in May, he established a new and lower level of the defense budget. In reducing the projected real growth from about 13 percent to 7.8 percent he accepted the fact that the Administration would be unable to meet in full the objectives of its five-year program. He probably also recognized that Congress will undoubtedly make additional cuts founded, in part, on the defense critics' puerile argument that further major reductions in defense expenditures are possible without damage to our national security.

The adverse impacts of these actions will be felt most severely by the Army, both because it was allocated the smallest share of the budget and because both its original (10.3 percent) and revised (6.3 percent) real growth are significantly below those for defense as a whole. The reductions will have an immediate impact on Army readiness and the quality of life of its soldiers. They will force the Army to dilute reenlistment bonuses and will eliminate promised relief in the out-of-pocket cost to service members of government-directed moves. In addition to the detrimental effect on troop morale, these cuts could adversely affect army readiness if many skilled soldiers elect to take their talents elsewhere rather than reenlist.

In the long term, the reductions will defer Army modernization, stretch out procurement of weapons, delay major construction projects and postpone research and development programs for new and improved weapons. Among the Army systems to feel the sting of the cuts are: M1 Abrams tank; Bradley infantry fighting vehicles; AH-64 attack helicopter; Patriot and Hellfire missiles; tactical vehicles; training facilities; troop housing and medical facilities.

The effect of these reductions in an already austere fiscal 1985 Army Budget is to slow Army progress in correcting decade-old deficiencies and to threaten the substantial improvements achieved in readiness and in the quality of the people choosing the Army as a career. Most important is the lasting adverse impact on the Army's ability to defend our national interests.