
Defense Report

AUSA



Without the Support of Congress, We Will Never be Ready to Fight

There is a tragic irony in the recent report by the staff of the House Appropriations Committee criticizing the readiness and sustainability of our Armed Forces. This is the same committee that recommended cutting the 1983 defense budget by \$20.3 billion. It does not seem to have occurred to them to look at cause and effect.

In simple terms, and attested to by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, our Armed Forces are more powerful and more ready than they have been in years. But they simply are not capable of meeting all the global requirements that have been politically established as being essential to our national welfare. Army leaders have been saying for years that the sustainability of conventional conflict in Europe was insufficient.

Our war reserves in almost all categories are too low to sustain forces in any conflict lasting for more than a short while. We know what needs to be done to correct the problems, but it takes time and money to do it. It certainly cannot be accomplished by further reductions in the defense budget.

Our active forces are not large enough to meet the additional manpower requirements that may suddenly be thrust on us. While the reserve components are doing their utmost to absorb some of this burden, we are forced to plan for scenarios that materially overestimate their mobilization and employment capabilities.

In order to proceed with a long overdue modernization program, the Army, for example, had to make the conscious decision to stay too small in order to afford the new equipment it desperately needed. Because its share of the defense budget has not been large enough to accomplish all that was required, we "robbed Peter to pay Paul." And, even having bitten that bullet, Congress—notably the House Appropriations Committee—wanted to cut more.

The American people and our allies are misled by the kind of disinformation fostered by this recent report. It is also damaging to the morale of our Armed Forces. It is tough to be blamed for shortcomings by the very people who contributed so substantially to the problem.