
Defense Report

AUSA



The Army's Share of the Budget—Adequate Forces Require Realistic Funding

In this age of mutual assured destruction, there is increased awareness of the need to strengthen our conventional land forces in order to enhance the credibility of our military deterrent. It is the U.S. Army, the key to our landpower capability, which provides the bulk of our conventional warfighting forces.

The range of threats for which the Army must prepare is wider and more complex than at any time since World War II. With over 40 percent of its active forces deployed outside the continental United States, the Army must prepare to meet multiple challenges with a balanced mixture of heavy forces to deter high intensity conflicts and highly mobile light forces for low intensity conflicts.

To meet its commitments, the Army must be provided with adequate resources over an extended period. Here the track record of the Army vis-à-vis the rest of the U.S. defense establishment is not so encouraging.

Over the past ten years, the Army's share of the Defense budget has gradually decreased in comparison with the other services.

During the lean years of the 1970s, the Army was denied the funding needed to show any real growth. Since 1980, the Army has enjoyed varying amounts of growth, but only in fiscal years 1981 and 1982 was its real growth comparable to the Defense Department as a whole; otherwise it lagged significantly.

The fact remains that the Army is still playing catch up from the 1970s and needs a higher level of sustained growth to meet its essential needs. It is interesting to note that over the past four years Congress has been supportive of the Army's part of the overall Defense budget; yet the Army still lags behind the other services in real growth—a clear indication that the problem of a larger Army share lies squarely in the Defense Department arena.

Simply stated, the Army must be given the requisite budget priority, on the order of 26 percent of the defense budget, and an assured real growth of seven to eight percent over the next five years, if it is to fulfill its vital role in assuring the continued existence of our cherished freedoms.