
Defense Report

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The Army's Increasing Commitments —Is It Big Enough to Do the Job?

As the nation's primary Landpower force, the U.S. Army must deter hostile action against our vital national interests and, should deterrence fail, be prepared to fight and win in any environment. With the rapid growth of threats to the U.S. and allied security worldwide, the Army's commitments have increased dramatically. The spectrum of threats which the Army must be prepared to face include major war in Europe; mid-intensity conflict in Korea and the Middle East; guerrilla warfare in Latin America, Asia and Africa; and terrorism anywhere in the world.

These different threats require a flexible, strategically deployable active Army with the necessary supporting forces to move, supply and sustain it. There is a need for heavy divisions for sustained combat, light divisions for immediate global response and special operations forces for guerrilla warfare and anti-terrorist action.

Despite a clear need for additional forces to meet its growing commitments, budgetary constraints have forced the active Army to choose between modernization and increased strength levels. The decision was for modern equipment at the current strength of about 780,000, with the available manpower organized to provide the minimum essential force structure.

In view of the increasing number of possible deployment locations, the active Army must be provided with increases in strength to meet its expanding commitments. This larger force of 18 active divisions, to which the Army is now working, ultimately requires an active duty strength of 860,000 regular soldiers. Considering that Army active strength has remained stable for nearly a decade, there is an urgent need for almost 80,000 additional people to fully man all existing units and activities of the active Army.

A close look at the economic and political situations around the world makes it clear that our commitments are much more likely to expand than to contract. If our dedication to those commitments is to be credible both to our friends and to those who might want to test them, the forces which give them teeth must be fully manned and truly ready. A more modern Army is not enough; it must also be larger.