
Defense Report

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The Army At War — Getting There Will Be Half the Fight

No matter how ready, how well trained and equipped and how well led, the combat power of the U.S. Army must be projected where needed worldwide for it to be effective. The ability to deploy Army forces rapidly and to sustain them in combat is indispensable to the protection of the United States' vital national interests. Past failures to provide adequate strategic mobility — airlift and sealift — have raised questions concerning our ability to deploy, reinforce and support U.S. forces overseas in a timely manner.

The Army is dependent on the Navy and the Air Force to transport its land forces into an objective area on time and to reinforce and resupply the ground elements once committed to battle. Unfortunately, the programmed strategic airlift is short the equivalent of 80 to 100 C-5 type aircraft and the sealift capacity remains about 75,000 tons per day below that required to accomplish these vital wartime missions.

Within projected areas of operations there is also a growing shortage in intra-theater airlift capability. The C-130, the only airplane in our inventory with this capability, is over 20 years old and will need replacement in the next decade. Adequate funding for a replacement aircraft is imperative.

Today, in both Europe and the far east, the forward deployed elements of the Army provide a shield for those nations united in their resolve to limit Soviet expansion. Active and reserve component units of the Army, deployed permanently or on training exercises, provide visible and tangible evidence that we have the will to protect our vital national interests and those of the nations with whom we have binding defense commitments. It is sad testimony that the serious shortfalls in our strategic mobility capabilities could impair our means to fulfill those commitments.

The ability to move reinforcements and material from the U.S. to Europe, Korea or other potential flash points is crucial to our conventional deterrence and defense. These matters demand the continued support of the President, the Secretary of Defense and Congress if we are to successfully maintain the peace or win a war.