
Defense Report

AUSA



The Light Infantry Division—Another Boost to Army Readiness

When Congress decided to reduce defense spending \$250 billion over the next five years, some Pentagon planners called for elimination of the Army's five new light infantry divisions. It is fortunate for the Army's entire modernization program that Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has not accepted that proposal.

To be an effective deterrent to war, the Army must be organized, equipped and trained to meet the most likely threats. For over 40 years now, the Army has helped maintain the peace by being prepared for full-scale war in Europe or Korea. Those capabilities must be retained. However, with peace increasingly being challenged by state-sponsored terrorism and other conflicts at the low-intensity end of the spectrum, the Army is determined to adjust its force to meet the additional missions.

The five new divisions, four active and one National Guard, are to be formed with no increase to the Army's existing 781,000-man force. This will give the Army a flexible, balanced force of light and heavy divisions designed for employment at any hot-spot in the world.

The light infantry division will consist of 10,000 soldiers, compared to more than 17,000 in heavier units. The ratio of foxhole strength and frontline firepower in the new divisions will be greater because of the elimination of a lot of the supporting "tail" required by mechanized forces.

The light divisions will be ideal for combat in the cities of central Europe or the jungles of Latin America, the Persian Gulf region or the mountains of southwest Asia. Light infantry can maneuver aggressively in terrain where tank and mechanized forces cannot.

One of the foremost attributes of the light division is its rapid deployability. In comparison with a current division, the new units will be able to deploy in fewer than one-third the number of C-141 aircraft and in one-third the time.

It is imperative that the President, Congress and the Secretary of Defense give their full support to this plan for the improvement of Army combat readiness, a plan which will greatly increase the Army's effectiveness as a deterrent to war.