
Defense Report

AUSA



The Best Army in the World Can't Fight Without Ammunition

The U.S. Army is something on the order of one-third the way along in its planned modernization program and is probably better, man-for-man and division-for-division, than any other in the world. Today's Army is in better shape, has a better quality soldier, and is better trained and equipped than any army, American included, in many years. And it is safe to say that, given the continued support of the Administration, Congress and the American people, the Army will give a solid, professional performance even under the most trying circumstances.

There is one thing this best of armies can't do, however: it can't fight without ammunition. Even the best trained soldiers with the most modern weapons must be able to depend on a reliable flow of ammunition.

More than a dozen years after U.S. Army ammunition stocks were denuded to provide support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War, those stocks have been only partially rebuilt. Annually, the Army seeks the funds to restore its war reserve munitions stocks to safe levels. But, invariably, the budgetary wailing and gnashing causes the Army to use the ammunition funds as a balancing account for programs considered to have a greater degree of urgency. The result: Army field commanders consistently identify inadequate ammunition resources as a major constraint on their combat capabilities.

The Army must have available sufficient stocks of ammunition to perform its assigned missions until the national production base can be expanded to meet continuing requirements. In 1973, the Israeli Army was fortunate in being able to rely upon an 11th-hour airlift of munitions from the United States, without which it would have been crushed by the attacks of Syria and Egypt. Where could we turn for help to replenish our ammunition stocks if they were to become exhausted today?

If we are to continue to recruit the cream of America's youth to defend our precious freedoms, we have the deepest obligation to provide them with the resources needed to enable them to fight and win. That includes ensuring that our soldiers have all the ammunition they need to win not only the first but also the last battle.