
Defense Report

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The Army's Budget—Are We Strong Enough to Meet the Threat?

With so many moves afoot to reduce the federal deficit at the expense of national defense, many lawmakers will probably think it heresy when they are told that the Army's \$82 billion budget request for fiscal 1986 is inadequate. But when the cognizant congressional committees begin deliberating over the President's budget, the shortfalls in the Army program will become painfully evident.

For example, the members of Congress will learn early on that, while this budget seeks to improve our conventional war-fighting capabilities by activation of an eighteenth Army division, it does not provide the manpower needed to fill out all the combat and support units and to keep them at a high state of readiness.

Similarly, the Army's decision to forego requesting an increase of nearly 80,000 people means that it will meet only 88 percent of its documented manpower requirements. The Army is seeking increased reserve component strengths, but similar requests in fiscal 1985 were drastically reduced.

Other inadequacies in nearly every one of the Army's budget objectives for 1986 will adversely impact on planned equipment modernization, mobilization and deployment capabilities, readiness, and on the Army's growing backlog of construction of needed buildings and facilities.

All these shortfalls are contained in the Army program as it is proposed by the Administration. When the members of the Budget, Appropriations and Armed Services Committees of both houses of Congress attempt to balance defense needs against available resources, they will face many perplexing problems.

In the present congressional climate, a radical cut from the top seems almost a certainty, a cut that will, in turn, erode the various military department's programs. When that happens, the Army is traditionally forced to take a full share of the cut.

Hopefully, Congress will be alert to the existing inadequacies in the Army's budget request and will provide the nation's prime landpower element with sufficient resources to accomplish its mission. Otherwise, the Army's commitment may need to be reduced.