
Defense Report

AUSA



Sustaining The Force—Catching Up Is Hard To Do

Even after all the time, money and effort is expended to recruit, train and deploy military forces to deter war in peacetime and to win should deterrence fail, a lot of the credibility of those forces rests with their staying power. To succeed in combat, our forces must have readily available adequate stocks of food, fuel, ammunition and the many items of equipment that get used up in war.

Unfortunately, building stockpiles of war reserve consumables and replacement equipment is a slow and expensive process. The Reagan Administration has given primary attention to force sustainability since its beginning, but the long procurement lead times for ammunition and secondary supplies means that the items funded in the years from 1982 through 1984 have not yet been fully translated into significantly increased inventories.

In addition, the Defense Department is faced with an urgent need for ships and airplanes to transport large quantities of equipment and ammunition to pre-positioning sites overseas for use by our combat forces in fulfillment of our national security commitments. To reduce the existing air and sealift shortfalls, the Navy and Air Force have increased their respective budget requests to purchase required mobility assets.

Along with the attention required for pre-positioning and strategic mobility programs, emphasis is needed to rebuild depot stockpiles in the United States to improve America's industrial production capabilities and to provide for greater logistic support from the countries in which our forces are deployed.

At a NATO meeting last December, our European allies voted to increase their contributions for the sustainability of the forces of the North Atlantic Alliance. This move—coupled with the above Reagan Administration programs, the growth in Japan's defense budget and strengthening of Korea's military posture—are all hopeful steps toward improving the stamina of United States and allied war fighting and deterring capabilities.

Any denial of funding for the American contribution to force sustainability will only weaken our conventional deterrent and increase our reliance on nuclear arms.