
Defense Report

AUSA



Rearming America—Is The Money Wisely Spent?

The substantial paring back of the 1986 defense budget coupled with the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction law have seriously curtailed the biggest peacetime military recovery in modern American history. Five years ago the Reagan Administration embarked on a program to work toward restoring the military balance of power necessary to deter war and maintain peace. Lately, much of the national security debate has focused on whether the nation is getting its money's worth from this effort.

To the leadership of the Army, there is no question that the tax dollars have been wisely invested. Both the Secretary of the Army and its Chief of Staff proudly point to the solid improvements made in our primary land-power force in the past five years. Most impressive are the gains made in the quality of men and women entering the Army. Brighter people are enlisting, more of them are re-enlisting, and their morale is greatly improved over the recent past. They are meeting the test of more challenging training, are operating with better weapons and equipment in more adequate quantities, and their resolve is clearly illustrated through a drastic lowering of all the indicators of indiscipline. Drug use, absenteeism, and crime are way down.

At the same time, vast improvements have been made in our conventional war fighting capabilities with the purchase of 5,000 new M1 Abrams tanks, 2,550 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles, over 1,000 attack and utility helicopters, 95,000 trucks, 850 howitzers, 350 artillery multiple rocket launchers and 39,000 devices to permit combat soldiers to see and fight better at night.

Today's Army is infinitely better prepared and more capable of successful accomplishment of its peacetime (deterrent) and wartime (fighting) missions than it was five years ago, but it still has a long way to go. If the Army is to reach the capability of carrying out adequately its assigned missions, if it is to avoid falling back into the position of military inferiority from which it is just beginning to emerge, we must not permit it to lose the momentum now. Our national security demands a continued all-out effort.