
Defense Report

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U.S. Troop Reductions—A Serious Threat to NATO

Once again there is debate over the desirability of withdrawing some or all American troops from Europe. The proposals of Senate Armed Services Chairman Sam Nunn and former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to draw down our troops there should be taken seriously by every American who has the slightest concern about national security. You can bet their proposals are the subject of careful attention on the part of Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev and the marshals in Moscow.

Talk of troop withdrawals now seriously undermines the United States' position in negotiations with the Warsaw Pact nations on arms and troop reductions. The unilateral removal of any substantial portion of our forces in Europe would effectively yank the rug from under U.S. and NATO negotiators who are entering into comprehensive negotiations with the Warsaw Pact on conventional force reductions "from the Atlantic to the Urals." The East bloc negotiators must be shaking their heads in wonderment as they contemplate American troop reductions with no requirement for a quid pro quo on their part.

Advocating a reduction in the American conventional commitment to NATO is particularly ill-timed, now that prospects are increasing for agreements to significantly reduce the nuclear forces of both East and West. In view of our commitment to defend our own interests in Western Europe, what we should be debating is the extent to which we are willing to bolster our conventional forces in Europe—not their removal.

Until there is solid agreement for the balanced reduction of forces in Europe, it is in our vital interests to maintain our forward deployed forces and to get on with their planned modernization as a measure of our deterrent strength.

To weaken that strength by unilaterally cutting back the U.S. Army in Europe would seriously endanger the ties between the United States and Western Europe, would play directly into the hands of the Kremlin and would invite the military adventurism that could lead to the demise of a free, independent and democratic Europe.