
Defense Report

AUSA



To Neglect Army Modernization is to Endanger Military Readiness

The advent of the Reagan Administration saw a renewed commitment to the revitalization of our armed forces after an extended period of neglect as seen in the 1970s. The defense budgets of 1981 and 1982 showed substantial increases in spending for national security over the previous decade and helped launch a long overdue program of modernization of our military services. During the first half of the 1980's, both the Navy and the Air Force got a big jump in modernization. The Army, off to a slow start, is still only about halfway toward its goal in meeting the equipment modernization needs.

Since then, reduced budgets have meant that the Army's modernization program has been faced with stretch-outs and underfunding. Cutbacks in the present defense budget will be the cause of further stagnation and even termination in the improvement of certain critical weapons systems. Curtailment of Army modernization will most certainly have a deleterious effect on the future ability of the Army to accomplish its deterrent and warfighting objectives.

The Army's ability to deter or to win in war is a function of well trained, highly motivated soldiers, armed and equipped with qualitatively superior weapons, employing sound battlefield doctrine. This effective combination can help balance the enormous quantitative advantage in conventional forces presently enjoyed by the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. Yet, declining budgets and program reductions have worked contrary to the achievement of this goal. By putting these vital systems on the appropriations chopping block we risk failure in our efforts to overcome the Warsaw Pact advantages. Our best hope lies in continuance of investment in the modernization of weapons as well as in research and development to exploit American superiority in advanced technology.

The 41st President and the 101st Congress, in consort, must decide where our national security priorities lie in order to insure an adequate defense and a competent deterrent in these unsure times. In the face of a quantitatively superior foe, modernization is the Army's best and most practical answer. That can only be attained through the appropriation of sufficient funds for needed weapons systems and technologies. These hard decisions should no longer be delayed.