
Defense Report

AUSA



Reducing The Defense Budget—Care And Common Sense Are Needed

In the wake of the sudden collapse of the communist empire in Eastern Europe, providing advice on how to spend the so-called “peace dividend” has become the fastest-growing cottage industry in Washington.

Never mind that we have been dipping into that peace dividend for a number of years. The Defense budget has already decreased, in real terms, every year for the last five. The 1991 budget, now being worked on Capitol Hill, will show the sixth consecutive year of decline in U.S. Defense spending.

Meanwhile, the military services—most notably the Army—are trying to plot a sensible course toward a smaller defense establishment. The idea is to reduce at a rate and in a fashion which will treat people fairly, conserve resources and preserve our defenses in the best way possible. Unfortunately, in the maze of rhetoric and self-interest, we are very likely to be forced to go about it in the wrong way.

A primary consideration in shaping our Armed Forces for the new decade is the fact that Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are in the throes of enormous economic and political instability—a situation that will take a very long time to resolve. Our European allies see this clearly and warn against making reductions with undue haste. Certainly, we need to take care to maintain a viable defense—even as we reduce its size.

The leadership of our Army has set forth a carefully calculated plan for reduction that extends over a number of years. In fact, the Army is the only service to lay out a complete reduction plan. But those who want to move more quickly or to make draconian cuts in their own way are a threat to both the defense of the nation and to the fair treatment of the people of the Army.

Somehow, our elected and appointed officials must find a way to make reductions in defense in careful and measured ways. If we do not, we are likely to end up with an Army that is far less capable than it needs to be and could be at the same cost. And, we will surely exact a price from the very people who sacrifice every day to serve this nation.