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# Defense Report

AUSA



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## **Gutting the Army — We Can't Let It Happen Again**

Now that the Berlin Wall has crumbled, the Warsaw Pact dissolved and everything is getting cosy with the Russians, it's time to disband the Army and close the military store, right?

Wrong!

The last couple of times that we tried that we paid dearly by having to deplete our national treasury or, even worse, by sacrificing the lives of an awful lot of young American soldiers to defeat aggression and protect U.S. interests.

After World War II, we demobilized the greatest military force the world had known to that time. Then in less than six years, when North Korea invaded South Korea, we tried to stem the red tide by sending in ill-prepared and poorly-equipped troops and a lot of them died needlessly.

After Korea, we let it happen again. With the emphasis on strategic weapons and the policy of massive retaliation, conventional fighting forces received little attention.

It took much effort and major resources to rebuild, train and support larger conventional forces in Vietnam. Then, once we decided to abandon our Vietnamese allies to the invading North Vietnamese Army, we again diminished our forces to the point where its Chief of Staff admitted publicly that ours was indeed a "hollow army."

Looming problems in Southwest Asia and the Iranian crisis forced a turnabout starting around 1980. Upwards of a trillion dollars is popularly given as the cost of rebuilding America's Armed Forces into the trained, ready and lethal machine that won the Cold War and made quick work of Saddam Hussein's fourth largest army in the world. Yet, even before we can get all our troops home from the Persian Gulf, there is a clamor to cut back the services — particularly the Army — in order for the nation to reap the rewards of something called a "peace dividend."

Unless we want to let our Army slip into the post-Vietnam status of unreadiness and are willing to pay massive costs in terms of money and lives to meet the next world crisis, we had better be smarter about how we go about reducing the size of our armed forces this time. If we don't do it in a more reasoned manner than in the past, this country could well be on the way to forfeiting its status as a world power.