
Defense Report

AUSA



The Stakes Are High in the Military Drawdown

In the rush to cut our armed forces by anywhere from 25 to 50 percent, Congress should keep in mind that it took more than 20 years to create the force that won the Cold War. Our legislators need to be more mindful of past efforts to reduce our forces too quickly and too casually. Each past attempt to seriously cut back our armed forces has been a miserable failure. Invariably it resulted in great loss of life and national treasure when we found it necessary to call the armed forces into action.

It isn't as though we haven't travelled this road before. On those occasions when we rushed to bring the boys home and put matters of national defense on the back burner, we ended up having to face some kind of a crisis for which we were neither organized, trained nor equipped to cope. Somehow we Americans just can't seem to grasp the meaning of preparedness.

In the present case, it makes a lot of sense to listen to our civilian and military leadership when they offer a plan to reduce the size and cost of the armed forces without breaking the force. More than two years ago, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff put forth a plan that would reduce American military force by at least one fourth while maintaining sufficient strength to adequately face up to any of the possible threats evolving in our still-volatile world. Further, their plan would not leave us with a "hollow army" like that of pre-WWII or Korea days or even as recently as the late 1970s.

The Armed Forces of the United States—the same force credited with the major role in winning the Cold War—can be pared back and reshaped to perform needed missions in the post-Cold War era without crippling it. And it can be done without having to sacrifice an inordinate number of good people in the name of unpreparedness.

Our best hope is that the elected and appointed leaders of this nation will muster the courage and common sense to guarantee that this time we get it right. If they fail us again, they could put a lot of people's freedom in jeopardy.