
Defense Report

AUSA



Cutting Back On Defense—Let's Get It Right This Time

The class of 1992 budgeteers have more schemes for slashing the military budget than there are soldiers in the U.S. Army. And if we allow them to have their ways, they will most certainly botch the job just as their predecessors have done throughout American history.

Ever since November 3, 1783 when George Washington's last general order directed the Continental Army to turn in its arms and disband, our nation has celebrated the end of every war or military crisis by patting our soldiers on the back and sending them home. Doing so has always put us in the position of meeting the next challenge—and there have been plenty—with whatever band of poorly trained and badly-equipped troops we could muster. Many are the strategists who ascribe a direct relationship between the challenges and our condition of unpreparedness at the time.

In the entire history of the United States of America, we have never gone from a wartime footing to a peacetime Army in a sensible manner. If we give in to the present hue and cry for an excessive peace dividend we seem hell-bent to do it wrong again.

We came out of World War II with the most capable Army in the world and we promptly disbanded it. Five years later, when North Korea invaded the South, we were compelled to confront the invaders with untrained and badly armed units from occupation duty in Japan and many of our soldiers did not survive the first battle of the Korean War.

As we reduce the size of our present military establishment, we must remember that as long as there are despots who doubt America's ability or willingness to respond to an attack against us or an ally, there will be more Pearl Harbors and Koreas and Kuwaits.

Yes, we can cut back the size of the Armed Forces which won the Cold War. But this time we need to do it sensibly. If we continue recklessly down the road to disarmament and demobilization—a road we've traveled before—we will assuredly see American soldiers pay the price of unpreparedness with their lives just as they have done in the past.