
Defense Report

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A Deployable Army—Can We Get There in Time?

Given the changes that have taken place in the international security arena in the past several years, America's defense posture is radically altered from that of Cold War days. Nowhere are these changes more pronounced than in the current deployments of our Army.

Where we once had two corps and six divisions in Europe, that force has been reduced to one corps of two divisions, an armored cavalry regiment and a very sparse support base.

These adjustments are predicated on the new National Military Strategy with its emphasis on rapid deployment to quickly dispose of regional threats to our national interests. For the Army, this boils down to moving a light infantry brigade anywhere in the world in four days; a light division in 12 days; one heavy brigade in 15 days; and two heavy divisions in 30 days.

The light brigade and light division requirements can probably be met in the future, given present plans for C-17 airlifter procurement. The rub comes in attempting to meet the heavy units movement schedule with our inadequate sealift assets.

Presently, the Navy has eight high-speed roll on/roll off ships of the type needed to project and sustain forces in far away lands. That won't do the job and everyone knows it. Over the past few years Congress has provided the money to upgrade our sealift assets—the National Defense Sealift fund was established with \$1.85 billion funded in FY 1993 and prior years—but the Defense Department has lagged in getting the program moving.

The good news is that with the current program the Navy has launched a multi-billion dollar program to add another 11 fast cargo ships to the fleet as well as increasing the pre-positioning fleet from 13 to 22 cargo vessels. The latter are the "floating arsenals" that are loaded with military equipment and sited near some of the world's troubled spots.

What is needed now is for President Clinton and the new Defense Secretary, Les Aspin, to use the power of their offices to get the program underway with firm funding over time. Unless and until they do, we all need to hope that future security threats will occur only under circumstances like Desert Storm where Saddam Hussein permitted us the luxury of building our forces at a pace of our choosing.