

Defense Report

from the Institute of Land Warfare



AT RISK: THE WORLD'S FINEST FIGHTING FORCE

The Clinton administration's goal of having armed forces ready to fight and win two major regional conflicts almost simultaneously, as well as being able to conduct peacekeeping missions around the globe, has run up against budget realities. The Fiscal Year 1995 Defense budget request makes amply clear that all the services, and the Army particularly, will be hard pressed to meet all of those missions.

The strategy drawn from the Pentagon's 1993 Bottom-Up Review envisioned a much smaller armed force than the one that existed at the start of the decade, but one kept fully modernized and trained. One of the keys to future success was to retain technological superiority. Additionally, more dependence was to be placed on the reserve components in the review's strategy. Lastly, to move those forces to the world's trouble spots, the antiquated ships and aging aircraft that were sorely tested during Desert Shield/Desert Storm were to be replaced.

Those three building blocks of national security were being laid at the same time the administration was scaffolding a budget top line through the end of the decade. However, forces and money requested in the FY 1995 Army \$61.1 billion budget and further projected through 1999 will not provide what was promised in the review, and the Army and the nation face some critical questions.

Is the envisioned Army force structure enough? Will the high-priority reserve component units be ready and available when needed? Have peacekeeping and other operations short of war been fully factored into the equation? Will strategic air- and sealift and prepositioned stockage be in place before the end of the decade? Where is the money needed for defense modernization? These questions remain unanswered.

Strategic requirements as now defined will be difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish with expected Army budgets through FY 1999 derived as the product of the Bottom-Up Review combined with defense dollar caps directed by the administration. This means resource allocations are now tied to dollar limits rather than to stated national security needs.

The Army active force is projected down to 495,000 in 1999 with 10 active divisions. The reserve component strength will be down to 575,000 with 15 enhanced Army National Guard brigades in a high state of readiness for contingency employment. Adequate lift capability will not be achieved until after the year 2000.

Army modernization goals are predicated on the need to maintain technical superiority to minimize risk to our soldiers. For the FY 1995 program, the Army is significantly underbudgeted for long-term modernization needs.

As the request level for Army procurement drops to \$6.1 billion in FY 1995, a number of Army programs for the future are being terminated or slipped significantly. Major terminations identified in this budget include the Multiple Launch Rocket System, the Avenger air defense system, and several vehicle programs. Production of the venerable Black Hawk helicopter will halt in FY 1997. The new armored gun system is to be delayed by one year.

Although operations and maintenance (O&M) appropriations increased by \$1.8 billion in FY 1995 (of which half is solely for pay and price increases), this merely reflects a recovery from the depressed levels of last year. Last year, maintenance, operating tempo and average O&M costs per unit were eroding as the Army was forced to absorb some peace-

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keeping costs out of those funds. The current budget submission includes a line for \$300 million for peacekeeping missions, probably well short of actual needs. As these kinds of missions are not preplanned, failure to recognize them in the budget leads to the need for supplemental appropriations.

If inflation estimates are unfavorable, or if savings now expected from efficiencies within defense or as a result of base closures do not materialize, then more cuts will be required. Continued erosion of future budgets, either by congressional diversion of funds for other discretionary programs or by additional cuts to accommodate unfunded gaps in the present defense plan, would be destructive.

The Army does not decide its own strategic requirements! Its job is to prepare, equip, train and support forces and, when called upon, to project its forces and to fight and win. Training and a high state of readiness are basic requirements.

Army resources, as now authorized and projected, are simply not adequate to allow the Army to meet its diversified missions. Funding must be turned around if the Army is to move into the 21st century with a smaller, technologically superior force, fully trained and ready.

The finest fighting force in the world requires nothing less, and the security of this nation depends on it.

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