

Defense Report

from AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare



MODERNIZATION: A COMMITMENT TO FUTURE READINESS

Two near-simultaneous major regional conflicts (MRCs) ... predominantly continental United States-based forces ... rapid projection of military power ... coalition warfare ... increasing reliance on reserve components. This is America's new national military strategy, developed to deal with the new security requirements in the post-Cold War world.

The Army in this strategy is to be a smaller total force, but one that must be fully trained and ready with the best equipment and weapons in the world. However, the concept will work only with continuous development and adequate resources to retain a technological lead. This can be achieved only through a vigorous program of research, development and acquisition (RDA).

The reality of today's world is that there is fighting in 20 or more countries. There are still tens of thousands of nuclear weapons in the former USSR. More than 15 nations already have ballistic missiles, and by the year 2000 this may increase to perhaps 20. Many of these are seeking to acquire, or already have, weapons of mass destruction. Also, many Third World nations are buying the latest in missiles, warheads, artillery, armor, satellite communications, sensors and computers. These are the same countries which are developing or attempting to acquire chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. The night vision and global positioning technology which gave our soldiers a great advantage in the Gulf War is now available on the world market. Unfortunately, by its very nature, ground combat technology tends to be easily transferable.

Potential regional aggressors could field forces in the following ranges: 400,000-750,000 total force under arms; 2,000-4,000 tanks; 3,000-5,000 armored fighting vehicles; and 2,000-3,000 artillery pieces. And all are attempting to modernize their forces.

Aggressive action to counter these capabilities must be an essential part of the Army's RDA program. Unfortunately, America's Army is in a precarious position to guarantee this. In fact, the drawdown since the Persian Gulf War, coupled with a precipitous decline in RDA funding since Fiscal Year 1985 (procurement dollars down some 75 percent in real terms), means that even today the Army is in an unlikely position to execute another Desert Storm, much less to assure technological superiority in the next century.

Past tradeoffs to maintain readiness within budget constraints have caused the Army to cancel 55 weapons systems and delay 77 others since Fiscal Year 1993. With RDA funding now projected, the Army will not complete the modernization of key systems (Abrams tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Apache attack helicopters, etc.) for its contingency corps until the middle of the second decade of the next century! This raises the specter of increased U.S. and allied casualties in battle should a major regional conflict occur.

United States National Military Strategy (January 1992) clearly states: "Our strategy is to resolve any conflict in which we become involved swiftly and decisively. The United States must continue to rely heavily on technological superiority to offset quantitative advantages, to minimize risk to U.S. forces, and to enhance the potential for swift, decisive termination of conflict. In war {technical superiority} enhances combat effectiveness and reduces loss of personnel and equipment." However, the Army has been forced to use money from its modernization accounts to fund a multitude of current operations. In effect, the future Army is being robbed to fund today's missions.

How much money is needed for Army modernization? War game scenarios show that about \$15 billion per year in Army RDA is about right to substantially reduce the negative

impact of enemy modernization, energize the technology base, and be well on the way to fielding the next generation of battle-field systems by the year 2010. This increase over the current \$11 billion level outpaces enemy modernization and the risk of high casualties.

Trading off force structure will not provide decisive warfighting capability, and modernization cannot be recouped. A sufficient level of RDA funding is necessary so that the Army can meet both its force readiness and modernization objectives. This must be a commitment to the men and women who face the greatest risk in any combat — soldiers.

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