



Army's Role in Executing the National Security Strategy

As we move through the final years of this century and into the first decade of the next, the United States Army continues to play the central role in executing the National Security Strategy of the United States. Indeed, if the strategic environment continues to develop as many predict, the missions assigned to and expected of the Army will very likely be broadened significantly. This circumstance has emerged because the capabilities of today's Army, and those to be developed in tomorrow's Army, are the most relevant for addressing the challenges of the 21st century.

With the end of the Cold War, marked in late 1991 by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact alliance, many predicted that the end of the threat to Central Europe meant that the Army would play a considerably more modest role in any future security structure. Since the nation had always demobilized after a conflict and had a history of maintaining naval forces while choosing to "raise armies" only when required, and since it historically withdrew behind the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (electing to maintain its military connections through maritime means), the general consensus was that the Army would be reduced furthest and first among the military services.

To some extent this occurred. During the period following the end of the Cold War in 1989, reductions to the Army's forces structure, end strength and budget exceeded those of its sister services. But throughout this same period, the need for Army forces, and the flexibility and decisiveness they provide when engaged in a wide variety of missions, substantially dampened the enthusiasm for additional Army reductions beyond those effected to meet the force structure directed in the Defense Department's 1993 *Bottom-Up Review*. The challenges to American security interests that developed after the fall of the Berlin Wall have required a continuing, heavy reliance on Army forces and unique Army capabilities.

In the post-Cold War era, the United States has been involved in a wide variety of military operations. Operation Just Cause, the December 1989 invasion of Panama to remove a corrupt leader and restore a democratic process, was conducted quickly and efficiently by Army forces whose strategic and tactical agility made them uniquely suited for such an operation. In 1990, after Iraq invaded Kuwait in an effort to redefine the balance of power in the Persian Gulf region and to enormously expand Iraqi influence over international oil and financial markets, American objectives were only met after Operation Desert Storm's major ground campaign, spearheaded by seven Army divisions, ejected Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Army forces played the major role in the humanitarian mission to Somalia in 1993, the invasion of Haiti (Operation Restore Democracy) in 1994, and Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia in 1995 to enforce the principles of the Dayton Accord end a complex, bloody civil war among the former Yugoslav states. Since nearly 80 percent of the military forces in Eastern Europe are ground forces, the Army has led the way in conducting NATO's Partnership for Peace Program by engaging local militaries in a wide array of activities, from small professional conferences to large multinational training exercises. Such personal contacts offer the best means for increasing the prospects for an enlargement of the family of democratic countries in the former Soviet sphere.

Across the spectrum of military activity, from providing domestic assistance to local emergency and legal authorities in dealing with natural disasters or civil disturbance, to conducting large-scale conventional operations, today's Army has been heavily involved in protecting and furthering national interests. When the nation decides to employ military force, the likelihood is that the Army will provide the dominant and decisive component of the joint task force formed for the mission. The experience of the recent past

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strongly suggests that events can be influenced and shaped by the capabilities provided by naval and air assets, but decisive results still require a powerful presence on the ground. This has been a clear trend in the present, and is likely to remain so in the years just ahead.

Although much has been written about the emergence in the future of a “peer competitor” — a foreign power with a well developed economy, widely dispersed economic interests, and a technologically sophisticated military with capabilities equal to our own — it seems unlikely that such a power will exist to influence world events for a few decades. The challenges to American interests in the interim, challenges conceivably requiring the use of American military force, are more likely to exist in a regional and local context.

As we have seen over the past eight years, well-armed regional powers exist who may, under certain circumstances, find it in their interests to challenge the borders and sovereignty of their neighbors in an effort to enhance their position internationally and within their immediate area of interest. In some cases, such as currently exist in regards to Iraq in Southwest Asia and North Korea in Northeast Asia, such efforts may threaten American interests. In these two specific cases, and others that may evolve, the most effective means for signifying national resolve and securing established objectives will be found in the Army. Once an aggressor’s armies have moved into new areas, as was recently seen when Saddam Hussein sent his ground forces to occupy portions of northern Iraq, they can be forced to withdraw only when confronted by over-whelming ground power. As President Clinton observed after launching a cruise missile strike in response to Baghdad’s actions, sending in troops was “the only way” to fully reverse the Iraqi action and, since vital American interests were not involved, there was no need to resort to such action. But what if vital American interests were involved, as they were in 1990 in Kuwait? Under such circumstances, the United States must have the capability to respond appropriately, effectively and decisively.

In other areas of the world, there are likely to be continuing threats to regional stability as local institutions of legal order fray or fail. Clearly, the collapse of local governmental authority in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti and Rwanda presented the United States with difficult choices. Although vital American interests were not involved in any

of these cases, with the arguable exception of Bosnia, Washington eventually felt compelled to act. At some level, the maintenance of local authority and regional stability are an American interest, especially in those circumstances where American citizens and property are at risk. In each of these cases American ground forces were ultimately the central capability holding the key to restoration of order and the distribution of humanitarian aid. The odds are quite high that the immediate future will see more circumstances such as these as governments throughout the world attempt to deal with the pressures created as population growth exceeds economic growth. The United States will not respond in each case, but when it does it will require a strategically mobile, disciplined, sustainable force capable of controlling events on the ground. Only the Army has such characteristics.

The Army of the future will support the National Security Strategy by providing national leaders with a force that is rapidly deployable throughout the globe; that has minimal requirements for logistical support, allowing it to operate for long periods with a much smaller support base than has previously been the case; that is flexible and adaptable to a wide variety of circumstances but retains the characteristics that make it the force of decision when its employment is required. Technology will provide these improvements, making the Army more lethal and more agile than ever before. But while technology will be able to make soldiers more capable in performing their traditional missions, and it may make the Army somewhat less manpower-intensive, it will not substitute fully for the soldier on the ground. For now and well into the next century, the soldier will remain the nation’s most capable “precision munition.”

In Summary

- ◆ The Army has been heavily in demand as the key component of national strategy since the end of the Cold War.
- ◆ The Army has provided the decisive capability in the major conflicts of the past eight years.
- ◆ Conflicts over the next 30 years are more likely to involve regional and local powers than a clear “peer competitor.”
- ◆ The Army will continue to provide the “decisive” response to such threats to our national interests.
- ◆ Technology can enhance but not replace the soldier as the nation’s most capable “precision munition.”