



Overseas Presence

American military presence abroad — for training exercises, contingency prepositioning, humanitarian assistance or democracy development — is an essential element in executing our national security strategy of engagement and enlargement.

Overseas presence gives credence to our determination to defend our interests and demonstrate our commitment to bilateral and multilateral defense obligations. It is essential, therefore, that our armed forces continually demonstrate their ability to conduct operations in multiple regions to advance United States interests and to assist allies and other friendly nations in meeting common challenges and threats. Further, access to developed bases and facilities from which our forces may train for or commence joint and combined operations, using equipment that is forward deployed and quickly available, is also essential. The concept of overseas presence is supported by military doctrine, joint commanders (who tend to equate gaps in overseas presence with additional risk) and the Department of State.

Overseas presence facilitates regional integration, allowing cooperation of allied nations through coalition with the United States in ways they might not be willing to do in our absence. Our experience during the Gulf War demonstrated that future uses of American power may often be possible only as part of a coalition. Being able to train and interoperate with likely coalition partners strengthens our potential effectiveness. With our international stature and stabilizing influence, the continued growth of developing democracies is furthered through our international engagement and presence. As the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expands the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program and moves toward enlargement, this has taken on particular significance. Thus, whether it be through the permanent

stationing of our forces, limited deployments or combined exercises, a robust overseas presence is essential to the success of U.S. foreign policy.

Still, in the period since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the United States has significantly reduced overseas permanently stationed forces, even though the new and highly unpredictable international security environment that has resulted means that potential areas for U.S. engagement are now more widely dispersed across several regions. As a result, combined with service end strength reductions, these overseas drawdowns have resulted in increased personnel and operating tempos, and associated costs.

What is debatable is whether the concept of overseas presence requires permanent land forces stationed in particular regions or if the same value can be achieved through the use of naval forces or air deployments. One value of forward deployed naval forces is that they remain in international waters and are not as provocative as permanent ashore forces. Nevertheless, naval forces cannot, without extensive stress on the remaining parts of the fleet, stay indefinitely in an area, nor can they be deployed in close proximity to all potential areas of instability. Air forces display the strategic reach and interest of the United States and can be reinforced or withdrawn on fairly short notice. Still, most military forces in the world are land forces, and these nations have found greater utility from exercising with and having U.S. land forces in their region. Land forces are a more visible, more viable and more cost-effective means of demonstrating United States commitment.

The cornerstone of our nation's overseas presence remains trained soldiers on the ground. They promote stability and thwart aggression wherever deployed. They

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are the most cost-efficient means of displaying United States commitment and determination.

The reality of today and the foreseeable future is that land forces are highly suitable and versatile tools for implementing the national security strategy objective of overseas presence, as well as power projection. They provide the most flexible, visible, sustained presence overseas and the ultimate expression of America's power.

The Army has more than 100,000 soldiers and 28,000 civilians stationed around the world, primarily in Europe and in the Pacific. On any given day an additional 35,000 soldiers are deployed away from their home stations conducting operations and participating in exercises in over 70 countries. Missions include the Sinai, Macedonia, Kuwait, Haiti, Partnership for Peace exercises with former Cold War adversaries in Europe, joint task forces for counterdrug operations, hurricane and flood relief and, of course, Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia.

The Bosnia operation initially involved 20,000 soldiers in the international Implementation Force (IFOR); the presence was reduced to 8,000 soldiers in December 1996 to become part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR). Most of these operations involve reserve component soldiers. For example, over 8,000 Reserve and Guard soldiers supported the IFOR; some were on duty to backfill units in Germany and some deployed to Bosnia.

In summary, the forward presence of U.S. soldiers contributes to the strategy of engagement and enlargement by demonstrating U.S. resolve and capabilities to defend our interests. The presence of 100,000 soldiers overseas and another 35,000 on various operations in more than 70 countries provide visible, credible evidence of America's ability to stabilize crisis situations before they escalate and to contribute, in the longer term, to the maturing of foreign democratic institutions so that political, economic and social progress can be made.

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