



Time to Invest in Strategic Mobility

We must invest . . . to develop the strategic capabilities we need, and to overcome decades of under funding. In addition, our Armed Forces must maintain a proper mix of airlift, sealift, and properly maintained equipment sets, positioned on land and afloat.

Army 2007 Posture Statement

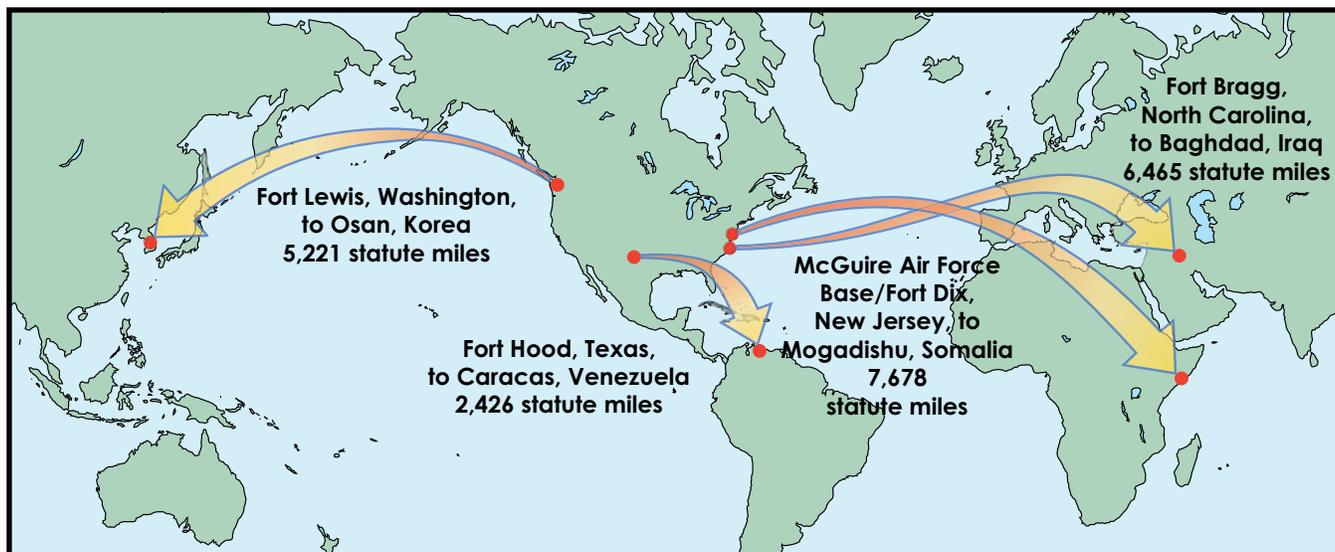
Introduction

The Department of Defense’s Global Defense Posture Realignment (GDPR) plan is significantly changing the U.S. Army’s strategic positioning throughout the world (see map on page 4). At the conclusion of this plan, the only Army active component combat forces outside of the 50 states will be three brigade combat teams (BCTs)—one each in Korea, Italy and Germany. In a few years, most of the U.S. military will be a continental-based power-projection force. Yet the national security environment today and for the foreseeable future remains complex and unpredictable, requiring a rapid and sustained military capability to respond to contingencies in the protection of America’s vital interests.

In expected anti-access environments, the ability to rapidly deploy and then forcefully employ into austere, hostile locations is paramount. Unfortunately, even with assured access, the tyranny of distance is a formidable obstacle (see examples in map below).



Moreover, the National Defense and Military Strategies call for rotating land forces in peacetime from the United States to Europe, Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere for four- to five-month deployments to maintain that access and provide deterrence. Therefore, **strategic mobility is, as never before, a national imperative.**





Current Status

U.S. strategic mobility consists of three capabilities: airlift, sealift and prepositioned sets of equipment. This triad is instrumental in ensuring the availability of relevant forces that are able to conduct combat operations immediately upon arrival in theater.

Here are some examples from recent operations:

- Forward Operating Site (FOS) Carlson in Afghanistan—established by the 27th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Airborne) to support counterinsurgent operations in a critical border area—is an excellent example of joint projection of combat power into an undeveloped, non-permissive area. The site is austere and high-altitude, with no road access. In April 2004, five C-17s began to establish the FOS, conducting the largest airdrop of Army engineer equipment since World War II. After the hasty work of expeditionary engineers, C-17s performed routine landings on a dirt landing strip. At the end of construction, FOS Carlson had a 7,200-foot runway capable of C-17 operations and an 80,000-gallon refueling system.
- The insertion of an airborne brigade into North Iraq in March 2003, at the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), also demonstrates the importance of strategic mobility in combat operations. Because Turkish ports were closed to coalition forces, the ground line of communication through Turkey was denied to U.S. forces. In response, 1,000 paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade, U.S. Army Southern European Task Force (Airborne), loaded onto C-17s, flying nonstop in total black-out mode for eight hours while avoiding closed airspace. After parachuting into northern Iraq, they seized the Bashur airfield in support of the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command; within 25 minutes, 1,000 Soldiers, aided by the Army and Air Force, had landed on the ground to deter Iraqi aggression against Kurds and factional fighting in the area. In the days following, C-17s brought in another 1,200 Soldiers and vehicles to establish a conventional stabilizing force in the area, delivered humanitarian relief supplies for displaced civilians to the airfield and conducted nightly sorties to carry the water, food, fuel and ammunition necessary to support the forward deployed forces. In total, the insertion was followed up by more than 60 C-17 missions, landing follow-on forces and supplies and reinforcing the airhead and bringing that phase of the operation to a swift conclusion.
- In the first five months of 2003, both before and immediately after the invasion of Iraq, the Navy's Military Sealift Command (MSC) "Steel Bridge" of massive cargo ships carried more than 21 million square feet of cargo into the Middle East for military units participating in OIF. In FY 2006 the MSC Sealift Program's ships supported OIF, the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and peacekeeping operations in Eastern Europe, as well as other day-to-day Department of Defense missions worldwide. Today, MSC's fleet continues to deliver military cargo needed by U.S. warfighters around the globe.
- The Army maintains stocks of equipment and supplies prepositioned overseas to speed the deployment of Army formations to likely areas of operation. Some of these sets are on shore in host countries and some are based afloat aboard Navy



sealift ships. In the run-up to the war, the Army was able to move Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS) afloat in Qatar quickly and smoothly to Kuwait for movement to tactical locations. The Army issued three APS brigades and supporting equipment to the 3d Infantry Division for OIF.

The Army's 76 BCTs and more than 225 support brigades are totally dependent upon strategic mobility assets to "get them to the fight." The following chart depicts the current and planned end state for each of these strategic mobility programs.



Strategic Mobility Programs		
Platforms	On Hand	Total in Program
C-17	161	190
C-5	111	Out of Production
C-141	0	Retired in 2006
KC-135	482	Out of Production
KC-10	59	Out of Production
Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) (Passenger/Cargo)	149/179	149/179
B767 (Aero Med)	50	50
Large, Medium-Speed, Roll-on/roll-off (LMSR) ships	20	20
Fast Sealift Ships (FSS)	8	8
Ready Reserve Fleet	31	31

Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army

(Note: Although commercial airlift and sealift are capable, they are not always available in the required quantities and configurations to respond to all

contingencies, nor can they operate in an anti-access environment. Marine units floating at sea are capable of rapidly responsive, forced-entry operations and have dedicated ships assigned for their deployments, but the units are not designed to sustain themselves for extended periods of time.)

Since combat operations began in U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility, as many as two squadrons of C-17s have been based in theater to support the intra-theater needs of the combatant commander. Since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland, between 30 percent and 40 percent of the strategic airlift fleet has been committed to flying GWOT missions on any given day. These ongoing operations—and similar operations—are likely to continue into the foreseeable future. The currently planned airlift fleet cannot sustain these levels of operations over the long term.

Despite heavy usage, these systems are traditionally underfunded. For the second year, the C-17 program was not fully funded in the Fiscal Year 2008 budget. Sealift programs have faced the same fate.

What is Needed Now

The airlift and sealift fleets have suffered from decades of chronic underfunding. The nation's industrial capacity to produce sealift vessels and airlift aircraft is at risk just at a time when the requirement for strategic mobility capability is increasing. The

recent recognition, beyond current wartime needs, of the strategic importance of Africa (and its large geographic area) to America's vital interests has created a new set of demands for strategic mobility, both inter- and intra-theater. **What is needed is a new and credible mobility requirements study to ensure the nation has the right type and mix of strategic mobility assets.** This study must be focused on the year 2015, when modernized Army formations will reach their initial operating capability. The last comprehensive study of mobility assets occurred before the September 2001 terrorist attacks and, even at that time, indicated a need for more airlift and sealift.

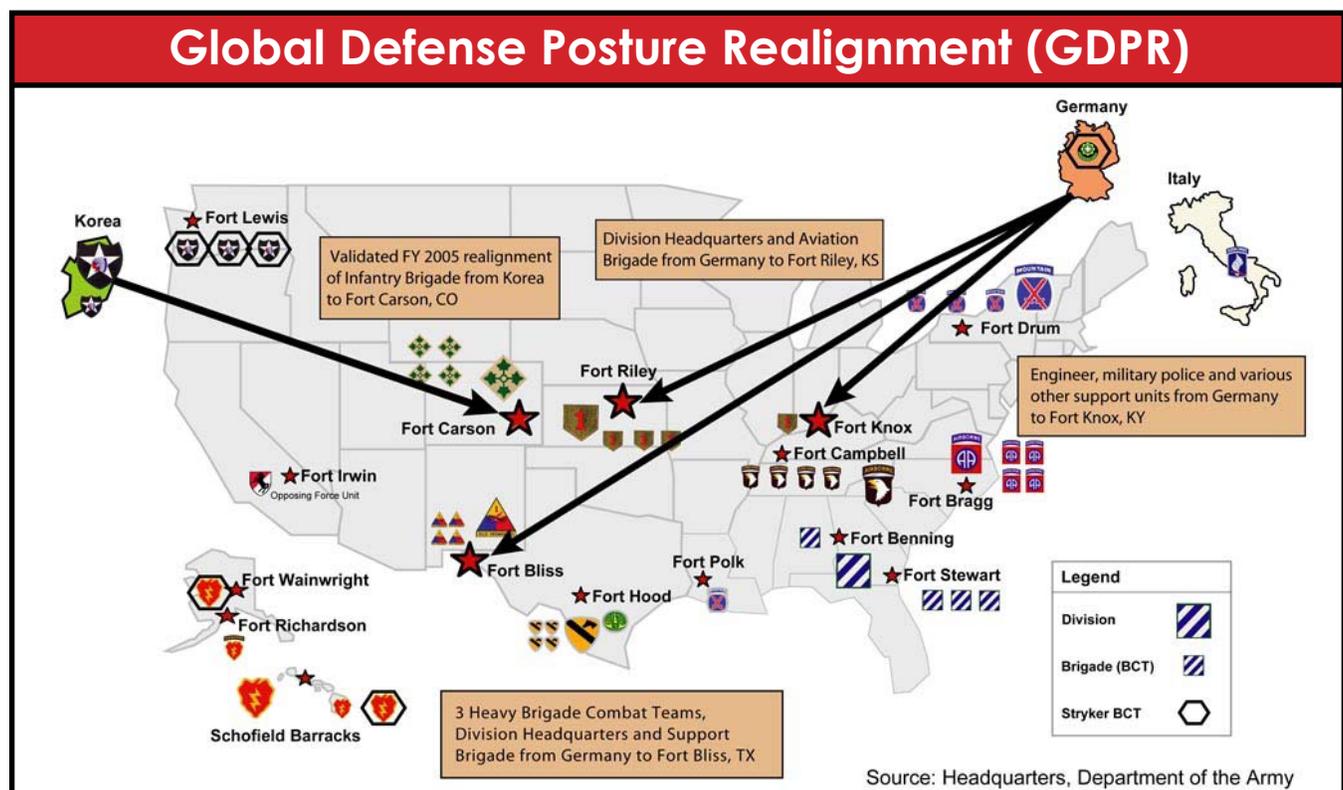
What You Can Do

The Quadrennial Defense Review requires the Army to deter threats, discourage military competition and, if deterrence fails, to decisively defeat an enemy. This, combined with current operational requirements related to the ongoing war, is a serious responsibility.

Conducting these missions with a continental U.S.-based force means that robust strategic airlift and sealift fleets are *national security imperatives*.

AUSA continues to advocate for sufficient strategic mobility assets to ensure America's vital interests are protected.* The United States must have a national capacity to move a force, whatever the required size and composition, to where it needs to go in a timely manner and to sustain that force in a major campaign. Therefore, Congress and the Department of Defense must validate strategic mobility requirements and must ensure timely and sustained funding in support of those requirements. **Strategic mobility platforms such as C-17s, fast sealift ships and prepositioned sets of equipment are strategic enablers.**

You can help by contacting your elected representatives in Washington, D.C., and reminding them of the importance of strategic mobility programs to the Army of today and tomorrow.



* See AUSA's 2007 Resolutions, online at <http://www.ausa.org/WEBINT/DeptGovAffairs.nsf/byid/JRAY-6VBPNV>.