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Reality set in when budget was prepared. Reality set in and “one must pay bills,” the Army’s number two civilian told about 200 defense industry leaders Feb. 11, in explaining why the service’s budget devotes so much money to base operations fixing real property.

This year, Bernard Rostker, the under secretary of the Army, said the service was seeking \$67.4 billion to fund its operations, but shoring up base operations was necessary to stop the “drain on training money.”

What has been happening in the fourth quarter of recent fiscal years, installation commanders had to tap operations and maintenance accounts, which pay for training, to fix aging utilities, repair streets, etc.

Adding, this budget was “noteworthy because it was a total force budget. The issue is not which component but when do you fight.” He said this meant needed training and modernization money was going not only to active duty programs, but also to the reserve components.

Modernization still needs help. “There’s not enough to fix all the modernization requirements,” Bernard Rostker, under secretary of the Army, said recently. He was referring to the \$5 billion estimate Gen. Dennis Reimer, Army chief of staff, gave the Senate Armed Services Committee last September as the sum needed to bring on the new weapons systems soldiers will need in the future. The request for modernization is \$2.6 billion for Fiscal Year 2000.

What this means is the Army doesn’t “know when we will finally replace our tanks. Our Chinook fleet needs work.” On how Bradley Fighting Vehicles and M-113s will have their service life extended is an open question. “Frankly, the money’s not there.” Adding, “we need to come to grips with how we’re going to do this.”

Rostker said the Army was still excited about the Apache Prime Vendor Support Program, a partnership between industry and the Corpus Christi Army Depot to maintain the attack helicopters over the system’s life cycle, but no decision has been made on whether to go ahead with the program.

“We certainly know we have to do business differently.” He said the Army expects to save about \$10 billion over the next six years through efficiencies in business practices “without compromising our operating forces.”

He said two more rounds of base closures (BRACs) were needed to drive down infrastructure costs and provide money for weapons and system modernization.

Rostker said \$3.2 billion would be used to finance the 4.4 percent pay hike called for in the budget request, targeted raises of up to 9.9 percent and to restore the retirement formula to 50 percent.

The Senate Armed Services Committee approved across-the-board pay raises of 4.8 percent for military and civilian employees of the Defense Department, targeted raises of up to 10.3 percent, and restoring the 50 percent formula or offering members at the 15-year point of taking a \$30,000 bonus and sticking with the 40 percent formula. In addition, the committee approved establishing a Thrift Savings Plan for service members and raising the G.I. Bill education stipend.

Rostker and other Army officials stressed that the budget was prepared in accordance with the balanced budget agreement that set caps on spending in each department.

Rostker was speaking at the monthly AUSA Institute of Land Warfare breakfast in Arlington.

Defense and the budget and taxes. The balanced budget agreement not only provides caps on how much discretionary programs—and defense is one of those programs—can spend over the next fiscal year, but a little way down the road is calling for cuts in those areas.

The cuts would come as part of the required drop from discretionary spending accounting for 6.6 percent of the Gross Domestic Product to 5 percent.

At the same time, as Bruce Bartlett, a fellow with the National Center for Policy Analysis, writes reductions in taxes must be offset either with tax increases or cuts in entitlement programs (Social Security, federal annuities, etc.). The tax cuts cannot come from discretionary accounts.

What this means for defense, which in the president's request remains within the confines of the agreement because it calls for cuts in existing DoD programs, is pressure to hold down any increase to provide enough money for other discretionary programs—education, etc.—and pay for a tax cut.

Bartlett suggests a change in the agreement, as well as the law covering the budget resolution, to avoid the “emergency” gimmick that accounted for \$27 billion in federal spending in Fiscal Year 1999.

The change would allow “Congress and the White House to establish tax and spending priorities through the normal political give-and-take, and not have to jump through legal hoops to cut taxes or raise spending for necessary purposes, such as national defense.”

AUSA, through its Torchbearer campaign, calls for an increase in defense spending above the present budget caps. The Association notes that since the end of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the United States has garnered a three-quarter of a trillion dollar “peace dividend.”

Whether such a change will be approved in both Houses of Congress is unclear. Rep. John Kasich, R-Ohio, and chairman of the Budget Committee has, in the past, opposed significant increases in defense spending.

President advocates sending U.S. forces to Kosovo. President Clinton said Feb. 13 that U.S. ground forces should participate in any NATO peace-keeping mission in Kosovo.

The population of the Serbian province is 90 percent ethnic Albanian. The Serbs and ethnic Albanians are meeting outside of Paris to discuss the future of the province split by a bloody civil war.

Defense Department leaders have testified before Congress that as many as 4,000 U.S. troops could participate in the peacekeeping mission that could last up to five years. U.S. troops likely would be positioned close to the mountainous Albanian border to stop the flow of arms and fighters in the southern Serbian province.

Clinton said that Bosnia taught the United States a lesson. “If we wait until casualties mount and war spreads, any effort to stop it will come at a higher price under more dangerous conditions.” The first U.S. forces into the province would come from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Force now in the Mediterranean Sea. Follow-on forces would come from the Army.

Air Force misses recruiting goal, will advertise. The Air Force missed its recruiting goal by almost 700 airmen over the four months from October through January. Air Force recruiting officials announced plans in mid-February to spend \$17 million immediately on advertising tied to high-impact programming for young men and women. Many of these ads will be seen during the NCAA college basketball tournament in March.

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All told, Air Force officials said they would spend \$76 million on recruiting advertising this year, up from the originally budgeted \$22 million.

Over the same period, the Army fell 2,479 recruits short of its goal of 19,020. The Navy and the Marine Corps made their goals.

Chugging along. The Boren-Rudman Commission on future national security needs will be stepping up its pace in March and April with a series of hearings and field trips aimed at submitting a preliminary report by Aug. 9.

The commission, officially called the National Security Study Group, is chaired by two former U.S. senators, David Boren and Warren Rudman. Its final report to the secretary of what is supposed to be the most comprehensive review of the national security environment and organizations is to be submitted to the president and the Congress on Feb. 16, 2001.

Defense Secretary William Cohen established the commission in 1998 so that its results "should be advanced in the form of practical recommendations that the president of the United States, with support of Congress, could begin to implement in the Fiscal Year 2002 budget, if desired." Gen. Charles G. Boyd, USAF, ret., serves as staff director.

Leaner Army, working hard. Army Secretary Louis Caldera and Gen. Dennis J. Reimer, chief of staff, sent the Congress in mid-February its annual state of the Army appraisal that included a number of warnings, such as:

"While funding increases have been helpful in many areas, modernization continues to carry the largest burden of risk."

The Army's Fiscal Year 2000 Posture Statement finds a service that is:

"Much leaner than it was 10 years ago, the Army nonetheless finds itself almost continuously engaged at home and abroad. More than 60 percent of the people participating in 32 of the 36 major military deployments since 1989 have been soldiers, yet the Army receives only 25 percent of the budget. The resource constraints of the past 14 years, coupled with the high pace of operations have severely stretched the fabric of the Army."

Specifically on modernization, the report says, "Last year the Army identified the need for an annual increase of \$5 billion over the FY 1999 budget in addition to increases required for contingency operations, pay increases and reform of military retirement. The president's FY 2000 budget sends a strong signal of support and concern for the welfare of our soldiers, Army civilians and their families. There simply have not been enough resources to fund all priorities. Highest priority modernization programs have been funded to ensure development of future capabilities, but at a pace slower than desired. Other programs will have to await the results of initiatives that will generate additional funding for modernization."

The initiatives would include an additional two rounds of base closures, but Congress remains skeptical about that approach to savings. They also include Defense Reform Initiatives that adopt business practices to government activities and possible privatization of functions.

The statement also notes the effect of underfunding base operations and real property maintenance have had on recruiting, training and readiness. "Unfortunately, readiness can dissipate far more rapidly than it can be built. Underfunded Operations Tempo, Base Operations and Real Property Maintenance accounts, as well as late reimbursement for contingency operations, detract from training and readiness."

The statement adds that all components missed recruiting targets last year, a trend continuing into FY 1999, but "the Total Army continues to meet most of its recruiting quality goals."

On retention, the statement reports that satisfaction with the 40 percent retirement formula continues to be an irritant with soldiers leaving the Army. "The REDUX retirement system resulting from the 1986 Military Retirement Reduction Act was the fastest-rising area of discontent on these (Sample Survey of Military Personnel) on these surveys." For officers, low base pay and long separations from family were the two top reasons for leaving.

"Recent difficulties in recruiting and retention threaten to erode the pool of outstanding soldiers who are the heart of today's readiness and the source of tomorrow's leaders. All of these issues (pay, retirement, modernization, base operations, etc.), if left unresolved, unhinge readiness."

Reimer unveils Strike Force. To enhance the Army's commitment to readiness and modernization, a new rapidly deployable, flexible force was added to the Army's arsenal when the service's top soldier announced the formation of Strike Force.

Gen. Dennis J. Reimer, Army chief of staff, made the announcement Feb. 16 at the Association of the United States Army's Symposium and Exposition in Orlando, Fla., saying, "We still have a force that is mismatched. We have a Cold War force. But now we must mix and match those forces (in the Army) to face potential adversaries."

That, Army officials said, will be the role of Strike Force, an Army concept designed to fill a void in the capabilities available to commanders in chief and the National Command Authority.

Strike Force, they said "will have the ability to deploy, almost immediately, a lethal, modular force, tailored to operational requirements, and able to sustain itself and survive until mission completion or follow-on forces arrive."

It will rely on evolving technologies in lift, logistics, communications and weaponry. It will be rapidly deployable at the outset of a conflict armed with either heavy firepower or battlefield agility. It will be tailored to meet and confront a contingency in a variety of situations, locations and theaters of operation, worldwide, including cities as part of MOUT — military operations in urban terrain. "We must continue to change," Reimer said, "but we cannot take a time out to change."

Strike Force, with about 5,000 soldiers, will be created within the year at Fort Polk, La. The 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the oldest regiment in continuous active service and that includes a mission in Bosnia, has been designated to be the command and control element.

The process will prepare combat and combat support units for future multi-functional operations as an early-entry force. It is expected to be fully operational by 2003. Fort Polk is also home to the Joint Readiness Training Center, or JRTC, one of the Army's centralized training centers that the new force will use as it develops.

Initially, Strike Force will be a headquarters that will call on other Army units for its manpower needs and requirements.

Strike Force, which has been involved in experimental war games at Fort Knox, Ky., for some time before the announcement, will bridge the gap between the light and heavy, or mechanized, forces the service is redesigning.

Army maintains strategic relevance. "This is what our Army does everyday," said Lt. Gen. Randall L. Rigby, the deputy commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). "It maintains strategic relevance (around the world)."

Rigby, chairing a panel discussion Feb. 16 at the Association of the U.S. Army's Symposium and Exposition in Orlando Fla., told the over 700 military and industry attendees that on Christmas Eve the Army had 137,147 soldiers deployed or in 55 countries.

This includes 7,300 soldiers in Bosnia, Croatia and Hungary; 4,070 serving in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch; 3,500 in Kuwait; 900 in the Sinai; 860 in Saudi Arabia; 500 in Honduras; 360 in Macedonia; and 60 in Haiti. It also includes soldiers stationed in Germany and Korea.

Rigby said that the Army's operating tempo continues to increase and cited that in Fiscal Year 1998, 28,420 soldiers were deployed per day. So far in FY 1999, 24,249 are deployed at the same rate.

To reach the Army's objective of making the service, through its Experimentation Campaign Plan, "the most relevant, affordable force for the 21st century," Rigby said that the addition of Strike Force to the Army's arsenal will give the service a much needed dimension.

Strike Force is a modular, rapidly deployable force that will fill a void in the capabilities available to commanders in chief by drawing from the mechanized force, or heavy force, and the light force.

We have to leverage our existing force and make it the best fighting force we can," Rigby said.