
America's Armed Forces: A Perspective

By

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The world in 2010 will be as challenging as today's. While there may be no superpower competition, expect to see asymmetrical power factions, ethnic and religious conflicts, nonstate actors. It all means we must stay ready.

It's certainly a pleasure to be back here. For 75 years, senior officials have come to the Council not only to talk, but also to listen to its members about foreign policy issues. And I look forward to listening to your views and your concerns.

And I am happy to be back here, because I feel that I owe you one! In a parody of our rapidly changing times, the last time I was here to speak I arrived here at the Pratt House and we were about to sit down to lunch when I was suddenly called away by the President to go to Dayton, and so we never had a chance to talk.

Nearly 40 years ago in basic training, a drill sergeant told me that every soldier must expect the unexpected. I'm not sure that my case was what he had in mind, but it was good advice. In fact in the seven years (almost to the day) since the fall of the Berlin Wall, "expect the unexpected" has become the watchword for the American armed forces.

In our volatile world, our armed forces time after time have overcome the unexpected and, I might add, performed superbly. Not only have they successfully upheld and advanced our interests, but in the process they have created a new world standard for military excellence.

And there is absolutely no doubt that today, ours are the best and most capable armed forces in the world, bar none.

And to convince you of that, I would like to offer you, our "stockholders," a prospectus on our armed forces and to discuss what we will have to do to maintain the readiness and strength of our forces well into the Twenty-first Century.

But at the start, let me be clear: Amidst all of the talk about today's dangerous world, it is all too easy to overlook the fact that today the United States and our allies are much safer than we were in the dark days of the Cold War.

And one of the great strategic benefits from the end of the Cold War is that we have been able to safely cut our forces. Since 1989, we have reduced our active all-volunteer forces by 700,000 people—about a third of the active force.

How big is a cut of 700,000 people? The force we cut is more than the number of troops in the British, the German, the Dutch and the Danish armed forces combined. Or put another way, the force we cut is 200,000 people more than all of the auto workers in the United States. Today, our armed forces are smaller than they were since before the Korean War.

In terms of combat structure, the Navy went from 566 ships to 354, a reduction of 38 percent. The Air Force went from 36 to 20 fighter wings, a reduction of 45 percent. And the Army went from 18 active divisions to 10, a reduction of 45 percent as well.

Meanwhile, the defense budget has been reduced by 40 percent in real terms. And we now spend less of a percentage of our national wealth, only 3.2 percent, on defense than at any time since before the Second World War.

All these are dramatic reductions—reductions which in the past have always resulted in a nose dive in our capability and readiness. That's what happened after the First World War, the Second, the Korean and the Vietnam War.

But not this time, not after the Cold War. With hard work, sound leadership in the field and a high degree of support from two administrations and the Congress, we have, for the first time in our history, been able to manage a huge postwar drawdown, creating a much smaller but pound-for-pound an even more capable and more ready force. That in itself is a remarkable success story yet to be told.

And it's a good thing that we stayed ready because in the wake of the Cold War came not peace and stability, but ethnic conflicts, failed states, the disorders of democratization, and that old reliable, naked aggression.

Today's force has successfully engaged in over 40 contingency operations since Operation Desert Storm. This week, some 55,000 servicemen and women are participating in 14 separate operations around the globe. That makes it about an average week for the three years that I've been chairman.

A recently concluded operation in Liberia was in many ways typical of these operations. With almost no notice, the United States, responding to a call to evacuate American citizens, formed a joint task force from our units in Italy, in the Adriatic, in Germany, in the U.K. [United Kingdom], and in the United States. The first units were on their way in hours, and in short order, our joint task force, with all of the services participating, evacuated 2,400 citizens from 68 countries. Although there was lots of gunfire and more than a few close calls, the evacuees and the task force returned safely.

Typically, few people in the United States even took notice of this highly complex operation, for the area was so remote that not even [TV news reporter] Christiane Amanpour could get there with CNN. But the American people have simply come to expect such skill and professionalism from our armed forces. What this operation demonstrates is that no other nation possesses the global reach that would allow them to mount such a joint operation in such remote corners of the world.

But not all of our operations receive so little scrutiny. Today, one of our most closely followed military efforts is in Bosnia, where nearly 17,000 servicemen and women are performing their military tasks and are doing so with great expertise and professionalism as part of a 34-nation peace implementation force.

Whether in the end the three factions will agree to live together and peace will be able to prevail in Bosnia is still very much in question. However, there is no question about the success of IFOR's [implementation force] part of the operation. And so it is useful to understand why IFOR succeeded where UNPROFOR [U.N. Protection Force] failed.

The first reason is the close coordination between the diplomat and the soldier, which reached a new height during the crucial negotiations that led to the Dayton agreement.

For the first time, those who would be charged with the implementation of the military aspects of the agreement were there not just as advisers, but as actual negotiators.

The second reason is that unlike UNPROFOR, IFOR was given a very clear mission, including specific tasks to be performed as well as tasks to be specifically excluded. That is exactly what is needed to keep a peacekeeping force from sliding into mission creep.

Finally, IFOR has a straightforward chain of command, robust rules of engagement and sufficient force to get the job done as well as intimidate those who would wish it ill.

Because of these conditions and because of sound planning, thorough training, and solid leadership, the military aspects of the Bosnia operation have gone so well. And these are lessons that we must not forget in whatever subsequent operations might come our way.

However, regrettably, many of our other expectations have not been met. While successful national and regional elections have been held, municipal elections had to be postponed. And civil reconstruction has lagged badly, as has the building of political structures and the establishment of law and order. Certainly, ethnic hatred and related disputes still dominate life there. And so the possibility of interethnic violence, regrettably, remains a real possibility.

That said, today IFOR, its military tasks completed and municipal elections pushed off into the spring or later, has begun to withdraw. Barring unforeseen circumstances, American forces in Bosnia should be down to approximately 10,000, or maybe even 7,500, by the time IFOR's mission ends around the 20th of December.

The question being discussed now is not whether IFOR will remain; it will not. The question is whether there might be a need for some other follow-on force to deter a renewed outbreak of hostilities and to protect our significant investment there to date.

To answer this question, NATO's military authorities will report to the North Atlantic Council [NAC] on four options that include complete withdrawal after the Dec. 20 "end-of-mission;" a follow-on force, stationed either inside or outside of Bosnia, whose sole function would be deterrence of the outbreak of new fighting; a beefed up deterrent force, which could provide on-scene stability as well; and finally, a force similar to IFOR which would be able to provide all of these functions along with wider civil support.

Based on the results of this study, the NAC will then decide whether or not there should be a post-IFOR military force, what its mission and specific tasks should be, what the size of such a force would have to be, and how long such a force would have to stay. NATO nations, including the United States, as well as other non-NATO participants in IFOR, in turn, will have to decide whether they would wish to participate in such a follow-on force.

Clearly, IFOR gave the people of Bosnia a year without war. And perhaps the people must be given some more time. But about one thing we must be clear: Only the Bosnians themselves—Muslims, Croats and Serbs—can make a lasting peace in that land. But the stakes are high. For this is not only about peace and stability in Bosnia, but also about the future of NATO and thus, as well, the contours of a future Europe and the continued strength of the trans-Atlantic link.

And along the way these last few years, we have seen how difficult it is to protect our interests abroad from our barracks at home. And also how in international affairs, as in battle, you can only lead from the front. Because America's leadership is so important and because we are, as President Clinton states, that "indispensable nation," our men and women in uniform

today serve with great distinction, not just in Europe, but in other parts of the world where our interests are important: enforcing the no-fly zones in Iraq, dampening conflict in the Taiwan Straits, deterring aggression in Korea, and helping to stem the flow of illegal drugs from Latin America. Our active engagement would not be possible without the superb men and women in uniform today, our unmatched military capabilities, and our high levels of readiness.

But now the question before us is whether we can maintain this readiness into the future. To that end, we have begun to work on a Quadrennial Defense Review with the goal of completing it next spring. In preparation for this soup-to-nuts review, the first task was to look at the future security environment out some 10 to 15 years.

Certainly, predictions are problematical. Everyone from Cassandra to Yogi Berra knows that. Given the power of historical accidents, the gaps between good data, usable information, and accurate predictions remain very wide. But even with this caveat, some predictions are relatively safe, and they suggest a range of policy choices that are similarly prudent.

In our internal review, we concluded that for the U.S. armed forces, the world between now and the year 2010 will be at least as challenging as the present one. While we can take comfort from the absence of superpower competition, the growth of the world economy and the progress of democracy around the world, we will also have many security-related concerns.

In the next 15 years, we see the further development of a complex world of many asymmetrical powers, a world marked by ethnic and religious-based conflicts, and influenced considerably by nonstate actors. Adding to the soup, there will undoubtedly be significant leadership and regime changes in North Korea, Cuba, China and many countries in the Middle East. The effects of these transitions will add to the unpredictability of our world.

Demographically, we see world population growing by 25 to 35 percent, with particularly rapid growth in the developing countries. Economic growth in some of those countries will be negated by population growth. Mass migrations from developing to developed countries will also continue. At the same time, in the developed world, the population will age, putting greater strains on pension systems and entitlement programs, creating downward pressure on budgets for foreign and defense policy.

Economically, we see greater interdependence and a growing world economy, but increasing competition for resources. Continued urbanization will exacerbate social problems in both the developed and developing world.

Technologically, we see dangers related to the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the vulnerability of our information and data processing infrastructure and the growing sophistication of terrorist movements.

And our military will be influenced by what some call a "Revolution in Military Affairs," the term that describes the rapid and profound progress in the marriage between information technologies and precision strike capabilities.

The good news is that we are on the leading edge of that revolution. The bad news is that the entry barriers to this revolution are relatively low, and in this century, no leader in military technology has ever gone unchallenged for very long.

So out to 2010, our forces in the field are likely to face a range of threats, from terrorists to rogue states with weapons of mass destruction, to potent regional powers or toward the end of that period, even emerging peer competitors. It is sad but probably true that in the next 15

years, disorder, conflict, and war, especially on the low end of the spectrum, will likely remain a growth industry.

With that as a given, our forces in the future must remain able to prevent threats from arising by shaping the strategic environment; deter threats, if they emerge; and if conflict prevention and deterrence fail, use force to defeat these threats whenever and wherever our important interests are at stake.

To be ready, it seems to me, three key tasks must be accomplished. First, the U.S. must maintain its current major alliances in Europe, Asia, and its coalition in the Middle East.

Our cornerstone alliance in the West is NATO. Contrary to all of the experts of a few years back, it is not disappearing. Rather, it is getting stronger, reaching out to other nations through the Partnership for Peace and opening up to new members.

Unlike all of us in this room, NATO is not getting older, it's getting better and indeed more relevant. The basic decision to enlarge that alliance was made some time ago and reconfirmed at the Bergen [Norway] ministerial in September. It is no longer an issue of "if" but of "when" and "who."

But NATO enlargement must also be seen in relationship to a second major task for future U.S. national security policy: engagement with the great powers.

Russia today is fraught with challenges and is still in the early stages of transition to democracy and a market economy. But some of our engagement activities are quite intense. Here, we must make a special note of our cooperation on the control of nuclear weapons and materials and our groundbreaking cooperation in Bosnia.

Earlier this week, I visited my counterpart in Moscow and had a fruitful day discussing how far we have come just in the last few years. Who could have imagined 10 years ago or even five years ago that a Russian brigade, a solid fighting unit by the way, would be working side by side with a U.S. armored division as part of a NATO-led operation helping to bring peace to a troubled country in the Balkans?

The joint patrols of Americans and Russians have done a lot for IFOR's reputation for evenhandedness among the former belligerents. And this kind of engagement will also help to break down the barriers between us and between Russia and NATO.

Soon, NATO and the Russian armed forces will open liaison offices at each other's headquarters. The Secretary of State has proposed formalizing the relations between NATO and Russia with a charter that would create standing arrangements for consultation and for joint action. In that, while we intend to open NATO to new members, our aim is to build stability and security in Europe not against Russia but with Russia.

In a similar vein, peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region will be strongly influenced by U.S.-Chinese relations. The United States is firmly committed to continuing its policy of engagement with China. While trade has become, and will remain, a significant factor in our bilateral relationship, China's vast population, rapidly growing economy, and modernizing, military make it the major actor on the Asian security scene.

Engagement on security matters will be difficult. While we have many shared interests in the region, China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, its policy toward weapons of mass destruction, and its fractious relations with Taiwan and its differing views on human

rights issues will make engagement with Beijing potentially the most complex challenge that we face in the year ahead.

However, as Secretary [of Defense William J.] Perry has noted, military-to-military relations must be part and parcel of our policy toward China. Contact between our military and China's may have a positive influence on the Chinese military—a key player in Chinese politics. But even if that hope is frustrated, contacts between our militaries will improve mutual understanding and reduce the effects of misperceptions.

Overall, while protecting our interests, we must maximize our engagement with China. We may not succeed at helping China to become more democratic, but common sense and our long-term interests demand that we continue to try. And such a policy is supported by all of our friends and allies in the Asia-Pacific region.

As a third major task, we must ensure that our military strength remains commensurate with our worldwide interests and international obligations well into the future. This strength depends on three factors: the willingness to invest in readiness, making the right force structure decisions, and making prudent investments in modernization.

The great issues of defense planning for an uncertain world have often been reduced to one simple question: How much is enough? On force structure, this issue is particularly tough to decide when there is no overarching central threat.

During the Cold War, the prospect of war with the USSR determined the force levels against which we had to size our own forces. After the Cold War, first in the base force and then in the Bottom-up Review, we sized against two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts, one in the Persian Gulf and one in Korea.

Critics of this force have noted that a one-conflict force or a reinforced one-conflict force is all that is needed or supportable in the future. Others have noted that savings from force structure cuts could be put toward modernization to keep the force up to date.

But these critics ignore how hard the present force is working to meet the requirements of lesser contingencies, such as Bosnia, of our military-to-military outreach programs, of our forward presence requirements, and the rest. They also ignore the strategic utility of a multiple contingency force.

Last year, for example, soldiers and marines deployed for around 140 days on the average. On any given day, over half of our Navy's ships are under way, with more than a third of the total forward deployed. The Air Force, with a third less people than during the Cold War, has more than quadrupled the number it habitually deploys on operations. These facts all support one conclusion: The force structure today is being worked to its capacity, especially when we consider the requirements for training that precede or come after lengthy operations or engagement activities.

Our best estimates are that our forces will be at least as busy in the mid- to long-term as they are today. Moreover, much of what we do for engagement or on the low end of the operational spectrum is more manpower intensive than we originally thought. But our peacetime requirements, challenging as they may be, are not the most important reason to maintain a robust highly capable force. The capability to fight and win major contingencies is the most important reason.

I am not talking about conceptual requirements here. In my tour as chairman, we have faced multiple contingencies. For just one example, in the Fall of 1994 in response to

heightened threats, we deployed deterrent forces to both Korea and Kuwait. Remarkably, just a few weeks before those deployments, we had dispatched a humanitarian mission to Rwanda and while that was still going on, a force of some 21,000 personnel to Haiti to restore democracy to that troubled island.

As we begin to size the force of tomorrow, it is important to understand that the size of our force today is not a luxury but a practical requirement. We are today as busy as we've ever been short of a major war. And as we try to determine that force for tomorrow, we must also resist the tempting notions that somehow, somewhere, there is some undiscovered answer that will allow us to do more with less. Yes, farther out in the long-term future there are promising technologies that may allow us to maintain the same capabilities with a smaller force. And that brings us to the issue of modernization, the bedrock of tomorrow's readiness.

Modernization presents us with a very big challenge. In a restrictive budget environment, we must now turn to replacing old equipment and sustaining a prudent modernization program. We must also leverage new technology to develop the capabilities that we will need to stay ahead in the out years.

During the downsizing, we were able to hold back on buying new equipment and hold back on modernization because sufficient equipment had been freed up from units that were being deactivated. Now this windfall has passed, and we face the demanding task of modernizing our force.

Today, our procurement spending is in real terms lower than it was before the Korean War. I told Congress last winter that to ensure the readiness of tomorrow's force, we would have to increase procurement spending by approximately \$15 to \$20 billion annually.

To accomplish this will take revolutionary new management approaches. Additionally, more bases will have to be closed, more functions privatized and more equipment and services purchased off the shelf. Where possible, without reducing force structure, we will have to trim manpower. We must also continue the restructuring of our reserve forces to bring them into line with our strategic requirements. And certainly to make the force more efficient, we must continue to build on the great strides that we have made in joint doctrine, joint training, joint education, and in joint operations.

A few months ago, we made a bold leap into the future by publishing Joint Vision 2010, a conceptual template for, and approved by, all of the services and joint commands. When it is fully implemented, JV 2010 will change the way the uniformed services and the joint commands do business in the long term.

In the past, each service created a vision of future warfare that emphasized its own competencies. The end result was wasted resources and unnecessary duplication of effort.

Without hobbling the services' core competencies, Joint Vision 2010 will move the entire armed forces, jointly, into the Twenty-first Century. It will provide us a foundation to bring together emerging technologies, high quality people, and outstanding training with the aim of achieving dominance across the full spectrum of operations that we might face.

For the first time in our history, all the services and all of the joint commands will work from a common vision of future operations. Using key operational concepts as a "mark on the wall," this common vision will enable us to make better resource and acquisition decisions by asking one probing question: what is the value of this proposal for the joint fight?

In the final analysis, Joint Vision 2010 keeps us ready and makes us more efficient.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a law written somewhere, in some important book, that a long speech must have a short conclusion.

As I said earlier, President Clinton laid out the challenge when he said that the United States is, and must remain, the world's "indispensable nation."

For the Joint Chiefs, that means that our challenge now is to design a force for tomorrow that is structured, modernized, and ready, to keep us persuasive in peace, decisive in war, and pre-eminent in any form of conflict. A force for tomorrow, that will enable some future chairman to stand before you and say as confidently as I can that ours is the best and most capable military in the world.