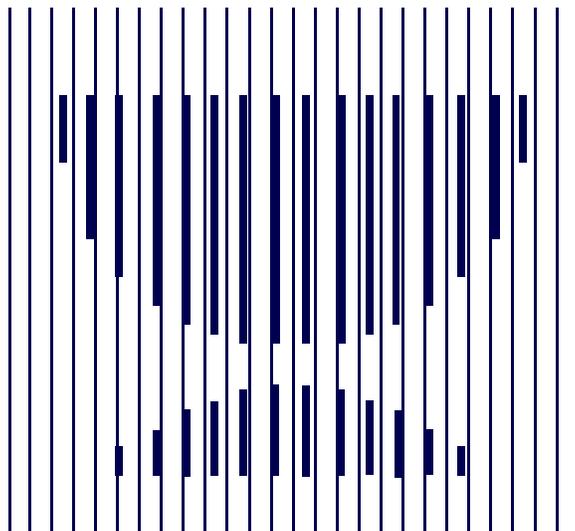




CBO MEMORANDUM

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE ARMY'S
FORCE STRUCTURE: SUMMARY**

April 1997



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE



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SECOND AND D STREETS, S.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

This Congressional Budget Office (CBO) memorandum was prepared as an initial response to a request from the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Senate Armed Services Committee. It summarizes the results of an ongoing CBO study that looks at the mix of active and reserve-component units in the Army, as well as possible alternative force structures for the Army. The full study will be released later in the year. The summary is being published now to aid the Senate in its debate of the 1998 defense authorization bill.

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The U.S. Army provides the bulk of the ground forces needed to carry out the nation's defense strategy. That strategy has changed dramatically over the past 10 years—from the Cold War mission of deterring or defeating the forces of the Soviet Union and its allies, to a strategy that emphasizes being able to fight and win major regional conflicts, take part in peacekeeping and humanitarian relief efforts, and help maintain domestic tranquility and civil order. To play its role in carrying out those missions, the Army maintains three separate organizations: the active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve.

CURRENT ARMY FORCES

Although reserve (National Guard and Army Reserve) personnel outnumber active-duty soldiers, the bulk of the Army's resources are spent on its active-duty forces. The Army plans to maintain an active-duty force of 495,000 soldiers and reserve forces of at least 575,000 soldiers for the foreseeable future. But the Army's annual budget in 1997 devotes \$38 billion to the pay and operations of active-duty forces and only about \$9 billion to comparable spending for reserve forces.

The difference in funding results in part from the different missions of the active and reserve components. Soldiers on active duty are always available to respond to orders from the Commander in Chief. By contrast, most members of the Army Reserve—who number 215,000 today but will shrink to 208,000 by 1999—

are only part-time federal soldiers and must first be called to active duty by the President before they can be assigned military tasks outside the scope of regular training duty. The National Guard, with 367,000 mostly part-time soldiers, reports during peacetime to the state governors and forms the states' militias mandated in the Constitution. The Guard provides a force that governors can call on to meet domestic emergencies and maintain civil order. During a national crisis, members of the National Guard can be called to federal active duty by the President.

Force Requirements

The Army employs more than 1 million soldiers in its forces to carry out its assigned tasks as part of U.S. national security strategy. The Clinton Administration has declared that the United States must maintain sufficient forces to fight two regional conflicts—similar in size to Operation Desert Storm—if they broke out nearly simultaneously. Forces that can meet that requirement are likely to be more than adequate, at least in terms of size, to meet the Army's less demanding tasks of conducting peacekeeping operations or responding to domestic emergencies.

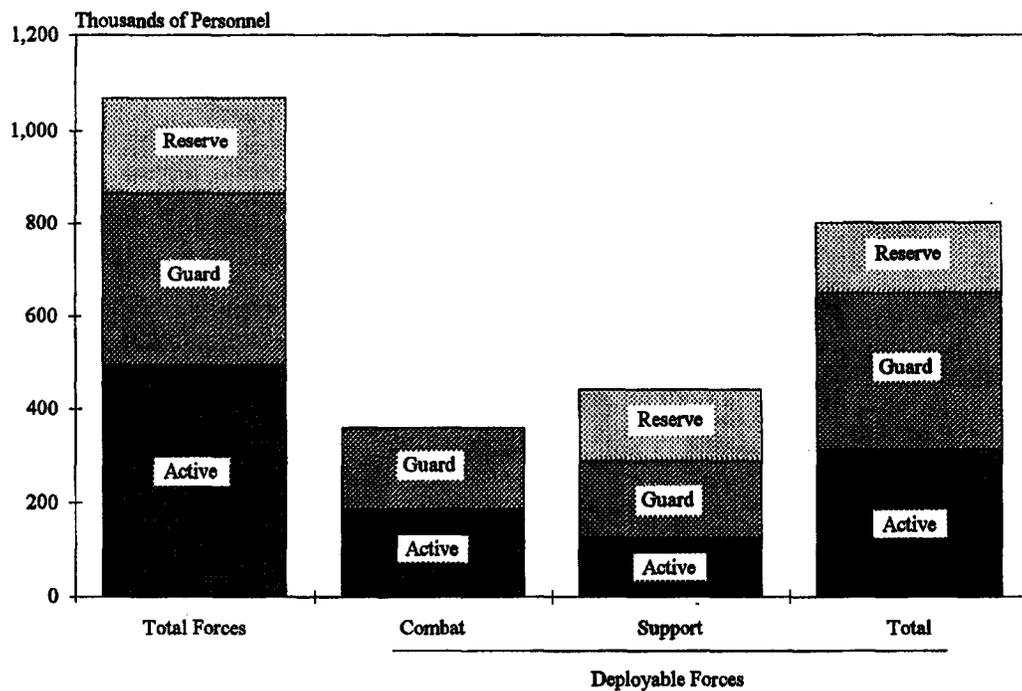
Based on a recent analysis of its force requirements, the Total Army Analysis 2003, the Army says it needs 672,000 troops in deployable units to carry out the strategy of fighting two major regional conflicts (MRCs). That number is more than

the total active-duty troops in the Army, but significantly less than total Army forces when all reserves are included. However, not all of the soldiers that the Army retains in either its active or reserve forces can be sent overseas to fight in regional conflicts.¹ A significant fraction of those personnel—more than one-third of the active forces and 15 percent of the reserve forces—are assigned to the "institutional" Army; they perform administrative duties, teaching, training, or similar tasks and are not part of units that could be sent overseas. Of course, that still leaves the majority of Army forces (slightly less than 800,000) assigned to deployable combat or support units and thus available to military commanders worldwide to take part in regional conflicts (see Figure 1).

Although the Army has more deployable troops in both the active and reserve components than it says it needs to fight two MRCs, those forces contain too many combat troops and not enough support troops. The Army includes approximately 360,000 combat troops. But based on Department of Defense (DoD) and Army planning assumptions, only about 195,000 of the 672,000 troops needed for two MRCs—or less than a third of the total—would be in combat units. According to Army analysis, the other 477,000 troops would be assigned to units that perform supporting activities, such as providing artillery cover, transporting troops and cargo

1. As used here, the terms "reserve forces" and "reserve component" include personnel in both the Army national Guard and the Army Reserve.

FIGURE 1. ARMY FORCE STRUCTURE PLANNED FOR 1999



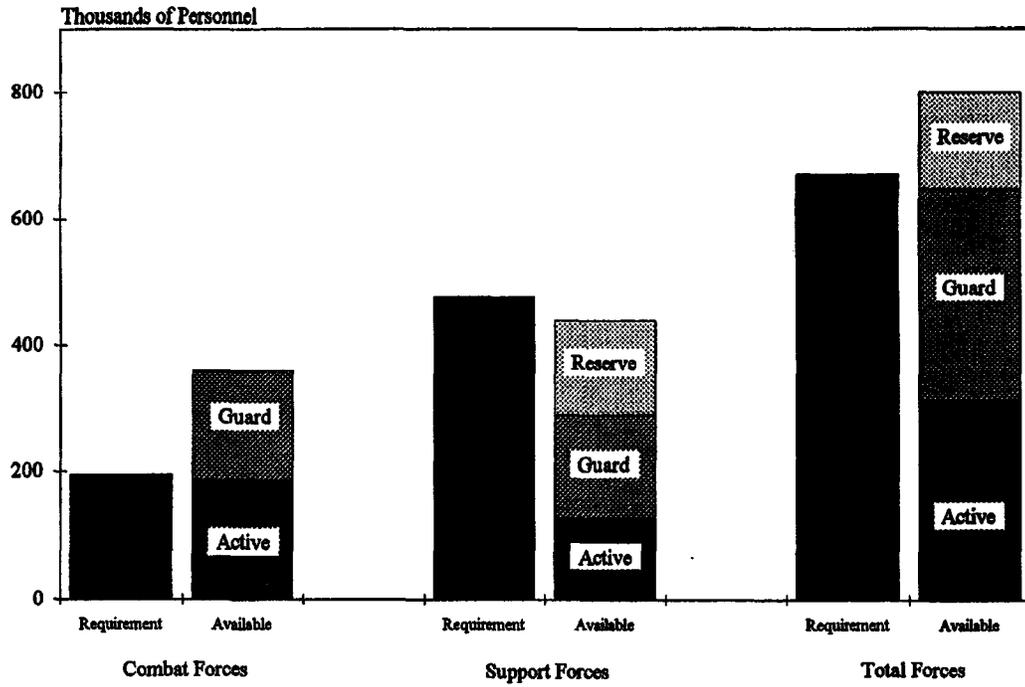
SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on Ronald E. Sutor, *Army Active/Reserve Mix: Force Planning for Major Regional Contingencies* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1995).

around the battlefield, or providing medical care. That requirement is significantly greater than the number of deployable personnel who are assigned to such support units (see Figure 2).

The Army has set an ambitious schedule for deploying its forces overseas to fight a major regional conflict. A notional timetable based on the Army's Strategic Mobility Plan would require that at least 270,000 Army troops be in the theater of operations no more than 75 days after the start of the conflict. Plans developed by other agencies within the Department of Defense assume that delivering a similar number of troops and their equipment to one MRC could take up to 90 days. One reason for such a tight schedule is that military planners do not believe a future adversary would allow the United States the luxury of 200 days to build up forces in a theater, as was the case during the Persian Gulf War.

A second major conflict would require a similar number of troops to be deployed to another theater. (The two theaters that are usually mentioned when discussing MRCs involving the United States are the Korean Peninsula and the Middle East.) If conflicts were to break out in two areas nearly simultaneously, then deployments to the second theater could begin shortly after the beginning of the first conflict—perhaps within 40 to 45 days—and certainly before all forces were delivered to the first theater. If deliveries to the second conflict adhered to the same schedule as deliveries to the first, the remainder of the 672,000 troops needed to fight

FIGURE 2. DEPLOYABLE ARMY FORCES FOR TWO MAJOR REGIONAL CONFLICTS, COMPARED WITH ARMY REQUIREMENTS



SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on data from the Department of Defense and Ronald E. Sutor, *Army Active/Reserve Mix: Force Planning for Major Regional Contingencies* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1995).

two MRCs would have to deploy overseas within 75 days to 90 days of the outbreak of the second conflict. Put another way, all deliveries to both theaters would have to be completed within 135 days of the start of the first conflict (assuming that the second conflict began 45 days after the first and the buildup within each theater was accomplished within 90 days).

Issues Concerning the Army's Current Force Structure

Several aspects of the Army's current force structure raise concerns among defense experts. Chief among those is the excess of combat forces. The Army's deployable forces today include almost 360,000 soldiers assigned to combat units, many more than are needed to carry out current war plans (see Figure 2). Slightly more than half are assigned to the active component, and almost all of those have a direct role to play in the two MRCs. But in the Total Army Analysis 2003, only 30,000 of the 175,000 combat forces in the reserves (all of which are in the National Guard) were assumed to fight in either of the two MRCs. They would presumably be used to reinforce the active combat forces sent to a second MRC should one erupt shortly after the first.

The National Guard includes 15 combat brigades that the Administration plans to maintain at a higher level of readiness than other combat forces in the Guard.

Those enhanced readiness brigades (ERBs) are specifically assigned the mission of reinforcing active combat forces in an MRC. In addition to the six ERBs (with 30,000 troops) that are included in the Army's plans to fight two MRCs, the Guard maintains another 35,000 combat troops in its remaining nine enhanced readiness brigades. But the Guard also has 110,000 combat forces (organized into eight divisions) that have no direct role to play in likely contingencies. That fact led the Commission on Roles and Missions to conclude in its 1995 review of U.S. military forces that the Army had 110,000 excess combat troops that were good candidates for conversion to support roles or elimination from the force structure.

The overemphasis on combat troops is partly a legacy of the Cold War (during that time, a large number of ground combat forces was thought to be needed to deter the Soviet Union from attacking U.S. allies in Europe). It also results partly from the perception that combat forces, with their advanced weapons and battlefield role, are more glamorous than support units.

In contrast to the overabundance of combat forces, the Army's recent study has identified a shortage of units to support those combat forces. Specifically, the Total Army Analysis 2003 concluded that the service requires an additional 58,000 support troops to carry out its mission of fighting two MRCs nearly simultaneously.

The Army's need for large numbers of support units leads to huge requirements for transport planes and ships (so-called mobility assets) to move both combat and support forces overseas. In fact, analysis by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) suggests that moving the Army's equipment to just one major conflict could take more than 250 shiploads. Because the number of ships and planes available to move troops and equipment is limited, the time needed to make multiple trips across oceans can substantially delay the buildup of forces in a theater.

That delay could prevent the Army from meeting its desired deployment schedule. Using relatively optimistic assumptions, CBO estimated how long it would take to transport all of the Army's forces and associated equipment to two conflicts that broke out 45 days apart. Based on that analysis, the U.S. mobility assets proposed for early next century could need about 130 days to get all Army forces to the theater for an initial conflict—40 days more than the 90 days assumed in some DoD plans, and 55 more than the 75-day goal in the Army's Strategic Mobility Plan. The time required to complete deliveries to a second theater could be almost 200 days. Although such delays in building up forces are similar to the ones experienced during the Persian Gulf War, the Army had hoped to speed up its deployments substantially in the future. All told, CBO's analysis suggests that delivering all Army forces to both theaters might take as many as 240 days—significantly longer than the 135 days consistent with a notional DoD schedule.

Another concern with the Army's current structure stems from the fact that the bulk of its support forces are in the reserves. More than 70 percent of the soldiers in Army support units belong to the National Guard or Reserve. Even given the delays involved in transporting all of the Army's forces overseas, it could be difficult to get many of those reserve units ready in time to deploy in support of combat units for a major conflict. For example, the Army's force requirements for a conflict in Korea call for having more than 120,000 reservists in the theater within 110 days of the start of a conflict there, even taking into account transportation delays. By contrast, only about 73,000 reservists from the Army were deployed to the Persian Gulf at any one time during all of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and it took 200 days to mobilize and transport them there. Indeed, even in peacetime, some types of support units—such as water-supply battalions and prisoner-of-war brigades—are found only in the reserve component. That means reserve personnel have to be activated and deployed overseas to take part even in small operations such as those in Haiti and Bosnia, which involved less than 10 percent of the Army's active-duty troops.

One final concern with the Army's force structure is that it is expensive to maintain and equip. The service's current budget of about \$60 billion a year would be stretched to operate and support all of the Army's forces as well as equip them with the new weapons and materiel they will need in coming decades. Since some defense experts believe that the Army's budget is unlikely to grow appreciably in the

near future—and in fact may shrink when adjusted for inflation—the Army may need to find ways to reduce the cost of maintaining and equipping its forces.

THE ARMY'S PLAN FOR ITS FORCE STRUCTURE

The Army has proposed relieving its perceived shortage of support troops by converting some combat units in the reserve component to units that perform supporting functions. Specifically, the Army plans to convert 12 combat brigades in the National Guard to support units, thus creating 42,700 new support troops and eliminating all but 15,700 of the perceived shortfall. That reorganization would take more than 10 years to complete and could cost almost \$3 billion based on the Army's preliminary estimates. However, the cost—primarily to buy trucks for the newly created support units—may decrease as the Army continues to evaluate and refine its estimates of equipment needed for those units.

The Army's plan has much to recommend it. By converting some combat units that have no direct role to play in the Army's planned conduct of two MRCs into support units, the plan would accomplish two goals at once: filling a recognized need for support forces and eliminating some redundant combat forces. It would also carry out part of the recommendation made by the Commission on Roles and Missions in 1995. And in making those changes, the Army would avoid cutting its

active combat forces, which some observers believe are barely adequate to carry out the mission assigned to them.

On the other hand, the Army's plan would not address many of the issues that have been raised about its current force structure. Even with the changes, the service would still have many of the same problems carrying out small operations in peacetime or prosecuting two nearly simultaneous MRCs that it has today. And although the Army's plan would reduce the number of excess combat troops, it would not eliminate them entirely. In fact, the Army would retain more than 60,000 combat forces with no direct role in fighting MRCs.

In addition, the bulk of the support forces would remain in the reserve component; indeed, the percentage of total support forces in the reserves would rise slightly after the planned restructuring. Another concern is that the Army's plan does not address the issue of the amount of equipment that would need to be transported overseas for a major regional conflict. Finally, the reorganization plan would cost money in the near term—at a time when the Army's budget is already strained.