

**RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCES:
POLICY AND BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS**

**Congress of the United States
Congressional Budget Office**

NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, all years referred to in this paper are fiscal years. Likewise, unless otherwise noted, all dollar amounts are expressed in fiscal year 1984 dollars.

Program detail for fiscal year 1984 of the Administration's budget was the only data available at the time of publication. Where possible, costs presented in this paper were updated to reflect the latest program revisions. Where no specific data beyond 1984 were provided, cost estimates were based on program detail submitted with last year's budget, amended only for changes in inflation.

PREFACE

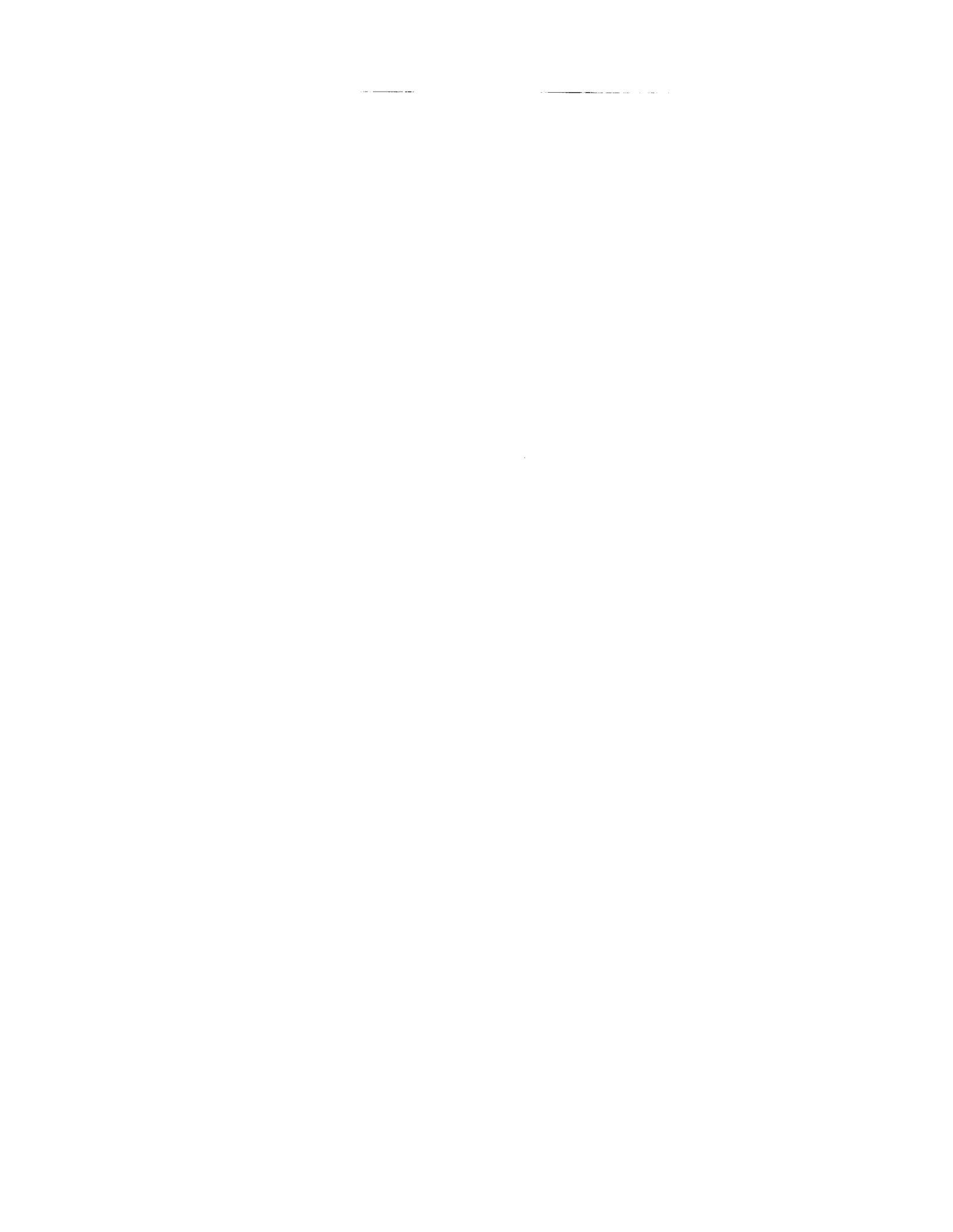
The planned growth of U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF), which may nearly double in size in the coming few years, raises important policy and budgetary issues for Congressional consideration. This growth in forces earmarked for the RDF is being accomplished not by adding combat forces but by changing the primary mission of existing forces, most of which are already committed to the defense of NATO Europe. Though the United States has persistently urged its NATO allies to accept some of the defensive burden resulting from RDF plans, the Congress may wish to consider the extent to which U.S. policy is shifting its focus and the potential budgetary costs of sustaining current U.S. commitments to NATO and Southwest Asia.

Prepared at the request of the Subcommittee on Sea Power and Force Projection of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Joint Economic Committee, this study analyzes the policy implications of alternative RDF levels and the budgetary implications of the policy decisions. In keeping with CBO's mandate to provide objective analysis, this paper offers no recommendations.

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SUMMARY

When plans for the Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF) were announced in 1979, no new combat forces were created for them. (For simplicity, the RDF is referred to here as a single unit.) Rather, the RDF was envisioned to consist of existing forces--portions of all four U.S. armed services--most of which already had the traditional mission of assisting in the defense of NATO Europe. The size of the RDF can therefore have important implications for the U.S. policy with respect to NATO.

As the RDF is constituted today, it comprises 222,000 troops. The Administration plans to increase the size of the RDF, perhaps doubling that number. At the same time, though, no plan for an overall increase in U.S. combat forces has been advanced. Thus, the Administration's planned larger RDF could have further effects on U.S. policy for NATO.

Moreover, the RDF could affect the U.S. defense budget. Only \$737 million has been earmarked directly for the RDF for fiscal year 1983. But the RDF, and particularly the plans for a larger version, could give rise to pressure for eventual increases in the defense budget and could hamper efforts to reduce the budget deficit in the next few years. Thus the Congress' decision about the appropriate size of the RDF has important implications for the budget as well as for NATO policy.

To assist in deliberations about the appropriate size of the RDF, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has examined several aspects of three possible RDFs--one manned at the Administration's higher level, assumed to include 440,000 troops, one manned at the current 222,000-troop level, and one reduced to 165,000 troops. The analysis first considers the missions appropriate to the different sizes. Then, for each version of RDF, the analysis considers the implications for NATO versus Warsaw Pact force ratios in Europe, and the RDF's combat, mobility, and support needs. To the extent that each of these factors has budgetary implications, the potential costs or savings are also examined.

DIFFERENT MISSIONS FOR DIFFERENT RDF FORCE LEVELS

Since the RDF was originated, it has undergone major redefinitions of purpose. Conceived as a fast-reaction force with global orientation, the RDF quickly became focused on the Persian Gulf region. At present, the

RDF's primary function would be to safeguard U.S. interests in Southwest Asia and deter Soviet aggression in the region. A series of upheavals has given urgency to this RDF mission--most recently, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which could be construed as evidence of a Soviet intent to strengthen a position in Southwest Asia.

The most demanding threat in Southwest Asia, a major Soviet invasion of Iran has motivated the size and configuration of the larger RDF. Within close proximity of Iran, the Soviets have available 24 combat divisions. Though few are now combat ready, full readiness could probably be achieved within several weeks. In addition, the Soviets' airborne divisions could be deployed to strategic locations inside Iran. The Administration therefore believes that the larger RDF is needed not only as a deterrent but also possibly to counter an invasion by these Soviet forces in Iran.

On the other hand, the Administration has stated that the Soviets would more likely engage in encouraging subversion and internal upheavals, rather than undertake a difficult and risky invasion of Iran. Averting such disruptions would not require so large a force as the Administration plans. The combat units of the current RDF (see Summary Table 1) could provide effective military support to any politically moderate state. The current RDF would offer roughly the same early combat capability as the larger RDF, and though it might be unable to defeat a determined Soviet drive toward the Persian Gulf, it would still present a significant deterrent.

Rather than the larger or even the current RDF, history suggests that the far likelier need would be for a small U.S. force that could be dispatched quickly to areas of potential conflict before actual fighting erupts. A peacekeeping mission such as that now being performed by U.S. Marines in Lebanon is one example. An RDF with these more modest responsibilities might consist of approximately 165,000 persons. But a force this small might be of little value in deterring a Soviet invasion of Iran, and of still less use in actual combat with Soviet forces.

EFFECTS OF RDF SIZE ON U.S. COMMITMENT TO NATO

Deployment of the RDF could present a risk to NATO's defense if war were to erupt simultaneously (or nearly so) in Southwest Asia and in Europe. Only the addition of new U.S. forces--a course that has been discussed but not formulated--would obviate that risk, but at costs that would be determined by the size of RDF chosen (see Summary Table 2).

SUMMARY TABLE 1. COMPOSITION OF THREE RAPID DEPLOYMENT
FORCE LEVELS

Forces	Larger RDF	Current RDF	Smaller RDF
Army Combat Divisions <u>a/</u>	5	3 1/3	1
Navy			
Aircraft Carrier Battle Groups <u>b/</u>	3	3	3
Amphibious Ready Group <u>c/</u>	1	1	1
Air Force Tactical Fighter Wings <u>d/</u>	10	7	5
Marine Corps			
Marine Amphibious Forces <u>e/</u>	2	1 1/3	1

Total Personnel	440,000	222,000	165,000

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 1984, press reports, and the Congressional Budget Office.

- a. Each would consist of 16,000 to 18,000 soldiers.
- b. Each would consist of one aircraft carrier plus six surface escort ships.
- c. Typically consists of three to five amphibious ships including an amphibious assault ship.
- d. Each would consist of approximately 72 aircraft.
- e. Each would consist of a ground combat division, a tactical fighter wing, and sustaining support, totaling approximately 45,000 people.

SUMMARY TABLE 2. PROJECTED CUMULATIVE BUDGET AUTHORITY INCREASES AND SAVINGS (-) FOR RDFs OF THREE SIZES, RELATIVE TO ADMINISTRATION PLAN (1984-1988, in billions of 1984 dollars)

Cost Components	RDF of 440,000		RDF of 222,000		RDF of 165,000
	No Added Forces <u>a/</u>	Added Forces	No Added Forces	Added Forces	
Added Army Combat Forces	0	37.8 <u>b/</u>	0	18.9	0
Mobility Forces	0	5.8	0	0	-11.0
Support Forces <u>c/</u>	0	1.3	0	1.2	0
Total	0	44.9	0	20.1	-11.0

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office, from data provided by the Department of Defense.

- a. Administration plan.
- b. Added tactical air wings may also be needed but are not included in these costs. Costs over five years would equal at least \$3 billion per added wing.
- c. Includes persons to meet support shortfalls plus those needed to recruit and train added personnel.

The Larger RDF

If the larger RDF were drawn to Southwest Asia and conflict also broke out in Europe, the United States would be unable to sustain its current level of commitment to NATO. The United States could still deploy the initial six reinforcing divisions it holds in reserve on U.S. bases within ten days of a NATO mobilization, but it could do no more within the first 60 days unless RDF divisions were able to redeploy to Europe. From NATO's perspective, this would represent a decrease of up to 33 percent in

the number of U.S. combat divisions. By the end of the second month of a conventional war in Europe, the balance of NATO versus Warsaw Pact forces in Europe would be weakened by as much as 12 percent.

The Administration hopes that the NATO allies will offset this shortfall by increasing their own defense efforts. This would give the United States latitude to respond to sizable conflicts elsewhere without reducing NATO capabilities. To date, however, such responses on the part of our European allies have not been forthcoming, perhaps because of economic constraints.

Moreover, some military analysts feel that the current balance of forces in Europe is already disadvantageous to NATO, even without a loss of forces to an RDF engagement. Thus, pressure to increase the Army's force structure could be forthcoming; the goal would be to allow concurrent reinforcement of NATO and deployment of the larger RDF. The Department of Defense does not plan now to increase Army combat structure in the future, nor does it plan to propose spending levels higher than those already set. But it has not ruled out Army increases, and in fact, has indicated that it may eventually wish to provide some additional forces. Four more fully supported Army divisions, at a cumulative five-year cost of approximately \$37.8 billion, would be needed to allow the United States to maintain NATO's stance in the current force balance while simultaneously deploying the larger RDF. Added Naval and Air Force units might also be needed; some buildup of those forces is, however, already under way.

The Current RDF

Limiting the size of the RDF to its current level would still pose some increased risk to NATO, but a lesser one. The number of U.S. combat divisions available during the first 60 days could decrease by as much as 20 percent, while NATO's position in the force balance would diminish by as much as 6 percent. Simultaneous maintenance of the current commitment would require increases of two fully supported combat divisions at a five-year cost of about \$18.9 billion.

The Smaller RDF

Only if the size of the RDF were appreciably reduced could the current commitment to NATO be sustained, should the RDF be activated. Thus, only the choice of the smaller RDF could avoid any future pressure for more U.S. combat forces.

RDF MOBILITY AND SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS, AND PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

Two aspects of the RDF could have clear budgetary implications: the mobility assets that would be needed to move combat forces to a theater of combat 12,000 miles from the continental United States, and the logistic infrastructure that would be needed to support combat forces.

RDF Mobility Needs and the Planned Improvements

Timing would be a critical factor in the effectiveness of any RDF deployment. Mobility assets, in turn, are the critical determinant of timing. In 1980, a 30-day span was considered the time goal for deployment of a large force to the Persian Gulf. CBO's analysis uses this same 30-day criterion.

Mobility assets fall into three categories: airlift, sealift, and "prepositioning" (that is, materiel stored in or near possible theaters of combat). The Administration has under way a major program to increase mobility forces in all three categories. The airlift component of this program includes improvements in the so-called "utilization rates" of certain aircraft, and purchase of an additional 50 C-5 cargo and 56 KC-10 tanker/cargo aircraft. (The Air Force already has 77 C-5 and 16 KC-10 aircraft.) The programmed sealift expansions include eight new fast logistic ships that can haul heavy Army equipment at speeds up to 33 knots, and leasing 13 more prepositioning ships to carry the equipment for three Marine amphibious brigades. (The Navy now has 18 prepositioning ships dedicated for the RDF.) The total five-year acquisition cost of this program is approximately \$13.7 billion; funds for this program are included in currently planned increases in defense budget authority.

In combination, the mobility forces already available and the improvements planned would allow the current version of the RDF to deploy all of its integral, or "unit," equipment to Southwest Asia within 30 days. Thus, under this study's criterion, the current RDF should require no additional mobility improvements beyond the completion of those planned.

Even with the mobility improvements scheduled, however, the larger RDF that the Administration now plans would require more than 40 days to deploy its unit equipment. Deployment by the 30th day instead would require procurement of eight additional fast logistics ships and the leasing of ten more prepositioning ships; the United States would also have to buy additional equipment to be prepositioned aboard these vessels. Over five years, the initial costs of these assets would total about \$5.8 billion.

With current mobility forces and the planned improvements, all of the smaller RDF could reach the Persian Gulf in about 21 days. Thus, some of the additional forces planned by the Administration might not be needed, inasmuch as the 30-day criterion would be surpassed. Therefore, were the 165,000-man RDF selected, the Congress could terminate a number of planned purchases--for example, development and production of the C-17 aircraft and further buys of C-5 aircraft. These terminations would save approximately \$11 billion over a five-year period. Such cancellations could have adverse implications for NATO, since the Administration maintains that more mobility assets are also needed there. Nonetheless, much of the impetus for improving mobility forces has been motivated by the RDF and not NATO planning.

Support Force Needs

Support forces--the people who do construction, deliver ammunition and other supplies, maintain communications, and treat the wounded--are as critical to the success of any engagement as are combatants. The locale in which the RDF would fight would exert a greater influence on RDF support needs than would the actual numerical size of forces. Unlike NATO Europe, with its industrial economies, its complex transport and fuel distribution networks, and its advanced medical facilities, the Persian Gulf region offers what the military terms a very "immature theater." Thus, it presents the RDF with a deficiency of support resources that would have to be covered.

RDF planning makes each of the four services responsible for providing units to sustain its own combat forces. But the Army has the additional responsibility of establishing and maintaining for all services the basic regional logistic infrastructure--road maintenance, water distribution, and so forth. The support forces now available to Army RDF units--which are designed to support a logistics network in NATO, not in the much less developed Persian Gulf area--are too few to accomplish this task.

Analysis of Army data by CBO suggests that the current RDF would need approximately 49,000 more support personnel than are now available. Over the next five years, the Army plans to dedicate 6,000 (about 20 percent) of its planned increases in military personnel to providing more support. This would leave an unfilled requirement of 43,000 persons. The Administration plans to meet this unfilled requirement by drawing upon the support forces available to deploy to Europe in the event of a NATO war; this plan rests on the expectation (thus far, unmet) that the NATO allies will be able to provide support beyond what current agreements specify. The Congress, however, may decide that support for the RDF should not be

at the expense of support to other commitments, particularly the defense of NATO. If so, meeting this requirement by adding 43,000 persons over the next five years would cost approximately \$1.3 billion.

For the current RDF, though it is roughly half the size of the Administration's planned version, the cost of meeting the support shortfall would differ by only a marginal 9 percent, or \$100 million. This is because, for RDFs above a certain threshold size, the shortfall depends mainly on the need to set up the elaborate logistics infrastructure. That need is a function of the theater itself, not of the size of RDF. For a smaller RDF, because it would not be designed to sustain combat operations over long periods, a large logistics network would not be necessary. As a result, the smaller RDF could probably be supported without any increases in support forces beyond those already planned.