



"The Commission shall undertake a comprehensive study of the structure of the Army ... related to current and anticipated mission requirements for the Army ..."

2015 NDAA, Section 1703(a)(1)(B)

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Army requires a flexible force capable of fulfilling land component demands in the future. Army forces conduct their missions in a continuously changing strategic environment, which both affects and is affected by U.S. policy decisions. The probability of challenges that might require the use of U.S. Army assets is always difficult to measure; the nature and sometimes the location of conflict are not always predictable several years out. Nevertheless, the United States repeatedly finds itself in need of the kind of land forces only

the Army delivers.

By tracking geopolitical, technological, and other important trends, and bearing in mind historical patterns, the Commission drew some conclusions about the general range and pace of likely threats and the potential costs to U.S. interests. The Commission then evaluated some of the most important and likely implications of these challenges for the U.S. Army operating as part of a U.S. Joint Force and usually a multinational combined force. The Commission's



2nd Cavalry Regiment Strykers leave the front gate of an air base in Romania for a tactical road march to the Smardan Training Area in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve.

recommendations rest not only on a shared understanding of the likely future strategic environment, but also on the history of the Army. This understanding of the past, present, and future was informed by extensive review and consultation with experts inside the U.S. government and beyond.

GEOPOLITICAL TRENDS

Although the Commission acknowledges the impossibility of precisely predicting the future, the Commission is certain that U.S. leaders will face a variety of simultaneous, diverse threats to our national interests from both state and non-state actors as well as natural and man-made disasters. These threats will likely test America's security commitments to allies and partners

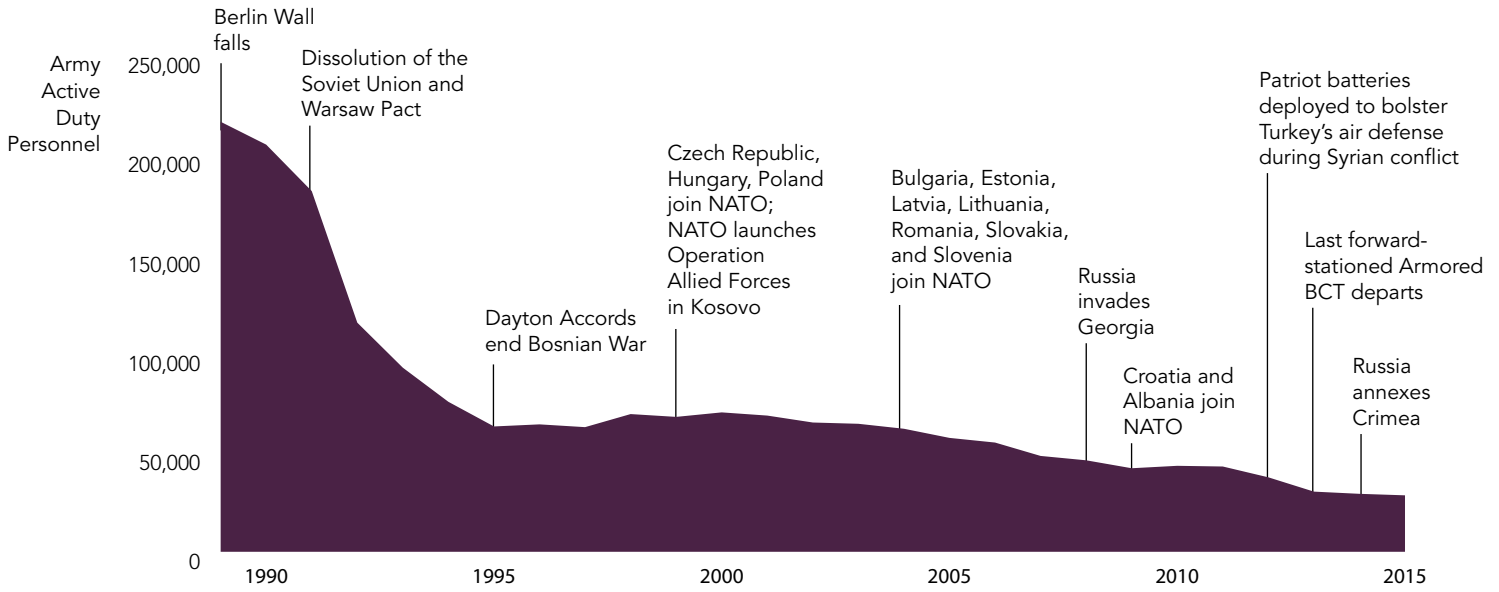
Photo on page 27

Soldiers with 1st Armored Division operate with an M109A6 Paladin during a rotation at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California.

around the world as well as Americans' expectations of their Army's ability to assist with homeland challenges.

Russia poses significant and complex challenges to American security interests due to its nuclear capabilities, sales of advanced weapon systems, willingness to violate international convention, and support for actors working against U.S. interests, as it presently is doing in Syria. Russia is facing severe challenges in demography, corruption, capital flight, and opportunities for economic growth over the next 10 to 20 years, and so may turn to military adventurism to solidify domestic support. Insufficient revenues—especially if oil prices remain low—have the potential to undermine Russian military modernization, increase Russia's willingness to sell weapons to malignant actors, decrease stability within Russia's borders, and limit the influence Russia can project internationally. Over the next two decades, the Commission expects the Russian government to prioritize military modernization with available resources and coerce or subvert its neighbors to preserve and extend Russian influence. Russia seeks to achieve its objectives in Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine by combining a variety

Figure 7
ARMY IN EUROPE



U.S. Forces in Europe have seen a significant drawdown since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. At that time, the Army had more than 216,700 soldiers stationed in Europe. The reduction in forces continued even as NATO expanded and its borders pushed further east. Now, with Army forces numbering about 28,450, Europe is facing security threats from Russia, from the refugee crises, and from ISIL. Force decisions are made according to the risk environment of the time, an environment that can change substantially in a matter of months.

Source: U.S. European Command.

of military and non-military activities with a propaganda campaign blurring the distinction between war and peace. The United States will no doubt have to contend with these “gray-area zone” tactics from Russia and other key international actors in the future.

Terrorism has emerged as the most visible threat to Americans and the nation’s allies. The organization currently receiving the most attention on the threat spectrum is the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), operating in Iraq and Syria, but with devoted followers and affiliates willing to engage in acts of terrorism in nations around the globe, including the United States. The emergence of ISIL is an example of how non-state actors seize upon opportunities created by communal conflict and weak governance. ISIL’s willingness to use murder and other

forms of brutality against innocents and its ability to mobilize people, money, and weapons have enabled the organization to seize territory and establish control of populations and resources. ISIL uses social media and cyberspace to prosecute a propaganda campaign while employing terrorist tactics to control populations and territory. The ISIL threat demonstrates the need for land forces to defeat determined enemies that operate among and control civilian populations. ISIL also highlights the need to extend efforts beyond physical battlegrounds to other contested spaces, such as public perception and political subversion. In addition to the threat of direct attacks, the activities of ISIL and other actors in the Middle East have created a massive movement of refugees, triggering a humanitarian crisis that raises concerns for future instability in Europe and other regions.

HOMELAND DEFENSE AND DSCA

“...An evaluation and identification of a structure for the Army that...ensures that the regular and reserve components of the Army have the capacity needed to support current and anticipated homeland defense and disaster assistance missions in the United States...”

2015 NDAA, Section 1703(a)(2)(A)(iii)

The Army's top priority is the defense of the homeland. The United States is not immune to acts of war or terrorism in its territory, and each contingency plan must consider simultaneous demands for military capability in the homeland.

The Commission was directed to consider the Army capacity needed to support current and anticipated homeland defense and disaster assistance missions in the United States. The responses to such demands are captured in anticipated homeland defense (HD) and defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) requirements. The Commission found the Army's overall capabilities and capacity to be adequate for assigned missions.

The homeland is a unique and challenging theater of operation where Army forces must achieve unity of effort through the employment of both state and federal forces and authorities. The Army National Guard provides capabilities to states with interstate Emergency Management Assistance Compacts facilitating the sharing of assets and resources across state borders in an emergency or disaster. In the event of a large, complex catastrophe in the homeland, the Total Force would provide the majority of Department of Defense capabilities and support. Such operations also are likely to involve organizations from the local, state, and federal levels. The need for integrated and well-coordinated contingency planning, training, and exercises is clear.

The Commission observed one such exercise, Vigilant Guard, in Minnesota. Army National Guard forces from multiple states participated in the exercise, which included a Joint task force led by a Dual Status Commander (with state and federal authority), federal forces commanded by a U.S. Army North Task Force, state and federal elements from the Chemical, Biological Radiological and Nuclear Response Enterprise, and multiple civilian immediate-response entities from several counties in Minnesota and other states. The Army is the only Service that provides U.S. Northern Command a full-time, three-star Service component command solely focused on the homeland mission, Army North. In the event of a large-scale operation, Army North will employ support and



Nuclear Disablement Team members of the 20th Support Command in Aiken, South Carolina, participate in a scenario-based exercise at Savannah River Site.

sustainment units and mission command elements from all Army components to support U.S. Northern Command.

The Commission found, through extensive discussions with and feedback from Governors, state Adjutants General, DoD officials, the U.S. Northern Command Commander, and the U.S. Army North Commander, that the Army's capabilities and capacity for disaster response and homeland defense have improved and are adequate at this time. However, potential reductions in Army forces raised many concerns. The Commission shares this concern, as the Army must continue to embrace its requirement to be prepared to conduct a large, no-notice response in the homeland with trained and ready forces.

Iran poses a multitude of potential challenges to the United States. First, its nuclear ambitions to date have created significant concerns for the United States, Israel, and other U.S. allies and partners in the Middle East. The recent nuclear agreement reached between the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Iran could provide for greater conventional military and nuclear stability in the region if Iran abides by its terms. However, should Tehran develop nuclear weapons, or appear to be on the verge of doing so, broader nuclear proliferation—potentially including Saudi Arabia—would be a strong possibility and would significantly complicate U.S. goals in the region.

Second, the continuation of Iran’s longstanding support for terrorism threatens the United States and its allies and partners. Iran’s own Revolutionary Guard Corps and Quds Force are already undertaking actions that threaten U.S. allies in the region, both Israel and Arab partners. Iran also provides the main means of support to non-state terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, which likewise threaten Israel

“No matter how clearly one thinks, it is impossible to anticipate precisely the character of future conflict. The key is not to be so far off the mark that it becomes impossible to adjust once that character is revealed.”

— Sir Michael Howard quotes in the Ministry of Defence: Strategic Trends Programme Future Character of Conflict, 2



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven K. Young

Members of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and Junglas from the Colombian National Police train TIGRES (“Policia”) commandos in Honduras to conduct operations against narcotrafficking targets.

U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Benjamin Moreau



A soldier with the 197th Field Artillery Regiment throws an RQ-11 Raven unmanned aircraft system at the start of a flight mission at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

and others. Although the recent nuclear deal may provide an opening for more moderate political forces in Iran, U.S. security authorities should assume that Iran will continue to look for unconventional and even terrorist means to pursue its regional and international goals. One bellweather of Iran's future intentions will be its investment choices following any relief from economic sanctions: whether it primarily chooses to increase spending for its conventional and unconventional military approaches or whether it grows its commercial economy and middle class.

In Asia, an area dominated by land armies, China's trajectory impacts regional security more than any other single factor. China's insistence on creating spheres of exclusive influence in the East and South China Seas will keep regional tensions high and perpetuate the risk of escalation to direct conflict with the United States. The rapid pace of China's military modernization and its actions in the air, maritime, space, and cyber domains increase the risks to U.S. forces if

tensions escalate. However, China's military and economic growth trajectory may falter as demographic and citizen demands challenge the ruling Communist party, though that could inspire China's leaders to escalate foreign issues in an effort to rally their population to the party leadership. Conflict with China remains an important consideration due to its high impact, even if its probability remains low.

The Commission sees North Korea's continued volatile nature and military provocations as a possible catalyst for Sino-American confrontation and the most likely military threat to Asian stability. North Korea's development and repeated testing of nuclear weapons demonstrates a significant threat to U.S. interests and regional stability. Failed deterrence or rapid North Korean escalation of hostilities epitomizes the need for the Army to be ready to fight tonight and win. The collapse of North Korea would present a significant threat to regional stability with conceivably greater consequences outside the region due to the possibility of loose nuclear material.

Trends suggest India should grow in global importance and acquire the ability to positively influence Asia through economic and political leadership. However, India's volatile relationship with Pakistan risks destabilizing the region and creates potential for nuclear conflict. Globally, nuclear proliferation increases the opportunities for malignant actors to acquire a nuclear weapon, especially in nations where violent extremism persists and tactical nuclear weapon stockpiles are growing. Violent extremist organizations in Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to support and direct attacks against American interests around the globe. Afghanistan represents a continuing commitment for U.S. forces and illustrates the challenge of anticipating the length of post-conflict military requirements. The regional threat to U.S. interests has overwhelmed strong U.S. desires to end the military mission in Afghanistan. This threat has the potential to increase significantly as Pakistan continues to expand its tactical nuclear weapon arsenal.

In Africa, unstable and corrupt governments have fomented civil strife and humanitarian crises, while weak states provide fertile ground for terrorist cells seeking members, financing, and safe havens. The continent faces several humanitarian challenges, both man-made and natural, ranging from civil strife and poverty to drought and disease.

Although the Western Hemisphere poses few direct threats to the United States, many countries in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean will probably struggle with economic growth while corruption and inadequate governance could cause civil unrest. The Commission expects transnational criminal organizations to remain entrenched and maintain sophisticated smuggling networks into the United States, which

terrorists or other U.S. adversaries could leverage to attack the homeland.

Globally, climate change has numerous implications for national security. Warming trends are lessening agricultural productivity in many areas and increasing the frequency of extreme weather events. The resulting food and water insecurities may increase resource competition between and within states. Changes in the Arctic have the potential to create benefits for the global economy, but may also become a flashpoint for confrontation. Russia has ambitious designs on the resource-rich Arctic region and has substantially expanded its Arctic forces. In addition to overlapping claims by Arctic nations, many non-Arctic nations, including China, have strong interests in facilitating access to low-cost shipping routes and Arctic resources.

Population growth across the globe is giving rise to megacities, which are frequently located in littoral regions, increasing the likelihood and scale of future natural disasters. Megacities offer the potential to foster economic growth and stability, but they also provide safe-haven and recruitment opportunities for criminal networks, warlords, and terrorists, especially in weakly governed, well-connected slums. These dense urban areas have the potential to create unique governmental entities transcending traditional or existing state governments and could complicate U.S. involvement on multiple levels. Moreover, some weak or failed states around the globe are likely to become more vulnerable to increasingly sophisticated criminal and terrorist networks, posing serious threats to domestic and, in certain cases, international security and stability.

MILITARY TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

Many of the current and potential geopolitical challenges described above are exacerbated by the spread of advanced technologies. The United States is increasingly challenged to maintain a technological advantage. Although the United States can and should take advantage of the rapid technological transformations now underway, it is likely to lose any monopoly it might have once held over military know-how. Information technology is trending toward ever-faster data transmission at lower costs, providing poor states and criminal organizations access to capabilities traditionally monopolized by advanced countries. Such capabilities reside in a wide range of emerging technologies.

- Precision Guidance—More lethal and accurate rockets, artillery, mortars, and missile systems will place fixed and mobile sites at greater risk and deny air and sea access to others.
- Supercomputing and Big Data—Commercialized big data

“Deterrence is tested negatively by things which do not happen. But it is never possible to demonstrate why something has not occurred...the longer peace is maintained—or the more successful deterrence is—the more it furnishes arguments for those who are opposed to the very premise of defense policy.”

Henry Kissinger, 1969.

provides any country or terrorist group access to fast, high-powered computational and analytical capacity.

- Robotics/Autonomy—Unmanned air, ground, and undersea systems for surveillance, communication relay, and lethal operations will augment or replace manned systems, increasing adversary air-to-ground and terrorist strike capabilities, while autonomous or tethered robots add to operational threats.
- Nano-technology—Nano-technology will provide forces with substantially improved capabilities (lethality, strength) while reducing logistical requirements (weight, energy consumption), which could potentially be used to make powerful explosives with lightweight composites.
- Cyber/Electro-magnetic—Nation and non-state actors already are using cyberspace attacks, advanced encryption techniques, espionage, and propaganda in their arsenal of weapons, and the development and proliferation of weapons producing an electro-magnetic pulse are a real possibility.
- Bio-technology—Medical and bio-technological advances have greatly improved soldier survivability, and exoskeletons and advanced prosthetics could revolutionize soldier care.
- Space Access—More nations and non-state actors will have access to space-based services, such as electro-optical imagery and satellite communications and navigation, while several nations have already developed weapons, lasers, and radio-frequency jammers to degrade or destroy satellites.

Furthermore, the speed of innovation and information technology is increasing the pace of operations and the ability

“As I’ve said from my first day in the chairman’s office, we need to think our way through our security challenges, not bludgeon our way through them.”

General Martin J. Dempsey, USA, quoted in POLITICO Magazine article by James Kitfield, September 26, 2015.

of adversarial actors to spread influence and action across the battlefield.

These trends reinforce the need for multilateral approaches to security problems, as threats become greater than any one nation can address on its own. However, multilateral approaches will depend on the political will and capability to use appropriate national tools. Many American allies and partners appear less willing to meet security threats with military force. Many also are flat-lining or reducing their defense expenditures to address competing social, demographic, and economic challenges—as has the United States. Even with current funding and complete commitment, few partners would be able to replicate advanced U.S. capabilities such as air and missile defense, technical intelligence collection, or aviation. Accordingly, the Commission anticipates significant limits on the capability of many allies and partners to contribute to combined land missions beyond supplying infantry units at brigade level and below.

ANTICIPATED MISSIONS FOR ARMY FORCES

Based on its understanding of the future geopolitical and technological environment, the Commission concludes that the United States requires a flexible land component force capable of contributing to a wide range of future missions in a myriad of regions and circumstances. The optimum balance of Army capabilities differ for each specific threat, but all Army core capabilities are likely to be called upon in the future.

Projected Russian doctrine and capabilities to threaten U.S. interests suggest the need for an Army with sufficient ability, as part of a joint and combined NATO or other multinational force, to quickly counter Russian armor, artillery, aviation, and proxy forces attacking European allies. Deterrence and assurance will be the primary mission for these forces. U.S. success in Europe depends on partners and adversaries believing that the U.S. military has the capability and capacity to win in combat. A substantial threat from

manned aircraft, numerous unmanned aerial vehicles, and rockets presents the need for robust anti-air and rocket defense capabilities. The most efficient capabilities against these threats may differ greatly from current conceptions; for example, electronic warfare capabilities may be more effective at identifying and countering small drones than traditional kinetic air defense capabilities would.

Events in the Middle East are likely to continue to demand Army counterterrorism and countering violent extremism operations. Trends suggest U.S. partners in both the Middle East and South Asia will continue to depend on U.S. weapons and training along with U.S. assistance during disasters. Army activities could include sustained land operations for a gray area, a counter-coercion campaign, or a mission to neutralize weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Increasing the Army’s expeditionary capability to quickly respond to threats in this region would improve the credibility of U.S. deterrence and expand response options during crises.

In Asia, efforts to deter potential adversaries and assure partners, along with humanitarian response and disaster relief operations, likely would constitute the most frequent Army requirements. Successful deterrence and assurance requires strong strategic lift and improving U.S. and partner-nation anti-aircraft, anti-ship, and anti-missile capabilities to ensure freedom of movement. Army power projection from land into the air, sea, and cyber domains could provide Joint Commanders with the ability to deter, assure, and sustain land forces in the region despite enemy anti-access capabilities. Army leaders will likely also serve in an important military diplomacy role in support of the State Department because the armies of Asian nations generally hold more influence than their navy or air force counterparts. All the while, the U.S. Army must maintain trained and ready forces to deter an aggressive and unpredictable North Korea, which could collapse from within or launch an unprovoked attack on its neighbors. In either case, North Korea will present substantial WMD—chemical, biological, or nuclear—and humanitarian concerns, necessitating a large and long-term commitment of U.S. Army forces.

As with the Middle East, South Asian threats indicate the Army should have the ability to proficiently conduct sustained counterterrorism and countering violent extremism operations, both independently and through partners. Security cooperation, civil affairs, counter-WMD, and information operations would be enduring regional requirements due to the many American interests at stake in the region, including the capacity of partners to contribute to counter-WMD and stability operations. However, large populations, frequency of national disasters, history of terrorism, traditions of

anti-Americanism, regional tensions, and growth of nuclear weapons complicate Army operations in the region.

Expected Army missions in Africa and Latin America will focus on efforts to build partner capacity, counterterrorism missions, countering violent extremism activities, and countering transnational criminal organizations. These missions emphasize Army trainers, including Special Operations Forces, intelligence assets, logistics, engineers, and civil affairs. The most important mission remains developing the institutional capabilities of host nations, building upon previous U.S. assistance. Generally, the evidence suggests missions to provide disaster relief or stop infectious disease outbreaks will remain steady or grow.

Despite all the threats abroad, the United States homeland will remain a chief concern for Army forces. Aside from girding against potential attacks from both state and non- or near-state actors, the nation must prepare to respond to terrorist attacks on a scale that ranges from small, localized incidents to regional events with numerous casualties and severe detrimental impact on infrastructure. Responding to natural and man-made disasters is part of the Army's purview. Governors will continue to rely on their National Guard assets in the event of severe weather events, earthquakes, wildfires, and civil unrest, and Army Reserve and Regular Army forces will likewise be called upon to render defense support of civil authorities. Responding in the homeland remains a Total Force mission, both military and civilian.

In all these missions, the most overarching mission requirement will be developing the Army's human capital—creating flexible and adaptable personnel who can respond to adversary efforts to exploit U.S. vulnerabilities and avoid U.S. strengths. Army leaders will need to adapt available capabilities and technology to unexpected missions. To retain a competitive advantage, the Army should emphasize the following:

1. Developing leaders who can adapt to enemy actions and new technology;
2. Improving cyber capabilities due to the Army's increasing reliance on computer networks and the growth of cyber capabilities by state and non-state actors;
3. Expanding capabilities to operate in urban environments due to growing urbanization;
4. Enabling units to operate in a dispersed manner, with smaller and more flexible formations that better leverage partners and respond to hybrid challenges;



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Porch

Private First Class Brandon Johnson, assigned to Task Force First Round at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, and other soldiers worked with wildland firefighters to help suppress the Kaniksu Complex fires.

5. Improving air, rocket, and missile defenses against growing threats from air and ground artillery and missile systems; and
6. Investing in potentially game-changing technologies and preparing leaders to accept and exploit such new technologies to provide U.S. forces with the greatest advantage possible.

Based on its survey of future requirements compared to average requirements in the past, the Commission did not find a reason to expect the use of U.S. Army forces to decline, either in the near or distant future. Rather, the current security environment could demand a greater need for U.S. Army units in missions that are more diverse and geographically dispersed than ever before.

A HISTORY OF READINESS CRISES

Though it eventually mobilized almost eight million soldiers to fight the Second World War, the U.S. Army was woefully unprepared when the war began. In three wars since, the nation again had to play catch up with its armed forces upon the onset of conflict.

With two oceans serving as a buffer for the homeland, and with lingering regret over the casualties of 1917–1918, the United States saw no need to build a large Army. Consequently, when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the U.S. Army had less than 190,000 personnel on active duty. Germany's conquest of France in June 1940 convinced President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Congress that the Army was ill-prepared should the nation go to war. So, Congress mobilized the National Guard in August 1940 and established the nation's first peacetime draft in September. However, both measures were to expire after one year.

Mobilization did not go smoothly. Through the winter and spring of 1941, the Army struggled to build temporary bases and gather uniforms, equipment, and supplies. General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, had trouble filling leadership ranks as almost half of the National Guardsmen who reported for duty were discharged because they were unfit, needed for essential war industries, or claimed family hardship.

In August 1941, despite the growing threats around the globe, the U.S. House of Representatives extended the call-up of the National Guard and the draft by a margin of just one vote, 203 to 202. Meanwhile, President Roosevelt diverted most of the arms and equipment the Army needed to Britain and Russia to help those countries stave off defeat. The President even directed the Army in September 1941 to reduce its ranks and discharge Guardsmen and soldiers, believing they would not be needed in the near future.

That future came three months later with the attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1942, the Army rushed to build large, combat-ready forces but had too few company and field

grade officers or sergeants to train and lead new recruits. The Army drew leaders from hastily assembled units to provide cadre for other new units. Though the initial stages of the November 1942 North Africa campaign in French Morocco and French Algeria were largely successful, American forces suffered defeat in their first major engagement with German troops at the Battle of Kasserine Pass in February 1943.

The next readiness crisis for the Army came less than five years after the end of World War II—five years of reduced spending on the Army—when North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950. The Army rushed poorly equipped and ill-trained units from Japan to South Korea, and, repeating the results of 1942, the Americans were quickly overwhelmed by North Korean armor. Unprepared Regular Army units deployed from the United States as rapidly as possible as President Harry S. Truman mobilized the National Guard and the Organized Reserve Corps. Though the Army's authorized end strength was increased, it took months to draft and train tens of thousands more soldiers and bring National Guard divisions up to full strength. By the time the Army had more ready forces to commit to Korea, the war had devolved into a stalemate leading to a ceasefire two years later.

After the Korean War, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's New Look strategy counted on nuclear retaliation to counter communist aggression, a strategy that led to the marginalization of the Army in defense strategy and significant Army reductions. The Army invested in the reserve components as a hedge against wartime operational demands, but the Berlin Crisis of 1961 demonstrated that reserve units needed more post-mobilization training than Army planners had realized. President John F. Kennedy, meanwhile, embraced Special Operations Forces as a solution for small wars, such as the growing advisory effort in Vietnam.

In 1965, as Viet Cong attacks intensified, General William Westmoreland, the commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, determined he needed American ground combat forces to launch offensive operations

to prevent the South Vietnamese government from falling. President Lyndon B. Johnson approved General Westmoreland's requests for hundreds of thousands of troops, but the President rejected repeated requests to mobilize reserve component forces. Instead, President Johnson filled the Army's ranks with conscripts by doubling monthly draft calls. Because conscripts only had to serve a year in Vietnam before being discharged, the Army had to rely increasingly on career soldiers to provide experienced leadership, which put excess stress on the force as the war continued. The end of the draft and the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force became an opportunity to rebuild a professional Army, but for the remainder of the 1970s, resources were sparse and defeat in Vietnam reverberated in institutional memory.

The Army in the 1980s turned the resources provided by President Ronald Reagan's buildup into ready combat power, and a generation of officers used the lessons of the past to build a force that could prevail on the battlefield. The Persian Gulf War (1990–1991) was a resounding success for the Army. It was also an anomaly, a rare moment when, due to the sudden end of the Cold War and what turned out to be months of advanced preparation before the onset of combat, the Regular Army's readiness far exceeded requirements. Although many Reserve and National Guard units deployed for the war, three Army National Guard combat brigades, designated as round out formations, did not deploy with their associated Regular Army divisions. Why was hotly debated: that they were not ready, that they required too much post-mobilization training, that readiness standards were imposed to preclude deploying the National Guard combat brigades, or that readiness requirements and reporting standards were too vague. The debate, though, helped foster a new commitment to increasing reserve component readiness.

Yet, the Army faced another readiness crisis in 2006—well after the onset of war in Iraq. Budget cuts forced the Army to shrink by a third in the early 1990s while, paradoxically, renewed confidence in military solutions led to more deployments. Demands on all the Services soon outstripped the supply of regular forces and required

greater use of the reserve components. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq initially saw dramatic successes but did not lead to decisive victory. In late 2004, both the Army Reserve and Army National Guard warned that growing demands were having a detrimental effect on their ranks. Two years later General Peter Schoomaker, the Chief of Staff of the Army, warned that “without recurrent access to the reserve components through remobilization, we will break the active component.” When President George W. Bush decided to surge forces to Iraq, he simultaneously expanded the Army. However, growing the Army's end strength by tens of thousands in a couple of years brought its own difficulties with significant increases in enlistment bonuses and lower enlistment standards.

A readiness crisis is easier to regret in hindsight than to predict or prevent ahead of time. There are no easy paths for building a ready force before the demand for ground combat power is immediate and significant. Within the span of living memory, the United States has used multiple solutions for the problem of building readiness:

- Full reserve mobilization, conscription, and expansion (World War II);
- Partial mobilization, conscription, and expansion (Korea);
- No mobilization, conscription, and expansion (Vietnam);
- Presidential Order to active duty (Gulf War);
- Partial mobilization and limited expansion (2001-2011).

Peacetime savings always seem pennywise at the time. But when wars come, policymakers and commanders struggle to build forces for the fight, often regretting not having made the Army ready before sending soldiers into combat without the formations, numbers, equipment, supplies, or training they need to accomplish the mission.