

December 28, 1992

## A PLAN FOR PRESERVING AMERICA'S MILITARY STRENGTH

*I pledge to maintain military forces strong enough to deter and when necessary to defeat any threat to our essential interests.*

Bill Clinton  
*December 12, 1991, speech  
at Georgetown University*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President-elect Clinton, during the campaign you committed yourself to maintaining a strong national defense. You said that the U.S. must have adequate military strength to deter, and if necessary defeat, any threat to the nation's vital interests. Thus, you committed yourself to a military that retains a nuclear deterrent, is able to project power overseas, preserves America's lead in space systems, and is well-trained and equipped for combat.

These defense goals are laudable. However, during the campaign you also made statements that appear to contradict them. For example, while you say you support a survivable nuclear deterrent, you also endorse the idea of banning nuclear tests, which are necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear arsenal. Moreover, while you talk about the need for the capability to project American power overseas, you also want to cut the number of U.S. aircraft carriers—the central element in the nation's power projection forces—from twelve to ten.

To clear up the confusion, you should make a speech that affirms your campaign commitments to strengthen American defenses. In this speech, you should not only reaffirm specific commitments, but overcome some of your earlier contradictions. To do this you should:

- ✓ **Set a floor on the overall size of the military.** You have promised to cut \$60 billion from President Bush's \$1.42 trillion five-year defense budget. This reduction is too large. You should set not arbitrary funding levels, but a specific force structure. This force would include twelve active duty Army divisions, twelve active duty Air Force tactical wings, 450 Navy ships, and 177,000 active duty Marines. This force would cost about \$1.4 trillion over five years, or about the level of defense spending projected by the Bush Administration.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The twelve active duty Army divisions recommended here include the equivalent of two divisions in brigades and regiments that are not organized into divisions.

- ✓ **Maintain the nuclear triad.** The U.S. has pledged to reduce its strategic nuclear arsenal from the current level of 13,000 to 3,500 warheads. This makes it more necessary than ever to retain the three legs of the nuclear triad—sea-, land-, and air-based nuclear weapons. The reason: At lower levels of forces, greater diversity of deployment is needed to protect them from surprise attack.
- ✓ **Commit specific forces to project power to specific regions.** Power projection is now the most important mission for the military. With fewer forces deployed overseas, America must be able to project military power from U.S. territory. To guide the military as it restructures its forces, you thus should make specific commitments about the size and composition of the forces you are prepared to send to distant regions. For example, you should plan to allocate forces roughly the size of those used in Operation Desert Storm to defend U.S. interests in the Middle East in time of conflict.
- ✓ **Continue to produce, not just develop, new generations of weapons.** Advanced technology is America's trump card in defeating its enemies on the battlefield. This was amply demonstrated in the Persian Gulf War. To retain its technological edge on the battlefield, America will have to build new generations of weapons, and not just develop prototypes to put "on the shelf."
- ✓ **Set dates for the deployment of defenses against both short-range and long-range missiles.** The American people and U.S. military forces all deserve protection against missile strikes. Specific commitments should be made to field defenses against short-range missiles by 1996 and long-range missiles by 2002.
- ✓ **Establish a new policy for ensuring U.S. access to and control of space in the event of conflict.** Prevailing in a conflict requires that the U.S. military control space. The military depends on satellites and other space systems for intelligence, communications, navigation, and warning of attack. A clear and comprehensive policy needs to be established to ensure that the U.S. can control space during wartime.
- ✓ **Retain an effective military force focused on its mission.** America must not recreate the "hollow force" of the 1970s, when weapons did not work for lack of spare parts and U.S. troops were poorly trained. This means not only funding training and maintenance programs, but designing a force that includes no more than four reserve Army divisions, nine reserve Air Force tactical wings and 16,000 reservists in the Marine Corps.<sup>2</sup> Maintaining combat readiness also requires that you not undermine morale or distract the military from its mission. Therefore, you should not lift the ban on homosexuals serving in the military, not allow women in combat, and avoid assigning the Pentagon such non-military tasks as environmental research and urban assistance.

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2 The four Army reserve divisions recommended here include separate brigades that, although not organized into a division, are the equivalent of a division in number of troops.

## SEVEN COMMITMENTS ON DEFENSE

During the presidential campaign you or Senator Gore made seven commitments designed to strengthen the nation's defense. They were:

**Commitment #1: Maintain a strong force.** You said: "I pledge to maintain military forces strong enough to deter and when necessary to defeat any threat to our essential interests." December 12, 1991, speech at Georgetown University.

**Commitment #2: Retain a nuclear deterrent.** You said: "But as an irreducible minimum, we must retain a survivable nuclear force to deter any conceivable threat." December 12, 1991, speech at Georgetown University.

**Commitment #3: Project power overseas.** You said: "We need a force capable of projecting power quickly when and where it is needed." December 12, 1991, speech at Georgetown University.

**Commitment #4: Deploy high-tech weaponry.** You said: "We must maintain our technological edge." December 12, 1991, speech at Georgetown University.

**Commitment #5: Deploy missile defenses.** You said: "First, we would develop and deploy theater-based [missile] defense systems—like *Patriot* and its successors—to defend U.S. troops and allies against the existing threat of short-range missile attack.... Second, we should focus strategic defense research on a limited defense of the United States against the possibility of new ICBM threats.... Third, we should support a prudent re-research program on more advanced follow-on anti-missile technologies." Interview in the July 13, 1992, edition of *Defense Week*.

**Commitment #6: Recognize the importance of space in military operations.** Senator Gore said: "Bill Clinton and I recognize the role our aerospace industry plays in preserving our national security...." October 19, 1992, statement at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland.

**Commitment #7: Keep U.S. forces ready for combat.** You said: "Our new military must be more *ready*, because the new world will be unpredictable." Speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council on August 13, 1992.

## CONTRADICTIONARY STATEMENTS

These seven commitments are the foundation of a sound defense policy for the post-Cold-War era. However, during the campaign you muddled your message on defense by making statements that contradict these commitments. For example:

**Contradiction #1:** You made a commitment to maintain a strong, combat-ready force. Yet you also pledged to cut the defense budget by \$60 billion by 1997. These two goals are contradictory. Shrinking the defense budget by \$60 billion will reduce the size of the force too much. Existing security commitments will not be met, the purchase of needed weapons will be deferred, and training will suffer.



**Contradiction #2:** You pledged to make progress on fielding anti-missile defenses. Yet you also endorsed large-scale funding reductions for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program. Large-scale funding reductions for SDI will cripple the effort to field anti-missile defenses.

**Contradiction #3:** You promised America a combat-ready military force. Yet you support those in Congress who wish to cut active forces while retaining a large reserve force that is not ready for combat. Reservists, who train only periodically, cannot be as combat-ready as those active-duty forces that train full time.

## MAKING GOOD ON CAMPAIGN PLEDGES

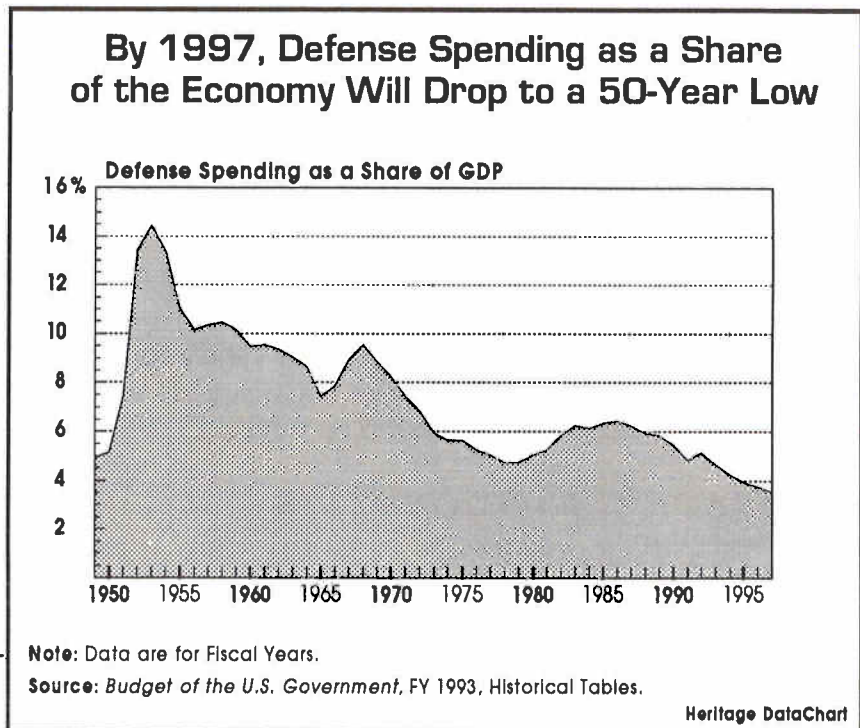
To overcome this problem of contradictory statements, you should reaffirm your intention to fulfill your seven campaign commitments. Doing this, however, will require jettisoning other commitments that, if honored, not only will contradict your stated defense commitments, but will muddle your strong defense message.

Thus, early in your administration, you should make a speech articulating your national security policy. In this speech you should:

### Establish the minimum size of U.S. military forces.





Maintaining the forces strong enough to deter, and if necessary to defeat, potential enemies, as outlined in your first commitment, means establishing a minimum level of forces. Your goal should be that the U.S. retain at least twelve active Army divisions, twelve active Air Force tactical fighter wings, 450 Navy ships, and 177,000 Marines on active duty.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, you cannot build this force and keep your pledge to slash an additional \$60 billion from the Bush Administration's five-year defense plan. Thus, you should acknowledge in your national security speech that maintaining a force of the size you want, armed with high technology weapons, might cost more than you indicated in the campaign. In acknowledging this, you should add that the Bush plan will reduce the defense burden, as a percentage of gross domestic product, to 3.6 percent, which is the lowest level since before World War II.



<sup>3</sup> The twelve active Army divisions described here includes brigades and regiments not organized into divisions and as such is descriptive of the overall size of the Army force.

## Military Force Reductions: Current Plans Facing the Clinton Administration

		End FY 1991 Force	Bush Base Force	Heritage Recommended Floor Force
	<b>Army Divisions</b>	19 Active* 16 Reserve**	14 Active* 8 Reserve**	12 Active* 4 Reserve**
	<b>Air Force Tactical Wings</b>	22 Active 12 Reserve	15 Active 11 Reserve	12 Active 9 Reserve
	<b>Navy</b>	528 Ships 15 Carriers***	450 Ships 13 Carriers***	450 Ships 13 Carriers***
	<b>Marine Corps Personnel</b>	194,000 Active 45,000 Reserve	159,000 Active 35,000 Reserve	177,000 Active 16,000 Reserve

\* Accounts for separate brigades and regiments not organized into divisions.

\*\* Accounts for separate brigades not organized into divisions, but does not include 2 cadre divisions.

\*\*\* Includes training carrier.

### **Commit yourself to retaining a modern strategic triad even at a reduced level of forces.**

The agreement reached last June with Russia to reduce U.S. and Russian strategic warheads to 3,500 should not be interpreted as step toward eliminating nuclear weapons altogether. Protecting U.S. security will require a minimum level of nuclear forces. While your second commitment—to retain a survivable nuclear force—requires you to support the continued deployment of nuclear forces, you have not provided details. To fill out your position, you should say in your speech that:

- ✓ **The reduction in American nuclear forces depends on whether Russia and the other nuclear-armed republics of the former Soviet Union reduce or eliminate their nuclear weapons.**
- ✓ **Even if Russia and the others cooperate on arms reductions, you will not reduce the U.S. strategic nuclear force below the 3,500-warhead limit.**
- ✓ **Even at reduced levels, you will preserve the strategic triad.** This will assure that the remaining force is both survivable and flexible. It is important to recognize as well, that the long-range bomber force can play an important role in force projection when armed with conventional bombs.
- ✓ **The U.S. reserves the option to retaliate with nuclear weapons if its territory, forces, or allies are attacked with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.** Preserving this option may help deter future U.S. adversaries from attacking with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.

Your commitment to a strong nuclear deterrent is contradicted by the 1992 Democratic Party Platform, which calls for a comprehensive nuclear test ban. The periodic testing of nuclear weapons is necessary to ensure their safety and reliability. Thus, you should insist that the U.S. be allowed to test its nuclear weapons for as long as they exist in the arsenal. To do this, you will have to overturn the decision made by Congress earlier this year to impose a 1996 deadline for ending all nuclear tests.

**□ Specify the forces that you plan to retain in order to project power to distant regions of the globe.**

You were correct to demand that U.S. forces be able to respond quickly to military threats around the globe. The U.S. must commit itself to preventing hostile powers from dominating or destabilizing East Asia, Europe, and the Persian Gulf. Such a commitment will serve to protect vital U.S. interests by assuring a global balance of power. Therefore, in your speech you should describe the forces America is prepared to commit to each of these regions. Further, the U.S. needs additional forces capable of winning smaller conflicts in less important regions. Together, these power projection forces should enable the U.S. to prevail simultaneously in one major conflict and one smaller conflict.

The size of American military forces dedicated to maintaining security in East Asia should be modeled on the requirement to defend South Korea from an attack by North Korea. This is not to say that defending South Korea is the sole purpose of U.S. forces in East Asia. An important political purpose of these forces will be to keep Japan secure under the U.S. defense umbrella and thereby prevent a regional arms race. Mounting a defense of South Korea will require at least one armor division, one infantry division, one light division, one air assault division, and one airborne division for the Army; one Marine Expeditionary Force; sixteen tactical air squadrons for the Air Force; and seventy ships (including four aircraft carriers) for the Navy.

The force dedicated to safeguarding American interests in the Middle East should be modeled on the force that fought the Persian Gulf War. Thus, in time of war the U.S. must be able to send to the Middle East six heavy armor and mechanized divisions, one light division, one air assault division, and two armored cavalry regiments for the Army; three brigades deployed on land and at least one at sea for the Marines; 24 tactical air squadrons for the Air Force; and seventy ships (including four aircraft carriers) for the Navy.

A U.S. presence in Europe is necessary to safeguard American interests there and to ensure stability during this period of rapid change. This means adapting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to new political realities. Doing so requires that associate membership in NATO be extended to the countries of Eastern Europe that adhere to democracy, a free market, and respect for their neighbors. This associate membership, however, should not include extending the U.S. nuclear umbrella over these countries.

The peacetime U.S. force deployed in Europe should include one reinforced Army division and one Air Force tactical air wing, roughly 75,000 troops in all. The forces required to help respond to a crisis in Europe will depend on what threats may arise in the future. Nevertheless, if a crisis is imminent, the U.S. should rebuild its presence in Europe to the levels that existed in 1990: seven Army divisions, eight tactical fighter wings for the Air Force, and four aircraft carriers for the Navy.

Finally, the U.S. should retain additional forces to handle a smaller conflict, such as the 1989-1990 Operation Just Cause, which ousted Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega. This force should include: one infantry brigade, one battalion of armor, one mechanized battalion, one airborne battalion, one Ranger battalion, one Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), four tactical air



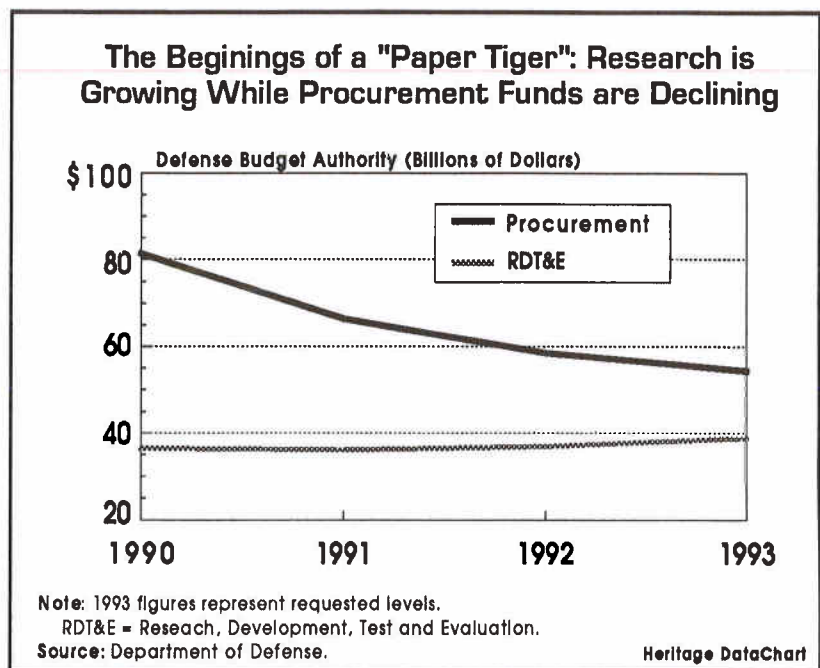
squadrons, one special operations air group, two carrier task forces, and various special operations units.

Unfortunately, Mr. Clinton, your commitment to emphasize power projection forces was contradicted by your promise to reduce the number of aircraft carriers from twelve to ten.<sup>4</sup> Ten carriers are not enough to cover all of America's far-flung regional commitments. Given that three or four of the carriers will be in port for maintenance at any one time, perhaps as few as six carriers will be available to patrol the world's oceans. The result will be carriers at sea for intolerably long periods of time, perhaps the better part of a year. Thus, in your speech you should correct your course, stating that the Navy needs at least twelve operational aircraft carriers, in addition to the one training carrier.

### □ Insist on producing, not just developing, high technology weapons.

High technology is America's trump card in war. You acknowledged as much in your fourth defense commitment—to maintain the U.S. military's technological edge. Some in Congress, however, mistakenly believe that this can be done by developing advanced weapons prototypes and "putting them on the shelf" until needed. There are four reasons why this is a dangerous misconception.

**Reason #1:** An arsenal relying heavily on weapon prototypes will have too few operational weapons for war-fighting. Proponents of prototyping assume that America will have plenty of warning to gear up for a major war. Given the uncertainty in the former Soviet Union, this is an assumption the U.S. cannot afford to make.



**Reason #2:** To be effective using high technology weapons, troops must train with them on a routine basis, something that cannot be done with an off-the-shelf prototype.

**Reason #3:** Many important technological advances in weapons are made as they go into production cycle. For example, the electronic navigation, flight control and targeting systems (avionics) for jet fighters often are improved during and after production. This is because combat pilots learn the characteristics of fighters as they train with them. Suggested improvements are then incorporated into the future avionics packages. These improvements would be lacking on technologically stagnant prototypes.

4 "Clinton Shines New Light On Defense Views As Nomination Nears," *DefenseWeek*, July 13, 1992, p. 14.

**Reason #4:** Overemphasizing research and development at the expense of production will undermine the nation's military industrial base. The reason: a healthy industrial base depends on operating production lines. Military industry will not maintain idle production lines in anticipation of a future crisis. Absent production, the industrial capacity in the defense sector will wither.

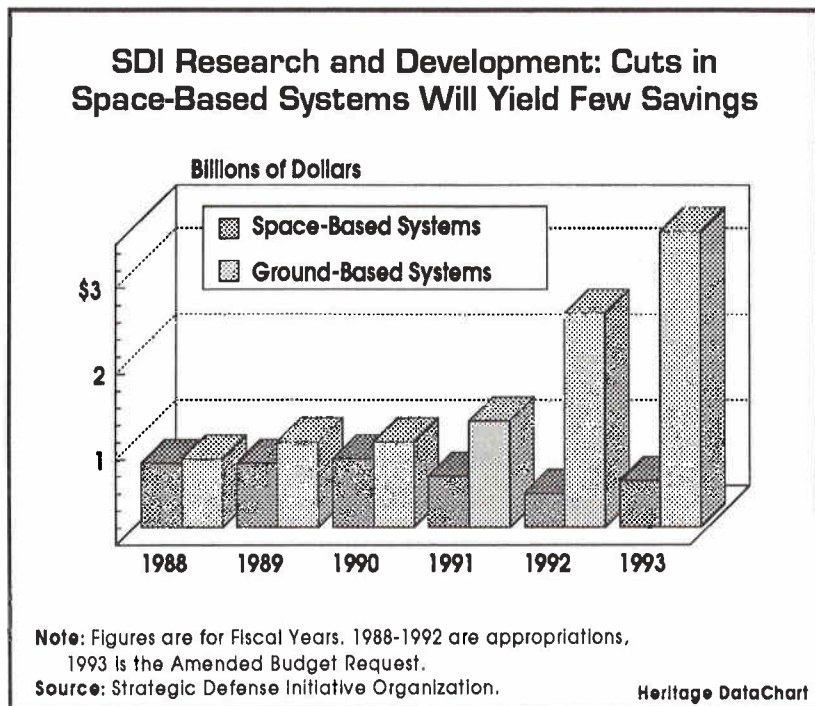
To ensure that American forces have a sufficient number of weapons when they need them, you should order the Pentagon to produce—not just develop—such important weapons as the F-22 advanced tactical fighter, V-22 *Osprey* transport aircraft, and the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system.

Your commitment to a high-tech military is contradicted by your promise to slash spending for SDI, which is the Pentagon's most important advanced technology program. It is working on highly capable sensor systems, advanced computers, and new rocket technologies that are relevant not only for strategic defense, but for other military missions. If you reduce the SDI program too much, you undoubtedly will inflict significant damage on the military's ability to fight with the world's most advanced weaponry.

**□ Set specific target dates for the deployment of defenses against short-range and long-range missiles.**

Of all the statements you made during the campaign on defense, none have been more confusing and contradictory than those you have made about the SDI program. For example, while you have promised to make progress on building anti-missile defenses, you also have advocated deep cuts in the SDI program. This goal cannot be met if the SDI program suffers major funding reductions. The development and deployment of anti-missile defenses requires not only testing such systems as the Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI) missile, but building them as well. If these often expensive tests are not conducted, SDI cannot be reliably deployed. Large-scale funding cuts for SDI will reduce the program to a very expensive research project.

You also want the U.S. to observe strictly the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which prohibits the deployment of wide-scale defenses. Strict observance of the ABM Treaty, however, will prevent the deployment of effective defenses against ballistic missiles. Your advisors probably have told you that the ABM Treaty, which was aimed at long-range or "strategic" missiles, does not stand in the way of deploying defenses against short- and intermediate-range (theater) missiles. But they are wrong. Even though the intent of the treaty was not to restrict theater anti-missile defenses, its technical requirements have that effect. This is because in some instances it is impossible to distinguish between theater and





long-range (strategic) defenses. If a system is deemed to be capable of countering a long-range missile, it is restricted by the treaty. The THAAD system is likely to be this category.

Strict observance of the ABM Treaty also will undermine the strategic defense negotiations with the Russians. If Moscow chooses to modify or even abandon the ABM Treaty, the U.S. position will slow progress in the negotiations.

You also mistakenly have downplayed the missile threat to America. But the missiles in the former Soviet Union and China still exist and could be launched accidentally at the U.S. Moreover, if nations like China and Russia continue to sell missiles and missile components to Third World thugs, the missile threat to America may arise faster than is now forecast by the intelligence community. Remember that even at the Bush Administration's proposed funding levels for SDI, it will be over ten years before a nation-wide defense against small-scale missile strikes is deployed. Given the growing proliferation threat, you should not allow SDI deployment dates to slip.

You can clarify your position by announcing that your goal is to deploy defenses against short- and intermediate-range missiles by 1996. Deployment of defenses against small-scale strikes (comprising fewer than 200 attacking warheads) from long-range missiles should take place by no later than 2002.

**Announce a policy that will ensure that the U.S. controls space in the event of a conflict.**

One of the most important lessons of the Persian Gulf War is that space-based systems for intelligence-gathering, communications, navigation, and early warning are critical to success on the battlefield. U.S. forces depended more on satellites during that war than at any other time in history. As this lesson makes clear, the ability to control space during times of armed conflict will be increasingly important in the future. The U.S. now has an historic opportunity to establish control over space in much the same way it controlled the open seas after World War II. Therefore, after your inauguration, you should establish a space policy that, at a minimum, achieves the following goals:

**Goal #1: Protect U.S. space systems against attack or interference.** If an enemy can easily undermine U.S. space systems that are used to support combat operations by either attacking them directly or interfering with their electronic signals, they will quickly be rendered useless during a conflict. This new policy must ensure that U.S. military satellites are survivable.

**Goal #2: Counter enemy satellites.** Space systems have as much value to enemy forces as to U.S. forces. In recognition of this fact, the U.S. military must be able to destroy enemy satellites during a conflict.

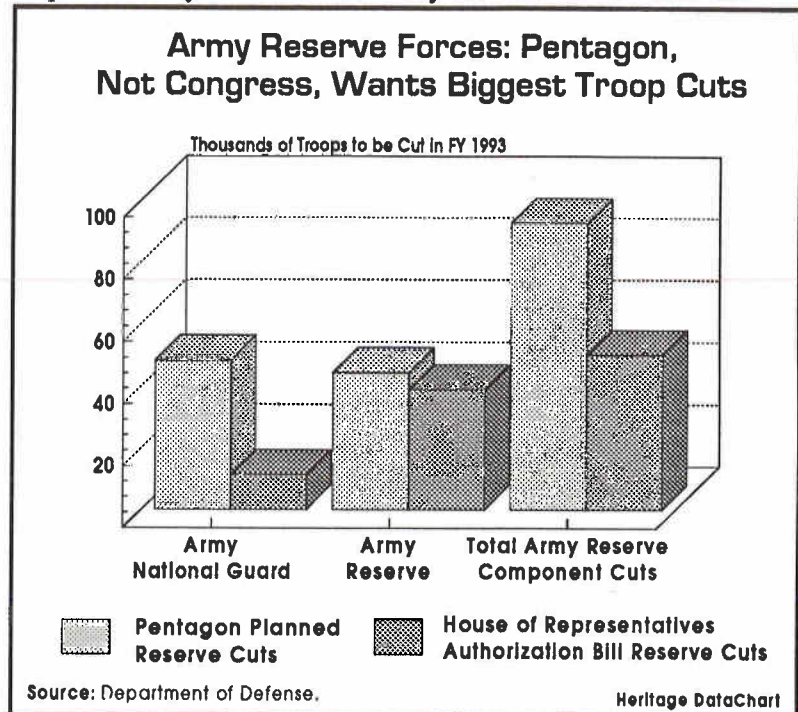
**Goal #3: Limit the proliferation of space technology.** The spread of military space technology to outlaw regimes such as Iran, Iraq, and Libya will pose a threat to U.S. interests. This policy should include proposals for limiting the access of Third World countries to this technology, including space-launch rockets, satellites, anti-satellite weapons, and satellite receiving units.

**Pledge to retain a force that is active, professional, and not distracted from its mission.**

Combat readiness is a key ingredient of military power. A well-trained and equipped force is needed not only to win battles, but to assure low casualties. To maintain a combat-ready force, you should establish a set of goals. They are:

**Goal #1: Emphasize active-duty over reserve forces.** During the campaign you indicated that you may support greater reliance on National Guard and Reserve forces. This would be a mistake. Troops that train periodically cannot be as ready for combat as those that train every day. As such, you should establish ceilings for Guard and Reserve manpower levels at: four Army reserve divisions, nine Air Force tactical air wings, and 16,000 Marine reserve personnel.<sup>5</sup>

**Goal #2: Maintain a professional, all-volunteer military.** During the campaign you pledged your support for some kind of national service. However, it is unclear whether you included military service as an option. You should state in your national security speech that military service is not an option under this program. The presence in the military of conscripts who do not want to be there only would undermine combat readiness and morale.



**Goal #3: Maintain a force focused on its military mission.** The armed forces exist for the sole purpose of defending the United States from outside military threats. Today, however, there are growing calls for using the armed forces for a variety of purposes not related to national defense—for example, rebuilding inner cities, providing discipline and education for troubled youth, rehabilitating criminals, and conducting environmental research.

These tasks are serious distractions for the military. It is difficult enough today to field an effective force without requiring it to assume additional and unnecessary tasks. If non-combat missions such as these become a focus of military training, rather than a side benefit, they will undermine combat readiness and inevitably cost American lives.

<sup>5</sup> The four Army divisions described here include brigades that are not organized into divisions and therefore only describe the size of the relevant forces. Nor do these divisions include the Bush Administration's proposal for two "cadre" divisions.

A more ominous development is the use of the military for social experiments. Feminists and others are seeking to remove all restrictions on allowing women in combat, and gay rights activists are demanding an end to the Pentagon's well-founded ban on homosexuals in uniform. They argue that the purpose of the armed forces is to provide equal career opportunities to women and homosexuals, and that the armed forces need the best individuals they can get, regardless of their sex or sexual orientation.

Both arguments are wrong. The purpose of the armed forces is to defeat an enemy as quickly and with as few American casualties as possible. This means that the first priority of the Pentagon should be an effective fighting force, and not some social program. Only when the differences among troops are minimized can they perform capably in combat. Individual sexual identity causes unpredictable distractions and has unpredictable implications; it is too big a problem to allow in a military unit. When it comes to risking lives in combat, prudence should take precedence over ideology.

## CONCLUSION

Mr. Clinton, a military failure can destroy your presidency. You need look no farther than the failed Iran hostage mission in 1980 to find an example. You can prevent such a failure by maintaining a strong national defense. You are lucky. You have inherited an American fighting force that is the best in history. It would be utter folly to let this force wither because of an unclear and inconsistent defense policy. The nation, our allies, and our potential adversaries need to know that your pro-defense statements made during the campaign were true and serious.

Baker Spring  
Senior Policy Analyst



