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## THE DECLINE OF U.S. MILITARY STRENGTH SINCE THE GULF WAR

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The United States military buildup in the Persian Gulf even as some 20,000 American troops are occupying Haiti offers an opportunity to reassess the Clinton Administration's defense plans. With the dramatic reductions in U.S. military spending and the size of the armed forces that have occurred since 1990 and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Americans are correct in wondering whether there is a danger that U.S. forces are stretched too thin.

The anecdotal evidence is compelling. For example, six aircraft carriers provided just under 20 percent of all the air sorties during the Gulf war. Of those six carriers, two no longer are in commission. Meanwhile, two Navy battleships delivered 2.1 million pounds of ordnance to assist the ground forces prior to their triumphant 100-hour campaign.<sup>1</sup> Neither of those ships is in service.

For its part, the U.S. Army relied heavily on forces based in Europe to augment its buildup in the Persian Gulf prior to the war. Of the two U.S. Army corps in Germany, one (VII Corps) was sent to the Gulf and played a major role in the liberation of Kuwait. Since Desert Storm, VII Corps has returned to the U.S. and been deactivated.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time that this dramatic reduction of forces has been occurring, the Clinton Administration has greatly increased the number of spots where U.S. troops are deployed. While the total number of overseas forces has fallen because of the steep decline (65 percent) in the number of American troops stationed in Europe, U.S. forces are now spread out among no fewer than fifteen United Nations and other multinational operations around the globe. This ranges from nearly 20,000 troops occupying Haiti to over 500 in Macedonia and some 30 in the Western Sahara.<sup>3</sup> The ongoing buildup in the Gulf is taking place against this backdrop.

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- 1 "The United States Navy in 'Desert Shield'/'Desert Storm,'" Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C., May 15, 1991.
- 2 Brigadier General Robert H. Scales, Jr., *Certain Victory: United States Army in the Gulf War*, Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, Washington, D.C., 1993.
- 3 "U.S. Forces Acting in Support of U.N. Operations," Unpublished paper, United Nations Division, The Joint Staff, Department of Defense

Meanwhile, though, the Clinton Administration recently published its National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement. In it, the White House reaffirmed its commitment—first outlined in the “Bottom-Up Review” of U.S. security requirements published in September 1993—to be able to conduct two wars on the scale of Operation Desert Storm “nearly simultaneously.” In an interview on October 11, even as some 40,000 U.S. troops were preparing to return to the Persian Gulf, Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch underscored the Administration’s belief that this remains official U.S. policy.<sup>4</sup>

This ambitious strategy would have been plausible at the time of Operation Desert Storm. Today, however, there are doubts. In a study released within days of the National Security Strategy, the government’s General Accounting Office determined that the President’s own defense budget did not provide sufficient funds to pay for the two-war scenario. The GAO determined that the amount of the shortfall would be as much as \$150 billion over five years.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is appropriate for Americans to wonder if the current crisis in the Gulf will put a strain on U.S. military readiness. Few doubt the ability for the United States to mount a credible offensive force should Saddam Hussein continue to threaten Kuwait or other American allies in the region. But as the data provided in the following pages suggest, it is an open question whether a similar buildup could occur at the same time in another far-flung region of the world, as called for in the Clinton strategy.

Given the stalemate in the negotiations with North Korea regarding that nation’s possible development of nuclear weapons—which President Clinton has implied would be met with force—this is not an academic question. Deputy Secretary Deutch, in the October 11 interview, noted that such a scenario is not plausible. But the desire of opponents to pin down a great power by opening a “second front” while that power’s forces are focused elsewhere is hardly implausible, and the notion deserves more public airing than Deutch’s offhanded rejection of it.

While most Americans have not been paying attention as the Clinton Administration has begun gutting the nation’s defenses, it is likely Saddam Hussein, Kim Jong-Il, and other potential adversaries have.

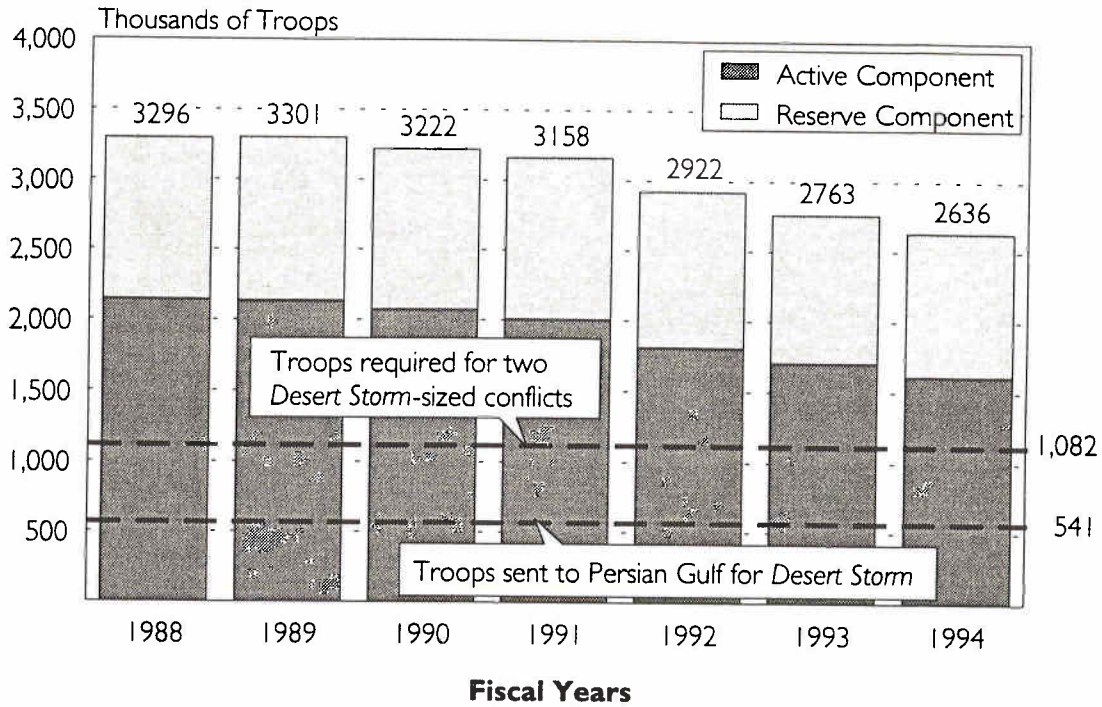
Rob Chase conducted research for this paper.

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4 ABC News *Nightline*, October 11, 1994.

5 For a full discussion, see Lawrence T. Di Rita, “Clinton’s Bankrupt National Security Strategy,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1000, September 27, 1994.

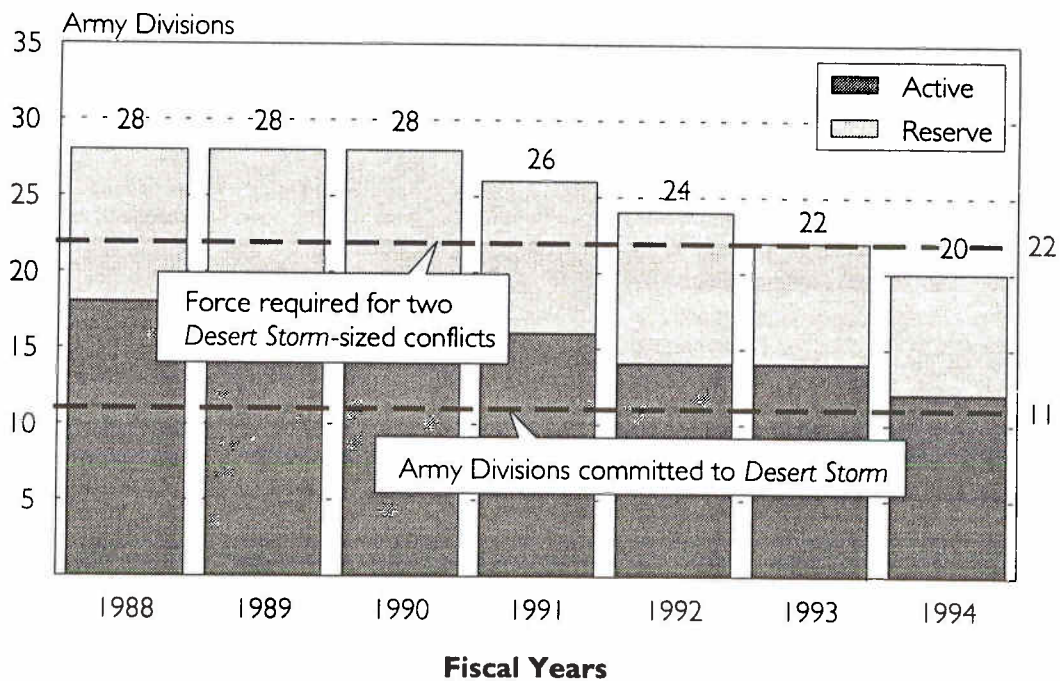
## Since 1988, Military Manpower is Down 21%



**Note:** 17 percent of all military personnel were committed to Desert Storm in 1991, while in 1994 over 20 percent would be required.

**Source:** Department of Defense.

## Since 1988, Army Force Structure is Down 28%

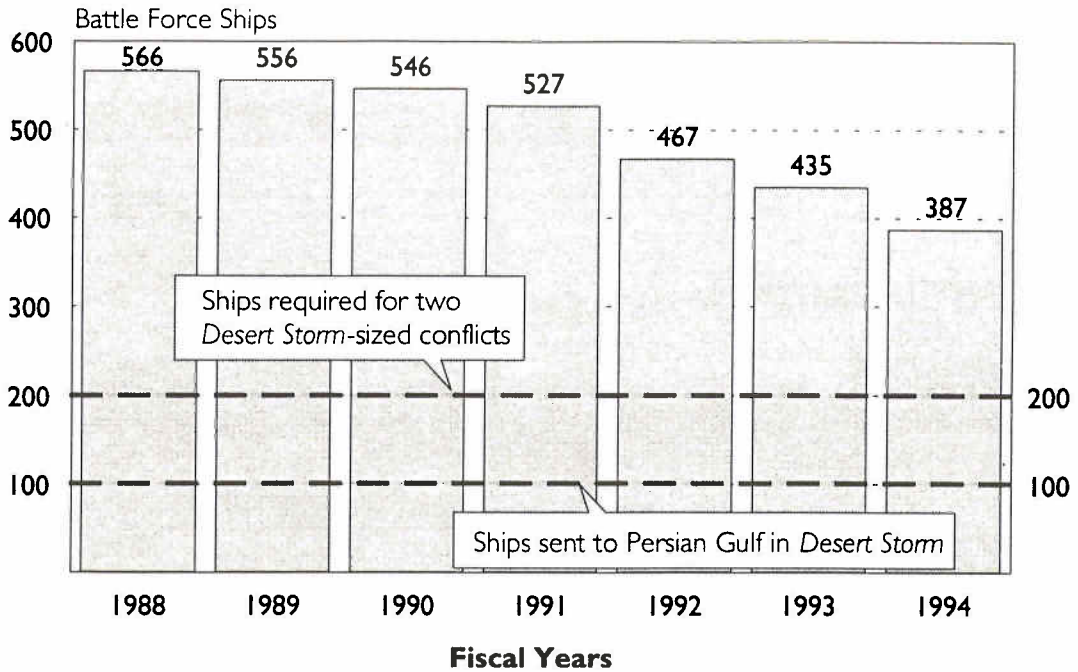


**Note:** 42 percent of all Army divisions were committed to Desert Storm in 1991, while in 1994 such a force would absorb 55 percent of all such divisions.

**Source:** Department of Defense.



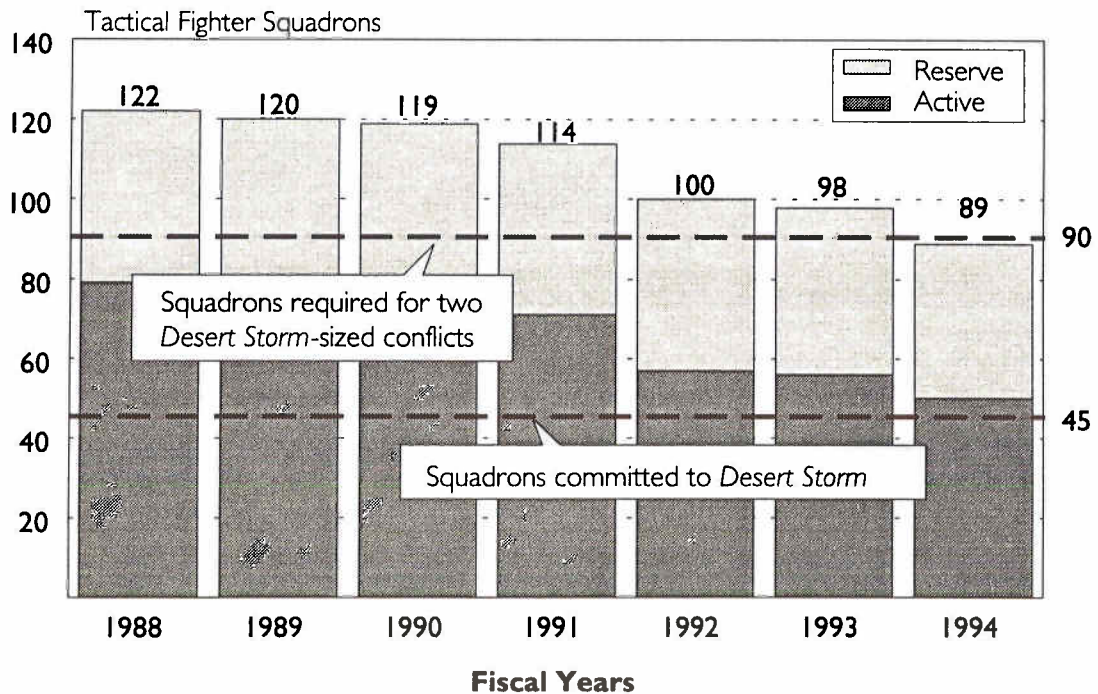
## Since 1988, Navy Ships Are Down 32%



**Note:** 19 percent of Navy battle force ships were committed to Desert Storm in 1991, while in 1994 such a force would absorb 27 percent of such ships.

**Source:** Department of Defense.

## Since 1988, Air Force Strength is Down 27%



**Note:** 40 percent of Air Force tactical squadrons were committed to Desert Storm in 1991, while in 1994 such a force would absorb 50 percent of all such squadrons.

**Source:** Department of Defense.

## Clinton Has Increased U.S. Role in U.N. Peacekeeping Operations

### Total American Forces Involved: 80,263\*

Operation Location & Title	Year Established & Description	U.N. Security Council Resolution No.	Number of U.S. Troops
<b>Croatia</b> (UNPROFOR)	<b>February 1992-Present</b> Buffer operation, disarming irregulars, and overseeing the return of Serb-occupied areas to Croatia.	350	447
<b>Former Yugoslavia</b> <i>Provide Promise</i>	<b>July 1992-Present</b> U.N. humanitarian relief to airlift excess Department of Defense supplies to Sarajevo.	770	19
<b>Former Yugoslavia, Adriatic</b> <i>Sharp Guard</i>	<b>June 1993-Present</b> Enforcement of the U.N.-sanctioned embargo against the Former Yugoslavia.	770, 781, 787, 816	7,800
<b>Former Yugoslavia</b> <i>Deny Flight</i>	<b>April 1993-Present</b> Enforcement of the U.N.-sanctioned "no-fly" zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina.	781, 816, 836	2,061
<b>Haiti</b> <i>Support/Restore Democracy</i>	<b>October 1993-Present</b> Originally a maritime interdiction of arms and oil off the coast of Haiti. Currently, the U.S. occupation of Haiti.	841, 917, 940	19,800
<b>Iraq</b> <i>Provide Comfort</i>	<b>May 1991-Present</b> U.N. humanitarian assistance of Iraqi Kurds.	687, 688	1,488
<b>Iraq/Kuwait</b> (UNIKOM)	<b>1992-Present</b> Support for peace enforcement.	687, 689	15
<b>Iraq</b> (UNSCOM) <i>Southern Watch</i>	<b>August 1992-Present</b> Coalition Forces enforcing a "no-fly" zone below the 32nd parallel for all Iraqi aircraft.	660, 661, 687, 688	11,042
<b>Korea</b> U.N. Command	<b>1953-Present</b> Prevention of renewed hostilities by North Korea.	83, 84	37,000
<b>Macedonia</b> (UNPROFOR) <i>Able Sentry</i>	<b>July 1993-Present</b> Military observers to prevent potential spillover of Bosnian conflict.	795, 815, 842	543
<b>Middle East</b> (UNTSO)	<b>June 1948-Present</b> Support of peacekeeping operations.	50	16
<b>Mozambique</b> (UNOMOZ)	<b>December 1992-Present</b> Buffer, humanitarian, and election monitoring ops.	850	2
<b>Western Sahara</b> (MINURSO)	<b>April 1991-Present</b> Buffer and election monitoring ops. Supervising cease-fire & conducting plebiscite on future status.	690	30

**\*Total U.S. Forces** (Does not include 36,000 being sent to Persian Gulf now.) **80,263**

Source: Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

