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GAO REPORT, ECHOING HERITAGE WARNINGS, SAYS CLINTON MILITARY FORCE IS NOT ENOUGH

Baker Spring
Senior Policy Analyst

To paraphrase a well-known radio talk show host and author: See, we told you so.¹ When the Clinton Administration concluded a months-long study of defense policy in September 1993, it declared that it was prepared to build and fund a military force capable of addressing two major regional conflicts (MRCs), such as Operation Desert Storm, "nearly simultaneously." Just three weeks following the release of the Administration study, called the "Bottom-Up Review," The Heritage Foundation warned of two major shortcomings:

- 1) the force proposed by the Bottom-Up Review was going to cost far more than what the Administration proposed for the defense budget, and
- 2) the capabilities of the proposed force were exaggerated.²

A year-and-a-half later, the General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, has finally confirmed both shortcomings. In July 1994, it released a report declaring that the Administration's defense budget fell short of what was required for the force outlined by \$150 billion over five years.³ Now GAO has dropped the other shoe. In a January 31 report, confirming the other shortcoming which Heritage identified, the GAO has concluded that the assumptions used in the Bottom-Up Review are questionable and that the BUR force cannot, in fact, fight two regional wars nearly simultaneously.⁴

FYI#52/95

1 Rush Limbaugh, *See, I Told You So* (New York: Pocket Books, 1993).

2 Lawrence T. Di Rita *et al.*, "Thumbs Down to the Bottom-Up Review," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 957, September 24, 1993. This paper also included a host of lesser criticisms of the Bottom-Up Review, including how it would produce low levels of military readiness, leave the U.S. vulnerable to missile strikes, and undermine the technological edge U.S. forces had enjoyed in the past.

3 General Accounting Office, "Future Years Defense Program: Optimistic Estimates Lead to Billions in Overprogramming," July 29, 1994.

4 General Accounting Office, "Bottom-Up Review: Analysis of Key DOD Assumptions," January 31, 1995.

Secretary of Defense William Perry told reporters at the Pentagon on February 1 that he did not agree with the conclusions of the GAO's report.⁵ This is curious, because last July, Perry acknowledged that the U.S. would not have a two-conflict capability for at least two years, until the strategic sea and airlift issue and others were resolved.⁶ Nevertheless, the Secretary testified before the House National Security Committee on January 27 that the combination of tensions over North Korea's nuclear program and the threatening deployment of Iraqi forces last year confirms the need for the two-war strategy.⁷ The GAO study challenges the Administration's willingness to put the necessary resources behind such a strategy.

The House Contract with America envisions the creation of a commission to review development of an effective national security strategy for the post-Cold War environment. Secretary Perry attacked this idea in his testimony as a threat to his authority. Further, he challenged members of the committee to ask for his resignation if they find him unable or unwilling to fulfill his responsibilities.⁸ In the face of the challenge by Perry, Congress need look no further than the GAO study to determine that the commission is still needed.





WHERE DID THE CLINTON PENTAGON GO WRONG?

As the Congress contemplates the next steps toward revitalizing national security, it should heed the warnings of the GAO report. The Clinton Administration's two-war strategy will require a much larger force than it has proposed. There are many reasons for the Administration's miscalculation:

- X **The Bottom-Up Review ignored the real-world experience of the Persian Gulf War in designing major elements of its force structure, particularly Army divisions and Navy aircraft carrier battle groups.**

The Army deployed over seven divisions in the Persian Gulf during

Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm and the Navy deployed six aircraft carrier battle groups. The Bottom-Up Review would allocate only four or five divisions and battle groups to each of

		BUR Force FY 1999	Real "Two War" Level
	Army Divisions	10 Active 5+ Reserve	16 Active 8 Reserve
	Air Force Tactical Wings	13 Active 7 Reserve	22 Active 12 Reserve
	Navy	346 Ships 12 Carriers*	450 Ships 15 Carriers
	Marine Corps Personnel	174,000 Active 42,000 Reserve	195,000 Active 44,000 Reserve

* Includes training/reserve carrier.

5 John F. Harris, "Military Leaders Stress Funding Needs," *The Washington Post*, February 2, 1995, p. A-15.
 6 William Matthews, "2 Wars Now Are Too Many," *Navy Times*, July 25, 1994, p. 26.
 7 William Perry, "Statement of Hon. William J. Perry, Secretary of Defense, Before the House Committee on National Security Hearing on H.R. 7," January 27, 1995, p. 7.
 8 Dana Priest and Bradley Graham, "Perry Resists GOP Program," *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1995, p. A-1.

two MRCs. Thus, instead of allocating the 14 Army divisions and 12 Navy aircraft carrier battle groups to forward deployments in the two MRCs, as the experience in the Persian Gulf would dictate, the Bottom-Up Review would allocate as few as eight divisions and eight aircraft carrier battle groups to the two conflicts combined.⁹ The GAO report does not address this issue directly, but it does cite other GAO studies that reviewed the Desert Storm experience in certain key areas such as Army reserve readiness.

X The Bottom-Up Review planners mistakenly assume that forces engaged in peacekeeping missions can be withdrawn quickly from those missions and re-deployed to a combat mission.

The Bottom-Up Review allocates up to three Army divisions, two Navy aircraft carrier battle groups, two Air Force tactical fighter wings, and one Marine Corps brigade to peacekeeping operations. Its assertion that these forces could be immediately available for combat is flawed, both for technical and for political reasons. On the technical side, it is unlikely that a unit deployed on a lengthy peacekeeping mission will be properly prepared for a combat mission, having had no chance to train for it. On the political side, it is unlikely that Congress would approve the rapid abandonment of a peacekeeping mission even for the most pressing reasons. Particularly if the new majority's proposed U.N. peacekeeping restrictions are enacted, once U.S. forces are committed, both the Congress and the President will have a stake in the success of such operations in the future.¹⁰ The GAO faults the Administration for not adequately "analyz[ing] its assumption on redeploying forces from operations other than war," the current term for peacekeeping.¹¹

X The Pentagon authors of the Bottom-Up Review do not realize that certain military assets cannot be swung easily between two major regional conflicts.

Using the bomber example, the Bottom-Up Review states that this swing concept will allow the deployment of up to 100 heavy bombers to each of two MRCs with a total inventory of no more than 184 bombers. This assessment fails to address the fact that some of those bombers will be unavailable because of the need to hold them back for strategic nuclear missions. The GAO did not consider this fact but nonetheless asserts that the Pentagon did not even start to study the real feasibility of "swinging" forces in this way until after the Bottom-Up Review was concluded.¹² The ongoing studies will not be completed until later this year.

X Bottom-Up Review planners were wrong to assume that the U.S. armed forces have enough strategic lift to deploy forces to combat theaters thousands of miles away.

The Bottom-Up Review assumed the strategic lift capacity would be available based on enhancements recommended in a 1991 Pentagon study. But even that study's recommended enhancements, according to the GAO, would not be sufficient to cover the two-conflict scenario anticipated by the Bottom-Up Review.¹³ Only now is the Pentagon undertaking the assessments needed to determine whether the lift requirements to support two conflicts can be met.

9 For more detailed discussion, see Lawrence T. Di Rita and Baker Spring, "The Decline of U.S. Military Strength Since the Gulf War," Heritage Foundation *F.Y.I.* No. 42, October 17, 1994.

10 For a full discussion of the GOP peacekeeping proposals, see Lawrence T. Di Rita, "H.R. 7—The National Security Revitalization Act: Congress's Defense Contract With America," Heritage Foundation *Issue Bulletin* No. 205, January 19, 1995.

11 GAO, "Bottom-Up Review: Analysis of Key DOD Assumptions," p. 23.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

X The Army has insufficient support units to assist its combat units in two military theaters.

According to the GAO, the Army is experiencing shortfalls in support units. In addition, the report reveals that during Operation Desert Storm the Army deployed virtually all of its support units to the Persian Gulf in such important areas as prisoner-handling, medium and heavy trucks, and water supply.¹⁴ Thus, the Army was forced to leave virtually no room for sending similar supply units to a second theater, although the shortness of the war and the extensive support provided by Saudi Arabia allowed the Army to mitigate the impact on its supply units. The GAO faults the Bottom-Up Review for its implicit assumption that such favorable circumstances will exist in the future.

X New generations of weapons designed to improve combat efficiency, such as precision-guided munitions, are not coming on line as anticipated.

The Bottom-Up Review asserted that the force structure it recommended would be able to address two concurrent MRCs because new weapons would improve combat efficiency dramatically. It now turns out that such weapons are not becoming available as anticipated. This revelation should not be surprising. Modernization funding—the money the Pentagon uses to research and procure new weapons—has dropped by over 50 percent in real terms since 1985. A recent example of a weapon that was to improve combat efficiency but was canceled is the Tri-Service Stand-off Attack Missile (TSSAM).¹⁵ This highly accurate air-to-surface missile was to replace “dumb bombs” and thereby reduce the number of attack sorties the Air Force would be required to fly to destroy a set of enemy targets.

X The Administration has refused to fund its own Bottom-Up Review recommendation.

This issue, though not considered by the GAO, is a serious flaw in the Bottom-Up Review. The GAO study recommends fielding a force of up to 184 bombers. The fiscal year 1995 budget presentation made it clear, however, that the Administration was willing to fund a force of no more than 120 bombers. Congress voted to reject the Administration’s retreat from its own proposal in last year’s Defense Authorization Bill, even though Congress was controlled by members of the President’s own party.¹⁶ Given that the Clinton Administration’s five-year defense program is underfunded by some \$100 billion, it can be expected that the bomber force episode will be repeated for other elements of the force structure in the future.

X The Bottom-Up Review makes no specific recommendation to back up the forces deployed to regional conflicts with replacement troops.

Prudent defense planning requires the establishment of a “rotation base” of forces to relieve troops deployed for long periods of time in a distant theater and to replace forces lost in combat. The Air Force, for example, tries to retain a rotation base that is one-half as large as its forward-deployed combat force. During the Persian Gulf War, the equivalent of ten fighter wings was deployed in the war. These forces, however, were drawn from a total force of 20 air wings. The components of the 20 wings remaining behind served as the rotation base for the aircraft engaged in combat. This is perhaps the most serious force structure shortcoming found in the Bottom-Up Review.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁵ Secretary of Defense William Perry announced the cancellation of the TSSM program during a December 9, 1993, press conference at the Pentagon.

¹⁶ U.S. House of Representatives, *Conference Report to Accompany the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995*, August 12, 1994, pp. 26-28.