



# Backgroundnder

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## Executive Summary

No. 1394

September 15, 2000

## THE FACTS ABOUT MILITARY READINESS

*JACK SPENCER*

In recent months, the major foreign policy issue debated by the candidates in the 2000 presidential election campaign has been military readiness. Governor George W. Bush has accused the Clinton Administration of neglecting the military, referring to the status of the U.S. armed forces as “a military in decline.” Vice President Al Gore, on the other hand, countered that the military is the “strongest and the best” in the world.

Readiness measures the ability of a military unit to accomplish its assigned missions. Logistics, available spare parts, training, equipment, and morale all contribute to readiness.

Evidence of a widespread lack of readiness within the U.S. armed forces exists. Recently leaked Army documents report that 12 of the 20 schools that are training soldiers in skills such as field artillery, infantry, and aviation have received the lowest readiness rating. And the Pentagon in November rated two of the Army’s 10 active divisions at the lowest readiness level.

**The Facts About Readiness.** In the early 1990s, the Bush Administration began to reduce the size of the U.S. military so that it would be consistent with post-Cold War threats. Under the Clinton Administration, however, these reductions in forces escalated rapidly, with too little defense spending, while U.S. forces were deployed more often.

Because the security of the United States is at stake, it is imperative to present the facts about military readiness:

**FACT #1. The size of the U.S. military has been cut drastically in the past decade.**

Between 1992 and 2000, the Clinton Administration cut national defense by more than half a million personnel and \$50 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars. The Army alone has lost four active divisions and two Reserve divisions. The number of total active personnel in the Air Force has decreased by nearly 30 percent. In the Navy, the total number of ships has decreased from around 393 ships in the fleet in 1992 to 316 today. Even the Marines have dropped 22,000 personnel.

In spite of these drastic force reductions, military missions and operations tempo increased.

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Because every mission affects far greater numbers of servicemen than those directly involved, most operations other than warfare, such as peacekeeping, have a significant negative impact on readiness.

**FACT #2. Military deployments have increased dramatically throughout the 1990s.**

The pace of deployments has increased 16-fold since the end of the Cold War. Between 1960 and 1991, the Army conducted 10 operations outside of normal training and alliance commitments, but between 1992 and 1998, the Army conducted 26 such operations. Similarly, the Marines conducted 15 contingency operations between 1982 and 1989, and 62 since 1989. During the 1990s, U.S. forces of 20,000 or more troops were engaged in non-warfighting missions in Somalia (1993), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1996), and Iraq and Kuwait (1998).

This dramatic increase in the use of America's armed forces has had a detrimental effect on overall combat readiness. Both people and equipment wear out faster with frequent use. Frequent deployments also take funding away from ongoing expenses such as training, fuel, and supplies. Moreover, the stress of frequent and often unexpected deployments can be detrimental to troop morale and jeopardize the armed forces' ability to retain high-quality people.

**FACT #3. America's military is aging rapidly.**

Most of the equipment that the U.S. military uses today, such as Abrams tanks, Apache helicopters, Bradley fighting vehicles, surface ships, submarines, bombers, and tactical aircraft, are aging much faster than they are being replaced. Due to a shortsighted modernization strategy, some systems are not even being replaced. Lack of funding coupled with increased tempo and reduced forces strains the U.S. military's ability to defend vital national interests.

As weapons age, they become less reliable and more expensive to maintain. The services have

attempted to provide for their higher maintenance costs by reallocating funds, but they often take the funds from procurement accounts, effectively removing the money from modernization programs. Shortages of parts and aging equipment are already affecting readiness, and the effects are expected to worsen. Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon recently reported that spare parts are so scarce that the Air Force is made to "cannibalize" perfectly good aircraft for spare parts.

**FACT #4. Morale is on the decline in the U.S. armed forces.**

According to an August 1999 U.S. General Accounting Office review, more than half of the officers and enlisted personnel surveyed "were dissatisfied and intended to leave the military after their current obligation or term of enlistment was up." Because U.S. servicemen are the military's greatest asset, a ready U.S. military requires bright, well-trained, and highly motivated active and reserve personnel. Unfortunately, due largely to low morale, the services are finding it difficult to recruit and retain servicemen.

**Conclusion.** Under the Clinton Administration, the U.S. military has suffered under a dangerous combination of reduced budgets, diminished forces, and increased missions. The result has been a steep decline in readiness and an overall decline in U.S. military strength. Nearly a decade of misdirected policy coupled with a myopic modernization strategy has rendered America's armed forces years away from top form.

To deny that the United States military has readiness problems is to deny the men and women in uniform the respect they deserve. America's military prowess can be restored, but policymakers must first admit there is a problem. Only then can the President and Congress work together to reestablish America's top readiness capabilities.

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No. 1394

September 15, 2000

## THE FACTS ABOUT MILITARY READINESS

*JACK SPENCER*

In recent months, the major foreign policy issue of the 2000 presidential election campaign has been military readiness, with Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush each addressing the subject. Governor Bush has accused the Clinton Administration of military neglect, referring to the U.S. armed forces as “a military in decline.”<sup>1</sup> Vice President Gore, on the other hand, has countered that “Our military is the strongest and the best in the entire world.”<sup>2</sup>

While there are clear signs that readiness is a problem for the U.S. military, Al Gore is factually correct when he contends that the U.S. armed forces stand far above any other military force. He is missing a more important point, however. The United States, as the most powerful nation in the world, has responsibilities and national security concerns far beyond those of any other nation.

U.S. military readiness cannot be gauged by comparing America’s armed forces with other nations’ militaries. Instead, the capability of U.S. forces to support America’s national security requirements should be the measure of U.S. military readiness. Such a standard is necessary

because America may confront threats from many different nations at once.

America’s national security requirements dictate that the armed forces must be prepared to defeat groups of adversaries in a given war. America, as the sole remaining superpower, has many enemies. Because attacking America or its interests alone would surely end in defeat for a single nation, these enemies are likely to form alliances. Therefore, basing readiness on American military superiority over any single nation has little saliency.

The evidence indicates that the U.S. armed forces are not ready to support America’s national security requirements. Moreover, regarding the broader capability to defeat groups of enemies,

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1. Remarks by Texas Governor George W. Bush at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) national convention, August 21, 2000.
2. Remarks by Vice President Al Gore at VFW national convention, August 22, 2000.

military readiness has been declining. The National Security Strategy, the U.S. official statement of national security objectives,<sup>3</sup> concludes that the United States “must have the capability to deter and, if deterrence fails, defeat large-scale, cross-border aggression in two distant theaters in overlapping time frames.”<sup>4</sup> According to some of the military’s highest-ranking officials, however, the United States cannot achieve this goal. Commandant of the Marine Corps General James Jones, former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jay Johnson, and Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael Ryan have all expressed serious concerns about their respective services’ ability to carry out a two major theater war strategy.<sup>5</sup> Recently retired Generals Anthony Zinni of the U.S. Marine Corps and George Joulwan of the U.S. Army have even questioned America’s ability to conduct one major theater war the size of the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>6</sup>

Military readiness is vital because declines in America’s military readiness signal to the rest of the world that the United States is not prepared to defend its interests. Therefore, potentially hostile nations will be more likely to lash out against American allies and interests, inevitably leading to U.S. involvement in combat. A high state of military readiness is more likely to deter potentially hostile nations from acting aggressively in regions of vital national interest, thereby preserving peace.

**Readiness Defined.** Readiness measures the ability of a military unit, such as an Army division or a carrier battle group, to accomplish its assigned mission. Logistics, available spare parts, training, equipment, and morale all contribute to readiness. The military recognizes four grades of readiness.<sup>7</sup> At the highest level, a unit is prepared to move into position and accomplish its mission. At the lowest level, a unit requires further manpower, training, equipment, and/or logistics to accomplish its mission.

There is evidence of a widespread lack of readiness within the U.S. armed forces. Recently leaked Army documents report that 12 of the 20 schools training soldiers in skills such as field artillery, infantry, and aviation have received the lowest readiness rating. They also disclose that over half of the Army’s combat and support training centers are rated at the lowest readiness grade.<sup>8</sup> As recently as last November, two of the Army’s 10 active divisions were rated at the lowest readiness level, and none were rated at the highest.<sup>9</sup> Every division required additional manpower, equipment, or training before it would be prepared for combat, due largely to the units’ commitments to operations in the Balkans.<sup>10</sup> And 23 percent of the Army’s Chinook cargo helicopters, 19 percent of its Blackhawk helicopters, and 16 percent of its Apaches are not “mission-capable.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, they are not ready.

3. The National Security Strategy is a comprehensive statement of national objectives. The document, which is produced by the National Security Council and signed by the President, is required by the National Security Act of 1947, as amended by Section 603 of the Goldwater–Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. The principal function of the National Security Strategy is to lay out the specific political, diplomatic, economic, social, and military objectives that must be pursued in order to achieve the nation’s objectives and specify how they will be integrated and coordinated.
4. The White House, “A National Security Strategy for a New Century,” December 1999, p. 19.
5. Peter Grier, “Ryan’s Concerns About USAF Posture,” *Air Force Magazine*, December 1999, p. 14, and “Representative Floyd Spence (R–SC) Holds Hearing on Readiness and Unfunded Requirements,” House Armed Services Committee, FDCH Transcripts, Federal Document Clearing House, Inc., October 21, 1999.
6. Jim Moret and Jamie McIntyre “Retiring Commander of U.S. Forces in Persian Gulf Raising Questions About U.S. War-Readiness,” CNN *The World Today*, aired August 10, 2000. Also, Tony Snow, Juan Williams, Fred Barnes, Brit Hume, and Jeff Birnbaum, “Montana Fires Continue to Rage; Is Gore’s Bounce For Good? How Prepared is U.S. Military?” *Fox News Sunday*, aired August 27, 2000.
7. The four grades of readiness range from C–1, the highest level, to C–4, the lowest level of readiness.
8. Rowan Scarborough, “Army Training Centers Get Failing Grades,” *The Washington Times*, August 29, 2000, p. A1.

## THE FACTS ABOUT MILITARY READINESS

The reduction in forces of the U.S. armed forces began in the early 1990s. After the end of the Cold War, the Bush Administration began to reduce the size of the military so that it would be consistent with post-Cold War threats.<sup>12</sup> Under the Clinton Administration, however, that reduction in forces escalated too rapidly at the same time that U.S. forces were deployed too often with too little funding. The result was decreased readiness as personnel, equipment, training, and location suffered.

Since the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the U.S. military has been deployed on over 50 peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations.<sup>13</sup> Yet the resources available to fund these missions have steadily decreased: The number of total active personnel has decreased nearly 30 percent, and funding for the armed services has decreased 16 percent. The strain on the armed forces shows clearly now as the reduced forces deploy for too long with insufficient and antiquated equipment. The result is indisputable: Readiness is in decline.

Because the security of the United States is at stake, it is imperative to present the facts about military readiness:

### FACT #1. The size of the U.S. military has been cut drastically in the past decade.

Between 1992 and 2000, the Clinton Administration cut national defense by more than half a million personnel and \$50 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars.<sup>14</sup> (See Table 1.) The Army alone has lost four active divisions and two Reserve divisions. Because of such cuts, the Army has lost more than 205,000 soldiers, or 30 percent of its staff, although its missions have increased significantly throughout the 1990s.

In 1992, the U.S. Air Force consisted of 57 tactical squadrons and 270 bombers. Today the Air Force has 52 squadrons and 178 bombers. The total number of active personnel has decreased by nearly 30 percent. In the Navy, the total number of ships has decreased significantly as well. In 1992, there were around 393 ships in the fleet, while today there are only 316, a decrease of 20 percent. The number of Navy personnel has fallen by over 30 percent.

In 1992, the Marine Corps consisted of three divisions. The Corps still has three divisions, but since 1992, it has lost 22,000 active duty personnel, or 11 percent of its total. The Clinton Administration also cut the Marine Corps to 39,000 reserve personnel from 42,300 in 1992.

9. The Army divisions' grade has risen since the Pentagon report came out in November 1999; however, there is still a significant problem. The higher rating resulted from a shift in resources rather than an increase in resources. The extra people, money, and equipment came largely from support units—hence, the poor rating of the Army training facilities. This readiness shell game creates the illusion of readiness while actually exacerbating the readiness problem. It takes soldiers out of combat training and puts them into peace operations. Simultaneously, it takes the resources away from the units training for combat to pay for the missions. The divisions participating in peace missions will be unprepared to fight if war erupts, and the units that will have to replace them will be unprepared as well.
10. Bradley Graham "Two Army Divisions Unfit for Major War: Both Flunk Ratings of Preparedness," *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1999, p. A1.
11. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Readiness: Readiness Reports Do Not Provide a Clear Assessment of Army Equipment*, GAO/NSIAD-99-119, June 1999, p. 12.
12. The cuts made by the Clinton-Gore Administration are beyond those envisioned by President George Bush in the early 1990s. His plan, known as the "Base Force," would have cut U.S. forces by 25 percent and the defense budget by 20 percent over a five-year period. Base Force would have reduced active and reserve Army divisions from 26 to 18; Navy ships to 450; active and reserve tactical fighter wings from 34 to 26; and active duty personnel to 1.6 million.
13. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Contingency Operations: Providing Critical Capabilities Poses Challenges*, GAO/NSIAD-00-164, July 2000, p. 3.
14. U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Budget Estimate for 2001*, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), March 2000, p. 207.

**Effect on Readiness.** In spite of these drastic force reductions, missions and operations tempo have increased, resulting in decreased military readiness. Because every mission affects far greater numbers of servicemen than those directly involved, most operations other than warfare, such as peacekeeping, have a significant negative impact on readiness.

For each serviceman who participates in a military operation, two others are involved in the mission: one who is preparing to take the participant's place, and another who is recovering from having participated and retraining. Therefore, if 10,000 troops are on peace operations in the Balkans, 30,000 troops are actually being taken away from preparing for combat. Ten thousand are actively participating, while 10,000 are recovering, and 10,000 are preparing to go. Coupled with declining personnel, increased tempo has a devastating effect on readiness. Morale problems stemming from prolonged deployments, equipment that wears out too quickly, and decreased combat training levels heighten when troops are committed to non-combat operations.

Further exacerbating the military's declining readiness is the tendency to take troops with special skills from non-deployed units. Thus, a mission may affect non-deployed units as well because they will not be able to train properly. The soldiers integral to the non-deployed mission are not present, and there is no one to take their place. A mission's spillover effects are clearly illustrated by a July 2000 report by the U.S. General Accounting

Office (GAO) on the U.S. commitments in the Balkans:

In January 2000 ... four active divisions and one Guard division were affected by these operations [in the Balkans]. Among the active divisions, the 1st Cavalry Division was recovering from a 1-year deployment in Bosnia, the 10th Mountain Division was deployed there, and elements of the Guard's 49th Armored Division were preparing to deploy there. At the same time, the European-based 1st Infantry Division was deployed to Kosovo, and the 1st Armored Division was preparing to deploy there. Although none of these divisions deployed in its entirety, deployment of key components—

Table 1 B1394

### Reduction in Force of the U.S. Military, 1992–2000

	1992	2000	Percent Change
<b>Total Active Personnel</b>	1,913,750	1,371,500	-28%
<b>Army</b>			
Active divisions	14	10	-29%
Reserve divisions	10	8	-20%
Total active personnel	674,800	469,300	-30%
<b>Marines</b>			
Expeditionary forces	3	3	0%
Total Personnel	193,000	171,000	-11%
<b>Air Force</b>			
Active fighter squadrons	57	52	-9%
Bomber forces	270	178	-34%
Total active personnel	499,300	361,400	-28%
<b>Navy</b>			
Carrier battle groups	12	12	0%
Total ships*	393	316	-20%
Total active personnel	546,650	369,800	-32%
<b>Budget**</b>	\$327	\$274	-16%

**Note:** \*Submarines, surface combatants, patrol and coastal combatants, and amphibious ships. \*\*Billions, in 1996 dollars.

**Source:** The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance: 1992–1993*, 1992, pp. 18–26 and *The Military Balance: 1999–2000*, 1999, pp. 20–26. Also, U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Defense Budget Estimate for 2001*, March 2000, p. 207.

especially headquarters—makes these divisions unavailable for deployment elsewhere in case of a major war.<sup>15</sup>

Simultaneously, the military’s budget has continuously decreased over the past eight years; and, thus, the services are being forced to choose between funding quality of life improvements, procurement, training, and other essential spending. Consequently, none is adequately funded. For example, the Army is short by thousands of night vision goggles, binoculars, global positioning systems and hundreds of generator sets, battery chargers, and chemical agent monitors. (See Table 2.) According to the Office of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, these shortages are due to “recent increases in requirements,” “slowed procurement funding,” and “use of operations and maintenance funds for higher priorities.”<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, when smaller forces deploy for more missions, the result is increased wear-and-tear on equipment and longer deployments for servicemen. Coupled with too little money, the result is a military weakened by aging equipment, low morale, and poor training.

**FACT #2. Military deployments have increased dramatically throughout the 1990s.**

The pace of deployments has increased 16-fold since the end of the Cold War.<sup>17</sup> According to Representative Curt Weldon (R-PA), the Clinton

Table 2 B1394

### Auxiliary Equipment Shortages in U.S. Army

	Units Reporting Shortages	Number of Items Short
Telephone cable	335	6,481
Night vision goggles	214	8,835
Binoculars	174	1,129
Generator set	148	493
Global positioning system	136	1,246
Chemical agent monitor	114	521
Battery charger	38	112

Source: U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Readiness: Readiness Reports Do Not Provide a Clear Assessment of Army Equipment*, GAO/NSIAD-99-119, June 1999, p. 6.

Administration has deployed U.S. forces 34 times in less than eight years. During the entire 40-year period of the Cold War, the military was committed to comparable deployments just 10 times.<sup>18</sup>

Between 1960 and 1991, the Army conducted 10 operations outside of normal training and alliance commitments, but between 1992 and 1998, the Army conducted 26 such operations. Similarly, the Marines conducted 15 contingency operations between 1982 and 1989, and 62 since 1989.<sup>19</sup> During the 1990s, U.S. forces of 20,000 or more troops were engaged in non-warfighting missions in Somalia (1993), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1996), and Iraq and Kuwait (1998).<sup>20</sup>

15. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Contingency Operations: Providing Critical Capabilities Poses Challenges*, p. 9.  
 16. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Readiness: Readiness Reports Do Not Provide a Clear Assessment of Army Equipment*, p. 60.  
 17. Robert Holzer, “U.S. Army, Marines to Gauge Deployment Cost,” *Defense News*, July 17, 2000, p. 1.  
 18. House Republican News Conference on Defense Appropriations Bill, Washington, D.C., October 25, 1999.  
 19. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Operations: Impact of Operations Other Than War on the Services Varies*, GAO/NSIAD-99-69, May 1999, p. 13.  
 20. Congressional Budget Office, *Making Peace While Staying Ready for War: The Challengers of U.S. Military Participation in Peace*, December 1999, Chapter 1, at [www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=1809&sequence=0&from=1](http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=1809&sequence=0&from=1).

Table 3		B1394						
<b>The Cost of Selected U.S. Peace Missions from 1993–1999</b>								
	Mission	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Iraq	Provide Comfort/ Northern Watch	\$116.6	\$91.8	\$138.2	\$88.9	\$93.1	\$136.	\$156.4
	South Watch/Air Force Expeditionary Force	715.9	333	468.4	576.3	597.3	1,497.2	933.2
	Vigilant Warrior			257.7				
	Desert Strike/Intrinsic Action					102.7	5.6	13.8
	Desert Thunder (Force Buildup, 11/98)							43.5
	Desert Fox (Air Strikes 12/98)							92.9
	UNIKOM (UN/Iraq Observer Group)	6.0						
	Bosnia	IFOR/SFOR/Joint Forge				2,231.7	2,087.5	1,792.8
Other operations		138.8	292	347.4	288.3	195	169.9	155.4
Kosovo	Balkan Calm							34.6
	Eagle Eye							20.3
	Noble Anvil							1,775.7
	Joint Guardian (KFOR)							1,050.2
	Sustain Hope							124.6
East Timor							1.5	
Korea			69.7	90.9				
Haiti	Embargo/Interdiction/ Sanctions Enforcement	2.8	65.8					
	Uphold Democracy		198.2	448.8				
	UNMIH			56.5	86.9			
Somalia		943.1	528	19.4				
Rwanda		1.0	106.7	36.5				
Angola		0.1	2.6					
Cambodia								
Western Sahara		0.3	0.1					
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,924.6</b>	<b>1,687.9</b>	<b>1,863.8</b>	<b>3,272.1</b>	<b>3,075.6</b>	<b>3,601.5</b>	<b>5,784.6</b>

**Note:** \*In millions of current dollars.

**Source:** Nina M. Serafino, *Peacekeeping: Issues of U.S. Military Involvement*, Congressional Research Service Report No. IB94040, February 16, 2000.



In 1998, before U.S. interventions in Kosovo and East Timor, General Henry Shelton, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned, “In the past four years we’ve conducted some four dozen major operations. And today, in support of our national strategy, we have more than 50,000 troops deployed in 12 major operations—and, I might add, many smaller ones—in dozens of countries around the world.” Today the Army has 144,716 soldiers in 126 countries.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, U.S. taxpayers spent an average of \$3 billion per year on peace operations.<sup>22</sup> In 1990, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) spent around \$200 million on peace operations. Today that amount has ballooned to \$3.6 billion.<sup>23</sup> The 78-day Kosovo campaign in 1999 cost around \$5 billion, not including the ongoing peace mission.<sup>24</sup> Operations Southern and North Watch in Iraq cost \$1.1 billion per year; the Haiti operation cost a total of \$2.4 billion; and to date, the Balkans have cost over \$15 billion.<sup>25</sup> (See Table 3.)

**Effect on Readiness.** This dramatic increase in the use of America’s armed forces has had a detrimental effect on overall combat readiness. According to General Shelton, “our experience in the

		FY 1999 Target	FY 1999 Actual
<b>Selected Operations/Personnel Tempo Statistics</b>			
<b>Army</b>			
Number of units with soldiers who deploy more than 120 days		0	43
Number of individual units deploying more than 179 days per year		0	43
<b>Navy</b>			
Units not meeting tempo goal		0	2
<b>Air Force</b>			
Percentage of personnel assigned to combat systems who are deployed under 120 days per year		100	75
Average number of days deployed for those personnel exceeding 120 days per year		N/A	148
Source: Congressional Research Service, “Summaries of FY 1999 Performance Reports for the 24 CFO Agencies,” memorandum to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, June 2, 2000.			

Balkans underscores the reality that multiple, persistent commitments place a significant strain on our people and can erode warfighting readiness.”<sup>26</sup>

Both people and equipment wear out faster under frequent use. For example, units deployed in Somalia took 10 months to restore their equipment to predeployment readiness levels.<sup>27</sup> According to a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) survey of Army leaders who participated in peace mis-

21. “The Army Birthday Quiz,” *The Washington Post*, June 14, 2000, p. A37.

22. Michael O’Hanlon, “The U.S. Defense Budget,” *Brookings Review*, March 22, 2000, p. 41.

23. Congressional Budget Office, *Making Peace While Staying Ready for War: The Challengers of U.S. Military Participation in Peace*, Chapter 1.

24. John Omicknsik, “Pace of Peacekeeping Could Take 20,000 More U.S. Troops,” Gannet News Service, February 1, 2000.

25. Hearing of the House Appropriations Committee, Defense Subcommittee, FY 2001 Defense budget, Supplemental Request for Kosovo, March 1, 2000.

26. General Hugh Shelton, Testimony, Senate Appropriations Wrap-up Hearing, April 26, 2000.

sions, almost two-thirds said that their units' training readiness had declined.<sup>28</sup>

Training is a key component of readiness, and frequent missions cause the armed forces to reduce training schedules. For example, Operation Allied Force caused 22 joint exercises to be cancelled in 1999. Joint training exercises were reduced from 277 in fiscal year (FY) 1996 to 189 in FY 2000.

Inadequate training has resulted in the Air Force exceeding its annual deployment goals for Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) crews. Thirteen of the Air Force's 40 AWACS crews were inadequately trained, forcing the 27 remaining crews to carry the workload of all 40. For U-2 pilots, the situation is equally bad. Because only 40 of the Air Force's 54 authorized U-2 pilots are fully trained, many experienced crewmembers leave the force due to an excessive workload.<sup>29</sup>

The frequent deployments also take funding away from ongoing expenses. The Department of Defense funds about 80 percent of the cost for operations other than warfare from its "operations and maintenance" accounts,<sup>30</sup> although the funds in the account are supposed to pay for training, fuel, and supplies to forward-deployed troops—all of which are readiness-related. Every dollar spent in Kosovo or Somalia takes 80 cents away from training America's troops for war, buying spare parts for aging equipment, or providing a high quality of life for troops in foreign lands protecting America's interests abroad. The remaining funding for operations other than warfare comes from personnel accounts.<sup>31</sup> This 20 percent is money that could be used to pay pilots or computer programmers.

The stress of frequent and often unexpected deployments is detrimental to the morale of troops and jeopardizes the military's ability to retain high-quality people. Already understaffed units undertake more missions that last longer. (See Table 4.) Some 58 percent of U.S. troops are married, and long deployments often result in strains in family life, leading many to leave the service. The Center for Strategic and International Studies recently concluded that the high tempo of operations had had a significant, negative effect on morale.<sup>32</sup> More recently, the General Accounting Office concluded, "long deployments can adversely affect morale and retention."<sup>33</sup> Increased missions have clearly worn out equipment, reduced training, and decreased morale—all resulting in decreased readiness.

### **FACT #3. America's military is aging rapidly.**

Most of the equipment that the U.S. military uses today, such as Abrams tanks, Apache helicopters, Bradley fighting vehicles, surface ships, submarines, bombers, and tactical aircraft, are aging much faster than they are being replaced. Due to a shortsighted modernization strategy, some systems are not even being replaced. Lack of funding coupled with increased tempo and reduced forces has again strained the U.S. military's ability to defend vital U.S. interests.

For example, between 1991 and 1999, according to a GAO study, the percentage of mission-capable Air Force fighter aircraft has decreased from 85 percent to 75 percent.<sup>34</sup> Jacques Gansler, Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, points out that "we now have an average age of our fighters in the Air Force of about 20

27. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *Making Peace While Staying Ready for War: The Challengers of U.S. Military Participation in Peace*, Chapter 3.

28. *Ibid.*

29. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Contingency Operations: Providing Critical Capabilities Poses Challenges*, p. 5.

30. U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *Making Peace While Staying Ready for War: The Challengers of U.S. Military Participation in Peace*, Chapter 1.

31. *Ibid.*

32. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, *American Military Culture in the 21st Century*, January 2000, p. 6.

33. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Contingency Operations: Providing Critical Capabilities Poses Challenges*, p. 3.

years. These were designed for a 15-year life.”<sup>35</sup> The U.S. bomber force consists of B-52s,<sup>36</sup> B-1s, and B-2s, none of which are being produced today. In fact, the Air Force has claimed that it does not want a new bomber until 2037, by which time the B-52 will be nearly 90 years old. Although the B-2 is a new bomber, the United States has only produced 21 of these planes.

The Navy’s equipment has begun to age rapidly as well. Amphibious ships, for example, are on average over 27 years old, while the service life of these ships is only 30–35 years.<sup>37</sup> Currently, the shipbuilding accounts are inadequate to maintain current force structure. The Navy is being forced to cut its ship building accounts from 8.7 per year—the number needed to maintain a 300-ship Navy—to 6.5 per year.<sup>38</sup>

**Effect on Readiness.** The effects of old equipment are being felt across the services. As weapons age, they become less reliable and more expensive to maintain. The services have attempted to provide for their higher maintenance costs by reallocating funds, but they often take the funds from procurement accounts, effectively removing the money from modernization programs.

Shortages of parts and aging equipment are already affecting readiness, and the effects are expected to worsen. On August 4, 2000, Kenneth

Bacon, the DOD Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, told reporters that spare parts are so scarce that the Air Force is made to “cannibalize” perfectly good aircraft for spare parts.<sup>39</sup> In April, 40 percent of the Army’s helicopters were assessed as being either unable or at high risk of being unable to perform their mission.<sup>40</sup> The impact this has on America’s readiness to fight wars is immense. For example, by day 60 of a two-war scenario, 44 percent of the Army’s Apache helicopters and 52 percent of its Kiowa helicopters will not be available due to shortages in spare parts.<sup>41</sup>

In June, a study released by the Pentagon reported that over half of its gas masks had critical defects that rendered them useless against chemical or biological attack.<sup>42</sup> In late August, 413 Marine aircraft were grounded due to safety concerns. These included the Super Stallion helicopter, the Vietnam-era Cobra attack helicopter, and the new MV-22 Osprey.<sup>43</sup> This is in addition to the 76 Harrier “jump” jets that have remained grounded since July.<sup>44</sup>

According to General John Coburn, Commander, U.S. Army Materiel Command, “One of the most serious issues the Army faces is aging equipment. This issue is so serious that, if not properly addressed and corrected, it will inevitably result in degradation of the Army’s ability to main-

34. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Operations: Impact of Operations Other Than War on the Services Varies*, p. 13.

35. “U.S. Representative Curt Weldon (R-PA) Holds Hearing on Defense-Wide R & D Programs,” Military Research and Development Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., March 1, 2000.

36. The B-52 was designed in the late 1940s and first deployed in 1954. The Air Forces plans to maintain its fleet of B-52s well into the 21st century.

37. Prepared Statement of The Honorable H. Lee Buchanan III, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Research, Development and Acquisition and Vice Admiral James F. Amerault, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Logistics, before the House Armed Services Committee, Military Procurement Subcommittee, February 24, 1999.

38. Robert Holzer, “U.S. Navy Budget Takes a Hard Hit,” *Defense News*, July 30, 2000, p. 1.

39. Kenneth Bacon, Defense Department Regular Briefing, August 4, 2000, The Pentagon.

40. Ron Laurenzo, “Army Wants Leaner, Faster Helicopter Force,” *Defense Week*, April 10, 2000.

41. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Readiness: Readiness Reports Do Not Provide a Clear Assessment of Army Equipment*, p. 20.

42. David Ho, “Study: Many US Gas Masks Defective,” *Associated Press*, June 21, 2000.

43. The Cobra attack helicopters and the Osprey have since been given the go-ahead to resume operation.

44. Robert Burns, “Grounded US Aircraft Spurs Questions,” *Associated Press*, August 28, 2000.

tain its readiness.”<sup>45</sup> The consequence of poor readiness resulting from an aging force was described starkly by Admiral James M. Loy, Commandant of the Coast Guard, “Lack of readiness may already be costing us lives.”<sup>46</sup>

**FACT #4. Morale is on the decline in the U.S. armed forces.**

According to a recently retired Marine colonel who wishes to remain unnamed, in the armed forces “quality of life is paid lip service.... We need tough, realistic and challenging training. But we don’t need low pay, no medical benefits and ghetto housing.”<sup>47</sup> The poor living conditions for soldiers, sailors, and airmen impair the services’ ability to recruit the best young people to fill their ranks and their power to retain highly skilled servicemen. Representative Joel Hefley (R-CO) described the condition succinctly: “The pay is lousy, the retirement is lousy, the living conditions are lousy. The op tempo is lousy. The ability to do their job, because of lack of spare parts and that kind of thing, is lousy.”<sup>48</sup>

Military payroll comes out of the military personnel account. Current outlays project that this account will remain relatively unchanged at around \$75 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars through FY 2005.<sup>49</sup> Given that over 5,100 military

families are currently on food stamps, and that some of the military’s brightest and most talented servicemen are leaving to find higher-paying jobs in the private sector, military payroll clearly needs increased funding. The “pay gap” between the military and the private sector for similar jobs is currently at over 13 percent.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, according to an August 1999 GAO review, more than half of the officers and enlisted personnel surveyed “were dissatisfied and intended to leave the military after their current obligation or term of enlistment was up.” The “lack of equipment and materials” was a primary reason.<sup>51</sup> Inadequate training is also a concern for military personnel.<sup>52</sup> Army officials, for example, have blamed a reduction in training at the Army schools for shortages in skilled workers such as mechanics.<sup>53</sup> Due to inadequate training, only three of the Army’s 15 reserve brigades can report that their platoons meet the requirements for tasks such as attacking enemy positions or defending against attacks. And only 42 percent of the Army’s 24 reserve mechanized battalions met training standards for firing at stationary and moving targets.<sup>54</sup>

Substandard housing is another problem for morale because it has an immediate impact on servicemen and their families. According to General

45. Prepared Testimony of Gen. John Coburn, Commander, U.S. Army Materiel Command, before Senate Armed Services Committee, October 7, 1999.

46. Roberto Suro, “For U.S. Aviators, Readiness Woes Are a 2-Front Struggle,” *The Washington Post*, February 3, 2000, p. 4.

47. Charley Resse, “Take It from One Who Knows: Military’s on a Downward Spiral,” *The Orlando Sentinel*, September 2, 1999, p. 18.

48. Hearing of the House Armed Services Committee on Fiscal Year 2000 Defense Budget, February 2, 1999.

49. U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2001*, p. 67.

50. Congressional Budget Office, *What Does the Military “Pay Gap” Mean?* June 1999, Chapter 1, at [www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=1354&sequence=2](http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=1354&sequence=2).

51. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Personnel: Perspectives of Surveyed Service Members in Retention Critical Specialties*, GAO/NSIAD-99-197BR, August 1999, p. 2-3.

52. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, *American Military Culture in the 21st Century*, p. 6.

53. They also attribute to the problem the burden of peacekeeping operations and the assignment of personnel to tasks beyond their military specialties. See, for example, U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Readiness: Readiness Reports Do Not Provide a Clear Assessment of Army Equipment*, p. 19.

54. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Enhanced Brigade Readiness Improved but Personnel and Workloads are Problems*, GAO/NSIAD-00-114, June 2000, p. 5.

Shelton, almost two-thirds of all military housing, or approximately 180,000 units, are inadequate.<sup>55</sup> While there are plans to alleviate housing problems,<sup>56</sup> the funding is inadequate. The military is continually forced to divert funds that could be used to update housing to pay for the costs associated with peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations.

**Effect on Readiness.** Because U.S. servicemen are the military's greatest asset, a ready United States military requires bright, well-trained, and highly motivated active and reserve personnel. Unfortunately, due largely to low morale, the services are finding it difficult to recruit and retain servicemen. The Army and the Air Force fell short of their 1999 recruiting goals by 6,300 and 1,700 recruits, respectively.<sup>57</sup> The U.S. Navy was forced to change its recruiting standards in 1999 to make up for the nearly 7,000 sailors it lacked in 1998. That year, many Navy ships deployed with too few sailors onboard.<sup>58</sup>

Retention is also a problem. With the exception of the Marines, the military is facing a severe manpower shortage. Although the Army is generally retaining enough soldiers, it is falling short on personnel with occupational specialties. For example, the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division was short on Bradley fighting vehicle turret mechanics, Abrams tank mechanics, and motor transport

operators by 75 percent, 50 percent, and 36 percent, respectively.<sup>59</sup>

In 1999, the Air Force missed its retention goals in all enlisted categories, causing it to fall short by 5,000 airmen.<sup>60</sup> The Air Force expects to be short 1,500 pilots by the end of 2002.<sup>61</sup> The Navy also missed its retention goals in 1999.<sup>62</sup> Even the Marines, who historically do not suffer from recruiting or retention problems, have begun to have retention problems. Due largely to a high operations tempo, the Corps lost Marines at a rate 10 percent greater than expected in the first half of 2000.<sup>63</sup>

Reserve and National Guard units are playing an increasingly important role in national military strategy, and their importance is likely to increase in the future. They, too, must maintain consistent recruiting and retention numbers. But like the active Army, Navy, and Air Force, Reserve units are also insufficiently staffed. In 1999, the Army Reserves fell short by 10,300; the Navy Selected Reserve, by 4,740; the Air Force Reserve, by 3,723; and the Air National Guard, by 122.<sup>64</sup>

Low morale among the Junior Officer Corps is also a problem in the force. In the fall of 1999, the Navy surveyed its junior officers to gauge morale. They expected a 15 percent response rate, but, to their surprise, over 55 percent of those surveyed responded. Of these responses, 82 percent

55. General Hugh Shelton, Testimony, Senate Appropriations Wrap-up Hearing, April 26, 2000.

56. The military plans to eliminate inadequate housing for single enlisted personnel by 2008 and to fix family housing by 2010.

57. General Hugh Shelton, Testimony, Senate Appropriations Wrap-up Hearing, April 26, 2000.

58. Hearing on Military Pay and Compensation, Subcommittee on Personnel, Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, 106th Congress, 1st Session, March 3, 1999.

59. There are numerous other examples. See, for example, U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Readiness: Readiness Reports Do Not Provide a Clear Assessment of Army Equipment*, p. 19.

60. General Hugh Shelton, Testimony, Senate Appropriations Wrap-up Hearing, April 26, 2000.

61. Prepared Statement of General Michael E. Ryan, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, Concerning Readiness, House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, 106th Congress, 1st. Session, October 21, 1999.

62. Congressional Research Service, "Summaries of FY 1999 Performance Reports for the 24 CFO Agencies," memorandum to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, June 2, 2000, p. CRS-6.

63. Robert Holzer, "U.S. Army, Marines To Gauge Deployment Cost," *Defense News*, July 17, 2000, p. 1.

64. Congressional Research Service, "Summaries of FY 1999 Performance Reports for the 24 CFO Agencies," p. CRS-6.

responded negatively. Citing poor leadership, inadequate pay and compensation, and insufficient spare parts and equipment, only one-third said they planned to reenlist.<sup>65</sup>

The Army conducted a similar survey this year to find out why it is having difficulties retaining captains. Between 1989 and 1999, the number of captains who voluntarily left the service rose 58 percent—from 6.7 percent to 10.6 percent. The Army Chief of Staff commissioned a survey of 760 officers at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, the base at which the Army trains its brightest and most promising future leaders. The results were startling. Junior officers had clear reasons for leaving the service, citing sensitivity training, the pace and type of operations, micromanagement from superiors, the risk-averse environment created by generals who view even small errors as career-threatening, and superiors who lied about military readiness.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, soldiers in the field hear the Administration blithely stating that everything is fine in the military—that the force is adequate, and that readiness is not an issue. This further degrades morale and readiness. Because morale inherently affects military readiness, low morale

among servicemen is a real indicator of the U.S. military's declining readiness.

## CONCLUSION

The Clinton Administration has damaged the U.S. military with a dangerous combination of reduced budgets, diminished forces, and increased missions. The result has been a steep decline in readiness and an overall decline in U.S. military strength. Nearly a decade of misdirected policy coupled with a myopic modernization strategy has rendered America's armed forces years away from top form.

To deny that the United States military has readiness problems is to deny the men and women in uniform the respect they deserve. America's military prowess can be restored. To do so, America's leaders must first admit there is a problem. Only then can the President reestablish America's military readiness.

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65. Ed Offley, "Young Officers' Anger, Frustration Stun Navy's Top Brass," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 29, 2000, p. A1.

66. Thomas E. Ricks, "Younger Officers Quit Army At Fast Clip," *The Washington Post*, April 17, 2000, p. A1.