

# Executive Memorandum

No. 912  
February 10, 2004



Published by The Heritage Foundation

## Growing the Army the Right Way

*Jack Spencer*

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has authorized temporarily increasing Army active-duty troop strength by 30,000. Efforts to relieve the Army's high operations tempo should be applauded. However, it is unclear whether adding 30,000 soldiers can provide the needed short-term relief or will be required for the long term. The reality is that the Pentagon has been operating at levels that exceed authorized end-strength for some time now, and adding 30,000 soldiers would take up to four years and over \$3 billion.

Nonetheless, the Army is stretched, and the emerging gap between its capabilities and responsibilities must be decreased. To ensure that the Army is properly structured in the long term, the focus should be on force capability, not end-strength. Adding troops in the near term could help to reduce the strain, but committing to permanent increases now would only perpetuate the structural problems that originally caused these strains.

Misplaced resources, not inadequate resources, are causing much of the Army's stress. A temporary increase may alleviate the pressure in the near term, but long-term success requires further restructuring. This effort has already begun with the restructuring in Europe and the Pacific. Similarly, the Pentagon has identified 50,000 clerical positions within the uniformed services that could be filled from the private sector. Of these positions, 10,000 were converted to combat positions in 2003, and another 10,000 will be converted this year. To maximize the

short-term impact of the additional troops without jeopardizing future reforms, Congress and policymakers should consider the following recommendations.

- **Keep the increases temporary until future needs are better understood.** America's armed forces have not been sized for the many missions asked of them since the end of the Cold War. Throughout the 1990s, the force was drastically

cut while simultaneously asked to take on many more missions. This mismatch resulted in severe declines in readiness by the late 1990s. While the gap had begun to close before September 11, the war on terrorism—specifically, Operation Iraqi Free-

dom—has once again exposed the disparities between America's military ends and means. This problem is not so much a result of the war on terrorism as it is a consequence of failing to adequately reform the defense establishment. Simply adding troops would allow the Pentagon to perpetuate its structural problems.

- **End deployments in the Balkans.** The United States has over 4,000 troops on peacekeeping

---

Congress and policymakers should:

- Authorize only a temporary increase in troop strength until future requirements are better understood,
  - Enact reforms that result in more capability from the current force, and
  - Not sacrifice other priority defense programs to pay for the increase.
- 

---

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/em912.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/em912.cfm)

Produced by the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis  
Institute for International Studies

Published by The Heritage Foundation,  
214 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002-4999  
(202) 546-4400 [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

missions in the Balkans. This translates into 12,000 dedicated to that mission, because for every soldier deployed, one is recovering and one is preparing for deployment. Ending this unnecessary deployment would significantly reduce the stress on the force by adding 12,000 soldiers to the rotation base—soldiers whose experience in the Balkans would prove extremely valuable on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- **Do not sacrifice other priorities.** Some Members of Congress have suggested that more troops are needed and that money from other priorities should fund them. Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) has even suggested taking these funds from missile defense. Doing so is unnecessary and dangerous. Congress has already appropriated the funding for the temporary troop increase in the \$87 billion supplemental passed in 2003. Second, the threat from long-range ballistic missile has not receded. The United States is finally close to ending its total vulnerability to ballistic missiles and should continue that effort.
- **Use any permanent increases to reduce strain on the reserve component.** Any permanent increase in the active force, to the extent an increase is needed, should be restricted to those areas of combat support and combat service support that are now largely maintained by the reserve component. The remaining permanent increases should be in the reserve component. The resulting size of the force should be adequate to defend America if the nation focuses on defending its vital interests. That said, the war on terrorism is unpredictable, and future requirements may dictate further increases in the force—but, then again, they may not. Outside Iraq, the war on terrorism is resource intensive, not manpower intensive. Barring further invasions and occupations, the United States needs no additional increase in manpower. However, by keeping a large reserve, the nation will be prepared if other

manpower-intensive missions become necessary.

- **Strongly encourage voluntary retention over recruitment.** The Army estimates that increasing the active force by 30,000 troops will take up to four years. Given that U.S. forces are stretched thin today and that troop requirements in Iraq should decline over the next four years, the Army should seek to increase forces as soon as possible. It can best achieve this by providing incentives to personnel to remain on active duty and by encouraging National Guard and Reserve members to transfer to active-duty forces. Retaining active-duty troops will bring the increased strength to bear much faster while maintaining unit cohesion and avoiding training costs. Because these personnel were already planning to retire, this will also make downsizing easier as the demand for manpower in Iraq decreases.
- **Continue the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process on schedule.** While the additional 30,000 active troops will require supporting infrastructure, the addition does not justify slowing the BRAC process. The process should continue on schedule, and for it to be successful, the Pentagon and the BRAC commission must consider the future requirements of the force—including a possible permanent increase in force structure—and present any conclusions in their recommendations.

**Conclusion.** Ultimately, the United States may need a permanent increase in end-strength to meet all of its defense needs, but that step should wait until existing forces are deployed more efficiently. By making smart investments and freeing wasted resources, the U.S. armed forces can increase their capability in the near term and be better prepared to fight and win America's wars in the future.

—Jack Spencer is Senior Policy Analyst for Defense and National Security in the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation.