

DOCUMENT RESUME

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[Another Look at the Readiness of Strategic Army Forces (Unclassified Digest)]. LCD-76-457. June 9, 1977.

Report to the Congress; by Elmer B. Staats, Comptroller General.

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The Army maintains strategic units in the United States which are to be constantly available on short notice for deployment in an emergency, either to reinforce and support forces stationed overseas or to be deployed elsewhere to support national commitments. Findings/Conclusions: It is doubtful that the strategic Army forces could deploy quickly and in a fully combat ready condition. Much of the forces' combat essential equipment was not kept up, although it was reported to be. As a result, a considerable amount of maintenance would be required in a deployment to make it combat ready. Funding problems continue to constrain maintenance and training programs. Shortages in the stock of repair parts still exist and personnel and training problems persist. Revisions in the criteria for reporting personnel and training readiness are needed. Planning for contingency deployments needs to be improved and strengthened. During 1970-71, the diversion of resources, funds, equipment, and personnel to South Vietnam contributed to the low readiness of the strategic divisions existent then. Recommendations: The Army should consider the following alternatives: reducing the strategic forces to the number of divisions that could be equipped, staffed, and supported with the resources available; and retaining existing divisions but concentrating the available personnel in selected organizational components that would be kept fully ready. The Secretary of the Army should require that resources needed to deploy strategic force units be compared to the availability and capabilities of existing transportation assets and should adjust deployment plans accordingly. (Author/QM)

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE READINESS
OF STRATEGIC ARMY FORCES
Department of the Army

D I G E S T

The Army maintains certain active units in the United States which are to be constantly available on short notice for deployment in an emergency--either to reinforce and support forces stationed overseas or to be deployed elsewhere to support national commitments. These units, the strategic Army forces, consisted of eight divisions and three brigades at the time of GAO's review. Three new divisions are being formed.

GAO first reviewed the readiness of these forces in 1971, when they had 4 and 1/3 divisions. GAO's report, "Need for Improvement in Readiness of Strategic Army Forces" (B-146896, May 8, 1972), concluded that it would be difficult for these forces to deploy quickly and at full strength because many units were not combat ready. Much of their equipment was not kept up and repair parts were in short supply. High turnover of personnel and a lack of qualified personnel were other problems. (See p. 2.)

This followup review disclosed that it is still doubtful that strategic Army forces could deploy quickly and in a fully combat ready condition. Although these units were reporting much higher readiness ratings than before, readiness reports were inaccurate and, therefore, did not provide a realistic basis for evaluating the units. (See p. 19.)

GAO found, among other things, that:

--Much of the forces' combat essential equipment was not kept up, although it was reported to be. As a result, a considerable amount of maintenance would be required in a deployment to make it combat ready. (See p. 4.)

--Funding problems continue to constrain maintenance and training programs. Although the stock of repair parts has improved since GAO's last report, shortages still exist. (See p. 25.)

--Personnel problems were less severe than previously reported; however, personnel and training problems still persist. (See p. 10.)

--Revisions in the criteria for reporting personnel and training readiness are needed. (See p. 19.)

--Planning for contingency deployments needs to be improved and strengthened. (See p. 29.)

Since 1972 the number of strategic Army units grew to "eight plus" divisions. However, the deployability of these units remains low because many of the problems reported earlier still exist. During 1970-71, the diversion of resources--funds, equipment, and personnel--to South Vietnam contributed to the low readiness for the then 4 and 1/3 divisions. Because of the limited availability of resources at that time, GAO recommended that the Army restructure these forces. Two alternatives were suggested:

--Reducing the strategic forces to the number of divisions that could be equipped, staffed, and supported with the resources available. Political considerations and international commitments could, of course, limit the extent to which this could be done.

--Retaining existing divisions but concentrating the available personnel in selected organizational components that would be kept fully ready. The remaining components could retain their identity and the basic equipment allowances under reduced staffing and could be expanded with reserves, if necessary.

Today, all divisions are competing for the limited resources available. The Army admittedly has improved the readiness of strategic forces since GAO's 1972 report; however, major problems still exist.

The Army should continue its efforts to remedy the deficiencies that remain. However, if limits on resources continue for a prolonged period, the Army should consider the recommendations made in GAO's earlier report, thus, guaranteeing that forces which are ready for combat and which can be deployed quickly will be available.

The Secretary of the Army should require that resources needed to deploy strategic forces units be compared to the availability and capabilities of existing transportation assets and should adjust deployment plans accordingly. Recommendations on the condition of equipment (p. 8), personnel and training (p. 17), the readiness reporting system (p. 23), and funding (p. 28) are contained in the report.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Army responded constructively to GAO's findings. It advised GAO of actions taken or being taken to alleviate funding shortages and improve personnel and training conditions. The Army also informed GAO that its readiness reporting regulation was being revised and that it would incorporate some of the changes GAO is recommending.

The Army disagreed with GAO's recommendation to consider restructuring strategic Army forces. The Army believes its program to increase combat power from 21 to 24 divisions is necessary to provide a realistic deterrent to war in Europe.

GAO acknowledges that political considerations and international commitments are the overriding factors in determining the size of the Army's force structure; however, until adequate resources become

available to support that structure, GAO believes that reducing the number of strategic forces divisions is a valid alternative. Likewise, GAO still believes that the Army should consider, as a possible alternative, GAO's recommendation to concentrate available personnel and resources in selected units that would be kept fully combat ready.

With regard to GAO's recommendation to compare transportation requirements and capabilities, the Army and the Joint Chiefs of Staff said a detailed strategic movement analysis was currently being made under the provisions of the Joint Strategic Planning System.