

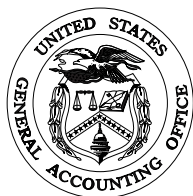
GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Military Readiness and Management
Support, Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate

May 1999

MILITARY OPERATIONS

Impact of Operations Other Than War on the Services Varies





United States General Accounting Office
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National Security and
International Affairs Division

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The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military
Readiness and Management Support
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Since the end of the Cold War, the frequency of U.S. military involvement in operations other than war¹ (OOTW) has increased, while the force structure and number of military personnel have been reduced. You asked us to examine the impact of OOTW on the military services. As agreed with your office, we examined the (1) impact of OOTW on the warfighting capability of each of the services, including the time to recover warfighting skills; (2) extent to which reporting systems fully capture the impacts; (3) available information on the effect of OOTW on morale and retention; (4) ability of U.S. forces to respond to a major theater war while engaged in OOTW; (5) Department of Defense (DOD) efforts to alleviate any adverse impacts; and (6) funding provided by Congress for OOTW. We focused our efforts primarily on Army and Air Force units that have been engaged in operations in Bosnia and Southwest Asia (SWA) over the past several years and also included Navy units engaged in counterdrug operations in the Caribbean.

Results in Brief

U.S. military forces have become increasingly involved in OOTW over the past decade. Based on our review of unit readiness and capability assessments and observations confirmed at military headquarters such as the U.S. European Command, U.S. Army Europe, U.S. Air Forces in Europe, and the Air Force's Air Combat Command in the United States, OOTW has adversely affected the combat capability of deployed units in Bosnia and Southwest Asia and some units that remain at the home station as they have to pick up the work of the deployed units. At the same time,

¹For the purpose of this report, "operations other than war" includes low-intensity peacekeeping operations, such as military observer duty, and counterdrug and high-intensity peace enforcement operations.

deployments for these operations can have some positive affects, such as fostering unit cohesion. OOTW has affected Army and Air Force units more than it has Navy and Marine Corps units. Returning units to their wartime mission capability levels during peacetime can take from several weeks for some support units to more than a year for some combat units, although in wartime the recovery period can be compressed if necessary. On the other hand, many units and/or personnel in the Army and the Air Force have been relatively unaffected by OOTW. While the services are reporting some adverse impacts of OOTW and impacts are regularly reported to senior-level DOD readiness forums, we found that there is considerable additional information on OOTW impacts that are not readily apparent in readiness reports.

The effects of OOTW on morale and retention is a mixed picture. Army morale studies indicate that morale was generally high among soldiers in Bosnia, but Air Force personnel indicate that morale is declining partly due to recurring OOTW deployments. Navy and Marine Corps personnel said that retention is an indicator of morale. The Army has been meeting its overall retention goals and U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR), which until late 1998 provided most of the soldiers deployed to Bosnia, has met or exceeded the overall Army's retention rates since 1994. However, retention is a problem in some of the services, particularly the Air Force, but according to the services, OOTW is only one of several factors affecting retention.

In the 1993 Bottom-Up Review and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review of national military strategy and associated force structure, DOD concluded that the same forces needed for war would be used for OOTW until they were needed to meet wartime requirements. Addressing the impacts of OOTW while maintaining the ability to engage in major theater wars will present a complex management challenge for DOD. DOD recently provided Congress a report on the effects of its involvement in Bosnia on the ability to conduct two major wars. Its European Command is studying how it would disengage and redeploy forces from Bosnia if there were a war, but results may not be available until later this year. The Joint Staff and the military services are taking steps to reduce the impact of OOTW, but either there is insufficient data available to know if the steps are achieving their intended objectives or the steps are too new to assess. One of these steps includes an Air Force plan to shift 5,000 personnel slots from occupations not heavily used in OOTW to occupations that are heavily used, beginning next year. If Congress and the executive branch conclude that the effects of OOTW are unacceptable, other than reducing U.S.

participation, it may be necessary to include OOTW needs in determining future force structure.

Congress has provided funding for OOTW, but to prevent growth in overall government spending, it reduced other planned defense spending in fiscal years 1995, 1996, and 1997. In fiscal year 1998, Congress did not reduce other planned defense spending to offset OOTW funding.

Background

American military forces have been engaged in OOTW throughout the nation's history. The U.S. military's current OOTW involvement includes providing forces in and around SWA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and, until recently, Macedonia, and for other operations such as counterdrug. The Army has deployed no more than 75,000 soldiers to Bosnia since the operation began in December 1995, with the size of the force at any one time ranging from less than 34,000 in the first year to slightly more than 6,000 soldiers in March 1999 in a total Army of 1 million personnel. On any given day in 1997, the Air Force deployed about 14,600 personnel for OOTW in a total Air Force of 370,000 personnel. Few Navy and Marine Corps personnel are deployed exclusively for OOTW.

Since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the Air Force and the Navy have enforced U.N. restrictions over Iraqi air space and supported U.S. forces in Bosnia; the Navy has inspected ships in the Persian Gulf to enforce the U. N. embargo on Iraq; and the Army has provided ground forces in Bosnia and Macedonia and air defense protection for Israel, and participated in combined training with Kuwaiti forces. Appendix I contains additional details on the level of U.S. military involvement in OOTW since the Gulf War.

Participation in OOTW Adversely Affects Parts of the Military While Leaving Other Parts Relatively Unaffected

OOTW has affected the combat capability of each of the military services to varying degrees. We found that the Army and the Air Force were more affected than the Navy and the Marine Corps, although many parts of the Army and the Air Force have been relatively unaffected. Army units engaged in OOTW generally require more recovery time than Air Force units, and combat units in the Air Force and the Army require more recovery time than support units. The Navy and the Marine Corps are less affected because they generally perform OOTW missions with forces that have been deployed as part of their continuing U.S. overseas presence. On

any given day, naval and Marine Corps forces are deployed around the world, primarily in Carrier Battle Groups and Amphibious Ready Groups.

Many skills decline to some extent if not used regularly. In the military the skills of individual personnel can decline under a variety of circumstances, including while attending schoolhouse training or serving in staff positions, although these experiences provide valuable training and experience of a different kind. The skills of individual personnel as well as entire units can decline as well if not used regularly, as is the case while participating in OOTW.

OOTW Erodes the Skills of Army Combat Units More Than Support Units

Within the Army, units from the European-based 1st Infantry Division, 1st Armored Division, and V Corps have repeatedly deployed to Bosnia since December 1995 and to a lesser extent to Macedonia. For example, as described by the 1st Armored Division's Commanding General, in the 3 ½-year period ending in March 1999, the division deployed to Bosnia twice and was involved in peacekeeping training prior to its deployment. The division initiated training for peacekeeping in August 1995, making it unavailable for high intensity conflict missions, deployed to Bosnia in its entirety from December 1995 to November 1996, retrained to its high intensity conflict standards upon its return from Bosnia, was told it would return to Bosnia as it was completing its retraining for high intensity conflict, and partially deployed to Bosnia again between October 1997 and October 1998.

The primary mission of combat units is the destruction of enemy forces and/or installations. Among combat units, an armored division's mission is to close with and destroy the enemy, and the tank is its primary offensive weapon. Moreover, mobile ground operations require the use of armored and mechanized infantry forces to train and fight as a team to defeat enemy armed forces. Mechanized infantry equipped with infantry fighting vehicles, such as the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, can accompany tanks in mounted attacks. To train for its mission in peacetime, the Army training standard is for armored units to drive their tanks 800 miles per year and for mechanized units to drive their Bradley Fighting Vehicles 940 miles per year. In addition, armored and mechanized units conduct gunnery training and participate in training exercises both at home stations and at combat training centers such as the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Germany.

In Bosnia, the primary mission of the armored and mechanized units deployed there is to implement the General Framework Agreement (also

known as the Dayton Agreement). Operations in Bosnia required that combat units maintain the zone of separation called for in the Dayton Agreement by (1) conducting mounted and dismounted patrols, (2) manning checkpoints, and (3) performing weapons storage site inspections. These units also performed cordon and search and reconnaissance operations and provided basecamp and convoy security. However, the mechanized infantry and armored units primarily conduct these operations mounted on Up-Armored High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles and not on the Bradley Fighting Vehicles and M-1 tanks, which they organized and trained to use for their wartime combat missions. While in Bosnia, armored and mechanized infantry units generally do not conduct any armored maneuver operations and are relieved from tank and Bradley gunnery requirements. The Army's peace operations field manual states that units selected for peace operations missions may be required to perform tasks that may be different from their wartime tasks.

Recent Testimony Detailed How OOTW Participation Affected Peacetime Training

In a March 1999 testimony before the House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Readiness, the Commanding General of the 1st Armored Division said that at the battalion level in Europe the division's training doctrine establishes a 6-month repetitive, iterative training cycle.² This cycle is evident in battalions' 6-month cycle of major training events such as participation in live gunnery certifications and annual Combat Maneuver Training Center rotations. At the brigade and division level, the division's training doctrine establishes a 2-year training cycle based on the Battle Command Training Program.

The General, who had commanded U.S. military forces in Bosnia at the time of our August 1998 visit, said that peacekeeping operations are a double-edged sword. At the company level and down to the individual soldier, the effects of peacekeeping operations are overwhelmingly positive. At battalion, brigade, and division levels, peacekeeping detracts from the Army's established training cycle to sustain highly trained and combat-ready teams. This includes rotations through training centers, such as the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Germany, and participation in the Battle Command Training Program. Furthermore, the General said that in the case of the 1st Armored Division, the historical development of peacekeeping operations in Bosnia has had a long-term impact on its ability to participate in high intensity conflict training. Effectively, the division has had to participate in two 1-year peacekeeping tours in Bosnia during

²A division is divided into brigades, its brigades into battalions, and its battalions into companies.

the last 3 years with a significant, cumulative effect on its ability to train for high intensity conflict missions.

The 1st Cavalry Division's headquarters and one of its three brigades are now deployed in Bosnia. In the same March 1999 hearing, one of the division's company commanders testified that the Bosnia operation offers substantial benefits at the small team level—squads, sections, and platoons—and that noncommissioned officers mature immeasurably. However, he also said that the operation comes at a high price on typical warfighting readiness. He said that 4 months prior to his company's deployment, it ceased training on several habitual wartime mission-essential tasks as it focused on new peacekeeping requirements. Specifically, the company altered its focus from tasks like conducting a movement to contact, a deliberate attack, or defending, to peacekeeping tasks like conducting presence patrols, performing weapons storage site inspections, and establishing checkpoints.

The company commander also described how personnel turbulence, primarily caused by the length of deployment, can take its toll on trained and ready teams. He said that prior to deploying to Bosnia he had stabilized the company's tank commander and gunner positions, the bedrock of combat readiness for an armored or mechanized unit. However, he said that stabilizing personnel for an extended deployment causes significant turbulence at the conclusion of the mission, whereas at home station and during shorter rotations, this personnel turbulence would occur over a longer period of time. As a result of the Bosnia deployment, the unit must accommodate this challenge in a shorter time period.

One of the 1st Cavalry Division's master gunners also testified at the March 1999 hearing. He said that when the division was notified in April 1998 that it would be deployed to Bosnia, it had several major events in progress. These included deployment of a task force to Kuwait; rotation of a brigade to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California; a Corps warfighter exercise; and completion of the fielding of M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tanks to one of its brigades. He described tank fielding as a significant point, considering that one of the battalions deploying to Bosnia had just completed its new equipment training and gunnery. He then said that sustainment of M1A2 specific skills is an ongoing challenge at home station for units that have had the equipment for a longer period of time and that the challenge is multiplied exponentially when the units are deployed to an area with no M1A2s on hand for training. He said that only two of the eight tank companies in Bosnia were equipped with M1A1 tanks and the other

six were equipped with Up-Armored High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles. Regarding the use of tanks, during our visit to Bosnia we were told that for the most part tanks are kept in the motor pool and are used when a show of force demonstration is needed; they were not being used in day-to-day operations.

The master gunner said that tank crewmen were not the only soldiers to face a skill degradation. The division also deployed 58 mechanized infantry crews to Bosnia. Enough Bradley Fighting Vehicles were issued to accommodate some sustainment training, but gunnery skills, which are extremely perishable, could not be adequately practiced due to the lack of live fire ranges. The closest range to practice live fire with both tanks and the Bradleys is well to the southwest of where U.S. forces are stationed in Bosnia. He said that sending U.S. units to this range was largely untenable because of extreme logistical difficulties in traveling to this range and operational requirements that would preclude releasing even a platoon, much less a company, for any length of time.

Our assessment of the 1st Cavalry Division's training plan indicates that the division is missing training opportunities as a result of its deployment to Bosnia. Although two of the division's three brigades trained at the Joint Readiness Training Center specifically to prepare for its deployment to Bosnia, one in June 1998 and the other in January 1999, this training was not considered a normal combat training center rotation. This division usually conducts training at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. From February 1999 through March 2000, these two brigades were not scheduled for any other combat training center rotations. The division's third brigade, which is not deploying to Bosnia, is scheduled for two combat training center rotations at the National Training Center in the same period—one in August 1999 and one in January 2000.

Combat Units' Warfighting Skills Declined While in Bosnia

Generally, the skills of combat units were degraded the most. According to the USAREUR Chief of Staff, high-intensity combat skills such as battlefield synchronization, maneuver, and gunnery are being degraded in Bosnia because (1) units do not train in these skills or (2) the missions or tasks undertaken in Bosnia differ from missions in a high-intensity conflict.

Our analysis of the readiness reports of combat units that deployed to Bosnia, the written assessments of these units' commanders, and discussions with those commanders indicated that their wartime combat skills were degraded during their Bosnia deployment. For example, according to the assessment of the commanding officer of a mechanized

infantry/armor unit we visited in Bosnia, his unit's combat skills were degraded because the soldiers were performing infantry tasks, such as guard duty, rather than their primary wartime tasks, such as operating in their M-1 tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles. According to the commander, his battalion conducted extensive individual and unit training prior to deploying to Bosnia, including tank gunnery and a rotation through the Combat Training Center in Germany. After rotating through the Center, the battalion was at the peak of its training readiness. After months in Bosnia, the commander assessed his battalion as only partially trained to meet some of its major warfighting requirements. Another battalion commander we visited in Germany had recently returned from Bosnia. He also assessed his unit as only partially trained against its wartime requirements. According to the commander, his brigade headquarters conducted a command inspection of his battalion shortly after its return and it failed the inspection. One failed area was operator maintenance of the battalion's equipment because the unit did not use its Bradleys and other equipment and the troops had forgotten specific maintenance procedures. Table 1 shows the assessments of these two units' commanders of their units' key capabilities.

Table 1: Commanders Assessment of Their Units' Capabilities as of Summer 1998

Capability	Mechanized/armored unit in Bosnia	Mechanized unit recently returned from Bosnia
Deploy/redeploy	Trained	Trained
Movement to contact with enemy	Partially trained	Partially trained
Attack	Partially trained	Untrained
Defend	Partially trained	Untrained
Perform support operations	Trained	Partially trained
Perform peace operations	Trained	Trained

Source: U.S. Army unit data.

To reduce the degradation of wartime skills, early in the Bosnia mission USAREUR established gunnery ranges in Hungary for the use of personnel deployed to Bosnia and units deployed with training simulators. However, the Army last used the ranges in Hungary in September 1997 and they were closed in January 1998. As noted earlier, the use of a range in Bosnia for tank and Bradley live fire gunnery was not considered tenable.

In the previously discussed March 1999 testimony before the House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Readiness, the Commanding General of the 1st Armored Division also said that the Bosnia deployment had a significant impact on combat readiness and at the same time positive impacts, primarily at the smaller unit level. The General, in part, testified that:

“Understandably, the Balkans peacekeeping mission has had a significant impact on combat readiness: however, contrary to popular belief, the impact on combat readiness at squad, platoon, and company levels, and even to a degree at the battalion level, is overwhelmingly positive. Unit cohesion, concentration on soldier common skill tasks, emphasis on small unit operations, a clear mission focus and enforcement of training standards result in confident, competent, and mission capable units. This positive effect at the small-unit level results from a combination of the intense environment presented by peacekeeping operations and ample opportunity to ‘train to task’ with teams of soldiers who are generally stabilized for the duration of the deployment.”

Support Units Skills Were Not As Adversely Affected by Bosnia Deployment

Support units that deployed to Bosnia were not as adversely affected as combat units. Support units provide a wide variety of services to combat units, including intelligence, medical, signal, logistics, transportation, and engineer support. In visiting military intelligence, signal, and medical units in Bosnia, we found that they used most, but not all, of their wartime skills while deployed there. For example, the commanding officers of both the signal and medical units in Bosnia at the time of our August 1998 visit told us that they operate in one place, whereas in wartime they would be moving with the combat units, constantly setting up their equipment, breaking it down, and setting it up again as the battle progressed.

OOTW Also Erodes the Skills of Air Force Combat Units More Than Support Units

Air Force fighter squadrons are also adversely affected by OOTW. In meetings before combat operations began against Iraq in December 1998, F-15 and F-16 fighter squadron personnel frequently described most routine OOTW missions as having little combat training value, particularly in Operation Southern Watch in SWA. The missions usually provided opportunities to refuel in the air and perform air combat control, which are considered basic flying events. However, many critical wartime events are not required by OOTW. For example, an F-16 squadron commander estimated that the amount of quality training received is only about 5 to 10 minutes on a 3- to 4-hour mission. A 1997 Air Combat Command operation tempo briefing provided an assessment of the quality of training at squadrons’ home stations versus what had been typically available during Operation Southern Watch for some critical F-16 combat events, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of the Quality of Training Opportunities at Squadrons' Home Station Versus in Operation Southern Watch for F-16 Pilots

Critical combat event	Quality of Training Opportunities	
	Home station	Southern Watch
Night precision weapon employment	Good	Poor
Medium-altitude employment	Good	Poor
Air strike control	Good	Poor
Four aircraft ^a air-to-ground employment	Good	Limited
Four aircraft ^a air-to-air employment	Good	Limited
Tactical navigation	Good	Limited
Maverick missile employment	Good	Poor

^aTraining to this event in groups of four aircraft is a critical combat task.

Source: Air Combat Command.

While we describe adverse operational impacts on fighter squadrons participating in OOTW, in commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that its SWA operations contribute significantly to its strategy in the event of war. Specifically, DOD said that its forces decrease the likelihood that a full-scale war will occur and those participating units would be part of the U.S. initial response if war were to occur, increasing the probability of successfully achieving national objectives.

The proficiency of Air Force support forces that are engaged in OOTW, such as air refueling and security police, is less negatively affected because these type units typically perform more tasks that are wartime related. For example, security forces usually provide force protection much like they would in wartime.

Time Required to Recover Warfighting Skills Varies

The services have varying means of ensuring that their personnel regain wartime mission-essential skills lost as a result of participating in OOTW. The Army and the Air Force have initiated deliberate processes to recover these skills, whereas the Navy and the Marine Corps view skill recovery as part of their routine forward presence deployment preparation. The recovery period during peacetime varies from several weeks to more than 1 year, depending on the service and type of unit. For example, in the Army an infantry battalion reported that it would take up to 14 months to recover its warfighting skills, an aviation unit estimated it would take 9 months, and a signal battalion estimated it would take 4 months. In wartime, recovery time could be compressed if necessary. In the Air Force, squadrons

estimated that it would take from 1 to at least 3 months to regain full flying proficiency. In summary, Army units generally require more recovery time than Air Force units, and combat units in both the Air Force and the Army require more recovery time than support units.

Army and Air Force Units Remaining at Home Station Generally Work Longer Hours and Combat Training Suffers

Entire units are not always deployed to OOTW because of force size constraints and the types of skills that are needed for the mission. In these instances, part of the unit deploys and the elements that stay behind must continue to perform their missions at the home station, a phenomena known as split-based operations. Both the deploying and nondeploying portions of the unit have been adversely affected by deployments. At 17 of 44 Army units we examined, the nondeploying portions of the units had to give up people or equipment to bring the deploying portion up to strength. For example, before the 1st Cavalry Division's³ headquarters and one of its three brigades deployed to Bosnia, nondeploying portions of the division provided 581 of the 747 additional soldiers needed for the Bosnia mission. The balance of the soldiers came from III Corps and other units throughout the Army. The two remaining brigades were insulated during the division's preparation for Bosnia because a second brigade replaced the initially deployed brigade in April 1999. According to a division personnel officer, the division diverted new arrivals from the remaining brigade but needed an additional 122 soldiers to round out the second rotation. III Corps and USAREUR agreed to provide 101 of the 122 soldiers; other U.S.-based units provided the remaining 21 soldiers. During the rotations, junior grade and nondeployable personnel have been used to form rear detachments for the deployed brigades.

As a result of deploying partial units, the nondeployed portions (1) lacked the officers and senior noncommissioned officers needed to train more junior soldiers, (2) could not conduct training above the small unit and individual soldier level, and (3) had to do their work and that of the deployed portion of the unit.

Both the Army and the Air Force had instances where training at home stations suffered because of OOTW. We have previously reported that officials at the 1st Infantry Division and 1st Armored Division told us that the shortage of noncommissioned officers in these divisions, in part due to

³The home station of the 1st Cavalry Division is Fort Hood, Texas. It deployed to Bosnia in August 1998 and formally took command in October 1998.

deployments to Bosnia, is a detriment to readiness because crews, squads, and sections are led by lower level personnel rather than by trained and experienced sergeants.⁴ According to the Chief of Staff of the 1st Armored Division, which had been operating as a split-based unit for much of 1998, the portion of the division at the home station could only conduct platoon- and company-level exercises when the rest of the division was in Bosnia. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the underlying cause of this personnel shortage is a serious shortage of noncommissioned and junior officers throughout the Army. DOD further commented that the deployment burden only exacerbates these problems within the nondeployed units and that home station training suffers because of a shortage of noncommissioned officers across the Army.

In the Air Force, numerous squadrons we visited reported that junior airmen's training had been interrupted because senior noncommissioned officers and officers who provided on-the-job training were often deployed. The result is that training has taken longer and is less comprehensive. Nondeploying airmen also told us that they normally work long days and weekends to accomplish their work and that of deployed personnel. We were told that support squadrons typically have been understaffed since the force drawdown and that deployments have made the situation much worse. At the wings we visited, the lack of personnel at the home station caused other impacts such as canceled vacation leave and training.

Some Aircraft Are Also Adversely Affected by OOTW

Aircraft participating in OOTW are being flown more hours than during regular training missions. For example, in December 1997, the 1st Fighter Wing's F-15C aircraft deployed to SWA accounted for 35 percent of the wing's sorties but 60 percent of its flying hours. An F-15C wing operations official estimated that the wing was putting about 2 years worth of hours on aircraft in about 6 months on its SWA deployment. This accumulation of flying hours, combined with the age of some types of aircraft, has revealed maintenance problems that are not typical, particularly on the F-15C and the A-10. F-16 units we visited did not report similar problems because, according to unit officials, the aircraft are not as old. In addition, officials in the Air Force units we visited said that the pace of deployments was, at least in part, causing aircraft mission-capable rates to decline and

⁴Military Readiness: Observations on Personnel Readiness in Later Deploying Army Divisions (GAO/T-NSIAD-98-126, Mar. 20, 1998).

cannibalization⁵ rates to increase. Since 1991, the percentage of Air Force fighter aircraft that were mission capable at any one time has decreased from 85 to 75 percent.

Many Military Personnel and Units Are Not Involved in OOTW

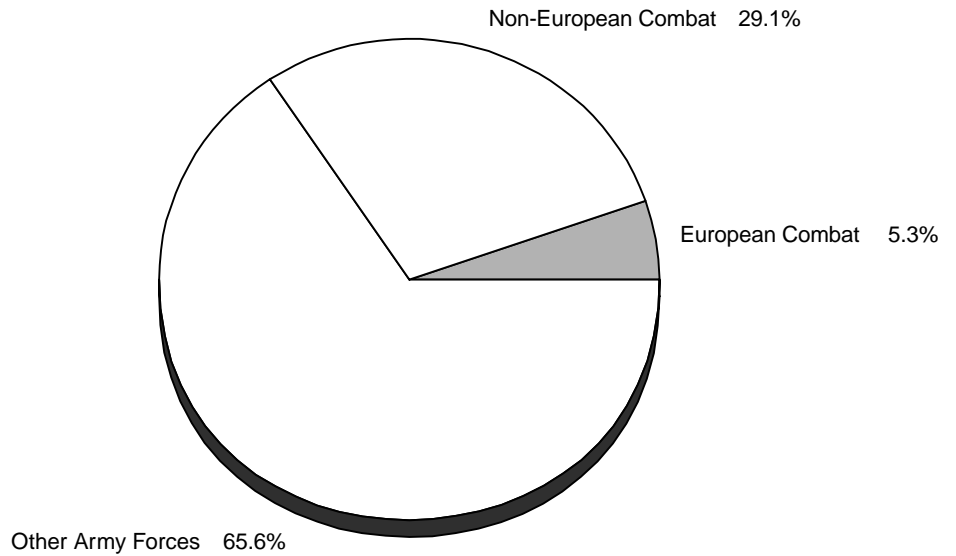
Only portions of the services are involved in OOTW. Large parts of the Army, for example, have been relatively unaffected by the Bosnia operation. Of the 1 million personnel in the Army during fiscal year 1998, about 570,000 were in the reserves and 495,000⁶ were in the active Army, of which about 170,000 were in active combat divisions, special operations forces, and other combat units. While the Army could not provide us with the actual number of soldiers that have served in Bosnia, it appears that no more than 75,000 soldiers have deployed there since the operation began in December 1995. In addition, a smaller number of soldiers that remained at home stations were affected by the Bosnia deployment.

At the peak of the operation, between December 1995 and December 1996, less than 34,000 soldiers were deployed to Bosnia and surrounding countries. In fiscal year 1998, less than 10,000 were deployed there at any one time and as of March 1999, the force level was down to slightly more than 6,000. Until recently, most of these personnel were from active forces assigned to USAREUR. The Army's two divisions in Europe, the 1st Infantry and 1st Armored Divisions, alternated providing a division headquarters and at least one combat brigade. The other eight divisions in the active Army had not deployed before August 1998. Before that time, the largest U.S.-based force in Bosnia was the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which deployed nearly 3,000 soldiers in August 1997. U.S.- and European-based units also provided about 2,700 individual augmentees to the deployed units. The portion of the total active Army in 1998 that was assigned to the European-based combat units, the remaining active Army combat units, and the rest of the active Army's support and headquarters forces are shown in figure 1.

⁵Cannibalization is the removal of parts from one aircraft to use on another aircraft, usually because parts are unavailable in the supply system.

⁶For fiscal year 1999, the size of the active Army was reduced to 480,000.

Figure 1: Portions of the Fiscal Year 1998 Total Active Army in European-based Combat Units, Non-European Active Combat Units, and the Rest of the Active Army



Source: Department of the Army.

Besides deploying forces for Bosnia, the Army has two other ongoing OOTW and one OOTW that ended in March 1999. One operation is the quarterly deployment of a battalion-size task force of about 1,100 soldiers to Kuwait to train with Kuwaiti military forces in desert armored warfare. A second operation is the continuous deployment of a similarly sized task force to the Sinai in support of the Multinational Force and Observers.⁷ A third operation had been the continuous deployment of a battalion of about 350 soldiers to Macedonia as part of the U.N. Preventative Deployment Force. In March 1999, the United Nations decided not to renew the mission in Macedonia.⁸

⁷Since 1982, the United States has deployed an infantry battalion to the Sinai continuously as part of a multinational effort to observe and report violations to the Egyptian-Israeli treaty of peace resulting from the Camp David Accords.

⁸From 1993 through March 1999, USAREUR had maintained a continual presence in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as part of a multinational peacekeeping force. USAREUR provided a combat battalion of around 350 personnel whose mission was to observe, monitor, and report on activities within their assigned sector.

In the Air Force, OOTW deployments are concentrated in a small percentage of career fields, and a large majority of personnel have little or no OOTW deployments. Our analysis of the Air Force's database that tracks all temporary duty (TDY), including OOTW deployments, showed that approximately 31 percent of active duty Air Force personnel had no TDY in fiscal year 1998. Another 53 percent were on TDY at least 1 day, but less than 60 days. It is unlikely that many in this group participated in OOTW because most deployments exceed 60 days. On the other hand, about 5 percent of Air Force active duty personnel accounted for 27 percent of total TDY in fiscal year 1998. Pilots, for example, comprised 4 percent of total active duty personnel but accounted for 9 percent of total TDY. The 5 percent of personnel who accounted for 27 percent of TDY consisted of about 16,700 assigned personnel, each of whom had TDY of 120 days or more in fiscal year 1998. The Air Force's goal is to keep TDY for any individual to no more than 120 days per year.

Air Force officials stated that a number of occupations, such as those in the medical, space, and missile fields, are seldom used during current OOTW but could be used during more intense hostilities. This factor contributes to their low TDY rates. In addition, U.S. Air Forces in Europe officials told us that even within squadrons, not all skills are tasked to support contingencies. For example, of all occupations in U.S. Air Forces in Europe, about three-fourths of all officers and half of all enlisted personnel do not deploy to OOTW.

Appendix II contains additional details on OOTW impacts on the services and the time required to recover warfighting skills.

A DOD Reporting System Shows Some, but Not All, Impacts of OOTW

The readiness reporting system used by DOD, the Global Status of Resources and Training System (GSORTS),⁹ has information that indicates that the readiness of units engaged in OOTW in all of the services has been adversely affected. These effects are particularly evident in Army lower unit-level readiness ratings. The Joint Staff, the Office of the Secretary of

⁹GSORTS, which evolved from the Status of Resources and Training System developed by DOD during the Cold War, requires each unit to indicate the current level of personnel, equipment on hand, equipment serviceability, and training and the commander's overall assessment of the unit's readiness to undertake its wartime mission. A C-1 unit can undertake the full wartime mission for which it is organized and designed; a C-2 unit can undertake most of its wartime mission; a C-3 unit can undertake many but not all elements of its wartime mission; a C-4 unit requires additional resources or training to undertake its wartime mission; and a C-5 unit is not prepared to undertake its wartime mission.

Defense, and the military services regularly review the impact of OOTW in senior-level readiness forums such as the Joint Monthly Readiness Review and the Senior Readiness Oversight Council. These forums meet monthly to review readiness concerns and direct corrective actions. However, important information about a unit's condition is not readily apparent in GSORTS or reported at all. For example, some impacts are only noted in the detailed commanders' comments. Furthermore, GSORTS does not clearly show some conditions that may adversely affect the ability of units to perform their wartime missions. These masked conditions include the counting of temporarily assigned personnel against wartime manning requirements, optimistically estimating training status, and reporting against different standards. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that based on congressional direction, it is examining revisions to readiness reporting in relation to the deployment of personnel.

Reported Readiness of European-based Army Units Has Declined

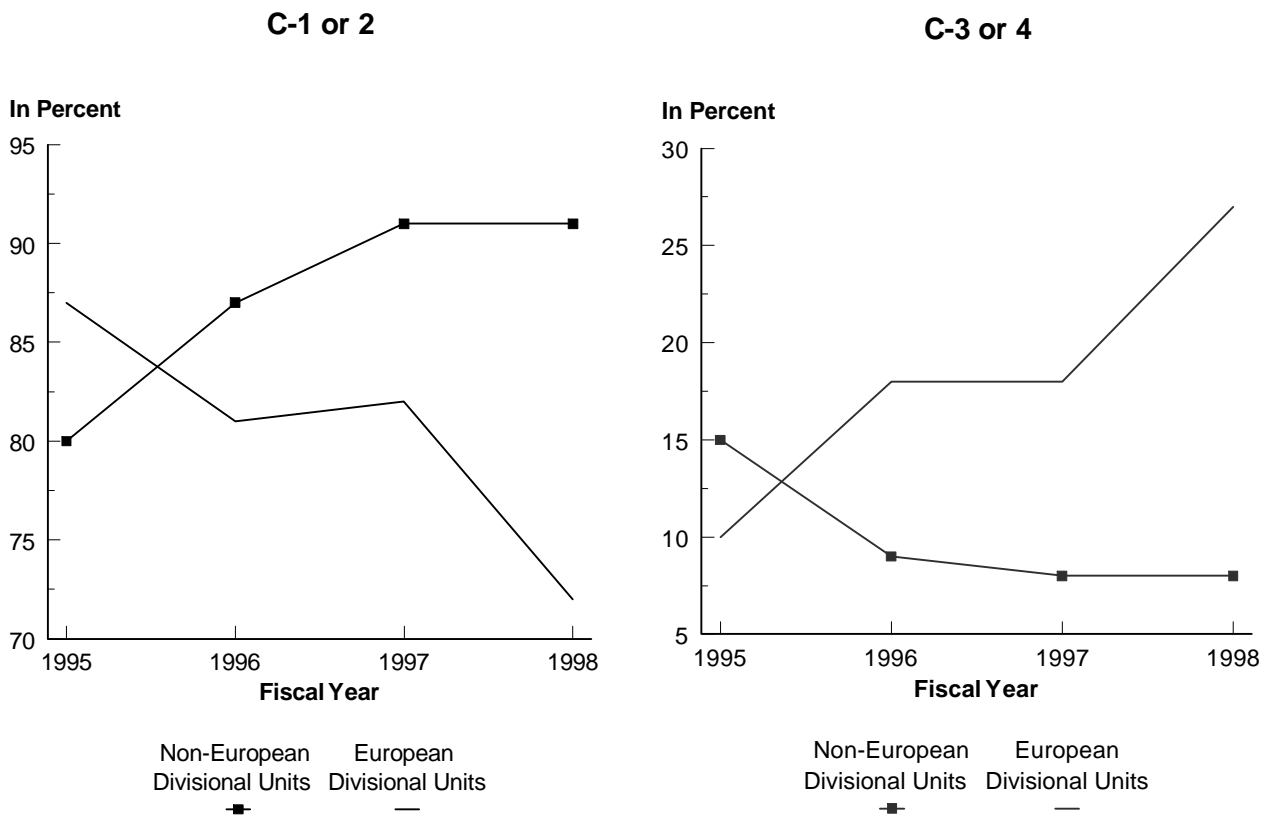
Until late 1998, the Army's Directorate for Readiness had been summarizing Army division-level readiness in reports to the Army Chief of Staff. It has since begun analyzing data for units within the divisions. We found that the readiness reported for the Army's 10 active divisions had not declined much. For example, from fiscal year 1995 to 1998 only two of those divisions reported a readiness rating below C-2 and those occurred in fiscal year 1995. Division-level reports are composites of their battalion and other units' reports prepared under the guidance of division commanders. GSORTS data at the battalion level, however, show an adverse impact on the readiness of Army units that had been deployed to Bosnia.

We analyzed GSORTS data to see how often Army battalions were reporting at high levels (C-1 or C-2) and lower levels (C-3 or C-4). While the specific ratings are classified, as can be seen in figure 2, since fiscal year 1995 the frequency at which the units in European-based divisions have reported their readiness at C-1 or C-2 has decreased 17 percent, from 87 percent in fiscal year 1995 to 72 percent by fiscal year 1998. Over this same period, the frequency at which the other eight active Army divisions reported C-1 or C-2 increased 14 percent, from 80 to 91 percent.¹⁰ Even more significantly, by fiscal year 1998, divisional units in the eight active Army divisions outside Europe were reporting at the lower readiness levels

¹⁰The U.S.-based brigades of the divisions stationed outside the continental United States are not included in these percentages. Including these brigades with the other eight active Army divisions had little impact on our reported calculations.

(C-3 or C-4) only 8 percent of the time, whereas European-based divisional units were reporting readiness at those lower levels 27 percent of the time.¹¹

Figure 2: Frequency at Which Divisional Units Reported C-1 or C-2 Versus C-3 or C-4 From Fiscal Year 1995 to 1998



Source: Department of the Army data.

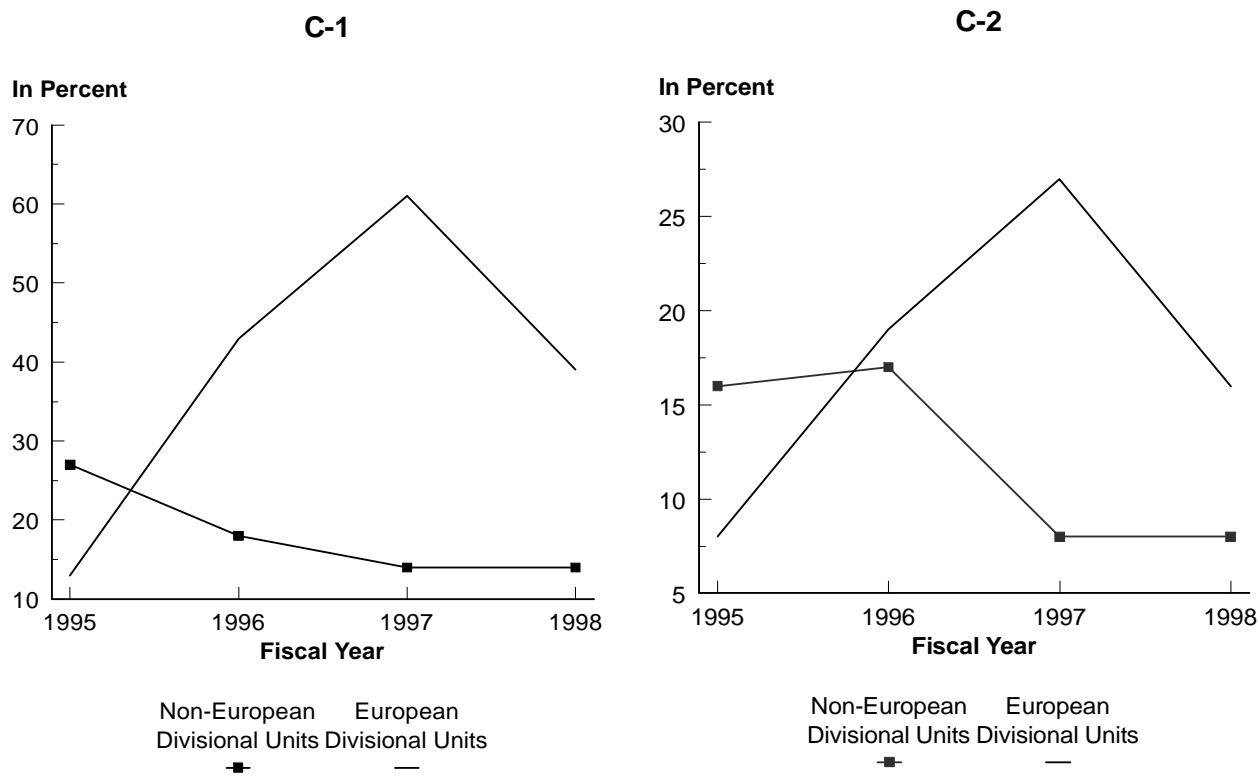
¹¹The European-based divisional units' GSORTS data for fiscal year 1998 include readiness ratings on two specialized engineer units that, according to USAREUR, are typically not found in Army divisions. Removing the two units' ratings from European-based divisional units' GSORTS data decreases the percentage of time they reported C-1 or C-2 in fiscal year 1998 by 1 percentage point and increases the percentage of time units reported at C-3 or C-4 by 1 percentage point.

European-based Army Units Subjectively Upgraded Their Readiness Ratings More Often Than Other Active Army Units

The reported decline in European-based Army combat units' readiness would have been greater had commanders not subjectively upgraded their units' ratings. GSORTS allows and notes whether a unit's readiness rating is the result of the commander's decision to report that the unit is at a different level of readiness than the data would normally support. Our analysis of GSORTS data shows that the commanders of the European-based Army divisional units exercised their prerogative and subjectively upgraded their units' readiness ratings more frequently than the rest of the active Army divisional units. From fiscal year 1995 to 1997, the European-based divisional units more than quadrupled the frequency at which they upgraded their readiness to C-1, from 13 percent to 61 percent. The frequency then declined to 39 percent in 1998, triple the level of 1995.¹² European-based divisional units also more than tripled the frequency at which they upgraded their readiness to C-2 between fiscal year 1995 and 1997, from 8 percent to 27 percent, before it declined to 16 percent in 1998. Over that same period, the divisional units in the other active divisions reduced the frequency at which they subjectively upgraded their status to C-1 by almost half, from 27 to 14 percent of the time and to C-2 by half, from 16 to 8 percent. Figure 3 depicts this information graphically. We are reporting the results of our analysis, not making any judgments about the appropriateness of these upgrades or the practice of allowing such upgrades.

¹²Removing the two specialized engineer units' ratings from the European-based divisional unit GSORTS data decreases the upgrade percentage for fiscal year 1997 by 3 percentage points and for fiscal year 1998 by 9 percentage points.

Figure 3: Frequency at Which Commanders in Divisional Units Upgraded Readiness Ratings to C-1 and C-2 in Fiscal Years 1995-98



Source: Department of the Army data.

Other Services' Readiness Also Affected by OOTW

The other services' data indicated that units engaged in OOTW were reporting lower readiness levels more frequently than they were several years ago. Air Force fighter squadrons in the Pacific, which have been less involved in OOTW, reported higher readiness levels than similar squadrons based in the United States and Europe. However, our analysis of the extent of subjective upgrading in the other services did not find that units heavily engaged in OOTW were subjectively upgrading their readiness ratings in GSORTS more frequently than in the past.

Commanders' Comments Reveal Conditions Not Reflected in Reported Ratings

Unit commanders may add comments to their GSORTS ratings to provide information or clarify circumstances surrounding their numerical ratings. Our review of these comments revealed details and concerns about the impact of OOTW that were not apparent in the ratings. For example, one USAREUR unit commander commented that his GSORTS personnel rating was high because he had 116 percent of the senior graded personnel, but the unit still had personnel who lacked the required skill level or rank to meet requirements. He said that junior officers had to serve in more senior positions and that the situation was sufficiently serious to subjectively downgrade his unit's readiness to C-2. Nine commanders noted that despite reporting both high personnel and overall unit readiness levels, they lacked sufficient senior enlisted personnel in key skill areas.

Furthermore, when units were split-based, knowing the units' condition at each location was difficult unless it was noted in the commanders' comments. For example, a commander in Bosnia reported his unit's personnel status as high and upgraded the unit's overall readiness, although two of the battalion's tank companies that were not deployed were critically short of deployable combat and support soldiers. The commander explained that the upgrade was warranted because infantry companies were attached to his unit in Bosnia and with the attached companies, his unit could execute combat or peace operations. Without commanders' comments, such circumstances affecting GSORTS ratings would not be clear.

Other factors also affect unit readiness reporting and thereby mask the impact of participating in OOTW. They include the way personnel are counted, training assumptions used, and the mission the unit is reporting against. Appendix III discusses these other factors and also contains details on other OOTW impacts that are not readily evident in DOD reporting systems.

The Army is Beginning to Analyze GSORTS Data Differently

Until recently, the Army's Readiness Directorate was only examining the reported readiness of its divisions. In reports and testimony since October 1994, we have reported that the Army needs to broaden its analysis and reporting of Army readiness data. In November 1997, as part of the Fiscal Year 1998 Defense Authorization Act, Congress directed that DOD's Quarterly Readiness Reports be expanded to include information on active battalion, squadron, or equivalent units that receive a C-3 rating or below for any month of the year covered by the report. Additionally, the Readiness Directorate staff and the Chief of Staff of the Army have been

hearing concerns about readiness that were not reflected in the division-level reports. These concerns often were relayed directly to the Chief of Staff in his visits to units as well as to Members of Congress who visited units in Bosnia and other locations. The most recent expanded Quarterly Readiness Report was delivered to Congress in early 1999.

Impact of OOTW on Morale Varies by Service and OOTW Contributes to Some Services' Retention Problems

Morale data have been obtained through personnel surveys in the Army and the Air Force and indirect means in the Navy and the Marine Corps. Army data do not indicate that OOTW create significant morale problems, but Air Force data indicate that OOTW is one of several factors affecting morale. A recurring theme in both Army and Air Force morale surveys is that deployments negatively impact families and marriages. Navy and Marine Corps personnel said that retention is an indicator of morale. Retention is a problem in some of the services, but OOTW is only one of several contributing factors. We have several efforts underway examining retention and quality-of-life issues in the services and will report our results later this year.

Army Surveys Show Morale High Albeit With Some Concerns

On the basis of USAREUR surveys involving thousands of military personnel deployed to Bosnia, the Army has described morale there as high. These surveys covered a number of topics, including morale, family issues, leadership, unit effectiveness, equipment, and attitudes toward peacekeeping. While the soldiers' morale declined during their first year in Bosnia and increased afterward, the surveys showed that more than 60 percent of the participants reported that their morale was high. A July 1997 survey of forces deployed throughout Bosnia also showed morale as relatively high. Morale increased by rank, with officers reporting higher morale than noncommissioned officers and noncommissioned officers reporting higher morale than lower enlisted soldiers. There was no comparable survey for 1998.

Soldiers reported positive and negative aspects of their deployments. Positive aspects included financial benefits (the income tax exemption while deployed and receipt of imminent danger pay) and educational benefits (the ability to take college courses through distance education while deployed). Negative aspects cited by soldiers who deployed the first year of the operation included the length of deployments and uncertainty about when they would return home. Soldiers deployed in 1996, the first year of the operation, and those deployed in 1997 often cited the adverse impact on families and marriages. For example, 47 percent of soldiers

surveyed in June 1996 reported moderate to extreme stress due to marital or relationship problems and 45 percent reported that the deployment had hurt their relationships with family members. In the July 1997 survey, 54 percent of the soldiers reported that the number of deployments¹³ had hurt the stability of their marriages. Among survey respondents with families, 54 percent of active duty soldiers, 47 percent of U.S. Army Reserve soldiers, and 71 percent of National Guard soldiers reported that the number of deployments had put a big strain on their families. Soldiers we talked to in nine units noted that predictability, knowing when you would be deployed and for how long, is a key to improving family morale.

According to USAREUR officials, the command was especially concerned about the effects of OOTW on the morale of both deployed soldiers and their families. They believed that the Army had significantly improved living conditions and pointed to the establishment of the Family Support System in Germany consisting of Family Assistance Centers, Family Support Groups, and Rear Detachment Commanders as steps that they had taken. USAREUR officials acknowledged that providing a soldier with some sense of deployment predictability is a key.

Eight of the 12 USAREUR morale indicators for the command as a whole were positive. For example, retention rates increased from fiscal year 1994 to partway through fiscal year 1998, from 113 percent to 144 percent of goals for mid-term enlisted personnel and 117 percent to 127 percent of goals for first-term personnel. Substance abuse enrollments declined from 47.4 per thousand in fiscal year 1993 to 31.9 per thousand in fiscal year 1997. Drug detection and suicide rates also declined.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that it considered USAREUR's concerns in subsequent unit deployments to Bosnia. For example, DOD said that the 1st Cavalry Division had set up a family support center with video conferencing, e-mail, and support personnel to improve the quality of life for the entire family. Units scheduled for rotations to Bosnia are establishing similar facilities and capabilities. DOD further stated that it is continuously seeking ways to mitigate the effects of OOTW through global unit sourcing, reducing deployment time frames, and earlier deployment notification to individuals.

¹³Seventy-six percent of the soldiers surveyed reported that they had previously deployed to Bosnia.

OOTW Is One of Several Factors Affecting Morale of Air Force Personnel

The Air Force 1997 Chief of Staff Organizational Climate and Quality of Life Survey, the most recent available, showed that about half of all personnel reported high morale. This was the first time the issue of unit morale was addressed in the survey. Survey officials said that their analysis showed unit morale was most closely associated with attitudes toward unit leadership. The survey did not specifically address OOTW and its effect on morale. However, the 1st Fighter Wing, a unit that deploys predominately to SWA, had the lowest surveyed morale of the units we visited. In units we visited, Air Force personnel described morale as declining due to the nature of operations and the conditions and length of deployments.

As was the case in the Army, Air Force deployments often had a negative impact on relationships with families. An Air Force official stated that the percentage of married personnel in the Air Force even among junior personnel is higher than in the past. The result is that deployments affect not only the servicemember, but also the spouse and other family members. The deployment schedule causes personnel to miss family events, such as birthdays and holidays. Morale also suffers in units where people are not deployed because they have to work long hours to cover for those that are deployed. In meetings with personnel of Air Force units engaged in OOTW, we were told that people not deployed may not have much more opportunity to spend time with family because they may also work holidays and weekends and may not be able to take scheduled vacations. The 1997 Quality of Life Survey found that high operating tempo caused personal problems for about a third of officers and enlisted personnel generally and more than half of pilots.

OOTW Contributes to Retention Problems, but With Some Exceptions, the Services Have Been Meeting Retention Goals

The Army has been meeting its overall retention goals. Within the Army, despite deployments to Bosnia, USAREUR's retention rates for initial and mid-term enlisted soldiers have generally met or exceeded the overall Army's rates since 1994. For those who leave the Army, OOTW deployments are sometimes cited as one of the reasons. For example, 19 percent of the soldiers that deployed to Bosnia during the first year of the operation reported that they decided to leave the Army as a result of the deployment. However, a study of Army reservists that deployed to Bosnia concluded that deployments were just one of a number of reasons for leaving the service. Other reasons cited included pay, leadership, and career advancement.

The Air Force is experiencing retention problems in a number of occupations, particularly pilots, and in critical enlisted specialties that may

be worsening. For example, Air Combat Command data indicate that 6 of the 10 occupations with the highest deployment rates are not meeting retention goals for personnel completing their first enlistment term. Air Force officials in the squadrons and wings we visited said that they were having difficulty retaining personnel and believed that many of the retention problems were partly or primarily the result of repeated deployments to undesirable OOTW and increased workloads when not deployed. However, Air Force data on the reasons people separate are mixed, with operations tempo and quality of life cited as factors for pilots, while pay, promotion, and leadership issues are more commonly cited as factors for enlisted personnel. Discussions with unit representatives and statements by high-level Air Force officials indicate that the decision to separate from the Air Force is a complex one and other factors besides TDY or OOTW play a big part in such a decision.

Overall, the Navy has been meeting its fiscal year 1998 first-term retention goals. Exit surveys routinely show family separation as one of the top three reasons for officer and enlisted personnel leaving the Navy. However, Navy officials could not measure the actual degree of impact caused by OOTW operations. The Naval Personnel Office has begun a study to better understand why personnel are staying in or leaving the service.

The Marine Corps also has been meeting its retention goals, although there are some critical shortages in career fields such as counterintelligence, imagery interpretation, career recruiters, and pilots. While the Marine Corps is aware of the above retention problems, it has no data that link them to OOTW. A Marine Corps official in the Office of Manpower and Reserve Affairs told us that the Corps is developing a retention survey to determine why Marines remain in or leave the service, which is scheduled to be administered for the first time in January 2000.

Appendix IV contains additional details on morale.

Responding to Major Theater War While Engaged in OOTW Presents Challenges

The services develop their force structure based on the requirements of engaging in major theater wars and providing forward presence. Two of DOD's major force structure analyses, the 1993 DOD Bottom-Up Review and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review, stated that all 10 active Army divisions are needed to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major theater wars. However, these analyses show that some of the forces necessary for a major theater war are also expected to be used for OOTW and until needed, would likely be involved in OOTW.

One of the Quadrennial Defense Review's major analyses identified some issues critical to ensuring that U.S. forces can transition from OOTW to major theater wars. For example, redeploying forces committed to various regions around the world would be difficult and could seriously strain the services' mobility and support forces. Also, some types of units, such as military police and signal, would be stressed. Although DOD did not use the results to recommend force structure changes, such as reducing some combat capabilities or adding others more suitable to OOTW to reduce the operating demands on some units, the analysis makes it clear that DOD still has much work to do in assessing the impact and managing the demands of OOTW.

In April 1996, DOD, in its Quarterly Readiness Report to Congress, began noting some concerns about its ability to engage in a major theater war while involved in an OOTW the size of the one in Bosnia. The April 1996 report and subsequent reports have noted concerns about the ability to quickly disengage and redeploy from OOTW. DOD said that,

"Diversion of strategic lift assets needed for withdrawal from an ongoing operation can impact arrival of forces and sustainment stocks to support a Major Regional Contingency (MRC). In addition, indigenous rail, highway, and seaport conditions can limit the ability to withdraw rapidly. National and international politics could complicate a rapid withdrawal, and of course, a non-permissive disengagement environment would increase the risk to our forces."

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the latest Quarterly Readiness Report to Congress downgraded this concern based on steps taken to mitigate the risk such as modifying deployment schedules for units engaged in OOTW and substituting other equally capable units. The unclassified version of this report described the assessment of the cumulative impact of ongoing operations, including the Bosnia operation, on the outbreak of a major war in SWA followed by a major war in Korea. The report stated that most major combat and key support forces are ready to meet assigned missions, but the pace of contingency operations continues to stress the readiness of certain segments of the force. It also stated that U.S. forces remain capable of executing the two major war strategy, but cited several factors, including mobility and logistics, that add to risk.

DOD Is Studying How to Disengage From Bosnia if There Were a Major Theater War

According to current DOD guidance, the services should plan for the possibility of withdrawing from OOTW in the event of major theater wars. DOD recently provided Congress a classified report on the effects of its involvement in Bosnia on its ability to conduct two major wars occurring at about the same time. In 1998, the U.S. European Command began to study how it would withdraw U.S. forces from Bosnia if the United States had to disengage before the end of the mission to respond to a major theater war. The command estimates its study will take over a year to complete. In the summer of 1998, officials we talked to at the Sarajevo headquarters of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led forces in Bosnia, the 1st Armored Division in Tuzla, the European Command in Germany, and the Army's III Corps and 1st Cavalry Division in the United States did not know how forces would be withdrawn from Bosnia if needed for a major theater war.

According to the European Command's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, one primary issue is that some of the military units that are needed to facilitate withdrawal from Bosnia are the same ones needed to facilitate a deployment to any new theater of operations. He suggested it may take 18 months to eliminate any conflicting requirements in the plans. The command estimated it will take 90 days to disengage forces from Bosnia and redeploy them to a major theater war—45 days to redeploy from Bosnia and 45 days to reconstitute, train, and redeploy to another theater. Other issues that would have to be addressed include coordinating with NATO, identifying any continuing support U.S. forces might provide to remaining NATO forces, and, if other NATO forces also withdrew, determining how facilities, such as roads, ports, and airfields, would be shared.

Appendix V contains additional information on responding to a major theater war while engaged in OOTW. We are also preparing a separate classified report on the withdrawal of forces from Bosnia for a major theater war.

Effect of Actions Taken to Reduce OOTW Impact on Forces Not Yet Known

The Joint Staff and the services recognize the need to reduce the impact of OOTW on U.S. military forces and have established some programs to achieve this goal. These programs include the Global Military Force Policy (GMFP), the Army's new stabilization policy, and the Air Force's initiative to establish the Expeditionary Air Force. However, the Joint Staff and the services do not know the extent to which these programs are achieving

their goals either because there is insufficient data available to assess them or they are too new to assess.

GMFP Seeks to Manage High Demand Assets

There is a greater demand during peacetime for some military assets than the services can meet without degrading the readiness of these assets and causing lost training opportunities and reduced quality of life for personnel in these units. These assets in the active force include some major platforms, weapon systems, units, and personnel that exist in limited numbers but are in high demand. For example, the Air Force has six Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center aircraft and at least three have been deployed continuously to OOTW since 1994. To balance these needs, the Joint Staff established GMFP in July 1996 as a peacetime prioritization process for allocating those assets among the theater warfighting commanders for use in crises, contingencies, and long-term joint task force operations. The policy's goal is to ensure that, while meeting the theater commanders' requirements, these service-specified assets are maintained at the highest possible level of readiness and are available to respond to crises when they arise.

The Joint Staff is responsible for administering GMFP. It coordinates with the warfighting commanders and services to (1) determine mission priorities, (2) establish or validate the assets' requirements, (3) assess their availability, and (4) develop allocation options for the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense. The services nominate the assets to be tracked under GMFP, provide criteria for how often they can be used, and monitor their status. The list of GMFP assets and the criteria for their use are updated annually. As of November 1998, the services had designated 32 assets to be managed under GMFP.

The Joint Staff's focus is managing the level of activity for assets covered under GMFP. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that it believes GMFP has been a significant factor in recent decisions about deploying these assets, although Joint Staff officials are uncertain about the policy's overall impact and have not formally analyzed its use. Historical data that could help determine the overall success of the effort are not maintained by the Joint Staff. Therefore, we were unable to ascertain the Joint Staff's or services' effectiveness in keeping the operating tempo of the GMFP-managed assets within established criteria.

GMFP does not address whether the services have adequate numbers of those assets covered by the program because, according to the Joint Staff,

GMFP was not designed to do so. It further said that other processes within the services and Joint Staff, such as the Joint Requirements Oversight Council and the Joint Warfighting Capability Analysis, are supposed to determine whether the military has the right numbers and mix of assets. The Joint Staff noted that a key question DOD faces is what requirement should determine the number of assets: a wartime requirement or a peacetime requirement. DOD and the services have been sizing military forces to fight two major theater wars, but GMFP is designed to better manage the peacetime demands on these assets.

In its January 1999 draft report to Congress on GMFP, DOD reports that it and the Joint Chiefs are aggressively managing the demand and use of the GMFP assets. Furthermore, DOD reports that the services (1) are taking steps to manage the force structure of the assets under GMFP within available funding and (2) in a few instances, are planning to increase the number of some assets that are managed under GMFP.

Army Initiatives Include Stabilization Policy Intended to Reduce Personnel Tempo

The Army has instituted a deployment stabilization policy that recognizes the personnel impacts that frequent and constant deployments have on Army forces. In February 1998, the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel announced a policy to provide a period of stabilization for soldiers that are temporarily away from their home stations on operational deployments. Under the policy, soldiers deployed to OOTW as individuals or part of a unit for a period of at least 30 consecutive days will be provided, to the greatest extent feasible, 1 month of stabilization for each month deployed. For purposes of this policy, these deployments include operations such as the one in Bosnia, international humanitarian assistance, counterdrug operations, and domestic civil disturbances. Deployments for training exercises and schools, which can be months in duration, and deployments of less than 30 days do not count toward eligibility for stabilization. During the stabilization period, soldiers are ineligible to be deployed from their home stations for OOTW-like deployments. However, stabilization may be waived by the first general officer in a soldier's chain of command to meet immediate and critical operational needs. We were told at USAREUR that waivers had been issued. Because the Army had begun implementing the policy in mid-1998, we believe it is too early to determine its success.

To relieve USAREUR of the high operating and personnel tempo it has experienced since the Bosnia mission began and to allow it to focus on training for its wartime mission, at the end of fiscal year 1998, the Army

shifted responsibility for providing personnel to Bosnia from USAREUR to U.S.-based forces. Plans are to continue to deploy U.S.-based forces through the end of fiscal year 2000.

While the Army is seeking to mitigate the impact of long deployments on individual soldiers and USAREUR as a whole, it did not consider force structure adjustments to meet OOTW needs in its 2000-2005 biennial determination of support needs completed in March 1998. The Army plans to identify OOTW requirements in its current Total Army Analysis,¹⁴ which identifies planned force structure needs for 2002-2007. As the Bosnia operation continues or other OOTW arise, the Army is likely to have a continuing need for specific units that are (1) limited in supply, (2) located in the reserve component with limited access ability, or (3) assigned to early deploying force packages needed for major theater war.

Air Force Initiatives to Reduce OOTW Impact Are Too New to Assess

The Air Force has implemented or plans to implement a number of initiatives to reduce the impact of OOTW, but most either have insufficient data available or are too new to assess whether they are meeting their intended objectives. These initiatives include developing systems to increase visibility over stressed systems and skills; reducing aviation unit (crews and maintenance) deployments to SWA from 90 to 45 days; and increasing the number of authorized aircraft for two assets under this program (the RC-135 and HH-60) and the number of aircrews for the Airborne Warning and Control System, HC-130s, and U-2 aircraft. These initiatives also include providing time off for members returning from contingencies; making greater use of the reserves; and, most recently and broadly, unveiling a major initiative to establish the Expeditionary Air Force.

The move to the Expeditionary Air Force would involve reorganizing the Air Force into 10 Air Expeditionary Forces, 2 of which would be on call at any time for use in contingency operations for a period of 90 days every 15 months. As part of this initiative, the Air Force is beginning to include OOTW requirements in its force planning. Key bases would receive personnel increases to smooth home station operations, with 5,000 personnel slots shifted to occupations needed for OOTW, such as security police, from occupations not heavily used in OOTW. The Air Force projects

¹⁴This is the Army's biennial process to determine the support force needed to meet its warfighting requirements.

that the Expeditionary Air Force will add predictability to deployments, which will allow greater use of the total force. When operational in the year 2000, the Air Force believes that the new structure will reduce operating tempo for personnel deployed as well as those who stay at home stations, thereby improving morale and retention.

The Navy Has Used Reserves to Reduce Tempo

To help keep active component personnel tempo at acceptable levels, the Navy has increased its reserve support by over 50 percent since the Gulf War. In fiscal year 1997, the Navy Reserves provided over 3,000 personnel to support operational activities and major command exercises overseas and in the continental United States. This level of support is expected to remain constant in the future. Some reserve forces used for OOTW operations such as counterdrug operations in the Caribbean, include Navy Reserve frigates and P-3 Orion and E-2C aircraft units. To a lesser degree, Navy Reserve medium airlift and other assets have supported Bosnia operations.

Congress Has Provided Funding For OOTW While Often Shifting Funds From Other Planned Defense Spending

Since 1995, Congress has provided funds to cover most OOTW costs through a combination of annual appropriations, supplemental appropriations, and reprogramming of appropriated funds. To prevent overall government spending from increasing, Congress reduced other planned defense spending in fiscal years 1995, 1996, and 1997. It also sometimes used savings due to lower than expected inflation and favorable changes in currency exchange rates to help offset OOTW costs; were it not for the need to fund OOTW, these funds could presumably have been used for other unfunded defense needs. In fiscal year 1998, Congress did not reduce other planned defense spending to offset OOTW funding. Appendix VI contains additional detail on OOTW funding.

Conclusions

Our analysis of OOTW impacts reveals a complex picture, with all of the military services experiencing adverse effects to varying extent. The Army and the Air Force appear to be the most affected. Both deployed units, and some units that remained at home stations and had to pick up the work of the deployed units, have had their wartime skills adversely affected. While deployed units and some home station units are clearly adversely affected, many military personnel are relatively unaffected.

The Bottom-Up Review and the Quadrennial Defense Review did not include force requirements for OOTW as a determinant of force structure. Extended OOTW, as evidenced by the Bosnia and SWA missions, have required extensive use of certain types of combat and support forces, such as Army divisions and Air Force logistics personnel, as well as aircraft. Some of these forces and aircraft are sometimes limited in numbers relative to their use in OOTW, but are judged by DOD to be sufficient for wartime requirements. The Air Force is beginning to include OOTW requirements in its force planning, but the Army's Total Army Analysis of its warfighting requirements is not expected to identify OOTW requirements before completion of the 2002-2007 needs determination. If Congress and the executive branch conclude that the effects of OOTW are unacceptable, other than reducing U.S. participation, it may be necessary to include OOTW needs in determining future force structure.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the report provided a good overview of the many issues DOD is facing in managing its participation in OOTW and made several overall comments on the report and its key findings. DOD stated that the report presented an incomplete picture of the purpose or role of OOTW in the overall defense strategy and the significant contribution OOTW makes to DOD's strategy. We agree that OOTW plays an important role in the overall U.S. military strategy and while we have added mention of that in the report, we were not asked to, nor did we, examine the role of OOTW in the overall defense strategy.

DOD further stated that it has taken many steps to improve the monitoring of OOTW and its impact on readiness. DOD's comments noted some of the extensive discussion in our report concerning steps DOD has taken to address OOTW impacts, but it is concerned about the lack of discussion of senior-level readiness forums, specifically the Joint Monthly Readiness Review and the Senior Readiness Oversight Council. We have revised the report to state that these two forums regularly review the impact of OOTW.

DOD believes that our report suggests that it has not planned for the withdrawal of U.S. forces if a major war occurs. DOD stated that it continuously reviews and reapportions forces to meet the requirements of the national defense strategy and the evolving global environment. DOD stated that it recently sent a report to Congress that addresses in detail the planning that is involved in disengaging and redeploying forces from Bosnia in the event they are required for a major theater war. While DOD has reported to Congress on the issues related to withdrawal and

reapportioned forces to meet national defense strategy requirements, we found that DOD did not have specific plans to execute a withdrawal.

DOD expressed the view that our report oversimplifies the effects of OOTW on morale and retention. DOD stated that senior DOD officials have testified frequently before Congress on the complexity of the morale and retention issue, noting that while tempo issues certainly play a role, so do other factors, including the strong competition for skilled personnel from a robust civilian economy. We agree that the morale and retention issue is complex. Our report specifically discusses the effects of OOTW on morale and retention, providing evidence that these effects represent a mixed picture, including positive and negative effects of OOTW deployments, and states that OOTW is one of a number of factors affecting retention and that it is not possible to isolate the extent of OOTW impacts on the decision to separate from the military. As we stated in the report, we have several other efforts underway examining retention and quality-of-life issues in the services.

Finally, DOD commented that our conclusion that OOTW adversely affects the services is overstated and does not reflect the steps the services and DOD have taken to mitigate their effect. DOD has not fully characterized our conclusion, which is that our analysis of OOTW impacts reveals a complex picture, with all of the military services experiencing adverse effects to varying extent. While our conclusion does not address the steps the services and DOD have taken to mitigate the effect of OOTW, our report contains extensive discussion of these steps.

Appendix VII describes the Scope and Methodology of our work and appendix VIII contains the full text of DOD's comments. DOD also provided technical comments on a draft of this report and we modified our report as appropriate to reflect these comments.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after its issue date. At that time we will send copies to other congressional committees. We will also send copies to the Honorable William Cohen, Secretary of Defense; the Honorable Louis Caldera, Secretary of the Army; the Honorable Richard Danzig, Secretary of the Navy; the Honorable F.W. Peters, Acting Secretary of the Air Force; and the Honorable Jacob Lew, Director, Office of Management and Budget. We will make copies available to other interested parties on request.

Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix IX. If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5140.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Gebicke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "M".

Mark E. Gebicke
Director, National Security Preparedness

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
GMFP	Global Military Force Policy
GSORTS	Global Status of Resources and Training System
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OOTW	operations other than war
RDT&E	research, development, test, and evaluation
SWA	Southwest Asia
TDY	temporary duty
USAREUR	U.S. Army Europe

History of U.S. Forces' Participation in Operations Other Than War

Since the end of the Cold War, the frequency of operations other than war (OOTW) has increased. The Army conducted 10 operational events outside of normal training and alliance commitments between 1960 and 1991 and 26 during 1992-98. The Marine Corps conducted 15 contingency operations from 1982 to 1989 and 62 since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and for the first time the Air Force is experiencing long-term deployments. Both the report of the Quadrennial Defense Review and the Defense Planning Guidance predict that OOTW will be the predominate form of U.S. military involvement for the next 15 to 20 years. The size of the military services has fallen from post-Cold War levels of 2 million to less than 1.4 million active duty personnel and from 1.9 million reserve personnel to less than 900,000. The force structure has also been reduced, from 18 to 10 active Army divisions, 36 to 19 Air Force fighter wings, and 547 to 346 Navy ships.

Bosnia Is Currently the Largest Army Mission

Since December 1995, the United States has deployed military forces in and around Bosnia to implement the General Framework Agreement (also known as the Dayton Agreement). These forces are part of a multilateral coalition under the command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). From December 1995 to December 1996, the coalition was called the Implementation Force. In December 1996, NATO authorized a new mission and renamed the coalition the Stabilization Force. In February 1998 NATO approved extending the mission with no deadline for withdrawal. The decision to withdraw will now be based on achieving certain conditions within Bosnia.

From December 1995 through October 1998, the U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) provided the bulk of the U.S. military forces for the mission in Bosnia. Parts of both of USAREUR's two combat divisions, the 1st Armored Division and the 1st Infantry Division, have deployed to Bosnia; the 1st Armored Division has deployed there twice. During that time, two combat units were also deployed from the United States to Bosnia: the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment and elements of the 1st Armored Division's U.S.-based brigade. After almost 3 years of continued participation in Bosnia, USAREUR was provided relief when the Army assigned the mission to a U.S.-based division. On October 7, 1998, the 1st Armored Division transferred command and control responsibility of the mission to the 1st Cavalry Division, which will retain mission responsibility for a year.

Air Force OOTW Involvement Has Increased Over the Past 10 Years

According to the Air Force, since about 1989 the average number of personnel deployed for OOTW has more than quadrupled, from about 3,400 personnel to about 14,600 personnel in 1997. The number of rotational personnel required to support open-ended OOTW increased from about 750 before the Gulf War to about 12,000 in 1997. During the same period, the number of Air Force personnel was reduced about 33 percent, from about 555,000 in 1989 to 370,000 in 1997. In addition, the number of forces permanently based overseas decreased. For example, the number of aircraft assigned to the U.S. Air Forces in Europe declined from about 702 aircraft in 1991 to about 215 in 1997. At the same time, the number of contingencies that the U.S. Air Forces in Europe supported increased, from 3 in 1991 to 11 in 1997, and the number of personnel and aircraft involved increased.

The Air Force currently supports three major contingencies with its forces: the mission in Bosnia and two in Southwest Asia (SWA) over Iraq (Operations Northern and Southern Watch) that have been underway since shortly after the 1991 Gulf War. Initially, U.S. Air Forces in Europe provided the forces for the Bosnia mission and Air Forces in Europe and the United States provided the forces for the SWA missions. Because these missions have no end date, the Air Force has begun to use worldwide forces, including those assigned to the Pacific region and the reserve components, to relieve the strain of using the same forces. To meet SWA mission requirements and to maintain a 45-day deployment practice, the Air Force has scheduled multiple deployments of some fighter squadrons in a 1-year period because, according to our analysis, the Air Combat Command and the U.S. Air Forces in Europe do not have enough active fighter squadrons to allow just one deployment a year. For example, about 16 F-15C squadrons are needed yearly to provide counter air coverage on a rotational basis for the two Iraqi missions. However, in fiscal year 1998, only eight active Air Force squadrons were based in Europe and the United States to cover these areas.

Additional Impacts of OOTW

In this appendix we discuss additional impacts of OOTW on the Air Force, impacts on the Navy and the Marine Corps, and the time required to recover warfighting skills after OOTW participation. Key factors determining the extent to which participating in an OOTW degraded a units' wartime skills appeared to be the unit type, frequency of participation, and mission skill requirements. Each service has units that appear to be heavily affected.

Effect of OOTW on Air Force Units

Within the Air Force, fighter squadrons generally are the most negatively affected by participating in OOTW. In addition to the previously described limited training value of OOTW participation for F-16 fighter squadrons, other fighter squadrons are also adversely affected. For example, an official of the 1st Fighter Wing, which flies the F-15C, estimated that only about 20 to 25 percent of the tasks needed to maintain pilot proficiency were accomplished when deployed to SWA.

Regarding the SWA mission, A-10 squadron officials told us that theater restrictions, which keep them at high altitudes, limit their ability to train for two of their primary missions, air-to-ground combat and close air support. These squadron officials believed that their overall combat skills were better sharpened by local training events or participation in combat training centers than by the opportunities received in past contingency deployments.

Several unit officials stated that when deployed to SWA, units not performing missions have limited training opportunities at best. In some locations, training ranges are not available and getting clearance to use air space has been difficult. Even in areas where access has been granted in the past, these opportunities are not guaranteed because of the sensitive political climate in that region. The Air Force has been working with host governments to improve access to training areas.

The Air Force's participation in OOTW may also be reducing opportunities to take full advantage of combat training centers and events, such as the Red Flag¹ exercise at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. The Air Force has increased the interval between unit participation in Red Flag from

¹Red Flag is one of the Air Force's premier training events. It provides realistic combat training in an air, ground, and electronic threat environment. It also allows participating units to operate with multiple weapon systems and other services and U.S. allies.

12 months to 18 months for active units to reduce overall temporary duty (TDY) assignments. However, unit officials told us that Red Flag is the event that their unit looks forward to because it challenges their skills. Moreover, units based in Germany have limited access to airspace and ranges and see Red Flag as their best opportunity to receive wartime training. However, some units had to cancel participating in Red Flag because they were deployed or just returning from a deployment. In addition, some units that attend Red Flag are less skilled than in the past. According to Red Flag officials, units participating in recent years have asked for a decrease in the intensity of the exercise because they tend to be less experienced. While we were told that units were still receiving some of the best training in the world, they spent less time in the high-end threat environment than was typical in the past. As a result, some officials believed that opportunities were being lost to fully exercise the increased capability of today's weapon systems.

Training proficiency of Air Force support forces that are engaged in OOTW, such as airlift, air refueling, security police, civil engineering, and logistics units has been less negatively affected because these types of units typically perform more tasks that are wartime related. For example, security forces usually perform force protection and logistics personnel maintain aircraft and equipment much like they would in wartime, so there is little loss in combat proficiency. However, because support deployments involve a handful of individuals, unit cohesion is seldom achieved. Some commanders expressed concern that while their unit's wartime mission is to deploy and perform as a unit, contingency missions do not usually provide that opportunity.

Effect of OOTW on Navy and Marine Corps Units

Navy and Marine Corps wartime skills are less affected than those of the other services because they routinely use deployed forces for OOTW. However, a small number of units have been affected by OOTW. Generally, these were the types of units that are limited in number but in high demand. They include the Navy's E-2C Hawkeye aircraft squadrons and the Marine Corps' EA-6B aircraft squadrons.

The Navy's E-2C Hawkeye is a carrier-based, all-weather, multimission aircraft and its squadrons normally deploy as part of a carrier battle group. The E-2C's wartime missions include anti-air warfare, amphibious warfare, strike warfare, antisurface ship warfare, and command and control warfare. However, counterdrug deployments to the Caribbean, which are separate from normal deployments, do not require the E-2C Hawkeye crew

to exercise the full range of warfighting skills. Therefore, the squadrons report degraded training readiness because warfighting skills, such as those used for antiair warfare, amphibious warfare, and command and control warfare, are not used.

The four Marine Corps EA-6B electronic countermeasure squadrons are deployed repeatedly to ground bases in support of OOTW. Their missions are to detect, disrupt, and target enemy electronic and communication transmissions. The crews use their wartime skills in OOTW and thus are not degraded, but the continued deployments have degraded the aircrafts' condition. This degradation has decreased the units' readiness status and aircraft availability.

Effect of OOTW on the Services' Recovery of Warfighting Skills

In December 1997, USAREUR directed that units returning from Bosnia implement deliberate training plans during peacetime to reestablish their unit integrity and full range of warfighting skills. The training plans, which have five phases, are to be completed within 9 months of the units' return to Germany. These plans include time for the units' redeployment, recovery and leave, home station training, weapons qualification, and participation in a battalion-level exercise at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Germany. This process is intended to train the units to the highest training readiness level for their wartime mission. Air Force combat units report that recovering wartime skills takes up to several months.

Army Peacetime Recovery Time

Units we visited in Germany and the United States had recovery plans that varied from 4 to 14 months. One brigade commander thought that his unit required more time to recover its wartime skills than the training plan provided. While based on the USAREUR five-phased plan, the commander based his unit's recovery time on the brigade's previous redeployment from Bosnia and its subsequent experiences at the Combat Maneuver Training Center.

The Chief of Staff of the 1st Infantry Division in Germany said that its training plan allows 9 months for the division to recover its warfighting skills. He noted that the units that deployed to Bosnia had lost much of their proficiency in wartime mission skills because they were not organized or performing the types of missions expected in wartime.

The Chief of Staff of the 1st Armored Division in Germany said that the division would need 6 to 7 months to recover after returning from Bosnia. A July 1998 command assessment of the division's readiness showed that its forces were fully trained in only three of eight mission-essential tasks and partially trained in key tasks such as its ability to attack, defend, and conduct force protection because of its split-based operations. He said it would take 60 to 90 days to reintegrate the deployed forces with those at the home station, check the systems, and reestablish the command relationships. In March 1999 testimony before the House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Readiness, the division's Commanding General said that the division will attain the goal of training to high-intensity conflict standards in less than 6 months following completion of its warfighter exercise.

The recovery times for units below the division level that we visited in Germany varied, with combat units generally taking the longest time and combat support units the least. For example, one infantry battalion we visited assessed that the unit was not trained in half of its mission-essential tasks after returning from Bosnia and that a year would be needed to rebuild and become a trained battalion once again. The battalion's commander did not think the division's plan provided sufficient time to recover all of its skills. Similarly, one aviation unit's officials reported that they would need up to 9 months to recover their skills. By contrast, a signal battalion expected to recover in only 4 months. As noted previously, a signal battalion performs a large part of its wartime skills in Bosnia. Its commander noted that the battalion's plan would allow for equipment repair and soldiers to be retrained on the mobility aspects of their wartime mission tasks.

The two U.S.-based units we visited that were involved in Bosnia also expect to take at least 9 months to regain their wartime skills. The 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which returned to the United States from Bosnia in 1998, has a 10-month recovery plan that began in July 1998 and is expected to end in May 1999. The 1st Cavalry Division, which began deploying to Bosnia in August 1998 for 1 year, had already developed a 9-month recovery plan for its forces when they return from Bosnia. This recovery time, when added to the preparation for and actual deployment time to Bosnia, means that this high priority division's wartime readiness status will be adversely affected for nearly 2 years.

Air Force Peacetime Recovery Time

Air Force aviation units we visited reported a degradation in combat skills and stated that they took from several weeks to several months to fully regain their warfighting skills. Upon returning from deployments, crews must regain flight currencies, provide training for inexperienced personnel, and hone combat skills that could not be practiced while deployed. Personnel are given administrative leave to catch up on personal affairs after deployments, which delays recovery for a week or two. One wing predicted that none of its three aviation squadrons would be fully capable for at least 3 months after deployment, and two other wings reported that at least one squadron would require a month to regain pilot proficiency. This recovery period may be reduced in the future because deployment lengths have been shortened from 90 to 45 days. Air Force officials believe that pilot skills will erode less with the shorter periods.

Navy Peacetime Recovery Time

The Navy expects sailors to prepare for their forward presence deployments, including recovering their wartime skills, during the routine 18- to 24-month interdeployment training cycle. Prior to the cycle, there is a period when personnel rotate and/or take leave and participate in specialized training, such as the Air Force's Red Flag exercise for pilots. Units that engage in OOTW during this period do not have the opportunity to engage as extensively in specialized training and do not enter the cycle as proficient as they might otherwise be. For example, the Navy E-2C squadrons participating in counterdrug operations have 2 months less than other units to prepare for their next deployment.

Effect of OOTW on Forces Remaining at Home Stations

According to USAREUR's November 1998 after-action report on Bosnia operations, between mid-1996 and June 1998, divisions took personnel from portions of nondeploying units to fill the deploying headquarters and other units with key personnel of the necessary ranks and numbers. Consequently, the divisions were operating in widely separated locations with the number of equipment and personnel designed for a single location. The split in leadership focus led to ad hoc operating and training methods and eroded unit cohesion, which, according to the report, has long-term negative effects. For example, subordinate leaders and soldiers at home stations are denied the attention, guidance, and mentoring they need. Furthermore, the report predicted that this problem would be exacerbated by distance for U.S.-based units deployed to Bosnia.

In March 1998, we testified that the readiness of the divisions responsible for peacekeeping in Bosnia had been especially affected because the challenges imposed by personnel shortages were compounded by frequent deployments. According to division officials, the shortage of noncommissioned officers in these divisions, in part due to deployments to Bosnia, is the biggest detriment to overall readiness because crews, squads, and sections are led by lower-level personnel rather than by trained and experienced sergeants. Such a situation impedes effective training because the replacement personnel become responsible for training soldiers in critical skills they themselves may not have been trained to accomplish.

According to the Chief of Staff of the 1st Armored Division, operating within a split-based environment precludes units remaining at home station from conducting battalion-level exercises and results in conducting only platoon- and company-level exercises. After redeploying and reuniting all of the division's units from its most recent deployment and recovering in Germany, the 1st Armored Division will schedule its first brigade-level exercise in 6 years.

U.S.-based Army forces supporting deployed personnel in Bosnia were also affected by split-based operations. The 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment's partial unit remaining in Louisiana did not train above the individual and platoon level because the bulk of the regiment was deployed and it also had to support the deployed forces' families and meet installation needs.

In the Air Force, the flying program for nondeploying personnel was often reduced because fewer aircraft were available for training after others deployed. Some units we visited reported that the deploying squadron often took the best maintained aircraft from the wing or squadron. The number of mission-capable aircraft remaining at home stations may only allow a reduced training program for those that are left behind. Respondents to the 1997 Air Force Chief of Staff Organizational Climate and Quality of Life Survey indicated that OOTW was affecting home station activities. Over 50 percent of pilots and more than a third of other officers and enlisted personnel reported that the level of operational activity over the previous year had an adverse impact on their ability to accomplish required training. The survey also showed that personnel who were on TDY for more than 30 consecutive days in the previous year were more likely to report that operations tempo made it difficult to receive required training and professional military education than those who were TDY 30 or fewer consecutive days over the same period.

Security squadron personnel have been one of the areas heavily affected by deployments of high numbers of personnel. Some security forces in Europe have worked 12-hour days, and other commands reported that their security forces have gone to 12-hour days to keep the bases operating. In some cases, even stretching the workday has not been adequate. Many bases we visited reported using personnel from other wing squadrons, including those that may be trained in areas such as personnel or as civil engineers, to augment the bases' security forces. These augmentees received a brief training course and helped to staff gates and perform other basic duties. Even with augmentation, some law enforcement duties such as community patrols may be curtailed.

Effect of OOTW on Aircraft

Flying more hours and longer sorties during deployments than are flown during home station training has accelerated the aging of aircraft. As discussed earlier, the accumulation of flying hours during OOTW has revealed maintenance problems that are not typical. Maintainers must fix these problems as well as routine problems that develop. For example, after the 1st Fighter Wing completed a 6-month deployment to SWA in December 1997, aircraft availability was a big problem, according to wing staff. The wing has 63 total aircraft, including backup aircraft, but was averaging less than 45 aircraft available daily, which was enough to do about two squadrons' worth of training. The biggest reason for aircraft unavailability was corrosion problems in the F-15 fuel cells, which required an inspection of the entire fleet. In March 1998, the wing estimated that its entire fleet would be inspected and repaired by December 1998, based on the assumption that parts would be available when needed. However, we were told that recent history may make this assumption highly optimistic. In addition, six of the wing's aircraft were grounded for structural problems that either developed in SWA or were discovered on return from SWA. Other aircraft with landing gear, engine, and other structural problems awaited repair because maintenance specialists were engaged in fixing the problems of the aircraft returning from SWA.

Officials in the Air Force units we visited said that the pace of deployments had, at least in part, caused aircraft mission-capable rates to decline and cannibalization rates to increase. Since 1991, the percentage of Air Force fighter aircraft that were mission capable at any one time has dropped from 85 to 75 percent. Officials told us that when aircraft return from deployments, a maintenance backlog is often created because not all maintenance can be performed while the aircraft are deployed. Reducing this backlog may tie up personnel that cannot perform routine maintenance

on other aircraft. Even when personnel are available, parts are often unavailable, since nondeploying units have lower priority for parts. Thus, either aircraft are not in a condition to fly or needed parts are taken from other aircraft to increase the number of aircraft available. Air Force data show that fighter aircraft are at times being cannabilized at a rate that exceeds its targets; Air Force officials said that this problem is getting worse. Air Combat Command officials have attributed the falling mission capable rates not only to OOTW participation but to inadequate funding for supply parts and to reductions in the number of experienced maintenance technicians.

Department of Defense Reporting Systems' Information on the Impacts of OOTW

The Global Status of Resources and Training System (GSORTS) does not clearly capture some conditions in addition to those described earlier that may adversely affect the ability of units to perform their wartime mission. These conditions include the counting of personnel temporarily assigned against wartime manning requirements, optimistically estimated training status, and inconsistent reporting standards.

How Personnel Are Counted Can Be Misleading

If an Army unit scheduled to deploy to Bosnia for more than 60 days has a personnel shortage, the Army will temporarily assign some personnel for that mission, usually from nondeploying units. The number of temporarily assigned personnel in Bosnia at any one time varied from 1,400 in December 1995 to 365 in April 1999. The Army has instructed that temporarily assigned personnel be included as part of the deployed units' personnel total reported in GSORTS. While counting these personnel as part of the units' resources may be appropriate for reporting against the Bosnia mission requirements, GSORTS is expected to measure the units' readiness to conduct its wartime missions. Therefore, counting temporary personnel that are expected to return to their home units when their temporary deployment ends appears to overstate the units' manning level for wartime. For example, the military intelligence, signal, and forward support battalions we visited in Bosnia reported that they were 92 to 100 percent manned. However, when temporary personnel were not counted, they actually had 80 percent or less of their required personnel, including those at their home stations.

According to USAREUR's November 1998 after-action report on Bosnia operations, counting temporary personnel against a unit's strength had impeded getting replacements. This was of particular concern to unit commanders that needed soldiers to fill personnel requirements in the portions of their units at home stations that were recovering from previous deployments. One unit commander told us that he was concerned that the 9 months it might take to fill the personnel requirements in his unit would exacerbate the unit's plan for regaining its high-intensity conflict capabilities.

Optimistic Assumptions or Waivers Can Overstate Training Readiness

The Army and the Air Force allow latitude in how they require units to report their training status. Army units can report training status in GSORTS predicated on having unconstrained resources and unrestricted training range access if mobilized. In the Air Force, flying requirements can be prorated based on the time spent deployed. Both practices may allow units to optimistically rate their readiness.

Army units we visited had planned recovery periods that varied from 4 to 14 months and most routinely reported high training readiness. However, one infantry brigade official noted that his battalions had not trained above the company level in over 2 years and an aviation brigade had not trained at the brigade level for 3 years. Although USAREUR announced in December 1997 that to conduct systematic training upon returning from Bosnia, units may take as long as 9 months to recover, U.S. European Command officials stated that this could be compressed to 45 days if units were tasked to deploy. They said this would be accomplished by moving the units to a higher priority status for personnel, equipment, spare parts, and access to facilities. According to USAREUR officials, this compression was acceptable because their Command is responsible for prioritizing and eliminating any conflicts in its use of resources and facilities. However, if a large number of unit training plans assume the units would have unconstrained access to resources and training ranges, all of the units that would need to attain proficiency in their high-intensity skills within 45 days could not realistically expect to obtain the necessary resources and access quickly.

In the Air Force, pilot combat proficiency may be reduced in some ways not measured by GSORTS. For example, flying units normally have to complete a specified number of events yearly to qualify as mission ready. However, because the mission may not allow deployed pilots opportunities to perform all events, requirements can be prorated based on the time deployed, effectively reducing the number of combat events performed. Actual proficiency in required skills may therefore be overstated. Pilots that have not deployed are not allowed to prorate training requirements.

Some Army Units Reported Readiness to Perform the OOTW Instead of Wartime Mission

According to the Army, units deployed to Bosnia are still expected to report their readiness status in GSORTS against their wartime mission requirements. However, some brigade and combat support battalion commanders said that they had reported the training status of their forces in Bosnia against Bosnia mission skills. While this may allow for a more accurate picture of their capability to perform the less demanding Bosnia operation, it does not clearly reveal the impact of the operation on their wartime readiness or provide senior defense leaders with the information they expect about the preparedness of the units to perform their high-intensity conflict missions associated with major theater wars. Joint Staff officials said that they recognize this problem and that the latest change to GSORTS directives will require units to report against both the wartime and OOTW mission requirements. They said the services were developing policies to implement the directive.

Not Counting All Time Away From Home Station Presents an Incomplete Picture of Operating Tempo

In addition to GSORTS not presenting a complete picture of reported readiness, the Department of Defense (DOD) systems for tracking the frequency with which military personnel deploy also have some shortcomings. The services track the frequency with which their personnel deploy, but they account for time differently. The Navy, and to a lesser extent the Marine Corps, does not count all time away from home, which serves to understate their operating tempo. As we reported in 1996,¹ a DOD-wide definition of a deployment does not exist, and each service defines it differently.

The Navy's procedure for computing personnel tempo rates does not include all time away from home station. Navy guidance requires that a person must be gone from a home station for more than 56 consecutive days to be considered deployed. Furthermore, regardless of the duration, the time away is not counted if less than 50 percent of the unit is away from the home station. Additionally, Navy guidance stipulates that (1) a unit must spend a minimum of 50 percent of its time at a home port over a 3-year period; (2) a unit cannot deploy for more than 6 months or 180 consecutive days; and (3) the minimum turnaround time between deployments is set at a ratio of 2 to 1, for example, 12 months home after a 6-month deployment. The Navy stated that it has not granted any

¹Military Readiness: A Clear Policy Is Needed to Guide Management of Frequently Deployed Units (GAO/NSIAD-96-105, Apr. 8, 1996).

exceptions to this guidance since the 1994 Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti. However, the Navy is sending E-2C Hawkeye units for counterdrug operations in the Caribbean for 56 days. Other shorter deployments for E-2C units have included those for training and other exercises. According to Chief of Naval Operations guidelines, time away from a home station should not exceed approximately 166 days during the 18-month period at home. Navy Atlantic Fleet E-2C squadrons' data show that if the Navy counted all time away from home stations, regardless of duration, their E-2C units would be home 6 months and deployed 12 months.

The Navy reports personnel tempo by ships or aircraft squadrons, not by individuals. While the Navy's Bureau of Personnel has the data to identify personnel tempo by individual, a sailor's unit commander is not routinely aware of how much time individuals have been away from the home station. We were told that individuals are responsible for notifying their unit heads if the order to deploy exceeds Chief of Naval Operations guidelines. The Navy was researching better ways to track individual personnel tempo, and various organizational units, including the Navy Audit Office, were reviewing this process.

Effects of OOTW on Morale

OOTW is one of several factors affecting Air Force morale. At units we visited, we were told that the first deployment to an area can be a positive experience, but repeated deployments have declining benefits. The Navy and the Marine Corps could not measure the actual degree to which OOTW affects morale and subsequent service retention and both services are studying why personnel remain in or leave the service.

Impact of OOTW on Air Force Morale

Many personnel in Air Force units we visited described morale as declining, due both to the nature of operations and to the conditions and length of deployment. Universally, Air Force units, particularly those U.S.-based units and personnel that have participated in Operation Southern Watch in SWA since the early 1990s, said that the novelty of deployments has worn off. Officials at squadrons and wings we visited stated that the first deployment to an area can be a positive experience and looked upon as an adventure, but repeated deployments have declining benefits. SWA is usually cited as the least desirable deployment because living conditions are less than ideal, free movement is restricted, and monetary benefits are not as generous as those for other deployments, such as deployments to Italy to support Bosnia operations.

Other officials stated that the length of deployments was a source of discontent. We were told that although Air Force personnel, particularly pilots, are accustomed to some TDY, TDYs of 90 days or more are considered a hardship, particularly when they occur repeatedly. A recent Air Force decision to reduce deployments to 45 days for aviation units was positively received, even if the units are likely to deploy twice as often. Personnel not part of aviation units still rotate every 120 days, however, and believe that it is unfair that their deployment length has not changed.

Impact of OOTW on Navy Morale

The Navy administers a Navy-wide personnel survey conducted annually at the request of the Chief of Naval Personnel. While morale is not mentioned in these surveys, satisfaction levels closely related to morale have been measured. The report on the results of the 1997 survey, dated December 1998, covered a variety of topics, including overseas duty, job satisfaction, leadership, and medical facilities. Navy personnel in the Office of the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel/Personnel Policy, who said that their office was responsible for morale and retention issues, told us that retention is the best indicator of morale in the absence of a specific system to measure morale.

Overall, the Navy met its fiscal year 1998 first-term retention goals. Exit surveys routinely show family separation as one of the top three reasons that officer and enlisted personnel cite for leaving the Navy. However, Navy officials could not measure the actual degree of impact caused by OOTW. Other reasons frequently cited for leaving the Navy include a lack of promotion and advancement opportunities, basic pay, quality of Navy life, and the quality of leadership/management.

The Naval Personnel Office has begun a study to better understand why personnel are staying in or leaving the service. The study is intended to provide more timely, accurate, and reliable retention data. The Navy plans to redesign its reenlistment and exit surveys and investigate different methods for administering the questionnaires to help ensure more reliable results.

Impact of OOTW on Marines Corps Morale

Headquarters Marine Corps believed that retention is an indicator of morale. Retention goals were being met, although career fields such as counterintelligence, imagery interpretation, recruitment, and pilots had critical shortages. For example, the Marine Corps is not meeting its retention goal for fixed-wing pilots. They are resigning at a rate two times greater than the 1995 historical average. While the Corps was aware of the retention problems, it had no data that link them to OOTW. A Marine Corps official in the Office of Manpower and Reserve Affairs told us that the Corps is developing a retention survey to determine why Marines decide to remain in or leave the service, which is scheduled to be administered for the first time in January 2000.

We did find one instance in which OOTW deployments and retention were clearly linked. In 1997, and part of 1998, Marines in the 2nd Counterintelligence Unit, which had about 65 personnel, were deployed 260 days, or 72 percent of the time. Unit personnel stated that high operating tempo may be acceptable for short time periods, but they saw no end in sight. This high tempo combined with other factors, such as a strong economy, resulted in 70 percent of the unit's officers and 65 percent of its enlisted personnel leaving the Marine Corps. According to a Marine Corps official involved in tracking retention, this unit had a 20-percent turnover rate in 1995.

Responding to Major Theater War While Engaged in OOTW

We examined disengagement from an ongoing OOTW to respond to a major theater war in a March 1995 report on the impact of OOTW.¹ That report focused on the then current mission in Somalia and the ongoing mission in SWA. We concluded that certain key Army units and specialized Air Force aircraft used in recent OOTW had been identified as being needed in the early stages of a major theater war, but that it may be difficult to disengage these forces from OOTW and redeploy them quickly to a war.

The Army Is Using High Priority Units in Bosnia

In recent years, USAREUR combat divisions were not expected to be among those rapidly deploying to the first major theater war. Their use in Bosnia therefore had less strategic risk than some other units. However, the 1st Cavalry Division, which deployed to Bosnia in August 1998 and formally took command in October 1998 for 1 year, was cited in war plans as one of the earliest deploying heavy divisions² for the two major theater war plans. Moreover, this division was one of two U.S.-based heavy divisions immediately available for a major theater war with a high readiness level and capable of short notice deployments to any part of the world. As such, it had a high priority for resources and a high level of readiness.

Following the decision to send the 1st Cavalry Division to Bosnia, the U.S. Atlantic Command, the joint command responsible for providing forces to meet worldwide warfighting requirements, requested that DOD assess the impact of deploying the division to Bosnia and substituting different forces in the war plans. The Command was concerned that this high-priority division, once deployed to Bosnia, would not be available to meet previously approved time-phased force deployments. According to the division's recovery plan, it does not expect to reestablish and test the required high-intensity conflict warfighting skills until a warfighting exercise is conducted in March 2000—5 months after returning from Bosnia. Thus, in a peacetime environment, the division expects to be affected nearly 2 years by its participation in the Bosnia mission and would not immediately be deployable for wartime tasking.

¹Peace Operations: Heavy Use of Key Capabilities May Affect Response to Regional Conflicts (NSIAD-95-51, Mar. 8, 1995).

²The Army defines a heavy division as one organized as armor or mechanized infantry and configured with tanks and armored fighting vehicles.

The Joint Staff approved U.S. Atlantic Command's request and directed that several of the unified commands and the Transportation Command assess the impact. Their assessments resulted in changes to the established plans for time-phased force deployments for potential major theater wars. Although, according to the U.S. Central Command and the U.S. Pacific Command, the changes had minimal or negligible impact on the plans, the U.S. Atlantic Command thought it was important to recognize such changes to ensure that the unified commands and supporting commands have accurate visibility of unit readiness and that the U.S. Atlantic Command has visibility of the readiness of all U.S.-based forces because that could affect its ability to provide forces.

The Army has also had to use some of its early deploying active and reserve support forces to meet Bosnia mission requirements. According to an Army official, the Army had not planned to use its early support forces,³ but as the mission continued, the Army deployed support forces it had identified as being needed to support early deploying combat forces in a major theater war.

³Early support forces are known as force support package 1 and 2 units that are needed in the first 30 days of a major theater war and then the next follow-on forces to support the deployed divisions.

Funding for OOTW

Until fiscal year 1996, DOD did not budget for the cost of military operations, including OOTW. It budgeted to be ready to conduct such operations. When the services conducted such operations, they generally borrowed funds that they planned to spend later in the fiscal year. If these funds were not replenished through supplemental appropriations or reprogramming of previously appropriated funds, then the services would cancel planned activities.

Beginning in fiscal year 1996, at the urging of Congress, DOD began to budget for the cost of ongoing OOTW. Congress has then included funds for ongoing operations in the annual defense appropriations acts. In the case of new or expanded operations, such as the extension of the Bosnia mission and the late 1998 deployment of additional military forces to SWA, costs have not been budgeted in advance and so DOD continues to use its earlier practice of borrowing from spending planned for later in the fiscal year and awaiting replenishment.

While the operating commands have had to borrow funds planned to be spent later in the fiscal year, command personnel told us that they have been able to execute all or almost all of their planned budget program. Budget officials at major operating commands we visited said that a trust has developed between service headquarters and the major commands regarding receipt of OOTW funding. This trust involves assurances from service headquarters that funding for the additional costs of OOTW will be provided. Thus, commands have continued with planned activities and have not held back funds out of concern about running out of funding in the fourth quarter and then stopping activities such as training.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the assurance mentioned above is based on an indication from Congress that it will provide funding. Our analysis of supplemental appropriations for OOTW in fiscal years 1996 through 1998 indicated that the appropriations were enacted in the third quarter of each fiscal year.

Congress Has Shifted Funds to Offset OOTW Costs

Since 1995, Congress has provided funds to cover most OOTW costs through a combination of annual appropriations, supplemental appropriations, and reprogramming of appropriated funds. To prevent an increase in overall government spending, Congress reduced planned defense funds for other programs in fiscal years 1995, 1996, and 1997. It also sometimes used savings from lower-than-expected inflation and favorable changes in currency exchange rates to help offset OOTW costs;

presumably were it not for the need to fund OOTW these funds could have been used for other unfunded defense needs.

In fiscal year 1995, the executive branch requested \$2.6 billion to fund OOTW. Congress provided supplemental funding of \$2.5 billion for OOTW and an additional \$552 million in supplemental funding for enhanced readiness and military pay. At the same time, Congress rescinded \$2.4 billion in previously appropriated DOD funds and \$1.1 billion in non-DOD funds. This, in effect, more than offset the supplemental funding provided for both OOTW and enhanced readiness and military pay. Of the \$2.4 billion in rescinded DOD funds, more than half came from procurement and research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) accounts. Within procurement, rescissions were made primarily in Army and Air Force accounts. Within RDT&E, the largest rescissions were in the DOD-wide technology reinvestment program, almost half of the total RDT&E rescission.

In fiscal year 1996, Congress appropriated \$647 million for ongoing operations in SWA. U.S. participation in the Bosnia operation did not begin until December 1995, and so no funds were requested or appropriated. To fund the estimated \$2.2 billion dollars in fiscal year 1996 Bosnia operations costs, DOD primarily reprogrammed existing funds. During the fiscal year, Congress approved almost \$1.4 billion in reprogramming and provided \$858 million in supplemental appropriations. The bulk of the reprogrammed funds—89 percent—was available because of revised, lower inflation rates, which reduced planned program costs and freed funds for other uses, in this case, Bosnia operations. Had these funds not been used to fund Bosnia operations, they could presumably have been used for other unfunded defense needs. The \$858 million in supplemental appropriations was fully offset by rescissions of previously appropriated DOD funds, of which most were in procurement and RDT&E accounts.

In fiscal year 1997, Congress included \$1.1 billion for planned Bosnia and SWA operations in the fiscal year 1997 DOD appropriations act through the Overseas Contingency Operations Transfer Fund. It later provided DOD with supplemental funding of \$1.9 billion for additional costs associated with the two operations. At the same time, Congress rescinded \$1.9 billion in defense funding to offset the supplemental appropriation. A large part of the rescission resulted from a combination of revised inflation rates (24 percent) and foreign currency savings (22 percent). As was the case in fiscal year 1996, had these funds not been used for OOTW, they presumably could have been available for other unfunded defense needs. The balance

of the rescissions came mostly from procurement, RDT&E, and military construction programs.

In the fiscal year 1998 DOD appropriations act, Congress provided \$2.2 billion in funds for the ongoing operation in SWA and for the Bosnia operation through June 1998. The extension of the Bosnia operation and the crisis in SWA increased estimated costs, and Congress appropriated \$1.8 billion in supplemental funding. Unlike the preceding fiscal years, Congress did not offset this funding with rescissions or reprogramming.

Scope and Methodology

To examine the impact of OOTW on the warfighting capability of each of the services, we obtained briefings, reviewed documents, and interviewed personnel at Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps locations, at the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and at component and unified command headquarters within the United States and Europe. Our efforts were primarily focused on the current operations in Bosnia and SWA for the Army and the Air Force. Our focus for the Navy and the Marine Corps primarily involved their routine deployments but included counterdrug operations in the Caribbean. We reviewed after-action reports and analyzed before and after deployment personnel, equipment, and training readiness reports of units participating in OOTW and interviewed officials responsible for the readiness of these units and some of the forces that participated in these operations.

To determine the impact on the Army of participating in OOTW, we reviewed the experiences of combat and support forces that operated in Bosnia, Macedonia, and SWA. We talked with and obtained information from personnel in units stationed in Bosnia, Hungary, Germany, and the United States regarding their capability to meet their primary warfighting missions, the effect of OOTW on combat skills, and the efforts to return to full combat capability.

As a means of determining the impacts of OOTW on the Air Force, we visited Air Force units in the United States and Europe. At these units, we talked with and reviewed documentation from unit officials of combat forces such as F-15C, F-16C, and A-10 squadrons and support forces, such as maintenance, security police, and civil engineer squadrons that participated in OOTW.

We discussed the effect of the Navy's and the Marine Corps' participation in OOTW with representatives of various elements of the U.S. Atlantic and Pacific fleets. We also examined documents describing the impact of OOTW and counterdrug operations in the Caribbean.

To examine the extent to which service reporting systems fully reflect OOTW impacts, we assessed readiness at the unit level by obtaining and analyzing GSORTS readiness reporting data for fiscal years 1995-98. We reviewed the GSORTS ratings to determine whether (1) the services had reported adverse impacts of OOTW participation and (2) unit commanders had attributed degraded readiness to participation in OOTW.

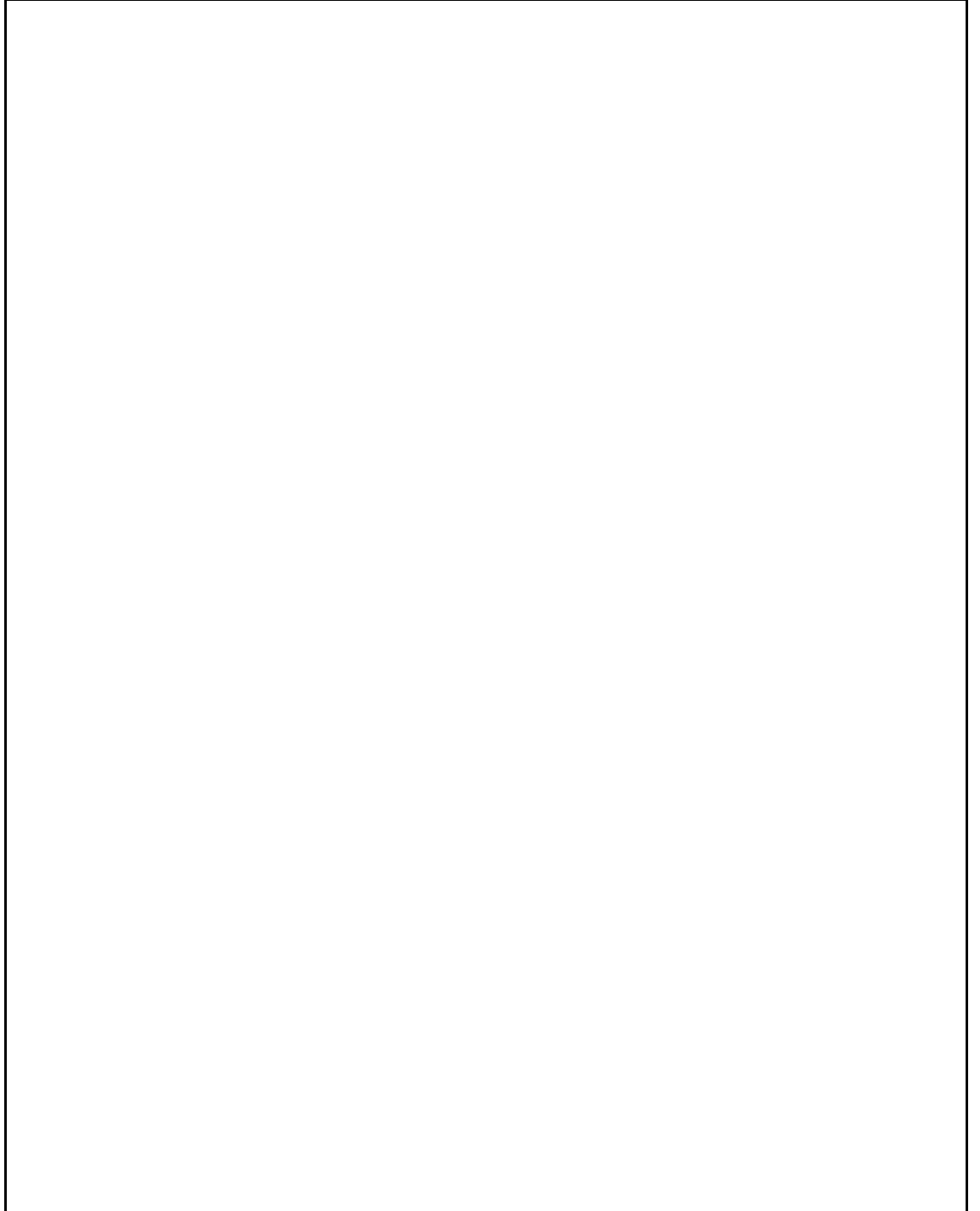
To examine available information on the effect of OOTW on morale, we obtained and reported on the results of Army surveys of personnel deployed to Bosnia and Air Force quality of life surveys of Air Force personnel. We did not assess the methodology of these surveys or compare responses among questions for consistency. In addition, we interviewed key officials and service personnel to obtain their perceptions about whether participation in OOTW had affected morale and had caused personnel to leave the services. To examine retention, we reviewed service data and morale surveys as they related to the reasons personnel gave for leaving the military.

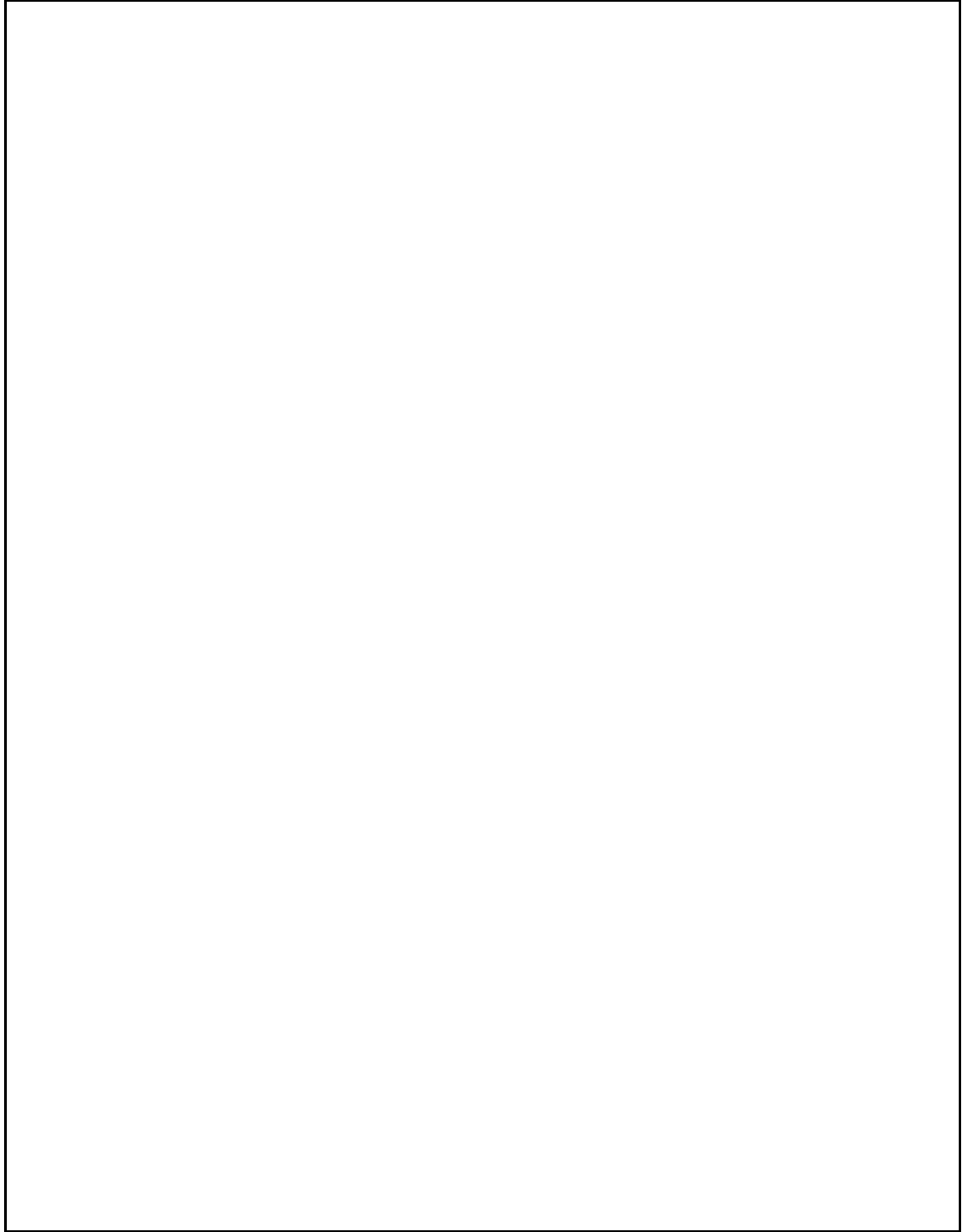
To examine the ability of U.S. forces to respond to a major theater war while engaged in OOTW, we reviewed DOD force structure analyses and defense guidance. We also discussed the impacts of disengaging from Bosnia and redeploying to a major theater war with unified and component command officials and the Army division headquarters deployed to Bosnia.

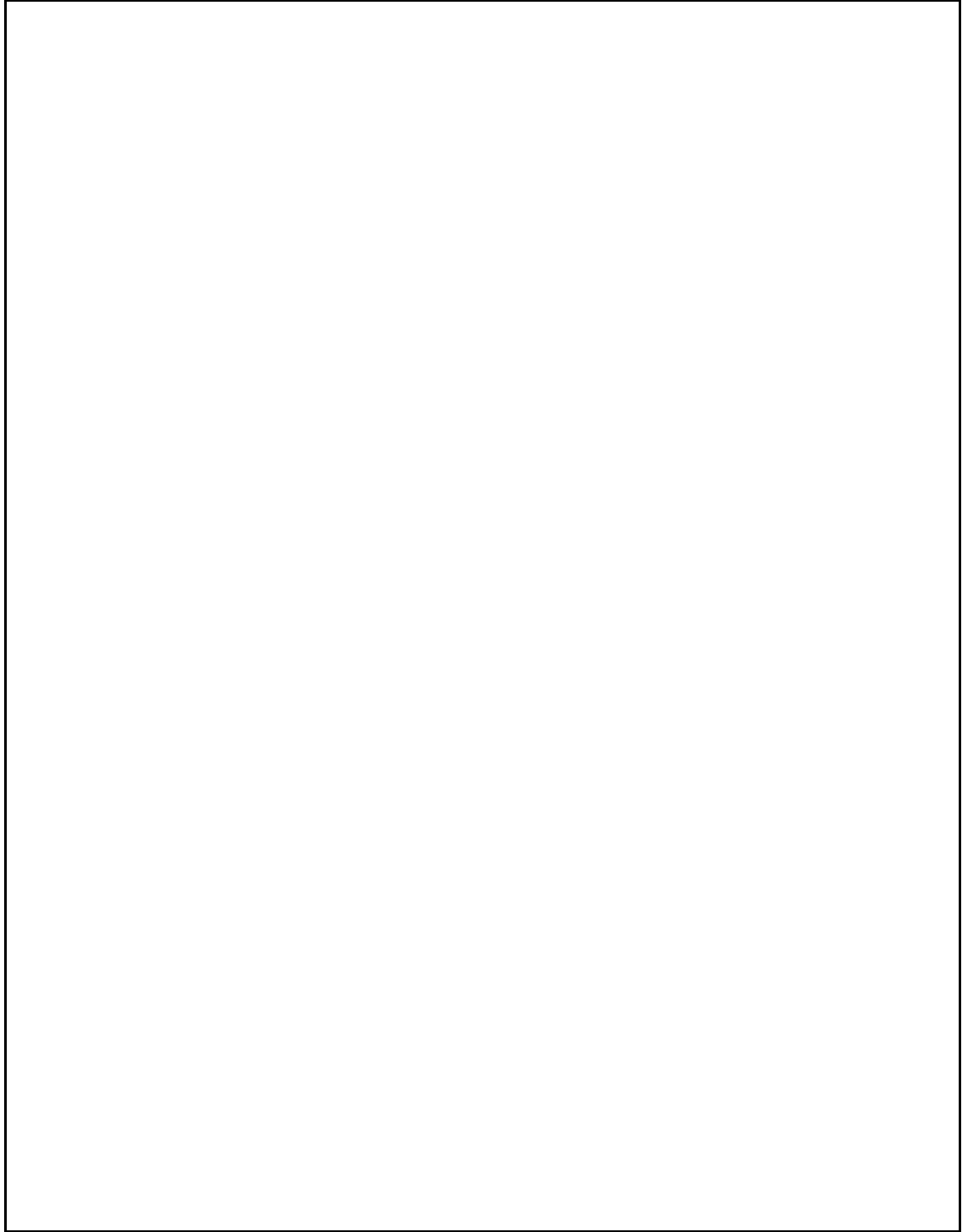
To examine DOD's efforts to alleviate any adverse impacts of OOTW participation, we interviewed personnel at the Joint Staff and Army, Navy, and Air Force headquarters and reviewed documents establishing personnel deployment policies and processes to manage the operating tempo of specific units and platforms.

To examine funding for OOTW, we obtained and analyzed DOD budget documents and the annual defense and supplemental appropriation acts and their legislative histories. We also interviewed budget officials at major commands we visited to determine the extent that funding was available to meet their OOTW operational needs.

Our review was conducted from February 1998 through March 1999 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.







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