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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE AUG 2015		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2015 to 00-00-2015	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Limiting Regret: Building the Army We Will Need				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) RAND Corporation, 1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA, 90407-2138				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 23	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Limiting Regret

Building the Army We Will Need

Addendum

Timothy M. Bonds

RAND Corporation

CT-437/1

August 2015

Testimony with annotated slides presented before the National Commission on the Future of the Army on August 18, 2015

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Published 2015 by the RAND Corporation
1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
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Timothy M. Bonds¹
The RAND Corporation

Limiting Regret
Building the Army We Will Need²

Before the National Commission on the Future of the Army
August 18, 2015

Thank you, Commissioners, for inviting me to speak with you. It is an honor for me to be here today. I would like to share with you an analysis on closing the gap between the defense commitments the United States has made and the ground forces that the Department of Defense (DoD) has planned to provide to fulfill America's commitments and limit future regret.³

¹ The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the sponsors of its research. This product is part of the RAND Corporation testimony series. RAND testimonies record testimony presented by RAND associates to federal, state, or local legislative committees; government-appointed commissions and panels; and private review and oversight bodies. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

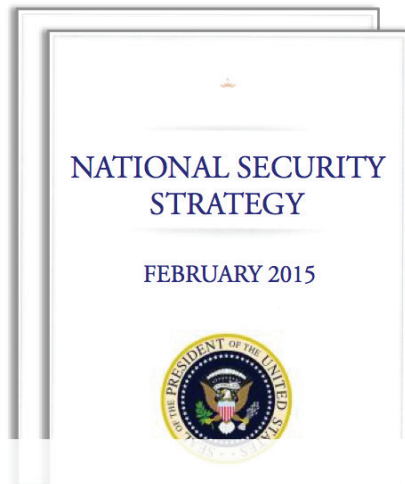
² This testimony is available for free download at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT437z1.html>.

³ This analysis draws upon publicly available materials, published RAND national security research, and RAND wargaming and analytic expertise to evaluate the Army's ability to help execute the national defense strategy against key threats. The documentation for this analysis was funded by philanthropic contributions from RAND supporters and income from operations.

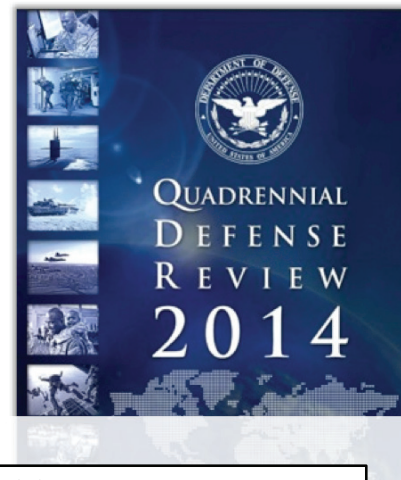
The Army describes its capability to support the nation's security commitments in terms of three factors: (1) the number of soldiers in it—what it refers to as its “end-strength”; (2) how well prepared its units are to operate —what the Army refers to as its “readiness”; and (3) how modern its equipment is. What I would like to talk about today is how big and ready the nation needs its Army to be—from a Joint perspective—to fulfill America's commitments and limit future regret about the decisions made.

I have three main messages today: (1) the world has changed since the decisions in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) were made; (2) emerging and growing threats make it more likely that U.S. commitments in key regions will be challenged; and (3) the current trend in force planning will leave us with an Army too small to credibly sustain U.S. commitments—and interests—under the shadow of those threats.

National Strategy and Commitments



QDR 2014 Force Planning



Can Planned Ground Forces Meet Commitments?

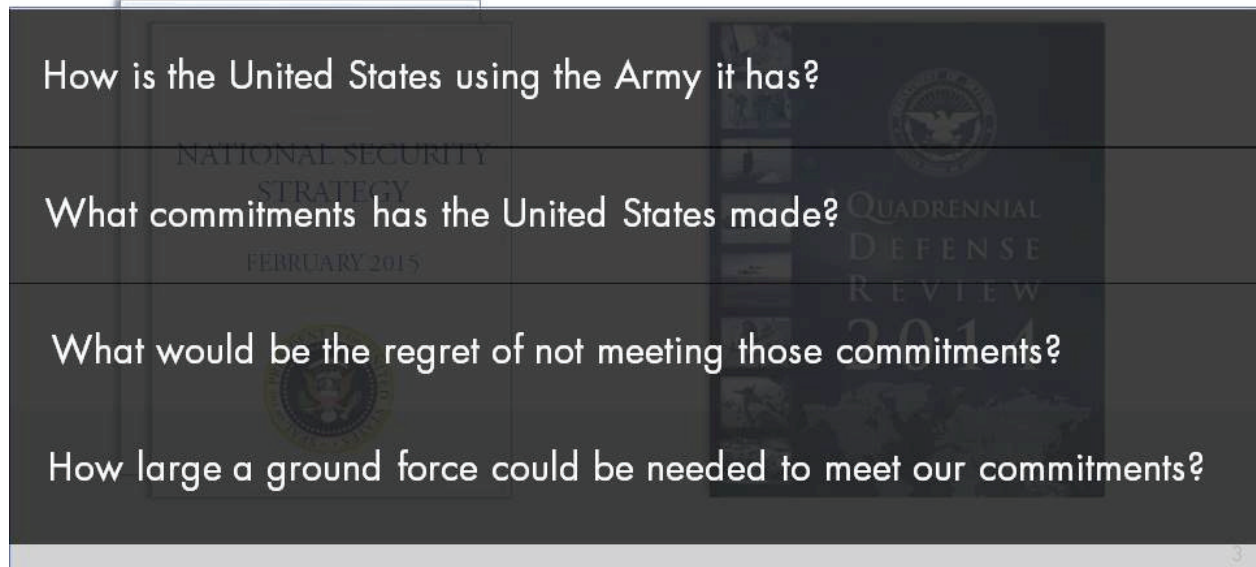
The latest 2014 QDR, released in March of 2014, “rebalanced” U.S. military operations to the Asia-Pacific and prescribed cuts in Army end-strength. This included reductions in active component soldiers from 570,000 to 450,000, or to as low as 420,000 if sequestration continues; reductions in the Army National Guard from 385,000 to 335,000, or 315,000 with sequestration; and reductions in the Army Reserve from 205,000 to 195,000, or 185,000 with sequestration.

But many new demands have emerged or worsened since the 2014 QDR was issued. Therefore, we need to compare the national commitments by this and past administrations and reaffirmed in

the most recent National Security Strategy (released in February 2015) with U.S. force planning as reflected in the QDR to determine whether the nation's planned ground forces can meet the commitments that the United States has made.

National Strategy and Commitments

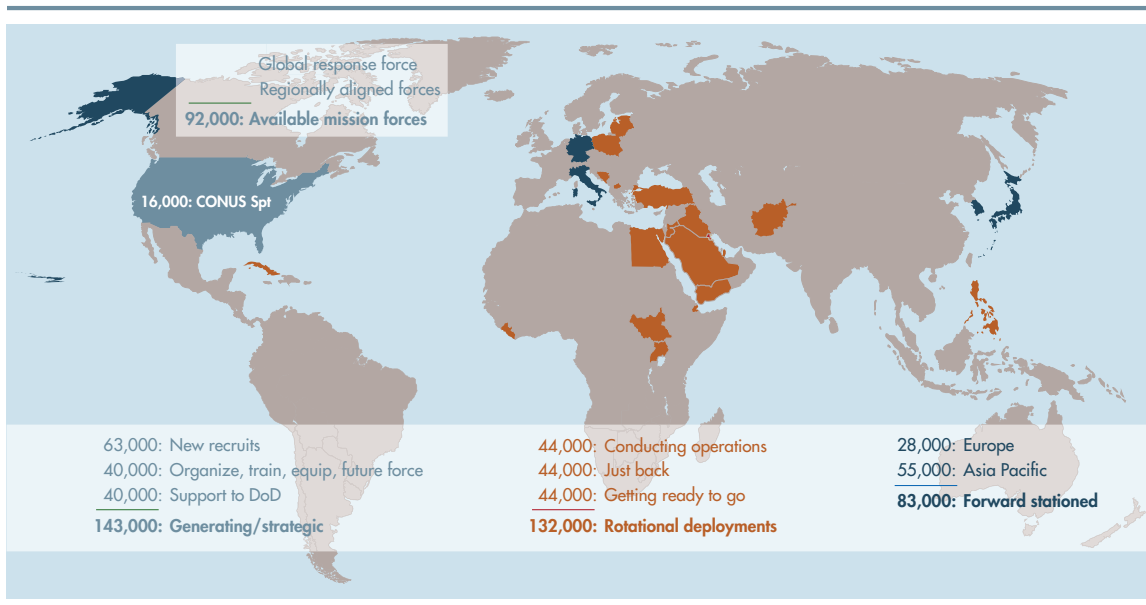
QDR 2014 Force Planning



To determine whether the nation's planned ground forces can meet the commitments that it has made, we sought to answer four more-specific questions:

- How is the Army being used now—around the globe?
- What has the United States committed itself to do?
- What regret might the nation have if it does not meet those commitments?
- How large a ground force could be needed to meet those commitments?

The final question assumes that the ground force is part of Joint air, sea, land, space, and cyber operations and is one component of national power, in addition to diplomatic, economic, and other measures.



At present, the United States maintains forces around the world, as shown on the above map. Specifically, as highlighted on the map in red, the Army has 44,000 forces conducting operations. These soldiers are deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, the Baltics, Africa, and other places around the world.

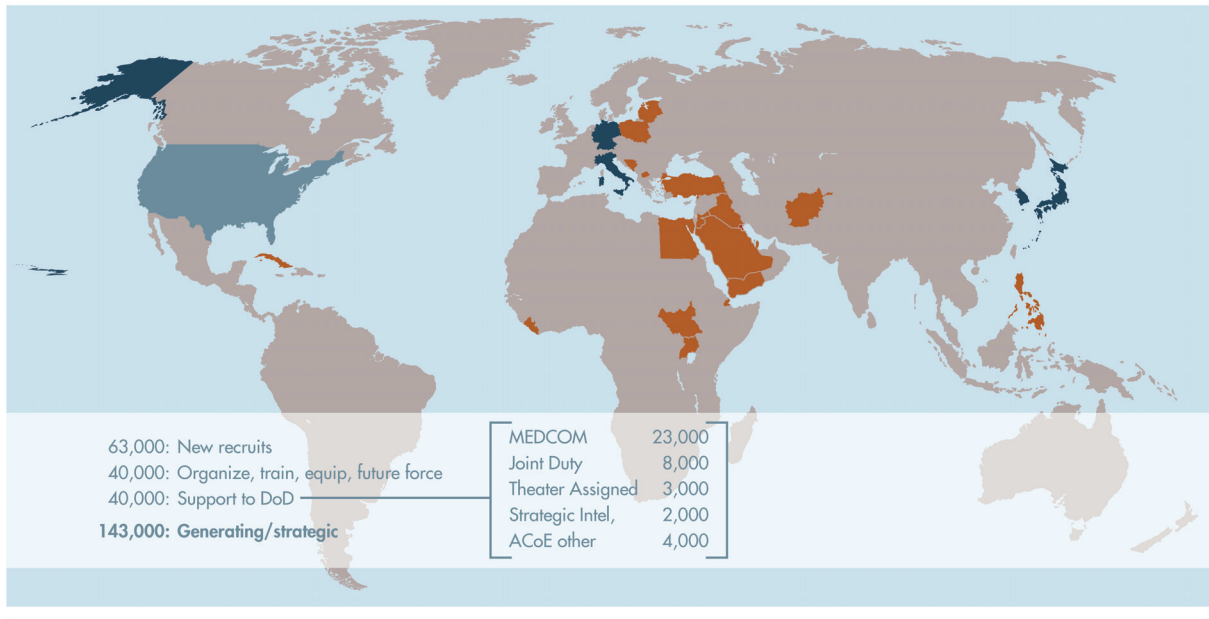
These 44,000 soldiers are deployed on a rotational basis. For the Army, that could be 1 year deployed and 2 years at home, which we call a 1:2 deployment ratio. At 1:2, it takes 132,000 troops to keep 44,000 troops deployed in the field—44,000 conducting operations, 44,000 just back, and 44,000 more getting ready to go.

From this point on in this testimony, I will describe wartime demand, with troops deployed without rotation for the duration of the conflicts. The United States may find it necessary to send troops for the duration of a conflict if demands greatly exceed the supply of available troops. I will also comment on the extraordinary strain that deploying for the duration may impose on troops and their families.

Also shown on the map, in blue, are the 28,000 troops the Army has forward-stationed in Europe with NATO and the 55,000 more forward-stationed in the Asia-Pacific. Because these troops are home-based in these regions, that 83,000 soldiers means 83,000 are ready for contingencies. Finally, the Army has 16,000 soldiers in CONUS providing a variety of support for ongoing missions. (The 15,500 reserve component soldiers on active duty in July, 2015, may comprise many of these soldiers). At an end strength of 450,000 active component soldiers, the Army would have 92,000 soldiers in the continental United States (CONUS) supporting Regionally

Aligned Force (RAF) deployments, the Global Response Force (GRF), and other forces available for assigned missions.⁴

Supporting force generation and strategic needs

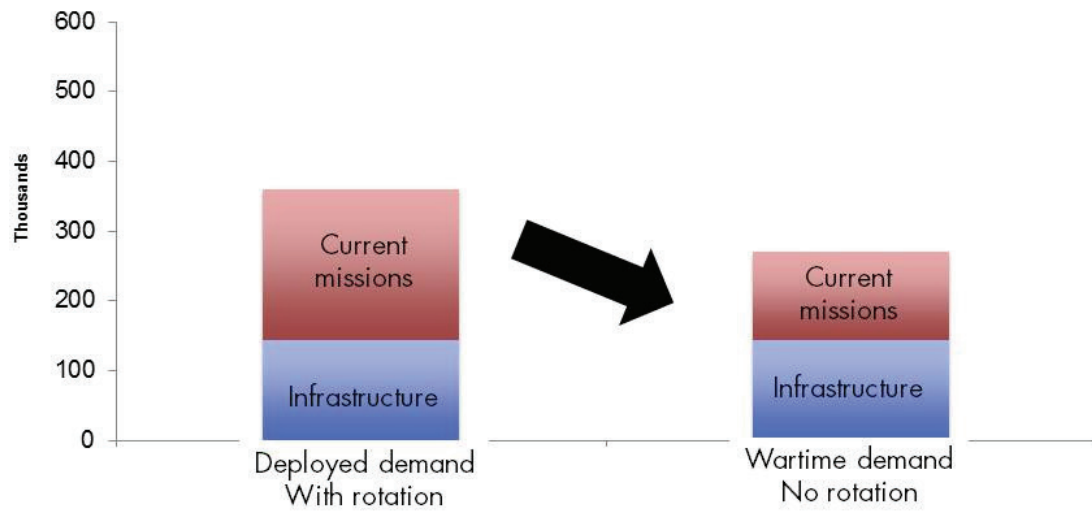


Let me also mention the 143,000 soldiers conducting generating-force and some strategic activities. At any given time, about 63,000 new soldiers are being trained or educated; 40,000 soldiers are organizing, training, and equipping the Army and building the capabilities that the United States will need in the future; and 40,000 soldiers are providing support for Joint and national missions, including the 23,000 soldiers in Army Medical Command and 8,000 soldiers in Joint assignments, such as Combatant Commanders and other senior officials. Also, additional soldiers are assigned to theater commands, strategic intelligence, and other DoD supporting activities.

⁴ At the current Army active component end strength of 490,000 soldiers, the number available for RAF, GRF, and other mission forces would remain at 132,000 soldiers. We use the current 490,000 active component end strength as the baseline in our companion report, "Limiting Regret: Building the Army We Will Need", RR-1320, RAND Corporation, September, 2015

Suspending troop rotations reduces demand

No. of soldiers



The total numbers of troops who are rotationally deployed, forward-stationed, and supporting generating- and strategic-force operations (but who are not GRF, RAF, or available for other missions) are shown in the left-hand column in the chart above. This amounts to the 360,000 troops discussed earlier and reflects the Army's existing rotational practice.

If the rotations are suspended and troops are thus deployed for the duration of their missions, 88,000 fewer troops would be required. This would reduce the troops needed to about 270,000 soldiers—as shown in the right-hand column.

National Strategy and Commitments

QDR 2014 Force Planning

Combat persistent threat of terrorism “We will degrade and destroy ISIL”	ISIL not anticipated
Assure allies, deter aggression Defeat, deny aggression in multiple theaters Baltics: “You lost your independence once, you never will again”	Russian invasion of Ukraine not anticipated
Counter provocations, prevent the spread, use of WMD “Refuse to accept nuclear North Korea”	Scope and scale of countering provocations and eliminating WMD program larger than anticipated

Given the forces available, the question, then, is how such forces map against the commitments the United States has made. Here we focus on three of the major commitments that are part of the national strategy.

First, the national strategy commits the United States to combatting the persistent threat of terrorism. President Barack Obama has specifically stated that “we will degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL.”⁵ However, our current force planning mainly describes our efforts to continue to degrade al Qaida. It turns out that the Middle East is in much worse shape than we assumed in our “rebalance”: The Taliban remain a threat to the government of Afghanistan, and the rise of ISIL—and its seizure of population centers—was not anticipated in our force planning.

The next two commitments are related. Our nation has long been committed to assuring allies and deterring, defeating, and denying aggression in multiple theaters. As a particularly relevant example of these commitments, in Tallinn, Estonia, President Obama stated in September 2014 that the United States, as part of NATO, would “be here” to defend the territorial integrity of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. He went on to say, “you lost your independence once; with NATO you will never lose your independence again.”

⁵ The organization’s name transliterates from Arabic as al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-’Iraq wa al-Sham (abbreviated as Da’ish or DAESH). In the West, it is commonly referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (both abbreviated as ISIS), or simply as the Islamic State (IS). Arguments abound as to which is the most accurate translation, but here we refer to the group as ISIL.

However, the current force planning in the 2014 QDR did not anticipate the Russian invasion of Ukraine—and its potential implications for the NATO Baltic states. There are some references in the QDR to concerns about Russia’s behavior, including: “Russia’s multi-dimensional defense modernization and actions that violate the sovereignty of its neighbors present risks. We will engage Russia to increase transparency and reduce the risk of military miscalculation” (p. 6). But other than that, the QDR force-planning construct does not anticipate what President Obama later described as Russia’s “brazen assault on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.”

Finally, this and previous administrations have long acknowledged the dangers that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) pose to the United States, its allies and friends, and their interests. While in Seoul, South Korea, President Obama committed the United States to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Republic of Korea in the face of North Korean provocations, and to refuse to accept a nuclear North Korea.

The QDR does address deterring a North Korean attack and countering WMDs to some degree. However, the scope and scale of needed capabilities are not fully addressed. In particular, the QDR does not anticipate the scope and scale of countering provocations that could escalate to a massive North Korean artillery barrage of South Korea. Similarly, the problem of “loose nukes” is described in terms of counter-terror and special operations, but not securing the entire North Korean nuclear program from theft and proliferation.

Potential regret: an enduring ISIL terror state



- Destabilizes neighbors
- Harms captured peoples
- Exploits sanctuary, sustainable economic base, global recruiting pipeline
- Exports violence to U.S., allies, and friends

So let's examine the regret that the nation might face if it does not meet its commitments.

For our first example, what might happen if the United States does not degrade or destroy ISIL? One potential regret is an enduring ISIL terror state that continues to destabilize its neighbors; harm captured peoples; exploit captured territory to train terrorists, raise funds, and attract new recruits; and export violence to the United States and its allies and friends.

We do not know whether current forces are sufficient to achieve U.S. objectives, but we assume that U.S. ground forces will remain engaged at their current levels against extremist groups in order to continue to degrade them. These troops could not be pulled away for other operations without ending this mission. It is also possible that countering violent extremists will require more troops if their mission changes—for example, if ground troops are committed to combat operations. Total troop requirements would remain those shown in the figure on page 6.

Potential regret: fractured NATO or war



- Russian “volunteers” could destabilize Baltics
- Rapid invasion could present fait accompli
- Would leave few and bad choices for U.S.

For our second example, what happens if Russia takes the same course in the Baltics that it has taken in Ukraine? Russian “volunteers” could enter and destabilize Estonia and Latvia, or worse, conventional forces could launch a surprise invasion and present a fait accompli to NATO. We estimate that against currently stationed forces, the Russians could reach the Baltic capitals in 36–60 hours. That would leave the president with few and bad choices. The President could negotiate for the Russians to leave and risk the fracture of NATO if negotiations and sanctions drag on for months or years, or the President could choose to launch a counter-offensive to retake NATO territory—against a nuclear-armed Russia.

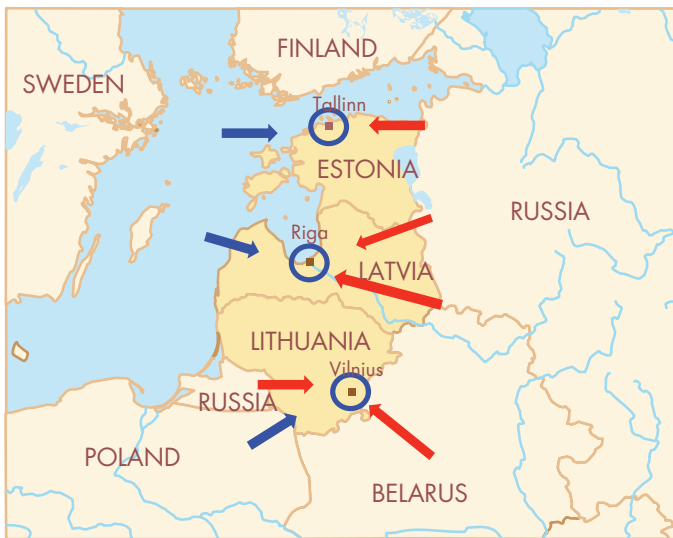
Potential regret: fractured NATO or war



- NATO heavy ground forces needed to prevent overrun
 - Permanent forward stationing
 - Rotational deployment

Instead, NATO—and the United States—might place armored brigades in the Baltics. These armored brigades, along with other U.S. and NATO forces able to quickly deploy on warning, would be capable of denying Russia a quick victory. Such forces could be permanently stationed or rotationally deployed. These ground forces would be supported by air and sea power from the United States and its NATO allies.

Potential regret: fractured NATO or war

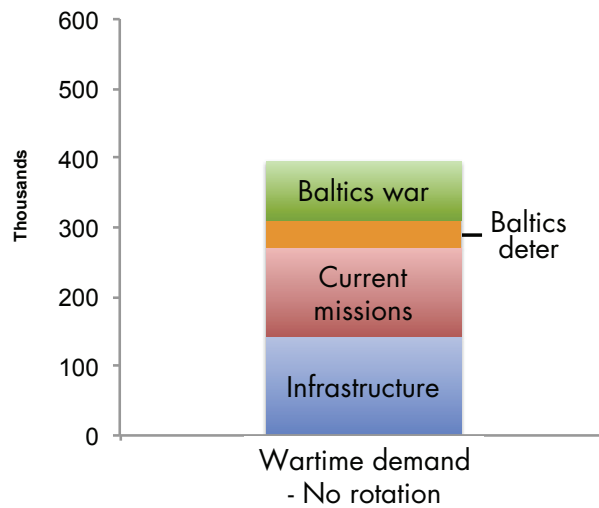


- Mix of U.S. and NATO ally reinforcements needed to deny or reverse Russian advance

If the Russians attacked under this scenario, the United States and NATO would send air, sea, and land reinforcements to deny or reverse the Russian advance.

US contribution to deter and defeat aggression

No. of soldiers



So, how large a force would be required to deter and defeat aggression in the Baltics? For the deterrent force, we estimate that three armored brigades and a total of 40,000 U.S. soldiers would be needed on the ground in the Baltics on the day fighting started (shown here in orange), along with the two brigades and supporting soldiers already in Europe and other U.S. Army and NATO rapid reaction forces that can deploy to the Baltics on warning.

To complete the defending force, we estimate that an additional six brigades and 86,000 U.S. troops would be needed to defeat a Russian invasion (shown in green), along with eight brigades and a similar number of troops from NATO allies.

These forces are needed on top of the generating and strategic forces meeting "infrastructure" demands and the forces forward-stationed or deployed to deal with current missions, including countering ISIL.

Potential regret: loose nuclear weapons



- Current planning focused upon invasion threat to South Korea
- Threat changing
 - ✧ Provocation could lead to artillery barrage
 - ✧ Collapse leaves many nuclear facilities unsecured
- Both missions require significant U.S. ground forces
 - ✧ President will need ready options

Turning now to the third example —what if a war in Korea happens—say because of a provocation cycle that escalates to a North Korean attack on the South? Current planning seems to focus on an invasion threat to South Korea from North Korean forces, depicted on the map.

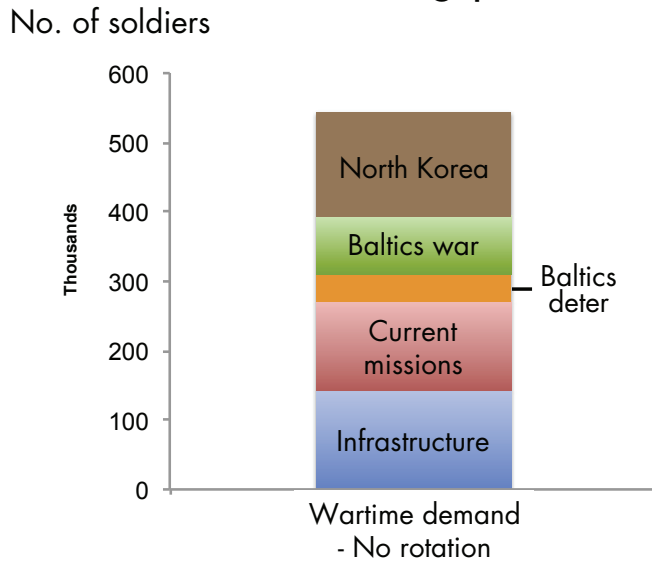
But the threat is changing. A provocation cycle could escalate out of control—and potentially lead to an artillery barrage of Seoul involving some of the 8,000 artillery pieces and multiple rocket launchers, firing from hardened positions, that DoD believes to be in range of South Korea. Or North Korea might collapse as a result of war or economic failure, leaving a large nuclear, chemical, and biological program unsecured, with up to 200 sites (many highlighted on the map with dots) according to a recent South Korean Minister of Defense.

In either event, a significant burden would fall on U.S. forces. To counter North Korean artillery, U.S. ground forces would need to provide forces to evacuate U.S. non-combatants; engineering, logistics, and maneuver units to sustain South Korean and U.S. operations to clear artillery within range of Seoul; WMD-elimination task forces; and ground combat forces to protect them.

South Korean forces would be busy gaining control over North Korean military forces, exerting political control over territory captured, and dealing with a massive humanitarian catastrophe—all at a time when the South Korean Army is decreasing in size by one-third from its peak.

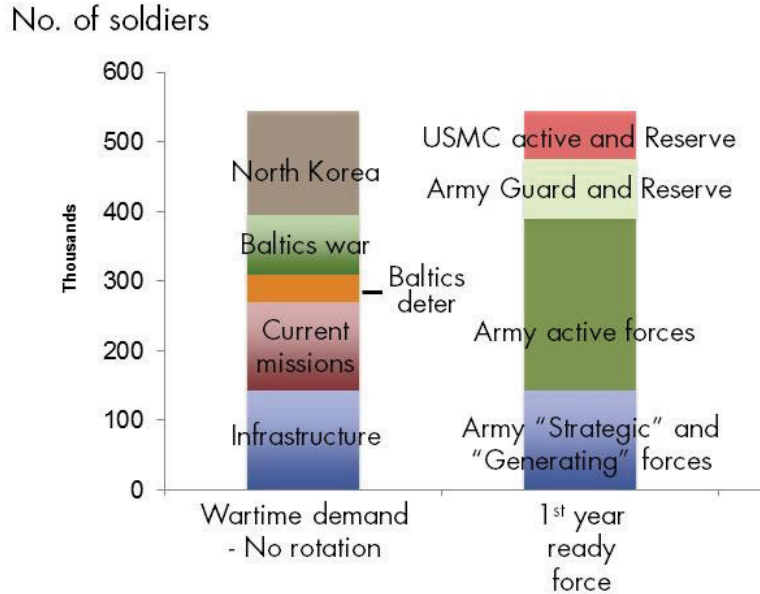
Therefore, countering an artillery barrage or North Korean WMDs would require significant U.S. ground forces.

Countering provocation or collapse



We estimate that 150,000 soldiers (shown in brown in the figure above) would be needed for either the counter-artillery or counter-WMD missions over and above the troops already in Korea and at other forward-stationed locations in the Asia-Pacific. Those numbers are added to the forces already shown as needed for current missions and to deter or address aggression in the Baltics.

... and bulk of Marine Corps

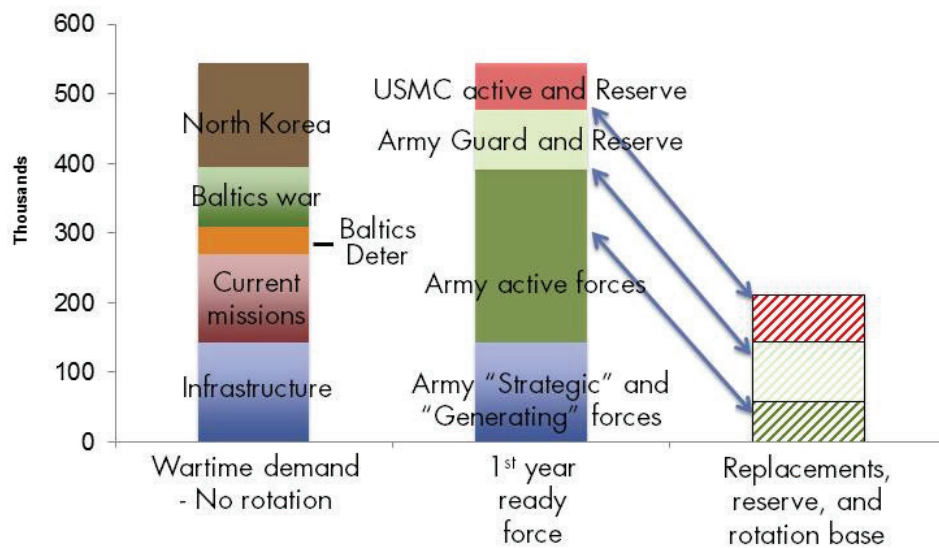


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Turning from the demand side to the supply side, how could the United States meet the demand required to fulfill the three missions I just discussed? This level of demand could be met if the United States deploys 80 percent of the planned Army active component operating force, one-fifth of the combined Army National Guard and Army Reserve operating forces, half of the Marine Corps active force, and one-fifth of its reserve—in addition to continuing Army force generation and strategic activities.

But force and readiness may not be sustainable

No. of soldiers

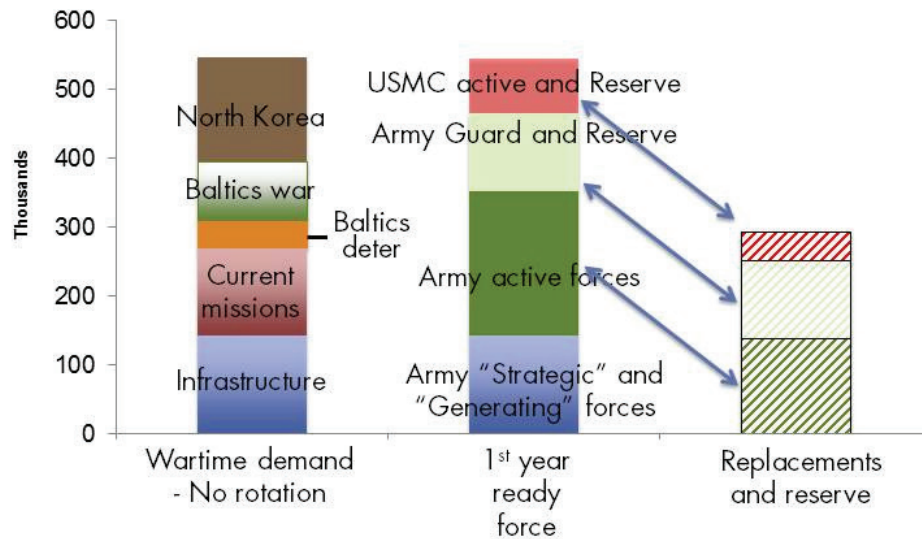


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But that approach would leave very few soldiers or marines available to sustain that deployed force. Sustaining that force in combat will require replacements for casualties and other force "frictions," a reserve in case the conflicts are harder than expected or new crises emerge, and some rotation base if wars are longer than expected. Taken together, sustaining that force for an extended period of time will probably not be possible with an Army active component of 450,000 soldiers, a National Guard of 335,000 soldiers, and an Army Reserve of 195,000 soldiers.

Pausing drawdown provides needed depth

No. of soldiers



20

We estimate that the nation could have sufficient ground forces to conduct operations during the first year of the described conflicts and some depth to provide replacements, a reserve, and some ability to rotate some soldiers out of combat *if* the United States takes several measures.

First, pausing the current drawdown would maintain the FY 2015 Army end-strength of 490,000 in the active component, 352,000 in the National Guard, and 200,000 in the Army Reserve. Second, the United States could plan for longer deployments—15 months for the active component, and 15 months mobilization and 12 months of deployment for reserves. Third, the United States could go to full mobilization of the reserve components and attempt to speed up their deployment—for example, to 25 percent of the reserve components the first year and every year thereafter, as shown in the example above.

Please note that this and the prior example assume that the Marine Corps devotes essentially its entire operating strength to these ground missions and suspends other deployments, such as the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and special Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) missions.

Planned Army too small to meet commitments ... Leaving two choices:

Limit Response – Choose one fight to win

- If fully engaged in Korea, Army cannot successfully defend Baltics
- If fully engaged in Baltics, Army cannot stop artillery barrage or secure loose nukes in Korea
- Opportunistic aggression may become more likely

Limit Regret – Retain forces needed for both

- Pause drawdown until new threats fully addressed
- Increase Active and Reserve readiness – test on regular basis
- Improve defense posture in Baltics and Korea
- Force would be stressed, but would have capacity/some staying power

In summary, the planned Army is too small to meet the United States' current commitments. This leaves the nation with two choices. The first choice is to **limit response**. The United States could decide to win just one of the fights—losing the ability to “hold” an opponent’s progression in the second fight. For example, if the nation puts its war-winning force in Korea, it could not keep the Russians from overrunning the Baltics. Conversely, if U.S. forces fully engage in the Baltics, they could not stop a North Korean artillery barrage or secure loose nukes. Such limitations could raise chances that an adversary might take advantage of an opportunity to commit aggression and may also cause U.S. allies to rethink the credibility of U.S. commitments and whether to rely on U.S. conventional and nuclear deterrent forces.

The second choice is to **limit regret**. To do so, the United States could pause the current troop drawdown until new threats are fully addressed, which would provide another 40,000 active and 20,000 Army Reserve soldiers. The nation may be able to fund those soldiers with Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding, which could end when the threats have diminished. If, for example, the Russians withdraw from Ukraine, return captured territory, and take other measures to demonstrate that they will respect international boundaries, then the drawdown could be resumed. Arguably, the base budget should be used to fund forces that the United States is certain to need. However, it may be possible to fund these troops immediately by using OCO funding—and OCO funding is more clearly implied to be temporary.

In either choice, the United States should improve its ground force posture through two key steps:
(1) increase the readiness of active and reserve forces and test their readiness on a regular

basis, and (2) pre-position more equipment in both the Baltics and Korea to speed force deployments.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to take your questions.