

Army Man Power and the War on Terror

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INTRODUCTION

Army manpower is a key factor in the military's ability to fight the war on terror, including sustaining the combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, manpower is a subject that is often misunderstood and misreported. How does the status of Army manpower affect the nation's war on terror? What if the manpower demands of concurrent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have sapped the country's ability to deploy to the next hot spot on the globe? What if recruiting shortfalls leave combat units half filled? What if frequent deployments for long periods cause professional soldiers to leave the service? And what if mobilization demands on the Reserve and Guard mean that those forces are used up and unavailable for a new contingency not yet on the radar? Political debates about the pros and cons of intervening in Syria, Darfur, or Iran, or even prolonged presence in Iraq, become academic if the reality of the manpower situation is that no troops are available for the next conflict. This paper provides background material on Army manpower that is meant to inform journalists who might cover the issue.

Stretched Too Thin; We Don't Have Enough Troops to Meet Defense Demands

Op-Ed, *Washington Post*

December 18, 2006

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When America's top general in charge of Iraq, John Abizaid, told Congress last month that our Army was unable to increase the number of troops deployed in Iraq, it was a first-of-its-kind admission from a senior defense official: that our ground forces had reached their capacity for military action. "This is not an Army that was built to sustain a 'long war,' " Abizaid told students at a Harvard lecture two days later. This is an Army built to achieve victory with speed and precision. This is a short-war Army fighting a long war.

On Dec. 6, the day after Robert Gates told Congress that he is "open to the possibility of an increase" in the size of our ground forces, the Iraq Study Group released its report, which declared that "America's military capacity is stretched thin." And last week the Army's chief of staff, Gen. Peter Schoomaker, told Congress that the Army is prepared to add up to 7,000 soldiers per year to its ranks if authorized.

The stage has been set for a serious discussion about the appropriate size for our Army: a discussion that should balance resources with demands. Today the 37 combat brigades of the active Army are almost totally consumed by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. With all units either deployed, returning from deployment or preparing to deploy, there are none left to prepare for other contingencies. Active brigades have only 14 months at home before they are recalled for their next 12-month deployment. The National Guard can muster only two or three of its 15 enhanced brigades at any given time, largely because of crippling equipment shortages. The lack of ground forces has an impact beyond the ability to commit more troops to Iraq. Our published defense strategy requires a military that can defend our homeland, sustain two major wars, be present in key regions abroad and fight a global war on terrorism. With Marine and Army ground forces barely large enough to fight the two major wars, the other security tasks are left to flyovers and ship visits from our Air Force and Navy. According to Schoomaker, America is "on a dangerous path that dictates we must increase our strategic depth, increase readiness and reduce our operational risk." If Afghanistan and Iraq are typical of the two-war capability called for in our defense strategy, our Army must be able to sustain a deployment of 14 brigades. To do this and achieve the Defense Department goal of two years at home for every year in combat, the Army would need 56 brigades in its structure. To meet the demands of homeland defense, foreign presence and a global war on terrorism, one could make a good case that America must be able to sustain an additional five to seven brigades in deployment, which would require 20 to 28 more brigades in the structure.

A rough estimate therefore of active and Guard brigades needed for our defense strategy would be between 76 and 84. And these numbers assume that America's other ground force, the Marine Corps, continues to provide the forces it already does in the Middle East and around the globe. Currently the Army has 52 brigades (37 active and 15 enhanced Guard) and has authority

to build to 70 brigades (42 active and 28 Guard), but Congress has not authorized enough troops to man these units.

The 2007 defense budget pays for only 512,000 active-duty soldiers. The Army needs a minimum of 575,000 to man the brigades our defense strategy requires. America must bring its military capabilities back in balance with its strategic demands.

Support is building to correct this mismatch. Colin Powell, the former secretary of state and chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said yesterday that both the Army and Marine Corps need to grow in size. Former Army chief of staff Gordon Sullivan has called for the active Army to have between 560,000 and 600,000 soldiers. Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona has called for the active Army and Marine Corps to increase by 100,000 troops. The United States Army Relief Act, sponsored by Democratic senators Jack Reed, Hillary Clinton, Joe Lieberman and Bill Nelson, calls for an increase in end strength of 20,000 per year over the next four years. These recommendations all bring us closer to the mark.

Throughout the 1980s we recruited an Army of more than 750,000 entirely from volunteers: the same Army that won the Persian Gulf War. It will take several years to recruit additional troops and build the organizations and facilities to house them, but these numbers are well within our reach.

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"The Troop Surge That Isn't"

Op-Ed, *Boston Globe*

January 6, 2007

Author: Brigadier General (ret.) Kevin Ryan, Senior Fellow, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

WHEN IS a surge not a surge? The American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington, issued a report yesterday calling for a "sustained surge of US troops to secure and protect critical areas of Baghdad." The report, presented by professor Frederick Kagan and retired Army vice chief of staff Jack Keane, purports to give ground commanders a new strategy for deploying 30,000 more troops and winning the war in Iraq.

The American Enterprise Institute report matters because its authors are influential within the current administration, and because it appears to capture the thinking of the most prominent politicians who favor a surge. (Senators John McCain of Arizona and Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut were scheduled panelists at the report's release.) Unfortunately, the proposal only provides a temporary bump in troops while jeopardizing the readiness of an American Army that is already stretched too thin.

The report calls for accelerating the arrival of four Army brigades and two Marine regiments that are already preparing to go to Iraq in early 2007 and delaying the departure of the 15 brigades now in Iraq by three months each. That is not a surge of new troops. That is a three-month overlap of scheduled troop departures and arrivals.

The report details this overlap strategy for the 2007 rotation but has no concrete plan for 2008 and beyond. Only then will the real damage from the American Enterprise Institute proposal surface. To sustain the deployments, units that have been accelerated in 2007 will have to stay longer than their one-year rotations, and units whose deployments were extended will go back to Iraq in 2008 and 2009 with less than one year of rest.

Kagan and Keane are banking that either the extra brigades will not have to be replaced or that the National Guard and Army Reserve can equip and deploy additional combat units -- dangerous assumptions that have proven false before with respect to Iraq.

The balance of deployment and recovery is already tenuous. That's why President Bush agreed in December to enlarge the Army and Marine Corps. If the American Enterprise Institute's recommendations become reality, the balance will tip, readiness will spiral downward, and the cost and time to reset units will spiral upward. In exchange for one last rush at the objective, this proposal risks our ability to fight the long war necessary for success in the region. The report suffers from the same casual dismissal of undesirable outcomes that characterized post-combat, reconstruction planning in Iraq.

Notably, the report comes from Washington-based military observers, not from the generals in Iraq who are charged with strategy. Those commanders have overlapped units to increase troops before; during Iraqi elections in 2005 and this past fall in Baghdad. They also have 15 US brigades in Iraq, only five of which are in Baghdad. If the commanders thought that three or four extra US brigades in Baghdad would turn the tide, they could have arranged that. The fact is that the generals in charge of Iraq, George Casey and John Abizaid, have said they do not want more

US troops. They want more Iraqi troops, and they know the Army and Marines cannot sustain 30,000 additional troops in Iraq.

Kagan, who has advocated troop increases in Iraq of up to 75,000, claims that the additional troops needed can be replenished with the increased Army end strength that the president and Congress are likely to authorize this year. But the Army still has not recruited all the 20,000 additional troops Congress authorized in 2004 and cannot grow as rapidly as Kagan wishes.

In a November Weekly Standard article, Kagan said he understood the surge would be difficult for the Army and explained that one solution would be to "send forces that are not as well trained as one would like." Such comments begin to reveal the risks associated with this idea -- and should give Americans pause about its chances for success.

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Plans in Iraq Must Be Based on Realistic Demands

Op-Ed, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

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This week, a second round of surge units were announced for Iraq as the number of troops in that country builds to its highest level ever. Gen. David Petraeus has told President Bush that he needs until September to see if conditions on the ground warrant continuing the surge.

But earlier this month, the Army had a chance to brief the president on a different set of conditions. On May 10 in the Pentagon's "Tank" briefing room, the Army told the president in detail about the conditions on the ground, not for units in Iraq, but for the units getting ready to go to Iraq. We've had plenty of warning that the message would be pessimistic. It undoubtedly was.

In November, then CENTCOM commander John Abizaid told Congress that he knew the Army couldn't sustain a surge of 20,000 troops. A month later, the president ordered almost 30,000 more troops to go. So did Abizaid. A balance of barely one year at home for each year at war was shattered and units began redeploying to Iraq for 15-month tours with less than a year preparation. The result was a downward spiral in readiness in units preparing to deploy. The author of the surge, Fred Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute, had predicted in November that his idea might require units to deploy "not as well trained as one would like." No one can accuse him of not appreciating the impact of his plan on conditions in the Army. It got so bad by April that Defense Secretary Robert Gates had to order the Army to keep units home a minimum of a year so troops wouldn't deploy into combat lacking equipment and training. Our ability to react to any other crises is almost zero. Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who has traveled to the war zone and studied the situation firsthand, told Congress in April that 40 percent of the Army and Marine Corps equipment is either in Iraq or in repair. McCaffrey told Congress it will require \$212 billion and years to repair that equipment. The National Guard estimates that 80 percent of its units in the states are incapable of performing their wartime mission. Those facts were undoubtedly part of the Army's brief to the president.

The morale of the troops remains high against all odds, and they will still be the best soldiers in the world by any measure, even after the surge.

But the institution of our Army has been contorted beyond recognition to sustain untenable deployment levels. The Army Times reported this month that only four Army brigades out of 39 remain available in the U.S. for other contingencies. For the past four years, strategic planning staffs have reinforced tactical staffs working near-term crises rather than thinking ahead to future conflicts.

Training units, the greenhouses of our force, are gutted to provide cadre for deploying units. Tomorrow's armor and artillery battalion commanders are growing up expert in infantry tactics but knowing little about their own branches. It will be years before we regain our balance between operations, training and manpower.

At the briefing with the president, the Army's chief, Gen. George Casey, undoubtedly told him all that. What Casey wouldn't have told the president was how to proceed in Iraq, because he isn't

calling those shots anymore.

It's Petraeus, Casey's replacement in Baghdad, who has that job, and his plan remains based on conditions in Iraq, not back home. His idea to enhance security by concentrating troops in Baghdad and Anbar province and dispersing them into neighborhoods is essentially sound. But it must be done with fewer U.S. troops. Until conditions on the ground back here are included in the calculations, our oversized plan will continue to bankrupt our ability to sustain it. The Army has said repeatedly that to sustain a deployed force for a long time in Iraq we need to draw down to about 10 brigades (or about 100,000 troops). If this truly is a "long war" and, if we are serious about not abandoning Iraq and the region, we need plans based on realistic demands. We will lose the race if we continue to run this marathon like a sprint.

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"No choice -- withdrawal starts in '08"

Op-Ed, *Los Angeles Times*

September 11, 2007

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In his testimony to Congress on Monday, Gen. David H. Petraeus announced that he was withdrawing the first "surge" troops from Iraq this month and recommended bringing home the first combat brigade in December, followed by an additional four brigades over the following eight months. But he postponed any decision about the baseline force of 130,000 troops until next March.

In making his case for withdrawal, Petraeus cited improvements in Iraqi security forces, cooperation by Sunni sheiks in Anbar province and successes against extremists and Al Qaeda operatives in Iraq. Legislators who challenged his comments, as well as those who supported him, focused on these strategic variables in Iraq.

What all of this debate about withdrawal missed, however, is that the driver is not conditions in Iraq or politics in the United States but the hard realities of Army and Marine Corps readiness. As the troops' extended 15-month tours of duty end, the Army and Marine Corps simply don't have more troops to replace them. The withdrawal will be, in effect, the flip side of the surge.

This "drawdown" should come as no surprise. Army Gen. John P. Abizaid, the former head of the U.S. Central Command for forces in the Middle East, candidly prepared us for this when he was questioned about the surge by the Senate Armed Services Committee last fall. "We can put in 20,000 more Americans tomorrow and achieve a temporary effect," he said. "But when you look at the overall American force pool that's available, the ability to sustain that commitment is simply not something that we have right now with the size of the Army and the Marine Corps."

How is it possible that a nation with 300 million people, a \$13 trillion GDP and a defense budget of more than \$600 billion is unable to muster 30,000 additional troops and sustain the surge for even a full year? The bottom line is that the leaders responsible for our military -- the president, the secretary of Defense and Congress -- refused over the past six years (as their predecessors had before them) to recruit, train and equip more troops. Even after deciding to attack Iraq, this leadership neglected its duty to raise the forces required, until it was too late to affect the outcome.

The reasons are varied and complicated. Illusions of a short war of liberation in Iraq, and a stubborn unwillingness to recognize the growing insurgency, blinded many political leaders. A command system that divides responsibility for planning operations from responsibility for generating forces has produced untenable plans and dangerous underestimates of resources.

Absent a formal declaration of war, the president had to declare a partial, rather than a full, mobilization of our military following 9/11, effectively limiting access to thousands of National Guard and Reserve personnel.

Some steps are being taken to address these problems, such as the congressionally mandated study of the role of the Reserves and National Guard and how they are mobilized. The president and Congress also have authorized the active Army and Marine Corps to grow by 57,000 troops, but that will take time.

We should also take a hard look at the relationship among the branches of the armed services, combatant commands and the Joint Staff. When fights were localized and small, it was manageable to have combatant commanders and service chiefs reporting directly and separately to the secretary of Defense. But when we are in a global fight, it would be more effective to have the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff consolidating these aspects of war fighting and making operational decisions -- so that battlefield planning and strategies better match resource decisions, and vice versa.

Whatever the successes and failures of the surge, troop withdrawal is unavoidable in Iraq now. As the forces and the commanders there struggle to find a workable way to accomplish our goals amid that reality, we can support them best by expanding and restructuring our military so that future decisions about lengthy, complex fights can be made on the strategic merits, without capricious constraints.

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