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**THIRD IN A SERIES
THE THIN GREEN LINE**

By Andrew F. Krepinevich

SUMMARY

Following the successful major combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army, which had organized, trained and equipped itself principally to wage short, decisive wars against conventionally armed adversaries, has been confronted with a protracted deployment against irregular forces waging insurgencies.

The ground force requirements to provide stability and security to Afghanistan and Iraq clearly exceed those available for the mission. Moreover, the demands for Army ground force deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq are not likely to decline substantially any time soon.

Internal options for addressing the problem—such as violating rotation base ratios, imposing stop loss and stop movement requirements, tapping into the Individual Ready Reserve, and deploying marines into Iraq, have already been exercised. But they are short term fixes at best. Moreover, near-term relief from external sources seems problematic. A sizeable, competent Iraqi security force will likely take years, not months, to train and equip. Neither the United Nations nor NATO is likely to be willing—or able—to provide significant support.

Longer-term solutions put the Army in a race against time, in which its ability to execute them competes with the demands to reduce forward deployments or risk “breaking” the force in the form of a catastrophic decline in recruitment and retention. Nevertheless, a combination of reforms, involving a modest increase in the Army’s size, if aggressively executed, could create a force sufficient to sustain current force levels indefinitely, while maintaining a modest strategic reserve.

It must be emphasized, however, that the Army’s efforts to adapt on the fly to the requirement to maintain large forces overseas will not, even if they succeed, be sufficient to overcome a flawed strategy.¹

¹ The issue of the United States’ strategic shortcomings will be addressed in future backgrounders on strategy and performance metrics.

Emerging From “Strategic Irrelevance”

Just prior to the 9/11 attacks on the United States by al Qaeda, the Army found its “strategic relevance” being questioned. To be sure, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Army had deployed units on a range of commitments around the globe to places like Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti and Somalia. Yet the Service’s well-publicized difficulties in deploying forces to Albania during Operation Allied Force, and the absence of Army units from the battlefield during that conflict, which was prosecuted almost entirely by air power, left some questioning its future utility.

In response, in the fall of 1999 the Army began the process of transforming itself. Responding to criticism concerning its strategic relevance, the Army argued that, while ground forces might need to deploy more rapidly to a threatened area in the future, there would always be a need for “boots on the ground” to secure the victory.

Following 9/11, the Army’s assertion that the United States must ultimately put “boots on the ground” was sustained during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and especially in the Second Gulf War (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and in subsequent post-conflict stability operations.

FROM SPRINTS TO MARATHONS

During these conflicts, the small contingent of Army Special Operations Forces (SOF) committed to Afghanistan performed remarkably well, as did the multi-division Army force that was central to toppling Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq in the spring of 2003. Both of these operations, however, were brief in duration. Faced with the requirement to sustain a large ground force presence in Afghanistan and Iraq to conduct stability operations, the Army again found itself challenged. This time, concerns stemmed not over its relevance, but its stamina, or ability to sustain a large force in the field over a protracted period of time. Put another way, the Army, which had prepared itself to compete as a world-class sprinter, was now being asked to run a marathon.

THE VIETNAM SYNDROME

The Army that went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq was designed, almost exclusively, with an eye toward waging conventional warfare. This orientation was not novel. Indeed, it was consistent with the Army’s emphasis over the past century. Moreover, the Army had enjoyed great success in this form of warfare and, from an institutional perspective, was very comfortable with this approach. This institutional preference was further reinforced by the United States’ traumatic experience in the Vietnam War, in which the Army played the central role and suffered the most, in both a human and institutional sense. Thus in addition to a cultural preference for conventional war, the Army became positively neuralgic over the thought of waging a protracted war against irregular forces.

In its desire to avoid such conflicts, the Army found willing partners in the form of the American people and their political leaders. “No More

Vietnams” became a slogan, not just for Americans in general, but for the US military—and especially the Army—in particular. Thus the 1980s saw the introduction of the Weinberger Doctrine, and its stepchild, the Powell Doctrine, which sought to avoid future “Vietnams” by carefully choosing America’s battlefields, applying overwhelming force when troops were committed, and looking for an early way out of the conflict. When it looked like US forces might be tied down in an irregular conflict, or incur substantial casualties, as occurred, for example, in Lebanon in the fall of 1983, US forces were withdrawn before the mission could be accomplished.

This theme continued in the 1990s, under the rubric of “Exit Strategies.” For planned deployments of US forces to places like Bosnia, Haiti and Rwanda, their withdrawal date was debated as much as how the military planned to accomplish the mission. When US forces dipped their toe in the waters of stability operations, as in Somalia, they were withdrawn quickly when casualties were incurred.

In the wake of the Soviet Union’s demise, defense reviews conducted by both the Bush and Clinton administrations focused primarily on orienting the US military for conflicts similar to the First Gulf War. It was not until the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that the term “small-scale contingencies” (SSCs) was introduced, in reference to peacekeeping operations. Even then, it produced no significant change in the Army’s force posture or modernization program. In the 2001 defense review, a “1-4-2-1” formula was introduced to guide US force sizing and posture. As in previous reviews, the formula discounted the possibility of protracted ground force stability operations.²

Not surprisingly, in Army circles, phrases like “We don’t do windows, jungles, cities or guerrillas” were heard, reflecting not only the Service’s institutional preference, but clearly those of the American people as well.

THE “POTTERY BARN RULE”³

This all changed with the attacks of 9/11. Following the successful major combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States realized that it could not depart at a time of its own choosing, lest it run the risk that the

² The “1-4-2-1” metric sizes and structures the US military to defend the homeland (“1”), maintain presence in four key areas overseas (“4”), fight two major regional conflicts (“2”), and effect regime change in one of those two conflicts (“1”). This metric replaced the two major regional conflict/war metric employed by the Clinton Administration as a force sizing mechanism. The Bush Administration has adopted an additional metric, known as “10-30-30.” It calls for US forces to be capable of initiating operations against a major regional adversary within ten days, of defeating that adversary within 30 days, and of “resetting” itself to conduct additional operations 30 days after that. Obviously, this metric has no relevance against an enemy waging irregular warfare.

³ The “Pottery Barn Rule” has been attributed to Richard Armitage, the Deputy Secretary of State. The rule is “If you break it, you own it,” and it refers to the consequences incurred by the United States when it engages in regime change operations. The argument is that the US bears a responsibility following the overthrow of the existing regime to insure stability until a new regime can be formed and assume primary responsibility for its own security.

unstable conditions in these states might produce regimes every bit as hostile to the United States as those that were displaced.

As in Afghanistan, following the end of major combat operations in Iraq, the Army was the Service principally confronted with the mission of providing stability until a new government could be elected and indigenous security forces could be trained. This would have been demanding under conditions of relative tranquility, as can be seen in the NATO mission in the Balkans. It is made far more difficult in Afghanistan, and especially in Iraq, where there are active insurgent forces trying to foment instability and frustrate the democratic process and reconstruction.

Thus for the first time since the Vietnam War the Army was faced with the challenge of maintaining a large deployed force in the field for a protracted period of time. This presented problems, even for the world's best military.

RUNNING A MARATHON

The ground force requirements to provide the necessary level of stability and security to Afghanistan and Iraq clearly exceed those available for the mission. To be sure, in the final analysis, the Afgans and Iraqis must shoulder the main burden for providing their own security. But the conditions must be created for this to happen. That means having sufficient coalition forces available to provide a shield behind which it becomes possible to establish a stable government and create indigenous security forces. Part of the problem stems from a lack of proper planning as to how so-called Phase IV, or post-conflict stability operations were to be conducted. The forces called for proved insufficient to execute effectively stability operations of the type envisioned by the US military.⁴ A clear sign of this is the willingness of the US command in Iraq to cede responsibilities for stability operations in several key cities to forces hostile to the interim government. The Army's difficulty in meeting the demands for forces, in the form of combat brigades and their supporting elements, is driven by two simple factors: its inadequate size and the ending, over 30 years ago, of conscription.

The volunteer Army—a euphemism for a professional Army—is based on the presumption of career service for a substantial percentage of its soldiers. The United States instituted an all-volunteer force in 1973, at the end of its direct involvement in the Vietnam War. The volunteer force differs from the conscription era force, which drafted young men into the force for several years, after which most returned to civilian life. Thus during the protracted Army deployment during the Vietnam War, many of its troops were draftees that were given training, rotated into the combat theater, and then returned home and left the Service, to be succeeded by another wave of draftees.⁵

⁴ This is not to say that the United States is pursuing the optimum strategy for dealing with the insurgency, or even a preferred strategy.

⁵ The reader should note that this is not an argument for the return of conscription. It is merely to point out that, under a conscription system, the Defense Department can

A professional force, on the other hand, faces a very different situation. It hopes to retain most of its soldiers for a full career in the Army. In many respects, today's professional Army is superior to the draft era force. For example, in protracted conflicts such as the ones now confronting the Army in Afghanistan and Iraq, draftees might serve once in the combat theater before departing the military. Long-term volunteers, however, might serve a number of tours, as is the case at present. It seems reasonable to assume that a soldier serving his or her second or third tour would be more effective than a soldier experiencing the conflict for the first time.

Yet, if it rotates its troops too frequently into combat, the Army risks having many of its soldiers decide that a military career is too arduous or too risky an occupation for them and their families to pursue. This leads to the question: How often can a soldier be put in harm's way and still desire to remain in the Army?⁶ The answer is different for every soldier, but the deployment ratio range seems to be somewhere in between 3:1 and 5:1. That is, for every brigade that is forward deployed in combat operations or in a "hardship" tour, there must exist between three and five brigades to sustain the rotation. Thus a 3:1 rotation base would find soldiers deployed on such missions one-third of the time; a 5:1 rotation would see them deployed one-fifth of their service time.

For the purposes of this assessment, a 4:1 deployment ratio is assumed.⁷ Thus a soldier under these circumstances could expect to be on deployment six months out of every two years. The Army currently has 34 active brigades. Using a 4:1 ratio, this means it could deploy forward 8½ brigades at any one time.

Not surprisingly, the deployment ratio for National Guard brigades in the Reserve Component of the Army is not as favorable. The simple reason is that National Guard soldiers are civilians who have joined the Reserves in the expectation that their civilian livelihood and lifestyle will not be subjected to numerous interruptions. Moreover, because National Guard units do not train anywhere near as frequently as units in the Army's Active Component, once

increase the size of its monthly draft calls to match anticipated force requirements, as occurred, for example, during the Korean and Vietnam wars.

⁶ Other factors in addition to the rotation base come into play as well. For example, if soldiers perceive that they are being poorly led, or engaged in executing a failed strategy, their willingness to persevere may decline, perhaps dramatically. During the Vietnam War, once it became clear the United States was looking for a way out of the conflict rather than attempting to win it, there was a heightened degree of cynicism, and a corresponding decline in the willingness of soldiers to sacrifice in order to accomplish the mission. The phrase "Why die for a tie?" is emblematic of this attitude.

⁷ This assumption is based on the author's discussions with senior Army leaders. It also conforms to the rotation base ratio used by the Marine Corps. John Hendren, "Rumsfeld Asks Army to Consider Shorter Rotations," *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 2004, p. 10. A study by the Congressional Budget Office concluded that "rotation ratios of between 3.2:1 and 4:1 span the range expected to be feasible over the long term for active-component units." Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Congressional Budget Office, "The Ability of the U.S. Military to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq," Testimony, Committee on Armed Services, US House of Representatives, November 5, 2003, p. 11.

they are called up to active service they require a period of intensive training, typically several months, before they are ready for deployment. According to senior Army officials, a more reasonable deployment ratio for National Guard brigades, then, would be 6:1.⁸ But owing to the need for pre-deployment training, the true ratio of deployed brigades to existing brigades is probably closer to 8:1.⁹ The Army National Guard currently maintains 15 enhanced separate brigades, 19 divisional brigades, one scout group and one separate brigade, for a total of 36 brigades. Assuming an 8:1 deployment ratio, a maximum of 4½ brigades could be deployed forward at any given time. Thus the total number of Active and Reserve Component brigades that can currently be sustained is roughly 13 brigades.

One only has to contrast this figure with actual Army deployments to see how thin the Green Line is stretched.

Figure 1: Army Deployed/"Hardship Tour" Brigades

	Active Army	National Guard
Afghanistan	2	0
Balkans	0	2
Iraq	10	3
South Korea	2*	0
Total	14	5

*One of these brigades is being redeployed to Iraq.

As Figure 1 indicates, the Army has some 19 brigades deployed in contingency operations and in "hardship" tours.¹⁰ Making matters worse, unless the Army is willing to further stress its rotation base, it effectively has no strategic reserve.

The demands for Army ground force deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq are not likely to decline substantially any time soon. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld summed up the views of most informed observers when he concluded that Iraq represented a "long, hard slog" for the United States military.¹¹ He might well have said the same with respect to the situation in Afghanistan, where democratic elections have already been postponed several times owing to a lack of security.

⁸ As with the Army's Active Component, this ratio is based on the author's discussions with senior Army leaders. This also conforms to the conclusion reached by the CBO. See Holtz-Eakin, "The Ability of the U.S. Military to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq," p. 11.

⁹ It is important to note that while there exist some data with respect to Active Component deployment patterns, the data regarding acceptable Reserve Component rotation rates is sketchy.

¹⁰ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/global-deployments.htm>.

¹¹ Memo, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to Gen. Dick Myers, Paul Wolfowitz, Gen. Peter Pace, and Doug Feith, "Global War on Terrorism," October 16, 2003, found at <http://usatoday.printhis.clickability.com>.

NEAR-TERM OPTIONS

There are several immediate options open for addressing the problem of an overextended Army, while more permanent, long-term solutions are developed and implemented. One option that is already being exercised involves violating rotation base ratios. Soldiers and brigades are being deployed more frequently, and for longer periods, than what the Army believes is appropriate in order to attract and retain the number of soldiers necessary to maintain the size and quality of the force. It is not clear, even to Army leaders, how long this practice can be sustained without inducing recruitment and retention problems.

Another option exercised by the Army is known as “stop loss” and “stop movement”. Stop loss refers to requiring soldiers to remain in their deployed units beyond the time in which their term of service is completed. Under stop loss, soldiers are typically required to stay on active duty until 90 days after their unit has returned from its deployment. Stop movement refers to soldiers whose reassignment to other duties is held up until their unit returns from its deployment. The Army has also tapped into the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) to call up an additional 5,600 soldiers.¹²

While these actions have enabled the Army to meet its troop deployment requirements, they are short-term fixes at best. Applied over an extended period of time, these remedies risk “breaking the force” as recruitment and retention problems mount.

Another possible partial solution is to deploy US Marine ground forces into Iraq. There are currently two Marine brigade equivalents deployed in Iraq, which is the limit the Marines can sustain over a protracted period.¹³ In short, the Marine option is already being exercised.

INDIGENOUS FORCES

The ultimate goal, of course, is to rely on indigenous Afghan and Iraqi forces to provide security for their own country. The premise here is that ultimately Afghans and Iraqis are going to defend their new-found freedom.

To date, however, progress has been slow. Initial efforts to field large numbers of Iraqi security forces, in the form of police, a civil defense corps, and the beginning of a reconstituted Iraqi Army have achieved mixed results, at best. These units proved generally unreliable during the recent uprisings in the Sunni and Shi'ia parts of the country. A small number of the security forces even went over to the insurgents' side.¹⁴

¹² Michael Hirsh and T. Trent Gegax, “Needed: More Soldiers, More Billions,” *Newsweek*, July 12, 2004. The announced call up will affect 5,674 soldiers in the IRR.

¹³ Marine combat organizations are significantly different from those employed by the Army. There are 24 infantry battalions in three Marine divisions, and nine more in the Marine Corps Reserve. At present there are two Marine regiments in Iraq, along with 2 Marine Expeditionary Units. Roughly speaking, they form the equivalent of two or three Army brigades.

¹⁴ One concern that must be addressed is the extent to which the presence of US and other coalition security forces induces a “free rider” effect on the Iraqis. That is to say,

Several reasons are given for the Iraqi forces' substandard performance. One is the lack of an Iraqi government to command the loyalty of these forces, and inspire them to perform effectively. Another is that these forces are generally poorly equipped. Still another is that the training they received has been wholly inadequate for the tasks they have been asked to perform. Many of these units have also been deployed without adequate backup support (e.g., rapid-reaction forces) to provide aid in the event they are overmatched by the insurgents. Finally, cases of corruption among the leadership of these units have been identified.¹⁵

Although an interim Iraqi government is now in place, it is not yet clear whether it will offset the other problems identified above that compromise these forces' ability to perform effectively in counterinsurgency operations. It appears that many of these units remain reluctant to take action against the insurgents in their midst. Some are unwilling to go on joint patrols with US forces, which would appear to be a key part of their training and evaluation. Others are unwilling to patrol at all.

What seems clear is that training large numbers of Iraqis to the levels of proficiency required will take a considerable amount of time, as will providing them with the kinds of equipment they will need to perform their missions. The Defense Department has increased its priority in this area and assigned LTG David Petraeus to oversee the training effort.¹⁶

It is not clear whether this renewed emphasis in training will overcome the problems noted above. In any event, if large, competent Iraqi security forces are to be fielded, it will likely take years, not months, to achieve that result.¹⁷ Thus this option also represents a possible long-term solution, not a near-term fix for the Army's deployment woes.

OUTSOURCING TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

While the ultimate security of both Afghanistan and Iraq rests in the hands of the indigenous population, time must be bought, and stability maintained and enhanced, until they are capable of doing so. Hence there is a search for

so long as external forces are providing security in Iraq, there may be less incentive for Iraqis to take on the task themselves. Given the sad state of Iraqi forces at present, and the recent return of sovereignty to Iraq, this is not an immediate concern. However, over time, as Iraqi forces become more proficient, this could become an issue. During the Vietnam War senior US officials were acutely aware of what some called the "Plimsoll Effect," a term used to describe a corresponding lack of effort on the part of South Vietnamese forces once American troops were deployed to Vietnam in large numbers.

¹⁵ Aamer Madhani, "In Race to Train Iraq Security Force, GIs Find Trust is Biggest Obstacle," *Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 2004.

¹⁶ LTG Petraeus achieved some notable success in northern Iraq as commander of the Army's 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in stability operations immediately after the end of major combat operations.

¹⁷ When asked to provide a timetable under which some 200,000 Iraqi police, civil defense forces, border and facility protection guards and soldiers would be trained, LTG Petraeus replied, "I don't think you can put a timetable on this." Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Needs More Time to Train and Equip Iraqis," *New York Times*, May 24, 2004.

options to bridge the gap between an overstretched US military and the development of capable Afghan and Iraqi security forces. Both the Bush Administration and Senator John Kerry, the Democratic Party's nominee for president, have supported the idea of engaging the international community to provide troop support as a means of reducing the strain on the Army. This option has two principal forms: requests made to the United Nations for support, and appeals to NATO.

The United Nations

While attractive in principle as a source of support, the United Nations is unlikely to provide it at the levels required to make a significant difference in the Army's deployment problem. Save for those occasions when the United Nations has authorized the use of force in operations led by the United States (e.g., during the Korean War and the First Gulf War), the international body has not, in its history, been able to field large forces in support of either combat or peacekeeping operations. In short, when the United Nations has authorized actions in which large numbers of troops have been deployed (i.e., 50,000 troops or more), it has been the United States which provided the bulk of them.¹⁸ Yet this is exactly what the United States needs to stabilize in Iraq to stabilize its rotation base—well-trained troops in large numbers.

Typically, UN peacekeeping operations are small in size. Even when the UN force dispatched is relatively large (e.g., in excess of 10,000 troops), it tends to comprise relatively small numbers of troops from a rather large number of contributor nations.¹⁹

The United Nations has conducted 56 peacekeeping operations in its history, not including authorized interventions such as First Gulf War. Eighteen peacekeeping operations were undertaken during the Cold War period from 1948-1989. In the fifteen years since then, 38 more have been pursued, with 35 occurring in the 1990s alone. The vast majority of these missions were conducted in benign environments, and involved monitoring or enforcing a ceasefire, or cessation of hostilities, not active combat against armed insurgents.²⁰

Indeed, in recent years, the United Nations has found it difficult to take military action in cases where a benign environment did not exist. For example, Operation Allied Force, undertaken to address human rights violations by Slobodan Milosevic's Yugoslavia, was led by NATO. American

¹⁸ During the Korean War, the United States eventually deployed well over 300,000 troops to Korea. The next highest foreign contingent was provided by Great Britain, with less than 15,000 troops. The most significant non-NATO contribution came from Australia, which deployed roughly 2,200 troops. <http://korean-war.com/unitednations.html>.

¹⁹ For example, the United Nations Protection Force comprised some 38,600 personnel from 37 countries. The largest contributions came from France (4,493), the United Kingdom (3,405), Jordan (3,367), and Pakistan (3,017). See http://www.gmu.edu/departments/t-po/resource-bk/unprofor_un.html.

²⁰ See http://worldiq.com/definition/Timeline_of_UN-peacekeeping_missions.

forces were finally dispatched to Rwanda in 1994 after the UN proved incapable of acting to avert humanitarian disaster. Recent UN troubles in the Congo lend support to this view.²¹ Even now, in Sudan's western Darfur region, the site of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the UN Security Council has yet to act, just as it temporized during the genocide in Rwanda a decade ago.²²

In summary, historically speaking, in addition to its helpful role in monitoring cease fires in relatively pacific environments, the United Nations has served more as a provider of political cover for those states desiring to take military action in a hostile threat environment, than as a provider of substantial military capability capable of functioning at a high level of effectiveness in such environments. Indeed, the United Nations is having difficulty securing commitments for troops to provide security for its new mission in Iraq.²³ Given this track record, the United Nations is unlikely to be a provider of significant military capability in Afghanistan or Iraq, either in immediate present or over the longer term. This could change, however, if the conflict environment were to become much more benign than it is at present. In that case, of course, the demand for US ground forces would have diminished substantially.²⁴

NATO: The "Hollow" Alliance?

As it became clear US forces would be required in sizeable numbers the United States has tried, unsuccessfully to date, to increase NATO's

²¹ See Laura Neack, "Peacekeeping, Bloody Peacekeeping," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, July/August 2004, pp. 40–47. The French-led European Union peace enforcement mission, Operation Artemis, was followed by a UN peacekeeping operation, the UN Organization Mission. The author's conclusion is that the Congo has been "an immense and failing peacekeeping effort," and notes the EU is "unlikely to return."

²² Nicholas D. Kristof, "Dare We Call it Genocide?" *New York Times*, June 16, 2004; and Mike DeWine and John McCain, "It's Happening Again," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2004. In Darfur, over one million people have been driven from their homes. The US Agency for International Development estimates that, even under "optimum conditions," 320,000 Sudanese may die this year as the government continues to block humanitarian assistance efforts.

²³ UN Secretary Kofi Annan recently declared that "We haven't had much success attracting governments to sign up for the dedicated force to protect the U.N. personnel in Iraq and our property. For practical measures, we have no other choice but to rely on the multinational force, and this is the way we are going." Colum Lynch, "U.N. Says Iraq Force Is Stalled," *Washington Post*, August 5, 2004, p. 14; and Paul Richter, "Too Many Blue Helmets Still Unfilled," *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2004.

²⁴ Saudi Arabia recently advanced an initiative calling for an all-Muslim security force to be sent to Iraq. The initiative appears to be taken seriously by the Bush Administration. The Iraqis, however, have indicated they do not want troops from neighboring states deployed to Iraq, for obvious reasons. The Iraqis have met with officials from Algeria, Bahrain and Tunisia to discuss the plan. Other possible contributors include Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and Morocco. If some or all of these states prove willing to deploy forces, they might provide some relief for US troops. For example, Secretary of State Colin Powell has suggested that such a force might provide security for key facilities, or for UN personnel. Christopher Marquis, "Saudi Plan for Muslim Force in Iraq gains in U.S.," *New York Times*, July 30, 2004.

involvement in stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both for reasons of policy and lack of capability, America's NATO allies have provided only a small fraction of the overall force in these countries. Nor is this situation likely to change. For while the political opposition to deploying forces to Iraq among several leading NATO states, notably France and Germany, is well known, what is far less appreciated is NATO's lack of capability to augment its efforts.

Several key members of the alliance, notably Britain and Italy, have forces in Iraq, as does Poland, the largest of the former Soviet satellite states that have become members of the alliance. Thirteen other NATO nations have individually deployed forces to Iraq. These NATO allies have little in the way of surplus forces to provide for the Iraq mission.²⁵

Revealingly, other NATO nations also are struggling to maintain the relatively small forces they have deployed to these and to other contingencies. France, for example, has deployed a total of 15,000 troops to Haiti, Africa, the Balkans and Afghanistan. Some 4,000 of these troops are in the small African nation of Ivory Coast.²⁶ As one senior French military official recently commented to the author, "We are experiencing difficulties maintaining these forces overseas, even absent a commitment to Iraq."²⁷

Similarly, Germany, with a military of some 270,000, has declared that its deployment of 7,500 troops abroad to Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, has left it overstretched.²⁸ Indeed, the United States' NATO allies, which boast over 2 million troops under arms, are experiencing difficulty in making good on a pledge to increase their troop strength of 6,500 in Afghanistan by 5,000.²⁹ This condition exists despite NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's statement that this contingency is the alliance's "number one

²⁵ For example, the British government has recently announced that significant reductions will be made in both equipment and force structure, which cannot be sustained with the relatively small increases planned in their defense budget estimates, which average 1.4 percent through 2007-08. Andrew Chutter and Pierre Tran, "France. U.K. Plan Spending Hikes," *Defense News*, July 19, 2004, p. 1.

²⁶ "What Alliance?" *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2004, p. 10.

²⁷ Author's discussion with senior French military official, April 2004.

²⁸ "What Alliance?" *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2004, p. 10. Germany's inability to deploy more than a small fraction of its military overseas is, in part, a function of both its long-declining defense budget—reduced by some 40 percent in the last three years alone to a little over 6 percent the size of the US budget—and its reliance on the draft. With respect to the latter factor, Germans conscripted for military service serve short enlistments, and require most of this time to learn fundamental military skills. Aside from the practical difficulties encountered in deploying such forces, a number of America's European allies have laws prohibiting the deployment of draftees overseas. See Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Expanding Global Military Capability for Humanitarian Intervention* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2003), pp. 55, 58.

²⁹ Of course, the largest military in NATO Europe belongs to Turkey, with a standing land force of some 402,000, including some 325,000 conscripts. Turkey, however, has proven itself reluctant to become involved in Iraq, both during the period of major combat operations and in the stability operations that followed. Nor are the Iraqis particularly fond of their neighbor to the north. With its large ethnic Kurdish minority, which it has often repressed, Turkey is viewed with a certain measure of fear by the large Iraqi Kurdish minority.

priority.”³⁰ It is now anticipated that the Europeans will deploy perhaps an additional 1,800 troops to Afghanistan, rather than the 5,000 pledged.³¹

By contrast, the United States has nearly 20,000 troops in Afghanistan alone, most engaged in conducting operations in the areas of greatest danger. With small exceptions, NATO’s contingent has remained in the relative safety of Kabul, the country’s capital city. “Why is it that we cannot translate political commitments into having the necessary resources?” NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer recently lamented.³² The response, provided by Burkhard Schmitt, of the European Union Center for Security Studies, is that “NATO cannot give more than a political signal because there are no troops to be deployed.”³³

Moreover, France recently blocked a proposal by Scheffer to deploy NATO’s new “rapid-reaction” force to provide the security in Afghanistan needed to enable free and fair elections. This has led a Human Rights Watch official to declare that “If the [Afghan] elections don’t take place because of insecurity, or if they . . . are not free and fair, the blame will rest squarely on the heads of the US and its NATO allies.”³⁴

With respect to Iraq, at a recent summit NATO leaders pledged to involve the alliance in training Iraqi security forces, but even here the details are vague. France, for example, has declared that training should be conducted by individual nations, and not under a NATO flag.

In summary, given the current standing of its militaries, and projected trends in terms of NATO’s European members’ defense investments,³⁵ the allies do not appear capable of making a significant contribution beyond their current level of effort, either at present or in the foreseeable future.³⁶

³⁰ “NATO is Failing Afghanistan,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 2004.

³¹ Christina Lamb, “NATO Wrangling Threatens to Stall Afghan Mission,” *London Sunday Times*, June 27, 2004; David Rohde, “14 Afghans Are Killed for Registering to Vote,” *New York Times*, June 28, 2004; and Michael Moran, “NATO Solves Iraq? Afghanistan Suggests Not,” *MSNBC.com*, May 27, 2004. Last winter, NATO’s outgoing secretary general had to “bludgeon” member defense ministers into committing six helicopters to the Afghan mission. Elaine Sciolino, “Drifting NATO Finds New Purpose with Iraq and Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, February 23, 2004.

³² Philip Shishkin and Frederick Kempe, “NATO May Take Iraq Training Role,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2004, p. 6.

³³ Peter Ford, “NATO Struggles as Global Cop,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 28, 2004.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Remarkably, even as the United States contemplates increasing the size of its Army, even staunch allies like Britain are now preparing to reduce theirs. See Michael Evans, “Hoon to Temper Army Cuts with More Stability,” *London Times*, July 21, 2004.

³⁶ To be sure, there are other individual potential coalition members apart from NATO. South Korea, for example, is increasing its troop commitment from 600 to 3,700, in addition to the 3,600-troop US brigade being redeployed from that country. India, a prospective US ally, maintains a large military. However, its frictions with Pakistan bring into question whether an Indian contingent would pose more difficulties than provide solutions. Indeed, the current geopolitical configuration with respect to the

ACCOMMODATING THE ENEMY

The US effort to reduce the strain on its deployed forces and to increase the role played by indigenous Iraqi forces recently took a bizarre turn when several US field commanders turned over several urban areas to groups that were previously considered hostile to the coalition and its objectives.

After inflicting severe losses on insurgents in Falluja, a city just west of Baghdad, following the uprising there in April, the Marines struck a deal with a former Iraqi general, Mohammad Latif, who commands the “Fallujah Brigade,” a force comprised of Iraqis. The agreement called for the brigade to provide security for the city, in exchange for the Marines’ withdrawal. The brigade was given the task of apprehending the killers of the four American contractors whose bodies were mutilated in March, capturing or killing foreign insurgents, and disarming the remaining insurgents.³⁷

None of this has happened. Rather than police the city, the brigade stays on the outskirts of town, and the city has become a sanctuary for insurgents and terrorists.³⁸

In a classic case of “subtraction by addition,” the Fallujah episode has made things tougher on the overstretched American ground forces, not easier. The US command has, within a few months, been reduced to abandoning plans to restore order (let alone a democratic administration) in the city, and hoping that Islamic extremists do not extend their control over the province of Anbar, in which the city is located, and which stretches from Baghdad to the Syrian border. Indeed, insurgents now speak of creating more “Fallujahs,” stimulating a domino effect that will find the insurgents taking control of one city after another. When Anbar’s governor left the province’s capital city of Ramadi in June, some local Iraqi forces participated in an attempt to overthrow him. Local forces refused to go on patrol, either with Americans or on their own. It is not clear whether the situation will improve now that Iraq’s sovereignty has been restored.

Clearly, the highly unusual practice of ceding the field to the enemy in the hope that this will produce positive results has thus far proved a chimera. Today the insurgents rule Fallujah. Consequently, this practice appears to

challenges confronting the United States in its war with radical Islam suggests a fundamental reordering of US alliance relationships.

³⁷ Daniel Williams, “Despite Agreement, Insurgents Rule Fallujah,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 2004, p. 15; Bradley Graham, “Marine Commander Admits Iraqi Unit Has Been Erratic,” *Washington Post*, June 19, 2004, p. 10; Borzou Daragahi, “Taliban’ Rule Imposed on Fallujah,” *Washington Times*, June 25, 2004, p. 1; Laura King, “Insurgents and Islam Now Rulers of Fallujah,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 2004, p.1; and Rowan Scarborough, “Fallujah Brigade’ Fails to Hit Rebels,” *Washington Times*, June 14, 2004, p. 1.

³⁸ Tom Lasseter, “Wary U.S. Troops End Patrols in Iraqi Area,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 21, 2004, p. 1; and Gregg Zoroya, “Fallujah Brigade Tries U.S. Patience,” *USA Today*, June 14, 2004, p. 1.

represent a poor option for reducing the strain on Army deployment requirements, if that was its intended purpose.³⁹

OUTSOURCING TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The Army might obtain some relief for its overstretched forces through the increasingly popular method of outsourcing support activities to private contractors. As in the case of the Marines and the allies, however, this option is already being exercised, by some accounts to the tune of roughly 20,000 personnel—or approximately the number of allied coalition forces in Iraq.⁴⁰

Moreover, as in the case of embracing the enemy, it is not clear whether the use of contract personnel represents a positive step for the US military in Iraq. For one thing, security contractors represent a potential source of morale problems, which could lead eventually to reduced Army unit efficiency and problems with recruiting and retention. Consider that:

- § There are clear differences in pay between soldiers and contract workers, with the latter typically receiving significantly greater compensation than the former.
- § Contractors are not under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, or UCMJ, and hence do not operate under the standards that, the military has long argued, are key to good order and discipline.
- § Contract workers generally also enjoy a better quality of life than their military counterparts, staying in better quarters and being provided with more amenities.
- § Perhaps most important, contractors enjoy a huge benefit in terms of the personal freedom they enjoy. For example, they are free to quit their job at any time; soldiers are not.

Contract security workers also present a potential military problem. They are not integrated into the overall US military chain of command, and thus function apart from the overall counterinsurgency campaign being conducted in Iraq.

One challenge in dealing with insurgents is differentiating between them and noncombatants. In a combat situation, oftentimes the safest thing to do from an individual soldier's perspective is to shoot first and ask questions later. This, however, risks incurring noncombatant casualties and alienating the population. It is for that reason that US forces' rules of engagement are so strict. The contractor security forces, however, apparently do not function

³⁹ It is not clear why US Marines, who were in a position to retake the remaining section of the city under enemy control, were ordered to withdraw. Clearly the United States had the combat power to complete the subjugation of the enemy forces. Just as clear, maintaining order in Fallujah following its recapture would have made significant demands on US forces.

⁴⁰ Edward Cody, "Contractor Immunity A Divisive Issue," *Washington Post*, June 14, 2004, p. 1; and "The Other US Military," *Business Week*, May 31, 2004.

under the rules of engagement imposed on US and coalition forces. It is not clear whether the contract forces even have standing rules of engagement. This has the potential to undermine US efforts at winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.

Another issue concerns the degree of responsibility incurred by US forces to protect US nationals operating as security forces. For example, are Army rapid reaction forces established to come to the aid of US and coalition forces under attack also obligated to respond to requests from security contractors? Doing so not only puts US forces directly at risk, but also increases the risk to other coalition units who may call upon US rapid reaction forces, only to find that they are committed to defend security contractors.

Yet another worrisome issue involves the obligation, if any, of US forces to share intelligence with security contractors to enable them to perform their job more effectively. The problem here, of course, is whether the intelligence will remain a secret, or whether the likelihood of security being breached will be substantially greater by those who are not subject to military order and discipline

In short, it is not clear that this form of outsourcing manpower requirements makes good sense, much less whether it should be expanded in an effort to solve the challenge confronted by the Thin Green Line

LONG-TERM OPTIONS

No near-term option, or combination of options, is likely to provide the kind of relief required to bring Army force commitments in line with its force structure and rotation base. This leads to a consideration of long-term solutions which, either singly or in combination, might offer a remedy. Of course, these longer-term options put the Army in a race against time, in which its ability to execute long-term initiatives competes with the demands for the Army to reduce its forward deployments or risk “breaking” the force in the form of a catastrophic decline in recruitment and retention. At present, the following options are under consideration for relieving the stress on the Thin Green Line.

Option 1: Grow the Army

This option, which has substantial support among some key members of Congress, would add an additional six brigades to the active Army force structure over the next two years. The Army has already requested and received approval to increase its size by some 30-40,000 troops as a temporary measure to facilitate other options. This option, however, would make the increase in troop strength permanent and orient it on filling out new brigades.⁴¹ Assuming a rotation base of 4:1, this would increase the Army’s forward deployed forces by 1½ brigades.

⁴¹ It may also require an additional 20-30,000 soldiers be added to the force to provide the necessary combat support and combat service support.

Option 2: Redeploy the Army

The Army has announced that it is redeploying one of its two brigades from South Korea to Iraq. If this is made permanent, the Army will be relieved of maintaining one brigade that is currently a hardship tour for those soldiers assigned to it.

There has been some discussion of the Army reducing its force posture in Germany in favor of periodic rotations to austere East European “lily pad” bases. Whatever its strategic merits, this initiative would increase the strain on Army deployments by creating a rotation base requirement for the lily pad bases where there is not one at present. Until the Army’s rotation base problem is resolved, this initiative would best be deferred. The Army might also draw down the two National Guard brigades currently deployed in the Balkans, and demand that NATO commit to an increased level of support for this benign mission.

The result of these initiatives would be a net decrease in demand for one Active Army brigade and two National Guard brigades from contingency/hardship requirements.

Option 3: Restructure the Army

The Army structure today is very much a close representation of the Army that came out of the Cold War, with its primary focus on waging large-scale conventional war against a similarly equipped and structured enemy (i.e., the Soviet Army). Consequently, there is potentially much to be gained by “rebalancing” the Army, shifting the primary emphasis from conventional, open battle to accord greater priority on stability operations.

The Army is taking steps to do just that. For example, it is reducing its emphasis on firepower (field artillery) and on air threats (air defense) by converting soldiers in many of these units to positions that are more relevant for a new era in warfare, such as intelligence, special forces, civil affairs, and military police. These steps, in combination with Army efforts to leverage the capabilities of its sister Services (e.g., the Air Force for fire support and air defense), and the exploitation of technology to substitute for manpower in certain instances, could realize a substantial increase in the number of Army and National Guard brigades.

If these and related initiatives are successful, the Army anticipates an increase in the number of its Active brigades from 34 to 43-48, or an additional 9-15 brigades.⁴² This would yield roughly an additional 2 to 4 brigades for forward deployment.

⁴² The Army’s restructuring effort will create formations called Units of Action, or UAs, that roughly approximate today’s brigade combat team formations in terms of their size and capabilities.

Figure 2: Increasing the Number of Deployable Brigades

	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Total
New Brigade Combat Teams* (Units of Action)	3	3	4	5**	15

*These brigades are in addition to the 33 brigades of the Active Army that existed during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and which are also (with the exception of six Stryker brigade combat teams) being restructured in to UAs.

**Subject to operational necessity and OSD approval.

Source: US Army

Summary of Options

The Army’s long-term initiatives for addressing the challenge of establishing a rotation base that can sustain indefinitely its current deployment level and maintaining a strategic reserve, if executed as planned, would provide much-needed relief to the forces current comprising the Thin Green Line.

Taken as a whole, these initiatives would increase the Army’s active brigade combat teams from the 33 that existed at the time of the Second Gulf War to between 43 and 48. Given a 4:1 active force rotation base, this represents roughly an additional 2 to 4 brigades available for forward deployment at any one time. The Army National Guard would undergo a similar conversion that extends to 34 of its brigades. The total number of brigades available for forward deployment would increase from around 13 to between 15 and 17.

Other Army initiatives would reduce current forward deployment requirements by three brigades, two from the National Guard (from the Balkans) and one from the Active Component (from South Korea). This would leave a requirement for 16 brigades to be forward deployed in contingency operations or hardship tours. Since between 15 and 17 brigades would be available for deployment at any given time, this would establish a sustainable rotation base. However, it would take the rest of this decade to accomplish. Furthermore, it would not provide any extra brigades to form a strategic reserve.

If it is determined that the Army should also increase the number of brigades in its force structure through a 30-40,000 augmentation of its end strength, this would add an additional six brigades to the Active Component, boosting the rotation base level by an additional 1½ brigades, to between 16 and 17½. Alternatively, in conjunction with the Army’s other initiatives, this would create a modest strategic reserve. Of course, the required number of forward deployed brigades could be reduced significantly, if and when indigenous forces in Afghanistan and Iraq become capable of providing for their country’s stability, enabling the formation of a more robust strategic reserve.

Risks

In theory, the Army's approach to addressing the problems associated with an inadequate rotation base will work. However, there are significant, unavoidable risks associated with the Army's approach.

To succeed, the Army must make it through this transition period without "breaking" the force—i.e., without stressing the Active and Reserve Components so severely that recruiting and retention problems become so severe as to threaten the effectiveness of the force. This is the central, and as yet unanswerable, question the Army must confront.

Success also implies training indigenous Iraqi and Afghan forces to take on a greater share of the burden for stabilizing their own countries. To the extent this occurs, it could provide significant near- to mid-term relief for forward deployed Army units. Over the longer term, it would enable the Army to increase the size of its strategic reserve available for major regional conflicts and other contingency missions, and perhaps also enable the Army to reduce its force structure so as to facilitate its modernization.

As difficult as it will be under the current circumstances for the Army to pass through this danger zone on the path toward its restructuring (and perhaps expansion as well), there are plausible contingencies that would place immediate and substantial deployment demands on the Army's overstretched force structure. Among these are the following:

- § *Major Regional War.* The situation with respect to North Korean and Iranian nuclear ambitions remains tense. If an argument can be made that intervention in Iraq was necessary to preclude the possibility that a hostile Third World regime would acquire weapons of mass destruction, then one cannot discount the prospect of a conflict with either or both of these states. Either contingency would likely place significant, immediate demands on the Active Army, with the Guard feeling the ripple effects shortly thereafter.
- § *Homeland Defense.* According to the Department of Homeland Security, there is a significant risk of a major terrorist attack on the United States this year or next. Should such an attack occur, the demand for National Guard forces to provide security at key facilities could compromise both near-term deployments and the Guard's longer term restructuring. Here the indirect effects would be felt by the Active Component in terms of reduced Guard participation in overseas deployments.
- § *Horizontal Escalation.* Islamic insurgents are trying to destabilize Saudi Arabia and also disrupt its oil industry. Should either occur, the demand for ground forces to secure these vital facilities of the global economy could be great. While one might assume that there would be much greater support from the international community for such a mission, it is not clear whether it would take the form of political cheerleading or military commitment. As noted above, the supply of well-trained ground forces among America's traditional allies is quite limited.

§ *Ally Defections.* The United States' coalition allies may not prove willing or able to sustain their current force commitments for the duration of the "long, hard slog" in Iraq envisioned (accurately, in this author's estimation) by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. If not, the Army would be hard-pressed to make up for significant defections, such as would occur if the Australians, British, Italians, Poles or South Koreans withdrew their forces.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED? THE MATTER OF STRATEGY

Finally, it must be noted that the Army's efforts to adapt on the fly to the requirement to maintain large forces overseas to conduct military operations in a form of warfare it had largely abandoned over a quarter century ago will not, even if they succeed, be sufficient to overcome a flawed strategy for defeating what is, at its root, a transnational insurgent movement undertaken by radical Islamists and, to some extent, antidemocratic nationalists.

Put another way, the Army's success in addressing the strains on what has become a Thin Green Line of brigades deployed and engaged around the world is a necessary, but hardly sufficient, condition for realizing a successful outcome in the Iraqi and (quite likely) Afghan counterinsurgency fronts.

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