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# National Strategy and the Army of the 1990s

CARL E. VUONO

The 2d of August 1990 will be long remembered for its impact on the Middle East and on the world. On that day, the army of Saddam Hussein invaded and overran Kuwait. This act of unprovoked aggression triggered a series of events that would ultimately result in the destruction of the Iraqi army's ability to project power beyond its borders. It would also usher in a new dawning of respect within the community of nations for the United Nations and for America's commitment to resisting international lawlessness.

In one of those rare coincidences in history, the 2d of August is important for yet another reason. Even as Iraqi tanks were crushing Kuwaiti resistance, the President of the United States was on the other side of the globe announcing the elements of a new national military strategy—a strategy that would get its first test on the sands of the Arabian Peninsula and that has far-reaching implications for the United States Army.<sup>1</sup>

Today, as the United States celebrates the historic triumph of Desert Storm, it is essential for the Army and the other members of the US national security community to understand the essence of our new national military strategy and how it affects the Army of the future.

## *The Roots of a New Strategy*

The strategy that the President outlined has its roots in three fundamental factors that confronted the United States as we entered the 1990s: dramatic changes within the Soviet bloc, rising challenges elsewhere in the world, and a budgetary crisis within the United States. These form the foundation upon which the new strategy rests.

First, and most visibly, the changes within the Soviet Union were of profound importance in shaping the new strategy. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet empire ushered in a new era in post-World War II history. Notwithstanding two unanticipated land wars in Asia, the armed forces of the United States

had been trained, equipped, and deployed principally to deter or win a major war against the Soviet Union in Europe. We relied on an intricate network of multilateral and bilateral alliances—led by the incomparably successful North Atlantic Treaty Organization—to deny the Soviet Union avenues by which it could extend its domination beyond the Warsaw Pact. The disintegration of the Soviet empire was persuasive evidence that the strategy of containment that had served our nation and the entire free world for more than 45 years had succeeded. And it was apparent that the evolving environment called for a revised military strategy for the United States.

The principal military agent of containment had been the powerful land forces forward deployed in Europe—land forces that boasted the most modern and lethal weapons our nation could provide. These forces were buttressed by a large quantity of combat materiel pre-positioned in Europe and by reinforcing divisions based within the United States that, together, were the basis for the Army's ability to mass ten divisions relatively rapidly to counter a Warsaw Pact invasion of Europe. And, of course, standing behind our conventional forces was the sobering capability of our theater-based nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear arsenal—the ultimate deterrents to Soviet aggression.

The containment strategy worked. For well over four decades, NATO forces successfully repulsed Soviet attempts to intimidate Western Europe and deterred all Soviet efforts to impose the Kremlin's will on the free world through the force of arms. In so doing, the Atlantic Alliance bought the time necessary for the contradictions inherent in communism to bring about the demise of the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe.

The 1980s witnessed a particularly pronounced shift in the correlation of forces in the West's favor. The fielding in Europe of ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing IIs in the early 1980s, the dramatic upsurge in the land combat capabilities of the US Army in Europe, and the Soviet perception of an impending "great leap forward" in Western military technology all underscored the fact that Soviet numerical advantages were being increasingly offset by the West. These, and a wide range of equally daunting challenges, forced Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to realize that further military competition with the West was not only futile but also counterproductive.

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Even as the Warsaw Pact was dissolving, however, challenges in Europe began to assume a different, but no less complex, character and would continue to command active US leadership and involvement. And, at the same time, the United States began to confront a new and ominous set of threats emerging in the international environment—the proliferation of advanced weapons and the rise of major military powers throughout the world. This became the second major impetus behind America's new strategy. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, and the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, revealed to the world the implications of the spread of sophisticated weapons to nations with centuries-old animosities. It became increasingly apparent that even developing nations were acquiring the capacity to engage in high-intensity land warfare.

The full impact of the dramatic increase in worldwide military capabilities, however, was not felt until the fall of 1990. At that time, the United States and its coalition partners confronted an Iraqi army equipped with thousands of tanks, artillery pieces, and surface-to-air missiles, and hundreds of attack helicopters, surface-to-surface missiles, and chemical weapons.

The Iraqi army was unable to integrate its combat power effectively in the face of the coalition's coordinated land-air-sea campaign and suffered a crushing defeat. Nevertheless, we must not underestimate the quality of the weapons themselves or the capabilities that such weapons can accord to nations throughout the world that are not considered to be world powers. And we must remember that, even with the serious deficiencies in Iraqi command and control and in the performance of the Iraqi land and air forces, it still took a major portion of the conventional military power of the United States, in concert with the forces of many other nations, to reverse Iraq's aggression.

Moreover, there is no reason to believe that Desert Storm was an isolated case. The developing world is replete with sophisticated weapons. Ancient schisms and hostilities are rampant, and the force of arms is considered to be a legitimate form of international discourse by many regimes. The United States cannot afford to ignore the implications of conflict in areas far from our shores. The very nature of the security environment anticipated for this decade and the early 21st century requires the United States, as a global military, economic, and political power, to remain deeply involved in fostering peaceful progress and the spread of democratic values in the international system.

The third source of our strategy springs from our federal government's severe budgetary constraints. In Fiscal Year 1992, the Department of Defense will begin the seventh year of real budgetary decline. Even in the euphoric aftermath of Desert Storm, there is no reason to expect that these trends will be substantially reversed.

Thus these three factors—the collapse of the Soviet empire, the growth of military power elsewhere in the world, and the decrease in the

dollars available for defense—led collectively to the major revision in our national military strategy. It was this strategy that we subsequently validated on the battlefields of Southwest Asia.

### *The Elements of the Strategy*

At its most basic level, the national strategy of the United States moves us from our traditional focus on containing Soviet expansionism to a broader and more active engagement throughout the world that protects and advances US interests in conjunction with allies and coalition partners. Our military strategy, designed to support overarching national objectives, must evolve as well. To be sure, our military strategy will continue to be based on time-honored deterrence and collective security concepts that have now received renewed prominence as a result of the coalition's triumph in Desert Storm. In addition, the strategy puts emphasis on three newly defined concepts: forward presence, power projection, and force reconstitution.

First, the United States will maintain a forward military presence in areas where presence is required to protect important interests. However, we will station fewer forces abroad than we did during the era of containment, particularly in Europe. Forward presence in the new era will take the form of some forward-deployed land and air forces, pre-positioned equipment afloat and ashore, periodic joint and combined exercises, security assistance operations, and carefully cultivated nation-to-nation relationships to advance mutual objectives in crucial areas of the world.

The heart of the new strategy lies in the second element, the projection of power from within the continental United States to trouble spots around the world. If we are to use our smaller conventional forces to best effect and have them available for requirements worldwide, we can no longer afford to station the bulk of our combat power in any single theater. We must now concentrate our forces within the United States and plan to project power swiftly and massively to advance and defend our vital interests whenever and wherever they are challenged.

Finally, the strategy relies on the nation's ability to reconstitute—or expand—our force structure, should the need arise. While the concept of reconstitution is not new, it will gain in importance as the armed forces of the United States are reduced in size. We must have the capacity to expand the armed forces significantly in response to a resurgence of adventurism by the Soviet Union or the outbreak of large-scale hostilities elsewhere in the world. Moreover, reconstitution demands national efforts to preserve the US mobilization apparatus and infrastructure, to make every effort to protect the defense industrial base and America's technological superiority, and to maintain a stockpile of critical materials.

## *Implications for the Army*

*The Vision.* Taken together, these three elements of our national military strategy have significant implications for the Army and for the plans we have developed for reshaping the force for the future. As we contend with the pressures of change, however, the Army's vision of the force necessary to accomplish its mission remains constant. It is a vision of an Army that is trained and ready, today and tomorrow, to fulfill its strategic responsibilities anytime, anywhere. It is this vision that provides the Army with its principal azimuth for navigating the trackless areas of change.

As we advance to realize the Army's vision of the future in the context of the new US military strategy, the size, structure, and stationing of the Army in the mid-1990s will be substantially different from that of the Army of the 1980s.

*Forward Presence.* Throughout much of the Cold War, the Army maintained a substantial portion of its combat power in Europe. When the Soviet empire began to unravel, the Army had two corps comprising four and two-thirds divisions stationed in Europe. This is now changing. With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the collapse of communism in central and eastern Europe, extensive unilateral troop withdrawals by the Soviets, and the anticipated implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, the Army's forces on the continent can and will become substantially smaller.

At the same time, however, the United States and NATO face an environment of great uncertainty as the nations of the Warsaw Pact emerge from decades of Soviet domination to confront the monumental task of reorienting their political and economic structures. Moreover, the future of the Soviet Union itself is by no means certain, and Europeans view with great uneasiness their giant Eurasian neighbor as it lurches about in search of its destiny.

In view of the potentially unstable period ahead, it seems clear that NATO—the most successful alliance in modern history—has a prominent role to play in shaping the future of Europe. And the United States, as the senior partner in the alliance, must maintain a credible, capable military presence on the continent. We envision that the forward-deployed force in Europe will consist of an armored corps of two divisions as the backbone of America's commitment to NATO.

In a similar vein, the Army must retain a significant force forward deployed in Korea where we and our allies face what is perhaps the last of the world's Stalinist regimes. Although surging South Korean economic strength and growing military power will allow the United States to adjust its presence on the peninsula, there have been no fundamental changes in the complex and fragile security environment in that area that would argue for a total withdrawal. The Army must, therefore, maintain a credible, capable force in

Korea, as well as forces forward deployed elsewhere in the Pacific region, as evidence of our unambiguous commitment to advance and defend our vital interests in that crucial part of the world.

Thus, the Army will continue to retain powerful forces forward deployed in vital areas, although in numbers far smaller than in the past. These forces, supplemented by an aggressive program of exercises and periodic deployments, are the basis of US forward presence and will continue to demonstrate American capabilities and commitment to peace and security.

*Power Projection.* The preponderance of the Army will be based within the continental United States and will be focused on the projection of land combat power quickly and massively anywhere in the world. The nature of the international system and the rising challenges posed by modern armies in the developing world require that the Army have a power projection force trained and ready to deploy anywhere in the world without prior warning.

In order to meet the challenges of a world awash in weapons, the power projection force must have a mix of capabilities—armored, light, and special operations units that can be tailored into force packages to meet the specific challenge at hand. This force will include five fully structured active divisions based in the continental United States that can rapidly deploy and fight with very modest augmentation from the reserve components. This is the minimum force necessary to establish the building blocks for the force packages appropriate to the threats that we can anticipate in the future.

The Army must also have the capacity to reinforce its units deployed in either the forward presence or power projection missions. Therefore, the Army will maintain units in the United States that can be alerted, mobilized, trained, and deployed to reinforce as necessary. These reinforcements may include active component divisions not already deployed and divisions rounded-out by National Guard combat brigades. If circumstances permit, reinforcements may be provided by forward-deployed units from other theaters, such as the corps we deployed from Europe in Desert Storm. For more protracted or larger-scale conflicts in Europe or elsewhere, the Army will rely on its remaining reinforcing units—the combat divisions of the National Guard.

For power projection to be the centerpiece for our strategy, however, structure is not enough. The United States must build the capacity to project this power throughout the world. Deployability thus becomes a sine qua non for all Army forces. As we look to the future and attempt to redress our nation's deployability deficit, we must make substantial improvement in our sealift and airlift as a matter of urgent national priority. And, beyond that, we must move ahead with other initiatives as well. We must design our forces so that they can be put together in packages tailored for rapid movement. We must examine military access agreements that allow us to project forces during pre-crisis situations. We must stress mobility in our equipment design, without sacrificing

combat power, and we must look at ways to pre-position supplies and equipment and to enhance the support infrastructure in key regions.

As we work to improve the deployability of our forces, our objective should be to have the capacity to project the major elements of a multi-division US corps, to include a capability for forcible entry, substantial armored forces, and sufficient sustainment anywhere in the world in one month.

The Army's four corps headquarters provide essential command and control in both peacetime and war for forward presence and power projection missions. Each of the four must be prepared to assume responsibility for some or all of the forces forward deployed and based in the continental United States, active and reserve, that are required to prepare for war, fight, and win in a particular circumstance. The key to using our smaller forces in the most effective manner possible in the decade of the 1990s and beyond will be the Army's ability to rapidly tailor a force package, under an appropriate corps headquarters, to counter the particular threat at hand.

*Reconstitution.* Finally, the Army must be prepared to expand beyond the fully structured active and reserve component divisions in anticipation of a major war. As the leading edge of this reconstitution effort, the Army is examining how best to establish two cadre divisions. These divisions would be partially manned and equipped during peacetime and fleshed out during times of war.

The final step in reconstitution is the generation of wholly new divisions based on total national mobilization, a requirement we saw amply demonstrated during World War II. In the period from 1940 to 1943, the Army expanded from six to 91 divisions and had more than eight million soldiers under arms by the end of the war. Certainly, no one anticipates mobilization on such a scale today in spite of our much larger population base. However, historical precedent argues that we should not limit our thinking when we look ahead to a future that we can see only dimly.

In sum, the Army of the 1990s will be dramatically different from that of today. It will be an Army based primarily in the continental United States and oriented outward on power projection around the world. It will be a smaller Army, but one that will be designed to generate the right force for the task at hand. And it will be trained and ready to meet the needs of the nation.

### ***The First Test—Desert Storm***

It is one of history's ironies that, even as the new strategy was being announced, it was about to get its first test—the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Without attempting to reconstruct a comprehensive history of this crisis, we can see clearly that the projection of American land combat power was the key to the ultimate defeat of Saddam Hussein's aggression.

On the 8th of August, President Bush outlined four basic US objectives in the crisis: unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, restoration of



the legitimate Kuwaiti government, safety for all American citizens, and stability throughout the region. To achieve these objectives, the United States crafted a multidimensional strategy that featured US power projection as its military foundation.

With an Iraqi army flush from its victory in Kuwait poised for a strike into the eastern province of Saudi Arabia in early August, the immediate requirement was to demonstrate unequivocally that the United States was serious about its stand and was committed to the defense of Saudi Arabia. At that time, the United States had no land forces in the region and only very modest naval forces in the Gulf itself. To establish its commitment, the United States dispatched strong naval forces to the region, began to move air units to the peninsula, and, most important, deployed the 82d Airborne Division to Saudi Arabia, with the first units arriving less than 30 hours after the initial alert. The United States understood that rhetoric alone would be unconvincing to Saddam Hussein and, indeed, to the world at large. To demonstrate the depth of its commitment the United States had to draw a line in the sand, and did so with the bayonet of an American paratrooper.

At the same time, the coalition of nations, operating under the auspices of the United Nations and with the United States in the lead, had to build a credible defensive capability to deny Iraq the ability to seize and hold Saudi territory. Air, naval, and airborne forces were insufficient for this purpose. Over the course of the next three months, therefore, the United States built a substantial armored force, using Marine units and Army divisions from all over the world. With the arrival of the first American tanks in the third week of August, it became increasingly clear that Iraq could not succeed in an attack against Saudi Arabia.

Finally, land forces projected from outside the region were the instrument of choice once the coalition made the decision to eject an intransigent Iraq from Kuwait. In early November, the President ordered an additional Army corps of three armored and mechanized infantry divisions, three more carrier battle groups, another Marine Expeditionary Force, and more land-based tactical fighter wings to deploy to the region.

The deployment of the additional Army corps—VII Corps from Europe—was vital to the operation and set a precedent for the future. This represented the first time that significant US land forces committed to NATO had been used in any theater outside of Europe, thus demonstrating the powerful role that forward-deployed forces can play in contingency operations outside their assigned areas. When added to the Saudi and coalition units already on the peninsula and to the further commitments of land combat formations from many other countries, the expanded US land force gave the coalition a genuine capability to drive Iraq from Kuwait—a capability that was employed to great effect beginning on the 16th of January.

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The successful final phase of Desert Storm was a powerful demonstration of the effectiveness of land forces operating jointly with air and naval forces to achieve objectives that were not attainable any other way. The plan envisioned a deliberate attack into Kuwait with Marine, Army, and coalition forces to fix the enemy in place and to begin the liberation of that nation while two US Army corps swept around to the west of the Iraqi defenses in an audacious envelopment to destroy the Republican Guard. Air and naval support were fundamental dimensions of this plan, which was designed to pit coalition maneuver against the static Iraqi defenses, terminating the war swiftly with as few US and coalition casualties as possible. Seldom in the history of warfare has a plan been so flawlessly executed.

On the 23d of February, the coalition faced more than 43 Iraqi divisions, thousands of tanks, and several hundred thousand Iraqi soldiers in the Kuwaiti theater of operations. These were the anchor of Saddam's grip on Kuwait and had not been dislodged after 12 UN Security Council resolutions, six months of intense diplomacy, almost air-tight economic sanctions, and six weeks of continuous precision aerial bombing. One hundred hours after the final land-air-sea phase of Desert Storm began, the Iraqi army lay shattered and burning, organized resistance had ceased, and Kuwait was an independent nation once again.

This was a victory that rested, in the final analysis, on the capability of the United States to project war-winning power from the continental United States and from Europe and to fight jointly on land, in the air, and at sea to win in a theater far removed from America. That capability, of course, is the essence of our new military strategy.

### ***Shaping the Army***

Based upon a careful review of the Army's responsibilities to the nation in light of the new strategy, the Army of the mid-1990s will be a force of 20 divisions in the active and reserve components. It will be substantially smaller than the Army of today. Indeed, by 1996, we will have the fewest soldiers under arms in the active forces in more than half a century. This will be a perilously small force, given the broad range of America's global commitments and the fact that the United States is the world's sole remaining superpower. A force of this size will entail acceptance of greater national risk

as a consequence of our reduced capacity to resolve large-scale or simultaneous crises solely with active component forces that can deploy with no notice. Accordingly, a smaller force structure will demand early decisions on the mobilization of reserve component units across a wide range of crises.

Yet, I believe that by cleaving closely to the nation's military strategy, by carefully designing our forces, and by strict adherence to the Army's plan, we can limit the degree of risk and maintain an Army that can indeed defend and advance American interests around the world.

The blueprint by which we are building the Army necessary to fulfill its roles in the new military strategy is based on the six enduring imperatives that serve as the foundation for the Army of today and serve as a beacon as we move into the future. These imperatives have been validated in the crucible of combat during Just Cause and now in Desert Storm and must remain immutable as we shape the force for tomorrow.

The six imperatives—now deeply embedded in the Army—bear repeating here. We must:

- Maintain an effective and evolving warfighting doctrine—the principles by which the Army fights. AirLand Battle doctrine proved its mettle in the deserts of Iraq and Kuwait, and we will continue to move forward with the AirLand Battle-Future concept during the years ahead.

- Scrupulously maintain our standards of tough, realistic training—the first priority of the Army in the field. We have now observed the results of our uncompromising training program in the iron discipline, the quiet confidence, and the brilliant technical competence of the American soldier.

- Continue to modernize the force, even in the face of budgetary constraints. The impact of modernization was dramatically demonstrated in Desert Storm and we must never relinquish our technological advantages in the future. We cannot ask America's soldiers of the next generation to brave 21st-century combat with inadequate 20th-century technology.

- Maintain a mix of forces—armored, light, and special operations—that gives us the capacity to tailor force packages appropriate to the challenges we confront.

- Continue to develop a new generation of leaders—sergeants and officers—who are competent in the art of war, responsible for their soldiers, and committed to the defense of the nation.

- Most important, maintain a quality Army—an Army of men and women who are tough and disciplined and who capture the best of the American spirit. This final imperative—first among equals—is fundamental for the Army that must execute the nation's new military strategy.

If we conform to these imperatives without deviation, we will craft an Army that embodies the fundamental characteristics that I have long believed are indispensable to meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow: we will

have an Army that is versatile and able to fulfill its roles in the face of a wide range of challenges in multiple theaters, an Army that is deployable and able to project combat power rapidly and massively, an Army that is lethal and able to fight and win anywhere in the world, and an Army that is expansible and able to grow as required by conditions in the international environment.<sup>2</sup>

These are the characteristics that flow from the six imperatives—characteristics that are mandated by the new national military strategy.

### *Conclusion*

As outlined at the beginning of this article, the 2d of August 1990 will be remembered for generations to come as a turning point for the United States in its conduct of foreign affairs—the day America announced the end of containment and embarked upon the strategy of power projection. It was the same day on which began a chain of events that would give the principal elements of that strategy their baptism of fire. The historic triumph of Desert Storm is persuasive evidence that the new military strategy of this nation provides a powerful mechanism by which the United States can achieve its national objectives in an environment of profound and, in some cases, revolutionary change.

As a crucial element in America's arsenal of power, the United States Army is central to the success of this strategy. We are shaping the force accordingly. As a result, the Army of tomorrow will be a different Army in its size and in its disposition, with fewer forces abroad and a more pronounced focus on power projection.

But, even in the midst of these changes, the Army must be a mighty force of continuity—continuity of capabilities and continuity of commitment that have kept this nation free for more than 200 years. As we move ahead through an uncertain and restless decade, the Army must and shall meet the same uncompromising standards of training and readiness that mark the Army of today. It will remain an Army of unparalleled quality—the finest our nation has ever fielded and the best in the world. And it will remain an Army of outstanding young Americans who know how to fight and win, who are trained to a razor's edge for combat, who are equipped with the best weapons our nation can provide, and who are led by sergeants and officers of unmatched professionalism.

This is the trained and ready Army of today—the Army of Desert Storm. And this must be the trained and ready Army of tomorrow—the new strategic Army of power projection. Our nation, the American people, and the national military strategy require no less.

### NOTES

1. President George Bush, Address at the Aspen Institute, Aspen, Colo., 2 August 1990.

2. See Carl E. Vuono, "The Strategic Value of Conventional Forces," *Parameters*, 20 (September 1990), 2-10.