

# The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

---

Volume 41  
Number 4 *Parameters Winter 2011*

Article 14

---

11-1-2011

## The Need to Increase the Size of the Deployable Army

Michael O'Hanlon

Follow this and additional works at: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters>

---

### Recommended Citation

O'Hanlon, Michael. "The Need to Increase the Size of the Deployable Army." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 41, 4 (2011). <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol41/iss4/14>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.

# The Need to Increase the Size of the Deployable Army

MICHAEL O'HANLON

*This article was first published in the Autumn 2004 issue of Parameters.*

After criticizing the Clinton Administration for overdeploying and overusing the US military in the 1990s, the Bush Administration is now doing exactly the same thing—except on a much larger scale. Having made the decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and having badly underestimated the difficulty as well as the force requirements of accomplishing the post-Saddam stabilization effort successfully, the Bush Administration or its successor now needs to get serious about making ends match means. At present, the latter are insufficient.

The possibility exists that large numbers of active-duty troops and reservists may soon leave the service rather than subjecting themselves to a life continually on the road. The seriousness of the worry cannot be easily established. So far the problem has not become acute. Stop-loss orders that prevent some military personnel from leaving the service at the scheduled end of their tours, together with a surge of patriotism after 9/11, together with limited awareness to date of just how long the Iraq mission is likely to last, have limited the fallout of overdeployments. But there can be no assurance that this state of affairs will continue. Avoiding a personnel crisis in the all-volunteer military has become the chief force management challenge for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld or his successor, much more so than transforming the armed forces or relocating overseas bases.

The problem is most acute for the US Army, which numbers only a half million active-duty troops, though it is also significant for the Marine Corps. The Air Force and Navy have benefited considerably from not only the end of the Iraq invasion but also from the end of the no-fly zone and sanctions

---

*<Michael O'Hanlon is a senior fellow and co-holder of the Stein Chair in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, where he specializes in US defense strategy and budgeting, homeland security, Northeast Asian security, and humanitarian military intervention. He is also adjunct professor at the public policy school of Columbia University, a visiting lecturer at Princeton University, and a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Council on Foreign Relations. Among his several recent books are Expanding Global Military Capacity for Humanitarian Intervention and Protecting the American Homeland: A Preliminary Analysis.*

enforcement operations that characterized the 1991-2003 period. However, US ground forces still have about 140,000 personnel in Iraq, another 30,000 or so in Kuwait and other parts of the Persian Gulf region, and nearly 20,000 in Afghanistan.

Service	Authorized Strength, 9/03	Actual Strength, 9/03	Mobilized Reservists, 9/0	Request, 05
Army	480.0	499.3	127.5	482.4
Marine Corps	175.0	177.8	11.1	175.0
Navy	375.7	382.2	3.5	368.1
Air Force	359.0	375.1	21.2	359.8

Source: Under Secretary of Defense David Chu, "How Might We Think About Stress on the Force?" Briefing at the Pentagon, 11 February 2004

Figure 1. Existing and Planned Active-Duty Force Levels (thousands of personnel)

More than 25,000 soldiers remain in Korea (even if several thousand of those are now slated to go to Iraq); nearly 2,000 are still in the Balkans; several thousand marines are on Okinawa; dozens here and hundreds there are on temporary assignments around the world. Virtually all of these soldiers, most of them married, are currently separated from their home bases and families.<sup>1</sup>

This total of some 225,000 deployed troops must be generated from an Army of just over one million and a Marine Corps of just over 200,000 total personnel. The strain is greatest on the Army, with about 190,000 soldiers deployed out of its million-soldier total strength.

As noted in Figure 1, the active-duty Army numbers just under 500,000, of which only about 320,000 soldiers are easily deployable at any given moment. The Army Reserve and Army National Guard together include 550,000 troops, a quarter or more of whom typically have been activated in recent times. For example, in late 2003, 156,000 Army reservists were mobilized out of a total of 558,000, and in June 2004 the number stood at 130,000. Cumulatively since 11 September 2001, 213,000 Army reservists had been mobilized at least once by the end of the 2003-04 winter, just under 40 percent of the total. Roughly 30 percent of Air Force Reserve or National Guard personnel have been mobilized as well, just under 25 percent of Navy reserve personnel, and more than 50 percent of the Marine Corps' small reserve. But by now the reserve activations of those other services have dropped quite substantially, whereas the Army's remains at a high level.<sup>2</sup>

Deployment demands are likely to remain great, even if Secretary Rumsfeld and President Bush hope otherwise. Foreign coalition partners in Iraq continue to provide about 25,000 troops, but that number is not trending upward. That makes it likely that US troop strength there will have to remain substantial for a long time to come. Indeed, the US military is preparing for the possibility that its current strength in Iraq of just over 140,000 may have to remain at that level for years. The history of recent stabilization missions suggests that even a favorable scenario might see the number decline to about

100,000 in 2005, 75,000 in 2006, 50,000 or so in 2007-08, and perhaps half that latter number for a period thereafter.<sup>3</sup> It is entirely possible that these estimates could prove wrong—and even that the United States could be asked to leave Iraq rather suddenly in the coming year or two. But planners cannot assume such an outcome.

As a result, the typical active-duty US soldier in a deployable unit could literally spend the majority of the next three to four years abroad. In 2004 alone, even before the problems in Iraq in the spring led to an increase in planned force levels there, 26 of the Army's 33 main combat brigades in the active force were to deploy abroad at some point during the year. Over the course of 2003 and 2004 together, virtually all of the 33 brigades will have been deployed.

The typical reservist might be deployed for another 12 months over the next couple years. As one example, all 15 of the Army National Guard's enhanced separate brigades are to be deployed at some point by 2006.<sup>4</sup> But the greater problem is with units that have to be mobilized more than once. Through the winter of 2003-04, somewhat fewer than 40,000 reservists had been involuntarily mobilized more than once since 9/11, not an enormously high number, but one that is continually growing.<sup>5</sup> The overall pace of Army overseas deployments on tours away from home base (and families) is more than twice what it was during the 1990s, when overdeployment was blamed for shortfalls in recruiting and retention on several occasions.<sup>6</sup>

The problem is so severe that we must approach it from several angles. Some have already been espoused by the Pentagon in recent times. For example, after months of effectively being given a pass from the post-Saddam Iraq mission, the Marine Corps has again been deployed and is now a full partner of the Army in the stabilization mission. This has meant reducing the Marine Corps presence in Okinawa; it also means asking marines to accept a temporarily higher global deployment pace themselves. (Even though their personnel are not perfect substitutes for marines, the Navy and Air Force could increase certain deployments in East Asia and elsewhere temporarily to compensate for a reduced Marine Corps presence.)

In addition, in a major and highly commendable move discussed further below, the Army is making a much higher percentage of its total number of troops useful for stabilization missions. This is not easy, since it means taking people away from specialties that have long been considered important, but it is necessary and indeed prudent given changes in the nature of modern warfare. Among other decisions, the Army is sending troops from the national training centers and Korea to Iraq.

On a related matter, it will be important that Secretary Rumsfeld and General James Jones, USMC, Commander of European Command, tread carefully in any plan to relocate many American forces from Germany. Rather than creating facilities known as "lily pads" in new NATO member states where significant numbers of troops are sent on temporary assignments, they should in general redeploy troops only to bases that permit accompanied tours and a good quality of life—whether in the United States or abroad. Today's Army

does not need, and cannot afford, more unaccompanied tours. This plan needs to be scaled back or delayed in implementation.<sup>7</sup>

The United States must also continue to approach a broader range of allies, especially larger countries such as France and Germany, for substantial troop contributions in Iraq. Each of these countries can provide roughly 5,000 troops. The United States also should be able to solicit more help from those south and southeast Asian states with peacekeeping experience. If that requires transferring greater decisionmaking authority for Iraq policy to the United Nations, so be it. Even though these nations have continued to oppose any such participation at the June 2004 Istanbul NATO summit and other locations, a new American President or even a reelected President Bush may be able to make progress in soliciting help next year.

Finally, for reasons developed in more detail below, the Army should temporarily add about 40,000 more active-duty troops to its ranks, above and beyond the 20,000 or so added through emergency powers and supplemental appropriations to date. Ideally, to facilitate planning and reflect a strong national consensus behind the move, the increase in end-strength should be achieved through law by an act of Congress signed by the President. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has resisted such a policy on the grounds that any such troop increase would be difficult to reverse in the future; General Schoomaker has expressed similar concerns, fearing that troops may be added now but underfunded by Congress later. But these arguments do not seem convincing. Troop strength has been legislatively adjusted throughout modern American history, especially in the aftermath of the Cold War; if the country needs to reduce its Army in the future it can, once this crisis has passed. (In fact, the necessary reduction would be modest by comparison with the drawdown of 300,000 active-duty soldiers after the Cold War.)

### ***Restructuring and Rebalancing the Total Army***

Under the able guidance of Chief of Staff Peter Schoomaker and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, the Army is embarked on an ambitious plan to reassign many of its personnel over the course of the rest of the decade. Units of less likely utility on the modern battlefield would in many cases be eliminated to permit increases in those units that have been in highest demand in recent years, and that seem likely to remain heavily employed in the future. (In addition, in 2004 and 2005 the Army will convert a total of some 10,000 military jobs to civilian positions, freeing up additional soldiers for high-demand tasks.<sup>8</sup>)

Notably, the Army would reduce its field artillery, air defense, engineer, and armor units substantially (by 24, 10, 11, and 19 battalions, respectively). It would reassign many of the billets to increase transportation, civil affairs, and psychological operations units, as well as military police and special operations forces. Other units would be affected as well, but the above are generally the most important. The exact numbers of personnel to be shifted are unclear from existing documentation, but the total is reported to exceed 100,000, more than

ten percent of the total Army. Those specialties expected to undergo significant increases or reductions in troop totals are indicated in Figure 2.

Specialty	Active Troops	Reserve Personnel	Total	Planned Changes
<b>Main Specialties</b>				
Air Defense Artillery	12	9	21	reduction
Armor	24	29	53	reduction
Artillery	29	48	77	reduction
Aviation	25	21	46	
Engineering	21	62	83	reduction
Infantry	49	57	106	
Maintenance	10	33	43	
Military Intelligence	24	13	37	increase
Military Police	16	27	43	increase
Signal (Communications)	22	16	38	
Transportation	12	41	53	increase
<i>Subtotal</i>	234	356	590	
<b>Support and Secondary Specialties</b>				
Adjutant General, Finance, Chaplain, History, Judge Advocate, Public Information	14	23	37	
Chemical	3	9	12	increase
Civil Affairs	0.6	6	7	increase
Combat Service Support (Indirect Support)	38	43	81	increase
Medical	10	27	36	
Ordnance, Quartermaster, Supply	11	32	43	some of each
Psychological Operations	1.2	2.2	3	increase
Security	3	0	3	
Special Operations	8	4	12	increase
Support for Misc. Specific Units	12	8	20	
<i>Subtotal</i>	101	154	255	
<i>Grand Total</i>	335	510	845	
Source: US Army communication to the Brookings Institution, 2003.				

Figure 2. Army Force Structure (thousands of personnel).

Changes are being made not only in personnel totals, but in the way units are being structured. For example, the reserve components are eliminating a number of units that have traditionally been undermanned to ensure that remaining units are more likely to have their full complement of personnel.

The active Army's combat force structure is also changing. It will remain oriented on ten main combat divisions, as is the case now. But rather than have three brigades per division, plus three independent brigades (making for a total of 33 combat brigades in the active force), the Army will restructure its divisions, the net effect being to add at least one brigade per existing division, increasing the total to 43. The new brigades will be slightly smaller but are intended to be at least as effective and more easily deployable (since they will contain more of their own organic support units). There is also a possibility of a further increase to 48 brigades in 2007 or thereafter. Of the 43 refashioned brigades, 20 are envisioned as heavy, nine light, five medium-weight (Stryker brigades), and nine airborne. Meanwhile, the Army National Guard's combat structure will change from its current composition of 15 enhanced separate brigades, 19 brigades within divisions, and one (non-enhanced) separate brigade, to 32 brigade combat teams and one Stryker brigade combat team. In other words, the divisional structure will be eliminated.<sup>9</sup>

These smaller, more deployable brigade combat teams may make sense given improvements in Army firepower. But they do not solve the current problem that the Army is trying to do too much with too few people.

### ***The Need for More Troops***

Despite all the above laudable and promising initiatives, the Army—and perhaps the Marine Corps as well, but particularly the Army—needs an immediate increase in active-duty troop levels. In fact, the decision is overdue. At the latest, it should have been made as soon as it became obvious in mid-2003 that the post-Saddam Iraq stabilization mission would be difficult and long. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), it would take five years to fully train and recruit an additional 80,000 troops. (That would be enough for two divisions plus associated support. It would have an annual cost of about \$6.5 billion just to maintain the needed forces stateside—not counting marginal occupation-related costs or up-front investment costs, the latter estimated at just shy of \$20 billion.<sup>10</sup>) Even if CBO's methodology is too cautious, assuming a business-as-usual approach to recruiting and retention at a time when accelerated measures are called for, and even if it might take only half as long to add 40,000 troops, the time to act is now. That is because the period of maximum stress on Army personnel from the Iraq mission is likely to be this year through 2007. It is during these years when force totals will remain high and when units that have already deployed once to Iraq will have to return at least one more time.

So how does one determine the appropriate increased size of the Army? There is no definitive method because it is impossible to determine exactly how large a rotation base will be needed to continue the Iraq mission over a period of years while avoiding an unacceptable strain on the all-volunteer force that could drive large numbers of people out of the military. But logic and a basic sense of fairness suggest that we should not generally send active-duty troops back to Iraq after only a short respite at home between successive deployments. One year in Iraq, one year home, and then back for a year is extremely demanding—yet that is exactly what the Army will soon need to do with some units. While there is no way to prove that such a pace is excessive—at least not yet—it effectively turns soldiers into visitors in their own country. The short time spent at home is dominated by the period of recovery from a previous deployment and then preparation for the next deployment. Moreover, reservists should not have to be involuntarily activated more than once every five to six years, given the expectations those individuals have when joining the National Guard or Army Reserve.

Today's policies for deploying forces abroad risk breaking the all-volunteer force. It makes sense to take out insurance against such a possibility by increasing the size of the land forces at a time when the military is not yet having particular trouble recruiting more soldiers (and marines as well, if that option is desired). Once a perception grows that military service has become undesirable, and Army deployments excessive and unfair, any personnel shortfalls will become much harder to redress since the allure of military service will have suffered greatly and thus the proclivity to enlist among Americans will have declined.

As one simplified but still illuminating way to think about the necessary increase in troop strength, imagine creating enough new units to carry out the active Army's share of an entire rotation in overseas missions—notably, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Korea—say in 2006 or perhaps more realistically 2007. (It would have been much better to create the respite for existing units by 2005, before units like the 3d Infantry Division and quite possibly the 101st had to be sent back to Iraq after only a short time home. But given the Pentagon's unwillingness to espouse such a policy to date, 2005 is no longer within reach.) Providing a break for existing units in 2006 or 2007 is in fact a minimal objective for relieving strain on the active and reserve forces in the coming years.

How many troops does that require? The Army and Marine Corps might have to provide 100,000 troops to these missions in 2006-07, roughly speaking. This range of figures assumes 25,000 ground troops in Korea, about 10,000 in Afghanistan, and 50,000 to 75,000 in Iraq. Perhaps 10,000 to 20,000 troops can be provided out of the combat brigades of the Army National Guard, leaving a need for 80,000 to 90,000 fresh soldiers and marines. Of that number, 10,000 should be generated due to existing and appropriate Pentagon plans to privatize certain military positions. More rapid privatization than this is not practical; indeed, if anything, too much privatization has occurred in Iraq, leading to too many situations in which contractors have been killed or captured.<sup>11</sup> And



10,000 to 20,000 more active troops might be available due to the rebalancing of the force discussed above, by which individuals in high-demand units are increased in number as units such as artillery are reduced in number.

This arithmetic leaves about 60,000 additional troops that would have to come from increased end-strength. Secretary Rumsfeld is using emergency powers to increase the size of the active ground forces by roughly 20,000, so 40,000 additional troops would be required according to this rough calculation.

### ***Should We Build Dedicated Peacekeeping Units?***

As the US military has increasingly taken on constabulary duties in the last decade, from Somalia to Haiti to Bosnia to Kosovo to Afghanistan and Iraq, some have argued that the country should create military or quasi-military units expressly devoted to that specialized task.<sup>12</sup> The model for such a capability might be the Italian carabinieri, a force of just over 100,000 normally under the control of the Ministry of Interior for police functions but also usable by the Ministry of Defense.

There is an obvious appeal to such an idea, given how frequently the United States is deploying troops to peace operations and stabilization missions. Regular combat troops do not always relish such tasks and are not fully trained for them. Specialized units also could be properly structured to include the appropriate contingents of civil affairs, military police, and psychological operations experts.

There are also significant downsides to this idea, however. Most importantly, in many peace operations, it is necessary to deter renewed conflict. Or it is necessary—as in Iraq, not to mention Somalia and Afghanistan—to win a counterinsurgency. Combat units are best at these jobs, as they are trained to win battles and as they inspire respect and fear from those who would challenge them.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in large operations, most notably Iraq but also Bosnia in the early years, the missions are too large in scale for a small number of specialized units to handle on their own. Even if such units existed, they would require considerable help from general-purpose formations, either all the time or at least at some point in the multi-year efforts.

For example, in Iraq, where at least 24 active brigades and five National Guard brigades will have served in 2003 or 2004, no addition of one or two or even three or four constabulary divisions to the force structure would have sufficed to handle the challenge. With a limited number of units available, would it have made the most sense to deploy them in places such as Basra or Mosul, where the counterinsurgency mission was the least demanding? Or would it have been best to deploy them to the Sunni triangle and Baghdad, where they would have been most needed given the difficulty of the job—but perhaps least well prepared for the rigors of combat? Alternatively, one could imagine using constabulary units for policing countrywide, overlaying them with smaller combat formations to fight the insurgency. But this distinction between policing and fighting is largely artificial in the context of a guerrilla struggle, so the logic for such an idea would be difficult to sustain, and having two units

share responsibility in any sector would complicate command arrangements enormously.

Moreover, the experience of recent stabilization missions suggests that it is often not combat units per se that are most lacking in capabilities. Their performance in maintaining the peace has generally been acceptable, and where missions have proven difficult it has generally been due to military challenges (Lebanon, Somalia, Afghanistan) at least as much as peacekeeping ones. Rather, the problem most commonly has been the lack of quickly deployable police, judges, criminal law experts, and other specialists in civil society who are needed yet generally unavailable.<sup>14</sup> In other words, troops are performing ably at policing, but our instruments for nation-building are weak.

Given these considerations, the best course of action seems to be as follows. First, as the Army is already doing, the United States should add substantial quantities of the types of support units like military police that are frequently being used yet in short supply.

Second, as it restructures itself, the Army might look for ways to improve the cooperation between various policing and civil affairs units and its main combat forces. Devising better doctrine on how to combine combat teams and police units in joint patrols—or to keep them apart, when that is more appropriate—is clearly desirable. More joint exercises could help. So could a means of integrating more police units into the combat brigade teams now being created by the Army, with sufficient flexibility to allow different numbers of such units to attach to any normal combat brigade.

Third and finally, the United States should create various types of nonmilitary units in other parts of the government that would be useful in any stabilization mission. Their specialties should include not only security activities but reconstruction assistance as well. The idea should not be to create capacity that is already found in the armed forces. Nor should it be to pay for large formations of many thousands of police and aid officials who would do little except during such missions. For possible operations in countries the size of Iraq or Afghanistan, where standard police sizing rules would suggest the need for up to 100,000 police, fielding standing forces that were often on standby in the United States would be inordinately expensive.<sup>15</sup> Rather, the smarter approach would be to create a nucleus of experts in various fields that could become the core of any larger operation, drawing on reservists and non-governmental organizations and private contractors to beef up their ranks as needed.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Should We Restore the Draft?***

As casualty tolls have continued to mount in Iraq, active forces have been heavily deployed, and frequent callups of troops from the National Guard and Reserve have placed unusual strains on many of the nation's citizen-soldiers, some have called for a return to military conscription. Representative Charles Rangel of New York even introduced a bill in Congress that would restore the draft. Does that idea make sense?

It is first important to note that American society and government are indeed making far greater demands on some individuals than on others in the nation's waging of the war on terror. Of course at one level this always has been true. Those who wind up being killed in war, and their families left behind, make the ultimate sacrifice, with those who are physically and psychologically wounded in combat and those who care for them also suffering an enormous burden. But current policies amplify this set of circumstances. In particular, the fact that the military is all-volunteer, combined with the fact that certain regions of the country and certain parts of society contribute disproportionately to that force, raise specific concerns. Among other anxieties, some now argue that policy elites, less likely than before to have themselves served in the armed forces or to have children who are presently serving, have become less sensitive to the human implications of the possible use of force.

There are indeed reasons to worry. It is not a desirable thing for the country when an increasing share of our military personnel come from narrow sectors of society.<sup>17</sup> On the whole, a much smaller percent of today's population shows any interest in ever considering military service.<sup>18</sup> In some ways this is just as well, since the modern American military is smaller than it has been in decades even as population has continued to expand, so there is not room for everyone. But having large swaths of the country's population effectively elect out of military service, and the possibility of making the ultimate sacrifice in defense of national security, cannot be good for the nation's cohesion. It is also troublesome that even in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, most Americans have made little or no sacrifice in financial terms—indeed, even having their taxes cut—in the face of large war supplemental appropriations and mounting deficits.

That said, the draft is not the answer. For one thing, the fact that certain groups serve disproportionately in the military also means that the military offers opportunities to people who need them. Society asks a great deal of its military personnel, especially in the context of an ongoing war in Afghanistan and another in Iraq. But it also compensates them better than ever before—with pay, deferred compensation, educational opportunities, and the chance to learn skills within the armed forces that are often highly marketable thereafter. These various forms of compensation are quite high by historical standards, and have eliminated any hint of a military-civilian pay gap except in certain rare cases. Indeed, today's enlisted military personnel are now generally compensated considerably more generously than individuals of similar age and experience and educational background working in the private sector, once health and retirement benefits are factored in.<sup>19</sup> The military, while not without its problems of discrimination and prejudice, is also now among the most progressive institutions in America in terms of providing many of the best opportunities for minorities and the economically disadvantaged.<sup>20</sup>

A few facts and figures back up these assertions—and also underscore that today's military, while including some groups more than others, is not dramatically imbalanced racially or otherwise. Enlisted personnel in the current

American military are about 62 percent white, 22 percent African-American (reflecting a fairly steady level since the early 1980s), ten percent Hispanic, and six percent other races. Enlisted personnel are 85 percent male and 15 percent female (50 percent of all enlistees are married). The enlisted force consists of 95 percent high school graduates and five percent GED equivalent degree holders. The officer corps is 8.3 percent African-American and about four percent Hispanic, meaning that minority officer representation is far from proportional to the racial profile of the enlisted force, but much greater than for many other professions in the United States. The officer corps also is highly educated, with 91 percent holding at least a bachelor's degree and 11 percent a higher degree as well.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, one must be careful not to break an institution in the process of purportedly fixing it. The US military is probably the most impressive in history—not only in terms of its technology, but also in the quality of its personnel, their basic soldiering abilities, and their other skills in fields ranging from piloting to computing to equipment maintenance to engineering to linguistics to civil affairs. Those who doubt this need only review the decisiveness of recent American military victories in a range of combat scenarios, the professionalism of US forces in post-conflict environments, and the high standards of training maintained throughout the force.<sup>22</sup>

With no disrespect intended to those who served in earlier generations, today's US military is far superior to the all-volunteer forces of the past. Today's soldier, marine, airman, or sailor typically has a high school diploma and some college experience, several years of experience in the military, and a sincere commitment to the profession he or she has chosen. Contrast that with the 10- to 24-month tours of duty that are inevitable in most draft systems, the small fraction of time that leaves for a trained soldier to be in an operationally deployable unit, and the resulting limited quality of militaries that are still dependent on the draft (as in a number of European countries).

It is important to maintain a link between society and the military. But that link is not so tenuous today as some assert, given the important role of the Guard and Reserve in any overseas mission.<sup>23</sup> Even after the completion of the ongoing reconfiguration of the Guard and Reserve and active force, especially within the US Army, that role will remain important in any operation of significant scale and duration.

Moreover, the frequently heard assertion that policymakers have become casualty insensitive is exaggerated. It was only a half decade ago when the nation was purported to have the opposite problem, an extreme oversensitivity to casualties that prevented the country from considering decisive military actions that its national security required—helping to create a perception of American weakness that allegedly emboldened some adversaries.<sup>24</sup>

Someday, the case for a draft could strengthen. The most likely cause would be an overuse of the all-volunteer force, particularly in the Army and Marine Corps, that led to an exodus of volunteers and a general perception among would-be recruits that military service had become far less appealing.

Clearly, a sustained period of high casualties in Iraq or another place would reinforce any such problem as well. At that point, to sustain an effective military, the nation might have no option but to consider the draft—though in an era of high technology and highly skilled armed forces, such a policy would surely create as many problems as it solved.

This conclusion does not categorically preclude the possibility of mandatory national service of some kind, with the military being one option from which individuals could choose. But such a policy should fill only certain types of military jobs with those performing mandatory (and presumably rather short-term) service. The most demanding military specialties should be reserved for professionals, as is the case today.<sup>25</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In recent months, a debate over whether the US military is large enough for its current tasks has intensified. Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry and a number of prominent members of Congress of both parties say no, and call for adding several tens of thousands of additional uniformed personnel to the American armed forces for the next few years. President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, by contrast, prefer to add only modest numbers of troops using emergency powers rather than formal and traditional legislative methods. They have added many contractors to the Defense Department's payroll and called up large numbers of reservists, but have resisted official increases in active-duty end-strength.

While the position of President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld is understandable—active-duty forces are expensive, and additional soldiers are probably needed for a period of only a few years—it is not persuasive in the end. It risks breaking the all-volunteer force. That is, it risks making military service seem so unappealing that many in the military will leave the service when their existing terms end, and recruits will dwindle in number. Once such a process begins, it can become a vicious spiral, since the only antidote to losing people from the armed forces is to recruit even more, and that may not be possible even if signing bonuses and pay are further increased.

No more time should be lost—about 40,000 more troops, most of them Army soldiers, should be added to the US military. At worst, this will prove to be unneeded insurance against the possibility of a major crisis in recruiting and retention. And contrary to some thinking in the Army today, it is not a particularly difficult policy to reverse if properly handled. Just as likely, for the relatively modest cost of less than \$10 billion a year, it will help protect the excellent all-volunteer military from experiencing a major personnel crisis—one which could, if things got bad enough, necessitate a return to the draft, with its even greater problems.

**NOTES**

1. See Department of Defense, *Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country*, <http://web1.whs.osd.mil>.

2. US Army briefing at the Pentagon to defense pundits and retired military group, 11 February 2004; and Under Secretary of Defense David Chu, "How Might We Think About Stress on the Force?" Briefing at the Pentagon, 11 February 2004.

3. For historical evidence that such trends are largely what is to be expected in stabilization and nation building efforts, see James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2003), p. xvii. But it is important to underscore that no two drawdowns look the same and that the Iraq mission combines stabilization and nation-building efforts with counterinsurgency in a way that previous operations have not.

4. US Army briefing, 11 February 2004.

5. Chu briefing.

6. See Michael O'Hanlon, *Defense Policy Choices for the Bush Administration* (Washington: Brookings, 2002), pp. 28-62.

7. See Bradley Graham, "U.S. May Halve Forces in Germany," *The Washington Post*, 25 March 2004, p. A1.

8. Chu briefing.

9. US Army briefing, 11 February 2004.

10. Adebayo Adedeji et al., *An Analysis of the U.S. Military's Ability to Sustain an Occupation of Iraq* (Washington: Congressional Budget Office, September 2003), pp. 3, 19.

11. For more on the role of private contractors in war, see Peter W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003).

12. See, for example, Max Boot, "Shouldering the Load, and the Rifle," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 February 2004; and US Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Seeking a National Strategy: A Concert for Preserving Security and Promoting Freedom* (Washington: US Commission on National Security/21st Century, 2002).

13. Richard K. Betts, "The Delusion of Impartial Intervention," *Foreign Affairs*, 73 (November/December 1994), 20-33; and Stephen John Stedman, "Alchemy for a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, 74 (May/June 1995), 17-18.

14. Robert M. Perito, *Where Is the Lone Ranger When We Need Him?* (Washington: US Institute of Peace, 2004), pp. 323-37.

15. See James T. Quinlivan, "Force Requirements in Stability Operations," *Parameters*, 25 (Winter 1995-96), 59-69.

16. I am grateful to Lael Brainard and Susan Rice for help thinking through this problem; see also Alice M. Rivlin and Isabel Sawhill, eds., *Restoring Fiscal Sanity: How to Balance the Budget* (Washington: Brookings, 2004), 46-51.

17. Ole R. Holsti, "A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976-1996," *International Security*, 23 (Winter 1998/99), 13.

18. David C. King and Zachary Karabell, *The Generation of Trust: How the U.S. Military Has Regained the Public's Confidence Since Vietnam* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 2003), p. 44.

19. Adebayo Adedeji, *Educational Attainment and Compensation of Enlisted Personnel* (Washington: Congressional Budget Office, 2004), p. 14.

20. King and Karabell.

21. US Department of Defense, *Population Representation in the Military Services* (2001), [http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/poprep2001/chapter3/chapter3\\_6.htm](http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/poprep2001/chapter3/chapter3_6.htm).

22. For a good overview of how one US military service improved dramatically after Vietnam, see Robert H. Scales, Jr., *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington: Brassey's, 1994), pp. 1-38.

23. For a description of the total force policy of the post-Vietnam era, see Michael D. Doubler, *I Am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Washington: GPO, 2001), pp. 269-300; see also Janine Davidson, "A Citizen Check on War," *The Washington Post*, 16 November 2003, p. B7.

24. For a review of the debate of that time, see Steven Kull and I. M. Destler, *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* (Washington: Brookings, 1999), pp. 81-112.

25. For an illuminating study of why military service should be viewed as a profession, albeit one with its problems, see Don M. Snider and Gayle L. Watkins, project directors, and Lloyd J. Matthews, ed., *The Future of the Army Profession* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).