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**Fighting on Borrowed Time:
The Effect on US Military Readiness
of America's post-9/11 Wars**

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PDA

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INDEX

1. Introduction: Readiness and risk
 - What is "readiness"?*
 - Risk displacement*
 - The politics of risk displacement*
 - Measuring the decline in readiness*
2. Current deployment tempo
3. The effect of deployments on equipment
4. The effect of deployment tempo on morale
5. Recruitment and retention
 - Filling the ranks by extraordinary means*
 - The devil in the details*
 - Special operations: enlisted personnel exit*
 - Junior officer shortage*
6. Deployment tempo and training
7. Conclusion
8. Notes

1. Introduction: Readiness and risk

Considerable controversy surrounds the effects of America's post-9/11 wars on its armed forces – more specifically, their effects on military readiness. And there are grounds enough for concern in the August 2006 admission by General Peter Pace, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, that two-thirds of the US Army's active and reserve combat brigades registered in the two lowest readiness categories.

The controversy would be less acute if there were a supportive national consensus on the necessity of America's most demanding post-9/11 operation: Iraqi Freedom. When viewed as a "war of choice", however, issues of cost come to the fore. Among those costs, war-related decreases in military readiness are a type that is measured in increased risk. In other words: it is a cost with direct implications for national security. This gives it a unique political salience. It poses neither a "guns versus butter" nor a "war versus peace" choice, but rather a "war versus future security" one. Of course, even in "wars of necessity" that enjoy consensus support, it is important to keep account of costs – lest these capsizes or bankrupt the effort before the fight is won.

What is “readiness”?

How to understand “readiness”? For the purposes of this memo, it refers to the capacity of a military organization to fully realize in short order the potential power implicit in its size, personnel, material assets, organization, and doctrine. Two armed forces identical with respect to these characteristics can be nonetheless differently “ready”. Each may have troops that are more or less rested, healthy, motivated, disciplined, and skillful; their units may have different proportions of their authorized strength in personnel and equipment; the forces may differ in unit cohesion, leadership, and training; their equipment may be in better or worse shape; and their capacities to rapidly repair equipment, provision units, and care for people may differ significantly. It is the synergy of these latter attributes that determine the capacity of a fighting organization to quickly and fully actualize its potential power.

Risk displacement

With the United States heavily engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Pentagon’s policy has been to maximize the readiness of “in-theater” units at the expense of most others. It is a policy of risk displacement. There is nothing extraordinary in this, *per se*: units in combat come first. The real issue concerns the extent, degree, and duration of the broader decrement in readiness – and how much or if it actually extends to units “in theater”. What has made this a serious issue is the magnitude and protracted character of the Iraq war, which were not anticipated. Indeed, Iraq deployments to date (measured in terms of personnel days) have exceeded goals suggested in 2003 by between 70 percent and 140 percent – and closure is not yet in sight.^{1} The demands of the Afghan operation also have significantly exceeded expectations. For these reasons, the degree of risk displacement may be considerable.

The present policy displaces risk not only “laterally”, but also – and perhaps predominantly – *into the future*. According to Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker, “resetting” all the Army’s war-worn equipment may take up to three years beyond the end of the Iraq conflict. Restoring training regimes to pre-war standards may take longer because these are partly dependent on the availability and restoration of equipment. Any significant decrease in the average quality of personnel, due to the loss of experienced soldiers or to lower recruiting and promotion standards, could easily extend the remedial or “refractory” period to five years.

The politics of risk displacement

Why not just “pay down” risk by significantly increasing the size of the armed forces (and especially the Army) now – as some have proposed? ^{2} One problem is that any decision to do so might not sufficiently relieve “operational tempo” (optempo) problems in less than three to five years. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that adding two divisions (six brigades plus higher-level support and central administration) would cost \$127 billion total through 2022. Associated personnel would be 57,000 active and 21,000 reserve troops.

If right, the CBO's cost estimates suggest that the addition would be a real bargain; the estimated marginal costs per new person are much lower than what the Army spent per person before 9/11. But any increase to the budget baseline – even at bargain-basement prices – is problematic. Defense outlays are already up 53 percent since 1999 (after inflation) and efforts to recapitalize the armed forces have just begun.

The administration has assiduously displaced into the future the financial cost of enacting its military strategy. Much of the increase in military spending has been simply added to the national debt, which once again is pressing against or beyond the limits of sobriety. Even without increasing the size of the armed forces, the administration may face a set of unenviable choices: end its program of tax cuts, tolerate higher interest rates, cut deeply into military modernization plans, or cut deeply into other federal spending. These realities may affect the administration's willingness to "buy down" risk.

From a political perspective, "risk" has the advantage of being the type of cost that is normally unseen and difficult to calculate. One pays for risk in the currency of blood and damage. But the bill is contingent on the turn of events. If one's luck holds, it may not come due at all. And if it does come due, it will not necessarily be clear that the added difficulties are the result of "risk-taking" behavior that could have been avoided. For instance: To what extent were the events at Abu Ghraib and Haditha due to troop stress, poor morale, or inadequate training? To what extent have these events, and others like them, contributed to the strength and tenacity of the Iraqi insurgency, which has now claimed thousands of American lives?

Measuring the decline in readiness

How serious is the broader decrement in military readiness associated with today's wars? What is the likelihood of serious consequences today or in the postwar period? The nature of "readiness" makes this hard to calculate with any precision – especially with regard to future risk.^{3} Many of the variables contributing to readiness (recounted earlier) can be partially quantified – but it is their synergistic interaction that counts, and this is far more difficult to figure. Some of the relationships are governed by thresholds – for instance: the effectiveness of unit training falls off rapidly when equipment or personnel shortages dip below a certain value. This suggests that the overall relationship between what we see (quantifiable inputs) and what we get (a degree of "readiness") may be nonlinear. Moreover, there may be "catastrophe points": certain combinations of seemingly moderate shortfalls that produce profound declines in readiness. At minimum, we should expect that a ten percent deficit across the range of readiness indicators will produce a force far less than 90 percent ready. Given this dynamic, a reasonably cautious approach would be to take quite seriously any unusual and broad decline in readiness indicators.

The following sections review some of the changes in military readiness indicators and trends associated with current operations. But we begin by taking a look at the factor that is shaping all of these – deployment tempo – and how it has changed.

2. Current deployment tempo

Today the United States maintains approximately 320,000 active-component military personnel overseas – either stationed or operationally deployed; in addition, there are more than 60,000 Guard and Reserve personnel abroad. Similar or higher numbers of troops were overseas for most of the past 3.5 years. Of the total today (9 September 2006), more than 220,000 are operationally deployed in or around Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.^{4}

Focusing on the active component: about 23 percent are now overseas. During most of the 1990s (after Desert Storm), the proportion overseas was approximately 17-17.5 percent. What is more telling, however, is that the average proportion of active- component troops involved in actual operations today is five times larger than in the mid- to late-1990s. And much of this stress is focused on the Army, which now routinely has one-third of its active component personnel (and more than one-half of its active combat brigades) stationed or deployed overseas.

Together with other commitments, the war has required Marine units to deploy at rates more than 25 percent higher than what the service considers acceptable for long periods. Active Army units have been exceeding their deployment standards by 60 percent. These rates would have been even higher but that DOD leaned heavily on National Guard and Reserve units, deploying as many as 100,000 reserve personnel overseas at one time for tours averaging 342 days. The reserve components have not been leaned on so heavily for such an extended period since the Korean war.

High rates of deployment tempo (deptempo) maintained over long periods are known to adversely affect training, morale, and discipline – causing a degradation in capability and, eventually, problems in personnel retention and recruitment.^{5} High tempo also wears down equipment, increasing the needs for maintenance, overhaul, and (eventually) replacement.

3. The effect of deployments on equipment

The Army estimated in April 2005 that it had already rotated 40 percent of its equipment through Iraq and Afghanistan. More recently, the Marine Corps estimated that 40 percent of its ground equipment and 20 percent of its air assets were being used to support current operations.^{6} The stress on this equipment has been unusually high: not only is the hot, sandy environment of Iraq a punishing one, but utilization rates have exceeded peacetime standards by two- to ten-fold. This is a pace that quickly eats into service life.^{7}

Relevant to this, the Government Accountability Office surveyed 30 key equipment items (across services) and reported in October 2005 that the readiness ratings for most of them showed a distinct decline since 1999.^{8} The list included tanks, most armored fighting vehicles, trucks, helicopters, and combat aircraft. Exacerbating this problem has been the maintenance protocol adopted by the Army and Marine Corps to ensure near-term availability of equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is an approach that defers costs and consequences.

In order to ensure immediate equipment availability in the field, the services have adopted the practice of retaining much of the required equipment “in theater,” while rotating units and people through.^{9} The services have also tapped prepositioned stocks. Together these sources equip the field force and a local equipment reserve. As some equipment has been destroyed or recycled home for major repair, replacements have been drawn from newly deploying units or state-side ones. The net result is that non-deployed units face a shortage of equipment – or have had to draw less-capable equipment out of storage. And this affects their training capacity (which is addressed in more detail below).

Higher-level maintenance and refurbishment – which normally occurs at home bases or depots – has been deferred for most of the equipment kept in the field. As the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported in March 2006:^{10}

The services have made a risk-based decision to keep equipment in theater, to forgo depot repairs, and to rely almost exclusively on in-theater repair capabilities to keep equipment mission capable. As a result, much of the equipment has not undergone higher level depot maintenance since the start of operations in March 2003.

GAO also reports that the arrangements for maintenance inside the theater have faced a range of problems, including substandard performance by contractors and insufficient personnel. And, GAO found that less than seven percent of the major equipment in the theater sustainment stock was fully mission capable – although this equipment is supposed to serve as replacements for items damaged in combat.

Finally, the GAO notes that some state-side units, short on equipment and training time, are similarly choosing to defer depot maintenance.

Maintenance deferral has the character of borrowing on the future; eventually, the bill will come due. Equipment failures will accumulate. And equipment in larger quantity will have to be sent off to depots – or be replaced. While this more-thorough process of “resetting” the force is underway, units will have to make do with less or with lower quality equipment. For this reason, the postwar reset will constitute a refractory period – a period of diminished readiness. The Army will retain over 280,000 pieces of major equipment in Iraq until the end of the mission. Resetting these will take another two years, at least, according to Lt. Gen. David Melcher, the Army’s deputy chief of staff.^{11} (Three years is a more likely estimate insofar as rebuilding some types of equipment, such as combat helicopters, can take that long.)

Decreased equipment readiness is not the only cost that will persist into the postwar period. There will be financial costs as well. In March 2005, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the accrued unmet equipment reset costs for the services to that point was between \$13.2 billion and \$18.4 billion.^{12} At the time, service estimates roughly accorded with those of CBO. Since then, however, yearly maintenance costs have increased and the extent of deferred maintenance has become clearer. On 27 June 2006, Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker told lawmakers that the Army alone will require between \$12 billion and \$13 billion “for a minimum of two to three

years beyond” the end of the conflict. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that the current conflicts will end with a reset bill of \$25 billion to \$40 billion outstanding.{13}

4. The effect of deployment tempo on morale

Polls of military personnel serving overseas indicate the extent of current morale problems. The second US Army Mental Health Advisory Team Report, released in January 2005, showed 54 percent of operationally-deployed personnel reporting that their units had low to very low morale.{14} Although better than the previous year surveyed (2003), when a remarkable 72 percent reported poor morale, the extent was still serious. And indicators for 2005 suggest a return to the poor conditions evident in 2003.

Motivating the initial report was a spike in suicides among deployed personnel during 2003, when the rate was 18.8 per 100,000 troops serving in operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.{15} In 2004, the rate retreated to 10.4 – an improvement also reflected in morale reports, as noted above, and due probably to improvements in “quality of life” conditions and a new suicide prevention program. However, the Army’s mental health report for 2004 showed continuing problems having to do with combat stress and, for most respondents, deployment time. These may be at the heart of another spike in suicides that occurred in 2005: the rate for that year was 19.9 per 100,000 – higher than the 2003 rate that sparked the Army’s initial concerns. Results from the Mental Health Advisory Team Report covering 2005 have not yet been released as of 1 September 2006 – almost nine months after becoming due.{16}

An appropriate baseline for comparison is the overall Army suicide rates in 2000 and 2001, which average about 10 per 100,000. These years are reasonably close to the present and were not characterized by protracted large-scale operations. Obviously, the absolute number of suicides is not large. The usefulness of the statistic is as a proxy measure for stress and morale overall – suicide being only one of the more severe manifestations of a problem.

Some commentators have compared the suicide rates for Iraq-deployed personnel to those for their approximate age cohort at home – an overwhelming civilian group. But this comparison is manifestly irrelevant. In order to test for deployment-related morale problems, the appropriate comparison is “deployed Army” versus “non-deployed Army” – not “deployed Army” versus “civilian population” at home. The baseline suicide rate for the peacetime Army has been routinely lower than that for a comparably-aged segment of the civilian population. There may be institutional reasons for this; it may be due to Army enculturation; or it may be because those who join the army are different in all sorts of ways than a comparably-aged slice of the general population. The fact remains: when personnel from this Army were subjected to long-tours of duty in Iraq their suicide rates increased quite substantially in two out of three measured years. The average increase was 63 percent. This indicates a significant increase in stress and/or a significant deterioration of morale.

The annual *Stars and Stripes* poll of its military readers also registers the recent morale issues – although with an interesting twist: it shows that perceptions of unit morale differ dramatically depending on the rank of the respondent.^{17} While commissioned officers and higher-ranking sergeants tend to rate morale higher, 50 percent of the enlisted ranks and junior non-commissioned officers rate unit morale as low. Of course, it is this latter cohort that makes up the bulk of deployed forces and that has the greatest exposure to combat.

The results recounted above roughly accord with the findings of a poll of troops in Iraq conducted by Zogby International in early 2006.^{18} The Zogby poll found 72 percent of the troops wanting to see the war concluded by the end of the year (2006). More than a quarter wanted withdrawal within six months. Zogby also found that three-quarters of the troops had served multiple tours: 45% were on their second tour; 29% were in Iraq for the third tour or more. Only 26% were on their first tour of duty.

5. Recruitment and retention

America will always be able to fill the ranks of its armed forces – given time and money. What is more pertinent to ask is: How much time and money will be needed? It is also vitally important to look beyond gross recruitment and retention numbers. The most serious challenges have to do with retaining experienced personnel, maintaining quality standards in recruitment, and acquiring the particular mix of skills the armed forces require.

The services most affected by America's post-9/11 wars have been the Army and Marine Corps. As of September 2006, almost eighty percent of active soldiers and marines had served in Afghanistan or Iraq – and, as suggested above, many have gone for two or three tours. In this light, it is encouraging that both the Army and Marine Corps were able to meet their gross active-component recruiting goals during the period FY 2001 through FY 2004. With regard to the active Army, however, it also is important to note (and actually quite remarkable) that the numerical recruitment goals throughout this period were *actually set lower than in FY 2000*.^{19} The same is true of the Army Reserve. The use of “stop loss” orders, which stymied personnel attrition, and the unusual dependence on National Guard troops in Iraq, may have allowed the Army to lower its recruiting goals for the active component. Increased reliance on Individual Ready Reservists, as noted below, also helped.

Only the National Guard increased its recruitment goals in the aftermath of 9/11 – and it was able to achieve these higher goals initially, benefitting from the patriotic response to the attacks and increased interest in homeland defense. Once the Iraq war began, however, the Guard began to fall short in its recruitment efforts – missing its goals in 2003, 2004, and 2005.

Real trouble became apparent across the board in FY 2005 (which began in October 2004), 18 months after the onset of the Iraq war. That year, all components of the Army fell significantly short of their recruitment goals: the active Army by 8 percent, the National Guard by 20 percent, and the Army Reserve by 16 percent. For the active Army, this was the first shortfall in 16 years and the

largest in 26. (Notably, it was in 2005 that the active Army restored its recruiting goals to the level current in 2000.)

The Army and Marine Corps have managed to meet most of their gross “retention” (or “re-enlistment”) goals, but involuntary extension of service terms (“stop loss orders”) have played an important role in this. Stop-loss bolsters retention numbers and can also relieve new recruitment requirements, as noted above.

Filling the ranks by extraordinary means

All told, 50,000 soldiers have had their service time extended involuntarily since 2002. In June 2005, “stop loss” orders were affecting 15,000 Army personnel, active and reserve.^{20} In January 2006, about 12,500 soldiers were serving involuntarily under “stop loss” orders, according to a *Reuters* report (citing Army spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty). These coercive (but legal) practices have served to mitigate the immediate impact of the wars. But there is strong evidence to suggest that once “stop loss” in all its forms ends, there will be a significant spike in attrition. (This effect is examined below in the paragraphs on Special Operations Forces).

Resort to the Individual Ready Reserve – reservists who do not routinely train with units – also has reduced recruitment and retention requirements. From 2002 through to the end of FY 2005, 7,000 of these IR Reservists have been deployed – 6,400 of them involuntarily.^{21} Approximately 4,000 were still serving at the end 2005. As of September 2006, 2,200 are still serving in the Army alone – 1,850 of them involuntarily.^{22} And recently the Marine Corps called up another 2,500 with the aim of finding enough to fill 1,200 more job slots.

Despite the troubles apparent in 2005, the Army and Marine Corps will probably meet their recruiting goals for FY 2006, although one or more reserve components may fall short. The apparent turn-around is illusory, however. The means employed by the Army to restore its recruiting numbers simply trade a numerical shortfall for a qualitative one:

- The Army has doubled the percentage of enlistees that will be accepted from among the lowest-scoring tier of recruits (so-called Category IV recruits).^{23}
- And it has raised the maximum age for enlistment – twice: first, from 35 to 39 in January 2006 and then again in June to 42.^{24}
- Finally, active-duty service terms for some recruits have been reduced to 15 months, instead of four years, which cuts into training preparation. (Of course, 15-month recruits are subject to “stop loss” extensions).^{25}

Increased monetary incentives play a role, too: The Army has offered new tax-free bonuses of \$5,000 for enlistment and \$40,000 for re-enlistment – payable in the future at the completion of the recipient’s service (ie. by the next administration).^{26} This rolls costs into the future. In a different way, so do initiatives that trade down the quality of service personnel.

The devil in the details: a closer look at recruitment and retention

Attention to gross statistics on recruitment and retention provides no insight on the services' success in getting and keeping the specific mix of skills they need. Optempo does not distribute equally across all specialities and neither does personnel attrition. Some units and specialities have been in much greater demand than others and, thus, subject to higher pressure. In a review of all of the services' 1,484 occupational specialities, the Government Accountability Office found that 19 percent of DOD's occupational specialities were consistently overfilled and 41 percent were consistently underfilled during the period FY 2000-2005.{27}

"Infantry" and "tank crewmember" are among the Army's "difficult to fill and retain" occupations. The Army Reserve finds it hard to recruit and retain individuals in the "military police" and "civil affairs" occupations. This may not be very surprising, given current demands. But those same demands make these shortfalls a serious concern. Of course, the services have the capacity to assign people to jobs outside their speciality. But even with some "cross training", this is an inherently inefficient process, and one likely to exacerbate morale problems.

Special operations: enlisted personnel exit

Of special concern are rising attrition rates among Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel – especially among the enlisted personnel.{28} Prior to 9/11 the attrition rate for the latter was about 10 percent. With the implementation of targeted occupational "stop loss" orders, this rate fell to below 6.5 percent in 2002, rising only slightly with the onset of the Iraq war in 2003. However, the stop-loss policy as applied to occupational specialties ended in June of that year (although it continued for deploying units). Immediately thereafter, the attrition rate for SOF enlisted personnel rose to 12.9 percent, which is 25 percent higher than the pre-9/11 level. (The rate for officers also rose substantially, but not to the pre-9/11 level.) Of course, the demand for SOF personnel is much higher today than prior to 9/11 – and it is growing with efforts to expand this sector of the forces.

Junior officer shortage

A somewhat different problem concerns the supply of officers – especially junior and mid-career officers – across the Army.{29} The Army had been facing officer retention problems for years prior to 9/11. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, however, retention rates seemed to improve significantly. Between 2001 and 2003, the rate of junior officers opting out as soon they could fell from 9.3 percent to 6.3 percent. Since then, however, the rate has increased to about 8.6 percent, which is still better than before 9/11. Of course, "stop loss" as applied to deploying- and deployed-units continues to have a restraining effect here; only when it ends will the full effect of the recent wars be evident. In the meantime, the demand for officers has increased, partly due to plans to increase the number of Army brigades. Increased efforts to train and monitor the Iraqi military may also have added to the demand for officers. Of course, the real test of recruiting and retention efforts is not their ability to achieve some abstract numerical goal, but instead to succeed in matching supply to demand. In this, the Army is failing.

In response to the demand for officers, the Army has increased its rates of promotion by 10 to 20 percentage points.^{30} In 2005, for instance, it promoted 97 percent of all formally eligible captains to the rank of major. Lowering the bar on promotions has not yet brought supply into line with demand, however. In April 2006 the Army predicted a shortfall of 2,500 captains for the year. Looking forward to 2007, it foresees a shortage of 3,300.

Looking more closely at the officer supply problem reveals a further concern: while the Army is lowering the bar on promotion, the attrition rate among the best-educated officers has grown especially bad.^{31} The loss rate for West Point graduates who have fulfilled their five-year obligation has reached its highest point in 16 years. In 2005, fully one-third left – whereas in 2003, less than 22 percent had.

6. Deployment tempo and training

The situation of SOF forces also illustrates how high deptime can affect training. Between 2000 and 2005, the proportion of SOF forces that were operationally deployed at any one time rose from an average of 31 percent to 80 percent.^{32} Commensurate with this, the proportion involved in training declined from 61 percent to 17 percent. The amount of time spent in training specifically geared to maintain battle skills has declined by 50 percent. Of course, operational deployments themselves help hone some skills – but not all skills (unless deployments are spread evenly across the conflict and mission spectrum, which they presently are not).^{33} Finally: some of the routine training and exercises undertaken by SOF (and other) units have vital secondary functions – such as building a wide range of joint and multi-national connections. There is no substitute for these.

Recognizing the problems associated with reduced training time, the Special Operations Command set a policy in August 2005 requiring a 50/50 split between time deployed and time at home. According to GAO, however, the services have failed to consistently or fully implement this regulation.

Current optempo for regular Army units is not as demanding as that for SOF units – although it, too, is disruptive of training and reconstitution cycles. In recent years, the Army has continuously deployed 50 percent or more of its active combat brigades in operations, on average. This pace requires that reconstitution activities that would normally occur during a two-year period at home be squeezed into one – or simply postponed. The squeeze can compel trade-offs between, for instance, training and sending unit equipment to depots for higher-level maintenance, as the GAO has reported.^{34} Of course, training with equipment that needs repair can also be suboptimal.

7. Conclusion

Training problems as well as other shortfalls – lack of personnel, equipment, or fully-rehabilitated equipment – have combined to result in lower than normally acceptable readiness ratings for most active Army and Guard combat brigades outside Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, according to Senate

testimony given by JCS Chair, General Peter Pace, on 3 August 2006: "about two thirds of the brigades...would report C-3 or C-4," which are the lowest readiness levels.{35} (This estimate applies to the total compliment of active - and reserve-component Army combat brigades.)

Reportedly included among the low readiness units are some deploying for Iraq. The Pentagon maintains, however, that all Iraq-bound units are brought up to readiness for their tasks once they enter the theater, "fall on" the equipment stocks there, and conduct whatever remedial training their missions require. This may be so, but it implies that most of the Army today is brought up to a high readiness level for one purpose only: occupation duty in either Iraq or Afghanistan. And, even in the case of these operations, there were several serious lapses in readiness.{36}

Today, the situation of the Army National Guard is especially acute. While its role has been essential in sustaining Operation Iraqi Freedom, the cost has been a serious disruption of its functioning.{37} In October 2005, the GAO found that:

The heavy reliance on National Guard forces for overseas and homeland missions since September 2001 has resulted in readiness problems which suggest that the current business model for the Army National Guard is not sustainable over time.{38}

The Army Guard presently is in refractory mode with overseas deployments down to approximately 30,000 – compared with 80,000 in 2005. But, with the US presence in Iraq holding steady or growing, this implies increased stress on the active-component.

How deep and persistent will be the effect of the Iraq and Afghan wars on the US military remains indeterminate. It can only be suggested by the magnitude and persistence of current operational deployments and by the indicators summarized above. One thing is certain: the effects of the wars will be felt for years after they end.

8. Notes

1. In May 2003, allied officials reported plans to reduce the US troop presence in Iraq to 30,000 troops before the end the year. By Fall, however, US commanders had revised planning to reflect the goal of reducing to 100,000 troops by summer 2004 and then to 50,000 by mid-2005. Thomas E. Ricks, "Reduction in US Troops Eyed for '04," *Washington Post*, 19 October 2003; and, Michael Gordon with Eric Schmitt, "US Plans to Reduce Forces In Iraq, With Help of Allies," *New York Times*, 3 May 2003.

2. Recent proposals to increase the size of the US military – mostly Army and Marine Corps – range from adding 30,000 to 80,000 troops. Actually, most of the Democratic proposals seek to either accelerate existing plans to increase the deployable portion of the military or to make permanent forces that have already been added temporarily to authorized end strength. The most ambitious option was outlined by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which calculated the time and money necessary to add 80,000 troops. Brookings Institution scholar, Michael O'Hanlon, has proposed a mid-range option, which would add approximately 40,000 new troops to the 20,000 he estimates have already been temporarily added.

An Analysis of the U.S. Military's Ability to Sustain an Occupation of Iraq (Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, September 2003);

"Dems aim to increase army size," *The Hill*, 13 July 2005;

Lawrence J. Korb, Caroline P. Wadhams, and Andrew J. Grotto, *Restoring American Military Power: A Progressive Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, January 2006);

Carla Marinucci and John Wildermuth, "Kerry says Bush has left U.S. vulnerable to attack; Senator wants 40,000 more troops overseas," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 February 2004;

Michael O'Hanlon, The Need to Increase the Size of the Deployable Army, *Parameters* (Autumn 2004), pp. 4-17;

National Security Advisory Group, William Perry, chair, *The US Military Under Strain and at Risk* (Washington DC: January 2006). This is a background report to the security policy document published by congressional Democrats in March 2005, *Real Security: Protecting America and Restoring Our Leadership in the World*; and,

Tom Squitieri, "Congress pushes for larger military," *USA Today*, 12 December 2003.

3. The following books, reports, and articles provide important insight on the concept and dynamics of readiness:

Richard K. Betts, *Military Readiness: Concepts, Choices, Consequences* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1995), Part I: "Understanding Readiness";

John M. Collins, *Military Preparedness: Principles Compared with US Practices* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 21 January 1994);

Neal P. Curtin, *Military Readiness: Current Indicators Need to Be Expanded for a More Comprehensive Assessment* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, 21 April 1994);

Carl J. Dahlman and David E. Thaler, *Assessing Unit Readiness: Case Study of an Air Force Fighter Wing* (Santa Monica CA: Rand Corporation, 2000);

Steven A. Oliver, Alan W. Johnson, Edward D. White III, and Marvin A. Arostegui, "Forecasting readiness," *Air Force Journal of Logistics* (Fall, 2001); and

John C.F. Tillson, "A systems approach to readiness reporting," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Winter, 2000).

The following reports (in addition to the above) provide useful assessments of pre-911 readiness issues and trends:

Military Readiness: Data and Trends for April 1995-March 1996 (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, August 1996);

Military Readiness: Data and Trends for January 1990 to March 1995 (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, March 1996);

Trends in Selected Indicators of Military readiness 1980 through 1993 (Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, March 1994); and

Carl Conetta and Charles Knight, *The Readiness Crisis of the US Air Force: A Review and Diagnosis*, PDA Briefing Report #10 (Cambridge MA: Commonwealth Institute, 22 April 1999).

4. For comparative statistics on deployment and stationing overseas, see: Carl Conetta, Charles Knight, and Melissa Murphy, *Is the Iraq war sapping America's military power? Cautionary data and perspectives*, PDA Briefing Memo #32 (Cambridge MA: Commonwealth Institute, 22 October 2004); <http://www.comw.org/pda/041022milops.html>

5. Carl A. Castro and Amy B. Adler, "OPTEMPO: Effects on Soldier and Unit Readiness," *Parameters* (Autumn 1999), pp. 86-95; Michael C. Ryan, *Military Readiness, Operations Tempo, and Personnel Tempo: Are US Forces Doing Too Much?* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 14 January 1998); and, John C. F. Tillson, *Reducing the Impact of Tempo* (Alexandria VA: Institute for Defense Analysis, October 1999).

6. William M. Solis, *Preliminary Observations on Equipment Reset Challenges and Issues for the Army and Marine Corps*, Testimony Before the Subcommittees on Readiness and Tactical Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, 30 March 2005).

7. The condition of Army and Marine Corp equipment is examined in greater detail in: Loren B. Thompson, Lawrence J. Korb, and Max A. Bergmann, *Marine Corps Equipment After Iraq* (Arlington VA and Washington DC: Lexington Institute and the Center for American Progress, August 2006); and, Loren B. Thompson, Lawrence J. Korb, and Caroline P. Wadhams, *Army Equipment after Iraq* (Arlington VA and Washington DC: Lexington Institute and the Center for American Progress, May 2006).

8. *Military Readiness: DOD Needs To Identify and Address Gaps and Potential Risks in Program Strategies and Funding Priorities for Selected Equipment* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, October, 2005).

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10. William M. Solis, *Preliminary Observations on Equipment Reset Challenges and Issues for the Army and Marine Corps*, Testimony Before the Subcommittees on Readiness and Tactical Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, 30 March 2005).

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25. Dave Moniz, "Army offers 15-month hitch," *USA Today*, 13 May 2005.

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28. *Special Operations Forces: Several Human Capital Challenges Must Be Addressed to Meet Expanded Role* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, July 2006); James W. Crawley, "Commandos leaving in record numbers; Less-experienced soldiers being promoted," *Winston-Salem Journal*, 30 July 2005; *Rebuilding Iraq: Actions Needed to Improve Use of Private Security Providers* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, July 2005), see section on SOF attrition, pp. 35-43; and "United States Special Operations Command Personnel Issues," hearing before the Terrorism,

Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 108th Congress, Second Session, 20 July 2004.

29. Charles A. Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 5 July 2006); Thom Shanker, "Young Officers Leaving Army at a High Rate," *New York Times*, 10 April 2006; Sig Christenson, "Army faces a major officer shortage," *San Antonio Express-News*, 8 April 2006; Ann Scott Tyson, "Army Offers Incentives to Try to Retain Officers," *Washington Post*, 12 February 2006; Dave Moniz, "Incentives beefed up to keep young officers in the Army," *USA Today*, 7 November 2005; and, *Briefing by LTG Timothy J. Maude, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, US Army*, posted on Defense and the National Interest website, http://www.d-n-i.net/maude_com_conf/index.htm

30. Mark Mazzetti, "Army's Rising Promotion Rate Called Ominous," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 January 2006.

31. Shanker, "Young Officers Leaving Army at a High Rate," *NYT*, 10 April 2006.

32. *Special Operations Forces: Several Human Capital Challenges Must Be Addressed to Meet Expanded Role* (Washington DC: GAO, July 2006), pp. 29-37.

33. The best way for the force-as-a-whole to learn from experience is to cycle lessons from the battlefield back into the process of training and experimentation, where variations can be more safely tried, tweaked, and learned. In short: unless a nation can bear a slow and bloody learning curve, experience is not a substitute for training. The two must work together – and this requires ensuring sufficient time for training. Moreover, it is important to recognize that what we are learning in Iraq is not counter-insurgency skills "in general", but rather how to fight (or not fight) a particular type of insurgent, who is heavily dependent on a particular subset of insurgent tactics, in a very specific environment, and in the context of a mission defined by military occupation. Not only is there a much broader spectrum of missions and conflicts to be concerned about, there is a more varied spectrum of "counter-insurgency" operations and scenarios.

34. *Reset Challenges and Issues for the Army and Marine Corps*, p. 17; *Military Readiness: DOD Needs to Identify and Address Gaps and Potential Risks in Program Strategies and Funding Priorities for Selected Equipment*, p. 44.

35. "Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Global War on Terrorism," *Federal News Service*, 3 August 2006.

36. A variety of tenacious shortfalls have affected Operation Iraqi Freedom, especially. These include several serious training lapses and difficulties in providing for vehicle and body armor. *Several Factors Limited the Production and Installation of Army Truck Armor during Current Wartime Operations* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, March 2006); *Actions Needed to Improve the Availability of Critical Items during Current and Future Operations* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, April 2005); Scott Gold, "Guardsmen Say They're Facing Iraq Ill-Trained," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 November 2004; Michael Moss, "Many Missteps Tied to Delay in Armor for Troops in Iraq," *New York Times*, 7 March 2005; Brian Palmer, "Training Marines How Not to Kill," *The Huffington Post*, 7 July 2006; Rowan Scarborough, "Ill-equipped soldiers use excess force," *Washington Times*, 28

July 2005; and, James Schlesinger, chair, *Final Report of the Independent Panel to Review DOD Detention Operations* (Arlington VA: August 2004).

37. See assessment by Chief of National Guard Bureau, Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum: "General: Most Army Guard units unprepared," *Associated Press*, 1 August 2006. Also, for a more detailed description of the effect of deployments on the Guard, see: *Army National Guard's Role, Organization, and Equipment Need to Be Reexamined* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, 20 October 2005); *Plans Needed to Improve Army National Guard Equipment Readiness and Better Integrate Guard into Army Force Transformation Initiatives* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, October 2005)

38. *Army National Guard's Role, Organization, and Equipment Need to Be Reexamined* (Washington DC: GAO, 20 October 2005).



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