



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Director
U.S. Congress
Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2005

Honorable John M. Spratt Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman:

In response to your request, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has compared its prior estimates of the size of an occupation force that the U.S. military can sustain in Iraq with the military's actual practice over the past few years.

The Department of Defense (DoD) has made some policy decisions over the past two and a half years that have increased its ability to sustain a larger occupation force compared with CBO's previous estimate. Those decisions include terminating the U.S. military mission in Bosnia, reducing the U.S. presence in North East Asia, and adopting somewhat more demanding goals for how rapidly U.S. forces should rotate through extended deployments.

However, the majority of the difference between the size of an occupation force in Iraq over the past two and a half years and CBO's estimate of the size of a sustainable force derives from DoD's employing practices that depart from the standards that DoD states are preferable and that CBO uses in its analysis. The most significant such practice has been deploying active- and reserve-component units at rates in excess of what are generally considered sustainable.

The attachment to this letter provides some background on the size and nature of the military forces deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, discusses how CBO compared its prior estimate with DoD's actual practice, and answers the remainder of your specific questions.

I hope that you find the analysis useful. If you or your staff have any questions about it, please feel free to contact me at (202) 226-2700 or Adam Talaber, who is the staff contact for this work, at (202) 226-2918.

Sincerely,

Douglas Holtz-Eakin

cc: Honorable Jim Nussle
Chairman

An Analysis of the U.S. Military's Ability to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq: An Update

October 5, 2005

Report Documentation Page

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Background on the Size of Deployed Forces

The question of how large a force the U.S. military can sustain in extended deployments for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF and OIF) is primarily a question about the Army's and Marine Corps's ability to provide forces for the operations. For this analysis (and all of the personnel and units discussed in it), the term "forces" refers only to land forces.¹

The numbers of personnel described here are larger than those in many press reports and in some statements by the Administration. The number of U.S. forces deployed inside Afghanistan and Iraq proper is less than the total number of forces involved, which includes a considerable number of personnel supporting those operations in neighboring states. For the analytic tasks that CBO has been asked to undertake (including estimating costs and analyzing sustainability), the total number of personnel involved in each operation is the relevant consideration.

The level of forces involved in the Afghanistan theater of operations has generally been about two combat brigades, with between 15,000 and 20,000 personnel—a level that has not varied significantly since the end of major combat operations in OEF.

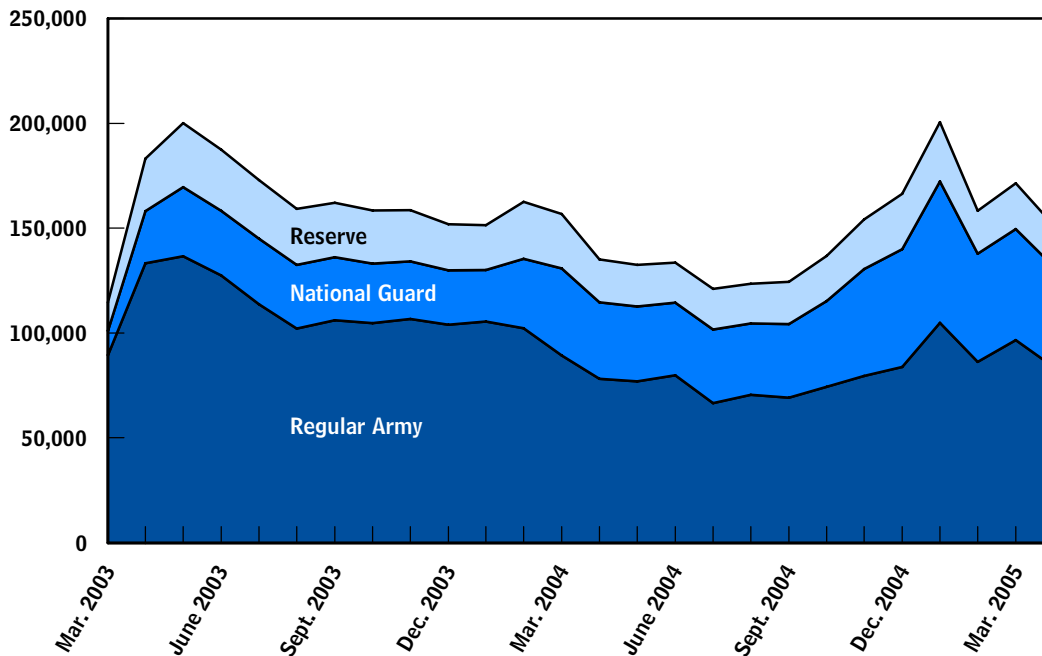
In general, the U.S. occupation force in the Iraqi theater has required about 16 to 18 combat brigades, or 160,000 to 180,000 personnel.² At some points over the past two and a half years, the size of the U.S. occupation force has moved outside of that range, but overall, that level represents the typical size.

The variation in the level of personnel results primarily from the annual rotation of forces through the theater and from decisions in response to changing security conditions in Iraq (see Figure 1).

The United States rotates forces through the Iraqi theater periodically; that is, it deploys entire units to the theater and redeploys entire units out of the theater. The

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1. The United States also receives assistance from its international partners in both operations. OIF, which is the larger, includes a consistent level of about 20,000 to 25,000 coalition personnel deployed to assist the United States, according to weekly briefings by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the State Department. See the Iraq Weekly Status Report, available at www.defendamerica.mil, with archived prior reports available at www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraqi-freedom_weekly.htm. But some coalition partners (namely, Poland and the Ukraine) have declared their intention to terminate their involvement.
 2. A force that size is the equivalent of about five to six divisions of traditional Army and Marine Corps units, which have three combat brigades in most divisions. The Army's modularity initiative, however, is converting the Army's combat brigades to a larger number of smaller brigades so that, over time, divisions will more commonly have four brigades, rather than three.

Figure 1.
Army Forces Deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom,
March 2003 to April 2005



Source: Department of Defense.

Notes: The figure excludes information on Marine Corps personnel, because CBO was unable to obtain time-series data on them.

Time-series data are not available past April 2005.

rotations largely occur during the winter, because most units deployed for the invasion of Iraq arrived between December and April of 2003, and most units are deployed for one year. Because replacement units are scheduled to arrive in theater before the units they are replacing leave (there is deliberate overlap between units in the rotation), U.S. forces in the Iraqi theater increase and decrease with a seasonal pattern. In the summer and early fall, U.S. forces are at their cyclical lows, while in the winter and early spring, U.S. forces are at their cyclical highs.

Variation has also occurred in the size of the U.S. force deployed to the Iraqi theater between rotations. DoD reduced the size of the occupation force between the first rotation (conducted in 2003) and the second rotation (conducted in 2004). As the security situation in Iraq deteriorated over the spring and summer of 2004, however, DoD temporarily increased force levels by extending the deployments of two brigades of the 1st Armored Division and an armored cavalry regiment.

Similarly, by taking advantage of the winter rotation of forces and by taking some additional measures, DoD increased the level of forces in the Iraqi theater for the January 2005 elections.

Overall, the total level of U.S. land forces deployed to both OEF and OIF has averaged about 175,000 to 200,000 personnel over the past two years (15,000 to 20,000 for OEF, and 160,000 to 180,000 for OIF). According to the most recent data that CBO was able to obtain (from the Defense Manpower Data Center for the end of June 2005), 186,000 members of the Army and Marine Corps were deployed in support of both operations.³

Differences Between the Size of Deployed Forces and CBO's Prior Estimate

Those levels of forces are well above what CBO considered sustainable over the long term in its September 2003 letter to Senator Byrd, *An Analysis of the U.S. Military's Ability to Sustain an Occupation of Iraq*. That analysis examined the question with respect to OIF only (taking OEF as a given, prior commitment). In that analysis, CBO estimated that the U.S. military could sustain 67,000 to 106,000 personnel in Iraq over the long term.⁴ The 160,000 to 180,000 personnel involved in the occupation of Iraq over the past two and a half years exceeds that estimate.

Although there is substantial uncertainty about the pace of deployments that would be considered unsustainable over the long term, there are certain benchmarks for the pace of deployment that the Congress, DoD, and the Army have considered acceptable. CBO's prior analysis was based in part on the deployment tempo guidelines contained in Public Law 106-945 (the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003), which suggested that 3.2 to 4 active-component units would be required to sustain a

3. According to a standard presentation by DoD, 195,000 military personnel were (although the presentation does not display personnel by military service and therefore almost certainly includes some Navy and Air Force personnel.) DoD's "global commitments" slide, used in numerous presentations and frequently updated, displays where U.S. forces are deployed.

4. The size of any occupation force will be far less than the total number of personnel in the U.S. military, because many personnel are engaged in tasks, such as overhead functions, that do not allow them to be deployed for occupation duty. Other personnel are assigned to units (such as Patriot missile-equipped air defense battalions) that are not useful for occupation duty. The remaining pool of people cannot all be deployed at once, but are instead rotated through a theater, to allow units and individuals periodic opportunities to recover, rest, and train. CBO's September 2003 letter discusses those considerations in more detail.

single active-component unit that was deployed.⁵ Since then, the Army has formally committed to a somewhat higher pace of rotation—having three active-component units in the force for each deployed active-component unit. In actual practice, many units have had only one year between deployments and are effectively sustaining a rotation ratio of 2 to 1.

Similarly, for the reserve component, DoD recently has established a benchmark of mobilizing units not more than one year out of every six. Because such units must be mobilized for some period of time before and after deployments (on average, about three to six months, to allow for various predeployment activities, additional training, postdeployment recovery, and leave for personnel) that goal, if applied for the one-year deployments that the Army is currently using for most units, suggests that the reserve component should be able to sustain one deployed unit for every 7.5 to 9 units in the force.⁶

The size of the occupation force in Iraq is larger than those benchmarks would permit. The active components of the Army and Marine Corps had 41 combat brigades at the beginning of 2004 (prior to the change associated with the Army's modularity initiative), and the reserve components had 39 combat brigades. Absent any other commitments, those forces would be able to sustain about 19 brigades deployed overseas compared with the 18 to 20 brigades that OEF and OIF currently require. However, the United States has numerous other demands on its land forces, including maintaining units in North East Asia for the defense of the Republic of Korea, peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and the Sinai

5. That goal is phrased as deploying only one-third of the active combat force at any one time, allowing units to spend two years in garrison for every one year deployed. The time in garrison is now referred to as "dwell time." The goal was first stated by General Richard Cody, Vice-Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, at a hearing of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, House Committee on Armed Services, February 2, 2005.

6. How DoD will implement that new policy is unclear because of the need to account for predeployment and postdeployment activities. If the policy is interpreted to mean that units will be mobilized for only one year and will then be demobilized for five years (the most direct reading), then the need for three to six months of mobilization for predeployment and postdeployment activities would reduce the level of forces that the reserve component could sustain to between 8 and 12 units in the force for each unit deployed (because each unit would be deployed for six to nine months every six years). If, however, the policy is interpreted to mean that reserve-component units will be deployed for one year (which is more consistent with current practice) and that the additional time mobilized for predeployment and postdeployment activities is not factored in, then the level of forces that the reserve component could sustain increases to six units for each unit deployed (because each unit would be deployed for one year out of every six). CBO assumed that that goal would imply a 6-to-1 ratio of time mobilized to time demobilized, such that a unit would experience a duty cycle of three months mobilized for predeployment and postdeployment activities, one year deployed, and then six years and three months demobilized (that is, 15 months mobilized:75 months demobilized, allowing 7.5 units to sustain one deployed unit) or six months mobilized for predeployment and postdeployment activities, one year deployed, and then seven years and six months demobilized (18 months mobilized:90 months demobilized, allowing 9 units to sustain one deployed).

Peninsula, providing forces for Amphibious Ready Groups, and periodically converting units to different types (such as Stryker brigades). Collectively, those missions require about four additional deployed brigades. Thus, the sustainable force consistent with DoD’s goals is two brigades in Afghanistan (15,000 to 20,000 personnel) and 13 brigades in Iraq (123,000 personnel). As such, the demands made on the force by OEF and OIF (175,000 to 200,000 personnel) are more than the available U.S. land forces can sustain while meeting the Army’s and DoD’s benchmarks.

The differences between CBO’s previous estimates and DoD’s actual performance in Iraq to date can be explained primarily by four changes that have occurred over the past four years. The sequence of those changes (shown in Table 1), is as follows:

The first change that has occurred is the termination of the U.S. military mission in Bosnia—freeing up the forces that were previously being deployed there to participate in the Iraq mission.

Table 1.

Effects of Various Changes Since CBO’s Previous Analysis on the Size of the Occupation That Can Be Sustained in Iraq

	Personnel
Previous Estimate, High Bound	106,000
Termination of Bosnia Mission	+3,000
Two Years at Home Dwell Time	<u>+6,000</u>
Subtotal	115,000
Reduction in North East Asia (Best possible with current dwell-time goals)	<u>+8,000</u>
Subtotal	123,000
De Facto Dwell Time of One Year at Home (Reflecting current practice)	<u>+45,000</u>
Total	168,000

Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Note: All options include an assumed force of 15,000 personnel also deployed to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom.

The second change that has occurred is the Army's adoption of new "dwell-time" goals, calling for a slightly more demanding rotation schedule for units than that incorporated in CBO's prior estimate. The high bound of CBO's prior estimate assumed that 3.2 units in the force would be required to sustain each active unit that was deployed, whereas the Army's new goals posit that three units should be required in the force to sustain each unit deployed. In combination with the termination of the Bosnia mission, this decision should allow the United States to sustain up to 115,000 personnel in OIF.

The third change that has occurred is that DoD has reduced its presence in North East Asia, deploying one of the Army's two brigades that were in Korea to Iraq and deploying Marine Corps battalions from Okinawa. The decision to reduce the U.S. presence in North East Asia may not be permanent, but if it were, the U.S. would be able to sustain an occupation force of up to 123,000 personnel in the Iraqi theater under the current dwell-time goals.

Because the occupation of Iraq has required more forces than that, the fourth change that has occurred is that DoD has adopted a de facto dwell-time standard of one year at home for every year deployed (with two units in the force for every unit deployed). Numerous units, such as the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 3rd Infantry Division, and most Marine Corps regiments, have already been deployed to Iraq with less than two years at their home stations, and several others, such as the 101st Air Assault division, are scheduled for such a rotation shortly. That increased pace of rotation, if maintained over the long term, would increase the level of forces that the United States could maintain in the Iraqi theater of operations to 168,000, roughly consistent with the actual levels of forces that have been deployed over the past two and a half years. However, that pace of rotation is probably not sustainable and is higher than any of the generally accepted benchmarks of which CBO is aware.

Not all of DoD's units have actually rotated with one year's dwell time because the department has made some decisions that have alleviated the short-term pressures of the occupation but that probably cannot be sustained over longer periods of time. Those decisions included employing training units that have not been traditionally included in extended deployments (such as squadrons of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment) and employing some elements of the reserve component at high rates.

Deploying large numbers of Army National Guard brigades, for example, has allowed some active-component units (such as the 4th Infantry division) to rotate at rates closer to the Army's dwell-time goals. The effect is short term, however, because the Army National Guard's combat brigades have been used at levels that cannot be sustained. Of the National Guard's current 15 "enhanced" separate

brigades, 11 have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan over the past two and a half years.⁷ In addition, the Army has deployed three brigades from National Guard divisions to Iraq. That pace of deployments is, along with the National Guard's missions in the Balkans and the Sinai, higher than the National Guard can sustain over long periods of time—at some point, there will be no National Guard brigades that can be deployed without violating DoD's mobilization standard.

The Army should be able to conduct another rotation of forces to Iraq, or possibly even two rotations, with relatively large numbers of National Guard brigades, thus allowing some active-component units to have more than one year of dwell time at their home garrisons. However, if the occupation continues and the Army employs progressively more brigades from National Guard divisions (as opposed to the enhanced brigades that the Army has preferred to deploy), the supply of those divisional brigades will also be exhausted or those brigades will have to be mobilized again before the point at which DoD's mobilization standard permits.

It is unclear what the long-term impact of such deployment rates will be on the overall health of the U.S. land forces. Some effects, such as deteriorating equipment, have already appeared and are being addressed through supplemental appropriations.⁸ Effects on the recruiting and retention of military personnel and the readiness of units are difficult to predict.

Although some of the military services have experienced recruiting shortfalls in the past two years and there are anecdotal accounts of issues arising from the pace of deployments, the effect that high deployment rates will have on recruiting and retention in the long run is not known.⁹ CBO is currently examining the potential that shortfalls in recruiting or retention could have on the long-term health of the force.

7. The Army has maintained two different classes of National Guard combat unit for the past decade: "enhanced" separate brigades, which are maintained at higher levels of readiness, and the remaining brigades, almost all in the National Guard divisions, which are maintained at lower levels of readiness. The Army's modularity plan envisions reducing the number of National Guard combat brigades somewhat but increasing all of those brigades' readiness to the higher standard.

8. See Congressional Budget Office, *The Potential Costs Resulting from Increased Usage of Military Equipment in Ongoing Operations* (March 18, 2005).

9. Through June 2005, the Army National Guard had missed its monthly recruiting goals for nine consecutive months, was running 10,000 soldiers below its cumulative recruiting goal for fiscal year 2005, and was 19,000 below its authorized manning level. The Army National Guard also missed its annual recruiting goals for fiscal years 2003 and 2004. Through June 2005, the active Army was running about 7,000 soldiers below its cumulative recruiting goal for fiscal year 2005. See John J. Lumpkin, "Army Guard Misses Recruiting Goal Again," Associated Press, July 12, 2005; and Lawrence Kapp, *Recruiting and Retention: An Overview of FY2004 and FY2005 Results for Active and Reserve Component Enlisted Personnel* (Congressional Research Service, June 30, 2005), available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32965.pdf.

Specific Questions

Question. What is the maximum force level that the United States can sustain in Iraq, given current force structure and the military's stated dwell-time goals?

Answer. As discussed above, since CBO published its initial estimate of the U.S. military's ability to sustain an occupation force, the United States' military role in the Bosnia mission ended, DoD deployed one brigade of Army forces from Korea to Iraq, DoD deployed Marine Corps battalions from Okinawa to Iraq, and the Army has established new goals for dwell time.

Those changes have increased the available pool of forces that could be deployed to Iraq. CBO estimates that the combined effect of the changes has increased the size of the force that the United States could sustain in the Iraqi theater to 123,000 personnel, whereas CBO's previous estimate was from 67,000 to 106,000 personnel. (If the decision to make forces in North East Asia available for the occupation of Iraq were reversed, that revision would reduce the level by 8,000 personnel, to 115,000.) Greater forces would require the United States to either increase the size of its land forces, terminate some other commitments, or rotate forces to Iraq at more demanding rates.¹⁰

Question. What is the size of the military needed to sustain a force of 138,000 in country while achieving dwell-time goals, and what alternatives are there to increasing end strength that would help in sustaining a deployed force of 138,000?

Answer. A force of 138,000 personnel in country is roughly equivalent to 170,000 personnel in theater (which is in the middle of the range of forces that the United States has been deploying to Iraq over the past two and a half years). The U.S. force in the Iraqi theater generally includes about 30,000 personnel supporting the occupation from other Gulf states (primarily Kuwait).

At a conceptual level, there are three major ways to increase the amount of forces that the United States could sustain in the occupation of Iraq. The United States could rotate its land forces at higher rates, increase the fraction of the existing forces that can be employed, or increase the size of its land forces.

10. CBO's estimate could change if the Army demonstrates an ability to convert entire units (to Stryker brigades or the planned units equipped with Future Combat Systems) quickly enough to occur within the units' dwell time. Because the Army has completed the somewhat less demanding conversions involved in creating modular brigades in that manner, it may be able to do the same with Stryker brigades and units equipped with Future Combat Systems. If that were the case, the size of the occupation force that the United States could sustain would increase by about 5,000 to 6,000 personnel above what CBO has estimated. However, the shorter the dwell time allotted to units, the less likely it is that extensive conversions can be accomplished during that period of time.

The United States has already chosen to increase the fraction of forces that can be employed by various measures, including reducing the number of forces used for other commitments. All of the options for employing more forces in the occupation of Iraq that CBO considered in its September 2003 analysis—employing National Guard combat units, Marine Corps units, Marine Corps reserve units, special forces, and rapid reaction forces—have already been adopted, along with the reduction in the forces dedicated to North East Asia (which CBO did not anticipate).

The United States could convert support forces that generally are not used for occupation missions to support forces that would be more useful for occupation missions.¹¹ If it converted all such forces, the size of the force that could be deployed overseas would increase to 13,000 personnel per brigade, from about 9,000 to 10,000 personnel per brigade (which is the level of forces that DoD has maintained over the past two and a half years). The change would allow an upper limit of about 165,000 to 170,000 personnel for the occupation of Iraq, rather than 123,000. However, it would also involve reducing the ability of U.S. forces to conduct major combat operations, because those support forces that are not required for occupation missions (such as those for rocket artillery or air defense artillery) are generally required for high-intensity conventional conflicts.¹² Nonetheless, if all such forces were converted, increases in the size of the Army might not be required to sustain an occupation of the current size.

Alternatively, without such changes but adhering to the standard of two years' dwell time would require increasing the size of the active Army by four to five divisions.¹³ CBO estimates that such an increase would cost about \$140 billion in 2006 dollars over 10 years and would require at least 115,000 additional active-component personnel and 42,000 reserve-component personnel.¹⁴ The feasibility

11. The Army has, for example, retrained some field artillery battalions to be military police battalions.

12. Other practical considerations also suggest that 165,000 to 170,000 personnel represents a theoretical upper bound on the size of the force that the United States could deploy without increasing the size of its land forces. In particular, such a level would raise an issue in coordinating the higher rotation rates used by active-component combat units and the lower rotation rates of the reserve-component units that must be activated to support them.

13. If conversions to Stryker brigades and units equipped with Future Combat Systems could be accomplished without withdrawing units from the force pool available for deployments, as discussed in the answer to the prior question, about four divisions, as opposed to four to five, would suffice.

14. That estimate is based on the option to increase the size of the active Army by two divisions (Alternative 1A) that CBO describes in its May 2005 study of *Options for Restructuring the Army*. That option was designed to maintain the Army's current level of dependence on reserve-component personnel and therefore include creating some reserve-component support units along with the active-component combat units. CBO has not analyzed the potential effects that the

of such large increases in the size of the force in the current recruiting environment is unknown, and if they could occur, they would probably take eight to 11 years.¹⁵ Over the long term, annually recurring operation and support costs would be about \$14 billion in 2006 dollars. Employing those new forces overseas—if that were necessary when they were available—would incur additional costs, above and beyond those to create the new forces.

An alternative way to increase the number of forces the United States could deploy to the occupation of Iraq would be to hire additional civilians to perform many of the military's overhead tasks and to use the military personnel thus freed up to create new deployable units. If feasible, that approach would be similar to an increase in end strength in some ways (as it would increase the number of personnel employed by DoD), but would increase the fraction of military personnel who could be deployed. In its September 2003 analysis, CBO discussed two versions of that option, one sufficient to create a single new Army division, the other sufficient to create two new Army divisions, and estimated the annual costs of implementing those options to be \$1.7 billion and \$3.4 billion per year in 2006 dollars, respectively.¹⁶

Question. How does the Army's modularity initiative increase the military's ability to sustain an occupation force?

Answer. Many elements of the Army's plan for modularity have either not been decided or have not yet been announced. Some of those elements are key to understanding the effect that modularity might have. Questions include whether or not the Army's current increase in end strength of 30,000 personnel will be made permanent and whether the Army will seek to expand to 43 or 48 active-component combat brigades. Appendix B of CBO's May 2005 *Options for Restructuring the Army* discussed the effects of modularity on the Army's ability

current recruiting shortfalls—which are larger for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve than for the active Army—might have on the time required to establish the new units.

15. Because the United States has not created new divisions by increasing the Army's end strength in the recent past, estimating how much time such an increase might require is difficult. Historical experience with increasing the number of divisions in the Army during the 1980s (which was done without increases in end strength) suggests that phasing in a single division would take two to three years, and a second division, perhaps another two years. CBO has discussed the issue with senior Army personnel, who have generally agreed with that estimate, although some officials were optimistic that, through various expedients, one new division could be established in only two years, and additional divisions in as little as 18 months.
16. Since CBO made that estimate, however, it has increased its estimate of the costs involved in creating new Army divisions. Were CBO to reestimate the options, the costs would be somewhat higher. For example, for its September 2003 analysis, CBO priced the annually recurring costs of adding two new divisions to the Army via end strength at \$6.6 billion in 2006 dollars, whereas for its May 2005 *Options for Restructuring the Army*, it put the costs at slightly more than \$7 billion.

to sustain extended deployments. However, on the basis of the information that it has received and making reasonable assumptions about what the modular force may look like, CBO estimates that the 43-brigade force would increase the Army's ability to sustain forces in the Iraqi theater by about 5,000 to 7,000 personnel, and the 48-brigade force would provide 9,000 to 11,000 additional personnel.¹⁷

The modular force would have a relatively small effect on the number of personnel who could be deployed for an extended occupation of Iraq but would increase the number of combat brigades that could be deployed by a larger percentage. Traditional Army brigades (with three subordinate battalions and nine to 12 subordinate companies) are larger than modular brigades (with two subordinate battalions and eight subordinate companies). Thus, with a modular force, the number of brigades that the Army could have deployed at any one point in time increases by between two and four. A larger number of smaller brigades might be more effective (by being more flexible or by affording the Army the ability to allocate units more efficiently), but many of those hypothetical benefits can already be achieved by tailoring the mix of units deployed to the theater, cross-attaching units, or other such measures.¹⁸

Question. What is our military's ability to respond to other threats while maintaining current force levels in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Answer. The U.S. military's ability to promptly respond to any other large contingency operation while engaged in Iraq is reduced from the capability it would have otherwise. Those forces deployed to Iraq would not be readily available for any other contingency, and those that were in the immediate phase of recovery from a recent deployment might prove unavailable in the short term as well.

17. Those estimates are based on the assumptions that the modular force will have 25,000 to 45,000 additional active-component personnel in combat units and 20,000 fewer reserve-component personnel in combat units, that the net increase of 5,000 to 25,000 combat personnel will also require an increase of 5,000 to 25,000 support personnel, and that the Army will require the current increase in end strength of 30,000 personnel to be made permanent in order to achieve the 48-brigade army. Most of the increase in the number of personnel who could be deployed comes from the increased fraction of combat units in the active component (since active units can be rotated more rapidly), along with the increased size of the Army in the case in which it has 48 brigades.

18. It is fairly rare for the United States to deploy standardized "packages" of forces. Almost all actual deployments contain unique mixes of units intended to most effectively perform the anticipated missions. Similarly, once units are deployed to a theater, it is common to alter the disposition and command arrangements of various units. One typical method is to temporarily detach a unit's subordinate units and assign them to another unit—a process called cross-attaching. Such practices provide U.S. planners and commanders substantial flexibility already.

Although forces that have just returned from Iraq are unlikely to be immediately ready for combat again, over the course of the year or two that they remain at their home garrisons, they return to a ready state. Therefore, the amount of forces immediately available for other contingencies exhibits a seasonal fluctuation. Immediately after a rotation, in the spring and summer, the number of ready forces will be at a seasonal low, and it will rise throughout the fall and winter until the next rotation begins.

Under the assumptions that reserve-component forces are never immediately ready to respond to other contingencies and that active units in conversion, deployed to OEF or OIF, in Korea, or recovering from deployments are also not immediately ready, the amount of land forces immediately available to respond to other contingencies would be about two divisions' worth after the annual rotation of forces, rising to about six before the next annual rotation.¹⁹

That level of readiness holds true only in the short term. Over longer periods of time, it would be possible to either reduce the forces deployed to Iraq (if a new contingency was judged to be of sufficient importance) or to fully prepare and deploy other forces. With sufficient time, the U.S. military would eventually be capable of deploying all active- and reserve-component units in the entire force to any contingency.

19. Those estimates are based on a typical mix of active- and reserve-component forces.