

# IN THE WAKE OF THE QDR

The Quadrennial Defense Review and Its Consequences

SEPTEMBER 2006

*Air Force Association Special Report*





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# IN THE WAKE OF THE QDR

**The Quadrennial Defense Review and Its Consequences**

***By John T. Correll***

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## The Quadrennial Defense Review and Its Consequences

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

7	<b>THE QDR MYSTIQUE</b> <i>Great expectations, every four years</i>
9	<b>THE LONG WAR</b> <i>From 9/11 to Afghanistan to Iraq</i>
12	<b>THE “SNAPSHOT IN TIME”</b> <i>What the QDR says—and doesn’t say</i>
15	<b>THE QDR AND STRATEGY</b> <i>The challenge of non-traditional warfare</i>
19	<b>THE QDR AND FORCE STRUCTURE</b> <i>Modifying the 1-4-2-1 Standard</i>
24	<b>THE QDR AND THE AIR FORCE</b> <i>Is the Revolution in Military Affairs still on?</i>
27	<b>IN THE WAKE OF THE QDR</b> <i>Observations, Questions, and Conclusions</i>
30	<b>REFERENCES</b>





# 1 THE QDR MYSTIQUE

*Great expectations, every four years*

Every four years, by mandate of Congress, the Pentagon conducts the Quadrennial Defense Review, a complete re-evaluation of the nation's military strategy and forces. The 2005 QDR, the third such review, was published in February 2006.

A QDR takes more than a year to finish. It generates intense interest, not only within the government but also among the popular news media and advocates and opponents of programs and causes that might be affected.

No special authority is reserved for the QDR. Anything the QDR can do can also be done in between reviews by the regular process of government. For example, the Bush Administration's pre-emption strategy in June 2002—a landmark change in defense policy—was implemented between QDRs.

Nevertheless, the QDR is surrounded by an aura of great importance. This is partly because of the depth and breadth of the review and partly because of the attention that is focused on it. The QDR process, in existence for less than 10 years, is perceived as the venue in which key defense issues will be decided. The expectations often exceed what the QDR actually delivers.

The QDR grew out of a recognition by Congress in the summer of 1996 that the defense program was seriously out of balance. The armed forces were not sized or

funded to carry out the declared national strategy. The force was considerably smaller than it had been during the Cold War, but the operational tempo was higher. With the effects of inflation factored out, the defense budget had declined for 12 years in a row.

The defense authorization act for Fiscal Year 1997 directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct and submit to Congress a Quadrennial Defense Review to "include a comprehensive examination of the defense strategy, force structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the defense program and policies with a view toward determining and expressing the defense strategy of the United States and establishing a revised defense program."<sup>1</sup>

The creation of the QDR did not attract much notice at the time. When President Clinton signed the FY 1997 authorization bill into law, the White House issued a three-page statement commenting on various aspects of the act. The QDR was not mentioned.

The QDR was later written into permanent legislation which said that each quadrennial review should employ the perspective of "establishing a defense program for the next 20 years."<sup>2</sup>

## **Bottom-Up Disaster**

The Bottom-Up Review of 1993 is often cited as the real beginning of the process that became

the QDR. There is some validity to this. Like the QDR, the Bottom-Up Review was a detailed examination of the defense program. The objective, at least nominally, was to align forces, requirements, and strategy. However, the Bottom-Up Review was basically an exercise to justify an arbitrary budget cut. It provided no solutions. The main result of it was to institutionalize the very imbalance that the QDR was later invented to address.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the Cold War, it was obvious that US military posture could be and should be reduced. The question was by how much. The Department of Defense chose an approach called the "Base Force" that would draw military strength down by 25 percent, close many overseas bases, and cut US forces in Europe by half.

The Clinton Administration, taking office in 1993, wanted deeper cuts. In March 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin announced a blind budget cut that was not backed up by any analysis of feasibility or consequences. He then launched the Bottom-Up Review in search of a strategy and defense program to match the budget cut.

After floating various force-sizing standards, including one called Win-Hold-Win (ridiculed as "Win-Hold-Oops"), Aspin adopted—as the minimum he could persuade Congress to agree was acceptable—the capability to simultaneously fight two major re-

<sup>1</sup> Military Force Structure Review Act of 1996, Subtitle B, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997, Sept. 23, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Title 10, Section 118, US Code.

<sup>3</sup> John T. Correll, "The Legacy of the Bottom-Up Review," *Air Force Magazine*, October 2003.



gional conflicts. Reconsideration of the two-conflict standard for sizing the force has been an important part of every QDR, including the most recent one.

The Bottom-Up Review failed in its primary purpose. The forces it projected were not sufficient to cover two regional conflicts. Even so, that force was more than the projected budget would support. The imbalance persisted and worsened. That was the problem that Congress sought to remedy with the QDR.

The first QDR was finished in a matter of months. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen forwarded it to Congress in May 1997. It confirmed the force-sizing standard as the capability to simultaneously fight two major regional conflicts (changing the terminology to “major theater wars”).

Of equal significance, the 1997 QDR acknowledged “a Revolution in Military Affairs that will fundamentally change the way US forces fight.”<sup>4</sup>

The Revolution in Military Affairs, referring to advancement in such areas as information technology, stealth, and long-range precision strike, in some instances offered an alternative to traditional attrition warfare. Dramatic improvements in precision made it possible for a few airplanes to do what, in years past, would have taken hundreds or even thousands of sorties to accomplish.<sup>5</sup>

The 1997 QDR sent mixed signals. The Revolution in Military Affairs obviously put greater reliance on airpower and space power, but it allocated the deepest force cuts to the Air Force. Army and Marine Corps ground forces survived the review intact, as did all 12 Navy aircraft carriers.

Judging that “the nation is unlikely to support significantly greater resources dedicated to

national defense,” the QDR did not call for a substantial increase in funding and did not resolve the imbalance in strategy, requirements, and forces.<sup>6</sup> The defense budget bottomed out in 1998 after 13 years of decline.

The second QDR was already rolling when the Bush Administration took office in January 2001. The Bush election campaign the year before had promised that “help is on the way,” suggesting that the defense strategy resources gap would soon be closed.

Events, however, took an odd turn.<sup>7</sup> At a Jan. 26 news conference, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced that there would be a “sweeping force structure review different from the QDR.” The White House put its attention on a different priority: a \$1.35 trillion tax cut.

The QDR process was placed on hold and the “sweeping” review proceeded behind closed doors. Rumors spread that the Pentagon was doing away with Air Force fighter programs, Army divisions, and Navy carriers. Rumsfeld didn’t confirm the rumors, but he didn’t deny them, either.

The confusion and discord finally got so bad that Rumsfeld changed his approach. After four months of saying almost nothing about the review, Rumsfeld went on a media blitz in the middle of May, giving 14 press interviews in three weeks. He said the work behind closed doors had been “exploratory.”

### Overcome by Events

In June, the QDR was resurrected, put on a “forced march,” and told to complete its work by midsummer. The study was finished by early September and the Pentagon was preparing to issue the report.

Then the world changed. The

terrorist attacks in New York and Washington occurred before the 2001 QDR was published. The Department of Defense patched up the QDR report and put it out on Sept. 30, but it had become a mismatch with reality. It had been hastily amended to make Homeland Defense a primary mission of armed forces. There were other revisions throughout, but they amounted, unavoidably, to an overlay rather than a fundamental change.

Nevertheless, Pentagon officials reiterated that some of the findings of the 2001 QDR were still valid.

The Department of Defense was shifting from *threat-based* to *capabilities-based* planning. The strategy would no longer fixate, as previous strategies did, on exactly who the adversary might be or where a war might happen. It would, the QDR said, “refocus planners on the growing range of capabilities that adversaries might possess or could develop” and point to capabilities the United States itself might need.

The 2001 QDR also established a new force structure standard that would become known as “1-4-2-1.” The force would be sized to do the following.

- Defend the homeland (the first “1” in the formulation).
- Deter aggression in *four* critical theaters (Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, Middle East/Southwest Asia).
- Swiftly defeat aggression in any two theater conflicts at the same time.
- Preserve the option for decisive victory in *one* of those theater conflicts, including the capability to occupy an aggressor’s capital or replace his regime.
- In addition to 1-4-2-1, the force was to be able to con-

<sup>4</sup> QDR 1997, p. iv.  
<sup>5</sup> Brig. Gen. David A. Deptula, “Effects-Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare,” Aerospace Education Foundation, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> QDR 1997, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup> For more details, see John T. Correll, “In Pursuit of a Strategy,” *Air Force Magazine*, August 2001.

duct a number of smaller-scale contingencies.<sup>8</sup>

The new standard was more demanding than the 1997 QDR

requirement that the force be ready to handle two major theater wars. The new standard was also more reliant on airpower.

A more fundamental realignment of strategy and forces would have to await the next QDR four years hence. ■

# 2 THE LONG WAR

## *From 9/11 to Afghanistan and Iraq*

QDR 2005, published Feb. 6, 2006, reflects the change in priorities and requirements brought on by the attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon in September 2001.

The emphasis is on the struggle against terrorism, which the QDR labels “the Long War.” It has already lasted longer than World War II, but Rumsfeld, speaking at the National Press Club in February 2006, suggested a different point of comparison.

“A decade ago, we celebrated the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War,” Rumsfeld said. “But that war—which President Kennedy called ‘a long twilight struggle’—lasted some 45 years before we saw a hope of victory.”

The Long War has gone through several phases.

In September 2001, President Bush declared unrelenting war on terrorists and said that “every nation in every region now has a de-

cision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.”

The immediate target, he said, was “a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda,” which “is to terror what the Mafia is to crime.” Al Qaeda, he said, was linked to terrorist groups in more than 60 countries.<sup>9</sup>

Military aircraft began around-the-clock combat air patrols above Washington, New York, and a dozen other cities, and President Bush announced the creation of a Cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security. However, it was understood from the beginning that it was not possible to defend everywhere against everything. As the patched-up QDR 2001 said, the plan was to “deter forward,” to take the war to the ter-

rorist camps and bases abroad.<sup>10</sup>

The war on terror is typically envisioned as the domain of special forces and irregular operations, but the first offensive action was a global attack by conventional forces. Operation Enduring Freedom began Oct. 7, 2001 with air strikes in Afghanistan. By December, it had ousted the Taliban regime, which had given sanctuary to al Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden, and had the terrorists on the run. The air campaign tapered off in January as the military emphasis shifted to the ground, with airpower in support.

In September and October 2001, letters containing anthrax were sent through the US mail to news media in Florida and New York and to two Senate offices in Washington. Enclosed messages appeared to be from terrorists. The anthrax mystery has never been solved, and in 2001, it created alarm that the terrorists had

<sup>8</sup> QDR 2001, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> President Bush, address to Congress, Sept. 20, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> QDR 2001, p. 20.

access to weapons of mass destruction.

### **The Axis of Evil**

The war on terrorism moved into its second phase when President Bush broadened the goal in his State of the Union address Jan. 29, 2002. "Our nation will continue to be steadfast and persistent in the pursuit of two great objectives," he said. "First, we will shut down terrorist camps, disrupt terrorist plans, and bring terrorists to justice. And second, we must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world." The specific threat, he said, was an "Axis of Evil," consisting of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq.

James Mann, in *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, summarized the change: "Thus over a period of less than five months, the Administration had progressively shifted the focus of the war on terrorism from (a) retaliating against the perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks to (b) stopping terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction to (c) preventing states from supplying terrorists with these weapons. Indeed, there were suggestions in Bush's speech that a link between the states and terrorism wasn't absolutely necessary; what mattered above all were (d) the axis-of-evil states and their weapons programs. 'By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave a growing danger,' the President said."

The State of the Union address, Mann said, "set the Bush Administration on a new course.

Hunting terrorists was de-emphasized, at least in public; instead, stopping rogue states from developing weapons of mass destruction became the Administration's top priority."<sup>11</sup>

### **Targeting Iraq**

The third phase of the conflict—targeting Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq—emerged gradually. Initially, the White House and the Pentagon did not believe that Iraq was responsible for the 9/11 attacks, nor did they make that claim.<sup>12</sup> The concern with Iraq was the conviction that Saddam had or soon would have weapons of mass destruction and would supply them to the terrorists. Saddam's defiance of UN weapons inspectors added to the sense of urgency.

Regime change in Iraq had been US policy since the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. Furthermore, the world's intelligence agencies were said to be unanimous in the view that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Key players on President Bush's national security team argued that it was time to remove Saddam Hussein from power. After 9/11, they pressed the issue and the President agreed. Behind the scenes, planning for an operation against Iraq had begun in September 2001.<sup>13</sup>

In June 2002, President Bush declared the doctrine of pre-emption. He said that "unbalanced dictators" could attack with weapons of mass destruction or provide them to "terrorist allies" and that "if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long." He did not mention Iraq specifically.<sup>14</sup>

Congress authorized the use of force against Iraq in October 2002. A consensus to disarm Iraq formed, gaining considerable momentum from a speech to the UN Security Council by Secretary of State Colin Powell on Feb. 6, 2003.<sup>15</sup> So convincing was his presentation that an editorial in the *Washington Post* said, "It is hard to imagine how anyone could doubt that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction."<sup>16</sup>

The fourth phase of the conflict began with Operation Iraqi Freedom, the invasion of Iraq, March 20, 2003. Coalition forces swept into Baghdad and Saddam fled. The coalition soon captured Saddam but did not find any weapons of mass destruction.

Conventional military operations ended and the war entered the fifth phase—emphasis on peacekeeping and nation building in Iraq—that would persist for the next three years. A White House fact sheet on the war in Iraq emphasizes political and social improvements in Iraq. Military action and terrorism are secondary themes.<sup>17</sup>

QDR 2005 depicts the sequence of events as a continuous Global War on Terrorism. "Currently, Iraq and Afghanistan are crucial battlegrounds in this war, but the struggle extends far beyond their borders and may well be fought in dozens of other countries simultaneously and for many years to come," the QDR says. "Al Qaeda and its associated movements operate in more than 80 countries."<sup>18</sup>

Rumsfeld adds that "since September 11th, some 50 million people in two nations that supported terrorism and threatened

<sup>11</sup> James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, Viking, 2004, p. 318-19.

<sup>12</sup> Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, p. 302; Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, Pantheon, 2006, p. 17; Dana Priest, "US Not Claiming Iraqi Link to Terror," *Washington Post*, Sept. 10, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, p. 10-23.

<sup>14</sup> Speech at West Point graduation, June 1, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Steven R. Weisman, "Powell, in UN Speech, Presents Case to Show Iraq Has Not Disarmed," *New York Times*, Feb. 6, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> "Irrefutable," *Washington Post*, Feb. 6, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Three Years Later," White House Fact Sheet, March 18, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> QDR 2005, p. 21.



their neighbors, now rule themselves. As a result of coalition efforts around the world, thousands of individuals, including three-quarters of al Qaeda's leadership, have been removed from terrorist ranks."<sup>19</sup>

### ***Sidetracked in Iraq?***

Critics, on the other hand, say that the war on terrorism was sidetracked by Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"What started as the war against terror, proclaimed by the President to Congress in the aftermath of the 2001 attacks, has undergone a metamorphosis," said political commentator William Pfaff.<sup>20</sup> "The initial interpretation was that the people responsible for the World Trade Center attacks and other terrorist outrages against Americans and their interests would be discovered, defeated and killed, or brought to justice." Now, Pfaff said, "there is an insurrection in Iraq, which had nothing to do with al Qaeda when it started, but from which al Qaeda and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi now draw global publicity."<sup>21</sup>

Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), just back from observing the Iraqi election in December 2005, told President Bush that "with all due respect, Mr. President, if every single al Qaeda-related terrorist were killed tomorrow, done, gone, you'd still have a war on your hands in Iraq." Zalmay Khalilzad, US ambassador to Iraq, taking part by video link in the meeting at the White House, reportedly agreed.<sup>22</sup>

Marine Lt. Gen. Greg Newbold, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 2000 to October 2002, said, "I now regret that I did not more openly

challenge those who were determined to invade a country whose actions were peripheral to the real threat—al Qaeda."<sup>23</sup>

QDR 2005 says that "al Qaeda and its associated movements recognize Iraq as the place of the greatest battle of Islam in this era."<sup>24</sup> Even if that were not the case earlier, it appears to be the situation today. Confirmation of sorts was provided by Osama bin Laden on a tape played by the Al Jazeera television network Jan. 19, 2006, in which he offered a "long truce" if the United States would withdraw "so we can build Iraq and Afghanistan."<sup>25</sup>

In April, President Bush said again that Iraq is pivotal to the war on terrorism. "It's important for Americans to understand the stakes in Iraq," he said. "A free Iraq will be an ally in the war on terror. A free Iraq will be a partner in the struggle for peace and moderation in the Muslim world. A free Iraq will inspire democratic reformers from Damascus to Tehran and send a signal across the broader Middle East that the future belongs not to terrorism but to freedom. A free Iraq will show the power of liberty to change the world. And as the Middle East grows in liberty and prosperity and hope, the terrorists will lose their safe havens and recruits, and America and other free nations will be more secure."<sup>26</sup>

### ***Evolution of al Qaeda***

The world terrorist networks have also evolved over the course of the Long War. In a study for RAND last year, Bruce Hoffman reported, "Al Qaeda in essence has transformed itself from a bureaucratic entity that could be destroyed and an irregular

army that could be defeated on the battlefield to the clearly less powerful, but nevertheless arguably more resilient, amorphous entity it is today."

Hoffman identified four "distinct but not mutually exclusive dimensions":

- "Al Qaeda Central." Remnants of pre-9/11 al Qaeda organization. Some old players, some new ones. Hard core centered in or around Pakistan "continues to exert some coordination if not actual command capability." Major attacks are entrusted only to al Qaeda's "professional cadre."

- Al Qaeda affiliates and associates. Terrorist groups and insurgents in Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Chechnya, Philippines, Bosnia, Kashmir, and other places. Agendas are mostly local, but these groups support global jihad and strikes by al Qaeda's professional cadre.

- "Al Qaeda locals." Groups likely to have had previous terrorism training or experience, but whose present links to al Qaeda are tenuous or dormant.

- "Al Qaeda network." Home-grown Islamic radicals. No direct connection with al Qaeda but "prepared to carry out attacks in solidarity with, or support of, al Qaeda's radical jihadist agenda."

Of the jihadists fighting in Iraq, Hoffman said, 61 percent come from Saudi Arabia, 10 percent are from Syria, and seven percent are from Kuwait.<sup>27</sup>

The situation has been further complicated by the rise to power in Palestine of Hamas, a terrorist organization (and identified by the United States as such). Hamas won a majority in the Palestine Authority's legislative elections in January 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Foreword to National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism, Feb. 1, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> William Pfaff, "A 'Long War' Designed to Perpetuate Itself," *International Herald Tribune*, Feb. 11, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Zarqawi, the al Qaeda leader in Iraq, was killed in an air raid north of Baghdad June 7, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> George Packer, "The Lesson of Tal Afar," *The New Yorker*, April 10, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Marine Lt. Gen. Greg Newbold, "Why Iraq Was a Mistake," *Time*, April 17, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> QDR 2005, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Hassan M. Fattah, "Bin Laden Re-emerges, Warning US While Offering 'Truce'," *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Speech, "The Global War on Terror," Johns Hopkins University, April 10, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "Does Our Counter-Terrorism Strategy Match the Threat?" RAND, Sept. 29, 2005.

In words that are much softer than the ringing “with us or with the terrorists” declaration of September 2001, the

new National Security Strategy says, “The opportunity for peace and statehood—a consistent goal of this Adminis-

tration—is open if Hamas will abandon its terrorist roots and change its relationship with Israel.”<sup>28</sup> ■

## THE “SNAPSHOT IN TIME”

*What the QDR says—and doesn’t say*

# 3

The Quadrennial Defense Review was conducted and completed in 2005, but it was not published until February 2006. Speculation about the outcome started more than a year ahead of time, with rumors stimulated and fed regularly by leaks to news reporters from factions in the Pentagon.

One such leak divulged the charts and text from an August 2004 policy briefing that described “a decade of strategic evolution.”<sup>29</sup> It said there was diminishing concern about “traditional” wars with more attention being put on lesser contingencies and “irregular” conflicts.

A leak in January 2005 gave the news media a copy of a draft document, “Program Budget Decision 753,” a proposal to cut Navy and Air Force budgets in order to shift additional funding to the Army and the Marine Corps. The proposal was never implemented, but the leak churned the anticipation that the ground forces would do well in QDR 2005.<sup>30</sup>

According to another leak,

the two-war standard for sizing and configuring the force was about to be junked. The “Pentagon’s most senior planners” were said to be “weighing whether to shape the military to mount one conventional campaign while devoting more resources to defending American territory and anti-terrorism efforts.”<sup>31</sup>

It was understood that QDR 2005 was going to be “resource neutral,” meaning that any new initiatives would have to be paid for by cutting or killing existing programs.<sup>32</sup>

An unnamed “defense official” told Elaine Grossman of the *Inside the Pentagon* newsletter that the emerging force-planning construct was “a very infantry-centered view of the future. This is one that has a big smile on the Army and Marine Corps.” Grossman added, “Every bill to pay requires Bush Administration leaders to identify a billpayer. That role may fall to the Air Force and Navy this time around, at least according to the latest conventional wisdom circulating in the Pentagon.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Expectations and Outrage**

Thus, as QDR 2005 slogged toward the finish line, two kinds of people eagerly awaited the outcome: hard-core defense cutters who wanted to see big programs—especially the Air Force’s F-22 fighter<sup>34</sup>—killed and hard-core advocates of the ground forces who felt the defense programs of the 1990s had wrongly favored airpower at the expense of the Army and the Marine Corps.

When QDR 2005 appeared, these factions were outraged. To be sure, there was strong emphasis on ground forces, especially special operations forces, and new counterterrorism capabilities. However, the F-22 and the other high-technology programs survived, albeit with some reductions. The anticipated personnel increases for the ground forces did not materialize.

The *Washington Post* accused Rumsfeld of dodging all the hard decisions. “Some hoped that he would decisively push the American military out of the outdated conventional war posture it was

<sup>28</sup> National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 16, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> “Building Top-Level Capabilities: A Framework for Strategic Thinking,” briefing to Senior Level Review Group, Department of Defense, Aug. 19, 2004. For key charts from this briefing, see Robert S. Dudley, “Worrying Less About ‘Traditional’ War,” *Air Force Magazine*, March 2005.

<sup>30</sup> David Ignatius, “Grand Vision vs. Patchwork,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 7, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, “Pentagon Weighs Strategy Change to Deter Terror,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Jason Sherman, “On Rumsfeld’s ‘Terms,’” *Air Force Magazine*, June 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Elaine Grossman, “Army, Marine Corps Seen as Early Winners in Quadrennial Review,” *Inside the Pentagon*, Aug. 18, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> For a time, the F-22 was designated F/A-22 (for fighter/attack). Both modes of reference are to the same airplane.

in on Sept. 11, 2001 and provide it with the means to deal with terrorism and the low-intensity conflicts that seem likely to dominate the coming years," the *Post* said. It criticized the plan for "spending tens of billions of dollars on three short-range airplanes, including the Air Force's gold-plated F/A-22, even though there is no threat to US air superiority from China or anyone else. Billions more are being thrown at next generation destroyers and aircraft carriers."<sup>35</sup>

Upon seeing an advance copy of QDR 2005, Ralph Peters, a retired Army officer turned newspaper columnist and television commentator, complained that "instead of beefing up the forces that do the actual fighting, the Pentagon self-justification process known as the 'Quadrennial Defense Review,' or QDR, is about to call for increasing the buy of the F/A-22, a pointless air-to-air fighter with a \$280 million-per-copy price tag, while acquiring high-tech destroyers designed to defeat a vanished Soviet Navy."<sup>36</sup>

Few of the outraged acknowledged that the F-22 already had been cut sharply, from an original plan for 750 aircraft to 648, then to 442 and 339 before settling, in QDR 2005, at a total of 183—too few to provide even a squadron's worth to each of USAF's Air and Space Expeditionary Forces.

According to Michele A. Flournoy, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy, a "Red Team" taking part in the review had proposed major program reductions.

"The review's generally modest program recommendations are contrasted with the more sweeping vision offered by a Pentagon-commissioned 'Red Team' tasked with bringing the QDR's increased emphasis on nontraditional chal-

lenges to its logical conclusion," Flournoy said. "The Red Team proposed a number of substantial changes for the US military of the future, including cutting tactical air forces by 30 percent, canceling the Navy's DDX future destroyer, delaying the Army's Future Combat Systems, developing conventional theater ballistic missiles to strike high-value targets rapidly, building fast sealift ships and nuclear submarines, and developing a new long-range bomber."<sup>37</sup>

### ***Selected Findings of QDR 2005***

QDR 2005 describes itself as "a snapshot in time of the department's strategy for defense of the Nation and the capabilities needed to effectively execute that defense."<sup>38</sup> The major findings are summarized below.

- The Global War on Terrorism will be a "Long War" that cannot be won only or even principally by military force. Currently the struggle is centered in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Irregular warfare is the dominant form of warfare confronting us. Future ground forces will be as proficient in irregular operations, including counterinsurgency and stabilization operations, as they are today in high-intensity combat.

- The QDR identifies four priorities: Defeating terrorist networks; defending the homeland in depth; shaping the choices of countries at strategic crossroads; and preventing hostile states and nonstate actors from acquiring or using weapons of mass destruction. These four "focus areas" are not the full range of activities the Department of Defense might have to conduct, but senior leaders regard them as "among the most pressing."

- The new force-sizing standard to replace 1-4-2-1 is based on the combined requirements for homeland defense, the war on terrorism, and conventional campaigns. The QDR retained the yardstick of fighting two major theater wars (now called "conventional campaigns") but with modifications. US forces will be structured for a surge capability to win two nearly simultaneous conventional campaigns and be prepared in one of those campaigns to remove a hostile regime and destroy its military capacity.

- By 2011, Army strength will be stabilized at 482,400 active duty (down 10,600 from current strength) and 533,000 in the reserve components. The Marine Corps will have an active force strength of 175,000 (down about 5,000 from the present level) and 39,000 in the reserve component. Air Force end strength will be reduced by 40,000 with "balanced cuts across the Total Force."

- Special operations forces will increase by 15 percent. Psychological operations and civil affairs will be expanded.

- The QDR redefines Total Force to include not only active and reserve military components but also civilian and contractor personnel. Reserve components will be "operationalized" to be "more accessible and more readily deployable." Their traditional Cold War role as a strategic reserve has become "less relevant" in the world of today.

- A number of findings affected the Air Force.

- The Air Force would be organized around 86 combat wings of various kinds.
- Joint air capabilities would be reoriented to favor greater range and persis-

<sup>35</sup> "Mr. Rumsfeld's Flawed Vision," *Washington Post*, Feb. 13, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Ralph Peters, "Betraying Our Troops," *New York Post*, Feb. 2, 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Michele A. Flournoy, "Did the Pentagon Get the Quadrennial Defense Review Right?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2006.

<sup>38</sup> QDR 2005, p. ix.



- tence, larger and more flexible payloads, and the ability to penetrate and sustain operations in denied areas.
- Long-range strike capabilities will be increased by 50 percent and the penetrating component of long-range strike will be increased by a factor of five by 2025. A new land-based long-range strike capability will be fielded by 2018.
  - Approximately 45 percent of the future long-range strike force will be unmanned.
  - The F-22 fighter program will be "restructured," stretching production out to FY 2010 (to abut Joint Strike Fighter production, which begins in 2011). The QDR did not change the supposedly provisional 2004 decision to reduce the program from 339 aircraft to 183.
  - Unmanned aerial vehicle coverage capability will be doubled with the acquisition of additional Predators and Global Hawks. An Air Force UAV squadron will be established under US Special Operations Command.
  - The C-17 airlifter procurement will be capped at 180. The additional strategic airlift will be 112 modernized C-5s.
  - The Department of Defense "is considering" a KC-X tanker-airlifter aircraft.
  - The E-10 intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance aircraft was reduced to a technology demonstration program; production was terminated.
  - Reduce the Minuteman III

ICBM fleet from 500 missiles deployed to 450.

- The Navy will "build a larger fleet that includes 11 carrier strike groups." That is one less carrier than the Navy has today.
- Deploy a precision guided conventional warhead on Trident SLBMs.
- Develop medical countermeasures against "the threat of genetically engineered bio-terror agents."
- Produce "follow-on roadmaps" in areas of particular interest, including: department institutional reform and governance, irregular warfare, building partnership capacity, strategic communications, and intelligence.

### Did the Process Work?

QDR 2005 got mixed reviews. There was considerable opinion that the decision to keep the process "resource neutral" prevented any chance of closing the gap between the declared strategy and the forces charged with carrying it out.

Thomas Donnelly, former editor of *Army Times*, now editor of *Armed Forces Journal*, and a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, said that the reviews were worthless and that the QDR should be discontinued.

"The Quadrennial Defense Review process, from 1993 until now, has utterly failed to do what it was intended to do: provide a link among strategy, force planning, and defense budgeting," Donnelly said. "Indeed, with every QDR, the situation has gotten worse; the ends-means problem has grown."<sup>39</sup>

According to Andrew Krepinevich, director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, "Independent estimates

conclude that over the long term, the defense program may be short some \$50 billion a year, a shortfall that will prove difficult to erase given the Administration's plans to cut the deficit in half by 2009."<sup>40</sup>

Fred Kaplan, writing for *Slate*, faulted Rumsfeld for the claim that "the QDR is not a programmatic or budget document" but rather a reflection of "the thinking of the senior civilian and military leaders of the Department of Defense."<sup>41</sup>

Pointing to the language of the law that established the QDR, Kaplan said that "lawmakers weren't interested in learning about the Secretary's 'thinking.' They wanted to know how his ideas and policies were related to actual programs and budgets."<sup>42</sup>

Barry M. Blechman offered a more positive evaluation. The QDR, he said, should be regarded as "a statement of intent" and that "critics who charge that the QDR offers nothing new are usually looking first for radical changes in modernization or force structure planning. While the latter constitutes an important consideration, it risks putting the cart before the horse. The first task of the QDR is to set strategic priorities in response to evolving national security circumstances. Accordingly, the QDR is a highly relevant document that codifies a number of shifts in strategic thinking."<sup>43</sup>

At *Air Force Magazine*, Editor in Chief Robert S. Dudley gave QDR 2005 a grade of "incomplete." Unlike previous QDRs, it gave no detailed information about the number and kind of forces to support the strategy.

"It could be that the Pen-

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Donnelly, "Kill the QDR," *Armed Forces Journal*, Feb. 1, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Krepinevich, "Old Remedies for New Evils," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 14, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> QDR 2005, preface.

<sup>42</sup> Fred Kaplan, "Rumsfeld Surrenders," *www.slate.com*, Feb. 3, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Barry M. Blechman, "Strategic Priorities in the 2006 QDR," *DFI Quarterly*, Spring 2006.

tagon is following an internal timetable and may yet provide complete force structure data,"

Dudney said. "That certainly would be a good thing, because without such information, it is

not possible to assess the Pentagon's power to carry out the national defense strategy."<sup>44</sup> ■

# 4 THE QDR AND STRATEGY

## *The challenge of non-traditional warfare*

The QDR is not strategy in any formal sense of the term. Strategy is found in other documents specifically labeled as such. The QDR is better thought of as a statement of policy that is consistent and interactive with strategy. The QDR also tends to be more readable than the official strategy products, which are written primarily for use by specialized audiences. The QDR dovetails with an established hierarchy of strategies, of which three are the most important:

- The National Security Strategy, prepared by the White House and signed out by the President.
- The National Defense Strategy, from the Department of Defense.
- The National Military Strategy, from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In addition, there are a number of special and targeted strategies. Currently, these include the National Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism, the National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the National Security Strategy for Victory in Iraq.

"The foundation of this QDR is the National Defense Strategy, published in March 2005," says

the introduction to QDR 2005. The QDR departs from that strategy in only one noted exception: the "refined force planning construct" that replaces 1-4-2-1, which was still in effect when the strategy was published.<sup>45</sup>

### **Shift in Emphasis**

Both the National Defense Strategy and the QDR postulate four kinds of "security challenges."<sup>46</sup>

■ **Irregular:** Terrorism, insurgency, and other forms of non-conventional conflict featuring "unconventional methods." This is a "strategy of the weak" and likelihood of occurrence is rated as "very high." Examples are Iraq and Afghanistan.

■ **Catastrophic:** Attacks that result instantaneously in unacceptable levels of destruction. Examples are Pearl Harbor and 9/11. Includes terrorists or rogue states employing weapons of mass destruction or producing "WMD-like effects." Likelihood is "moderate and increasing."

■ **Disruptive:** Development by competitors of technology, methods, or capabilities that would counter or cancel current US mili-

tary advantage. Likelihood rated as "low."

■ **Traditional.** Familiar forms of war fought by conventional forces in which the enemy is a state. Likelihood "currently decreasing due to historic capability-over-match competition."

Of these, QDR 2005 says, "irregular warfare has emerged as the dominant form of warfare confronting the United States, its allies, and its partners."<sup>47</sup> The challenges most likely to occur are the ones in which US vulnerability is lowest, and vice versa. This assessment is depicted on a matrix known as the "Quad Chart," which was widely used in QDR discussions and presentations, but which does not appear in the QDR itself.

The Quad Chart showed up regularly in the news. *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius called it "a powerful intellectual weapon" and "bad news" for the Navy and the Air Force because it "suggested that the imminent danger to America came from al Qaeda" rather than the kinds of war that justified their budgets.<sup>48</sup>

In actuality, the inverse relationship in war between the level

<sup>44</sup> Robert S. Dudney, "The QDR Has Landed, Sort Of," *Air Force Magazine*, March 2006.

<sup>45</sup> QDR 2005, p 38.

<sup>46</sup> Ryan Henry, Pentagon news briefing on QDR, Feb. 3, 2006; "Defense Transformation and the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review," *Parameters*, Winter 2005-06.

<sup>47</sup> QDR 2005, p 36.

of violence and the probability of occurrence is a familiar military concept. It was treated at length, for example, in the 1991 Joint Military Net Assessment.<sup>49</sup>

The threats on the Quad Chart overlap. As noted earlier in the National Defense Strategy, "Our adversaries in Iraq and Iran presented both *traditional* and *irregular* challenges. Terrorist groups like al Qaeda are *irregular* threats but also seek *catastrophic* capabilities. North Korea at once poses *traditional*, *irregular*, and *catastrophic* challenges."<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, the QDR does signal an important shift in emphasis and effort. "The traditional major combat operation is what we do best," said Ryan Henry, principal undersecretary of defense for policy and the Pentagon's point man on the QDR. "We are currently stronger than the foreseeable adversaries we would have to fight in that kind of war."<sup>51</sup> It was in other areas of capability where a push was needed most to align with the changing emphasis in strategy.

In a related change, prior to publication of the QDR, the Department of Defense declared stability operations to be a major military mission. "Stability operations are a core US military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support," the directive said. "They will be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DOD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning."<sup>52</sup>

The various national strate-

gies address the four priorities or most "pressing problems" identified by QDR 2005:<sup>53</sup>

- Defeating terrorist networks.
- Defending the homeland in depth.
- Shaping the choices of countries at strategic crossroads.
- Preventing hostile states and nonstate actors from acquiring or using WMD.

### Defeating Terrorist Networks

The National Security Strategy describes the war on terror as a battle of arms and ideas.

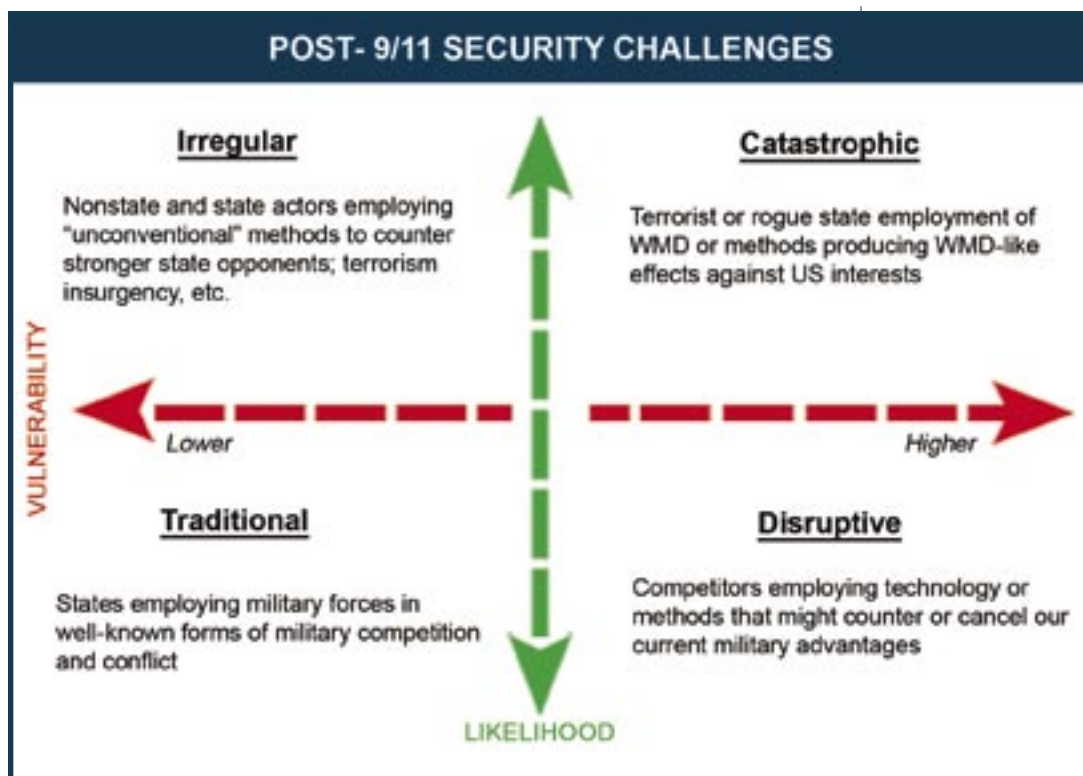
"In the short run, the fight involves using military force and other instruments of national power to kill or capture the terrorists, deny them safe haven, or control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to WMD; and

cut off their sources of support," the strategy says. "In the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas, for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims."<sup>54</sup>

The strategy recognizes that "the hard core of the terrorists cannot be deterred or reformed; they must be tracked down, killed, or captured. They must be cut off from the network of individuals and institutions on which they depend for support. The network must in turn be deterred, disrupted, and disabled by using a broad range of tools." The policy of the United States is to "make no distinction between those who commit acts of terror and those who support and harbor them."<sup>55</sup>

The National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism

The challenges most likely to occur—such as irregular warfare—are those in which US vulnerability is lowest. Those in which vulnerability is highest—such as "disruptive" challenges—are the least likely to occur. —Pentagon news briefing, Feb. 3, 2006



<sup>48</sup> David Ignatius, "Grand Vision Vs. Patchwork," *Washington Post*, Oct. 7, 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Military Net Assessment," March 1991, p. 1-8.

<sup>50</sup> National Defense Strategy, March 2005, p. 2.

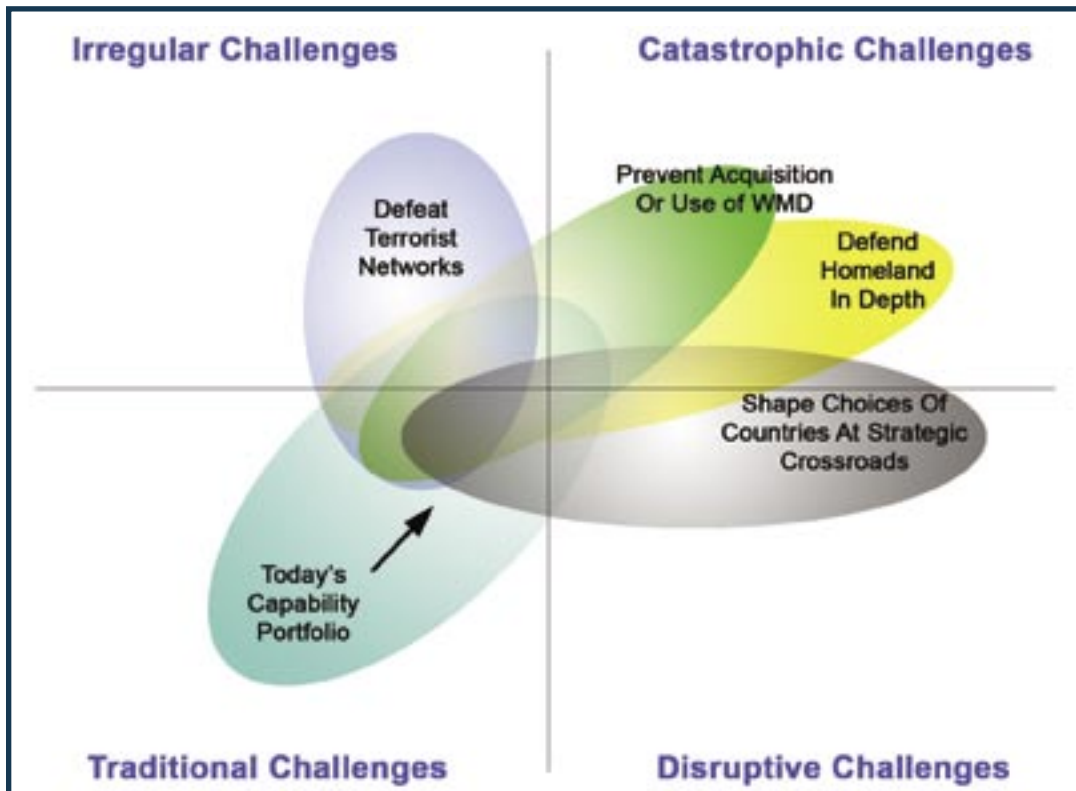
<sup>51</sup> Ryan Henry, *Parameters*, Winter 2005-06.

<sup>52</sup> "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations," Department of Defense Directive No. 3000.05, Nov. 28, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> QDR 2005, p. 3, 19.

<sup>54</sup> National Security Strategy, March 2006, p. 9.





As this diagram from the QDR shows, the Pentagon is shifting its portfolio of capabilities to address irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive challenges while sustaining capabilities to address traditional challenges.

identified nine "key functions, process, and resources" that terrorist networks need to operate and survive: leadership, safe havens, finance, communications, movement, intelligence, weapons, personnel, and ideology.<sup>56</sup> That presumably is the list from which special forces and others will develop their targets and operations.

QDR 2005 itemizes specific requirements for conducting the war on terror. Among these are: good intelligence; persistent surveillance to find and target the enemy; locating, tagging, and tracking terrorists in all domains, including cyberspace; special operations forces for direct action; multipurpose forces to train, equip, and advise indigenous forces; urban warfare capabilities; prompt global strike to attack fleeting enemy targets.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Defending the Homeland***

Since 9/11, defense of the American homeland has been a leading mission for the US armed forces. The problem, then and now, is that it is impossible to defend everything, everywhere, all of the time.

It has become a familiar story when Air Force fighters intercept airplanes flying in prohibited airspace or failing to properly identify themselves. It has been presumed that a hijacked airliner, if intercepted in time and unable to be diverted from its target, would be shot down. How realistically has the nation considered the probable reaction to and consequences of US fighters shooting down an airliner with hundreds of civilians aboard?

The National Defense Strategy restates the goal of taking the war to the enemy's territory: "Our

most important contribution to the security of the US homeland is our capability to identify, disrupt, and defeat threats early and at a safe distance, as far from the United States and its partners as possible."<sup>58</sup>

QDR 2005 says that the Department of Defense "will maintain a deterrent posture to persuade potential aggressors that their objectives in attacking would be denied and that any attack on US territory, people, and critical infrastructure (including through cyberspace) or forces could result in an overwhelming response. US forces must be capable of defeating threats at a distance and of swiftly mitigating the consequences of attack."<sup>59</sup>

Further complicating matters, homeland defense is a shared mission. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the Department of Homeland Security was seen as a bulwark against terrorism. Today, it has become a diversified bureaucracy whose priorities include natural disasters and illegal immigration problems that have little connection to terrorism.<sup>60</sup>

As the fears generated by the 9/11 attacks receded, politicians and local communities have begun to regard Homeland Security as a source of pork barrel funding. Among the projects for which money has been doled out were air-conditioned garbage trucks in Newark, N.J., traffic cones in Des Moines, Iowa, and defibrillators for high school basketball games in Tiptonville, Tenn. (Pop. 7,900). The city of Washington, D.C., spent some of its homeland security money on leather jackets for the police force and to develop an outreach rap song on emergency preparedness.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> National Security Strategy, March 2006, p. 12.

<sup>56</sup> National Military Strategic Plan for War on Terrorism, p. 5, p. 14-19.

<sup>57</sup> QDR 2005, p. 23-24.

<sup>58</sup> National Defense Strategy, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> QDR 2005, p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> For a summary of the Homeland Security agenda, see the speech by Secretary Michael Chertoff to the Heritage Foundation, March 20, 2006.

## Shaping the Choices

The third priority of the QDR, shaping the choices of countries at strategic crossroads, is to be addressed by a combination of strategies employing such approaches as diplomacy and security assistance. The QDR mentions three such countries by name.<sup>62</sup>

The QDR says that India is “emerging as a great power and a key strategic partner” and that “shared values” provide a basis for a cooperative relationship.

“Russia remains a country in transition,” the QDR says. “It is unlikely to pose a military threat to the United States or its allies on the same scale or intensity as the Soviet Union during the Cold War. ... Internationally, the United States welcomes Russia as a constructive partner but views with increasing concern its sales of disruptive weapons technologies abroad and actions that compromise the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of other states.”

Columnist Fred Kaplan says that “shaping the choices of countries at a strategic crossroads” is in the QDR because of China. “This is Pentagon-speak, these days, for countering the potentially loom-

ing threat of China,” he says.<sup>63</sup>

“Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional US military advantages absent US counter strategies,” the QDR says. “US policy remains focused on encouraging China to play a constructive, peaceful role in the Asia-Pacific region and to serve as a partner in addressing common security challenges, including terrorism, proliferation, narcotics, and piracy. US policy seeks to encourage China to choose a path of peaceful economic growth and political liberalization rather than military threat and intimidation.”

## Proliferation of WMD

The National Security Strategy—the revised version of which was published a month after the QDR—reconfirms the doctrine of pre-emption.

“There are few greater threats than a terrorist attack with WMD,” it says. “To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively in

exercising our inherent right of self-defense.”<sup>64</sup>

If possible, the WMD threat will be resolved by other means.

“Our strong preference and common practice is to address proliferation concerns through international diplomacy, in concert with key allies and regional partners,” the strategy says.

“If necessary, however, under long-standing principles of self-defense, we do not rule out the use of force before attacks occur, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. When the consequences of an attack with WMD are so devastating, we cannot afford to stand idly by as grave dangers materialize. This is the principle and logic of pre-emption. The place of pre-emption in our national security strategy remains the same. We will always proceed deliberately, weighing the consequences of our actions. The reasons for our actions will be clear, the force measured, and the cause just.”<sup>65</sup>

The strategy says that “we may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran,” primarily because of its continued efforts to obtain nuclear weapons<sup>66</sup> (emphasis added). ■

<sup>61</sup> “Handouts for the Homeland,” CBS News, April 10, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> QDR 2005, p. 28-29.

<sup>63</sup> Fred Kaplan, “Rumsfeld Surrenders,” *Slate*, Feb. 3, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> National Security Strategy, March 16, 2006, p. 17.

<sup>65</sup> National Security Strategy, p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> NSS, p. 20.

# 5 THE QDR AND FORCE STRUCTURE

## *Modifying the 1-4-2-1 standard*

The most contentious issue in the Bottom-Up Review and all three QDRs has been the force-sizing standard. How many wars should we be prepared to fight simultaneously? All of the reviews arrived at some variant of the same answer: US forces should be

in Asia, and (3) handle a regional contingency elsewhere, with planning emphasis on the Middle East.

The force never came close to meeting that ambitious two-war capability, and believing that a realistic objective would be of more

Caspar Weinberger rejected numerical two- or one-war strategies as “mechanistic” and adopted instead a no-number approach in which, he said, “our long-range goal is to be capable of defending all theaters simultaneously.”<sup>68</sup>

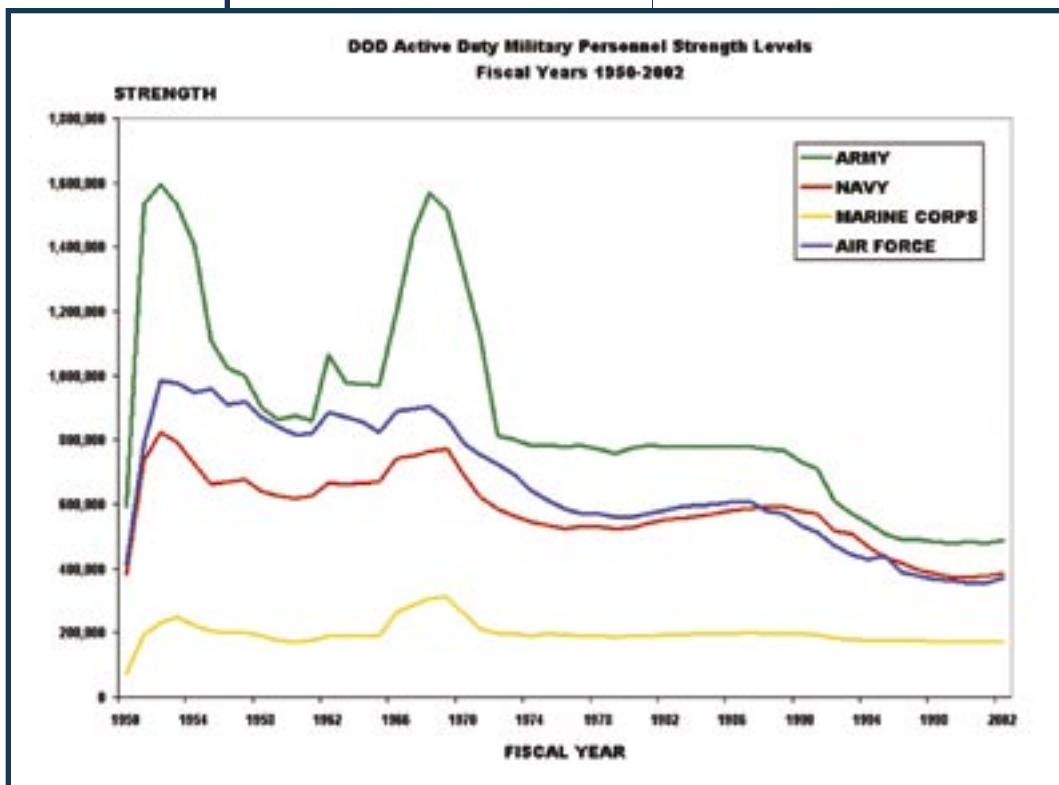
That was the policy until the Bottom-Up Review in 1993, when Secretary of Defense Les Aspin was desperately searching for a strategic concept that would work with his ill-fated decision to cut the defense budget before calculating the feasibility and consequences.<sup>69</sup>

Unable to get Congress to consent to anything less, Aspin chose as the force-sizing standard the capability to fight two major regional conflicts simultaneously. That standard, however, had nothing to do with the two-war strategy of the 1960s. In that formulation, the “half war” was a major regional conflict, specifically Vietnam. Aspin’s yardstick was equivalent to about a fifth of the standard from the 1960s.

In 1996, prior to Congressional creation of the Quadrennial Defense Review, there was a clamor in Washington to abandon the two-war standard on the grounds that it was excessive and unaffordable.<sup>70</sup> Upon further consideration, though, QDR 1997 kept the two-war standard and so did QDR 2001.

In 2004, the two-war standard was in question again. The Pentagon said it would be reconsidered in the upcoming QDR, and the rumor mill speculated that it would be dispensed with altogether.

In the summer of 2005, plan-



The decision to reduce US force levels at the end of the Cold War was not an altogether new direction. Except for an uptick during the Vietnam War, military strength levels had been falling since the Korean War.

able to fight two major regional conflicts at the same time.

This benchmark has a history that goes back more than 40 years. In the 1960s, the United States followed what was then called the “two-war strategy.” The specification was for a conventional force that could (1) conduct an initial 90-day defense of Europe against a Soviet attack, (2) simultaneously meet an all-out Chinese attack

value, the Nixon Administration in 1970 switched to a one-war strategy. The peacetime conventional force would be prepared for one major communist attack, either in Europe or in Asia, and a major regional contingency elsewhere.<sup>67</sup> Beyond that, the force would rely, as it had all along, on the nuclear deterrent to make up for what it lacked in conventional strength.

In 1982, Secretary of Defense

<sup>67</sup> Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown, 1979, p. 22-222.

<sup>68</sup> Jeffrey Record, *Revising US Military Strategy*, Pergamon-Brassey's, 1984, p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> John T. Correll, “The Legacy of the Bottom-Up Review,” October 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Correll, “Backing Up on Strategy,” *Air Force Magazine*, June 1996.



ners developed a three-part construct that gave roughly equal weight to homeland defense, the war on terrorism, and conventional warfare. The occasional shorthand reference for it was “1-1-1,” in contrast with the previous standard of 1-4-2-1.<sup>71</sup> It was illustrated by a graphic (which made its way into the published QDR report) called “the Michelin Man” because of its resemblance to the character in the tire ads.<sup>72</sup>

### The New Standard

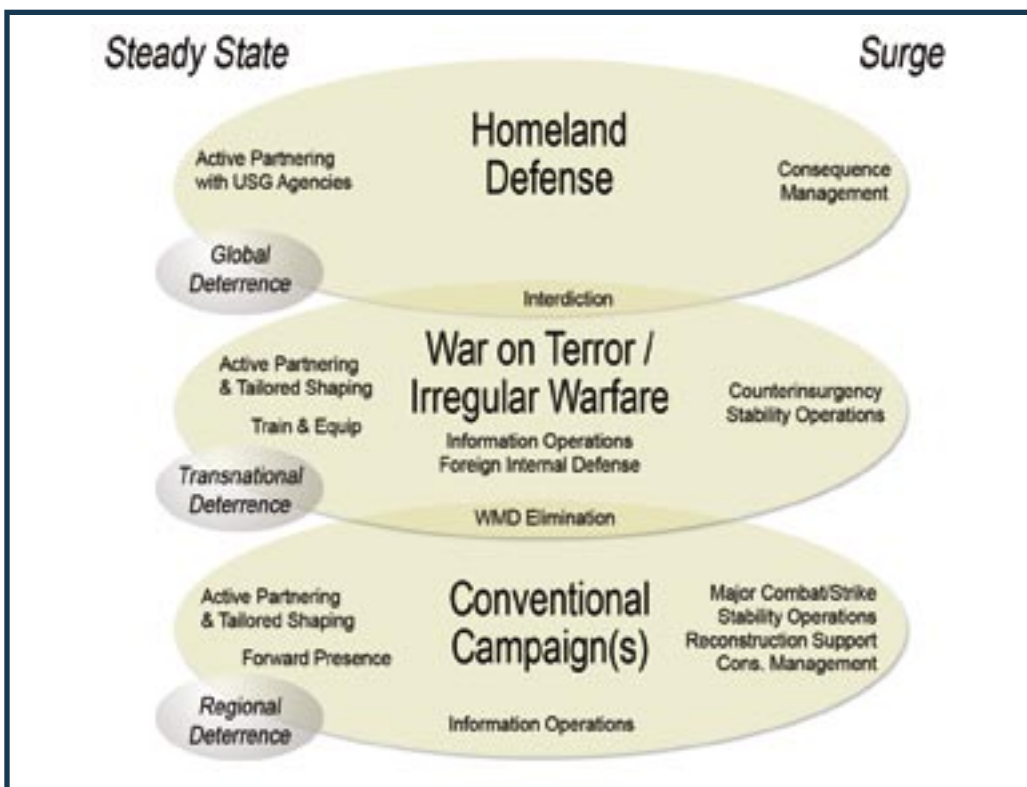
To the surprise of those who thought the two-conflict standard was done for, it survived again in QDR 2005, although in modified form. So did other major elements of the force-planning construct from QDR 2001.

“During this QDR, senior leaders confirmed the importance of the main elements of that force-planning construct: maintaining the ability to defend the US homeland; continuing to operate in and from forward areas; and above all, the importance of maintaining capabilities and forces to wage multiple campaigns in an overlapping time frame—for which there may be little or no warning of attack,” QDR 2005 says.<sup>73</sup>

“We clearly—I want to be very clear about this—we maintain the ability to handle two conventional campaigns nearly simultaneously,” Undersecretary Ryan Henry told reporters.<sup>74</sup>

(One difference is terminology. “Major regional conflicts” from the Bottom-Up Review became “major theater wars” in QDR 1997 and “conventional campaigns” in QDR 2005.)

Despite the similarities and holdovers from previous QDRs, the new force-planning construct represents a fundamental change. The size and structure of the force will be based on three “objective



areas”:

- Defend the homeland.
- Prevail in the war on terror and conduct irregular operations.
- Conduct and win conventional campaigns
- Both “steady state” and “surge” requirements will be established for each of these three focal points, and the main determinant for sizing the force will be the steady state requirement, which includes “Long War” operations against terror networks.

In the area of homeland defense, the steady state force will be structured to detect, deter, and if necessary defeat “external threats.” In surge conditions, the force would be prepared to contribute to the overall national response to a WMD attack or a catastrophic event, raising “the level of defense response in all domains (e.g., air, land, maritime, space, and cyberspace.”

In the war on terror, the steady state posture require-

ments include conducting “multiple, globally distributed irregular operations of varying duration.” In surge conditions, the force could conduct a large-scale, long-duration irregular warfare campaign with a level of effort comparable to the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Conventional campaign capabilities in their steady state would include presence missions, exercises, and maintaining readiness. Their surge capability would be to “wage two nearly simultaneous conventional campaigns (or one conventional campaign if already engaged in a large-scale, long-duration irregular campaign), while selectively reinforcing deterrence against opportunistic acts of aggression. Be prepared in one of the two campaigns to remove a hostile regime, destroy its military capacity, and set conditions for the transition to, or for the restoration of, civil society.”

Michele Flournoy, former

This graphic—dubbed “the Michelin Man” because of its resemblance to the character in the tire ads—is used in QDR 2005 to illustrate the new force-planning construct that replaces 1-4-2-1. Note that the Homeland Defense oval has top position.

<sup>71</sup> Jason Sherman, “The Two-War Strategy Begins to Fade Away,” *Air Force Magazine*, September 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Elaine Grossman, “Quadrennial Review Focus Turns to Homeland Defense as Top Concern,” *Inside the Pentagon*, Sept. 1, 2005.

<sup>73</sup> QDR 2005, p. 36.

<sup>74</sup> Ryan Henry, Pentagon news briefing on the QDR, Feb. 3, 2006.

deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy, observed that “perhaps the most innovative aspect of this new force-planning construct is that it puts both homeland defense and irregular warfare on an equal footing with conventional war fighting. Although homeland defense was first given prominence in the 2001 QDR and the 1-4-2-1 construct, this emphasis turned out to be more rhetorical than real. The new force-planning construct appears to unpack the military requirements of homeland defense in a bit more detail, but it stops far short of the specificity needed to adjust the mix of US military capabilities for this set of missions.”<sup>75</sup>

### Force Structure Questions

QDR 2005 leaves many questions unanswered. Previous QDRs had “put forward detailed force structure plans—fighter wings, strategic forces, bombers, land divisions and brigades, warships, submarines, and so forth,” *Air Force Magazine Online* said, but “the latest one, for some reason, does not contain such a chart. DOD provided only a few details about the or-

ganizational size of the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.”<sup>76</sup>

The review makes no sweeping changes in the size of the armed forces. The general conclusion is that force size is about right but that the mix of capabilities is disproportionately skewed toward conventional operations.<sup>77</sup>

The QDR provides some information about personnel strength, but that picture, too, is incomplete. The QDR says that Army active duty end strength will stabilize by 2011 at 482,400, which is down about 36 percent from 1990 level. It also says the Air Force total force will be cut by 40,000. USAF has said it will take 88 percent of the reductions in the active force,<sup>78</sup> which would put Air Force end strength at 319,000 in 2011, some 40 percent below 1990. Marine Corps strength in 2011 is projected at 175,000. The QDR did not state a projected strength or force reduction for the Navy.

The QDR introduces further ambiguity with its decision to “organize the Air Force around 81 combat wings (e.g., fighter, bomber, ISR/battle management/ command and control, mobil-

ity, air operations centers, battle-field airmen, other missions, and space/missile) with emphasis on leveraging reachback to minimize forward footprints and expedite force deployments.”<sup>79</sup>

The Air Force now has roughly 86 combat wings. However, the QDR prescription would spread the total out to include force structure in areas not traditionally counted as combat units. The number of future fighter and bomber wings is uncertain.

This new way of counting Air Force units is not compatible with decades of historical data, and the change complicates direct comparison of past and future force structure. It is unlikely that this is a coincidence.

The Pentagon was somewhat more forthcoming about changes for the Army. Rumsfeld said, “The centerpiece of the Army reorganization plan is a shift away from a structure based on large divisions—the ‘building block’ of the Army since World War I—into an active and reserve force configured into 70 more capable combat brigades and over 200 support brigades—all fully manned and fully equipped.”<sup>80</sup>

According to Undersecretary Henry, “We’re shifting 40,000 positions from the ‘institutional Army’ into the ‘operational Army,’ thereby increasing capability. Each of the new Army’s modular combat brigades has 46 percent more operational capability than a traditional brigade it replaces. So yeah, it’s possible to do more as the size of the force stays the same, or even as it gets smaller.”<sup>81</sup>

The QDR adds, “Joint ground forces will continue to take on more of the tasks performed by today’s special operations forces,” and that “future warriors will be as

### END STRENGTH IN THOUSANDS

	1990	2005	Change 1990-2005
<b>Total Active Duty</b>	2,065	1,389	-676
<b>Air Force</b>	535	354	-181
<b>Army</b>	731	493	-258
<b>Navy</b>	582	363	-219
<b>Marine Corps</b>	197	180	-17
<b>Selected Reserves</b>	1,128	821	-307
<b>Civilians (full-time equivalent)</b>	997	653	-334

SOURCE: *Air Force Magazine*

<sup>75</sup> Michele Flournoy, “Did the Pentagon Get the Quadrennial Defense Review Right?” *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2006.

<sup>76</sup> “The Missing Force Structure Chart,” *Air Force Magazine Online Daily Report*, Feb. 7, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Undersecretary Ryan Henry, Defense Writers Group, Feb. 8, 2006.

<sup>78</sup> “QDR Directs Air Force Future,” *Air Force Policy Letter Digest*, 2006.

<sup>79</sup> QDR 2005, p. 47.

<sup>80</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, FY 2007 Posture Statement, Senate Armed Services Committee, Feb. 7, 2006.

<sup>81</sup> James Kitfield, “War is the Best Time to Change,” *National Journal*, April 29, 2006.

proficient in irregular operations, including counterinsurgency and stabilization operations, as they are today in high-intensity combat.”

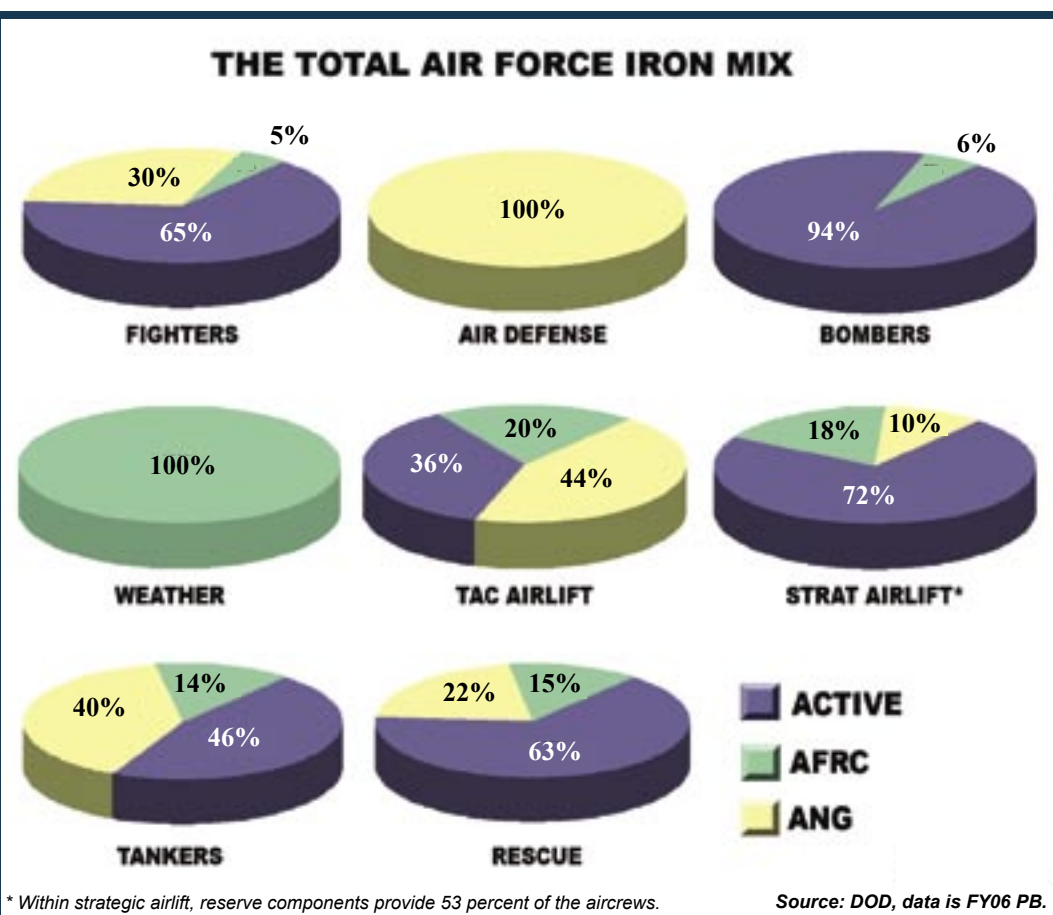
As “general-purpose joint ground forces take on tasks that special operations forces (SOF) currently perform, SOF will increase their capacity to perform more demanding and specialized tasks, especially long-duration, indirect, and clandestine operations in politically sensitive environments and denied areas.”

The headline change in force structure for the Navy is the reduction from 12 carriers to 11, which will be accomplished by retirement of the 38-year-old *John F. Kennedy*. The Navy, which once aspired to a 600-ship posture and came close to achieving it in the 1980s, has reached a low point of 281 ships. The plan, however, is to build back to a fleet size of 313.<sup>82</sup>

Flournoy noted that the implications for the ground forces differ from those for the Air Force and the Navy.

“This construct requires US ground forces to maintain essential warfighting capabilities but also pushes them to rebalance their mix of capabilities to place greater emphasis on meeting irregular challenges,” Flournoy said. “By contrast, the construct aims to maintain the focus of the Air Force and the Navy primarily, although not exclusively, on the capabilities needed to win the conventional wars of the future, including conflicts involving disruptive challenges such as a near-peer competitor’s efforts to deny the US military access to a region of interest or conflict.”<sup>83</sup>

In the opinion of defense analyst Max Boot, the ground forces were shortchanged on force structure. “The defense budget does not fund any expansion of



Army strength, and the QDR actually calls for shrinking the Army slightly over the next five years—from 491,000 active duty soldiers today to 482,400 in 2011,” he said. “That’s down from 710,000 soldiers in 1991!

“What gives? Why is the Pentagon still throwing money into high-tech gadgets of dubious utility while ignoring the glaring imperative for more boots on the ground?”<sup>84</sup>

### Total Force

In 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announced a “Total Force concept,” in which capabilities of the National Guard and Reserve were incorporated, along with those of the active forces, in all aspects of planning and budgeting. In 1973, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger upgrad-

ed the concept to the Total Force policy.

QDR 2005 broadens the definition of the Total Force to include not only the active and reserve military components but also civilians and contractors. The QDR cites “the need to rebalance military skills between and within the active and reserve components” and says that “joint force commanders need to have more immediate access to the Total Force.

“In particular, the reserve component must be operationalized, so that select reservists and units are more accessible and more readily deployable than today,” the QDR says. “During the Cold War, the reserve component was used, appropriately, as a “strategic reserve,” to provide support to active component forces during major combat operations. In

A significant portion of the Air Force’s aircraft are flown and maintained by its air reserve components. In two cases—stateside air defense and weather—the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve Command, respectively, are the sole source of iron. What these graphs do not show are the percent of Air Guard and Reserve air and ground crews that help fly and maintain active force iron. For example, within the strategic airlift category, reserve components provide 53 percent of the aircrews.

<sup>82</sup> Dave Ahearn, “Adm. Mullen Opposes Navy Fleet Less Than 281 Vessels,” *Defense Today*, Apr. 25, 2006.

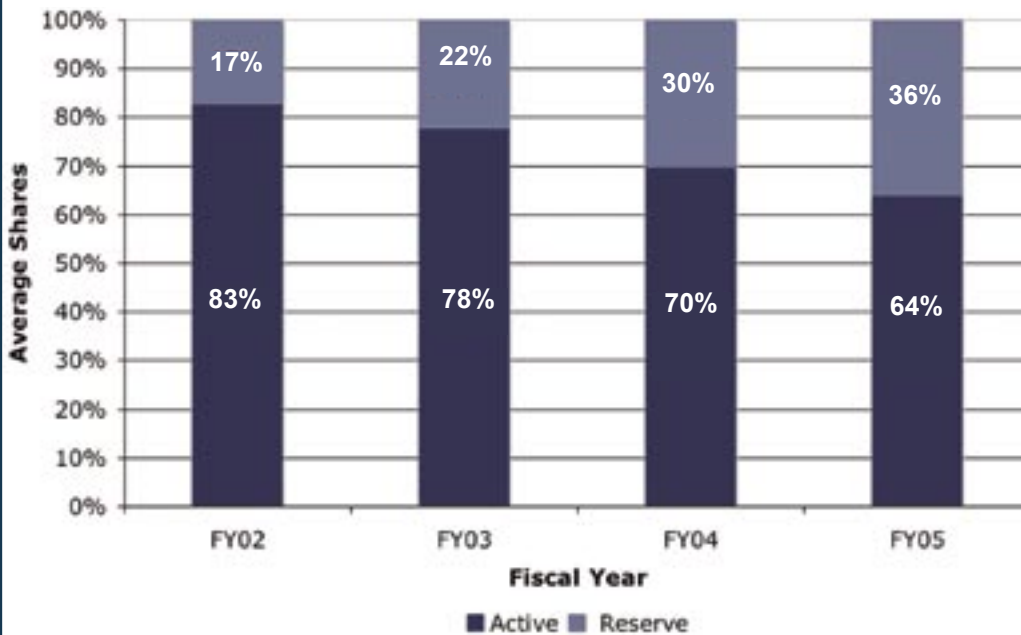
<sup>83</sup> Michele Flournoy, “Did the Pentagon Get the Quadrennial Defense Review Right?”

<sup>84</sup> Max Boot, “The Wrong Weapons for the Long War,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 8, 2006.



### TOTAL FORCE IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve Shares of Deployment



SOURCE: Congressional Research Service, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," April 24, 2006

The Guard and Reserve percentage of the forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan has increased steadily. In 2004 and 2005, the Defense Department has relied less on the use of reserve forces in Iraq while increasing their use in Afghanistan.

today's global context, this concept is less relevant."<sup>85</sup>

QDR findings on Total Force fed into a heated argument, already in progress, about the relationship of the active force and the National Guard. Guard units have three identities—as Total Force components of the military services, as elements of the National Guard, and as assets of their home states—that are sometimes in conflict.

As the armed forces diminished in size and closed bases and facilities, there were repeated clashes about the effect of the drawdown on Guard units. The Air Force was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the Total Force policy and had put a considerable part of its prime force structure into the Guard and Reserve. The partnership began to fray in 2005 as state governors and the National Guard Bureau bridled at actions proposed by

the Air Force for the reduction, reshaping, and relocation of Air National Guard units.<sup>86</sup>

The head of the National Guard Association of the United States said that in a drawdown, "the most expensive forces (the active component) should be sacrificed first, followed by the least expensive (the Guard and Reserve)."<sup>87</sup>

The Guard has always had considerable political clout, a combination of the interest by states in Guard affairs and a gen-

eral popularity and support in Congress. Extensive use of the reserve components in the war on terrorism has added to that leverage. In 2005, the Guard and Reserve accounted for 36 percent of the forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is not yet clear what the role of the reserves, especially the Army and Air National Guard, will be in the new Total Force. The National Guard caucus in Congress has proposed promoting the director of the Guard Bureau to four-star rank and giving him a seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A Congressionally chartered commission on the Guard and Reserve is plowing through a number of issues and is to report back by March 2007.

Meanwhile, there are signs that the Guard is adjusting to a different role. "The National Guard is no longer a strategic reserve from the Cold War era," Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, president of the Adjutants General Association, said at a press conference May 10, 2006. "From providing nearly one-half of the combat forces in Iraq last year to rapidly moving more than 50,000 citizen soldiers and airmen and their equipment to New Orleans and Mississippi to save the day, the National Guard is demonstrating again and again that it has become an operational reserve—a military force expecting to be called on frequently." ■

Thirty-five percent of the Air Force's current military strength is in Guard and Reserve. — Air Force budget briefing, Feb 6, 2006.

#### FY 2007 USAF TOTAL FORCE

	FY 07	Change from FY 06
<b>Military</b>	516,100	-16,500
Active	334,200	-17,600
Guard	107,000	+200
Reserve	74,900	+900
<b>Civilian</b>	167,184	+427

<sup>85</sup> QDR 2005, p. 75-77. QDR references to "reserve component" include both the National Guard and the Reserve.

<sup>86</sup> Rebecca Grant, "Total Force Turbulence," *Air Force Magazine*, Oct. 2005.

<sup>87</sup> Brig. Gen. Stephen M. Koper, USAF (Ret.), president of the National Guard Association of the United States, letter to Congress, Dec. 21, 2005.



# THE QDR AND THE AIR FORCE

*Is the Revolution in Military Affairs still on?*

# 6

At a budget hearing in March 2006, Sen. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) delivered a lecture to the Air Force Secretary and Chief of Staff.

"We're presently engaged in a global war and it's a long war," Burns said. "It isn't a war of air dominance. And frankly, we've never had a war of air dominance. Wars are won on the ground, as you well know. And this one is taking on a completely different character from anything we've ever faced before.

"Our success in Iraq and Afghanistan will be solely based on the success of those boots on the ground kind of operation. ... The senior leadership of the Air Force seems to be detached from the reality of what this operation is all about.

"The measure of every branch of the armed forces in this war is their ability to support the efforts on the ground. This is where I and many others part ways from the direction the Air Force seems to be going.

"The future of the Air Force is in the service to the mission on the ground. It is in support of our young corporals and sergeants engaged in the real fight. Unfortunately, it seems that many of the senior leaders [in the Air Force] are reluctant to recognize that waves of Russian fighters will not be coming over the horizon any time soon. The future of the Air Force is not the main effort of the fight, but it is that of a supporting arm."<sup>88</sup>

In a speech to the Association

of the US Army in 2003, Paul Wolfowitz, then the deputy secretary of defense, said, "For the record, let me state my own view, which I imagine is shared by almost everyone in this room: Wars are won by seizing and holding ground, and only ground forces can do that."<sup>89</sup>

Senator Burns and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz are hardly alone in proclaiming that wars are won on the ground, but the historical record is not very supportive of such an assertion.

When did the United States last win a war strictly on the ground? It certainly wasn't in Korea or in Vietnam or in the Persian Gulf. It wasn't in Serbia or Kosovo. Airpower had a leading role in the combat-intensive phases of the operations in Afghanistan and in Iraq. In World War II, ground forces were prominent, but airpower also had a share in the victory, most conspicuously in the Pacific where the atomic bombs brought the war to a close.

The fact is, wars are won by a combination of land power, airpower, seapower, and space power. Gratuitous claims that "wars are won on the ground" serve no purpose other than attempting to keep the Air Force in its place.

## **Ground Power Backlash**

Unfortunately, this belittling of airpower has a degree of influence in the Quadrennial Defense Review and other policy-making venues. When QDR 1997 acknowledged the Revolution in Military Affairs and the rising importance

of airpower, it led to a backlash from the ground forces.

The Army and the Marine Corps were already smoldering about a vision statement published in 1996 by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It had said, "With precision targeting and longer range systems, commanders can achieve the necessary destruction of enemy forces with fewer systems, thereby reducing the need for time-consuming and risky massing of people and equipment" and that in the future, there would be "less need to mass forces physically than in the past."<sup>90</sup>

The backlash had considerable strength. When the Joint Chiefs issued their next vision statement in 2000, the official view had been rolled back and now said that "the capability to rapidly mass force or forces and the effects of dispersed forces allow the joint force commander to establish control of the battlespace at the proper time and place."<sup>91</sup>

QDR 2001 was a bridge document. It reflected the experience of the 1990s with a superficial patch to include the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The ground power backlash aside, airpower had been highly instrumental in Gulf War I, in Bosnia, and in Kosovo. The evidence was not yet in on what airpower could contribute to the new war on terrorism.

Operation Enduring Freedom, the counteroffensive against al Qaeda, began Oct. 7, 2001 with air strikes in Afghanistan. Within weeks, a multitude of critics were

<sup>88</sup> Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, hearing on 2007 Air Force budget, March 29, 2006.

<sup>89</sup> John D. Banusiewicz, "Wolfowitz Asserts Value of Ground Forces, Touts Their Role in Joint Operations," American Forces Press Service, Oct. 8, 2003.

<sup>90</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Vision 2010," July 1996.

<sup>91</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Vision 2010," June 2000.

saying that the war was bogged down, that airpower was not working, that the enemy would hold on through the winter, and that our best hope was a ground offensive in the spring with as many as 250,000 US ground troops committed.<sup>92</sup>

The critics were wrong. When heavy bombers, assisted by US spotters on the ground, began hammering the front-line positions, the defenses crumbled. Afghan irregulars, supported by airpower and US special forces, swept south, and by November, were in control of most of the country.

Speaking at the Citadel in December 2001, President Bush said,

Fareed Zakaria, editor of *Newsweek International*, noted that after every successful use of airpower—in the Gulf, in Bosnia, and in Kosovo—"influential experts and journalists" were to explain that "what looks to the naked eye like victories produced by airpower were really—with some creative interpretation—victories from the ground." Zakaria predicted that we would soon hear that the results from Afghanistan have little to do with airpower.<sup>94</sup>

Zakaria was right. Before long, the "influential experts and journalists" had made their case so well that conventional wisdom was that fighting terrorism was the domain of ground forces and

its value. That has not been well remembered as columnists and commentators repeat the theme that airpower is marginally relevant to the changing demands of warfare.

### ***Again, Mixed Messages***

When QDR 2005 appeared, airpower detractors could take some satisfaction in the general philosophical tone and the emphasis it placed on irregular operations, especially local, personnel-intensive ground operations.

It does not live up completely to the prediction that it would be a "very infantry centered view of the future,"<sup>96</sup> but ground forces and operations were prominent in the report from beginning to end.

The QDR also downgraded several concepts that had been identified mainly with the Air Force and which had tended to disgruntle ground power advocates. QDR 2001 had prescribed a force that could "swiftly defeat" adversaries in two overlapping campaigns and "win decisively" in one of them. QDR 2005 said, "Operational end-states defined in terms of 'swiftly defeating' or winning decisively' may be less useful for some types of operations US forces may be directed to conduct."<sup>97</sup>

By the strict wording of the QDR, this finding applied only to "some types of operations," but more could be read into it, and was. Carl Conetta of the Project on Defense Alternatives, for example, called it "a remarkable (but welcome) retreat from the overconfidence of previous QDRs."<sup>98</sup> Those lines in QDR 2005 could be interpreted as shifting the official

### **BUDGET SHARES**

	2005	2006	2011
<b>Air Force</b>	29.3%	30.2	28.7%
<b>Army</b>	24.9%	24.1	24.9%
<b>Navy</b>	29.8%	29.8	29.8%
<b>Defense Agencies</b>	16.0%	15.8	16.6%

The QDR and other deliberations have not made a big change in the percentage shares of the services in the defense budget. The Air Force got the largest share in the early years of the Cold War, but the service percentages pulled closer to each other in the 1960s and have not varied greatly since then.

Sources: DOD, *Air Force Magazine*

"This revolution in our military is only beginning, and it promises to change the face of battle. Afghanistan has been a proving ground for this new approach. These past two months have shown that an innovative doctrine and high-tech weaponry can shape and then dominate an unconventional conflict."<sup>93</sup>

Thus, in the first major action of the war on terrorism, airpower took a leading role and proved to be of great value.

special forces and that airpower was of limited relevance. Wars are won on the ground.

In 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom toppled Saddam Hussein from power in a three-week offensive marked by exceptional joint force cooperation. According to Rumsfeld, the operation included "the most powerful and precise air campaign in the history of warfare."<sup>95</sup>

In the second major action of the war on terrorism, as in the first, airpower had demonstrated

<sup>92</sup> Michael O'Hanlon, "At the Pace of the Offensive, the Taliban Will Survive the Winter," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 26, 2001; Irving Kristol, "The Wrong Strategy," *Washington Post*, Oct. 30, 2001; Ronald Brownstein and Paul Richter, "Critics Say Air Power Alone Won't Suffice," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 31, 2001; Mackubin Thomas Owens, "The Case for Ground Troops," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 31, 2001; Molly Moore and Kamran Khan, "Big Ground Force Seen as Necessary to Defeat Taliban," *Washington Post*, Nov. 2, 2001.

<sup>93</sup> President Bush, speech at the Citadel, Dec. 11, 2001.

<sup>94</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "Face the Facts: Bombing Works," *Newsweek*, Dec. 3, 2001.

<sup>95</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, "Town Meeting" in Qatar, April 28, 2003.

<sup>96</sup> Elaine Grossman, "Army, Marine Corps Seen as Early Winners in Quadrennial Review," *Inside the Pentagon*, Aug. 18, 2005.

<sup>97</sup> QDR 2005, p. 36.

view a little further away from the Revolution in Military Affairs. In any case, it is reasonable to guess that such was the intention.

Despite all of this, QDR 2005 imposed less radical change than the critics had hoped for. It maintained the capability to conduct conventional warfare. It made no wholesale shift of end strength or resources from one service to another. It left key development programs alive, although reduced and stretched.

QDR 2005 directed the Air Force to put more attention on long-range strike capabilities. This was seen by some as timely criticism of too much Air Force emphasis on fighters and not enough on bombers. Forgotten in such characterizations is the time, 15 years ago, when the Air Force was pushing hard for a bomber program, the B-2, and was under savage attack—from some of the same factions that now want to kill fighter programs—for doing so. The B-2 program was cut from 132 aircraft to 21, and when the B-2 later performed with distinction in combat, questions arose about why the Air Force had bought so few of them.

The renewed push for long-range aircraft is a welcome development, but tactical aircraft such as the F-22 and the F-35 are of much greater value than depicted by the critics. Without air superiority, neither ground forces nor air forces will be able to operate against a significant enemy in hostile territory.

The Air Force is an ally, not a rival, of the ground forces. “The US Army is incapable of surviving, much less prevailing, without overhead cover provided by the Air Force,” said Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute. “It is myopic to think that money spent

AIR FORCE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND EQUIPMENT		
	1989	2004
Total Force military and civilian	1,031,000	718,000
Bases (major installations)	140	84
Aircraft	9,219	6,075

to control airspace somehow detracts from Army effectiveness. It makes Army effectiveness possible.”<sup>99</sup>

Contrary to a recurring theme in the op-ed columns, the requirement for stealthy tactical aircraft is not driven completely by the threat of enemy fighters. In order to break through air defenses and “kick down the door” for the joint force coming behind, aircraft must be able to defeat the vastly improved surface-to-air missiles that are proliferating everywhere.

The most recent Air Force posture statement said, “SAM systems are incorporating faster, more accurate missiles, with multitarget capability, greater mobility, and increased immunity to electronic jamming. Currently possessing ranges over 100 nautical miles (NM), these anti-access weapons will likely achieve ranges of over 200 NM by the end of the decade. These advanced SAMs can and will compel nonstealthy platforms to standoff beyond useful sensor and weapons ranges.”

In addition to that, the challenge from enemy fighters is not zero. “The threats from advanced fighter aircraft also continue to grow,” the posture statement said. “Currently there exist 31 nations already fielding 2,500 or more airframes. Countries like India and China are now able to produce their own advanced fighters, thereby increasing the quantity and quality of adversary aircraft

the Air Force may face in the future. By 2012, China will more than double its advanced fighter inventory to over 500 airframes, most with advanced precision-guided munitions and air-to-air weapons.”<sup>100</sup>

Prior to the QDR, the Air Force had announced plans to cut the fighter fleet by 25 percent and the overall aircraft fleet by 10 percent by 2015. The QDR specifically confirmed a reduction in the F-22 program from 381 aircraft to 183. In the opinion of analysts for *DFI Quarterly*, “it was a victory for the Air Force to prevent additional F-22A cuts.”<sup>101</sup>

In addition to the F-22 reduction, the Air Force wants to cut another 40,000 people, hold the C-17 airlifter program to 187 aircraft (instead of 222), reduce the ICBM fleet by 50 missiles, cancel production of the E-10 electronic aircraft, reduce the B-52 force, and retire a number of other systems early.

Nevertheless, airpower critics describe QDR 2005 as a victory for the Air Force at the expense of the more deserving forces. Ralph Peters, who bills himself as “a retired Army officer, strategist, columnist, and the author of 21 books,” is among the more outspoken.

“To identify an organization truly unwilling to change, we need look no further than Rumsfeld’s beloved Air Force,” Peters said. “Far from driving ‘transformation’ as he claims, the Defense

Maj. Gen. Ronald J. Bath, “America’s Air Force,” December 2004

<sup>98</sup> Carl Conetta, “QDR 2006: Do the Forces Match the Missions? DoD Gives Little Reason to Believe.” Project of Defense Alternatives, Feb. 10, 2006.

<sup>99</sup> Loren Thompson, testimony, House Armed Services Committee, Oct. 26, 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Secretary Michael W. Wynne and Gen. T. Michael Mosely, Air Force posture statement, House Armed Services Committee, March 1, 2006.

<sup>101</sup> Heather Schluckebier and Joshua Williams, “Force Structure Implications of the 2006 QDR,” *DFI Quarterly*, Spring 2006.

Secretary has continued to buy hyper-expensive, virtually useless aircraft that were conceived in the 1980s to combat the Soviet Air Force. Rumsfeld's Transformation program boils down to re-

ducing our ground forces—the soldiers and marines who rescued him from a fiasco in Iraq, where progress has been made despite his incompetence—in order to send massive welfare checks

to the defense industry.”<sup>102</sup> Retired Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales, former commander of the Army War College, complains that defense budgets reflect a “love affair with aerial killing.”<sup>103</sup> ■

# 7

## IN THE WAKE OF THE QDR

### *Observations, Questions, and Conclusions*

QDR 2005 got quite a few things right. The new capabilities it prescribed were well conceived, especially the increase in special operations forces, the next generation long-range strike aircraft, and the proficiency in irregular warfare.

The QDR recognized, fully and rightly, that dealing with worldwide terror networks requires forces, methods, and tools that we do not yet possess.

At the same time, the QDR resisted the pressure, which was considerable, to base US military posture on the short term and on a single threat. The 9/11 attacks introduced a new threat, but that did not mean the old threats had disappeared. The other challenges, surveyed in depth and confirmed by QDR 2001 a few months before the terrorist attacks, did not go away.

Following its charter to take a 20-year perspective, QDR 2005 struck a balance between new and

immediate needs of the Global War on Terrorism and the continuing requirements for capabilities across the spectrum of conflict.

For the fourth time, Pentagon planners wrestled with the “two-war strategy” question and came up again with the same answer. Like the Bottom-Up Review and the previous QDRs in 1997 and 2001, this QDR concluded that the force needs to be sized and structured to handle some variation of two regional conflicts simultaneously.

However, the main message of QDR 2005 was one of change, not of continuity and balance. The headline was the shift in emphasis from traditional conflict to irregular conflict, seen as the “dominant form of warfare” now confronting the United States and its allies.

#### ***Repeating the Flaw***

Unfortunately, QDR 2005 has the same basic flaw as the two previous QDRs. It was decided ahead

of time that the outcome would be “revenue neutral.” Financial constraint was not the only principle that guided QDR deliberations, but it was significant enough to prevent an uncluttered analysis of national security needs.

The defense program currently costs 4.0 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. The President and the Pentagon say the nation is at war, but this is not a wartime allocation of resources. At the peak of World War II, the nation spent 34.5 percent of GDP on the war effort. In the Korean War, it was 11.7 percent of GDP, and 8.9 percent in the Vietnam War. Even the short Gulf War of 1991 was allocated 4.6 percent of GDP.<sup>104</sup>

The fears and commitment so prevalent in the days following the 9/11 attacks have faded with time. There are dark hints from Congress that the budget is not “unlimited.” The *Wall Street Journal* reports that “the Pentagon’s days of open checkbooks are numbered.”<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Ralph Peters, “Hawks for Dissent,” *Washington Monthly*, June 2006.

<sup>103</sup> Maj. Gen. Robert Scales (Army, Ret.), “Military Strategies: Boost Ground Forces, Rethink Air Transport,” *Washington Times*, Apr. 20, 2006.

<sup>104</sup> Pentagon news briefing on FY 2007 Defense budget, Feb. 6, 2006.



We will not know for certain about adequacy of the force until it is tested in actual conflicts of the future. It is also difficult to make analytical judgments because of the lack of specificity in the QDR about force structure. Even so, 4.0 percent of GDP—if that is what is meant by “unlimited”—is cutting it short.

“The Bush Administration plans a large-scale modernization effort in the coming years, the first in over two decades,” said Andrew Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. “Yet it also proposes to reduce defense spending toward the end of this decade, in part by holding down spending on personnel.”

In the QDR, Krepinevich said, “the tough choices were deferred, raising doubts whether the existing defense program could be executed, let alone one including initiatives to address new threats.”<sup>106</sup>

With stability operations coming on line as a priority supposedly equal to that of combat operations, the Pentagon should not expect to save much money by reducing the force, which is already stressed.

For its part, the Air Force is headed for an active duty personnel strength 40 percent below the 1990 level and is still cutting systems. Summing up, *Air Force Magazine* Editor in Chief Robert Dudley said, “The upshot of the QDR, then, is that the Air Force of future years will be smaller and less capable than it otherwise would be.”<sup>107</sup>

### ***The Danger of Overcorrecting***

The QDR says that irregular warfare, terrorism, and insurgency have become the dominant forms of warfare. To the extent that “dominant” means most frequent, that is probably true.

It is worth remembering,

though, that since 9/11, there have been two major offensives in the Global War on Terrorism. In both cases—Afghanistan and Iraq—large numbers of forces were committed, and the operations culminated in regime changes in established states. Both operations resembled conventional conflict at least as much as they did irregular warfare.

Furthermore, as the QDR “Quad Chart” exercise reminded us, irregular warfare is not the threat posing the greatest danger. Those in charge of implementing the QDR must avoid overcorrecting. The kind of conflict likely to occur most often needs emphasis, but the strategy should not veer too far away from the threats to which the nation is most vulnerable.

The QDR says specifically that the single biggest threat to the United States is Iran. China, North Korea, and the Hamas regime in Palestine are also potential problems. All of them are formal states, with governments, capitals, and organized armed forces.

The idea of military operations other than war is not new. It achieved something like a cult following in the 1980s. Indeed, strategic results can sometimes be achieved by nonlethal means. The Berlin Airlift, which broke the Russian blockade of Berlin in 1948, is the classic example.

However, it is essential to take care in reorienting combat forces to noncombat functions such as nation building, stability operations, and peacekeeping. Military operations other than war involve different attitudes and approaches than combat. The armed forces should not be refocused too far in that direction.

### ***Poisoning the Debate***

The United States is the only nation with a true capability for

global reach and global power. As crises arise in both the traditional and irregular realms, the United States will have to take the lead in resolving them. No other nation can—or will.

To do that, we need strong ground forces and special forces. We also need seapower, airpower, and space power. The idea that we can dispense with any of these is a delusion.

Unfortunately, the debate following the QDR is being poisoned by a corrosive attack on airpower. One fork of this attack is the claim that “wars are won on the ground.” This assertion is repeated over and over, apparently without much thought. An examination of the past 75 years will find that no recent US war has actually been “won on the ground.” World War II came closest, and airpower and seapower had a lot to do with the victory then.

Those who denigrate airpower in order to promote ground power do no service to their country.

Another fork of the attack on airpower has the aim of killing aircraft development programs—the F-22 and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter mainly—that the critics oppose.

We would do well to remember the track record of the opponents of airpower modernization programs. They said the C-5 airlifter was a lemon, a hopelessly flawed development; that the F-15 fighter was “too complicated;” that the E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) was “an airplane without a mission;” and that the B-2’s stealth coating would melt in the rain and that the aircraft would be incapable of the global strike mission. All of these aircraft turned out to be outstanding assets of great value to the nation.

The critics like to say that cer-

<sup>105</sup> Jackie Calmes, “Pentagon’s Blank Check May Be Withdrawn,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 10, 2006.

<sup>106</sup> Andrew Krepinevich, “Old Remedies for New Evils,” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 14, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Robert S. Dudley, “Battle Damage From the QDR,” *Air Force Magazine*, January 2006.

tain kinds of aircraft—fighters are targeted at the moment—are no longer relevant. We should bear in mind that in the 1930s, some theorists said the bomber had made the fighter obsolete. In the 1960s, it was said that the ICBM had made the bomber obsolete. As recently as 1992, Pentagon officials were asked by Congress who the B-2 could possibly be used to bomb.

### ***Long War, Long View***

During the Cold War, threat-based planning prevailed in the Pentagon. The most serious threat was the military power of the Soviet Union, and everything else was a “lesser included case.” After the Cold War ended, threat-based planning was less useful because it was less clear who the adversary might be and what kind of confrontation might occur.

QDR 2001 introduced the concept of “capabilities-based planning,” which did not try to figure out when and where the next conflict might occur but concentrated instead on the capabilities that possible adversaries had or might obtain. QDR 2005 confirmed capabilities-based planning.

Some critics of the QDR would like to return to threat-based strategy. In their view, the threat is clear: It is global terrorism, and the defense program should be structured to deal with that, not with some unknown threat years away that might never materialize.

Ryan Henry, the point man for the QDR, explained why the armed forces cannot key on a single threat. “Within the next decade, US forces will be engaged somewhere in the world where they’re not engaged today,” Hen-

ry said. “We’re clueless on where that’s going to be, when that’s going to be, or in what manner they’re going to be engaged.”<sup>108</sup>

Like the critics of airpower modernization, those who doubt the occurrence of traditional conflict have parallels in history. In 1938, a *Time* Magazine cover story surveyed the prospects of US involvement in a foreign war, decided it was unlikely and said:

“This fiscal year, the US Army is costing \$492,896,735, a record peacetime high. Since the US is determined not to fight abroad and does not expect to have to fight at home, the public may well ask whether its half-billion dollars is serving any purpose except to keep up with the Joneses of Europe and Asia. Where, how, and for what does the US Army expect to fight?”<sup>109</sup>

Three years later, *Time* got its answer. ■

<sup>108</sup> Ryan Henry Defense Writers Group, Feb. 8, 2006.

<sup>109</sup> “Arms Before Men,” *Time*, Aug. 22, 1938, p. 23.

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