

SOLDIERING IN PERSISTENT CONFLICT: WINNING TODAY, STAYING READY FOR TOMORROW

BY

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The United States has unmistakably found itself embroiled in two long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. From the Soldiers' viewpoint, these conflicts are unlike any our Country has seen in its history. Most of our previous long wars were fought by draftees who served either until the war was won or their conscriptions expired. To the present day Soldier in an all-volunteer force, going home is only a temporary condition. Many Soldiers are required to redeploy in approximately one year, either with the same unit or a new one. This revolving door deployment cycle has had major impacts on Soldiers, families, and the United States Army as an institution. This essay will examine the 'human implications', both positive and negative, of the persistent conflicts that we currently face. It will focus on the effects on Soldiers and their ability to sustain current operations. It will explain the impact on the United States Army and make recommendations on how to potentially address these issues by mitigating the negative implications and capitalizing on the positive.

SOLDIERING IN PERSISTENT CONFLICT: WINNING TODAY, STAYING READY FOR TOMORROW

There has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited.

—Sun Tzu¹

The United States has unmistakably found itself embroiled in two long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. From the Soldiers' viewpoint, these conflicts are unlike any our country has seen in its history. Most of our previous long wars were fought by draftees who served either until the war was won or their conscriptions expired. Soldiers trained for the conflict at hand, without concern for any future conflicts. To the present day Soldier, in an all-volunteer force, going home is only a temporary condition. Many Soldiers are required to redeploy in approximately one year, either with the same unit or a new one. This revolving door deployment cycle has had major impacts on Soldiers, families and the United States Army as an institution. This essay will examine the 'human implications', both positive and negative, of the persistent conflicts that we currently face. It will focus on the effects on Soldiers and their ability to sustain current operations. It will explain the impact on the United States Army and make recommendations on how to potentially address these issues by mitigating the negative implications and capitalizing on the positive.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

The 'human implications' of persistent conflict on Soldiers is a wide ranging area that a paper of this scope and length could not possibly completely address. However, it is worth attempting to identify those key issues that do pertain to the subject in order to properly understand the environment in which United States Army Soldier is currently

serving. In categorizing these 'human implications', they seem to naturally fall into three categories that we might conveniently title based on the famous Clint Eastwood 1966 spaghetti western, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

The Good. Conflict by its very nature is almost always defined in negative terms. Few would argue with the assertion that in the human consequences of war, particularly long wars, the negatives far outweigh the positives. However, it would be foolish of the strategic leadership of the United States military not to recognize that some good does come out of persistent conflict in order to make the most of the current situation. After eight long years of conflict the all volunteer United States Army has managed to fill its ranks with arguably more combat experienced Soldiers than it has ever had. Soldiers are not only experienced in basic war fighting skills, but also all of the complex issues that surround counterinsurgency warfare. The decentralized nature of the battlefield has placed greater responsibilities on junior leaders and Soldiers, giving them greater confidence and resilience. These long wars have created a more adaptable, intelligent and dedicated force than the U.S. Army has ever placed on the field of battle.

Even in the associated trauma of war, some positive trends are emerging. According to Brigadier General Rhonda Cornum, director of the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program "Research appears to show that many people can emerge from traumatic experiences with greater self-confidence, a keener sense of compassion and appreciation for life."² BG Cornum is uniquely qualified to lead this endeavor as she was an Army captain and flight surgeon aboard a Black Hawk helicopter shot down over Iraq in 1991. Five of seven soldiers in the Black Hawk died while she suffered two broken arms and a gunshot wound to the shoulder. Additionally, she was captured with two

others and held for eight days.³ Sergeant First Class Gregory Frikken, a Soldier in the 10th Mountain Division, has deployed three times to Iraq and Afghanistan. Although he feels that the deployments have robbed him of precious time with his family, he also concedes that he has gained a sense of personal strength, appreciation for life and love of family.⁴ Cornum and other experts call this concept post-traumatic growth.⁵

Strategic Leaders in our Armed Forces must clearly understand the positive effects of persistent conflict and combat in general. Their task is to harness the momentum of these implications and direct them into constructive results for the future of the military.

The Bad. While the average United States Army Soldier is constantly improving skill sets in the area of counterinsurgency warfare due to Iraq and Afghanistan, other skills are experiencing atrophy at an alarming rate. The U.S. Army must address the requirement to balance the force in training, readiness and force structure in such a way that Soldiers can win the current fights while maintaining the capability to win future conflicts. This issue is paramount to the strategic success of the United States. It is where much of this essay will concentrate.

The Ugly. “War is hell.” When or whether or not General Sherman said it, is not relevant.⁶ What is very relevant is that it is just as true today as it was in the Civil War. The psychological, physical, and emotional toll on Soldiers after eight years of persistent conflict has been played out in the media for the entire World to see.

The United States Army finds itself in uncharted territory for suicides. “The 2008 numbers were the highest annual level of suicides among soldiers since the Pentagon began tracking the rate 28 years ago. The Army said 128 soldiers were

confirmed to have committed suicide in 2008, and an additional 15 were suspected of having killed themselves. The statistics cover active-duty soldiers and activated National Guard and Reserves.”⁷

Col. Kathy Platoni, chief clinical psychologist for the Army Reserve and National Guard, stated that “multiple deployments, stigma associated with seeking treatment and the excessive use of anti-depressants are ongoing concerns for mental-health professionals who work with soldiers. Those who are seeking mental-health care often have their treatment disrupted by deployments. Deployed soldiers also have to deal with the stress of separations from Families.”⁸

The ‘ugly human implications’ of persistent conflict is also evident in the rising number of Soldiers identified with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. “By one estimate, more than 300,000 of the nearly 2 million U.S. servicemen and -women deployed since 9/11 suffer from the often-debilitating condition, with symptoms that include flashbacks and nightmares, emotional numbness, relationship problems, trouble sleeping, sudden anger, and drug and alcohol abuse.”⁹ Researchers at Stanford University feel this number could climb to over 500,000 in the next few years.¹⁰ Retired General Shinseki, the newly appointed Secretary of Veteran’s Affairs (VA), has made PTSD a priority, with efforts underway to address concerns from the way claims are processed to the development of new, more effective treatments.¹¹ However, there is still the problematic issue of getting veterans to accept treatment. “As many as seven in 10 veterans refuse mental-health treatment even when it is offered, according to a 2008 study by the RAND Corporation. Further complicating matters is the fact that there is no universally accepted ideal treatment for PTSD.”¹²

The strain can be found in the sky rocketing divorce rates in the Army. The Army divorce rate among active-duty soldiers in 2008 was 3.5 percent, up from 3.3 percent the year before.¹³ “An Army spokesperson attributed the rise in divorces to frequent

deployments and relocations. Long deployments require the spouse left behind to do the work of managing and raising a family alone.”¹⁴ The divorce rate has shown a steady increase since 2001.¹⁵

As of 30 October, 2009, the United States Military has had 36,222 personnel wounded in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts of which 16,616 were serious enough that they could not be returned to duty in the first 72 hours.¹⁶ While advances in medical science have performed miracles on the battlefield saving lives, many of the wounded warriors suffer from horrific injuries requiring long periods of recovery and rehabilitation. Some would say that the U.S. Military was unprepared for the volume of wounded warriors that the persistent conflicts have created. “Among other things, the Army failed to anticipate a flood of wounded soldiers. Some transition units have been overwhelmed and are thus severely understaffed. At Fort Hood, Texas, last month, staff members found 1,362 patients in a unit authorized for 649 — and more than 350 on a waiting list.”¹⁷

Finally, there is the ugliest of all ‘human implications’ arising from the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. That would be the thousands of Soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Not to mention the tens of thousands of family members whose lives are forever changed due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; the children who will never know their mother or father; the parents who have had to bury a child before their life had even really begun. What of the brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends who will live the rest of their lives with a void created by these conflicts?

The magnitude of these ‘ugly human implications’ is enormous and mainly falls outside of the range of this paper. Nevertheless, it is important to identify them as they

are a key element in truly understanding the current environment. The United States Army has already done much to address these issues, but it has much more to accomplish. However, many of these issues are either created or exasperated by the stress on the force. The overarching issue in addressing the stress placed on the United States Military for the strategic leadership of the United States Armed Forces is that of end strength. Does the United States Army have the right end strength to win in Iraq and Afghanistan while staying ready to fight tomorrow's conflicts?

The list of 'human implications' caused by persistent conflict is probably infinite. However, the aforementioned cover many of the main issues and help identify three strategic issues that must be addressed by leaders in the United States Army.

- How to best exploit the positive effects of persistent conflict.
- How to balance the training, readiness and force structure to win the current conflicts and stay ready for the future.
- How to achieve and maintain the proper end strength to reduce stress on the force now and in the future.

Accentuating the Positive

As previously stated, the United States Army has filled its ranks with experienced, adaptable, confident and caring Soldiers due to the persistent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The question then becomes, so what? How does the United States Army as an institution capitalize on this fact?

One of the main objectives should be to recognize this fact, and account for it when Soldiers are no longer deployed. Soldiers and junior leaders are constantly frustrated when they are given an enormous amount of trust and responsibility while

deployed to combat, only to return to a garrison environment where much of that trust and responsibility is taken away. Out-dated regulations and overcautious senior leaders combine to dampen the positive effects of combat to the point that they are lost or minimized. This is not to say that the safety and health of Soldiers should be needlessly jeopardized, but that leaders should take every opportunity to ensure Soldiers and junior leaders are given as much responsibility as possible during training and in maintaining their own readiness.

Another method for maintaining the positive effects of combat is to use the British Army's model for adventurous training. The stated aim of Adventurous Training by the British Army is to develop leadership skills and military performance.

Adventurous Training (AT) is a valuable addition to formal military training, helping support the values and standards of the British Army. When properly conducted it enhances an individual's ability to withstand the rigors of operations and rapid deployments. The Aim of military AT is to develop, through authorized challenging pursuits and within an outdoor environment, leadership and the qualities necessary to enhance the performance of military personnel during peace and war.¹⁸

This type of training would be instrumental in enhancing the confidence and adaptability that Soldiers return with from combat. The United States Army has developed a modified version of adventure training called *Warrior Quest*. However, the stated aim of this program is to help redeploying Soldiers avoid accidents and make the adjustment from a high-paced, high-adrenaline combat environment to garrison or "home" life.¹⁹

"Warrior Adventure Quest combines existing high-adventure outdoor recreation activities such as skydiving, paintball, ropes courses, rock climbing, mountain biking, stock car racing, skiing, and others, with Battlemind training to help Soldiers make the adjustment back to a calmer paced lifestyle."²⁰ Due to the programs highly structured and controlled environment, it may actually counter some of the positive impacts of

combat. At a minimum, it does very little to develop them, as its stated goal amounts to trying to return Soldiers back to a pre-deployment mindset.

What this all really amounts to is that the United States Army needs to fundamentally change the way it does business in a garrison environment. Senior Leaders need to recognize that the current persistent conflicts have changed the force in some positive ways and these changes need to be understood and incorporated into the United States Army as an institution.

Balancing the Force

The issue of balancing the United States Army so that it can win the current fight, while simultaneously preparing for future conflicts is not lost on United States Military Strategic Leaders. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, when outlining the Fiscal Year 2010 Defense budget, stated that one of his three main objectives was to “rebalance this department’s programs in order to institutionalize and enhance our capabilities to fight the wars we are in today and the scenarios we are most likely to face in the years ahead, while at the same time providing a hedge against other risks and contingencies.”²¹ General George W. Casey, Jr., the Army Chief of Staff, stated during a speech to the National Press Club, “our immediate challenge is to balance the current demands on the all-volunteer force with the need to transform and to build readiness for the future.”²² Yet, what follows in both cases is a list of programs to be cut or added, or new technology to be developed. What is the United States Army doing to prepare *Soldiers* for future conflicts?

Steven M. Jones points out that, “the human dimension, not technology, remains the decisive element in most commercial and military activities.”²³ This is clearly evident to the United States Military as seen in the Defense Science Board *Task Force Training*

For Future Conflicts Final Report 2003, which stated, “Our Military is transforming for the future. The emphasis so far has been upon new weapons systems and new operational doctrine. This emphasis is a natural result of hardware’s visibility. Largely unexplored, however, are the human consequences of this emerging transformation.”²⁴ Most Soldiers return from deployment, go through a period of regeneration, followed by a training cycle focused entirely on deployment back into counterinsurgency operations. Even the U.S. Army’s Combined Training Centers (CTCs) are completely focused on providing a “Capstone” exercise in order to certify Units prior to Iraq or Afghanistan. While clearly the United States Army’s priorities must be to win the current conflicts, Strategic Leaders must also be preparing Soldiers for potential future wars.

Hybrid Warfare. Of course, this falls into the proverbial ‘easier said than done’ category. By anyone’s definition, this issue would be considered a very wicked problem indeed. Preparing United States Army Soldiers for future conflicts would be much easier if one could predict the future. Arthur C. Clarke tells us that, “It is impossible to predict the future, and all attempts to do so in any detail appear ludicrous within a few years.”²⁵ History also shows us it is very hard to do, and particularly with the military, it always seems to be preparing for the last war instead of the next. Predicting the future is not possible, but tools such as trend monitoring, scanning, and scenarios are very useful in assisting leaders with developing vision and strategy about future conflicts.²⁶ These tools were essential in the United States Department of Defense developing its outline concept of future war in the soon to be released Quadrennial Defense Review. “The Pentagon will adopt a new strategy that for the first time orders the military to anticipate that future conflicts will include a complex mix of conventional, set-piece

battles and campaigns against shadowy insurgents and terrorists, according to senior officials.”²⁷ Senior officials have declared that this so called ‘hybrid’ warfare is the way of the future.²⁸ This strategy in effect will require the United States Army to be prepared to deal with a spectrum of possible threats from high intensity conflict conventional threats to cyber wars. This ‘be ready for everything’ strategy for future conflicts has broad implications for Soldier training and readiness that does not yet seemed to have been addressed.²⁹

Finding the Right Model. When searching for an appropriate strategic decision making model to develop a strategy that addresses the issue of how to best train and prepare United States Army Soldiers for future conflicts, one must first define the potential ways, means and ends of the strategy. Given that the U.S. Department of Defense strategic leaders have decided on ‘hybrid’ warfare as the future, one could evidently make the argument that the goal (end) of the strategy should be to prepare the U.S. Army to fight and win such conflicts. However, the resources required in terms of money, equipment, time and manpower to be completely ready to fight and win a war with such a wide range of required capabilities makes this much less of a simple answer. The complexity of this situation is compounded by the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The conventional wisdom for the U.S. Army in the past has been to train for High Intensity Conflict (HIC), which in turn will prepare Soldiers for less intense forms of conflict. This idea has not only been historically proven inaccurate, it is seemingly not possible with the current deployment cycles. Additionally, in many ways, Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) is actually more difficult at the platoon, squad and individual Soldier level.

Training for high and adapting for low is a cliché that Western militaries need to challenge for a number of reasons. The first and most important point is to appreciate that countering Complex Irregular Warfare (CIW) is very difficult; at the section and platoon level, it is harder and more demanding than conventional war fighting. In conventional division or corps-level operations, small tactical units move in accordance with synchronized plans, each performing a relatively 'simple' part of an overall whole—take that hill, defend that village or cross that obstacle are all the daily tasks of subordinate commanders. However, in complex irregular warfare, we expect small tactical units to be agile and adept at many competing tasks for extended periods in a chaotic environment full of neutrals, civilians and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in a grey area between war and peace.³⁰

Producing a label such as 'hybrid' warfare does little to assist in simplifying the desired end state of the United States Army training program.

The complexity of the U.S. Army's strategic goal makes such strategic decision making models as the Rational Decision Making Model inappropriate. Although this model is very attractive in its approach due to its apparent clarity and certainty, it is much more suited for simple, well-structured problems.³¹ However, the very nature of the United States Army as an organization makes the Participative Decision Making Model very difficult. The size and hierarchal structure would make it near impossible to include all those directly affected by the decision with direct input.³² While one could definitely make the case that the Garbage Can Model, developed by March, Cohen, and Olsen, is well adept at addressing complex issues with multiple stakeholders, the trial and error basis for which it is predicated can have devastating consequences when applied to national security.³³ During historical periods of relative stability, the Incremental Model may have served the U.S. Military well; however, the slowness of the model makes it unsuited to address the current and future challenges. Although there are definitely elements of the Polis Model in every government decision, President

Lyndon Johnson's use of this model for the Vietnam War is hardly a glowing endorsement.³⁴ So what is the right model? Well, maybe to prepare the United States Army for 'hybrid' warfare, our strategic leaders need to use a 'hybrid' decision making model.

Experts consider the Mixed Scanning Model to be such a 'hybrid' model. It is essentially a paradigm derived from both rational and incremental decision making theories.³⁵ The model was developed by sociologist Amitai Etzioni with the purpose of seeking a strategy that addressed both short term urgent needs as well as long range less defined requirements.³⁶ Etzioni describes the concept as using two cameras simultaneously, one with a wide angle lens to scan the entire environment and one a telescoping lens to zero in on those areas requiring a more detailed look.³⁷ Maybe an even more clear endorsement of this model comes from the fact that this approach is identical to that of an expert chess player and the recent propensity of the U.S. Army's strategic leaders to liken our current situation to "playing 3 dimensional chess in the dark."³⁸

When applying the Mixed Scanning Model to the required strategic decision of how to best train and prepare U.S. Army Soldiers for future conflicts, one must first address the urgent requirements. Undoubtedly, this is the necessity of the U.S. Army to win the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States has much to do before either of these conflicts is resolved, particularly in the diplomatic, informational and economic areas of power. However, due to multiple deployments and focused CTCs the U.S. Army is actually well trained for these counterinsurgency operations. The real issue becomes how to rebalance resources by the appropriate amount from the

narrowly focused counterinsurgency operations to the broad ranging 'hybrid' warfare of the future. This model calls on one to constantly scan the environment for potential threats or conditions that can impact training requirements for U.S. Army Soldiers. A recent Army Capstone Concept exercise held at Carlisle Barracks identified the following requirements:

- Conducting operations under the condition of transparency;
- Conducting operations with partners and among diverse populations;
- Overcoming anti-access in the context of Joint Operations;
- Conducting and sustaining operations from and across extended distances;
- Fighting for information (physical reconnaissance and human intelligence);
- Employing the manpower, mobility, firepower and protection to close with the enemy;
- Conducting area security operations over large areas (including population security and precision fires to limit collateral damage);
- Developing partner capabilities (for example, security force assistance);
- Protecting the network and routinely fighting in degraded mode;
- Overcoming hybrid threats/complex web defenses in complex urban terrain;
- Ensuring tactical mobility in complex terrain and overcoming enemy counter mobility efforts; and
- Reshaping logistics and the demand side of sustainment to ensure operations without pause and freedom of movement in non-contiguous areas of operations.³⁹

The conference also recognized the need to constantly review and reframe these requirements based on the multifaceted situation.

The good news is that many of these necessities are very similar to the ones required in the current conflicts. While others may not be directly related, the adaptable nature of counterinsurgency warfare lends itself to partial preparation for these endeavors. For these, a modest approach might be acceptable for a training strategy. Some addition to the current Soldier education system might be enough. However, those capabilities required for more conventional HIC wars are not currently being addressed. This is true of both combat forces and the supporting effort. As the United States enters its eighth year of persistent counterinsurgency operations, the ability to rely on past experiences dwindles at an alarming rate. The majority of company commanders and squad leaders in the U.S. Army today have never experienced high intensity combat even during a rotation at one of the CTCs. This distressing trend needs to be addressed by military leaders as they develop the strategy to prepare the U.S. Army for future conflicts.

The first step should be to literally 'fence' a Division and its Brigade Combat Teams, to include a supporting Fires Brigade and Sustainment Brigade, for possible HIC environments. This would incur taking approximately 30,000 Soldiers out of the current fight. Current projected reductions in Iraq might make this possible without increasing the end strength of the United States Army. However, since President Obama committed in his speech at West Point to send 30,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan, the end strength should be increased, as increasing the number or length of current deployments is not a viable option.⁴⁰ We will address the Army end strength issue in a subsequent section. The HIC Division would focus entirely on training for conventional high intensity conflicts. The National Training Center (NTC) would have to

maintain the ability to provide realistic HIC training. Soldiers should be assigned to this unit for approximately three years before rotating to another unit. This would allow for ample time to become an expert in the HIC arena and provide an expanding base of HIC experience as more Soldiers rotate through the unit. It would also provide a much needed opportunity to decompress from the fight for Soldiers and stability for their families that would have significant secondary benefits.

This size of the unit suggested is both a product of feasibility and necessity. It is hard to imagine given current conditions the ability to pull more than 30,000 Soldiers out of the current fight. Furthermore, there is little evidence to show in the near future, the United States would be required to produce more than a Division's worth of Soldiers capable of fighting in a HIC environment on a moment's notice. If a larger conventional threat were to become apparent, hopefully there would be adequate time to transition the force. However, U.S. military strategic leaders must remain true to the Mixed Scanning Model and be constantly scanning and refocusing strategy.

End Strength

Although seemingly simple, finding the right end strength for the United States Army has turned into one of the most complex and controversial issues during these long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Contributing to the complexity are the numerous second and third order effects created by a change in end strength. What is unmistakable is that the all volunteer United States Army is busier than it has ever been, with fewer Soldiers in recent history.

The active-duty Army peaked at 1.6 million troops during the Korean conflict and stood at just below that figure during the war in Vietnam, before hovering around 800,000 for much of the 1970s and 1980s, according to Pentagon statistics. Following the first Persian Gulf War, which coincided with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the

Army's active-duty force dropped first to below 600,000 and then below 500,000 before the increases ordered after the Sept. 11 attacks.⁴¹

President Bush agreed to a permanent increase in end strength in 2006, which was designed to bring the active Army up to around 547,000 Soldiers. However, the majority of this increase came from just making permanent some early temporary increases. This change did little to relieve the stress on the force. In fact, due to the surge in forces to Iraq at that time, things actually seemed worse.

Congress recently pressed for another increase of Soldiers. In April 2009, Senator Joe Lieberman, proposed a temporary end strength increase of 30,000 more soldiers, in order to allow more dwell time immediately for units between deployments.⁴² This proposal met with initial resistance from the senior leadership of the Army and the Department of Defense. Such a move would cost another \$1 billion a year, an expense that at the time Army Chief of Staff General George Casey said he would be "reluctant to embrace right now."⁴³ However, Casey did state that neither he nor Secretary of Defense Robert Gates had ruled out a temporary end strength increase, especially if plans to pull troops from Iraq are delayed or changed.⁴⁴ In fact, just a few months later, both Secretary Gates and General Casey agreed to a temporary increase of 22,000 Soldiers. This probably came about due to an expected increase in commitment to Afghanistan occurring before subsequent decreases in the conflict in Iraq.

Most would agree that a greater end strength would result in a corresponding reduced number of stressors on the force. There are many second and third order effects, especially for a permanent increase in the end strength of the United States Army. Of course the obvious one - increased costs - would be a major issue. The 97,000 permanent troop increases for the United States Army and Marines is estimated

to have cost over 100 billion dollars.⁴⁵ "These costs are incurred at a time that several new aircraft and ship programs are far above predicted costs, virtually all U.S. Army and Marine Corps ground vehicles except for M1 tanks are in need of replacement, military health costs are skyrocketing, and the increased costs of fuel are playing havoc with operating budgets."⁴⁶

Still others point out that it is too late to affect the current conflicts with a permanent increase, and it is highly unlikely that the United States will engage in another protracted conflict with a large ground force in the probable future.

While some troop increases transcend the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, especially increases in special operations forces and, to some extent, in Marine units. After withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq -- as after the Vietnam War -- U.S. national leaders will be very reluctant to commit ground forces to sustained combat situations. Rather, special operations and forward-deployed Marine units afloat will be the more likely to be used in future crises and conflicts. Along with forward-deployed Navy ships, they will be the "forces of preference" for the foreseeable future.⁴⁷

Although this view is held by some, the majority of defense experts see the projected future quite differently. Most predict that the United States deployed troop commitment will remain about the same for the next fifteen to twenty years. The missions may change, but the fact remains that the world is a more unstable place than ever, and the United States Military is the only option currently available to conduct the full spectrum of operations from peace keeping to high intensity conflict.

So what is the correct answer to the question of the appropriate end strength for the United States Army? Of course no one can absolutely predict the future, but given the strain of current conflicts with a prediction of more of the same for the future, it is evident that the United States needs a permanent larger Army. A recent study came to the conclusion that a 650,000 Soldier strong active Army is required to maintain the

current deployed force, while being able to provide for at least two years dwell time between deployments.⁴⁸ If the strategic leaders of the United States are serious about reducing the stress on the force, both now and in the future, an increase of this order of magnitude must be considered.

Conclusion

The United States Army as an institution must identify and incorporate the positive effects on Soldiers of the current persistent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. By using the Mixed Scanning Model, U.S. military strategic leaders can address the training, readiness and force structure issues created by the current long wars. And finally, the appropriate end strength of the United States Army must be identified and resourced. These approaches will assist in developing the ultimate solution for the United States Army to maintain the best force possible for both current and future conflicts. This, in turn, will ensure that the most valuable asset in the U.S. Army, the Soldier, is ready and relevant for today and tomorrow.

Endnotes

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