

**Avoiding Overcorrection: An Alternative to  
Increasing the Army's End Strength**

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## **Abstract**

To many in the U.S. military, Operation Iraqi Freedom shows that the Army lacks enough personnel to fight the “long war” against Islamic extremism. In response to this concern, the Department of Defense is pushing for a permanent 65,000 soldier increase of the Army’s end strength, the legislated number of active-duty personnel that the Army must employ. However, this increase constitutes a dangerous overcorrection for the Army’s shortcomings in counterinsurgency operations—protracted, low-intensity conflicts against radical guerillas. Significant “boots on the ground” will not effectively quell asymmetric insurgencies. The Defense Department’s plan will only burden the military with massive expenses. These funds would be better spent on training and technology—force multipliers essential to future military successes. The Army should maintain its end strength around the current level and focus on building a highly trained and smartly equipped force. Investing in advanced communication technology, robotics, and extensive training—specifically academic training in military strategy, sociology, and linguistics—will transform the Army into a versatile Expeditionary Force. Because of its higher per unit lethality and specialization in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations, creating such a force will negate the need for more “boots on the ground” and increase the Army’s success in future conflicts. To support our argument, we present a review of recent military and scholarly analysis of the strategic lessons being learned in Iraq.

## **Introduction**

Operation Iraqi Freedom is straining the all-volunteer Army beyond any other conflict since its advent following the Vietnam War. The Army’s deteriorating readiness is raising calls within both the military and political establishments to increase the Army’s overall end

strength—the legislated number of active-duty personnel that the Army must employ. Behind these calls is the assumption that the Army will shoulder the brunt of the fighting in the “long war” against radical Islamic extremists. Unfortunately, acting on this assumption would constitute a dangerous overcorrection for the lessons of the Iraq War. Looking beyond Iraq, it becomes clear that bolstering the Army’s boots on the ground capability represents a highly inefficient use of American tax dollars. Recent counterinsurgency strategies developed in reaction to operations in Iraq indicate that simply deploying more units will not quell asymmetric insurgencies. The real key to success in such unconventional operations rests in building stable political institutions that incorporate the local population—large, unilateral troop deployments obstruct this bottom-up process.

Secretary Gates’ end strength increase will do little to improve the Army’s performance in counterinsurgency operations. The massive expense of maintaining 65,000 additional soldiers will amount to little but an unnecessary burden. Because of increasing constraints on the defense budget, these expenses will likely tradeoff with money that could be used for training and technology. Therefore, the Army should maintain its end strength around status quo levels and invest in more effective measures to address the lessons of Operation Iraqi Freedom. One such measure is an initiative to transform the Army into a large scale “Expeditionary Force” that would use training methods and equipment optimized to fight unconventional wars. These changes are a more effective way to increase the military’s effectiveness against unconventional rivals than adding more troops.

Section one of this paper will consider the costs and benefits of Secretary Gates’ proposal to increase the size of the Army. This analysis suggests that Gates’ proposal is not the best way

to prepare the Army to fight unconventional threats. Section two uses this analysis to propose a possible alternative force structure to improve the Army's ability to win asymmetric conflicts.

## **Background**

In the eyes of many in the United States military, the invasion of Iraq and the ongoing counterinsurgency operation illuminate significant inadequacies in the current size of the all-volunteer Army. Showing this sentiment are the public statements of military commanders such as former Army Chief of Staff Peter Schoomaker, who told Congress that “at [the current] pace,” without reform, “we will break the active component” of the Army.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, a recent poll conducted by the Center for New American Security indicates that 88 percent of top ranking military personnel believe that the Iraq War has stretched the military dangerously thin, while a majority of responders cited the Army as the service most imperiled by overstretch.<sup>2</sup> In order to sustain operations, the Army is extending deployment times to Iraq, reducing training and leave time at home, and instituting stop-gap measures that force troops to stay in the Army to serve additional tours of duty. All of this mitigates the effectiveness of the force. For example, an estimated two-thirds of Army combat units are considered unready for combat.<sup>3</sup> Were another major contingency to break out in a geopolitical hot spot such as Syria, Pakistan, Serbia, North Korea, or Sudan, the Army would find itself unable to mount an adequate response.

Proposals to increase the Army's end strength have gained significant momentum as the best solution to the current readiness crisis. Legislation to raise the Army's end strength, usually part of the defense budget, mandates that the Army employ more personnel each year. To meet its end strength requirement, the Army uses a combination of incentives to increase recruitment—the number of personnel entering the Army—and retention—the number of Army

personnel who continue their service. The Department of Defense under Secretary Robert Gates is pushing for a permanent end strength increase of 65,000 Army personnel, thereby increasing the total end strength to 547,000 active duty troops. Behind these proposals is the assumption that the Army will shoulder the brunt of the fighting in the long war against radical Islamic extremists. Many believe that the US is fighting a global counterinsurgency comprised of loosely connected extremists who use terrorism in their struggle against Western Civilization.<sup>4</sup> The words of Colonel Henry Foresman, as published in *The Armed Forces Journal*, typify the general sentiment within the Army:

Today, the Army finds itself fighting an enemy in a counterinsurgency environment. It is an environment in which the science of war is less important than the intangibles of culture, history and society — an environment in which the enemy enjoys both interior and exterior lines, where family, tribe, religion and common ethnic heritage link the enemy. It's an environment in which we fight not only an indigenous enemy, but also an enemy who wishes to destroy the West because it is at odds with its view of the world.<sup>5</sup>

Those who believe that the US must engage in the long war argue that the military must be restructured to specialize in sustained “boots on the ground” operations instead of technology-rich conventional capabilities.<sup>6</sup> Assuming that the long war will, in fact, define the future geopolitical landscape, the question for military planners becomes whether increasing the number of ground forces in the Army is the best way to prepare for future conflicts.

Emphasizing “boots on the ground” is most closely associated with the proponents of the surge strategy pursued in Iraq in 2007. Fredrick Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute and Jack Keane, a retired Army general, argue that a large contingent of ground troops is necessary to clear, hold, and build neighborhoods with a large insurgent presence. The Army was

ineffective before the surge because, according to Kagan and Keane, troops were not left in place to “hold” areas that had previously been “cleared” of insurgents.<sup>7</sup> As a result, insurgents would simply leave neighborhoods when the Army conducted offensive operations and return once the Army left. To address this concern, the clear-hold-build strategy installs a blanket force in cleared neighborhoods to ensure that insurgents do not return.<sup>8</sup> However, the major critics of this clear-hold-build strategy point out that such an approach does little to foster the necessary political power sharing agreements in the country in question.

Investigating the effectiveness of large contingents of “boots on the ground” in counterinsurgency conflicts is vital to develop a successful Army for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Current operations in Iraq seek to quell an insurgency—a guerilla force rebelling against the dominant political authority. Such an insurgency employs unconventional tactics to counter the superior U.S. military. While future conflicts might not pit the Army against an Iraq-style insurgency, they will likely be unconventional in nature, and the Army must prepare to fight these asymmetric conflicts against technologically inferior opponents. Current military leaders believe that increasing the size of the Army’s ground forces is a necessary component to achieve this goal. As the following analysis of counterinsurgency strategy will show, unconventional conflicts cannot be won simply by deploying more troops to a conflict zone. A successful counterinsurgency strategy must navigate the complex political landscapes of the modern battlefield.

To date, the Army has already taken several progressive steps towards creating a force better prepared to confront these asymmetric threats. In response to the overwhelming successes of Special Operations Forces (SOF) throughout the last four decades, current lawmakers are now proposing a massive increase in the legislated size of the SOF. According to the 2006

Quadrennial Defense Report, the Defense Department recommended increasing active duty SOF battalions by one-third, including a 3,500 increase in Civil and Psychological Operations, the formation of a 2,600 personnel Marine Special Ops unit, and the creation of an Air Force Special Ops squadron devoted to unmanned aerial vehicles.<sup>9</sup> Following a renewed interest in counterinsurgency strategy, the services have been instructed to increase linguistic and cultural training, while counterinsurgency has fortunately reappeared in the curriculum at the Army War College, the Command and General Staff College, and the School of Advanced Military Studies.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth is leading the “development of the Human Terrain System to help brigade commanders understand and deal with the social, ethnographic, cultural, economic, and political factors in which they operate.”<sup>11</sup> More recently, the Army updated its operations field manual to compensate for the hard “lessons learned” in Iraq and Afghanistan, equally emphasizing nation-building and the importance to defeating adversaries on the battlefield.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps most striking, the National Training Center—“the Army’s most important unit level training facility”—has shifted away from conventional battlefield scenarios and embraced complex insurgency scenarios “complete with civilians and all of the other things a unit could expect to find in Iraq.”<sup>13</sup>

But even these steps will not sufficiently increase the Army’s flexibility and per-unit efficiency to a degree which negates the demand for a higher end-strength. As Lt. Col. Paul Yingling suggests, the basic ideologies and preferences for conventional tactics prevail, specifically noting that “...the institutional Army, to include [its] organizational designs and [its] personnel system, is essentially the same as before 9/11.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, garnering popular support for such a radical departure from the status quo constitutes perhaps the greatest challenge to creating

an optimal counterinsurgency force, primarily due the military's traditional aversion to change. As General Matthew B. Ridgeway, a former Chief of Staff, noted with a brief statement in 1955:

The Army has no wish to scrap its previous experience in favor of unproven doctrine, or in order to accommodate enthusiastic theorists having little or no responsibility for the consequences of following the courses of action they advocate.<sup>15</sup>

In the same survey conducted by the Center for New American Security expressing top ranking commanders' beliefs that the Army is stretched dangerously thin, an astounding 95 percent of all respondents maintained that the "core" mission of the military is "fighting and winning wars against other *states*." Only 22 percent believed that reconstruction operations are a central tenant of successful military strategy,<sup>16</sup> while only 64 percent believed that building partner capacity and training indigenous security forces are primary military functions.<sup>17</sup> However, it is this mindset that has overstretched the military, pushing the Army, in particular, to its breaking point. Alleviating the current readiness crisis and preparing the Army for future conflicts requires a top-down response to bottom-up analysis, which the Army's generals and high command are not yet ready to acknowledge. Simply put, the Army's current force posture favors the 'wrong troops' for the future security environment. Immediate action is needed to undo years of mismanagement.

### **Policy Recommendation I: Maintain Current Force Size**

While the Army's immediate readiness problems are alarming, it is important to recognize that they are primarily a result of high levels of troop deployment to Iraq. Because the current deployment levels are unlikely to be sustained very far into the future, assessments of Gates' proposal must look beyond the immediate demands of the Iraq War. The benefits of an

end strength increase will not materialize in time to significantly affect the situation in Iraq. Former Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker estimates that the Army can only add about 6,000 to 7,000 soldiers a year.<sup>18</sup> While the military is slightly more optimistic, some analysts predict that it will take even longer to implement Gates' end strength increase. Andrew Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments argues that the Army will need five years to add 35,000 troops, slightly more than half of Gates' proposal.<sup>19</sup> When evaluating the current end strength increase, the long-term impact of maintaining a larger active-duty force must be given precedence over the need to increase capacity in the short run. Policymakers must therefore look beyond the Iraq War and determine whether the multi-billion dollar costs of permanently adding 65,000 soldiers are necessary to successfully fight the next counterinsurgency war. This section first investigates the ramifications of a ground troop intensive counterinsurgency strategy. An analysis of the opportunity costs of implementing such a strategy follows. This cost-benefit comparison makes it clear that the proposed permanent end strength increase should not be enacted. The section concludes by addressing potential criticisms of holding the Army's size at status quo levels.

Strategic reactions to ongoing counterinsurgency operations in Iraq indicate that boots on the ground are not a panacea for virulent insurgencies. Defeating insurgents is much more than a numbers game. Few insurgencies in recent history have been defeated by the sheer military force of a major power. The French defeat in Algeria, Russian defeat in Afghanistan, and American stalemate in Vietnam all show the limited effectiveness of large armies in distant, asymmetric conflicts.<sup>20</sup> When military might has defeated insurgencies, combat operations "annihilate[d] the insurgency and its supporters through bombings, massive raids, heavy shelling, and even torture and executions."<sup>21</sup> Such tactics would only intensify modern insurgencies, as the Internet ensures

that the occupied population would quickly learn about their occupier's brutality.<sup>22</sup> That is not to say that boots on the ground are unnecessary. As Williamson Murray, the former Army War College Professor of Military History, states:

In almost every situation envisioned, boots on the ground will determine the outcome of the wars that America fights, because for most of the world's peoples, it is control of the ground that matters. Only control of the ground, not air superiority, will translate into political success—the only reason to embark on war.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, control of the ground does not come from the brute force of large troop deployments; rather, it comes from mastering the political environment of the occupied state to bring about stability and ultimately a self-sustaining government.

The chief advantage of successful insurgencies is their ability to control the political sphere in the area of operation. Gaining influence with the local population lets insurgents operate freely and openly. Without some degree of confidence that locals will not report them to authorities, insurgents cannot successfully engage the occupying power and then escape by receding into the local population. Because insurgents require this local support, locals are often capable of identifying the insurgents as well as their bases of operation. However, the locals must be persuaded to support the occupying power in its fight against the insurgents. Without such local support, any military superiority is unsustainable.<sup>24</sup> In order to gain the support of the population and defeat the insurgency, the occupying power must prevent the insurgents from creating a constant level of violence. By exerting the will power to effectively prevent violence and foster economic growth, the occupying power gains legitimacy with the local population, causing them to turn away from the insurgents.<sup>25</sup> However, the counterinsurgency force faces a conundrum when using only military might to prevent violence.

While a large presence of boots on the ground deters insurgents, it also frustrates the local population, who might perceive the troops as unfriendly occupiers violating their sovereignty. Policies that increase this negative perception also increase locals' willingness to cooperate with the insurgents.<sup>26</sup> This problem is clearly evident in the United States' attempts to restore order in Iraq after toppling Saddam Hussein. By targeting the soft underbelly of American operations—the aid workers and contractors tasked with rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure, the insurgency was able to prevent the United States from delivering on its promise to improve the lives of Iraqis. As the United States went on the offensive against the insurgency, they further angered the Iraqi population with aggressive military action.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the Army must strike a balance between achieving a strong presence on the ground and winning the support of the local population. The best way to achieve this balance is not to pour money into more troops. The Army must develop more capable, flexible, and dynamic units to successfully and efficiently win counterinsurgency wars.

An optimal counterinsurgency force should possess a broad set of capabilities, especially in the fields of stabilization and infrastructure-building operations. The need to rapidly deploy these capabilities is paramount. This force must also be knowledgeable of the cultural and political environment in which it operates, and it must have the skill to apply this knowledge in response to the constantly changing situation on the ground.<sup>28</sup> Building this force requires a step away from counterinsurgency doctrine centered on adapting conventional ground forces to fight unconventional wars.<sup>29</sup> Gates' proposed end strength increase inhibits attempts to radically rethink the way the Army should fight counterinsurgency wars. Under the proposal, the soldiers added to the force structure will form six additional brigades, suggesting "U.S. ground forces will be trained and equipped primarily for conventional, high-intensity ground combat

operations.”<sup>30</sup> Because 65,000 additional soldiers will impede counterinsurgency operations, the cost of such an augmentation in end strength is not worth the benefit.

The sheer cost of Gates’ proposed end strength increase is astounding. Some analysts predict that total increase, including 65,000 for the Army and 27,000 for the Marines, will cost at least \$10 billion a year to achieve.<sup>31</sup> That estimate may even be too low when one acknowledges expensive incentives like \$20,000 cash bonuses that the Army must use to meet its current recruiting goals.<sup>32</sup> These incentives will have to be increased even further to achieve higher end strength requirements. Moreover, one soldier costs about \$120,000 a year to support—an additional \$7.8 billion a year for 65,000 more soldiers.<sup>33</sup> The additional long-term costs from future medical care and other veteran benefits should also not be ignored.

Attempting to recruit more soldiers also harms overall troop quality. In order to meet its current recruiting goals, the Army is already lowering its standards for new enlistees. More recruits with low scores on the armed forces aptitude test, without high school diplomas, or with criminal records are being allowed to join the force. The number of unqualified troops entering the Army would continue to rise under Gates’ proposal. Numerous studies of troop quality have concluded that the recruitment of low-aptitude personnel hurts the Army’s overall effectiveness.<sup>34</sup> The Army’s resources would be better spent to develop a force structure that is optimally trained and equipped to fight low intensity asymmetric conflicts.

### *Considering the Troop Surge*

Critics might argue that a large ground presence is the only way to establish the necessary stability to prevent an insurgency from developing in an occupied country. These critics point to the apparent success of President Bush’s troop surge to Iraq, which represents a strategic shift

towards clear-hold-build operations. These operations recognize the need to provide security for the Iraqi population and maintain a dialogue with insurgent groups and tribal leaders.<sup>35</sup> Given the specific tactical situation in Iraq, a temporary troop increase is the best way to achieve these objectives. But more important for the success of the surge than the increase in troop levels is the strategy shift towards operations that employ many of the tenants of optimal counterinsurgency strategy described above. This causal distinction is shown by the dramatic difference between the recommended size of the troop surge and the relatively few number of troops actually deployed to Iraq. Frederick Kagan's initial troop surge proposals cited the need for 50,000 to 80,000 troops.<sup>36</sup> President Bush actually deployed 28,000 additional troops to Iraq. This mismatch suggests that strategy is a much more influential determinant of success than troop levels. And, even if more troops are necessary, Gates' current proposal is too small to achieve the tactical benefits that boots on the ground supporters' project.

Moreover, the specific demands of the conflict in Iraq should not be used to predict what resources future conflicts in the long war would require. Naturally, each situation will have unique demands, and these differences must be accounted for during the planning process. In Iraq, for instance, the post-invasion insurgency that developed shows more about poor strategic planning than the nature of warfare.<sup>37</sup> Many strategic planners argue that, had the United States deployed a larger proportion of the Army to Iraq initially, focused on preserving Iraq's infrastructure, and provided the general population with a basic level of security and material welfare, a virulent insurgency would not have gained enough popular momentum to be effective.<sup>38</sup> If better strategy had been implemented in Iraq from the beginning, the current troop surge would likely be unnecessary. In order to avoid future strategic pitfalls similar to those of the Iraq War, the Army should use its finite resources to further improve its current forces. Such

improvements will increase the Army's effectiveness in protracted unconventional warfare scenarios much more so than Gates' end strength proposal.

**Policy Recommendation II: Restructure the Army to Form an Expeditionary Force**

Instead of spending large sums on a problematic end strength increase, the Army should seek an alternative solution to the readiness crisis which maximizes the “professional efficiency” of individual units. One feasible approach involves transforming the Army into an Expeditionary Force that is optimally trained and equipped to fight low-intensity, asymmetric conflicts. Under this design, the Army would overhaul and expand its training infrastructure, looking towards the Special Operations Force University as a model. While Special Operations Forces cannot serve as a feasible replacement for conventional forces, the Expeditionary Force would draw upon the successful tactics of the SOF and incorporate elements of SOF training into the basic training requirements for *all* conventional units. Under this new training system, each unit would develop a working knowledge of the cultural norms, demographics and regional politics of unstable hot spot locations. In addition to academic instruction, the Expeditionary Force would receive extensive training in the latest counterinsurgency techniques, which would be supplemented by the successful introduction of advanced communications networks to increase troop autonomy and disaggregate the Army's support structure.

Shifting away from complex technology driven platforms, the Army would embrace the “individual-as-warrior” platform and procure smaller, cheaper, force multiplying weapons. While not a panacea for the Defense Department's current troubles with weapons acquisition—such as the uncontrollable program cost escalations and lagging procurement schedules now plaguing nearly all DOD weapons systems—the new platform would constitute a positive step

toward the ideal system in which weapons could be produced on time, within budget and in mass quantity. Admittedly, revamping the Army's training and procurement infrastructure will be a costly, time-consuming effort. To pay for these massive overhauls, the Army should selectively cancel Future Combat Systems programs, which are no longer compatible with the Army's new posture.

### *The Military's Force of Choice*

Since their inception, United States Special Operations Forces have performed extraordinarily well in a wide variety of combat and non-combat situations, including counterterrorism operations, the training of indigenous forces, psychological warfare, civil affairs and intelligence gathering—in short, nearly every scenario inherent to modern warfare. Special Forces executed, for instance, perhaps the only successful military operation during the America's first great counterinsurgency: the Vietnam War. Armed with “foreign weapons and untraceable gear,” Special Forces reconnaissance teams of three Americans and nine native soldiers conducted highly sensitive cross-border operations to block and delay passage along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Utilizing a broad weapon set, including anti-tank missiles in one shot disposable containers—which destroyed countless million dollar pieces of machinery—mini-grenades and “Claymore” mines, the American SOF in Vietnam were considered an effective use of military personnel.<sup>39</sup>

Likewise, military operations in Afghanistan have given the Army a glimpse of what future conflicts will likely resemble—prolonged low-intensity conflicts which smolder on for years. Under harsh conditions in the mountainous, arid regions around Kandahar and Tora Bora, the SOF performed superbly in the opening stages of Operation Enduring Freedom. Working

alongside local Afghani warlords and tribal leaders—riding horses and often sporting beards<sup>40</sup>—Special Forces were able to drive the Taliban from their mountain strongholds in the elaborate Tora Bora complex.<sup>41</sup>

In all of these conflicts, the ultimate success enjoyed by the SOF rests upon the principles established by T.E. Lawrence, the first officer to consider the idea of a “special force.” According to Lawrence, “the efficiency of [special] forces was the professional efficiency of the single man...Our ideal should be to make our battle a series of single combats, [the] ranks a happy alliance of agile commanders in chief.”<sup>42</sup> The ability of each SOF unit to work in small groups—or often independently—leads to more efficient coordination and increased adaptability, while smaller chains of command allow SOF units to respond quickly and efficiently to time-sensitive intelligence.<sup>43</sup> Higher mobility, advanced technology and training allows Special Forces units to quickly and stealthily approach a target and neutralize threats. They demonstrate “a tremendous capacity for endurance in the face of hostile conditions”<sup>44</sup> and leave a light “footprint,” requiring little logistical support in the form of provisions, transportation, and ammunition. These advantages derive almost exclusively from extensive training and specialized weapons procurement. In order to make the Army more versatile and better able to respond to low-intensity conflicts, it should look towards the immense successes of the Special Forces as a model and increase the skill set of each individual unit.

While the Expeditionary Force is an attempt to increase the skill set of every unit, this proposal recognizes that it is impossible to provide to every unit the same degree of specialized training that SOF units receive. Special Forces are precisely what their name implies: elite units. They are drawn almost exclusively from the larger pool of conventional Army recruits based on their demonstrated abilities in basic training and their first years of service. Because no large-

scale mechanism is in place to indentify and enlist the most qualified soldiers—and because of an overall lack of qualified applicants—a ‘selection bias’ makes Special Forces an impractical replacement for conventional units.<sup>45</sup> The Expeditionary Army, consequently, should not be viewed as an Army of elites. Rather, it should be viewed in light of the cost-benefit analysis offered in section one. Because success in asymmetric conflicts rests upon the Army’s ability to navigate the complex political landscapes of the combat theater, units highly trained in traditional SOF-tactics are preferable over conventionally trained units. The Expeditionary Force seeks to provide the maximum practical level of SOF-style training to regular ground forces while maintaining the Specials Forces as an elite and separate force.

### *Modeling the Special Forces*

#### ***Weaponry***

To replicate the past successes of the Special Forces, the new Expeditionary Force should draw on the Special Forces’ unique technological advantage. Special Operations Forces employ a broad range of exotic munitions that not only enhance their firepower, but also increase their adaptability. Working in smaller, specialized groups, SOF can quickly identify the types of weapons they need and receive or build them in a timely fashion. In the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, SOF were “beneficiaries of responsive acquisition when they requested advanced technology solutions and received them in days and weeks rather than the normal months and years.”<sup>46</sup> The introduction of modified weaponry—such as the “Claymore” mines used by SOF during the Vietnam War, or the modified ATVs used by SOF in Afghanistan—often allows soldiers to operate more effectively in smaller numbers. Equipping and training an Expeditionary Army to use modified and advanced weaponry would increase the Army’s “per-unit lethality,” affording each unit more autonomy and increasing their effectiveness in quelling

asymmetric conflicts. As Anthony Cordesman, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, notes “force quality is not necessary more expensive than force quantity and—with the right strategy, tactics, and technology—can often accomplish far more.”<sup>47</sup> To illustrate how these technological improvements can increase a unit’s effectiveness, British counterterrorist Special Air Service Regiment units can fire, on average, over 5,000 rounds of ammunition a week, a number comparable to the average number of rounds fired by a conventional unit over a period of years.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Information Technology***

The Expeditionary Force would also benefit from the integration of Special Force-style communication technologies. As information technology and computers become readily available, terrorists and insurgents will continue to embrace networking as a means of decentralizing operations, working with amazing independence and flexibility.<sup>49</sup> In order to best counter the “disaggregated” terrorist threat, America’s military will need to adopt similar tactics. John Arquilla, Professor of Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School, suggests that the only way to combat technology savvy insurgents is to “fight networks with networks.”<sup>50</sup> Generally speaking, Special Force units are the most inter-connected and networked units the Army employs. While the nature of SOF missions often necessitates prolonged periods of radio silence and infrequent communications with high command, SOF represent the cutting edge in communications abilities. Satellite communications networks (SATCOMS), portable devices that allow SOF to network within the field and from anywhere in the world, revolutionized the way forces transmit information following their widespread implementation in the early 1980s.<sup>51</sup> Current technologies include the Multiband Multimission Radio, the modern incarnation of SATCOM, and the AN/PCR-148 Multiband Inter/Intra Team Radio which “offers

‘embedded and secure communications between dispersed members in SOF teams.’”<sup>52</sup> Special Operations Forces also employ alternative communications devices, such as ‘Iridium handheld satellite telephones with secure sleeves,’ which connect individual units to headquarters in the field or outside combat zones. Expeditionary Forces could also be thus equipped. Hand-held, multipurpose networking devices could greatly enhance the Army’s ability to fight counterinsurgency wars. These relatively inexpensive investments would go a long way towards increasing the autonomy of each individual unit, allowing them more operational flexibility. The increased independence could, in turn, effectively reduce chains of command and allow units to respond to time sensitive intelligence with greater success.

### ***Training***

Introducing technology alone, however, will not adequately increase the overall effectiveness of each unit so as to negate the demand for a higher end-strength. Recalling Lawrence of Arabia’s concepts, SOF are the most culturally sensitive and adaptable units available to the Army, a direct result of their advanced training. An extensive knowledge of cultural norms, language, demographics and regional politics the key to the Special Forces’ successes and should therefore play an integral role in the Expeditionary Force. The revolutionized training programs of the Expeditionary Force emphasize cultural sensitivity, demographics, conflict resolution strategies, and linguistics, following the SOF University as a model. These improvements will give soldiers the skill sets they need to reach out to indigenous populations, protect infrastructure, and navigate the complex political landscapes of the combat theater in order to build popular support for American military operations. Continuing to revolutionize the Army’s training infrastructure will ensure that Expeditionary Units can take on tasks that Special Operations Forces currently perform, allowing SOF to further specialize in

counterterrorism and “increase their capacity to perform more demanding and specialized tasks, especially long-duration, indirect and clandestine operations in politically sensitive environments and denied areas.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Funding the Expeditionary Army*

The Rumsfeld Era, driven partially by a belief in “casualty aversion,” introduced a sweeping transformation doctrine marked by its refusal to increase end-strength.<sup>54</sup> Instead, transformation sought to increase the Army’s lethality by creating a technologically advanced, rapidly deployable Future Combat System (FCS). As originally envisioned, the FCS operated on the principle of Network-Centric Warfare—a belief that information dominance would allow smaller, lightly armored forces to preempt conventional or asymmetric threats, thus achieving swift victory. It relied upon complex system-of-system networking programs and eighteen individual manned and unmanned platforms (ground and air vehicles, sensors, and munitions), which could “respond to threats with speed, precision, and lethality.”<sup>55</sup> It comes as no surprise that Defense Transformation is now viewed, to quote an anonymous senior military official, as a “personality driven initiative” which rests on unsound principles.<sup>56</sup> Rumsfeld’s insistence that the Army could lean heavily upon advanced technology is considered flawed logic, largely as the result of the counterinsurgency failures in Iraq, while troop readiness problems are driving the arguments for end-strength increases.

Popular opposition to Defense Transformation programs are strengthened given the rampant cost escalation facing nearly all Transformation Era programs. A recent report by the GAO found that more than 95 procurement projects, including warships, helicopters, and other large scale projects, have been delayed an average of 21 months and cost an average of 26

percent more than originally estimated—around \$295 billion total.<sup>57</sup> In more precise terms, DOD procurement programs have experienced a 19.1 percent total cost escalation since 2007.<sup>58</sup> The FCS alone has undergone a 54.1 percent program cost escalation, including a 46.1 percent research and development increase and a 57 percent procurement cost increase.<sup>59</sup> Such unbridled cost increases are widely blamed on defense contractors' inability to adequately estimate and report costs, and in extreme situations, on outright fraud.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the problem of cost escalation, the Transformation doctrine itself rests on untenable expectations. The Iraq War, for instance, has made the limitations of technology painfully evident, as Improvised Explosive Devices—primitive technologies easily acquired by any militant—are routinely used to disable lightly armored American units. According to the Brookings Institute, I.E.D. attacks are responsible for 1,503 U.S. military fatalities between March 2003 and September 2007, or roughly 39.5 percent of total U.S. fatalities.<sup>61</sup> These asymmetric attacks, designed to counter American technological supremacy, constitute the insurgents' most successful strategy and have left the Defense Department scrambling to provide enough body armor and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to equip an already overstretched force.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the creation of a highly mobile force that could be deployed anywhere in the world within 76 hours—one of the objectives of Rumsfeld's transformation agenda—seems unattainable. One study, according to Andrew Krepinivich, suggests that the increasing weight of FCS vehicles and shortage of serviceable aircraft make Rumsfeld's target unrealistic. Furthermore, FCS communications systems (the backbone of network-centric warfare), occasionally break down or are easily countered by insurgents using cell phones and the internet.<sup>63</sup> In short, defense transformation has proven to be a policy nightmare that the Defense Department must address.

In order to fund the future Expeditionary Army, the Army should therefore selectively terminate FCS programs. Investing in simple, more practical technologies would allow the defense industry to produce equipment in mass, as well as eliminate the lagging procurement schedules and control the systemic cost escalations associated with complex Transformation Era programs. According to the Congressional Budget Office, terminating the FCS alone would save the Army \$87 billion from fiscal year 2006 through 2022, funding which could be partially reallocated to revamping training infrastructure.<sup>64</sup>

However, terminating the FCS leaves the military without a heavy weapons procurement program. To compensate for this loss, the Army could follow the CBO's "Alternative 6" plan for replacing the FCS with programs to remanufacture—with reasonable technological upgrades—the heavy equipment currently in operation.<sup>65</sup> The new procurement plan should employ the "Spiral Development" model, continuously increasing weapons capabilities by incrementally upgrading and integrating more complex weapons systems.<sup>66</sup> This approach allows the Army to rapidly adapt to combatants tactics and strategies, ensuring that the Army's weapons programs will not face a lagging procurement schedule that decreases readiness.

## **Conclusion**

The asymmetric conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to giving the Army its first glimpse of 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare, are placing a higher demand on Army personnel than ever before. Soldiers must now be—at once—skilled warriors, diplomats, urban planners, policemen, and intelligence agents. Winning future unconventional wars will require the United States Army to further revolutionize its training infrastructure to better prepare soldiers to face a litany of scenarios inherent to modern warfare—a fact that top ranking military personnel are not yet

willing to admit. Accordingly, it is imperative that the Army recognize the necessity of shifting away from conventional tactics and towards nation-building capabilities in order to facilitate this transition. As Robert Gates' end strength increase will inhibit the Army's ability to provide higher quality forces at a time when they are most needed, the Army should reconsider the end strength proposal and adopt alternative strategies maximizing the value of individual units. The Expeditionary Force is one feasible way the Army can avoid overcorrecting for the mistakes of the Iraq War and repair the post-Cold War damage to the Army's force posture.

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