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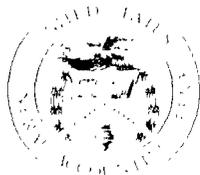
United States General Accounting Office

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Readiness, Committee on Armed
Services, House of Representatives

December 1991

ARMY TRAINING

Changing Threat Not Expected to Significantly Affect Combat Training



**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-246504

December 10, 1991

The Honorable Earl Hutto
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Recent world events, such as the reunification of Germany, the demise of the Warsaw Pact, and the apparent dissolution of the Soviet Union, have changed the type of threat the United States is likely to face in the future. Because of these changes, you asked us to determine whether the Army had (1) evaluated the implications of the changed threat on the training of its combat forces and (2) developed an adequate training strategy to respond to new threats.

Results in Brief

The Army is reviewing the results of its recent assessment of the changed threat's impact on its training strategy for combat forces. Although the review is not complete, the Army does not anticipate that major revisions to its training strategy will be necessary.

Army combat units are currently structured and trained to respond to various threats ranging from special operations to a large-scale war. Although the Army will continue to train combat forces to meet a Soviet threat, it also trains forces to meet other threats, and the Army can adjust its training to depict virtually any type of threat scenario.

Background

For over 40 years, the United States has focused its defense strategy primarily on countering the military threat posed by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact forces. Accordingly, the major focus of Army combat training was to prepare U.S. forces to counter this threat. However, recent world events have shown that this threat has diminished. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union have improved; Germany has been reunified; and the Warsaw Pact has collapsed. Most recent indications are that the Soviet Union may dissolve into a loose confederation of independent republics. Although the Soviet Union will continue to possess the capability of destroying the United States, the likelihood of its trying to do so is now less than it has been at any time since the end of World War II.

According to Department of Defense (DOD) and intelligence agency estimates, a Soviet-led invasion into Western Europe that escalates into a global war is now also considered unlikely. The Soviet Union has reduced the size of its military forces and is withdrawing troops from Europe. DOD and intelligence officials believe that even if the Soviet Union did attempt to reconstitute its forces back to Cold War strengths, the United States would have time to respond with existing forces and to generate additional forces.

While the likelihood of a massive war with the Soviet Union has diminished, the chances of smaller regional conflicts have increased. As demonstrated by the recent war with Iraq, such conflicts may arise with little warning or predictability. These changes in the threat are causing DOD to reexamine U.S. military strategy.

The Army Is Assessing the Effect of the Changed Threat on Its Combat Training Strategy

DOD's planning guidance describes the military threat and the defense policies and strategies to meet it. The guidance is published every 2 years, and the Army develops its programs and budgets based on it. The guidance for 1992 and the President's fiscal year 1991 budget proposals were issued in early 1990, shortly after the collapse of communist governments in East Germany and in other Warsaw Pact member states and prior to the major political changes occurring in the Soviet Union. Consequently, neither DOD's guidance for 1992 nor the 1991 budget was significantly influenced by these developments.

Because strategic planning occurs over a 2-year cycle, DOD will not issue the next guidance until late 1991 or early 1992. It began preparing defense programs and DOD budgets for fiscal years 1992 through 1997 in early 1990, based on guidance and threat evaluations prepared in 1989. Accordingly, DOD made program and budget decisions during a period of increasing uncertainty regarding the threat.

Although DOD did not fully consider the threat changes during its last formal planning process, other reports, such as the President's annual National Security Strategy of the United States, along with statements from the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, clearly indicate that the changes have been recognized. DOD is shaping a new military strategy based on the changes. A speech given by the President on August 2, 1990, outlines the new strategy. In general, it involves a force that is forward deployed but at lower levels than it has been in the past. The strategy no longer focuses on the threat of a Soviet-led conflict leading to a global war. While the

Soviet Union is still recognized as the dominant threat, the strategy will now place more emphasis on the possibility of regional conflicts.

The Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is responsible for determining training requirements and developing training programs to respond to threat and strategy changes. TRADOC uses the Concept Based Requirements System (CBRS) to assess whether the Army's current war-fighting requirements will meet its projected needs in five areas: doctrine, training, leadership, organization (force structure), and materiel. This process consists of an assessment of (1) current capabilities and the effects of changing conditions, including changes in the threat, and (2) the development of solutions to overcome deficiencies. The needed changes are then implemented by TRADOC through its proponent schools or by other Army organizations, as appropriate.

TRADOC completes CBRS assessments about every 2 years in conjunction with the Army's planning and budgeting cycle. The current assessment cycle began in April 1989. In October 1991, TRADOC completed the CBRS assessment. The results are now being reviewed by the Department of the Army.

Army Combat Training Strategy Reflects Threat Change

Army officials told us that the latest CBRS assessment, while not final, does not show that significant changes will be needed in the Army's combat training strategy. Army officials believe that the current strategy, along with changes underway, is adequate to respond to a wide variety of threats. The bases for the Army's position are that

- combat forces have been structured to meet a wide variety of threats,
- war-fighting doctrine is being adjusted to reflect changing conditions,
- soldiers' training is flexible enough to address a wide variety of wartime missions that are not expected to significantly change,
- a Soviet-based threat will continue to be included in training because the Soviet Union remains a formidable adversary, and
- Operation Desert Storm tested the quality of the Army's combat training.

Nevertheless, the Army is adjusting its classroom training curricula to better prepare soldiers for varying types of threats.

The Army Has Developed Combat Forces to Meet Varying Threats

Over the years, the Army has recognized that it must be prepared to conduct a wide range of missions: from undertaking a massive war against the Soviet Union or a third world country to taking part in lesser conflicts involving insurgencies against constituted governments, terrorism, or hostage rescue operations. The Army has developed a combination of heavy, light, and special operations forces to undertake these various missions.

A major mission for the Army's heavy combat forces—armored and mechanized infantry divisions—has been to support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in defending Western Europe against Soviet expansion. To achieve this objective, the Army stationed nearly five armored and mechanized infantry divisions and more than 200,000 troops in 12 European countries. With the diminished Soviet threat, the Army is now reducing the number of forward-deployed armored forces in Europe and plans to develop a contingency force that can deploy anywhere in the world as the need arises.

Concerned about its ability to adequately perform in conflicts of varying intensity in all parts of the world, the Army developed a light, division-sized force capable of rapid deployment in the early 1980s. The Army believed that early and rapid deployment of a credible fighting force to a crisis area could preclude the subsequent necessity to use a larger, more costly force. In contrast to other infantry divisions, light divisions contain fewer soldiers and less equipment and can deploy faster.

The Army's special operations capabilities have been enhanced considerably since the early 1980s. DOD defines "special operations" as actions conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by nonconventional means. They are conducted across the full spectrum of conflict, from low to high intensity, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional forces.¹

After the end of the Vietnam conflict, funding for special operations forces was reduced substantially. However, the failed attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran in April 1980 led to the enhancement of U.S.

¹Conflicts are classified into three levels based upon their severity. A high-intensity conflict is a general war between major powers in which the total resources of the combatants are used and the national survival of one may be in jeopardy. A mid-intensity conflict is a limited war with constrained resources between two or more nations at an intensity below that of general war. A low-intensity conflict is a constrained political-military operation, ranging from diplomatic, economic, and other pressures to terrorism and insurgencies against a constituted government.

special operations capabilities. The special operations budget was increased from less than \$500 million in fiscal year 1981 to more than \$3 billion in fiscal year 1990. In fiscal year 1991, approximately 25,000 Army personnel were assigned to special operations activities. The Army's special operations force includes

- special forces units, which train and assist foreign military and paramilitary forces in internal defense, unconventional warfare, reconnaissance, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance, and
- ranger units, which are light infantry forces designed to deploy rapidly anywhere in the world to achieve critical military objectives.

The Army Is Revising Its War-Fighting Doctrine

As a result of the changing security environment, the Army is revising its war-fighting doctrine. If Army combat forces are to accomplish their missions successfully, they must be driven by a fundamental strategy that accommodates changing threats, missions, and worldwide situations. The Army's "AirLand Battle" doctrine, which was adopted in 1982, established the principles that forces were to follow in planning and conducting military operations. Primarily directed toward meeting the threat of a massive Soviet attack in Western Europe, the doctrine did recognize that the Army needed to be able to undertake a wide variety of contingency operations requiring the rapid deployment of Army forces. The doctrine, which is contained in the Army's Field Manual 100-5, Operations, emphasizes four key war-fighting principles:

- Initiative: Forcing the enemy to conform to the Army's terms of battle by conducting offensive operations.
- Agility: Acting faster than the enemy by concentrating the strength of Army forces on attacking the enemy's weaknesses.
- Depth: Attacking enemy flanks, rear, and support echelons to reduce his flexibility and endurance and to disrupt plans.
- Synchronization: Arranging battlefield activities to produce maximum combat power at the decisive point (for example, coordinating supporting fire with troop maneuvers).

"AirLand Battle" was based on the assumption that a large number of Army combat forces would be forward deployed and reinforced by forces stationed in the United States.

In response to budgetary pressures and changes in the security environment, the Army plans to reduce its forces by nearly 250,000 personnel by fiscal year 1995. The number of Army divisions will also be reduced

from 28 to 20. In response to the changed security environment, the Army, in 1988, began to revise its "AirLand Battle" doctrine and expects to adopt a new doctrine in the spring of 1993. The new doctrine, to be called "AirLand Operations," is to be based on having fewer combat forces stationed in forward-deployed positions and a contingency corps in the United States with the capability of projecting combat power as conflicts arise.

The new doctrine is not expected to represent a radical departure from the old one, but it is to place more emphasis on meeting various threats. According to the TRADOC Commander, the four key tenets of the Army's "AirLand Battle" doctrine will continue to be important in the new doctrine, although the emphasis on some may change. For example, under the new doctrine, the Army will be expected to have the ability to quickly tailor its forces for a particular purpose and deploy them in response to both expected and unexpected events.

Flexible Training Prepares Combat Forces for a Wide Variety of Missions

The Army implements its doctrine in establishing unit missions and developing training plans. After the development of war plans to meet worldwide threats, Army commanders make lists of essential tasks that individual units must perform to accomplish their portions of the wartime mission. A "Mission Essential Task List" (METL) serves as the basis for training programs for an active or reserve Army unit. METLs may vary significantly, depending on the unit's wartime mission or geographical location. For example, a unit with a European wartime mission may have a river-crossing as an essential task, whereas a unit with a Southwest Asian mission probably does not.

While unit METLs may differ, Army officials believe that, even during this current period of change, the kinds of missions and war-fighting tactics that Army combat forces must be prepared to execute will remain fundamentally the same. For example, Army officials told us that an armored unit in Europe would use essentially the same tactics to fight Soviet armored units that an armored unit would use to fight the Iraqis in Southwest Asia. However, as the Army moves towards implementing its "AirLand Operations" doctrine, which assumes the use of fewer forces, units may have to support more than one command, possibly requiring proficiency in new tasks.

Training at Combat Training Centers Is Flexible

To maintain proficiency in mission-essential tasks, Army combat units periodically participate in large-scale exercises. During peacetime, the Army's three Combat Training Centers (CTC) provide unit training in a

variety of combat missions and allow large-scale unit maneuvers. Heavy, light, and special operations forces train at these centers to prepare themselves for differing levels of conflict. Two centers—the National Training Center (NTC) and the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC)—are in the continental United States. The third center is the Combat Maneuver Training Center at Hohenfels, Germany. Our work focused on the two centers located in the United States.²

The NTC, which began operations in 1981, is located at Fort Irwin, California. It is the Army's key facility for training heavy armored and mechanized brigade-sized forces in mid- to high-intensity conflicts. Both active and reserve forces participate in NTC exercises. From fiscal years 1987 through 1991, the NTC conducted 11 to 14 exercises per year. During these exercises, units practiced offensive and defensive tactics primarily against a Soviet-style opposing force in an environment very similar to that of actual warfare, including exposure to simulated nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. The Air Force routinely participates in NTC exercises and conducts close air support missions.

While the NTC will continue to train combat forces against a Soviet threat, according to an Army official, the NTC is developing an array of other threat scenarios. Units will train against the threat that they are most likely to confront in battle. In addition, an Army official told us that the training scenario at the NTC can be adjusted to replicate virtually any type of threat with approximately 3 to 6 months' advanced notice. If a crisis arises, the Army anticipates that it could adjust the threat scenarios more quickly. For example, an Army official said that to prepare combat units for Operation Desert Storm, the Army changed the model at the NTC to represent an Iraqi threat within 6 weeks of the invasion of Kuwait. In the future, the Army plans to construct facilities at the NTC to conduct training in a simulated urban environment.

The JRTC, which began operations in 1987, is located at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. It provides training for light infantry brigades and airborne, special operations, and ranger forces in low- to mid-intensity conflicts. From fiscal years 1988 through 1991, the JRTC conducted about nine exercises per year. During these exercises, units practiced tactics against several third world-style forces. As is the case at the NTC, the JRTC can adjust its training models to replicate virtually any third world

²The Joint Chiefs of Staff are evaluating how combined service training could be improved. Under consideration is the consolidation of some military training centers located in the United States. If implemented, a Joint Training Theater would combine Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force training facilities in California, Nevada, and Arizona.

threat. The training includes the use of a simulated chemical environment and operations in an urban scenario. The Air Force and the Marines also participate in JRTC exercises. The Air Force provides search and rescue operations, aerial resupply, strategic airlift, and close air support. Beginning in 1989, the Marines have provided a company for directing simulated naval gunfire.

The Army's war-fighting strategy recognizes that heavy, light, and special operations forces are likely to have to fight together in future conflicts. Accordingly, the Army conducts combined training exercises at both CTCs, which provide these forces with the opportunity to train together under wartime conditions. At the NTC, two heavy battalions train with one light battalion; at the JRTC, two light battalions train with a heavy company. From fiscal years 1987 through 1990, the Army annually conducted one to four combined exercises at the NTC. The JRTC began conducting combined exercises in fiscal year 1988 and has held about four combined exercises each year.

The Army's goal is to conduct 10 combined exercises annually at the CTCs. In fiscal year 1993, the Army plans to relocate the JRTC to Fort Polk, Louisiana. This relocation is designed to provide the Army with more capability to conduct combined training. The Army also believes that the CTCs are adequate to meet their future training needs.

The movement towards combined exercises has actually increased the frequency with which combat units can train at the CTCs, especially light units. According to an Army official, during combined training at the NTC, the Army has added a light battalion without replacing a heavy battalion. Thus, there was no impact on the frequency with which heavy battalions could train at the NTC and an increase in the capability to train light units.

Joint Exercises Prepare Army Combat Forces to Fight With Forces of Other Countries

Army combat forces participate in joint exercises with other countries' forces under the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Exercise Program. Such training is important, as future conflicts may require Army forces to fight with forces from other nations, as was the case in Operation Desert Storm. The Army participates in about 50 such exercises annually; 90 percent of them are conducted overseas. According to an Army official, the number of exercises is expected to remain constant through fiscal year 1997, although the scope of some exercises may change. Significant exercises in the program include the following:

- **Return of Forces to Germany (REFORGER):** A continental U.S.-based deployment exercise conducted annually for more than 20 years to demonstrate the rapid reinforcement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and U.S. war-fighting capabilities. Because of the reduced Soviet and Warsaw Pact threat, German reunification, concerns about environmental damage in Germany, and budgetary and other considerations, the total number of U.S. troops participating in REFORGER in 1990 was 57,500. This represented a reduction of about 56,500 from the approximately 114,000 troops who participated in the previous exercise conducted in 1988.
- **Team Spirit:** A large-scale field exercise that began in fiscal year 1976 and is conducted annually in Korea. Forces from both the United States and the Republic of Korea participate in the exercise. The objective is to increase the combat readiness of Korean and U.S. forces through training in combined and joint operations, including the strategic and tactical movement, deployment, and redeployment of continental U.S.-based forces. In fiscal year 1990, about 27,000 Army troops participated in the exercise.
- **Bright Star:** An overseas deployment exercise that began in fiscal year 1983 and is conducted every 2 years in Egypt with several Middle Eastern countries. In fiscal year 1990, about 6,600 Army troops participated in the exercise.

The Army Intends to Continue Training Combat Forces to Meet a Soviet Threat

According to DOD's 1990 report on Soviet military power and Army officials, even in its current state, the Soviet Union would be the U.S. most formidable adversary in a war.³ With about three million soldiers and thousands of nuclear warheads, the Soviet Union has the capability of destroying the United States. Although the threat of a quick Soviet attack on Europe is virtually gone, the Soviet Union retains modern conventional and nuclear weapons and chemical and biological warfare capability. It has also provided a substantial amount of military assistance to many countries around the world, including Cuba, Vietnam, and Iraq. According to Army officials, more than 30 countries have developed their military forces based on Soviet war-fighting strategies. Because the Soviet Union remains a formidable military power, Army officials believe that the Army must continue to train combat forces to deter and defend against a Soviet-based threat.

³Soviet Military Power, 1990 (Department of Defense, Sept. 1990).

Activities of Army Combat Forces in Operation Desert Storm

To respond to the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, the Army called on all elements of its combat forces—heavy, light, and special operations. In accordance with their missions, light and special operations forces were the first Army forces to deploy to the Persian Gulf. These forces were complemented by combat air assault and armored units. Their missions included establishing a defensive capability to deter Iraq from continued aggression, defending Saudi Arabia, conducting reconnaissance, taking measures to deceive Iraqi forces, and assisting in the care of civilians and the control of prisoners of war.

Subsequently, another Army armored corps was deployed to the theater to provide counteroffensive capability. Its mission was to destroy Iraqi communications, liberate Kuwait, and destroy the Republican Guard forces in Kuwait. Thousands of U.S. reserve soldiers also participated in Operations Desert Shield/Storm, conducting artillery, water purification, port operations, fuel-handling, supply, and medical missions. Altogether, more than 300,000 soldiers participated in the Persian Gulf conflict.

In a July 1991 report to the Congress, DOD cited the importance of highly trained military personnel to the success of Operation Desert Storm.⁴ In particular, the report cited the realistic training provided at the combat training centers, such as the NTC, and multinational training exercises, such as REFORGER and Bright Star, as important to the success of Gulf operations. According to the Army's Chief of Staff, Operation Desert Storm demonstrated that Army forces were trained and ready to deploy rapidly.

The Army Is Making Some Curricula Changes to Respond to New Threats

The Army's war-fighting strategy, which emphasizes sound military doctrine, a balanced mix of combat forces, and realistic combat training, has placed it in a position to be able to respond to a wide variety of threats. Although the Army is not planning to significantly revise its strategy, it is making some revisions to its classroom training curricula in response to the changed threat.

The Combined Arms and Services Staff School trains captains to perform duties at the brigade, division, and installation levels. The curricula include instruction on training management, combat operations, mobilization, and deployment. Previously, one phase of this training focused only on organizations and equipment related to a Soviet threat.

⁴Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict: An Interim Report to Congress (Department of Defense, July 1991).

However, according to the Army, by late 1992 or early 1993, the training will be revised to include a consideration of Latin American, Southwest Asian, and Pacific-based threats.

The Command and General Staff College prepares senior officers for field-grade command and principal staff positions. The curricula focus on command and staff skills required to implement the "AirLand Battle" doctrine at division levels and above and on the skills needed for higher-level assignments. Its previous "defense of Europe" focus has been expanded to include a consideration of varying levels of threat in five regions: the continental United States, Europe, Central America, Southwest Asia, and the Pacific.

Scope and Methodology

To address our objectives, we reviewed regulations and other key documents of the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Department of the Army on assessing the changed threat, identifying combat training requirements, and developing the Army's training program. We also interviewed program officials to obtain their views on threat changes and their impact on Army force structure, doctrine, and combat training. We obtained information on the CBRS; however, we did not include an evaluation of the Army's CBRS assessment in the scope of this review. We obtained our data and held interviews at the following locations:

- the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C.;
- the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C.;
- the Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.;
- the Offices of the Army Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Operations and Plans and Intelligence, Washington, D.C.;
- the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia;
- the Combined Arms Command, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas;
- Forces Command, Fort McPherson, Georgia;
- the 1st Army Division (Mechanized), Fort Riley, Kansas;
- the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California;
- the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas;
- the AirLand Forces Application Agency, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia; and
- the Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

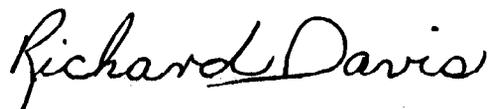
As requested, we did not obtain written DOD comments on this report, but we discussed our findings with DOD program officials and incorporated their comments where appropriate.

We conducted our review from December 1990 through September 1991 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

We are sending copies of the report to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services and on Appropriations and the Secretaries of Defense and the Army. Copies will also be made available to other interested parties upon request.

Please call me on (202) 275-4141 if you or your staff have any questions about this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix I.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Davis".

Richard Davis
Director, Army Issues

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