

## DEFENSE ALTERNATIVES: A Strawman Vision -- The Military We Ought to Have in Five Years... and Beyond

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### In Brief

- Our strategy and force planning is focused only on present problems and those in the near term, while failing to make decisions that go beyond recent trends.
- The current force planning does not see the important shift in the active-reserve force relationship.
- We should develop a joint “prevent component” with enhanced strategic speed, agility, and expeditionary capabilities from about 20% of the current active component.

### Where we stand today

**T**oday’s military is different than it was eight years ago. Then, the Navy was consolidating its post-Cold War shift from sea control to power projection. The Army was beginning its own transition toward more agile, modular, expeditionary forces. The Air Force was trying to decide if it would become America’s AeroSpace Force. The public was reveling in the nation’s military dominance, not sure about what to do with it, but not worried about not knowing. Indeed, we all had finally accepted that the Cold War was truly over; we did not, however, agree on what had replaced it.

Today, the military services – particularly the Army and Marines – seek the right balance between replenishing the equipment used up and burned out in America’s second-longest war, modernizing along the paths set at the beginning of this century, and maintaining the quality of their manpower– eroded by rotations and high operational tempos. The ground forces – the Army and Marine Corps – are stretched, and stretching toward greater capabilities to deal with irregular challenges. The Navy

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and Air Force are stretching toward greater capabilities to compete – or in the Navy’s case, collaborate – in the new commons: the sea, the air above the sea, space, and cyberspace.

We have spent a lot on the military, particularly since 9/11, and plan to continue to spend a lot. In 2008, we will spend over half a trillion dollars on the base defense budget and about another \$180 billion in supplemental appropriations to cover operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The fiscal 2009 budget will probably exceed that, and in inflation-adjusted terms, remain about 25 percent higher than what the United States was spending on the military at the height of the Vietnam War in 1968.

Our strategy and force planning has narrowed toward the present. We focus increasingly on dealing with current problems, making decisions that try to meet the trends of the last few years rather than those that will condition the future. It is, of course, hard to foresee what is to come and probably dumb to try to design our forces for specific guesses about it. But the decisions we make today in response to immediate problems will determine our ability to deal with what comes later. And, because we are still the 700-pound gorilla in world affairs (slimmed down somewhat from where we were a decade ago), the decisions we make now will greatly affect what is to come.

## Near-Term Demands

Recognizing the disagreements between its edges, the national consensus on the kind of military we should develop currently includes the following elements:

- The current operating tempo, driven by the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the broader global war on terror, will decline over the next five years but remain relatively high (compared to the 1990s).
- Increases in Army and Marine Corps end strength are the best way of relieving the internal stress of the expected operational tempo and the rotation schemes designed to meet it.
- U.S. capabilities for irregular warfare have to improve, and the improvement has to occur in the State Department and other departments and agencies, as well as in the military.
- The purpose of the reserve components of the Army and Marine Corps has changed from strategic hedges against a global conventional war to operational plugs to relieve the stress of “long-war” combat rotations.
- We must retain a robust conventional warfare capability as a hedge against a major conventional conflict and as a base from which to spin off, hone, or mold other capabilities.
- The spread of modern, deadly kinetic means of exercising power will be global and will accelerate.
- We must control military spending.

Currently we seek to meet all these points in particular ways:

- Dealing with a higher operating tempo by increasing ground force manpower and maintaining contractor support for and directly in U.S. combat operations.

- Increased recruiting and extension bonuses and advertising for active and reserve components.
- Studies, coordinating groups, and increased budgets for better cross-agency collaboration on irregular challenges.
- Greater public diplomacy outreach.
- Expanded manpower via contract outsourcing for SOF in indirect GWOT operations.
- Continued funding for joint experimentation at JFCOM and within the military services.

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If there is a succinct way of characterizing the current thrust of planning for the next five years, it's this: "Focus on restoring U.S. ground forces to their pre-9/11 status with attention to operations in CENTCOM, enhance SOF GWOT capabilities, outsource as many other irregular challenge capabilities as possible, and use the Navy and Air Force as the primary hedge against other contingencies."

This is a consensus, near term-focused strategy -- probably good for the next year or so, and certainly consistent with the incremental-change approach of the Cold War. We know how to do this and have the bureaucracies and processes to do it.

Its flaw is twofold: It will not maintain the rate of transformation that the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands, and it does not recognize the fundamental change in the active-reserve component relationship, nor take advantage of it. Its reliance on outsourcing military functions carries longer-term political, cost, and change-rate implications that are not beneficial. It is not driven by a vision of the kind of military we should have beyond 2009 and sets a course that will complicate and delay the changes we will need down the line.

## **A Force for 2010 and Beyond**

We should build a force for 2010 and beyond that:

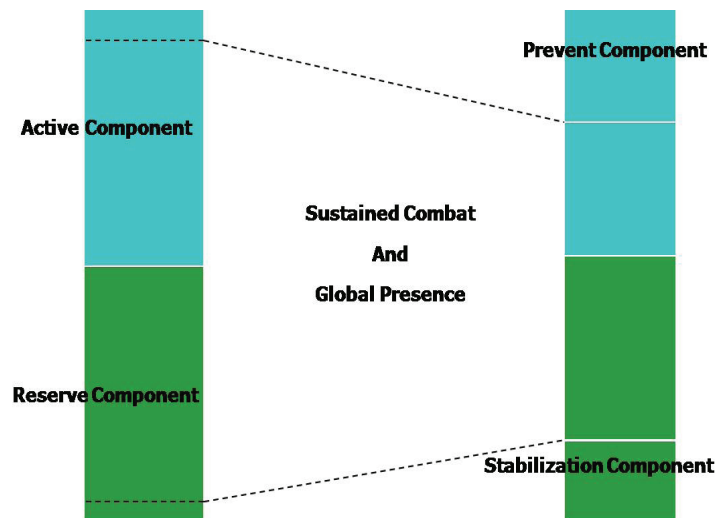
- Accelerates transformation rates across the military services
- Increases homeland security and stabilization capabilities abroad
- Improves joint military quick-response expeditionary capabilities
- Maintains an adequate capability to conduct sustained conventional combat and global presence operations in a national security strategy of global collaboration and deterrence with Europe, Russia, China, Japan, and India for the new commons (the seas, air above the seas, space, and cyberspace)
- Constrains costs

This force would move from today’s “total force” design toward a new force triad by accelerating some of the trends that are already visible. More specifically, we should develop a joint “prevent component” with enhanced strategic speed, agility, and expeditionary capabilities from about 20% of the current active component. The participating units would synchronize their rotations to provide extended periods of training, operating, and experimenting together. In effect, this component would become the nation’s preemptive force capability and transformation vanguard.

We should also develop a homeland security/stability component from up to 12 National Guard BCTs and units of the Air Guard. These units would specialize in skills focused on domestic responses to crises and disasters and on stability/restoration capabilities abroad. They would maintain many military characteristics, but because of their specialization, they would differ in structure, organization, equipment, training, and recruitment, and draw heavily on contractor support in cultural knowledge, sociology, and other aspects of human terrain.

In some respects, the current force has these two components. But the capabilities of the proposed “prevent ” and “stabilization” components here currently reside in relatively small portions of the total force, and the training associated with them is generally conditioned by and part of the broader, dominant mission of the total force: to wage war in the form of sustained combat campaigns. Figure 1 illustrates the new design.

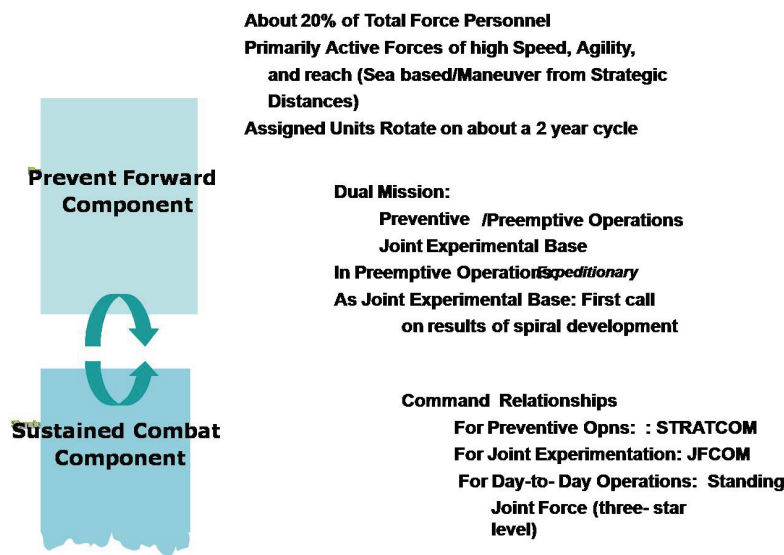
**Figure 1**  
**The Transition to the New Design**  
**(% of Total Force)**



# The Prevent Component

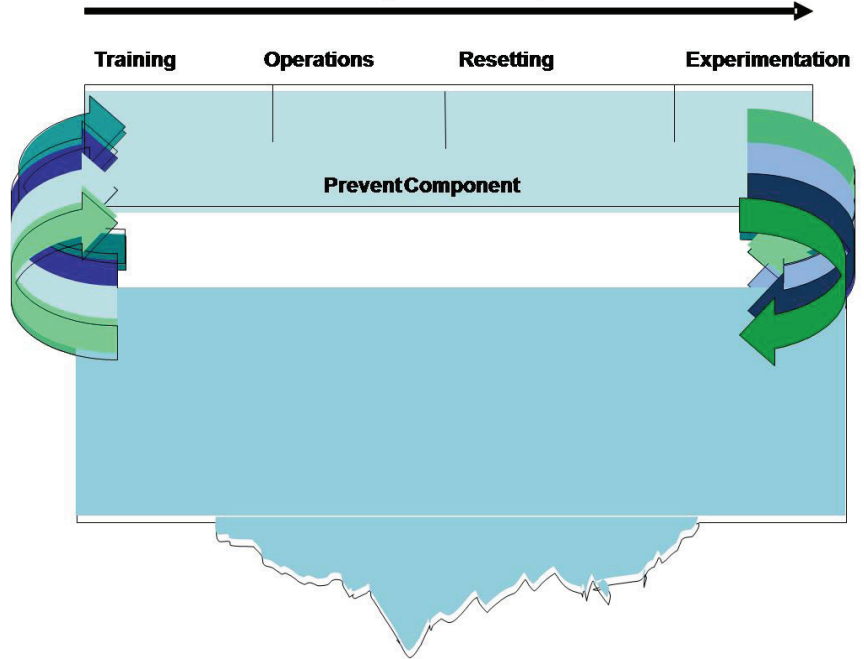
Because the prevent component would be the force pool from which the United States would launch preemptive operations, it would consist mostly of active forces known for their speed, reach, and agility. The component would possess the most potent combination of C4ISR assets we could assemble. Units assigned to the component would serve in it for about two years before rotating back to the Sustained Combat component. Figure 2 highlights distinguishing aspects of the concept.

**Figure 2**  
**The “Prevent Forward” Component**



The transformation vanguard notion stems from the goal of a faster transformation rate, which can come from a broader base of joint transformation: getting enough new technology prototypes in the hands of troops and new organizations and structures to shortcut the slow, parsimonious, and constrained “joint experimentation” process we have today. All the military services now rotate their units through similar phases of preparation for deployment, deployment, and resetting. This allows coordinated joint service rotation through these stages. The addition of a new stage of joint, coordinated and much expanded, experimentation for units assigned to the prevent component can make them the transformation vanguard. Units assigned to the prevent component would train, operate, reset, and experiment together. The first three stages would conform to the current rotation pattern, although the prevent component units would go through them together, working jointly within the confines of joint doctrine. In the joint experimentation stage, however, they would explore new ways of using the cutting edge/prototypes of technology, with different organizational and structural forms, in true experiments (not “demonstrations,” but in efforts to finding out what does and doesn’t work). They would return to the force pool better able to transfer the new knowledge to the force as a whole.

**Figure 3**  
**Joint Unit Rotation Pattern with Joint Transformation Experimentation Phase**  
**Nominal 2 year rotation period**



... the component would serve as a national/regional defense and crisis response institution, cutting across state boundaries, for terror or other attacks ...it would serve as the core military contribution to the interagency stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

## Stabilization Component

Like the prevent component, the stabilization component of the model represents an acceleration of some emerging trends. The stabilization component would constitute about 15% of the total force personnel and, because it would be composed largely of Guard personnel, would mark an increase in the portion of those personnel currently skilled in stabilization and reconstruction missions. The component would be closely associated with homeland security -- hence a salient command role postulated for NORTHCOM. So far as homeland security is concerned, the component would serve as a national/regional defense and crisis response institution, cutting across state boundaries, for terror or other attacks on the United States. For stabilization missions abroad, it would serve as the core military contribution to the interagency stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

Over time, the stabilization component would diverge from the capabilities needed to easily fit into a sustained combat role and therefore away from the similarity with the active force's equipment, organization, and operational style.

## Building a New American Arsenal

The American Security Project (ASP) is a bipartisan initiative to educate American public about the changing nature of national security in the 21 century.

Gone are the days when a nation's strength could be measured by bombs and battleships. Security in this new era requires a New American Arsenal harnessing all of America's strengths: the force of our diplomacy; the might of our military; the vigor of our economy; and the power of our ideals.

We believe that America must lead other nations in the pursuit of our common goals and shared security. We must confront international challenges with all the tools at our disposal. We must address emerging problems before they become security crises. And to do this, we must forge a new bipartisan consensus at home.

ASP brings together prominent American leaders, current and former members of Congress, retired military officers, and former government officials. Staff direct research on a broad range of issues and engages and empowers the American public by taking its findings directly to them.

We live in a time when the threats to our security are as complex and diverse as terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, climate change, failed and failing states, disease, and pandemics. The same-old solutions and partisan bickering won't do. America needs an honest dialogue about security that is as robust as it is realistic.

ASP exists to promote that dialogue, to forge consensus, and to spur constructive action so that America meets the challenges to its security while seizing the opportunities the new century offers.



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