Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.
——Alfred Lord Tennyson, Ulysses

The Art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get
at him as soon as you can. Strike at him as hard as you can and as
often as you can, and keep moving on.
——Ulysses S. Grant
Ironically perhaps, these are trying times for American defense planners. On the one hand, U.S. armed forces today are perhaps better prepared than ever before to protect the nation and to defend its interests around the globe. With the Cold War behind us, U.S. forces continue to enjoy a legacy of decades of investment in research and development, in modern weapons, and in extensive, realistic training. And by any measure, either in absolute terms or relative to the rest of the world, the United States is devoting a substantial level of resources to defense.

Yet it is difficult to avoid the sense that the nation is not focusing its defense resources as well as it could on meeting emerging threats and challenges. Over the past four years, modernization spending (as measured by the combination of Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) and procurement funding) has been at its lowest level since 1977. Moreover, the share of spending on procurement—the expenditures that actually place new equipment into the hands of soldiers, sailors, and airmen—has fallen at a disproportionate rate. Procurement spending by the Department of Defense is now at its lowest level since the beginning of the Korean War.

More to the point, our potential adversaries may have profited more from the lessons of the Gulf War than our own defense establishment. There is ample evidence that the military forces of key regional powers are emphasizing improvements in such areas as ballistic and cruise missiles, weapons of mass destruction, modern air defenses, low-cost antiship weapons, and other capabilities that
could be used to deter or impede U.S. forces’ access to overseas theaters and to suppress their tempo of operations once deployed. It is not evident that U.S. operational concepts for deploying or employing forces are adjusting to these emerging challenges. Nor is there a consensus within the U.S. defense community to capitalize on unique and enduring U.S. advantages in rapidly deployable firepower and information systems, the early potential of which was demonstrated in Operation Desert Storm. Left unchecked, these trends could lead to a situation a decade hence in which U.S. forces, though sizable and well-trained, lack the capabilities they need to defeat aggression by a capable opponent without risking unacceptably high casualties and costs.

As is often the case, the problems stem not so much from technical barriers as from the difficulty in discerning that the risks of adopting new approaches to warfare are increasingly outweighed by the risks of holding onto more traditional approaches. New systems are emerging that can enable operational concepts well suited to meeting the demands of the future, but many of these programs are vulnerable to unnecessarily prolonged development schedules or even cancellation because of misguided funding priorities.

This report does not argue that the nation should be spending more on defense. It does argue that the Department of Defense should reexamine its force mix and investment priorities in order to exploit more fully and more rapidly important opportunities that exist to enhance U.S. capabilities for rapid power projection. The analysis set forth here should be useful to anyone with a serious interest in U.S. national security and defense planning, particularly those interested in capabilities needed to deter—and to prevail in—major theater conflicts.

**PROJECT AIR FORCE**

Project AIR FORCE, a division of RAND, is the Air Force’s federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) for studies and analyses. It provides the Air Force with independent analyses of policy alternatives affecting the development, employment, combat readiness, and support of current and future air and space forces.
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