

CRS Report for Congress

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U.S. Military Dispositions: Fact Sheet

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The United States maintains a global military presence to support foreign policy and military strategy. Representation ranges from one Marine in Sierra Leone to an Army Corps in Germany, and is found in 144 nations. In some countries, presence is maintained continuously and service members are assigned tours of one to three years. In other countries, there may be short term deployments of units or teams in response to emergencies or training opportunities. This report describes the worldwide distribution of U.S. military personnel and related concerns of Congress. It will be updated quarterly.

The table below is a snapshot of active duty military distribution compiled by the Department of Defense for September 30, 2004. These statistics are normally published quarterly — on any given day exact numbers differ. Rotation of replacement personnel and units occurs regularly at traditional overseas bases, while one-time spikes can occur anywhere the United States may be involved in a crisis situation. In 1996, for example, there were 15,000 U.S. soldiers deployed in Bosnia — but today there are 951. On any day, also, many military personnel are afloat on ships. On the day shown there were 135,536 men and women at sea or in temporary ports, included and distributed throughout the territorial waters of the United States and the several regions shown in the table.

Geographic Distribution of U.S. Military Personnel (AD)^a

Total Number on Active Duty	1,426,836
United States and Territories (see Note)	1,139,034
Europe (see Note)	114,860
East Asia and Pacific (see Note)	89,846
Africa, Near East, and South Asia (see Note)	4,956
Western Hemisphere (excluding USA)	1,825
Rest of the World (see Note)	76,315

Source: Department of Defense. Worldwide Manpower Distribution by Geographical Area. September 30, 2004.

Note: Not included are 211,028 AD, Reserve, and National Guard members of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in Iraq and Kuwait who are instead accounted for in United States, Germany, Italy, and South Korea. “Rest of the World” includes Afghanistan, Former Soviet Union, and all personnel undistributed on March 31, 2004.

^aComparable data not available for Reserve Components, however, on March 22, 2005, there were some 84,400 RC personnel serving outside the Continental United States. (OASD-RA).

Forward Presence. Forward presence remains an important component of U.S. military strategy; in the Cold War it supported containment, but now it primarily supports regional stability and the Global War on Terrorism. Advantages derived: assures friends and allies of U.S. commitments; deters potential regional aggressors; places forces closer to crisis response sites; and, provides a physical and human infrastructure for global military response capabilities. Disadvantages: additional costs to maintain forces overseas (personnel and operating costs 10-20% above Continental U.S.); may make it easier to act or be expected to act as “world policeman”; adds to “overcommitment” of downsized forces; and, potential to attract political or environmental complaints.

Trends. After the Cold War ended, the overall size of the U.S. Armed Forces declined while the operating tempo increased. The number of forces permanently stationed overseas declined — especially in Europe. Whereas 33% of the Army was stationed overseas in 1989, the figure is now 21% (not including deployments). The Clinton Administration decided to stabilize U.S. presence in Europe at about 100,000 troops, down from 300,000 in the past. Presence in the Pacific region was also stabilized at about 100,000 focused in volatile Northeast Asia, where some 40,000 troops are in South Korea and 36,000 in Japan. (The Bush Administration is in the process of changing the global stationing posture.) While such presence stationings are normal and expected by individual uniformed personnel, temporary deployments for humanitarian or peacekeeping purposes, joint and combined training, and actual conflicts increased after the Cold War and remain high. Units for these missions come from both overseas and stateside bases. Today, U.S. activities include land, water, and air operations in and around Iraq, former Yugoslavia, Korea, Afghanistan, and other areas critical to the War on Terrorism.

Costs and Burdensharing. Overseas presence and engagement commitments raise questions about costs. Broad questions involve how much the nation should devote to maintaining influence abroad and world-power capabilities and whether there are cheaper ways to do so. The United States has already shifted emphasis from forward presence to power projection. Cost savings from bringing forces home may be reduced by the need to compensate with greater airlift, sealift, and pre-positioning. Because U.S. presence is normally in the interest of both the host nation and the United States, there has often been pressure to have hosts pay more of the costs. For analysis of these complicated issues, see CRS Reports 95-726, *Defense Budget: Alternative Measures of Costs of Military Commitments Abroad*, and 94-515, *Defense Burdensharing: Is Japan's Host Nation Support a Model for Other Allies?*

Congressional Actions. Since the later days of the Cold War, Congress has set ceilings on U.S. forward presence primarily by limiting the numbers of troops ashore allowed in Europe — currently 100,000. In the defense authorization act for FY1999 (P.L. 105-261), Congress again directed the President to seek increased burdensharing by each nation that has cooperative military relations with the United States. Congress authorized, but did not require, several measures that the President could use to encourage nations to increase such efforts. For FY2001 (H.R. 4205), Congress directed GAO to study costs and benefits for U.S. military activities in Europe, which was accomplished in reports GAO-02-174 and GAO-02-99. Temporary deployments by the President may be reported to Congress under provisions of the War Powers Act.