

Is America's Military Ready?

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The "smaller scale contingency" against Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia, a NATO intervention prosecuted primarily with American might, drags on day after day, sortie after sortie, bomb after bomb. Suddenly, within the first week, the warning cry goes out: "We're running short of cruise missiles! We have only 90 left!"

By the third week, Pentagon officials admit they cannot coax any more reservists to volunteer for duty in the Balkans, eliciting rumors that as many as 33,000 would be called up. A few weeks later, the rumors prove true as thousands of flight-support reservists are told to report to active duty.

It is also worrying that the Pentagon has committed half of America's combat air wings to the "Kosovo crisis," including most or all of its F-16 fighters fitted with missiles, spy planes, and electronic-jamming aircraft. Thus the U.S. must scale back on its previous commitments, like monitoring the no-fly zones over Iraq.

These revelations are troubling, but they are only the most recent and obvious signs that the vaunted U.S. military is not truly prepared to engage in a major war anywhere in the world, much less in *two* regional conflicts, the current strategy. Although the church of God does not involve itself in military affairs, the prophetic implications of such a readiness crisis are significant and bear investigation.

Downsizing

Commander-in-Chief Bill Clinton, in a letter seeking exclusion from the draft, once wrote, "I loathe the military." His six-plus years in office proves just how much he hates it:

Since Clinton has taken office, the military has been forced to cut: 4 aircraft carriers, 121 surface combatants and attack submarines, 13 ballistic missile submarines, 500 intercontinental ballistic missiles, 232 strategic bombers, 20 entire air wings of the Navy and Air Force (2,000 combat aircraft), 2 Reserve Army divisions, 8 Regular Army divisions, 293,000 Reserve soldiers and 709,000 Regular Army soldiers. In fact, today's active duty force is only two-thirds the size it was during Desert Storm. (Mike Wilson, "Six Years of Commander-in-Chief Clinton Has Hamstrung U.S. Military Readiness, Crushed Morale Within the Ranks," *American Policy Center News Wire*, 1998, p. 2)

Many, of course, expected the military to downsize after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but not this drastically. Ironically, while defense spending in real dollars has declined for 14 consecutive years, and while spending as a percentage of gross domestic product is at its lowest point since Pearl Harbor, the latest budget provides \$270.5 billion, a figure \$20 billion *higher* than the average Cold War budget. Though inflation accounts for some of this disparity, waste and frequent deployment make up the remainder.

Why, then, is the American military on such shaky ground? According to Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, General Ralph Eberhardt, the problem is Clinton's foreign policy: "The high level of operations over the past several years is beginning to wear on both our people and our systems and is stressing

our current readiness" (Rick Maze, "Leaders Acknowledge Burden on Units," *Air Force Times*, March 30, 1998).

The San Diego *Union-Tribune* reported, "An American military a third smaller than it was in 1990 is stretched ever thinner. U.S. forces have been deployed in 36 foreign operations during the 1990s, nearly double the total for the 1980s" ("Shortchanging Defense . . . An Overstretched, Underfunded Military," April 19, 1998). According to Wilson, Clinton has turned the military into "an international 911 squad," operating missions from Haiti to Rwanda to Kosovo—and straining troops, equipment and resources in the process.

Demoralizing

Clinton's first act in office came at the military's expense: the gays-in-the-military debacle, resulting in the infamous "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Again ironically, homosexuals discharged from the military *rose* from 597 in 1994 to 997 in 1997, mostly because they "told." Not only does the toleration of homosexuality undermine "unit cohesion," the glare of media scrutiny casts a dim light on every branch of the service.

Clinton has also meddled in military culture over women in combat and in the barracks. He has successfully implemented these feminist aims through "fem fear." According to Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, *fem fear* is "an irrational anxiety that grips the hearts of otherwise-sensible men when they contemplate doing anything that might annoy a feminist." The military brass is full of such craven leaders who have allowed this emasculation.

Because of these policies, soldiers train in sneakers and shorts rather than combat boots and fatigues. If a sergeant orders a recruit to do something taxing, the latter can hand him his "stress card" and opt out of the task, no questions asked. A female recruit can charge sexual harassment if a male sergeant yells too loudly or comes too close. And of course, qualifications and standards have been lowered or "gender normed" for both sexes so that basic training is not even challenging.

Beyond this, the administration's social meddling has had other effects:

- » On one base alone, Camp Pendleton near San Diego, 5,000 active-duty personnel sought divorces in 1996, and 2,400 were granted.
- » The pregnancy rate among female U.S. soldiers in Bosnia is reported to be one every three days.
- » The Department of Defense permits military bases to sell pornography.

Richard Rash, a retired Air Force colonel, observes:

Recruitment, morale and readiness are all suffering. People are fed up with being used by feminists and other activists to advance their causes. It's a social experiment being conducted at the expense of the mission. (Carolyn Curtis, "Dangerous Experiment," *Christian American*, p. 4).

Doomed

Are these the initial signs of the total military collapse of modern Israel prophesied in Ezekiel 7?

The time has come, the day draws near. . . . [T]he vision concerns the whole multitude, and it shall not turn back; no one will strengthen himself who lives in iniquity. They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, but no one goes to battle; for My wrath is on all their multitude. (verses 12-14)

The wording suggests military organization and planning will be done, but when the call to war comes, no one responds. Mounting sins will sap Israel's strength, making her totally unprepared to face the enemy God sends against the people as punishment for their wickedness. Scaling back the armed forces in response to a deceptive "peace dividend" will only add to the disaster (see verse 25).

Moses prophesies in a similar vein: "And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of My covenant. . . . [A]nd you shall have no power to stand before your enemies" (Leviticus 26:25, 37). Isaiah adds, emphasizing the fear that falls on the people: "One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left as a pole [*a tree stripped of branches*, margin] on top of a mountain . . ." (Isaiah 30:17).

Instead of a heroic stand, Israel's end will be cowardly, ignominious defeat, where "the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee" (Leviticus 26:36). Yet even this will work to her benefit, humbling stiff-necked Israel and leading to repentance (Jeremiah 31:7-9, 16-20). The appearance over the U.S. military of this dark cloud with its pale silver lining adds evidence that Christ's return and God's Kingdom are significantly "nearer than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).