Predictions

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Morgan Smiley

As discussions about the size and purpose of the US Army continue, the recent National Security Strategy (NSS) as well as events unfolding in Iraq may point the way for what we will see in the years to come and how we can expect to deal with it.

The NSS makes clear that protecting the US homeland, from catastrophic attack, terrorist actions, WMDs, etc, remains the primary focus of our strategy. That strongly suggests that we maintain/reinforce strong air, naval, cyber, and special operations (SOF) capabilities, along with strong interagency fusion efforts (the recent activation of the 1st Special Forces Command as well as the soon-to-be-created Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center are examples of this). Expect dwindling dollars to be surged towards these areas, with CYBERCOM potentially becoming as prominent as SOCOM if not more so.

In protecting the homeland, the US Army may not be expected to play a significant role other than as a visible deterrent feature, ready and equipped for “Big War” which, hopefully, will cause others to think twice about getting too bold with us. However, as the NSS identifies “Building Capacity to Prevent Conflict” as a strategy, and given our previously stated preference to work with others to conduct military-to-military security-building activities, coupled with our desire to avoid any more major operations, it seems that Iraq (and possibly Ukraine) will serve as the template for how the Army (conventional & SOF) will be used in the future: using small elements to advise and assist host-nation forces in executing regionally-focused combat/security missions that have our attention but not necessarily our full interest. The Army may shrink even more from the current 490,000 but will likely level off at roughly 400,000-430,000...large enough (with our Reserve Component) for the unlikely “Big War” scenario but still sizeable enough for the more likely mil-to-mil/ combat advising scenario. Don’t be surprised if the conventional Army permanently reorganizes certain formations to better support regional advise & assist missions in order to expand the influence of a smaller force.

That’s my two-cents.

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