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UNITED STATES

The United States maintains armed forces that while maintaining traditional warfighting capabilities, also seek to improve their capabilities to address new asymmetric challenges, including irregular warfare, terrorism employing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and disruptive threats. This will involve adopting a more capabilities based approach to defence, with particular emphasis on the development of flexible, adaptive and decisive joint capabilities to accommodate the full spectrum of military contingencies, including stability and support operations. The transformation process will balance near-term operational risks against possible future risks in making investment decisions, and seeks to encourage the adoption of innovative approaches to achieving objectives through alternative concepts, structures, capabilities and doctrine.

The Army has maintained some 238,500 active, reserve and National Guard personnel (some 22% of total strength) on operations abroad over the past two years. Currently, some 200,000 troops are deployed on Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM, some 15,000 support ISAF and 1,800 are deployed with KFOR. The United States Marine Corps has maintained some 29,000 active and reserve troops on operations abroad over the past two years, about 14% of its total active and reserve strength. Marine units are serving with coalition forces in Iraq and with other units deployed on operations in Djibouti and Afghanistan. In terms of usability, the land forces strength for 2006 was 1,276,000 (includes army and marine active and reserve components, and the Army National Guard); deployable personnel 970,100 (76%); sustainable 184,265 (14.4%). In the short to medium term, the United States plans to increase army and marine strengths while maintaining similar levels of deployability and sustainability.

The Navy provides one frigate (normally one of the units participating in the Standing NATO Maritime Groups) on a continuous basis for Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR in the Mediterranean and maintains a continuous presence on Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. In addition, the Navy has some 9,800 personnel deployed in support of joint missions.

Air Force commitments currently include some 260 manned and unmanned aircraft deployed in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. In 2005, the Air Force deployed aircraft and support units for air policing in the Baltic States and it is scheduled to repeat this in 2008.

Financial allocations for defence permit the maintenance of large and very capable military forces and considerable investment in equipment and advanced technology. After substantial rises in defence expenditures in recent years, anticipated expenditures for 2008 are forecast to decline; however these forecasts do not include the customary supplementary allocations. United States defence expenditure, estimated at 4.0% of GDP in 2006 and 2007, was substantially above the NATO benchmark of 2%. The proportion of that expenditure planned for the procurement of major equipment, estimated at 24.7% in 2006, was also above the NATO benchmark of 20%. Defence expenditure as a proportion of GDP is forecast to fall slightly to 3.4% in 2008 while the proportion of defence expenditure devoted to major equipment will increase to 28.3% in 2008.

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