

Glossary of Abbreviations

A

A2/AD	anti-access/area-denial
AAMDS	Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System
AAV	Amphibious Assault Vehicle
ABM	Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis
ACF	Army contingency force
ACV	Amphibious Combat Vehicle
ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
AEHF	Advanced Extremely High Frequency (satellite system)
AEW	airborne early warning
AFAFRICA	U.S. Air Forces Africa
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AFRICOM	U.S. Africa Command
AFSOC	U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command
AIP	Air Independent Propulsion
AIT	American Institute in Taiwan
AMDR	Air and Missile Defense Radar
AMPV	Armored Multipurpose Vehicle
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AN/TPY-2	Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance
ANZUS	Australia–New Zealand–U.S. Security Treaty
AUSMIN	Australia–United States Ministerial
AOR	area of responsibility
APC	armored personnel carrier
APS	Army Prepositioned Stocks
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ARG	amphibious ready group
ASBM	Anti-ship ballistic missile
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
ASUW	anti-surface warfare
AW	air warfare

B

BBA	Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015
BCA	Budget Control Act of 2011
BCT	brigade combat team
BDCA	border defense cooperation agreement
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BMD	ballistic missile defense
BUR	Bottom-Up Review
BVR	beyond visual recognition

C

C2	command and control
C4ISR	command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
CA	civil affairs
CAB	combat aviation brigade
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CCDR	Combatant Commander
CCMD	Combatant Command
CCT	Combat Controller
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CFC	Combined Forces Command (South Korea-U.S.)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJTF-HOA	Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa
CLF	Combat Logistics Force
CMRR	Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement
CMT	combat mission team
CONUS	continental United States
CPMIEC	China Precision Machinery Import-Export Corporation
CPT	Cyber Protection Team
CSF	coalition support funds
CSG	carrier strike group
CSO	Critical Skills Operator
CT	counterterrorism
CTC	Combat Training Centers
CTF	Combined Task Force
CTIC	Counter Terrorism Information Center

CVN	Aircraft Carriers
CVW	carrier air wing
CW	chemical warfare
CYBERCOM	U.S. Cyber Command

D

D2D	deployment-to-dwell
DA-KKV	direct-ascent kinetic-kill vehicle
DDPR	Deterrence and Defense Posture Review
DIME	diplomatic, informational, military, and economic
DMZ	demilitarized zone
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
DOD	U.S. Department of Defense
DOE	U.S. Department of Energy
DOS	denial of service
DDOS	distributed denial of service
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
DTTI	Defense Trade and Technology Initiative
DSG	Defense Strategic Guidance
DSR	Defense Strategic Review

E

EAS	European Activity Set
EBO	effects-based operations
ECP	engineering change proposal
EDCA	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EFV	Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
EMD	engineering and manufacturing development
EMP	electromagnetic pulse
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
ESG	Expeditionary Strike Group
EUCOM	U.S. European Command
EW	electronic warfare

F

FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCS	Future Combat Systems
FOC	full operational capability
FONOPS	freedom of navigation exercises
FTA	free trade agreement

G

GAO	Government Accountability Office (formerly General Accounting Office)
GATOR	Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar
GCC	geographic combatant commander
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCV	Ground Combat Vehicle
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFMAP	Global Force Management Allocation Plan
GEO	geosynchronous orbit
GPF	general purpose forces
GPS	Global Positioning System

H

HA/DR	humanitarian assistance/disaster relief
HEO	highly elliptical orbit
HMMWV	High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (“HUMVEE”)
HVE	homegrown violent extremist

I

ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile
ICS	industrial control systems
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IFV	infantry fighting vehicle
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEW	Integrated Network Electronic Warfare
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (treaty)
IOC	initial operating capability

IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance

J

JOAC	Joint Operational Access Concept
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammed
JP	joint publication
JSF	Joint Strike Fighter (F-35 Lightning II)
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JSTAR	Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System
JLTV	Joint Light Tactical Vehicle
JTF North	Joint Task Force North
JuD	Jamaat-ud-Dawa

K

KATUSA	Korean Augmentees to the United States Army
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L

LAC	Line of Actual Control
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LAV	Light Armored Vehicle
LCAC	Landing Craft Air Cushion Vehicle
LCS	Littoral Combat Ship
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LHA	landing helicopter assault (amphibious ship)
LHD	landing helicopter dock (amphibious ship)
LNG	liquefied natural gas
LoC	Line of Control
LPD	landing platform/dock or amphibious transport dock (amphibious ship)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LRS-B	Long-Range Strike Bomber
LRIP	Low-Rate Initial Production
LSD	landing ship, dock (amphibious ship)

M

MAGTF	Marine Air-Ground Task Force
MANPADS	man-portable air-defense systems
MARCENT	U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command
MARFORAF	U.S. Marine Corps Forces Africa
MARFOREUR	U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa
MARFORPAC	U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific
MARSOC	U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations Command
MCM	mine countermeasure (ship)
MCO	major combat operation (see MRC, MTW)
MCMV	mine countermeasure vessel (ship)
MDAP	Major Defense Acquisition Program
MEB	Marine Expeditionary Brigade
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MISO	Military Information Special Operations
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MNNA	major non-NATO ally
MOJWA	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
MPC	Marine Personnel Carrier
MPS	Maritime Prepositioning Ships
MRC	major regional conflict (see MTW, MCO)
MRAP	Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected (vehicle)
MRBM	medium-range ballistic missile
MRF	Marine Rotational Force
MTW	major theater war (see MCO, MRC)

N

NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAVAF	U.S. Naval Forces Africa
NAVEUR	U.S. Naval Forces Europe
NDN	Northern Distribution Network
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NDP	National Defense Panel
New START	New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
NNSA	National Nuclear Security Administration

NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
NPRIS	Nuclear Posture Review Implementation Study
NSC	National Security Council
NSR	Northern Sea Route
NSWC	Naval Special Warfare Command

O

OAS	Organization of American States
OCO	overseas contingency operations
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
O-FRP	Optimized Fleet Response Plan
ONA	Office of Net Assessment
ONE	Operation Noble Eagle
OPCON	operational control
OPLAN	operational plan
OPTEMPO	operational tempo
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation In Europe

P

PACAF	U.S. Pacific Air Forces
PACFLT	U.S. Pacific Fleet
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
PAF	Philippine Air Force
PDD-15	Presidential Decision Directive-15
PIM	Paladin Integrated Management
PLFP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLFP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command
PKO	peacekeeping operation
PLA	People’s Liberation Army
PLAAF	People’s Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People’s Liberation Army Navy
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNI	Presidential Nuclear Initiative
PNT	positioning, navigation, and timing
PRC	People’s Republic of China

PRT	Provisional Reconstruction Team
PSA	Port of Singapore Authority
PSF	Peninsula Shield Force

Q

QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
QNSTR	Quadrennial National Security Threats and Trends

R

RAF	Royal Air Force
RBA	Ready Basic Aircraft
RCOH	refueling and complex overhaul (nuclear-powered ship)
RDJTF	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
RFP	Request for Proposals
RMA	revolution In military affairs
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
RP	Republic of the Philippines

S

SAARC	South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SAR	search and rescue
SBIRS	Space-Based Infrared System (satellite system)
SCN	Shipbuilding and Conversion, Navy (budget category)
SEAL	Sea Air Land operator (Navy)
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SFA	Strategic Framework Agreement
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SLBM	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SMU	special mission unit
SOCAFRICA	U.S. Special Operations Command Africa
SOCCENT	U.S. Special Operations Command Central
SOCEUR	U.S. Special Operations Command Europe
SOCPAC	U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific
SOF	U.S. Special Operations Forces
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

SORT	Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty
SOTFE	Support Operations Task Force Europe
SPE	Sony Pictures Entertainment
SPMAGTF	Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force-Crisis Response-Africa
SRBM	short-range ballistic missile
SSBN	ballistic missile submarine, nuclear-powered
SSGN	guided missile submarine, nuclear-powered
SSN	attack submarine, nuclear-powered
SSP	Stockpile Stewardship Program
STRATCOM	U.S. Strategic Command
SUW	surface warfare

T

TACAIR	tactical air
TAI	total active inventory
TANAP	Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline
TAP	Trans-Adriatic Pipeline
TCO	transnational criminal organization
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
TLAM/N	Tomahawk Land Attack Missile/Nuclear
TMP	technical modernization program
TNW	tactical nuclear weapon
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
TRANSCOM	U.S. Transportation Command
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command

U

UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCLASS	Unmanned Carrier-Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike
UNASUR	Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Union of South American Nations)
UNC	United Nations Council
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USAFCENT	U.S. Air Forces Central
USAFE	U.S. Air Forces Europe
USARAF	U.S. Army Africa

USARCENT	U.S. Army Central
USARPAC	U.S. Army Pacific
USAREUR	U.S. Army Europe
USASOC	U.S. Army Special Operations Command
USFJ	U.S. Forces Japan
USFK	U.S. Forces Korea
USNAVCENT	U.S. Naval Forces Central
USNORTHCOM	U.S. Northern Command
USSOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command
USSOUTHCOM	U.S. Southern Command
USW	undersea warfare

V

VEO	violent extremist organizations
VLS	vertical launching system

W

WGS	Wideband Global SATCOM (satellite system)
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
WRM	wartime readiness materials
WWTA	Worldwide Threat Assessment

Methodology

The assessment portion of the *Index of U.S. Military Strength* is composed of three major sections that address America’s military power, the environments within or through which it must operate, and threats to U.S. vital national interests.

The authors of this study used a five-category scoring system that ranged from “very poor” to “excellent” or “very weak” to “very strong” as appropriate to each topic. This particular approach was selected to capture meaningful gradations while avoiding the appearance that a high level of precision was possible given the nature of the issues and the information that was publicly available.

Some factors are quantitative and lend themselves to discrete measurement; others are very qualitative in nature and can be assessed only through an informed understanding of the material that leads to a judgment call. Further, conditions in each of the areas assessed are changing throughout the year, so any measurement is based on the information at hand and must necessarily be viewed as a snapshot in time. While this is not entirely satisfactory when it comes to reaching conclusions on the status of a given matter, especially the adequacy of military power, and will doubtless be quite unsatisfactory for some readers, we understand that senior officials in decision-making positions will never have a comprehensive set of inarguable hard data on which to base a decision.

Purely quantitative measures alone tell only part of the story when it comes to the relevance, utility, and effectiveness of hard power. In fact, using only quantitative metrics to

assess military power or the nature of an operating environment can lead to misinformed conclusions. Raw numbers are a very important component, but they tell only a part of the story of war. Similarly, experience and demonstrated proficiency are often decisive factors in war, but they are nearly impossible to measure.

In assessing the *global operating environment*, this *Index* focused on three key regions—Europe, the Middle East, and Asia—because of their importance relative to U.S. vital security interests.

For *threats to U.S. vital interests*, the *Index* identifies the countries that pose the greatest current or potential threats to U.S. vital interests based on two overarching factors: the behavior and capability of those countries. The classic definition of “threat” considers the combination of intent and capability, but intent is not susceptible to clear measurement, so “observed behavior” is used as a reasonable surrogate because it is the clearest manifestation of intent. The selection of threat countries is based on their historical behavior and explicit policies or formal statements vis-à-vis U.S. interests, scoring them in two areas: the degree of provocative behavior that they exhibited during the year and their ability to pose a credible threat to U.S. interests irrespective of intent.

Finally, the *status of U.S. military power* is addressed in three areas: capability (or modernity), capacity, and readiness. All three are fundamental to success even if they are not de facto determinants of success (something we explain further in the section). Also addressed is the condition of the United States’ nuclear

weapons capability, assessing it in areas that are unique to this military component and critical to understanding its real-world viability and effectiveness as a strategic deterrent.

Assessing the Global Operating Environment

Not all of the factors that characterize an operating environment are equal, but each contributes to the degree to which a particular operating environment is favorable or unfavorable to future U.S. military operations. Our assessment of the operating environment employed a five-point scale ranging from “very poor” to “excellent” conditions and covering four regional characteristics of greatest relevance to the conduct of military operations:

1. **Very Poor.** Significant hurdles exist for military operations. Physical infrastructure is insufficient or nonexistent, and the region is politically unstable. The U.S. military is poorly placed or absent, and alliances are nonexistent or diffuse.
2. **Unfavorable.** A challenging operating environment for military operations is marked by inadequate infrastructure, weak alliances, and recurring political instability. The U.S. military is inadequately placed in the region.
3. **Moderate.** A neutral to moderately favorable operating environment is characterized by adequate infrastructure, a moderate alliance structure, and acceptable levels of regional political stability. The U.S. military is adequately placed.
4. **Favorable.** A favorable operating environment includes good infrastructure, strong alliances, and a stable political environment. The U.S. military is well placed in the region for future operations.
5. **Excellent.** An extremely favorable operating environment includes well-established and well-maintained

infrastructure; strong, capable allies; and a stable political environment. The U.S. military is exceptionally well placed to defend U.S. interests.

The key regional characteristics consisted of:

- a. **Alliances.** Alliances are important for interoperability and collective defense as allies would be more likely to lend support to U.S. military operations. Various indicators provide insight into the strength or health of an alliance. These include whether the U.S. trains regularly with countries in the region, has good interoperability with the forces of an ally, and shares intelligence with nations in the region.
- b. **Political Stability.** Political stability brings predictability for military planners when considering such things as transit, basing, and overflight rights for U.S. military operations. The overall degree of political stability indicates whether U.S. military actions would be hindered or enabled and considers, for example, whether transfers of power in the region are generally peaceful and whether there have been any recent instances of political instability in the region.
- c. **U.S. Military Positioning.** Having military forces based or equipment and supplies staged in a region greatly facilitates the ability of the United States to respond to crises and, presumably, achieve successes in critical “first battles” more quickly. Being routinely present in a region also assists in maintaining familiarity with its characteristics and the various actors that might try to assist or thwart U.S. actions. With this in mind, we assessed whether or not the U.S. military was well positioned in the region. Again, indicators included bases, troop presence, prepositioned equipment, and recent examples of military operations (including

training and humanitarian) launched from the region.

d. Infrastructure. Modern, reliable, and suitable infrastructure is essential to military operations. Airfields, ports, rail lines, canals, and paved roads enable the U.S. to stage, launch, and logistically sustain combat operations. We combined expert knowledge of regions with publicly available information on critical infrastructure to arrive at our overall assessment of this metric.

Assessing Threats to U.S. Vital Interests

To make the threats identified herein measurable and relatable to the challenges of operating environments and adequacy of American military power, *Index* staff and outside reviewers evaluated separately the threats according to their level of provocation (i.e., their observed behavior) and their actual capability to pose a credible threat to U.S. interests on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing a very high threat capability or level of belligerency. This scale corresponds to the tone of the five-point scales used to score the operating environment and military capabilities in that 1 is bad for U.S. interests and 5 is very favorable.

Based on these evaluations, provocative behavior was characterized according to five descending categories: benign (5); assertive (4); testing (3); aggressive (2); and hostile (1). Staff also characterized the capabilities of a threat actor according to five categories: marginal (5); aspirational (4); capable (3); gathering (2); and formidable (1). Those characterizations—behavior and capability—form two halves of the overall threat level.

Assessing U.S. Military Power

Also assessed is the adequacy of the United States' defense posture as it pertains to a conventional understanding of "hard power," defined as the ability of American military forces to engage and defeat an enemy's forces in battle at a scale commensurate with the vital national interests of the U.S. The assessment

draws on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of military forces, informed by an experience-based understanding of military operations and the expertise of the authors and internal and external reviewers.

It is important to note that military effectiveness is as much an art as it is a science. Specific military capabilities represented in weapons, platforms, and military units can be used individually to some effect. Practitioners of war, however, have learned that combining the tools of war in various ways and orchestrating their tactical employment in series or simultaneously can dramatically amplify the effectiveness of the force committed to battle.

The point is that a great number of factors make it possible for a military force to locate, close with, and destroy an enemy, but not many of them are easily measured. The scope of this specific project does not extend to analysis of everything that makes hard power possible; it focuses on the status of the hard power itself.

This *Index* assesses the state of military affairs for U.S. forces in three areas: capability, capacity, and readiness.

Capability. Capability is scored based on the current state of combat equipment. This involves four factors: the age of key platforms relative to their expected life span; whether the required capability is being met by legacy or modern equipment; the scope of improvement or replacement programs relative to the operational requirement; and the overall health and stability (financial and technological) of modernization programs.

This *Index* focused on primary combat units and combat platforms (such as tanks, ships, and airplanes) and elected not to include the array of system and component upgrades (such as a new radar, missile, or communications suite) that keep an older platform viable over time. New technologies grafted onto aging platforms ensure that U.S. military forces keep pace with technological innovations relevant to the modern battlefield, but at some point, the platforms themselves are no longer viable and must be replaced. Modernized sub-systems and components do not entirely

substitute for aging platforms, and it is the platform itself that is usually the more challenging item to field. In this sense, primary combat platforms serve as representative measures of force modernity just as combat forces are a useful surrogate measure for the overall military that includes a range of support units, systems, and infrastructure.

In addition, it is assumed that modernization programs should replace current capacity at a one-to-one ratio. Less than a one-to-one replacement assumes risk, because even if the newer system is presumably better than the older, until it is proven in actual combat, having fewer systems lessens the capacity of the force, which is an important factor if combat against a peer competitor carries with it the likelihood of attrition. For modernization programs, only Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs) are scored.

The capability score uses a five-grade scale. Each service receives one capability score that is a non-weighted aggregate of scores for four categories: Age of Equipment, Modernity of Capability, Size of Modernization Program, and Health of Modernization Program. General criteria for the capability categories are as follows:

Age of Equipment

- **Very Weak:** Equipment age is past 80 percent of expected life span.
- **Weak:** Equipment age is 61 percent–80 percent of expected life span.
- **Marginal:** Equipment age is 41 percent–60 percent of expected life span.
- **Strong:** Equipment age is 21 percent–40 percent of expected life span.
- **Very Strong:** Equipment age is 20 percent or less of expected life span.

Capability of Equipment

- **Very Weak:** Majority (over 80 percent) of capability relies on legacy platforms.

- **Weak:** 60 percent–79 percent of capability relies on legacy platforms.
- **Marginal:** 40 percent–59 percent of capability relies on legacy platforms.
- **Strong:** 20 percent–39 percent of capability relies on legacy platforms.
- **Very Strong:** Less than 20 percent of capability relies on legacy platforms.

Size of Modernization Program

- **Very Weak:** Modernization program is significantly too small or inappropriate to sustain current capability or program in place.
- **Weak:** Modernization programs are smaller than current capability size.
- **Marginal:** Modernization programs are appropriate to sustain current capability size.
- **Strong:** Modernization programs will increase current capability size.
- **Very Strong:** Modernization programs will vastly expand capability size.

Health of Modernization Program

- **Very Weak:** Modernization programs facing significant problems; too far behind schedule (five-plus years); cannot replace current capability before retirement; lacking sufficient investment to advance; cost overruns including Nunn–McCurdy breach. (A Nunn–McCurdy breach occurs when the cost of a new item exceeds the most recently approved amount by 25 percent or more or if it exceeds the originally approved amount by 50 percent or more. See 10 U.S. Code § 2433, Unit Cost Reports.)
- **Weak:** Facing procurement problems; behind schedule (three–five years); difficult

to replace current equipment on time or insufficient funding; cost overruns enough to trigger an Acquisition Program Baseline (APB) breach.

- **Marginal:** Facing few problems; behind schedule by one–two years but can replace equipment with some delay or experience some funding cuts; some cost growth but not within objectives.
- **Strong:** Facing no procurement problems; can replace equipment with no delays; within cost estimates.
- **Very Strong:** Performing better than DOD plans, including lower actual costs.

Capacity. To score capacity, the service's size (be it end strength or number of platforms) is compared to the force size required to meet a simultaneous or nearly simultaneous two-war or two–major regional contingency (MRC) benchmark. This benchmark consists of the force needed to fight and win two MRCs and a 20 percent margin that serves as a strategic reserve. A strategic reserve is necessary because deployment of 100 percent of the force at any one time is highly unlikely. Not only do ongoing requirements like training or sustainment and maintenance of equipment make it infeasible for the entirety of the force to be available for deployment, but committing 100 percent of the force would leave no resources available to handle unexpected situations.

Thus, a “marginal” capacity score would exactly meet a two-MRC force size, a “strong” capacity score would equate to a 10-plus percent margin for strategic reserve, and a “very strong” score would equate to a 20 percent margin.

Capacity Score Definitions

- **Very Weak:** 0 percent–37 percent of the two-MRC benchmark.
- **Weak:** 38 percent–74 percent of the two-MRC benchmark.

- **Marginal:** 75 percent–82 percent of the two-MRC benchmark.
- **Strong:** 83 percent–91 percent of the two-MRC benchmark.
- **Very Strong:** 92 percent–100 percent of the two-MRC benchmark.

Readiness. The readiness scores are from the military services' own assessments of readiness based on their requirements. These are not comprehensive reviews of all readiness input factors, but rather rely on the public statements of the military services regarding the state of their readiness.

It should be noted that even a “strong” or “very strong” score does not indicate that 100 percent of the force is ready; it simply indicates that the service is meeting 100 percent of its own readiness requirements. Often, these requirements assume that a percentage of the military at any one time will not be fit for deployment. Because of this, even if readiness is graded as “strong” or “marginal,” there is still a gap in readiness that will have significant implications for immediate combat effectiveness and the ability to deploy quickly. Thus, anything short of meeting 100 percent of readiness requirements assumes risk and is therefore problematic.

Further, a service's assessment of its readiness occurs within its size or capacity at that time and as dictated by the Defense Strategic Guidance, National Military Strategy, and related top-level documents generated by the Administration and senior Defense officials. It does not account for the size-related “readiness” of the force to meet national security requirements assessed as needed by this *Index*.

Thus, for a service to be assessed as “very strong” would mean that 80 percent–100 percent of the existing force in a service meets that service's requirements for being “ready” even if the size of the service is less than the size required to meet the two-MRC benchmark. Therefore, it is important for the reader to keep this in mind when considering the actual

readiness of the force to protect U.S. national security interests against the challenges presented by threats around the world.

Readiness Score Definitions

- **Very Weak:** 0 percent–19 percent of service’s requirements.
- **Weak:** 20 percent–39 percent of service’s requirements.
- **Marginal:** 40 percent–59 percent of service’s requirements.
- **Strong:** 60 percent–79 percent of service’s requirements.
- **Very Strong:** 80 percent–100 percent of service’s requirements.

Victor Davis Hanson

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Dr. Hanson is the author or editor of 24 books and hundreds of articles, reviews, and editorials, but it is his lifelong study of warfare and its impact on civilizations for which we recognize him with this edition of the *Index*. His approach to telling the stories of the great wars of our past and the leaders, peoples, cultures, and political systems involved in them has made the lessons of history accessible to the widest possible audience. War places extraordinary demands on the breadth and depth of society and calls upon us to be serious about

leadership, strategy, and “providing for the common defense.” Dr. Hanson’s insights into Western military history have helped millions to develop a greater appreciation of the timeless principles of warfare.

Getting national defense right preserves and protects everything that makes our country the symbol of freedom, prosperity, and opportunity it has been and is to so many around the world. Conversely, neglecting the fundamentals of military power, competency and accountability in high office, and the involvement of citizens in the workings of their government can have the most tragic of consequences.

We are delighted to honor Professor Hanson and his body of work with this edition of the *Index of U.S. Military Strength*.