

Conclusion: U.S. Military Power

The Active Component of the U.S. military is two-thirds the size it should be, operates equipment that is older than should be the case, and is burdened by readiness levels that are problematic. Accordingly, this *Index* assesses the:

- **Army as “Marginal.”** The Army’s score remains “marginal” in the *2020 Index*. The Army has continued to increase its readiness, earning the score of “very strong” with 77 percent of its brigade combat teams assessed as ready. However, it continues to struggle to rebuild end strength and modernization for improved readiness in some units for current operations.
- **Navy as “Marginal.”** The Navy’s overall score remains “marginal” in the *2020 Index*. The Navy’s emphasis on restoring readiness and increasing its capacity signals that its overall score could improve in the near future if needed levels of funding are sustained. However, manpower presents a potential problem as the Navy looks to increase the size of the fleet.
- **Air Force as “Marginal.”** This score has trended downward over the past few years largely because of a drop in “capacity” that has not effectively changed and a readiness score of “weak.” Shortages of pilots and flying time have degraded the ability of the Air Force to generate the air power that would be needed to meet wartime requirements.
- **Marine Corps as “Marginal.”** The Marine Corps has improved from “weak” to “marginal” in the *2020 Index*. This change is based on an improvement in readiness following increased investment of funds and focus on high-end warfare. Capacity issues remain an issue because the force still falls well below the recommended number of battalions.
- **Nuclear Capabilities as “Marginal.”** The U.S. nuclear complex is “trending toward strong,” but this assumes that the U.S. maintains its commitment to modernization and allocates needed resources accordingly. Although bipartisan attention has led to continued progress on U.S. nuclear forces modernization and warhead sustainment, these programs remain threatened by potential future fiscal uncertainties, as do the infrastructure, testing regime, and manpower pool on which the nuclear enterprise depends.

In the aggregate, the United States’ military posture is rated “marginal.” The *2020 Index* concludes that the current U.S. military force is likely capable of meeting the demands of a single major regional conflict while also attending to various presence and engagement activities but that it would be very hard-pressed to do more and certainly would be ill-equipped to handle two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies (MRCs).

The military services have prioritized readiness and have seen improvement over the

past couple of years. However, modernization programs continue to suffer as resources are redirected toward current operations and sustainment of readiness levels. The services have also normalized the reduction in size and number of military units, and the forces remain well below the level they need to meet the two-MRC benchmark.

Congress and the Administration took positive steps to stabilize funding for FY 2018 and FY 2019 through the Bipartisan

Budget Agreement of 2018 and, through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, managed to sustain such support for funding above the caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA). While this allays the most serious concerns about a return to the damaging levels of the BCA, more will be needed in the years to come to ensure that the U.S. military is properly sized, equipped, trained, and ready to meet the missions that the services are called upon to fulfill.

U.S. Military Power: Army

	VERY WEAK	WEAK	MARGINAL	STRONG	VERY STRONG
Capacity		✓			
Capability			✓		
Readiness					✓
OVERALL			✓		

U.S. Military Power: Navy

	VERY WEAK	WEAK	MARGINAL	STRONG	VERY STRONG
Capacity		✓			
Capability			✓		
Readiness			✓		
OVERALL			✓		

U.S. Military Power: Air Force

	VERY WEAK	WEAK	MARGINAL	STRONG	VERY STRONG
Capacity			✓		
Capability			✓		
Readiness			✓		
OVERALL			✓		

U.S. Military Power: Marine Corps

	VERY WEAK	WEAK	MARGINAL	STRONG	VERY STRONG
Capacity		✓			
Capability			✓		
Readiness			✓		
OVERALL			✓		

U.S. Military Power: Nuclear

	VERY WEAK	WEAK	MARGINAL	STRONG	VERY STRONG
Nuclear Stockpile				✓	
Delivery Platform Reliability			✓		
Warhead Modernization			✓		
Delivery Systems Modernization				✓	
Nuclear Weapons Complex			✓		
National Labs Talent			✓		
Force Readiness				✓	
Allied Assurance				✓	
Nuclear Test Readiness		✓			
OVERALL			✓		

U.S. Military Power

	VERY WEAK	WEAK	MARGINAL	STRONG	VERY STRONG
Army			✓		
Navy			✓		
Air Force			✓		
Marine Corps			✓		
Nuclear			✓		
OVERALL			✓		