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Pentagon Worries About Cost of Aid Missions

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 4 — Defense Secretary William J. Perry warned today that the military's relief mission for Rwanda was bleeding the Pentagon's budget and threatening combat readiness.

"We're an army, not a Salvation Army," Mr. Perry told the House Appropriations subcommittee on military spending, where he went hat in hand today to ask for \$270 million more in emergency aid for Rwanda.

Without the extra allotment and approval to shift money from other accounts, Mr. Perry warned, some tank divisions would have to stop buying spare parts, the Atlantic fleet could only do emergency aircraft-engine repairs and a major Army command in Atlanta would have to dismiss temporary civilian workers.

Plea for Patience on Haiti

The Secretary also discussed Haiti, and acknowledged that economic sanctions so far have had "very little effect" on forcing the military regime to step down. But, he said, the new ban on commercial flights into Haiti, tighter restrictions on Haitians' assets abroad and stricter enforcement along the border with the Dominican Republic should be given "some weeks" to work.

Mr. Perry's main goal today was to win support for the \$270 million that President Clinton asked for on Friday. The money would be used to establish and operate airports, provide safe water and provide logistical support to United States forces in Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire. Mr. Perry said the money was for costs estimated through Sept. 30. Senior civilian Pentagon officials

and top field commanders have expressed increasing alarm that the costs of peacekeeping and relief missions are straining their declining budget and imperiling the Pentagon's main goal: to be prepared to fight two regional wars nearly simultaneously.

Mr. Perry reiterated the Administration's position that the United States would support a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Rwanda but would not directly take part. And he said that if widespread killing resumed, the United States would withdraw.

A Short Stay Predicted

"We do not plan to put in military forces to enforce the stability in the area," Mr. Perry said. "Therefore, in that case, we would have to pull out."

He also said the United States relief mission would be brief.

"We're there for emergency humanitarian aid, and as soon as the operation is up and running, we want to get out and turn things over to the relief agencies," he said. Mr. Perry has said the United States involvement would last less than a year.

Mr. Perry, who was accompanied by Gen. John M. D. Shalikashvili, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and John Hamre, the Pentagon comptroller, also heard concerns from lawmakers that relief operations could reduce combat readiness.

"We're desperately concerned about readiness being eroded by all these concerns," said Representative John P. Murtha, a Pennsylvania Democrat, who heads the subcommittee.

General Shalikashvili said he had ordered a review of the deployment of certain units in high demand, like C-130 cargo plane crews and Marine

expeditionary forces, to determine if "we're running them ragged."

Mr. Perry's remarks on Haiti reinforced views he voiced on Tuesday in a meeting of senior national security advisers. At the meeting, Mr. Perry said the United States should fully explore all options for forcing out Haiti's military leaders before resorting to an invasion, Administration officials said.

American intelligence analysts here and in Haiti have expressed skepticism that tighter sanctions, which clearly hurt the country's poor people, are pinching the pocketbooks of the elite and the military rulers.

"The embargo to date has had a very limited effect on the regime or the elites," Mr. Perry said. "We've been very effective in blocking goods coming by sea. Meantime the back door is wide open to goods coming in through the Dominican Republic. Until that back door is closed, sanctions can't be that effective."

The Pentagon said this week that it was sending 6 helicopters, 18 military scouts and several technical experts to the Dominican Republic on Monday to help stop smuggling of fuel. The officials will be part of an international team of 88 observers who are to patrol the 186-mile border under an accord signed Monday between the United States and the Dominican Republic.

"The Dominican Republic will also be continuing to patrol, and this will be in addition to that," a Pentagon spokesman, Dennis R. Boxx, told reporters today. "Smugglers will not know precisely where the observers are going to be. They will be moving, and hopefully that'll help add a little mystery to it."