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BRIEFS

Beyond Coast Artillery: Cross-Domain Denial and the Army

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Resources: Future Warfare & Concepts

Secretary Hagel recently made waves in Army circles by suggesting that the Army leverage its missile forces to resume the old mission of coastal defense.

In this brief, CSBA Research Fellow Eric Lindsey argues that Army missile forces can do far more than defend coastlines. By enhancing its land-based anti-air, anti-ship, and surface-to-surface strike capabilities, he says, the Army could field a forward-deployed anti-access/area-denial force that would deny adversaries sanctuary and freedom of action and help the Army deter and prevail in a wider spectrum of conflict.

Taking on this new mission may be difficult in the current zero-sum budget environment, but it is imperative that the Army take some initial steps towards fielding the capabilities required. The Army is right to think that it can and should prioritize winning wars on land. But too narrow a focus on the land discounts the Army's inherent potential to project power into other domains. Although the heyday of the coast artillery may be long past, it would be foolish for the United States to overlook the important advantages in resilience, persistence, and sustainability that ground forces can bring to bear in a contest to control or deny the other domains.