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LETTER TO EDITOR: Low and mighty

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Richard Halloran's column "U.S. forces stretched thin" (Opinion, Monday) accurately addresses the shortcomings of our political and diplomatic policies. Frederick the Great once said, "He who attempts to defend everywhere, defends nothing."

Washington is directing its resources toward a costly conventional strategy in Central Asia at the expense of weakening our political presence in other areas of the world. This narrow-minded focus not only diminishes our ability to secure our own territories, but it leaves us ill-equipped to respond in timely fashion to additional international threats.

As Mr. Halloran correctly points out, the United States has followed President Kennedy's policy of being international policeman despite the insufficiency of resources to carry through these endeavors.

President Nixon accurately observed that the world had seen its last conventional war between major powers. Irregular or limited wars are being fought by insurgents in Afghanistan, Iraq, Central America and elsewhere. These low-intensity conflicts require different strategies from what the Obama administration is pursuing.

The reliance on heavy firepower and an elevated number of troops should be substituted with a greater emphasis on Special Forces, security training and socioeconomic reform of the countries in conflicts. The recent selection of Gen. Stanley McChrystal, a Special Forces veteran, to direct the forces in Afghanistan may bring a change in the way the United States handles foreign conflicts. The recent surge in conventional troop numbers, however, tends to resemble old policies and old losses.

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