



# Keeping America Safe: Why U.S. Bases in Europe Remain Vital

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# Keeping America Safe: Why U.S. Bases in Europe Remain Vital

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## Executive Summary

As part of a policy that is shrinking America's military presence in the world, the Obama Administration's recent defense cuts heavily impact the U.S. military footprint in Europe. These cuts are sending the wrong signal on America's commitment to transatlantic security and will embolden U.S. adversaries in the Euro-Atlantic region. Most importantly, the cuts will reduce the ability and flexibility of the U.S. to react to the unexpected in Eurasia and the Middle East.

### **A Shrinking Force Posture.**

On January 26, 2012, the Pentagon announced reductions of U.S. military forces in Europe as part of the latest round of defense cuts:

- Inactivation of one A-10 squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, in 2013.
- Inactivation of the 603rd Air Control Squadron at Aviano Air Base, Italy, in 2013.
- Reduction of V Corps headquarters structure after deployment to Afghanistan later this year. It will not return to Europe.
- Inactivation of the 170th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) in 2013 and the 172nd BCT in 2014—a reduction of more than 8,000 soldiers.
- An additional reduction of approximately 2,500 soldiers in enabling units of the U.S. Army in Europe over the next five years.

**U.S. Forces in Europe.** Today, the U.S. has approximately 80,000 military personnel in 28 main operating bases in Europe, primarily in Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Spain. These forces include four BCTs, which form the backbone of U.S. ground capability in Europe.

Some believe that basing U.S. troops in Europe is a Cold War anachronism, but forward basing U.S. troops in Europe is just as important today as it was during the Cold War, albeit for different reasons. The U.S. military presence in Europe helps to achieve American policy aims in the broader Eurasia and Middle

East regions. From the Arctic to the Levant, from the Maghreb to the Caucasus, Europe is at one of the most important crossroads of the world. U.S. military bases in Europe provide American leaders with increased flexibility, resilience, and options in a dangerous world. The garrisons of American service personnel in Europe are no longer the fortresses of the Cold War, but the forward operating bases of the 21st century.

**America's Interests.** A safe and secure Europe is in America's financial interest. Regional security means economic viability. The economies of the 27 member states of the European Union, along with the U.S. economy, account for approximately half of the global economy.

A relevant and strong NATO is also in America's interest. U.S. forces play a major role in the capacity building of key European allies. This has huge benefits for the United States. In 2010, the U.S. carried out 33 major multinational training exercises involving 50,000 troops from 40 countries in Europe. U.S.

forces also help European allies to prepare for missions such as the one in Afghanistan. For example, a Georgian infantry battalion is fighting alongside U.S. Marines in Helmand Province, one of the most dangerous parts of Afghanistan. The more America trains its allies to carry out challenging missions, the more they can share the burden.

**Cost-Driven Reductions.**

Perceived financial savings, not an empirical or strategic review of U.S. force requirements, appear to have driven the decision to reduce the U.S. military footprint in Europe. On April 8, 2011, the Obama Administration announced that it was modifying a 2004 decision to remove two of the four BCTs from Europe and would bring only one BCT back to the United States. In January 2012, the Administration reversed itself, stating that two BCTs would return from Europe. However, the Administration did not explain what had changed in the geostrategic picture of Europe or in the advice from U.S. allies since last April to prompt this reversal. This indicates that defense cuts, not strategy, are driving the decision.

**The Red Herring of Perceived Financial Savings.** Proponents cite savings as the main reason to reduce U.S. bases in Europe. This is clearly the rationale behind the Obama

Administration's recent decision. This is dangerous, shortsighted, and based on the false assumption that the U.S. can project the same degree of power with rotational forces as it currently does with troops permanently based in Europe. Under current plans, more than 10,000 soldiers will leave Europe and be replaced by a maximum of one battalion rotating through Europe for training. Furthermore, most savings estimates exclude the cost of building new infrastructure in the U.S. for any returning units, the up-front cost of closing down facilities in Europe, the cost of rotating units between the U.S. and Europe, and the strain this would exert on the smaller army that the Obama Administration is proposing.

**Time for U.S. Leadership.**

Instead, the White House should:

- **Put America's national security interests ahead of defense cuts.** Important decisions, such as the number of bases and the troop strength, should follow from a strategic review of U.S. interests in Europe, not the desire to slash the defense budget to find savings.
- **Show U.S. commitment to NATO and Euro-Atlantic security.** The U.S. troop presence in Europe is the most visible sign of U.S. support to NATO. As NATO

transforms for the 21st century, it needs American leadership and commitment.

- **Be honest and open with European allies.** The Obama Administration needs to consult with key European allies and with the broader NATO alliance before making decisions on U.S. troop reductions in Europe.
- **Reward key U.S. allies with closer defense cooperation.** Instead of reducing the numbers of U.S. military bases in Europe, the U.S. should consider establishing new bases in Europe, especially on the periphery and with allies who have demonstrated a strong commitment to Euro-Atlantic security, such as Georgia.

**Conclusion.** The U.S. military presence in Europe deters American adversaries, strengthens allies, and protects U.S. interests. Whether preparing U.S. and allied troops for Afghanistan or responding to a humanitarian crisis in the region, the U.S. can project power and react to the unexpected because of its forward-based military capabilities in Europe. Reducing these capabilities will only weaken America on the world stage. 🇺🇸



# Keeping America Safe: Why U.S. Bases in Europe Remain Vital

*Luke Coffey*

## Abstract

*The Obama Administration's latest rounds of cuts will significantly reduce the U.S. force posture in Europe. Budgetary considerations, not changes in the strategic environment, appear to be driving these cuts. These reductions will limit America's ability to project power into Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The Administration's policy is sending the wrong signal on America's commitment to transatlantic security and will embolden U.S. adversaries in the Euro-Atlantic region.*

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. military presence in Europe has been viewed as low-hanging fruit for those seeking savings in the defense budget. At its peak in 1953, the U.S. had approximately 400,000 troops in Europe. Due to the Soviet threat to Western Europe, the U.S. had good reason to base a high number of U.S. troops in Europe. During the early 1990s, as part of the “peace dividend,” U.S. troop numbers in Europe were slashed. Paradoxically, in the early 1990s, use of U.S. troops based in Europe increased while their numbers were being reduced.<sup>1</sup>

Today, approximately 80,000 U.S. troops are permanently based in Europe. Of these, roughly 11,000 service personnel are deployed outside Europe at any given time. Maintaining a robust and capable military presence in Europe is in America's interest. The Obama Administration's attempt to “pivot” its defense focus to Asia, while simultaneously cutting defense expenditure to its lowest level in decades, is

jeopardizing the future of the U.S. military presence in Europe.

As part of the recent tranche of defense cuts, the Obama Administration announced the withdrawal of at least two brigade combat teams (BCTs)<sup>2</sup> totaling approximately 8,000 soldiers and 2,200 combat service and support soldiers from Europe by 2014. In addition, the Administration announced that key aviation assets would be removed from their permanent bases in Europe. These cuts have been supported by some Members of Congress and media commentators who believe that basing U.S. troops in Europe is a Cold War anachronism.

However, basing American troops in Europe directly serves U.S. national security interests. Of course, the presence of U.S. forces in Europe contributes to the collective defense of U.S. allies on the continent, but this is a consequence of, not the reason for, maintaining a robust presence. The challenge for U.S. decision makers is to keep a military force

that can promote U.S. interests in the region without creating a culture of dependency on the U.S. security umbrella among America's European allies. The commonly held belief that U.S. forces are in Europe to protect European allies from a threat that no longer exists is wrong. In fact, forward basing U.S. troops in Europe is just as important now as it was during the Cold War, albeit for different reasons.

The Cold War world was defined by its bipolarity. The two centers of power were the United States and the Soviet Union. Today, the post-Cold War world is defined by its multipolarity with various centers of power around the world, which is more akin to the late 19th century than to anything experienced during the Cold War. However, the 19th century and today differ in the way that globalization has empowered nonstate actors and individuals to become centers of power competing against nation-states in their own right. For example, Hezbollah, a terrorist organization

and nonstate actor, has an arsenal of rockets and missiles that “dwarfs the inventory of many nation-states,” according to former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.<sup>3</sup> Bands of Somali pirates have turned piracy into a multi-million-dollar business. According to the BBC, the pirates earned \$146 million from ransom payments in 2011.<sup>4</sup> This is equivalent to the annual nominal gross domestic product of Kiribati, an island nation-state in the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> Many of these nonstate actors and terrorist groups operate on the periphery of Europe, and some operate inside Europe itself. They can directly or indirectly affect U.S. security.

From the Arctic to the Levant, from the Maghreb to the Caucasus, Europe is at one of the most important crossroads of the world. U.S. bases in Europe provide American leaders with flexibility, resilience, and options in a dangerous multipolar world. The huge garrisons of American service personnel in Europe are no longer the fortresses of the Cold War, but the forward operating bases of the 21st century. The U.S. needs to have the tools available to react to events in America’s interests. Hence, a robust and capable presence of U.S. military forces in Europe is just as important today as it was during the Cold War.

## **The History of U.S. Forces in Europe**

U.S. troops are stationed in Europe for good security and political reasons. The role, disposition, and configuration of the troops have changed with the global security circumstances. The presence of U.S. troops in Europe should not be viewed through the narrow lens of defending the Fulda Gap, but as part of an evolving process designed to meet U.S. security needs. Therefore, it is folly to view the end of the Cold War as the end of the need for U.S. troops in Europe. It is important to recall the reasoning behind stationing large numbers of U.S. troops in Europe after World War II to better understand the situation today.

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### **A ROBUST AND CAPABLE PRESENCE OF U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN EUROPE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT TODAY AS IT WAS DURING THE COLD WAR.**

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The first instance of basing significant numbers of U.S. troops in continental Europe dates back to the end of World War I, when approximately 15,000 soldiers of the newly formed Third Army occupied the Koblenz region between Luxembourg and the Rhine River. The last of these occupation force troops departed in early

1923, and the U.S. did not again base large numbers of troops in Europe on a permanent basis until after World War II.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of World War II in 1945, large numbers of U.S. troops were permanently based in Europe as part of the occupation force. In 1952, U.S. European Command (EUCOM) was created to better organize the U.S. military presence, bringing U.S. Navy, Air Force, and Army elements under one unified command.

During the Cold War, EUCOM focused mainly on providing peace in Europe and deterring and preparing to defeat Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces. At its peak, more than 400,000 U.S. troops were stationed in Western Europe. Initially, EUCOM’s area of responsibility also included all of Africa and the Middle East.

Between 1950 and 1953, the U.S. presence in Europe grew from 120,000 troops to 400,000. Given that the U.S. was fighting in Korea at the time, this troop increase was relatively fast, markedly impressive, and desperately needed to counter the emerging threat from the Soviet Union.

However, the Vietnam War took a toll on U.S. troop numbers in Europe, which fell below 265,000 by 1970. Troop numbers in Europe did not

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1. For example, between 1990 and 1993 the number of U.S. soldiers in Europe decreased from 213,000 in 1990 to 122,000 in 1993, and the number of U.S. Army installations across Europe dropped from 858 to 415. However, during this time the U.S. Army in Europe command supported 42 deployments that required 95,579 personnel. U.S. Army Europe, “History,” <http://www.eur.army.mil/organization/history.htm> (accessed April 12, 2012).
  2. A brigade combat team is a self-contained combined arms formation and the basic deployable maneuver unit in the U.S. Army. There are three types of combat brigades: heavy brigade combat teams, infantry brigade combat teams, and Stryker brigade combat teams.
  3. Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (January/February 2009), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63717/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy> (accessed April 11, 2012).
  4. Frank Gardner, “Seeking Somali Pirates, from the Air,” BBC News, February 21 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17095887> (accessed April 11, 2012).
  5. International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, Reports for Selected Countries and Subjects: Kiribati, April 2011, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?sy=2008&ey=2011&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=826&s=NGDPD%2CNGDPDPC%2CPCPPGDP%2CPCPPPC%2CLP&grp=0&a=&pr.x=59&pr.y=4> (accessed April 13, 2012).
  6. U.S. Army Europe, “History.”
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## U.S. Forces in Europe, 1950–1953

U.S. Air Forces in Europe grew from three groups with 35,000 personnel in 1950 to 11 wings with 136,000 personnel in 1953. The U.S. Navy operating in the Mediterranean doubled to more than 40 warships. The U.S. Army grew from one infantry division and three constabulary regiments to two corps with five divisions, including two mobilized National Guard divisions. In 1953, the Army also relocated the 10th Special Forces Group from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Bad Tölz, Germany, for unconventional warfare missions behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>7</sup>

recover until the 1980s under the Reagan Administration. However, U.S. troops in Europe only topped 350,000 troops, never again reaching the Cold War peak of 400,000.

During the late 1970s and in the 1980s, the U.S. responded to the Soviet deployment of SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Eastern Europe by deploying similar Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Western Europe. This was made possible by

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's support of the proposal, once again highlighting the strength of the Anglo–American Special Relationship.<sup>8</sup>

With the creation of Central Command (CENTCOM) in 1983 the Middle East, except Israel, Lebanon and Syria, was transferred out of EUCOM's area of responsibility. The creation of Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2008 transferred EUCOM's Africa responsibilities to the new combatant command. Today, Israel is the only area outside Europe that remains in EUCOM's area of responsibility. However, EUCOM continues to regularly support CENTCOM and AFRICOM. In fact, AFRICOM almost completely depends on support from EUCOM.

### SINCE 1952, U.S. TROOPS BASED IN EUROPE HAVE PARTICIPATED IN OR SUPPORTED MORE THAN 200 NAMED OPERATIONS — MANY OF THEM OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL EUROPE.

Even during the Cold War, the U.S. military presence in Europe did much more than the traditional Cold War mission of defending Western Europe. There are countless examples of the U.S. using its forward-deployed presence in Europe to project power for America's

interests. Since 1952, U.S. troops based in Europe have participated in or supported more than 200 named operations varying from humanitarian and natural disaster relief efforts to peacekeeping, anti-terrorism, and force protection operations—many of them outside continental Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Three examples from the Cold War demonstrate the policy advantages of having U.S. military forces prepositioned in Europe:

- **Operation Blue Bat: The U.S. military response to the 1958 Lebanon Crisis.** In 1958, the U.S. Navy deployed 45,000 men, including 5,000 marines, to the Middle East from Sixth Fleet in Naples, Italy.<sup>10</sup> U.S. Army Europe deployed one infantry unit from Germany to Turkey, and then to Beirut.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the duration of the mission, four U.S. airbases in Europe provided logistical and lifesaving capabilities.<sup>12</sup>
- **The multinational force in Lebanon, 1982.** In the midst of Lebanon's civil war, Israel invaded Lebanon in response to an assassination attempt on Shlomo Argov, Israeli ambassador to the U.K.<sup>13</sup> The United States and European allies brokered a cessation of hostilities. After the Palestinian Liberation Organization and

7. U.S. European Command, Headquarters, Directorate of Public Affairs, "Fact Sheet: History," <http://www.eucom.mil/doc/22823/history-of-eucom.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

8. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), pp. 236–263.

9. U.S. European Command, "History of EUCOM," <http://www.eucom.mil/mission/background/history-of-eucom> (accessed April 13, 2012).

10. Lieutenant Colonel Mark A. Olinger, "Airlift Operations During the Lebanon Crisis," *Army Logistician*, May–June 2005, <http://www.almc.army.mil/alogs/Issues/MayJun05/airlift.html> (accessed March 9, 2012).

11. Lieutenant Colonel Gary H. Wade, "Rapid Deployment Logistics: Lebanon, 1958," U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Combat Studies Institute Research Survey No. 3, October 1984, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/resources/csi/Wade/wade.asp> (accessed March 9, 2012).

12. Olinger, "Airlift Operations During the Lebanon Crisis."

13. Lawrence Joffe, "Shlomo Argov," *The Guardian*, February 24, 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/feb/25/israelandthepalestinians.lebanon> (accessed March 9, 2012).



Syrian forces had withdrawn from Beirut, the U.S., France, and Italy deployed a multinational force in Lebanon to maintain stability.<sup>14</sup> EUCOM played a key role in providing command and control and logistical support for the U.S. contingent deployed to Lebanon.

- **Operation El Dorado Canyon: Libyan air strikes, 1986.** In 1986, U.S. intelligence connected a terrorist bombing of a nightclub in West Germany to the Libyan government.<sup>15</sup> On April 15, 1986, the U.S. Air Force in Europe struck a number of Libyan military assets in retaliation for this and other terrorist actions traced back to the rogue state.<sup>16</sup> U.S. fighter-bombers flew from airbases in the U.K. to carry out the airstrikes in Libya.<sup>17</sup> Because France, Spain, and Italy prohibited use of their airspace due to political concerns, the U.S. aircraft flew around the Iberian Peninsula, which required multiple in-flight refuelings.<sup>18</sup> Even so, the flight path from the U.K. to Libya was much shorter than flying from airbases in the United States. The strike force was refueled by KC-10s and

KC-135s flying from bases in the U.K. and Italy. On the return flight, one aircraft made an emergency landing at a U.S. Air Base in Rota, Spain.<sup>19</sup>

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the U.S. drastically reduced its troop presence in Europe. However, the U.S. troops that remained in Europe have been more active than ever before. In all of these post-Cold War operations, the forward deployed and prepositioned military capabilities located in Europe enabled the U.S. to respond in a timely manner. It is worth examining notable operations to which U.S. forces based in Europe have contributed since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

**The First Gulf War.** When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990, U.S. troops in Europe supported Central Command by providing the bulk of the U.S. ground troops used to liberate Kuwait. The first troops from Europe deployed to Saudi Arabia later that month. By September, the entire 12th Aviation Brigade was in the Gulf. The U.S. Army in Europe deployed 75,000 soldiers, 1,200 tanks, 1,700 armored

combat vehicles, 650 pieces of artillery, and 325 Army aviation aircraft to support Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.<sup>20</sup>

**Bosnia.** After Yugoslavia dissolved in 1992, war broke out across ethnic and national lines in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As part of U.N. humanitarian efforts, the U.S. Army rapidly mobilized the 212th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital based in Wiesbaden Army Airfield, Germany,<sup>21</sup> and deployed it to Croatia. The unit set up a 60-bed hospital within days, and U.S. medical staff treated more than 9,700 casualties from more than 31 countries during the conflict.<sup>22</sup> Escalation in the region prompted the U.N. to declare a no-fly zone over Bosnian air space on April 12, 1993, and U.S. air assets primarily from U.S. bases in Italy executed this mission.<sup>23</sup> The ability to fly from Italy saved the U.S. aircraft valuable time and fuel by reducing transit time.

**Kosovo.** In 1999, the U.S. participated in the NATO Operation Allied Force to suppress violence in Kosovo committed by Serbian military forces. In preparation for this mission, U.S. Air Force Europe moved 64 fighter jets from bases in Lakenheath,

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14. John H. Kelly, "Lebanon: 1982-1984," chap. 6, in Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin, eds., *U.S. and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1996), [http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf\\_proceedings/CF129](http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF129) (accessed March 9, 2012).

15. Nathalie Malinarich, "Flashback: The Berlin Disco Bombing," BBC News, November 13, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1653848.stm> (accessed March 9, 2012).

16. Ibid.

17. Global Security, "Operation El Dorado Canyon," May 7, 2011, [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/el\\_dorado\\_canyon.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/el_dorado_canyon.htm) (accessed March 19, 2012).

18. Jaglavaksoldier, "Operation El Dorado Canyon 1986 Libya," YouTube, September 16, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgqDT2mIENo> (accessed April 13, 2012).

19. Ibid.

20. U.S. Army Europe, "History."

21. Mary T. Sarnecky, *A Contemporary History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps* (Washington, DC: Office of the Surgeon/General Borden Institute, 2010), p. 505, [http://www.bordeninstitute.army.mil/other\\_pub/nurse/NurseCorpsch22.pdf](http://www.bordeninstitute.army.mil/other_pub/nurse/NurseCorpsch22.pdf) (accessed April 11, 2012).

22. Lieutenant General Michael L. Dodson and Gary C. Miller, "Military Operations: The U.S. Army in Bosnia and Herzegovina," United States Army in Europe, *AE Pamphlet No. 525-100*, October 7, 2003, <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/ae-pam-525-100.pdf> (accessed April 13, 2012).

23. Kurt F. Miller, "Deny Flight and Deliberate Force: An Effective Use of Airpower?" master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1997, p. 36, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ada331766> (accessed April 11, 2012).

U.K., and Spangdahlem, Germany, to American air bases in Italy. The Army V Corps, based in Germany, deployed a squadron of Apache helicopters closer to the region. With full support, this included 31 support aircraft, two infantry battalions, one signal battalion, and 5,000 supporting personnel, which travelled from Germany to Kosovo's border in Albania.<sup>24</sup>

**Iraq Operations After Desert Storm.** In the wake of Operation Desert Storm, U.S. and Coalition forces were concerned for the safety and well-being of Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq. U.S. European Command led a number of humanitarian missions called Operation Provide Comfort to relocate displaced Kurds and provide stability in the region.<sup>25</sup> At its peak, more than 5,300 soldiers from U.S. bases in Europe were deployed into northern Iraq to protect the Kurdish population. During this period, U.S. bases in Turkey, primarily at Incirlik, proved invaluable. Over time Operation Provide Comfort became the basis of a no-fly zone mission called Operation Northern Watch. U.S. Air Force units based in Europe also participated in Operation Southern Watch, the no-fly zone over southern Iraq established to protect the Shia population. Once again, this mission

## Training European Allies

A capable and militarily strong NATO is in America's interest. NATO is only as strong as its member states, which is why joint training between U.S. forces and its allies is vital to keeping NATO a strong alliance. Preparing the militaries of European allies to deploy outside NATO's borders offers huge benefits for the United States. In 2010, the U.S. carried out 33 major multinational training exercises involving 50,000 troops from 40 countries in Europe. Many of these training exercises were to prepare European allies for deployments to Afghanistan. Approximately 80 percent of the countries with forces deployed in Afghanistan are European.<sup>27</sup> If these European troops were not in Afghanistan, the U.S. would have needed to deploy more troops.

For example, a Georgian infantry battalion<sup>28</sup> is fighting alongside U.S. Marines in Helmand Province, one of the most dangerous parts of Afghanistan. The more America trains its allies to carry out challenging missions, such as in Afghanistan, the more they can share the burden carried by the U.S.

However, former EUCOM commander General Bantz Craddock told the House and Senate Armed Services Committees in 2007 that wartime deployments left him without the forces needed for exercises and other security cooperation in his area. Removing two more brigade combat teams, as the Obama Administration is planning, will exacerbate this already difficult situation.<sup>29</sup>

relied on U.S. airbases close to the region.

**Afghanistan 2001.** U.S. Military Forces in Europe continue to play an important role in the ongoing campaign in Afghanistan. Within 45 minutes of the first U.S. airstrikes in Afghanistan in October 2001, C-17s from Ramstein Air Base, Germany,

dropped food and medical aid to Afghans.<sup>26</sup> Since combat operations began in October 2001, tens of thousands of troops based in Europe have deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Furthermore, U.S. forces based in Europe trained tens of thousands of NATO troops who deployed to Afghanistan.

24. Colonel Gary P. Shaw, "Operation Allied Force: Case Studies in Expeditionary Aviation—USAF, USA, USN, and USMC," Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2002, pp. 12-13, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA404537> (accessed May 15, 2012).

25. John P. Cavanaugh, "Operation Provide Comfort: A Model for Future NATO Operations," U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Studies, 1992, p. 34, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA254123> (accessed April 11, 2012).

26. Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), p. 81, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND\\_MG166-1.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG166-1.pdf) (accessed April 11, 2012).

27. Admiral James G. Stavridis, "European Command Posture Statement," testimony before Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, and Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, March 30, 2011, [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/postures/posture\\_eucom\\_30mar2011.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/postures/posture_eucom_30mar2011.pdf) (accessed April 11, 2012).

28. This commitment from Georgia will be doubled in autumn 2012, making Georgia ISAF's largest troop contributor per capita in Afghanistan.

29. General Bantz J. Craddock, statement before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, March 15, 2007, <http://www.dod.mil/dodgc/olc/docs/TestCraddock070315.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

**Iraq 2003.** When combat operations in Iraq started in March 2003, the U.S. Army V Corps had already deployed a number of divisions from headquarters in Germany to Kuwait.<sup>30</sup> As part of the initial invasion, the V Corps crossed the Iraq border led by the 3rd Infantry Division with 20,000 soldiers and 10,000 vehicles.<sup>31</sup> A few days later on March 26, the 173rd Airborne Brigade based in Vicenza, Italy, took off from Aviano Air Base in northern Italy and parachuted around 1,000 troops into northern Iraq to open a northern front, a mere five-hour flight from Italy.<sup>32</sup> Since 2003, tens of thousands of troops based in Europe have deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**Liberia.** After years of violence and corruption in Liberia, EUCOM initiated a peacekeeping and humanitarian mission in August 2003. Due to its proximity, the Southern European Task Force (SETAF) based in Vicenza was chosen as the headquarters for the joint task force. Under SETAF's command, special operations forces and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit

stabilized Monrovia, Liberia's capital, and then withdrew from the country by September 30 of that year.<sup>33</sup>

**Libya.** On March 18, 2011, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1973 which called for a cease-fire in Libya. Muammar Qadhafi failed to comply with the resolution, and NATO and U.S. forces enforced a no-fly zone to protect civilians from the dictator's military attacks. On March 20, 2011, F-15Es based at Lakenheath; F-16CJs from Spangdahlem; KC-135s from RAF Mildenhall, U.K.; and C-130Js from Ramstein<sup>34</sup> began enforcing the no-fly zone with ease, and U.S. involvement tipped the scales against Qadhafi.

As EUCOM commander Admiral James Stavridis summarized in his 2012 written report to Congress:

Indeed, we witnessed last year how rapidly the installations along the Mediterranean—Moron Air Base, Spain; Aviano Air Base, Italy; Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy; and Naval Support Activity Souda Bay, Greece—were able to provide

critical basing and logistical support to support NATO operations over Libya.<sup>35</sup>

## **U.S. Forces in Europe Today**

Approximately 80,000 U.S. service personnel from all branches of the military are based in Europe. The U.S. has three different types of military installations in the EUCOM area of responsibility:

- **Main operating bases** are the large U.S. military installations with a relatively large number of permanently based troops and well-established infrastructure.
- **Forward-operating sites** are intended for rotational forces rather than permanently based forces. These installations tend to be scalable and adaptable depending on the circumstances.
- **Cooperative security locations** have little or no permanent U.S. military presence and are usually maintained by contractor or host-nation support.

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30. Gregory Fontenot, E. J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Annapolis, MD: First Naval Institute Press, 2005), p. 86, <http://books.google.com/books/> (accessed April 11, 2012).

31. Associated Press, "U.S. Troops Make Last-Minute War Preparations," Fox News, March 19, 2003, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,81503,00.html> (accessed April 13, 2012).

32. Catherine Dale, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, April 2, 2009, p. 49, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34387.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

33. Colonel Blair A. Ross Jr. "The U.S. Joint Task Force Experience in Liberia," *Military Review*, May-June 2005, p. 60, <http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/ross.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

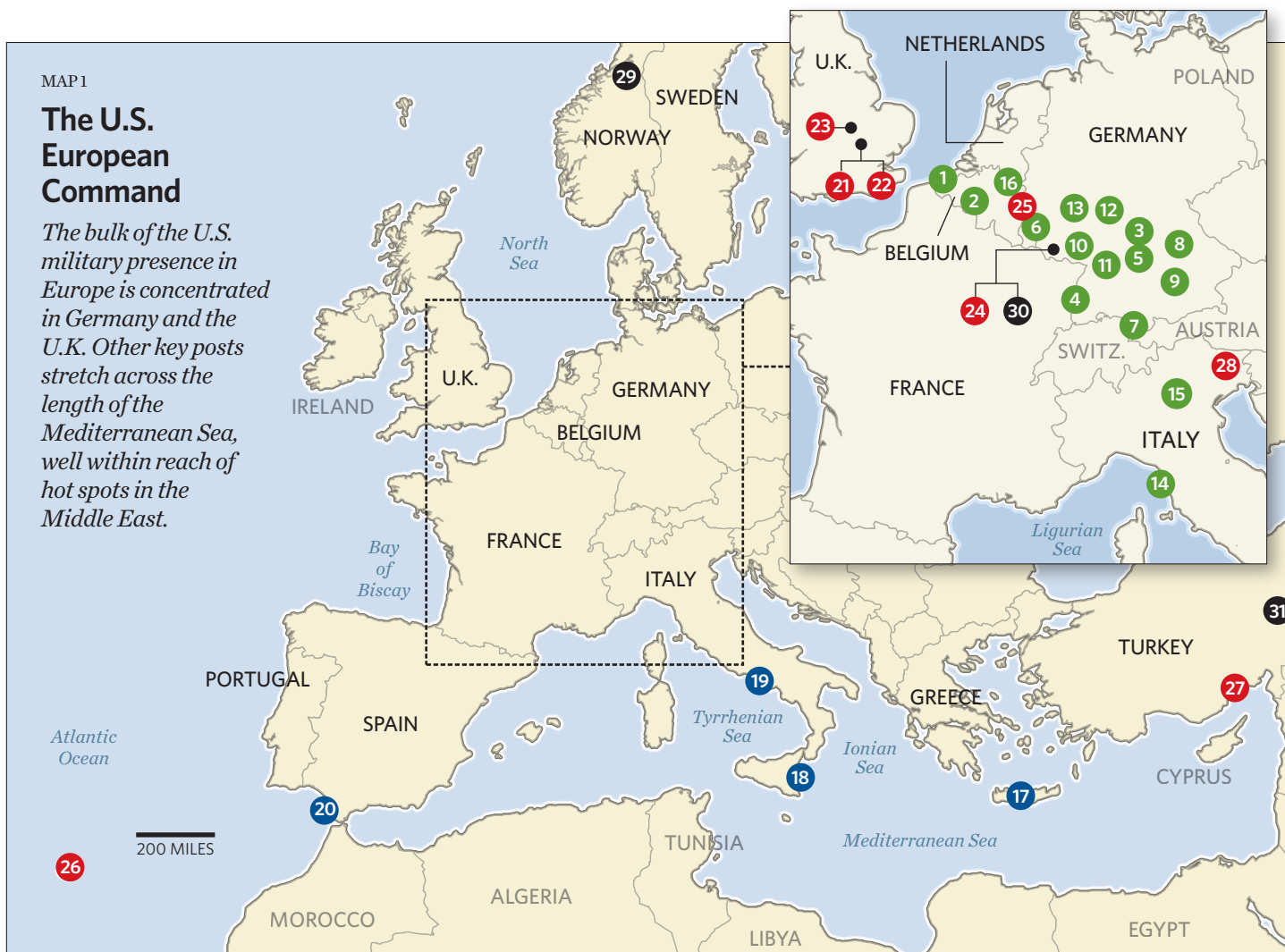
34. Jeremiah Gertler, "Operation Odyssey Dawn (Libya): Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, March 30, 2011, pp. 11-12, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R41725.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

35. Admiral James G. Stavridis, "European Command: 2012 Posture Statement," U.S. European Command, p. 71, <http://www.eucom.mil/doc/23162/2012-high-res-posture-statement.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2012).

MAP 1

## The U.S. European Command

*The bulk of the U.S. military presence in Europe is concentrated in Germany and the U.K. Other key posts stretch across the length of the Mediterranean Sea, well within reach of hot spots in the Middle East.*



### U.S. ARMY—16 key bases

#### BELGIUM

1. Benelux
2. Brussels

#### GERMANY

3. Ansbach
4. Baden Wuerttemberg
5. Bamberg
6. Baumholder
7. Garmisch
8. Grafenwoehr
9. Hohenfels
10. Kaiserslautern
11. Stuttgart
12. Schweinfurt
13. Wiesbaden

#### ITALY

14. Livorno
15. Vicenza

#### NETHERLANDS

16. Schinnen

### U.S. NAVY—4

#### GREECE

17. U.S. Naval Support Activity, Souda Bay, Crete, Greece

#### ITALY

18. Naval Air Station Sigonella
19. Naples Naval Support Activity

#### SPAIN

20. Rota Naval Station

### U.S. AIR FORCE—8

#### U.K.

21. RAF Lakenheath
22. RAF Mildenhall
23. RAF Alconbury

#### GERMANY

24. Ramstein Air Base
25. Spangdahlem Air Base

#### PORTUGAL

26. Lajes Field (Azores)

#### TURKEY

27. Incirlik Air Base

#### ITALY

28. Aviano Air Base

### OTHER

#### NORWAY

29. Marine Corps Prepositioning Program in the Trondheim Region

#### GERMANY

30. Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl

#### TURKEY

31. U.S. X-band radar as part of missile defense in Kürecik (eastern Turkey)

Source: Heritage Foundation research.

The U.S. has 28 main operating bases, primarily in Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Turkey, and Spain. The number of U.S. installations in Europe has declined steadily since the Cold War. For example, in 1990, the U.S. Army had more than 850 sites in Europe, but today the total number for all services is approximately 350.<sup>36</sup>

EUCOM's stated mission is to conduct military operations, international military engagement, and interagency partnering to enhance transatlantic security and defend the United States as part of a forward defensive posture. This mission statement is supported by a number of objectives. According to the 2012 EUCOM Posture Statement submitted to Congress, the objectives are to:

- Ensure high readiness to execute EUCOM's contingency plans;
- Posture EUCOM forces to support NATO Article V response, while focusing on allied and partner training designed to maintain interoperability;
- Assist the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) transition through the continued generation and training of ample coalition forces;
- Sustain NATO and capable partner nations' expeditionary capabilities, while reinforcing their ability to maintain regional

stability and to provide for their own security;

- Nurture strategic relationships and necessary force posture to enable continued access, thereby ensuring U.S. freedom of action and global reach;
- Prevent violent extremist organizations from obtaining and using weapons of mass destruction;
- Advance NATO European ballistic missile defense through an integrated approach built on balanced contributions; and
- Prevent the evolution of local crises into regional conflicts, particularly in the Balkans and Caucasus.

EUCOM is supported by four service component commands and one subordinate unified command: U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR), U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR), U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), U.S. Marine Forces Europe (MARFOREUR), and U.S. Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR).

#### **U.S. Naval Forces Europe.**

NAVEUR is responsible for providing overall command, operational control, and coordination for maritime assets in the EUCOM and AFRICOM<sup>37</sup> areas of responsibility. This includes more than 20 million square nautical miles of ocean and

more than 67 percent of the Earth's coastline.<sup>38</sup>

This command is currently provided by the U.S. Sixth Fleet based in Naples and brings critical U.S. maritime combat capability into an important region of the world. Some of the more notable U.S. naval bases in Europe include the Naval Air Station in Sigonella; the Naval Support Activity Base in Souda Bay, Greece; and the Naval Station at Rota. Naval Station Rota will soon be home to four capable Aegis-equipped destroyers. In addition, the USS *Mount Whitney*, a *Blue Ridge*-class command ship, is permanently based in the region. This ship provides a key command-and-control platform, which was successfully employed during the early days of the recent Libyan operation.

The U.S. Navy also keeps a number of submarines in the area which contribute greatly to EUCOM's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capacity. Admiral Stavridis has pointed out, "These [submarine] capabilities are increasingly important as the Russian Federation Navy increases the pace, scope and sophistication of its submarine fleet."<sup>39</sup> The U.S. Navy also has a fleet of P-3 Maritime Patrol Aircraft and EP-3 Reconnaissance Aircraft operating from U.S. bases in Italy, Greece, Spain, and Turkey. They complement the ISR capabilities of U.S. submarines.

**U.S. Army Europe.** USAREUR was established in 1952. Like today,

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36. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Defense Management: Additional Information and Stakeholder Input Needed to Assess Military Posture in Europe*, GAO-11-131, February 2011, p. 6, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11131.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2012).

37. The commander of NAVEUR is also the commander of U.S. Naval Force Africa (NAVAF).

38. Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe–U.S. Naval Forces Africa/U.S. Sixth Fleet, "Area of Responsibility," <http://www.c6f.navy.mil/AORPAGE.html> (accessed April 13, 2012).

39. Stavridis, "European Command," p. 23.



the U.S. Army formed the bulk of U.S. forces in Europe during the Cold War. At the height of the Cold War, 277,000 soldiers<sup>40</sup> and thousands of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and tactical nuclear weapons were positioned in the Army's European bases. USAREUR also contributed to U.S. operations in the broader region, such as the U.S. intervention in Lebanon in 1958, when it deployed 8,000 soldiers for four months from bases in Europe.<sup>41</sup> In the 1990s after the fall of the Berlin Wall, USAREUR continued to play a vital role in promoting U.S. interest in the region, especially in the Balkans.

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**SINCE 2003, 75,000 USAREUR SOLDIERS HAVE DEPLOYED TO IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN INCLUDING 18,000 IN 2010.**

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Today USAREUR is headquartered in Heidelberg, but will move to Wiesbaden, Germany, by the end of 2014. The core of USAREUR is formed around four brigade combat teams and an aviation brigade located in Germany and Italy. In addition, the U.S. Army's 21st Theater Transport Command has helped the U.S. military presence in Europe become an important logistics hub in support of Central Command.

Since 2003, 75,000 USAREUR soldiers have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan including 18,000 in 2010.<sup>42</sup>

**U.S. Air Forces in Europe.**

USAFE provides a forward-based air capability that can support a wide range of contingency operations ranging from direct combat operations in Afghanistan and Libya to humanitarian assistance in Tunisia and Israel. USAFE originated as the 8th Air Force in 1942 and flew strategic bombing missions over the European continent during World War II. In August 1945, the 8th Air Force was redesignated USAFE with 17,000 airplanes and 450,000 personnel.<sup>43</sup> Today, USAFE has eight main operating bases along with 114 geographically separated locations. The main operating bases are the RAF bases Lakenheath, Mildenhall, and Alconbury in the U.K.; Ramstein and Spangdahlem Air Bases in Germany; Lajes Field in the Azores; Incirlik Air Base in Turkey; and Aviano Air Base in Italy. Approximately 39,000 active-duty, reserve, and civilian personnel are assigned to USAFE.<sup>44</sup>

USAFE supports operations around the world. In 2011, elements of USAFE flew more than 26,000 combat hours in support of ongoing military operations in the European

theater and globally. The airbases in Europe were particularly effective in enabling a timely response to the Libya crisis. The forward presence of U.S. Air Force assets in Europe also allows U.S. leaders to respond quickly to emerging humanitarian crises. For example, in 2011, USAFE delivered nine tons of aid within 48 hours to Tunisia<sup>45</sup> and rapidly provided aid to Turkey after the devastating magnitude 7.2 earthquake in October 2011.<sup>46</sup>

**U.S. Marine Forces Europe.**

MARFOREUR was established in 1980 to support the U.S. Navy better. It was originally a "designate" component command, meaning that it was only a shell during peacetime, but could bolster its forces during wartime.<sup>47</sup> Its initial staff was 40 personnel based in London. By 1989, it had more than 180 marines in 45 separate locations in 19 countries throughout the European theater. Today, the command is based in Boeblingen, Germany, and has approximately 1,500 marines assigned to support EUCOM, NATO, and other operations, such as Operation Enduring Freedom. It was also dual-hatted as the Marine Corps Forces, Africa (MARFORAF) under Africa Command in 2008.<sup>48</sup>

In the past, MARFOREUR has supported U.S. Marine units

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40. U.S. Army Europe, "History."

41. U.S. Army, "The Lebanon Operation (15 July–25 October 1958)," <http://www.history.army.mil/documents/AbnOps/TABD.htm> (accessed April 13, 2012).

42. U.S. Army Europe, Headquarters, Directorate of Public Affairs, "U.S. Army in Europe by the Numbers," March 2012, <http://www.eur.army.mil/pdf/USAREURbytheNumbers.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

43. U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Public Affairs Office, "United States Air Forces in Europe," April 23, 2012, <http://www.usafe.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=13320> (accessed April 11, 2012).

44. U.S. Air Forces in Europe, "Units," <http://www.usafe.af.mil/units/index.asp> (accessed April 13, 2012).

45. Stavridis, "European Command."

46. Captain William Russell, "U.S. Assists with Turkish Earthquake Relief," U.S. Air Force, November 15, 2011, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123280037> (accessed April 11, 2012).

47. In fact, the only time that MARFOREUR lost its "designate" status was during the war in Kosovo.

48. Brigadier General Tracy L. Garrett and General William E. Ward, "Marine Corps Forces, Africa Officially Established," U.S. Africa Command, November 14, 2008, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=2252> (accessed April 11, 2012).

deployed in the Balkans and the Middle East. MARFOREUR also supports the Norway Air Landed Marine Air Ground Task Force, the Marine Corps's only land-based prepositioned stock. The Marine Corps has enough prepositioned stock in Norway to support a force of 13,000 marines for 30 days,<sup>49</sup> and the Norwegian government covers half of the costs of the prepositioned storage.<sup>50</sup> The prepositioned stock's proximity to the Arctic region makes it of particular geostrategic importance.

**U.S. Special Operations Command Europe.** SOCEUR is the only subordinate unified command under EUCOM. Its origins are in the Support Operations Command Europe, and it was initially based in Paris. This headquarters provided peacetime planning and operational control of special operations forces during unconventional warfare in EUCOM's area of responsibility. In 1955, the headquarters was reconfigured as a joint task force, and it was renamed Support Operations Task Force Europe (SOTFE) and then later Special Operations Task Force Europe. When French President Charles de Gaulle forced American troops out of France in 1966, SOTFE relocated to its current headquarters in Panzer Kaserne near Stuttgart, Germany, in 1967. It also operates

out of RAF Mildenhall.<sup>51</sup> In 1982, it was redesignated for a fourth time as U.S. Special Operations Command Europe.

Due to the sensitive nature of Special Forces operations, publicly available information is scarce. However, it has been documented that SOCEUR elements participated in various capacity-building missions and civilian evacuation operations in Africa; took an active role in the Balkans in the mid-1990s and combat operations in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars; and most recently provided support to AFRICOM's Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya. SOCEUR also plays an important role in joint training with European allies. In 2011 alone, SOCEUR carried out 67 training events with European allies on various degrees and scales.<sup>52</sup> This scale of training with European allies could not be replicated by rotational forces.

### **Supporting Other Combatant Commands**

Perhaps resulting more from geography than its shared history, EUCOM has played an important role in supporting other combatant commands, such as CENTCOM and AFRICOM. Admiral Stavridis, EUCOM's commander, recently told the Senate:

I think there is still good value in a presence in Europe because of the geographic importance. It's not just Europe. It supports Carter Ham in Africa. It supports Jim Mattis in CENTCOM. It's a strategic platform that allows us access in and around the region.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to CENTCOM and AFRICOM, U.S. troops in Europe also support Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) and Transportation Command (TRANSCOM). For example, EUCOM supports TRANSCOM with its array of airbases and access to ports throughout Europe and through its development and enhancement of the multimodal distribution capabilities center at Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base on the Black Sea in Romania. This is an important capacity initiative for ongoing theater and global logistical missions in a key part of the world.<sup>54</sup>

EUCOM also supports TRANSCOM with the work on the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), which supplies U.S. troops in Afghanistan. In 2011, EUCOM's Deployment and Distribution Operations Center moved 21,574 containers and 32,206 tons of equipment through Europe to Afghanistan over the NDN.<sup>55</sup> The NDN's success has

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49. The prepositioned stock is actually stored in seven locations in Norway totaling more than 900,000 square feet of storage, including 471,445 square feet in caves. The caves are climate-controlled storage, with humidity maintained between 45 percent and 55 percent and temperature between 45 degrees and 50 degrees. This precise regulation allows safe long-term storage of tents, vehicle tires, and other climate-sensitive equipment.

50. Sergeant Matt Lyman, "US Ambassador, MFE Marines Tour Supply Caves in Norway," U.S. Marine Forces, January 9, 2012, <http://www.marines.mil/unit/marforeur/Pages/USAmbassador,MFEMarinestoursupplycavesinNorway.aspx> (accessed April 11, 2012).

51. Stavridis, "European Command."

52. Ibid.

53. Admiral James Stavridis, testimony, in *Hearing to Receive Testimony on U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2013 and the Future Years Defense Program*, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 112th Cong., 1st Sess., March 1, 2012, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/Transcripts/2012/03%20March/12-05%20-%203-1-12.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2012).

54. Stavridis, "European Command."

55. Ibid.

been a game changer in Afghanistan. EUCOM could not support these TRANSCOM initiatives without the infrastructure and relationships established by the permanent U.S. military presence in Europe.

EUCOM also works closely with CYBERCOM to implement of Department of Defense cyber-policy in Europe and to bolster the cyberdefense capabilities of America's European partners. This has included hosting a number of cyber-related conferences and joint exercises with European partners. Furthermore, EUCOM has supported CYBERCOM's work inside NATO by becoming a full member in the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia.

NATO's cyberdefense capability is only as strong as its weakest member state. Considering that NATO members Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and NATO ally Georgia have been targeted by cyber-attacks, U.S. interests are best served by ensuring that EUCOM and CYBERCOM work closely with NATO on this issue.

## U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe

In addition to the French and British nuclear capabilities, the U.S. maintains tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Until the end of the Cold War, the U.S. is believed to have maintained around 2,500 nuclear warheads in Europe. Unofficial estimates put the current figure at between 150 and 200 warheads, based in Italy, Turkey, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands.<sup>56</sup> All of these are free-fall gravity bombs

designed for use with U.S. and allied dual-capable aircraft.

Russia remains a potent nuclear weapons power, which should concern both the U.S. and Europe. Encouraged by the Obama Administration's policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament, some in NATO have suggested that American tactical nuclear weapons in Europe are a Cold War anachronism and should be removed from the continent. Inside the alliance, there has been an ongoing debate on the future of these weapons. This debate has been carried out under the auspices of NATO's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR).

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### NATO SHOULD REMAIN A NUCLEAR ALLIANCE AS LONG AS THE WEST FACES ANY NUCLEAR THREAT FROM ANY PART OF THE WORLD.

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The 2010 Lisbon Summit Declaration stated that the alliance "agreed to continue to review NATO's overall defense and deterrence posture" and decided to delay a final decision regarding the future of these weapons. The 2012 Chicago Summit declared that NATO would maintain its U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, but left the details vague. Behind closed doors there is still skepticism by some European allies on the need for such weapons.

The U.S. needs to ensure that tactical nuclear weapons remain part of the alliance's nuclear strategy. This is an important and often overlooked part of alliance burden sharing.

NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept stated that "the supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance."<sup>57</sup> NATO should remain a nuclear alliance as long as the West faces any nuclear threat from any part of the world.

## The Case for U.S. Troops in Europe Today

There are strong economic, political, and geographical reasons to keep large, robust, and capable U.S. military forces in Europe.

**The Geographical Case: Emerging Threats from a Dangerous Region.** The geography of the U.S. European Command shows why the region matters. The 51 countries in EUCOM's area of responsibility include approximately one-fifth of the world's population inside 10.7 million square miles of land and 13 million square miles of ocean.<sup>58</sup> EUCOM has physical borders with Russia, the Arctic, Iran, Asia Minor, the Caspian Sea, and North Africa. Most of these areas have long histories of instability and a potential for future instability that could directly impact the security interests and economic well-being of the United States.

One of the most obvious benefits of having U.S. troops in Europe is its geographical proximity to some of the most dangerous and contested regions of the world. This proximity of U.S. forces gives policymakers the ability to respond quickly to a crisis.

To the south of Europe, from the eastern Atlantic Ocean to the Middle East and up to the Caucasus, is an arc

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56. Malcolm Chalmers and Simon Lunn, "NATO's Tactical Nuclear Dilemma," Royal United Services Institute *Occasional Paper*, March 2012, p. 1, [http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/NATOs\\_Nuclear\\_Dilemma.pdf](http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/NATOs_Nuclear_Dilemma.pdf) (accessed March 23, 2012).

57. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Active Engagement, Modern Defence," November 19, 2010, <http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf> (accessed April 30, 2012).

58. Stavridis, "European Command."

## Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

Geographical proximity to areas where U.S. troops will likely operate is also beneficial for medical care. Germany is home to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC), the largest U.S. military hospital outside the continental United States. However, the LRMC does not exist simply as a consequence of the huge U.S. troop presence in Europe during the Cold War, but to provide timely medical care to troops operating in some of the world's most dangerous places.

The LRMC has often played a key role in U.S. military interventions in the region. For example, during the Cold War the LRMC treated U.S. Marines injured during the attempted rescue of American hostages in Iran in 1980 and in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. Since the Cold War, the hospital has served as a repatriation point for more than 4,000 American casualties during the first Gulf War, and more than 800 U.S. military personnel deployed to Somalia were treated there.<sup>61</sup> The LRMC also played an important role in providing medical care during the various Balkan operations.

During recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the LRMC's proximity to the battlefield has literally saved lives. Since January 1, 2004, the earliest date for which information is readily available, the LRMC has treated almost 65,000 wounded service personnel from Iraq and Afghanistan. For obvious reasons, the time between injury on the battlefield and arrival at the LRMC varies greatly. In rare cases, the LRMC has received patients in about 10 hours after injury in Iraq.<sup>62</sup> Transporting a patient to the East Coast of the United States adds an extra nine hours of flying time.

of instability. This region is experiencing increasing instability from demographic pressures, increased commodity prices, interstate and intrastate conflict, tribal politics, competition over water and other natural resources, religious tension, revolutionary tendencies, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and frozen conflicts. This region also has some of the world's most vital shipping lanes, energy resources, and trade choke points. This is a recipe for instability.

Recent instability in North Africa after the popular uprisings in 2011 have shown the utility of basing robust U.S. military capabilities near potential global hot spots. For example, when ordered to intervene in Libya, U.S. commanders in Europe were able to act effectively and promptly because of the well-established and mature U.S. military footprint in southern Europe.

Inside Europe itself, the Balkans have a potential for future instability. Although security has improved

dramatically in this region, there is still a potential for more violence. On a positive note, Albania, Montenegro, and Croatia have joined NATO, and Croatia will soon join the EU. The situation in Kosovo still remains fragile. As recently as August 2011, elements of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade were deployed to reinforce NATO's Multinational Brigade East in Kosovo after conflicts arose at border control points.<sup>59</sup> The security situation in the Balkans is far from settled.

### **RECENT INSTABILITY IN NORTH AFRICA AFTER THE POPULAR UPRISINGS IN 2011 HAVE SHOWN THE UTILITY OF BASING ROBUST U.S. MILITARY CAPABILITIES NEAR POTENTIAL GLOBAL HOT SPOTS.**

To the north, the Arctic or the High North is becoming more contested than ever before. During summer months, Arctic ice has been decreasing in size and new shipping lanes to Asia are opening as a result. Even if the recent reduction in Arctic ice is a cyclic phenomenon, it poses security challenges in the present. Of course, the U.S. has an interest in stability and security in the Arctic because the U.S. is an Arctic nation. The American commitment to NATO is also relevant because four of the five Arctic powers are in NATO.<sup>60</sup>

Geography also plays an important role in missile defense, especially against medium-range and long-range missile threats from countries such as Iran. Locating major missile

59. News release, "U.S. Army Europe Looks Back at a Busy, Productive 2011," U.S. Army Europe, January 5, 2011, [http://www.eur.army.mil/news/archive2011/2012-01-05\\_YIR2011text.htm](http://www.eur.army.mil/news/archive2011/2012-01-05_YIR2011text.htm) (accessed April 11, 2012).

60. U.S., Canada, Norway, and Denmark (Greenland). The non-NATO Arctic Sea power is Russia.

61. News release, "LRMC History," Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Public Affairs Office, June 2009, <http://ermc.amedd.army.mil/landstuhl/factsheets/LRMCHistory.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2012).

62. The flight from Baghdad to LRMC takes about seven hours.



defense assets in Poland, Romania, Spain, and Turkey would help to protect U.S. interests and European NATO allies.

Russia is also important to the U.S. troop presence in Europe. With the Cold War over, Russia no longer poses a direct military threat to Western Europe, but Russia's future is uncertain. For some NATO members, Russia is still a force driver in military planning. For other U.S. allies, such as Georgia, Russia continues to be an aggressor.

Nothing indicates that Russia is on a path to reform. Its economy is in tatters, its demographics and aging population are putting pressures on the state, and its government is best described as a thugocracy. In Russia democratic freedoms are in retreat, corruption is endemic, and the future is bleak. The same failings of the Soviet Union a quarter of a century ago are starting to reappear in Putin's Russia.

Even with Russia's current economic difficulties, Vladimir Putin clearly indicated during his presidential campaign that he will invest heavily in Russia's military. In an article for *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, Putin stated:

Under these circumstances, Russia cannot rely on diplomatic and economic methods alone to resolve conflicts. Our country faces the task of sufficiently developing its military potential as part of a deterrence strategy. This is an indispensable condition for Russia to feel secure and for our partners to listen to our country's arguments.

We have adopted and are implementing unprecedented programs to develop our armed forces and modernize Russia's defense industry. We will allocate around 23 trillion rubles [\$775 billion] for these purposes over the next decade.<sup>63</sup>

Putin has also linked strengthening the Russian economy with modernizing its armed forces. In the same article Putin suggested that financial investment in modernizing the Russian Armed Forces must "serve as fuel to feed the engines of modernization in our economy, creating real growth and a situation where government expenditure funds new jobs, supports market demand, and facilitates scientific research."<sup>64</sup>

Although Russia by itself should not drive the U.S. military presence in Europe, the second-order effects of Russian-induced instability in the region should be an ongoing NATO concern. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall caught many by surprise. Western leaders should not allow a resurgent Russia to catch them by surprise, too.

**The Economic Case: Stability Equals Prosperity.** A stable, secure, and economically viable Europe is in America's financial interest. Regional security means economic viability and prosperity. For more than 60 years, the U.S. military presence in Europe has contributed to European stability, which has economically benefited both Europeans and Americans. The economies of the 27 member states of the European Union,<sup>65</sup> along with United States,

account for approximately half of the global economy.

The potential impact of the current eurozone crisis on the U.S. makes European economic stability more important than ever before. The eurozone crisis could turn into a security crisis. For example, any instability or civil unrest resulting from Greece defaulting or leaving the eurozone could spill over into the Balkans. Nobody can predict the security effects of the current eurozone crisis.

The economic case also illustrates the importance of the greater European region to energy security and the free flow of trade. Some of the most important energy security and trade corridors are on the periphery of Europe as are some of the world's most dangerous and unstable regions. European economies depend on oil and gas transported through the volatile Caucasus and several maritime choke points. As Arctic sea lanes start to open, shipping is increasing in that region, creating new security challenges.

**The Political Case: Relations with European Allies Are Best Done Through NATO.** The U.S. troop presence in Europe is the strongest signal of American support for NATO. Regardless of its institutional shortcomings, NATO has anchored the U.S. inside Europe for the past 63 years. It is important for the U.S. to engage its European allies through NATO, especially with the EU looking fractured and weak.

Since the EU's failed 2004 Constitutional Treaty, the political situation among EU member states has become more fragile

63. Vladimir Putin, "Being Strong," *Foreign Policy*, February 21, 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/21/being\\_strong](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/21/being_strong) (accessed April 11, 2012).

64. Ibid.

65. Any further mention of the European Union in this document refers to the 27 independent and sovereign nation-states that collectively form the European Union.



and incoherent. Recognizing this in 2005, the U.S. Overseas Basing Commission stated that the French and Dutch referendums rejecting the EU Constitutional Treaty “highlighted the continued weakness of the [European] Union and thus the importance of NATO to our relationship with Europe.”<sup>66</sup>

The 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which replaced the failed Constitutional Treaty, was finally ratified by all EU member states after great political cost and controversy. Ireland initially rejected the Lisbon Treaty in the June 2008 referendum, but passed it in a second referendum in October 2009. Lingering political fallout from the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties, coupled with the current eurozone crisis and the new and controversial Financial Stability Treaty, has increased the risk of political instability in Europe.

The current economic and political situation has also made the EU unpopular among Europeans. However, NATO still enjoys a high degree of increasing popular support. A recent Eurobarometer poll found that only 31 percent of Europeans have a positive image of the EU,<sup>67</sup> compared to the most recent German Marshall Fund on Transatlantic Trends, which reported that 62 percent of Europeans thought that NATO was an essential organization.

Considering the EU’s bleak future, the U.S. needs to continue

multilateral political engagement in Europe through NATO. Maintaining full participation in NATO allows the U.S. to maintain a leadership role in European affairs in a way the EU would prevent. With all of the problems and the uncertain future, NATO should continue to be the primary interlocutor for U.S. engagement in Europe.

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**SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT  
ENERGY SECURITY AND TRADE  
CORRIDORS ARE ON THE PERIPHERY  
OF EUROPE AS ARE SOME OF THE  
WORLD’S MOST DANGEROUS AND  
UNSTABLE REGIONS.**

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### **A Shrinking U.S. Force Posture in Europe**

As part of a broader policy that is shrinking the U.S. forces around the world, the Obama Administration’s most recent defense cuts will deeply impact the U.S. military footprint in Europe. These cuts send the wrong signal about America’s commitment to transatlantic security and will embolden U.S. adversaries in the Euro-Atlantic region. Most importantly, the move will reduce the ability and flexibility of the U.S. to react to the unexpected in Eurasia and the Middle East.

On January 26, 2012, the Pentagon announced reductions in the U.S. military force posture in Europe:

- Inactivation of one A-10 squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base in 2013.
- Inactivation of the 603rd Air Control Squadron at Aviano Air Base in 2013.
- Reduction of V Corps headquarters structure after deployment to Afghanistan later this year. It will not return to Europe.
- Inactivation of the 170th Brigade Combat Team in 2013 and the 172nd BCT in 2014—a reduction of more than 8,000 soldiers that completely eliminates the U.S. Army’s mechanized capability in Europe.
- An additional reduction of approximately 2,500 soldiers in enabling units of the U.S. Army in Europe over the next five years.

**Air Force Cuts.** The inactivation of the 81st Fighter Squadron and the Air Control Squadron will create significant gaps in U.S. aviation capability in Europe.

Disbanding the 81st Fighter Squadron also means retiring its 20 A-10 fighter aircraft and removing this capability from Europe.<sup>68</sup> The 81st Fighter Squadron first arrived in Germany in 1973. Since then it has played a key role in U.S.-led operations in the region and beyond, including the first Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, the no-fly zone in Iraq in the

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66. Judy Dempsey, “Questioning EU’s Will, U.S. Panel Backs NATO,” *The New York Times*, September 13, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/12/world/europe/12iht-nato.html> (accessed February 22, 2012).

67. European Commission, “Eurobarometer 76: Public Opinion in the European Union,” December 2011, p. 20, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76\\_first\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_first_en.pdf) (accessed April 11, 2012).

68. U.S. Air Forces in Europe Public Affairs, “FY2013 Budget Cuts to Impact U.S. Air Forces in Europe,” Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, February 22, 2012, <http://www.spangdahlem.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123290946> (accessed April 11, 2012).

late 1990s, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom,<sup>69</sup> and most recently over Libya as part of Operation Unified Protector.<sup>70</sup>

The Defense Department has offered little public explanation of the logic of removing this capability from Europe. During his 2012 testimony to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, Admiral Stavridis justified the decision by saying said that “even though we’re taking out some aircraft, we’re going to bring some new aircraft and (sic) including the V-22 which is optimized for special operations.”<sup>71</sup> Nobody disputes the combat effectiveness of the V-22, which has proved itself in Iraq and Afghanistan. The V-22 is a very welcome addition to USAFE and will provide U.S. commanders in Europe an additional capability, especially U.S. Special Forces in Europe.

However, the V-22 is not a substitute for the A-10. The A-10 is a ground attack aircraft that can destroy a main battle tank at a range of 6,500 meters using a cannon capable of firing up to 4,200 rounds a minute.<sup>72</sup> The V-22 Osprey is a vertical take-off and landing tiltrotor aircraft that can carry up to 32 troops. As Admiral Stavridis pointed out in his statement, the V-22 is optimized for special operations, not ground attack. The capabilities offered by the A-10 and the V-22 could not be

more opposite. Therefore, the assertion that V-22s can replace the A-10s is misleading.

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**BECAUSE THEY CONSTITUTE  
U.S. ARMY IN EUROPE’S PRIMARY  
ARMORED FORCE, CUTTING THE  
TWO HEAVY BCTS WILL LEAVE A  
SIGNIFICANT CAPABILITY GAP IN THE  
U.S. GROUND FORCES.**

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**Army Cuts.** The U.S. Army in Europe has two heavy BCTs (the 170th and 172nd Brigade Combat Teams in Germany), one infantry BCT (the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Italy), and one Stryker BCT (the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Germany) permanently based in Europe. The 170th BCT is slated to be cut in 2013, and the 172nd BCT in 2014. In addition, the U.S. Army in Europe will see a further reduction of approximately 2,500 soldiers from enabling units over the next five years. In all, more than 10,000 soldiers will return from Europe.

Because they constitute U.S. Army in Europe’s primary armored force, cutting the two heavy BCTs will leave a significant capability gap in the U.S. ground forces. This echoes the analysis of the 2005 Overseas Basing Commission, which warned against removing a heavy BCT from Europe.<sup>73</sup> Despite this

warning, the Obama Administration is removing both heavy BCTs.

In his testimony to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, Admiral Stavridis justified this move by stating that the loss of these two BCTs will be mitigated by a dedicated BCT based in the U.S. that will rotate its battalions to Europe for joint training. However, a single infantry battalion rotating through Europe cannot provide the same capability as two permanently based heavy BCTs provide. Admiral Stavridis told Congress that the current BCT structure is “static and essentially parked in Germany.” He went on to say that dedicating a BCT in the United States to focus on Europe would allow its battalions to rotate to places like the Balkans, the Baltics, or other places in Eastern Europe.<sup>74</sup> A renewed U.S. focus on these regions is welcome, but a single BCT based permanently in the United States cannot properly meet this ambition by occasionally rotating one of its battalions to Europe for joint training. Furthermore, elements of the BCTs based in Germany and Italy already deploy to Eastern Europe when they are not deployed on combat operations overseas. For example, elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade carried out exercises in Ukraine and Poland in 2011.<sup>75</sup>

The decision to reduce the number of BCTs in Europe appears

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69. Spangdahlem Air Base, “81st Fighter Squadron,” October 21, 2010, <http://www.spangdahlem.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=7910> (accessed April 13, 2012).

70. Joe Pappalardo, “Air War over Libya, in the Pilots’ Words,” *Popular Mechanics*, March 31, 2011, <http://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/military/planes-uavs/air-war-over-libya-in-the-pilots-words-5486669> (accessed April 12, 2012).

71. Stavridis, testimony.

72. Airforce Technology, “A-10 Thunderbolt (Warthog), United States of America,” <http://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/a-10/> (accessed April 13, 2012).

73. Dempsey, “Questioning EU’s Will, U.S. Panel Backs NATO.”

74. Admiral James Stavridis, testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, March 1, 2012, <http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/2012/2/fiscal-year-2013-national-defense-authorization-budget-request-from-u-s-european-command-and-u-s-africa-command> (accessed April 17, 2012).

75. News release, “U.S. Army Europe Looks Back at a Busy, Productive 2011.”

to have been based on perceived financial savings, not an empirical or strategic review of U.S. force requirements. On April 8, 2011, the Obama Administration initially announced that it was reversing the 2004 decision to remove two of the four BCTs from Europe and would instead only bring one BCT back to the United States. The Department of Defense provided the following justification:

Based on the administration's review, consultations with allies and the findings of NATO's new Strategic Concept, the department will retain three Brigade Combat Teams in Europe to maintain a flexible and rapidly deployable ground force to fulfill the United States' commitments to NATO, to engage effectively with allies and partners, and to meet the broad range of 21st century challenges.<sup>76</sup>

In fact, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that no U.S. troops would be brought back from Europe until after 2015, when NATO leaders had agreed to complete the handover of security responsibilities to the Afghans and end combat operations. Gates implicitly acknowledged the importance of U.S. forces in Europe in supporting expeditionary campaigns, such as the one in Afghanistan. It also highlighted the strain on EUCOM, which was trying to carry out joint training operations in Europe while supporting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan with only four BCTs.

A mere nine months later on January 25, 2012, the Obama Administration changed the policy, announcing that two BCTs will return back to the U.S. from Europe no later than 2014. The Administration has not explained what changed in the geostrategic picture of Europe since April 2011 so it can only be assumed that perceived cost savings, not strategic rationale, drove this decision.

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**MOST SAVINGS ESTIMATES EXCLUDE THE COST OF BUILDING NEW INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE U.S. FOR ANY RETURNING UNITS, THE UP-FRONT COST OF CLOSING DOWN FACILITIES IN EUROPE, THE COST OF ROTATING UNITS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND EUROPE, AND THE STRAIN THIS IMPOSES ON THE SMALLER ARMY.**

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The main reason usually given by proponents of reducing U.S. military bases in Europe is the perception of saving money. This is apparently the rationale for the Obama Administration's recent decision. However, the facts do not support this argument. First, reducing U.S. troops from Europe and achieving the same capability by regularly rotating units from the United States is not economically viable because deploying two mechanized BCTs and their equipment overseas to Europe would incur huge costs.

The Obama Administration has demonstrated this point with its unwillingness to rotate the same

capability to Europe that they are removing. Instead of two BCTs, only one infantry battalion will rotate to Europe at a time. This is dangerous, shortsighted, and based on the false assumption that the U.S. can project the same degree of power with rotational forces as it does with troops permanently based in Europe.

Most savings estimates exclude the cost of building new infrastructure in the U.S. for any returning units, the up-front cost of closing down facilities in Europe, the cost of rotating units between the U.S. and Europe, and the strain this imposes on the smaller army that the Obama Administration is proposing. For example, even if the Obama Administration wanted to match the capability it is removing with rotational forces, U.S. Army analysis states that it could potentially cost approximately \$1 billion over ten years to rotate two BCTs to Europe twice annually.<sup>77</sup> Considering the Department of Defense's (DOD) history of underestimating the cost of programs, there is no reason to assume this figure will not increase. Even the Government Accountability Office expressed concerns about the DOD's inability to properly estimate its European force structure strategy:

DOD has taken steps to align posture initiatives with strategy and cost, but continues to lack comprehensive and consistent cost estimates of initiatives.... Until these cost data are comprehensively compiled and reported,

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76. News Release, "DOD Announced U.S. Force Posture Revision in Europe," U.S. Department of Defense, April 8, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=14397> (accessed February 23, 2012).

77. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Report to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Force Structure: Improved Cost Information and Analysis Needed to Guide Overseas Posture Decisions*, June 2012, p.15, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/591398.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2012).

DOD and congressional decision makers will be unable to assess the true cost of posture initiatives.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, morale and welfare of the troops and their dependants need to be considered in such decisions. After experiencing such a high operational tempo for the past 10 years, military families do not need another strain resulting from loved ones “deploying” to Europe for unaccompanied tours. In this regard, the current structure of accompanied tours in Europe, however costly, contributes to family stability and troop welfare during a period of high operational tempo. The importance of this should not be underestimated.

## Defending American Interests in Eurasia

Far from reducing the U.S. military presence in Europe, the Obama Administration should examine ways to increase the U.S. presence, especially on Europe’s periphery and with allies who have been committed to Euro-Atlantic security. In 2004, General Jim Jones, EUCOM commander, told Congress that any “new bases should have a transformational footprint, be geo-strategically placed in areas where presence yields the highest return on investment, be able to both contract and expand as required and should ... take advantage of our developing ability to rotationally base our forces.”<sup>79</sup> His advice still applies today.

Given General Jones’s criteria, the U.S. should consider increasing and making permanent its military presence in three areas.

**Georgia.** A small detachment of U.S. Marines located at the Krtsanisi National Training Center outside Tbilisi prepares Georgian soldiers for combat operations in Afghanistan. In addition, elements of the U.S. Marine Corps Black Sea Rotational Force<sup>80</sup> and U.S. National Guard and Reserve units visit Georgia for joint training missions.

Georgia has been one of America’s best allies in Europe. Georgia is committing more troops to the mission in Afghanistan this year, doubling their contribution in Helmand Province. As a result, Georgia will contribute more troops per capita than any other nation in ISAF. When Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, Georgia was the second-largest troop contributor in Iraq, second only to the United States.

First, the U.S. should rotate infantry battalions through Georgia to ensure that at least one battalion and its required support elements are always in Georgia at any given time. Over time, aviation assets could be added. This would place U.S. forces at the heart of a region with deep U.S. interests and reward the Georgians for their committed contribution to U.S. and NATO operations.

**Poland.** The U.S. and Poland have enjoyed a strong bilateral defense training relationship. In early 2012, the U.S. Air Force will establish a

permanent aviation detachment at the 32nd Tactical Air Base in Łask, Poland. The initial plans call for a permanent detachment of only 10 Air Force personnel. No planes will be permanently based in Poland. The detachment will host periodic rotations of U.S. F-16 fighter jets and C-130 cargo aircraft.<sup>81</sup> The U.S. should consider permanently basing F-16 fighter jets in Poland and increasing the size of the permanent detachment to demonstrate a firm U.S. commitment to Poland, NATO, and the region. Furthermore, it would fill, albeit only partially, the capability gap created by withdrawing the A-10s from Europe.

A permanent U.S. airbase in Poland would reassure the Baltic States through increased U.S. participation in NATO’s Baltic Air Policing and ensure that the U.S. maintains a critical air capability in Eastern Europe. Finally, it would send a signal of enduring support to the Poles, especially after the Obama Administration betrayed them by cancelling plans to base ballistic missile interceptors in Poland.

Finally, there is a political aspect to consider. The Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski has vocally supported deeper EU defense integration.<sup>82</sup> A more visible U.S. commitment to the U.S.–Polish defense relationship would also send the right political messages to Poland that a U.S. anchored to NATO, not the EU, best serves Europe’s and Poland’s defense requirements.

78. Ibid., p. 2.

79. General James L. Jones, statement before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, September 23, 2004, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2006/March/Jones%2003-07-06.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2012).

80. U.S. Marine Corps Black Sea Rotational Force is a special-purpose Marine air-ground task force, which deployed to the region to enhance interoperability, promote regional stability, and build camaraderie among the forces. The six-month deployment includes training exercises with countries in the Black Sea, Balkan, and Caucasus regions.

81. This is most likely a reflection of Poland’s recent acquisition of F-16 and C-130 aircraft from the U.S. in 2009.

82. Andrew Rettman, “Polish Minister: EU and Nato Might Fall Apart,” *EU Observer*, March 30, 2012, <http://euobserver.com/24/115758> (accessed April 12, 2012).



**Romania and Bulgaria.** The U.S. defense relationship with Romania and Bulgaria is maintained under Task Force East, which EUCOM created to better engage with Eastern European allies through joint training and capacity building. The U.S. should consider making a more robust and permanent contribution to Task Force East. The U.S. should also examine opportunities to bring other services to the task force, making it joint as it was previously.

EUCOM quickly learned that Romania and Bulgaria's proximity to the Middle East and Central Asia provides many benefits. Bulgaria opened its Burgas airfield to U.S. tanker aircraft during the campaign in Afghanistan in late 2001. Romania allowed U.S. forces to use its Black Sea port of Constanta and nearby Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base as logistical centers for U.S. forces deploying to the Middle East in the run up to the 2003 Iraq War.

Today, Task Force East includes a small permanent headquarters of approximately 100–300 personnel, who oversee rotations of U.S. Army units. However, the initial ambition of a dedicated BCT rotating through has been scaled down to a battalion. The U.S. has already made significant investments in infrastructure to make the bases more permanent.<sup>83</sup> Romania has a new 1,600-troop capacity facility at the Romanian Land Forces Administrative Center in Mihail Kogălniceanu, which should become operational very soon. A 2,500-troop-capacity facility under construction of the Bulgarian Novo

Selo Training Area should be completed in 2012.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to considering increasing the number of permanent U.S. military bases in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the White House should also:

- **Put America's national security interests ahead of defense cuts.** A strategic review of U.S. interests in Europe, not a desire to slash the defense budget, should guide the important decisions, such as the number of bases and the distribution of troops in Europe.
- **Conduct a full reassessment of U.S. interests in Eurasia** to identify how EUCOM can support U.S. objectives in the region.
- **Demonstrate U.S. commitment to NATO and Euro-Atlantic security.** The U.S. troop presence in Europe is the most visible sign of U.S. support for NATO. As NATO is transforming itself for the 21st century, it will need American leadership and commitment.
- **Be honest and open with the European allies.** The U.S. should consult with key European allies and the NATO alliance before making any decisions on U.S. troop numbers in Europe.
- **Earmark a U.S.-based brigade combat team solely for rotational joint training exercises**

**in Europe**, in addition to maintaining four BCTs in Europe.

- **Reverse the decision to remove the A-10s** or replace them with an equivalent capability.
- **Reaffirm the U.S. commitment to NATO as America's key interlocutor** for U.S. relations with European allies.
- **Review U.S. strategic sea-lift and airlift requirements** that are affected by the Administration's decision to remove the two heavy BCTs from Europe.
- **Review the U.S. military's prepositioned stock requirements in Europe** in light of the Administration's decision to remove two heavy BCTs from Europe.

## **Conclusion**

Some believe that the European region is yesterday's news and that the U.S. should focus on defense and security issues in Asia. Indeed, the U.S. and its allies are facing emerging security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, the world's economic interdependency means that factors that affect the security situation in Asia will often directly affect Europe. U.S. force posture in Asia and U.S. force posture in Europe are complementary. It is not a zero-sum game.

Some believe that the U.S. should not have a robust military presence

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83. U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs, "Task Force East in Romania/Bulgaria Changes Command," U.S. European Command, June 3, 2010, <http://www.eucom.mil/Article/19788/task-force-east-in-romania-bulgaria-changes-command> (accessed April 12, 2012).

84. Seth Robson, "USAREUR Cuts Back Summer Training Exercises in Eastern Europe," *Stars and Stripes*, April 18, 2010, <http://www.stripes.com/news/usareur-cuts-back-summer-training-exercises-in-eastern-europe-1.100987> (accessed April 12, 2012).



in Europe because the Europeans should defend themselves and that the U.S. should not be providing a security umbrella at the expense of the American taxpayer. However, the primary objective of U.S. forces in Europe is to provide a forward-based military capability that gives U.S. decision makers timely and flexible military options in defending America and promoting American interests in the broader European region. The U.S. contribution to the collective defense of Europe is simply a positive side effect.

The Administration's justifications for cuts in U.S. military capability in Europe do not add up. No matter how it is spun, V-22s are not a replacement for A-10s, and a rotating infantry battalion is not the same as

two heavy BCTs permanently based in Europe.

The Administration's cuts in the U.S. force posture in Europe are part of a large array of defense cuts that will weaken America and its allies. The decision to remove a large number of U.S. troops and their associated military capabilities from Europe and the Administration's disgraceful treatment of Poland and the Czech Republic over missile defense plans send the signal to European allies that America no longer cares about Europe.

The U.S. military presence in Europe deters American adversaries, strengthens allies, and protects U.S. interests. Whether preparing U.S. and Allied troops and deploying them to Afghanistan or responding

to a humanitarian crisis in the region, the U.S. can more quickly and effectively project power and react to the unexpected using its forward-based military capabilities in Europe. Reducing this capability will only make America weaker on the world stage.

In the past 90 years, the U.S. has disengaged from Europe on two occasions: during the early 1920s when the U.S. occupation force left the Rhineland and during the huge troop drawdown in the early 1990s. Both cases ushered in new eras of instability and warfare on the continent. America's economic and security interests require a stable Europe, and the U.S. military presence in Europe contributes to this. ■



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