

## Forging the Shield: Returning the Seventh Army to Europe

In the five and a half years following D-Day, the mission of US troops in Europe had come almost full circle. From total war it had moved through demobilization and peacetime occupation to combat readiness as part of an international defense against Soviet expansionism and intimidation.

Almost as soon as the surrender documents had been signed in Europe, the ties that bound the Soviet Union to the Western allies began to disintegrate. Resistance from the United States and Western Europe to Soviet demands for reparations from Germany created friction between the former allies. Meanwhile, political pressure from the Soviet Union, reinforced by the presence of its victorious armies in the heart of Europe, drew much of Eastern Europe under Soviet domination.<sup>1</sup> Increasing Communist influence in France and Italy coupled with an active insurgency in Greece further fueled Western suspicions of Soviet intentions and, in March 1947, prompted President Harry S. Truman to declare a policy of American military and economic support for nations battling against Communist expansionism.<sup>2</sup>

Tensions between the former allies came to a head in June 1948. They failed to agree on economic policies for occupied Germany, and the Western allies introduced, in their zones, currency reforms that replaced the reichsmark with a new deutsche mark.<sup>3</sup> When the allies began to issue the new currency in the western sectors of Berlin, the Soviets responded by increasing restrictions on road, rail, and barge traffic into the city

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<sup>1</sup>Hastings Lionel Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949–1954* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Bosch-Utrecht, 1954), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, pp. 184–85, 194.

<sup>3</sup> Frederiksen, *The American Military Occupation of Germany*, p. 147.

until, by 24 June, they had cut off all Western ground access to Berlin.<sup>4</sup> During the next 15 months, American and British pilots flew almost two-and-one-half million tons of food, coal, and other essential supplies into the blockaded city. Although the Soviets officially lifted the blockade in May, the allies continued the airlift through the end of September 1949 to ensure that a suitable stockpile was in place.<sup>5</sup>

### **The European Command in 1950**

The major U.S. military headquarters in Europe in 1950 was the European Command, located in Heidelberg, Germany, and commanded by Army General Thomas T. Handy. Its varied responsibilities included the coordination of administrative and logistical support to its component commands, the preparation and coordination of emergency and evacuation plans for U.S. forces in Europe, and the coordination and review of budget requests and priorities. Although designated as a unified command by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1947, the headquarters was manned almost exclusively by Army personnel. On 1 January 1950, the three service components of the command—United States Army, Europe; United States Air Force, Europe; and United States Naval Force, Germany—represented a total of one-hundred-three thousand assigned or attached military personnel.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Min, HQ, European Command (EUCOM), Deputy Commander in Chief's Weekly Staff Conference, 22, 29 Jun 1948, Entry 211, USAREUR General Correspondence, 1947–1951, RG 549, NACP.

<sup>5</sup> Frederiksen, *The American Military Occupation of Germany*, p. 147. Varying interpretations of the early stages of the Cold War can be found in Carolyn Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); idem, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Annual Hist Rpt, 1 Jan–31 Dec 1950, HQ, EUCOM, pp. 31–33, 68; Annual Hist Rpt, 1 Jan–31 Dec 1950, HQ, USAREUR, pp. 8–10. Both in Historians files, CMH.

Also located in Heidelberg, USAREUR began 1950 as a fully operational headquarters responsible for the administration, support, and control of most U.S. Army units in the theater. Its major subordinate units included the U.S. Constabulary, headquartered at Vaihingen, Germany; the 1st Infantry Division, headquartered at Bad Tolz; and the various military posts that provided administrative and logistical support to American occupation troops throughout the U.S. Zone. In all, the command numbered about eighty-three thousand soldiers.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to Germany, U.S. Army forces performed postwar duties in other conquered nations of Europe. Almost fifteen thousand soldiers assigned to U.S. Forces, Austria, continued to perform occupation duties there. Another contingent of five thousand, identified as Trieste United States Troops (TRUST), helped to provide security in that city, which was located on the Italian Adriatic coast and had been divided between U.S. and British occupation forces on one side and the Yugoslav Army on the other. Although neither command belonged to EUCOM, reporting instead directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, both relied on the command for administrative and logistical support.

As the last remaining U.S. Army division serving with the occupation forces in Germany, the 1st Infantry Division had dispersed throughout the U.S. Zone and Berlin. In 1947, EUCOM initiated efforts to reassemble the majority of the division to serve as a theater reserve. The command relieved division personnel from most of their occupation duties and directed the division commander, Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn, to begin a program of tactical training and improved combat readiness. By 1950, however, most of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

its subordinate units remained scattered across the U.S. Zone while USAREUR and EUCOM leaders searched for suitable locations to consolidate them.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, Army leaders in Europe also took steps to realign the U.S. Constabulary. Upon its activation in July 1946, the Constabulary's mission had been to maintain general military and civil security, to assist the military government in carrying out its objectives, and to control the borders of the U.S. Zone of occupation. At its peak the Constabulary consisted of thirty-two thousand men, organized into three brigades, nine regiments, and twenty-seven squadrons. Constabulary units maintained an active patrol system and cooperated closely with German local and border police throughout the U.S. Zone.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of 1948, German police had assumed responsibility for most security duties in the U.S. Zone and EUCOM ordered U.S. forces to begin reorganizing into a more tactical posture. On 20 December, the Constabulary completed a transformation into a more combat-ready force by reorganizing its 2d, 6th, and 14th Regiments into armored cavalry regiments. The new units received shipments of light and heavy tanks and other new equipment, while an increased emphasis on recruiting in the United States helped to provide the additional manpower they required. At the same time, the

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<sup>8</sup> Min, HQ, EUCOM, Monthly Conference of Commander in Chief with Major Commanders and Deputy Military Governor, 26 Mar 1947; Min, HQ, EUCOM, Deputy Commander in Chief's Weekly Staff Conference, 15 Apr 1947; Rpt, HQ, U.S. Forces, European Theater, 5 Mar 1947, G-3 Monthly Report. All in Entry 211, USAREUR General Correspondence, 1947-1951, RG 549, NACP. Reorganization of Tactical Forces: V-E Day to 1 January 1949, Historical Division, EUCOM, 1950, Historians files, U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, D.C.

<sup>9</sup> Frederiksen, *The American Military Occupation of Germany*, p. 69; Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946*, Army Historical Series (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2003), p. 341; Kendall D. Gott, *Mobility, Vigilance, and Justice: The U.S. Army Constabulary in Germany, 1946-1953*, Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 11 (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2005), pp. 11-13.

command inactivated two other squadrons, the 15th and 37th, to provide personnel for two new field artillery battalions, the 70th and 74th.<sup>10</sup>

Beginning in 1947 for elements of the 1st Infantry Division and in 1948 for the three new armored cavalry regiments, EUCOM conducted a tactical training program designed to return the units to an acceptable level of combat readiness. During the winter of 1948–1949, every battalion spent two weeks in cold weather training at Grafenwohr, an old German Army training area about forty miles northwest of Nuremberg. Exercise NORMAL in the summer of 1948 and Exercise HARVEST in September 1949 provided the units with an opportunity to demonstrate their combat proficiency. While observers noted that the participants exhibited excellent mobility and a sound grasp of tactical fundamentals, they pointed out that much still remained to be done. In particular, General Handy noted that many of the World War II vintage vehicles and weapons could not stand up to the strain of the maneuvers.<sup>11</sup>

Over the next year, additional exercises led EUCOM's leaders to believe that the command was well trained by peacetime standards. On the basis of their performance during Exercise RAINBOW, held 11-18 September 1950, the EUCOM deputy chief of staff for operations, Brig. Gen. Edward T. Williams, estimated that Army elements within the

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<sup>10</sup> Min, HQ, EUCOM, Deputy Commander in Chief's Weekly Staff Conference, 13 Apr 1948, Entry 211, USAREUR General Correspondence, 1947–1951, RG 549, NACP; *Reorganization of Tactical Forces: V-E Day to 1 January 1949*, Occupation Forces in Europe Series, EUCOM Historical Division, 1950, Archives files, CMH.

<sup>11</sup> Frederiksen, *The American Military Occupation of Germany*, pp. 174–75; "U.S. Maneuvers in Europe Go Back to Exercise NORMAL in 1948," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 14 Sep 1950; Interv, Lt Col Edward M. Knoff Jr. with General Thomas T. Handy, former Commanding General (CG), EUCOM, 1974, p. 20, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute (MHI), Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

command had an operational readiness of 85 percent but would need an additional three months of intensive training for them to be fully ready for combat.<sup>12</sup>

Other efforts to restore the 1st Infantry Division and the Constabulary to higher levels of combat readiness were also beginning to pay off. One of the most significant developments was the progressive build-up to desired overstrengths of the major tactical units in the European Command. By the end of May 1950, the 1st Infantry Division was at 96.5 percent of its total personnel authorization while the Constabulary was at 97 percent. By mid-August, both organizations exceeded 100 percent of their authorized strengths.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the progress that EUCOM made, other impediments to combat readiness remained. As the number of troops assigned to EUCOM continued to rise, so too did the number of military dependents. Army leaders acknowledged the value to soldier morale of having families accompany deploying soldiers, but also recognized the numerous challenges that would be associated with an increased civilian community. In several cases, a shortage of troop housing prevented the command from consolidating its tactical units. Because many units were still dispersed in occupation locations, they lacked ranges and local training areas where they could develop tactical skills on a daily basis. The force in Europe also lacked any semblance of a logistical base capable of supporting a wartime theater. Perhaps most important, almost all of EUCOM's supplies and reinforcements came into the theater through the German port of Bremerhaven on the North Sea. The line of support linking the port and the command's deployed units

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<sup>12</sup> Annual Hist Rpt, 1950, HQ, EUCOM, p. 88; Omer Anderson, "Forces Proved Mobility in Exercise RAINBOW," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 1 Oct 1950.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid pp. 70–71; Annual Hist Rpt, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1950, HQ, USAREUR, p. 105.

ran parallel to the border between the allied and Soviet zones in Germany and within easy reach of any potential Soviet advance.<sup>14</sup>

### **Perceptions of a Rising Threat**

By the beginning of 1950, events had conspired to convince many military and political leaders in the United States that conflict with the Soviet Union was imminent. In September 1949, U.S. scientists picked up traces of radioactivity over the Pacific that indicated the Soviets had exploded their own atomic device. Although U.S. intelligence agencies had long reported that the Soviets were on the verge of such an achievement, to many U.S. officials, the loss of the American atomic monopoly was shocking. The victory of Mao Zedong's forces in China in October 1949 reinforced fears that communism was still on the march worldwide.<sup>15</sup>

Despite these diversions, U.S. strategic planners firmly kept their eyes on the Soviet Union as a potential foe. In December 1949, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved Joint Outline Emergency War Plan OFFTACKLE, a revision to the previous plan, HALFMOON, to reflect the strategic changes in Europe brought about by the NATO alliance. According to OFFTACKLE, in the event of war with the Soviet Union, the United States would safeguard the western hemisphere and its own mobilization base, conduct a strategic defensive in the Far East, and wage a strategic offensive in Western Eurasia. In Europe, allied forces would defend essential areas along the periphery, pulling back to a line along the Pyrenees if they did not have to evacuate the continent

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<sup>14</sup> Annual Hist Rpt, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1950, HQ, EUCOM, pp. 88, 111–15.

<sup>15</sup> Walter S. Poole, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, vol. IV, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1950–1952* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1998), p. 3; Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, pp. 341–44.

altogether. The allies would conduct a sustained strategic air offensive from the United Kingdom, and whatever bases they could hold in southern Italy, the Mediterranean, or North Africa. This air-sea offensive would destroy the vital elements of Soviet war-making capacity, defend base areas and lines of communication, provide aid to allied nations, and clear the way for an eventual counteroffensive and, if necessary, return to the European continent.<sup>16</sup>

The outbreak of war in Korea in June 1950 served to underscore a sense of urgency and imminent threat to Western Europe that had been growing since the Soviet imposition of the Berlin blockade in 1948. Although the North Korean invasion seemed to be a logical extension of the Communist victory in China, the Joint Chiefs considered the conflict in Asia to be a war against the wrong enemy. For EUCOM, the immediate effect of the conflict in Korea, with its pressing requirements for manpower and logistics, was to postpone reinforcements and to delay shipments of new equipment.<sup>17</sup>

The concerns expressed by the Joint Chiefs were reinforced by U.S. intelligence reports. The newly established Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) observed that the Soviet Union's treatment of the Korean situation most likely reflected a belief that the Soviet bloc had reached a military and political position superior to that of the West. In view of the recent Soviet atomic test, CIA analysts believed that Moscow intended to exploit the end of the Western atomic monopoly, relying on its superiority in conventional forces to intimidate rather than to negotiate, avoiding general war but

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<sup>16</sup> Poole, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, vol. IV, pp. 83–84.

<sup>17</sup> Annual Hist Rpt, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1950, HQ, EUCOM, p. 1; Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), p. 582. European reactions to the North Korean invasion are described in Edward Fursdon, *The European Defense Community: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).

increasing the tempo of pressure and agitation on Germany.<sup>18</sup> Other reports described an expansion of East German paramilitary forces and predicted that those units would soon constitute both a potential threat to West Germany and an even more immediate threat to West Berlin. These forces already included thirty-five thousand “alert police” assigned to field units of battalion-type organization that included infantry, artillery, tank, signal, and engineer components. The reports concluded that the rapid increase in East German military capabilities raised more and more of a possibility that the Soviets would wield them as instruments of policy toward all of Germany. Their value as a psychological threat, moreover, seemed every bit as important as their actual military potential.<sup>19</sup>

With the threat in Europe growing and U.S. forces struggling to hold their lines in Korea, President Truman announced on 10 September 1950 that he had approved substantial increases in the strength of U.S. forces in Europe. Although the timing and nature of these increases required coordination with NATO allies and the approval of Congress, the president’s announcement reinforced the U.S. commitment to the defense of Europe and spurred the effort to increase the American presence on the continent.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>National Intelligence Estimate, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Probable Soviet Moves to Exploit the Present Situation, 11 Dec 1950, CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, copy in Historians files, CMH.

<sup>19</sup> Min, HQ, EUCOM, Commander in Chief’s Weekly Staff Conference Notes, 3 Jan 1950, Entry 211, USAREUR General Correspondence, 1947–1951, RG 549, NACP; CIA, Probable Developments in Eastern Germany by the End of 1951, 28 Sep 1950, CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, copy in Historians files, CMH.

<sup>20</sup> Ltr, Louis Johnson, Secretary of Defense, and Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, to President Harry S. Truman, 8 Sep 1950, Proquest and National Security Archive, Digital National Security Archives (hereafter cited as Digital National Security Archive), copy in Historians files, CMH; “Truman OK’s Substantial Rise of American Forces in Europe,” *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 10 Sep 1950.

On 17 September, with the understanding that additional troops would soon be coming his way, the EUCOM commander, General Handy, requested authority from the Department of the Army to activate a field army headquarters within the command. He argued that the early experiences of U.S. forces in Korea indicated the need for a command and control element at that level. The new headquarters would oversee a self-contained force that could readily be transferred to allied operational command in case of an emergency. All Army units with tactical missions, including combat, combat support, and service support elements, would be assigned to the field army. In response to General Handy's request, on 24 November the Department of the Army reactivated the U.S. Seventh Army and placed it under the command of Lt. Gen. Manton S. Eddy. At that time, EUCOM placed the 1st Infantry Division and all remaining elements of the U.S. Constabulary under Seventh Army command and inactivated the Constabulary headquarters. On 2 December, the Army reassigned all military posts previously under USAREUR control to EUCOM headquarters. With that action completed, the command made plans to discontinue Headquarters, USAREUR. Meanwhile, the Seventh Army established its headquarters at Stuttgart and began to prepare for its new mission.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Annual Hist Rpt, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1950, HQ, EUCOM, pp. 37-38, 43; Memo, Dep Ch of Staff for Opns, EUCOM, for EUCOM Staff, 4 Oct 1950, sub: Organization of a Field Army Headquarters, Entry 2052, USAREUR G3 Operations General Correspondence, RG 549, NACP; Min, HQ, EUCOM, Minutes of Press Conference Held by Lt Gen Manton S. Eddy, 19 Aug 1950, Entry 6, USAREUR, RG 549, NACP.