

# Europe, Forward Presence, and the Future

By JAMES P. STANTON

Change, life's only true constant, still buffets the European security environment like wind. The fall of the Wall, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the collapse of the Soviet Union have eliminated any immediate threat of large-scale attack against Western Europe. These changes have allowed U.S. European Command (EUCOM) to judiciously

reduce forward-based forces. But the challenges and responsibilities of a new European environment still loom large. Revolutions in recent years have been largely bloodless yet revolutions nonetheless. More new nations, borders, and expectations have been created by these events than by any others since World War II.

Joint Combat Camera Center (Bob Simmons)



Allied briefing at Vercenza Air Base, Italy, during Operation Deny Flight.

## Summary

A new security environment has enabled European Command (EUCOM) to carefully draw down American forward presence on the Continent. Since the dust has not settled on the momentous events of the last few years, continued U.S. engagement remains imperative. Cooperative security arrangements which guided the allies through the Cold War have unique capabilities that could not be replicated if NATO ceased to exist. Therefore the status of the Atlantic Alliance as the protector of Europe—a region with immense cultural, political, and economic claims on our national interests—seems assured for at least another half century. With the flexibility to adjust in changing times, and American resolve to support the Alliance through continued forward presence, NATO will remain *the* vehicle for meeting security challenges in EUCOM's area of responsibility.

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That post-war era, in fact, offers clues to our mandate for a new European security identity—in many ways a task as challenging as that faced by our predecessors in 1945. Looking out on a bleak, war-scarred landscape with economies in ruin and populations displaced, who would have imagined the vibrant, cooperative Western Europe of today? In fact, we can empathize with the difficulty that they had in making their decisions while facing down the declared Soviet intent to export a bankrupt ideology and expand hegemony over war-ravaged countries to the west. The critical structure needed to meet the Cold War's grueling challenges—a nuclear-backed deterrent alliance incorporating all concerned democracies and even former adversaries—took ten years to contrive.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, one cannot expect instant solutions to today's challenges nor exclude any nation as an unlikely actor from a future, unknown stage. Hopefully,

the answers we arrive at will, through cooperative action, ensure European peace and stability for at least another half century.

Stability in Europe—as well as in neighboring adjacent areas of Africa—is important. Since it was founded, this Nation has been strengthened through commerce.

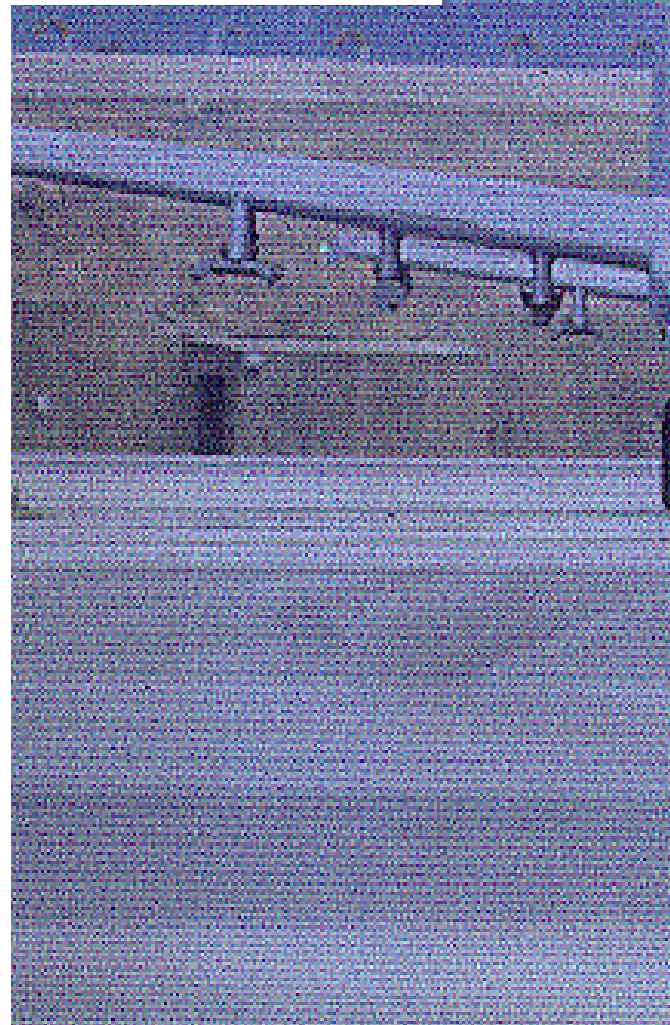
Stability and peace allow an open international economic system to benefit all participants. In addition, a stable environment creates a climate where American ideals and values prosper. Only economic well-being and security from aggression can allow us to enjoy democracy's healthy institutions and unlock the creative endeavors of a free people. Liberty is a value that the founding fathers enshrined in a new political union which in part was a rejection of the old world. Yet most Americans still feel

interest in EUCOM's area of responsibility is not based on humanitarian concerns—but rather on what is good for us

Joint Combat Camera Center (Efrain Gonzalez)



Unloading C-5 Galaxy at Skopje, Macedonia, during Operation Able Sentry.



connected to that old world for cultural, ethnic, or far more pragmatic reasons.

Many of us feel a strong connection to foreign shores in a visceral way. In the last national census only one in twenty Americans did not claim some cultural, racial, or national identification. Three-quarters of them cited a European heritage, while one in ten

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A-10 Buzzards  
arriving at Aviano Air  
Base, Italy, during  
Operation Deny Flight.



P-3 Orion at Sigonella,  
Italy, during Operation  
Sharp Guard.

U.S. Navy (David W. Hansmann)



Transporting commu-  
nications equipment  
during Operation Deny  
Flight.

Joint Combat Camera Center (Robert S. Vran)

Joint Combat Camera Center (Steve Thuroff)

claimed to be African-American.<sup>2</sup> We have a rich, varied culture, formed not in a melting pot but in a crucible, building strength from the contributions of individuals who retain their unique ethnic identities. The individuals are, without a doubt, American—yet their ties to their origins are real. European and

African-American influences on our culture are clearly visible in our music, foods, religions, and even the dialects we speak. These influences form a strong cultural bond with the EUCOM area of responsibility.

America is part of a global economy with worldwide systems of banking and commerce. While one can argue that we





U.S. Navy (Michael Gallagher)

*USS Hawes* participating with Danish, German, and Dutch ships in Baltops '92.

should focus more closely on domestic priorities, no one would argue that we should conduct a global economic retreat. An invisible web of economic interconnectivity guarantees that there is no possibility of a healthy, prosperous U.S. economy without a healthy, prosperous European economy. While recognition of political and demographic ties to EUCOM's area of responsibility depend largely on experience and observation, economic ties can be readily quantified. Recognizing that statistics are the best tool of propaganda since the warm smile, they nevertheless indicate how European trade is vital to U.S. prosperity.

Europe imports more American goods than Canada, Japan, or Australia, even more than Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan combined. Trade with Eastern European and former Soviet states in 1992 increased 13 percent over the previous year. These are expanding markets with untapped potential. Annual trade between Europe and the United States is more than \$235 billion.<sup>3</sup> Trade equates to U.S. products sold overseas, and that means American jobs.

Interest in maintaining stability and peace in EUCOM's area of responsibility is not based on humanitarian concerns for the good of mankind, Europe, or Africa—but rather on what is good for us. The United States has fought two world wars in this century, despite concerted efforts to remain disengaged. The globe is too small and violent for disengagement. The over half million American soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen who died in the world wars bear silent testimony to our historical connections with a dangerous world.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, stability is at risk throughout the world. While arms control implementation and efforts to further regional economic integration tend to level the rolling deck, seas beneath are not calm. A geographic survey of EUCOM's area of responsibility reveals top-to-bottom upheaval—rough seas where in former times of bipolar confrontation there was a troubling though predictable stasis. The days of easy analysis, a known threat, and more simple but painful choices are gone. The dynamics of the revolutions of 1989 are not yet completely understood or over. Civil war and conflict are a daily reality

which serve as humbling reminders of our inability to predict political events. Centrifugal political trends follow ethnic, religious, and nationalistic fault lines. Fears of the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons are exacerbated by the demonstrated will to use them. The World Trade Center bombing in New York City has put an exclamation point on the assertion that America is no longer an inviolate island.

Indeed, there are some growing dangers. Real tension from economic disparity can be felt from north to south and from east to west. While an affluent Western Europe looks out over the Mediterranean Sea to an impoverished African continent, the struggling former Soviet Union and nations of Eastern and Central Europe see prosperity over walls erected to discourage immigration where walls of oppression once stood. Economic disparity heightens differences between lucky oil-rich states of the Middle East and their less fortunate neighbors on all sides. The tectonic plate formed by a rise in Islamic fundamentalism also is centered in the Middle East. Radical elements fill a vacuum of political and economic disenfranchisement which then can spread to other regions through migration causing even greater tension between east and west.

World War I brought a violent end to the house of cards created by the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic wars. The turmoil following that collapse of imperial power allowed the twin totalitarianisms of fascism and communism to eventually bloom. World War II dealt a fatal blow to fascism but the post-war political turmoil that followed led to the Soviet subjugation of Central and Eastern Europe. For over forty years America led the free world struggle against a political, economic, and military threat. It ended with a victory of democracy over imperialistic communism and took a high toll in human lives and resources. But the strategies of deterrence and containment succeeded. The Iron Curtain fell and the Soviet empire dissolved. Unfortunately, despite the cost of past sacrifices, there is a chance that post-Cold War

turmoil may have unwelcome results. Will ethnic strife, religious militancy, and nationalistic fervor lead to another era of European conflict?

Today the answer to European security remains a vibrant, capable North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which served as the pillar of transatlantic security throughout the long dark years of the Cold War. It is still the hope for the future because of its unique structure, capability, and flexibility. The transatlantic linkages between the United States and Canada on one shore and Western Europe on the other are not accidental. While the Alliance has been long recognized as the linchpin of North American and Western European security interests, it now looks hopefully to the east. Within NATO the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) has emerged as a forum for peacekeeping, security cooperation, and consultation with members of the former Warsaw Pact. NATO is an extremely valuable organization because of its capabilities in command and control, infrastructure, standardization, and multinational force structure with shared training experience. No other organization has such military potential, a legacy of bipolar confrontation that could not be reinvented. There is no imaginable set of bilateral agreements or system of alliances that could approach the current capabilities of NATO.

The Alliance has the flexibility to handle new challenges. NATO's mission is expanding. Article 5 of its treaty—"[that] an armed attack on one or more . . . shall be considered an attack on them all"—remains the central security provision while article 4 offers flexibility for future crises.<sup>5</sup> Taken together the 1991 Alliance Strategic Concept and article 4 provide for consultation among the allies and "where appropriate, coordination of their efforts including their responses to such risks...whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of the parties is threatened."<sup>6</sup> The Alliance recognizes that the new security environment requires political engagement as well as the "indispensable defense dimension."<sup>7</sup> The task for the foreseeable future is understanding complex social, political, and economic difficulties. NACC can serve as a conduit for cooperation as emerging democracies to the

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SEALs practicing  
aboard *USS Theodore  
Roosevelt* during  
Operation Deny Flight.



Joint Combat Camera Center (David McLeod)

east confront these difficulties. But NACC membership does not provide *insurance* under article 5, only *assurance* derived from consultation. NACC offers a vehicle for acting in concert to conduct peacekeeping operations and defuse crises in a new environment through common goals, tools, and openness in communication. Eastern and Central European nations are eagerly looking to the west for a means to enhance security in troubled, unpredictable times. NATO is listening and will step forward as the single most important forum for an emerging security architecture.

America has a leadership role in this landscape just as it has since the end of World War II. We will continue to lead because it is impossible to shun the challenges and unknown dangers that accompany today's unparalleled opportunities. The U.S. role in the Alliance is shaped by common national interests, the accident of geography, and the reality that our treaty commitment is a political bond not only to security, but to a system of procedure. America is trusted as a European power: it is a cultural, political, and economic force as well as a participant in the area's security institutions. Geographic separation ensures that we play the

role of honest broker. The baggage of Europe's past struggles for liberation, unification, and conquest prevent other powers from assuming this leadership role. Few have the will, and none have the resources.

American defense dollars have been well spent. Over the years we have continually honed our fighting forces and technology. No other nation can project and sustain combat power as well. Strategic lift, tactical aviation, amphibious capability, and aircraft carrier battle groups are just a few examples of the sustainable combat power that we can provide in a short period of time. Also, America's lead in theater ballistic missile defense will help protect vital regions and forces in both crises and conflicts. Weapons of mass destruction are proliferating and ballistic missiles have the potential to deliver them. Operation Desert Storm dramatically demonstrated that such weapons are political as well as military threats. We need to develop a capable defense against them.

Technological advantage is valuable, but it is only part of the story. American fighting men and women are unique and respected because they have demonstrated their ability to combine land, sea, and air power in a dramatic synergy. Only our Armed Forces can field the finest men and women with the

best training and equipment. Preparing for war at the operational level where the greatest combat power can be brought to bear on an enemy at the decisive moment and location to achieve strategic and policy objectives is a tall order, but one for which the United States is well prepared.

Synchronized land, sea, and air forces can realize economies of scale. Greater effects with a smaller force can be achieved by melding preparation, skill, and technology. As we reduce our forward-based forces in Europe to approximately 100,000 military personnel by FY96, we must ensure that we retain the right balance of combat and support forces. Despite the smaller forward-based presence we must plan and train for a full spectrum of missions. U.S. forces will continue to be called upon to act in concert with allies and friends or alone. According to Secretary of Defense Aspin's comments on the Bottom-Up Review:

*The U.S. will maintain a corps headquarters, with support units, and two heavy Army divisions consisting of two brigades each, as well as approximately two and one-third Air Force fighter wings in the European theater. In addition, there will be five brigade-sized sets of Army prepositioned equipment and one set of forward deployed Marine Corps equipment. The Navy Sixth Fleet will continue to routinely patrol the Mediterranean.*

Aspin also stressed that our "troops stationed in Europe will remain there primarily to reinforce European security, [and] they

forward presence enables us to affirm our commitment to the Alliance while enhancing regional stability

will also be available to deploy on relatively short notice for other missions such as peacekeeping or peace-enforcement."<sup>8</sup> American forward-based forces can meet the challenge posed by an emerging security landscape. Flexibility and sustainability

guarantee that EUCOM's forces will continue to be relevant. These forces are fundamental to a national strategy which merges political and economic realities in an unpredictable climate with security concerns.

U.S. interests are linked to global stability, and Europe and Africa are among the regions of importance to all Americans. We live in a global village where a fire in our

neighbor's house is of great concern to us for the obvious reasons. Our cultural affinity, political connectivity, and vital participation in international commerce are ties that cannot be broken. Thus a peaceful Europe is of particular importance. NATO is key to continued transatlantic security and the means of coping with a new environment and its unpredictability. Forward presence enables us to affirm our commitment to the Alliance while enhancing regional stability. The United States maintains its security by engaging in collective defense. In sum, collective defense is America's defense. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John A. Reed, Jr., *Germany and NATO* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1987), pp. xxii, 44.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census Release, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, "U.S. Trade with Major Countries and Regions of the World—Revised Data" (Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> John W. Wright, editor, *The Universal Almanac* (Kansas City: Universal Press Syndicate, 1993), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1992), p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>7</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1991), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Announcement of Bottom-Up Review Results, Joint State/DOD Message, September 1, 1993.