

Seminar H  
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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

**NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE**

**AN ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR US PACIFIC COMMAND**

**COURSE V ESSAY**

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1. REPORT DATE <b>1994</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-1994 to 00-00-1994</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>An Organizational Framework for US Pacific Command</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>see report</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>15</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

*"Today, no region in the world is more important for the United States than Asia and the Pacific. Tomorrow, in the 21st century, no region will be as important."*

Winston Lord, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs

The Honorable Winston Lord points out the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region in world economic and political affairs and its potential influence on US regional security policy. This transformation manifests itself by virtue of geography and history. For over two centuries the US has been a Pacific power with enduring economic, political, and security interests. These interests remain remarkably consistent: commercial access to the region, freedom of navigation, and the prevention of the rise of any hegemonic power or coalition. (3:2)

United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) underpins regional stability through an integration of forward presence and a network of bilateral security alliances. The presence makes the US the key regional balancer, contributes to regional stability, enhances US diplomatic influence, and contributes to an environment conducive to growth of US economic interests. (8: )

As the 21st century approaches, strategic planners should analyze changes in the international environment, domestic political realities, and the ability of the US and her allies to share responsibility in shaping the future.

This paper examines USPACOM and its organizational structure in light of the changes in the strategic environment. The essay seeks to review the ways and means USPACOM meets the strategic ends. First, this paper begins with a brief background of the USPACOM area of responsibility (AOR) and organizational structure. Next, a military response model introduces a means to examine the deployment challenges of USPACOM forces and contingency responses.

Finally, the paper explores three internal organizational alternatives and one external modification to the USPACOM structure identifying strengths and weaknesses of the proposals. A logical place to discuss USPACOM begins with its strategic environment and the organizational structure to prosecute the mission.

## **STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Admiral Charles R. Larson, Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Command, stated the Pacific strategic environment is marked by several special considerations. The first is the sheer size of the Asia-Pacific region. The region's dimensions comprising 105 million square miles or 52% of the world's surface present some critical time and distance problems. "If the North Koreans crash across the border tonight, as they are prepared to do on a few moments notice, seaborne reinforcements from the States must have left San Diego (two weeks ago) if they are going to influence the first critical hours of the conflict." (9:F-4) The sheer distance from the continental United States reinforces the need to permanently base US forces close to potential areas of interest in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The role of US bilateral treaties in the Pacific is another consideration in the security environment. Five of our seven mutual defense treaties link the US to Asian nations -- Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Republic of the Philippines. US bilateral ties are critical, for unlike NATO Europe there is no Asian multilateral defense organization. For better or worse, the US is the "honest broker" in the region, the only nation around which the area can coalesce.

With these strategic considerations in mind, Admiral Larson developed his command strategy of "cooperative engagement" on three strategic concepts. The first concept is forward

presence. He stated, "our forces are permanently stationed and temporarily deployed in theater reach out to more than 40 nations. The key point is that forward presence sends an immediate message about American commitment. It says we are serious about protecting our interests overseas." (5:) Next, military alliances form the second strategic precept. The US stages and participates in numerous staffs, computer-assisted war games and joint training exercises such as TEAM SPIRIT and COBRA GOLD. The third concept revolves around crisis response. "A handful of combat commanders and their headquarters have been specially trained to control a Joint Task Force, activated only in time of crisis, tailored with exactly the forces needed for the situation, and reporting directly to me." (5:)

The Pacific Command requires a diversified organizational structure to respond to the military challenges of the theater. The sheer size of the area demands the establishment of three subordinate unified commands (subunified commands). Each of the subunified commands is organized for a specific military responsibility within the larger Pacific Command. For example, United States Forces Korea focuses on military responsibilities on the Korean Peninsula. Likewise, United States Forces Japan and Alaskan Command assume responsibilities for operations in Japan and Alaska respectively. Figure 1 depicts the command relationships between USPACOM and his subordinate commanders.

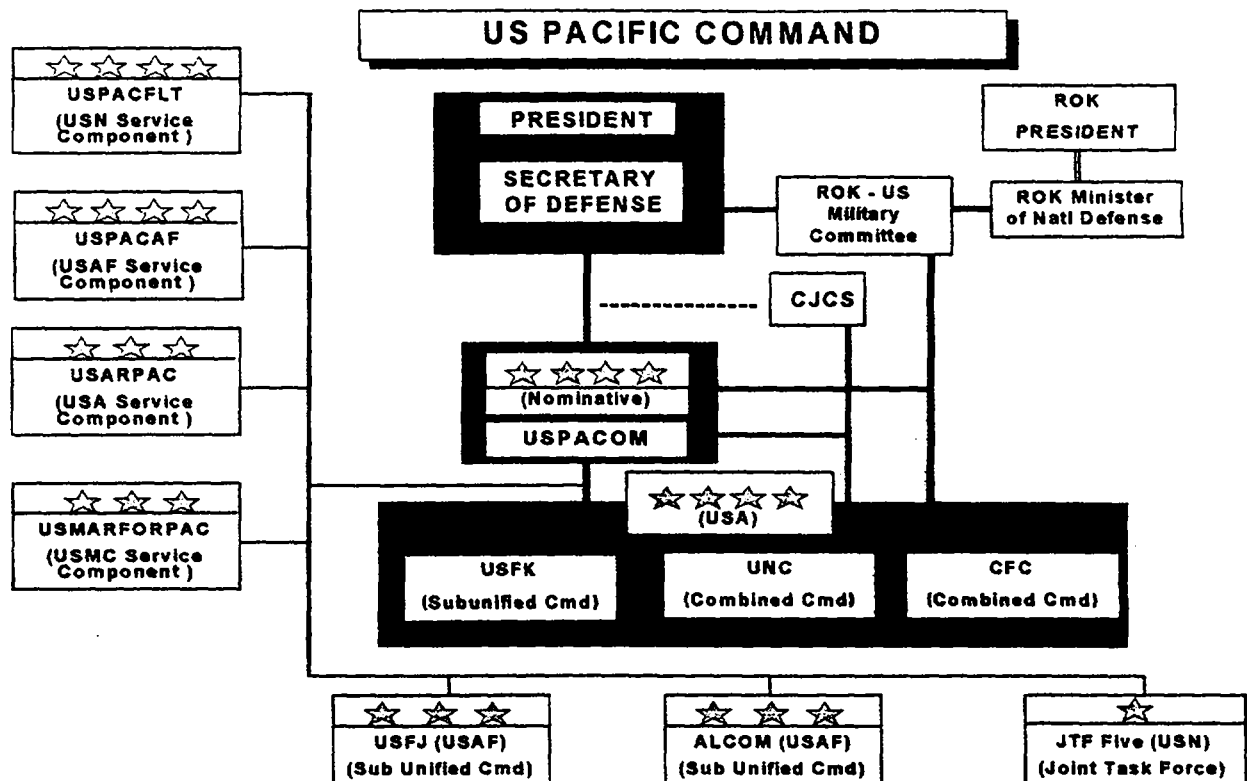


Figure 1 (Source AFSC Pub 1, pg 2-30)

The US is committed to protecting its interests in the theater. No doubt every country in the theater is convinced of the US resolve in the Pacific. However, PACOM is spread thin with only 20 percent of the US active duty forces forced to cover half of the world's surface. A regional conflict of any sizable proportion will require augmentation from other regions of the command or from the continental US. The next section of this paper introduces a simple model for exploring military responses in the new geostrategic environment.

## USPACOM's MILITARY RESPONSE CHALLENGES

One has only to read the newspapers or watch television to view the US challenges in the strategic environment without the former Soviet Union. Lack of a single monolithic threat fuels calls for reduced defense spending and a smaller standing army. However, regional instabilities throughout the world present the US with peacekeeping and humanitarian aid challenges in

Bosnia, Somalia, and other points on the globe. The National Security Strategy sums up the military challenges succinctly:

We are threatened by the continued proliferation of advanced conventional arms, ballistic missiles of increasing range, and weapons of mass destruction; by terrorism; and by the international drug trade. Long withstanding missions, such as humanitarian assistance, must now be undertaken in the midst of civil war and anarchy. Peacekeeping and peace enforcement are more complex than ever. Finally, we must continue to support the concept of democratic civilian authority over national military institutions. (1:1)

A key feature of US forces over the past 45 years has been their worldwide forward deployment. The bulk of these forces deployed to Europe totaling approximately 323,000 in the late 1980s. (4:18) The US also stationed forces in Korea and Japan and have smaller contingents in a number of locations, such as Panama, Turkey, and Iceland. Forward deployment replaces forward presence where the US has reduced the size of the military force. Forward presence continues to "show our commitment, lend credibility to our alliances, enhance regional stability, and provide a crisis-response capability" (11:7) but with fewer military forces. The forward presence of these forces "sends explicit signals about the firmness of US commitment in a region." (10:4-2) Forward presence identifies a prime point to consider; with fewer forces deployed overseas the ability to respond rapidly to regional tasks becomes more and more important.

Figure 2 shows the traditional force structure of US military forces. The bulk of the forces is committed to conventional and nuclear threats (the least likely occurrences). Non-traditional military operations such as humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and disaster relief are more likely. However, these areas fall short of traditional manpower authorizations. In fact, reserve forces comprise the majority of many specialized functions such as civil affairs, psychological operations, and aeromedical evacuation. The model's key feature shows most of USPACOM's forces are configured for conventional type operations with the majority stationed in Northeast Asia and Alaska. However, the sheer expanse of the command's AOR and recent operations present many challenges to timely and effective military responses.

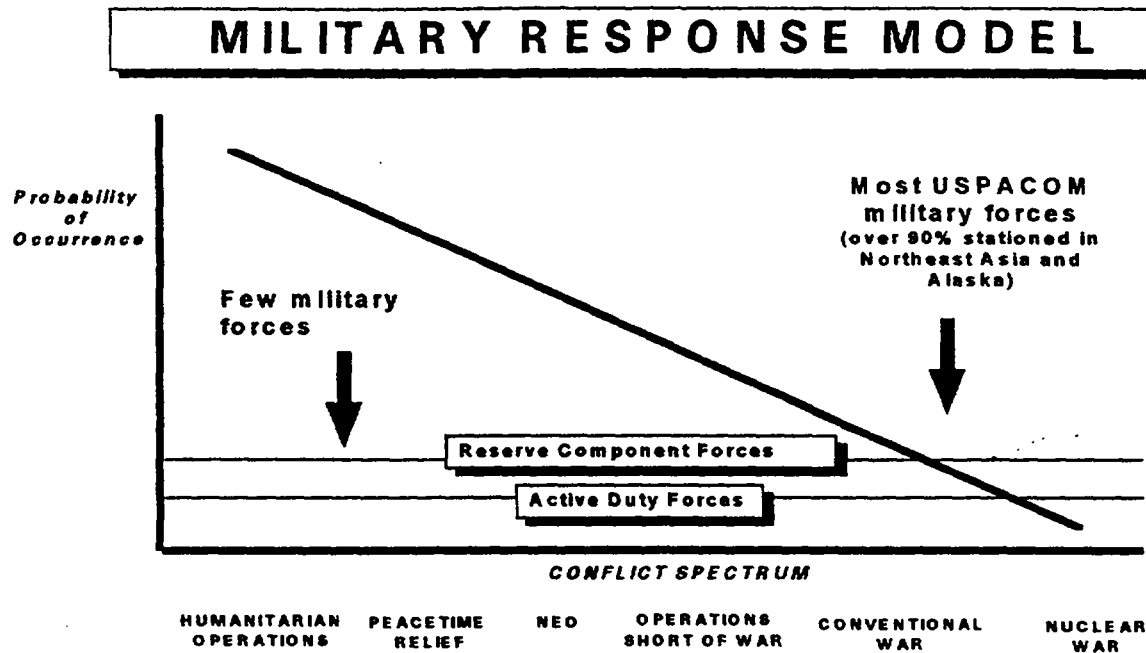


Figure 2

USPACOM's theater of operations ranges from Arctic waters to tropical islands. The sheer expanse of USPACOM's AOR creates a tyranny of distance. For example, it takes about three weeks for a Navy battle group to steam across the region. A jet transport carrying troops needs more than a day to meet a crisis. A fighter aircraft may need to refuel several times just to get to a trouble spot. (6:83) The immense distance forced immediate help from forward forces in Japan, Alaska, and Hawaii to support a relatively small US Pacific military presence in Southeast Asia. The missions consisted of a myriad of humanitarian and relief actions at the lower end of the conflict spectrum.

USPACOM's crisis response approach reflects a new joint force structure, a new vision to employ forces in the rapidly changing Pacific region. Relief actions in the Pacific during Hurricane Iniki, Typhoon Omar, Bangladesh typhoon support (Operation SEA ANGEL), and the Philippine Mount Pinatubo eruption (Operation FIERY VIGIL) required massive military efforts. A joint task force was employed during SEA ANGEL, a humanitarian operation in Bangladesh. A



massive storm killed over 139,000 people and rocked a democratic government just 39 days old. (7:7) In addition, United Nation's forces, the traditional peacekeepers, have been spread thin in Cambodia supporting United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Figure 3 graphically depicts the USPACOM responses while also pointing out the geographical distances between them. The next section of this paper looks at alternatives and modification to the USPACOM organizational structure to enhance its effectiveness.

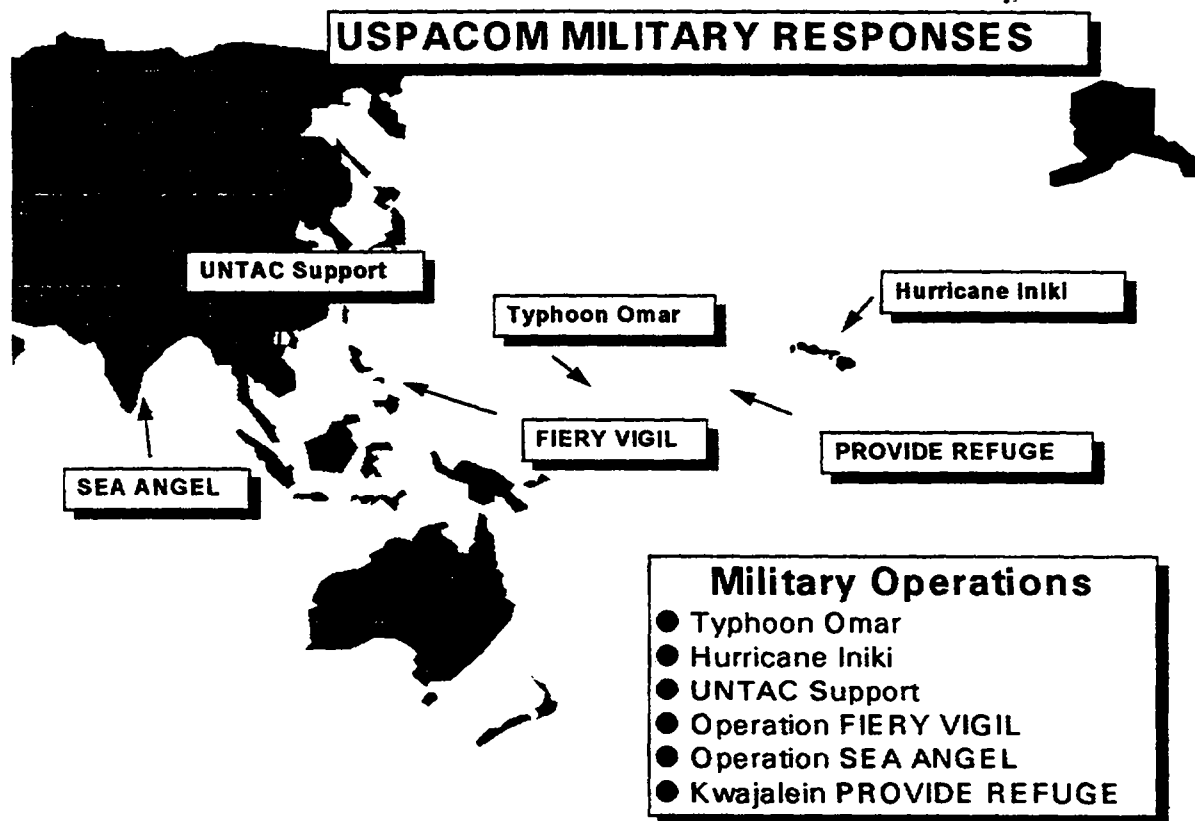


Figure 3

## USPACOM ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES

To this point the paper looked at USPACOM's immense AOR, its response to the changing strategic environment, and the diverse responses to a myriad of military challenges. This

section introduces three internal organizational changes and one external modification. The organizational changes include dividing the USPACOM AOR into two separate unified commands, moving the headquarters to a new location, and establishing a new subunified command. The modification results from building a United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) field office to coordinate transportation requirements.

The establishment of two separate unified commands in the PACOM region combats the immense span of control attendant with the largest unified AOR. Although dividing PACOM into two separate unified commands seems logical three key reasons argue against the proposal. First, USPACOM enjoys an enviable history of service to the US in World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War. The organizational structure tested in combat proves adequate for the future. Second, the establishment of three subunified commands mentioned earlier in the paper obviates the span of control problem. History again supports this premise. World war and two conflicts saw the establishment of subordinate commands to dispatch regional campaign plans with exceptional results. Finally, defense budgets are becoming more austere. The establishment of a new unified command requires additional administrative overhead and manpower, possible military construction, and ultimately more defense dollars.

Relocating USPACOM headquarters westward provides an alternative structure that may enhance mission effectiveness. USPACOM headquarters at Camp H.M. Smith is in Honolulu, Hawaii. The international dateline and nearly 7,000 miles separates the headquarters from forces stationed in the Pacific Rim. A more westward location would put the headquarters closer to its troops. However, many of the cost considerations associated with the first option occur here as well. The cost of such a move is too prohibitive. In addition, modern communications allow for near instantaneous contact with subordinate commands.

The most promising change revolves around the establishment of a new subunified command that I'll call Southeast Asia Command. Currently, no USPACOM subunified command focuses on Southeast Asia. The 13th Air Force, headquartered at Andersen Air Force Base Guam, assumes the lead for Southeast Asia issues. 13th Air Force enjoys a long history of support to the region, particularly during the Vietnam era when it was located at Clark Air Base Republic of the Philippines. The withdrawal of US forces from Clark and Subic Bay closed the era of US forces stationed in Southeast Asia.

USPACOM troop strengths may reach rough parity with NATO forces. While the aggregate numbers appear close at roughly 100,000 service members, the distribution of forces is not congruent. Nearly 92% of the 1993 troop strengths serve in Northeast Asia. (45,227 in Japan and 37,413 in Korea).(3:23) Only a handful of US service men and women reside in Southeast Asia proper. In the event of a regional crisis, troops would probably come from the continental US and Alaska. Alliance commitments in Korea and Japan preclude a large part the USPACOM forces to the Southeast Asia placing a premium on swift response and troop deployment. In addition, the geographic distances separating Honolulu and the region create communication and regular "face-to-face" exchanges among military members.

Southeast Asia Command would formally signal US resolve to the regional security and could be done efficiently. Three distinct advantages result from establishing a new subunified command. First, the cost of establishing the new command would be minimal. 13th Air Force is an established command complete with a staff and a Major General. The organizational change could be made with a stroke of a pen without incurring major costs or construction. In fact, a cost saving measure could be reaped by combining a Navy staff function at Agana Naval Air Station Guam and 13th Air Force headquarters. Second, this joint staff formalizes US support to the region. Southeast Asia Command would be charged with day-to-day planning and military contacts. The new command solidifies the fragile network of disparate bilateral alliances into a

single US organization. Finally, the command is on US territory enhancing the external balancer argument while not requiring basing arrangements on foreign soil.

This paper focused on the disparate types of military responses USPACOM has been tasked to support. Each response required strategic mobility support that exceeded PACOM's organic capability. USTRANSCOM provides the requisite lift deploying headquarters elements, communications gear, equipment, and personnel. Strategic lift is a finite national resource. USTRANSCOM must carefully evaluate each request to ensure mobility customer satisfaction. Establishment of a USTRANSCOM field office at USPACOM headquarters would support rapid crisis response and troop projection.

The field office consists of a handful of strategic mobility specialists advising the USPACOM staff on transportation matters. An O-6 heads the office, with an O-5 action officer from Military Sealift Command, Air Mobility Command, and Military Traffic Management Command providing subject matter expertise. A single administrative specialist completes the team. The strategic lift team works as a part of the CINC's special staff or reports to either the J-3 or J-4 as appropriate.

The field office works closely on day-to-day operations. In the event of increased tensions requiring augmentation, the team provides the nucleus of a larger transportation team. In effect, the field office operates in peacetime as it would in crisis or wartime conditions. The field office could be established with minimal costs. For example, USPACOM liaison officers of the various transportation disciplines serve in Hawaii at their service component headquarters. A modification of unit manning documents could establish the transportation office. USPACOM

would have a direct link into the defense transportation system ensuring timely request and ultimately quicker response to mobility needs. Figure 4 shows a simple organizational chart and relationship of the USTRANSCOM field office at USPACOM headquarters. The office could ultimately provide more timely responses to mobility needs.

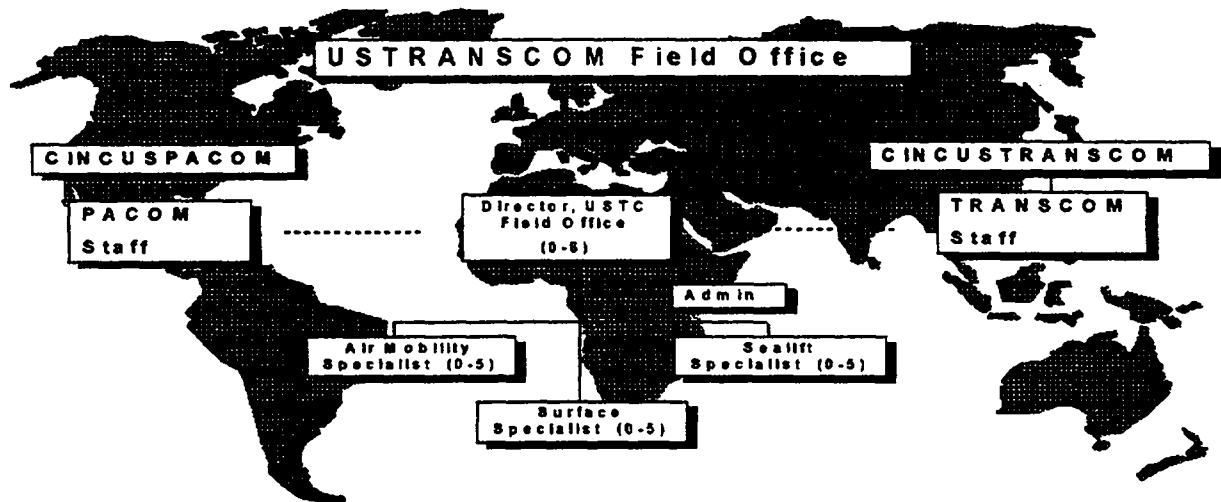


Figure 4

USTRANSCOM is a functional unified command charged with providing worldwide transportation support to every unified CINC. The entire defense transportation system relies on four pillars: strategic sealift, strategic airlift, surface transportation, and propositioned equipment. Airlift is key to each segment. General Ronald Fogleman, CINCUSTRANSCOM, points out

Every regional CINC depends on AMC [Air Mobility Command] mobility assets to provide the entree for the forces in contingency operations, such as Restore Hope and Southern Watch, in western hemisphere and counternarcotics operations, and in domestic relief operations as those in the aftermath of hurricanes Andrew and Iniki. AMC contingents are responsible for staking our landing sites, setting up command and control centers and other operational facilities, and cleaning up when it's all over. (2:43)

Strategic lift and mobility remain the keys to rapid force projection of future expeditionary responses.

## CONCLUSIONS

For over two centuries the US has been a Pacific power. The US fought in tragic Asian land wars no less than three times in the past half century. The Cold War thaw provides a fragile new era of relative peace. USPACOM met the challenges of the new era through efficient organizational structure charged with the largest unified AOR non-traditional military missions such as humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and peacekeeping become new challenges for USPACOM forces. This paper looked at the phenomenon of non-traditional missions and analyzed three internal organizational changes and one external modification. The first two proposals appear cost prohibitive. The last two alternatives make fiscal sense and could promote more effective responses to future crisis. Figure 5 summarizes the recommended changes to USPACOM's organizational structure.

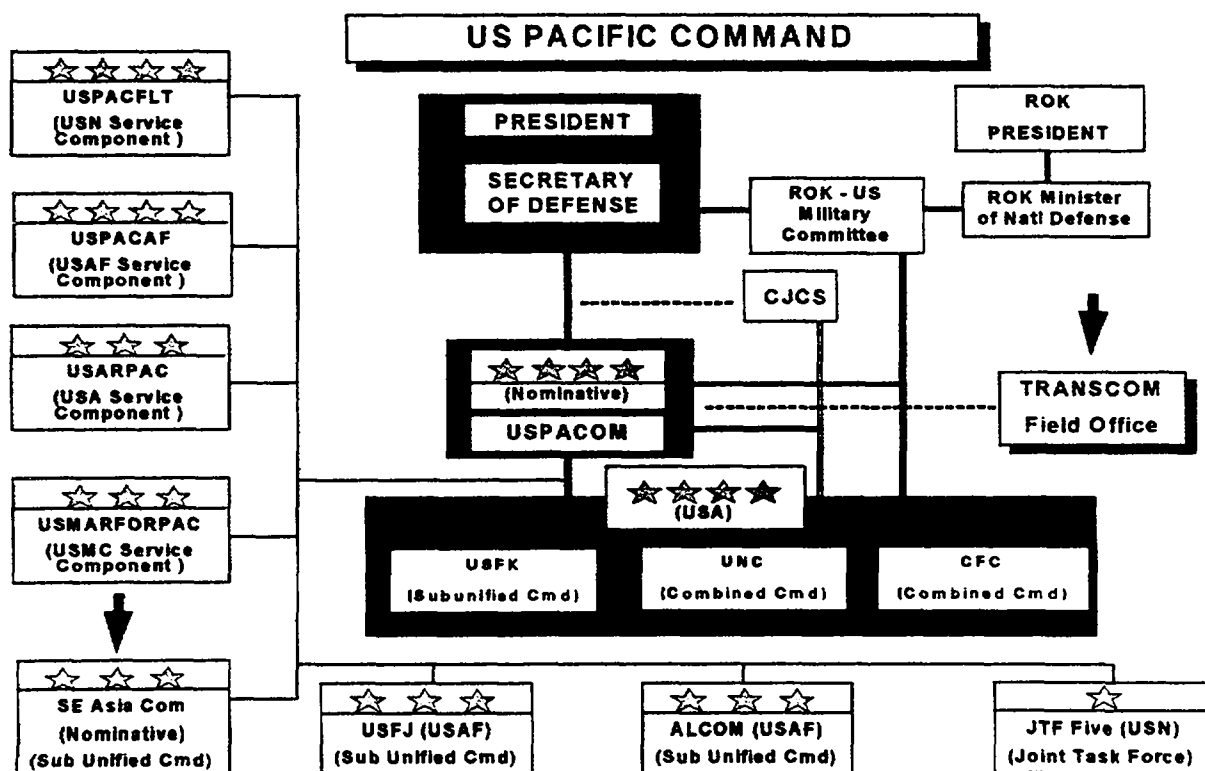


Figure 5

*"To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace."*

George Washington, First Annual Address to Congress, January 1790

More than 200 years later this concept looms more and more important in a new world order where regional response to conflict and contingency is the norm. With an adequate force and force projection capabilities, USPACOM will remain the leader and partner in this vital region.

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