
Preparing the

Army in the Pacific

for the 21st Century



U.S. Army Signal Corps (Wayne H. Weidner)

Uirson, Korea,
August 1950.

By WILLIAM M. STEELE

In August 1898 Admiral George Dewey had to wait 90 days after defeating the Spanish at Manila Bay for a 15,000-strong Army force from California to put boots on the ground and secure his victory in the Philippines. As U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) celebrates 100 years of service in the Asia-Pacific region, it can account for two-thirds of the Army campaign streamers awarded for action outside North America. It also reflects the

changing role of America as a Pacific power. Today, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) relies upon trained and ready forces to support military operations and peacetime engagement. As we near the 21st century, USARPAC has the vision and direction to keep the Army component of PACOM relevant, responsive, and ready.

Tyranny of Distance

The American commitment to the Pacific over the last century can be divided into two major periods: Japanese expansionism and confrontation with

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Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. REPORT DATE 1998 | | 2. REPORT TYPE | | 3. DATES COVERED 00-00-1997 to 00-00-1998 | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Preparing the Army in the Pacific for the 21st Century | | | | 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) National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, 260 Fifth Avenue SW Bg 64 Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319 | | | | 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 Approved for public release; distribution unlimited | | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT | | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS | | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT unclassified | b. ABSTRACT unclassified | c. THIS PAGE unclassified | | | |

the Soviet Union. These two experiences challenged the Army to assume various roles—expeditionary, occupation, counterinsurgency, and deterrent—in a theater where vast ocean spaces and faraway land masses presented another passive but significant force, the tyranny of distance.

The central strategic issue for our military in the Pacific during the first half of this century was maintaining a credible presence in the Philippines and countering the growing power of Japan. The United States could not defend the Philippine Islands because the American people would not commit the needed assets until the eve of war. Consequently Hawaii became the center of gravity for our strategic position in the Pacific. It was home to Army and Navy commands as well as the industrial facilities which supported operating forces that would be projected into the Pacific.

With the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, the free world soon faced an even greater danger than that formerly posed by the Axis powers. The central strategic threat was thought to be prevention of nuclear war. The Cold War and lines of confrontation in the Pacific area, however, were clearly drawn in another way in East Asia as Task Force Smith jumped, poorly equipped and manned, from occupation duty to combat on the Korean peninsula. Both Korea and Vietnam were major conflicts—proxy wars in a bipolar Cold War world centered in Europe. PACOM forces and the defense establishment as a whole struggled with new strategic and operational concepts before and after those two Asian wars. Finally, we adopted a deterrent strategy that has achieved 22 years of regional security and stability and established a forward presence that we maintain to this day. We are experiencing the longest period of peaceful engagement in the Asia-Pacific for a century.

Nevertheless the shadow of the Cold War still extends over the Army in this region. Today USARPAC has three major combat formations: 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii with one brigade located at Fort Lewis, Washington; 1st Brigade, 6th Infantry Division in Alaska; and 1st Battalion, 1st Special



DOD (Randy Pullen)



Forces Group on Okinawa. Support forces include U.S. Army Japan and U.S. Army Hawaii. USARPAC headquartered in Hawaii and I Corps at Fort Lewis provide operational and tactical command and control (C²) respectively. This current force mix is the result of the situation in Korea, the recent drawdown, and our Cold War

posture. Ultimately, the situation in Korea will resolve itself through a treaty, reconciliation, or reunification, with resultant changes in the size and function of Army forces in theater. The history of the region, our security relationship with Japan, and the strategic requirements suggest continued presence of Army support forces in north-east Asia.



U.S. soldiers jumping from Australian DHC-4.

DOD (Erin Gonzalez)

The Pacific, the largest ocean in the world, dominates this region and presents a tyranny of distance of over 5,000 miles from the west coast of the United States to the Pacific Rim countries of Japan and the Philippines. In 1898 it took IX Corps 90 days to sail from California to Manila. By World War II that was cut to 30 days steaming time. It still requires 21 days to move troops, equipment, and supplies by sea from Oakland to Manila and 16

there is no Asia-Pacific equivalent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

more to reach the western limits of the PACOM and USARPAC area of responsibility (AOR) in the Indian Ocean. We have reduced but not eliminated the tyranny of distance with airlift and faster ships. Control and security of the sea, sea and air lines of communication, and theater power projection platforms remain an essential task for military forces in the Asia-Pacific.

The 21st Century

The end of the Cold War has led to another transitional period for the military in the Pacific. Few signs of confrontation remain. Korea is in the throes of political and military contention under a 44-year-old armistice.

The world is increasingly multipolar. The predictability and stability that sprang from the bipolar alignments of the Cold War have eroded. Stability is the result of regional security and economic prosperity. This is certainly true in the Pacific where emerging economies and developing nations are divided by enduring tensions along their borders. The relative stability enjoyed across the area results from the presence of U.S. forces together with military contacts and economic prosperity. PACOM and its components reflect this presence and afford the security for continued growth in the region. They also maintain military overmatch to prevail in any conflict.

While there is no Asia-Pacific equivalent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, five of the seven mutual defense treaties signed by the United States involve the PACOM AOR. Relations with countries in the region tend to be bilateral and limited in scope. Yet there is growing interest in both multilateral dialogue and partnership in the face of challenge. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the foremost multinational partnership, but it has no military charter.

This region will become central to the global economy in the next century, replacing Europe in many regards. It contains 56 percent of the world population. China's total is 1.2 billion people while India's is 950 million and is expected to surpass China early in the next century. Indonesia, the most populous Muslim nation, has 206 million and is the fourth largest in the world. By 2020 there may be 25 cities in Asia with populations over 10 million. Such huge markets are impressive but are only partially developed today.

U.S. ties to Asia are growing as the percentage of Asian-Americans increases. Trade with Asia in 1996 was \$920.8 billion, 37 percent of the U.S. total, more than with Europe, Canada, or Latin America. Some 60 percent of global economic growth in the next decade will occur in East Asia. As a result, the Asia-Pacific region will develop a powerful new middle class of 500 million. It will create market-driven economies and shift from labor-oriented production to both industrial and information age technology. The effect on area culture and societies will be equally profound. New wealth and a powerful middle class will transform traditional social structures to complement economic well-being and meet rising expectations. This prosperity will lead to development that is commensurate with political, informational, and military potential. To maintain regional stability in this dynamic future it is vital to shape the security environment to facilitate economic growth.

While we often think of the Asia-Pacific region as primarily maritime because of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, armies rather than navies dominate military organizations. Asia claims eight of the ten largest militaries in the world, and substantial modernization programs reflect new wealth and diverse security concerns in the region. Spending on modernization has increased 35 percent over the last six years. This contrasts with the general decline in military spending elsewhere since the end of the Cold War. While these forces are likely to shrink, they will undergo modernization in the interim. Short- and mid-range ballistic missiles, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and limited power projection



City of Pará with soldiers leaving for the Philippines, 1898.

DOO

will be common and increase the scope and lethality of regional conflict. Moreover, the demands of natural/humani-

forward basing and engagement signal readiness to more than friends and allies

tarian disasters will expand the role of regional militaries.

The proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons risks placing them in the hands of rogue states or terrorists. Countering proliferation requires multinational and multiagency efforts as will combating the drug trade, terrorism, maritime piracy, and insurgency.

Foreign policy will continue to dictate that the United States accept a mantle of international leadership and build alliances and institutions. In a July 23, 1997 address to the Pacific Council on International Policy, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that the objective of U.S. strategy must be to “work with our many friends in this region of rising powers to ensure

stability, build prosperity, and promote democracy.” The Nation should “fortify core alliances” while remaining forward deployed and supporting multinational security dialogues. The United States must

focus on peacefully resolving disputes and avoid “misunderstandings that could lead to armed conflict.” Forward basing and engagement enables this strategy by means of USARPAC involvement with regional militaries. Maintaining strong army-to-army relations is a principal role of USARPAC in peacetime to support our preventive defense strategy.

Shape, Respond, Prepare

National military strategy uses the three concepts of shape, respond, and prepare to provide an integrated approach to promoting peace and stability and defeating adversaries when necessary. PACOM and its components will continue to pursue these objectives through regional engagement to shape the Asia-Pacific and create conditions favorable to U.S. interests. USARPAC forces will support PACOM and

maintain the ability to respond worldwide across a full crisis spectrum.

PACOM theater engagement strategy supports our national military objectives. So long as the region remains devoid of a substantial multilateral security mechanism, most nations will desire the continued presence of the U.S. military and its Pacific Army. In January 1997 Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto cited “the presence of the United States in Asia” as the most important factor in assuring stability.

USARPAC helps to shape the region through forward basing and deployments. Combined training and engagement activities such as engineering, medical, and civic projects also contribute to forward presence by sending our soldiers abroad. The Pacific Army of the 21st century must maintain forward presence to provide access to army-dominated military organizations. Exercises such as Cobra Gold in Thailand and Balikatan in the Philippines are examples. Forward presence demonstrates our commitment and negates some of the tyranny of distance.

As USARPAC presence and engagement shape the security environment they also serve as a preventive defense. Forward basing and engagement activities signal the readiness of our forces to more than friends and allies. Exercises also demonstrate readiness in support of PACOM and contribution to joint and combined warfighting.

Shaping enables the Nation to maintain an objective role as a regional power. The benefits of mutual training and increased interoperability among countries helps set the stage for conducting combined operations with allies or coalition partners. Although we will be ready to act unilaterally, combined operations are the preferred method. Our ability to conduct successful operations is well known by states that might consider destabilizing the region. The PACOM strategy of engagement and presence is the right way to shape regional stability and U.S. interests into the next century.

Since shaping efforts alone cannot guarantee peace and stability, our forces must be capable of responding

to a full spectrum of crises. On an average day USARPAC has 3,000 soldiers in 20 countries. Just 3 percent of the U.S. Army, the Pacific Army, conducts 10 percent of total Army deployments. That is a high payoff.

The Army has fought four wars in the Asia-Pacific over the last century. In World War II and Korea, it was unprepared and paid the price. Tomorrow's Pacific Army, like its predecessors, will not have forces in theater to prosecute a major war, so it must be able to project USARPAC forces from CONUS.

PACOM needs a ground detachment with a limited forced entry capability that can respond quickly and decisively. It can evolve from the current force and address regional crises. It also requires access to CONUS land forces for either theater engagement or strategic power projection to protect American citizens and interests or prevent conflict. Speed argues for a response force in a central location and the ability to project forces by air and sea with prepositioned stocks.

The Army in the Pacific must be a theater engagement force and a strategic projection force. Theater engagement serves as a deterrent to aggression by demonstrating the capability to fight and decisively win smaller scale contingencies. Its secondary mission is engaging regional militaries as previously discussed. The strategic projection force, like the engagement force, must be forward based and quickly augmented by CONUS-based forces which deploy worldwide to reinforce either in-place theater forces or use air and sea lines of communication through the theater in support of a major theater war.

Strategic mobility is critical when projecting power into or through the Asia-Pacific region. It largely resides in sealift and airlift, though infrastructure plays a significant role. Prepositioned equipment together with strategic lift enables us to react with the appropriate speed for strategically decisive maneuver.

The Future

The Army of the 21st century must be built on a sound foundation and supporting pillars. That foundation is comprised of quality people; command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C⁴I); and a theater infrastructure to support power projection. The four pillars are a trained and ready force, forward presence, an expeditionary force, and modern equipment. Our training today and tomorrow should range from the lowest tactical echelon to operational exercises to improve interoperability with other armies. Additional efforts to enhance and sustain readiness include establishing multicomponent units as well as other forms of active and Reserve integration in training and operations. We participate in joint and combined exercises to maintain warfighting capabilities just as we must continue to expand relations with the armies in the region.

The cost of current training programs is too high because of the tyranny of distance. Army forces must travel to the Joint Readiness Training Center or National Training Center to take part in priority tactical training. Moving equipment to either center, even with prepositioned brigade sets for training, is costly and time consuming. We need joint training areas in the Asia-Pacific located within proximity of our bases and along air and sea lines of communication in the theater.

The chief means of achieving full spectrum dominance for the Pacific Army in a peacetime environment is realized by the second pillar, forward based forces. Even though I Corps is located on the west coast at Fort Lewis and USARPAC is headquartered in Hawaii, the latter remains five time zones from the eastern edge of the Asian mainland and fourteen from the western edge of the Indian Ocean. Positioning forces and Army C² headquarters farther in the AOR enhances regional presence and tangibly improves the ability to conduct crisis response, forward presence, and C².

The third pillar is creating an expeditionary force capability from Army divisions, brigades, and battalions. These force packages would be capable of rapid deployment to crisis spots

within the Asia-Pacific from power projection platforms and the prepositioned stocks placed in the theater infrastructure force. Much of this capability already exists.

The last pillar is modern equipment to sustain the first to engage operations and keep pace with regional powers. Forward presence, regardless of its other advantages, also demonstrates the quality of U.S. equipment to area militaries. The requirement for continual C⁴I modernization is obvious given the tyranny of distance in the AOR. We also need improved strategic mobility from more fast sealift ships, just in time logistics, Crusader, Javelin, Apache Long Bow, and other new weapons and equipment to conduct preventive defense well forward.

The future is certain. The prominence of the Asia-Pacific region is growing and so are both the importance and the contributions of USARPAC to national security. We can and must achieve a trained and ready force, one with expeditionary capabilities postured and positioned well forward in the area with the training, infrastructure, C², and quality people to perform its missions. It must be a modern, tailorable theater engagement force based to provide effective initial entry forces that contribute to full spectrum dominance. It must be expandable to supply sufficient ground forces, theater Army C², and sustainment to support a joint and combined major theater war. We are able to perform these tasks. Today our challenge in the dynamic Asia-Pacific environment is to remain relevant, responsive, and ready for tomorrow. **JFQ**