

COMBAT MULTIPLIER: EXAMINING THE SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE
BRIGADE'S ROLE IN FUTURE ARMY STRATEGIC DETERRENCE

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Art of War Scholars

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

COMBAT MULTIPLIER: EXAMINING THE SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE BRIGADE'S ROLE IN FUTURE ARMY STRATEGIC DETERRENCE, by John T. Pelham IV, 108 pages.

Current United States strategic commitments for forward-deployed forces place considerable stress on the force generation and readiness of Armored Brigade Combat Teams (ABCTs). The Army could add more ABCTs to the existing force structure. However, given the fiscal and materiel costs associated with doing so, other options may be more feasible to ensure the US meets these strategic obligations. Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) train and equip to satisfy many of the existing ABCT rotational mission set without costly force additions, but which requirements can they fulfill? Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs) also possess many of the capabilities required for that mission set. Insufficient research and doctrine currently exist to identify which facets of the current mechanized rotational mission sets an SFAB, SBCT, or similar formation could assume from an ABCT or another mechanized unit.

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ACRONYMS

A2AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
AASLE	Advise, Assist, Support, Liaise, and Enable
ABCT	Armored Brigade Combat Team
AWG	Asymmetric Warfare Group
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BEB	Brigade Engineer Battalion
BSB	Brigade Support Battalion
COCOM	Combatant Command
CONUS	Continental United States
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Policy
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EDRE	Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise
FSF	Foreign Security Force
HBCT	Heavy Brigade Combat Team
IBCT	Infantry Brigade Combat Team
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
OAR	Operation Atlantic Resolve
OSS	Operation Spartan Shield

RAF	Regionally Aligned Forces
ReARMM	Aligned Readiness and Modernization Module
RoK	Republic of Korea
SBCT	Stryker Brigade Combat Team
SFAB	Security Force Assistance Brigade
SFAC	Security Force Assistance Command
TAAC	Train, Advise, and Assist Command
UN	United Nations
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
USEUCOM	United States European Command
USINDOPACOM	United States Indo-Pacific Command
VHRTF	Very High Readiness Task Force

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The second decade of the Twenty-First Century introduced considerable challenges and dynamic change to both the United States Army and Marine Corps armored forces. Sequestration brought the first significant reduction in force for the US military in a generation. The armored force experienced increased pressure as budgets and force structures slashed to conform to new fiscal restraints. Concurrently, as US strategic policy shifted to conventional Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) deterrent rotations, Army Armored Brigade Combat Teams (ABCTs), Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs), and other mechanized forces faced greater demand than ever.

Problem Statement

Current US strategic force-deployment commitments place considerable stress on the force generation and readiness of ABCTs. The Army could add more ABCTs to the existing force structure, however, given the fiscal and materiel costs associated with doing so, other options may be more feasible to ensure the US meets these strategic obligations. Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) train and equip to satisfy many of the existing ABCT rotational mission set without costly force additions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide the Army a combination of actionable options to current and future strategic and operational problems. Any combination of potential solutions offered by this study assists the Army enterprise in optimizing force

structure and best fulfill the Army strategic responsibilities of shaping environments, preventing conflict, prevailing in ground combat, and consolidating gains. All solutions resulting from this study will be tailorable to specific theaters while remaining fundamentally applicable to support Army operations worldwide. This study is valuable to the military enterprise because it examines the feasibility of incorporating a new type of unit, the SFAB, into a rotational strategic deployment model conceptualized before the formation of the SFAB. This study seeks to highlight opportunities to employ this new formation for maximum efficacy while simultaneously reducing the negative impact on the readiness of the armored force resulting from perpetual deployment. This study also offers recommendations to optimize the employment of US mechanized and armored forces.

Research Questions

1. How can the Army successfully fulfill the strategic need for forward-deployed forces while reducing the operational demands on the existing Armored Force?
2. How does the Army currently interpret the strategic need for forward-deployed forces, and what is the current policy for meeting this end?
3. What negative consequences from prolonged operational tempo on limited mechanized forces might be alleviated per recent Chief of Staff guidance while still meeting strategic requirements?
4. Does recent history show the ABCT too large for current inter-operability training with multinational partners and too small to delay a threat invasion force without significant rapid reinforcement?

5. If they were to take on all or part of the existing ABCT rotation, what would impact current and future SFAB employment plans?
6. Can SFABs set the theater more efficiently than conventional units while presenting a smaller materiel footprint and target?

Scope/Proposed Methodology

This study will assess acceptability, feasibility, suitability, and, perhaps most importantly, the sustainability of integrating SFABs partially and completely into the RAF model in roles currently filled solely by ABCTs. The results of this assessment will also inform whether force generation of additional ABCTs is necessary and feasible in the event the other Brigade Combat Team (BCT) types prove unsuitable. Finally, the study will assess the links between all findings to determine the necessity of the forward postured strategic deterrent at all in its current means and ways.

This study employs a research strategy grounded primarily in qualitative case study analysis of historical examples of Foreign Security Force (FSF) Advisors and their impacts on partner mounted warfare capabilities, existing and historical FSF Advising doctrine, and current and forecasted US strategic commitments entailing mechanized force mission sets. This study also employs a case study qualitative analysis to examine recent Army Force Generation and reduction initiatives to assess the feasibility of increasing the number of ABCTs available to US Army Forces Command.

Formations considered for integration into the RAF model are various configurations of the ABCT and SFAB only, short of generating additional ABCTs or eliminating the need for a strategic deterrent in its current form. Some investigator bias could exist from extensive familiarity with each specific unit type; however, this study

offsets the risk by incorporating diverse sources of military, non-military, and intra-governmental origin. The two BCT-types not examined as a possible solution by this study are the SBCT and Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT). IBCTs are not included given their inherent lack of mobility and firepower compared to the ABCT and ability to embed with partnered mechanized units compared to the SFAB.

I believe I am qualified for this work as a university-trained historian with extensive experience as an Armor Leader qualified on multiple platforms, having led Soldiers and advised FSF partners on various tours both in combat and garrison. I most recently served on the 3rd SFAB's inaugural deployment to the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Area of Responsibility. I advised a Mechanized Infantry Kandak of the Afghan National Army in Train, Advise, and Assist Command (TAAC) Capital in conjunction with both the British and Turkish Armies. Identified weaknesses include a lack of personal background in sustainment and force management; however, I mitigate this in literature review via incorporating multiple force structure studies from the RAND Corporation, Army Office of Research and Statistical Analysis, and others.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to expand the interpretation of the strategic requirement for forward-postured forces and a corresponding expanded proposed menu of means to satisfy it. This work further seeks to offer solutions to current controversies involving SFAB force structure. This study creates an extensive dialogue for further research on the SFAB's future in the Army force structure and the evolution of the armored force as threats and operating environment advantages evolve and current technologies age.

Summary

Many of the mission requirements currently filled by ABCTs as part of the three current strategic deterrence rotations can shift to SFABs. Notably, even as many armored brigades and regiments deactivated, enduring strategic deterrent rotations in the United States European Command (USEUCOM), USCENTCOM, and United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) on the Korean Peninsula demanded that no less than three (often more) Army ABCTs deploy continuously. The increasing strategic demand on a dwindling supply of available mechanized forces created challenges in shifting from the Army Force Generation force management model to the Sustained Readiness initiative as units struggled to implement sustainable manning models against increased readiness requirements. This solution could reduce the burden on the American armored force and allows it to focus on the core competencies of the Decisive Action aspect of strategic deterrence in each respective Combatant Command (COCOM).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide the Army a combination of actionable options to current and future strategic and operational problems. Any combination of potential solutions offered by this study assists the Army enterprise in optimizing force structure and best fulfill the Army strategic responsibilities of shaping environments, preventing conflict, prevailing in ground combat, and consolidating gains. All solutions resulting from this study will be tailorable to specific theaters while remaining fundamentally applicable to support Army operations worldwide. This study is valuable to the military enterprise because it examines the feasibility of incorporating a new type of unit, the SFAB, into a rotational strategic deployment model conceptualized before the formation of the SFAB. This study seeks to highlight opportunities to employ this new formation for maximum efficacy while simultaneously reducing the negative impact on the readiness of the armored force resulting from perpetual deployment. This study also offers recommendations to optimize the employment of US mechanized and armored forces.

Research Questions

1. How can the Army successfully fulfill the strategic need for forward-deployed forces while reducing the operational demands on the existing Armored Force per the National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense Strategy (NDS), and National Military Strategy (NMS)?

2. How does the Army currently interpret the strategic need for forward-deployed forces, and what is the current policy for meeting this end?
3. What negative consequences from prolonged operational tempo on limited mechanized forces might be alleviated per recent Chief of Staff guidance while still meeting strategic requirements?
4. Does recent history show the ABCT too large for current inter-operability training with multinational partners and too small to delay a threat invasion force without significant rapid reinforcement?
5. If they were to take on all or part of the existing ABCT rotation, what would impact current and future SFAB employment plans?
6. Can SFABs set the theater more efficiently than conventional units while presenting a smaller materiel footprint and target?

Introduction

This study organizes via the organization, materiel, and personnel domains of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Policy (DOTMLPF-P) by section to answer the central question and each supporting question. Section One consists of a qualitative organizational analysis of current ABCT deployed configurations, SFABs, and impacts occurring from increasing or decreasing the current rotational force structure. Section Two analyzes qualitative impacts associated with costs of the current ABCT deployment model and comparison of relative costs of SFAB deployment and cost/benefit analysis of reducing or increasing the overall rotational construct. Section Three examines qualitative comparison of personnel demands as relating to deployed ABCTs, SFABs, and increasing or decreasing the existing

mechanized deployment construct focusing on key differences and impacts to Army manning associated with altering force end strengths.

Ultimately, this work seeks to offer the Army a series of recommendations. The negative impacts resulting from prolonged operational tempo on limited mechanized forces might be alleviated per recent Chief of Staff guidance while still meeting strategic requirements. This study employs this theoretical approach because the organization, materiel, and personnel domains of DOTMLPF-P best address what is primarily a matter of optimizing force structures to right-size the means to execute the ways best achieving the ends outlined in the NSS, NDS, and NMS. Secondly, these domains also create the lens to produce analysis that may adjust strategic ways based on capabilities and shortcomings identified within the organizations studied.

Introductory supporting sources include multiple primary and secondary historical sources, including T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*,¹ Walter Hermes and Robert Sawyer's *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*,² David Galula and John Nagl's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*,³ Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*,⁴ and Van Tin Nguyen's

¹ T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Penguin Books, 2019).

² Robert K. Sawyer and Walter G. Hermes, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2005).

³ David Galula and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2010).

⁴ Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008).

biography of MG Van Hieu Nguyen *Major General Nguyen Van Hieu, ARVN: A Revealing Insight of the ARVN and a Unique Perspective of the Vietnam War*.⁵ Works used throughout include multiple doctrinal publications such as Army Training Publication (ATP) 3-96.1, *Security Force Assistance Brigade*,⁶ and Field Manual (FM) 3-96, *Brigade Combat Team*.⁷ Works appearing throughout this study also include multiple studies and comprehensive works, among them David Johnson's *The Importance of Land Warfare: This Kind of War Redux*,⁸ Zachary Johnston's "Partnering with Host Nation Allies,"⁹ Robert Manning's *The Future of U.S. Extended Deterrence in Asia to 2025*,¹⁰ Terry Stevens's "Deterring North Korea: U.S. Options,"¹¹ Christopher Twomey's *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Differences and Deterrence Failure in Sino-American*

⁵ Van Tin Nguyen, *Major General Nguyen Van Hieu, ARVN: A Revealing Insight of the ARVN and a Unique Perspective of the Vietnam War* (San Jose, CA: Writers Club Press, 2000).

⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Training Publication (ATP) 3-96.1, *Security Force Assistance Brigade* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2018).

⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Field Manual (FM) 3-96, *Brigade Combat Team* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2015).

⁸ David E. Johnson, *The Importance of Land Warfare: This Kind of War Redux* (Arlington, VA: Institute of Land Warfare, 2018).

⁹ Zachary Johnston, "Partnering with Host Nation Allies," *Aviation Digest* 6, no. 1 (January-March 2018): 26.

¹⁰ Robert A. Manning, *The Future of U.S. Extended Deterrence in Asia to 2025* (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, 2014).

¹¹ Terry C. Stevens, "Deterring North Korea: U.S. Options," *Comparative Strategy* 22, no. 5 (December 2003): 489–514.

Relations,¹² Gary Schmitt's *Hard Look At Hard Power: Assessing the Defense Capabilities of Key U.S. Allies and Security ... Partners*,¹³ and Adam Weaver's "Back to Basics: Demonstrating Conventional Readiness in a Globalized World."¹⁴

This work also analyzes current strategic documents and policy statements, including the NSS,¹⁵ NDS,¹⁶ NMS,¹⁷ and USEUCOM posture statement.¹⁸ Initial analyses of these sources generally establish a widespread historical precedent for advisor organizations successfully relieving conventional force burdens, offering an effective economy of force option in most cases. However, further study is required to

¹² Christopher P. Twomey, *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Difference and Deterrence Failure in Sino-American Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

¹³ Gary James Schmitt, ed., *A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing the Defense Capabilities of Key U.S. Allies and Security...Partners* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2015).

¹⁴ Adam Weaver, "Back to Basics: Demonstrating Conventional Readiness in a Globalized World," *Aviation Digest* 6, no. 2 (April-June 2018): 34–37.

¹⁵ US President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2017* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017).

¹⁶ Secretary of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

¹⁷ The Joint Staff, *Description of the National Military Strategy 2018* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/UNCLASS_2018_National_Military_Strategy_Description.pdf.

¹⁸ US Congress, Senate, *Statement of General Tod D. Wolters, United States Air Force, Commander, United States European Command*, US Senate Committee on Armed Services, Washington, DC, September 2020.

contextualize historical examples to assess the suitability of the SFAB using the permissive yet specifically defined criteria concerning the role of forward-deployed forces expressed by the NSS, NDS, and NMS.

Section One: Organization

For analysis of SFAB organizational impacts, this study considers multiple sources, including the Center for Army Lessons Learned's *Advise and Assist Brigades: Observations, Insights, and Lessons*,¹⁹ Leslie Payne and Jan Osburg's *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*,²⁰ and Liam Walsh's *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team*.²¹ Monte Bailey's article "Atlantic Resolve 2017" examines ABCT performance in Europe as part of Battle Group Poland.²² This work also incorporates organizational conclusions from Michael Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka's *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in*

¹⁹ Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), *Advise and Assist Brigades: Observations, Insights, and Lessons* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CALL, 2011).

²⁰ Leslie Adrienne Payne and Jan Osburg, *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013).

²¹ Liam P. Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College Press, 2015).

²² Monte Bailey, "Atlantic Resolve 2017," *Aviation Digest* 6, no. 1 (January-March 2018): 32–34.

Northeastern Europe regarding changes associated with increasing or decreasing the existing mechanized rotational force structure.²³

As expected, Payne and Osburg do not necessarily draw direct parallels to the SFAB's potential ability to relieve traditional ABCT responsibilities. However, their study generally supports the SFAB's overall suitability for integration into the RAF model and potential for increased partner capabilities via interoperability.²⁴ By comparison, Bailey mentions ABCT performance against a heavy opposing force at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center as well as 2nd Cavalry Regiment's performance in support of a strategic deterrent against a mechanized threat as part of Battle Group Poland.²⁵

Section Two: Materiel

For materiel analysis of possible SFAB solutions, this study considers Payne and Osburg's *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*,²⁶ as well as the Asymmetric Warfare Group's (AWG) studies *AWG Support to 1st Security Forces Assistance Brigade* and *What 2nd SFAB Needs to Know*:

²³ Alexander Lanoszka and Michael A. Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Press, 2019).

²⁴ Payne and Osburg, *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*.

²⁵ Bailey, "Atlantic Resolve 2017," 32–34.

²⁶ Payne and Osburg, *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*.

An Operational Advisor Perspective.²⁷ Finally, the RAND Corporation's 2013 study *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas* offers a comprehensive comparative analysis of reduced, current, and increased rotational force materiel costs across all BCT types and COCOMs.²⁸

The RAND Corporation's 2013 study is the principal source for analysis in terms of materiel cost of posturing forces forward regardless of BCT type.²⁹ It establishes a baseline from which the study can examine projected cost savings from reducing the ABCT footprint, project costs of increasing the ABCT footprint, and predict changes, if any, associated with integrating other BCT types into the RAF model. While the AWG studies on SFAB lessons learned do not particularly compare them to other

²⁷ Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG), *Asymmetric Warfare Combat Advising Handbook* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017); Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG), *AWG Support to 1st Security Forces Assistance Brigade* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017); Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG), *What 2nd SFAB Needs to Know: An Operational Advisor Perspective* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2018).

²⁸ Michael J. Lostumbo, Michael J. McNerney, Eric Peltz, Derek Eaton, David R. Frelinger, Victoria A. Greenfield, John Halliday, Patrick Mills, Bruce R. Nardulli, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jerry M. Sollinger, and Stephen M. Worman, *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR201.html.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

organizations,³⁰ the analysis of current equipment and materiel capabilities is valuable compared to the cost baseline offered in the 2013 RAND study.³¹

Section Three: Personnel

AWG's *Asymmetric Warfare Combat Advising Handbook*,³² and Stu James and Andrew Kyde's "Lessons Future Security-Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider" offer conclusions on possible personnel impacts of SFAB solutions.³³ Andrew Feickert's *Army Drawdown and Restructuring: Background and Issues for Congress* and John McGrath's *Army at War: Change in the Midst of Conflict* offers similar ABCT personnel comparison to the current deployment construct.³⁴ David Johnson's *Heavy Armor in the Future Security Environment* study for the RAND Corporation contains a considerable analysis of impacts for both personnel increases and decreases in possible future rotations.³⁵

³⁰ AWG, *Asymmetric Warfare Combat Advising Handbook*; AWG, *AWG Support to 1st Security Forces Assistance Brigade*; Aic Warfare Group, *What 2nd SFAB Needs to Know: An Operational Advisor Perspective*.

³¹ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*.

³² AWG, *Asymmetric Warfare Combat Advising Handbook*.

³³ LTC Stu James and CPT Andrew T Kydes, "Lessons Future Security-Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider," *Cavalry and Armor Journal* (Spring-Summer 2018): 34–38.

³⁴ Andrew Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2013).

³⁵ David E. Johnson, *Heavy Armor in the Future Security Environment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011).

AWG's handbook outlines personnel requirements for advisor organizations in general.³⁶ James and Kyde's study helps identify personnel capability gaps identified in lessons learned from 1SFAB and 2SFAB's inaugural deployments in USCENTCOM from 2016 to 2018.³⁷ The gaps identified can then be examined through Feickert's study on personnel restructuring level to assess the feasibility of manning the SFABs to bridge the gaps if they prove unsuitable to assume all of part of the conventional RAF mission at their current end strength.³⁸ Likewise, McGrath's reference to ABCT integration in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom helps determine the suitability of current ABCT manning to the demands of the RAF mission set.³⁹ There are indeed opportunities for integrating lighter mechanized forces into deterrent missions, as discussed in Johnson's RAND study.⁴⁰ Johnson's work also helps project conventional deployment footprints regardless of platform and possible future operating environment.⁴¹

³⁶ AWG, *Asymmetric Warfare Combat Advising Handbook*.

³⁷ James and Kydes, "Lessons Future Security-Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider," 34–38.

³⁸ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*.

³⁹ John J. McGrath, ed., *Army at War: Change in the Midst of Conflict* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2012).

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Heavy Armor in the Future Security Environment*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Comparison

Army Modernization through 2028

In *Army at War: Change during Conflict*, McGrath described how, even before terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Army was transitioning from an industrial army to a post-industrial one capable of fighting protracted campaigns across the full spectrum of conflict.⁴² McGrath also pointed out that large-scale conventional battles were an anomaly compared to US military history. Current and future conflicts would bear less and less resemblance conversely.⁴³ This assertion has bourn true apart from isolated cases such as the Russian annexation of the Donbas Region of Ukraine in 2014.⁴⁴

Understanding the changing nature of conflict, Army leadership must be mindful when developing strategy for fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in the NMS. Its ends should support the means at hand.⁴⁵ Furthermore, as Schmitt argues in *A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing the Defense Capabilities of Key U.S. Allies and Security Partners*, any Army modernization area should strike a balance between force size and technological sophistication.⁴⁶ In this case, the current amount of ABCTs in the Army

⁴² McGrath, *Army at War*.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army Armor Company Commander deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield, February 18 to November 8, 2017.

⁴⁵ McGrath, *Army at War*.

⁴⁶ Schmitt, *A Hard Look at Hard Power*, 244.

force structure and the inception of permanent advise, assist, support, liaise, and enable (AASLE) units in the SFABs should be present in the decision calculus. The operating environment has changed since the beginning of the RAF deployment model in 2013. Pre-positioned forces reduce sustainment costs in the short term, but expeditionary forces ultimately become more difficult to sustain over time as they move further from their support areas. Costs of pre-positioned units stay constant over time, whether committed or not, whereas expeditionary forces incur costs only when used.⁴⁷ Ultimately, the opportunity cost becomes one of response time versus cost of sustainment. The SFAB, though wholly expeditionary, still requires significant logistical support from its higher headquarters.⁴⁸

In Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team, CPT (P) Liam P. Walsh observed that the BCT in its current form, particularly the ABCT, was not suitable to optimally conduct the multiple partnered security force assistance missions demanded of the Operation Spartan Shield (OSS) rotational ABCT in USCENTCOM.⁴⁹ Since Walsh's writing in 2015, the Army added six dedicated advising brigades to the force structure. Any current of future modernization effort must acknowledge the increasing

⁴⁷ McGrath, *Army at War*.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*, 52.

importance of partnered operations and the growing demand for leveraging partner capacity compared to the need for other capabilities in a future conflict.⁵⁰

Implications for Future US Strategic Deterrence

Every operation that the US Army conducts both currently and into the future will be not only joint but likely multinational as well. It is unreasonable to think that conditions will change into the future as the global community becomes increasingly interdependent. The importance of partner integration at all three levels of war will only increase. Dwight Eisenhower remarked that the future of warfare depends on partner integration.⁵¹ Likewise, as the need for partner integration increases, the need to pool resources across all elements of national power, particularly military, will be essential in reducing the demand on American national resources to allow the US to honor its treaty commitments to allies more sustainably in an increasingly resource-constrained environment.⁵²

Partner integration is vital in mitigating strategic risk incurred from reducing conventional force numbers stationed overseas, as the April 2012 edition of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) study on Army restructuring described.⁵³ It is still

⁵⁰ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 2020.

⁵¹ McGrath, *Army at War*, 166.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 338.

⁵³ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*.

important to note that the only rotation specifically recommended for exclusively ABCTs was Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR) in USEUCOM. At the time of the recommendation, the May 2012 installment of the CRS restructuring study recommended specifically that a rotational ABCT align with USEUCOM as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) reaction force.⁵⁴ As corroborated by the March 2013 draft of the CRS report, the “utility of engagement operations” can offset the need in terms of both risk and cost to commit large numbers of conventional forces to overseas deterrence missions by integrating greater numbers of partnered forces.⁵⁵

In the January-March 2018 edition of the *Aviation Digest*, CPT Zachary Johnston examined the power of strategic messaging on the effectiveness of strategic deterrence rotations such as OAR. Johnson explained that the type of unit was not as important as messaging. In other words, it was the scale of partnered activity and the advertising of said activities that affected threat decision calculus more so than the type of units in a theater.⁵⁶

In *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, Hunzeker and Lanoszka explain that strategic deterrence ends, ways, and means should mirror adversary intent, lest inappropriate means achieve the opposite effect and instigate

⁵⁴ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁶ Johnston, “Partnering with Host Nation Allies,” 28.

conflict.⁵⁷ To this end, Hunzeker and Lanoszka argue that determining the correct means to achieve strategic deterrence is, in fact, a balancing act between the capabilities needed to defeat a threat and capabilities needed to assure allies without instigating conflict.⁵⁸

Walsh suggests a similar argument in *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team*, that building partner capacity increases conventional military capabilities while simultaneously assuring allies.⁵⁹ In other words, leveraging partner capacity builds security globally while lowering the risk of instigating conflict that comes with posturing large conventional formations.⁶⁰

Within the Army's strategic responsibilities of shaping environments, preventing conflict, prevailing in ground combat, and consolidating gains, Walsh submits that conventional forces are more appropriate for preventing conflict against a conventional threat and carrying the risk of escalating conflict as well. Walsh argues that Security Force Assistance units are more suitable for shaping environments.⁶¹ Balancing capabilities to defeat a threat and assure allies likely means finding the right combination of forward-postured conventional and security force assistance forces, given the US

⁵⁷ Lanoszka and Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, 28.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁹ Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*, 20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

commitment to deployment as the preferred way to achieve deterrence across all levels of American strategy. As it is not likely feasible to regionally align Special Forces Groups to leverage partner capability⁶² fully, Security Force Assistance Command (SFAC)'s regional alignment plan seeks to address the need for Security Force Assistance task forces assurance portion of US strategic guidance. Furthermore, as the US increasingly relies on partners to maintain the global security environment,⁶³ SFAB advisors can leverage greater partner conventional deterrent capabilities to relieve demand on US conventional forces as well.

In *A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing the Defense Capabilities of Key U.S. Allies and Security Partners*, Schmitt describes the value of leveraging allied military resources to reduce the burden on the American military worldwide.⁶⁴ Schmitt admits that soft power means and ways are insufficient to fill the global “insecurity vacuum,” however, utilizing soft power to garner greater military commitment from allies is key to a more sustainable American strategic deterrence.⁶⁵ To this end, Schmitt offers that successful security force assistance and partnered interoperability training hold the key to preventing crises as a crucial complement to US conventional forces.⁶⁶

⁶² Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*, 62.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁴ Schmitt, *A Hard Look at Hard Power*, 12.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

However, security force assistance forces cannot negate the need for conventional US forward presence. As Johnson asserts in the RAND Corporation study *Heavy Armor in the Future Security Environment*, any threat with standoff weapons capability, as Russia, China, and Iran all possess, necessitates at least some heavy force presence in a theater.⁶⁷ While true, increasing adversary anti-access/area denial (A2AD) systems continue to make large conventional units difficult to project and sustain, as Johnson explains in his Land Warfare Institute essay *The Importance of Land Warfare: This Kind of War Redux*.⁶⁸ Johnson argues that the Army will be a means for conventional deterrence currently and in the future.⁶⁹ He further submits that land forces, using combined arms maneuver are necessary to make even modern hybrid adversaries visible and defeat them.⁷⁰ The evolving threat nature necessitates reducing the size of forward postured conventional forces to lower their target profile while employing them in an early warning or “speed bump” role to create reaction time and maneuver space for larger forces to deploy.⁷¹

By decreasing the size of the conventional forward footprint, the US retains a greater ability to convert military strength in Continental United States (CONUS)

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Heavy Armor in the Future Security Environment*.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *The Importance of Land Warfare*, 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

locations to military power abroad while reducing risk to forwarding forces.⁷² Thus, the evaluation criteria for selecting forces for strategic deterrence rotations should be their credibility.⁷³ For example, forward-deployed US conventional forces in Europe in 2014 likely did not deter Russia from annexing the Crimean Peninsula or the Donbas, signaling that larger conventional deterrence forces are not necessarily appropriate to achieve a deterrent effect in the future.⁷⁴

Having established the importance of multinational interoperability and the need for effective security force assistance forces in integrating partners going forward, the role for SFABs within the framework of US strategic deterrence becomes clearer. In “Lessons Future Security-Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider,” James and Kydes emphasize the power of relationships within partnered operations as well as the need for a flexible mission command suite such as the SFAB’s organic communication architecture paired with the mental agility among advisors to employ it effectively.⁷⁵ James and Kydes offer that conventional BCTs by their very nature are susceptible to the “ugly American” style of advising that prioritizes effects over relationships.⁷⁶ In addition, the nine-month conventional deployment cycle makes it difficult to establish the continuity

⁷² Johnson, *The Importance of Land Warfare*, 17.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ James and Kydes, “Lessons Future Security-Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider,” 34.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

necessary to build the necessary relationships for effective interoperability. A specialized advising force must be part of any operation involving partner participation, and it must be committed for a longer term than that to which rotational BCTs are accustomed. James and Kydes point out the general need for consolidated intelligence, fires, and sustainment support among most partner forces that advisor teams provide compared to a BCT.⁷⁷

In the RAND Corporation study *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan*, Payne and Osburg, one senior American officer interviewed echoed James and Kydes “ugly American” advisor sentiment in that the Army “You cannot take a BDE from a unit like the 82nd Airborne Division, which continually thinks about highly kinetic engagements and make them advisors capable of understanding complex human dynamics after just two weeks’ worth of training.”⁷⁸ In other words, the need for a dedicated advising force managing the critical partner aspect of strategic deterrence is paramount. Payne and Osburg also noted that specialized advising forces have on partner morale and enthusiasm to contribute a significant combat multiplier.⁷⁹ Equally important is the advisor unit’s ability to affect multiple countries and regions outside of the immediate operating environment via relationships and influence with partner forces. In contrast, a conventional maneuver force confines itself to the immediate

⁷⁷ James and Kydes, “Lessons Future Security-Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider,” 37.

⁷⁸ Payne and Osburg, *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*, 31.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

area.⁸⁰ Considering these factors, Payne and Osburg argue that SFABs should habitually align with specific regions.⁸¹

In the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies Study *European Allies in US Multi-Domain Operations*, Jack Watling and Daniel Roper explain that the increased risk posed by Russian and Chinese long-range fires capabilities “fracture” the US Army’s Air-Land Battle, Full Spectrum Operations, and later Unified Land Operations doctrines by creating an area access/area denial network necessitating the pre-positioning of at least some US conventional forces in a theater.⁸² Watling and Roper further submit that the key to successful forward posturing lies in building partner multi-domain operations capabilities, particularly in the areas of cyber, electronic warfare, and long-range fires. In doing so, US partners can offset the risk incurred from maintaining fewer conventional deterrent forces forward.⁸³ Watling and Roper explain that US Army end strength is likely to decrease soon because of resource constraints and evolving technology, therefore making partial reliance on partner capabilities in strategic deterrence increasingly inevitable.⁸⁴ To balance the need for forward conventional and security force assistance capabilities against threat capabilities, Watling and Roper

⁸⁰ Payne and Osburg, *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*, 33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸² Jack Watling and Daniel Roper, *European Allies in US Multi-Domain Operations* (London: Royal United Services Institute Press, 2019), 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

recommend a “calibrated force posture” consisting of an appropriately sized and positioned force with the necessary capabilities held at the requisite readiness level.⁸⁵ Watling and Roper’s recommendation is compatible with “Line of Effort Four: Strengthen Alliances and Partnerships” of the Army Strategy, stating, “The Army will continue to train and fight with allies and partners, and therefore, we must strive to integrate them further into our operations to increase interoperability.”⁸⁶

In “The Theater Army Role in Multi-Domain Operations Integrated Research Project,” Dr. Gregory Cantwell states, “The actions taken to “set the theater” determine the strategic options that will be available to achieve our national objectives. Those individuals that are not involved in the tough government work that ensures the right resources and agreements are in place before the start of an operation may not appreciate the efforts these actions require.”⁸⁷ Given the SFAB’s vital role in establishing partnered relationships and the SFAB brigade support battalion’s mobility expertise, it is not infeasible to assert the SFAB’s utility in setting a theater as an expeditionary unit.⁸⁸

Cantwell examines the cost associated with integrating Army National Guard units into strategic deterrence rotations such as OSS, noting that, while readiness and

⁸⁵ Watling and Roper, *European Allies in US Multi-Domain Operations*, 14.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁷ Gregory L Cantwell, ed., “The Theater Army Role in Multi-Domain Operations Integrated Research Project” (Research Project, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2020), 13.

⁸⁸ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom’s Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

interoperability benefits exist, the fact remains that the Army is committing a portion of its operational reserve.⁸⁹ To that end, Cantwell relates the criticality of liaison officer billets in effective partnered operations,⁹⁰ an exact point given the SFAB's doctrinal role of liaison within the AASLE framework to streamline the challenges of multinational operations.

An essay in Cantwell's study by COL Shawn Underwood (USA) emphasizes George C. Marshal's quote, "The time has come when we must proceed with the business of carrying the war to the enemy, not permitting the greater portion of our armed forces and our valuable material to be immobilized within the continental United States."⁹¹ The world security environment is vastly different now than in 1941. However, current US strategy of maintaining forces overseas to deter threats and assure allies demands the most efficient, sustainable mix of forces possible as economic and fiscal resources will likely be more constrained in the future. COL Underwood's essay within Cantwell's study does, however, endorse the utility of the SFAB in reducing the burden on the Total Army Force resulting from continuous deployment by assuming much of the assurance and partnered portions of the strategic deterrence mission set.⁹²

⁸⁹ Cantwell, "The Theater Army Role in Multi-Domain Operations Integrated Research Project," 40.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 171.

⁹¹ Ibid., 176.

⁹² Ibid., 177.

CATS Planning Tool						
87310K000 - Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT)		Plan: Holistic Strategy		Component: Active		
View CATS EXSUM				View CATS Knowledge Base Home/Search CATS		
<input type="checkbox"/> CATS Overview <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> METL <input type="checkbox"/> UTL <input type="checkbox"/> Training Events Matrix <input type="checkbox"/> Event List <input type="checkbox"/> Reports						
Mission:		Holistic Strategy				
Status:		Approved Standard METL				
Prereq	Number	Name	Next Scheduled Training...	Last Scheduled Training ...	Assessment	Evaluation
<input type="checkbox"/>	07 BDE 1272	Conduct Area Security - BCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	01 BDE 0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	06 BDE 5066	Employ Fires	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	07 BDE 6084	Conduct Survivability Activities - BCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 9225	Conduct a Screen - Brigade	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	71 BDE 5100	Conduct the Operations Process for Command and Control (C2)	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	71 BDE 8600	Establish Civil Security	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1030	Conduct an Area Defense - ABCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	01 BDE 0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	06 BDE 5066	Employ Fires	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	07 BDE 6084	Conduct Survivability Activities - BCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	63 BDE 4021	Provide Internal Sustainment (Brigade)	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	71 BDE 5100	Conduct the Operations Process for Command and Control (C2)	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1074	Conduct a Movement to Contact - ABCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	01 BDE 0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	06 BDE 5066	Employ Fires	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1254	Conduct a Combined Arms Breach of an Obstacle - ABCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	63 BDE 4021	Provide Internal Sustainment (Brigade)	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	71 BDE 5100	Conduct the Operations Process for Command and Control (C2)	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1094	Conduct an Attack - ABCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	01 BDE 0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	06 BDE 5066	Employ Fires	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 BDE 1254	Conduct a Combined Arms Breach of an Obstacle - ABCT	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	63 BDE 4021	Provide Internal Sustainment (Brigade)	Not Scheduled	No Record	N/A	N/A
		Conduct the Operations Process for Command				

Figure 1. Armored Brigade Combat Team Mission Essential Task List (METL)

Source: Army Training Network, “Armored Brigade Combat Team Mission Essential Task List,” accessed February 16, 2021, <https://atn.army.mil/special-pages/search-results?searchtext=Security%2BForce%2BAssistance%2BBrigade&searchmode=anyword>.

**Infantry Battalion
Infantry Security Force Assistance Brigade
Standardized METL
07255K000**

MET: Organize Foreign Security Forces (71-BN-7361)

- Support the Task Organization of FSF for Operations (71-BN-7370)
- Support the Rebuilding of Foreign Security Forces (71-BN-7364)
- Integrate Battalion Sustainment Activities for the SFAB (63-BN-4881)
- Coordinate Force Protection Activities for the SFA Battalion (19-BN-2171)
- Support the Operations Process for SFAB (71-BN-7372)

MET: Train Foreign Security Forces (71-BN-7362)

- Train Foreign Security Forces in the MDMP (71-BN-7371)
- Train Foreign Security Forces on Offensive Operations (07-BN-1075)
- Train Foreign Security Forces on Defensive Operations (07-BN-1031)
- Train Foreign Security Forces on Security Operations (07-BN-1273)
- Integrate Battalion Sustainment Activities for the SFAB (63-BN-4881)
- Coordinate Force Protection Activities for the SFA Battalion (19-BN-2171)
- Support the Operations Process for SFAB (71-BN-7372)

MET: Advise Foreign Security Forces (71-BN-7365)

- Conduct Liaison with FSF and Country Teams for SFAB (71-BN-7368)
- Support Key Leader Engagements For SFA Battalions (71-BN-7373)
- Integrate Battalion Sustainment Activities for the SFAB (63-BN-4881)
- Coordinate Force Protection Activities for the SFA Battalion (19-BN-2171)
- Support the Operations Process for SFAB (71-BN-7372)

MET: Support Foreign Security Forces Operations (07-BN-1076)

- Support Integration of Unified Action Partners Warfighting Function (07-BN-1077)
- Support the Integration of FSF COP with USARFOR COP (71-BN-7375)
- Integrate Battalion Sustainment Activities for the SFAB (63-BN-4881)
- Coordinate Force Protection Activities for the SFA Battalion (19-BN-2171)
- Support the Operations Process for SFAB (71-BN-7372)

MET: Conduct Partnered Area Security Operations (07-BN-1274)

- Conduct Survivability Activities (07-BN-6084)
- Synchronize Fires (06-BN-5076)
- Synchronize Close Air Support (BN) (17-BN-0308)
- Conduct the Mission Command Operations Process Battalions (71-BN-5100)

MET: Conduct Expeditionary Deployment Operations (BN) (55-BN-4800)

- Prepare Personnel for Deployment (Battalion) (12-BN-0004)
- Conduct Actions Associated with Force Projection at the Battalion Level (55-BN-4801)
- Conduct Deployment Activities at the Battalion Level (55-BN-4804)
- Conduct the Mission Command Operations Process for Battalions (71-BN-5100)

Figure 2. Example SFAB Infantry Battalion Mission Essential Task List (METL)

Source: US Army Maneuver Center of Excellence, Infantry Battalion Infantry Security Force Assistance Brigade Standardized METL Handbook (Fort Benning, GA: US Army Maneuver Center of Excellence, 2017), 2.

Deployment and Basing Costs

The RAND Corporation study *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits* recommends that forward postured forces be responsive enough to prevent defeat while gaining time to deploy additional units. While the study did not recommend a force structure, it highlighted the need for a dedicated intermodal (air and surface) lift even in a theater. This requirement increases costs while eroding the advantage of posturing large amounts of armored forces forward, making the course of action only nominally less expensive than deploying them from the US.⁹³ In other words, the presence of armored and mechanized forces forward only achieves deterrence in one close location.⁹⁴ The contributors go so far as to say that forward-deployed ABCTs are at the risk of “stranding” if they lose dedicated lift even regionally.⁹⁵ Surprisingly, the study found that sealift from CONUS locations is still quicker and more cost-efficient including port movement costs, even with dedicated lift assets and floating pre-positioned stocks aligned in theater against forward postured ABCTs in many cases.⁹⁶

The study argues that forward postured forces do not necessarily provide all needed capabilities, and often possess capabilities extraneous to achieving deterrence,

⁹³ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*, 25

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

which the authors define as “perceptions of the will of a nation and its abilities relevant to a particular conflict.”⁹⁷ However, the study acknowledges that cost savings in basing alone do not justify cost savings in security cooperation capability.⁹⁸ As a compromise, the contributors offer that smaller, rotational forward postured forces are easier to reconfigure if the US loses host nation support for basing.⁹⁹

Lostumbo and company echo Cantwell in that increased threat medium-range missile and long-range missile capabilities reduce the effectiveness of maneuver forces while incurring additional risk.¹⁰⁰ The study also highlights that costs of basing BCTs overseas even rotationally fall between 50 to 200 million extra dollars per year in 2013 dollars, even offset by host nation subsidies.¹⁰¹ Also, it cost approximately 105 million dollars in 2013 dollars in transportation costs alone to deploy and re-deploy an ABCT from CONUS for a strategic deterrence rotation.¹⁰² The contributors offer that interoperability risks of conventional forces overseas can be mitigated by posturing smaller, more cost-efficient specialized units to build partner capabilities similar to those

⁹⁷ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*, 26.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

recommended by Watling, Roper, James, Kydes, and Walsh as well.¹⁰³ Ultimately, the study suggests that a deterrent's credibility correlates more to the willingness to commit the deterrent force rather than any specific means.¹⁰⁴

USEUCOM RAF Compatibility Comparison

In his British Army Review article "NATO's Very High Readiness Task Force (Land) 2017: An Analysis," British Army Captain Steve McGuire examines the evolving threat posed by Russia in the USEUCOM Aor emphasizing the Russian "Gerashimov Doctrine" published in 2013 and its shift from conventional large scale combat operations to waging continual war across all domains up to, and including, total nuclear war.¹⁰⁵ Russia's doctrinal shift was largely concurrent with the US Army doctrinal development focus to large scale combat operations from counterinsurgency operations. By McGuire's analysis, Russia could seize all three Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia within 60 hours.

McGuire argues that current NATO contingency plans for a Russian incursion into the Baltic states would only be useful in that scenario if Russia followed the Law of Armed Conflict, which they would not.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, McGuire asserts that, if NATO's

¹⁰³ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*, 35.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁰⁵ Steve McGuire, "NATO's Very High Readiness Task Force (Land) 2017: An Analysis," *Small Wars Journal*, September 7, 2017, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/nato%E2%80%99s-very-high-readiness-joint-task-force-land-2017-an-analysis>.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

strategic deterrence means of large forward conventional forces are only marginally useful in specific scenarios, why does NATO insist on tactically insufficient means when better options are available?¹⁰⁷ Even with US advantage in strategic and operational mobility compared to most NATO allies, power projection capabilities have seemingly nominal impact on recent threat decision calculus. Furthermore, reduction in conventional forces does not appreciably reduce US strategic and operational mobility capabilities in relation to available support to allies.

McGuire's analysis suggests that strategic deterrence is possible through any means that alter an enemy's decision calculus and thus does not have to be fulfilled by large rotational conventional forces.¹⁰⁸ McGuire does not dismiss the need for forward conventional forces completely. He simply underscores that the Very High Readiness Task Force (VHRTF) still needs ten days to deploy to Eastern Europe from the United Kingdom. Even then, it requires highly proficient liaison officers attached to optimize its performance with US forces, a doctrinal mission of an SFAB advisor.¹⁰⁹ To this end, McGuire's analysis seems to suggest that more significant US investment in the VHRTF via conventional and security force assistance forces could significantly reduce the need for an additional US rotational ABCT with 2CR and 173IBCT already permanently in a theater.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ McGuire, "NATO's Very High Readiness Task Force (Land) 2017."

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

In *Conventional Landpower and Deterrence in Northwest Europe*, Hunzeker and Lanoszka examine whether Russia is motivated by fear or imperialist aspirations. Thus, whether its actions over the last seven years were overtly defensive or offensive, respectively. Hunzeker and Lanoszka assert that this determination is critical because it informs whether additional US conventional forces, such as the rotational ABCT, in Europe, would have a provocative, rather than a deterrent, effect on Russia.¹¹¹ Hunzeker and Lanoszka assert that Russia enjoys regional superiority. Still, they cannot project power like the US. As a result, Hunzeker and Lanoszka argue that Russia is as susceptible to NATO A2AD networks in Europe as NATO is to its A2AD network, as well as natural obstacles such as the Suwalki and Fulda Gaps. Considering these observations, Hunzeker and Lanoszka seem to suggest that Russian posture is more defensive and that increasing NATO's conventional military presence in Eastern Europe could very well prove provocative rather than deterrent.¹¹²

Hunzeker and Lanoszka instead argue integrating new partner nations in place of large US conventional forces in an early warning role such as Belarus.¹¹³ Hunzeker and Lanoszka contend that, since the Suwalki Gap presents just as much of an obstacle to Russia as it does to NATO, overstating its importance and posturing of large US armor and mechanized forces in the vicinity is only likely to escalate tensions in the region.

¹¹¹ Lanoszka and Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, 14.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 17.

Instead, Hunzeker and Lanoszka recommend decreasing the number of conventional forces postured forward in Europe, and instead incorporate the smaller force with partner forces and nations to create a series of “tripwires” to provide early warning, reaction time, and maneuver space to NATO.¹¹⁴ Similar to McGuire, Hunzeker and Lanoszka seem to suggest incorporating US forces to optimize the VHRTF rather than maintaining a separate US rotational ABCT.¹¹⁵

Aside from achieving the desired deterrent effect vice antagonizing the adversary, Hunzeker and Lanoszka explain that determining threat intent is vital from a cost perspective since revisionist offensive foes are more expensive to deter than defensive ones.¹¹⁶ For example, Hunzeker and Lanoszka suggest that a revisionist threat must be deterred by brigades and divisions, while battalions and companies can deter a defensive threat.¹¹⁷ Hunzeker and Lanoszka assess that available Russian Army combat power in their Western Military District bordering Eastern Europe consists of the 6th Army, 20th Army, 1st Guards Tank Army, and three divisions airborne infantry. However, the bulk of these units seems to be postured defensively.¹¹⁸ Therefore, Hunzeker and Lanoszka suggest that Russia is modernizing its military, not out of strength.¹¹⁹ It is important to

¹¹⁴ Lanoszka and Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, 19.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

emphasize that, regardless of whether Russia's strategy is revisionist or defensive in nature, the fact that Russia can theoretically seize all three Baltic states in 60 hours while the VHRTF needs a minimum of ten days to fully deploy underscores the continued need for US conventional presence.

Like their prior arguments on Russian susceptibility to natural obstacles and NATO A2AD networks, Hunzeker and Lanoszka also contend that the Kaliningrad Oblast and its attendant military forces are as much or more a vulnerability to Russia than a strength given its risk of canalizing reinforcements and lack of strategic depth.¹²⁰ Seeming to refute McGuire's point partially, Hunzeker and Lanoszka assess that while Russia likely can seize the Baltic states in 60 hours, any large conventional Russian invasion force would culminate after 72 hours.¹²¹ Contrastingly, NATO lines of communication shorten as smaller forward postured conventional forces displace towards their support areas. In contrast, Russian lines of communication would increase as they move further away from theirs.¹²² Therefore, Hunzeker and Lanoszka argue that the resulting sustainment constraints make large scale Russian conventional offensive action highly unlikely.¹²³

¹²⁰ Lanoszka and Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, 52.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 58.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

Hunzeker and Lanoszka state that the Baltic states' vulnerability to hybrid warfare is low given general anti-Russian sentiment within their respective populations. As a result, the inability to shape operations via preparatory hybrid warfare activities in the Baltic states makes follow-up conventional offensive action equally unattractive to Russia.¹²⁴ Hunzeker and Lanoszka do not dismiss the possibility of Russian conventional offensive action outright, as they examine how the concerns among some NATO allies that Russian incursion would not necessarily trigger an Article V collective defense response.¹²⁵ Hunzeker and Lanoszka contend that large scale combat should not be the sole focus of NATO deterrence efforts, citing that 25 of 25 international security experts did not believe large scale combat operations in Eastern Europe imminent.¹²⁶

Acknowledging that determining Russia's exact strategic intent is impossible, Hunzeker and Lanoszka recommend a "hedging strategy" with conventional forces large enough to prevent Russia from achieving a quick victory while providing early warning to NATO without being so large as to provoke Russia.¹²⁷ To achieve the correct balance of deterrence forces, Hunzeker and Lanoszka offer three recommendations. First, establish the "tripwire" networks discussed earlier in this chapter.¹²⁸ Next, compensate for reduced

¹²⁴ Lanoszka and Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, 81.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

forward postured conventional forces through “facilitated regional cooperation” such as embedding SFAB advisors with partner forces.¹²⁹ Finally, “quit fixating on the gaps” as the key to successful deterrence lies in partnered operations across the full spectrum of conflict, not unlikely large scale conventional engagements around the Suwalki or Fulda gaps.¹³⁰

Hunzeker and Lanoszka further expand on the criticality of partnered operations in achieving strategic deterrence in that “long haul” allies such as Poland and the Baltic states would prefer a smaller permanent US force to a large rotational one as currently employed.¹³¹ Hunzeker and Lanoszka argue that the large footprint occupied by the current rotational ABCT is likely to irritate the local populace and thus erode host nation support over time.¹³² Like McGuire, Hunzeker and Lanoszka recommend US investment in smaller conventional forces in the VHRTF while integrating more specialized advisor forces with partners. If the main threat is hybrid in Eastern Europe as they assess it, then that is what the US and NATO should plan against.¹³³

Hunzeker and Lanoszka’s recommendation appears to be preemptively corroborated by Schmitt in *A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing the Defense*

¹²⁹ Lanoszka and Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, 122.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 137.

Capabilities of Key U.S. Allies and Security Partners in his recommendation for “pooling and sharing” of NATO military resources in Europe to reduce the burden on US overseas military commitments.¹³⁴ Schmitt further demonstrates many NATO nations’ increased capability and commitment to self-sufficiency by analyzing the steady increase in Polish and Romanian defense spending, creating both appetite and opportunity for increased interoperability with US forces.¹³⁵ Schmitt also echoes McGuire’s sentiment that the NATO reaction forces are testbeds for interoperability more than tactical fighting forces, and thus tailorable.¹³⁶

Similarly, in “The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits,” the authors examine the relative financial cost of the current US force posture in Europe and its efficacy in reassuring allies. The study reports,

In short, for forces in Europe, the central question is: How much does US presence assure allies, and how much is security cooperation valued? Each service member based in Europe costs about an additional \$15,000 to 40,000 per year, depending on the service, with fixed costs of each European installation costing between \$115 million and \$210 million per year, due to factors such as the high cost of living, accompanied tours, and lower levels of H.N.S. than key Asian allies. Can substantial cuts beyond current plans be made in Europe to reduce costs?¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Schmitt, *A Hard Look at Hard Power*, 298.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹³⁷ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*, 340.

Ultimately, the authors seem to suggest that a smaller, less expensive force can better assure allies and achieve a more optimal deterrent effect against threats.¹³⁸

USCENTCOM RAF Compatibility Comparison

In “Lessons Future Security Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider,” James and Kydes noted that the 3rd ABCT, 1st Armored Division’s mission in OSS 2016 was to reassure allies in the Middle East through presence. However, like Lostumbo and the company’s argument, 3ABCT/1AD neither possessed all of the capabilities required to reassure partners fully nor did partnered nations need all of the capabilities of a full-strength ABCT.¹³⁹ The opportunity and capability cost associated with committing an entire ABCT to OSS compounds with the deployment costs of an additional 200 million dollars a year in 2013 dollars not counting regional lift once in theater according to “The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits.”¹⁴⁰

USINDOPACOM (Korea) RAF Compatibility Comparison

In his Atlantic Council Study, *The Future of U.S. Extended Deterrence in Asia to 2025*, Manning defines deterrence on the Korean Peninsula as a balance of credibility and

¹³⁸ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*, 340.

¹³⁹ James and Kydes, “Lessons Future Security-Force Assistance Brigades Should Consider,” 34.

¹⁴⁰ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*, 38.

capability. Moreover, Manning contends that the modern Republic of Korea (RoK) Army's capacity is such that it ensures there will be no more "Task Force Smith's" even if the US decreases its forward postured conventional footprint.¹⁴¹ Manning further offers that any force postured as a deterrent to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) will negatively affect China as well, a deterrent, or otherwise. As a result, Manning recommends a strategy of "tailored coercion," employing a means capable of deterring and defeating a DPRK incursion while being small enough not to provoke China. This sentiment seems to question the suitability of the rotational ABCT.¹⁴²

Like Hunzeker, Lanoszka, Lostumbo, and multiple other arguments in this chapter, Manning assesses that the DPRK conventional threat is based more on fires and effects than the likelihood of maneuver large scale combat operations. Likewise, Manning argues that the combined impact of Chinese and DPRK A2AD networks makes the Korean Peninsula more challenging to reinforce from the US than USEUCOM.¹⁴³ This assessment, combined with the RoK assuming command of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force on the Korean Peninsula, appears to offer the US an opportunity to optimize its means of deterrence by reducing the number of heavy conventional forces on the peninsula and compensating with the RoK and other UN allies.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Manning, *The Future of U.S. Extended Deterrence in Asia to 2025*, 5.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

Schmitt offers a similar outlook in *A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing the Defense Capabilities of Key U.S. Allies and Security Partners*. Schmitt explains that the critical weakness right now in the combined RoK-UN alliance command structure lies in the command-and-control warfighting function exacerbated by a lack of liaison officers. Schmitt's recommendation seems to suggest that SFAB advisors could address one of the critical concerns in fully realizing RoK partner potential in the peacekeeping force, like McGuire's suggestion of the suitability of SFAB advisors as American liaison officers in the VHRTF.¹⁴⁵ Schmitt further clarifies that improving liaison officer capacity would help streamline the alliance parallel command structure.¹⁴⁶ Schmitt also addresses the cost-benefit of reducing conventional forces on the peninsula, observing that the RoK is already subsidizing 45 percent of the cost of US basing amounting to 570 million dollars in 2013 dollars.¹⁴⁷ Put another way, reducing the cost of basing US forces allows for more RoK capability by ensuring and increasing host nation government support.¹⁴⁸

Schmitt further demonstrates the RoK's capability and commitment to self-sufficiency by analyzing the steady increase in defense spending since 2010, creating both appetite and opportunity for increased interoperability with US forces.¹⁴⁹ Schmitt observes that the peninsula's mountainous terrain makes large-scale mechanized

¹⁴⁵ Schmitt, *A Hard Look at Hard Power*, 130.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

maneuver both unsuitable and unlikely, questioning the suitability of the rotational ABCT as a means of strategic deterrence in the region.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, the contributors of *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits* suggest that since the focal point of deterrence in the Indo-Pacific Region generally lies in the air, littoral, and maritime domains, that reducing the number of land forces on the Korean Peninsula could partially offset the increased cost of rotating the necessary air and naval forces to achieve strategic deterrence.¹⁵¹ Ultimately, the study supports Schmitt's argument of RoK self-sufficiency in that the RoK is conventionally capable of deterring the DPRK on its own, and thus creates greater latitude for the US to contribute to strategic deterrence on the Korean Peninsula with a smaller force.¹⁵²

The US should also assess the composition of forces acting as a strategic deterrent on the Korean Peninsula while considering whether they truly represent strategic deterrence, or rather strategic coercion, against the DPRK and the possibility of provocative effects towards China such as Theater High Altitude Air Defense System deployment. As Twomey explains in *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Difference in Deterrence Failure in Sino-American Relations*, strategic coercion can “lead to an

¹⁵⁰ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*, 145.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 126.

inappropriately robust policy in the face of an unfavorable military balance.”¹⁵³ In other words, the presence of large numbers of conventional US military forces in Korea may be excessive to deter the DPRK while provoking China in a theater in which China possesses significant local overmatch in ground combat capabilities.¹⁵⁴

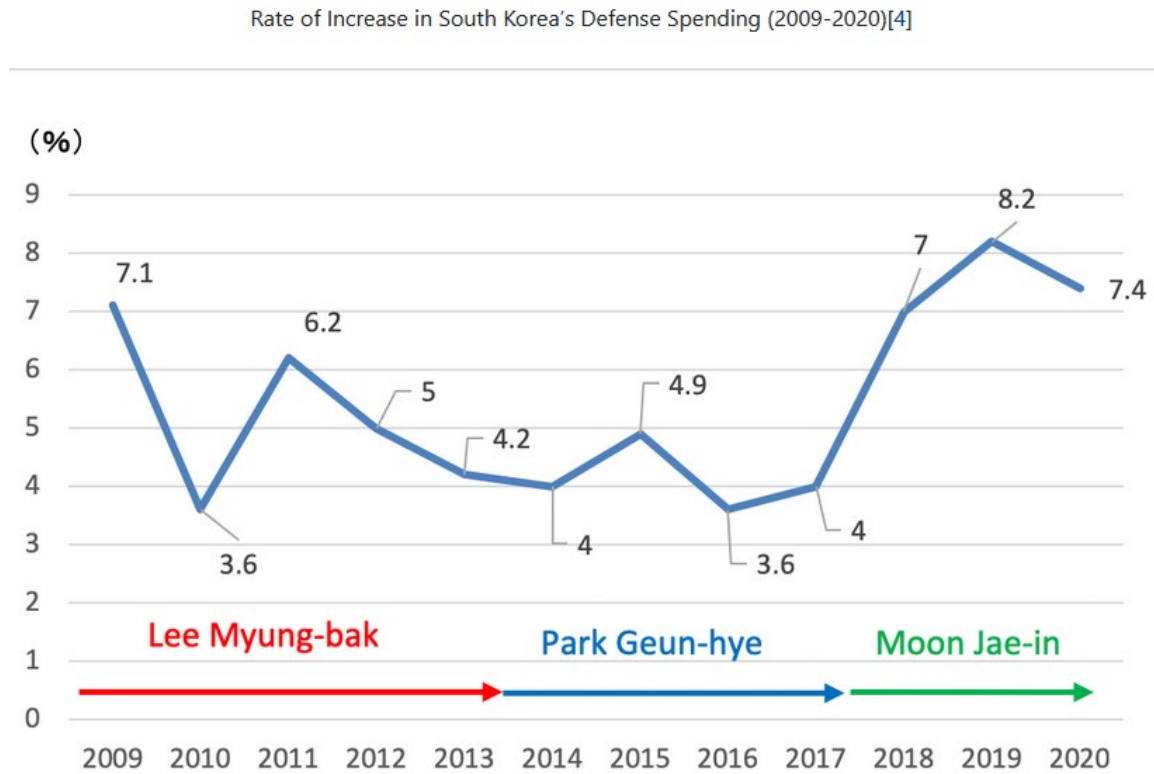


Figure 3. Republic of Korea Defense Expenditures 2009-2020

Source: Kohtaro Ito, “What to Make of South Korea’s Growing Defense Spending,” The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, March 12, 2020, <https://www.spf.org/en/>.

¹⁵³ Twomey, *The Military Lens*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, even if the US truly desires a coercive effect within a broader strategic definition of deterrence, or whether the US recognizes any distinction between the two concepts, joint and Army Leadership in the Pacific should remember that deterrence via coercive techniques often fails. Even when the coercive state is more powerful, a coercive approach to deterrence sought by posturing of conventional forces is often insufficient as evidenced by US forward-postured forces' seeming failure to deter Russian annexation of the Donbas Region and Crimea in 2014.¹⁵⁵ While China and Russia are vastly different competitors in many ways, the conceptual underpinnings of the pitfalls of coercive deterrence remain possible in terms of concentrations of heavy conventional forces in Korea proving ineffective in deterring Chinese expansion in the Western Pacific region. Finally, if US strategic tendencies remain constant to trade capital in terms of material and capability for manpower commitments, then a reduction in conventional forward-postured forces in Korea in favor of specialized units that instead leverage partner capability may provide a more suitable means to meet the desired strategic end of deterrence in a more sustainable way.¹⁵⁶

Summary

Introduction supporting sources include multiple primary and secondary historical sources, including T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*,¹⁵⁷ Walter Hermes and

¹⁵⁵ Twomey, *The Military Lens*, 19.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

Robert Sawyer's *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*,¹⁵⁸ and Van Tin Nguyen's biography of MG Van Hieu Nguyen *Major General Nguyen Van Hieu, ARVN: A Revealing Insight of the ARVN and a Unique Perspective of the Vietnam War*.¹⁵⁹ In Section One, the RAND Corporation's *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas* explains how the current strategy employs ABCTs concerning missions by theater, including gunnery, interoperability, and maneuver training down to monthly and weekly levels including costs.¹⁶⁰ Andrew Feickert's *Army Drawdown and Restructuring: Background and Issues for Congress* provides insight into whether recent history shows ABCTs too large for current inter-operability training with multinational partners and too small to delay a threat invasion force without significant rapid reinforcement, as well as the feasibility of reducing deployed conventional footprints vice extensive emergency deployment readiness exercises (EDREs) such as Reforger or Defender Europe 2020.¹⁶¹ David Johnson's *Heavy Armor in the Future Security Environment* study for the RAND corporation helps determine if a smaller conventional footprint is more feasible to train with multinational partners while presenting a smaller target.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Sawyer and Hermes, *Military Advisors in Korea*.

¹⁵⁹ Nguyen, *Major General Nguyen Van Hieu, ARVN: A Revealing Insight of the ARVN and a Unique Perspective of the Vietnam War*.

¹⁶⁰ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*.

¹⁶¹ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*.

¹⁶² Johnson, *Heavy Armor in the Future Security Environment*.

For Section Two, the Center for Army Lessons Learned's *Advise and Assist Brigades: Observations, Insights, and Lessons* helps answer how the Army currently employs SFABs, how the SFAB deployment model formed over time, and possible future deployment options both conceptual and actual.¹⁶³ Leslie Payne and Jan Osburg's *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations* inform potential impacts to SFAB employment plans if they undertake part of the ABCT rotation. It also provides evidence of whether regionally aligned SFABs can fulfill part of the strategic requirement for deployed forces with their current modified table of organization and equipment.¹⁶⁴ Liam Walsh's *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team* relates to SFABs possessing the correct personnel to eliminate all or part of the need for forward-deployed conventional ground forces. SFABs could set the theater more efficiently than conventional units while presenting a smaller materiel footprint and target.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ CALL, *Advise and Assist Brigades*.

¹⁶⁴ Payne and Osburg, *Leveraging Observations of Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan for Global Operations*.

¹⁶⁵ Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Methodology

This work seeks to answer how the current Army strategy employs forward-deployed ABCTs to meet strategic ends. This study includes missions and sub-missions conceptual and actual by theater, including gunnery, interoperability, and maneuver training down to monthly and weekly level. Consequently, what is the current cost of this way in terms of organization, materiel, and personnel, and what is the appropriate measure of performance tied to these costs? This study uses a case study qualitative analysis of historical examples of FSF Advisors, Advising doctrine, and current and forecasted US strategic commitments entailing mechanized force requirements. A case study qualitative approach is necessary to capture the lived experiences of different unit types across the current operating environment in determining if and how different organizations are suitable to use as means in support of US Army strategic commitments while providing the necessary quantifiable analysis associated with costs, capability gaps, and force management options. This study also employs qualitative case study methodology to examine recent Army Force Generation and reduction initiatives to assess the feasibility of increasing the number of ABCTs available to US Army Forces Command.

This research does not involve direct engagement with living persons via interviews, focus groups, and observations to obtain oral histories. Graphics and figures are incorporated in comparing associated costs for supporting questions such as: this

work seeks to answer how the current Army strategy employs forward-deployed ABCTs to meet strategic ends concerning missions and sub-missions conceptual and actual by theater, including gunnery, interoperability, and maneuver training down to monthly and weekly level. Consequently, what is the current cost of this way in terms of organization, materiel, and personnel, and what is the appropriate measure of performance tied to these costs?

Ethical Assurances

As discussed in chapter 1, all identified ethical issues are identified and mitigated within capability thus far to include investigator bias mitigated through source diversification, committee diversification, and independent review diversification. Investigator bias, in many instances, represents a unique qualification to assess the armor branch in terms of investigator background. Investigator background with SFAB deployment experience also represents a distinct qualification to assess the topic of this study as a whole.

Summary

Chapter 5 synthesizes pertinent conclusions, identifies significant themes from chapter 1 through 4, and intends to provide a conclusive inference as to whether each unit studied presents a feasible and suitable solution. The study's conclusion answers if it is, in fact, more viable to reduce deployed conventional footprints vice extensive EDREs such as Reforger or Defender Europe 2020? It is possible given that most combat power will have to deploy from CONUS installations anyway in the event of a high-intensity conflict. Would a smaller conventional footprint be more feasible to train with

multinational partners while presenting a smaller target to threats? Can regionally aligned SFABs fulfill part of the strategic requirement for deployed forces with their current modified table of organization and equipment? If so, do they possess the correct personnel to eliminate all or part of the need for forward-deployed conventional ground forces? Finally, can SFABs set the theater more efficiently than conventional units while presenting a smaller materiel footprint and target?

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Strategic Deterrence

In the broadest strategic context, the 2017 NSS outlines the necessity for strategic deterrence via forward-postured military forces in that “We will maintain a forward military presence capable of deterring and, if necessary, defeating any adversary. We will strengthen our long-standing military relationships and encourage the development of a strong defense net-work with our allies and partners.”¹⁶⁶ The 2018 NDS interprets NSS guidance as “Investments will prioritize ground, air, sea, and space forces that can deploy, survive, operate, maneuver, and regenerate in all domains while under attack. Transitioning from large, centralized, unhardened infrastructure to smaller, dispersed, resilient, adaptive basing that include active and passive defenses will also be prioritized.”¹⁶⁷ Nested within the NDS definition of forward strategic deterrence, the 2018 NMS outlines deterrence within the framework of deterring strategic attack, particularly nuclear attack, and deterring conventional attack.¹⁶⁸

As the American military’s primary ground combat arm, the US Army fulfills the strategic roles of shaping environments, deterring conflict, prevailing in ground combat,

¹⁶⁶ US President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2017), 1.

¹⁶⁷ Secretary of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, 6.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

and consolidating gains. Correspondingly, the 2018 Army Strategy explains its deterrent role as “maintain its conventional deterrence capability with a combination of combat-credible forward forces, robust alliances, and a demonstrated ability to reinforce a region rapidly.”¹⁶⁹ In the context of the Army Strategy and below, “combat credible” is not specified down to any combination of capabilities or mixes of forces. Instead, the Army integrates ends, ways, and means per the Combatant Commanders’ requests based on the strategic estimates of their respective areas of responsibility as outlined in their theater strategies, theater posture statements, and corresponding requests for forces.¹⁷⁰

For example, the USEUCOM mission statement contained in its 2019 theater strategy outlines its vision for forward conventional deterrence as “a full range of multi-domain operations in coordination with Allies and partners to support NATO, deter Russia, assist in the defense of Israel, enable global operations, and counter transnational threats.”¹⁷¹ At its core, the strategy explains the intent of deterrence as altering threat decision calculus by using forward-postured forces that increase responsiveness by reducing distance and time required for decision-making when integrated with a flattened, simplified command and control structure. USEUCOM, in conjunction with NATO, currently employs a “30/30/30/30” mix of forces as a means to achieve

¹⁶⁹ Chief of Staff of the Army and Secretary of Army, “The Army Strategy 2018,” US Army, October 25, 2018, https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/the_army_strategy_2018.pdf.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ US Congress, Senate, *Statement of General Tod D. Wolters*.

conventional deterrence, generally comprising 30 ground combat battalions, 30 aviation squadrons, and 30 warships, all available for employment with 30 days.¹⁷²

US Army Europe, the Army Senior Component Command within USEUCOM supports the forward conventional deterrence component of the USEUCOM theater strategy and posture statements by providing forces to “NATO’s strengthened deterrence and defense posture.”¹⁷³ The US Army contributes to the current force structure through a combination of forces permanently stationed in Europe, such as the 2nd Cavalry Regiment (SBCT) and 173rd IBCT (Airborne). A rotational ABCT also deploys from the US to serve a nine-month rotational tour at various locations across central and eastern Europe, including Germany, Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states since the beginning of the Army RAF model in 2012. American forces operate partnered with NATO and other friendly European security forces in a variety of roles across the full range of military operations and echelons from company to brigade. Partnered operations include 2CR supporting NATO battle group in Poland, and rotational ABCTs conducting interoperability training with the British, multinational VHRTF in Poland and the Baltic states. US Army Europe describes OAR as “bringing units based in the U.S. to Europe for nine months at a time. Atlantic Resolve provides these rotational units with the ability

¹⁷² US Congress, Senate, *Statement of General Tod D. Wolters*.

¹⁷³ US Army Europe and Africa, “Operations: NATO Forward Presence,” accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.europeafrica.army.mil/Operations/>.

to build readiness, increase interoperability, and enhances the bond between allies and partner militaries through international training events.”¹⁷⁴

The theater posture statement of US Central Command states, “To maintain the contested deterrence our recent military actions have reestablished, Iran’s regime must continue to see the US has enough forward-deployed forces for a credible military capability.”¹⁷⁵ Like USEUCOM, USCENTCOM’s strategy seeks to use forward-postured conventional forces to alter the strategic calculus of Iran, Russia, China, and various third-party entities to dissuade conflict and stabilize the region while increasing friendly forces’ responsiveness by reducing distance. Like USEUCOM, USCENTCOM integrates forward-postured conventional forces in conjunction with the host-nation coalition. Allied partners to maximize options and capability via interoperability, however, not in identical ways, as USCENTCOM has no parallel comprehensive, long-standing security organization such as NATO in USEUCOM with semi-permanent, large tactical formations such as Battle Group Poland or the VHRTF.¹⁷⁶

US Army Central, also known as ARCENT or 3rd Army, is the Army Senior Component Command within the USCENTCOM area of responsibility. US Army Central’s mission statement declares, “United States Army Central - America’s land

¹⁷⁴ US Army Europe and Africa, “Operations: NATO Forward Presence.”

¹⁷⁵ US Congress, House, *Statement of General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr. on the Posture of U.S. Central Command*, House Armed Services Committee Hearing, Washington, DC, March 10, 2020, <https://www.centcom.mil/ABOUT-US/POSTURE-STATEMENT/>.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

domain experts in the Middle East and Central- and South Asia - postured through enduring forward presence and robust and capable partnerships to protect US national interests in the central region.”¹⁷⁷ A rotational BCT executing OSS RAF deployment acts as the theater reserve. Rotational brigades supporting OSS train across the full range of military operations and echelons from platoon to brigade with partnered FSFs in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and others.¹⁷⁸

USINDOPACOM states, “USINDOPACOM protects and defends the territory of the United States, its people, and its interests. With allies and partners, USINDOPACOM is committed to enhancing stability in the Asia-Pacific region by promoting security cooperation, encouraging peaceful development, responding to contingencies, deterring aggression, and, when necessary, fighting to win.”¹⁷⁹ Like USEUCOM and USCENTCOM, USINDOPACOM underscores the importance of forward-posturing forces as a means to compete with China and Russia while assuring allies such as the Republic of Korea (RoK), Taiwan, the Philippines, Japan, and Australia. The USINDOPACOM area of responsibility is overwhelmingly maritime, air, and littoral. However, the need for land deterrent forces persists, particularly on the Korean

¹⁷⁷ US Army Central Staff, “Mission,” US Army, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.army.mil/usarpac#org-about>.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ US Indo-Pacific Command Staff, “USINDOPACOM: Area of Responsibility,” US Indo-Pacific Command, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/>.

Peninsula, to deter aggression from the DPRK to reassure the RoK, a vital American ally in East Asia.¹⁸⁰

US Army Pacific, also known as USARPAC, is the Army Service Component Command in USINDOPACOM. US Army Pacific supports the USINDOPACOM commitment to strategic deterrence as outlined in its mission statement, “United States Army Pacific postures and prepares Army forces, sustains and protects those forces in the theater, sets the theater, support the development of an integrated multi-domain Joint force, and builds military relationships that strengthen alliances.”¹⁸¹ Eighth Army, the field army responsible for all US Army forces on the Korean Peninsula, supports the US Army Pacific and USINDOPACOM priorities of strategic deterrence via forward-positioning of conventional forces by providing command and control and Title 10 United States Code manning, training, and equipment support for a mix of permanently stationed logistical hubs and fires units, as well as a rotational BCT. Eighth Army codifies its responsibilities to provide credible deterrence per US Army Pacific, and USINDOPACOM strategic guidance as “Readiness is our number one priority. Eighth Army conducts armistice operations along three lines of effort that create Readiness: Training, Strengthening the Alliance, and Transformation. We must never forget that Korea is not at peace, and Eighth Army remains prepared to ‘Fight Tonight’ - daily.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ US Indo-Pacific Command Staff, “USINDOPACOM: Area of Responsibility.”

¹⁸¹ US Army Pacific Staff, “Mission,” US Army, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.army.mil/usarpac#org-about>.

¹⁸² Eighth Army Staff, “Eighth Army Mission,” Eighth Army, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://Eightharmy.korea.army.mil/site/about/mission.asp>.

All permanently based maneuver units deactivated in Korea in 2014 per the Base Re-Alignment and Closure of the “sequestration” cuts. Notably, to date, ABCTs have completed all of the Korean rotational deployments.¹⁸³

ABCTs in the RAF Model

The strategic deterrent model has its origins in the latter stages of the Global War on Terror and the Obama administration’s subsequent Department of Defense drawdown. As the Global War on Terror ended, the US government planned a policy shift away from protracted stability operations in the Middle East and the large, expensive conventional occupation forces necessary to execute them. This policy shift, in conjunction with “sequestration,” necessitated a sweeping review of force structure changes across the military, notably the Army, by the Congressional Budget Office and CRS from 2012 to 2014 aimed at tailoring the force to fit the new policy goals and fiscal constraints.¹⁸⁴

In its *An Analysis of the Army’s Transformation Programs and Possible Alternatives*, the Congressional Budget Office underscored the significant costs of deploying ABCTs, then known as Heavy Brigade Combat Teams (HBCTs). It compared the 440 C-17 sorties, and 24 days it would take to deploy an entire HBCT/ABCT from a CONUS location to a location overseas with 350 sorties over 19 days for a SBCT and

¹⁸³ Eighth Army Staff, “Eighth Army Mission.”

¹⁸⁴ Frances M. Lussier and Christine Bogusz, *An Analysis of the Army’s Transformation Programs and Possible Alternatives* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2009), 20, 46.

170 sorties over ten days for an IBCT.¹⁸⁵ The high costs in terms of time, money, and transportation assets required to deploy and HBCT/ABCT ran counter to Obama's shift to a lighter, cheaper, and easily deployed force structure. In turn, it served as a significant factor in the reduction of two ABCTs from the Army end strength between 2012 and 2015.¹⁸⁶

The initial installment of the CRS's study on Army drawdown and restructuring in April of 2012 recommended eliminating both ABCTs then permanently based in Europe due to high costs. In their place, the report recommended replacing one of the deactivated BCTs with a permanently based SBCT and a rotational ABCT, marking the inception of what would become the rotational strategic deterrent deployment model the Army currently employs. The report further specified that the rotational ABCT deploy as the US's primary contribution to the NATO Response Force. The April 2012 draft also shifted the Army's interpretation of forces needed to achieve strategic deterrence that had existed since the DuPuy/Abrams reforms of the 1970s. The previous policy stated that the US Army force structure should be capable of fighting two large scale conflicts and one small to intermediate scale conflict simultaneously. Instead, the CRS Study outlined the new strategic guideline as "Deter and Defeat aggression . . . As a nation with important interests in multiple regions, our forces must be capable of deterring and defeating

¹⁸⁵ Lussier and Bogusz, *An Analysis of the Army's Transformation Programs and Possible Alternatives*, 20, 46.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

aggression by an opportunistic adversary in one region even when our forces are committed to a large-scale operation elsewhere.”¹⁸⁷

The May 2012 installment of the CRS Study expanded the recommendation for rotational forces to all COCOMs beginning with an active duty BCT to the OSS rotation to USCENTCOM in 2013.¹⁸⁸ Operation Spartan Shield existed as an enduring mission since Operation Desert Storm in 1991. However, Army National Guard units conducted the mission almost exclusively in that period. The Army shifted to an active-duty rotational brigade in 2013 due to concerns over costs and availability of permanent bases resulting from fluid host nation political environments in the region.¹⁸⁹ Both Congressional Armed Forces Committees and the Department of the Army expressed concern over a capability gap due to the loss of two HBCTs/ABCTs.¹⁹⁰

The January 2013 draft of the CRS’s study was the first installment to capture the Army’s recent doctrinal nomenclature change from HBCT to ABCT.¹⁹¹ The study’s installment also recommended revising the Army Force Generation Model, or ARFORGEN, the force management process during the Global War on Terror to provide deployable brigades for rotations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The recommended Army Force Generation Model revision focused on re-aligning its three phases of training,

¹⁸⁷ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

deployment, and reset with specific regionally aligned units to ensure readiness uniformity and avoid the “readiness cliff” of mass personnel losses post-deployment.¹⁹² This recommendation failed because BCTs were never truly aligned against specific COCOMs recommended by earlier versions of the CRS’s Study. Instead, multiple BCTs rotated through different COCOMs over the ensuing eight years.¹⁹³

The January 2013 draft of the CRS restructuring study also introduced the “third maneuver battalion imperative,” in which the Army, acting on earlier recommendations from CRS, Congressional Budgeting Office, and Department of Defense Studies, deactivated eight BCTs from the Regular Army Force structure between 2013 and 2014. This reduced total Army active-duty end strength from a high of 44 BCTs during the Global War on Terror to 36, with two of the eliminated BCTs being ABCTs. In the deactivated BCTs, sustainment, fires, headquarters, and engineer battalions deactivated completely. However, the two maneuver battalions were retained and assigned to the remaining brigades. The change resulted in the remaining BCTs increasing from two to three maneuver battalions.¹⁹⁴

As a result of the third battalion imperative, the remaining ABCTs grew in size and capability. However, the reduction of two ABCTs from the Regular Army reduced the pool of ABCTs available for regionally aligned deployment from eleven to eight. The ninth remaining ABCT, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, was maintained as a

¹⁹² Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*, 14.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

permanent opposing force at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. The January 2013 CRS draft went so far as to propose eliminating ABCTs from the active-duty Army altogether and moving them to the Army National Guard. However, this proposal was vehemently rejected by then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey over concerns of increases in time for mobilization and the resulting loss of capability to the military collectively.¹⁹⁵

The March 2013 edition of the CRS study recommended integrating Army National Guard BCTs into the RAF deployment model to mitigate operational strain on the reduced Regular Army.¹⁹⁶ This practice resumed in September of 2018 with the 130th ABCT of the North Carolina Army National Guard deploying in support of OSS to USCENTCOM for the first time since the beginning of the RAF deployment model in 2013. The March 2013 installment also recommended continued significant reductions in permanently based units in Europe. The report advocated removing all remaining Army maneuver forces in USEUCOM and relocating them to a CONUS location or deactivating them altogether. Feickert recommended leaving the 173rd IBCT (Airborne) headquartered at Vicenza, Italy, and 2nd Cavalry Regiment headquartered at Vilseck, Germany. However, he further recommended reducing many smaller garrisons occupied by their subordinate units as part of the corresponding round of Base Realignment and Closure.¹⁹⁷ The March 2013 report expanded on “regionalizing” BCTs within the RAF

¹⁹⁵ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*, 23-32.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

model. It described how regionalized BCTs leveraged capabilities by better understanding regional operating environments, cultures, and interoperability host nations partnered security forces via habitual relationships.¹⁹⁸ However, this recommendation was never implemented, as the demand for ABCTs requested by the USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USINDOPACOM commanders simultaneously on a pool of eight available ABCTs proved infeasible.¹⁹⁹

Until the October 2013 draft of the CRS Army Restructuring study, only the USEUCOM rotation had been recommended to be filled precisely and exclusively by an ABCT, detailing that a rotational ABCT should always be postured forward in Europe as part of the NATO Response Force. However, with the October 2013 draft, the annotation of the likelihood of significant land force competition in Korea suggested the need for the Army rotational BCT in USINDOPACOM to possess heavy and mechanized capabilities.²⁰⁰ The October 13 draft also specified the two ABCTs to be cut from the Regular Army as the 170th and 172nd ABCTs then-stationed in Germany.²⁰¹

The February 2014 installment of the study, released during significant reduction efforts across the Department of Defense, recommended that further Army end strength be reduced further from eight to twelve ABCTs for a projected end strength of thirty-two total BCTs. In the February 2014 draft, Feickert also asserted that significant permanent

¹⁹⁸ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*, 27.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

party excess forces remained in Europe and recommended further reduction.²⁰² The reductions would ultimately decrease total active-duty Army end strength from a high of 570,000 personnel during the Global War on Terror to 490,000. However, the recommendation did not specify additional ABCTs as previous installments had in 2012 and 2013, likely influenced by the need generated for the remaining ABCTs as the implementation of the RAF model got underway.²⁰³

ABCT Employment Within the RAF Model

Since the implementation of the Army's RAF model in 2013, the USCENTCOM OSS, USEUCOM OAR, and USINDOPACOM Korea rotation deployments have been conducted exclusively by ABCTs. Until 2018, all three rotations had been conducted by exclusively active duty ABCTs until the 130th ABCT of the North Carolina Army National Guard executed the OSS rotation. While the RAF model was not developed exclusively for ABCTs, the USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USINDOPACOM commanders have continually requested ABCTs to fulfill those missions due to the nature of the threats in their respective areas of responsibility. More specifically, the fundamental shift in US strategic security goals outlined in the 2017 NSS marked a stark change from the Global War on Terror era focus on counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and global stability operations to a renewed emphasis on great power competition.²⁰⁴ The

²⁰² Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*, 13.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ US President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2017), 1.

Army still considered the ABCT the most capable of the three BCT types. As one Army analyst remarked of the HBCT/ABCT in McGrath's *Army at War: Change in the Midst of Conflict*, "I think we got that one right."²⁰⁵

As a result of the national policy shift to great power competition, the NDS, NMS, service strategies, and theater strategies all evolved to reflect the change in priorities. Specifically, USEUCOM defined Russia as the greatest threat to stability in the European area of responsibility. USEUCOM's assessment originated from significant military modernization efforts launched in 2013, the annexation of the Donbas Region of Ukraine in 2014, and the latent threat posed to the Baltic States via Russian irregular warfare and malign actions below the threshold of armed conflict.

In response to a conventionally resurgent and increasingly bold and aggressive Russia, USEUCOM has continually requested a rotational ABCT to fulfill OAR, particularly after losing permanently stationed ABCTs during the sequestration era. Since 2015, rotational ABCTs on OAR have occupied garrisons all over Central and Eastern Europe to include Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Romania, and others. Rotational ABCTs have trained in all scenarios across the spectrum of conflict, range of military operations, and echelons from fire team to BCT.²⁰⁶

OAR rotational ABCTs partner with NATO, European Union, host nation, and other multinational forces. They include combined maneuvers at the Joint Multinational Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany, maneuvers with the VHRTF in Poland and the

²⁰⁵ McGrath, *Army at War*, 398.

²⁰⁶ US Congress, Senate, *Statement of General Tod D. Wolters*.

Baltic, operations with NATO Battle Group Poland, and multiple EDREs by rail, sea, air, and ground. EDREs include planning for Defender Europe, the largest exercise of its kind since the Cold War era's Reforger exercises. USEUCOM exclusively requested ABCTs to provide a division-size unit of ground combat capability across all three BCT types in conjunction with the 173rd IBCT (Airborne), US Army Europe's contribution to USEUCOM's theater quick response force, and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment (SBCT), most recently a rotational unit itself as part of NATO Battle Group Poland.²⁰⁷

As with USEUCOM and Russia, the USCENTCOM theater posture statement unequivocally describes Iran as the greatest regional threat in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility and thus signifies Iran as the focal point of USCENTCOM deterrence efforts.²⁰⁸ USCENTCOM has exclusively requested ABCTs to fulfill the OSS rotational maneuver force mission. USCENTCOM employs multiple different unit types, including IBCTs, SBCTs, and SFABs, to support contingency missions elsewhere in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria and Operation Freedom's Sentinel/NATO Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan.²⁰⁹

ABCTs on rotation supporting OSS have conducted both training and combat missions across the full range of military operations, spectrum of conflict, and echelons from fire team to ABCT. Combat missions fulfilled by ABCTs supporting OSS have included providing peacekeeping forces in support of Operation Inherent Resolve in

²⁰⁷ US Congress, Senate, *Statement of General Tod D. Wolters*.

²⁰⁸ US Congress, House, *Statement of General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Syria, providing strike cells and advisors in support of the Iraqi Army in support of Operation Inherent Resolve in Mosul, securing fires assets in theater, and providing security and quick response forces in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel/NATO Operation Resolute Support. The rotational ABCT provides the Mechanized Reaction Force. It consists of a battalion task force of armored and mechanized infantry force packages postured in Kuwait. It deters and, if necessary, interdicts Iranian conventional forces to provide early warning, reaction time, and maneuver space for additional forces to arrive.²¹⁰

The OSS rotational ABCTs also conduct multiple partnered, coalition, and host nation interoperability operations, including Operation Eager Lion, a combined arms battalion task force live-fire exercise with the Jordanian Army. Other exercises include Operation Bright Star, another battalion task force exercise with the Egyptian Army, and Operation Desert Observer, a multi-armored and mechanized battalion combined arms maneuver exercise the Kuwaiti Army in the Udairi Desert. The ABCTs have also traditionally conducted company exercises with Bahraini and Emirati forces. OSS rotational ABCTs also provide security cooperation to the Kuwait Naval Base.²¹¹

While the focus of strategic deterrence for USINDOPACOM is China, the conventional threat posed by the DPRK to US-allied RoK has necessitated heavy American ground forces since the start of the Korean War in 1950. Consequently,

²¹⁰ US Congress, House, *Statement of General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr.*

²¹¹ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army Armor Company Commander deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield, February 18 to November 8, 2017.

USINDOPACOM, via US Army Pacific and Eighth Army, has requested ABCTs to fulfill the maneuver brigade rotation to the Korean Peninsula since the beginning of the USINDOPACOM RAF mission 2014. The conventional deterrent role consisted of units permanently stationed on the Korean Peninsula, such as the 2nd Infantry Division and 1st Battalion, 72nd Armored Battalion from the armistice 1953 until 2014.²¹²

The RAND Corporation study *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas* suggested it was more efficient to provide conventional deterrence in Korea via rotational forces.²¹³ The increasing costs of permanently basing American units overseas despite rising RoK subsidies necessitated the change to rotational forces and increased RoK defense spending resulting in greater self-sufficiency and increased capability of their armed forces.²¹⁴ In 2014, the remaining permanently stationed maneuver battalions in Korea deactivated. The Korea RAF rotation began with two consecutive combined arms battalions from 3rd ABCT, 1st Cavalry Division over the next 18 months, starting with 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment and ending with 3rd Battalion, Eighth Cavalry Regiment. Following the battalion rotations, a full ABCT from 1st Cavalry Division replaced 3-8 CAV, and the rotation has proceeded with whole ABCTs since.²¹⁵

²¹² Eighth Army Staff, “Eighth Army Mission.”

²¹³ Lostumbo et al., *The Strategic Benefits, Risks, and Costs of U.S. Military Presence Overseas*.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Eighth Army Staff, “Eighth Army Mission.”

ABCTs on rotation in Korea operate exclusively in a partnered capacity with RoK and UN counterparts, ultimately falling under an allied chain of command headed by the recent RoK assumption of command of the UN peacekeeping mission on the Korean peninsula. With allies, rotational ABCTs to Korea conduct multiple deployment readiness and response exercises across all echelons to deter and, if necessary, defeat conventional threat actions from the DPRK. Partnered interoperability operations may range from conducting division-level maneuver with partnered RoK brigades, combined arms breaching, operational decontamination, non-combatant evacuation operation training, and counter-weapons of mass destruction operations training.²¹⁶

Impacts on ABCT Readiness

The shift to the RAF model created many opportunities for the employment and optimization of American armored forces. The change in focus to great power competition allowed ABCTs to train on core decisive action capabilities once again to rebuild competitive advantages in combined arms maneuver. Skills that had atrophied while armor units deployed in the economy of force roles during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, such as gunnery, combined arms breaching, battalion, and brigade maneuver, were once again mission essential tasks. Likewise, the opportunity to train expeditionary deployment operations, strategic mobility, and reception, staging, onward movement, and integration were invaluable to increasing the capability of armored formations to deploy effectively and efficiently. The opportunity to

²¹⁶ Eighth Army Staff, "Eighth Army Mission."

train interoperability with allied, coalition, host nation and other multinational partners increased the capabilities and lethality of armored forces exponentially.²¹⁷

Before RAF model implementation, the April 2012 edition of the CRS Army Restructuring study advised of the potential for adverse impacts on the health of the force from the reduction in force structure and increase in operational tempo.²¹⁸ Although the RAF model's shift created many opportunities, the cost reduction of two ABCTs during the sequestration era from eleven to nine effectively reduced the available pool of deployable ABCTs to eight apart from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment permanently stationed at the National Training Center. This development coincided with adopting the RAF model, creating a situation in which USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USINDOPACOM were all requesting ABCTs simultaneously to fulfill their respective rotational strategic deterrence missions. As a result, every one of the Army's available eight ABCTs was deployed, resetting from deployment or training to relieve a deployed ABCT on a perpetual nine-month cycle. With only eight deployable ABCTs, the Army did not possess the minimum threshold of nine to execute the three rotations sustainably without surging.²¹⁹

The benefits of training core capabilities and interoperability created an inflection point with organizational stress resulting from the continual deployment cycle manifested in negative impacts to equipment maintenance and personnel retention. Operational

²¹⁷ Eighth Army Staff, "Eighth Army Mission."

²¹⁸ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

readiness rates dropped across the armored force as vehicles and equipment suffered from a combination of wear and tear from constant training and deployment combined with rushed or substandard services to keep equipment functioning per compressed deployment timelines. Initially, wear and tear on some equipment was mitigated by pre-positioned stocks in the theater. The practice was more cost-efficient, at least early on, due to the lower cost of unit deployment from CONUS locations.²²⁰

In 2015, Army Forces Command Commanding General Robert Abrams determined that units deploying on strategic deterrence would bring their organic equipment due to the training units would receive mobility operations and increased incentives to keep their fleets at higher levels of readiness. While the policy shift appeared to achieve the desired effect, the trade-off came in increased wear and tear on organic equipment from continual use and deployment. The Army's change from the Army Force Generation Model force management model to the Sustained Readiness Model exacerbated the strain by eliminating dedicated reset periods following deployments.²²¹

Instead, the Army expected units to achieve a higher state of readiness and deployable status faster by combining reset periods with individual and small unit training. The further contraction of continual deployment timelines placed even more strain on equipment and personnel across with less time to regenerate combat power to

²²⁰ Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring*.

²²¹ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army Armor Company Commander deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield, February 18 to November 8, 2017.

always meet the increasing demand for armored forces at the highest stage of readiness to include the Army Reserve and Army National Guard. With the US policy shift to great power competition in 2017, the operational strain on the eight-rotating active-duty ABCTs was alleviated somewhat by the Army's decision to convert two existing BCTs into ABCTs. While this increase augmented the existing supply, adding ABCTs to the Army's force structure is a costly proposition compared to other options.²²²

Adding ABCTs is likely not a sustainable option heading into an environment of increasing competing demands and resource constraints. Given the minimum of nine ABCTs necessary to execute all three RAF rotations simultaneously and sustainably, an increase to 10, or even 11, nominally reduces operational strain on the armor force. However, a minimum of 12 ABCTs is necessary to meet all enduring rotational responsibilities while retaining the ability to surge additional ABCTs into theater or train division and higher operations at home station and CONUS locations. Likewise, the Army's shift from the Sustained Readiness Model to the Aligned Readiness and Modernization Module (ReARMM) force generation model aims to reduce operational strain on the force by providing dedicated reset periods for re-deploying units to regenerate combat power.²²³

²²² MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army Armor Company Commander deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield, February 18 to November 8, 2017.

²²³ Ibid.

Security Force Assistance Brigade Capabilities

Having examined ABCT structure and capabilities, this study now transitions to analysis of SFABs to enable comprehensive comparison. Throughout the Global War on Terror, the Army experimented with multiple ad-hoc advising formations to AASLE partnered Afghan and Iraqi security forces. The lack of continuity resulting from the rotational deployment cycle hindered long-term mission success. Likewise, these ad-hoc advisor teams eroded BCT readiness because they drew heavily from senior leadership and staff within the BCTs to fill them. The result was that many BCTs lost entire command teams and staffs for up to a year as their leadership served on advisor teams, leaving BCTs unable to train, deploy, or operate at echelon. Another unexpected consequence resulted in large numbers of field grade officers opting to deploy on advisor tours instead of working key and developmental assignments, disrupting career progression timelines and rating chains. The demand on Army Special Operations Forces for advisors in both irregular warfare and conventional force advise, assist, support, liaison, and enable missions also presented the special warfare community with more missions than it could support any given time.²²⁴

In 2016, Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley established SFAC and six SFABs. The Army described the SFAB as “the Army’s dedicated conventional organization for conducting security force assistance. The SFAB’s capabilities allow it to execute security force assistance tasks with FSFs in conjunction with joint, interagency,

²²⁴ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom’s Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

intergovernmental, and multinational partners anywhere in the world.”²²⁵ Five of the six SFABs reside in the Regular Army, with 1st SFAB stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, 2nd SFAB stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 3rd SFAB at Fort Hood, Texas, 4th SFAB at Fort Carson, Colorado, and 5th SFAB at Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Washington. The sixth SFAB, the 54th, is an Army National Guard unit comprised of guardsmen from all over the country.²²⁶

Each SFAB consists of two infantry battalions, one cavalry squadron, one fires battalion, a brigade engineer battalion (BEB), a brigade support battalion (BSB), and a brigade headquarters and headquarters company. Command at all echelons in SFABs is considered a broadening tour following a subsequent command, with promotion and centralized selection list rates for Majors and Lieutenant Colonels generally above service averages.²²⁷ Each battalion and squadron consist of advisor companies, troops, or batteries, which comprise combat advisor teams, field artillery advising teams in the fires battalion, engineer advisor teams in the BEB, and logistics advisor teams in the brigade support battalion.

Except for the military intelligence and signal companies in the BEBs, every unit at echelon from the combat advisor team to the brigade staff is structured to AASLE a partnered foreign security force up to two echelons above or below the team’s echelon.

²²⁵ HQDA, ATP 3-96.1.

²²⁶ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom’s Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

²²⁷ Ibid.

For example, the brigade staff can AASLE up to a Corps FSF partner or down to a Company FSF partner. The basic unit of the SFAB is the combat advisor team, which, unlike the platoon in a BCT, possesses no junior Soldiers. Combat advisor teams consist of non-commissioned officers fulfilling advising across all warfighting functions led by an officer and senior non-commissioned officer. SFABs organically lack sufficient maneuver forces to secure themselves. They must be augmented to conduct AASLE and security operations simultaneously.²²⁸

According to Army Training Publication 3-96.1, *Security Force Assistance Brigade*, SFAB capabilities include “security cooperation and security assistance regional engagement missions. The SFAB facilitates information flow, develops training, and prepares Soldiers, leaders, and formations to conduct effective regional engagement. The SFABs provide the combatant commander and the Army Service Component Command (ASCC) a responsive, expeditionary force with region-specific training.”²²⁹

Ideally, SFABs embed with partnered FSFs during operations up to and including the last covered and concealed position short of the objective in a tactical setting. Conceptually, this means that an advisor team co-locates with the partnered commander and staff to enable shared understanding, aid decision making, and enable the partnered force by integrating US fires and intelligence support assets. This concept originates from the “One War Concept” developed by then-Commander of Military Assistance

²²⁸ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom’s Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

²²⁹ HQDA, ATP 3-96.1, vii.

Command-Vietnam, and later Army Chief of Staff, GEN Creighton Abrams in the early 1970s.²³⁰

Similarly, the SFAB concept borrows from the “Abrams Charter,” a concept where personnel from units such as the Special Forces and Ranger Regiments rotated between billets and the conventional Army to raise the quality of leadership unit standards army-wide theoretically. The idea is the same for the SFABs, as advisors rotate between SFAB and conventional army assignments throughout their careers. SFABs train and equip to AASLE partnered forces in all settings across the range of military operations; however, to include security cooperation, security force assistance, and embedding at the partnered institutional level to build and enable training, doctrine, and partnered force management capacity. SFAB commanders retain rating responsibility for organic and assigned personnel on deployment with few exceptions. Finally, the SFAB organization mirrors a BCT down to the squad, fire team, and vehicle commander level because they can grow into full-sized IBCTs or ABCTs in the event the Army needs to generate additional BCTs rapidly.²³¹

Recent SFAB Operational Experience

1st SFAB, commanded by BG Scot Jackson, deployed to Afghanistan for Operation Freedom’s Sentinel and NATO Operation Resolute Support in the spring of 2018. From April 2018 until January 2019, 1st SFAB operated in battalion task forces

²³⁰ McGrath, *Army at War*, 261.

²³¹ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom’s Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

dispersed across the five TAAC regions of Afghanistan conducting AASLE operations supporting both Afghan Army and police forces. 1st SFAB's main effort centered on conducting AASLE supporting the Afghan Army regional training centers to build partner capacity in both training and force generation processes, as imbedding at the main Afghan government sustainment hub in Kabul to optimize partnered security force logistics. BG Donn Hill commanding 2nd SFAB relieved 1st SFAB in January of 2019, with 1st SFAB re-deploying to Fort Benning. The deployment was deemed successful, and the Army considered the SFAB concept validated from that point forward.²³²

BG Hill and 2nd SFAB also tested expeditionary advisor package missions embedded with Afghan units until insider attacks in 2019 caused a moratorium on partnered missions. This change in operating restrictions forced 2nd SFAB to host partner forces at larger coalition bases in most cases for the duration of the deployment.²³³

3rd SFAB, commanded by BG Charles Masaracchia, relieved 2nd SFAB in Afghanistan in 2019. Unlike the previous two SFAB deployments, however, the 3rd SFAB deployed to Iraq for Operation Inherent Resolve and Afghanistan and Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support. The dual mission set forced the 3rd SFAB to task organize into two brigades (minus) task forces, with approximately 35 percent of the unit deploying to Iraq under the brigade deputy commander COL Mark Andres and 65 percent of the unit under BG Masaracchia to Afghanistan. Despite the challenges of using

²³² MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

²³³ Ibid.

a dual command structure dispersed across the USCENTCOM areas of responsibility, the 3rd SFAB proved the concept feasible as Task Force Iraq conducted AASLE supporting the 9th Iraqi Army and Kurdish Peshmerga forces fighting Islamic State of Iraq. At the same time, Task Force Afghanistan inherited 1st and 2nd SFAB's previous missions supporting the Afghan security forces.²³⁴

In addition to resuming expeditionary advising operations in Afghanistan, the 3rd SFAB also provided logistics advisor teams supporting the Nato Special Operations Command-Afghanistan mission to optimize and build sustainment capability within the Afghan special operations forces. Also unique to the 3rd SFAB's Afghanistan deployment was the peace treaty between the Afghan Government and Taliban signed in the spring of 2020. 3rd SFAB played a vital role in the drawdown of coalition forces from Afghanistan by transitioning bases such as Gamberi over to Afghan forces and conducting much of the mobility planning to move coalition forces out of Afghanistan.

As the coalition presence in Afghanistan drew down, the 3rd SFAB retained most of its mission set and advisor capacity while reducing forces by transitioning advising, and outright command, responsibilities for entire TAACs over to SFAB battalion task forces. For example, 1st battalion, 3rd SFAB assumed control of all coalition forces in TAAC-East, while 3rd squadron, 3rd SFAB assumed command of all coalition forces in TAAC-South. The American drawdown in Afghanistan precluded the 4th SFAB from deploying the entire brigade to USCENTCOM so that the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd SFAB had.

²³⁴ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

However, the 4th SFAB did rotate designated teams and task forces through both Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, 1st SFAB began its second deployment, rotating battalion, company, and team task forces to Africa in 2020.²³⁵

Current and Future Plans for SFAB Employment

As of Spring 2021, SFAC, has no plans to continue deploying entire SFABs at a time. This change is partly due to the US drawdown in USCENTCOM and the corresponding reduced need for forces, as was the case previously for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd SFAB's deployments. However, the demand for SFABs across all geographic COCOMs has increased to the point that SFAC has developed an internal regional-alignment model for the active-duty SFABs heavily based on the Army's RAF deployment model. Within SFAC's regional alignment model, 1st SFAB aligns with US Southern Command, 2nd SFAB aligns with USEUCOM (specifically Africa), 3rd SFAB aligns with USCENTCOM, 4th SFAB aligns with USEUCOM (Europe), and 5th SFAB aligns with USINDOPACOM. Each brigade intends to deploy rotational advisor battalion task forces on a perpetual basis to provide combatant commanders an enduring conventional AASLE capability. Active-duty SFABs retain the ability to deploy as brigades, and SFAC has plans to integrate the 54th SFAB from the Army National Guard into the internal regional alignment model as well.²³⁶

²³⁵ MAJ John T. Pelham IV, personal experience as a US Army SFAB Combat Advisor Team Leader including deployment in support of Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support, August 30, 2018 to July 29, 2020.

²³⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How does the Army currently interpret the strategic need for forward-deployed forces, and what are the current means and ways for meeting this end?

A thorough examination of strategies and supporting policy and strategic guidance across the grand strategic, institutional strategic, and theater strategic levels held two general themes with few exceptions. The NSS, NDS, NMS, Army Strategy, and USEUCOM/USCENTCOM/USINDOPACOM theater strategies and posture statements all commonly outlined the need for deterrence as key to protecting the US and allied interests worldwide. Likewise, the same documents stated the need to achieve strategic deterrence via overseas posturing of US forces. However, none of them specified capabilities or composition required to achieve the desired ends aside from overseas positioning.

The joint force fulfills the strategic responsibility to provide deployed deterrent forces via a combination of permanently stationed and rotational units across each geographic COCOM. The Army retains permanently stationed units of all types to US Northern Command and USEUCOM, permanently stationed sustainment and enabler units across all geographic COCOMs. However, the Army provides the bulk of maneuver forces or combat arms units to US Southern Command, USEUCOM (including Africa), USCENTCOM, and USINDOPACOM via the RAF deployment concept. RAF missions include OAR in USEUCOM, OSS in USCENTCOM, and a rotation to the Korean Peninsula in support of the Eighth Army USINDOPACOM. Since the implementation of

the RAF concept in 2013, exclusively ABCTs executed the OAR, OSS, and Korea deterrence rotations.

The Army's reliance on ABCTs to fulfill the responsibility of providing forward postured deterrent forces appears based on the former Army force structure at the inception of the RAF concept in 2013. In other words, the limited amount of SBCTs at the time combined with the lingering commitment of IBCTs to Operations New Dawn and Enduring Freedom in the sequestration environment of overall military drawdown resulted in the incorporation of ABCTs into all three rotational missions established an operational precedent. This precedent, combined with COCOM requests for heavy mechanized forces and Army efforts to justify the cost of armored troops within the Army force structure in a period of austerity, resulted in the exclusive use of ABCTs for Army rotational strategic deterrence still currently practiced. None of the contributing factors resulting from the Army's sole reliance on ABCTs for rotational deterrent deployment account for the formation of the SFABs in 2016. Changes in the strategic and operating environments over the last eight years combined with recent SFAB operational performance suggest that the SFAB is suitable for integration into the RAF concept in a way that precludes the Army from having to employ ABCTs exclusively for rotational strategic deterrence.

What are current ABCT deployed configurations compared to their Modified Tables of Organization and Equipment, as well as possible impacts from increasing or decreasing the existing rotational force structure?

Since the RAF deployment model began in 2013, rotational ABCTs deployed in their organic force structure of two combined arms battalions, one cavalry squadron, one

fires battalion, one BEB, one brigade support battalion, and the BCT headquarters. With the reduction in BCTs under sequestration in 2014, the ABCT force structure changed to add a third combined arms battalion. In 2015, rotational ABCTs stopped using pre-positioned equipment in theater and instead deployed with all organic equipment from CONUS home stations and the guidance of then-US Army Force Command, Commanding General Robert Abrams. ABCTs continue to deploy their entire force for RAF rotations except for 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd ABCT, 1st Cavalry Division in 2014, and 3rd Battalion, Eighth Cavalry Regiment, 3rd ABCT, 1st Cavalry Division in 2015 to the Korea USINDOPACOM rotation.

Increasing the amount of overseas rotational armored forces could cost as much as \$200 million annually in 2021 dollars for every additional ABCT deployed, or an increase upwards of \$600 million annually to deploy an armored or mechanized division compared to a single ABCT. Inversely, cost reductions and savings project as approximately \$35 million annually in 2021 dollars per every battalion reduced from the current deployed force structure, or an estimated \$40 million for a combined arms battalion task force compared to an estimated \$200 million for an entire ABCT. By comparison, SFAB deployment and basing within similar parameters projects as approximately \$50 to 60 million dollars for the whole brigade and exponentially less for a battalion task force or equivalent.

Beyond pure fiscal cost, allied political and military-strategic commentary across USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USINDOPACOM tend to focus less on the size and specific capability of US forces requested and more on partner interoperability. For example, NATO analysis of US force posture in Europe centers more on US

interoperability with the VHRTF in Eastern Europe than the specific need for a BCT, let alone an ABCT. Likewise, defense commentary among the RoK and other Western Pacific allies revolves not only on interoperability vice specific US capabilities in light of increased RoK defense expenditures but also on robust US naval and air presence in the region, more so than a large US army conventional footprint.

The focus on interoperability vice-specific capability creates opportunities for SFABs to leverage their doctrinal capabilities within the RAF model. There are some fringe concerns among allies such as Germany and Poland that reducing overall US forward footprints will negatively impact host nation economies. Opportunities exist to reduce costs by employing a combination of SFAB and smaller conventional forces into the rotational deterrent concept.

How might negative consequences from prolonged operational tempo on limited mechanized forces be alleviated per recent Chief of Staff guidance while still meeting strategic requirements?

The negative impacts resulting from continual deployment are not unique to the armored force in terms of diminished equipment readiness from constant deployment and use. Wear and tear on organizational equipment and constrained maintenance and reset windows within perpetual deployment cycles impacted all BCTs as part of an Army primarily at war for the previous two decades. Likewise, the challenges posed to Soldier retention from fatigue resulting from continual deployment and increased alternative employment options in an improving civilian economy over the last decade are also not unique to ABCTs.

What separates and exacerbates the adverse effects on ABCTs since the end of the Global War on Terror is the continuation in a perpetual deployment cycle as ABCTs

executed RAF deterrence rotations. Simultaneously, the operational tempo for SBCTs and IBCTs decreased to that of the ABCTs. Furthermore, the Army experienced a functional shift from the BCT as the basic unit of action to divisions and corps in conducting large-scale combat operations as part of great power competition. The constant deployment of three out of an available eleven ABCTs in the current active force structure at any given time constrains Army corps and divisions' ability to train their entire formation at home stations or CONUS locations to operate at full strength.

By integrating SFABs into the RAF deployment cycle and decreasing the amount of rotationally deployed conventional forces, the Army can create opportunities to increase readiness at the BCT level in areas such as maintenance and retention. Perhaps even more importantly for future operations, however, this course of action builds lethality in terms of proficiency in corps and division combined arms maneuver and wide-area security competencies by retaining more ABCTs at home station for training. With the ongoing shift from the Sustained Readiness Model to the ReARMM force generation model, integrating SFABs into the RAF deployment concept in a way that optimizes their unique capabilities decreases strain on the armored force, and builds overall Army readiness.

Does recent history show the formation too large for current inter-operability training with multinational partners and too small to delay a threat invasion force without significant rapid reinforcement?

RAF deterrent deployments over the previous eight years do not necessarily suggest that a BCT is too large to achieve partner interoperability in maneuver capacity. However, mission requirements across OAR, OSS, or USINDOPACOM Korea have not demanded BCT level maneuver as part of partnered operations. For example, ABCTs

executing OAR have deployed smaller echelons from company team to battalion task force to train across Central and Eastern Europe with virtually all NATO partners to include the VHRTF. However, the entire ABCT has yet to operate with a partnered force at one time. Likewise, ABCTs deployed in support of OSS in USCENTCOM have provided battalion task force and smaller units to partnered training operations such as Operations Bright Star in Egypt, Eager Lion in Jordan, and Desert Observer in Kuwait. However, ABCTs deployed in support of OSS have yet to execute any partnered operations involving the entire BCT at any one time. ABCTs deployed to Korea conduct constant EDREs and combined arms live-fire exercises with RoK and UN partners. They have yet to execute any of these missions with the entire BCT maneuvering or operating together at once.

While research suggests that entire ABCTs are not necessary for practical partnered interoperability training and operations, it also indicates that rotational ABCTs have not been incredibly effective in altering threat decision calculus as a deterrent either. For example, the presence of an ABCT postured in Poland and Germany in 2014 did not deter the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Donbas region of Ukraine, nor did it appreciably decrease Russian hybrid warfare activities in the Baltic States. Similarly, a rotational ABCT supporting OSS in USCENTCOM in 2014 had no noticeable impact on Islamic State of Iraq or Iranian operations in Iraq, Russian, Syrian, Iranian, or Turkish operations in the Syrian Civil War, or Iranian operations in the Yemeni civil war. In Korea, ABCTs are probably not the deciding factor in terms of means considering the need for US fires, naval, and air forces in the region.

Furthermore, the Russian destruction of two Ukrainian mechanized brigades by massed fires alone in the opening phase of the Donbas invasion suggests that an ABCT is not even necessarily sufficient to delay a superior enemy force without significant augmentation, at least in USEUCOM. The improving massed fires and conventional capabilities of the DPRK present a very similar concern on the Korean Peninsula. Even with fires parity and other enabler support, a rotational ABCT would likely need significant conventional augmentation from host nation partners to survive and delay, let alone defeat, a superior attacking enemy force.

Given that evidence suggests entire rotational ABCTs are unnecessary for effective partner interoperability operations, opportunities exist to reduce the conventional overseas footprint while compensating with SFAB integration. Furthermore, the debatable efficacy of ABCTs in achieving deterrence against peer threats without significant augmentation suggests that, aside from being unnecessarily large to achieve effective interoperability, rotational ABCTs may be too small to delay or defeat a superior attacking adversary effectively. Inversely, it may make rotational ABCTs more of an unnecessary target than a sufficiently early warning force. If a rotational ABCT needs augmentation to deter, delay effectively, or even defeat a threat force, then the integration of SFABs is optimal to achieve a deterrent effect.

If they were to take on all or part of the existing ABCT rotation, what would impact current and future SFAB employment plans?

After the inaugural deployments of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd SFABs in their entirety to the USCENTCOM AOR supporting Operations Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Kuwait and Freedom's Sentinel/NATO Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan, SFAC has

implemented an internal RAF deployment model. 1st SFAB aligns with SOUTHCOM, 2nd SFAB aligns with USEUCOM (Africa), 3rd SFAB with USCENTCOM, 4th SFAB to USEUCOM (Europe) 5th SFAB to USINDOPACOM. Each SFAB rotates battalion task forces through deployment vice deploying the entire brigade at any one time. Each SFAB retains the ability to surge the whole brigade into its respective theater if needed.

Integrating SFABs into the current Army RAF strategic deterrent concept is feasible without changing their existing regional alignment within the SFAC concept. Potential impacts lie in whether SFAB battalion task forces are sufficient to offset the amount of conventional rotational forces reduced, if any. For example, advisor battalion task forces are likely sufficient if entire ABCTs remain a forward deterrent. If rotational ABCTs decrease to one battalion task force, multiple SFAB battalion task forces would be necessary to embed with the number of partnered forces necessary to leverage partner capability to compensate for the loss of US conventional land capability. It is infeasible to surge the entire SFAB in perpetuity without permanently stationing them in their respective regions, a development that renders moot the concept of rotational deployment and lacks traction in a political environment seeking to reduce costs and overseas commitments.

What are the impacts resulting from the organizational, materiel, and personnel changes compared to an ABCT rotation?

Organizational impacts to reducing the amount of overseas rotational conventional forces include the loss of some combined arms capability regarding how many combined arms battalions or cavalry squadrons reduce if the Army chose to deploy an echelon smaller than an ABCT. Reducing the deployed rotational force below BCT

size means losing part of the BCT's fires battalion depending on what organic fires assets the BCT places in support of the deployed combined arms battalion task force(s) instead. However, the reduction in fires previously provided by the rotational BCT represents a minor loss of tactical capability. Thus, it is compensated by existing theater fires capabilities and insufficient to produce a decisive tactical result against a numerically superior peer threat force anyway.

Reducing the deployed rotational force structure below BCT size likely means a reduction in organic tactical sustainment capability. The BCT likely will not deploy its entire BSB to support the combined-arms task force(s). As with the decrease in BCT fires battalion capability, however, theater sustainment infrastructure within each COCOM is entirely sufficient to compensate for the reduction. The reduction in some tactical sustainment capability by not deploying the entire BSB or BCT is not enough to create a tactical or operational disadvantage.

Suppose an entire BCT no longer deploys in support of a RAF rotation. Reduction in mobility, counter-mobility, survivability, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear reconnaissance capability is possible also. Likewise, some loss of intelligence analysis and signal support capability would likely result from a BCT not deploying its entire BEB. Also, BCTs would likely deploy part of their headquarters as a tactical command post. However, suppose only a single combined arms battalion task force deploys in place of the entire BCT. The battalion's organic headquarters is almost certainly sufficient to provide useful command and control. At any rate, the reduction of BEB and BCT headquarters capability represents a tactical adjustment at best. It creates no real disadvantage or impact at the operational, let alone strategic, levels.

Organizational capabilities gained from incorporating SFABs into the RAF concept include the addition of at least nine combat advisor teams capable of providing AASLE to nine separate partner battalions, three company advisor teams providing AASLE to three partnered brigades, and one battalion advisor team providing AASLE to one partnered division by building an advisor battalion task force around one or more of its infantry advisor battalions or the cavalry squadron. This capability doubles or triples depending on how many advisor battalion task forces an SFAB provides in theater at any one time. A rotational advisor battalion task force could provide AASLE to a partnered fires battalion via a field artillery advising team, but likely much more depending on if the SFAB placed a battery advising team capable of advising a partner fires brigade.

An SFAB battalion task force could also provide AASLE to a partnered engineer battalion via an engineer advising team and AASLE to a partnered engineer brigade with an engineer company advising team. It could even provide AASLE to partnered division and above engineer assets if the SFAB placed elements of its BEB advising team supporting the deployed advisor battalion task force. An SFAB BSB possesses the ability to provide AASLE to a partner sustainment battalion via a logistics advisor team, partner sustainment brigade via a logistics company advisor team, or partner sustainment command at division and higher via elements of the BSB advisor team. Logistics advisor teams in support of advisor battalion task forces are combat multipliers enhancing partnered sustainment capabilities in a way that compensates for the reduction of a rotational BCT's BSB.

Like rotational BCTs deploying only part of their force, SFABs could elect to deploy part of the brigade headquarters to provide command and control for the advisor

battalion task forces. A significant advantage to deploying elements of the SFAB brigade headquarters is that advisors from the brigade staff can provide AASLE to partnered corps and above formations. This ability exponentially increases the efficiency of multinational interoperability in a theater. Ultimately, SFAB task forces would not compensate for the loss of conventional tactical maneuver capability from reducing rotational BCTs in a theater. However, as with the BSB and brigade headquarters advising capabilities, the prospective three to nine-fold increase in partner conventional ability possible through the integration of advisor battalion task forces into the RAF rotation represents an exponential increase in overall combat power available to a COCOM in a way that a single traditional BCT cannot equal. Evidence analyzed in this study does not suggest a need for any permanent organizational changes to existing BCT or SFAB structures regardless of rotational BCT reduction or SFAB integration in a theater.

Material impacts from reducing conventional forces in theater focus on a reduced need for basing due to significantly less equipment depending on the number of conventional troops decreased in a theater. This impact is genuine of the reduction in vehicles when reducing the number of mechanized forces in theater and that SFABs possess a drastically smaller vehicle footprint. As the difference in vehicles translates primarily into a lower need for motor pool and mounted maneuver space than the reality that rotational ABCTs generally occupy temporary, host nation military, or leased bases, the impacts to installation management are negligible. The only exception is perhaps Korea, where rotational forces generally occupy permanent installations, even if leased

from the RoK government. Reducing conventional forces and integrating SFAB elements also represent a decreased need in maintenance facilities and support correspondingly.

Other materiel impacts manifest in reduced costs for strategic deployment to theater from CONUS locations and operational deployment within a theater. The cost of deploying fewer conventional forces reduces in increments of approximately \$20 million in 2021 dollars for every battalion of a BCT not deployed compared to roughly \$10 million for every SFAB battalion task force deployed. For example, reducing conventional rotational forces from a BCT to a combined arms battalion task force represents a savings of approximately \$80 million. Deploying an SFAB advisor battalion task force in place of the rest of the BCT would cost roughly \$12 million for a \$68 million net savings, depending on its composition.

Reduction in conventional forces in favor of SFAB integration overseas also represents an overall decreased consumption rate across all classes of supply. For example, an ABCT of approximately 4,500 Soldiers reduced to a battalion task force of roughly 700 represents a decrease of 3,800 Soldiers in theater. Offset against about 300 Soldiers in the advisor battalion task force replacing the difference in combat power from the reduced BCTs; it results in approximately 3,500 fewer Soldiers sustaining in a theater. Thus, the net impacts of reducing conventional forces and integrating SFAB forces into the deterrence rotation appreciably decrease demand on theater sustainment capabilities. Like organizational impacts, the evidence does not suggest permanent materiel changes are needed to equip and sustain either formation, whether conventional force levels change or SFABs are integrated into the RAF rotation.

As with materiel impacts, the personnel decrease resulting from reducing conventional deployed rotational forces and integrating SFAB units affects basing via diminished requirements. This impact is genuine given that many, if not most, advisor teams would embed with their partner force in a way that likely further reduces the need for US basing in a theater. As with organizational impacts, the reduction of conventional forces decreases capability to conduct combined arms maneuver and wide-area security resulting from the decrease in infantrymen, armor crewmen, scouts, etc., in a way that SFABs cannot compensate in and of themselves. However, SFABs do not need augmentation to replace the capabilities lost from reducing conventional forces as they leverage those capabilities from partners instead. The only personnel augmentation an SFAB task force needs is a designated security force consisting of approximately one maneuver company per battalion task force equivalent. Even then, a security force is only necessary based on partner forces' reliability and the security environment. For example, SFAB advisors in USEUCOM or USINDOPACOM Korea likely would not need a designated security force as often as advisor forces in USCENTCOM. While security force augmentation is necessary for SFAB integration into the RAF concept on a mission-dependent basis, the requirement does not demand permanent personnel changes in either conventional rotational forces or SFABs. Security forces could even be sourced from deployed rotational conventional battalion task forces, or permanent maneuver forces, in the case of USEUCOM, in a theater.

Can SFABs set the theater more efficiently than conventional units while presenting a smaller materiel footprint and target?

The expeditionary capabilities of an SFAB BSB partnered with host nation sustainment assets create opportunities to rapidly open a theater of operations in advance of more sophisticated sustainment assets. This capability further allows for the subsequent rapid deployment of conventional forces. The nature of current RAF rotational deployments consists of generally established, mature theaters of operation. Historically, rotational ABCTs have not conducted theater opening or setting.

However, the capability offered by the BSB element within an SFAB task force allows for a rapid increase of conventional forces in a theater via EDRE such as Reforger or Defender Europe 2020. Theoretically, the capability reduces the need for conventional troops forward in a theater on a rotational or permanent basis. The SFABs ability to set a theater for subsequent conventional forces creates an opportunity to maintain enough conventional capability forward in a theater to provide reaction time, maneuver space, and deterrence while reducing risk. Reducing conventional forces postured permanently or rotationally in theater also eliminates basing costs by \$20 million to \$80 million per conventional battalion while retaining only deployment costs of approximately \$100 million per conventional brigade in the event of a surge or EDRE.

How can the Army successfully fulfill the strategic need for forward-deployed forces while reducing the operational demands on the existing Armored Force per the NSS, NDS, and NMS?

Research and analysis show that the need for conventional overseas forces for deterrence and early warning will persist into the foreseeable future because of specific guidance mandated in US strategic documents from the national strategy to theater

strategic level, particularly in USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USINDOPACOM. It is also the case due to the nature of threats present in each respective theater. If peer competitors possess significant conventional capabilities, US conventional forces in a theater will be necessary to change the decision calculus of threat actors to deter aggression. If critical, delay or defeat threat forces and protect US interests and allies.

When the Army developed the RAF concept in 2013 to fulfill its role in strategic deterrence within COCOMs, force structure, sequestration, and the demands of combatant commanders shaped the strategic environment in ways that required the Army to execute all RAF rotational deployments using ABCTs exclusively. In 2016, however, the formation of the SFABs created a new capability enabling the Army to leverage conventional partner capabilities and reducing demand for US conventional forces deployed in each theater. SFABs can now fulfill part of the role previously filled by ABCTs within the RAF rotation by integrating with multinational partners in a way that reduces costs while providing the US flexible deterrent options and preserve combined arms maneuver capability.

As a result, this study recommends reducing the number of conventional forces deployed in the RAF concept by reducing the deployed ABCT from three combined arms battalions to two, with the difference compensated by an SFAB battalion task force executing a synchronized and concurrent regionally aligned deployment within the SFAC regional alignment model as a test of concept. Measures of effectiveness and performance should be expressed in terms of interoperability and maintaining deterrent effect against threats as assessed by USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USINDOPACOM strategic estimates. If successful, the Army should expand the test of concept to reduce

the deployed conventional force to one combined arms battalion task force provided from a supporting CONUS-based ABCT with SFAC continuing to rotate advisor battalion task forces its current model. One combined arms battalion task force and one SFAB battalion task force is the recommended force structure for rotational strategic deterrence deployments. However, suppose this mix of forces proves insufficient. This study then suggests a ratio of either two combined arms battalion task forces and one SFAB battalion task force. One combined-arms task force and two SFAB battalion task forces dependent upon the operational environment and force availability.

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