



AUSA BACKGROUND BRIEF



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ATLANTIC COMMAND

Readers familiar with the U.S. unified command structure will recall that Atlantic Command (formerly referred to as LANTCOM) was predominantly oriented to seapower and support to NATO. However, with the major changes still ongoing in this post-Cold War era, LANTCOM has been given additional missions and a new acronym: ACOM. The U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) has been designated as the Army component. The purpose of this background brief is to familiarize the reader with ACOM in its expanded role and responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION

Changes to the unified command structure started with the political realities surrounding the end of the Cold War, the lessons learned in joint operations during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and the requirements of the Goldwater-Nichols defense reorganization law. The impact of the Defense Bottom-Up Review of national military strategy, the declining Defense Department budget, the reduction in size and structure of all the services, and curtailments of forward basing and deployments were making combatant commanders worldwide more dependent on CONUS-based forces to accomplish missions.

No longer could combatant commanders in the 1990s and beyond rely on a large forward presence of U.S. forces, significant in-theater capability and a massive reinforcement streaming from the continental United States. The combatant commanders, i.e., Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), Pacific Command (PACOM), European Command (EUCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), and Atlantic Command (ACOM), were becoming more oriented on the broader range of conflicts and crises that develop regionally rather than on the global war scenario of the Cold War. These other crises include humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, peacekeeping, military support of civil authorities, and assistance during civil disturbances in the United States.

This shift in orientation and need means that combatant commanders now and in the future will be looking for forces that are rapidly deployable, highly skilled in joint operations, and ready to fight on arrival. These factors led General Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to recommend in his 1993 report on the roles, missions and functions of the armed forces that designated CONUS-based forces be merged under a single CONUS-based commander and that the mission should go to the United States Atlantic Command.

COMMAND STRUCTURE

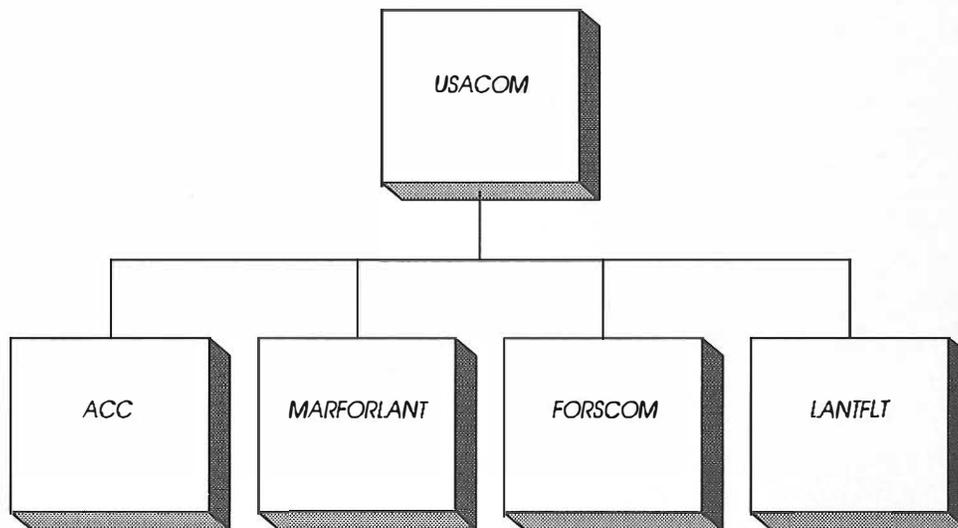
The Unified Command Plan is the document that prescribes the geographic and functional responsibilities for unified commanders. One of the most significant changes to the plan in 45 years took effect on 1 October 1993, with the establishment of the United States Atlantic Command (USACOM). USACOM is a single unified command responsible for the joint integration and readiness of a majority of the combat forces based in the continental United States. This includes the Army's Forces Command (FORSCOM), the Air Force's Air Combat Command (ACC), the Navy's Atlantic Fleet (LANTFLT) and the Marine Corps' Forces/Atlantic (MARFORLANT). These are the service components of the command.

Additionally, two joint task forces, while remaining under FORSCOM and LANTFLT respectively, are being consolidated under USACOM. These joint task forces support law enforcement agencies in the southwestern United States and narcotics detection operations in the Caribbean. Subunified commands also under USACOM include forces in the South Atlantic, the Azores and Iceland.

USACOM's staff structure is largely nominative. That means the person selected for the position, including commander in chief and deputy commander in chief/chief of staff, may come from any service. The exceptions are: J1 (personnel), which is Army; and J2 (intelligence) and J8 (resources), which are Navy.

USACOM is responsible for preparing forces for use throughout the world. Additionally, the command is responsible for planning the land defense of the continental United States and Canada. The command also has an ocean area of responsibility that covers 45 million square miles and touches the shores of over 50 nations. Headquarters are in Norfolk, Virginia.

United States Atlantic Command



RELATIONSHIP TO NATO

The commander in chief (CINC) of USACOM also serves as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic (SACLANT). WESTLANT (Western Atlantic Command, a major subordinate command in NATO) and OCEANLANT (Ocean Atlantic Command, a principal subordinate command in NATO) are under SACLANT command.

USACOM will perform many of the same tasks that it does for other U.S. unified commands in a supporting role for the Allied Command Europe. That means providing trained and ready forces.

JOINT FORCE PROVIDER

USACOM is responsible for training, packaging and deploying forces in response to the requirements identified by the CINCs of European Command, Central Command, Southern Command and Pacific Command. (The requirements are also sent to the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for validation.) USACOM is also to provide trained and ready forces to other unified commands, such as Special Operations Command, and, when appropriate, support civil authorities in crises such as the floods in the Midwest in 1993.

The challenge for USACOM is to provide the relevant joint training and appropriately tailored joint force packages to satisfy the CINCs' requirements. Satisfying those requirements must be done in a manner that makes the full capabilities of all the services available to the CINCs.

JOINT FORCE PACKAGING

For many operations, no single service will have the best or most appropriate mix of capabilities to support a specific mission requirement. The concept of "adaptive joint force packaging" calls for assembling, from all assigned forces (including Coast Guard, reserve components and forces from supporting CINCs, such as Transportation Command) the mix of capabilities that is most appropriate for a specific mission. The information regarding which service possesses what capability and what units fit specific needs is collected and stored at USACOM.

The warfighting CINC writes the requirement, which is validated by the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who in turn direct USACOM to meet that need with a force tailored to best respond to the mission. The supported CINC does not write the requirement based upon specific units or even specific service, but on exactly what capabilities are needed for the mission.

A tailored force can come from a preplanned menu (designed cooperatively with the supported CINCs to respond to the most likely scenarios) or be built from the ground up. There can be several ways to build "from scratch" a force package that can successfully support the mission. USACOM has been testing this kind of packaging by embarking Army Rangers and Special Operations Command helicopters aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier U.S.S. *George Washington* and having them operate from the ship while it is under way.

The staffs of USACOM and the supporting CINC refine the package until it meets mission requirements; it is then sent back to the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs for validation. The last step involves the National Command Authority decision, through the JCS chairman, to direct the deployment of the force.

JOINT FORCE TRAINING

The individual services are responsible for providing basic training in their respective doctrine, tactics and procedures. This training covers all their Title X responsibilities. The intermediate level of training, such as that conducted at the Joint Readiness Training Center and the National Training Center, is also service-sponsored but includes training in basic joint operations. Advanced training comes in large-scale CINC-sponsored and JCS-directed exercises.

USACOM has established a three-tier training program. Tier 1 is the service component basic training that covers the Title X responsibilities. Tier 2 is joint field training at the tactical level to Joint Mission Essential Task standards and involves component forces and staff. Tier 3, which will mature in 1996, is operational/strategic training for joint task force commanders and staff. This tier of training will use simulation and computer-assisted exercises and seminar programs.

At each tier, the training audience will be targeted. In joint training, there also will be coordinated management of the commonly understood joint mission essential task. This means a single policy-level manager for USACOM assets, component participation in program design and management, and an integrated training plan. Additionally, there will be increased opportunities for joint training and sufficient training to facilitate accountability.

In Tier 2 training, USACOM will concentrate on the service component exercises. There will also be a joint training coordinator program. In that program, one of the service components will be designated the coordinator for each tactical discipline to help focus management attention and improve training and scheduling in each area.

In Tier 3 training, simulation exercises and seminars give commanders a broader scope of training with a variety of scenarios at significantly less cost. This training will also be available through a distributed simulation network to involve a far greater share of the staff population.

A joint training simulation center for USACOM is planned in nearby Suffolk, Virginia. The center will serve joint task forces as a headquarters for both predeployment planning and command post exercises. It also will maintain a close and continuing relationship with the joint warfighting center. The centers will offer all supported CINCs a centrally located and comprehensive joint training, simulation and analysis capability.

OTHER MISSIONS

USACOM is responsible for developing training programs for peace operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and for building adaptive joint force packages to satisfy geographical CINCs' requirements in these areas around the world.

The command also serves as the planning agent for military support to civil authorities and military assistance for civil disturbances within the continental United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Additionally, the command develops joint training and deploys adaptive joint force packages in support of civil authorities as required.

GOAL: READY FORCES

ACOM-supported combatant commanders in chief will be looking to ACOM to provide tailored force packages to meet their mission requirements. With limited in-theater capabilities available, combatant commanders will need CONUS forces that are trained in joint operations and rapidly deployable. This force readiness mission is the primary mission of ACOM.

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