



AUSA ISSUES

ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY
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FORWARD PRESENCE: Key To Deterrence

The issue: To what extent should U.S. Army forces be committed to forward presence operations?

Background: Since World War II, the day-to-day presence of American troops in areas of importance to U.S. national interests has been key to averting crises and preventing war. Our forces deployed around the world show our commitment, lend credibility to our alliances, enhance regional stability, and provide a crisis-response capability while promoting U.S. influence and access.

The diminished Soviet threat and severe budget pressures at home have already dictated major reductions in the numbers of U.S. forces stationed overseas. Still, the *National Security Strategy of the United States* assigns great significance to Forward Presence as one of its four foundations—along with Strategic Deterrence and Defense, Crisis Response, and Reconstitution.

While the overseas stationing of organized U.S. forces is a key element of our Forward Presence strategy, it is not the be-all and end-all. In addition to forces stationed overseas and afloat, Forward Presence includes periodic and rotational deployments of U.S. forces, access and storage agreements with friendly nations, combined U.S. and allied exercises, security and humanitarian assistance programs, port visits, and military-to-military contacts.

Role of the Army in forward presence: The Army performs a key role as the primary land component of U.S. military power. Forward presence of Army forces and resources in a region connotes a longer and more visible commitment that cannot be replaced completely with other options such as CONUS-based crisis response and periodic or rotational forces.

The Army provides forward presence with units forward deployed in regions of vital interest overseas. This ability to retain sufficient forces overseas is vital to sustaining U.S. and allied commitments and contributes greatly to regional stability.

In the Atlantic region, the Army has committed a corps, stationed in Europe, to forward presence operations. That corps is the foundation of a U.S.-led multinational corps and provides a division committed to a German-led corps as well as forward-based elements of the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Force.

The corps in Europe can conduct combat operations there, project viable power elsewhere, and support the arrival of reinforcing units from CONUS should the continental situation change. A corps with two divisions is the fundamental Army unit capable of credible theater warfighting and is the minimum force suitable to serve this purpose.

The Army also retains a forward presence in the Persian Gulf, including the conduct of training and combined exercises, to reassure our allies, chill our adversaries, and discourage other adversaries from emerging. The current level of presence is not permanent and can be reduced as the potential for crises decreases.

In the Pacific, the Army keeps elements of a division in Korea and additional forward presence forces in Alaska and Hawaii. The North Korean threat still requires U.S. forces for the peninsula, although continued improvement in South Korea's military capabilities should permit reduction of the U.S. ground force presence in the future.

AUSA key points:

- The forward presence concept is a sound and vital part of the U.S. National Military Strategy.
- As overseas basing is decreased, other actions need to be taken to display U.S. commitment and resolve. These include prepositioning of material, practice deployments and combined exercises. Related is the need for sufficient strategic air- and sealift to be able to respond rapidly in a crisis.
- Continued forward basing of forces is essential, particularly in Europe and Korea, where significant ground force elements are the most visible and convincing signal of American resolve.
- An Army corps, maintained at a high state of training and readiness, should be forward based in Europe as the U.S. commitment to NATO and should be prepared and available for other intra- and extra-regional contingencies.
- Forward presence in Korea should retain the present force until the North Korean threat is satisfactorily resolved.
- Army forces based in the United States or overseas must be capable of rapid reaction to meet any crisis on a worldwide basis. Success will depend on other forward presence arrangements, including strategic mobility, overseas prepositioning of materiel, base rights and infrastructure arrangements, and agreed command and control arrangements with other joint and combined forces.

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