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## The 2002 Unified Command Plan: Changes and Implications

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The 2002 Unified Command Plan (UCP) has revised and expanded existing missions, theaters and duties for several military commands. Among those changes, the new UCP has created commands devoted to domestic protection and military transformation, as well as expanding the global functions of other commands. The modifications are part of a mandatory biennial review process undertaken by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and approved by the Secretary of Defense and the President to better adapt American strategic military responsibilities to changing geopolitical situations worldwide.

The UCP changes illustrate current transformational trends within the Department of Defense (DoD). The military is confronting new and unconventional threats to the United States at home and around the globe. It must also keep abreast of rapid technological advancements to maintain American strategic dominance. Genuine military transformation not only will incorporate the latest information technology and computer innovations but will require structural and procedural changes within the armed forces. DoD officials have prioritized the military's capability for global response, homeland defense and counterproliferation.<sup>1</sup>

As a reflection of this, the 2002 UCP has shifted its emphasis from regional theaters to strategic global functions. With increased clout given to long-range precision strikes, C<sup>4</sup>ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) and special operations, DoD appears to be pursuing the Afghanistan model of military use of force, relying on airpower, advanced sensors and unconventional ground operations for combat success. The Army's place in this dynamic appears to be shifting as well, with fewer combatant commanders, despite its significant combat role and resource commitments worldwide.

The 2002 UCP, announced in April 2002, established U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) for homeland defense and civil support missions. The plan redesignated U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) from its geographic responsibilities to a functional combatant mission focusing on transformation. Under the revision U.S. European Command (EUCOM) expanded its geographic area of responsibility (AOR) to include Russia and the majority of the Atlantic Ocean. Further amendments to the UCP, announced in June 2002, merged U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM) and U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM). The Secretary of Defense announced four specific revisions to the STRATCOM task list in January 2003, expanding its role to include global strike, missile defense, information operations and C<sup>4</sup>ISR.

Decisionmaking authority emanates from the President to the Secretary of Defense directly to combatant commanders. The direction guides the process for UCP implementation. A second authority structure runs from the President and Secretary of Defense to the secretary of each military branch.

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) emphasized the importance of homeland defense and military transformation in the changing strategic environment, particularly since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The current UCP has incorporated those priorities and will put them into practice.

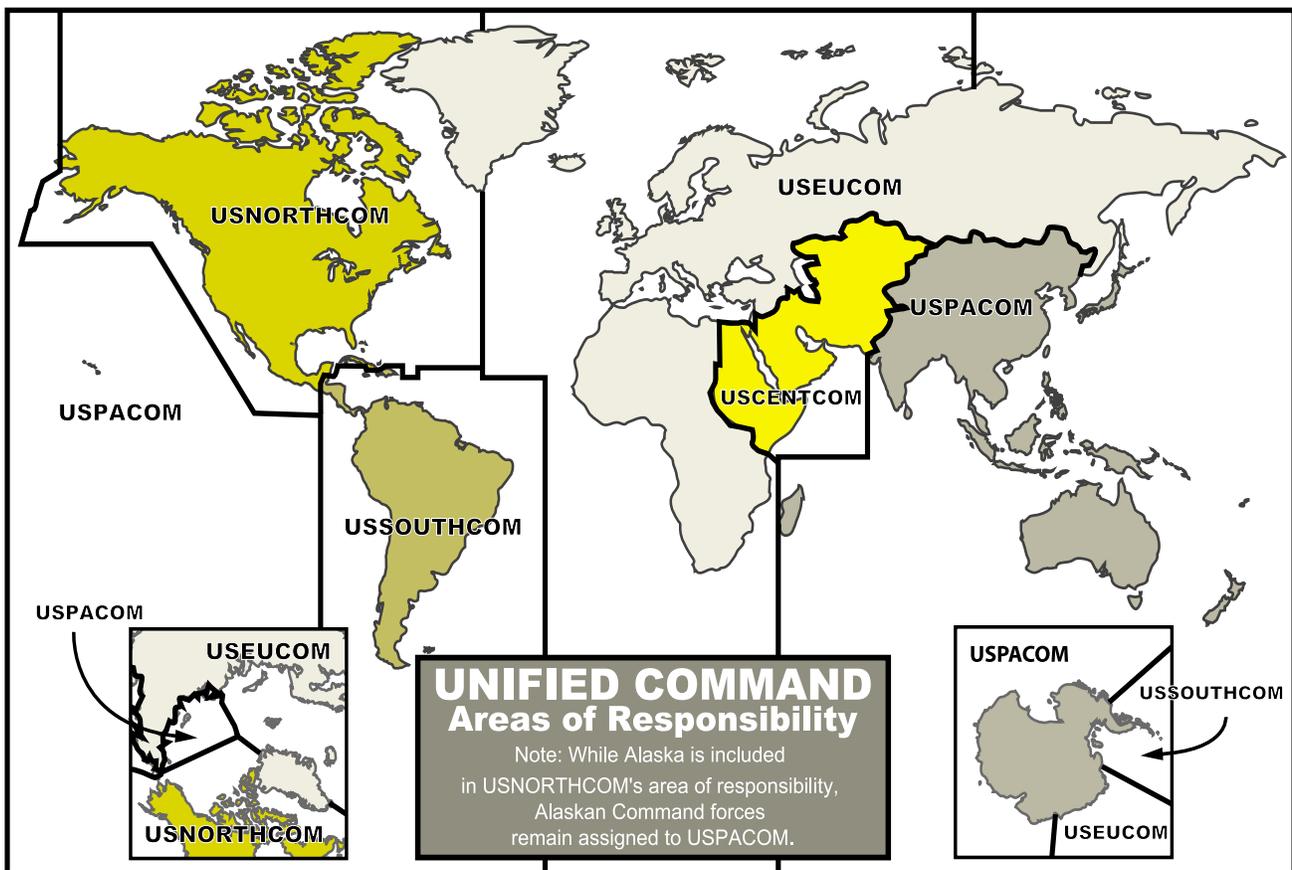
## What is the UCP?

The National Security Act of 1947 and the Title 10 U.S. Code 161 authorize the UCP review to take place at least every two years. With direction from the National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Military Strategy (NMS), UCPs establish military combatant commands and the missions, functions and geographic AORs of each. Clear and concise chains of command are outlined in the plan, including force structure for each theater. The guidelines are intentionally specific and precise to maintain efficient command authority.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary of Defense and the President ultimately approve the UCP, with the CJCS providing input. Combatant commanders also make recommendations for UCP revisions. In this regard, geographic and functional military leaders provide the connection between the national security principles and the operational military elements that execute them. This “vital link” helps achieve national strategic objectives.<sup>3</sup>

Combatant commands fall under either geographic or functional responsibilities. Geographic missions are defined by AORs or theaters. Currently, NORTHCOM, EUCOM, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) fall into this category. Combatant commanders in those areas are granted the authority to plan, prepare and conduct military operations in their respective AORs according to existing strategic guidance.

Functional commanders perform warfighting missions worldwide according to specific capabilities. STRATCOM, JFCOM, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) constitute the current functional commands. Traditionally, functional commands acted as *supporting* elements for regional, or *supported*, commands. Recent DoD alterations to the UCP are shifting that relationship.

The military maintains between nine and ten unified commands to sustain a sensible balance for military forces worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Any more theaters or functions would complicate command arrangements. A reduction in the balance would strain resources and harm force structure.



Combatant command structures are broken into broad ongoing missions with the participation of multiple military departments. They are called unified commands. To streamline operations, the CJCS may authorize unified combatant commanders to establish subordinate commands, functional component commands and joint task forces (JTFs) as needed.

JTFs provide commanders with limited, mission-specific responsibilities to confront high-priority threats, such as narcotics, information warfare and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). JTFs provide the military with immediate action against emerging security concerns without requiring a rewrite of the UCP.<sup>5</sup> Some JTF missions, like drug war operations, remain ongoing subordinate functions while others may have become commands accommodating strategy shifts as necessary.

### **How is the UCP reviewed?**

Revisions to the UCP occur every two years, as mandated by law. Combatant commanders and service chiefs reevaluate the existing UCP, using executive decisions, recent defense authorizations, studies and other issues tied into the National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy. The CJCS provides further input and establishes a working group. The recommendations are forwarded to a joint working group and then submitted to the CJCS for final approval before being sent to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Inside OSD, a further review process takes place before the secretary approves it. The CJCS must approve the subsequent version before it goes before the President for authorization.<sup>6</sup> At times, congressional concerns have led to legislation directly modifying the UCP or to DoD rectifying those matters on its own.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1995, 1998 and 2001 review processes, several principles guided the UCP evaluation. They required the UCP provisions to support the NSS, NMS and public law while maintaining strategic focus in support of national security interests. The UCP working groups were expected to consider diplomatic and international commitments, geographic boundaries and existing AORs to optimize operational command and control in peace and war. The UCP changes were expected to be practical, affordable and realistic.<sup>8</sup>

Revisions to the plan ensure the military adjusts periodically to developments in American policy. By reevaluating its posture, the U.S. military also adapts to changing regional situations within each AOR. Shifts in local political, economic or cultural dynamics could determine strategic interests and require combatant commanders to modify their operational boundaries or resources.<sup>9</sup> Such adjustments determine the structure of joint operations as well. The revision process keeps the military abreast of situations on the ground and on the horizon within geographic and functional commands, enabling more efficient threat response.

Combatant commanders must evaluate the threats, operations, alliances and force structure in their respective theaters when developing strategic estimates during the input and review process. They must plan and execute military operations according to the President or Secretary of Defense in support of the National Military strategy and well as maintain force protection. The interrelationships between theaters are taken into account to determine the best delineations and resource allocations among the commands.<sup>10</sup> Through this process, combatant commanders have input on the parameters that guide their war- and peacetime missions.

### **What are the current Unified Combatant Commands?**

- **Northern Command:** Proposed in April 2002 and activated in October 2002, NORTHCOM's mission is to deter, prevent and defeat threats to the United States. It provides domestic force protection, air monitoring and interdiction, sea-lane security and countermining sensing. At the same time, NORTHCOM will provide military assets for consequence management, as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense. NORTHCOM is not a law enforcement mechanism nor does its authority supersede the 11 million "first responder" emergency personnel who would take action in a domestic emergency. Its

homeland defense (HLD) mission dictates the protection of the United States and its population from military attacks emanating from outside the country. While HLD is a function of NORTHCOM's supporting role in homeland security, the two missions are not the same.

The majority of NORTHCOM's geographic domain in North America was transferred from JFCOM. It is responsible for cooperative security and military efforts with Canada and Mexico. These arrangements include the command and operational functions with Canada under North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Previously assigned to SPACECOM, NORAD detects and warns of attacks from hostile aircraft, ballistic missiles and space vehicles.<sup>11</sup>

When fully operational, the command will have a staff of 500 civilian and military personnel from all branches of service, including liaisons from organizations including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>12</sup> Aside from the staff positions, NORTHCOM has few permanently assigned troops on standby. Rather, the command will receive forces as necessary to address crises as they develop.<sup>13</sup> NORTHCOM contains several JTFs coordinating and supporting the homeland security mission with other agencies, leading units in augmenting lead-agency responses and continuing the counterdrug effort. The Civil Support JTF was transferred from JFCOM to aid in chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and conventional explosive emergencies.

- **European Command:** With an AOR including 93 nations in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, EUCOM promulgates U.S. interests throughout the theater. It provides combat forces to Allied Command Europe and other unified commands for unilateral or coalition operations. Assigned troops from all services total approximately 116,400.<sup>14</sup> The EUCOM combatant commander also serves as NATO's senior commander, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).

The 2002 UCP changes expanded EUCOM's AOR to absorb elements of JFCOM's former theater, including Iceland, Greenland and more than half of the Atlantic Ocean to nearly 500 miles off the east coast of the United States.<sup>15</sup> The unprecedented inclusion of Russia in EUCOM's strategic responsibilities stems from improved relations between the United States and Russia since the end of the Cold War and the importance of cooperation to U.S. strategy.

- **Southern Command:** SOUTHCOM's major tasks within its AOR focus on developing modern militaries with friendly nations in the South and Central American regions through engagement while defending U.S. interests, particularly counterdrug activities and other threats, to foster democracy and stability. Approximately 800 military personnel and 325 civilians and liaison officers from other federal agencies are assigned to the command.<sup>16</sup> With the exception of Caribbean realignment to NORTHCOM's domain, the 2002 UCP made no significant changes to the SOUTHCOM AOR and mission.
- **Central Command:** CENTCOM's troop strength varies between 17,000 and 25,000 personnel depending on the number of forward deployments in the Central and South Asia region. With the exception of a 1,000-person staff, CENTCOM has no permanently assigned combat units.<sup>17</sup> The CENTCOM mission hinges on engagement and forward presence to deter aggression, promote peace and maintain stability. While the 2002 UCP made no significant changes to the command's mission, CENTCOM has been occupied with ongoing operations in Afghanistan and a significant buildup in preparation for a war in Iraq.
- **Pacific Command:** The PACOM AOR covers more than 50 percent of the earth's surface and comprises five subordinate unified commands, two JTFs and about 300,000 military personnel.<sup>18</sup> The command is responsible for 43 countries, including Japan, China and North and South Korea. PACOM's intent is to reduce the likelihood of regional conflicts in peacetime and advance U.S. interests with decisive victories should war occur. Engagement and preparedness sustain this strategy.<sup>19</sup> The 2002 UCP tasked PACOM with supporting EUCOM's Russian responsibility but made no other significant changes to its AOR or mission.

- **Strategic Command:** DoD announced the merger of STRATCOM and SPACECOM in June 2002, eliminating command structure redundancies and refining the decisionmaking process to improve combat effectiveness and information collection.<sup>20</sup>

STRATCOM's role was expanded again in January 2003. The command has four previously unassigned mission areas requiring STRATCOM to:

- plan, command and control extended-range, precision global strikes;
- oversee missile defense operations and support to worldwide combatant commands and NORAD;
- integrate DoD information operations for computer network attack and defense, electronic warfare, operations security, psychological operations and military deception and;
- apply C<sup>4</sup>ISR as a key enabler augmenting the missions listed above.

The merged command element was to contain 3,000 personnel. Final headquarters personnel strength after the mission changes has not yet been determined.<sup>21</sup>

The changes reflect the acknowledged need for transformation and defense of the United States. Advancements in precision-guided munitions, research and development for ballistic missile defenses and the unprecedented pace of information technology have placed the United States in a dominant strategic position. STRATCOM seeks to exploit its technological advantages with organizational changes to alter the way the U.S. military fights and wins wars. With its global strike assignment, STRATCOM has been authorized to act as a supported command—calling upon other functional and regional commanders to assist in specific operation.<sup>22</sup>

- **Joint Forces Command:** Under the new UCP, JFCOM has undertaken responsibility for military transformation, experimentation, joint training and interoperability for all the services. JFCOM frames its mission in the overarching transformation concept of Effects-based Operations. The command will introduce new doctrine, test it among warfighters and receive immediate feedback to streamline future military operations.<sup>23</sup> Each service branch has a component command assigned to JFCOM. Army Forces Command, Marine Forces Atlantic, Navy Atlantic Fleet and Air Force Air Combat Command provide more than a million active and reserve component troops and equipment to JFCOM's mission while nine subject-specific joint elements contribute to the transformation objective.<sup>24</sup> Its geographic missions in Northern Europe and the Atlantic were transferred to EUCOM.
- **Special Operations Command:** The SOCOM functional mission supports commanders worldwide with more than 40,000 military personnel (the Army provides nearly 26,000 of those troops) capable of unconventional warfare, direct action, civil affairs, psychological operations, foreign internal defense, counterterrorism, special reconnaissance and specialized aviation and naval support.<sup>25</sup> Since its 1987 inception as a sovereign command authority, SOCOM has supported combatant commanders with operators and equipment for particular missions. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has granted the command \$7 billion to meet increased equipment and personnel needs. Like STRATCOM, SOCOM is now approved to act as a supported command in specific situations, granting its commander a dominant role for particular operations.<sup>26</sup>
- **Transportation Command:** Force projection and sustainment are TRANSCOM's primary tasks. Integrating the Air Force Air Mobility Command (AMC), Navy Military Sealift Command and Army Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC), TRANSCOM assets rapidly deliver personnel and cargo anywhere in the world and systematically maintain those resources for missions ranging from combat and deterrence to peacekeeping and humanitarian relief. Midair refueling, commercial transport, traffic management, terminal operations and prepositioned sealifts constitute a large part of the command's capabilities. The 2002 UCP changes do not significantly impact the existing TRANSCOM mission.

<b>New Strategic Direction (Organizationally)</b>			
<b>Unified Command</b>	<b>Primary Orientation</b>	<b>Commander (as of 21 Feb 03)</b>	<b>Primary Role</b>
U.S. European Command (EUCOM)	Regional	Gen. James L. Jones, U.S. Marine Corps	Area of Responsibility (AOR)
U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM)	Regional	ADM Thomas B. Fargo, U.S. Navy	AOR
U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)	Regional	GEN Tommy R. Franks, U.S. Army	AOR
U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)	Regional	GEN James T. Hill, U.S. Army	AOR
U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)	Regional	Gen. Ralph E. Eberhart, U.S. Air Force	Significant responsibilities for military assistance to civil authorities
U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM)	Functional	ADM E. P. Giambastiani, U.S. Navy	Transformation
U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM)	Functional	ADM James O. Ellis, Jr., U.S. Navy	Global (Execution)
U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)	Functional	Gen. Charles R. Holland, U.S. Air Force	Global (Execution)
U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM)	Functional	Gen. John W. Handy, U.S. Air Force	Transportation

**The Implications of the 2002 UCP**

The 2002 UCP changes reflect the changing priorities for American strategic posture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Transformation, homeland defense and counterproliferation received serious attention many years before recent influential events like the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the publication of the QDR, the war in Afghanistan and the looming campaign against Iraq occurred. Within a relatively brief period, these circumstances have helped propel changes in the military, its organization and the way it fights.

The NORTHCOM function addresses pressing concerns of domestic attack and mass-casualty crisis response. JFCOM has already undertaken significant transformation projects, like the nationwide Millennium Challenge '02 exercise last summer, testing interoperability and new doctrine for future warfare. The expansion of EUCOM to include Russia indicates the importance defense planners have placed on military-to-military relations, strategic alliances and informal partnerships.

The combatant commands demonstrate interdependence with one another, evident in their respective mission priorities. The efforts at JFCOM, with the participation of regional and functional commanders, support the overall push toward effective and timely transformation. Successful theater operations depend on reliable mobilization and sustainment efforts from TRANSCOM. Sensitive, small-scale operations or engagements in particular regions may require the unique skills only SOCOM operators retain. Conflicts in

multiple AORs require efficient coordination among regional commanders to achieve the standing military strategy.

The shifts in regional and functional commands as either supporting or supported elements in combat operations may have significant implications for U.S. military strategy. SOCOM and STRATCOM are now authorized to draw on the resources of regional commands in executing particular operations. In this capacity, the two functional commands hold a global response mission consistent with the stated objectives of DoD. SOCOM and STRATCOM would execute their assigned tasks within the AORs of regional commanders, who are now required to support the functional commanders' requirements. This support could include conventional troops, logistical needs and in-theater transportation. Thus, regional commanders may find their long-term AOR priorities and assets hindered by short-term functional combatant demands.

From another perspective, assigning SOCOM and STRATCOM unprecedented supported-command authority sustains the maximum force/minimum footprint principle DoD relied upon in Afghanistan. DoD transformation concepts discourage traditional deployment scenarios involving large numbers of ground troops, armor packages and artillery assets—including their vast logistical tails. By drawing on the resources of geographic commands, the functional commands are not relegated to a subordinate segment of the operation but rather may take the lead. A significant portion of the conventional force may be included only as a secondary consideration—provided they see action at all.

Fostered by the success in Afghanistan, popular opinion has lent credibility to the transformational impact global strikes and special operations elements are having on battlefield doctrine. However, that formula is not universal. Conventional forces, particularly ground troops, are indispensable for large-scale conflicts where taking and holding terrain is key to victory. In that capacity, the Army bears the burden of ground combat.

At the same time, the Army has embraced the DoD transformation blueprint. It has thrust ahead in its transition from the Cold War-era Legacy Force to the Objective Force of the future. Army leaders of the past decade have emphasized the need for light, flexible, information-centric and rapidly deployable forces capable of countering a range of threats. The Army is restructuring its organization, streamlining management and upgrading its hardware while continuing to conducting its worldwide missions—to include fighting a war.

Despite the Army's major role in several theaters, no Army generals hold command slots in any of the four functional commands. They occupy only two of the five regional unified command positions, CENTCOM and SOUTHCOM. The Army provides 61,000 troops to EUCOM and 53,170 to PACOM.<sup>27</sup> Active duty and reserve component Army units constitute 60 percent of SOCOM's special operations forces. While the Army cannot and should not dominate the unified commands, its leadership presence is not indicative of its contributions.

The 2002 UCP made necessary adjustments to U.S. military posture worldwide. The changes encourage transformation and contribute to more lethal and responsive armed forces. The plan maintains readiness and improves the American strategic stance to accommodate the changes that have taken place in the world and within the military. The Army must be wary of having its resources exploited while the authority of its combatant commanders—and the expertise and influence they maintain—diminished in the name of push-button warfare.

The drive toward a transformed military does not allow arbitrary selectivity when promulgating services, platforms and operations to best deal with threats to American security interests. Transformation remains an all-encompassing process, across the services, from top military and civilian decisionmakers to local commanders and their personnel at sea, in the air and on the ground. Elements of the 2002 UCP illustrate the benefits of a sound, holistic strategic revision. At the same time, unless the defense community is careful, fastidious political priorities at work in the UCP risk undermining practicable and lasting military progress for the future.

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