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# The Establishment, Evolution, and Accomplishments of the United States European Command

[This brief history of the United States European Command is provided courtesy of the command web site. Further topics of interest within the European theatre can be found at: <http://www.eucom.mil>.]

## Background to Establishment

Although the Headquarters United States European Command (HQ USEUCOM) was formally established on 1 August 1952, its activation can be seen as an evolutionary process that actually began in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) during the Second World War. This process has subsequently been shaped by the onset, escalation, and end of the Cold War.

At the close of World War II, U.S. troops in Europe were under dual command. Operational control was exercised by the combined (US/UK) "Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF)." The administration and supply of U.S. forces were the responsibilities of the "European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, Communications Zone (ETOUSA-COMZ)." General Dwight D. Eisenhower commanded both SHAPE and ETOUSA-COMZ. General Eisenhower began to shift authority from the former to the latter as the war in Europe came to a close. Two weeks after the redesignation of ETOUSA-COMZ as "U.S. Forces, European Theater (USFET)" on 1 July 1945, SHAEF was inactivated (14 July 1945). On 1 March 1946, the USFET "component commands" were identified as the: Seventh U.S. Army; U.S. Army Air Forces (former U.S. Strategic Air Force Europe); and U.S. Naval Forces, Germany.

The *National Security Act* (NSA) of 1947 was designed:

. . .to provide for the effective strategic direction of the armed forces and for their operation under unified control and for their integration into an efficient team of land, air and naval forces.

In addition to the National Military Executive (which became the Department of Defense (DoD) in 1949), the NSA established the U.S. Air Force, and (of particular significance for the history of USEUCOM) the unified and specified commands.

The first attempt at creating a joint command in Europe was made on 15 March 1947 when the European Command (EUCOM) replaced USFET. The purpose of the reorganization was:

. . .to place in the hands of a single commander responsibility for the conduct of military operations of the land, naval and air forces.

Although EUCOM was planned as a joint command, it never truly became one. The EUCOM "component commands" as of 15 November 1947 were the:

- U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR)
- U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE)
- U.S. Naval Forces, Europe

The apparent "jointness" of the wiring diagram was, however, misleading as EUCOM and USAREUR had identical staff sections.

The currency reform in the Western Zones of occupied Germany and the western sectors of Berlin, which took place on 20 June 1948, alarmed the Soviets and catalyzed the blockade of "West

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Berlin.” The Berlin Blockade in turn inspired “Operation VITTLES,” more commonly known as the Berlin Airlift (26 June 1948 through 30 September 1949). The airlift clearly demonstrated the value of unified execution of operations. General Lucius D. Clay, the Military Governor (U.S.) and Commander-in-Chief, European Command observed in April 1949 that:

Among our Armed Forces, the Airlift has become a symbol of unity, with the Air Force, Army and Navy all cooperating to the limit to fulfill the highest expression of American will–Freedom.

The Soviet blockade of the three western sectors of Berlin also catalyzed the signing of the treaty that established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on 4 April 1949 (effective date 24 August 1949). The invasion of South Korea by North Korean troops on 25 June 1950 energized NATO. On 19 December 1950, General Eisenhower became the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). He subsequently activated the Allied Command Europe (ACE) and established his headquarters at Roquencourt (Paris) on 2 April 1951.

### **Establishment**

In addition to being SACEUR, President Harry S. Truman gave General Eisenhower authority over all U.S. forces in the theater: “You are hereby assigned operational command, to the extent necessary for the accomplishment of your mission, of the U.S. Army Forces, Europe; U.S. Air Forces, Europe; and the U.S. Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean.”

Given General Eisenhower’s wartime experience in the ETO, it is not surprising that EUCOM was quickly drawn into a close working relationship with SHAPE/ACE, providing necessary resources and personnel. Despite his authority from President Truman, General Eisenhower was reluctant to be “dual-hatted” as the commander of all U.S. Forces in Europe. Nonetheless, on 19 May 1952 he informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) that SACEUR would assume direct command of the U.S. forces in Europe and established a separate staff under a deputy for the conduct of joint U.S. military affairs. General Eisenhower observed that:

A matter of great importance will be the rank, previous experience and ability of the officer who will be selected as my Deputy. Since, under my concept, this officer will have a maximum of delegated authority . . . , consulting me only on matters of fundamental policy and critical problems, it is essential that he be of four-star rank . . .

On 23 May 1952 the Joint Staff approved General Eisenhower’s concept. Five days later, he appointed General Thomas T. Handy, USA, as his deputy and directed him to establish the “new” unified command. Following General Eisenhower’s return to the United States, General Matthew B. Ridgway became SACEUR on 30 May, and subsequently declared his willingness to be dual-hatted as the United States Commander in Chief, Europe (USCINCEUR).

In a letter of instruction dated 19 July 1952, General Ridgway made a delegation of authority to General Handy, which reflected the concept developed by General Eisenhower:

. . . you are hereby authorized to exercise for me, as my deputy, authority and direction in U.S. military matters of a joint nature within my cognizance as U.S. CINCEUR over all U.S. military commands and agencies subject to my command authority as U.S. CINCEUR. You are authorized to issue appropriate instructions in your own name and to take action in my behalf with higher authority and with appropriate agencies outside of this chain of command. I leave to your discretion the referral to me of those questions, including matters of fundamental policy and critical problems, which are of such nature or significance as to require my personal attention. You will keep me informed of your major actions, plans and decisions.

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This broad delegation of authority continues to serve as the model for the unique relationship between the USCINCEUR and the “DCINC.”

As General Order No. 1 established HQ USEUCOM on 1 August 1952, General Order No. 2 of the same date combined the three European commands:

- U.S. Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean
- U.S. Air Forces in Europe; European Command (redesignated as USAREUR) under the “new” joint headquarters
- The United States European Command

### **Evolution of Jointness**

From 1952 until 1986, the USEUCOM component commands retained a great deal of operational independence. The U.S. European Command was generally regarded as a logistics, planning and administrative headquarters. Following the passage of the *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, which placed the authority of combat command (COCOM) firmly in the hands of the unified and specified combatant commanders, the focal point of the “one single concentrated effort” (General Eisenhower’s goal) began to shift to USEUCOM. This process was further accelerated and solidified by the organizational changes (e.g. drawdown) and the unique operational requirements that followed in the wake of the political developments in Europe resulting from the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War in Southwest Asia, and the Global War on Terrorism after 11 September 2001.

### **Headquarters Locations**

The Headquarters, U.S. European Command was “temporarily opened” at the I.G. Farben Hochhaus (renamed the C. W. Abrams Building) in Frankfurt in 1952, where it remained for two years until permanent facilities were available. In 1954, HQ USEUCOM relocated to Camp-de-Loges on the outskirts of Paris to be near SHAPE headquarters and remained there until the withdrawal of the NATO and U.S. Forces from France, at the 1966 request of President Charles De Gaulle. The search for new quarters resulted in HQ Seventh U.S. Army moving from Patch Barracks in Stuttgart-Vaihingen, Germany, and relocating with HQ USAREUR in Heidelberg. HQ USEUCOM moved to Patch Barracks 15 March 1967.

### **Area of Responsibility**

The USEUCOM area of responsibility (AOR) has also continued to evolve during the past fifty years. In 1952 it included continental Europe, the United Kingdom, North Africa and Turkey. The AOR subsequently expanded to include Southwest Asia as far east as Iran and as far south as Saudi Arabia.

With the establishment of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in 1983, which assumed responsibility for most of the Middle East region, the USEUCOM AOR became Europe (including the United Kingdom and Ireland), the Mediterranean Sea (including the islands), and the Mediterranean littoral (excluding Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti), and sub-Saharan Africa.

Beginning in 1989, a sea change swept over Central and Eastern Europe, dissolving both the Warsaw Pact and ultimately the Soviet Union itself. As a result, a number of “new” countries (with additional responsibilities) were added to the AOR, bringing the total to 91 countries. It is important to note that although North Atlantic Treaty Organization Europe was USEUCOM’s *raison d’être*, the command’s mission to promote stability and democratic growth among African and Middle Eastern countries is of equal importance.

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On 1 October 2002, in *Unified Command Plan 02*, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld introduced major changes in Joint responsibilities; every nation of the world was assigned to one of the five U.S. regional unified combatant commands. [There were ten unified combatant commands in all.] The immediate intent was to unquestionably globalize America's growing war on terrorism. HQ USEUCOM's AOR now totaled 93 countries, to include Russia. The theater thus comprised 30 percent of the earth's landmass and 23 percent of the world's population. A March 2004 change to UCP 02 transferred responsibilities for Syria and Lebanon to US Central Command, reducing USEUCOM's AOR to 91 countries.

**Note:** UCP 02 also directed use of the title "Combatant Commander" by the commanders of the ten unified combatant commands in place of the former designation "CINC." Thus, USCINCEUR became CDRUSEUCOM (Commander, USEUCOM).

### **Mission**

In 1989, the primary missions of the Headquarters United States European Command were essentially the same as they had been on 1 August 1952: to support the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and execute U. S. policies within the prescribed AOR.

By the end of the next two years, the politico-historical changes in Europe, as mentioned, coupled with developments outside of the AOR, of which the Gulf war in Southwest Asia (SWA) was undoubtedly the most visible, permanently changed the operational environment. The dramatic events of the 1990s ushered in a new world for the command. And 11 September 2001 totally changed the way HQ USEUCOM executes its mission responsibilities.

USEUCOM is now called upon not only to maintain ready forces to conduct unilateral operations but also to work in concert with allied and coalition partners, as can be seen since 1990, in the Middle East (Desert Storm and Operation Northern Watch), the Balkans (Operations Forge, Guardian, and Amber Fox), and the Global War on Terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom). USEUCOM continues to enhance transatlantic security through support to NATO. Of equal importance, the command also continues to promote regional stability and advances U.S. interests in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Russia, largely implemented through numerous theater engagement initiatives such as Partnership for Peace programs, military-to-military contact programs, and peacekeeping and peace enforcing and training operations.

### **Accomplishments**

Over the past 50 years, USEUCOM participated in or provided support to over 200 named operations, from humanitarian and natural disaster relief efforts, to evacuation of American citizens from areas in crisis, to combat or contingency operations, to peacekeeping and anti-terrorism/force protection operations across the theater and beyond. During the Cold War years, USEUCOM's focus had been to preserve the peace in Europe. Since then, HQ USEUCOM has deployed forces in support of over 95 contingency, noncombatant evacuation operations, humanitarian operations, and Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom throughout the theater and beyond, continuing to build upon its proud heritage and achievements.