



A soldier from the 21st Theater Sustainment Command walks through a hangar inspecting cots 21 August 2021 at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, in preparation for arriving Afghan immigrants as part of U.S. Army Europe and Africa's support to Operation Allies Refuge. (Photo by Spc. Katelyn Myers, U.S. Army)

# The Theater Army's Central Role in Integrated Deterrence

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*Now, integrated deterrence means using every military and non-military tool in our toolbox, in lock-step with our allies and partners. Integrated deterrence is about using existing capabilities, and building new ones, and deploying them all*

*in new and networked ways ... all tailored to a region's security landscape, and in growing partnership with our friends.*  
—Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin

**D**uring a speech in July 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin outlined his integrated deterrence concept. His idea advanced the Department of Defense's evolving competition concepts and incorporated many of the Army and joint competition fundamentals, which the new *National Defense Strategy* further develops.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to counter growing threats from adversaries below the level of armed conflict, Army and joint leaders have also placed increased emphasis on winning in competition short of armed conflict. As Gen. James McConville argues, the Army must learn how to win the “infinite game” of competition because it “helps to ensure that great power competition does not become great power conflict.”<sup>2</sup> The Army must continue combatting America's adversaries across all domains—land, air, sea, space, and cyber—to prevent them from achieving their objectives short of war.

Fortunately, the Army already employs an organization that can serve as the cornerstone of the integrated deterrence concept: the theater army. In addition to performing their enduring roles and functions, theater armies engage allies and partners, set and maintain a theater, and conduct limited contingency operations to enable the Army and joint force's success in competition. These unique organizations help the Army and joint force conduct all-domain operations and actively campaign to assure friendly nations; achieve integrated deterrence; and place geographic combatant commanders (GCC), the joint force, federal agencies, allies, and partners in a position of relative advantage to deter an adversarial attack; or rapidly respond if deterrence should fail. Theater armies will help the Army and joint force maintain a competitive edge over America's adversaries for the foreseeable future.

## Competition Concept Evolution since 2015

The idea of states in constant competition is not new, yet the Army only recently more clearly defined its role in military competition. The Army's concept of competition below the level of armed conflict emerged in a 2015 Army-Marine Corps white paper. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) recognized that U.S. ground combat forces were not “sufficiently trained, organized, equipped, or postured to deter or defeat capable peer enemies.”<sup>3</sup> TRADOC later

explained these ideas in its 2017 publication, *Multi-Domain Battle*, which sought to put the Army in a better position compared to its adversaries using three tenets: calibrate force posture, employ resilient formations, and converge capabilities.<sup>4</sup>

Two joint publications also influenced Army competition concepts. The 2018 *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* developed the idea of competition beyond the common binary peace-war construct and envisioned other roles for the joint force beyond just deterring adversaries during competition.<sup>5</sup> The following year, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, elaborated upon these ideas by reiterating that the joint force must adopt a mindset of integrated campaigning to advance or defend U.S. interests short of armed conflict.<sup>6</sup> Competition usually occurs over extended periods, with indirect actions and less intense resource expenditure. Likewise, local successes rarely lead to an end to competition or permanent gains.<sup>7</sup> Future competition would require that the joint force maintain a persistent presence in theater, engaged in competition for extended durations.

In December 2018, the Army published two TRADOC pamphlets that further codified its competition concept: *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* and *U.S. Army Concept: Multi-Domain Combined Arms Operations at Echelons Above Brigade 2025-2045*. The *National Defense Strategy's* great-power competition idea and the newly published joint concepts greatly influenced each document.<sup>8</sup> *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* describes the United States in a state of continuous competition with China and Russia. In an effort to hamper its adversaries' actions, the Army would now use active engagement to “counter coercion, unconventional warfare, and information warfare directed at partners.”<sup>9</sup> Army forces would set conditions before conflict and consolidate gains as the joint force returned to competition. These pamphlets were the first to identify the theater army as the primary Army echelon converging capabilities across all domains in the physical, human, and information environments.

*Echelons Above Brigade 2025-2045* emphasizes the theater army's role in multi-domain operations (MDO). It recognizes that the Army must tailor theater armies and fill them with trained and ready personnel.<sup>10</sup> Theater armies set conditions for the



Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III delivers remarks and discusses his integrated deterrence concept 30 April 2021 during the change-of-command ceremony for Indo-Pacific Command at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Rivera, U.S. Navy)

employment of landpower and defeat adversary aggression below armed conflict within their designated theaters. In MDO, theater armies remain focused on the entire theater of operations to sustain and support subordinate units at all times. Within the MDO framework, theater armies reside primarily in the operational support area, the friendly area where forces gain combat power, sustain operations, and project power into the support, close, and deep areas. They also coordinate with elements in the strategic support area to obtain the necessary strategic and national assets for use in theater.<sup>11</sup> With these documents, the Army made it clear that theater armies were an essential element of success in MDO.

Last year, the chief of staff of the Army published two strategic papers. The first, *Army Multi-Domain*

*Transformation*, outlines how the Army will meet its Aimpoint Force 2035 requirements. The Army will use “inside forces,” or those that operate inside an adversary’s antiaccess/area denial zones, to shape conditions within a theater and “outside forces” at the strategic and theater levels. The theater army serves as the hub between inside and outside forces. It strengthens the joint force by expanding the Department of Defense’s (DOD) landpower network, setting theaters through assured power projection and dynamic force employment, and developing new capabilities.<sup>12</sup> The white paper also describes the Army’s Calibrated Force Posture initiative, which requires an enduring Army presence in theater. Theater armies maintain a permanent presence and use a combination of assigned and rotational forces and key capabilities during competition to support the Calibrated Force Posture. The Army’s Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model will align units with combatant commands and joint, allied, and partner forces.<sup>13</sup> This alignment allows theater armies to build lasting relations with corps and divisions aligned within their area of responsibility (AOR), helping to expand the competition space.

The second chief of staff of the Army paper, *The Army in Military Competition*, further outlines the Army’s competition concept. This conceptual document defines military competition as the “range of activities and operations employed to achieve political objectives and to deny adversaries the ability to achieve objectives prejudicial to the United States.”<sup>14</sup> The Army can compete to achieve objectives without fighting, deter adversaries, ensure allies, or prepare for conflict. The paper also introduces the three dynamics of military competition: narrative, direct, and indirect. Narrative competition not only involves states competing for reputation but also serves as the baseline for the other two forms. Indirect competition sees states competing for advantage with interests that are less important or ill defined. In direct competition, states compete for leverage over well-defined and vital interests. The Army contributes to competition by presenting a credible force, enabling joint force escalation superiority, and offering policy makers a range of options.<sup>15</sup> Theater armies play a role in nearly every aspect of the three dynamics of military competition and occupy a central piece of the Army’s competition concept.



## Theater Army Organization, Roles, and Functions

Theater armies serve as the Army's primary competition headquarters and a hub for integrated deterrence operations. The Army recently began altering theater army headquarters, their assigned forces, and theater enablers to do more in competition. Currently, the Army fields five theater armies, each in support of a GCC: U.S. Army North (USARNORTH) for U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Army South (USARSO) for U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Army Central (USARCENT) for U.S. Central Command, U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and U.S. Army Europe-Africa (USAREUR-AF) for U.S. European Command and U.S. African Command.

Theater armies contain three headquarters components, each with specific functions: a main command post (MCP), a contingency command post (CCP), and a headquarters and headquarters battalion. Though part of the same headquarters, the MCP primarily serves as an administrative headquarters focused on the entire theater while the CCP conducts limited,

Soldiers under the command of U.S. Army North walk down a vehicle trail 4 September 2021 while deployed in support of the Department of Defense wildland firefighting response operations for the Dixie Fire in California. (Photo by Sgt. Deion Kean, U.S. Army)

operational missions. The headquarters and headquarters battalion provides administrative and logistical support to the MCP and CCP, including sustainment to the CCP when it deploys. Theater army commanders can tailor the MCP or CCP to accomplish AOR-specific, short-duration or enduring missions.

The CCP serves as an immediately available, deployable command post for small-scale operations or as the foundation of a joint headquarters. It can also form the nucleus of a small joint task force (JTF) or joint forces land component command (JFLCC) headquarters under a JTF or GCC commander.<sup>16</sup> The MCP will provide direct planning support and reach-back capability when the CCP deploys for operations, exercises, or theater security cooperation activities. For instance, USARSO routinely deploys its CCP for foreign disaster relief (FDR) and foreign humanitarian

assistance (FHA) missions in the Caribbean during hurricane season.

Until 2014, theater armies also included an operational command post (OCP) to perform traditional field army roles, like those that USARCENT employed to manage operations in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. The Army is reportedly exploring options to add OCP capabilities back into theater army headquarters to improve their ability to manage competition operations. An OCP could oversee theater army forces and employ joint theater enablers in a joint operations area (JOA), allowing the MCP to maintain its theater-wide focus. Together, the theater army's dual-role headquarters and potential OCP additions, combined with its assigned forces and joint enablers, make it capable of performing various roles that enable Army and joint success.

Theater armies derive their roles, functions, tasks, and responsibilities from various documents, including Title 10 U.S.C.; Army Regulation 10-87, *Army Commands, Army Service Component Commands, and Direct Reporting Units*; and Department of Defense Directives 5100.01 and 5101.1.<sup>17</sup> Theater armies perform ten of the twelve Army responsibilities outlined in these documents.<sup>18</sup> They support the joint force across the range of military operations short of conflict: military engagement, security cooperation, deterrence, crisis response, and limited contingency operations.<sup>19</sup> A theater army serves both the Department of the Army and the GCC, acting as a conduit to Army headquarters on behalf of its supported GCC.<sup>20</sup> By doing so, a theater army helps the Army tailor the forces it will deploy to support a combatant commander's requirements for operations across the competition continuum.

The theater army daily performs its primary role as the Army service component command (ASCC) to a GCC. A theater army is responsible for all administration and support of all Army forces under the GCC or transitioning into the theater. Typically, a theater army handles these same roles in support of Army forces deployed in a JOA. A GCC could require its aligned theater army to serve as a JTF or JOA JFLCC for immediate response and contingency operations. However, operating in these roles for extended periods requires augmentation and inhibits a theater army from fulfilling its ASCC, theater-wide responsibilities. For example, Third Army

required significant staff augmentation to execute its mission in Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom, where it operated as a JOA JFLCC, Army forces, and theater JFLCC.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, a theater army can execute multiple competition roles without significant headquarters augmentation while serving as a theater JFLCC, such as U.S. Army Pacific has done since 2014.<sup>22</sup>

A theater army plans, coordinates, and fulfills the combatant commander's daily operational requirements and its ASCC responsibilities through its MCP. The headquarters provides theater-wide Title 10, administrative control (ADCON); Army support to other services; and Army executive agent responsibilities in support of the GCC.<sup>23</sup> By performing each enduring commitment, the theater army provides essential support to the Army and joint force. For instance, ADCON responsibilities include personnel management, logistics support, training, personnel services, and deploying troops.<sup>24</sup> A theater army can provide Army support to other services through fuel distribution, engineering, base defense, communications network infrastructure, land-based air missile defense, intratheater medical evacuation, common-user logistics, and other support roles.<sup>25</sup> For example, a theater army would provide substantial support to units like a Marine expeditionary force that lacks robust, organic sustainment capabilities. Additionally, the theater army could use assigned units like the battlefield coordination detachment to liaise with the joint force air component commander to synchronize joint fires across the AOR or digital liaison detachments to assist with multinational interoperability.

Theater armies also carry out Army executive agent responsibilities for essential theater-wide functions such as the military postal service, contracting activities, and DOD support to United Nations missions.<sup>26</sup> The MCP supports forward deployed Army, joint, and multinational forces deployed to a JOA established within the AOR. Often, theater armies allocate resources and delegate missions to subordinate theater-enabling commands or brigades, which then complete the detailed planning and execution to meet ASCC responsibilities.

A theater army performs seven functions that allow it to accomplish its ASCC role:

- exercise command and control over Army forces in a theater,



- ◆ execute combatant commander's daily operation requirements,
- ◆ provide ADCON of Army forces,
- ◆ set and maintain the theater,
- ◆ set and support operational areas,
- ◆ plan and coordinate consolidation of gains, and
- ◆ perform joint roles in limited scope, scale, and duration.<sup>27</sup>

These functions extend the joint force's operational reach and allow it to contest adversaries in all domains. While it is helpful to understand the functions, roles, and tasks that a theater army performs, simply reviewing these areas limits our appreciation of how a theater army supports integrated deterrence.

## How Theater Armies Support Integrated Deterrence

Many of the theater army's responsibilities that directly support integrated deterrence fall under three broad categories: engage allies and partners, set and maintain the theater, and conduct limited contingency operations. Tasks within these categories often overlap and mutually support each other. By daily fulfilling tasks

Soldiers with the 7th Transportation Brigade-Expeditionary, under operational control of the 8th Theater Sustainment Command, download Army prepositioned stock in Guam on 9 July 2021 in support of theater army and joint force exercises. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Martin, U.S. Army Pacific Public Affairs Office)

within these categories, theater armies enable the Army and joint force to conduct integrated campaigning. These highly capable headquarters leverage allies and partners, converge capabilities, prepare a theater, and support the joint force's efforts to achieve integrated deterrence.

**Engage allies and partners.** Theater armies engage allies and partners directly. They also oversee and employ subordinate units in various missions that support this line of effort. At its headquarters, a theater army prepares a theater campaign support plan "to organize and align operations, activities, events and investments in time, space and purpose to achieve strategic effect."<sup>28</sup> A theater army shapes the environment and maintains regional stability by engaging allies and partners to improve their military capabilities and capacity. Engagement increases the theater army's access and

influence in the AOR. It also expands the DOD's global landpower network, the network of allies and partners that sets a foundation for joint and whole-of-government strategic engagement.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, through routine interactions, a theater army prevents adversaries like Russia and China from building influence with allies and partners. Theater armies grow the landpower network through military engagement, education and exercises, and security cooperation.

Military engagement involves the frequent contact and interaction between U.S. forces and those of another nation's armed forces or foreign and domestic civilian agencies.<sup>30</sup> Success begins with a presence on the ground that starts at the top. Long-term partnerships and exchanges between senior leaders boost interoperability and shared trust. For instance, USARPAC, USAREUR-AF, and USARCENT all have deputy commanders from partner nations serving in their headquarters. Army commanders from these AORs demonstrate commitment by routinely engaging in senior leader discussions and attending events such as the annual Land Forces Pacific Symposium or African Land Forces Colloquium that "encourage other nations to choose the United States as the security partner of choice."<sup>31</sup> Theater army elements stationed forward in the Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East can interact with host-nation militaries daily to increase the interoperability and communication between nations. For example, USARPAC permanently stations two digital liaison detachments with South Korean field armies. Military engagement also includes Army interaction with foreign and domestic civilian agencies. For instance, the State Partnership Program builds enduring ties between U.S. forces and its partners through efforts such as training peacekeepers in Kenya and preparing regional partners for natural disasters in South America.<sup>32</sup>

Exercises and education also enable the Army to expand the landpower network and prepare for future operations with allies and partners. These endeavors support the Army in direct, indirect, and narrative competition. Directly, they showcase deterrent capabilities in action. For example, USAREUR-AF's DEFENDER-Europe 21 included twenty-eight thousand troops from twenty-seven partner nations, testing the theater army's ability to command and control multinational forces while maintaining theater-wide oversight of 104 countries.<sup>33</sup> Multinational exercises

contribute to indirect competition by providing value to allies and partners through officer exchanges, information sharing, and mutual logistics support.<sup>34</sup> These exercises support narrative competition by demonstrating America's commitment to its partners and allies.

Theater armies also nominate partner and allied officers to attend U.S. Army training courses and professional military education. For instance, the U.S. Army War College's C/JFLCC course routinely graduates ten to fifteen foreign general officers per year. Meanwhile, the current War College resident course has eighty international fellows from seventy-five countries.<sup>35</sup> These graduates build lifelong relationships with their U.S. counterparts that improve allied and partner cooperation.

Security cooperation provides one more key avenue by which theater armies engage allies and partners. Through security cooperation, theater armies improve partner nation capacity and capability, expand influence and access, and encourage partners to support U.S. interests.<sup>36</sup> Ideally, a theater army and its subordinate unit's efforts improve their partners' ability to manage internal and external threats, allowing host-nation governments to maintain the rule of law. One way that the theater army does this is through security force assistance (SFA). The Army's SFA brigades, or SFABs, advise foreign security forces and conduct SFA up to the corps level. Their efforts support theater security cooperation objectives. As Army Secretary Christine Wormuth recently said, the Army can use SFABs to "develop and deepen relationships, create opportunities for greater access, [and] create opportunities for interoperability."<sup>37</sup>

Theater armies oversee foreign internal defense, security sector reform, and foreign military sales. While special operations generally perform foreign internal defense, theater armies provide logistics to these missions and perform complementary SFA missions simultaneously. Theater armies also support security sector reform in host nations. For example, USARSO

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recently cohosted the Border Security Conference in Brazil to coordinate border security with its South and Central American partners.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, foreign military sales advance U.S. influence with allies and partners. U.S. Army Security Assistance Command manages more than 6,500 foreign military sales cases valued at more than \$200 billion with countries in every combatant command AOR.<sup>39</sup> Through its missions engaging allies and partners, a theater army and its subordinate units improve national security through well-postured, prepared, and interoperable partners, thus enabling increased access for the joint force across each combatant command.<sup>40</sup>

**Set and maintain the theater.** The second major grouping of theater army tasks falls under setting and maintaining a theater. Setting a theater relies heavily on enduring relationships with allies and partners. By expanding the DOD's landpower network, the theater army improves its ability to set and maintain the theater for the joint force.<sup>41</sup> Theater armies provide combatant commanders with theater-wide intelligence, mission command, information advantage, protection, sustainment support, and unique deterrent assets.<sup>42</sup> Setting the theater allows combatant commanders to execute their campaign and strategic plans successfully. Prepared theaters also extend the joint force's operational reach and ability to sustain integrated campaigning efforts.

Theater armies collect, produce, and disseminate intelligence using signal, geospatial, counterintelligence, human, open source, atmospheric, and other intelligence capabilities. By doing so, they develop regional theater databases and signatures, support deterrence activities, provide warning intelligence, and improve contingency plans.<sup>43</sup> Each theater army employs a military intelligence brigade-theater to help prepare the theater or JOA for competition activities. These brigades support joint targeting and provide a gateway for a theater army to access national-level intelligence.

As part of its mission command efforts, theater armies ensure that GCCs have appropriately tailored and postured forces who can communicate effectively with other Army units and the joint force. Theater armies tailor forces and deploy them to support a GCC for competition activities including contingency operations. Force tailoring is a continuous process as troops move in and out of the theater. Theater armies ensure that those forces are postured appropriately to

support GCC operation plans and contingency plans, deter adversaries, and assure partners. A theater army provides command and control (C2) through theater-wide communications to the Army and the joint force. A signal command (theater) helps the theater army establish, maintain, and defend the communications and network architecture for Army forces in a JOA and provides connectivity between land forces and the rest of the AOR. Theater armies place the right Army forces in the right location and at the right time to dynamically employ and converge landpower in support of a GCC's objectives.

Theater armies also establish and maintain information advantage to support GCC campaign plans. Headquarters staff personnel currently plan nonlethal fires, but some theater armies might soon field an experimental unit called the Theater Information Advantage Element (TIAE). The TIAE will "converge theater aligned information related capabilities across the operational environment to support decision making, protect friendly information, and affect relevant actor perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in order to gain and maintain information advantage."<sup>44</sup> TIAEs will fight to win the information space and enable successful narrative competition. Theater armies will be able to merge operations in the physical and information domains to influence both friendly and enemy actions.<sup>45</sup>

Theater armies protect U.S. forces, infrastructure, allies and partners, and other critical assets. Theater army protection comprises many tasks such as force health protection; personnel recovery; physical security; area security; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) operations; police and detention operations; and air and missile defense. These actions protect American and partner forces and prevent adversaries from gaining positions of advantage that could disrupt theater or JOA operations. Theater armies help maintain ground, air, and sea lines of communication through the employment of port, airfield, and critical infrastructure protection assets. Units like the Army Air and Missile Defense Command, 20th CBRNE Support Command, theater military police commands, maneuver enhancement or protection brigades, and regional support groups perform many essential protection functions. By positioning units appropriately, a theater army ensures that it can protect troops and infrastructure and maintain the theater for continuous operations.





A theater army employs unique deterrence units and capabilities, and can coordinate for national-level assets. These units demonstrate to an adversary that U.S. forces can hold their interests at risk. For example, the multi-domain task force is a theater-level element that synchronizes precision effects and fires in all domains against enemy antiaccess/area denial networks, enabling joint freedom of action.<sup>46</sup> Theater fires commands and elements will control long-range fires and hold an adversary at risk while friendly forces maintain significant standoff. The Intelligence, Information, Cyber, Electronic Warfare and Space unit will enable the Army to conduct MDO, enable freedom of action in space, contest adversaries in the cyber domain, and open windows of opportunity in the information environment.<sup>47</sup> Together, these new organizations will deliver effects from all domains to create multiple dilemmas for an adversary, enable joint force decision dominance, and create a significant deterrent effect.

Lastly, theater armies set and maintain a theater through the category most commonly associated with setting a theater: sustainment. Every day, through its theater sustainment command (TSC), the theater

The U.S. Army Central contingency command post (CP) on 5 May 2017 at the joint training center in Jordan. U.S. Army Central established the CP to standard in less than sixty hours as part of preparations for Exercise Eager Lion 17, an annual multinational exercise with over eighteen partner nations. (Photo by Sgt. Zoe Morris, U.S. Central Command)

army provides logistics, financial management, contracting support, and personnel services to Army forces in the AOR.<sup>48</sup> Theater armies provide transportation, construct and operate bases, assess critical infrastructure, deploy and redeploy forces, and maintain the Army prepositioned stock enterprise. For example, theater engineer commands provide C2 for engineer brigades in theater that can construct, maintain, and assess lines of communication, seaports, and airfields to ensure that they can maintain sustainment requirements for theater-wide and JOA-specific missions.

TSCs not only provide sustainment but also establish and maintain distribution networks. The 1st TSC has supported USARCENT since 2006, managing the “ports, flights, and customs points needed

to keep people and equipment moving 24 hours a day, seven days a week” in the CENTCOM AOR.<sup>49</sup> As an illustration of a theater army’s massive scope of sustainment requirements, 1st TSC provides 40,000 meals, 3 million gallons of fuel, 750 tons of cargo, and 135,000 pieces of mail across twenty countries each day.<sup>50</sup> Theater army planners and theater medical commands



provide and coordinate medical, dental, and veterinary support across AORs for a GCC. Additionally, they leverage relationships with allies and partners to establish basing, overflight, and status of forces agreements. These activities continuously shape the environment for the Army to employ landpower in support of the joint force and GCCs.

**Conduct limited contingency operations.** Theater armies also conduct limited contingency operations covering a broad range of missions. Success in contingency operations relies on effective engagement with allies and partners and the theater army’s ability to set and maintain the theater. The theater army CCP is well suited to provide C2 for Army or joint forces conducting limited contingency operations, to include FHA, FDR, defense support of civil authorities, noncombatant evacuation operations, peace operations, and CBRN response. CCPs can deploy their organic personnel and equipment by aircraft and C2 up to a division-size element.<sup>51</sup> The CCP could serve as a JFLCC or JTF commander or operate under another joint force commander. Regardless, the CCP will require augmentation of its staff and support from theater enablers.

Each theater army CCP stands ready to respond to various missions. For example, USARNORTH serves as the standing JFLCC for the U.S. Northern Command AOR. Its CCP can rapidly deploy and has communications that allow it to integrate with joint, interagency,

In partnership with Guatemalan forces, Joint Task Force-Bravo unloads emergency supplies from a U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook assigned to the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, 8 November 2020 to assist the victims of Tropical Depression Eta. (Photo by Capt. Rachel Salpietra, U.S. Air Force)

state, federal, and local authorities. Theater armies can also base their CCP forward in theater. USARCENT routinely bases its CCP in Kuwait for exercises and operations in its AOR, like when it served as the Operation Inherent Resolve CJTF headquarters in 2014.

A theater army can C2 FHA or FDR missions, even in nonpermissive environments. For example, U.S. Army Africa initially oversaw the DOD’s response to the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa during Operation United Assistance. Maj. Gen. Darryl Williams, then USARAF commander, operated as the joint force commander. The CCP quickly “assessed the operational environment, developed relationships, began operations, identified follow-on requirements, and established the infrastructure for subsequent forces,” ensuring that the operation got off on the right foot.<sup>52</sup> Some CCPs deploy routinely. USARSO’s CCP maintains a high level of readiness, especially during hurricane season.<sup>53</sup> The CCP has deployed to conduct FHA and FDR efforts after multiple hurricanes, tropical storms, and Haitian earthquakes in 2010 and 2021.

Theater army CCPs also conduct defense support of civil authorities missions. USARNORTH regularly responds to natural and man-made disasters in the United States. The CCP has long-standing relations with government agencies at the federal and state level, such as USARNORTH's defense coordinating elements aligned with FEMA's regional headquarters. Last year, USARNORTH supported and oversaw the DOD's ground response to the Dixie Fire in California. As Lt. Gen. John Evans said, "It is our duty and our honor to support the National Interagency Fire Center's efforts to suppress the Dixie Fire and protect those threatened by it."<sup>54</sup> USARNORTH also served as the JFLCC for DOD's efforts in the fight against COVID-19, supervising Navy and Air Force medical teams. Theater armies can also conduct noncombatant evacuation operations, such as Operations Assured Guardian in Africa and Operation Allies Refuge to rescue Afghan civilians. They can also serve as a headquarters in the initial stages of peacekeeping operations. Contingency command post missions help the Army expand its landpower network and gain influence through indirect and narrative competition. "Countries remember which partners provided timely, useful assistance," thus giving the United States future leverage over its competitors.<sup>55</sup>

Every role, function, and task that a theater army performs mutually supports the others. When a theater army engages allies and partners effectively, it improves host-nation capacity and capability. This engagement expands the landpower network and provides the Army with increased influence and options during future operations. Established relationships allow the Army to better set and maintain a theater for the joint force by having supporting agreements in place that allow forces access to host nation facilities. For instance, USARPAC uses its Pacific Pathways initiative to improve its partners' military effectiveness and interoperability with the joint force. If USARPAC is required to conduct a contingency

operation in the region, it will now have more effective partners and a further established theater from which to operate. These overlapping tasks ultimately enable a theater army to oversee a complex array of operations across its AOR in support of GCC and national objectives.

## Conclusion

Future Army and joint competition concepts call for a military that can deter enemy aggression, assure allies and partners, provide joint force escalation superiority, and give policymakers a maximum amount of options. No other organization supports these future competition and integrated deterrence concepts more than the theater army. Through their forward presence, these tailorable and multipurpose headquarters, along with their unique forces and theater enablers, orchestrate actions across vast distances that impact the Nation's ability to win in operations short of armed conflict.

A theater army allows for further Army and joint success in continued competition and sets the stage for American military forces to respond and win during crises, transition to armed conflict, or conflict. Theater armies engage allies and partners to extend the landpower network, set and maintain the theater to support Army and joint operations in all domains, and respond to limited contingency operations to increase influence, access, and freedom of action. Whether setting the theater in the Pacific, conducting multinational exercises in the Middle East, fighting wildfires in California, supporting noncombatant evacuation operations at Ramstein Air Base, or rebuilding essential services after severe weather events in South America, each theater army competes daily to support its combatant command, negate adversarial advantages, and empower the joint force. Theater armies provide strategic landpower that remains indispensable to the joint force's and our Nation's future ability to achieve integrated deterrence. ■

## Notes

**Epigraph.** Lloyd J. Austin III, "Secretary of Defense Remarks at the 40th International Institute for Strategic Studies Fullerton Lecture (As Prepared)" (speech, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Singapore, 27 July 2021), accessed 29 November

2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/2708192/secretary-of-defense-remarks-at-the-40th-international-institute-for-strategic/>.

1. While the 2022 *National Defense Strategy* presents new concepts and terminology, this article uses the term "competition" as found in current Army and joint concepts to refer to Army and joint force operations and actions short of armed conflict.
2. James C. McConville, *The Army in Military Competition: Chief of Staff Paper #2* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1 March 2021), ii.
3. David G. Perkins, "Multi-Domain Battle: Driving Change to Win in the Future," *Military Review* 97, no. 4 (July-August 2017): 9.
4. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), *Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century 2025-2040* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, December 2017), 2.
5. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 8 March 2018), vi.
6. Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 3 June 2019), 5.
7. *Ibid.*, 8-9.
8. See Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018); U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*.
9. TRADOC Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2018* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 6 December 2018), vii.
10. TP 525-3-8, *U.S. Army Concept: Multi-Domain Combined Arms Operations at Echelons Above Brigade 2025-2045* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 6 December 2018), 32.
11. *Ibid.*, 52.
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