

# UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND

## THEATER STRATEGY

GEN PHILIP M. BREEDLOVE, USAF  
COMMANDER



*United States  
European Command  
"Stronger Together"*

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Since the end of World War II, European allies and partners have worked with the United States around the globe to achieve security and stability, and Europe continues to be critical to U.S. national security interests. Currently, United States European Command (USEUCOM) is confronting the most profound negative change in the European security environment since the end of the Cold War. A revanchist Russia, mass migration from other regions, foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) transiting through Europe, cyber-attacks, the lingering effects from a global financial crisis, and underfunded defense budgets all jeopardize European security, endanger the U.S. homeland, and threaten global security and stability.

Addressing these challenges and preparing for an uncertain future requires agility; capable, ready, and postured forces; close partnerships with European allies and partners; a fully enabled North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and a dedicated whole of government approach. Together, the United States and Europe constitute a closely linked community of democracies with shared interests and close economic and security relationships; USEUCOM is the enabling defense link to NATO and to ensuring trans-Atlantic security and prosperity. This theater strategy broadly outlines the way USEUCOM will adapt to meet the challenges of the new European security environment to ensure a whole, free, peaceful, and prosperous Europe.

## EUROPEAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Over the last few years, the security environment in Europe has changed significantly. Today, the European security environment presents three geographically defined problem sets to the east, south, and north, as well as a functional one – cyber. Within the security environment, USEUCOM, NATO Allies,



**U.S. European Commander Air Force General Philip Breedlove briefs military leaders and senior enlisted personnel from U.S. and NATO partner nations at U.S. European Command's European Security Seminar hosted at The George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies (ESS). The purpose of the seminar is intended to renew relationships and exchange views about security challenges in Europe. During the seminar, participants discussed the various challenges facing Europe's north, east, and southern flanks and ways partner nations could address them while strengthening NATO/EU partnerships.**

and European partners are concentrating on multiple threats, conflicts, and strategic challenges. (Fig. 1) By working with its allies and partners to explore the problem sets, USEUCOM can assess challenges and opportunities and how to best support U.S. and European security priorities.

In the east and north, Russia is the cause of much concern due to its increasingly aggressive behavior in Eastern Europe and militarization in the Arctic. As demonstrated in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, Russia is employing a form of warfare that combines conventional, irregular, and asymmetric means – including the persistent manipulation of political and ideological conflicts – to foster instability, and it is rejecting a collaborative security approach with the international community. Although the United States and its allies and partners desire cooperation with Russia to address shared security concerns, continued Russian aggression and its use of malign influence to weaken the NATO Alliance and other Western international institutions will constrain such efforts.



From the south, Europe faces myriad security challenges as a result of a complex and unstable Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is a threat to key allies, partners, and U.S. national security interests. ISIL actively recruits and trains foreign fighters who then return through Europe to their countries of origin. In addition, the significant influx of migrants and refugees to Europe from MENA is a serious economic and humanitarian problem that provides opportunities for violent extremist organizations (VEO) and transnational criminal organizations (TCO) to take advantage of the crisis to gain access to Europe.

Europe is also contending with various other security challenges, including growing adversary ballistic missile capabilities, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), infectious diseases, cyber-attacks, international and national terrorism and narco-terrorism, and illicit trafficking. Individually or

in combination, these threats could result in catastrophic attacks against the United States and/or its allies and partners.

Contributing to the complexity of the European security environment are financial challenges to the global economy. Although some individual European economies are healthy, others are weak, causing overall instability which threatens the prosperity of the trans-Atlantic community. In response to the global financial crisis and perceived lack of threats, European defense budgets have shrunk, resulting in reductions in capability, capacity, readiness, and interoperability with U.S. forces. Reduced budgets also make it more difficult for Allied countries to meet their obligations to NATO. The United States has similarly felt the effects of smaller defense budgets despite a high demand for its military capabilities around the globe.



**Two Spanish Navy Harriers fly behind a U.S. Marine KC-130J aircraft during an aerial-refueling exercise off the coast of Spain. The aerial-refueling capabilities of the KC-130J greatly extend the range and flight times of NATO aircraft.**

The NATO Alliance is now facing the difficult task of transitioning its primary focus from expeditionary operations and support to a renewed emphasis on European security. Addressing NATO's capability issues is problematic for the 28-member Alliance due to decreasing military force levels, disparate

capabilities, uncertain defense spending, and divergent strategic interests. Each individual nation's ability to meet their Article 3 self-defense obligations is central to NATO's credibility. The United States' Article 5 commitment to the collective defense of all NATO members is unwavering, as is U.S. commitment to ensuring that the Alliance remains ready and capable for crisis response and cooperative security. Our European allies and partners collectively remain our most vital global security partner and we continue to require co-investment in that relationship to sustain it for the future.



**U.S. Army paratroopers and Czech army paratroopers seize an airfield during an air assault operation as part of Exercise Sky Soldier II at the Bechyne Training Area, Czech Republic. Sky Soldier is a series of bilateral exercises designed to increase interoperability and strengthen partnerships between NATO airborne forces.**

## STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The United States desires a European security environment where threats and conflicts in the region are alleviated and the strategic challenges successfully addressed. USEUCOM's vision and mission promote these goals. In support of U.S. policy, USEUCOM must ensure that Russia is deterred from further aggression and rejoins the community of cooperative nations to advance peace and security in Europe. USEUCOM also seeks mitigation of the growing transnational threat to southern Europe. To strengthen the Alliance, USEUCOM requires strong eastern European NATO nations and it will contribute to their defense by assisting them to increase their military capability, interoperability, and readiness. USEUCOM supports the aspirations of the Western Balkan, Caucasus, and eastern European nations toward closer integration with NATO. Finally, the United States remains fully committed to Israel's security and qualitative military edge, and USEUCOM will continue to work closely with the Israeli Defense Force to ensure that. A Europe that is whole, free, peaceful, and prosperous is essential to help protect the U.S. homeland, and this end state is advanced through U.S. leadership which promotes peace, security, and strong cooperation.

### MISSION STATEMENT

USEUCOM prepares ready forces, ensures strategic access, deters conflict, enables the NATO Alliance, strengthens partnerships, and counters transnational threats to protect and defend the United States.

## THEATER PRIORITIES

In response to the theater challenges and desired end states, and in support of higher level guidance, USEUCOM will concentrate its collective efforts on six theater priorities over the next three to five years.

### VISION

USEUCOM is engaged, postured, and ready with forward-deployed U.S. forces. We will enable and execute a full range of military missions in concert with our indispensable European Allies and partners to secure U.S. national interests and to support a Europe whole, free, and at peace.



Two F-16 Fighting Falcons assigned to the Royal Norwegian Air Force fly alongside to the wing of a KC-135 Stratotanker assigned to RAF Mildenhall, England, while participating in the Baltic Region Training Event over the Baltic region. The BRTE is an advanced training concept that serves to further develop cooperation with NATO allies and partners within the region.

### THEATER PRIORITIES

- (1) Deter Russian aggression
- (2) Enable the NATO Alliance
- (3) Preserve U.S. strategic partnerships
- (4) Counter transnational threats
- (5) Ensure postured and ready forces
- (6) Focus on key relationships

## DETER RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

While Russia has supported some common security efforts in counterterrorism and counternarcotics, these contributions are overshadowed by its disregard for the sovereignty of its neighbors in Europe and its violation of numerous agreements which require Russia to act within international norms. One of the United States' national military objectives is to deter state adversaries from threatening the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests while assuring the security of allies. Because Russian aggression threatens NATO allies and partners in Europe, USEUCOM is leading Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to deter further Russian actions that destabilize regional security. Through Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE, USEUCOM is working with allies and partners to deter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. USEUCOM will also participate in other bilateral and multilateral exercises and engagements to support the mission to assure and defend NATO, enhance Allied and partner ability to provide for their own security, and counter Russia's use of conventional, irregular, and asymmetric warfare.

Russia is presenting enduring challenges to our allies and partners in multiple regions; therefore, it is a global challenge that requires a global response. USEUCOM will work with other combatant commands, the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense to ensure that collective DoD deterrence efforts are synchronized and achieve the desired effect without causing unwarranted escalation or provocation.



**A Lithuanian general greets U.S. soldiers on Siauliai Air Base, Lithuania. Europe-based U.S. Army units were deployed to Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia to conduct bilateral military exercises and reinforce NATO security commitments to the host nations.**



**Dragoons maneuver through a forest toward a simulated enemy stronghold. Their mission was to capture a high value target as part of a combined training exercise with Estonian Allies in Rabassare, Estonia, in support of Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE, an ongoing multinational partnership focused on joint training and security cooperation between NATO allies.**

## ENABLE THE NATO ALLIANCE

U.S. and European efforts to advance a more democratic and prosperous Europe are built on the foundation of collective security provided by NATO. The transatlantic Alliance is a U.S. strategic center of gravity and source of cohesion in Europe. It is essential to ensuring that Europe remains whole, free, and at peace and capable of responding to crisis and contingency requirements in partnership with the United States.

USEUCOM has spent the last decade enabling NATO members to participate in expeditionary operations outside of Europe. While this mission is still important, USEUCOM will shift its engagement with NATO allies to concentrate on bolstering Allied capabilities – especially the most recent members – to ensure that they are able to meet their Article 3 self-defense and Article 5 collective defense requirements. Under NATO’s Readiness Action Plan, USEUCOM will continue to enhance the responsiveness of the NATO Response Force with pre-positioned stocks and related infrastructure to facilitate rapid reinforcement and manning for NATO command and control and associated enablers, which includes the enhancement of a corps- and division-level headquarters focused on assurance and adaptation measures. Lastly, USEUCOM will continue implementing the European Phased Adaptive Approach to provide protection to Europe from a potential ballistic missile attack from a rogue nation.



U.S. Army paratroopers and a Dutch soldier in the Royal Netherlands Army engage targets during a combined defensive live-fire exercise at the 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command's Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany. Army paratroopers routinely train alongside NATO forces to increase interoperability and strengthen the alliance



A U.S. soldier discusses training with Croatian soldiers for Immediate Response 15 in Slunj, Croatia. Immediate Response 15 is a multinational, brigade-level, Command Post Exercise utilizing computer assisted simulations and field training exercises in Croatia and Slovenia. The exercises and simulations are designed to enhance regional stability, strengthen partner capacity, and improve interoperability.

## PRESERVE U.S. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

USEUCOM has worked hard to help develop partner capacity, capability, and interoperability, and USEUCOM must continue to help sustain and strengthen these developments. In support of these efforts, USEUCOM will conduct comprehensive engagements to further develop allied and partner understanding, planning, and collaborative military-to-military approaches. Multilateral forums with allies and other partners – such as regional chiefs of defense (CHOD) conferences – serve to enlarge areas of agreement and strengthen multilateral and

bilateral cooperative activities. USEUCOM country cooperation plans will include bilateral roadmaps that seek allied and partner input and coordination to achieve desired security objectives. USEUCOM will also work with the National Guard Bureau, the States' adjutant generals, and the European countries who are associated with the State Partnership Program to leverage their unique capabilities and increase partnership building.

## COUNTER TRANSNATIONAL THREATS

The United States and Europe face a growing number of transnational, and often asymmetric threats, which include violent extremists, cyber-attacks, illicit trafficking, weapons of mass destruction, and infectious diseases. USEUCOM, with the assistance of other U.S. agencies, will continue to work with European and international organizations such as Interpol, NATO, and the European Union to counter these threats. Using a whole of government approach, USEUCOM will cooperate with allies



and partners to: monitor and thwart the flow of foreign terrorist fighters traveling to and from conflict zones and under-governed regions that threaten Europe and the U.S. homeland; dismantle extremist facilitation networks and transnational criminal organizations; and build

**Members of the Azerbaijani armed forces participating in Combined Endeavor conduct maintenance on their communication network. Combined Endeavor is a multi-nation exercise involving nearly 40 NATO, Partnership for Peace and strategic security partners, and is designed to increase interoperability and communications processes between the participating nations.**

partner nation capacity to counter the flow of foreign fighters. USEUCOM must also defend against adversaries who can threaten our forces through the cyber domain by identifying and securing our critical infrastructure. This will be accomplished through a defensible architecture, ready cyber forces, and improved situational awareness.

## ENSURE POSTURED AND READY FORCES

Europe has historically been and will remain key terrain for the U.S. military. The



**U.S. Marines practice landing on the deck of the British amphibious assault ship, HMS Ocean, with an MV-22B Osprey. The deck landing qualifications are part of the Allied Maritime Basing Initiative, which seeks to provide the U.S. and allies with a year-round maritime-based crisis response force in the Mediterranean Sea or the Gulf of Guinea by leveraging the significant amphibious capabilities already residing in Europe.**



bases, access, and freedom of movement provided to the United States by allies and European partners are essential to DoD's mission to employ forces globally to meet contingency requirement, conduct operations, and defend U.S. vital national interests. The access that the military enjoys is a product of the long-standing relationships that the United States maintains and nurtures – both through assigned forces and U.S. commitment through NATO to European security. U.S. infrastructure in Europe enables not only USEUCOM to meet its assigned missions, but it is also essential for the transit of forces and materiel through Europe to support other combatant command missions and requirements.

## FOCUS ON KEY RELATIONSHIPS

As reflected in the other priorities, USEUCOM will focus on key relationships by enhancing security in Eastern Europe and strengthening ties with emerging Alliance leaders. The Levant and the Mediterranean are also regions in which USEUCOM will be fully engaged. One of USEUCOM's core missions is assist Israel in its inherent right to self-defense. In addition to the threat posed by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah, Israel resides in a dangerous and complex region due to the expansion of radical Islamic extremists organizations on Israel's border in both Syria and the Egyptian Sinai. Continued tensions between Israel and the Hamas-led government in Gaza have also led to open warfare in the past with no indications of resolution. Therefore, USEUCOM will continue to work closely with the Israeli Defense Forces to assure them of U.S. commitment to their defense and to preserve their qualitative military edge over their adversaries amid a rapid and uncertain regional transformation. Finally, in the Arctic, USEUCOM will seek greater cooperation for military support to civil authorities to enable the peaceful opening of the Arctic.



**U.S. soldiers participate in the joint Austere Challenge Exercise with Israeli Defense Forces to develop partnered air and missile defense capabilities.**

## CHALLENGES

To successfully execute the strategy, USEUCOM requires reliable and ready forces, strategic anticipation, and funding that is consistent with the threat level. After years of force structure reductions, fewer than 65,000 U.S. military personnel remain permanently stationed in Europe to secure and advance U.S. national interests from Greenland to the Caspian Sea and from the Arctic Ocean to the Levant. Reduced U.S. forward presence and degraded readiness across the Services are inhibiting the United States' ability to favorably shape the environment. The size of the military presence requires difficult decisions on how best to use limited resources to assure, stabilize, and support the USEUCOM mission in the new European security environment. Even as USEUCOM leans forward with NATO Allies and partners

in response to these new challenges, fully addressing them and their long-term implications requires a reformulation of the U.S. strategic calculus and corresponding resourcing levied towards Europe.

USEUCOM cannot fully mitigate the impact felt from a reduction in assigned military forces through the augmentation of rotational forces from the United States. The temporary presence of rotational forces complements, but does not substitute for an enduring forward deployed presence that is tangible and real. Virtual presence means actual absence. The constant presence of U.S. forces in Europe since World War II has enabled the United States to enjoy the relatively free access that it relies on in times of crisis. Further reductions of both infrastructure and forces may negatively impact U.S. access to key strategic locations during times of crisis in the Middle East, Africa, or Eurasia. USEUCOM requires dedicated resources to remain decisively engaged with European allies and partners, interagency partners, and to support other combatant commands to achieve USEUCOM's important and challenging mission.

## CONCLUSION

By implementing this strategy – underpinned with the appropriate resources – USEUCOM will have ready forces postured to: respond to crises and unforeseen events; ensure that the United States has the strategic access required to support global operations; guarantee that the NATO Alliance is strong and capable; amplify the relationships that have been essential to U.S. security for decades so that they are stronger than ever; successfully counter transnational threats emanating from or transiting the European region; and above all, safeguard the forward defense of the U.S. homeland. The United States' shared values and economic interdependence with its indispensable European allies and partners provide unique opportunities for regional and global security cooperation. The USEUCOM theater strategy is designed to strengthen the tremendous advantages of our most willing and capable allies and partners as we all work to counter threats, enhance global stability, and secure a whole, free, peaceful, and prosperous Europe.



**Soldiers from nine NATO member countries take part in the closing ceremony for the multinational exercise Iron Sword in Pabrade, Lithuania. Iron Sword involved more than 2,500 personnel from the U.S., Lithuania, Canada, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, and the U.K. It also takes place as part of Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE.**



