



U.S. European Command

Stuttgart, Germany

U.S. EUCOM History

Although the Headquarters United States European Command was formally established at "00001 Zebra [sic] hours, 1 August 1952," its activation can be seen as an evolutionary process, which 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 (SHAPE)." The administration and supply of U.S. troops, were the responsibilities of the "European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army--Communications Zone (ETOUSA-COMZ)." Both SHAPE and ETOUSA-COMZ were commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who 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, SHAPE was deactivated (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 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); the U.S. Air Forces, Europe (USAFE); and the U.S. Naval Forces in Europe. The apparent "jointness" of the wiring

The Soviet blockade of the three western sectors of Berlin also catalyzed the signing of the treaty, which established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on 4 April 1949 (effective date 24 August 1949). Following the invasion of South Korea by North Korean troops on 25 June 1950, NATO was vitalized. 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. General Eisenhower was given the following authority by President Harry S. Truman: "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. General Eisenhower was, however, reluctant to be "dual-hatted" as the commander of all U.S. Forces in Europe. 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

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) began to shift to USEUCOM. This process was further accelerated by the organizational changes (e.g. drawdown) and the unique operational requirements, which followed in the wake of the political developments in Europe and the war in Southwest Asia.

The Headquarters, U.S. European Command was "temporarily opened" at the I.G. Farben Hochhaus (the former C.W. Abrams Building) in Frankfurt in 1952, where it remained for two years. From 1954 until the "fast relocation" of the U.S. Forces from France in 1966 at the request of President Charles De Gaulle, HQ EUCOM was located near SHAPE at Camp-de-Loges on the outskirts of Paris.

Following the collocation of HQ Seventh U.S. Army with HQ USAREUR in Heidelberg, HQ USEUCOM was relocated to Patch Barracks in Stuttgart-Vaihingen on 15 March 1967.

The USEUCOM AOR has also continued to evolve during the past forty-four years. In 1952 it included continental Europe, the United Kingdom, North Africa and Turkey. The AOR was 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). 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) have been added to the AOR, bringing the current total to 91. It is important to note that although USEUCOM was "born" in Europe, its mission to promote stability and democratic growth among African and Asian (i.e. Middle Eastern) nations, is of equal importance.

On 1 January 1989, the primary missions of the Commander-in-Chief (CINCEUR), United States European Command (USEUCOM) were essentially the same as they had been on 1 August 1952: to support the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and execute U. S. policies within the prescribed AOR. The politico-historical changes mentioned above coupled with developments outside of the AOR--of which the war in Southwest Asia (SWA) was undoubtedly the most visible--permanently changed the mission environment

"USEUCOM is a unified combatant command whose mission is to maintain ready forces to conduct the full spectrum of military operations unilaterally or in concert with the coalition partners; to enhance transatlantic security through support NATO; to promote regional stability; and advance U.S. interests in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East."

A brief review of some of the major operations since 1989, in which the U.S. European Command has been involved as either the "supported" or a "supporting" command, provides an overview of not only the scope and the importance of USEUCOM's more recent missions, but of its achievements as well.