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U.S. Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific: Background and Issues for Congress

May 6, 2022

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R47096

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

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SUMMARY

R47096

May 6, 2022

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U.S. Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific: Background and Issues for Congress

Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, the U.S. military has maintained a significant and enduring presence in the Indo-Pacific region. In the past, the United States' strategic approach to the region has varied greatly. From September 11, 2001, until almost the next decade, strategic emphasis was placed largely on global counterterrorism, primarily focused on U.S. Central Command's (USCENTCOM's) and later U.S. Africa Command's (USAFRICOM's) areas of operation. Starting around 2004, the George W. Bush Administration began to consider strengthening relations with allies in Asia and potentially revising U.S. doctrine and force posture in the region to improve U.S. capabilities.

In 2011, the Obama Administration announced the United States would expand and strengthen its existing role in the Asia-Pacific region. Referred to as the "Rebalance to Asia," this strategic shift away from counterterrorism was intended to devote more effort to influencing the development of the Asia-Pacific's norms and rules, particularly as China was emerging as an ever-more influential regional power.

While many view the Indo-Pacific as primarily a Navy- and Air Force-centric region, the Army and Marine Corps have a long and consequential presence in the region and are modifying their operational concepts, force structure, and weapon systems to address regional threats posed primarily by North Korea and China. The Army and Marines each play a critical role in the region, not only in the event of conflict but also in deterrence, security force assistance, and humanitarian assistance operations.

Congress continues to play an active and essential role in Indo-Pacific security matters. The Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI), created by the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA; P.L. 116-283, §1251) is just one example of congressional involvement in regional security efforts. The February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and its present and future implications for European and Indo-Pacific security will likely increase both congressional interest and action in the near term and for the foreseeable future.

Potential issues for Congress include

- the role of U.S. ground forces in the Indo-Pacific region,
- the posture of U.S. ground forces in the Indo-Pacific region,
- U.S. ground forces execution of regional wartime missions, and
- the potential impact of the Ukrainian conflict on U.S. ground forces in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Why Is this Issue Important to Congress?

In 2011, the Obama Administration announced the United States would expand and strengthen its existing role in the Asia-Pacific region.[1] Referred to as the "Rebalance to Asia," this strategic shift away from the post 9-11 strategic emphasis on counterterrorism signaled an intention to "devote more effort to influencing the development of the Asia-Pacific's norms and rules, particularly as China emerges as an ever-more influential regional power."[2] Some observers suggested that "for the last decade, the Pentagon has been promising a more distributed and resilient posture in the Indo-Pacific, but has not kept that promise. Highly-concentrated with few active or passive defenses, American forces—and lives—remain dangerously vulnerable to attack."[3] The Department of Defense (DOD) has been described as being "locked in a tense debate over whether to base American troops and high-end weapons within the reach of newly-capable Chinese missiles."[4]

Congress has debated this issue. Some contend that past and current Administrations have not done enough, suggesting that DOD's rhetoric in this regard does not match its actions or budget requests, and suggest some are "struggling to understand the disconnect."[5] In the past, others have said plans to implement U.S. Indo-Pacific military strategy were "overly ambitious" and that "we're constantly chasing our tail, unable to do what [the National Defense Strategy] say's we're supposed to be able to do. That needs to get more realistic."[6]

Congress, in its oversight, authorization, and appropriations roles, may continue to play an active and important part in in the ongoing policy debate about U.S. Indo-Pacific military strategy and the role that U.S. ground forces are expected to play in the region, especially in force structure and in capabilities for those forces.

A Brief History of U.S. Military Forces in the Pacific Region[7]

Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, the U.S. military has maintained a significant and enduring presence in the Indo-Pacific region. Earlier, the first U.S. presence in Asia was constituted by merchant ships trading with China in 1784. After the War of 1812, the United States realized it needed to protect its interests in the region. In 1821, the Navy created the Pacific Squadron, and in 1835, it created the East India Squadron, with both squadrons having embarked Marine detachments, as was the practice at the time. The first U.S. military operations in the region were two punitive expeditions against Sumatran pirates in 1832 and 1839. In 1844, as a result of a treaty with China, U.S. missionaries began educational and ministerial work in China's

[1] For detailed information on the Pacific Pivot, see CRS Report R42448, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia,* coordinated by Mark E. Manyin.

[2] Ibid., p. 1.

[3] Dustin Walker, "The Pentagon is in Desperate Need of an Intervention from the Top," *War on the Rocks,* January 27, 2022.

[4] Jack Detsch, "The Pentagon Faces Tense Fight Over Pacific Pivot," *Foreign Affairs,* June 7, 2021.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Information from this section is taken from United States Army Pacific (USARPAC), "America's Theater Army for the Indo-Pacific," September 2021, and Christopher L. Kolakowski, "A Short History of U.S. Involvement in the Indo-Pacific," *Journal of Indo Pacific Affairs,* 2018, pp. 14-20.

interior communities. In 1853, Commodore William Perry took the East India Squadron to Tokyo Bay, opening Japan to the western world.

At the end of the 19th century, U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific increased. The 1867 purchase of Alaska and the 1898 annexation of Hawaii extended U.S. territory, presence, and influence in the region. The Spanish-American War of 1898 is credited with establishing the United States as a prominent Pacific power as a result of U.S. military victories in Manila Bay and the subsequent capture of Manila and Guam in 1898. After Spain ceded its colony of the Philippines to the United States, another three years of war ensued between the United States and pro-independence Filipinos. After these victories, forward U.S. military ground presence was an important means to secure these new territories.

In 1900, in response to the Boxer Rebellion in China, the U.S. Army and Marines were sent to participate in the international China Relief Expedition (which included forces from Great Britain, Germany, Russia, France, Japan, Italy, and Austria) to rescue United States citizens, European nationals, and other foreign nationals threatened by the rebellion. In the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, the United States permanently stationed the 4th Marine and 15th Army Infantry Regiments in China to protect American interests. To support further operations on the Asian continent, the U.S. Army also established forward operating bases in Japan.

In 1907, the U.S. Army and Navy decided to make Pearl Harbor, in the then territory of Hawaii, the principal U.S. naval base in the Pacific, strengthening Army presence in the region and leading to the establishment of Ft. Shafter on the island of Oahu. During the era leading up to and after the First World War, in response to crises in the Pacific-Philippines (1905-1916) and Russian Siberia (1918-1920), the U.S. government deemed the use of Indo-Pacific based ground forces necessary to provide stability and protect U.S. citizens and interests.

After the Second World War, in which the Indo-Pacific region was a major theater of operations, the United States permanently established s large-scale ground force presence in the region to face the challenges of the Cold War. Although Europe remained relatively peaceful after 1945, U.S. troops fought wars in Korea (1950-1953) and Vietnam (1955-1975). While U.S. ground force levels in the region have diminished since the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army still maintains approximately 93,000 troops in and around the region, and the Marines maintain about 86,000 Marines both ashore and afloat.[8]

U.S. National Security and the Indo-Pacific Region

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) is the U.S. military's Geographic Combatant Command responsible for "using and integrating United States Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps forces within the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR) to achieve U.S. national security objectives while protecting national interests."[9] The INDOPACOM AOR is depicted in **Figure 1**.

[8] USINDOPACOM, at https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/, accessed February 2, 2022.

[9] USINSOPACOM, at https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/, accessed February 7, 2022.

Figure 1. USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility

Source: https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/, accessed February 7, 2022.

Strategic Approach

In the past, the United States' strategic approach to the region has varied greatly. From September 11, 2001, until almost the next decade, strategic emphasis was placed on global counterterrorism, primarily focused on U.S. Central Command's (USCENTCOM's) and later U.S. Africa Command's (USAFRICOM's) areas of operation. However, starting as early as 2004, the George W. Bush Administration began to consider strengthening relations with allies in Asia, revising U.S. force posture in the region, and examining doctrinal innovations to enhance U.S. military capabilities in Asia.[10]

[10] Nina Silove, "The Pivot Before the Pivot: U.S. Strategy to Preserve the Power Balance in Asia," *International Security*, vol. 40, no. 4 (Spring 2016), p. 67, and CRS Report R42448, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia*, coordinated by Mark E. Manyin, p. 2.

In 2011, the Obama Administration announced that the United States would expand and strengthen its existing role in the Asia-Pacific region.[11] Referred to as the "Rebalance to Asia," this strategic shift away from counterterrorism was intended to "devote more effort to influencing the development of the Asia-Pacific's norms and rules, particularly as China emerges as an ever-more influential regional power."[12] Militarily, the Obama Administration

- announced new troop deployments to Australia and naval deployments to Singapore, as well as new areas for military cooperation with the Philippines, and
- stated that, notwithstanding reductions in overall defense spending, U.S. military presence in East Asia would be strengthened, more distributed, flexible, and politically sustainable.[13]

The Obama Administration's 2015 National Security Strategy committed to continuing the rebalancing to Asia and the Pacific and noted "the potential of our relationship with India."[14] Continuing the emphasis on the Indo-Pacific region, the Trump Administration's 2017 National Security Strategy noted

> China presents its ambitions as mutually beneficial, but Chinese dominance risks diminishing the sovereignty of many states in the Indo-Pacific. States throughout the region are calling for sustained U.S. leadership in a collective response that upholds a regional order respectful of sovereignty and independence.[15]

Militarily, the Trump Administration sought to "maintain U.S. strategic primacy in the Indo-Pacific region" and to "ensure North Korea does not threaten the United States and its allies."[16] DOD's 2019 *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, which designated the Indo-Pacific as DOD's priority theater, outlined three components through which these security objectives were to be achieved:[17]

- **Preparedness.** Peace through strength by employing effective Joint Force deterrence, which, if required, would be prepared to win any conflict from its onset. DOD, alongside allies and partners, would ensure that combat-credible forces were forward-postured in the region. Furthermore, DOD would prioritize investments that ensured lethality against high-end adversaries.
- **Partnerships.** DOD would reinforce its commitment to established alliances and partnerships and expand and deepen relationships with new partners.
- **Promotion of a Networked Region.** DOD would strengthen and evolve U.S. alliances and partnerships into a networked security architecture. DOD would also continue to cultivate intra-Asian security relationships to deter aggression, maintain stability, and ensure free access to common domain.[18]

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[11] CRS Report R42448, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia*, coordinated by Mark E. Manyin, p. 1.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] National Security Strategy of the United States of America, February 2015, Introduction.

[15] National Security Strategy of the United States, February 2017, p. 46.

[16] U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, at https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf, accessed February 7, 2022, p. 1.

[17] The Department of Defense, "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region," June 1, 2019, Message from the Secretary of Defense.

[18] Ibid., Message from the Secretary of Defense.

President Biden's March 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance continued to focus on "allow(ing) us to prevail in strategic competition with China or any other nation," noting that the "growing assertiveness of China and Russia" poses a significant concern to the security of democratic nations.[19]

On February 11, 2022, the Biden Administration released its Indo-Pacific Strategy.[20] Militarily, the new strategy states that

> [w]e will renew our focus on innovation to ensure the U.S. military can operate in rapidly evolving threat environments, including space, cyberspace, and critical- and emerging-technology areas. We are developing new concepts of operations, building more resilient command and control, increasing the scope and complexity of our joint exercises and operations, and pursuing diverse force-posture opportunities that will strengthen our ability to operate forward and more flexibly with allies and partners.[21]

While the Administration's 2022 strategy provides little detail on the role that U.S. ground forces will play, future associated strategic documents from DOD and USINDOPACOM might provide specific details on the role of the Army and Marines in the Indo-Pacific.

Although growing strategic emphasis on the Indo-Pacific region has been a central feature in U.S. policy since around 2004, some experts question the efficacy of the "Rebalance to Asia." One analyst suggests

> Confronting the strategic threats that China poses to the United States is a daunting task even if the United States is able to focus the appropriate strategic resources and attention. However, perhaps it was never truly possible for the world's greatest superpower, with binding strategic alliances spanning the globe, to be able to have a laser-like focus on one region of the world. In that case, a true "pivot" to Asia was never really possible. The United States, whether it likes it or not, is still viewed as the world's policeman and will naturally be brought into global affairs in a way that China will not.[22]

Another analyst questions U.S. strategic efforts focused on the Indian Ocean region:

> But the United States' thin military presence in the Indian Ocean region is not a gap that needs filling. It is proportional to U.S. interests in the region compared with those in other parts of Asia. Expanding the navy's presence in the Indian Ocean could make sense if the United States needed to be prepared for the sudden outbreak of war there. But China's main conflict is on land in the Himalayas—against India, a dispute that does not concern U.S. interests. And China will not remain passive as it perceives the U.S. military further encircling it. The surest path to preventing war in the Indian Ocean is restraint, not more troops in defense of a nonexistent redline.[23]

In this regard, there will likely continue to be questions about the U.S. strategic approach in the Indo-Pacific region.

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[19] 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, March 2021, p. 20.

[20] Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, February 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf.

[21] Ibid., p. 12.

[22] Peter Birgbauer, "The US Pivot to Asia Was Dead on Arrival," *The Diplomat*, March 31, 2022.

[23] Van Jackson, "America's Indo-Pacific Folly," *Foreign Affairs*, March 12, 2021.

Greater Emphasis on the Navy and Air Force in Indo-Pacific Strategy

For military planning, the Indo-Pacific Theater has been characterized and defined by geography, particularly its size and distance. USINDOPACOM notes the AOR "encompasses about half the earth's surface, stretching from the waters off the west coast of the U.S. to the western border of India, and from Antarctica to the North Pole."[24] By percentage, in 2015, the INDOPACOM AOR was composed of 83% water and 17% land.[25] The combatant command grew in 2018 when India was added to U.S. Pacific Command's (USPACOM'S) area of responsibility, resulting in USPACOM being renamed USINDOPACOM. The size and maritime geography of the Indo-Pacific AOR has historically impacted the type of U.S. military forces and capabilities in the region.

In the 1990s, after witnessing two demonstrations of U.S. military power—the Gulf War and the third Taiwan Strait Crisis—People's Republic of China (PRC) leadership realized that it "lacked the technology to wage a modern war and to prevent foreign powers from intervening in the region" and accelerated modernization efforts begun in the late 1970s to catch up to top-tier militaries.[26] PRC naval modernization was a central aspect in improving its military. China expanded fleet numbers and capabilities over the decades, and growing Chinese naval power was viewed with heightened concern by the United States and regional allies.[27]

In recognition of increasing Chinese power and ambitions in the region, U.S. policymakers began to reconsider strategic priorities and force posture, and to undertake efforts to shift emphasis to the Indo-Pacific region. In 2012, reflecting the strategic rebalance to the Pacific, the Obama Administration published "Sustaining U.S. Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Leadership."[28] This strategic review stated that the U.S. military would no longer size its forces to fight in two nearly simultaneously major theater wars. The easing of this requirement resulted in substantial cuts to ground forces—about 80,000 active duty Army soldiers and about 22,000 Marines. The strategy proposed only minor cuts to naval force structure.

In 2013, DOD published the "Air-Sea Battle Concept," which stated that "instead of focusing on the land domain from the air, the Concept describes integrated operations across all five domains (air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace) to create advantage."[29] While the Air-Sea Battle Concept did not exclude land forces, some critics noted "the missing part of the Air Sea Battle concept was the land portion, basically how the land forces could be used to allow U.S. forces to gain access to a contested area."[30] In 2015, the Air-Sea Battle Concept was changed to "Joint Concept for

[24] USINDOPACOM, at https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/, accessed February 11, 2022.

[25] Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, III, Commander, US Pacific Command, "PACOM Before the House Appropriations Committee Remarks," March 18, 2015.

[26] Lindsay Maizland, "China's Modernizing Military," Council on Foreign Relations, February 5, 2020.

[27] For additional information on Chinese naval modernization, see CRS Report RL33153, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[28] Information in this section is taken from Department of Defense, "Sustaining U.S. Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Leadership," January 2012, and CRS Report R42448, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia*, coordinated by Mark E. Manyin.

[29] DOD Air-Sea Battle Office, "Air- Sea Battle Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges," May 2013, p. i.

[30] Sam LaGrone, "Pentagon Drops Air Sea Battle Name, Concept Lives On," *U.S. Naval Institute News*, January 20, 2015.

Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC)," which "include[d] a focus on including U.S. land forces into the wider concept."[31]

The geography of the Indo-Pacific, Chinese naval modernization, cuts to land forces, and the emergence of a naval- and air-centric concept of operations could have suggested to some that the Navy and Air Force would have leading roles in the Indo-Pacific Theater. This view was likely reinforced further by range limitations of land-based Army and Marine weapon systems and their perceived utility against Chinese naval and air threats. Some experts have questioned the role and need for the Army in the Indo-Pacific region, with one piece noting

> A large active-duty Army is not needed to protect the United States. America's security interests are far better served through deterrence and the projection of power by sea and air. Given the geography of the Indo-Pacific and the reality of future spending constraints, ensuring U.S. naval supremacy over China will require prudent increases to the Navy's budget at the expense of the Army.[32]

Service chiefs have called for a larger budget in light of the strategic prioritization of the Indo-Pacific region, particularly regarding China as a "pacing threat." Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Mike Gilday reportedly stated in January 2020

> We need more money. If you believe that we require overmatch in the maritime, if you believe that we're going to execute distributed maritime operations and operate forward in greater numbers now, that we need more iron, then we need more topline. Budgeting as usual, which means a one-third, one-third, one-third cut, does not reflect the strategy. It isn't necessarily aligned with where we need to go against the pacing threat that we face.[33]

Reportedly, the CNO had made these arguments to defense leadership before, but this was the first time the CNO had "publicly made the case for his service to grow at a faster rate than the other services."[34]

U.S. Indo-Pacific Headquarters and Ground Forces

Of critical importance to any discussion about the role and need for U.S. ground forces in the Indo-Pacific region is where they are based. **Figure 2** provides an overview of major headquarters and U.S. Army and Marine Corps forces based in the Indo-Pacific, as well as units based in the United States dedicated to supporting operations in the region. In the event of crisis, other units may be allocated to the Indo-Pacific region. These units are not depicted in **Figure 2**.

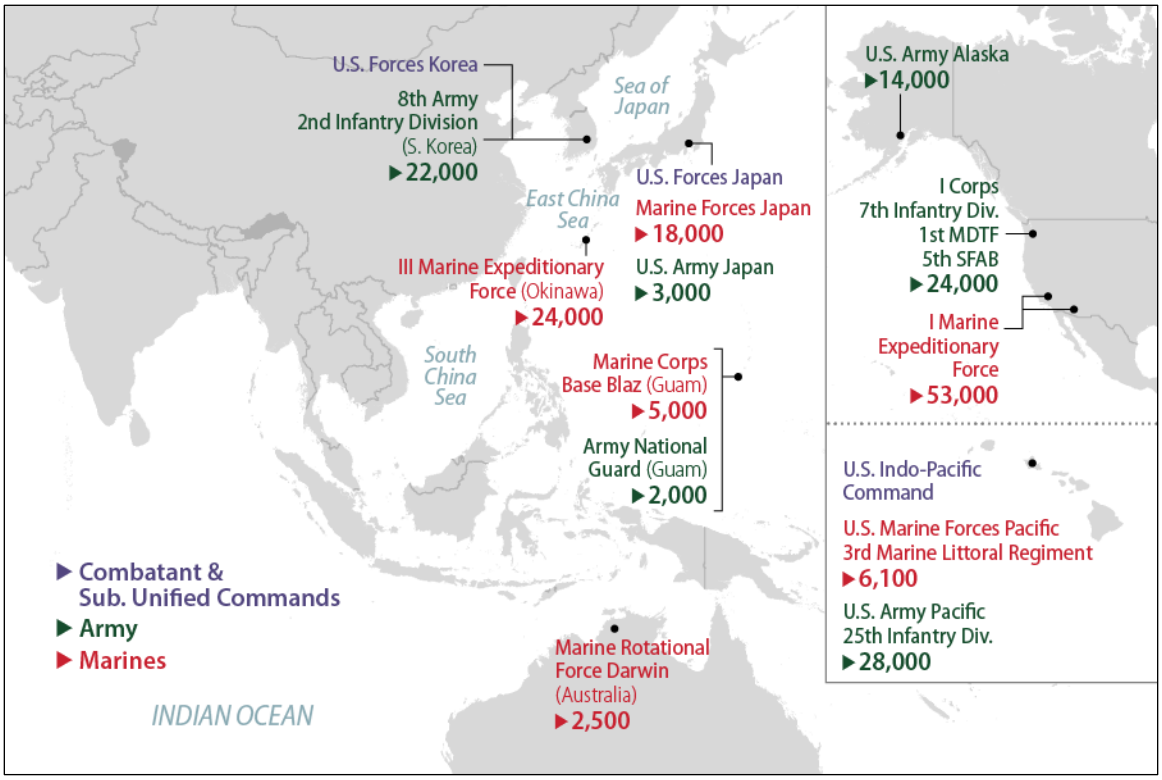
[31] Ibid.

[32] Gil Barndollar and Sascha Glaeser, "The United States Must Put the Navy First," *Defense News*, January 31, 2022.

[33] Paul McCleary, "Navy CNO Fires First Budget Salvo: We Need More Money Than Army, Air Force," *Breaking Defense*, January 14, 2020.

[34] Ibid.

Figure 2. Major U.S. Headquarters and Army and Marine Units in and Around the Indo-Pacific Region



Sources: Graphic produced by CRS Graphics. Information is taken from United States Army Pacific (USARPAC), "America's Theater Army for the Indo-Pacific," September 2021, and information provided to the author by the Marine Corps Legislative Liaison Office.

Note: Numbers of personnel associated with locations and units are approximate and includes additional units not depicted in **Figure 2**.

Headquarters and Major Ground Units in the Indo-Pacific

A variety of ground units are stationed in and around the Indo-Pacific region, and a number of headquarters provide command and control for these forces. The following sections provide information on the major headquarters and active duty units identified in **Figure 2**.[35]

Hawaii

United States India-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). One of six geographic combatant commands designated by DOD's Unified Command Plan (UCP), USINDOPACOM is in charge of employing and integrating U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps forces allocated to the USINDOPACOM AOR to achieve U.S. national security objectives. It does so by promoting stability in the region through security cooperation, encouraging peaceful development,

[35] For additional information on types of Army and Marine Corps Units, see CRS In Focus IF10571, *Defense Primer: Organization of U.S. Ground Forces*, by Barbara Salazar Torreon and Andrew Feickert.

responding to contingencies, deterring aggression, and, when necessary, conducting combat operations.[36] USINDOPACOM is located at Camp H.M. Smith on the island of Oahu.

U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC). USARPAC is the Army Service Component Command (ASCC) for INDOPACOM. It provides continuous oversight and control of Army operations throughout the INDOPACOM AOR with the exception of the Korean Peninsula.[37] USARPAC is located at Fort Shafter on the island of Oahu.

USARPAC Theater Enabling Commands. USARPAC has a number of theater-enabling commands that support operations in the Indo-Pacific AOR, including an engineer brigade, a military police brigade, a military intelligence brigade, and an air and missile defense brigade.

25th Infantry Division. The 25th Infantry Division, located at Schofield Barracks, Oahu, commands multiple brigades and is a primary tactical headquarters for combat operations. These infantry division units participate in several yearly exercises and operations in support of USARPAC and the Indo-Pacific region. Some of the 25th Infantry Division's major units include

- two infantry brigade combat teams (IBCTs),
- one combat aviation brigade (CAB), and
- one artillery brigade.

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific (MARFORPAC).[38] MARFORPAC is the Marine Corps Service Component Command for USINDOPACOM. MARFORPAC is the largest Marine Corps field command and constitutes two-thirds of the Marine Corps' operating forces. MARFORPAC commands all Marine Corps forces assigned to USINDOPACOM. The MARFORPAC Commander also serves as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific.[39] MARFORPAC headquarters is located at Camp H.M. Smith on Oahu.

3rd Marine Regiment. The 3rd Marine Regiment, part of the Okinawa-based 3rd Infantry Division, is stationed at Kaneohe Bay, HI. The 3rd Marine Regiment is reportedly being redesignated as the 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) and is being redesigned to deploy more quickly, operate inside weapon engagement zones, and be more self-sufficient logistically than existing Marine infantry regiments.[40]

Alaska

U.S. Army, Alaska (USARAK).[41] USARAK is headquartered at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Fort Wainwright in Alaska and is a major subordinate command of USARPAC. USARAK supports operations worldwide, as well as theater engagement in the Pacific/Arctic and military operations in the Alaskan area of operations. Major units include

- a Stryker brigade combat team (SBCT), from the Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Wainwright, AK;

[36] USINDOPACOM, at https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/, accessed February 24, 2022.

[37] USARPAC, at https://www.army.mil/organization/, accessed February 24, 2022.

[38] MARFORPAC, at https://www.marforpac.marines.mil/Unit-Home/About/, accessed February 25, 2022.

[39] MARFORPAC, at https://www.marforpac.marines.mil/Unit-Home/About/, accessed February 24, 2022.

[40] Aidan Quigley, "Marine Corps to Formally Stand Up First Marine Littoral Regiment this Week," *InsideDefense.com*, February 28, 2022.

[41] USARAK, at https://home.army.mil/alaska/index.php/history, accessed February 25, 2022.

- an airborne infantry brigade combat team (IBCT), also from the 25th Infantry Division, stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK; and
- a CAB stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK.[42]

Washington State

U.S. Army I Corps. First Corps (or I Corps) is a headquarters commanded by a Lieutenant General (three stars), that manages daily activities for more than 44,000 soldiers stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) and across the Pacific, including Hawaii and Alaska. I Corps' major subordinate commands include 7th Infantry Division, 25th Infantry Division (Schofield Barracks, HI), and U.S. Army Alaska.[43] Some of I Corps' corps-level assigned forces include

- an artillery brigade,
- a military intelligence brigade,
- an engineer brigade, and
- a military police brigade.

7th Infantry Division.[44] The 7th Infantry Division, stationed at JBLM, commands multiple brigades and is a primary tactical headquarters for combat operations. Seventh Infantry Division units participate in several yearly exercises and operations in support of U.S. Army Pacific and the Indo-Pacific region. Some of the 7th Infantry Division's major units include

- two active duty SBCTs,
- an affiliated Army National Guard (ARNG) SBCT, and
- a CAB.

1st Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF).[45] The 1st MDTF, stationed at JBLM, is a brigade-sized, theater-level organization designed to synchronize precision effects and fire in all domains (air, land, sea, space, and cyber) against adversary anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) networks so that joint forces can execute their operational plan (OPLAN)-directed missions in the Indo-Pacific region.

5th Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB).[46] SFABs are specialized units with the primary mission of conducting training, advising, assisting, enabling, and accompanying operations with allied and partner nations.[47] The 5th SFAB, stationed at JBLM, works for the Commander of USINDOPACOM and supports theater security cooperation efforts by training with partner nation security forces in the region.

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[42] JBLM, at https://www.jber.jb.mil/Units/Army/, accessed February 25, 2022.

[43] I Corps, at https://www.army.mil/icorps#org-about, accessed February 24, 2022.

[44] 7th ID, at https://www.army.mil/7thid#org-about, accessed February 24, 2022.

[45] For additional information on Multi-Domain Tasks Forces (MDTF), see CRS In Focus IF11797, *The Army's Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF)*, by Andrew Feickert.

[46] For additional information on Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs), see CRS In Focus IF10675, *Army Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs)*, by Andrew Feickert.

[47] U.S. Army, at https://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/current-and-prior-service/advance-your-career/security-force-assistance-brigade.html, accessed February 24, 2024.

California

1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF).[48] A subordinate unit of MARFORPAC, 1st MEF is stationed at Camp Pendleton, California. Its mission is to provide a globally responsive, expeditionary Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) capable of providing forces for crisis response, forward presence, and major combat operations. Major 1st MEF units include

- 1st Marine Division,
- 1st Marine Logistics Group,
- 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing,
- 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU),
- 13th MEU, and
- 15th MEU.

Republic of Korea (ROK)[49]

United States Forces Korea (USFK). USFK is a sub-unified command of USINDOPACOM. The USFK commander's responsibilities are to "administer the U.S.-Republic of Korea Defense Treaty; to conduct reception, staging, onward movement, and integration of U.S. forces (as necessary during Armistice and war); to conduct Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) if necessary; and to coordinate all U.S. military support to the Republic of Korea."[50] Commander USFK is also the commander of United Nations Command (UNC) and Combined Forces Command (CFC), which "are distinct organizations with different missions, reporting chains, and authorities."[51] USFK headquarters is located at Camp Humphreys, ROK.

8th Army. The 8th Army is the Army's only field army. Commanded by a Lieutenant General (three star), it conducts operational tasks on the Korean Peninsula and serves as the Army's component command to USFK. The 8th Army has the ability to command and control multiple corps-level units during combat operations. Major army-level 8th Army units include an air and missile defense brigade, a military intelligence brigade, and a signals brigade.[52] The 8th Army headquarters is located at Camp Humphreys, ROK.

2nd Infantry Division. The 2nd Infantry Division/ROK-U.S. Combined Division is the last remaining permanently forward-stationed division in the U.S. Army. The 2nd Infantry Division deters aggression and maintains peace on the Korean Peninsula.[53] Second Infantry Division headquarters is located at Camp Humphreys, ROK. Major units include

- a rotational armored brigade combat team (ABCT) from other Army divisions stationed in the United States,

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[48] 1st MEF, at https://www.imef.marines.mil/, accessed February 25, 2022.

[49] For additional information on the Republic of Korea, see CRS In Focus IF10165, *South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Mark E. Manyin, Emma Chanlett-Avery, and Brock R. Williams, and CRS In Focus IF11388, *U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Issues for Congress*, by Emma Chanlett-Avery and Caitlin Campbell.

[50] Senate Armed Service Committee, "Advance Policy Questions for General Paul LaCamera, USA, Nominee to be Commander, United Nations Command, Commander, Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command, and Commander, United States Forces Korea," May 14, 2021, p. 1.

[51] Ibid.

[52] United States Army Pacific, "America's Theater Army for the Pacific," September 2021, pp. 12-13.

[53] Taken from 2nd Infantry Division at https://www.2id.korea.army.mil/, accessed February 28, 2022.

- two field artillery brigades, and
- a CAB.[54]

U.S. Marine Corps Forces Korea (MARFORK). MARFORK is the Marine Corps' service component for USFK and the UNC. It commands all U.S. Marine forces assigned to USFK and UNC and advises USFK and UNC on the capabilities, support, and proper employment of Marine forces for the defense of the ROK.[55] MARFORK headquarters is located at Camp Humphreys, ROK.

Japan[56]

U.S. Forces Japan. United States Forces, Japan (USFJ) conducts operations, activities, and actions in Japan to support USINDOPACOM. USFJ manages the U.S.–Japan Alliance and is responsible for planning, coordinating, and supporting U.S. defense issues in Japan.[57]

U.S. Army Japan. U.S. Army Japan facilitates multilateral cooperation with regional partners and allies through engagements, training, and exercises. It also partners with the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force to enhance interoperability, capability, and capacity.[58] Major units include

- an air defense brigade,
- an aviation battalion, and
- a military intelligence brigade.

Marine Forces Japan. Marine Forces Japan primarily consists of two F-35B squadrons stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

Okinawa (Japan)

3rd Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). The 3rd MEF, commanded by Lieutenant Generals (three stars), is currently headquartered in Okinawa, Japan, and is responsible for maintaining a forward presence in support of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, and other regional allies. The 3rd MEF also conducts combined operations and training in the region in support of Theater Security Cooperation efforts.[59] Major units include

- 3rd Marine Division,
- 1st Marine Aircraft Wing,
- 3rd Marine Logistics Group,
- 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB),
- 31st MEU, and
- 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group.[60]

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[54] United States Army Pacific, "America's Theater Army for the Pacific," September 2021, p. 13.

[55] Taken from U.S. Marine Forces Korea at https://www.marfork.marines.mil/, accessed February 28, 2022.

[56] For additional information on Japan, see CRS In Focus IF10199, *U.S.-Japan Relations*, coordinated by Emma Chanlett-Avery.

[57] U.S. Forces Japan, at https://www.usfj.mil/About-USFJ/, accessed March 8, 2022.

[58] U.S. Army Japan, at https://www.usarj.army.mil/about/mission/, accessed March 8, 2022.

[59] 3rd MEF, at https://www.iiimef.marines.mil/.

[60] Ibid.

Relocation of 3rd MEF Forces from Okinawa

Based on an agreement with the Japanese government, the 3rd MEF is planning to relocate selected forces from Okinawa to Guam, Hawaii, and elsewhere.[61] It was reported that the transfer from Okinawa to Guam could begin as early as October 2024 and take 18 months to complete.[62] This realignment calls for 4,100 Okinawa-based Marines to be relocated to Guam, along with 900 Marines from elsewhere. In addition, approximately 2,700 more Okinawa-based Marines would be sent to Hawaii and 800 would go to the continental United States, with another 1,300 Guam-based Marines composing most of the 2,500-person Marine Rotational Force in Darwin, Australia. Plans to shift the Futenma Marine Air Base within Okinawa from a densely populated city to a less crowded coastal area, which was agreed upon by Japan and the United States in the 1990s, is meeting resistance from some native Okinawans.[63] It is not known how many Marines will be left on Okinawa once the realignment is completed.

Guam[64]

U.S. Army forces on Guam consist primarily of about 2,000 National Guard soldiers and approximately 100 Active soldiers manning a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery. As previously noted, the Marines plan to relocate approximately 5,000 Marines to Guam beginning in Fall 2024.

Australia

Marine Rotational Force–Darwin. On November 16, 2011, Australian Prime Minister Gillard and President Obama announced an extension of Australia's existing defence alliance with the United States. Called the United States Force Posture Initiatives (USFPI), the extension included the establishment of the Marine Rotational Force–Darwin (MRF-D).[65]

The Australian Department of Defense noted

> The Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D) sees a contingent of U.S. Marines and their equipment rotate through Northern Australia during the dry season. While in Australia, the MRF-D undertake a range of activities, combined exercises and training with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and regional partners. The MRF-D has grown in size and complexity since the first rotation of 200 US Marines through Darwin in 2012, through to reaching the milestone of 2500 Marines in 2019. It is now a highly capable force that provides significant opportunities to enhance interoperability with the Australian Defence Force. MRF-D composition will vary from year to year as a consequence of the activities being undertaken with the ADF and regional partners each year.[66]

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[61] For additional information, see CRS In Focus IF10672, *U.S. Military Presence on Okinawa and Realignment to Guam*, by Emma Chanlett-Avery, Christopher T. Mann, and Joshua A. Williams.

[62] Information in this section is taken from Matthew M. Burk, "Marines' Move from Okinawa to Guam Could Begin as Early as October 2024, Report Says," *Stars and Stripes*, May 16, 2019.

[63] Sheryl Lee Tian Tong, "Our Land, Our Life: Okinawans Hold Out Against New U.S. Base in Coastal Zone," *Mongabay*, November 25, 2021.

[64]Information in this section is taken from Matthew M. Burk, "Marines' Move from Okinawa to Guam Could Begin as Early as October 2024, Report Says," Stars and Stripes, May 16, 2019.

[65] Australian Army, "Ten years of Marine Rotational Force – Darwin," November 16, 2021, https://www.army.gov.au/our-news/media-releases/ten-years-marine-rotational-force-darwin, accessed April 15, 2022.

[66] Australian Department of Defense, https://defence.gov.au/Initiatives/USFPI/Home/MRF-D.asp, accessed March 11, 2022.

The Role of U.S. Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific Region

Essentially, the Army and Marines have four basic roles in the Indo-Pacific region (summarized below): combat operations, deterrence, security force assistance, and humanitarian assistance.

Combat Operations

The primary role for the Army and Marines in the Indo-Pacific is the conduct of ground combat operations should hostilities be initiated in the region. Such operations could range from high-intensity force-on-force combat operations to counterinsurgency operations. How Army and Marine forces would be employed in this role is envisaged by existing combatant command operational plans and directives from the National Command Authority (NCA). Unlike Japan and the Republic of Korea, the United States has no meaningful military presence in Taiwan, nor a mutual security agreement. Given Taiwan's geography and proximity to mainland China and ambiguous security commitments, a great deal of uncertainty exists regarding the role of U.S. ground forces. One author suggests that U.S. ground forces—the Army in particular—would face an "uncomfortable reality" should a conflict over Taiwan occur:

> There is a good chance that the role U.S. decisionmakers will ask the Army to play in this conflict is not what has been presented so far: lobbing missiles or "advising" Taiwanese military units. Instead, troops may find themselves either defending the island from a Chinese invasion or even helping retake Taiwan after China (due to proximity and first-mover advantages) wins the initial high-tech struggle.[67]

If the conflict happens as described, the author suggests the Army should shift its focus in terms of doctrine, force structure, and modernization to "defending or retaking territory," including conducting large-scale amphibious landings (likely including Marines) to retake Taiwan—operations considered beyond current U.S. capabilities.[68] Others argue, however, that the defense of territory is a core U.S. Army mission for which it is trained and equipped and that DOD leadership is comfortable with the current ability of U.S. ground forces to execute combat operations in the region.[69]

Directly related to combat operations is the Army's role as an Executive Agent[70] as established under Title 10, §7013b. Under this provision the Army provides the following support to other services:

- Land-based air and missile defense;
- Fire support;
- Base defense;

[67] Jacquelyn Schneider, "The Uncomfortable Reality of the U.S. Army's Role in a War over Taiwan," *War on the Rocks*, November 30, 2021.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Observation provided to CRS by the Director, Center for National Defense, Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, The Heritage Foundation, April 20, 2022.

[70] Executive Agent refers to a delegation of authority from the Secretary of Defense to service secretaries or combatant commanders to provide specific, mostly administrative, support to other U.S. Government agencies or service components.

- Transportation;
- Fuel distribution;
- General engineering;
- Intra-theater medical evacuation;
- Logistics management;
- Communications;
- CBRN defense; and
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal.[71]

The aforementioned support provided by the Army to the other services is arguably critical to the successful conduct of joint combat operations. In this regard, the Army's ability to provide this type of support in the full range of conflict scenarios may be considered equally important as its ability to provide direct combat power.

Deterrence

Ground forces may play a key role in deterring potential adversaries from acting against the United States and its allies. In theory, the strategic application deterrence operations is intended to

> … convince adversaries not to take actions that threaten U.S. vital interests by means of decisive influence over their decision-making. Decisive influence is achieved by credibly threatening to deny benefits and/or impose costs, while encouraging restraint by convincing the actor that restraint will result in an acceptable outcome ... Deterrence requires a national strategy that integrates diplomatic, informational, military, and economic powers.[72]

While all armed services participate in deterrence operations, a 2022 RAND analytical study conducted for the U.S. Army, "Understanding the Deterrent Impact of U.S. Forces Overseas," found that there was "the clearest evidence for the deterrent impact of heavy ground forces and little, if any, evidence for the deterrent impact of air and naval forces."[73] Additional findings included that

- there was "consistent evidence for the deterrent effects of heavy ground forces and air defense capabilities, especially when deployed in the general theater of interest but not necessarily on the front lines of a potential conflict";[74]
- there "was evidence that light ground forces, particularly when deployed directly inside the borders of the partner or ally being threatened, may be associated with a higher risk of low-intensity militarized disputes, but we do not find similar evidence of this risk for heavy ground forces in our statistical models";[75] and

[71] ATP-93, Theater Army Operations, August 2021, p. 4-3.

[72] Department of Defense, Deterrence Operations; Joint Operating Concept, Version 2.0, December 2006, p. 3.

[73] Bryan Frederick, Stephen Watts, Matthew Lane, Abby Doll, Ashley L. Rhoades, Meagan L. Smith, "Understanding the Deterrent Impact of U.S. Forces Overseas," RAND Corporation, 2020, p. xiv.

[74] Ibid., p. xvii.

[75] Ibid., p. 142.

- the "presence of U.S. forces in a particular country carries both a financial and an opportunity cost. Forces deployed in one location may be less available for contingencies elsewhere."[76]

The findings and the results of RAND's analysis suggest that U.S. ground forces could play a leading role in deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. In recent testimony, the Commander of USINDOPACOM noted that

> U.S. force posture is a warfighting advantage in USINDOPACOM's operational design. A force posture west of the International Date Line provides defense in-depth that enables the Joint Force to decisively respond to contingencies across the region. More distributed combat power increases survivability, reduces risk, and enables the transition from defense to offense quickly should deterrence fail. Forward-based and rotational Joint forces armed with the right capabilities are the most credible way to demonstrate resolve, assure allies and partners, and provide the President and Secretary with multiple options.[77]

Expanding on the concept of force presence, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David Berger, reportedly suggested,

> The expanse of the Indo-Pacific region and layered Chinese defensive systems have put a premium on systems that can hold an adversary hostage from a distance. However, there is no substitute for positioning some forces close to an enemy.[78]

Such forward forces, as described by General Berger, would likely be comprised of U.S. ground forces as air and naval forces have a limited on-site presence based on their inherent operational capabilities.

Security Force Assistance (SFA)

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) defines security force assistance (SFA) as

> [t]he set of DOD activities that support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions. Foreign Security Forces include not only military forces, but also police, border forces, and other paramilitary organizations at all levels.[79]

DOD further defines SFA activities:

> SFA activities shall be conducted primarily to assist host countries to defend against internal and transnational threats to stability. However, the Department of Defense may also conduct SFA to assist host countries to defend effectively against external threats; contribute to coalition operations; or organize, train, equip, and advise another country's security forces or supporting institutions.[80]

Security force assistance is said to have a mixed record of success, with Iraq and Afghanistan being characterized by some as "high profile failures."[81] Other SFA operations, such as those

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Statement of Admiral John C. Aquilino, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command before the House Armed Services Committee on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture, March 9, 2022, p. 14.

[78] Valerie Insinna, "Top American Generals on Three Key Lessons Learned from Ukraine," *Breaking Defense.com*, March 11, 2022.

[79] Joint Chiefs of Staff, https://www.jcs.mil/Directorates/J7-Joint-Force-Development/JCISFA/, accessed March 13, 2022.

[80] Department of Defense Instruction Number 5000.68, Security Force Assistance (SFA), October 27, 2010, p. 2.

[81] Renanah Joyce, Max Margulies and Tucker Chase, "The Future of U.S. Security Force Assistance," Modern War

initiated in 2001 with Philippines to assist in combating terrorism and the 2002 Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP), are considered by some as "successes"[82] whereas the impact of U.S. military training and equipment and weapons provided to Ukraine has yet to be fully assessed.

Army and Marine units typically focus on training, equipping, and advising as part of SFA, and these activities are generally viewed as an important way to "build partner capacity" with other counties. In addition, multinational training exercises have a role in SFA. Such exercises can improve interoperability between militaries and serve as a deterrent to regional aggression.

While conventional Army and Marine units continue to conduct SFA activities, the Army and Marines have developed specialized SFA units and organizations. The Army has created six SFABs to provide regionally focused SFA support to Geographic Combatant Commanders.[83] The 5th SFAB, stationed at Joint Base Lewis McChord, WA, is dedicated to USINDOPACOM. The Army National Guard also participates in SFA, primarily through the State Partnership Program (SPP).[84] Established by Title 10 §341, SPP is a DOD security cooperation program managed and administered by the Chief, National Guard Bureau and conducted by the Geographic Combatant Commanders, supported by the National Guard of the states and territories.[85] As of January 1, 2022, thirteen Indo-Pacific nations were involved in SPP activities with units from the Army National Guard.[86]

The Marines also are involved in SFA activities. In October 2011, the Marines established the Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group to

> [e]xecute and enable Security Cooperation (SC) programs, training, planning, and activities in order to ensure unity of effort in support of USMC and Regional Marine Component Command (MARFOR) objectives and in coordination with the operating forces.[87]

In September 2021, the Marine Corps Security Operations Group was deactivated in accordance with the Commandant's Planning Guidance and Force Design 2030.[88] Although this group was deactivated, the Marines have been and are involved in a wide array of long-term SFA activities throughout the Indo-Pacific region.[89]

Humanitarian Assistance (HA)

Humanitarian assistance is a DOD-wide mission and is of particular importance in the Indo-Pacific region. One report from 2019 notes that

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Institute at West Point, November 23, 2021.

[82] United States Special Operations Command, Security Force Assistance Introductory Guide, July 28, 2011, p. 3.

[83] For additional information on Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs), see CRS In Focus IF10675, *Army Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs)*, by Andrew Feickert.

[84] For additional information on the State Partnership Program see CRS Report R41957, *The National Guard State Partnership Program: Background, Issues, and Options for Congress*, by Lawrence Kapp and Nina M. Serafino.

[85] Army National Guard Fact Sheet, at https://www.nationalguard.mil/Portals/31/Resources/Fact%20Sheets/State-Partnership-Program-SPP-Fact%20Sheet-update.pdf, accessed April 25, 2022.

[86] Army National Guard Fact Sheet, at https://www.nationalguard.mil/Portals/31/Documents/J-5/InternationalAffairs/StatePartnershipProgram/National-Guard-State-Partnership-Program-Map-(1-Jan-22).pdf, accessed April 25, 2022.

[87] Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group, at https://www.mcscg.marines.mil/, accessed March 13, 2022.

[88] Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group Deactivation Ceremony, at https://www.dvidshub.net/video/812468/marine-corps-security-cooperation-group-deactivation-ceremony, accessed March 13, 2021.

[89] CRS meeting with Marine Corps Staff, March 31, 2022.

- worldwide, the Indo-Asia-Pacific is the region most prone to disasters, and since 1970 disasters there have killed 2 million people, or 57% of the global death toll from disasters;
- USINDOPACOM was called upon to support at least 36 foreign disaster responses in the region from June 1991 to June 2019; and
- U.S. military forces have been called upon to support disaster relief efforts in the USINDOPACOM AOR each year since 2004.[90]

Recognizing the importance of the HA mission, in 1994 Congress established the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM)[91] as a DOD organization that reports directly to USINDOPACOM and is located at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. U.S. military forces in the region from all services can be involved in HA operations and are responsible for supporting other U.S. government agencies in HA operations. Because of the frequency of disasters, many of the exercises conducted between U.S. forces and regional military forces focus on HA scenarios. The Army and Marines play a central role in HA operations and can provide engineering, medical, logistics, and communications capabilities, among other things.

The Indo-Pacific and Changes to Army and Marine Corps Operational Concepts

In recognition of the requirements set forth in national security and military strategies, and potentially in response to the emphasis placed on the role of the U.S. Navy and Air Force in the Indo-Pacific, the Army and Marine Corps are modifying their operational concepts.[92] For the Army, this concept is referred to as "Multi-Domain Operations (MDO)," and for the Marine Corps, it is referred to as "Stand-in Forces."

Army Multi-Domain Operations (MDO)[93]

MDO describes how the Army, as part of the Joint Force, plans to counter and defeat a near-peer adversary, such as China or Russia, that is capable of contesting the U.S. military in all domains (air, land, maritime, space, and cyberspace) in both competition and armed conflict. While ground combat forces in the Indo-Pacific Theater could play a part in defeating enemy forces, MDO emphasizes the role that long-range precision fires (LRPF)—artillery and missiles—could play in attacking both land-based and naval targets.[94]

Some argue, however, that the threat and challenges posed by both Russia and China may, in the end, be so divergent that one operational concept such as MDO might not be sufficient to

[90] Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance, USINDOPACOM Foreign Disaster Response in the Indo-Asia-Pacific - June 1991 – June 2019, 2019, p. 4.

[91] 10 U.S.C. 182 - Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, P.L. 105-85.

[92] The U.S. military defines a "Concept of Operations" as a verbal or graphic statement that clearly and concisely expresses what the joint force commander intends to accomplish and how it will be done using available resources. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 2011, p. 72.

[93] For additional information on Multi-Domain Operations, see CRS Insight IN11019, *The U.S. Army and Multi-Domain Operations*, by Andrew Feickert.

[94] For additional information on long-range precision fires, see CRS Report R46721, *U.S. Army Long-Range Precision Fires: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

adequately address both Russia and China and, as such, the Army may need to develop capabilities—formations and equipment—tailored to each individual threat. A study by the Heritage Foundation contends

> Russia is ground centric, seeking to control the air and contest the sea and space from the land, while China is air and maritime centric. Especially as time passes and the "boat moves away from the dock," it is inevitable that China's and Russia's capabilities—and the threats they pose—will increasingly diverge. The Army has not been confronted with the need to conceptualize a fight against two near-peer competitors since the development of the Rainbow plans in the 1930s. Indeed, even today some Chinese capabilities already exceed those of Russia. For the time being, the Army should form a "hybrid" best of breed threat, but must be prepared for the eventual time when China and Russia present such a diversity of capabilities and techniques that they must be addressed separately, perhaps with different operational concepts.[95]

Taken further, it is possible that in some cases, MDO might be a sufficient operational approach for some threats while an inadequate approach against other potential threats.

Marine Corps Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and Stand-in Forces (SIFs)[96]

In February 2021, the Marines introduced a new operational concept: Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO). At the conceptual level, EABO envisions

> the employment of mobile, low-signature, persistent, and relatively easy to maintain and sustain naval expeditionary forces from a series of austere, temporary locations ashore or inshore within a contested maritime area in order to conduct sea denial, support sea control, or enable fleet sustainment.[97]

In November 2021, the Marines introduced "A Concept for Stand-in Forces," providing additional context and operational examples for EABO. The SIF concept also proposes a multidomain approach to operations similar to the Army's. The Marines acknowledge that

> [t]he People's Republic of China (PRC) is the pacing challenge for the joint force; thus, while the concept [SIF] is applicable globally, the INDOPACOM area of responsibility is appropriately the focus of the Stand-in Forces concept.[98]

SIFs are considered a conceptual shift from the resource-intensive, land-centric focus of previous decades, where Marine and Army units performed largely interchangeable operational missions, to a more naval and expeditionary focus. The Marines described the central idea of SIFs as follows:

- SIFs are small, lethal, low-signature, mobile, simple-to-maintain-and-sustain forces designed to operate across a contested area as the leading edge of a maritime defense-in-depth intended to disrupt the plans of a potential or actual adversary.

[95] Thomas W. Spoehr, "Rebuilding America's Military Project: The United States Army," The Heritage Foundation, Special Report, No. 215, August 22, 2019, p. 34.

[96] Information in this section, unless otherwise noted, is taken from U.S. Marine Corps, "A Concept for Stand-in Forces," November 2021.

[97] Headquarters Marine Corps, "Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations," February 2021.

[98] U.S. Marine Corps, "A Concept for Stand-in Forces," November 2021, p. 2.

- SIFs can be composed of elements from the Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, special operations forces, interagency, and allies and partners.
- SIFs can deter potential adversaries by establishing the forward edge of a maritime defense-in-depth to deny adversaries freedom of action.
- SIFs' primary function is to help the fleet and joint force with reconnaissance and to deter adversarial reconnaissance in all phases of operations.
- When directed, SIFs conduct sea denial operations, especially near maritime chokepoints. They do so through the use of organic sensors and weapon systems and by integrating organic capabilities with naval and joint all-domain capabilities.
- SIFs are to have sufficient organic-maneuver and offensive capability to gain a position of advantage by securing, seizing, and controlling contested key maritime terrain in support of sea denial operations.[99]

How the Army and Marines Plan to Fulfill Their Operational Roles

In planning for operations in the Indo-Pacific region, the Army and Marines envision somewhat different roles than their traditional sustained land combat and large-scale amphibious assault roles.

Army

Army leaders argue that, in addition to its traditional land combat role, LRPF in the Indo-Pacific region will increase its utility to the Joint Force.[100] As part of this effort, the Army is seeking to upgrade current artillery and missile systems, develop new longer-range cannons and hypersonic weapons, and modify existing air- and sea-launched missiles and cruise missiles for ground launch by Army units. One unique aspect of the Army's LRPF effort is that in addition to using these systems for engaging land targets, the Army also envisions using them to engage naval targets.

In December 2021, Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth further defined the Army's role in the Indo-Pacific region.[101] Calling the Army the "linchpin service," she reportedly identified six core tasks for the Army in the Indo-Pacific:

- establishing, building, securing, and protecting staging areas and joint operating bases for air and naval forces in theater;
- providing integrated air and missile defense;
- sustaining the Joint Force with logistics and communications;

[99] Ibid., p. 4.

[100] For additional information on Army long-range precision fires, see CRS Report R46721, *U.S. Army Long-Range Precision Fires: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

[101] Information in this section is taken from Matthew Beinart, "Army May Be Linchpin Service for the Joint Force in Potential Fight with China, Wormuth Says," *Defense Daily*, December 2, 2021; Andrew Eversden, "Wormuth: Here's the Army's Role in a Pacific Fight," *Breaking Defense*, December 1, 2021; and C. Todd Lopez, "For Contingencies in Indo-Pacom, Army Will Serve as 'Linchpin' for Joint Force," *DOD News*, December 1, 2021.

- running command and control at multiple levels;
- providing ground-based long-range fires; and
- employing Army ground maneuver forces.[102]

Secretary Wormuth noted that in a nondirect combat supporting role, the Army would be responsible for building and defending bases in the Pacific, providing command and control, and establishing and sustaining theater-wide logistics, including maintaining munitions stockpiles and forward-arming and refueling points.[103]

Marines

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) summarizes the Marines' role in the Indo-Pacific in terms of how forces are to operate and avoid being targeted. The Marines contend that central to the vision

> is the ability to operate within an adversary's (read China's) bubble of air, missile, and naval power (which the Marine Corps calls the weapons engagement zone, or WEZ). The concept is that the Marine Corps will be a "stand-in force" that will operate within this WEZ, not a stand-off force that must start outside and fight its way in. As the guidance states: "Stand-in forces [are] optimized to operate in close and confined seas in defiance of adversary long-range precision 'stand-off capabilities.'" This requires developing "low signature, affordable, and risk worthy platforms" because existing ships and aircraft are the opposite—highly capable but expensive, few, and highly visible.
>
> Another element of the new concept is "distributed operations," the ability of relatively small groups to operate independently rather than as part of a large force, as in previous wars. "We recognize that we must distribute our forces ashore given the growth of adversary precision strike capabilities ... and create the virtues of mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration." Thus, small Marine forces would deploy around the islands of the first island chain and the South China Sea, each element having the ability to contest the surrounding air and naval space using anti-air and anti-ship missiles. Collectively, these forces would attrite Chinese forces, inhibit them from moving outward, and ultimately, as part of a joint campaign, squeeze them back to the Chinese homeland.
>
> A third element was institutional: the Marine Corps would leave sustained ground combat to the Army and focus on the littorals. Ground wars in the Middle East, North Korea, and Europe would be Army responsibilities.[104]

The Marines also plan to expand their LRPF.[105] In particular, the Marines intend to field mobile anti-ship missiles. The Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) uses the Marines' High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and the Naval Strike Missile (NSM) mounted on the chassis of a remotely operated Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV).

Force Structure Changes

The Army and Marines have undertaken a variety of force structure changes to better fulfill their roles as stipulated by national security and military strategies, as well as to support both Joint and

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Mark F. Cancian, "The Marine Corps' Radical Shift Toward China," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 25, 2020.

[105] Information in this section is from David B. Larter, "To Combat the China Threat, U.S. Marine Corps Declares Ship-Killing Missile Systems Its Top Priority," *DefenseNews.com*, March 5, 2020.

service-specific operational concepts. With DOD describing China as the "pacing threat," these force structure changes are informed by how the Army and Marines believe they will compete against potential adversaries in the Indo-Pacific and, if necessary, conduct combat operations in the region.

The Army's AimPoint and Army 2030 Force Structure Initiatives[106]

In 2020, the Army undertook the AimPoint Force Structure initiative to build the force structure needed to implement the 2018 National Military Strategy's new focus on China and Russia. As part of AimPoint, the Army plans to create five Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTF).[107] MDTFs are based on a Field Artillery (FA) brigade and augmented with an intelligence, information operations, cyber, electronic warfare, and space (I2CEWS) detachment. The first MDTF was established as a pilot program in 2017. It is stationed at Joint Base Lewis McChord, WA, and is assigned to U.S. Army Pacific Command. A second MDFT was activated in Europe in 2021 and the Army plans to establish an additional Indo-Pacific-focused MDTF in the future.

In January 2022, Army officials reportedly redesignated the Aim Point initiative (which had been renamed "Way Point 2028" in 2021) to "Army 2030."[108] Under Army 2030, the Army envisions either redesignating existing divisions or creating new divisions into five new types of divisions:

- Standard Light,
- Standard Heavy,
- Penetration,
- Joint Force Entry Air Assault, and
- Joint Force Entry Airborne.

It is not known if the five new division types were created with Indo-Pacific operational requirements in mind or what roles they might play in the region. These new unit types may have new capabilities as well.

Marine Corps Force Design 2030[109]

On March 23, 2020, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) announced a major force design initiative scheduled to occur over the next 10 years: "Force Design 2030."[110] As part of this initiative, the Marines plan to redesign the force for naval expeditionary warfare and to better align with the National Defense Strategy, in particular, its focus on strategically competing with China and Russia. The Marines intend to eliminate or reduce certain types of units and eliminate some military occupational specialties (MOS). The Marines also plan to reorganize higher echelon Marine formations and to reduce forces by 12,000 personnel by 2030. Selected major unit eliminations/reductions include

[106] For additional information on Army force structure initiatives, see CRS In Focus IF11542, *The Army's AimPoint and Army 2030 Force Structure Initiatives*, by Andrew Feickert.

[107] For addition information on Multi-Domain Task Forces, see CRS In Focus IF11797, *The Army's Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF)*, by Andrew Feickert.

[108] Ethan Sterenfeld, "Waypoint 2028 Becomes Army 2030," *InsideDefense.com*, January 25, 2022.

[109] For additional information on Marine Force Design 2030, see CRS Insight IN11281, *New U.S. Marine Corps Force Design Initiative: Force Design 2030*, by Andrew Feickert.

[110] Ibid. All information in this section is taken directly from CRS Insight IN11281, *New U.S. Marine Corps Force Design Initiative: Force Design 2030*, by Andrew Feickert.

- eliminating all Tank Battalions,
- reducing the size of and number of Infantry battalions from 24 to 21,
- reducing the number of Cannon Artillery Batteries from 21 to 5,
- reducing the number of Amphibious Vehicle Companies from 6 to 4, and
- eliminating a number of Medium Tiltrotor Squadrons, Heavy Helicopter Squadrons, Light-Attack Helicopter Squadrons, and Wing Support Groups.

The Marines also plan to establish three Marine Littoral Regiments (MLRs) organized, trained, and equipped to accomplish sea denial-and-control missions. The 3rd MLR—the redesignated 3rd Marine Regiment—is based in Hawaii, and plans call for converting two other regiments, the 4th and 12th Marine Regiments—currently stationed in Japan—into MLRs that are to be stationed in Japan and Guam. Each MLR is planned to consist of about 1,800 to 2,000 Marines and sailors and include three main elements; a Littoral Combat Team (LCT), a Littoral Anti-Air Battalion, and a Littoral Logistics Battalion.

The Marines' Force Design 2030 has been described as "a campaign of change as significant as any since the end of the Vietnam War."[111] While Marine Corps leadership has, for the most part, embraced Force Design 2030, some have suggested there are fundamental problems with its approach. One analyst contends that "the restructuring has been criticized for focusing too much on a maritime campaign in the Western Pacific, ignoring global conflicts, and relying on unproven operational concepts."[112] One former senior Marine Corps officer, retired LTG Paul K. Van Riper, offered his observations in an editorial:

> Marine Corps soon will no longer be the ready combined-arms force that our nation has long depended upon when its interests were threatened. It will be a force shorn of all its tanks and 76% of its cannon artillery, and with 41% fewer Marines in its infantry battalions. To make the situation even worse, there will be 33% fewer aircraft available to support riflemen on the ground. These divestures were and are being made to provide the resources for three Marine littoral regiments, designed to support naval campaigns for sea denial and sea control by firing anti-ship missiles.
>
> So, the Marine Corps will trade its combined-arms flexibility for a very specialized mission that the U.S. Army already can provide in greater numbers than the Marine Corps ever will. Moreover, for as long as eight years the Corps will be neither the powerful forcible-entry force in readiness it has been for decades nor the specialized anti-ship force of the future—neither fish nor fowl—which will seriously jeopardize national security. This is a risk not worth taking. In the end the Corps will have more space experts, cyber warriors, influence specialists, missileers and others with unique skills—many of which already are provided by other elements of the joint force.[113]

Weapon Systems and Equipment

As they develop new operational concepts and force designs, the Army and Marine Corps are pursuing weapons systems and equipment to support respective operational concepts and to equip

[111] Walker Mills and Timothy Heck, "The Marine Corps Should Look to the Army for Lessons Learned on Force Design," The Modern War Institute at West Point, January 27, 2022, p. 1.

[112] Mark F. Cancian, "U.S. Military Forces in FY2022: Marine Corps," Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2021, p. 2.

[113] Lt. Gen. Paul K. Van Riper (Retired), "Jeopardizing National Security: What is Happening to Our Marine Corps?," *Marine Corps Times*, March 21, 2022.

units under development. The following sections highlight selected weapon systems and equipment being sought by the Army and Marines.

Army

Given the limited range of Army ground combat systems and the geographic expanse of the Indo-Pacific region, the primary means by which the Army can contribute to joint operations, other than force-on-force ground combat, is through LRPF. As such, the Army is focusing primarily on LPRF weapon systems and equipment, which consists of upgrades to current artillery and missile systems, development of new longer-range cannons and hypersonic weapons, and modification of existing air- and sea-launched missiles and cruise missiles for ground launch by Army units.[114] The Army is developing three ground-based, long-range systems: (1) the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW), (2) the Mid-Range Capability Missile (a ground-based, anti-ship missile system armed with Navy SM-6 or Tomahawk cruise missiles),; and (3) the Precision Strike Missile (PrSM), which can be fired from existing Army Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) or Army and Marine Corps High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS).

The LRHW is considered a particularly important system in the Indo-Pacific context.[115] This weapon consists of a ground-launched missile (with a reported range of 1,725 miles) equipped with a hypersonic glide body and associated transport, support, and fire control equipment.[116] According to the Army,

> Hypersonic missiles that can travel well over 3,800 miles per hour. They can reach the top of the Earth's atmosphere and remain just beyond the range of air and missile defense systems until they are ready to strike, and by then it's too late to react. Extremely accurate, ultrafast, maneuverable and survivable, hypersonics can strike anywhere in the world within minutes.[117]

Organizationally, each MDTF reportedly is to have a Long-Range Fires Battalion consisting of one LRHW battery with four launchers each having two missiles apiece, one Mid-Range Capability Battery, and one PrSM HIMARs battery.[118] Under the Army's current force construct, a total of six batteries (three batteries per MDTF) of these missiles would be dedicated to the Indo-Pacific region.

Marines[119]

In a February 2022 media roundtable, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps discussed emerging technologies that would be deployed in the Indo-Pacific, primarily to support MLRs.[120] As previously noted, one such system is the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System

[114] For additional information on long-range precision fires, see CRS Report R46721, *U.S. Army Long-Range Precision Fires: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

[115] For additional information on the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW), see CRS In Focus IF11991, *The U.S. Army's Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW)*, by Andrew Feickert.

[116] For additional information on hypersonic weapons, see CRS In Focus IF11459, *Defense Primer: Hypersonic Boost-Glide Weapons*, by Kelley M. Sayler and Amy F. Woolf.

[117] Lt. Gen. L. Neil Thurgood, "Hypersonics by 2023," Army News Service, September 4, 2019.

[118] Ethan Sterenfeld, "Army Plans Three Hypersonic Batteries in MDTFs," *InsideDefense.com*, February 23, 2022.

[119] Information in this section is taken from Megan Eckstein, "Standup of Marine Littoral Regiment Will Usher New Gear into Pacific Theater," *Defense News*, February 28, 2022.

[120] Ibid.

(NMESIS). Is this role, NMESIS would enable MLR units to conduct anti-ship strikes and possibly gain sea control by means of threatening enemy ships. Another system is the MQ-9A Reaper Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), which is intended to provide extended range surveillance, intelligence collection, and reconnaissance. The MQ-9A could potentially be used to provide information to both the Joint Force and Marines and could possibly be used to help direct NMESIS strikes. A third system is the Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR), which is intended to be part of the theater communications architecture and to facilitate data sharing with the Marines, Navy, and the rest of the Joint Force. According to the Marines,

> The G/ATOR's interoperability with Naval systems and transportability make it a critical component to achieving Force Design [2030].... Initially fielded in 2018, G/ATOR can support various missions, depending on the "block" of software used on a single hardware platform. G/ATOR Block 1 provides air defense and surveillance capabilities, while Block 2 supports artillery operations.[121]

The final two systems sought by Marine leadership are a Marine-owned and -operated Long-Range Unmanned Surface Vessel[122] and the Navy's Light Amphibious Warship (LAW), both of which are intended to transport Marines, supplies, and equipment in littoral regions.[123] Some are concerned, however, that developing and procuring the LAW may be challenging, and that it may not be available until 2025.[124]

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI)

On an annual basis, primarily through the National Defense Authorization Act and the Defense Appropriations Act, Congress establishes policy and provides funding for the services and matters pertaining to the Indo-Pacific region. In the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA; P.L. 116-283, §1251), Congress created the PDI reportedly to "better understand what the Pentagon was spending in the Indo-Pacific region and to change the composition of that spending."[125] Concerned that "the Pentagon's budget justification books provide minimal information about how its spending aligns to specific theaters, threats or missions," the PDI was seen as a means to pull "information together in a consolidated budget display," and "to increase transparency, identify key Indo-Pacific investments, and enable Congress to track, assess and adjust those efforts over time."[126]

DOD's FY2022 PDI budget request called for $5.1 billion to be allocated between the Navy, Air Force, Missile Defense Agency, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, but no funds were requested under PDI for the Army.[127] Categories for PDI funding included Force Design and

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[121] Ashley Calingo, "Inside Acquisition: How the G/ATOR Modernizes the Corps for the Future Fight," Office of Public Affairs and Communication, Marine Corps Systems Command, July 14, 2021.

[122] For additional information on this system, see CRS Report R45757, *Navy Large Unmanned Surface and Undersea Vehicles: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[123] For additional information on the Light Amphibious Warship, see CRS Report R46374, *Navy Light Amphibious Warship (LAW) Program: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[124] Todd South, "Back to Ship: Marines Need Ships to Fight. Will They Get Them?" *Military Times*, March 24, 2022, and "Marines Will Have to Wait Until 2025 for Light Amphibious Warship," *Marine Corps Times*, March 28, 2022.

[125] Dustin Walker, "Pacific Deterrence Initiative: A Look at Funding in the New Defense Bill, and What Must Happen Now," *Defense News*, December 15, 2021.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Pacific Deterrence Initiative, Department of Defense Budget, Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), May 2021.

Posture, Exercises, Experimentation, and Innovation, Joint Force Lethality, and Strengthen Alliances and Partnerships.[128] The FY2022 NDAA Joint Explanatory Statement "identified approximately $7.1 billion in investments that support and attempt to improve the current posture, capabilities, and activities of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region," and included funding for Army Procurement, Operations and Maintenance, and Military Construction.[129]

DOD's FY2023 PDI budget request calls for $6.1 billion "in critical investments [to] include integrated fires, new missile warning and tracking architecture, construction to enable enhanced posture, funding for defense of Guam, and multinational information sharing, training, and experimentation."[130]

Potential Issues for Congress

The Role of U.S. Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific

As discussed above, the Army and Marines have four primary roles in the Indo-Pacific: combat, deterrence, security force assistance, and humanitarian assistance. In terms of the latter two roles—security force assistance and humanitarian assistance—it can be argued that the roles both services play in supporting the region's allied and partner ground forces and providing humanitarian assistance ashore cannot be fulfilled by the Navy and Air Force. Furthermore, while somewhat intangible, these two roles are seen as important in building and maintaining good relations with regional partners and allies, and in furthering security relationships with nonaligned nations in the region. Given the importance of these two roles, Congress might consider whether additional Army and Marine resources should be devoted to security force assistance and humanitarian assistance?

In terms of deterrence, RAND's 2022 study conducted for the Army seems to reinforce the argument that heavy ground forces and air defense units provide a greater deterrent effect than air and naval forces. If so, Congress might consider if the Army and Marines should play a greater role in deterrence operations in the Indo-Pacific region.

In terms of regional combat roles, two of the scenarios for ground combat—the defense of the ROK from a DPRK attack and ground operations in response to a PRC invasion of Taiwan—might also be a subject for Congress to discuss. Regarding the defense of the ROK, the United States has limited ground combat forces available in theater to respond to a DPRK attack and supposedly would deploy additional ground forces from the United States if needed. As currently configured, U.S. ground forces seem to play a somewhat minor role in that scenario. As such, Congress might reexamine the role of U.S. ground forces in the ROK to determine whether the United States has the right mix, types, and quantities of ground forces to respond to a DPRK ground attack. With the vast majority of attention being given to China-related regional security issues, and given the unpredictability and provocations from the DPRK, such an examination could help to ensure that Congress is fully informed on what is arguably the most likely scenario where U.S ground forces are involved in direct combat in the region.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Joint Explanatory Statement to Accompany the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, December 5, 2021, p. 280.

[130] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, United States Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request: Defense Budget Overview, March 2022, p. 14.

The role of U.S. ground forces in an invasion of Taiwan or other PRC regional aggression is less well-defined than that of the defense of the ROK. In terms of regional Chinese aggression, if ground combat is not a factor, the primary combat role for the Army and Marines would likely be long-range fires against ground and naval targets, as well as regional air and missile defense of U.S. forces and bases such as Guam. Furthermore, the Marines' divestment of tanks, towed artillery, and aircraft as part of Force Design 2030 might also have implications for the Marines' role in force-on-force combat, particularly against an opponent with mechanized or armored forces. As discussed above, some experts are concerned that U.S. ground forces—the Army in particular—would face an "uncomfortable reality" in terms of its role related to Taiwan and could be called upon instead to defend or retake territory, including by amphibious assault, that might be beyond current U.S. military capabilities.[131] The combat role for the Army and Marines in the Indo-Pacific region raises a number of concerns about how realistic that role might be, potentially meriting further discussion by Congress.

U.S. Ground Forces Posture in the Indo-Pacific Region

For each of the roles mentioned above, the way in which U.S. ground forces are postured in the Indo-Pacific region is of critical concern. Posture is generally defined as forces, locations (including large bases, forward-operating bases, and prepositioned stocks), and political agreements concerning what those forces can do under certain conditions, including overflight access for U.S. aircraft.[132] Force posture in the Indo-Pacific region influences deterrence, dictates what weapon systems can range targets, the air and missile defense coverage of potential ground targets, and the actions needed to resupply and maintain forward-deployed U.S. ground forces within range of enemy weapon systems.

Some analysts contend that "the Pentagon has been promising a more distributed and resilient posture in the Indo-Pacific, but it has not kept that promise. Highly concentrated with few active or passive defenses, American forces—and lives—remain dangerously vulnerable to attack."[133] Some observers within DOD and Congress reportedly advocate building up forces on Guam and Japan and forward deploying U.S. forces in what is referred to as the first island chain that rings China in the Western Pacific (including Japan), others are concerned that U.S. forces are not sufficiently hardened and that forward-deployed troops would not be able to withstand "China's new generation of highly-capable missile and rocket forces."[134] Those concerned with the perceived dangers of a more forward-deployed force posture favor "keeping American troops and assets outside of China's range, in places like Hawaii, Alaska, and California, using nascent long-range firepower and stealth bombers capable of withstanding Chinese air defense."[135]

Some observers suggest that the Pentagon and Congress should take a more active role in resolving the Indo-Pacific force posture debate.[136] Issues such as hardening facilities, developing

[131] Jacquelyn Schneider, "The Uncomfortable Reality of the U.S. Army's Role in a War over Taiwan," *War on the Rocks*, November 30, 2021.

[132] Chris Dougherty, "Don't Trust the Process: Moving from Words to Actions on the Indo-Pacific Posture," *War on the Rocks*, February 23, 2022.

[133] Dustin Walker, "The Pentagon is in Desperate Need of an Intervention from the Top," *War on the Rocks*, January 27, 2022.

[134] Jack Detsch, "Pentagon Faces Tense Fight Over Pacific Pivot," *Foreign Policy*, June 7, 2021.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Dustin Walker, "The Pentagon is in Desperate Need of an Intervention from the Top," *War on the Rocks*, January 27, 2022.

active and passive defense measures, and pursuing optimal locations for U.S. ground forces are within DOD's authority. Congress could likewise examine options regarding where forces might be postured to best support U.S. national security and military objectives. The creation of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative has been called a "turning point" whereby Congress—recognizing the Pentagon's "say-do gap" on force posture—established a mechanism for better aligning resources to force posture needs.[137] In addition to upgrading and protecting facilities throughout the region, PDI funds could be used for forward positioning of defense material.[138] While the Army and Marine Corps both maintain and have access to prepositioned stocks[139] in the region, further investment in forward positioning of defense materials could "expand the capacity of the U.S. military to operate in the region."[140]

U.S. Ground Forces Execution of Regional Wartime Missions

The Army and Marines face a different potential combat environment in the Indo-Pacific than in Europe or the Middle East. While conflict in Europe and the Middle East would likely involve force-on-force ground combat, it is conceivable that conflict in the Indo-Pacific would not. In this case, the Army and Marines' primary contribution would be LRPF against ground and naval targets. Although Army and Marine Corps long-range systems are based on existing systems, it is not known if the services will acquire these systems in sufficient quantities for use in a potentially protracted conflict. In addition, it is uncertain how these systems would be used against ground and naval targets and how those targets would be identified and validated for attack. This is a critical concern, particularly at extended ranges, when targets may be beyond visual identification range and beyond the range of existing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems integral to the targeting process.

Army

As discussed above, in December 2021 Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth further defined the Army's role in the Indo-Pacific region.[141] Secretary Wormuth emphasized, in addition to establishing and protecting operating bases, ground combat, and long-range precision fires, three other missions:

- providing integrated air and missile defense,
- sustaining the Joint Force with logistics and communications, and
- running command and control at multiple levels.

These missions, as well as the concerns associated with them, are briefly described in the following sections.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Alan Tidwell, "Building a Better Partner in the Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, January 28, 2022.

[139] For additional information on pre-positioned stocks, see CRS In Focus IF11699, *Defense Primer: Department of Defense Pre-Positioned Materiel*, by Maureen Trujillo and G. James Herrera.

[140] Alan Tidwell, "Building a Better Partner in the Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, January 28, 2022.

[141] Information in this section is taken from Matthew Beinart, "Army May Be Linchpin Service for the Joint Force in Potential Fight with China, Wormuth Says," *Defense Daily*, December 2, 2021, and Andrew Eversden, "Wormuth: Here's the Army's Role in a Pacific Fight," *Breaking Defense*, December 1, 2021.

Air and Missile Defense

To defend Marine forces ashore against selected short-ranged air threats, the Marines rely on short-range air defense (SHORAD) systems and depend on the Navy for missile defense. As a result, the Army is the only service capable of providing ground-based missile defense. The Army has, at present, 15 Patriot Battalions and 7 Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries dedicated to missile defense. DOD's FY2023 budget request calls for fielding an additional THAAD battery for eight batteries.[142] During testimony on May 5, 2022, the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army stated the Army would add an additional Patriot Battalion by FY2029 to enhance base defense.[143]

USINDOPACOM has three Patriot Battalions and two THAAD batteries.[144] In addition, Patriots and THAADs are routinely employed in U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), which could affect the Army's ability to provide additional ground-based missile defense to INDOPACOM. Further complicating the issue is the high operational tempo, or OPTEMPO,[145] of Patriot and THAAD units. According to Army leaders, THAAD and Patriot missile batteries "remain among the most frequently deployed units in the service," and there is an "acknowledged need to ease the burden on soldiers manning those systems."[146]

When considering resource limitations and the strain on soldiers crewing and maintaining Patriot and THAAD, along with the Army's commitment to provide integrated air and missile defense for the entire theater, it is possible that the Army is overestimating its ability to accomplish this mission as presently configured and resourced.

Joint Force Logistics and Communications

In addition to providing logistics and communications support to Army units in the region, the Army, as Executive Agent, is also responsible for various types of support to other members of the Joint Force. Secretary of the Army Wormuth noted in 2021

> The Army will provide much of the secure communication network background. We will generate intra-theater distribution networks to keep the joint force supplied from dispersed locations, and we will maintain munition stockpiles and forward arming and refueling points.[147]

Logistics pose a particular challenge to the Army due to the geography of the Indo-Pacific region, especially given the potential for long, contested lines of communications. The United States does not have the freedom of movement and distribution of logistics that it has had in past conflicts.

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[142] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, United States Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request: Defense Budget Overview, March 2022, p. 10.

[143] Statement by The Honorable Christine E. Wormuth, Secretary of the Army, and General James C. McConville, Chief of Staff, United States Army, Before the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, United States Senate, Second Session, 117th Congress, On The Posture of the United States Army, May 5, 2022, p. 6.

[144] U.S. Army, Air and Missile Defense Vision 2028, March 2019, p. 18.

[145] OPTEMPO can be defined as the rate of military operations as measured by deployments, training exercises, temporary duty assignments, and work hours that result in a servicemember being absent from their household and family.

[146] Kyle Rempfer, "Got to Fix That: Some Unit Ops Tempos Higher Than Peaks of Afghan, Iraq Wars, Army Chief Says," *Army Times*, October 2, 2020.

[147] C. Todd Lopez, "For Contingencies in Indo-Pacom, Army Will Serve as 'Linchpin' for Joint Force," *DOD News*, December 1, 2021.

Rather, the Indo-Pacific operational environment and China's military capabilities have given rise to the concept of "Contested Logistics," whereby U.S. logistics operations might be subject to attack—kinetic and/or cyber—throughout the entire supply chain. This issue is further complicated by Army and Marine plans for dispersed operations, including remote locations that might not have suitable airfields or ports. Supporting these remote locations could require not only multiple modes of distribution and transportation, but also a means to protect logistics operations from attack.

Unlike combat capability, logistics capability is more difficult to define and quantify. As one former DOD senior official observed, "the Department of Defense does a great job at running wargames" but oftentimes "they assume away any logistics and sustainment problems, because if you play them for real, it screws up the game."[148] To better understand how the Army plans to fulfil its Indo-Pacific logistics responsibilities, Congress might benefit from a comprehensive classified briefing from the Army, INDOPACOM, and U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) on the Army's role and capabilities related to regional joint logistics. This briefing could include what resources and capabilities are needed to operate in a contested environment and how logistics support could be provided to remote locations subject to PRC interdiction.

Command and Control at Multiple Echelons

Secretary Wormuth stated in 2021

> The Army can also provide command and control capability at multiple levels to ensure coordination and synchronization across the joint force. The Army, with its substantial planning and operations capacity at the division and corps level, is uniquely well placed to provide command and control for the Joint Force.[149]

Taken at face value, this statement appears to be more aspirational than empirical, outlining general capabilities rather than specific of DOD policy. Given the numerous service headquarters in and associated with the Indo-Pacific region, along with the comparable planning and operations capabilities resident in the Navy, Air Force, and Marines, there is an element of ambiguity associated with command and control roles and responsibilities in the Indo-Pacific. A briefing on Indo-Pacific command and control could facilitate greater congressional understanding of this essential function.

Marines

The Marines' new operational concept, as conveyed in EABO, Stand-in Forces, and Force Design 2030, reflects the belief that the Marines' mission in the Indo-Pacific can best be accomplished by providing distributed maritime defense-in-depth through preconflict competition activities, reconnaissance, target identification, and the provision of long-range fires against ground and naval targets. A number of related concerns could affect the Marines' ability to execute their wartime mission as envisioned.

[148] David Berteau, "Moving Pieces on the Chessboard: Strategy and Logistics in the Indo-Pacific," Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 4, 2021.

[149] C. Todd Lopez, "For Contingencies in Indo-Pacom, Army Will Serve as 'Linchpin' for Joint Force," *DOD News*, December 1, 2021.

Some observers have suggested that to properly execute this strategy, the Marines would need to have forces in position before the onset of hostilities:[150]

> There also would be significant political hurdles to implementing such a strategy. Host nations would have to authorize the positioning of U.S. forces on their territory indefinitely.... The United States would need to make arrangements with individual states for pre-conflict basing, and these would be difficult to arrange.[151]

In a sense, the Marines' proposed operational concept for the Indo-Pacific depends on the ability to gain access to territory, which is complicated by the fact that nations granting such access could face economic pressure from China.[152] Another concern is that adopting this operational concept, which focuses on defeating an enemy at long distance with precision fires, could make tactical maneuvers less relevant. For example, without this capability,

> [at] some point enemy forces will penetrate the friendly anti-access barrier, and when they do, the outnumbered and isolated small Marine units will be fighting for survival without the benefit of cannon artillery or tank support.[153]

Because Marine forces are expected to remain undetected through mobility, concealment, and maintaining a low electronic signature, security is another concern:

> Any emplacement that remains in place for any period of time will start to accumulate infrastructure.... If stand-in forces are engaged in security cooperation activities prior to hostilities, as is envisioned, their presence will be well known to the local population. That population almost certainly will be infiltrated with human intelligence sources.[154]

Logistics support is another potential challenge and would likely also play a factor in stand-in force survivability:

> Every resupply mission or other logistics contact risks giving away the expeditionary advanced base's (EAB) position, which is why EABs are meant to be largely self-sustaining ... we understand that local sustainment primarily means living off the local economy through greater operational contract support. Like security cooperation activities do, self-sustainment presents a major operations security risk. Interactions with the local population will expose the EAB to detection by human intelligence. EABs are likely to be pinpointed every bit as much as if they had been detected by high-technology sensors.[155]

If Marine stand-in forces are identified preconflict, a major concern for some is that a PRC first strike could target those forces and render many or all of them combat ineffective. Such a loss could significantly limit the Marines' role in an Indo-Pacific conflict, not only in terms of firepower but also reconnaissance capabilities for the Joint Force.

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[150] Information in this section is taken from The Maneuverist Papers, "Expeditionary Advanced Based Operations," *Marine Corps Gazette,* April 2022, p. 103.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid., p. 104.

[153] Ibid., p. 105.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid., pp. 105-106.

Potential Impact of the Ukrainian Conflict on U.S. Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific Region

Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine has arguably changed the global security environment. While some observers have said that U.S. and NATO deterrence failed in Ukraine, others have suggested that such deterrence was both a "triumph and a failure"; for although the United States and NATO failed to deter the attack, the conflict so far has been confined to Ukraine, and nuclear weapons have not been used.[156] In any case, given recent events in Ukraine, policymakers may question the role and effectiveness of deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region along with the future force posture and composition of U.S. ground forces in the region. In terms of overall U.S. national security priorities, some experts have suggested replacing the current Pacific-focused strategy with a "pivot to Europe";[157] while events in Ukraine have reportedly resulted only in minor to the new China-focused National Defense Strategy.[158] No matter where strategic emphasis is placed, there are potential implications for U.S. ground forces in the Indo-Pacific.

Some observers have suggested that U.S. and NATO force posture in Europe will likely change in composition, numbers, and permanence. Examples of suggested changes include

- permanently stationing a Patriot unit in Poland, and
- permanently stationing at least three more brigade-equivalent Army combat units in Poland, Germany, and Romania.[159]

In addition to these two examples, other types of U.S. ground forces could be committed to Europe on both a permanent and rotational basis. Should this occur, new units allocated to Europe might not be available for the Indo-Pacific, which, in the case of high–demand, low-density units such as Patriot and THAAD, could pose serious operational consequences. If more U.S. ground forces are allocated to Europe, Congress might decide to examine how this change would affect U.S. ground force posture in the Indo-Pacific and the ability for the Army and Marines to fulfil their operational roles.

Another implication is funding. Army and Marine funding could be influenced by a shift in priority from the Indo-Pacific to Europe and NATO. The U.S. response to Russia's attack of Ukraine was unforeseen and remains fluid. As a result, the resource implications are undefined beyond contingency funds provided to support current operations. In the longer term, Ukraine and NATO-related funding requirements could be part of the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).[160]

Unless future defense budgets increase to account for these requirements, it is possible that funding for Army and Marine efforts in the Indo-Pacific might decrease to fund European-related initiatives. Of particular concern for some are ongoing Army and Marine Corps long-range

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[156] Benjamin Jensen, "The Two Sides of Deterrence in Ukraine," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 30, 2022.

[157] P. Michael McKinley, "It's Time to Pivot Back to Europe," *Politico Magazine*, February 24, 2022.

[158] Jack Detsch, "Pentagon Rolls Out Defense Strategy Amid War in Europe," *Foreign Policy*, March 28, 2022.

[159] The Scowcroft Center Task Force on Deterrence and Force Posture, "Defending Every Inch of NATO Territory: Force Posture Options for Strengthening Deterrence in Europe," Atlantic Council, March 9, 2022.

[160] The Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) (10 U.S.C. §221) summarizes forces, resources, and equipment associated with all DOD programs. The FYDP displays total DOD resources and force structure information for five years: the current budgeted year and four additional years. See https://acqnotes.com/acqnote/acquisitions/future-year-defense-program-fydp, accessed April 1, 2022.

precision fires efforts, which are central to Indo-Pacific deterrence and warfighting missions. In addition, support of vital Navy programs, such as the LAW and NSM, and funding for the PDI, which the Army and Marines also depend upon, might be influenced by current and future European security resource requirements. In its oversight and authorization and appropriations roles, Congress may play a critical role in arbitrating emerging European security requirements with ongoing and future Indo-Pacific requirements.

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