



F-15C Eagle assigned to 48th Fighter Wing conducts aerial operations in support of Bomber Task Force Europe 20-2 over Keflavik, Iceland, March 16, 2020 (U.S. Air Force/Matthew Plew)

U.S. European Command Theater Infrastructure Plan

Aligning U.S. Requirements with European Capability and Resources

By Jon-Paul Depreo and Scott P. Raymond

U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) has had a long and storied history since 1952, providing response to more than 200

named operations including humanitarian and natural disaster relief efforts and deployed forces in support of nearly 95 contingency operations.¹

As old threats become new threats, USEUCOM continues to sync with national strategy and develop plans that leverage existing and planned infrastructure investments throughout Europe to reverse post-Cold War posture reductions. In response to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea,

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USEUCOM and European allies increased their commitment to defense spending and refocused their forces and footprint to deter further Russian aggression; however, with the pivot to the Indo-Pacific region to address emerging Chinese threats—during a period of constrained investments—USEUCOM’s infrastructure strategy is at risk of not reaching full potential.

A national strategy underpinned by a coherent infrastructure plan would mitigate unintended consequences of historical pendulum swings in resourcing.

The 2018 U.S. National Military Strategy (NMS) acts as a framework for “protecting and advancing U.S. national interests” for the joint force, allowing it to maintain its military advantage and implement defense strategies.² The NMS

describes a ready position supported by three strategy horizons: force employment, force development, and force design. The strategy horizons range to 15-year visions, with emphases on critical infrastructure and “a joint force that can exercise assured force projection, maintain freedom of maneuver in all domains, deliver joint combined arms decisively, and ultimately win” in support



Two Airmen assigned to 31st Security Forces Squadron participate in exercise Steadfast Nomad 2021 at Aviano Air Base, Italy, September 22, 2021 (U.S. Air Force/Brooke Moeder)

of homeland defense and allied defense against regional and global threats.³ Timely infrastructure development—offering flexibility and strategic options to the commander—is critical to the application of joint planning principles.⁴

In 2019, the need for a theater infrastructure plan (TIP) at the joint strategic level manifested from a multitude of reasons. General Tod Wolters, USAF, issued a command directive for convergence between USEUCOM and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe to create more coherence in theater operations, activities, and investments. A TIP would coalesce disparate military construction (MILCON) efforts and seek to offset reductions in that budget. When realized and fully implemented, the TIP would be a dynamic requirements-based document organizing infrastructure shortfalls that result from gaps between needs and existing theater capabilities. This plan would consolidate U.S. infrastructure requirements across the USEUCOM theater and enable unity of effort within the joint force. Most important, the TIP would converge plans and investments with our allies, partners, and European Union (EU) organizations. The USEUCOM operational environment, especially in Eastern Europe, proves too dynamic for effective infrastructure support from a lengthy MILCON process. The TIP would also contain a coherent plan that is adequately dynamic and flexible to meet today's needs and project long-term solutions for tomorrow's fight in support of U.S. military objectives. The TIP would make MILCON the option of last resort.

This article explores USEUCOM's conceptual framework for the TIP, which will support national military strategy, improve convergence with European allies and partners, and reduce risk to military mission and force. The adoption of a deliberate infrastructure planning strategy at the theater level should provide resource efficiencies and flexibility to reach desired conditions of securing the Euro-Atlantic region, achieving a competitive edge, supporting North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) credible

deterrence and defense, and enabling U.S. global power projection.⁵

The TIP's coordination and synchronization with EU planning and resourcing advances USEUCOM's combat commander's campaign plan and reduces the risk of an insufficient support infrastructure in times of crisis.

Supporting U.S. Strategic Objectives

The joint and multinational force emphasis on the transregional, multidomain, and multifunctional environment in operational planning strengthens Europe's defense. Over the past 5 years, USEUCOM operational plans have been refined to put more focus on military mobility, convergence with allies and partners, and new regional and global threats. To counter growing pressures from Russia and China, the Department of Defense and Congress provided billions of dollars for programs and initiatives to enhance U.S. and NATO readiness for rapid response to aggression; to strengthen infrastructure capacity and burden-sharing opportunities; and to increase equipment prepositioning and joint reception, staging, and onward movement throughput. USEUCOM continues to prepare the theater by enabling an environment for ingenuity and creative solutions. A coherent infrastructure plan offers the efficiency and coherence that safeguards U.S. investment and national objectives.

Neither the Joint Staff nor the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) mandates that unified commands establish an infrastructure support plan for combatant command activities, operations, and investments; however, the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) translates NMS and Global Employment of the Force guidance into strategic planning requirements for the command. The 2020 JSCP Logistics Supplement directs combatant commands to publish a theater posture plan, a theater distribution plan, and theater logistics overview, which in the aggregate constitutes a theater logistics plan.⁶ Although all three theater logistics plan elements describe infrastructure development, none identifies

or effectively communicates the totality of USEUCOM's infrastructure gaps or shortfall resolution options across the joint force (including both organic and host-nation infrastructure assets) in support of the transregional, multidomain, and multifunctional environment. Furthermore, the posture plan focuses most of the reliance on internal U.S. investments within a near-term horizon. A coherent infrastructure plan with a 15-year vision is essential to giving the best military advice on infrastructure and flexibility to the commander.⁷ A key aspect of the TIP is its complementary role to USEUCOM's theater posture plan, which is bound by the OSD's Future Years Development Program (FYDP). The TIP looks longer term—an additional 10 years beyond the FYDP—and deemphasizes MILCON due to budget volatility, which makes out-year programming inconsistent and USEUCOM susceptible to OSD reallocation in favor of other global requirements (such as U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's emerging Pacific Deterrence Initiative).

Long-term understanding beyond near-term planning presents new options to reduce Service component reliance on MILCON appropriations to fill such infrastructure gaps as munitions and fuel storage facilities, equipment prepositioning warehouses, and airfield improvements. USEUCOM must make MILCON a solution of last resort—by emphasizing the TIP's use of more cost-efficient, predictable, and responsive options to address the combatant commander's needs. A long-term vision for infrastructure should inform the commander's campaign plan strategy and the subsequent Service component supporting plans.

Convergence with NATO and Partners

The NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP) seeks to standardize and increase planning interoperability across all 30 nations. The NDPP aims to harmonize military planning efforts within the Alliance via a five-step process: establishing guidance, determining requirements, setting target apportion needs, facilitating implementation, and

reviewing results. The NDPP results in the recognition of a minimum capability requirement and the resulting shortfalls, development of higher level NATO objectives, and decisions to generate statements of requirement. The NDPP's demand signal informs the Common Funded Capability Delivery Model and, therefore, what receives common funding. The TIP would allow USEUCOM to provide its infrastructure needs to NATO to inform the NDPP. Infrastructure requirements transparency creates convergence and infrastructure coherence across the theater.

Financial support to NATO consists of indirect and direct funding. Indirect funding manifests, for example, as the voluntary contribution of equipment or troops. In 2006, NATO's defense ministers agreed to a 2 percent of gross domestic product national defense spending target, with 20 percent of that defense budget spent on major equipment. In 2014, heads of state and government at the Wales Summit approved this defense spending target declaration to reaffirm the "strong commitment to collective defence and to ensuring security and assurance for all Allies."⁸ Direct funding finances, for requirements serving the interests of all 30 nations, use a cost-share formula based on gross national income. One of these common funded arrangements is the NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP). A long-term infrastructure investment program, NSIP funds construction and command and control systems to offer military capabilities that are beyond the needs of individual member nations. In recent years, annual NSIP investments have averaged €750 million (approximately \$851 million). Starting in fiscal year 2021 (FY21), the U.S. cost-share of the NSIP common funding requirement decreased from 22 percent to 16 percent (\$120 million per year).

The U.S. return on investment from NATO funding mechanisms—such as direct funding of U.S. infrastructure, NATO projects at U.S. operating locations, and general NATO efforts since 2016—is approximately €5 billion (approximately \$5.7 billion; 16 percent)

of the total €31 billion (approximately \$35.2 billion) authorized by NATO. NSIP infrastructure investments approved since 2016 span 25 nations and should be completed in the next 10 years. Approved NSIP projects of U.S. interest include infrastructure supporting fighters, air-to-air refueling, air transport, the Airborne Warning and Control System, bombers, and aerial surveillance; fuel storage and delivery; equipment prepositioning; training ranges; and reception, staging, and onward movement of forces. Historically, NSIP investment for U.S. projects has been achieved through a bottom-up approach focused on specific projects. To increase future benefits of NSIP project funding, the United States is transitioning to a top-down approach that integrates USEUCOM basing and infrastructure requirements into NATO defense planning and associated NATO capability program plans, which would better align NSIP and U.S. project development.⁹ The TIP ensures that U.S. long-range infrastructure planning is in place to parallel NATO planning, thus better positioning the United States to insert needs into the NATO planning process that set medium- and long-term horizons from 7 to 20-plus years. The TIP coalesces USEUCOM infrastructure requirements in support of NATO's goal to improve readiness.

The European Union is made up of 27 nations—21 of which are NATO members—seeking "to continue prosperity, freedom, communication, and ease of travel and commerce for its citizens."¹⁰ The EU sought to improve cooperation by establishing in December 2017 a treaty-based organization called Permanent Structured Cooperation. Participating nations pledge to bolster global cooperation on projects "responding to the EU priorities by EU member states through the Capability Development Plan, also taking into account the results of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence."¹¹

EU investments in the Trans-European Transport Network reflect a priority to improve and strengthen European infrastructure. From 2000 to 2006, the EU invested €859 billion

(approximately \$975.7 billion) in transportation-related infrastructure and will likely contribute €1.5 trillion (approximately \$1.7 trillion) between 2010 and 2030.¹² From an infrastructure development perspective, U.S. cooperation with the EU is important to open the aperture for U.S. infrastructure development and use options captured in the TIP.

Reducing Risk in the USEUCOM Theater

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual (CJCSM) 3105.01, *Joint Risk Analysis*, identifies two types of risk: strategic and military. *Strategic risk* includes those activities that would result in negative consequence to the homeland, national interests (including NATO), or the invasion or loss of an ally or partner.¹³ *Military risk* encompasses risk to mission (inability to meet military objectives) and risk to force (inability to provide and sustain sufficient military resources).¹⁴

CJCSM 3105.01 subdivides risk to mission as operational risk and future challenges. Operational risk exists within the near term (0 to 2 years), and future challenges extend to the medium term (0 to 7 years).¹⁵ As a result of the TIP's cohesive effect, USEUCOM planners have increased flexibility during course-of-action development. Due to lengthy planning, design, and construction timelines, USEUCOM's ability to reduce risk in the near and medium term must start with a long-term vision. The TIP improves risk analysis decisions by bringing into focus the totality of the infrastructure requirements and capabilities, which allows decisionmakers to target investments where they are most effective. Improving resiliency through the development of a network of theater infrastructure reduces risk to mission by investing in long-term infrastructure planning. The TIP ultimately reduces risks to USEUCOM plans via a long-term vision, alternate infrastructure solutions, and strengthened relationships with allies and partners.

USEUCOM underwent transformative change in 2014 with the inception of the European Reassurance Initiative, now known as the European Deterrence

Initiative (EDI), which came about in response to Russia's actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. EDI provides Service components the opportunity to program MILCON projects addressing infrastructure shortfalls, including \$2.6 billion of infrastructure improvement funding from FY15 through FY21; as of FY20, more than half (\$1.8 billion) was deferred due to an emergency declaration at the southern border of the United States. Starting in FY22, as EDI MILCON dwindles

and reverts to the Armed Forces' base budgets, USEUCOM risks having an improperly resourced mitigation strategy. Therefore, USEUCOM must seek innovative solutions for infrastructure shortfalls. Allocating resources to infrastructure development and sustainment reduces delays and loss of progress.

USEUCOM reduces risk to mission by continuing convergence with NATO and cooperating with partner nations. Bilateral agreements such as defense cooperation

agreements establish authorities for execution of MILCON and use of existing facilities; however, these agreements are at the policy level and in most instances do not support shared understanding within NATO. For instance, U.S. Navy Europe's maritime requirements in support of NATO plans in northern Europe are developed in direct coordination with each host nation. As a result of bilateral arrangement, the needs are classified and releasable only to the respective nation.



Paratroopers assigned to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, wait to exit C-17 Globemaster III bound for Estonia during exercise Swift Response 21, May 7, 2021 (U.S. Army/Alexander Burnett)

The resulting inability to integrate the infrastructure requirements into the NDPP results in miscommunication and misalignment of national intentions and goals. The TIP will ensure that infrastructure needs stay at a level granting maximum transparency and collaboration.

USEUCOM's ability to "buy down" risk is becoming increasingly limited as EDI resourcing uncertainties, competing global threats to geographical combatant commands, and policy decisions challenge service budgets. The TIP provides military risk mitigation to theater objectives by optimizing resource planning, certifying infrastructure that is built fit for purpose, and improving resiliency through development of a robust network.

Conclusion

USEUCOM's creation of the TIP, with a 15-year vision, ensures direct alignment with the NMS, operation plans, and the USEUCOM's combat commander's campaign plan's three lines of effort to compete, deter, and prepare. The TIP focuses well beyond the FYDP, allowing USEUCOM to coordinate guidance that creates efficiencies and maximizes returns on investments—allowing Service components to develop their programs in support of TIP guidance. USEUCOM's requirement to conduct integrated infrastructure planning promotes convergence with the NATO Allies and partners, which in turn allows for burden-sharing and a common understanding.

Now more than ever, the TIP is needed to "better align ends, ways, and means to maximize the probability that the nation will meet its targeted policy objectives."¹⁶ The TIP provides convergence with U.S. joint infrastructure needs and allows wise resource decisions with NATO Allies and partner nations. The NSIP's \$750 million per year allowance presents an opportunity, when approached with a proactive mindset, to enhance plan development collaboration and coordination. By funding more than \$48 billion to support the development of the Trans-European Transport Network, the EU's Connecting Europe Facility is providing an opportunity to create

operational effects and achieve the U.S. national objectives described in the NMS.

U.S. MILCON should be the option of last resort within the USEUCOM theater. The decisive effects of a TIP are measured through generating potential cost savings; developing USEUCOM staff efficiency; increasing convergence and cooperation between U.S., NATO, and EU planning; and reducing military risk. USEUCOM's determination to offer diverse infrastructure sourcing solutions for the commander—through better cooperation with the EU, NATO, and host nations—mitigates risk within operational planning and crisis response options, enabling a decisive response.

USEUCOM's history demonstrates an ebb and flow of conflict with congruent resourcing. As national strategy continues to address global threats and balance resources, USEUCOM's infrastructure planning requires support, through alternate means, to minimize the effects of refocused resourcing. The TIP's realized effects ensure a coherent plan that is dynamic and flexible to meet today's needs for tomorrow's fight. JFQ

Notes

¹ U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), "History of USEUCOM," available at <<https://www.eucom.mil/organization/history-of-useucom>>.

² *Description of the National Military Strategy* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 2018), available at <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/UNCLASS_2018_National_Military_Strategy_Description.pdf>.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ According to Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, December 1, 2020), xiii, the principles of planning are: focused on the objective; globally integrated and coordinated; resource informed; risk informed; framed within the strategic environment and operational environment; informs decisionmaking; and adaptive and flexible.

⁵ *Combatant Commander's Campaign Plan-20* (Stuttgart, Germany: USEUCOM, 2021), figure 3.

⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3110.03F (DRAFT), *Logistics Supplement for the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 2020), B-5.

⁷ Fifteen years is a conceptual goal to bridge the time gap between a 5-year Fiscal Year Defense Plan and the 20- to 30-year strategic concepts discussed in the 2018 National Defense Strategy.

⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Wales Summit Declaration," press release, September 5, 2014, available at <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm>.

⁹ Commander's Campaign Plans are a programmatic approach for the coordinated management of a required capability to achieve the strategic benefits and objectives across all aspects of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership (and education), personnel, facilities, and interoperability, as outlined in the NATO Operational Requirement Statement. Actions include the identification, rationalization, monitoring, and control of the interdependencies between projects as well as tracking the contribution of each project to the consolidated program benefits.

¹⁰ Amanda Briney, "The European Union: A History and Overview," *ThoughtCo*, April 10, 2019, available at <<https://thoughtco.com/european-union-history-and-overview-1434912>>.

¹¹ "Deepening Defence Cooperation Among EU Member States," Permanent Structured Cooperation, November 2020, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/pesco_factsheet_november_2020-v1.pdf>.

¹² "Transport Facts & Figures," European Commission, updated April 16, 2020, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/site/en/facts_and_figures.html>.

¹³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3105.01, *Joint Risk Analysis* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, October 14, 2016), C-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, C-8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, C-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, A-3.