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## EASTWARD BOUND: THE STRATEGY AND POLITICS OF REPOSITIONING U.S. MILITARY BASES IN EUROPE

*Todd W. Fields*

This article examines the strategic rationale and political implications of the U.S. Department of Defense's proposal to reposition U.S. military bases in Europe. The Pentagon's plans call for a withdrawal of U.S. bases and personnel from Germany and the creation of various smaller, more flexible bases in Central and Eastern Europe. While the removal of U.S. forces from Germany is appropriate given the absence of an imminent security threat to Europe, revamping the European basing structure in the midst of current trans-Atlantic tensions presents formidable political challenges. Given the impact that base realignment is likely to have on U.S. relations with Germany, Russia, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United States must exercise a deft diplomatic touch—balancing the pursuit of its strategic interests with the preservation of its regional relationships and alliances.<sup>1</sup>

The United States is presently in the midst of the most comprehensive shift in its global military presence in the last fifty years. Driven by a desire to develop an integrated global presence that meets the security challenges of the twenty-first century, the U.S. military is revamping its forward basing strategies in key regions throughout the world. Since September 11, 2001, new American military installations have emerged along the “arc

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*Todd W. Fields is a Master of Arts candidate at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University (tfields@sais-jhu.edu).*

of instability,” stretching from Northern Africa to Southeast Asia, in countries including Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Djibouti, and Iraq. Pentagon officials are also hinting at the possibility of establishing future military facilities in Australia, the Philippines, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Ghana, and Mali (Jaffe 2003a).

Around the globe, American military power is also on the move. The 10,000 military personnel stationed in Saudi Arabia at the height of the recent war in Iraq have been redeployed to Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar. In late spring 2003, the Pentagon withdrew 2,500 of the 3,000 troops stationed at Incirlik Air Force Base in Turkey. Additionally, the Pentagon is currently crafting plans to pull U.S. troops out of the demilitarized zone that separates North and South Korea and to move the bulk of its operations on the Korean peninsula southward, out of the present range of North Korean weaponry (Demick 2003).

In Europe, a significant initiative to move U.S. bases in Western Europe to new NATO member countries in Central and Eastern Europe is in its beginning stages. Still a remnant of defunct Cold War strategic realities, the U.S. military’s basing structure in Europe is due for an overhaul. Alterations are particularly warranted in Germany, where over 80,000 U.S. military personnel are stationed, despite the fact that Germany and Western Europe face no imminent security threat.

The initiative to reposition U.S. bases in Europe comes, however, at an especially uncertain time for the trans-Atlantic alliance, one that some have characterized as the nadir of post-World War II U.S.-European relations. Although the U.S.-European relationship has never been as tranquil as some Atlanticists have romanticized it to be, trans-Atlantic relations have recently been repeatedly strained. Tensions have emerged in the last several years over issues such as the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the International Criminal Court, and the preemptive war in Iraq. This last disagreement exposed a vast rift between U.S. and European perceptions regarding the international security threat posed by transnational terrorism and the appropriate use of force in international relations.

Altering the U.S. military presence in Europe has the potential to exacerbate an already tense trans-Atlantic relationship. While the Pentagon views the geostrategic imperative of retooling the U.S. overseas basing presence as outweighing this potential hazard, the political considerations inherent in the proposed restructuring of the European basing structure must be carefully factored into the plans for any realignment. With U.S. troops slated to begin moving as early as this summer, now is the time to

carefully examine the implications of base realignment for U.S.-German relations, U.S.-Russian relations, and the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO).

## **THE STRATEGIC RATIONALE FOR EUROPEAN BASE REALIGNMENT**

The present global realignment of U.S. forces is being driven by the Pentagon's growing belief that the current overseas basing structure is inadequate to address the requirements of the twenty-first century security environment. The main security threat in this environment is not a major strategic competitor such as the Soviet Union, but a variety of asymmetric threats: transnational terrorism; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD); failed and failing states; and rogue states. In particular, the potential confluence of these asymmetric threats—rogue nuclear states cooperating with transnational terrorist groups to attack the United States—presents the gravest of national security threats (Bush 2002). Citing September 11 as a precedent, the Bush administration does not believe that all of these threats can be deterred and seeks the capacity to preemptively eliminate them before they materialize.<sup>2</sup> Commenting on the Pentagon's threat assessment, Andy Hoehn, deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy, stressed that the “unprecedented destructive power of terrorists—and the recognition that you will have to deal with them before they deal with you—means we will have to be out acting in the world in places that are very unfamiliar to us. We will have to make them familiar” (Jaffe 2003a). To achieve this familiarity, the American security perimeter is being expanded to encompass nearly the entire planet.

In order to patrol this global perimeter to address, and potentially preempt, emerging asymmetric threats, the U.S. military is evolving into a “global cavalry of the twenty-first century,” possessing a “worldwide network of frontier forts” to rapidly project decisive power into any region in the world (Donnelly and Serchuk 2003). At present, the U.S. global force structure is ill-equipped to meet these ambitious demands, with 80 percent of U.S. soldiers in Europe stationed in Germany and 75 percent of U.S. troops in the Pacific congregated in Japan and South Korea. To achieve a broader geopresence, the U.S. military is pursuing a holistic transformation of its global posture by enhancing its force capabilities, regional alliances, and basing structures. This in-depth transformation aims to create a lighter, faster, and more flexible set of force options for the Pentagon to rapidly and simultaneously address a variety of geographically diverse asymmetric threats.<sup>3</sup>

A revamped forward basing strategy, emphasizing long-term military access to countries over long-term military presence within countries, is at the heart of the Pentagon's transformation efforts. The movement to realign U.S. bases in Europe reflects this strategic priority and would bring to fruition a policy that has been considered by the Pentagon in various forms since the end of the Cold War. The timeline to implement these changes was accelerated in the spring of 2003 by the following events related to the war in Iraq:

1. The unified German, French, and Belgian opposition to the U.S.-led war effort.
2. The denial of access to Austrian rail lines to transport U.S. troops and equipment en route to Iraq, slowing the overall theater deployment.
3. The Swiss and Austrian denial of overflight permission—complicating U.S. flights from airbases in Germany and Britain to the Middle East and Italy.
4. The intentional delays of the Italian government in permitting the Army's 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, based at Aviano Air Base, to deploy to the Iraqi theater.
5. The Turkish government's refusal to grant the United States permission to use Turkish territory as a staging ground to open a northern front against Iraq.

All of these developments brought into sharp relief the political and logistical limitations of deploying U.S. forces to the Middle East from bases in Germany and Italy. Furthermore, they raised questions in the Pentagon about the reliability of U.S. allies in Europe and the degree of flexibility the U.S. military possesses to quickly access and deploy its military assets based in the European theater.<sup>4</sup> Given the importance of speed of deployment in the current security environment, the operational successes of temporary U.S. bases established in Bulgaria and Romania in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the possibility of additional U.S. preemptive military actions, and the widespread European aversion to preemptive operations, the Pentagon has expedited its rebasing efforts to ensure that its military assets in Europe can be fully and rapidly utilized in future operations.

In April 2003, General James Jones, commander of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), began unveiling his vision for a retooled and transformed U.S. military presence in Europe. Currently, the United States retains approximately 109,000 troops in Europe, more than 80,000 of which are stationed in Germany at over forty U.S. military installations. The Pentagon's plans focus on moving bases and troops out of Germany and establishing bases in the former Warsaw Pact countries of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. These new forward operating bases and locations will not replicate the massive permanent garrisons of their German predecessors, but will have much smaller logistical footprints, modeling the more Spartan infrastructure of recently built U.S. bases like Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo. They will operate as flexible, power projection platforms, where pre-positioned equipment can be housed and where brigade-strength units can be stationed and trained, rotating through on three-to-six-month expeditionary tours (Jones 2003).

Advocates for this new European basing proposal argue that base transformation in Europe will provide numerous benefits:

**Assured access to assets:** Proliferating the number of deployment platforms assures the United States access to military assets and critical regions in times of crisis, reducing U.S. dependence on any one facility or ally.

**Decreased basing costs:** Central and Eastern European forward operating bases will have much lower overhead costs than the massive garrison structures in Germany, where basing costs have become very high.

**Enhanced training capabilities:** Force readiness will be improved in Central and Eastern Europe, where U.S. forces can obtain more favorable Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA), enabling them to train in ways currently restricted in Germany.

**Proximity to pivotal regions:** An Eastern European basing presence provides greater access to the Black Sea and places U.S. forces in closer proximity to likely hotspots (the Balkans, the Caspian Region, the Middle East), thereby enabling more rapid force deployment.<sup>5</sup>

**Pre-positioned equipment:** The new bases will store significant pre-positioned equipment that will strengthen the strategic mobility of U.S. armed forces, augmenting sealift and airlift capabilities—the other two key legs of the interdependent strategic mobility triad.

While the ultimate scope and magnitude of the proposed basing changes are still unknown, senior military officials have said that the U.S. Army's 17,000-troop 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division will not return to Germany when it completes its present mission in Iraq (Schrader 2003). In total, anywhere from 15,000 to more than 40,000 troops of the roughly 60,000 U.S. Army personnel stationed in Germany are estimated to be moved—one of the biggest force redeployments since the second world war (Dempsey 2004). But it is evident that the military will retain considerable infrastructure in Germany. The military plans to keep EUCOM's headquarters in Stuttgart and retain Ramstein Air Force Base, which serves as the headquarters for the U.S. Air Force in Europe. According to General Jones, the complete vision for transforming the U.S. European basing strategy was to be completed by March 2004, with troops potentially moving east by late summer 2004 (Jones 2003).<sup>6</sup>

The Pentagon's plans constitute a bold, if overdue, reformulation of U.S. basing in Europe, reflecting post-Cold War realities and contemporary changes in U.S. global basing strategy. But there remain many unanswered questions regarding the political complications of realigning U.S. forces in Europe.

## **THE POLITICS OF EUROPEAN BASE REALIGNMENT**

The Pentagon's advancement of its rebasing plans in the wake of the trans-Atlantic spat over the war in Iraq has been interpreted by many as a punitive measure against Germany. This is not a baseless interpretation given that several members of the U.S. Congress advocated the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops in order to punish Germany for its opposition to the war. Additionally, a Bush administration official glibly commented that if the Germans take rebasing plans "as a slight, they're paying attention" (Curl 2003). These statements have prompted an outcry among some American policy makers and strategists, who have reaffirmed the value of having "boots-on-the-ground" in Europe. They further warn that a complete military withdrawal from Germany would turn the present political dustup between the United States and Germany into a permanent schism and would have deleterious effects on American standing in NATO. However, a total withdrawal of troops and bases has never been seriously proposed by the Pentagon. Instead, it may have been mentioned by U.S. officials as a threat to impress upon the Germans the political, economic, and strategic consequences of a complete U.S. military withdrawal.

## **U.S.-German Relations**

The rebuilding and peaceful reunification of Germany is one of the great American foreign policy achievements of the twentieth century. The result of these efforts is a strong Germany in the heart of Europe that serves as an economic engine for European Union prosperity. The history of U.S.-German cooperation and achievement has built close ties between the two countries. This bond has been reinforced by the extensive American military presence in Germany since the end of World War II—a source of European security and bilateral cooperation for nearly sixty years.

Yet the military relationship has been changing since the end of the Cold War, fueled by the continuous drawdown of U.S. forces in Germany as a result of the changing geostrategic landscape of Europe. The U.S. military presence in Europe has decreased by nearly 70 percent since the fall of the Berlin Wall and is again on the verge of decline (Jones 2003).<sup>7</sup> The withdrawal of U.S. forces from Germany, therefore, is not a new phenomenon. But the current proposal to remove troops is being interpreted by many in Germany as an action driven not by strategy, but by politics.

Publicly, high-level U.S. officials have consistently dismissed the accusation that the new basing proposals are politically driven. General Jones and other administration officials insist that the repositioning of U.S. bases is dictated solely by military and technical considerations, not the transient nature of current events. “One of the things I have tried to factor out is politics,” Jones said (Whitmore 2003). But numerous lower-level military officials have commented that the rebasing proposals are motivated by Pentagon anger at German actions preceding the Iraq war. According to one anonymous Pentagon source, the plans are intended to “strike a blow to the German trade and commerce.” The source added: “We intend not only to move our army and logistics but also dissolve all agreements and cancel all contracts concerning the defence issues” (Beaumont, Rose, and Beaver 2003). Such sentiment might resonate within a White House that felt betrayed by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, whose anti-American election campaign and anti-war position created a personal rift between him and President Bush (Maddox 2004).

Despite such mixed messages, those who believe that U.S. rebasing proposals are inspired by a wish to punish Germany overlook the fact that considerable U.S. military infrastructure will remain in Germany, including Ramstein Air Base and most likely several smaller, but sizable, facilities. These critics also ignore the greater global realignment of U.S. forces that is presently underway, a process with considerable implications in various regions, not just Europe. Moreover, the Pentagon is justified in reconsider-

ing its force presence in Germany at a time when 49 percent of Germans favor further reductions in the presence (Boston 2003).<sup>8</sup> The United States would understandably prefer to base its overseas forces in countries which share its geopolitical perspective and welcome its military presence.

In the final analysis, the movement of U.S. bases out of Germany is driven by both strategy and politics. The two considerations are, in fact, inseparable and cannot be assessed in isolation. Plans to move U.S. bases out of Germany to adjust to a new geostrategic reality have long existed in the Pentagon, but recent political tensions between the United States and Germany accelerated the implementation of those plans. Moreover, the war in Iraq presented the Pentagon with an opportunity to begin moving its forces out of Germany in a politically expedient fashion. Although the end result is the same, it is easier not to redeploy U.S. forces in Iraq back to their German posts after the completion of their tours than to withdraw those same forces directly from Germany. Removing forces in this manner provides a lower profile for the decision to withdraw and begins the force removal process prior to the inevitable diplomatic strain that will arise from the alteration of the U.S. military presence.

It is perhaps inescapable that the United States will focus on the strategic drivers of base realignment, while the Germans view the decision primarily in political terms. The U.S. military views the proposed basing alterations in Europe as a part of the broader global shift in U.S. military presence and consequently stresses the strategic motivations of rebasing plans. Germany, on the other hand, already disillusioned with American unilateralism and facing concentrated regional pockets of economic stagnation from the departure of bases, is more inclined to attribute the advancement of European rebasing proposals to the political machinations of a disgruntled Pentagon.

Both Washington and Berlin, however, have strong incentives to approach the removal of U.S. bases with pragmatism. From Berlin's perspective, there is little it can do to prevent the departure of U.S. forces, other than perhaps offering to increase its share of the financial burden of basing U.S. forces in Germany—a proposal that would probably be politically untenable in Germany given domestic pressures to reduce defense expenditures.<sup>9</sup> If Berlin obstructed the rebasing process or became hostile to the remaining U.S. presence, those bases would also be withdrawn, further damaging Germany economically. Such actions are improbable, moreover, as the German government has already taken several steps since the end of the war in Iraq toward rapprochement with Washington. For instance, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer emphasized in July 2003 that the “Europe of the future can be strong only together with the United



States, not as its rival” (Vincour 2003). U.S.-German relations remain tense, however, as demonstrated by the curt exchanges between Fischer and U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld during the Munich Conference on Security in February (Boyes 2004).<sup>10</sup>

From Washington’s perspective, it is important to maintain a healthy U.S.-German relationship in order to create a suitable host environment for the tens of thousands of U.S. military personnel that will remain at Ramstein—the Pentagon’s most vital logistical hub in EUCOM. Additionally, Germany is a pillar of NATO and its cooperation will be vital to molding the evolution of an effective, functioning alliance. Therefore, American policy makers would be wise to execute the removal of U.S. bases from Germany in a fashion that recognizes these U.S. interests, keeping the Germans informed of developing plans and giving them maximum lead time to prepare for base closures. Moreover, a concentrated effort should be made, whether through diplomacy or through the passage of time, to de-link the movement of U.S. bases from the notion that such actions are intended to punish Germany. A U.S. diplomatic failure to, at least, partially disassociate these notions is likely to solidify the anti-American sentiment currently brewing in Germany.

Finally, the removal of U.S. forces will presumably prompt the Germans to reassess their defense posture. Although many in Europe believe it is not in the world’s interest for Germany to engage in such a reassessment, the prospect has caused little concern in the United States. Contemporary Germany is perceived in the United States as a primarily pacifist nation, in part because it opposed the Iraq war and has spent, on average over the last several years, an anemic 1.5 percent of its GDP on defense—a sum that does not signal the impending revival of German militarism. In fact, in January 2004 German Defense Minister Peter Struck announced plans to cut the defense budget further by closing 100 German military installations and reducing the German army by 32,000 troops (Smith 2004). Moreover, German strategic airlift capability is so paltry that the 1,200 German troops sent to Afghanistan in 2001 had to travel via rail. Yet some in Europe still ponder whether the “German problem” has been solved, noting that Europeans suffered greatly from the German imperial adventures of the twentieth century. While such concerns are understandable, they overlook the fact that not all U.S. forces will be departing from Germany and unrealistically imply that U.S. forces can never leave Germany lest the Prussian martial tradition of the past reemerge.

## **U.S.-Russian Relations**

The initiative to relocate U.S. bases to former Warsaw Pact enemies in Central and Eastern Europe is but the latest expansion in the recent proliferation of U.S. bases surrounding Russia, a country historically obsessed with the security of its borders. In the fall of 2001, Washington established numerous U.S. military bases in Central Asia to support Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Although major hostilities have ceased in Afghanistan, U.S. bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan remain there and are being expanded, rather than contracted (Jaffe 2003a). These developments, combined with the long-standing U.S. military presence in Japan and South Korea, the deployment of U.S. military advisers to Georgia to conduct anti-terrorism and border control training, and now the proposed eastward movement of U.S. European bases, have understandably caused concerns in Moscow that Russia is being encircled by U.S. military power (Slevin 2004).

The Russian government, in response to U.S. proposals to position bases in the new NATO members, has questioned whether such installations violate the Russia-NATO Pact and the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). The Russia-NATO Pact forbids the development of new bases in the territories of newly absorbed NATO members. However, the Pact has no stipulations concerning the possibility of improving and expanding the existing military bases and infrastructure of new members, which is what the Pentagon is proposing to do. Additionally, the Pact limits the stationing of large military forces in new member countries, but Washington intends only to reposition equipment and rotate brigade-strength units (3,000 to 5,000 troops) through the bases. The planned basing of light forces, rather than heavy armor, also strengthens the Pentagon's argument that it is operating within the bounds of the CFE, which imposes limitations only on the amount of heavy military hardware and armor a state may possess. Therefore, Washington has strong grounds to argue that its rebasing proposals are within the bounds of the established treaty framework (Litovkin and Kornelyuk 2003).

Notwithstanding the legality of the proposal, three factors have moderated the impact of positioning U.S. bases in Central and Eastern Europe on U.S.-Russian relations. First, the shared interests between the United States and Russia in their common fight against terrorism have partially reduced the alarm over the proliferation of U.S. bases surrounding Russia. For instance, Moscow supports the U.S. presence in Georgia because it wants Georgia to improve its border security to limit the movement of Chechen militants. Furthermore, some Russian policy makers, appre-

hensive about the intentions of China in the east and rising instability wrought by radical Islam in the south, welcome the expansion of NATO because they view it as enhancing security along Russia's western border. Second, the limited size of the proposed forward operating bases and the absence of an American strategic rationale to invade Russia serve to allay Russian fears. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Russians can do little—politically, economically, or militarily—to prevent such base realignments.<sup>11</sup> While Washington should not flaunt this reality and unnecessarily stoke resentment in Russia, it has some freedom to operate within the broad latitude afforded it by the present power discrepancy between it and Moscow. Consequently, the Russian reaction to the stationing of U.S. forces in Central and Eastern Europe—like the Russian response to the war in Iraq, the establishment of U.S. bases in Central Asia, the termination of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and the invitation of the Baltic States into NATO—will be reluctant, tacit assent.

### **U.S.-NATO Relations**

Despite NATO's constantly vexing identity crisis since the end of the Cold War, it remains the most important alliance of the United States. It provides a critical forum to discuss trans-Atlantic and global issues and is "the one organization capable of reconciling American hegemony with European autonomy and influence" (Kagan 2004). Additionally, NATO is a key force provider in the maintenance of the liberal international order, as evidenced by NATO's recent watershed decision to embark on its first mission outside of Europe—taking command of the 5,000-troop International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> The war in Iraq severely strained the Alliance, however, exposing the political differences among NATO's key members: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, it revealed a split between established European powers and smaller European nations, as many of the latter broke ranks with the former and supported the war effort. Amidst this political disagreement, the U.S. proposal to move permanent garrisons out of Germany, the historic strategic center of gravity for the Alliance, to the territory of new NATO members has raised fears that the moves will further splinter the Alliance.

Undoubtedly, the United States has a vital interest in embracing the new NATO members. As NATO expands, it is appropriate for the United States and Western Europe to support the progressive political and economic policies of these countries. For the United States, one way to offer this support is through the recognition, security, and funds bestowed by the establishment of a forward basing presence.

Yet in providing such support, the United States risks that the movement of troops out of Germany will be perceived as a zero-sum game intended to punish Germany and to reward Central and Eastern European countries for their positions during the Iraq war. Such perceptions could induce German opposition to U.S. interests in NATO and aggravate tensions between “Old” and “New” Europe. U.S. efforts to establish forward operating bases in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania might also be perceived not as a mechanism to strengthen the integration of these nations into NATO, but as an attempt by Washington to disaggregate Europe, carving out a separate relationship with politically like-minded countries in order to counter the political influence of Germany and France. If Old Europe believes that Washington is attempting to divide and rule Europe in this fashion, the unity of NATO could be seriously damaged.

The United States must seek to maintain and improve relations with both traditional European powers and smaller European states. While Central and Eastern European states have little interest in aligning with a Europe intent on becoming a geopolitical counterweight to the United States, neither do they have an interest in siding with the United States in the establishment of an informal coalition against Europe’s leading powers. After all, their future economic prosperity is directly tied to their entry and integration into the European Union—a process heavily influenced by Europe’s dominant powers. Therefore, an American attempt to build relations with these smaller states at the expense of Old Europe places the states in an untenable position. Conversely, if the United States attempted to bind new NATO member states more closely to NATO without actively seeking to improve relations with the major European powers, to what kind of NATO would the United States be seeking to bind them? A NATO in which the Germans were pursuing their own independent agenda would be of little utility to the United States (Kagan 2003).

The voice that NATO provides the United States in European affairs, as well as NATO’s potential role as an ally and force provider in combating globalized instability, make the Alliance far too valuable for the United States to permit its rebasing initiative to threaten NATO’s viability. The future development of NATO ultimately depends on how the Alliance navigates a host of issues, including the basic disagreements within NATO over the role of force in the international system, the adoption of additional out-of-area mandates, and the increasingly vast military capabilities gap between the United States and Europe. The United States cannot allow misunderstandings over the repositioning of U.S. bases to exacerbate tensions within NATO, further crippling its ability to navigate these

larger, pivotal issues. To ensure that this does not occur the United States should formally and proactively consult with its NATO allies concerning its planned shift of U.S. forces. Such a gesture, although unnecessary since the U.S. presence in Central and Eastern Europe will be governed by bilateral agreements, would demonstrate respect for NATO allies and reassure them that the movement of U.S. forces does not represent a U.S. withdrawal from European security affairs, but rather an enhancement of global and continental security, which is in the interest of both the United States and Europe.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: SUBSTANCE AND EXECUTION**

The Pentagon's proposal to alter the European basing structure has a compelling military logic. The strategic substance of this logic, however, does not lessen the political challenges that the United States faces in properly executing the repositioning of U.S. bases in Europe. Navigating these challenges will require diplomatic acumen that has of late been largely absent on both sides of the Atlantic. To conduct the realignment of U.S. forces in Europe in a fashion consistent with greater U.S. interests, the United States should cease the rhetoric of punishment in its dealings with European allies, seek to gradually implement the proposed changes, and maintain a consultative and ongoing dialogue with allies and other affected parties.

*Eliminate the Rhetoric of Punishment:* Given the long-standing U.S. military relationship with Germany, it is understandable that German opposition to the Iraq war initially angered the Pentagon and the Bush administration. Such irritation produced various statements threatening punitive measures against Germany for its anti-war position. Yet anger and retribution are seldom the source of prudent policy. Such rhetoric has rightly subsided over time as the United States has sought additional military and financial support from Germany and NATO in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The rhetoric of punishment was reinvigorated in December 2003, however, by the Pentagon's memo explicitly stating that anti-war nations (Germany, France, Russia, and Canada) would be excluded from bidding as prime contractors on the \$18.7 billion effort to rebuild Iraq. It was not surprising that these nations were excluded from such opportunities, and the decision was appropriate, since the greatest financial benefits of reconstruction should go to those nations that undertook the risk of participating in the war. But the Pentagon's insistence on publicly stating

the exclusion of these nations indicated a desire within the Department of Defense to openly scold these countries. This rhetoric of retribution is not only ineffective—as these nations are already permitted to work as subcontractors in Iraq—but is also out-of-step with the greater diplomatic effort to encourage Germany and others to increase their contributions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This public rhetoric, furthermore, will likely perpetuate the perception that the proposed removal of U.S. bases in Germany is driven by a desire to punish Germany. Additionally, it fosters anti-Americanism within Germany, worsening the climate in which the remaining U.S. forces in Germany will have to operate. For all of these reasons, the language of punishment should be abandoned.

*Implement Changes Gradually:* While the Pentagon's enthusiasm for decisive transformation in Europe is welcome given the military's normal resistance to change, it is important that the military planning not outpace the careful study and coordinated diplomatic measures needed to effectively implement such sweeping basing changes. For the Pentagon, fundamental questions remain unanswered regarding the supposed operational efficiencies and economic benefits of adopting the new basing scheme. Moreover, the ability of the U.S. Army in Europe to transform itself from a permanent garrison force into a rotational, expeditionary force is far from assured. Properly examining these uncertainties and challenges will require the Pentagon to undertake a herculean planning effort, as well as numerous, time-consuming cost-benefit and feasibility studies to determine the true costs and actual operational advantages of repositioning U.S. forces.<sup>13</sup> While recent Pentagon planning failures to adequately prepare for the post-conflict environment in Iraq do not inspire confidence in the military's ability to foresee and avoid the potential pitfalls of its rebasing plans, such challenges are manageable given a sufficient amount of time and preparation.

Gradually implementing these basing changes over a period of years will also help soften the economic impact of the U.S. military withdrawal from Germany. The U.S. military presence in Germany currently employs 15,000 Germans, while indirectly supporting tens of thousands of German civilian jobs through base operations expenditures, military-industrial contracts, and the local spending of U.S. military personnel and their families (Beaumont, Rose, and Beaver 2003).<sup>14</sup> Various regions in Germany are dependent upon this annual infusion of billions of U.S. dollars and will undoubtedly suffer economic impoverishment from the departure of U.S. forces (Landler 2003).<sup>15</sup> "Much is at stake," a German diplomat recently

noted. "Entire villages have built their future around the bases, particularly in Germany. You just can't destroy those 60-year-old relationships" (Dempsey 2004). U.S. policy makers should acknowledge the economic hardships that the departure of U.S. forces will produce and provide the affected communities with as much notice as possible of planned closures, allowing them to begin adjusting to a new economic reality.

***Consult Allies and Affected Parties:*** Any substantial modification of U.S. overseas forces generates significant attention globally and produces uncertainty and anxiety about Washington's motivations. The very public flap last summer over the sudden U.S. announcement to remove American military forces from Iceland amply demonstrated not only the unease such changes produce, but also the hazards of failing to properly consult allies.<sup>16</sup> In implementing its rebasing plans in continental Europe, where the stakes are a great deal higher, Washington must therefore strive to maintain an ongoing, consultative dialogue with Germany, Russia, and NATO to address these uncertainties. During these dialogues, the United States must persuasively present the strategic rationale for its basing realignment, heading off perceptions that the U.S. basing plans are primarily driven by a desire to punish Germany, exploit divisions between Old and New Europe, or militarily encircle Russia. By consulting with Moscow, Berlin, and other NATO capitals about the basing changes, the United States would demonstrate a respect for their legitimate concerns while crafting the appropriate expectations for all involved parties as the rebasing process evolves.<sup>17</sup>

Admittedly, diplomacy has limitations in reducing the tensions that will result from the difficult process of realigning U.S. military bases in Europe. No amount of U.S. diplomacy can completely mollify German or Russian suspicions of the Pentagon's intentions or significantly mitigate the economic hardship resulting from the departure of U.S. forces. U.S. policy makers must nevertheless strive to deftly execute the realignment of bases, undertaking diplomatic efforts that, although they may be unnecessary to implement rebasing plans, would serve to clarify U.S. intentions and facilitate healthy U.S.-German and U.S.-Russian relations and the maintenance of a strong NATO. The common understandings that such efforts would produce will enable the United States to preserve its key relationships as it pursues its strategic interests. Such relationships are vital in a world that the United States, despite its overwhelming preponderance of military strength, cannot govern alone.

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## NOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> Speaking in May, Vice President Cheney discussed the war against terrorism, commenting that there is “no policy of containment or deterrence that works to deal with this threat. We have to go find the terrorists.... The only way to ensure stability...is to eliminate [them] before they can launch any more attacks. See *CNN Transcript*, “Vice President Cheney Speaks at Luncheon,” May 13, 2003.
- <sup>3</sup> The trend toward fighting dispersed asymmetric engagements is observable in this year’s Army war fighting simulation. Traditionally, the simulation has focused on fighting a major war. This year, however, the Army managed military actions in the Caucasus, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, while monitoring possible flashpoints in Latin America and Africa.
- <sup>4</sup> Presently, 84 percent of the bases within the European Command are located in three countries (Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom), potentially limiting the Pentagon’s flexibility to deploy in conflicts that are politically divisive in Europe (Jones 2003).
- <sup>5</sup> Andrew Bacevich notes that the purpose of these forward operating bases will not be to defend a geographical area, but to intervene “as an instrument of political change” (Schlesinger 2003). Given this focus on intervention, the correct metric is not the geographical proximity of U.S. forces to likely areas of deployment, but the speed of deployment to those hotspots. With the poor state of transportation infrastructure in Eastern Europe, it is unclear whether building U.S. bases there would generate significant reductions in deployment time to likely areas of conflict such as the Middle East or Caspian regions.
- <sup>6</sup> In preparation for moving eastward, the Pentagon requested \$6.5 million in its 2004 military construction budget to survey, design, and plan potential forward operating bases in Central and Eastern Europe—work that commenced in February 2004 (Whitmore 2004).
- <sup>7</sup> In Europe, the U.S. military has closed 566 installations over the past decade, along with over 356 other sites and training areas, and reduced its troop presence from 248,000 in 1989 to 109,000 in 2002 (Jones 2003).
- <sup>8</sup> In a recent *Time Europe* poll, 49 percent of Germans favored further reductions of the U.S. military presence in Germany, 25 percent said they would regret the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and 18 percent said they had no preference (Boston 2003).



- <sup>9</sup> The German government currently pays for 21 percent of the total costs of basing U.S. forces in Germany, roughly \$1.2 billion annually (Changing U.S. Military Basing In Europe 2003).
- <sup>10</sup> During the Munich Conference on Security, Germany agreed not to block U.S. efforts to heighten NATO involvement in Iraq, although it continues to refuse considering sending troops itself. Nevertheless, Foreign Minister Fischer stated publicly to Secretary Rumsfeld that “the risk of failure and possible consequences to the NATO alliance in Iraq absolutely must be taken into consideration. Honesty demands of me that I cannot conceal my deep scepticism on this account” (Maddox 2004).
- <sup>11</sup> Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov recently warned that if NATO set up new bases in Poland and the Baltic states, Moscow might respond by establishing a Russian military base in the Kaliningrad enclave between the two countries. Russia has also issued threats to leave the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty as retribution for NATO moves eastward. It is difficult to determine whether these threats are simply attempts by Russia to appear strong or whether they actually represent serious policy options. Such moves, however, hardly seem in Russia’s overall interest (Maddox 2004).
- <sup>12</sup> The United States is presently attempting to expand NATO’s out-of-area orientation, presenting the Alliance in February 2004 with ambitious plans to broaden NATO involvement in the Middle East as a part of a much larger effort to draw in European allies to help reshape the region (Shishkin 2004).
- <sup>13</sup> Moving from a permanent rotational force structure to an expeditionary paradigm is a radical shift for the U.S. Army in Europe, demanding drastic changes in its operational doctrine and tempo, logistical support structures, training standards, equipment provisioning, maintenance standards, and organizational culture. The implications of such changes on combat readiness, troop morale, recruitment, and retention need to be fully explored before realignment. For example, current plans call for the new expeditionary units to deploy on three-to-six-month hardship tours, without their dependents. Given the strain this will place on the families of these troops, it will likely have a negative effect on rates of troop retention and recruitment, possibly causing a manpower shortage in the Army. Such a development would increase the costs of recruitment and training, partially negating the financial advantages of moving to logistically smaller basing platforms in Eastern Europe.
- <sup>14</sup> German industrial interests are deeply involved in sustaining the local U.S. presence. If the U.S. bases are moved, “the defense companies which stand to lose out are missile-maker Diehl, aerospace and defence giant EADS Deutschland, armaments maker Rheinmetall and vehicle maker Krauss-Maffei Wegmann” (Beaumont, Rose, and Beaver 2003).

- <sup>15</sup> In November 2003, a delegation from Mainz, the capital of the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate, visited the Pentagon in an attempt to persuade the Pentagon not to withdraw U.S. forces from the region. Nearly 63,000 U.S. soldiers and dependents currently live in the region, infusing the regional economy with \$1.4 billion a year and creating 27,000 civilian jobs (Landler 2003).
- <sup>16</sup> Washington's abrupt decision during the summer of 2003 to withdraw its remaining F-15 and F-16 fighters, rescue helicopters, and refueling planes without consultation upset Iceland's pro-American prime minister, David Oddsson. He responded by insisting on a total withdrawal of the U.S. military. Wishing to avoid a major blow-up and retain some military presence in Iceland, Washington revised its withdrawal plans. A senior administration official stated: "This is going to be a transparent process where we consult with the Icelandics at all stages" (Graham 2003).
- <sup>17</sup> There are encouraging signs that such dialogues are taking place. U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith met with NATO allies in December 2003 to discuss proposed basing shifts within Alliance territory (Dempsey 2003).

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