

Written Testimony

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COMMISSION ON REVIEW OF OVERSEAS MILITARY
FACILITY STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED STATES

November 9, 2004

Senate Dirksen Building, Room 138

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It is my pleasure to address this commission, which is contributing an important helping hand in the effort to transform the military for the challenges of tomorrow. I come at the issue of foreign bases from having looked at the nexus of U.S. national security strategy, military strategy, and force structure over the years, most recently in several monographs – *A Swift, Elusive Sword*; *Reforging the Sword*; and *Honing the Sword*. Any examination of foreign bases should be part of a broader look at national security strategy and forces, as well as part of a look at the domestic base structure.

In your extensive travels and information gathering, you are no doubt assembling a mass of facts and details about U.S. base and force structure. So I would like to take a step back and offer a broader conceptual framework that hopefully can be a lens through which to look at your “overdose” of data. I will focus on just a couple of issues at the level of strategy or even grand strategy. In particular, cost is *not* a particular focus with such a perspective, in part because, happily, costs are probably not hugely different between basing abroad and at home.

Two Strategic Concepts

The wisdom of military strategists old and new, such as the ancient Chinese general and strategist Sun Tzu, and the more recent American fighter pilot and thinker Col. John Boyd, offer some useful perspectives. Although their theories might seem rather divorced from today’s practical matters such as where to put our bases, their relevance is made clear by the fact that our enemies are using their approaches every day – in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, now in Iraq, and likely increasingly so in the future.

To put these strategists approaches in a nutshell, which is to do a disservice to them, their approach is to out-think and outmaneuver an enemy so quickly and disorientingly that the opponent is subject to chaos, and becomes paralyzed. The ultimate ideal, rarely achievable of course, is to “win without fighting.” One key concept which sums up a lot of the Sun Tzu and Boyd approach is “agility,” which has implications for basing choices. This is in contrast to the approach of a competing military philosopher who is currently popular in the U.S. military, Carl von Clausewitz, who focused on marshaling one’s forces to take on the enemy in a climactic, bloody, and decisive battle.

Another fundamental element of these strategists’ approaches is to win allies to one’s own side, and subtract allies from the other side. Certainly this issue has come to the forefront because of Iraq, with the contrasting styles of the recent presidential candidates. Although it is hard for a superpower to acknowledge it, both militarily and politically, allies might have made a world of difference in Iraq. Militarily, NATO has one-and-a-half *million* troops in its ground forces alone, not including reserve troops. And politically, imagine how 20,000 foreign Muslim troops participating in Iraq at the beginning might have changed the initial stabilization period. So this is an important element of winning conflicts.

General Implications

Such approaches favor certain force structures, though the implications should not be taken as

absolutes or mean that other forces and capabilities can be dispensed with.

Agility is broadly favored by having forces that are fast, small, dispersed, and decentralized. (One immediate obvious caveat is that peacekeeping can require large, though not necessarily heavy, forces.) Such agile forces are favored by a base structure that is flexible, adaptable, expandable, and does not sacrifice many smaller nodes for the sake of a few huge ones. These elements generally give forces more options and capability to respond to the unplanned. As large, fixed sites, bases with a lot of permanently-stationed troops are somewhat “defensive” conceptually, since they are fixed targets that need to be defended – which is increasingly relevant in this era of unconventional attacks. Again, these are mindsets, not iron laws, but they are focused on the warfare of the future.

The fight to win allies also has a strong relevance for bases: foreign base structure must make sure that the base presence does not excessively irritate relations with the United States. This has both a local dimension arising out of the social, environmental, and other intrusive frictions of living next to large numbers of foreign military personnel, and also a global dimension. The local frictions were quite a problem in the decades of authoritarian South Korean rule, in the Philippines where the U.S. forces formally lost its bases, and today in Okinawa.

The global dimension is that the war in Iraq has greatly exacerbated foreign fears of U.S. subtle or not-so-subtle imperialism, whether justified or not. The presence of large numbers of U.S. forces around the world is one factor that validates those fears in the eyes of many people abroad.

Obviously, U.S. military presence in the Middle East, particularly its former presence in Saudi Arabia, has had severe political ramifications in the Muslim world, including providing one of the causes exploited by al-Qaida to gather support.

In theory, damage to relations can also come from pulling troops *out*. But it should be possible to handle this largely through an appropriate consultative, unhurried process with host nations. The deepest concern of allies undergoing U.S. troop withdrawals is probably whether the United States is abandoning them completely. If the policy is in fact not to weaken joint security commitments, the withdrawals become a less crucial matter of economic benefits and of secondary military issues like ability to do joint training.

Specific Applications

How do these broad strategic approaches apply to specific situations?

- They certainly support pulling out heavy brigades from Europe. If they are unlikely to be used in Europe, overall agility is increased by keeping them centrally located in the United States, especially if equipment is kept prepositioned in Europe. Nor are relations with allies going to be irreparably strained by such moves: the relationship is determined more by far larger concerns, for example the deep differences over the conduct of preventive wars like Iraq.
- In contrast, agility would support keeping the extensive transportation and logistics hubs in Europe, particularly Germany, and various other headquarters to preserve working

relationships and to train for combined operations.

- In the Pacific, distances and transportation issues are much greater, but there is a greater political problem attributable to the U.S. forces' presence than in Europe. Without necessarily reducing total presence, efforts should be continued to spread the burden and explore using new host countries.
- Ground forces in Korea should certainly be increasingly prepared for operations outside of the peninsula, as the administration has already begun to do.
- Agility would suggest building a network of *access* to facilities rather than new large "bases." The deployment to Afghanistan worked relatively well given the rudimentary or nonexistent prior facility network in the region. A network designed to operate in that manner should do even better.
- Such a network can be used to increase the rotation of U.S. forces into countries for exercises, gaining the benefits of combined training and developing personal relationships with local forces, without the drawbacks of permanent heavy presence – not least of which is much greater implied support for sometimes unsavory regimes.
- Prepositioning materiel also increases global options and flexibility, its main drawback being substantial cost.
- Enhancing options also suggests a shift of resources toward ever-in-demand airlift and sealift.
- Finally, as the Marines and the Navy ably point out themselves, their afloat forces are highly flexible and can be temporarily "based" near trouble spots with no political drawbacks.

In closing, I would hope that you can take as wide a view as possible in your report, because pursuing some of the priorities outlined above does require additional funds, and the answer to the question "where does the money come from?" requires looking at some of the other elements of national security strategy. Most obviously, it needs to be suggested that some of the vast sums still being spent on legacy expensive hardware like stealthy air-to-air fighter jets and nuclear attack submarines might be better reallocated to higher priority issues like foreign bases, access, and transportation.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to any questions.

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