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GLOBAL POSTURE – AN OVERVIEW

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Global Posture is a key element of force structure. The forces, footprints, and agreements in place overseas, enable the projection of force and constrain military options. This paper provides a short overview of what global posture is and then looks at global posture through a framework for examining defense enterprise issues.

Within weeks of Secretary Austin's confirmation and swearing in as Secretary of Defense, President Biden tasked him with completing a global posture review to ensure the worldwide footprint of U.S. service members is correctly sized and supports the U.S. strategy.² Before the review was complete, the U.S. already started realigning forces to meet its evolving strategy. In April 2021, President Biden announced the drawdown of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan.³ In June 2021, the Wall Street Journal reported that many U.S. forces including aircraft and air defense systems were being pulled out of the middle east.⁴ These examples show the U.S. Department of Defense makes significant choices about its global defense posture on a continual basis.

It is natural for posture announcements such as these to gain lots of attention. Posture decisions set the force, enable and constrain military options, and demonstrate to friends and adversaries what a nation values. If you want to

know what the U.S. finds important, watching where it puts its most precious military resources is a great start.

MEANING OF POSTURE

So, what is posture? DoD Instruction 3000.12 states, "Foreign and overseas posture is the fundamental enabler of U.S. defense activities and military operations overseas and is also central to defining and communicating U.S. strategic interests to allies, partners, and adversaries."⁵ DoD uses three elements "to define, plan for, and assess U.S. foreign and overseas military presence: forces, footprints, and agreements."⁶ Decisions about *forces* and their locations are fundamental to the strategy. *Footprints* are the overseas infrastructure that base and sustain the forces. *Agreements* with host nations and foreign partners enable and constrain U.S. options.

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² Jim Garamone, "Global Posture Review Will Tie Strategy to Defense Policy to Basing," *DoD News*, (February 5, 2021), <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2495328/global-posture-review-will-tie-strategy-defense-policy-to-basing/>

³ Terri Moon Cronk, "Biden Announces Full U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Afghanistan by Sept. 11," *DoD News*, (April 14, 2021), <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2573268/biden-announces-full-us-troop-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-by-sept-11/>

⁴ Gordon Lubold, Nancy A. Youssef, and Michael R. Gordon. "U.S. Military to Withdraw Hundreds of Troops, Aircraft, Antimissile Batteries from Middle East; Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin Told Saudi Crown Prince of Drawdown in June 2 Call, Officials Say." *Wall Street Journal* (Online), Jun 18, 2021. , <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/u-s-military-withdraw-hundreds-troops-aircraft/docview/2542482674/se-2?accountid=4444>.

⁵ DoD Instruction 3000.12, *Management of U.S. Global Defense Posture (GDP)*, (May 6, 2016 w C1 May 8 2017) [DoDI 3000.12, May 6, 2016; Incorporating Change 1 on May 8, 2017 \(whs.mil\)](#), 6.

⁶ DoDI 3000.12, 6.

Forces

Forces give combatant commanders important capabilities to accomplish their military objectives. The five Military Services and U.S. Special Operations Command are force providers, responsible for organizing, manning, training, equipping, and generating the forces to support the combatant commands.

Forces can be assigned to combatant commands in the Secretary of Defense's "Forces For Unified Commands Assignment Tables" or they can be allocated rotationally through the global force management process. Assigned forces typically require larger footprints than rotational forces, and often require additional infrastructure to support families and other longer-term requirements. Assigned forces demonstrate a stronger commitment than rotational forces, but also may constrain options employing that force globally. Changes to overseas force structure have many stakeholders who must be notified of any changes through a formal process. CJCS Instruction 2300.02K describes the military's role in this process.⁷

Footprints

Maintaining foreign locations provides DoD flexibility to further U.S. interests and respond to crises. Overseas bases are fundamental to the U.S. ability to project power within and across regions.⁸ Beyond their value to support ongoing combat operations, bases provide the U.S. access to locations and resources of strategic importance in the future; they have particular value to great powers.⁹ In addition to their military value, maintaining overseas bases signals a strong commitment to the host nation as their presence has significant diplomatic value.¹⁰

Footprints include property, facilities, and other infrastructure that can support military

operations, and are either enduring, or in support of contingencies. The annual Department of Defense Base Structure Report listed almost 5,000 sites managed by the Department, over 500 of which are overseas. Table 1 is an extract from the most recent report.

The distinction between contingency and enduring locations has important implications for funding, policy, planning and a base's strategic or tactical focus.¹¹ *Enduring locations* "enable ongoing operations activities and interests, which may or may not require a continuous force presence and provide strategic access to support US strategic interests and response to regional and/or global contingencies."¹² Enduring locations are those that DoD intends to maintain for more than five years. Enduring locations come in three categories: main operating bases (MOB), forward operating sites (FOS), and cooperative security locations (CSL). Enduring locations are managed by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, which maintains the enduring location master list (ELML).¹³

Table 1: U.S. Military Site Summary¹⁴

Location	Large Sites	Medium Sites	Small Sites	Other Sites	Total Sites
United States	121	89	3,208	732	4150
US Territories	3	2	78	28	111
Overseas	24	21	430	39	514
Total	148	112	3716	799	4775

While remaining consistent, the list of enduring locations is not completely static; when the strategic environment changes, combatant commands, Services, OSD or the Joint Staff can nominate new sites for inclusion on the ELML.

⁷ CJCSI 2300.02K, "Coordination of Overseas Force Structure Changes and Host Nation Notification," (2 April 2019), <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Library/Instructions/CJCSI%202300.02K.pdf>

⁸ Michael C. Desch, "Bases for the Future: U.S. Military Interests in the Post-Cold War Third World", *Security Studies*, 2:2, 201-224, DOI: 10.1080/09636419209347509 as cited in Alexander Cooley, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas*, (Cornell University Press, 2008), 5.

⁹ Michael C. Desch, "The Keys That Lock Up the World: Identifying American Interests in the Periphery," *International Security* 14, no. 1 (1989): 97-100, as cited in Cooley, *Base Politics*, 5.

¹⁰ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 7-8.

¹¹ Joint Publication 4-04, *Contingency Basing*, (4 January 2019), vii.

¹² JP 4-04, *Contingency Basing* I-2.

¹³ DoDI 3000.12, 11.

¹⁴ Department of Defense, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Infrastructure, *Base Structure Report - Fiscal Year 2018: A Summary of the Real Property Inventory Data*, (Washington DC, 2018), 18. Site size is based on plant replacement value of the site.

Each overseas location is assigned a lead service who is responsible for conducting site management, base operations support, and the coordination of requirements.¹⁵

As opposed to enduring locations on the ELML, *contingency locations* support contingency operations for Combatant Commanders. Contingency locations should be temporary in nature. If transient activities transition to more sustained actions, contingency locations should transition to the enduring location list.¹⁶

Contingency locations are categorized as initial, temporary, or semi-permanent. Defense policy and joint doctrine establish rules and processes for each type.¹⁷

Agreements

International agreements are critical components of global defense posture. They include everything from cooperative security agreements that require mutual defense like the NATO alliance and its article V requirement, to status of forces agreements that govern the legal status of forces in foreign nations, and overflight agreements that allow military assets to fly through the sovereign airspace of other nations. These agreements provide the framework for overseas posture. Agreements can support enduring locations, or they can be negotiated to support possible contingencies, and not fully implemented until a crisis occurs. The U.S. Department of State is responsible for negotiating and maintaining these agreements that support overseas posture.

All these agreements are negotiated to support areas of common interest between the U.S. and host nations. Agreements typically address three main types of issues – installations, troop levels, and capabilities; issues of sovereignty over bases and legal jurisdiction over deployed soldiers; and economic or political bargains struck to support the basing decision.¹⁸

The U.S. makes a distinction between global posture, that which is overseas, and U.S. based

forces and infrastructure. While this distinction is called out in law, policy, and regulation, forces and bases in the United States are equally as important as overseas posture to choices about force design and the application of military power.

APPLE(W) FRAMEWORK

USAWC faculty members have developed a framework to assist in assessing and understanding enterprise level issues. Like tactical (METT-TC) and operational (PMESII-PT) frames that appear in Army doctrine, the APPLE(W) frame can assist leaders faced with challenges at the Enterprise level.¹⁹ The APPLE(W) frame guides those with enterprise challenges to first look at the *authorities* governing the issue, then identify the *players* with power and interest in the issue. Third consider existing *processes* governing the issue and the *leverage points* where systems can be moved. Finally, identify *evaluation criteria* to aid in assessing success or failure. The parenthetical *W* stands for *workarounds* – actions taken outside the normal system that may be required to get quick results but will likely generate resistance and require increased follow up. Global posture issues involve the whole enterprise and are an appropriate area to apply this framework.

Authorities

Authorities governing global posture start with international law and rules regarding the power of sovereign nations. These authorities are key to some of the agreements that are generated.

Domestically, authority over the military is split between the executive branch, where the commander-in-chief executes command over military forces, and is responsible for making treaties, and the legislative branch, where Congress is responsible for raising the Army, maintaining the Navy and appropriating funds for their support, and the Senate must approve

¹⁵ DoDI 3000.12, 14.

¹⁶ JP 4-04, *Contingency Basing* I-2.

¹⁷ DoDD 3000.10, *Contingency Basing Outside the United States*, with change 2 (August 31, 2018), and JP 4-04.

¹⁸ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 29-30.

¹⁹ Allen, Charles and Robert D. Bradford. "Taking A Bite of the APPLE(W): Understanding the Defense Enterprise." *Military Review* 98, no. 3 (May, 2018): 64-73, <https://www.armypress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/May-June-2018/Taking-A-Bite-of-the-Apple-W-Understanding-the-Defense-Enterprise/>.

treaties for ratification.²⁰ Other public laws also govern overseas posture, some requiring extensive reporting on the benefits, risks, and costs of posture choices.²¹

DoD Policies governing overseas posture include DoD Instruction 3000.12, *Management of U.S. Global Defense Posture*. This document “establishes policies, defines processes, and assigns responsibilities for managing U.S. Defense Posture,” and is a primary source for people working in this area.²² For the subset of footprints that are contingency bases, DoD Directive 3000.10, *Contingency Basing Outside the U.S.*, sets policy and assigns responsibility and JP 4-04, *Contingency Basing* establishes doctrine and provides guidance for the U.S. armed forces regarding such bases.

Other authoritative documents that guide the assignment and allocation of forces include the Unified Command Plan (UCP) and the Forces For Unified Commands tables, the National Defense Strategy (NDS), the Guidance for the Employment of the Force (GEF), and the Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP), and deployment and execute orders signed by the Secretary of Defense.²³

DoD and Services also have many policy documents that further detail authorities and responsibility for acquisition, construction, management and disposition of real property such as bases and facilities.

Players

Organizations and offices with power and interest in global posture are many and varied.

Congress contains many important players and global posture draws significant Congressional interest. Congress cares deeply about posture choices and requires DoD to produce a Global Defense Posture Report and

submit it to congressional defense committees each year.²⁴ Within Congress, the Armed Services and Appropriations committees have the lead for authorizing and appropriating funds to support posture.

Unlike forces and bases in the United States, overseas posture does not have natural constituents in Congress. While service members come from every district, no Congressman or Representative represents Germany, South Korea, or Bahrain (although some diasporas retain significant influence in Congress).²⁵ DoD leaders need to clearly explain the strategic requirements of overseas bases to Congress when choices are between bases and forces in the U.S. or overseas.

Within DoD, the Under Secretary for Policy establishes policy and overall guidance for the governance of the global posture. Within his office, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) for Strategy, Plans and Capabilities manages this. She and the Director of the Joint Staff (DJS) co-chair the Global Posture Executive Council, (GPEC), an important group who review and make recommendations on all posture decisions.²⁶

The Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment maintains records on all DoD installations. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Infrastructure maintains the real properties assets database and publishes the annual Base Structure Report that lists the DoD footprint, to include overseas installations.²⁷ They have a key role in determining the lead service responsible for specific overseas infrastructure.

Secretaries of military departments and their service chiefs have important roles as they must resource the forces and provide base support for the installations where they are designated as the

²⁰ United States Constitution, Article 2, Section 2 and Article 1, Section 8 and 9; and “About Treaties,” United States Senate, March 3, 2021, <https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/treaties.htm>

²¹ See for example the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012 that directed DoD to commission an independent assessment that resulted in Michael Lostumbo, et al., *U.S. Overseas Military Posture: Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits*, (RAND: Washington DC, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9708.html

²² DoDI 3000.12.

²³ CJCSI 3100.01E, *Joint Strategic Planning System*, “Appendix G,” 21 May 2021.

²⁴ Title 10 United States Code Section 113.(g)(4)

²⁵ See for example, Schogol, Jeff. “Lawmakers Oppose Plan to Cut Personnel at Lajes Field.” Air Force Times. Air Force Times, August 8, 2017. Last modified August 8, 2017. Accessed July 13, 2021. <https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2015/01/29/lawmakers-oppose-plan-to-cut-personnel-at-lajes-field/>.

²⁶ DoDI 3000.12, 5

²⁷ Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment, “Library, Resources, and Archive,” https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/BSI/BEI_Library.html, accessed June 25, 2021.

“lead service.”²⁸ They work closely with the combatant commanders who assess current posture and plan for future requirements.²⁹

Outside of DoD, The Department of State is a central player with respect to DoD overseas posture. They are responsible assessing the foreign policy implications of posture initiatives and for negotiating agreements with host nation partners. Their ambassadors also work with host nations to identify and work through posture-related challenges in the bilateral relationship.

Host nations include many very important stakeholders, from government leaders, regional leaders, commercial and business leaders and the local population. All have interest, influence, and power over U.S. posture in their country.

Finally other countries all have interest in DoD overseas posture. This includes friends of the U.S., as well as potential adversaries.

Processes

Processes include the GPEC and its supporting O-6/planner level Global Posture Integration Team (GPIT) that reviews all issues submitted for the GPEC. The GPEC is chaired by the ASD(Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities) and the DJS. The executive secretary for the GPEC is the DASD (Plans and Posture) assisted by the Deputy Director for Strategy and Plans in the Joint Staff J5 Directorate. The GPEC includes members from across OSD, the Joint Staff, combatant commands, Services, Military Departments, Department of State, and the National Security Council Staff.³⁰ The GPEC and GPIT assess new posture initiatives presented by the Services and combatant commands, review combatant command posture plans, operate the annual military construction (MILCON) prioritization process to inform which MILCON projects the Services budget for, and facilitate DoD-wide coordination of posture issues (such as the 2021 Global Posture Review).

Other important processes include the development and maintenance of the ELML. This list is managed by Office of the Under Secretary for Policy and approved by the Deputy Secretary of Defense. The process for adding or removing facilities from the ELML includes inputs from the combatant commands and the Services and is described in policy.³¹

Changes to overseas posture are codified in Overseas Force Structure Changes (OFSCs) approved by the Secretary of Defense and require formal Host Nation Notification before changes to posture are implemented. These processes are described in DoD and CJCS instructions.³²

Combatant commands develop theater or functional posture plans and submit them to the GPEC. These posture plans are the primary source documents used to advocate for changes to posture in their area of responsibility. The annual posture plan development process looks to align combatant command plans with DoD strategic guidance; they “link national and theater objectives with the means to achieve them.”³³ Theater posture plans describe the forces, footprints, and agreements present in a theater and future requirements. Functional posture plans address functional requirements for posture. Details on the process for posture plans is included in the DoD instruction.³⁴

Global Force Management is an important process for the allocation of forces to combatant commands. The Joint Staff J35 manages this process, where combatant commands submit requests for forces and force providers help determine how to source these requests. The Global Force Management Board, led by the Director of the Joint Staff, assesses operational effects of force management decisions and the tradeoffs between combatant commands, readiness, and force availability.³⁵ The Secretary of Defense makes force allocation decisions, and these decisions are recorded either in the GFMAP and associated annexes, or, for emergent requirements, in the Secretary of Defense Orders

²⁸ DoDI 3000.12, 14.

²⁹ DoDI 3000.12, 5.

³⁰ DoDI 3000.12, 6-7.

³¹ DoDI 300.12, 11-16.

³² DoDI 3000.12, 17, and CJCSI 2300.02K, “Coordination of Overseas Force Structure Changes and Host Nation Notification,” (April 2, 2019),

<https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Library/Instructions/CJCSI%202300.02K.pdf?ver=oRI5vBbZ3cYtaKHxaDyAxw%3d%3d>

³³ DoDI 3000.12, 18.

³⁴ DoDI 3000.12, 18-20.

³⁵ CJCSM 3130.06 Series, *Global Force Management Allocation Policies and Procedures*, 12 October 2016 (Revision B).

Book that amend the GFMAP and authorize new deployments or extensions of current deployments. The Under Secretary for Policy supports the Global Force Management process; by reviewing force allocation requirements based on strategic guidance, resourcing implications, political-military considerations, and risk to strategy and advising the Secretary on decisions.

Other important processes that impact global posture include the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) process that DoD uses to align its resources to its strategy, the Joint Strategic Planning System, that helps the chairman accomplish his statutory authorities, Real Property processes based on federal law that govern the acquisition, sustainment, construction (to include MILCON), support, and disposition of bases and infrastructure. Leaders engaging in posture decisions need to have experts in all these processes on their teams.

Leverage Points

Leverage points impacting global posture are many and varied. Since posture should follow the strategy, strategy development and important strategic reviews are key places to leverage these processes. Important meetings between world leaders also often impact posture, and parties should track and leverage Presidential and other senior level interactions between national leaders.

The Pentagon spends much of its time considering the allocation of resources to align to strategy and policy, and this guides how DoD makes (or fails to make) effective posture-related decisions. Program Budget Review within PPBE and the GPEC's MILCON prioritization are processes that assess and facilitate long-term posture decisions based on strategic guidance. Near-term posture decisions, which typically involve allocated forces, are assessed against strategic guidance through the Global Force Management Process and the review by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. DoD identifies gaps in posture through its development and review of operations plans

(OPLANs) and through operations research conducted by OSD Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation.

Evaluation Criteria

Posture changes should be evaluated against defined criteria as to how the changes impact strategic choices now and in the future. Posture-related resources are finite, so investments in infrastructure or the deployment of forces always comes at a tradeoff. Increases to resource levels require decreases elsewhere – whether to a similar requirement somewhere else in the world, to the number and readiness of forces, or to funding that is pulled away from modernization and capabilities.

Decision makers have many potential ways to measure the efficacy and efficiency of DoD posture, and the choices of criteria used become important planning considerations with political impacts. Evaluation is often characterized as cost vs. benefit, and it is important to include all costs, benefits, and multiple time horizons in this consideration. Criteria may include improving DoD's contingency response and global power projection capabilities, ability to execute OPLANs, deterrence of adversaries, force protection, weapon system-related advantages, relationships with allies and partners, and infrastructure efficiency. Even with mature allies, it can take five years or more to develop a new agreement to host new forces, appropriate funds for MILCON, and begin changing the footprint on the ground. Given the time, resources, and political capital required to implement major posture changes, it is critical that DoD ensure posture initiatives are aligned with strategic guidance and deliver clear results for improving DoD's warfighting advantages.

Work Arounds

Workarounds circumvent an existing process or procedure and should be taken deliberately.³⁶ The existing posture processes are designed to ensure that posture decisions and investments are made in full consideration or the variety of

³⁶ While serving on the Army staff two months after graduating from the Army War College in 2011, the author wrote the Program Review issue paper for the Army that initiated the discussion of the removal of two armored brigade combat teams from Germany. This

issue did not go through the GPEC or GPIT or other normal processes. The posture decision was made through the budget development and approval process. Lessons learned from this experience were a large impetus for writing this paper.

policy, resourcing, and operational equities in play. All stakeholders get a chance to be heard. Workarounds that acknowledge and account for these varied equities are more likely to be successful. When using workarounds one should consider potential resistance, and take steps to mitigate the impact of going outside normal practices.

CONCLUSION

Global Posture is an important part of U.S. military capabilities and international engagement. When reviewing and developing posture initiatives, leaders should consider the impacts of changes in the strategic environment, changes to joint or service operating concepts, and the impact of changes to technology. Each of these areas can create new or different posture requirements. A posture aligned to strategy can enable coherent action. Misalignment can preclude options, cause friction, increase costs, and create risk to strategy.

Leaders must understand that forces, footprints and agreements enable military operations in support of national objectives. An understanding of how DoD manages its overseas posture is important for those operating at the strategic level within the defense enterprise.

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