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ABSTRACT: During World War II, the Army demonstrated the core competencies outlined in Army Doctrine Publication 1, The Army, in its application of strategic landpower. The Army of today must retain its capability to perform these core competencies—the requirement for the Army to provide true strategic landpower in conjunction with other services, partners, and allies is as critical today as it was then.

Seventy-five years ago, the US Army completed the destruction of its World War II enemies on land. While it received tremendous support from the air, sea, and Allies, I agree with Professor Russell Weigley's assertion: "At the close of World War II, the United States Army was the mightiest in the world. . . . In every theater the American Army had faced enemies long trained in war and had speedily overcame them."[1] While the Nazi German and Soviet armies fielded more combat divisions, only the US Army participated in both theaters of war and all six principal land theaters of operations at the same time.

While the Army has long used the term landpower to describe the capabilities it provides the nation, it only officially defined landpower in 2005.[2] The current definition in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 is "the ability—by threat, force, or occupation—to gain, sustain, and exploit control over land, resources, and people."[3] In 2012 the Army, in conjunction with the US Marine Corps and US Special Operations Command, established a Strategic Landpower Task Force to better inform Congress and American public about landpower.[4] More recently, the Army published its core competencies in ADP 1, *The Army*, on July 31, 2019.

Core competencies are intended to express clearly how the Army contributes to national defense and joint operations. These competencies are: prompt and sustained land combat; combined arms operations including combined arms maneuver, wide area security, armored and mechanized operations, and airborne and air assault operations; special operations; set and sustain the theater for the Joint Force; and integrate

1. Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 475.

2. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *The Army*, Field Manual (FM) 1 (Washington, DC: HQDA, June 14, 2005), 1-1.

3. HQDA, *Operations*, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: HQDA, July 31, 2019), 1-9.

4. Terms of Reference for the Strategic Landpower Task Force, October 12, 2012. Document in the author's possession.

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national, multinational and joint power on land.[5] However, not only are these competencies not new, but they were observable during World War II when the US Army demonstrated the origins of strategic landpower in its ability to conduct simultaneous global operations to gain, sustain, and exploit control over land, people, and resources.

US Army in World War II

The National Defense Act of 1920 specifically charged the War Department and the Army General Staff with overall mobilization planning and preparation in the event of war and remained unchanged until 1947.[6] In early 1942, then Chief of Staff General George Catlett Marshall organized the Army into three major administrative commands—Army Ground Forces (AGF), Army Service Forces (ASF), and Army Air Force (AAF). In 1945, 70 percent of AGF and ASF (some six million personnel) were deployed overseas, of which only 20 percent could be found in the 89 combat divisions, all overseas.[7] Was some 80 percent of the Army unnecessary *overhead* or *tail* to the divisional tooth? No! This arrangement was the complete force structure required for the Army to perform its core competencies including providing prompt strategic landpower and simultaneously sustaining global campaigns in two theaters of war—Europe and Pacific—and six separate theaters of operations.

Organization for Combat

The Army followed doctrine in Field Manual (FM) 100-15, *Field Service Regulations: Larger Units*, which called for Army theater commanders to be directly responsible for both administration and combat within their assigned theaters.[8] By late 1944, the Army had six principal theater armies: the European Theater of Operations, US Army (ETO), North African and later Mediterranean Theater of Operations, US Army (MTO), Persian Gulf Command (PGC), US Army Forces in the Far East (FE), US Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas (POA), and US Army Forces, China-Burma-India (CBI).[9] Each had a senior Army officer as commander who reported directly to the Army chief of staff for internal Army matters, and who, if not dual-hatted, also reported to a joint or combined commander for operational matters.

Under Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur, ETO and FE were extremely large and concerned with *sequel* planning

5. HQDA, *The Army*, ADP 1, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: HQDA, July 31, 2019), 2-7–2-9.

6. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 404.

7. Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1943–1945* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History [CMH], 1989), 839; and Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 435, 442–44.

8. War Department, *Field Service Regulations, Larger Units*, FM 100-15 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 29, 1942), 4–6, 49–51.

9. Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1951), 290, 373–81.

including the occupation of Axis countries.[10] Under theater armies with significant combat requirements, the Army formed Army groups and field armies. Based on World War I experience, field armies became the fundamental unit of strategic maneuver capable of independent operation, with a flexible structure, and expected to serve both as senior operational and logistical headquarters. In World War II, corps headquarters were flexible extensions of the field Army in tactical command of divisions but without support structure and consequently much smaller. Divisions were the largest unit with a completely organic structure capable of limited duration operations.[11] In addition to divisions, the Army organized most AGF and ASF combat and support units into groups, battalions, or companies which could be organized at echelons above division and provided to streamlined divisions only when required.[12]

World War II Army Core Competencies

Prompt and Sustained Land Combat

While the Victory Plan of 1941 envisioned an Army requiring some 6 million ground and service personnel with 215 ground combat divisions, the Army never fielded that many divisions because of the nondivisional support required.[13] The Army provided joint and combined theater commanders 9 field armies, 23 corps, and 89 combat divisions (16 armored, 66 infantry, 1 dismounted cavalry, 5 airborne, and 1 mountain) totaling over 2 million in deployed AGF units by May 1945.[14] At that date, 61 of the Army's 89 fielded divisions were in Eisenhower's ETO alone.[15] Charles B. MacDonald argues in *The Last Offensive*:

> The efficacy of the American tank-infantry-artillery team, of methods of air-ground co-operation, of the regimental combat team and combat command concepts, and of the "lean" division with attachments provided as needed . . . the general excellence of American arms and equipment, the ability to motorize infantry divisions on short notice—all these had been demonstrated and proved long before.[16]

The Army withstood the Japanese first strikes in 1941–42 in Hawaii and especially the Philippines. From Operation Torch in November 1942, the US Army conducted all American amphibious operations in the MTO and ETO. Once ashore, sustained land combat was exemplified by the operations of General George Patton's II Corps in Tunisia and

10. See Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1954), 322, app B, table 5, 534.

11. Shelby L. Stanton, *Order of Battle: U.S. Army, World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1984), 3–5; and David W. Hogan Jr., *A Command Post at War: First Army Headquarters in Europe, 1943–1945* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 2000), 13–16.

12. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 461–67.

13. Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1990), 98–108.

14. Stanton, *Order of Battle*, 3–5.

15. Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany, 1944–1945*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 727.

16. Charles B. MacDonald, *The Last Offensive* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1973), 478.

Seventh Army in Sicily, General Mark Clark's Fifth Army, 15th Army Group in Italy for the North African and MTO, and General Omar Nelson Bradley's 12th and General Jacob L. Devers's 6th Army Groups in the ETO. In the Southwest Pacific, MacArthur's Sixth and Eighth Armies conducted major amphibious operations in New Guinea and in the liberation of the Philippines. In the Central Pacific, Lieutenant General Robert C. Richardson's Army forces also conducted amphibious operations in conjunction with the Marines.[17]

Combined Arms Operations

Combined arms maneuvers conducted by US Army forces grew in tactical excellence as the war continued and provided the winning margin in applying landpower to defeat the Axis powers in four major theaters of operations. After overcoming initial inexperience in North Africa, II Corps demonstrated combined arms armored and mechanized excellence as it defeated the Germans and Italians in Tunisia.[18] At Normandy and the breakout at Saint-Lô, Bradley's First Army and 12th Army Group demonstrated combined arms excellence in amphibious and mobile warfare. Patton's Third Army exemplified this combined arms armored and mechanized excellence with its accomplishments, especially in the 4th Armored Division's relief of Bastogne in late 1944.[19]

Similarly during the Battle of the Bulge, the 7th Armored Division exemplified this excellence with its defense and later liberation of Saint-Vith, and the 2nd Armored Division with its destruction of the 2nd Panzer division.[20] The US Army also developed forcible entry by airborne and air assault capability (gliders at the time) with the First Allied Airborne Army, XVIII Airborne Corps, and five airborne divisions and several smaller units. These units conducted four division-sized or larger airborne and glider operations: the 82nd and 101st at both Normandy and Market Garden, the First Allied Airborne Army in south France, the 17th during Operation Varsity, and numerous regimental-sized airborne operations in Sicily, Italy, and the Southwest Pacific.[21]

Wide-Area Security

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave the US Army the lead conducting military government in 1942. In the ETO and MTO, the Army conducted wide-area security by providing the occupation and military government forces to secure the peace in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany after maneuver units had defeated the Axis forces. The 12th Army Group established the Fifteenth Army after June 1944

17. Richard W. Stewart, ed., *American Military History Volume 2: The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917–2008*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 2010), 133–201.

18. Historical Division, War Department, *To Bizerte with the II Corps, 23 April–13 May 1943* (1943; repr. Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1990).

19. Stewart, *American Military History*, 146–61.

20. Gregory Fontenot, *Loss and Redemption at St Vith: The 7th Armored Division in the Battle of the Bulge* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2019); and Donald E. Houston, *Hell on Wheels: The 2d Armored Division* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1977), 341–51.

21. James A. Huston, *Out of the Blue—U.S. Army Airborne Operations in World War II* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1998).

in ETO to relieve other units of mopping-up duties and to conduct occupation and other operations in conjunction with French forces against bypassed German units.[22] In Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's POA, Richardson employed Army base commands to secure, occupy, and provide administration for most of the islands, including Okinawa, in Nimitz's Central Pacific whether assaulted by marine or army forces.[23] In addition, the Army provided the liberating forces and initial military government in MacArthur's Southwest Pacific for numerous Japanese-occupied islands as well as the Philippines. Postwar, the Army provided all of the US occupation forces for West Germany, West Berlin, Austria, Trieste, Okinawa, South Korea, and Japan.[24]

Setting and Sustaining the Theater

The US Army set and maintained multiple theaters of operations through the theater armies and their Services of Supply branch. Under General Brehon B. Somervell, the ASF totaled over two million soldiers and civilians by 1945. It provided logistical support and procured most of the supplies and equipment for the AGF, AAF, and substantial numbers of Allied and Marine divisions.[25] Even theaters without significant ground combat forces—the PGC and CBI—had large numbers of ASF: "the relatively high support strengths for the Central Pacific Base Command are explained in part by the Army support rendered to 6 Marine divisions also present in the theater."[26]

In addition, the Army remained responsible for most major domestic or overseas infrastructure/base and road construction.[27] As the war continued, the Army also took responsibility for the evacuation and detention of over 400,000 Axis soldiers at over 600 facilities and for the evacuation and hospitalization of some 231,000 American casualties in the United States.[28]

Special Operations

As the war progressed, the Army created numerous new units to meet particular operational requirements. Army special operations forces for World War II included six Ranger battalions for special assault missions; the joint US-Canadian, First Special Service Force for operations in Italy; the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) for long-range penetrations in Burma; and other special reconnaissance units such as Alaskan and Alamo Scouts. Although the Office of Strategic Services formed in 1942 was an independent government agency growing to over

22. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 668.

23. Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy*, 448; and Robert C. Richardson Papers, Museum and Archives, US Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA.

24. Stewart, *American Military History*, 208–10.

25. Stewart, *American Military History*, 89, 90.

26. Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy*, 840; and Stewart, *American Military History*, 123.

27. Stewart, *American Military History*, 90.

28. Arnold Krammer, *Prisoners of War: A Reference Handbook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008), 40–46; and Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy*, 839.

thirteen thousand personnel, its larger military units were recruited from, manned by, and under the command of Army personnel.[29]

In Europe, the Army created Jedburgh teams specifically to liaise with the French resistance and operational groups. These groups, composed of foreign-language qualified soldiers who were skilled in sabotage and guerilla warfare, were designed to be employed in small teams in enemy territory. In the Pacific, Office of Strategic Services personnel played a major role in training thousands of Nationalist Chinese troops as well as over ten thousand Kachin and other indigenous irregular forces in Southeast Asia fighting the Japanese. In Axis-occupied Europe, regionally aligned operational groups conducted strategic intelligence and unconventional warfare operations.[30]

Integrating National, Multinational, and Joint Power

National. On September 1, 1939, the Regular Army consisted of only 190,000 in 11 understrength divisions. The Army also had divided the nation into field Army areas responsible for all bases, stationing and training on a geographic basis. Using the above framework, between July 1940 and June 1941, the Army mobilized over 215,000 members and 18 infantry divisions of the Army National Guard and over 100,000 officers of the Organized Reserve Corps. Later under the ASF, the Army remained responsible for acquiring and building the necessary bases for expansion and mobilization for millions of new draftees.[31] Additionally, the Army Corps of Engineers provided oversight of the $2 billion Manhattan Project building the atomic bomb.[32]

During World War II, the Army conducted support to domestic civil authorities and provided for the active defense of the US homeland. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, the Army established several defense commands to coordinate military responses to potential foreign attack. In the continental states, Second Army (Eastern Defense Command) and Fourth Army (Western Defense Command) never deployed and remained in place until war's end. The forces assigned to continental defense peaked at 379,000 in July 1943, including 140,000 in antiaircraft and coast artillery units.[33] The Army established the Caribbean Defense Command to protect US interests in South America and the Alaska Defense Command to defend Alaska and conduct operations to repel the Japanese invasion of the Aleutian Islands.[34]

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29. David W. Hogan Jr., *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1992), 3-139.

30. Hogan, *Army Special Operations*, 47–61, 120–132; and Richard W. Stewart, "The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Operational Group Burma: The 'Arakan Group,'" in *The U.S. Army and World War II: Selected Papers from the Army's Commemorative Conferences*, ed. Judith L. Bellafaire (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1998), 317–24.

31. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 419, 427–31, 599.

32. Stewart, American Military History, 123.

33. Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *Defense of the Americas: The U.S. Campaigns of World War II* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, n.d.), 18; and Jean R. Moenck, *A History of Command and Control of Army Forces in the Continental United States, 1919–1972* (Fort Monroe, VA: Historical Office, HQ, US Continental Army Command, 15 August 1972), 15–20.

34. Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 381.

Multinational. Besides fielding 89 divisions, the US Army supported security cooperation for Allies. The Army provided equipment and supplies, mostly under the Lend-Lease Act, for 60 Russian divisions (PGC), 36 Nationalist Chinese divisions (CBI), 12 French divisions (MTO/ETO), and 1 Brazilian division (MTO). In addition, the Army provided significant numbers of combat advisers, down to the battalion level, to the Nationalist Chinese, and advisers to the regimental level to the French and Brazilian divisions.[35] In this manner, the Army more than doubled its own number of fielded divisions.

Joint. Since AAF remained part of the US Army, ASF provided an estimated 167,257 personnel in direct support of AAF.[36] In addition to Army tactical headquarters, under provisions of the prewar Joint Action of the Army and Navy, the Army provided the joint theater commander—dual-hatted as the theater Army commander—and the core joint headquarters for four theaters: ETO, PGC, FE, and CBI. The Army also provided separate service component staffs for MTO and POA of the combined or joint commander. The Army also provided additional headquarters when required.[37] In 1944, the Army established the 1st Airborne Task Force (Allied) as a provisional airborne division for the invasion of southern France, and later the First Allied Airborne Army with command over both airborne units and their airlift as Eisenhower's theater reserve.[38] When a large ground headquarters was required in late 1944 with both an Army and a Marine amphibious corps for Nimitz's Central Pacific drive, the Army activated Tenth Army under General Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr.[39] The Army also provided hundreds of battalions of coast and antiaircraft units to defend joint forces.[40]

Conclusion

The US Army of World War II demonstrated the value of strategic landpower on a global scale. After the fall of the Philippines, the US Army never failed a strategic mission during the war. These missions included protecting the homeland; mobilizing, training, and equipping over ten million soldiers; setting, maintaining, and then dismantling six major theaters of operations; maneuvering on land to defeat three major enemies; building the atomic bomb; occupying, governing, and returning defeated countries to the community of nations; and humanely conducting detention operations for our captured enemies. Consequently, the Army demonstrated all current core competencies in its application of strategic landpower during World War II. Today the

35. See Marcel Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1957); and T.H. Vail Motter, *The Persian Corridor and the Aid to Russia* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1952), 4. For China see Marc Gallicchio, "Army Advisors and Liaison Officers and the 'Lessons' of America's Wartime Experience in China," in Bellafaire, *U.S. Army and World War II,* 353–70.

36. Coakley and Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy*, 839.

37. Stanton, *Order of Battle*, 184–85.

38. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 227; and Huston, *Out of the Blue, 76–82*.

39. Sharon Tosi Lacey, *Pacific Blitzkrieg: World War II in the Central Pacific* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2013), 166–73; and Roy E. Appleman et al., *Okinawa: The Last Battle* (Washington, DC: US Army CMH, 1948), 3–4, 21–27.

40. Kirkpatrick, *Victory Plan of 1941*, 93–101.

Army must retain its capability to perform these same core competencies as the global nature and requirement for the Army to provide true strategic landpower in conjunction with other services and allies still remains.