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U.S. Army Europe commander says more troops needed to meet evolving missions

By **Jim Garamone**

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- More troops will be needed to adapt to U.S. Army Europe's evolving missions, USAREUR commander Gen. Carter F. Ham told reporters during a Pentagon news conference Feb. 17.

The command once comprised some 300,000 Soldiers. Today USAREUR has approximately 42,000 Soldiers in its ranks, and its primary mission is to provide properly trained and equipped forces to support global operations, the general said.

If current plans move forward, that number set to dip to around 32,000 Soldiers, and Ham said he thinks that's too few. The general has recommended that two heavy brigades now based in Germany remain in Europe.



CHERIE CULLEN is
U.S. Army Europe commander Gen. Carter F. Ham discusses the future of the Army in Europe during a press conference at the Pentagon, Feb. 17. Ham told reporters he wants to retain some forces in Europe that are scheduled to return to the U.S., to keep pace with evolving USAREUR missions.

The command's Soldiers deploy like those of any other unit in the Army. At any given time, the command has about one-third of its Soldiers deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan,

Kosovo or other areas of the globe. USAREUR also supplies personnel and expertise to the newly established U.S. Africa Command.

A second mission is to work with partner countries to build their military capacity, Ham said. "That's a real and vital mission for us," the general said.

Ham, who visited Europe many times in his career before assuming command of USAREUR, said the biggest change he noticed in the command was "how just about everything we do has a multinational flavor to it."

For example, he said, American forces train constantly with their Bulgarian and Romanian counterparts.

"We've got a major training scheme set up for this coming summer that is larger in scale than it has been in previous years, and we think that's an important consideration," he said.

NATO forces also use USAREUR's Joint Multinational Readiness Center facilities in Hohenfels, Germany, to train the operational mentoring liaison teams that have been successful in Afghanistan.

Another command mission is to continue the transformation from the Army Europe of the Cold War to a more nimble joint task force headquarters. The command would be the joint task force headquarters for any major land operation in the U.S. European Command area of operations, he said.

Ham said he wants to ensure the right force posture is in place in his command to accomplish the missions.

"We're at about 42,000; by about 2013 or '14, the current plan is that we would get to 32,000, based principally on two brigade combat teams, one Stryker and one airborne, that we'd retain in Europe," he said. "There are also presently two heavy brigade combat teams. Those are currently scheduled to come back to [the continental United States] in 2012 and 2013.

"I've recommended to my operational boss, Gen. John Craddock, commander of European Command, that we revisit those decisions," he continued. "It is my estimation that in order to accomplish the missions that we have, we need a different force posture in Europe than is currently proposed."

The two brigades -- one based in Baumholder, Germany, and the other based in Schweinfurt, Germany -- are remaining in place for now, and Ham has recommended they stay there.

Ham said the Army presence on the continent is a visible commitment of America's commitment to the NATO alliance and to European allies.

The full transcript of Ham's press briefing is available on the Department of Defense Web site at www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4352 .



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