

THE U.S. ARMY'S INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM AND NOBLE EAGLE

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FINAL REPORT:

THE U.S. ARMY'S INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM AND NOBLE EAGLE

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The views expressed in this report reflect the author's analysis and documentation of the collective efforts of participants in The Army's Initial Impressions of Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle Conference. They do not necessarily reflect any official policy or position of the United States Army War College, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, or any other Department or Agency within the U.S. Government. Further, these views do not reflect uniform agreement among the conference participants. This report is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.

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The U.S. Army's Initial Impressions of Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle

Foreword

During a 26-29 August 2002 conference conducted at the Collins Center for Strategic Leadership of the United States Army War College, at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, a group of 51 representatives from throughout The Army gathered to examine initial impressions from Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle (OEF/NE). Conferees represented select Army major commands including: U.S. Army Forces Command, U.S. Army Europe, U.S. Army Central, U.S. Army Pacific, and U.S. Army Special Operations Command, the U.S. Army War College, the Center for Army Lessons Learned, The Army Center of Military History, and the United States Military Academy. Representatives of The Army Staff, RAND, and the Interagency Community also attended. Led by the Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy, Army G-3, participants examined the War on Terrorism at home and abroad seeking ways to improve The Army's overall performance as well as capture, organize, and exploit lessons learned over the long term.

The conference provided an opportunity to cross-fertilize ideas within The Army and consider how The Army's experiences since 9/11, in the War on Terrorism, may contribute to mastering the transition to "information age warfare" and setting the conditions for winning decisively during conflicts of the 21st century. Dr. Crane's report, documenting the impressions of the conferees, provides substantiation of The Army's success in demonstrating proficiency in its six core competencies during the War on Terrorism.

Moreover, the report documents the substantial demands that the War on Terrorism has imposed on The Army, contributing to a broader understanding of "information age warfare" from a Landpower perspective. Dr. Crane identifies a number of key issues, resources, and innovations that may contribute to moving The Army beyond the shortcomings made apparent by the recent engagement in the War on Terrorism such as in Cold War force structures and procedures, to achieve the ideals envisioned in the Objective Force Concept.

Although Dr. Crane submitted this report in September 2002 for publication, the rapidly changing events of last fall drew attention away from Operation Enduring Freedom to operations in Iraq. The delays in making this report available have not reduced the value of the information presented.

September 2003

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Introduction

From 26 to 29 August 2002, the Army assembled representatives from its worldwide commands at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania to assess Army operations to date in the global war on terrorism. The initial impressions offered by the participants highlighted rapid and successful responses at home and in distant theaters from Afghanistan to the Philippines. They also revealed some shortcomings in current operations and insights for future operations.

Results of the Army's efforts in supporting Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle have reinforced the view of the security environment developed during the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review. Despite the recent acts of terror against the U.S. homeland, the United States continues to enjoy a strategic advantage over potential adversaries. The Nation benefits from an unprecedented level of cooperation with its allies and a coalition of willing nations in the continuing war on terrorism. However, the security environment remains dangerous and uncertain. Increasing political, economic, ethnic, and religious divisions; the diffusion of power to non-state actors; and the proliferation of dangerous technologies and weaponry threaten the U.S. homeland and American interests worldwide, along with freedom and democracy on a global scale.

The Army's performance during the war has demonstrated its dominant proficiency in its core competencies. In addition, operational requirements have validated the vision and direction for service transformation and the need to create an Objective Force with increased agility, deployability, and capability for the complex and uncertain security environment of the future. At the same time, combat experience has highlighted the continuing importance of the synergy of coordinated fire and maneuver. Ground commanders still require well-trained soldiers supported by responsive all weather, round-the-clock, full spectrum fire support. Operations have also showcased the importance of the art of campaigning, a traditional Army strength.

A Total Army Fighting a Global War

While much attention has been paid to the Army's role in Afghanistan, that is only one of many theaters of Service activity. Soldiers at home and around the world have undertaken a multitude of varied missions to improve American security and combat terrorism. While it is impossible to cover them all in a brief report like this one, there are many highlights worth mentioning.

A. Combat Operations in Afghanistan - The war against terrorism so far has been unique in many respects but rather traditional in others. As has been mentioned above, American forces are operating in many new theaters with a host of new friends and allies. Simultaneous worldwide operations in austere environments have taxed command and control as well as logistics organizations, putting a premium on agility and innovation.

The experience with the war so far has reinforced the importance of campaign planning for major operations, but has also shown that current American systems to develop and execute such plans are too unwieldy for the pace and nature of war in the information age, requiring quick reactions in a global arena. The Joint Operation Planning System; Time-Phased Force and Deployment Lists; and Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System were all products of a Cold War mindset expecting more sequential operations with build-up and lead times. Instead, the global war against terrorism has featured simultaneous complex missions with relatively short windows for planning and execution. Units have juggled budgets in readiness accounts and lost training opportunities to support new missions. Headquarters have had to utilize scores of individual Requests For Forces (RFF) to build organizations in key theaters instead of formal TPFDL, leading to turmoil in the personnel system and ad hoc relationships. The fact that terrorist organizations tend to gravitate toward isolated and austere zones for bases has put a great burden on logisticians faced with a structure and procedures more suitable for large unit deployments in areas with some infrastructure. A better system needs to be devised to direct and coordinate the resources and forces necessary for this new kind of war.

Despite these problems, operations in Afghanistan quickly brought down the Taliban and punished Al-Qaeda. This is a tribute to the adaptability and competence of troops and leaders. The war has also showcased technological advancements. Airpower demonstrated a level of flexibility, accuracy, and power exceeding any previous war, especially when properly linked to the eyes of trained spotters on the ground.

However, ground operations in Afghanistan have also reinforced the importance of the synergy of traditional fire and maneuver as the key to victory. Surveillance assets, even when concentrated on a small section of Afghanistan as for Operation Anaconda, could not find all enemy positions, and long-range precision strikes could not annihilate them if they were concealed and dug-in. In the end, it was the ability of competent indigenous allies or American soldiers to conduct close combat that made the difference. Battle experience proved again that ground commanders need responsive all-weather fires around the clock to enable success, but even that combat multiplier will be wasted unless ground forces are at least as capable as the enemy they are fighting.

Army soldiers showed their mettle in Operation Anaconda, which again highlighted the need for continuous all-weather fire support, and demonstrated the synergy that can be achieved by modern fires and skillful maneuver. Adaptive opponents always learn to adjust to dominant American firepower; and well-trained ground forces are essential to fix and destroy an enemy who has mastered cover, concealment, and dispersal.

B. Responding at Home – While the commander of Army Forces Command is the land component commander for Joint Forces Command for homeland security and will be similarly involved in emerging Northern Command missions, FORSCOM is also a key force provider for combatant commanders in other theaters. Consequently, it has been required to respond to expanding tasks at home while augmenting forces abroad.

This war has been far different than that waged to free Kuwait. The six-month buildup of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm relied mostly on TPFDLs and detailed plans. In contrast to the 12 RFFs FORSCOM handled for the Persian Gulf War, this time it has received over 160, reflecting the quickly changing nature of the current struggle. Reinforcements have not just been provided to Central Command but also to Southern Command, Pacific Command, and European Command. Almost 2,000 individual augmentees have also been requested by headquarters around the world. Additionally, FORSCOM has mobilized almost 34,000 troops for Operation Noble Eagle. They are providing border security, consequence management, and other aspects of homeland defense. FORSCOM has utilized all components – active, Reserve, and National Guard – to meet these needs in addition to fulfilling requirements for regular training, modernization, and transformation. The Army Medical Department has also been very proactive in establishing Special Medical Augmentation Response Teams helping to reconstitute assets of other agencies and providing specific support ranging from airlifting ventilators to New York City to analyzing possible anthrax samples.

One of the great success stories for the Army has been how well and quickly these various components worked together to protect key national assets in the United States and help reassure all Americans. In December a Hawaiian National Guard lieutenant at Honolulu International Airport was approached by a small boy, who asked him, "Are you here to make sure the planes don't fall?" Assured that the soldier was, the boy added, "Well, I feel really safe because you guys are here." Many other citizens shared those sentiments.

C. Europe – The forward deployed forces of U.S. Army Europe have been essential to the success of Central Command operations. The established and experienced logistics organizations in Europe, along with their installations and host nation agreements, were essential for the missions in Central Asia. They established and maintained transportation links, provided supplies and communications support, and handled medical arrangements and facilities. At the same time, FORSCOM provided two Army National Guard Task Forces, TF Santa Fe and TF Keystone, to augment European security. Including Balkan duties, USAREUR currently has over 5,000 ARNG soldiers in the theater.

Those forces in the Balkans have not just been keeping the peace; they have also been prosecuting the war against terrorism along with NATO allies. They have aided the international Bosnia and Herzegovina Joint Coordination Committee for the Fight Against Terrorism, and constitute a key element of the U.S. Joint Interagency Task Force tackling the same issues. Since September 11, skilful raids have seized more than twenty suspects and facilitated the freezing of terrorist financial assets; investigations have begun on more that three hundred other suspicious individuals and organizations; and a terrorist haven has been completely disrupted. In another significant operation designed to keep weapons-grade uranium out of the hands of terrorists, a combined U.S.-Russian force of helicopters and soldiers descended on Belgrade one night in August to remove six thousand fuel rods from a defunct Yugoslavian nuclear facility.

Additionally, USAREUR has been instrumental in providing humanitarian relief in Afghanistan through the 21st Theater Support Command and 1st Infantry Division. Support included more than two million meals, two million pounds of wheat, and almost seventy thousand blankets.

D. Pacific – U.S. Army Pacific found itself in a rather unique position of having to coordinate the Homeland Security mission for Hawaii while supporting operations against terrorists in the Philippines. With responsibility as Joint Rear Area Coordinator – Hawaii, USARPAC had to facilitate joint military, interagency, state, and local cooperation for security matters.

Their teaming with interagency state and local authorities was very successful, and provided insights for the optimum execution of the Homeland Security mission in other locales. USARPAC developed a list of Military Essential Vulnerable Assets, some of which were civilian facilities, provided intelligence on them to local agencies, and established a quick reaction force. They formed a joint interagency working group that leveraged local expertise, especially emergency preparedness knowledge of the police. Information was shared at all levels, and special training was conducted to familiarize military units with civilian first responders. One important theme was "Smart Force Protection." Force protection postures were downgraded to reduce tension with the less-protected surrounding community, and new security technology was used to economize the commitment of troops.

In another example of the unique aspects of this war on terrorism, USARPAC had to support an exercise deployment to the Philippines that was designed to train local forces to deal with terrorists there. Because of the high demand on SOF assets, USARPAC had to build its own support structure for the soldiers involved in the operation in still another austere environment. It also had to deal carefully with the delicate diplomatic and public relations issues surrounding the U.S. deployment, often without clear guidance. Again, the adaptability and competence of the American soldier came to the fore, insuring success in another theater of this wide war.

Initial Impressions

Though it is only one year since the terrible events of September 11, the Army has already been involved in a wide array of operations to make the homeland more secure and combat terrorism around the world. From these experiences, some initial impressions can be drawn that might provide important insights for future phases of the global war against terrorism. There are some impressions of strains, but many more of strengths.

A. Strains on Technology – Though the war has gone well, some technological shortcomings have limited operational capabilities. The first involves bandwidth and communications. "Fast break war" requires very responsive networks for command and control as well as intelligence sharing, but in this Age of Information, more and more agencies are trying to transmit more and more data. Bandwidth requirements for the CENTCOM Theater of operations quadrupled after September 11 and will soon double again. Demand is especially heavy on military and commercial satellite activity. Such communications links are very important in Afghanistan. Not only does the country lack its own communications infrastructure, but also regular FM tactical radios often had insufficient range to connect dispersed units. Future units will need smaller, more deployable communications packages of increased bandwidth and range. If possible, long-term infrastructure should be emplaced in advance of potential need to reduce

demands on the limited resources of forces in the field. Staffs also need to be better trained to filter and organize information. Whenever bandwidth opens up, something always seems to fill it, meaning that we must always manage its use closely.

There are also many joint and combined communications issues. The simultaneous worldwide demands on SOF quickly overwhelmed their organic resources, forcing them to rely on a hodgepodge of support they could garner from other services. Intelligence sharing and operations with the many new partners in the war against terrorism were complicated by security concerns and communications system incompatibility, increasing the importance of the role of U.S. liaison officers, and again requiring leaders and soldiers to be flexible and innovative. Properly training and equipping allies to link with us must be a high priority, as should be making SOF and conventional forces more compatible.

Another key technological limiter was lift. At the tactical level, limitations of Blackhawk helicopters at high altitudes placed an increased burden on Chinooks, overworking those venerable aircraft and forcing ground commanders to make some hard choices about what soldiers and equipment could be taken on missions like Operation Anaconda. Shortages in strategic lift were even more apparent, also requiring combatant commanders to make difficult tradeoffs about deployments and slowing buildups and resupply. Problems were exacerbated even more by the limited airfields in Afghanistan, which lacked navigational aids, high-quality runways, cargo and fueling facilities, and even space to park aircraft. Fears of enemy air defenses sometimes restricted operations to nighttime and forced pilots to fly very difficult routes. Many other theaters in the fast break war have required the responsiveness of strategic airlift. U.S Transportation Command has been very quick to point out that, despite the C-17s fine performance in austere environments, numbers on hand fall far short of requirements.

B. Strains on Forces – The exemplary performance by Army SOF from Afghanistan to the Philippines has drawn plaudits from all quarters. Yet even before September 11, about 20% of ARSOF were deployed in 84 countries shaping the security environment as trainers and global scouts. Today, two-thirds of ARSOF are deployed in 85 countries, a rate of use that cannot be sustained. Because of the long training required to create a Green Beret, the force cannot be expanded quickly, so some way must be found to reduce their deployments, eliminating mission risks, compromising operations, or reducing key security cooperation programs, so the optimum solution is to get conventional forces to take over some of the current ARSOF duties. In general, SOF-conventional forces integration can be done better, and more joint training needs to be conducted. ARSOF need to be husbanded carefully for the many essential missions they will need to perform in the ongoing global war against terrorism.

Another force structure issue involves major headquarters staffing. Cost-cutting efforts over the years have tended to be particularly hard on headquarters manpower requirements. This situation is made worse in peacetime since major headquarters are not fully manned even at those reduced levels which, even when reached, are inadequate for the continuous operations that wars require. Elements of Third Army Headquarters, for instance, serving the Joint Force Land Component Commander, were at the lowest possible authorized level of organization; and that unit still does not have its full staff. Its problems have been worsened because Central Command Headquarters also needed augmentation to meet wartime demands, drawing some resources from strapped Third Army, which provides Army Forces for CENTCOM. Third Army in turn reached into FORSCOM to get people from the very tactical units that would soon be fighting in Afghanistan.

The pernicious ripple effect of these grab-bag augmentations is to create headquarters staffs with little experience or cohesion. One conference participant described the situation as "playing the Super Bowl with a pick-up team." Many reservists have been called up, but the talent pool, especially for operational or strategic planning, is thin. The further down the chain of command a headquarters is, the more likely it is to find itself utilizing people with inadequate prior training. They have applied themselves to learning their jobs, but the turmoil has been especially counterproductive for long-range planning. And because of the global nature of this war, the process of headquarters augmentation has not been limited to only CENTCOM, stretching personnel resources even further. In a fast break

war demanding agile planning, competent command and control elements are essential. It is a tribute to the soldiers involved that they have been able to achieve success with often ad hoc structures, but it has not been easy.

Below headquarters, there are numerous high demand, low-density units that will be important in this conflict. Many are logistic units, since Cold War force structure planning did not seem to adequately take into account the many austere environments where this conflict will be conducted, nor the way units would be split up and dispersed on missions. Another type of unit which is undergoing a particularly high operational tempo is military police. FORSCOM is extremely concerned about multiple call-ups of Reserve Components units of that type, which have been in very high demand for force protection and detainee operations. The latter were unexpected and have been particularly manpower-intensive, and have also contributed to the strains on lift assets because of aircraft required to transfer personnel to Guantanamo Bay and other locations. The prison in Cuba is undergoing considerable expansion and already has a garrison of over 4,000. There are about 600 inmates there at present, with plans to expand to hold 2,000. It appears that facility will be operating for a long time.

There may be ways to reduce MP requirements at detention centers by using conventional troops instead, though that is not an optimum or preferred use for such forces. There also may be ways to reduce the force protection requirements that have caused the deployment of so many MPs. A reevaluation of security requirements, such as those currently being conducted by the Corps of Engineers, may reveal that the military posts, especially in CONUS, that are now so heavily protected are not really the prime targets for terrorism. The new Northern Command should make this analytical task a high priority. Civilian facilities do not generally have the resiliency of their military counterparts and also provide more graphic publicity if attacked. During World War II, the Nation hardened 16,000 factories. We may need such a program again.

Such facilities as factories, dams, and bridges are probably best defended by civilian security and law enforcement agencies, which would have an additional benefit of getting more of the Nation involved in supporting the war against terrorism. During World War II, mobilization plans were backed up for six months in 1942 because nineteen divisions of deployable assets were tied up in homeland security. Eventually a system utilizing mostly state guard and auxiliary police was implemented, freeing up more troops to go to war overseas. This was also a part of the broad campaign including bond drives and Victory Gardens that gave the general populace a feeling they were part of the war effort. A similar program to reevaluate and augment security today would free deployable soldiers for other duties and help sustain public support for the protracted conflict to come.

C. Validation of the Army's Core Competencies – Despite these strains, the Army has served the Nation well during the first year of the global war on terrorism. While there is always room for improvement, the service demonstrated its considerable proficiency in all six of its core competencies.

1. Shape the Security Environment - Through its 150,000 forward-stationed and deployed soldiers, the Army provides over 60 percent of America's forces committed to theater assurance, dissuasion, and deterrence efforts. Often such involvement can shape the regional environment to prevent conflicts or facilitate responses when they occur. Army Service Component Commands and ARSOF have been proactive instruments in implementing combatant commanders' Theater Security Cooperation Plans around the world. The U.S. ability to conduct current operations against Afghanistan was aided considerably by 82nd Airborne Division and 10th Mountain Division exercises with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1997 and 1998. Other forward deployed Army forces have smashed terrorist cells in the Balkans, or contained the spread of violence by maintaining peace and stability, such as in the Sinai. As the global war on terrorism continues, the relationships and bases they have established will bear fruit in many other theaters.

Another consequence of the expanding conflict will undoubtedly be to increase American involvement in peace operations such as in the Balkans. The current situation in Afghanistan highlights again that post-conflict societies can become breeding grounds for crime and terrorism if some sort of order is not imposed.

This may be accomplished with direct American involvement or security assistance programs. Soldiers are engaged in training a new Afghan Army to maintain order in that war-torn state. Others are equipping and instructing former enemies in Georgia to build the core of a professional army for that small nation to take on Islamic rebels.

- 2. Prompt Response Army logistics forces responded rapidly to set up bases and facilities for operations in the austere environment of Central Asia. Army engineers and soldiers built most new military bases in the region. Rangers and Green Berets were the first ground troops deployed to the theater and figured prominently in operations, especially early in the campaign. Conventional forces overcame lift constraints to relieve Marines at Forward Operating Base Rhino and expand American capabilities on the ground throughout Afghanistan. USARPAC and ARSOF demonstrated commendable agility and flexibility in meeting requirements for operations in the Philippines. At home, Reserve Component and Active Component soldiers quickly secured airports and reassured Americans about their travel safety. While service transformation will further improve the responsiveness of conventional forces for overseas deployments, overall the Army demonstrated prompt response in a wide variety of scenarios.
- 3. Mobilize the Army This was another success story for the Army but, as has been noted earlier, the current mobilization process was designed more for the Cold War and large combat operations. There are many issues that need to be resolved about call-ups for homeland security missions, the use of individual augmentees, and reliance on multiple limited RFF instead of painstakingly developed TPFDLs. One insight for the future is that "mobilizing the mobilizers;" i.e., key leaders first, greatly facilitate the process. The development of more modular and scalable units in the Objective Force will improve the flexibility of mobilization in the future as well as speed deployment.
- 4. Forcible Entry Operations The Army maintains many options for forcible entry operations within FORSCOM, USARPAC, USAREUR, and USASOC. They are very dependent on lift assets, however. Still, Rangers and Green Berets played a key role in establishing the initial American presence in Afghanistan. Transformation will expand these capabilities further.
- 5. Sustained Land Dominance As Victor Davis Hanson has recently written, "In less than two months, the U.S. destroyed a most repressive regime. We fought without convenient bases or ports, 7,000 miles away and against a landlocked, mountainous and unfamiliar land whose cold peaks and warring tribes had held at bay formidable invading armies from the 19th –century British to the present-day Russians." After conducting decisive land warfare, the victorious American Army is providing security for a new government, training an Afghan army, and completing civil affairs projects all over the country. None of this would have been possible without the sustained land dominance that the U.S. Army provides better than any other force in the world. Demonstrated proficiencies included closing with and destroying the enemy, coordinating precision fires and maneuver, maintaining information superiority, commanding and controlling joint and multinational forces, controlling and defending land and people, and conducting sustainment operations.

Concerning the latter, central to Army success was the considerable innovation and agility exhibited by logistics elements, taxed by the requirements of austere theaters, not only to support Army organizations but also to meet Wartime Executive Agency Requirements for other services. Sustainment operations were conducted successfully in Afghanistan and the Philippines despite the difficulties caused by tight footprint constraints.

These constraints also affected troops and fire support available for ground operations, but the Army still played an essential role in providing the stable environment for the reintroduction of the Afghan civilian government. Its combat forces smashed any enemy concentration, allowing the transition to stability operations and facilitating the actions of civil affairs teams. Army units continue to provide security while helping to rebuild the Afghan infrastructure, army, and government.

6. Support Civil Authorities - The Army responded rapidly and efficiently to emergency civil support requirements for homeland security and consequence management. In fact, sometimes troops were organized for missions where they were not requested or really needed, such as for Joint Task Force Consequence Management,

suggesting that a better balance between "push" and "pull" support methods need to be struck. Reserve component organizations proved especially important for this competency, as governors of all states quickly responded to September 11 with Title 32 forces for airport security. Other troops were mobilized to augment border guards, though that deployment has raised a number of issues about the proper use of troops in that role. Some commentators have suggested that a review of *Posse Comitatus* is in order. Now that the initial scare is over and a new command is forming, an analysis should be conducted as to exactly what further Army support of civil authorities is required. As the World War II experience shows, increased involvement of local and state agencies increases public involvement in the war effort and frees deployable assets to go fight the global war on terrorism.

D. Validation of the Army Vision and Objectives of Transformation – While the Army has achieved great success in the global war on terrorism so far; the experience has revealed many shortcomings in Cold War force structures and procedures. They have not always been optimum for the unexpected requirements and quick responses characterizing this fast break war of multiple simultaneous operations in widespread theaters.

This war has demanded the agility and innovation that are at the core of the vision for the Objective Force. Future conflicts will continue to demand them. The new Interim Brigade Combat Teams will meet a demonstrated requirement to strategically deploy a medium-weight force rapidly anywhere in the world. Current operations have also highlighted the necessity for responsive and creative logistics; decentralized operations; modular and scalable units; improved mobilization and planning schemes; better C4ISR; and all weather, round-the-clock fire support; all features of the transformed Army of the future. That force, combined with soldiers who continue to exhibit exceptional mental and physical toughness, superb morale, amazing adaptability, and technical competence will continue to give America the best Army in the world for many years to come.

ACRONYMS

ARNG - Army National Guard

ARSOF - Army Special Operations Forces

C4ISR – Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

CENTCOM - Central Command

CONUS – Continental United States

CSL – Center for Strategic Leadership

EUCOM - European Command

FM - Frequency Modulated

FORSCOM - Forces Command

GWOT – Global War on Terrorism

MP - Military Police

OEF/NE – Operation Enduring Freedom/Noble Eagle

PACOM - Pacific Command

RFF – Request For Forces

SOF – Special Operations Forces

TF - Task Force

TPFDL – Time Phased Force Deployment List

USAREUR – United States Army Europe

USARPAC – United States Army Pacific

USASOC – United States Army Special Operations Command

USAWC – United States Army War College

