

Projecting the Force in the Pacific

■ By Brig. Gen. James S. Moore



A 25th Infantry Division Stryker vehicle is offloaded from the Ocean Jazz cargo ship at Yokohama North Dock, Japan, on Sept. 8, 2017, in support of Orient Shield. Orient Shield, held at Camp Fuji, Japan, is one of the many exercises linked by Pacific Pathways. (Photo by Luis Casale)



Recent developments in the Pacific, including a historic escalation of tensions on the Korean peninsula, ongoing issues between China and its neighbors in international waters, and a reevaluation of the relationship between the United States and the Philippines, are reminders that the region remains a very volatile political environment. In addition to its political challenges and regional threats, the Pacific Rim is extremely susceptible to natural disasters and is well deserving of its “Ring of Fire” moniker.

These conditions create a requirement for the Army to be able to deploy a sizable force on short notice to the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) area of responsibility (AOR) to counter a significant threat or provide a large-scale humanitarian cri-

sis response. The Army and its joint force partners must be prepared to swiftly execute such an operation.

PACOM is the largest unified combatant command. In addition, PACOM’s AOR is not a contiguous landmass with ground lines of communication; islands and peninsulas make up much of the land in the region. Clearly, force projection into the PACOM AOR, whether in response to a critical military contingency or a natural disaster, can not just instantly happen at the onset of a crisis. It must be planned, developed, and set.

Projecting a force from the continental United States (CONUS) across the world’s largest ocean requires constant, full-time attention in order to properly reassure allies, deter aggression, set the theater for poten-

tial contingency operations, and provide timely humanitarian assistance. Only through multiple lines of effort, including CONUS-based activities, multilateral exercises, regional engagements outside of CONUS, and the ongoing, synchronized actions of multiple stakeholders, are we able to credibly project the military element of national power across the Pacific.

Force Projection

Army Regulation 525-93, Army Deployment and Redeployment, defines force projection as “the ability to project the military element of national power from CONUS or another theater in response to requirements for military operations.” Army Doctrine Publication 4-0, Sustainment, elaborates by saying that the processes of force projection



Deploying units to operations in the Pacific requires maintaining constant relationships with numerous entities in order to be ready at a moment's notice.

(mobilization, deployment, employment, sustainment, and redeployment) “are a continuous, overlapping, and repeating sequence of events throughout an operation. Force projection operations are inherently joint and require detailed planning and synchronization.”

The Stepping Stone to the Pacific

Of the five processes within the force projection construct, mobilization and deployment and their associated subtasks are arguably the most critical. Recognizing this importance, the Army has designated certain CONUS-based installations as mobilization force generation installations (MFGIs) and others as power projection platforms (PPPs). Fortunately for PACOM, Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), Washington, is both an MFGI and a PPP.

MFGIs are Army installations designed and resourced to provide power projection support, pre- and post-mobilization training, and sustainment capability for active and reserve component units. JBLM is one of seven primary MFGIs. One of its tenants, First Army's 189th Combined Arms Training Brigade, conducts multicomponent integrated collective training both before and during units' mobilization.

PPPs are Army installations with access to designated local sea and air ports of embarkation (POE) that can rapidly deploy at least one combat brigade in support of strategic requirements. Poised on the U.S. Pacific Northwest coast, JBLM is uniquely positioned to connect Army combat forces to PACOM's AOR in support of the nation's strategic priorities. With McChord Field and the Port of Tacoma, as well multiple alternate sea POEs within close proximity, JBLM enjoys a multitude of strategic mobility options to rapidly deploy combat forces.

JBLM's advantages as a PPP extend beyond its great locale. The 593rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) at JBLM is fortunate enough to partner with a host

of outstanding organizations working in concert to effectively execute strategic deployments of tenant units and mobilized reserve component forces.

These organizations include the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command's 833rd Transportation Battalion and 1395th Deployment and Distribution Support Team, the Army Materiel Command's 404th Army Field Support Brigade and Army Field Support Battalion-Lewis, and Logistics Readiness Center-JBLM, whose Installation Transportation Division and Strategic Deployment Center (SDC) provide equipment marshalling support and direct unit movement data support to deploying units.

The Transportation Operations Branch of the 593rd ESC Distribution Management Center provides strategic mobility support to I Corps' separate brigades, and the 593rd ESC's 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion routinely transports equipment from unit motor pools to the SDC and from the SDC to the Port of Tacoma. All of these organizations' resources were brought to bear during a recent sea-lift emergency deployment readiness exercise, when the Forces Command redirected a Stryker brigade combat team to deploy its cargo to the National Training Center by sea instead of rail.

Setting the Theater Partnerships

Setting the theater is a critical component of effective force projection. It addresses the requirements necessary to support the geographic combatant commander's theater campaign plan, including agreements that allow U.S. forces' access to ports, terminals, airfields, and bases within the AOR.

In the Pacific, force projection and setting the theater are interdependent and inexorably linked, and their processes must be continual in order to be effective in times of crises. The 8th Theater Sustainment Command is responsible for setting the the-

ater in the Pacific, which involves all activities related to shaping the operational environment and establishing favorable conditions for military action.

The 593rd ESC is the sole deployable logistics command at JBLM. It supports a PACOM-aligned corps headquarters and has established essential relationships across the Pacific to enable critical continual force projection processes.

In order to understand the Pacific operational environment and anticipate force projection requirements in advance of a potential crisis, the 593rd ESC partners with the 19th ESC and Eighth Army in Korea, the 10th Regional Support Group and I Corps (Forward) in Japan, U.S. Army Pacific and the 8th TSC in Hawaii, and U.S. Army Alaska.

These staffs and units collaborate on multiple initiatives, including mutually supporting planning efforts and joint and multinational exercise support. For example, Army watercraft subject matter experts from the 593rd ESC, U.S. Army Pacific, and the 10th Regional Support Group recently collaborated to leverage two Japan-based landing craft utility vessels to transport Marine Corps cargo to and from a combined bilateral exercise in the Philippines.

Force Projection in Action

Pacific Pathways is an annual multilateral exercise in the form of a series of three strategic deployments around the Pacific. Each Pacific Pathways deployment features an Army task force, frequently components of a brigade combat team, whose equipment is transported from CONUS to multiple exercise locations and then back to CONUS on a single vessel.

For Pacific Pathways 18-2, the Indiana National Guard's 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team will ship its equipment by rail to JBLM. After downloading there, the cargo will undergo preparation for sealift, including a thorough cleaning for agricultural inspection, before it is called forward



Equipment from the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, is loaded onto a vessel at the Port of Tacoma, Wash., on Aug. 14, 2017, during a sea emergency deployment readiness exercise. (Photo by Pvt. Adeline Witherspoon)

to the Port of Tacoma for vessel loading in May and strategic deployment in support of the PACOM commander's training objectives.

This single movement of a reserve component force from the geographic heart of CONUS across the expanse of the Pacific and back requires the coordination of every organization previously mentioned and highlights the criticality of each process of force projection.

A major contingency or catastrophic natural disaster in the PACOM AOR is a distinct possibility with unpredictable timing. Deploying a sizable ground response force into an AOR as dynamic and vast as the Pacific requires deliberate plan-

ning before a crisis occurs. The processes of force projection, setting the theater, and establishing strong partnerships are the keys to success.

Brig. Gen. James S. Moore is the commander of the 593rd ESC. He holds a bachelor's degree in business information systems from Virginia State University, a master's degree in public administration from Troy State University, and a master's degree in joint campaign planning from the Joint Forces Staff College. He is a graduate of the Quartermaster Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the Command and General Staff College, Joint Professional Military Education, the Joint Forces Staff College, and the Joint Advanced Warfighting School.