

# Projecting Our Force: Our Strategic Advantage

The Army must be ready to effectively, efficiently, and quickly project and deploy forces forward with proficiency in movement and mobilization to achieve Army objectives.

■ By Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna



Our military's strategic advantages are its operational reach and ability to overcome the logistics challenges inherent in projecting our forces forward. Today's environment requires our continental United States-based Army to be ready to respond—shoot, move, communicate, protect, and sustain—to win. The Army must be proficient at mobilizing for training rotations, rotational force deployments, contingencies, disaster relief, and any other missions that may arise.

Logisticians are key enablers of Army power projection. We must rebuild critical capabilities and skills to quickly and efficiently support mobilization requirements.

Mastering force projection is no small feat. It requires complex synchronization at home station and points of origin; across rail, air, and sea; and with the support of the total force. We must define, know, and understand roles and responsibilities across

the strategic, operational, and tactical domains in order to project our Army from one location to another.

Strategically, we must set conditions by prioritizing mobilization training, updating policies and doctrine, and synchronizing Army and Department of Defense efforts. Just as fighting and winning wars requires more than one service, so does successful force projection. In close coordination with the U.S. Transportation Command, other combatant commands, and our allies, we continue to cultivate the relationships required to do the necessary work of projecting our troops and equipment around the world when needed.

Operationally, force projection requires synchronizing and integrating across several commands. For the Army, the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) has the lead in this effort. SDDC must work with the various life cycle management commands, the Army Sustainment Command, and Forces Command units to meet force projection requirements.

SDDC has already improved the visibility, speed, and efficiency of ship and air movements. Through a global common operational picture, we can now see major materiel movements worldwide. We have decreased by months the time units need to move from stateside installations to overseas areas of operation. Continued synchronization will be critical as we rebuild mobilization and force projection skills.

Force projection is more than just moving equipment from the point of

departure. At the tactical level, Soldiers must place themselves at the point of arrival and backward plan from there. Proper planning ensures successful force reception, which means Soldiers are able to offload and move out efficiently and expeditiously with combat-ready equipment.

Units must practice force projection and reception and build mobilization exercises back into training calendars. Soldiers must relearn container management and packing. They should load cargo from back to front and consider how equipment will be unloaded on the other side.

Units must ensure equipment being projected is ready for use as soon as it is unloaded. Units must shore up accountability of equipment and be proficient in loading, unloading, tie-down, and marking equipment at railheads and ports. These tactical-level skills are mastered only through practice and training.

While we have made progress in synchronizing force projection, including resourcing and prioritization, across the Army Materiel Command and our partners in the U.S. Transportation Command and the Forces Command, we have more work to do across the force. We must be ready to effectively, efficiently, and quickly project and deploy our forces forward with proficiency in movement and mobilization to achieve Army objectives.

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