

Donald A. Carter. *Forging the Shield: The U.S. Army in Europe, 1951-1962 (U.S. Army in the Cold War)*. Washington, D.C.: Centre of Military History, United States Army, 2015. Pp. 535.

At the start of 1951, the United States Army's presence in Europe consisted primarily of constabulary units engaged in occupation duties in the former territories of the Axis powers. Eleven years later, the US army had five divisions in West Germany positioned to confront a possible invasion by Soviet forces. The story of this transformation is at the heart of Donald A. Carter's book, *Forging the Shield: The U.S. Army in Europe, 1951-1962*. A volume in the US Army's official history of its forces in the Cold War era, it describes the evolution of the Army's role during this period, detailing the ways it adapted as its leaders strove to fulfill a new mission of superpower confrontation.

Carter begins by detailing the scope of the Army's challenge at the start of the 1950s, which involved a complete reversal of policy. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the aim of American officials was to end the US military's presence in the European theater, which was concentrated in three regions: southern Germany, Austria and the city of Trieste. The growing confrontation with the Soviet Union forced a reevaluation of this goal, with US forces shifting back towards combat preparation even as sovereignty was restored to the Germans in the American-, British- and French-controlled occupation zones. After the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949, however, the US Army faced a new mission to defend western Europe against a possible Soviet invasion and this required a far larger military presence than was already in place. A key step in this process was the reactivation of the Seventh Army in November 1950, which assumed control over organisation, training and operations for all US Army units stationed in Europe.

Seventh Army's tasks were considerable and Carter spends much of the early chapters of his book detailing their scope. Foremost among them was the building of a new combat-ready force in a foreign territory. Though the Pentagon soon transferred four divisions to Europe, these units had to be housed, supplied and trained for combat. Carter details these challenges at length, chronicling the gradual emergence of the Communications Zone (ComZ)—a logistical network that connected US forces in southern Germany to ports in France—as well as the development of housing

and other facilities for the troops. Adding to the challenge was the restoration of German sovereignty and the incorporation of West Germany into NATO as an equal partner. While these moves were key to shifting some of the defence burden to the West Germans, they reduced the latitude the Americans had enjoyed during the occupation period while increasing competition for the use of the already limited training ranges in the country. Though the units of Seventh Army enjoyed a considerable leavening of combat veterans from the Second World War and the Korean War, the constant influx of draftees ensured a regular need for training beyond what they received during their induction. This was especially true considering the forward position of most Seventh Army units, some of which were stationed within minutes of the border with East Germany. If war broke out, the opportunities for those soldiers to learn the art of war as they went along would be brief.

Complicating matters further was the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower as president in 1952. Though a career army officer, Eisenhower believed that a strong economy was vital to national security. To that end, his “New Look” strategy called for a greater reliance upon airpower and atomic weapons in order to reduce defence spending. As Carter explains in Chapter Three, for the Seventh Army, this meant incorporating atomic weapons into their planning. Carter identifies this as a significant factor in the evolution of the US Army in the early Cold War period. The Army and the Air Force had divergent ideas as to how such weapons might be deployed, and so the Army sought to reduce its dependence upon the Air Force to deliver atomic weapons. Such a change would allow for greater control over their use in a battlefield situation. For much of the period, the Army relied heavily upon ungainly 280-mm cannons as their primary means of deploying atomic weapons, subsequently supplementing them with intermediate-range missiles and even the infamous Davy Crockett short-range system. Budgetary pressure and the idea of an atomic battlefield also drove a reorganisation of divisions into a new “pentomic” structure, the effects of which on the Seventh Army Carter details in the later chapters of his book. The brainchild of the Army Chief of Staff, General Maxwell Taylor, the replacement of the three-regiment triangular division with one consisting of five “battle groups” of 1,356 men proved unworkable and was phased out in the early 1960s with the advent of the Kennedy Administration’s “flexible response” doctrine.

As the Seventh Army adapted to the uncertain demands of warfare in the atomic era, they also adjusted to the previously unfamiliar circumstances of long-term peacetime deployments abroad. Carter devotes a considerable amount of space in chapters Three, Eight and Ten to describing the problems faced by the Army in maintaining men abroad, addressing everything from their housing to morale. Drawing upon the work of such scholars as Donna Alvah, Anni Baker and Maria Hohn, as well as the contemporary accounts in news publications such as *Stars and Stripes* and *Army Times*, he recounts what life was like for these young American men, most of whom had not traveled much within their own country much less to a foreign one.<sup>1</sup> As Carter relates, despite occasional controversies the locals welcomed them for the protection their presence provided and for the money they spent in their communities. In turn, the soldiers often served as unofficial ambassadors, reconciling many West Germans to the continued presence of American forces and sometimes establishing enduring relationships that testified to the goodwill between two peoples who had been at war with each other just a few years before.

By the end of the period, Carter concludes, the United States Army, Europe (USAREUR) “had achieved almost all of the goals that service leaders had set for it more than ten years earlier” (p. 465). The same could be said for the official history of their effort. Based on an impressive range of official histories, archival records, contemporary reporting and scholarly monographs regarding defence policy and social history, Carter’s book offers a history of the US Army’s early Cold War engagement with the Soviet challenge that is lucidly written and clearly argued. His incorporation of the social history of the forces into his account is especially welcome, as it highlights an important aspect of the history of the Army that is all too often overlooked in official histories, such as the volumes on the US Army’s contemporary operations in the Korean War. Yet Carter’s focus is primarily upon the units and operations in West Germany. The ComZ organisation is discussed mainly in the context

<sup>1</sup> Donna Alvah, *Unofficial Ambassadors: American Military Families Overseas and the Cold War, 1946-1956* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Anni Baker, *American Soldiers Overseas: The Global Military Presence* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); and Maria Hohn, *GIs and Frauleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

of developing logistical support for the Seventh Army and the contingents in Austria and Trieste are addressed only in passing. Undoubtedly this reflects the primary mission of USAREUR during this period and the location of most of the Army's forces in the region, but it has the effect of leaving out parts of the history of the US Army in Europe from a volume ostensibly dedicated to just that. This omission is especially unfortunate considering the quality and comprehensiveness of Carter's scholarship in every other respect. With its coverage of everything from the Army's role during the Berlin Crisis to Elvis Presley's time as a soldier in a tank battalion, it is a model of official history, one that will endure as a resource for anyone interested in learning about the main focus of US Army operations during a critical period of the Cold War.

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