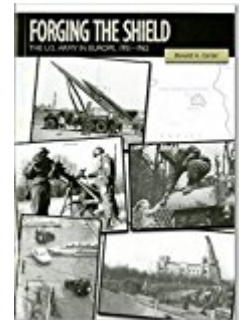


Donald A. Carter. *Forging the Shield: The U.S. Army in Europe, 1951-1962.*

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Donald A. Carter's new book, *Forging the Shield: The U.S. Army in Europe, 1951-1962*, examines the American military buildup in Germany after six years of post-World War II demobilization. Drawing on the institutional records of the US Army in Europe, including the reactivated Seventh Army, Carter produces an official history of the American institutions that faced off against the Soviet Union and its allies in Germany throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. While the United States remained unwilling to match the Soviets division for division, Carter argues, the reactivated Seventh Army was the country's "down payment" on its commitment to defend Western Europe. According to Carter, the Seventh Army emerged as the most visible face of the entire U. Army and became the testing ground for new doctrine and weapons as the service adjusted to the New Look of President Dwight Eisenhower. Ultimately, the US Army in Europe provided "the historical, doctrinal, and spiritual link" between the GIs of the Second World War and Korea and the draftees who would fight the Vietnam War (p. xx).

Carter begins by setting the stage for the reactivation of Seventh Army in December 1950. The postwar army in Europe, designed to oversee the occupation of Germany, was wholly inadequate for the defense of Western Europe. The 1st Infantry Division and the US Constabulary in Germany lacked any significant combat power. Additionally, rising tensions between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union, which culminated in the Berlin Blockade and the Korean War, convinced Washington of the need for a stronger American presence in Europe. As a result, President Harry Truman announced the reinforcement of Europe in September 1950 and the army consolidated all military units under a single command by the following December.

The process of standing up a credible deterrent to the Soviet Union, however, proved incredibly difficult. Throughout most of the book, Carter chronologically explores development of the army's key European institutions, while also chronicling the challenges faced by the US Army in Europe (USAREUR) and its major combatant

commands. Carter traces the changing organizational structure of the army's various commands and the planning for a potential invasion by the Soviet Union. Perhaps most significantly, the author examines the numerous problems which plagued efforts at rebuilding the army's presence in Europe. For example, the rapid influx of American personnel quickly strained the ability of post-war Germany to accommodate them. The arrival of dependents in the following years only exacerbated the problem and, at times, strained the relationship between the Americans and Germans. Additionally, the army faced a profound lack of training areas in Germany, particularly for large-scale military exercises. The former Wehrmacht training grounds at Grafenwöhr provided one option, but throughout the decade the army struggled with acquiring sufficient training grounds. Finally American commanders addressed problems with the line of communications supporting US units in Germany. A potential Soviet invasion threatened the line of communications running from Bremerhaven in northern Germany to the American units in the south. As a result, the army spent years negotiating and building a new communications zone running from the Atlantic coast through France.

Beyond such significant yet relatively routine issues, Carter shows how USAREUR responded to both domestic and international political developments. The most important domestic political development army commanders faced was the election of Dwight Eisenhower as president and the implementation of the so-called New Look. USAREUR and the Seventh Army became the army's laboratories, experimenting with new weapons, doctrine, and organization designed to keep the service relevant in the atomic age. The Seventh Army, for example, experimented with various atomic weapons, including the 280mm cannon and several different rockets. Additionally, the European army implemented the new pentomic division structure to better fight on an atomic battlefield. Some officers did question the wisdom of

using atomic weapons; they wondered what would be left of Europe to fight for after the widespread use of atomic cannons or rockets to stop a Soviet advance. Nevertheless, it was through USAREUR and the Seventh Army, Carter argues, that the army could demonstrate its continued utility in the New Look.

While the army tried to achieve "atomic mindedness," it also faced new challenges from a volatile international arena. The collapse of the planned European Defense Community and the subsequent Anglo-American decision to rearm West Germany meant that USAREUR assumed another major responsibility. Through the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Germany, and a variety of USAREUR training schools, the army instructed the commissioned and noncommissioned officers that would form the core of the new German army. Additionally, German officers attended American training exercises. According to Carter, the US Army's role in the development of the West German army was "perhaps the most significant" contribution during the Cold War (p. 205). Beyond rebuilding the German army, the repeated Berlin crises of the late 1950s and early 1960s tested the readiness of USAREUR and the Seventh Army. For example, the isolated units of West Berlin planned to fight a desperate defense of the city and then had to respond to the construction of the Berlin Wall.

By 1962, Carter argues, USAREUR achieved "almost all of the goals that service leaders had set for it more than ten years earlier" (p. 465). The Seventh Army acted as a credible deterrent to the Soviet Union while also demonstrating the American commitment to the long-term defense of Western Europe. Perhaps most significantly, however, "the mission in Europe served as a means to preserve the service's traditions as a ground combat force" while its leadership grappled with Eisenhower's focus on strategic air and sea power (p. 469). For Carter, then, the US Army in Europe

during the 1950s and early 1960s was a story of significant challenges but notable success.

Donald Carter presents a detailed institutional history of USAREUR and the Seventh Army. The foundation of his work is an impressive variety of research from primary and secondary sources. The core of Carter's primary source research comes from official records at the National Archives, but he also incorporates an array of oral histories from senior officers, material from the Eisenhower Presidential Library, and published primary sources such as *Foreign Relations of the United States*. He also incorporates a wide collection of major secondary sources; the bibliography includes such names as Andrew Bacevich, Melvyn Leffler, and Russell Weigley. From this research, Carter writes a fairly engaging official history of the US Army in Europe. Yet he does not get lost inside the institution of the European army. Carter successfully incorporates the larger political context, explaining how either domestic or international affairs shaped the army's actions in Europe.

The strengths of Carter's work as an institutional history also demonstrate its limits. As an institutional history it is not concerned about the social or cultural history of the US Army in Europe. Additionally, the individuals within the narrative are often subsumed beneath the overwhelming presence of the institution Carter writes about. In many ways this is understandable; after all, the army is a powerful institution that can easily overshadow its constituent parts. Nevertheless, many of the individuals Carter highlights in his work, including major commanders, are easy to forget. For example, general after general holds command of the Seventh Army throughout the 1950s, each merely a cog in the machinery of USAREUR and largely forgettable. Finally, any discussion of the broader historiography is largely absent from Carter's work. This is, again, somewhat understandable considering the book's position as an official history. Yet without a historiographical discussion a nonspecialist will struggle

to understand where Carter's work fits within the scholarship on the Cold War army.

Such critiques, however, do not subtract from the value of Carter's *Forging the Shield*. While of limited use for an undergraduate class, his work will provide good background reading for anyone interested in the army's activities in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, including undergraduate and graduate students conducting initial research. Finally, Carter's work demonstrates the continued importance of institutional histories. Although they possess notable limits, Carter shows that it remains important to understand the development and influence of society's most significant institutions. Donald Carter convincingly demonstrates that one cannot fully understand the US Army of the 1950s without examining the American army in Europe.

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