Association of the United States Army

Voice for the Army—Support for the Soldier

March 2008

Army Family Covenant for Soldiers and Families in Korea

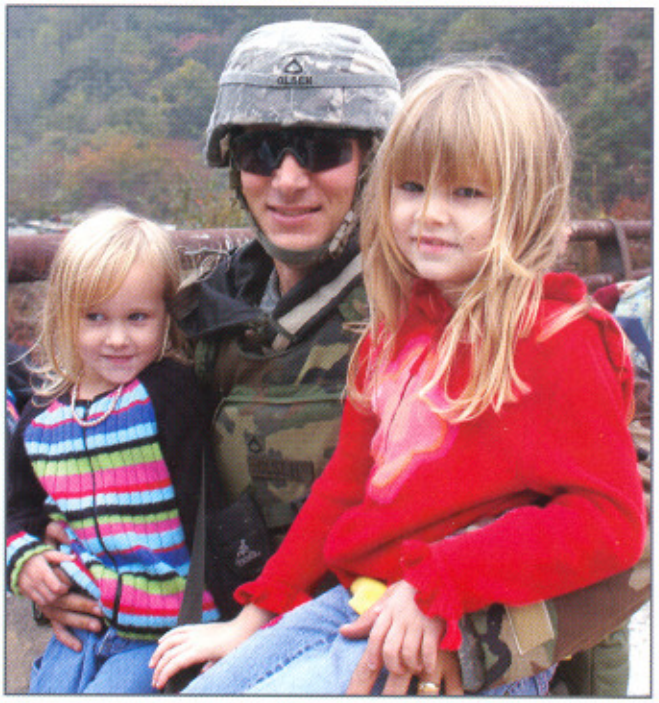
The U.S. Army in Korea in the 21st Century

The Soldier and the Army family—our all-volunteer force—[is] a national treasure, truly the strength of our nation. . . . We owe Army families a quality of life equal to the quality of their service.

The Honorable Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army,
AUSA Annual Meeting Opening Ceremony, 8 October 2007

Introduction

Committed to providing a quality of life commensurate with the dedication and sacrifice of today's all-volunteer force, United States Forces Korea (USFK) is leading a new era of "normalcy" for servicemembers, families, civilians and contractors serving in the Republic of Korea (ROK). This new normalcy furthers U.S. vital national interests in the Pacific region while implementing the Army's imperative of Sustaining Our Force. Breaking with Cold War short-term basing strategies and Quonset-hut mentalities, USFK is seeking to fundamentally change assignments in Korea by establishing a long-term, normal force presence at U.S. main operating bases across the peninsula. Executing an unprecedented restationing plan, USFK is



setting the stage for possible future three-year accompanied tours and two-year unaccompanied tours in South Korea—as in other locations outside the continental United States (OCONUS). Supported by an aggressive $8 billion-plus master plan (with the majority of resources coming from South Korean burden-sharing funding), the centerpiece for this transformation is U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, south of Seoul. Ultimately, stationing servicemembers—with their families—in Korea provides greater opportunities for theater engagement, reassures friends and allies of America's long-term commitment to peace and stability in the Pacific Region and strategically postures U.S. forces to secure the national interests, even beyond a future peace treaty with North Korea.

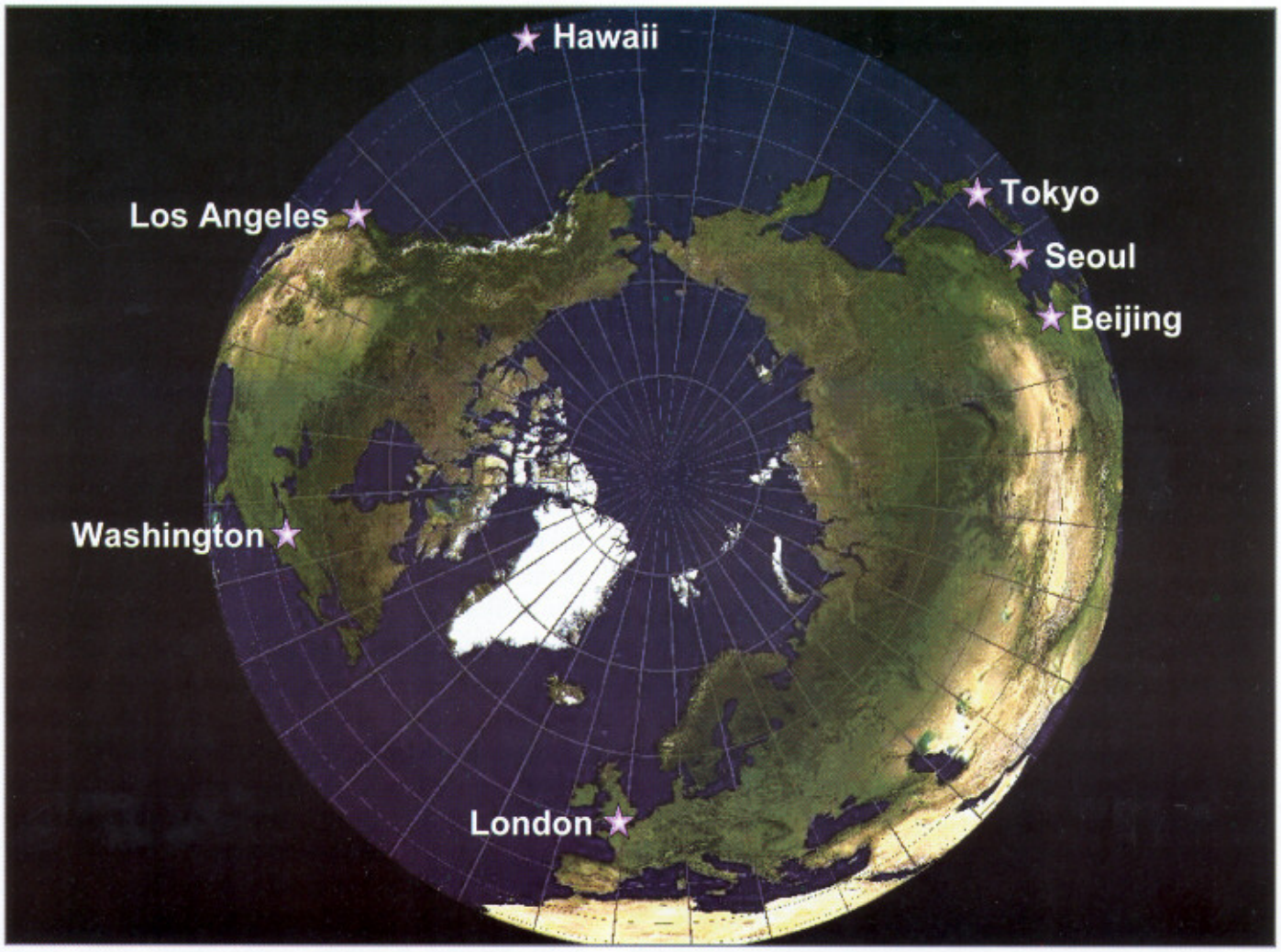
While American military presence on the Asian mainland began at the end of World War II and continued primarily because of the Korean War, today's strategic rationale for forward-deployed, family-accompanied tours in Korea extends far beyond the peninsula. With nearly one fourth of U.S. and a quarter of the world's trade flowing through Northeast Asia, a normal U.S. force presence in Korea will help secure sustained market and resource access, ensure peace and stability, and nurture relationships with likeminded friends and allies in a region filled with extraordinary opportunities and enormous challenges. Having lost its patron states at the end of the Cold War, North Korea has a degraded ability to wage major conventional war, but remains a primary threat to regional and global security through its asymmetric weapons of mass destruction programs and proliferation. Northeast Asia also has numerous flashpoints for instability with:

- five of the six largest militaries (including China and Russia);
- four proven nuclear powers (China, Russia, North Korea and the United States);
- heightened nationalism; and
- competition for natural resources amongst regional powers, including the opening opportunities along the Northwest Passage due to the realities of global climate change.

With nearly 29,000 servicemembers (including 20,000 of the 280,000 forward-deployed U.S. Soldiers around the world), USFK represents less than 2 percent of America's active military force—a small commitment for such significant strategic gains.

Transforming the Army's Strategic Approach to Korea

For more than 50 years, Korea was America's standing war. "Hardship duty on 'Freedom's Frontier'" described the mindset of repeated one-year unaccompanied tours in austere locations.



Correspondingly, the Army had a short-term approach to managing its installations and quality-of-life issues. In fact, some servicemembers still live and work in structures labeled "temporary" since the 1950s. Today, to support American strategic interests and the Sustain Our Force imperative in Asia, the U.S. Army is transforming its overall approach to stationing and installation management on the Korean Peninsula.

Given the long-term strategic importance of Northeast Asia, the U.S.-ROK alliance (one of seven U.S. mutual defense treaties, or MDTs)[1] is a cornerstone of America's global security framework. As an industrial power and stalwart ally (having militarily supported U.S. efforts in Vietnam, the first Gulf War, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan and United Nations missions in East Timor and Lebanon), the Republic of Korea is positioning itself to assume wartime control of its forces in 2012, with the United States shifting to a doctrinally supporting role. In conjunction with U.S. and ROK government bilateral agreements to relocate U.S. forces out of Seoul and the 2d Infantry Division (2ID) south of Seoul, this transformation presents the Army with an unique opportunity to change its approach to garrison master planning and, ultimately, the design of quality-of-life facilities available on its enduring installations. This planned realignment provides unprecedented opportunities for the Army and Installation Management Command (IMCOM) to improve quality of life for servicemembers and families by developing Army-standard, modern installations and eliminating the temporary infrastructure dating back to the mid-1950s.

Partnerships for a New Normalcy

USFK and Eighth U.S. Army are in the midst of the largest and most complex transformation and realignment process in the Department of the Army and arguably within the Department of Defense. Simultaneously, the commands are evolving the command and control relationship with the ROK military, transforming Eighth U.S. Army from an Army service component command to a warfighting-capable Operational Command Post-Korea in June 2008 and realigning the footprint of U.S. forces on the peninsula. Building and transforming the required supporting infrastructure to reposition the command's installation footprint and to sustain a more robust population requires concerted energy and synchronized support from numerous commands and agencies. USFK is working closely with the services (particularly the Army as the executive agent for installations through IMCOM), IMCOM-Korea, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Far East District, and the

[1] 1949 North Atlantic Treaty Organization; 1951 U.S.-Philippines MDT; 1952 ANZUS MDT; 1954 U.S.-Japan MDT; 1954 Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty; 1954 ROK-U.S. MDT; 1954 U.S.-United Kingdom MDT.

U.S. Army Medical Command. Also important are DoD activities such as the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS), the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), and the United Service Organizations (USO) and Red Cross. With international agreements directing the realignment and substantial host nation burden-sharing monies, the Republic of Korea itself is a major partner.

Republic of Korea Today. With an impressive array of western-style shopping malls and movie theaters, sports complexes, museums, temples and palaces, world-class hospitals, pioneering research centers and universities, combined with centuries-old customs and traditions, South Korea offers a standard of living and quality of life commensurate with that found in Japan, Europe and the United States. Efficient transportation systems and interstate highway networks connect metropolitan areas. As the 11th largest economy in the world, South Korea is an established economic power, as well as a thriving democracy, having conducted its fifth free and fair presidential election in December 2007. This economic and political growth, coupled with political and social recognition in hosting the 1988 Olympics, the 2002 Soccer World Cup and the future 2012 World Expo, has translated into a national priority to enhance the living standard and quality of life for the 50 million Korean citizens and more than 700,000 foreign nationals, including U.S. servicemembers and families, living in South Korea today.

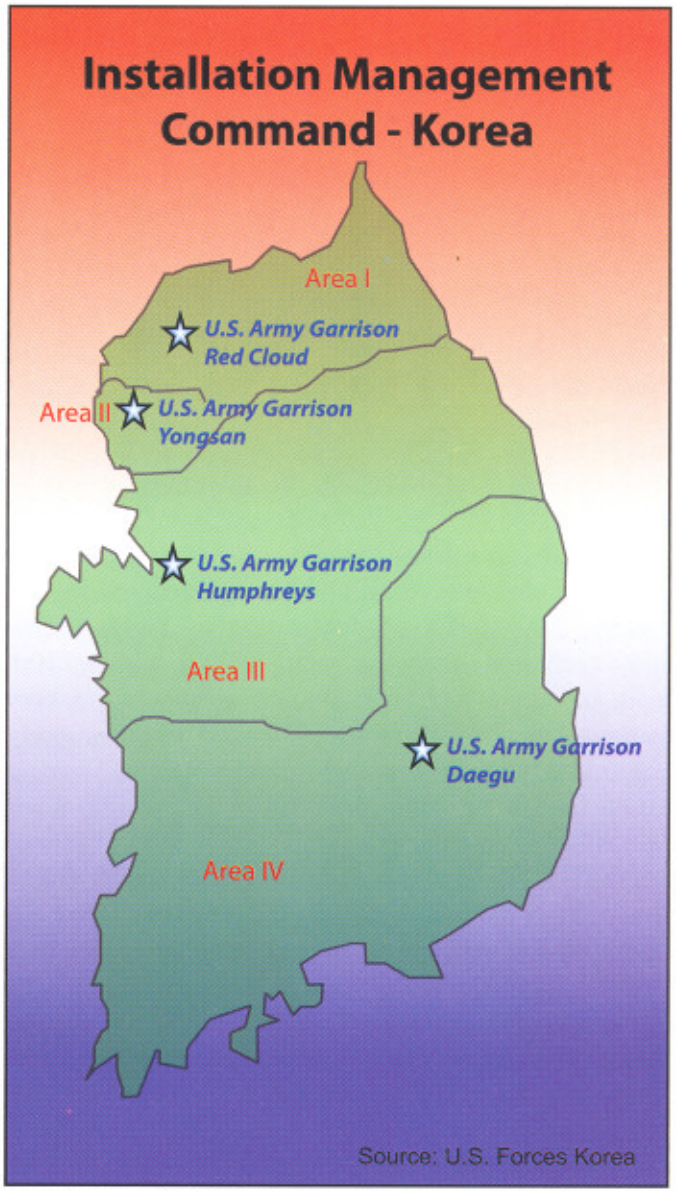
Keeping Families Together in the Republic of Korea. Coinciding with the signing of the Army Family Covenant in October 2007,[2] the USFK commander increased command sponsorship family opportunities from approximately 10 percent of the force to about 20 percent, initiating a measurable change toward normalcy. By reducing unaccompanied one-year family separations, which have been the norm in Korea for 55 years, USFK offers family stability between combat tours—a key means to Sustaining Our Force given today's current personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO) levels.

[2] http://www.army.mil/-news/2007/10/17/5641-army-leaders-sign-covenant-with-families/.

In the immediate future, 5,653 USFK servicemembers may bring their command-sponsored families for a stabilized two-year tour; many will have the option to extend for an additional year with the Korea-Assignment Incentive Program.

Although the vast majority of servicemembers currently serve unaccompanied tours in Korea, a great many choose to bring their families without the benefit of command sponsorship. Increasing in part because of the high PERSTEMPO for Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, this trend presents a key challenge, but one the command continues to meet: affording all eligible personnel access to the Army-standard, comprehensive services they deserve—from family housing to Army Community Services (ACS), Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR), AAFES, and DeCA support such as regularly stocked family-care items. While USFK phases in additional command-sponsored families, the command is working many initiatives in fulfilling the Army Family Covenant pledge to enhance support for families of the all-volunteer force.

Installation Management Command Korea. Given the long-term importance of providing normalcy to U.S. servicemembers and families, IMCOM-K is the backbone of USFK's ability to fulfill the Army Family Covenant. In addition to its core responsibilities of providing base operations support and services across four primary garrison commands geographically dispersed across South Korea, IMCOM-K is in the unique position of leading USFK's theater-wide master-planning effort. Backed by programmed resources from both the ROK and the United States, IMCOM-K is capitalizing on this opportunity to get it right, from the bottom up.



Over the next five years, as USFK and 2ID relocate south to USAG-Humphreys, this former single-Soldier camp with fewer than 9,500 personnel will grow to an installation of more than 200 separate organizations and a population of 44,300—a 470 percent increase. Guided by a comprehensive installation design guide, IMCOM-K is designing and executing a theater master plan that will deliver more than 600 new and renovated facilities, while growing its real property inventory from 4.5 million square feet to over 29 million square feet—the approximate size of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Additionally, IMCOM-K is implementing successful, state-of-the-art antiterrorism and force protection initiatives. The success of these efforts is underscored by the fact that in 2007, USAG-Humphreys took the top two honors in the Army-wide antiterrorism awards program.

Already furnished with a new family water park and modern family housing and recreation centers, USAG-Humphreys will also build a new post exchange shopping complex, a $26 million food, beverage and entertainment center and a new commissary. The Humphreys master plan uniquely supports USFK's normalcy initiative by delivering entire family communities that will include three embedded elementary schools, one middle school and one high school—all within walking distance, eliminating the need for on-post busing. Existing MWR facilities include one of the largest family fitness centers anywhere in the Army, two large multi-sports complexes, Laser Tag, RC Track racing, the peninsula's largest paint-ball range and a future 18-hole golf course.

While master-planning new facilities and services, IMCOM-K is simultaneously renovating and sustaining established facilities and services at 55 other active Army camps, ranges and remote sites, including those in Area I north of Seoul where more than 1,000 non-command-sponsored family members live without official support. However, IMCOM-K supports and staffs one-of-a-kind family-focused cottages that deliver social support services to all families. With amenities such as Internet service, washers and dryers, full kitchens and play areas for children, as well as services such as Army Family Team Building classes, family members have the opportunity to develop a mutual support network and build bonds, knowing that the Army cares for them. AAFES also now sends out a weekly "rolling PX" stocked with children's clothing and care products. Twelve miles south of Seoul, IMCOM-K continues to work with DeCA to establish a commissary at K-16 Air Base to better serve the anticipated increased numbers of command-sponsored families there. Initiatives such as this help to ease the burdens faced by non-command-sponsored families and are an incremental means to bridge the gap as the command moves towards normalcy.

USFK and DoDDS-Korea: Partners in Education. With approximately 4,000 school-aged family members attending the eight DoDDS-Korea schools, USFK and DoDDS-K formed a unique partnership in 2006 to improve the overall quality of the educational experience in Korea. Coordinating and integrating the efforts and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including the IMCOM-K garrison commands and supporting youth services, this formal partnership develops annual action plans endorsed and promulgated by the USFK commander.

Improved Internet-based resources for incoming families have eased the transition and bridged the gaps of time and distance from CONUS-based locations. Often, the biggest challenge facing families is a lack of timely information allowing them to make informed choices. The DoDDS-K website, www.korea.pac.dodea.edu, is a valuable tool for all families accompanying their servicemembers to Korea. This online assistance will prove essential in 2008 as the number of command-sponsored families increases. In Seoul, the USAG-Yongsan schools will gain up to 350 additional students for the 2008–2009 school year, a 16 percent increase. USAG-Humphreys and USAG-

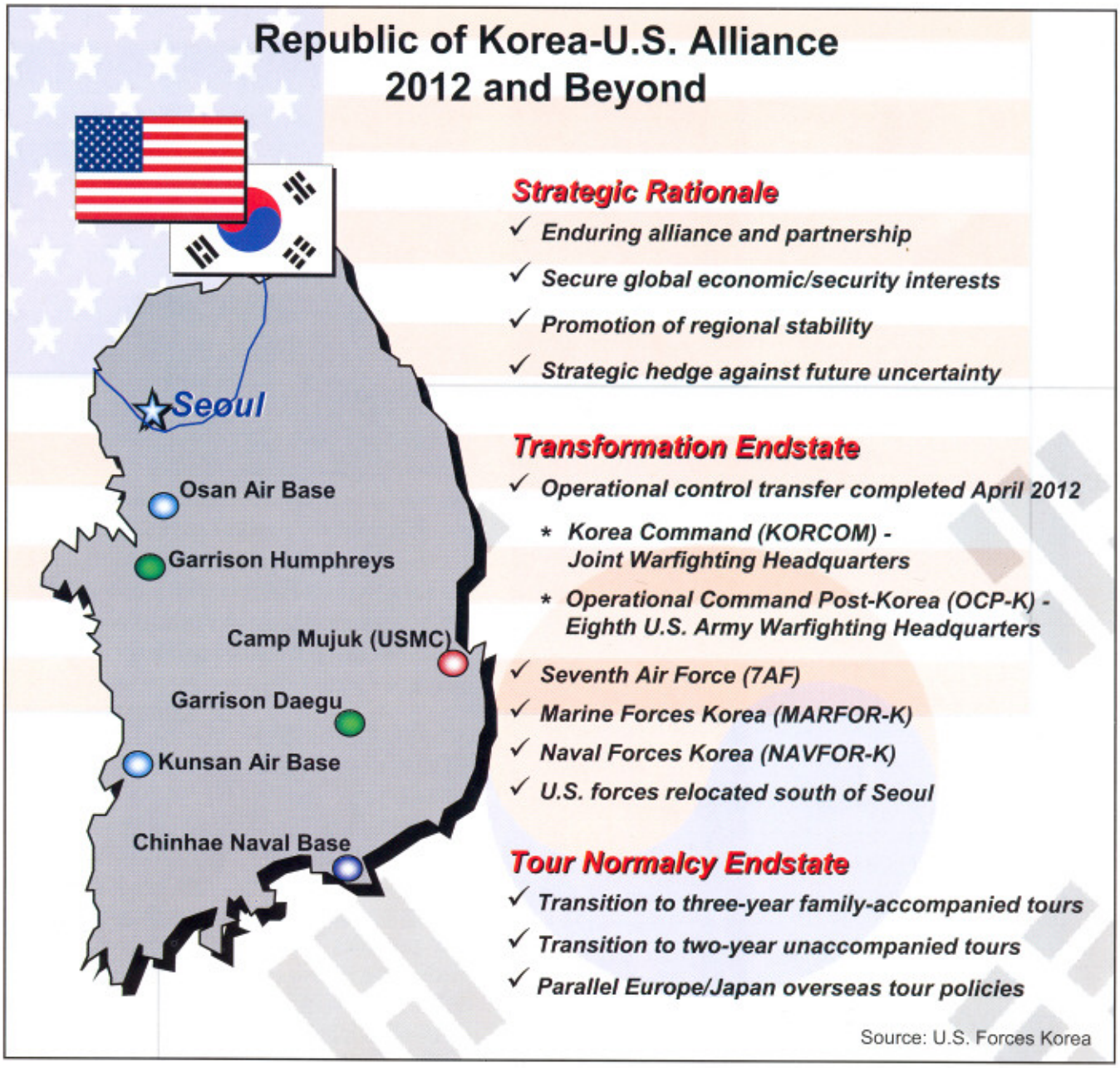
Daegu will also increase their enrollments according to their infrastructure capabilities and the regulatory guidance for teacher-student ratios.

To date, DoDDS-K has been able to accommodate all eligible children, including wait-listed, non-command-sponsored children enrolled on a space-available basis. Individual permanent change of station (PCS) orders for the Army and the other services now require all servicemembers bringing school-aged children to Korea to preregister on the DoDDS-K website, directly linked from the USFK homepage, www.usfk.mil. This website also remedies one of the greatest challenges facing DoDDS-K: the visibility of inbound students prior to the first day of school.

Aware that students living in Korea do not have the same "outside the gate" opportunities as students at CONUS-based installations, the USFK–DoDDS-K partnership actively seeks and promotes extracurricular venues for school-aged children. From activities and clubs, a variety of sports teams and summer school, students have a range of extracurricular activities, many linked to local Korean student clubs and activities. IMCOM-K also supports a robust summer youth employment program for full-time students, providing work experience for servicemembers' children while in the Republic of Korea. With new $750,000 artificial sports fields at the Seoul American High School and Camp Casey, servicemembers and families in and around Seoul have improved facilities for athletic and community activities year round, with more to be completed in 2008 at USAG Daegu. With the Army Family Covenant signing in Korea, IMCOM-K has further pledged to develop and improve family programs across the command.

Medical Care and Families. With the Acting Surgeon General of the Army present on 2 November 2007, the Army activated a Medical Department Activity (MEDDAC), a Dental Activity (DENTAC) and a District Veterinary Command (DVC) in the Republic of Korea. This was another milestone in improving the overall quality of life and establishing normalcy for servicemembers and their families. The commands have the authority to lay out their requirements, directly hire multidisciplinary medical professionals, and thus build and grow a capability that provides more precise care for servicemembers, spouses, children and civilians. Offering comprehensive medical care is a measurable step towards providing normalcy and an enhanced quality of life.

The establishment of MEDDAC and DENTAC commands coupled with the overall increase in command-sponsored positions will allow the TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP) to provide comprehensive health care for more USFK servicemembers and families. Unique to Korea, a regional TRICARE manager assists with paperwork, coordinates referrals and provides transportation to selected host-nation medical facilities, each of which has English-speaking doctors and staff (many trained in the United States), to ensure high-quality communication and medical service. This is just another step toward providing a quality of life proportionate to the level of commitment demonstrated by the all-volunteer force.



The Way Ahead

The Army's long-term ability to provide trained and ready Soldiers to defend U.S. interests around the world is dependent upon retaining the all-volunteer force through solid support systems and a high quality of life—which plays a vital role in recruitment and retention for both servicemembers and the civilian workforce. Theater transformation initiatives and normalized assignments in Korea can be another important element of the Army's ability to Sustain Our Force, especially in consideration of record PERSTEMPO. Reprogramming and new programming in military personnel and construction appropriations are necessary. However, the impact on funding and personnel will be minimal and consistent with U.S. forces based in Japan and Europe, especially with Korea's substantial annual burden-sharing monetary assistance. The end-state will reduce overall PCS costs and the need for entitlements resulting from family separation.

Establishing a normal, long-term joint force presence on the Korean Peninsula sends a powerful signal to both U.S. allies and potential adversaries alike of America's unwavering commitment to democracy, free trade and stability in Northeast Asia. The end result will be a strengthened alliance with the Republic of Korea, an enduring presence on the Asian mainland and a new normalcy for all U.S. servicemembers, families and civilians.