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## PREFACE

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U.S. military forces stationed and deployed abroad perform unique and important functions in support of U.S. national interests. Their presence overseas visibly underscores the U.S. commitment and capability to defend its interests and its allies, thus contributing to deterrence and stability. U.S. forces abroad help to create integrated U.S. and allied military capabilities through joint and combined training exercises and by developing invaluable personal contacts with foreign counterparts. Also, U.S. forces routinely stationed and deployed overseas provide policymakers with capabilities needed to respond quickly to sudden crises or threats of aggression.

For these reasons, maintaining capable joint forces in regions where important U.S. interests are at stake will remain a central feature of the U.S. force posture as long as this nation pursues a strategy characterized by high levels of engagement in global affairs. Since the end of the Cold War, the posture of U.S. forces stationed and deployed abroad has changed substantially. Other than in the Persian Gulf region, those changes have been characterized mainly by reductions in the number of personnel and units from their Cold War levels. For the most part, stationed forces remain based where they have long been based, despite the fact that the focus of our concerns in key regions is shifting.

This report provides a comprehensive review of the U.S. overseas presence from a “top-down” perspective. It emphasizes the need to strike an appropriate balance between continuity and change. Accordingly, it suggests that, as the future unfolds, substantial realignment may be needed in both the mix of U.S. forces stationed abroad and their locations and activities. The purpose is not to

diminish U.S. capabilities, but instead to make them more capable of handling the missions and requirements ahead.

This report surveys the changing international situation in light of U.S. national security objectives. From this assessment, the author derives a set of future U.S. military missions in key regions. He then posits a range of alternative future force postures for U.S. overseas presence and evaluates these according to a broad set of criteria. In the process, the author is mindful of incipient changes in the capabilities of U.S. forces, brought about by the fielding of new systems and the development of new operational concepts. A key conclusion offered here is that U.S. defense planners should begin to regard U.S. forces stationed abroad less as the leading edge of a large-scale reinforcement (though they will continue to serve this function), and more as the basis for projecting influence within the regions where they are based. Such a concept seems well-suited to a world in which the foci of U.S. and allied interests and concerns are widening inexorably outward beyond the old Cold War periphery.

This work was undertaken by the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND's Project AIR FORCE. It was sponsored by the Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, National Defense Review and Headquarters, U.S. Air Force. This report should be of interest to students and practitioners of U.S. defense planning, particularly those concerned with the changing security dynamics of Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf, and with the potential of air forces to assume new roles in U.S. joint operations.

## **PROJECT AIR FORCE**

Project AIR FORCE, a division of RAND, is the Air Force's federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) for studies and analyses. It provides the Air Force with independent analyses of policy alternatives affecting the development, employment, combat readiness, and support of current and future aerospace forces. Research is primarily performed in three programs: Strategy and Doctrine, Force Modernization and Employment, and Resource Management and System Acquisition.