

Ceremony Marks New Era in Homeland Defense

Press Release

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Homeland Defense has a new champion: U.S. Northern Command

A ceremony was held Tuesday at Hangar 140 for the unfurling of the U.S. Northern Command flag and the casing of the U.S. Space Command flag.

One of the responses to the attacks against the United States last Sept. is that the Department of Defense directed the creation of a new military command for homeland defense.

U.S. Northern Command formally came into being today. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Gen. Richard Meyers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, participated in the ceremony where command of USNORTHCOM was given to Gen. Ralph Eberhart, commander-in-chief for the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

"We must be prepared for attacks on our territory and our people. The fundamental way we will remain prepared for uncertainty is through the commitment of the men and women of Northern Command, who today shoulder a great responsibility on behalf of our nation," said Wolfowitz.

USNORTHCOM is different from the United States military commands operating in other regions of the world in that its area of responsibility is North America.

"Our survivability and way of life is what is at stake," said Meyers. "So we turn to NORTHCOM to provide that unity. A component of the command will focus on homeland defense operation, responsibilities, and planning of separate sea, air, and land operations."

USNORTHCOMs area of responsibility will include air, land and sea approaches and encompasses the continental United States, Alaska, Canada, Mexico and the surrounding waters out to approximately 500 nautical miles. It will also include the Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The defense of Hawaii and U.S. territories in the Pacific will remain the responsibility of U.S. Pacific Command.

"First and foremost, this is a command that will focus on the defense of this great nation and this area of responsibility, day in and day out," said Eberhart.

USNORTHCOMs mission is to conduct operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories, and interests within the assigned area of responsibility and, as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, provide military assistance to civil authorities including consequence management operations.

USNORTHCOM is only one part of a multi-layered, federal, state and local effort to defend our nation.

"The command will coordinate, liaise and communicate with all federal agencies and local responders that have an interest in the homeland security of this great nation," said Eberhart. "We are going to share information, harness technology, and breakdown cultural barriers to make sure we can do what the citizens of this great nation expect and deserve -- that is to protect them and their families."

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Even though Eberhart is now the combatant commander of USNORTHCOM, he will continue in his other role as commander-in-chief of NORAD, a position he has held since last February.

The headquarters of both USNORTHCOM and NORAD will be located here on Peterson Air Force Base.

As part of the same ceremony, U.S. Space Command transitioned its missions and responsibilities to the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

"A unique ceremony, the transition of the United States Space Command. We picked that word [transition] very carefully," said Eberhart. "It's not the retirement, it's not the deactivation, but it is the transition of USSPACE to the new USSTRATCOM."

The new USSTRATCOM will provide a single command greater focus to the interrelated areas of space operations, information operations and strategic defense and attack.

QUICK FACTS:

Mission Statement: to conduct operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories, and interests within the assigned area of responsibility and, as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, provide military assistance to civil authorities including consequence management operations

Budget: \$90 million

Number of personnel: Approximately 200 in place now and will have approximately 500 by Oct 1, 2003.

Heraldry:

In the forefront is the eagle, symbolizing our great nation and our alertness; ready to defend our homeland. Its right talons hold an olive branch and its left clutch a group of 13 arrows, the symbols for peace and war and representing the first 13 states. The eagle's head is turned toward the olive branch, indicating our desire for peace.

On the eagle's chest is a shield, a warrior's primary piece of defensive equipment. The 13 alternating red (courage and fortitude) and white (peace and sincerity) bars on the shield represent the 13 original colonies. The chief, in blue, represents their strength, vigilance and perseverance. The chief holds 13 six-pointed stars, a reference to the six-pointed design from General George Washington's personal flag. This flag was flown during his winter encampment at Valley Forge. General Washington had a personal protection guard, which consisted of a few hand-picked men from each of the colonies. This special guard carried these colors. The symbols from the Washington flag are a reminder of the efforts of the Continental Army, which served as our nation's first military organization to free and protect the homeland, and relate their great undertaking to the task set before us in the defense of North America.

A depiction of Northern Command's area of responsibility (AOR) is in the background, shielded by the eagle. On the AOR are three stars, a remembrance of each of the sites of the attacks on 11 September 2001. These attacks gave impetus to the formation of U.S. Northern Command. The stars are gold, a symbol of those who lost their lives. During the early years of World War I, a service banner was hung in the window of homes where there was a family member in the war. A blue star on the banner represented each family member. As the war progressed and men were killed in

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combat, wounded in combat and died of their wounds or disease, there came to be accepted usage of the gold star. This gold star was substituted and superimposed upon the blue star in such a manner as to entirely cover it. The gold star accorded the rightful honor and glory to the person for his offering of supreme sacrifice for his country.

The five stars at the top of the crest represent the five services: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. The stars are eight-pointed, representing the eight points on a compass and symbolizing our mission to counter the global threat of terrorism. The stars are lined up over the AOR, depicting the umbrella of protection that USNORTHCOM will provide North America.

The outside rings of red, blue and red with the white lettering of the command's name are representative of the colors of the nation and the national flag.