



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

By Donald A. Carter

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513 pages**

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Donald Carter's *Forging the Shield: The U.S. Army in Europe, 1951-1962* is the Center for Military History's official account of Army presence in Western Europe from the return of U.S. combat forces in 1951 through the Berlin Crisis of 1961-62. The book is a dense academic work focusing on the institution's doctrine, logistics, and manpower as the United States sought to reinforce its presence in Europe after the initial shock of the Korean War. Given recent discussions regarding America's role in European regional security, *Forging the Shield* deepens our understanding of how the Army went from a relatively small post-war garrison and occupation authority to a combat-ready force that remains stationed in Europe today.

As a result of rising tensions between the Soviet Union and the West in the late 1940s, American policy makers and strategists revised America's force posture throughout the world. The surprise of the Korean War and its initial American setbacks prompted changes to the American presence in Europe, where overt Soviet action was most expected. The 1st Infantry Division and the U.S. Constabulary, which were garrisoning West Germany, lacked sufficient or significant combat power required a radical shift in manpower and training in order to become a combat-capable force. In September 1950, just three months after the start of the Korean War, President Harry Truman called for reinforcements to be sent to Europe, demonstrating a willingness to forward deploy American troops in anticipation of conflict. The reinvigorated Army, Carter remarks, was a "down payment" for security in Western Europe in the event of a Soviet attack.

Carter's focus on the sinews and mechanisms required to expand American presence in Europe reveals the struggles commanders faced. Post-war drawdowns left equipment and training readiness at abysmal levels. Furthermore, doctrinal changes, especially with regards to atomic weapons, represented another significant challenge. Carter deftly portrays the frequent changes in American plans for tactical nuclear weapons and the resultant shifts in DOTMLPF (doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities) considerations. Throughout the 1950s, the U.S. Army in Europe conducted large-scale exercises and wargames in order to prepare for the atomic battlefield. These exercises helped American planners anticipate troop reactions, civilian concerns, and maturing NATO doctrine when preparing for World War III.

As Chief Historian Richard W. Stewart states in the book's foreword, the U.S. Army in Europe during this time was "a visible symbol to the world that America had placed its flag and its soldiers — its citizens-in-arms — in harm's way

to reinforce its commitment to peace and freedom.” Carter authoritatively tells that story from an organizational perspective. Drawing from official records and contemporary accounts in newspapers like *Stars & Stripes*, *Forging the Shield* is extensively researched and amply illustrated. That said, it is not for light or casual readers. The structural focus means the individual Soldiers and leaders who made up the Army are often lost in the narrative, leaving it somewhat sterile. While there are interesting asides on the birth of the Special Forces, intervention in Lebanon, post-war occupation politics, and simulated nuclear war in populated areas, the denseness of Carter’s work limits its applicability to all but the dedicated student of history. Ultimately, *Forging the Shield* is a valuable work in the history of the Army and its organization though aimed at a niche audience.