Returning SHORAD to Europe, part I
Establishing the foundation

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Introduction
We live and work in a complex and rapidly evolving operating environment. Rapid technological change and a number of other important developments across the full breadth of the diplomatic, information, military and economic spheres have led to a general consensus that the character of war has changed. But the future is inherently uncertain, and it is impossible to accurately predict the full arc of change with any degree of precision. Military professionals are, as they always have been, struggling to recognize the next major conflict’s location, what or who is coming over the next hill, and prepare accordingly to counter these unknowns. Quite understandably, then, today’s military journals are replete with articles unveiling the latest weapons systems, new technological advances, and emerging concepts designed to maximize and sustain a comparative and competitive advantage now and in the foreseeable future.

Critically important to achieving that goal, and somewhat underrepresented in much of the professional dialogue so far, is how the force “recaptures” and redeploys combat capabilities divested in our recent past. The demands of grueling counterinsurgency and counter-terror operations pushed the Army to eliminate or marginalize viable weapon systems, especially in Short Range Air Defense (SHORAD). Now, however, as the Army returns its focus to large scale operations against peer or near-peer adversaries and acknowledges that the proliferation of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) has given both national militaries and violent extremist groups credible air threats, SHORAD in direct support of maneuver units is once again critical to preserving the force and freedom of maneuver on the battlefield.

Recently activated during the first quarter of this fiscal year in Ansbach, Germany, 5th Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment colors during the battalion’s activation ceremony on Nov. 28, 2018 (Sgt. 1st Class Jason Epperson/U.S. Army).
dead; but with the Army’s shift to COIN, SHORAD capacity in the active component dwindled to only two battalions supporting ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan with a Counter-Rocket, Artillery, and Mortar (CRAM) capability using the Ground Based Phalanx Weapons System. Likewise, many of the seven SHORAD battalions in the Army National Guard were tethered to Homeland Defense missions, not supporting maneuver forces in the field.

As a result, knowledge and experience in tactical SHORAD atrophied throughout the force. There are many Air Defense Artillery Soldiers and leaders who have not touched an Avenger or Stinger weapon since initial entry training. Furthermore, most Soldiers and leaders in today’s maneuver forces have not operated with direct support SHORAD at any point in their careers. The Air Defense community in general, and newly-activating SHORAD units specifically, must therefore overcome a generational problem defined by a daunting array of related knowledge and experiential gaps at the individual, organizational and institutional levels. But as we have found, such issues cannot be addressed without first laying a deeper foundation upon which any SHORAD battalion’s ability affect individual, organizational, and institutional problems depends.

Setting the foundation

In September 2017, 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command (AAMDC) began mission analysis and conducted initial site visits to Ansbach in order to set conditions for the activation of 5-4th ADA slightly more than one year later. To minimize friction while restoring SHORAD capability in direct support of USAREUR formations, 10th AAMDC partnered with United States Army Garrison-Ansbach (USAG-A) representatives to ready facilities, network architecture, automations, and Soldier and Family Services. Routine engagements and dialogue with Human Resources Command (HRC) early and often enabled a manageable personnel surge to occur over time, based on pre-determined manning priorities focused on incrementally building combat power. The 10th AAMDC also reached out to 21st Theater Support Command (TSC), Letterkenny, Cruise Missile Defense Systems (CMDS), and 2nd Signal Brigade to proactively and collaboratively set conditions to activate, man, and equip 5-4th ADA as rapidly as possible. The relationships forged during this time synchronized efforts at echelon and addressed many challenges before the Army officially announced plans for the unit’s activation and stationing in Germany.

During the planning process, 10th AAMDC identified 13 critical billets to fill initially, selecting personnel from the 10th AAMDC HQ, 5-7th ADA, and 21st TSC in order to build the core leadership team at Ansbach four months before the first Soldiers’ arrival. The 10th AAMDC designed this “Tier-1” group to establish as many mission command, sustainment, and communications systems as possible prior to the unit’s activation. Immediately upon arrival, this team worked with garrison leaders and agencies to establish the reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOI) process for Soldiers and families. This group proved to be a tremendous asset that facilitated progress on establishing 5-4th ADA even before the Army identified its battalion command team.

As part of the Overseas Force Structure Change (OFSC) process, Shipton Kaserne in Ansbach, Germany, became home to 5-4th ADA. The selection of this installation is symbolic to the ADA branch for several reasons. It is named after the famed ADA founding father Brig. Gen. James A. Shipton, and was previously occupied by 6-52nd ADA, a Patriot battalion. The facilities are more than adequate to support a SHORAD battalion. Additional-
tranche of inbound personnel—comprised predominantly of junior noncommissioned officers (NCOs)—to prioritize the human dimension of activating a new unit. This decision proved especially critical after the first gains report indicated that new Advanced Individual Training graduates fresh out of Fort Sill would make up the vast majority of 5-4th ADA's first significant personnel surge. The Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate (EPMD) and ADA Branch at HRC, began discussions with 10th AAMDC and donor units to identify these Tier-2 leaders, thus enabling NCOs advance notice of their assignment orders prior to their publication. This was especially helpful in allowing these NCOs to prepare for this assignment, as delays in the host nation notification (HNN) process prevented the timely distribution of orders to affected personnel. In this case, Soldiers and leaders received notification of their selection for 5-4th ADA, allowing them to prepare ahead of the HNN. Fifth-4th ADA leaders conducted sponsorship video teleconferences with this group to streamline sponsorship efforts, answer questions and manage expectations of the Soldiers and the unit in a condensed timeline. After HNN, HRC placed those Soldiers and leaders on assignment, with many arriving within 30 days of receiving orders.

With infrastructure and initial personnel in place, 5-4th ADA was able to focus its attention on planning and coordinating its approach to activation. From the beginning, USAREUR leaders emphasized the importance of activating smartly instead of rapidly. Guidance to the battalion leadership was consistent and clear: activate methodically and resist outside influences to “rush to failure.” To that end, 5-4th ADA developed an activation strategy that presented a phased approach to building combat power based on criteria determined by the battalion leadership.

Using Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) as a framework, the battalion leadership identified conditions necessary for calling forward equipment from staging areas at Army depots in Europe, ensuring nothing would move without the proper personnel to account for, maintain and sustain the equipment. Analysis identified 11 critical positions and a total of 33 personnel required to call forward the first set of combat equipment, which consisted of 12 Avengers and eight Sentinel Radars with associated maintenance vehicles and equipment. This initial fielding has become the tactical backbone for Battery A, 5-4th ADA’s main effort in building combat power at this early stage. Working with HRC and 10th AAMDC G1, the Tier I personnel were able to pinpoint the time to request this equipment based on projected personnel gains and begin initial planning with civilian support agencies for fielding and New Equipment Training (NET) at Ansbach.

Moving out
With a foundation in place, 5-4th ADA activated in first quarter, FY19. Soldiers are eager and await the opportunity to hone individual, crew, and platoon skills, reintroducing direct support SHORAD to USAREUR’s maneuver forces. In setting that foundation, two important lessons are worth noting. First, the initial planning and coordination that 10th AAMDC conducted with partner units, agencies and directorates across USAREUR, the Fires Center of Excellence (FCOE) and HRC—carried on, once in place by 5-4th ADA’s core leadership team—was crucial to setting conditions for a relatively smooth and deliberate activation process. As a result, 5-4th ADA had the right leaders and processes in place to receive its first Soldiers and equipment sets. Second, developing a collective plan and using a deliberate approach tailored to the unique conditions facing each newly activating unit will prevent missteps and delays. A rush to failure will do nothing to help the enterprise address the individual, organizational and institutional problems that must be overcome to regenerate and rebuild SHORAD in direct support of maneuver forces on the dynamic and demanding battlefields of today and tomorrow.

Observations and lessons learned will follow in parts II and III, in an effort to share information to the entire enterprise. Returning SHORAD to Europe is a complex mission requiring concerted and collective effort from all ADA echelons in theater—5-4th ADA, 678th and 174th ADA Brigades, and 10th AAMDC. We hope that our experience may inform and assist the broader ADA enterprise as we collectively strive to enhance the branch, regenerate direct support SHORAD capability and re-educate the force on SHORAD support to maneuver forces in the current and emerging operating environments.

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