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The Army's Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF)

The Significance of the Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF)

Congress has expressed concern about the threat to U.S. national security posed by Russia and China. The Army believes to address this threat, it must be able to operate in a multi-domain (air, land, water, space, cyber, information) environment, requiring new operational concepts, technologies, weapons, and units. The Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) is the Army's self-described "organizational centerpiece" of this effort.

What Is a Multi-Domain Task Force?

The Army's *Chief of Staff Paper #1: Army Multi-Domain Transformation Ready to Win in Competition and Conflict* dated March 16, 2021, describes the Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) as "theater-level maneuver elements designed to synchronize precision effects and precision fires in all domains against adversary anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) networks in all domains, enabling joint forces to execute their operational plan (OPLAN)-directed roles."

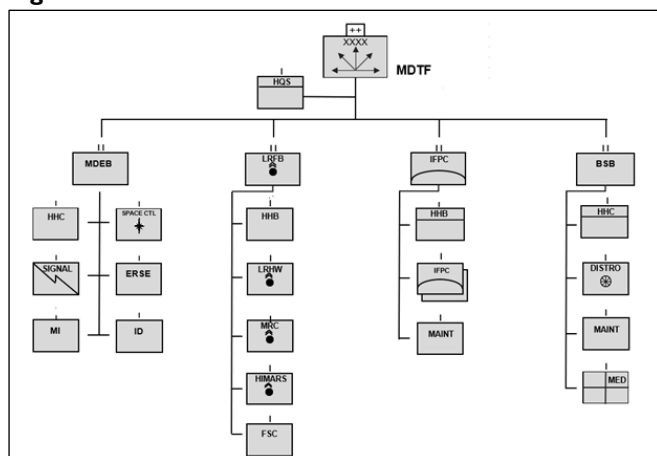
What Is Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)?

Anti-Access is any action, activity, or capability designed to prevent an advancing military force from entering an operational area. Area Denial is any action, activity, or capability designed to limit an adversarial force's freedom of action within an operational area. Threat A2/AD defenses are composed of layered and integrated long-range precision-strike systems, littoral anti-ship capabilities, air defenses, and long-range artillery and rocket systems.

MDTF Organization

The diagram at **Figure 1** depicts a generic MDTF.

Figure 1. Generic MDTF



Source: Army Information Paper provided to CRS, April 10, 2025.

Notes: **MDEB** = Multi-Domain Effects Battalion; **HHC** = Headquarters and Headquarters Company; **MI** = Military Intelligence; **ERSE** = Extended Range Sensing Element; **ID** = Information Dominance; **LRFB** = Long-Range Fires Battalion; **HHC** = Headquarters and Headquarters Battery; **LRHW** = Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon; **MRC** = Mid-Range Capability (also referred to by the Army as Strategic Mid-Range Fires (SMRF)); **HIMARS** = High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems; **FSC** = Forward Sustainment Company; **IFPC** = Integrated Fire Protection Capability; **BSB** = Brigade Support Battalion.

The Army notes each MDTF is to be tailored to Combatant Commander requirements, so it is possible the generic MDTF in **Figure 1** may contain more, fewer, or other types of units depending on the requirements of its assigned theater of operations.

Army Plans for MDTFs

The Army originally planned to build five MDTFs: two aligned to the Indo-Pacific region; one aligned to Europe; one stationed in the Arctic region and oriented on multiple threats; and a fifth MDTF aligned for global response

1st MDTF

The 1st MDTF is headquartered at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA and aligned to the U.S. Army Pacific. Since its 2017 activation, it has participated in a variety of exercises. In February 2023, the 1st MDTF's long-range fires battalion, 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, deployed a LRHW system over 3,100 miles from Joint Base Lewis-McChord to Cape Canaveral, FL, during Thunderbolt Strike, a full rehearsal of expeditionary hypersonic launch capabilities.

2nd MDTF

On April 13, 2021, the Army announced it would station its 2nd MDTF in Germany. The Germany-based MDTF is to support U.S. Army Europe and Africa. On September 16, 2021, the Army activated the 2nd MDTF at Clay Kaserne in Wiesbaden, initially consisting of a headquarters element; an intelligence, cyberspace, electronic warfare, and space detachment; and a brigade support company.

Split Stationing of the 2nd MDTF at Fort Drum, NY

On December 13, 2023, Senator Charles Schumer and Representative Elise Stefanik announced in 2025 Fort Drum, NY, would become the home of 1,495 soldiers and personnel from the 2nd MDTF's Long-Range Fires Battalion, Brigade Support Battalion (BSB), and Air Defense Battalion. The 2nd MDTF's Headquarters and Effects Battalions, activated in 2021, would remain in Germany.

3rd MDTF

The Army activated the 3rd MDTF at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, in September 2022. The 3rd MDTF is to support the U.S. Army Pacific as a component of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). The 3rd MDTF participated in its first exercise May 4-19, 2023, as part of exercise Northern Edge 23-1.

2024 Army Force Structure Transformation Initiative and MDTFs

On February 27, 2024, the Army released a white paper, *Army Force Structure Transformation*, outlining plans to transform the force. The white paper noted the Army intended to “complete the build out of the Army’s five MDTFs” and that

Three task forces will be assigned to U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC); one will be assigned to U.S. Army Europe-Africa (USAREUR-AF); and another will be service-retained with a likely focus on the CENTCOM area of responsibility [AOR]. One MDTF headquarters is already in Germany and another is stationed in Hawaii. As discussions with allied countries progress over time, the Army will likely forward station elements of the MDTFs permanently, such as the multi domain effects and long-range fires battalions, to strengthen deterrence.

April 2024 Update on MDTF Alignment and Stationing

According to an April 2024 *Defense News* article, the Army has updated MDTF pre-decisional plans. The Army reportedly plans to consolidate Mid-Range Capability and Long-Range Hypersonic batteries under a Long-Range Fires Battalion (LRFB) and complete programming of the remaining Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC) battalions over the next five years. The Army also plans to convert all brigade support companies to battalions. In terms of specific MDTFs

- The 1st MDTF is to be fully established in FY2024 with a Multi-Domain Effects Battalion (MDEB), an IFPC battalion, a BSB, and a LRFB.
- The 2nd MDTF is to be headquartered in Germany with an MDEB and other elements stationed at Fort Drum, NY, with an IFPC battalion, a BSB and an LRFB. The 2nd MDTF is to be fully operational in FY2025 with the addition of the LRFB in FY2026. The 2nd MDTF is to focus on supporting the European theater.
- The 3rd MDTF, headquartered in Hawaii with an MDEB, will have an IFPC battalion, a BSB and an LRFB stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, and is to be fully operational by FY2026.
- The 4th MDTF is to be stationed at Fort Carson, CO, but focused on the Indo-Pacific theater, and is to be fully operational by FY2027.
- The 5th MDTF is to be stationed at Fort Bragg, NC, and is to concentrate on regions as determined. The 5th MDTF is to be fully operational by FY2028.

2nd MDTF Strategic Fires Battalion to be Stationed in Germany

On July 10, 2024, the White House issued a joint statement with Germany “following discussions ahead of the NATO Summit”

The United States will begin episodic deployments of the long-range fires capabilities of its Multi-Domain Task Force in Germany in 2026, as part of planning for enduring stationing of these capabilities in the future. When fully developed, these conventional long-range fires units will include SM-6, Tomahawk, and developmental hypersonic weapons, which have significantly longer range than current land-based fires in Europe. Exercising these advanced capabilities will demonstrate the United States’ commitment to NATO and its contributions to European integrated deterrence.

3rd MDTF to Stand Up Long-Range Fires Battalion

Reportedly, in March 2025, the 3rd MDTF’s commander stated that “the Army’s 3rd MDTF is to stand up its long-range fires battalion over the next 12 to 18 months, as part of a “sizeable amount of growth” for the task force.” It was further noted that “during the same timeframe the MDTF is standing up the fires battalion, it will also establish a sustainment battalion at Joint Base Lewis-McChord,” and that the Army plans to add additional personnel to the unit’s Hawaii-based Effects Battalion and MDTF Headquarters.

Possible Oversight Issues for Congress

Possible oversight issues for Congress include the following:

- Based on the Army’s April 2024 Update on MDTF Alignment and Stationing, it appears that there is no dedicated MDTF coverage for the U.S. Central and Africa Command’s areas of operation. Are these two combatant commands to be covered by the 5th MDTF if it becomes operational in FY2028, or does the Army have other plans to provide MDTF support U.S. Central and Africa Command?
- The Arctic region is the responsibility of three Combatant Commands: U.S. Northern Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. How does this shared responsibility affect the alignment, command and control, and responsibilities of the Army’s MDTFs?
- What are the strategic implications of the July 2024 decision to station the 2nd MDTF’s Strategic Fires Battalion in Germany instead of Fort Drum, NY? Will the battalion’s long-range fire units be restricted to Germany only or can they be deployed to other NATO nations as well? How does this impact the planned stationing of long-range fire units at Fort Drum, NY?

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