

Charting the Army's Direction

By LTG Michael A. Vane

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The Army recognizes that the new realities of the current operational environment have affected traditional ways of viewing warfighting. In addition, we are picking up “weak signals”—such as rising suicide rates, increased drug use and occurrences of poor judgment—that indicate future force course corrections are warranted. Our projection of the future operational environment, coupled with these signals and cumulative lessons learned from the past years of conflict, spurred the Army's shift to a new conceptual framework to deal with the growing ambiguity, complexity, uncertainty and risks that confront our soldiers and units now and into the future. The 2009 *Army Capstone Concept* (ACC) and the 2010 *Army Operating Concept* (AOC) are the first products. With the ACC and the AOC, the Army establishes an important structure that moves beyond the counterinsurgency versus major combat operations debate without the dichotomous “either/or” proposition. In addition, the human dimension concept and emerging training and learning concepts address those weak signals. This new framework includes moving to a shorter, recurring two-year concept-development-and-analysis cycle to drive adaptation and force development and to underpin a comprehensive, affordable force modernization strategy across doctrine (and policy), organization, training, materiel, leader development, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF).

The Army Capstone and Army Operating Concepts

In late 2009, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) released the *Army Capstone Concept*. This document reflects the lessons learned from nearly eight years of conflict, describes the broad capabilities the Army requires in the 2016–2028 time frame and identifies how the Army will apply available resources to overcome adaptive enemies in complex future operational environments. The ACC articulates operations as part of a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational team. This approach is essential as the Army embraces a renewed emphasis on building partner capacity as part of its overall security cooperation mission. The ACC recognizes that future land operations will be characterized by uncertainty due to the human, psychological, political and cultural dimensions of conflict. To respond to this, the Army must provide joint force commanders with Army leaders, soldiers and units that exhibit a high degree of operational adaptability.

Operational adaptability demands that soldiers and leaders be skilled in critical thinking, comfortable with ambiguity and decentralization, willing to accept prudent risk, and able to make rapid adjustments based on a continuous assessment of the situation. To this end, the Army is developing new training and learning concepts in which operational adaptability is the central theme that binds the ends, ways and means of current and future full spectrum operations. The ACC describes what our Army must do and, with associated metrics, becomes the foundation for concept and doctrinal development

as well as capabilities-based assessments (CBA) to determine the most effective and affordable options.

The 2010 *Army Operating Concept* builds upon the ACC by describing the Army's contribution to national security within the context of joint operations. It focuses on the op-



erational and tactical levels of war and explains how the Army employs combined-arms maneuver and wide-area security operations as part of full spectrum operations. Army leaders will rely on an operational adaptability mind-set to lead full spectrum operations that fluctuate operationally with rapid transitions. The broad mission sets to accomplish full spectrum operations are combined-arms maneuver and wide-area security operations. Embracing these two core mission sets, Army forces will confront the problem of preventing and deterring conflict, prevailing in war, and succeeding in a wide range of contingency operations as part of a joint force.

Central to the military solution is the concept of mission command. Mission command is the conduct of operations based on mission orders, trust, mutual understanding among commanders and subordinates, and the exercise of disciplined initiative to accomplish missions within the commander's intent. Army forces achieve speed of action through the application of mission command and apply an expanded concept of combined-arms maneuver to identify and exploit opportunities and guard against unexpected dangers.

Concept-to-Capability Cycle Underpins Affordable Force Modernization

There are a number of ways in which the Army can improve operational adaptability through an affordable force modernization approach. First, given resource constraints and the demand to drive continuing relevance of the lengthy deliberative processes, TRADOC has shifted from a five-year to a two-year cycle for examining and updating

operational and functional concepts. This allows for more frequent and relevant submissions to support annual budget and programming decisions. The cycle utilizes warfighting concepts as the basis for CBA to inform program objective memorandum and total Army analysis development.

Second, the Army will establish baselines to a greater extent to learn where we are and where we are going and to capture critical assumptions to help adjust strategies as we move forward. We have established baseline capabilities for brigade formations consisting of numbers of soldiers, amounts of equipment, boots-on-the-ground to dwell ratio, and life-cycle costs. From the baseline, the Army can assess benefits and costs for potential DOTMLPF improvements and determine whether an improved capability merits adapting. (Expanding these baselines to address entire warfighting functions would be the next step.)

Third, the Army must continuously seek innovation. This occurs when the components of innovation, opportunity, demand and feedback from the "edge" are closely linked. Opportunity is the pace of technology, and demand is an adaptive adversary. The best feedback comes from those engaged in the close fight; their needs and ideas must be quickly incorporated into the mainstream of emerging concepts and capabilities developments—a challenge with a mixed bag of results. Seeking innovation requires keeping needs linked to opportunities. The feedback from the edge, tied to established baselines, allows for a more rapid and grounded projection of future capabilities tied to the existing planning, programming, budgeting and execution decision process.

Moving from concept to an affordable force modernization that supports operational adaptability also includes leader development programs, training and educational systems that address the human dimension of adaptability. Experimentation, gaming, studies, and analyses that lead to revisions of DOTMLPF require the same rigor and precision that are applied to equipping plans. In addition, the six warfighting functions (WFF) will have revised concepts this year, developed by the respective Centers of Excellence. These groupings of tasks and systems united by common purpose include mission command, movement and maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment, and protection. The shift to a two-year concept-development-and-analysis cycle enables the Army to modernize—that is, adapt—at a greater pace.

The Army's grounded projection of the future operational environment and state of technology, coupled with human dimension signals from the forces, led to a change in the conceptual framework to address future demands. The 2009 *Army Capstone Concept* and the 2010 *Army Operating Concept* are products of this new look. Embracing operational adaptability amplifies combat power and drives change in the force. In parallel, the Army's two-year concept-development-and-analysis cycle enables more rapid force modernization across DOTMLPF. These initiatives and subsequent actions have created the framework for the Army to chart its course with a clear focus on the challenges of the future, while keeping its qualitative edge in the current fight. ★

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