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Transformation: A Continuous Process

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Abstract

Changing times bring about the need for change. There are many circumstances that bring organizations to the realization that it is time to change the way that they conduct business, and the Army is no different. The Army is always changing, by improving weapons, modifying force structure, doctrine or tactics. This process always involves the interaction of recent combat experiences, budget constraints and new technology. Since the end of the Cold War, the military has attempted to maintain its capabilities while downsizing. Even more recently factors such as changing threat conditions, deployment tempo and battlefield requirements have impacted the Army's need for transformation.

This research will discuss factors and forces that have and will continue to influence the direction of transformation as well as recent policy changes that have been implemented to move the Army from its current force to the modular campaign quality force of the future.

Introduction

Throughout history, due to the ever changing environment of combat, transformation has been necessary for the U.S. military to maintain the necessary readiness posture to be successful in any theater of operation. By definition, “transformation is a process that shapes the changing nature of military competition and cooperation through new combinations of concepts, capabilities, people and organizations that exploit our nations’ advantage and protect against our asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position, which helps to underpin peace and stability in the world” (Department of Defense, 2003, p. 3). The Army is always changing, by improving weapons, modifying force structure, doctrine or tactics. This process always involves the interaction of recent combat experiences, budget constraints and new technology. Any change in an organization, such as the Army, is a balance of cost versus benefit. “The Army Campaign Plan (ACP) and its specific objectives, directs the planning, preparation, and execution of Army operations and Army transformation within the context of America’s ongoing strategic commitments” (U.S. Department of the Army, 2004, p. 1.8). As a result of the ACP, two major efforts by the Army to transform include creating smaller, modular units and optimizing Reserve Component contributions.

Supporting Reasons

Factors

There are several identified factors leading to the need for military transformation. The first of these reasons is that the current threat conditions dictate a need for a lighter, yet lethal and survivable, force that can rapidly deploy. “An assessment of the current and future global security environment involves a great deal of uncertainty about the potential sources of military threats, the conduct of war in the future, and the form that threats and attacks against the nation will take” (Director, Force Transformation, 2003, p. 12).

With an increase in deployment tempo (DEPTempo) there came a need to shift the Reserve Component from a strategic reserve to an operational force. Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) is a result of this need. In December 2006 the Army Chief of Staff, General Peter Schoomaker, received a

status of forces briefing that listed the entire Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) currently deployed or recently deployed. It also listed which units were going through transformation and when they would be available for deployment (U.S. Department of the Army, 2003). The Department of the Army (DA) was facing a problem of how to continue providing forces to sustain the current operations. Generating ready forces is a “structured progression of increased unit readiness over time resulting in recurring periods of availability of trained, ready and cohesive units prepared for operational deployment in support of regional combatant commander requirements” (U.S. Department of the Army, 2004, p. 3.13). ARFORGEN is a requirements-driven, capabilities-based concept that focuses every unit against future missions as early as possible and task organizes them into Deployment (DEF), Ready (REF), and Contingency Expeditionary Forces (CEF). This operational deployment cycle for the Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) provides for the needs of the Army and affords Soldiers and families adequate planning time for upcoming deployments.

Key Policies

Over the last several years there have been key policies enacted to effect transformation. The first example of such policy change is Army-wide Modified Table of Organization Equipment (MTOE) revisions. Due to the nature of the current battlefield environment there became a need for a wider range of military options; from this need came modularity. Modularity offers permanently organized brigade combat team (BCT) formations, as well as combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) elements, previously not found in purpose built task forces. Modular Army forces will be better able to support the joint force commander because modular capabilities enable the Army to provide flexible arrangements of combat power for the full range of military operation (U.S. Department of the Army, 2004). These commonly configured BCTs allow for the interchangeability between division and corps headquarters as well as improved versatility and deployability. A quick glance at the Force Management System Web Site, the Army web tool used to document manpower and equipment requirements and authorizations, will provide evidence of the recent equipping and personnel changes for the AC and RC units alike (FMSWeb). These changes provide for the “like” configurations that support

modularity. “Plug and Play” designs prevent the disassembly of division and corps structures that often leaves behind substantial forces that are relegated to being inoperable remnants (U.S. Department of the Army, 2004). In addition, “force structure changes and continuum of service paradigms optimize RC capabilities, as well as provide relevant, ready forces/individuals to the combatant commander as part of the Joint Force” (U.S. Department of the Army, 2004, pp. 1-8).

On January 19, 2007 the Secretary of Defense changed the mobilization guidance for RC forces in support of the Global War on Terror (U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, 2007). The most notable part of this change was that RC forces would only serve 12 months of active duty for each mobilization. This new policy recognized that the previous 12 months “boots on ground” (BOG)ⁱ was no longer attainable due to its dependency on the amount of post-mobilization training a unit required. In order to maximize RC BOG, and reduce required post-mobilization training time, a substantial portion of the pre-deployment certification training must be done prior to mobilization.

Pre-mobilization training is not a new concept. In accordance with FORSCOM REG 500-3-3 (currently under revision), company size RC units are required to maintain mobilization binders that contain the commander’s pre-mobilization training plan for a specified number of days based on the unit’s level of readiness (FORCES COMMAND, 1999). Due to the subjectivity of the evaluation process, as well as the increasing number of congressional inquiries to examine the training records of RC Soldiers whose families claim they were not properly trained, the need arose to standardize the process in which training was certified and documented. LTG Clyde Vaughn (Director, Army National Guard) issued the order on 19 July 2007 that established the requirement, and tasks to subordinate units, for the formation of Pre-Mobilization Training Assistance Elements to satisfy this need (U.S. Army National Guard, 2007). The gained effect would be minimize post-mob training time, maximize BOG for RC units, and ultimately to optimize the Reserve Component contributions.

Counter Arguments and Response

Afghanistan and Iraq are considered the two closest implementations of this doctrine and have presented arguments against transformation to include: increased civilian casualties and collateral

damage due to the heavy reliance on air strikes to replace a smaller ground force, inability to contain enemy forces due to reduced force, and an increase in looting due to insufficient amount of troops to guard infrastructure (Wikipedia contributors, 2008). Lending merit to these misconceptions only stifles the change of mind set that must also accompany the structural changes of transformation itself.

Evidence, and personal experience, shows that “violations of humanitarian law (use of human shields, abuse of the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems, use of antipersonnel landmines, location of military objects in protected places and failure to take adequate precautions to protect civilians from the dangers of military operations) by Iraqi forces (now insurgents) led to significant civilian casualties” (Docherty & Garlasco, 2003). Afghanistan and Iraq insurgents’ practice of wearing civilian clothes, though not relieving the Coalition forces of their moral and legal obligation to differentiate between combatants and civilians, tends to erode the distinction between the two. This practice of blending combatants in with civilians, combined with the strict Coalition policies and rules of engagement, allows for more unrestricted movement of insurgent forces. This, coupled with open, un-securable borders, decreases the ability to contain the enemy and prevent looting and infrastructure sabotage. These violations and practices must remain independent of any consideration or comparison to results of transformation.

Conclusion

Lessons learned (past and present), constantly changing security needs at home and abroad, and operational requirements that require total force readiness are all forces that have and will continue to shape policies pursued to achieve transformation. Due to the fact that transformation is not an end-state process but a continuous process, based on ever changing needs and constantly improving technology, it is difficult to determine if it has passed or failed . How well it is achieved can and will only be graded by the effectiveness of our forces.

History only repeats itself for those who do not learn from it. Since the beginning of the armed forces, the challenge to adapt to the time and space requirements of the battlefield has existed. The force

that has the flexibility to transform, physically and mentally, to meet the challenges of tomorrow while maintaining the capability to swiftly defeat the enemy of today, will be successful.

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ⁱ Boots on the Ground or commonly referred to as BOG is the actual time spent in a theater of operations. The Department of the Army (DA) policy was 12 months BOG for all Army units until the changes to the mobilization policy on January 19, 2007. The new DA policy is 15 months with a goal of 12 months for active duty units and RC units BOG is undefined due to the uncertainty of required post-mobilization training. RC units will mobilize for a maximum of 12 months including time required for post-mobilization training. (U.S. Department of the Army, 2008)