

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

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ARMY TRANSFORMATION:

IS IT JUST ABOUT FORCE STRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT?

LTC FREDDIE R. WAGGONER

COURSE 5605

U.S. MILITARY STRATEGY AND JOINT OPERATIONS

PROFESSOR

COL ROBERT STEPHAN

ADVISOR

COL DANIEL BURGHART

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The U.S. Army has recognized that it must transform itself due to the changing international security environment of the 21st century. Environmental change demands organizational change, but organizational change cannot succeed if current structure and systems are not realigned with the vision for change. The nature of change in highly interdependent systems, like the Army, is that you cannot change one area without changing other areas as well. Change in these settings is extremely difficult because, ultimately, you have to change nearly everything.¹

The Army's current transformation plan only addresses force structure, equipment, and training of brigade combat teams, and unless it addresses other areas it will not be successful in preparing for the new challenges and threats that the United States will face in the future. In order to achieve its vision, the Army must restructure itself for full-spectrum readiness, reform its personnel management system, transform its training and leader development programs, and it must adequately leverage the capabilities of the National Guard and Reserve during the transformation process. The purpose of this paper is to propose new ideas that can be used to insure that the Army is prepared to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

WHAT IS ARMY TRANSFORMATION?

For a half century, the U.S. Army has been organized and equipped to meet America's security needs for the Cold War. Now, America's security needs have changed, and the Army must reorganize and reequip to better meet those needs while modernizing for the future.² The goal of Army transformation is to become a strategically responsive force that is dominant across the full spectrum of operations. Army transformation represents the sweeping measures needed to accomplish the Army

vision, changing the ways that the Army thinks, trains, and fights.³ The Army transformation deployment requirement is the ability to put a combat-capable brigade anywhere in the world within 96 hours, a full division in 120 hours and five divisions on the ground within 30 days. All equipment must be transportable by C-130 aircraft.⁴

Army transformation will be conducted in three phases. Phase I, which is underway at Ft. Lewis, is the organizing and equipping of two initial brigade combat teams (IBCTs) and making them combat ready. Phase II is the establishment of the interim force of six to eight brigade combat teams and, possibly, a division headquarters. Phase III is the establishment of the objective force. Transitioning to the objective force will depend upon the ability of science and technology to produce a new family of vehicles, known as the “Future Combat System”. These new vehicles will be lighter than today’s armored vehicles, but will be just as lethal and offer as much protection. The objective force gives the Army the capabilities to achieve its vision of becoming a more strategically responsive force that can deploy faster while reducing its logistical requirements. The current plan calls for this transition to begin in FY2010 and to continue until FY2031. Starting in FY2012, one of the three brigades converted each year will be from the Army National Guard.⁵

Leaders of the transformation program contend that Army transformation is one of the most sweeping institutional changes ever envisioned for the Army, and that it is a total overhaul of training, doctrine, equipment and institutional thinking. Transformation will take place while the Army continues to maintain its warfighting capabilities and its ability to respond to small-scale contingencies.⁶

WHAT CURRENT ARMY PLANS FAIL TO ADDRESS

Current plans to transform the Army are a good start, but there are several key areas that have not yet been addressed. First, the Army is not adequately structured to perform small-scale contingency missions, such as, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and homeland security. There are not enough of the right kinds of units in the Army force structure to perform these missions.⁷

Second, current personnel management systems will not work for an Army that must deploy and fight under the proposed timelines. Soldiers – not technology – are the key to continued superiority. In the future Army, the relative value of each individual leader, soldier and planner will increase. Smaller units will bear greater responsibilities and enjoy a lower margin for error. These observations imply that the Army must once again raise the bar for its training and personnel systems.⁸ Thus, we must embrace the need to spend more time and resources training people, and we must keep those teams together longer to achieve the teamwork, confidence, trust and reliability necessary for elevated performance.

Third, the Army must change the way it trains its units and educates its leaders. The current system is not working as it should and must undergo major reform if transformation is to be successful. Perhaps the truest measure of diminishing warfighting readiness, short of wartime performance, is the performance of combat units at the combat training centers (CTC). In 1999, the Army Inspector General confirmed for senior leaders that unit performance at the CTCs continued to decline, in part because units have fewer opportunities to train at home station. The significant increase in

deployments to smaller-scale contingencies is a primary reason that unit training suffers from a lack of mission focus throughout the Army.⁹

Fourth, the Army must improve the readiness of the Reserve components (RCs) in order to fully exploit their vast manpower resources. Although the RCs are busier than ever reinforcing and augmenting active forces all over the world, the combat brigades and divisions of the ARNG until recently have remained largely on the shelf, with only the 15 enhanced separate brigades being assigned a combat mission in current war plans. Realists will also recognize that the Army must improve the current readiness of the reserve combat units in order to make this concept feasible.¹⁰

RESTRUCTURING THE ARMY FOR FULL-SPECTRUM READINESS

As the national strategy has evolved to increase emphasis on global engagement, Army leaders have recognized the need to adapt the size and shape of Army force structure to provide capabilities required by the national security strategy for the full spectrum of missions. To conduct the secondary shape and respond missions, senior leaders have generally drawn units from the MTW forces under the assumption that they could be quickly extracted from a smaller-scale contingency if necessary. The 1997 QDR acknowledged that withdrawing forces from smaller-scale contingency operations, reconstituting, retraining, and then deploying to an MTW in accordance with required timelines “may pose significant operational, diplomatic, and political challenges”. At best, this strategy is wishful thinking; at worst, it is creating the conditions for a future high-casualty disaster.¹¹ Even with more money, as long as the Army continues to deploy its first-to-fight MTW forces to smaller contingencies, it still faces a significant,

long-term readiness challenge. It is time for the Army to apply internal solutions to address its readiness shortfall.

The question is how can the Army improve its readiness to fight and win two MTWs at the same time that it improves its capabilities to respond to smaller-scale contingencies? The current transformation plan does not solve this problem. The remedy for this mismatch will require a renovation of the Army's force structure and the way it missions and trains its units.¹²

The first requirement is to change the Army's force structure. The Army's vision should describe a future force structure with unit-specific MTW or smaller-scale contingency mission focus and organization. For the Army's two MTW requirement, the primary combat forces needed for the first MTW and the halt phase of the second MTW should be active component forces. However, the combat forces required for the decisive counterattack phase of the second MTW should primarily be from the Army National Guard.¹³ Force structure freed up by this methodology, along with the decreased logistical requirements achieved by transforming to a lighter force, should be converted to the type of units needed for small-scale contingencies and homeland security. These missions require additional military police, civil affairs, public affairs, construction engineers, chemical units, etc.

Second, the Army should change the way we mission and train the force by adopting the expeditionary force model. Expeditionary forces operate on long wave cycles compared to present operations. This concept requires a very different infrastructure management system and institutional flexibility that will be difficult to adopt.¹⁴

The Marine Corps and Navy have operated as expeditionary forces for a long time. Their entire organizations are focused on a cycle that creates, trains, deploys, employs, and recovers. This system would be new to the Army but would allow it to tackle present and future obligations with less strain on the force and better use of available resources. Adopting an expeditionary mentality and infrastructure to support it would allow the force to always have units ready for major war or various contingencies. Some would be trained for one and some for the other.¹⁵

Using this concept, combat brigades, and their supporting combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) units, would be identified for specific missions. They would then use a two-year cycle to build the unit, conduct training and validation, deploy (if required), and then re-deploy and recover. It would be essential to assign and lock-in missions early on and to stabilize key personnel for the duration of the cycle. Adopting the expeditionary force model would dramatically improve combat proficiency, which would lessen the chance of failure on the battlefield.

REFORMING THE ARMY'S PERSONNEL SYSTEM

The Army must reform its personnel management system and related policies in order to adopt the expeditionary force model and to maximize the capabilities of the Objective Force. The armed services, and particularly the Army, are facing tremendous challenges in recruiting and retaining the quality people that they will need to man the ever increasingly sophisticated and highly technical equipment of a 21st century force.

All the services are throwing serious money at the dual problems of recruiting and retention, without any assurance that money alone will solve the problem.¹⁶ Recruiting costs have more than doubled over the past 14 years as the Army increasingly finds itself

competing with a booming economy for talent.¹⁷ As the range of choices available to those entering the work force has expanded, the propensity of young Americans to serve in the military has decreased. Since 1991, the propensity to serve amongst males age 17-21 has decreased from 17 percent to 12 percent.¹⁸ The recruiting and retention crisis of recent years has forced several of the services to either miss their quotas or reduce the quality of those they take in. In FY99, only the Army National Guard met its recruiting goals. The Army fell short by 6,300 and the Army Reserve was 10,300 below its goal.¹⁹ The Army and both reserve components met their recruiting goals for FY00, but the Army is over 1,200 short after six months of this year.²⁰

The Army is also struggling to retain its quality people. Recent studies indicate that the propensity to remain in the Army has declined steadily among junior officers (down 13 percent) and NCOs (down 17 percent) over the past nine years.²¹ One of the major concerns is the amount of time soldiers are away from home station, and its negative impact on the attitudes of soldiers and their families, which in turn affect retention, readiness, and morale.²²

To transform the personnel management system, the Army first needs to begin by reforming its recruiting program. This will require adapting to the realities of a new environment. The Army traditionally recruits high school graduates who choose not to go directly on to college. But the fraction of people who make such a choice is now shrinking – today only one in three. This is forcing Recruiters to draw from a smaller and smaller pool.²³ Instead, the Army should re-prioritize its recruiting focus to target the large number of high school grads who go on to college and drop out after a few semesters, and upon those who go from high school directly into the world of commerce,

only to find out that with just a high school diploma they have little chance of advancement.

The Army also needs to develop a plan to attract individuals trained in information technologies. Information specialists need to be recruited as we recruit doctors, lawyers, chaplains, and other professionals. The requirements for technical and advanced skills will only increase as our means for performing full spectrum operations become more sophisticated. The Army must quickly adapt to this changing reality.²⁴

Secondly, the Army must improve how it retains soldiers by adopting a culture that puts people first. Some people believe that bonuses and higher salaries can solve military recruiting and retention issues. They're only part of the solution. Service members need to be properly trained and equipped and have challenging and rewarding things to do. Retention success is also tied to the quality of support provided to members' families, which expect available, affordable childcare, quality healthcare and housing.²⁵ Sustaining a trained and ready force of high quality people requires a tangible, enduring commitment to the well being of the Army family. Such a commitment encourages retention and helps maintain professionalism and esprit.

The Army would greatly improve the quality of life for its soldiers and families if they would increase the length of tours to four or five years, and by leaving people in assignments for a minimum of two years. It should also consider adopting a true regimental system that would allow soldiers to remain in a specific unit (division or brigade) for the majority of their careers. This would be difficult to manage for mid-level and senior officers and NCOs, but could work well for most enlisted and junior officers. Not only would this help Army families, but would also greatly improve the overall

readiness of our units. It is almost impossible to see how the Army could adopt an effective expeditionary force system without changing its personnel assignment policies.

To put people first the Army must end its “conscripted mentality”.²⁶ Too many leaders continue to act as if there is an unlimited supply of new recruits, and when a young soldier gets into trouble or has problems adjusting to military life, these leaders are all too quick to “throw the book” at them. The Army can change this mind set by changing the way it trains and motivates new recruits and by altering its leadership development programs and courses to include more training on interpersonal skills, such as, coaching, counseling, and motivating subordinates. A new leadership paradigm is evolving. The old, top-down style of leadership, will no longer work. A new paradigm that focuses on participatory leadership is now called for. The new leader of successful organizations is one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who converts leaders into agents of change.²⁷

Third, the Army should reduce the number of its forces that are permanently based overseas. U.S. strategic interests will not allow the American military to disengage fully from any region where its forces are now deployed. But changed strategic circumstances, new technology, and creative thinking together make it possible to reduce the number of US troops deployed in many theaters abroad and to improve the quality of military lives in the process.²⁸ The Army could use the expeditionary force model to rotate units to places like South Korea and Germany, just as the Marine Corps rotate units in and out of Okinawa.

Fourth, the Army needs to change its promotion, pay, and recognition systems to reflect the changes of the 21st century economy and the changes caused by

transformation. For junior officers, promotions should be slowed down for their early years in order for them to have more leadership time with troops. The Army should at the same time encourage Congress to provide larger time-in-service pay increases (percentage wise) to junior enlisted, warrant officers, and junior officers. It should also target high-tech and hard to fill specialties (both officer and enlisted) with enlistment and reenlistment bonuses, and expand the use of special duty assignment pay. Soldiers and leaders who are in hard jobs should be rewarded for their effort. Another idea would be to provide a “good soldier” bonus, that a soldier could earn each year for meeting an established set of standards.

TRANSFORMING TRAINING

In order to achieve its readiness goals and provide the nation a transformed force that is immediately deployable anywhere in the world on short notice, the Army must make fundamental changes in how it trains and prepares its units and how it develop its leaders. This change should begin by having all units, active and reserve component, train to one standard. The Army needs an achievable training baseline and a method to validate training that supports the unit status report (USR) process.²⁹

The Army’s training strategy should insure that soldiers at the squad/section/crew level master the same core skills. Above this level, units should be identified, trained and validated for specific missions, such as, the MTW warfighting mission, peacekeeping, short notice contingency operations, etc. Units would then develop and execute their training plans, using the expeditionary force readiness cycle. This would be a two-year cycle for active units, and a three, four, or five-year cycle for RC units, depending on the mission and the type unit (company, battalion, or brigade).

For AC and RC combat units a successful rotation at one of the combat training centers should be established as the standard for training and validation. Without a doubt, the CTCs have been instrumental in improving the combat readiness of the Army. The Army's official account of the Gulf War credits our combat training centers (CTCs) with resounding success in helping our units prepare for war. The effectiveness of the CTCs cannot be duplicated by any other training method.³⁰ Of course, to make this possible the CTCs would have to be expanded and this would require additional funding. The CTCs should be redesigned to include asymmetrical threats, urban operations, peacekeeping, and other major contingencies. They also should include more combat support and combat service support units, become more joint, and when possible, include combined forces from our allies.

Adopting the expeditionary force methodology would also improve training and readiness by allowing units to focus on a specific mission. This concept would enable units to maximize time and resources, keeping personnel together in a cohesive unit for longer periods, thereby allowing them to conduct the necessary multi-echelon training that is needed to successfully prepare for the CTCs and their assigned missions.

As the Army transforms brigade-size formations and realizes near-term strategic responsiveness, leader development will remain fundamental. Successful transformation of the Army depends on developing innovative leaders for its new organizations and equipment. Regardless of the environment or the technology, mental agility – the ability to maintain the initiative in these complex and ambiguous situations – is the key to balancing and synchronizing all six Army imperatives – quality people, training, force mix, doctrine, modern equipment and leader development. The Army must develop

adaptive leaders who are innovative and display initiative with prudent risk taking.

Training and education must enable them to exploit information age situational understanding and become agents of change.³¹

Adaptive leaders develop through increasingly challenging scenarios that the leader presents for analysis and resolution. The Army's commission producing institutions must initiate an adaptive-learning continuum that develops officers who are open-minded, creative, and receptive to change. Required officer development courses must provide the necessary follow-on steps to insure that adaptive leaders are developed at each successive level of command. While the Army's training and education transforms and produces a career-long, adaptive-learning series of increasingly complex courses, commanders at all levels must contribute by growing and developing their subordinates.³² These changes need to incorporate more distance learning and shorter course length, thereby allowing leaders to spend more time with their troops and with their families. In addition, they should be synchronized with the unit's training and readiness cycles. This would reduce the number of PCS (permanent change of station) moves, and lessen the effect on unit turbulence. When leaders do attend resident phases, the program of instruction should focus on practical exercises that cause leaders to "think".

LEVERAGING THE CAPABILITIES OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE

During the transformation process, the Army must improve how it uses the unique capabilities of the National Guard and Reserve in order to provide ready and capable forces that can mobilize and deploy to support the National Military Strategy. First, the Army needs to identify specific RC units early on for specific missions in order for those

units to focus their training. Units need to be identified and resourced based on a rotational training cycle that gives them adequate time to prepare to meet established mobilization and deployment timelines. Some units would be missioned for the MTW fight, while others would be missioned for peacekeeping, homeland security, and peacetime engagement missions.

The second improvement that needs to be made is to develop a training strategy and training cycle for all RC units, and that strategy should be based upon assigned missions. Combat brigades, to include divisional brigades, should be on a five-year cycle. During the first year, units would focus on individual/leader training and squad/section/crew certification. The second year would focus on platoon training; third year on company level; fourth year on battalion/task force level; and, the fifth year the brigade would conduct a CTC rotation. For combat support and combat service support units, battalions should be on a four-year cycle while separate companies would be on a three-year cycle.

This change would require the Army to alter its tiered readiness policy. Units would have to be placed on different rotational cycles that would allow additional resources and training assistance to be provided to units as they conduct higher levels of training. Units conducting squad or crew level training would not be provided as much resources as units conducting battalion level or higher training.

To properly prepare units for a CTC rotation the Army needs to establish a National Guard Training Center (NGTC). It should be modeled after the NTC with some differences. The focus should be on the platoon and company level, and could use both

AC and RC observer/controllers and OPFOR provided by other RC combat units.³³ This concept should also be explored for CS and CSS type units.

Third, we must continue to work towards greater AC-RC integration. Since 1997, much has been accomplished in this area. The Army has established two integrated divisions, comprised of six enhanced separate brigades, and several multi-component units have been created. Today, all Guard divisions and the remaining enhanced brigades are “teamed” with an AC Corps or division. The Army has also implemented a command and staff exchange program to help weave a seamless Army and overcome cultural barriers.³⁴

But, even more needs to be done. Combined training between AC and RC units must be integrated into every single training opportunity. AC and RC units must develop their training plans with their counterparts in mind.³⁵ Every RC unit, not just divisions or brigades, need to be “teamed” or partnered with an AC unit. Another solution to improve RC readiness and break down cultural barriers would be to integrate active-duty officers and NCOs directly into key positions in RC units. This concept has been used effectively by the Marine Corps Reserve for many years.³⁶ Finally, there needs to be better integration and interoperability of RC personnel, logistics, and maintenance systems with that of the Army.

Fourth, the Guard and Reserve must be provided additional resources if readiness is to improve. This starts with additional full-time manning. The Guard is only resourced at 54 percent of its full-time manning requirements. The Army Reserve is in the same shape.³⁷ The RC must also receive more modern equipment in order to be more

compatible with AC units. RC units also need additional funding to resource challenging and meaningful unit training.³⁸

Finally, the Army and DOD must work to reform current personnel policies that adversely affect the retention of Guard and Reserve soldiers. Initiatives such as, employer tax credits, improved health care, expanded retirement options, and incentives to alleviate salary inequities for deployed reservists, are needed to improve retention and maintain high levels of readiness.³⁹ The Army must get smarter on how it deploys RC units, by conducting shorter rotations, identifying units earlier, allowing RC leaders more say in the selection and training of units, and by maximizing volunteers.

CONCLUSION

These changes will not be easy to implement and will require the Army to re-prioritize its funding plans. If the Army is to succeed at transforming itself into a force that is capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century, it must change more than just the force structure and equipment of its combat brigades, and it must realize that technology alone will not transform the Army – people will transform the Army.

In order to achieve the vision for transformation, the Army must restructure itself for full-spectrum readiness, reform its personnel management system, transform its training and leader development programs, and improve the readiness of the National Guard and Reserve. By understanding the interdependent nature of its organization, Army leaders can go about changing the systems, structure, and culture that stand as barriers to achieving its vision – *“Soldiers on point for the nation transforming this, the most respected Army in the world, into a strategically responsive force that is dominant across the full spectrum of operations.”*⁴⁰

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