



AUSA BACKGROUND BRIEF



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AIRLAND BATTLE - FUTURE: MATERIEL NEEDS FOR MISSIONS

THE CONCEPT

AirLand Battle - Future, the Army's emerging umbrella concept, is an evolutionary step beyond AirLand Battle, which has guided preparations for war throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. This next generation of operational doctrine incorporates the way the Army will apply rapidly emerging technologies to the battlefields of the early twenty-first century. It will be adaptable across the operational continuum, from peacetime competition through conflict and war, and will have a direct impact on Army organization, equipment and training, as well as how commanders will lead and fight their units.

AirLand Battle - Future recognizes the drastically-changed world environment and the nature and broad range of threats that are fed by the worldwide proliferation of technologically-advanced weaponry.

Prospects of reduced defense budgets and arms control agreements further require the emergent concepts to fit a smaller force structure. The combat effectiveness of a smaller Army will be determined by the quality of weapon systems; the organization for combat; individual and unit training; the capability to see, shoot, move and communicate on the battlefield; and the quality of combat leadership.

Technological advancements have significantly increased the lethality, range and accuracy of modern weapon systems. Because of their high costs and a smaller Army, there will be fewer such weapons on the future battlefield. Advanced developmental weapon systems that improve strategic mobility, deployability and lethality, enhance surveillance, and enable the rapid massing of long-range fires at the critical time and place, will allow the commander to gain and maintain initiatives while dispersing forces to reduce vulnerability.

Indications of the battlefield visualized by AirLand Battle - Future can be seen in Operation Desert Storm, where there is extensive use of automated systems in command, control, communications and intelligence functions. The amount of useful enemy information — to include imagery — made available from sophisticated sensors and transmitted virtually real time to all appropriate echelons of command far exceeds that of previous conflicts. With such reliable information the commander can move ground forces and mass fires to the greatest advantage.

The linear battlefield with objectives defined in terms of fixed terrain will be replaced by dynamic, fluid situations where the focus is on the enemy. Knowing the whereabouts of opposing forces, anticipating their moves, and synchronizing the elements of dispersed combat power to mass at the point and time of greatest advantage are the ingredients of the battlefield of tomorrow.

In organizing for combat on the less structured, more open battlefield, units will have to be more agile and capable of generating combat power quickly. This means units (usually brigade-size) will be organized as combined arms task forces that can concentrate, fight the battle, and disperse laterally, forward or rearward.

The structure implied in fixed bases or other semi-permanent base-camps will be replaced with fluid, fast-moving situations where units resupply virtually on the move. Task forces will require the support and coordination of security and reconnaissance forces to reduce the chances of meeting engagements with increasingly mobile enemy forces and to complement the information available from a wide range of sensors.

Army combat commanders of the twenty-first century will receive a wide array of information that will help in the development of operational and tactical battle plans. The commander and his staff will have to process information quickly and use it to shape the battlefield — through movement, reconnaissance, fires, deception and massing for battle at a chosen time and place.

The emphasis will be on flexibility and the ability to adapt to rapidly-changing situations, mission-type orders and decentralized execution. Commanders will have to take the initiative and accept risk. The intentions of the commander must be clearly communicated in battle orders so as to enable subordinate commanders to employ the combat power needed to meet the stated intentions of the operational commander.

MATERIEL NEEDS

The materiel needs of the Army on the battlefield of the future will incorporate many technological advancements. Some, such as the microcomputer, are already here. Advancements or improvements in the following areas are representative of the capabilities that will accompany this AirLand Battle concept:

- Battlefield surveillance systems.
- Almost real-time intelligence, to include imagery.
- Accurate, lethal fires at extreme ranges.
- Automated reliability and validity checks of intelligence.
- Automated target identification and engagement prioritization.
- Automated logistics command and control system.
- Acquisition and targeting capabilities.
- Fuel-efficient, low-maintenance mobility platforms.
- Rapidly deployable combat systems.
- Means to deceive the enemy as to friendly dispositions and intentions.
- Synchronization of air and ground operations.

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command is developing the AirLand Battle - Future concept. It represents a significant evolution of AirLand Battle that is necessary for the Army to adapt to a different battlefield, new technologies, and a smaller force structure.

(This Background Brief was prepared by the staff of the AUSA Institute of Land Warfare, 2425 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA 22201. Reproduction of this Background Brief, in whole or in part, is authorized with appropriate acknowledgement of the source.)

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