For the foreseeable future, our Army will continue to operate in complex environments that challenge soldiers, leaders and organizations. While much of the current focus is on Afghanistan and Iraq, Army forces must continue to train, equip and organize to conduct full spectrum operations—simultaneously combining offense, defense, stability and civil support operations. This view of the future provides the direction for the movement and maneuver concept (MMC).

The U.S. Army Functional Concept for Movement and Maneuver 2016–2028, Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-6, is nested with The Army Capstone Concept (ACC) and The Army Operating Concept (AOC) and carries forward the two central constructs introduced in the AOC: combined arms maneuver and wide area security (WAS).

Challenges of the Future Operating Environment

The current operating environment will continue to evolve, presenting ground forces in the future with an ever increasing challenge to defeat irregular and hybrid enemies that are connected by cell phone, computer network and satellite phone technology. In most cases, support from the local population in defeating these threats cannot be assumed. In addition, the possibility of major combat operations remains real.

The future operating environment will include adversaries ranging from well-led, well-trained and well-equipped conventional military formations experienced in close fighting to irregular and hybrid forces. Our most likely opponents will continue to be irregular forces, extending from trained insurgents focused on local or regional regime change or global jihad to criminals and tribal groups focused on maintaining power within their local areas for economic reasons. In some cases these enemies will work together, forming a hybrid threat that combines conventional and unconventional units, equipment and tactics. Regardless of makeup or aim, however, the enemy will continue to be adaptive and networked, employing a range of weapons and technologies along with conventional and improvised weapons.

Tribal culture—the natural wariness of the population toward outside forces—will cause local-nationals to remain uncommitted to the United States forces or their own government unless they can be assured of long-term security and economic subsistence. This complex and ambiguous environment, in which our forces fight a determined enemy while securing the population and setting conditions to enable the success of local and national governments, represents one of the greatest challenges of future maneuver.
While we expect the dominant operating conditions in the near-term and midterm to look much like our recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, the possibility of high-tempo major combat operations is real. For example, it may be unlikely that an attack on U.S. forces by a well-equipped standing nation-state will occur, but the unstable global conditions make highly plausible a hostile-nation attack on a U.S. allied state. In this situation, our heavy maneuver forces could face the challenge of deploying rapidly to defeat a well-equipped, well-led and well-organized opponent.

Addressing the Future: Vital Maneuvers

The future will require us to employ the movement and maneuver concept, which is based on the premise that the central focus of the force will dominate the close fight; at the same time, it recognizes the need to protect the population and calibrate the amount of force used in areas where we must set the conditions for an ally to succeed. Maneuver forces must be able to execute combined arms maneuver to defeat the enemy, while conducting wide area security to protect the civilian population and set the conditions for a stable environment.

Combined arms maneuver is the application of the elements of combat power in unified action to defeat enemy ground forces; to seize, occupy and defend land areas; to achieve physical, temporal and psychological advantages over the enemy; and to preserve freedom of action. It builds on traditional combined arms (Armor, Infantry and Artillery) and maneuver (moving to positions of advantage), and it emphasizes the need for agile and adaptive leaders who understand the complex environment and combine the warfighting functions—as well as leadership and information in combination with joint and allied partners—to defeat our enemies and protect our friends. The Army conducts combined arms maneuver throughout the full spectrum of operations.

Combined arms maneuver is characterized by:

- Networked units conducting decentralized operations.
- Understanding the enemy’s networks.
- Conducting continuous reconnaissance to seize and maintain the initiative.
- Developing the situation through action.
- Maintaining proficiency in the close fight.
- Fighting jointly.

In addition to considerations for the application of lethal and nonlethal combat power, combined arms maneuver includes recognizing the importance of understanding and defeating the enemy’s physical and electronic networks and employing the capabilities of the joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational (JIIM) team. It is a method of operating—combining capabilities—that applies at the operational and tactical levels across the spectrum of operations.

Protecting the Population: Wide Area Security

Wide area security is the application of the elements of combat power in unified action to protect the population, forces, infrastructure and activities; deny the enemy positions of advantage; and consolidate tactical and operational gains. It builds on combined arms maneuver and focuses on the presence of soldiers and their interaction with indigenous populations. Soldiers are trained and attuned to local culture and are tasked with building relationships and trust with local civil, military and religious leaders.

WAS recognizes the link between success in military operations and the security of the civilian population. It includes traditional actions to secure friendly forces, but emphasizes friendly-force actions to secure the local population, their activities and their infrastructure. At the same time it denies the enemy the ability to threaten by disrupting the enemy’s social and economic progress. Forces conduct wide area security to support the larger goal of setting conditions for local and regional stability. Successful WAS sets the conditions for the transition of area control to local and regional government forces.

A New Approach to Training

The future operating environment will challenge the
Army to develop adaptive and agile soldiers and leaders imbued with the Warrior Ethos, capable of leading combined arms formations and of functioning effectively in the complex environment as integral members of a JIIM team. Units must conduct training in a realistic manner that replicates the uncertainty, stress and complexity of the various theaters of operations to speed the growth of adaptive leaders and soldiers. Soldiers must be trained to engage with civil populations, nongovernmental organizations and host-nation organizations to build rapport and set the conditions for synergistic efforts toward common objectives. Leaders must be skilled in the art of mission command to lead operations successfully. To achieve this degree of realistic training, the Army must develop and utilize a blended training model of a fully networked structure of live, virtual, constructive, and gaming training systems and approaches that are applicable to both mounted and dismounted soldiers. This includes networked collective training capabilities embedded in Army systems.

Required Capabilities

More than nine years of war have reinforced the Army’s need to maintain its understanding of the complexity of the close fight and its proficiency in small-unit combat operations. Recent experience also clearly highlights the need to generate an adaptable force capable of conducting full spectrum operations under conditions of uncertainty and in the presence of an adaptable enemy. To prevail in the face of these operational realities, the Army must apply the lessons learned in the current conflict and adopt solutions that will increase its competency in future conflicts. The movement and maneuver concept proposes the following near-term required capabilities for maneuver forces.

- Develop a versatile mix of task-organized and networked combined arms organizations trained and ready to conduct combined arms maneuver and wide area security in full spectrum operations.
- Preserve the capability to conduct continuous reconnaissance and security.
- Maintain the capability to fire, maneuver and survive in close combat to close with and capture, kill, or neutralize the enemy.
- Develop units and leaders capable of conducting simultaneous, decentralized combined arms operations in noncontiguous areas.
- Improve unit and soldier skills to enable soldiers to work with and understand the culture of the people they are trying to protect through wide area security.
- Organize and equip maneuver forces to conduct joint entry operations, forcible or unopposed, from strategic distances.
- Update training simulations and systems to better replicate the future operating environment and to provide the best possible training experience for soldiers and units.

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