



The U.S. Army Capstone Concept: Defining the Army of 2020

The [Army Capstone Concept] hones the Army's understanding of emerging challenges and informs our preparation for the future, ensuring our Army stands ready to meet the demands that lie ahead. In the end, if we build a capable, credible Army in peace, we are far less likely to use it in war.

General Robert W. Cone,
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Introduction

The Army is the cornerstone of the nation's security. For more than 237 years, it has stood ready—detering potential adversaries, influencing the course of international relations and dominating the battlefield when called upon to act in the nation's interest. These roles will endure long into the future. However, the global security environment becomes more challenging and unpredictable every day, and the combinations of forces that can align to threaten the United States continue to increase.

The revised "The U.S. Army Capstone Concept" (U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-0), released in December 2012, presents the Army's initiative to transition into a force based predominantly in the continental United States (CONUS) but ready and able to deliver a wide array of expeditionary capabilities rapidly when needed. The Army Capstone Concept (ACC) serves as a guide to how the Army will employ its resources to confront an uncertain future and offers an outline for comprehensive investment in Army force structure, modernization and readiness in accordance with national strategy guidance.

Baseline Observations

Even though many details about the future operational environment are unclear, numerous emerging trends have informed the Army's vision for its contribution to Joint

Force 2020. For example, the Army assumes that its forces will generally deploy from CONUS or forward bases to operate in areas in which its access is challenged—both physically (by means of conventional defenses and hybrid threats) and virtually (via new kinds of defenses in cyberspace). The Army expects to be resourced adequately to conduct its principal and interconnected roles—preventing conflict, shaping the international environment and winning decisively when required—but acknowledges that real fiscal constraints will demand a rebalance of its modernization, training and force structure priorities. **Finally, the ACC identifies the idea of operational adaptability as the defining characteristic of the future force.** To execute its mission of protecting enduring national interests, the Army must anticipate and continuously respond to constantly adapting threats.

Developing Capability Throughout the Force

Given these trends and the broad scope of the Army's 21st century mandate, the ACC offers many implications for the planning and development of the Army of 2020. Operational adaptability must be embraced throughout the entire force—not only in the operating force but throughout the institutional Army. Adaptability must reside not only in the active component but throughout the total force. The key to maximum readiness and maximum efficiency is to train, equip and fight as one force.²

¹ U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, "The U.S. Army Capstone Concept," TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0, 19 December 2012, p. iv, <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/tp525-3-0.pdf>.

² See AUSA Defense Report "Army Total Force Policy: Fully Integrating the Operational Reserve," December 2012, http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/ilw_pubs/defense-reports/Documents/DR_12-1_web.pdf.



The Army must institutionalize the invaluable experience gained during the past decade. Many tools will be employed to restructure the Army's body of knowledge—identifying critical principles, delivering doctrinal expertise to the point of need and crafting some force design options to increase its responsiveness against hybrid threats. Among the most significant improvements will be augmented information- and intelligence-handling capabilities as well as some new formations developed for specific missions to build greater cross-domain synergies.

Training at home station and in Army schoolhouses must also transform to develop operational adaptability. Soldiers and units must be able to transition effectively among offensive, defensive and stability operations.

The Army has developed a critical and unique advantage in the past decade by designing a rapid technology integration and acquisition process. It will take further steps to institutionalize rapid development, which must be retained as an integral component of the formal acquisition process.

The current pace of technological advances requires the Army to continue to create leaders at ever lower echelons who can learn and adapt more quickly than their adversaries. Soldiers must have opportunities throughout their careers to educate themselves and to provide input into course content. The Army must improve its comprehensive approach to personnel management and career lifecycle policies. Attention to the human factors inherent in the profession of

arms enables Soldiers to perform the Army's missions more effectively.

It is imperative that the active and reserve components have the facilities and infrastructure to plan, train and fight as one force. In particular, training centers and schoolhouses must be modern and able to provide realistic and relevant opportunities for Soldiers to learn as the force becomes leaner. The generating force must exhibit the same adaptability and expeditionary posture as the operating force. Many shaping operations with partner countries demand the unique expertise that resides in the generating force. This expertise must be retained on an adequate scale to support expeditionary requirements.

Finally, the Army must select investment priorities as it reduces in size. These investments must mitigate risk, enable the regeneration of capability if needed suddenly and permit expansibility. The network-enabled Soldier remains at the center of a more capable Army.

Conclusion

The future security environment is more uncertain and potentially more dangerous than ever before. As a result, the Army must become comfortable with and accustomed to operating in ambiguous situations in which decentralized units and junior leaders carry significant responsibilities. The ACC provides a map of the capabilities that the future force will require. It is necessary now to invest strategically in these requirements to ensure that the Army maintains the flexibility it needs to meet any challenge.

Key Points

- The Army Capstone Concept describes the Army's vision of the future operational environment, the role of the Army in the joint force and a broad list of the capabilities required by future Army forces.
- The strength of America's Army lies in its Soldiers' ability to rapidly adapt to whatever circumstances arise in today's volatile security environment. The Army of 2020 will be defined by its ability to perform many missions with excellence.
- Now is the time to resource several key investment areas that will enable the Army's operational adaptability while carefully balancing the pillars of endstrength, modernization and readiness.



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