



The Army Operating Concept 2020–2040: Winning in a Complex World

One of the hoped-for outcomes of the Army Operating Concept is creating an atmosphere where we can create multiple dilemmas for the enemy in an environment where we feel very comfortable operating.

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Introduction

Recent and ongoing conflicts reinforce the need to develop a future force that balances the technological focus of U.S. Army modernization with the recognition that the human, cultural and political nature of armed conflict will endure, while technology has its limits.

The Army of the future must be prepared to deal with an operating environment that will include reduced budgets, reduced force structure and the increased momentum of human interaction. In addition, the Army will have to operate in cities with dense populations while the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and enemy overmatch capabilities continue to grow. In the future, a diverse array of enemies will most likely employ a mixture of traditional, unconventional and hybrid strategies to threaten U.S. security and vital interests. Threats may emanate from nation states or from nonstate actors such as transnational terrorists, insurgents and criminal organizations. These threats will employ strategies intended to avoid U.S. strengths and to disrupt access, freedom of movement and freedom of action. Simultaneously, the proliferation of technology will allow them to emulate technical and tactical capabilities that will lessen the current U.S. advantages as adversaries expand their influence through proxies and criminal networks.

To meet these challenges, the Army has created the new Army Operating Concept (AOC) to address prompt conduct of joint operations in sufficient scale and duration to prevent conflict, shape security environments and win wars. The AOC describes how the future Army forces, as part of a

joint, international and multinational effort, will operate to accomplish campaign objectives and protect U.S. national interests by winning at the tactical, operational and—most important—the strategic level of war.

Joint and Combined-arms Operations

The new concept describes how future Army forces as part of joint, interorganizational and multinational teams will protect the homeland and regionally engage to prevent conflict, shape security environments and create options for responding to and resolving crises. The Army is building a capability to win, as opposed to buying platforms to fight. When called upon, the Army will provide globally responsive combined-arms teams maneuvering from multiple locations and domains to present multiple dilemmas and limited options to the enemy while avoiding his strengths and attacking his weaknesses.

Integrate the efforts of multiple partners. In the future, the Army will exercise mission command and continue to work with joint, interorganizational and multinational partners to ensure sufficient capacity and interoperability to enhance strategic and operational depth and endurance.² The Army welcomes those who would want to integrate their efforts towards common goals, to include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Operate across multiple domains. The concept discusses the Army's need to project power from land into the maritime, air, space and cyberspace domains to allow the joint force freedom of maneuver and action and present



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adversaries with multiple dilemmas. The Army will project national power from and into numerous locations and contested spaces, presenting multiple dilemmas to the enemy, limiting options and avoiding strengths.

Support with foundational capabilities. As it is today, the future Army force will continue to be the backbone of the joint force and synchronize the delivering of national power as it relates to the strategic level of war. The Army will support with foundational capabilities such as communications, intelligence, rotary-wing aviation, missile defense, logistics and engineering. These balanced joint force capabilities help create synergy and provide the President, the Secretary of Defense and combatant commanders with multiple options.³

Tenets of Army Operations

Previous concepts over the years have addressed the tenets of Army operations, but the new AOC builds upon and further highlights how they will guide the generation and application of combat power in the future force. The Army will conduct operations consistent with these tenets to achieve operational overmatch and to seize, retain and exploit the initiative. Future Army commanders will be considering these tenets when visualizing, describing, directing, leading and assessing operations:

- **Initiative:** assessment of a tactical or operational situation and action to dictate the terms of operations.
- **Simultaneity:** execution of related and mutually supporting tasks at the same time across multiple locations and domains.
- **Depth:** extension of operations in time and space to prevent enemy forces from recovering from simultaneous efforts.
- **Adaptability:** response to new requirements or changes without a loss of functionality.
- **Endurance:** ability to sustain efforts for sufficient duration with the capacity necessary to accomplish the mission.
- **Lethality:** ability to kill or cause physical destruction—essential to fighting and winning battles.
- **Mobility:** the capability that permits military forces to gain positions of relative advantage, conduct high-tempo operations and concentrate combat power against decisive points while operating dispersed across wide areas.
- **Innovation:** the result of critical and creative thinking and the conversion of new ideas into valued outcomes. Innovation drives the development of new tools or methods that permit Army forces to anticipate future demands, stay ahead of determined enemies and accomplish the mission.⁴

The Core Competencies of the Army

The future Army force will provide many strengths, strategic advantages and essential contributions to the joint force, just as they do today. The new AOC addresses the Army's seven core competencies, which will be critical in addressing the Army Warfighting Challenges:⁵

- **Shaping the security environment.** The Army will continue to provide unique capabilities that allow combatant commanders to reassure partners and deter aggression while establishing conditions that support the potential employment of joint forces.
- **Setting the theater.** To retain freedom of action for the joint force, the Army will establish and maintain supportive conditions as needed.
- **Projecting national power.** The Army will maintain the ability to deploy and sustain landpower rapidly and effectively from many locations and across multiple domains to achieve sustainable outcomes.
- **Conducting combined-arms maneuver in the air, land, maritime, space and cyberspace domains.** Army forces will be able to apply combat power in time and space to defeat enemy ground forces, seize, occupy and defend land areas and achieve physical, temporal and psychological advantages over the enemy.
- **Conducting wide-area security.** This competency addresses the application of combat power to protect populations, forces, infrastructure and actions to deny the enemy positions of advantage and to consolidate gains to retain the initiative.
- **Conducting cyberspace operations in the land domain.** As part of the joint force, the Army will continue to play an integral role in cyber by integrating it with other forms of maneuver to deny the enemy's ability to conduct operations in cyberspace while preserving U.S. freedom of action.
- **Employing special operations forces.** Army special operations forces have provided combatant commanders with precise lethal and nonlethal capabilities. The future Army force will continue to do so with the interdependence of complementary conventional capabilities to achieve success.⁶

Implications

The future operational environment is unknown, unknowable and constantly changing. The Army is planning to meet the challenges and protect the homeland, foster security globally, project power and win. The Army understands the importance of its role and welcomes partners; it has the capability to integrate joint, interagency and multinational partners and NGOs to affect the strategic level of war and achieve sustainable outcomes. Now, as never before, the Army is a global force.

Key Points

- The U.S. Army Operating Concept describes how future Army forces will protect the homeland and regionally engage to prevent conflict, shape security environments and create options for responding to and resolving crises.
- The Army under *Force 2025 Maneuvers* will evaluate the ideas contained in this concept and the assumptions on which they are based to ensure that the Army's preparation for the demands of future armed conflict rest on a solid conceptual foundation.⁷

Endnotes

- ¹ David Vergun, "Solarium 2015: Forcing multiple dilemmas on enemy," *Army News*, 2 March 2015, http://www.army.mil/article/143728/Solarium_2015__Forcing_multiple_dilemmas_on_enemy.
- ² Mission Command is defined as the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations. For more information, see Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, Washington DC, 10 October 2011, p. 6.
- ³ Department of the Army, "The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World," Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, 7 October 2014, pp. iii–iv.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–20.
- ⁵ Army Capabilities Integration Center, "Information Paper: Army Warfighting Challenges," 18 January 2015, <http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/cact/ArmyWarfightingChallenges.pdf>.
- ⁶ DA, "The U.S. Army Operating Concept," pp. 20–22.
- ⁷ *Force 2025 Maneuvers* provides the means to evaluate and validate expeditionary capabilities for the brigade combat team (BCT), retain overmatch through 2025 and set conditions for fundamental changes to the Army beyond 2025. For more on *Force 2025 Maneuvers*, see Department of the Army, "Force 2025 Maneuvers," Fort Eustis, VA, 23 January 2014, http://www.arcic.army.mil/app_Documents/USArmy_WhitePaper_Force-2025-Maneuvers_23JAN2014.pdf.



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