

A Campaign of Learning To Achieve Institutional Adaptation

By GEN Martin E. Dempsey

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About 18 months ago, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command launched a campaign of learning for our Army to consider how we learn and adapt to meet the challenges of the 21st-century security environment. That's not to say that prior to 18 months ago our Army wasn't learning—far from it. In fact, during the last nine years of conflict, our Army has shown itself to be both introspective about its performance and adaptive to the lessons it has learned. Nevertheless, we wanted to formalize the effort to learn, and we wanted to make this campaign of learning the foundation of institutional adaptation.

Some have asked why we have placed increased emphasis on adaptation. Several significant trends have emerged over the past decade: hybrid threats of regular, irregular, terrorist and criminal groups with capabilities that rival those of nation states; an exponential pace of technological change; and greater complexity. These trends have created an operational environment that is very dangerous, increasingly competitive and always unpredictable. In response, our profession must embrace a culture of change and adaptation. We must think differently about how we develop leaders and how we organize, train, and equip our soldiers and units.

I'm interested in having a conversation across our Army about the future and about adaptation. I'm neither looking for consensus nor for affirmation of our current path. In fact, the power of our great profession comes from the diversity of thought possible because each of us has unique

experiences, training and education. I aspire to sharpen the dialogue about our emerging concepts, doctrine, training, leader development and how we can make adaptation an institutional imperative.

Over the next few months, a series of articles in ARMY Magazine will highlight initiatives that support our campaign of learning. These articles will ideally generate an Army-wide dialogue about our emerging concepts in order to establish a broader understanding of Army adaptation as an institutional imperative in an era of persistent conflict. These initiatives are all components of our overarching effort to adapt our institution based upon the hard-won lessons of the past nine years of war and the trends we can see before us in the 21st-century security environment. These articles are one of many ways we are reaching out to have a professional dialogue on the future of our great Army—just the beginning of what I expect to be a tremendously rewarding campaign of learning to shape the future of our Army together.

Each article will address a different challenge we face, articulating what we are changing and why we believe the change is necessary. Although these topics may adapt and evolve over the coming months, here is a general outline of the topics on which we want to shed light in order to advance our thinking on institutional adaptation.

Driving Change Through Concepts. This article will explain how our Army's conceptual work informs our doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities adaptations. It will articulate some of the important changes we've made in our recent revisions to both *The Army Capstone Concept* and *The U.S. Army Operating Concept*, and it will explain how we plan to revise FM 3-0 *Operations*. It will discuss the need to clarify our understanding of full spectrum operations in the context of our Army's two broad responsibilities: combined arms maneuver and wide area security. The article will ex-



plain why we need to move away from “false choices” that measure the development of Army organizations and capabilities against what an adversary may try to do to us (counterinsurgency versus major combat operations).

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Leader Development. Our Army leader development strategy articulates the need to produce agile and adaptive leaders. This article will provide the opportunity for a discussion about what we mean when we use those terms, and it will propose that *inquisitive* should be added to the list of key leader attributes in the future. It will argue that we need to revise our existing learning models to provide relevant and realistic training and education for our soldiers and leaders. It will suggest that the development of a “central training brain” for our Army—capable of creating complex and dynamic environments for training, whether in the institutional schoolhouse, at home station, at a combat training center or while deployed—will transform how we train units and develop leaders. This article will also discuss the challenge of reintroducing young leaders to the idea of garrison leadership after nine years of continuous conflict.

Mission Command. In the upcoming revision to FM 3-0, mission command replaces command and control as a warfighting function. In anticipation of that change, we are currently in the process of standing up the Mission Command Center of Excellence (MCCoE) at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., under the leadership of the Combined Arms Center commander. This article will make the case for mission

command as a more precise description of the capabilities—art and science—required in today’s operational environment. It will describe why the old taxonomy is inadequate and has become overburdened. It will argue that the stand-up of the MCCoE is an opportunity for our Army to integrate the often disparate and stovepiped initiatives that affect this most critical warfighting function.

How to Fight at Echelon. This article will seek to answer the question: “How will echelons of our force fight differently in the context of wide area security and combined arms maneuver?” The intent is to describe the capabilities and competencies required at each echelon within our refined description of full spectrum operations.

Series Summary. This final article will summarize the topics discussed and the feedback received during this process. It will outline the way ahead as we continue our campaign of learning and also show how we will incorporate thoughts and ideas from across the force as we seek to make institutional adaptation more than just a “bumper sticker” for our Army.

There are no crystal balls that can predict the demands of future armed conflict. That is why I believe our ability to learn and adapt rapidly is an institutional imperative. Our emerging concepts reflect this mind-set, and I look forward to hearing your feedback on our efforts to date. I also look forward to continuing and expanding this professional dialogue as we prepare the Army to meet the demands of the 21st-century security environment. Victory starts here! ★

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