



# LANDPOWER ESSAY SERIES



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## DECISIVE FORCE

by

General Glenn K. Otis, USA Retired

The military forces of the United States are comprised of sea, air and land forces. By law, their employment is conducted by a joint force commander who answers to the Secretary of Defense — usually through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. No nation has devised a better method for exercising command of modern military forces. It also fosters power and balance by granting authority to tailor elements of all branches of service according to the needs of the mission at hand as seen by the joint force commander in accordance with his guidance from the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense.

It is a tribute to the National Command Authorities and to Congress that our nation now has an unparalleled naval arm and easily the best Air Force in the world. While the Army is second to none in quality and capability, it ranks only eighth in numbers. Its modern weapons and superb training make up in quality what it lacks in quantity. The nation is well-served even as it struggles to provide needed funds for defense in an era of growing nondefense claimants.

United States National Military Strategy calls for deterring war; but if deterrence fails, then our military forces are charged with fighting as necessary to achieve decisive results using appropriate force to win quickly and with minimum casualties. The key words are *decisive results; win quickly; minimum casualties*. These words apply whether there is all-out war, insurgency, or peacemaking or peacekeeping operations. Each of the services will play roles in executing this strategy, depending upon the geography and the threat in the operational area. However, it will be the role of the joint force commander to tailor and employ his forces to accomplish the mission assigned in accordance with the strategy. In nearly every conceivable scenario, all services will be called upon to contribute to the tasks in accordance with their capabilities; nevertheless, in the end game of achieving *decisive results*, the *decisive force* will be the Army. People, on the ground, with the necessary weapons and equipment and the backing of the U.S. government, are the fundamental, visible source of authority.

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It is upon this base that the Army mans, trains, equips and supplies its own soldiers and contributes significant common support to the other services. This concept bears repeating so that it is clear and unambiguous: To achieve decisive results quickly and with minimum casualties, all services will be called upon in accordance with their capabilities and the needs of the joint force commander. Tailored forces will be employed. In achieving the desired end state, the decisive force will be the Army. In short, control of the sea is a *necessary* condition to achieving victory, however victory may be defined; control of the air is a *necessary* condition if victory is to be achieved quickly and with minimum casualties; occupation and control of the ground is both a *necessary* and a *sufficient* condition for decisive results, and it is exactly this that the Army accomplishes.

For the Army to perform its varied roles in the joint force, it must be organized, manned, trained, equipped, led and provided with doctrine that focuses its operational actions in all contingencies. The central theme of this paper is to establish a consistent description of how the Army views itself in the light of these fundamental categories.

## **Organization**

Most of the Army is based in battalion organizations. A battalion is usually a single-function structure — e.g., artillery, infantry, tank, signal, etc. — and commanded by a lieutenant colonel. Its size can be from as small as 200 to as large as 1,100 people. The battalion has a small staff, will normally be able to do some unit-level maintenance of its own equipment, and can be plugged into higher echelons of command such as brigades, regiments, divisions or even allied national organizations. It cannot support itself without major outside assistance. Its subordinate organizations (usually companies) are small, cannot support themselves at all, have no staff, and if removed from their parent battalion, should be assigned to another compatible element without long delay.

With battalions as basic building blocks, the Army further organizes itself into brigades or regiments which are groupings of battalions, usually from three to five. The brigade can be tailored with a mix of fighting battalions and supporting battalions as necessary to the mission that is assigned to the brigade. A colonel normally commands a brigade or regiment and is assisted by a staff who can handle both the current operations of the brigade and the staff planning for the next operation. A brigade can be tailored for an independent mission, or — as is more normally the case — it can play a key role as one of the major subordinate commands in an Army division.

A division, commanded by a major general, is a relatively fixed organization although it too can be tailored for specific missions. Most divisions will have three maneuver brigade headquarters, an artillery (brigade level) headquarters, an aviation brigade headquarters and a support (brigade level) headquarters. In addition, a division will have between 25 and 30 battalions of fighters and supporters, most of which will be grouped under brigade-level organizations. Some battalions, such as air defense, engineer, signal, cavalry and intelligence, will not be subordinated to brigade level headquarters but normally remain assigned directly to the division headquarters.

An Army division, with a two-star commander, a strong staff, a great variety of battalions and a far-reaching communications and intelligence capability, is an extremely flexible and multifunctional

organization. It can perform independent missions, sustain itself for long periods in combat and participate as a full partner in allied operations. It also has the capability to assume command of additional battalions of fighters and supporters if the success of its mission calls for more force or more support. And of great utility is the fact that its staff and its communications capabilities make it ideal for plugging in to a higher Army headquarters — such as a corps — or to a joint force command where it can be the Army component, or even serve as the joint force headquarters.

The reserve components — U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and Army National Guard (ARNG) — are organized along battalion lines in essentially the same manner as the active force. The ARNG has 15 high-priority combat brigades and the USAR has a significant proportion of the support forces for any major deployments. The reserve components are critical team members alongside the active force, and their organizations are congruent to their active Army counterparts. Organizationally, therefore, the Army is a highly adaptable force, able to be “sized” for the mission and sufficiently flexible to be tailored with just the right numbers of functional battalions to get the job done in conjunction with its partners from the Air Force and the Navy, both afloat and ashore.

## **Manning**

About 19 percent of the 495,000-person active Army leave service each year due to expiration of service agreement, retirement, death, disability and the like. This means that in order to retain the active force at its authorized strength level of 495,000, the Army must bring in about 85,000 new recruits each year and, of course, provide them with the training necessary to serve in military units. A critical aspect of manning is timing. Whenever and wherever an Army unit loses a soldier to discharge, it is essential to the readiness of his unit that a replacement be prepared to take his place, already trained in both skills and teamwork. Clearly the training establishment of the Army must be synchronized with the manning system or readiness will suffer.

This same reasoning applies to the Army’s reserve components, both U.S. Army Reserve and the Army National Guard. Some losses of personnel in ARNG and USAR are replaced by soldiers leaving active duty and moving to inactive status in reserve components. However, it is necessary to recruit and train new soldiers for USAR and ARNG duty. In the Total Army force, 58 percent of the combat units, 63 percent of the combat support units (artillery, air defense, etc.), and 75 percent of the combat service support units (transportation maintenance, etc.) are in the reserve components. It is critical, therefore, that at least some of the high-priority units of the reserve components be manned and prepared for quick reaction with their colleagues in the active forces.

There are thousands of jobs that are not only essential in the Army force structure, but also can be done in the continental United States (CONUS); or they do not require direct confrontation with an adversary if performed in an operational theater. In order to do these jobs without the added expense of more soldiers, civilians are employed as part of the Total Force. There are two broad categories: those who work directly for the government and those who work for a civilian firm which is under contract to the government. Members of both categories consist of U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens and both categories are absolutely essential to nearly any operational mission of the Army. For example, the U.S. depot system and a large proportion of the logistics system supporting

the Army are operated by civilians. Overseas seaports and a large part of the in-country transportation are dependent upon civilians. It is clear, therefore, that manning the Total Force involves much more than just recruiting new soldiers for the active forces. The interdependence of the flow of manpower into and out of active Army influences the movement into USAR and ARNG. The civilian categories of the force are a factor in every stage of force planning. Achieving the right balance and a proper mix in the manning function is a critical determinant for unit readiness.

## **Training**

The business of the Army is to be prepared to fight and win our nation's wars. Fundamental to achieving that preparedness goal is training. Army training may be loosely divided into two categories: (1) individual training; (2) collective training. Individual training begins with a new recruit participating in a standard eight weeks of basic training and progresses throughout the soldier's career to the few who are selected for the top schools: the Sergeants Major Academy for top NCOs and the War Colleges for top officers. Individual training emphasizes hands-on practical work to teach the skills needed to operate, survive and succeed in combat. It also teaches each soldier the particular skill (such as tank crewman, signal operator, aviation mechanic) that he will be required to perform as part of his Army's battalion organization. At each stage of his career, the soldier who stays on in the Army is given the opportunity for higher level skill training in his specialty so that he matures in both experience and technical ability.

Individual training is necessary for the Army to function. To win in combat, the Army depends upon teamwork among individuals who are trained in their skills. So collective training, which emphasizes crew and unit techniques, is an important complement to individual training. Crew training brings together the soldiers who must operate as a smooth, coordinated team to make a sophisticated weapon system perform at its optimum. A tank, for example, requires an extremely delicate balance of timing and physical actions among its four crew members for the system to perform as it is designed to do. The same applies to an artillery howitzer and to the whole panoply of crew-served weapons. The results of Desert Storm are convincing evidence that Army crews have mastered their sophisticated hardware systems.

During the 50 years since the end of World War II, there has been a remarkable explosion in both diversity and sophistication of weapon systems. This has led some to assert that perhaps the Army will not be able to recruit people with sufficient background and education necessary to cope with modern electronic systems of war. It is a fact, however, that even the most sophisticated systems have been designed so that the complexity is transparent to the operator. In most cases, the more modern the system, the easier it is to operate. Furthermore, concurrent with the advent of new systems, computer-assisted trainers, simulators and emulators have been fielded so that individuals and crews can be trained to even higher proficiencies with the new systems than was ever thought of with their predecessors. Crew training by itself is an extremely important aspect of Army readiness, but battlefield performance depends upon the teamwork of many crews with a variety of combat systems operating in close harmony with each other to achieve a common end. That's where unit training is aimed. And it must begin at the smallest unit level — a squad — up to battalions, and through brigades, divisions, corps and the joint force command. It is for this purpose that the National Training

Center was conceived, developed and is operating. The results in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm are conclusive proof that the Army's training system — from basic training for new recruits to major maneuver exercises — is right on the mark. Again and again soldiers of Desert Storm said, "It's just like training. It feels like a field exercise."

## **Equipping**

At one time in the World War II era, it was nearly axiomatic that alone among the services, the Army was "manpower intensive" and the other services were described as "equipment intensive." That model has been reversed. There is a fighting vehicle, tank, howitzer, air defense system, helicopter, or other major equipment item for every four soldiers. The implications of this transition are felt in every part of the Army. For example, a large portion of the Army's operating budget must go to fuel and repair parts to keep the equipment operational. Each passing year claims another aging candidate piece of equipment for upgrade or replacement. Software is at the heart of a majority of the new Army operating systems, and software is both expensive to design and demanding in its need for maintenance. We have pledged ourselves to remain at the top of the technological revolution. In fact, since the Army is the smallest it has been since World War II but the needs for Army forces worldwide have not diminished, maintaining the technological advantage is not merely a goal but perhaps a condition for survival. There are now at least seven nations with larger armies than ours. Modernization is the sine qua non to offset this numerical inferiority.

We now have some of the best equipment in the world. Patriot, Abrams tank, Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, Apache helicopter, many of our sensors and our radios are as good as or better than most in the world. In every case, we have to be alert to new technologies that let us upgrade existing equipment to keep it modern — at less cost than designing a new one — and a leader in its field. A case in point is the second generation far-looking infra-red optic (2d gen FLIR). Adapting this technology to our fighting systems allows us to operate around the clock with equal capability — i.e., to "own the night." Several countries now have some night vision devices. None has proliferated them throughout the force and trained with them as integrated combined arms teams as we have. That will be their next step. We keep ahead of them by integrating the 2d generation FLIR across the force — a technology that so far is not widely used by other nations. And so it is with modernization — we must develop the technologies, prove them out, try them out in current systems or in high-resolution simulations and then decide how and where to insert them — and pay the price for doing so. A case in point is the Army's new self-propelled howitzer. The current howitzer — called the Paladin — is the sixth improved modification to the M109 155mm howitzer first fielded in 1963 with technology that had been developed in 1950. However, the hull, the transmission and many other parts of the Paladin model are the same as they were 25 years ago. So the Army is embarked on the early stages of development for a new howitzer, to be called Crusader.

It will be new from the ground up, and in addition to improvements in its firing systems, the Crusader will be able to keep up with its maneuvering Abrams and Bradley teammates due to its improved power pack, suspension and protection systems. However, even if all of the Crusader's technologies and development milestones are achieved exactly as planned (a rare occurrence), the first Crusader will not be in the hands of troops until 2005. So equipping the force is a function not only

of buying equipment, but also anticipation of the need, a projection of future adversary developments and a decision to commit funds over a period of decades to afford the number needed for even the modest-sized Army of today.

Notwithstanding that to this point the focus of this paper has been on the major machines, people, training and organizations needed for fighting wars, it is a fact that our Army is and has been engaged heavily in operations other than war (OOTW). And the forecast is for more of the same. In these kind of roles, the lesser-known organizations and items of equipment become highly important. Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units have been deployed around the world, from Saudi Arabia to Rwanda. Engineers with bulldozers and dump trucks are a critical resource in most Army deployments. Medical teams with the capability to use “telemedicine” as a tool are always a part of each operation other than war. And military police with their special equipment and unique training are overcommitted for their numbers. The active Army’s only transportation brigade has been at the front end of nearly every Army deployment for the past several years. It is exactly this kind of response capability that the Army — and only the Army — gives to the nation. Our organizations, equipment and training provide the framework for flexible tailoring of forces — both fighters and supporters — to react to the varied needs of the nation. What follows, then, is the Army’s role in warfighting and the Army’s approach to operations other than war.

## **Warfighting**

The objective in war is to force the enemy to quit while avoiding casualties to our own troops. In every case (there are no modern contrary instances) the capabilities of all services are needed. The air arms of the Navy and Air Force must gain air superiority quickly to allow for the uninterrupted movement of friendly ground forces. The Navy must gain and maintain freedom of the seas. It is a fact that 95 percent or more of the supplies needed for warfighting must — and will — flow to the theater of operations by sealift. Any coalition partners who are in — or close to — the theater of operations can play a major role in securing air bases for U.S. Air Force operations and seaports for landing equipment and supplies. In the initial stages of deployment to an overseas operational area, the joint force commander (JFC) is faced with complex issues. As a first critical step he must seize and secure seaports and airports. Ideally the JFC might assign a U.S. Marine element the mission of seizing one or more seaports using their amphibious assault capability as needed. Concurrently, he may employ the Army’s 82d Airborne Division to seize one or more airfields by employing both airborne assault and airmobile techniques as the enemy situation indicates. Since tactical missiles are now held by nearly all potential enemies, the JFC would have a plan for early introduction of ballistic missile defenses such as Patriot and the Theater High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD), or the Navy’s Wide Area system. In any event, the early stages of a U.S. buildup in a hostile theater of operations is a critical and highly vulnerable period for U.S. forces of all services. It is one thing to cope with enemy tanks and infantry and to counter his artillery and short-range rockets, but the added threat of theater ballistic missiles (with or without chemical or biological agents) and special forces or guerrilla bands roving into air bases and other relatively “soft targets” (such as Patriot) make it imperative that the ground threat be countered by friendly ground forces. In a warfighting operation, the interrelationship of all modes of forces is critical to success, and the shortage or lack of any part of the force will almost always result in higher casualties, if not total defeat.

Warfighting is an art. Weapons capability is a science. The JFC must know the latter and be able to do the former. The Army role in the war fight becomes the decisive one, ideally after the enemy has been "set up" by the Air Force and the Navy. The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have affirmed that U.S. forces will be able to be successful in two nearly-simultaneous major regional contingencies (MRCs). In several computer-assisted analyses of simulated operations it is clear that the JFC needs six to eight ground divisions in order to be successful in a single MRC. These divisions are additive to air and sea forces which seize control of air and sea and help to interdict the battlefield with long-range attack of enemy forces. A ground force of lesser size not only risks defeat but guarantees greater casualties even if it is ultimately successful. If we are to extend the force capability to be able to be successful in two nearly-simultaneous MRCs, six to eight ground divisions are obviously inadequate. As a matter of fact, even by making the assumption that some of the divisions in the first MRC can complete their mission in time to fall in behind the lead divisions in the second MRC, at least 12 Army divisions would be needed in the force structure. And these numbers do not include the divisions required by our forward deployments of forces worldwide in peacetime.

However, there are reserve component forces which are designed to add to the active Army elements, albeit with additional time for call-up and training. It is now a fact that of all the combat service support needed to sustain the active Army's current 10-division structure, greater than 65 percent is in the reserve components. That means that an early reserve component mobilization is essential just for support to active Army deployments. Added to this urgent need for combat service support units from the reserve components, 15 combat brigades are also being trained to an enhanced readiness state in the Army National Guard. Given about 90 days' notice, some of these brigades could be used to augment Army component ground forces in a combat theater.

It is readily apparent that Army warfighting capability is a function of timing: time to deploy forces; time to achieve sufficient capability to turn to offensive actions vice the defensive; time to call up reserves and to train them; time to deploy reserves — especially combat service support units. The Army is ready to respond as needed to take its place in the joint force command's warfighting mission. An adversary with forces the size of Iraq or North Korea can be attacked by air in a relatively "stand-off" mode. However, if friendly airbases are closed, even temporarily, by missile or chemical attacks and weather takes its toll of flying hours, enemy ground forces will continue to attack. No JFC would want his mission success to depend solely upon stopping major enemy armored and infantry forces by air alone. They can be slowed, attrited and bloodied by air and by artillery, and air and special forces may be able to disrupt their supply routes and their communications; but in the end it will be a combined arms team of ground troops that seizes, occupies and holds the ground — and forces the enemy to quit.

A key measure of merit here is casualties. An Army force that is sized to "just about win" in a conflict is in danger of taking a much higher percentage of casualties than one whose size is such that it overwhelms the enemy in a relatively shorter time period. Our national military strategy calls for decisive victory with minimum casualties and that is exactly the way we are training and sizing our forces. It further explains why the Army knows that its current force of ten active combat divisions is at high risk to achieve the kind of success called for in a two nearly-simultaneous major regional contingencies situation.

## Peacetime Deployment

There is no argument that the Army must be prepared to go to war — and win — if that be the national decision. Nevertheless, the more likely missions for the Army are to participate in operations that are not initially war — much as we have done in Haiti, and are now doing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in the Sinai. In these so-called operations other than war, the Army plays a key role, but the role varies in nearly every case. In some circumstances, by its presence alone, the Army achieves the national goals. In other circumstances the soldiers know that they are at high risk of having to use lethal force just to stay alive.

Despite the differences in each area of operations, there are some principles that are common. Perhaps the most important principle is tailoring the composition of the force to reach a balance of needed units, skills and leaders while retaining the capability to fight if the situation turns sour. The flexible structure of the Army is ideal in this feature. Single-function battalions are relatively small organizational structures that can be logically grouped under modest-sized brigade, regiment or division headquarters. Civil Affairs units, medical teams, military police companies and engineer units can be assigned to appropriate command and control headquarters where their skills can be adequately employed.

Another common principle in operations other than war is the promulgation of rules of engagement. In a situation short of war there may be terrorists at work and of course there is no guarantee that combat actions will not occur. Therefore, the conditions under which soldiers and units may have to employ lethal force to protect themselves and their equipment must be carefully designed and explained. The fact that nongovernment agencies (Red Cross, medical relief agencies, etc.) are usually operating in the area, and will fall under the protective umbrella of Army troops, makes the overall situation even more complex. In operations other than war it has never been more true that each soldier is a visible symbol of the United States whose actions are interpreted to be the results of U.S. policy decisions. So rules of engagement have to serve not only for the protection of soldiers and noncombatant supporters, but also for preserving the image we wish to portray as U.S. citizens.

Operations other than war are the source of another stress on Army force structure. That is, these operations have been causing, and will probably continue to cause, repetitive and frequent deployments from peacetime stations to crisis areas. Unlike war, which is normally followed by a period of stability, operations such as Somalia, Haiti, Grenada, Panama, etc., seem to follow each other in quick succession. Many of the units with particular skills, such as high-level communications and transportation, have been deployed on nearly every nonwar operation in which the United States has participated. The result has been great turbulence for the soldiers and remarkable stress on their families. These facts point up the problems associated with sizing the force structure for war while being able to handle a continuing succession of nonwar deployments. One of the relief valves for these frequent deployments is to have a sufficiently robust force size in the United States to act as a rotation base. When the Army had 18 active divisions (with 780,000 total strength) and about 300,000 soldiers continually deployed overseas, we were able to cope with turbulence and carefully manage the CONUS rotation base. Now, with the active force at 10 divisions (about 495,000 total strength and 118,000 deployed overseas), managing a rotation base while keeping a high level of preparedness for war poses a much greater challenge. In fact, it is clear that morale is already suffering at a time when

the propensity to enlist is falling. Clearly, it is not in the national interest to jeopardize Army readiness at a time when the need for operations other than war deployments such as Bosnia shows no signs of diminution. A ten-division Army may not be big enough; surely it is not too large. The Army will remain the nation's decisive force and should be sized accordingly.

## **The Way Ahead**

The President writes:

“The United States recognizes that we have a special responsibility that goes along with being a great power. Our global interests and our historic ideals impel us to oppose those who would endanger the survival or well-being of their peaceful neighbors.

“We therefore will send American troops abroad only when our interest and our values are sufficiently at stake. When we do so, it will be with clear objectives to which we are firmly committed and which — when combat is likely — we have the means to achieve decisively.” (*A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, The White House, February 1995.)

There is no ambiguity in these words of the Commander in Chief. The commitment to have sufficient forces to achieve decisive results is at once a promise and a statement of need. There are few who would argue that the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force are second to none in the world in size and capability. It is the Army alone that cannot stake such a parallel claim. Yet, it is the Army that must ultimately be the decisive force while operating as a part of the joint team both in combat and in operations other than war. In Haiti, for example, it was a joint service team that began the move to restore the democratic leader to power. And in the President's words: “In Haiti, it was only when the Haitian military learned that the 82d Airborne Division was en route that we achieved peacefully what we were prepared to do under fire.” (*A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*.) It is exactly this kind of capability and the reputation earned in Desert Storm that provides the decisive force called for by our National Strategy. The Army is now at its leanest and smallest in half a century. To this point in the force reductions since the end of the Cold War, we have maintained the readiness of the Army and preserved its professionalism and its deterrent value. In the unstable world of such leaders as Saddam Hussein, of the proliferation of long-range missiles, of the growing numbers of nations who have or will have chemical or biological warfare capabilities, and of potential crisis flash points in several parts of the world, the need for a strong, flexible, responsive Army has never been greater. We have now such a force. We must pledge to preserve it.

(General Otis is currently a Senior Fellow for the Institute of Land Warfare.)

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