

**Jump TO Article**



The article on the pages below is reprinted by permission from *United Service* (the journal of the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales), which seeks to inform the defence and security debate in Australia and to bring an Australian perspective to that debate internationally.

The Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales (RUSI NSW) has been promoting informed debate on defence and security issues since 1888. To receive quarterly copies of *United Service* and to obtain other significant benefits of RUSI NSW membership, please see our online Membership page:

[www.rusinsw.org.au/Membership](http://www.rusinsw.org.au/Membership)



**Jump TO Article**

# *The Australian Army*

an address<sup>1</sup> to the Institute at its 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner  
on 22 August 2008 by

**Lieutenant General K. J. Gillespie, AO, DSC, CSM<sup>2</sup>**  
Chief of Army



*Since the inception of the United Service Institution of New South Wales 120 years ago, the naval and military forces of the then six Australian colonies have evolved into a unified Australian Defence Force which deploys purpose-specific joint task forces to conduct operations under the direction of Headquarters Joint Operations Command. In this paper, the new Chief of Army outlines the role of the Army within the new Australian Defence Force command and control paradigm, explains the need for Army's structure to be adapted to that paradigm and provides an insight into the intellectual underpinning of Army's ongoing modernisation.*

The Royal United Services Institute has an important role to play in the debate on defence and national security issues in Australia, so it is a pleasure to be here and have the opportunity to talk to you. Thank you for inviting me.

This is an exciting time for me to serve as the Chief of the Australian Army. The first decade of the new century has proved to be a demanding time for our men and women. The tempo of our global operations has challenged our personnel and material resources. We have seen many successes, and at times have experienced the painful loss of our soldiers. Through all this, the men and women of the Australian Army have maintained a very strong focus and dedication to their mission, while adapting to changes which have been required.

At the same time as we are providing highly capable, tailored, force elements for our operational commitments, we need to keep an eye on the future of the Army. A strategic approach to maintaining Army's long-term capability and health is a central part of my responsibilities as the Chief of Army and the future we are planning for will be defined by a convergence of three challenges.

### **The Challenges**

Our first challenge is to continue to excel on operations. I have already indicated that our tempo is high and it is likely to remain so. The Army has been on operations in many areas of the world, without respite, conducting a variety of tasks since 1999. The planning, execution, and support to these operations have resulted in the Army becoming a more operationally focused and vastly more experienced organisation. This is a great position to be in, but we cannot rest on our laurels – we need to seek every way we can to improve.

Our second challenge is to ensure our Army remains capable, responsive and relevant now and into the future. Our continued implementation of the 'Hardened Networked Army' and 'Enhanced Land Force' initiatives will ensure that we have the capacity to undertake a broad range of operations in a wide variety of environments.

Our third challenge is to ensure that Army's structure, organisation and processes are best suited to get the most from our existing capabilities and resources, and that we can develop new capabilities as they are required. Our command and control of Army must be adaptive to the significant changes that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has undergone in the last few years. The ADF has fundamentally changed the way it plans and conducts operations – the formation of the Joint Operations Command attests to that. Army's conduct of force generation and preparation needs greater alignment with the new command and control paradigm. Intimately related to this is our pressing need to ensure that we are able to more effectively employ and manage Army's huge fleet of equipment.

Essential to meeting these challenges is the recruitment, training and retention of first class soldiers, officers and public servants. Our people are not just a fundamental input to capability – they **are** our capability. They are not a priority – they are **the** priority for Army. Our success or failure in responding to the three challenges I have outlined previously will be determined by our ability to recruit sufficient numbers of quality men and women, train them in the requisite skills and trades, and then ensure we employ them in a manner that gives them meaning and a desire to remain in what is a unique and highly respected national institution – our Army.

We face these challenges at a time when our population is ageing and our robust economy is developing job opportunities in many sectors. Our Army is aiming to grow from its current size of around 26 000 people, to a figure of about 31 000 over the next eight years. This is an ambitious undertaking, but it must be

<sup>1</sup>Attended by 98 members and guests

<sup>2</sup>E-mail: ken.gillespie@defence.gov.au

achieved if we are to remain a potent force for the future security needs of our nation.

With this in mind, I want to tell you where I intend to take Army over the next three years.

### Getting the Thinking Right

We must continue our focus on the support of our soldiers deployed on operations. They provide a highly distinctive contribution to our nation's security. Many of them are in harm's way. The conduct of operations is our core function and we are constantly posing the question to ourselves of how we can better enable the success of our deployed soldiers.

Contemporary operations are characterised by the need for our deployed land forces to work *among the people* and establish a broad relationship with the supported population, while simultaneously engaging in offensive, protective and information operations to deprive the adversary of his support base. This requires extensive employment of civil-military cooperation, humanitarian assistance and other non-warlike skills, as well as the synchronisation of manoeuvre within a joint<sup>3</sup> – and often interagency – environment. Such warfare requires small teams of highly flexible soldiers. They need to be able to rapidly move from a non-aggressive posture to one of controlled aggression with superior firepower to defeat threats, and then transition back again.

As if these demands are not enough, the individual soldier is also affected by the increasing importance of the law of armed conflict, humanitarian issues and international law. Combine this with the growing pervasiveness of domestic and international media (both traditional and new media) and it leads us to an environment that demands we prepare our people for levels of contextual awareness, flexibility, expertise, sensitivity and precision which have rarely been required of the soldier in past conflicts.

This is not to say there is a lesser imperative to sustain and develop our conventional warfighting skills. Indeed, the opposite is the case. Training and structuring for high-level combined arms warfighting provides a crucible for the growth of highly-developed leadership skills and very necessary adaptation mechanisms. No other form of training hones these essential components of land forces for contemporary operations to such high levels. These skills provide the essential foundation for all types of operations that we may undertake.

So initiatives that will generate and prepare our soldiers for this environment in task-organised combined arms teams are the key to our ongoing development as an Army. Our contemporary, and likely future, operations

are about rebuilding (and often building for the first time) and influencing civil societies. Our operations will often be less about killing the enemy than about making them irrelevant to the population. The role of kinetic<sup>4</sup> operations in this context is to keep the enemy at arm's length while others (not always military) undertake the capacity building so essential to re-starting societies. Our operations *amongst the people* will require a level of precision and discrimination for non-kinetic operations that we have previously demanded from kinetic operations.

But training and equipping for operations is not enough. Our adaptability and our capacity to out-think an adversary is critical for operational success. We have recognised this through the development of our core philosophy – *Adaptive Campaigning*. This is the product of much of what our Army has learned in the past decade. It builds upon the hard-learned lessons of our forebears, from places such as Vietnam, Korea, New Guinea, North Africa and Europe to ensure our operations achieve the appropriate balance of land combat, population support, protection, public information and indigenous capacity-building, regardless of the scenario.

Our developing doctrine for counter-insurgency operations is now at an advanced level. Combined with the training and equipping of our soldiers, the intellectual foundation for contemporary operations that this provides helps ensure our soldiers are among the best prepared troops in the world.

### Continuing Army's Modernisation

Over the next few years, Army will introduce a range of capabilities that will improve our firepower, mobility, survivability and our capacity to collect and analyse information. Platforms as diverse as the armed reconnaissance helicopter, upgraded armoured personnel carriers, the Bushmaster troop-carrying vehicle, new troop-lift helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, new communications systems and Army's new fleet of trucks and trailers, will challenge our training and maintenance systems. As if this is not complex enough, we need to integrate these platforms into combined arms teams which are able to base themselves on, and launch from, the new Canberra-Class landing ships and that can conduct operations in accordance with our *Adaptive Campaigning* approach.

None of this will be possible if we do not recruit and train the right men and women to operate and maintain these wonderful new capabilities. This will require us to have innovative strategies to train sufficient numbers of people, while also retaining our people with experience.

If this was all we had to do, it would challenge us. But we will introduce these platforms while remaining involved in operations in many different theatres and concurrently re-aligning our command and control to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century realities. This will require careful synchronisation, prioritisation and allocation of resources.

On assuming command of the Army in July, I forecast changes in how Army operates. In particular, I undertook to review our structures and organisation to ensure that we adapt to both changes in the security environment and

<sup>3</sup>'Joint' in the context of the deployment of forces on operations implies a unified force composed of naval, army and air force units and assets balanced to meet the needs of the specific task.

<sup>4</sup>The term, 'kinetic operations', strictly speaking relates to military manoeuvre, but the term is frequently applied more narrowly to the application of destructive military force.

to changes over the last decade in the ADF's joint command and control arrangements.

Our current approach, with multiple levels of command in a strict hierarchical structure, reflects the command and control arrangements before Headquarters Joint Operations Command was formed. It would be fair to say that Army's higher-level command and control has not evolved significantly at a time when we have seen huge changes in ADF command and control. There are, arguably, too many headquarters. This slows down decision cycles, constricts the passage of information in an age of e-mail and 'Blackberries', and the sharing of lessons learned.

We have not yet fully transitioned to a culture where Army's mission is to undertake the force generation and preparation of land warfare capabilities for employment by joint commanders. Army now provides forces for operations; it does not conduct operations. In doing so, I intend to ensure our force generation and preparation processes mirror our adaptive approach to operations, encapsulated in our *Adaptive Campaigning* doctrine.

As we have transitioned to an Army that is constantly deploying force elements, it has made us focus more on the supporting mechanisms. In particular, we have learned much in the last decade about the strengths and weakness of our current structures and processes for generating and preparing personnel and organisations for operations.

Rapidly evolving operational and contingency requirements for joint operations demand an equally flexible force generation and preparation process. We believe an optimum level of support for operations can be achieved through a more systemic approach to adaptation within the force generation and preparation of Army force elements. To this end, since the start of this year, a team of planners from across the Army has developed and war-gamed a range of options to ensure that Army's generation and preparation of land forces is conducted more effectively and efficiently, and in better alignment with the new joint command framework. The principal aims of this work are to:

- improve Army's alignment with, and capacity to inform, the ADF's strategic and operational joint planning;
- better execute force generation and preparation, in a manner that balances operational commitments and contingency planning;
- increase the effectiveness and efficiency of training within Army;
- improve the linkage between resource inputs and collective training outputs within Army's force generation and preparation continuum; and
- improve the quality and timeliness of information flows throughout Army in order to enhance Army's adaptation mechanisms at all levels.

I hope to be able to make an announcement in the short term on the outcomes of this planning. It will form a natural and evolutionary step in Army's continuous modernisation.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, for the tremendous advances in the capability of Army over the past six years.

It is my aim to build rapidly on the very sound foundation he has provided to continue improving the ability of Army to provide first-class people and units when and where our nation requires them. We will continue the development of a hardened, networked, adaptive and – above all – ready Army.

## Conclusion

The last decade has challenged Army's conduct of its core role: the generation and preparation of land forces for operations. While Army has met the challenge on every occasion, we have learnt much that we can exploit to more effectively and efficiently provide land forces for operations.

The success of our operations indicates that our soldiers are of the highest quality. They continue to perform at exceptional levels of individual and collective performance even when under significant pressure. We need to accept, however, that operational excellence requires constant re-evaluation of how the Army as a whole thinks and operates. To ensure our soldiers continue to excel on operations, our challenge is to continually ask ourselves: 'how can we, as an Army, improve?'

This is an ongoing process. I see one of the principal challenges of my time in command of the Army as ensuring we are postured to be able to continually adapt to the environment around us. We must ensure that Army's structure and organisation is appropriate for the challenges we face – now and in the future. We must ensure that our command and control is adapted to the changes that the ADF has undergone in the last few years. We must ensure we improve the conduct of our force generation and preparation with the resources we are given. These are not insignificant undertakings, but we owe it to our soldiers deployed on operations, and those who will do so in future, that we apply to the task every measure of intellect and energy we possess.

**The Author:** Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, who became Chief of Army in July 2008, enlisted as an apprentice in 1968 and was commissioned into the Royal Australian Engineers, via the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, in 1972. Following a range of regimental, training and staff appointments, service with the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (1989), and as commanding officer of the 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment, he was promoted to Brigadier in January 1999 as Chief of Staff, Training Command–Army. He subsequently commanded the United Nations Sector West multinational brigade in East Timor, and then Australia's contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom. Promotion to Major General and appointment as Land Commander followed in January 2004; then promotion to Lieutenant General and appointment as Vice Chief of the Defence Force in July 2005. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for his service as commander of the Australian Contingent in Afghanistan. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his command and leadership in East Timor; and the Conspicuous Service Medal for his work in Namibia.