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Forces Command

an address¹ to the Institute on 30 September 2010 by

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Commander, Forces Command



Army's new Forces Command combines the former Land and Training Commands and comprises some 85 per cent of the Australian Army. Here, General Morrison explains why it was formed and where it is heading.

It is a real privilege to be able to address you today. As a former National Vice-Chairman of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia, I strongly support the organisation's aim of contributing to the current defence and security debate. I shall speak about the conceptual foundations of the modern Australian Army, explain the largest change to our command and control structure in 40 years, and show how we are merging individual and collective training across all of Army's capabilities.

Strategic Guidance

Our recent Defence White Paper (Australian Government 2009) provides a perspective on our conceptual foundations. The title of the White Paper is instructive in itself: *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*. It addresses how the Australian Defence Force (ADF) will be postured over the next two decades in an increasingly complex region and world. In this time, many countries of the Asia-Pacific will grow stronger and others will face many challenges. Indeed, just on the measure of population, Australia will be surrounded by most of the world's most populous nations. Coral Bell, an Australian strategist, has written:

"According to the UN's demographers, there are going to be almost twenty nations of over a hundred million people in the world by mid-century, many of them in our vicinity. Most of their governments are going to need to grow their economies by at least seven per cent a year to lift their people out of bitter poverty. That will mean an unprecedented demand for basic commodities, including oil, water, and fertile land, some of which will be in short supply. That will mean the certainty of competition in demand, and the probability of rather frequent crises." (Bell 2007)

The White Paper states that Australia's defence policy is founded on self-reliance in direct defence of Australia, but with a capacity to do more when required. It sets three broad tasks for the ADF. First and foremost it is to deter and defeat armed attacks on Australia, and so for Army it must be able to conduct joint and probably combined land combat. Secondly, the ADF

must be able to operate in support of nations of the region to ensure the security, stability and cohesion of our immediate neighbourhood. For the Army, that may involve combat but can also require us to protect and support local populations. And thirdly, the ADF must be able to support the national interest in preserving an international order that restrains aggression by states against each other, and which can also effectively manage other risks and threats, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, state fragility and failure, intra-state conflict, and the security impacts of climate change and resource scarcity. This will require Army to be able to fight, support and protect populations, and, with a view to restoring failing states or fractured societies, may see it involved in indigenous capacity building. Success in all of these operations will require Army to conduct effective information operations.

Adaptive Campaigning

Army's response to these government-mandated requirements has been to base our force structure, our capability development, and the way we train and ready our force-elements for operations, on the concept of *Adaptive Campaigning*. This posits that the principal operational goal of any Australian Army force-element should be the ability to influence and shape an environment in order to facilitate peaceful discourse and to thereby stabilise a situation. It accepts that there may be no end state to an operation, but rather an enduring set of conditions conducive to Australia's national interests.

The philosophical and conceptual framework for the conduct of *Adaptive Campaigning* is five mutually reinforcing and interdependent lines of operations: joint land combat; population protection; information actions; population support; and indigenous capacity building (Figure 1). The concept accepts that contemporary warfighting trends suggest that future conflict will increasingly involve multiple, diverse actors and influences, all competing for the allegiances and behaviours of targeted populations. As a consequence, the outcome of any conflict will increasingly be decided in the minds of these populations, rather than directly on the battlefield. It recognises that combat operations may no longer be seen as the decisive phase of an

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operation, and alone are not a guarantee of mission success, but that failure in combat operations will almost certainly result in mission failure. While the reduction in an adversary's combat power is obviously important, particularly if a decisive blow can be struck, the population's perspective on these combat actions is probably more important in the long run. To meet these challenges, the Australian Army must be proficient in all five lines of operation as part of a joint, combined and inter-agency force so that the right capabilities and emphasis can be brought to bear at the critical point to ensure success.

generation, which has been my principal task for two and half years, first as Army's Deputy Chief, and then as its first Forces Commander.

Army's New Command and Control Structure

So in now turning to the changes we have made to our command and control structure it is important to make one point: size does matter and therefore what you do with it is crucial. Australia's Army consists of just under 30,000 regular soldiers, nearly 17,000 reserve soldiers and around 1000 civilian personnel. At its heart, the Australian Army is a seven infantry battalion organisation, which is grouped within three regular manoeuvre brigades, which in turn are supported by an aviation brigade of three regiments, a combat service support brigade providing third and fourth line logistic support, and an intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) brigade. The formations are geographically dispersed, but even the units of a particular brigade can be separated by thousands of kilometres.

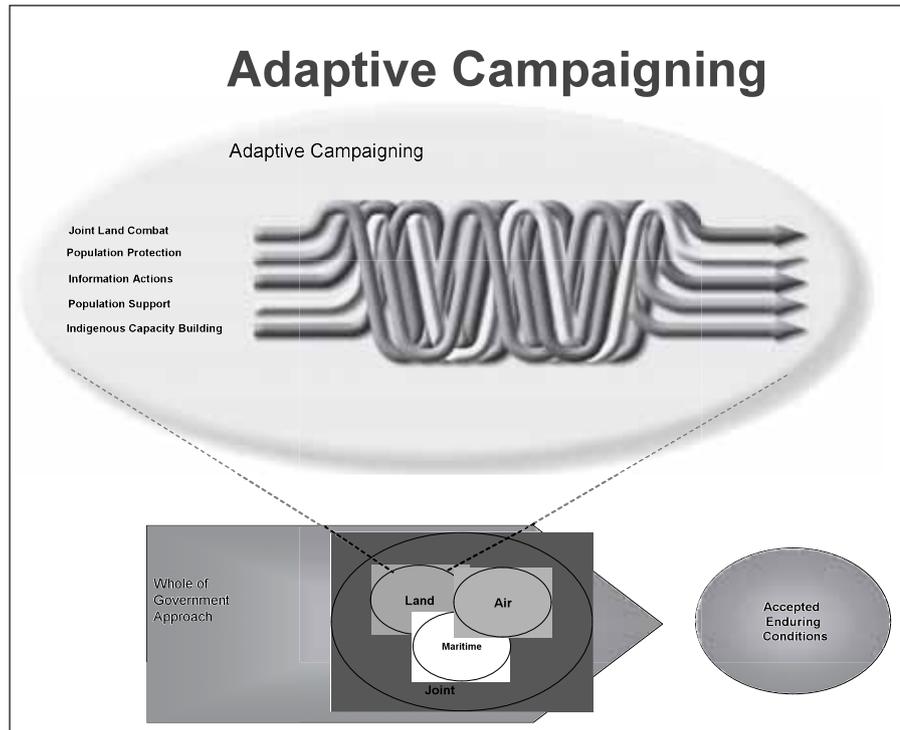


Figure 1: The Adaptive Campaigning concept

There is nothing particularly startling in all of this. From an Australian perspective, it is essentially how we have operated in a number of theatres from Vietnam in the 1960s, through Somalia, Rwanda, Bougainville, East Timor, the Solomons, Iraq and Afghanistan. But such an approach was not formalised, it was more an unstructured, but relatively successful, manifestation of the enduring character of the Australian soldier, as an ambassador, peacekeeper, teacher, aid worker and soldier.

What is new is that having developed a formal concept for operations that has broad utility in preparing individuals and forces for the full spectrum of operations likely to be encountered in the modern battlespace, we, Army's hierarchy, asked ourselves two key questions: is Army best structured to deliver what *Adaptive Campaigning* requires, and secondly, do we have a training continuum that properly addresses the individual and collective needs of the Service? Because the answer to both was, at best, a qualified maybe, we set about making the biggest changes to Army in a

organisation, which is grouped within three regular manoeuvre brigades, which in turn are supported by an aviation brigade of three regiments, a combat service support brigade providing third and fourth line logistic support, and an intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) brigade. The formations are geographically dispersed, but even the units of a particular brigade can be separated by thousands of kilometres.

Operational task forces

But traditional perspectives are problematic when you consider modern operations. They demand multi-faceted task forces that can operate effectively within the lines of operations described by *Adaptive Campaigning*. Our relatively small Army is being asked to perform a myriad of tasks in all of the

operational theatres where it is currently deployed; and, to ensure that best use is made of size, we build operational task forces around battle, not battalion, groups. Thus, the initial deployments to Iraq were based on our cavalry regiments; and the first four task forces committed to Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan, were centred on engineer regiments.

Again, there is nothing particularly startling in this, but it does demonstrate the requirement to ensure that whatever training system you have, it must be able to address the requisites for successful adaptive campaigning across all corps and functional areas. Furthermore, if you accept that you will group for operations, you must, as a consequence, group for training; and, to do that most effectively, we have concentrated on making our brigades the key organisation for the delivery of collective training and for the provision of trained forces.

Force generation cycle

Thus, the first major change was more temporal than structural. We established a force generation cycle, based around our three manoeuvre brigades,

which gives in any one period, the responsibility for the provision of operationally ready forces to one brigade, the responsibility for refurbishing and resetting recently returned forces to another brigade and the responsibility for making ready for deployment to the third brigade. The concept is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.1

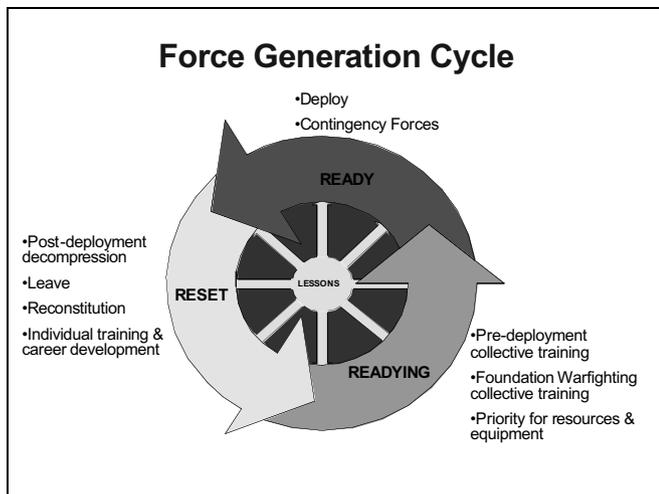


Figure 2: The force generation cycle

There is any number of practical issues that require constant management to make this cycle work. They include weapon and equipment serviceability, upgrade programmes, dwell time, attendance at professional courses and, of course, the real need to make Army's foundation warfighting skills more robust. The benefit of the force generation model is that it sets very clear priorities. This prioritisation process allows scarce resources, especially those resident in the enabling aviation, ISTAR and logistic brigades, to be allocated where and when the best training effect is to be achieved. Decisions can then be made that best balance support to operations and to force generation.

Foundation warfighting skills

By 'foundation warfighting' we mean the ability to conduct sustained close combat, against a lethal and adaptive enemy, for a specific purpose. A land force adept at close combat possesses the essential foundation for undertaking the full range of military operations. Foundation warfighting skills are a component of joint land combat as described in *Adaptive Campaigning* and constitute the primary and unique capability that land forces offer government. They underpin our ability to conduct all other lines of operation. The importance of foundation warfighting is that it delivers a close-combat capability that allows proximity to populations and threats and therefore allows us to influence and target. The concept is shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.

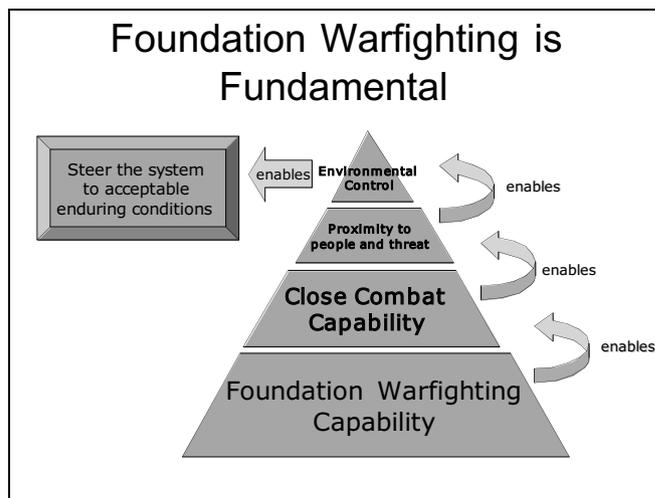


Figure 3: The foundation warfighting concept

Army modernisation and strategic planning

As a result of asking ourselves these tough questions, Army's senior officers also felt that we had become so focused on the current fight that we were not preparing robustly enough for what the future may deliver. While we have been very well funded by government for a number of years, we were not well structured internally to best introduce much of the equipment being procured as part of the Defence Capability Plan. Many of our small but important capabilities did not have a 'champion' and we were not well linked to the capability acquisition and sustainment organisations. In response, we have established within Army Headquarters a two-star officer (major general) to oversee all Army modernisation and strategic planning. All Army capability development is his responsibility and he liaises with all external agencies that support this effort.

That is timely when you consider that, in the next ten years, the Australian Army will introduce into service a fully developed, tier-two unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capability and an armoured reconnaissance helicopter fleet; completely overhaul the way we managed our tactical airspace; replace all of our wheeled vehicles, most of our armoured vehicles, all of our artillery systems and our utility helicopter fleet; become a digitised force with a new tactical communications and battlefield management system; upgrade our medium helicopter fleet; and improve substantially our ability to conduct tactical electronic warfare. And when I say over the next decade, most of those capability leaps are occurring now.

6th Brigade

Secondly, we grouped all of Army's small niche capabilities into a brigade now designated 6th Brigade [Combat Support and Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (CS&ISTAR)]. These capabilities are now being championed and husbanded as these skills are some of our most scarce and most in

demand. We are now getting better at generating UAV detachments, human intelligence teams, electronic warfare elements and explosive ordnance disposal capability bricks. We know where we need to go and we are running as fast as we can to get there. This headquarters has now focused our attention on digitisation and the importance of the network in maintaining our ability to leverage technological advantage. In many respects, the real challenge is ensuring that all this technology, information and knowledge supports the soldier, not the other way round.

Forces Command

Thirdly, we combined our two largest functional commands, Land Command and Training Command under one headquarters – Forces Command. I now command all of Army's forces less Army Headquarters, Special Operations Command and those forces currently committed to operations. I take civilians off the street into recruit training at one end of the training spectrum and conduct joint task force exercises at the other end. I am responsible, on a daily basis, for over 85 per cent of the Army and this means that my feet are firmly planted on the pedals of the force generation cycle. I make daily decisions on where priorities lie and allocate our resources accordingly.

The combining of the two major headquarters reduced duplication and gave us personnel savings that allowed us to create the new two-star position and the brigade headquarters looking after CS and ISTAR.

Army Training

Perhaps the biggest change in the last 18 months has been to the way the Army trains. Army's senior leadership has recognised that our people are performing magnificently on current operations, but what they are being asked to do is not all that a modern and capable Army could have asked of it. We have concluded that in particular areas, especially those centred on foundation warfighting skills, we need to be better focused.

We need to set the bar higher for our brigades and our likely task forces, tell everyone how high we expect them to jump, give them the lead-up training to assist them to do so, and then certify them by having them make that jump during highly demanding training. We need to ensure that all that is taught as part of individual training in our many schools complements that training continuum and does not run off at a tangent. Nothing startling I know, but nevertheless a training continuum that had not been operating particularly efficiently and one that certainly did not meet the mark with regard to developing the capacity to conduct, in an inter-dependent way, the five lines of operation described in *Adaptive Campaigning*.

We are doing this through the articulation of a new training continuum that synchronises individual and collective training with the force generation cycle in

order to clarify priorities of effort and resource allocation, whilst firmly connecting training to operational performance. The emphasis on evaluation, as well as the identification and application of lessons, embeds continuous improvement and increases the relevance of training to strategic guidance, as well as contemporary operations and contingencies.

I can appreciate that the last statement could be construed as something akin to 'management speak', but it is not. Forces Command, with its ability to oversee all individual and collective training, short of that which is done specific to particular operational missions, has now established the levels and standards that must be attained to be certified proficient at foundation warfighting and in the lines of operations described in *Adaptive Campaigning*. Now, on an annual basis, Army, with the support of the Air Force and the Navy, will run a large exercise that is the culmination of the readying brigade's training continuum. It will be supported in 'jumping the bar' by all of the enabling assets that it would expect if it were conducting operations in a modern and complex battlespace.

Exercise Hamel

For one month this year, just under 40 per cent of the deployable Australian Army will stop to take part in Exercise *Hamel* (see Front Cover photo), in one location and with one purpose – to improve our capacity to wage modern war in the scenarios envisioned in *Adaptive Campaigning*. And once we have done it in 2010, with one of our manoeuvre brigades as the focus, we will prepare to set the bar a little higher for the next readying brigade in 2011.

I can do this as Forces Commander because I have been given every lever within Army that is required to prepare forces for 'a war'. Mission-specific training for 'the war, or wars' is the focus of another and much smaller headquarters in Army. I have significant capacity to align and prioritise training and with that comes significant accountability and span of command.

Forces Command Accountability

I think Forces Command is off to a pretty good start. I am helped in demonstrating my accountability by being able to readily show how much more efficient in resource terms the new command is to those it replaced – budget savings of up to 20 per cent have been demonstrated in our first year of operation.

As for span of command, it was something that I was initially concerned about but not now. Engaging talented and highly professional subordinate commanders in the process of making Army more capable has been exceptionally invigorating. Getting mutual agreement as to what priorities are set, what resources are allocated and what standards are expected, and then letting them get on with it, reporting success, or modifying plans if problems arise, has been remarkably straightforward. It is called directive control and, for us in Forces Command, it has worked. It is overseen by a

Command headquarters that is based on one two-star (me), two one-stars (a chief-of-staff and a director-general training), seven colonels and some of the hardest-working lieutenant colonels on the planet!

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to draw a parallel with the Victorian-era Royal Navy. In what I found to be a wonderfully perceptive analysis, British naval historian, Andrew Gordon, used the Victorian Royal Navy to develop ideas about military transformation in long periods of peace. Now I know that we are involved in what has been termed the “long war”, and I have waded through Philip Bobbitt’s *The Shield of Achilles* (happily pretending to understand more than I actually did!) which describes last century’s wars as one conflict fought over several epochs (Bobbitt 2002). Gordon, however, in charting the sweep of history from the victory at Trafalgar in 1805 to the lost strategic opportunity that was Jutland in 1916, focuses on two telling aspects of the modernisation of the British navy. First is the substantial technological developments that occurred – not just the transition of wooden sailing ships to ironclad, steam-driven dreadnoughts, but other technological improvements, particularly the use of radio, all of which led to a disproportionate emphasis being placed on the infallibility of the machine and a commensurate enshrining of a doctrinal approach to resolving the chaos of war. The second aspect is the impact that all that had on the way the force prepared and then, eventually, conducted war. Gordon concludes, and I quote:

“In times of strategic change, although it is not terribly important how well a force makes the transformation from warfighting to operations other than war, it is important how well and fast it makes the change back again when great power conflict re-emerges.

The arrival of new technology was probably the most important factor in the erosion of Nelsonic doctrine because new technology appeared to eclipse historical lessons, however painfully learned.

In the long, successful maritime peace of the Victorian age, the Royal Navy had focused too little on the use of the material coming into service.

The admirals assumed they had sorted out the business of how to lead fleets in battle in the light of new technology, but they were wrong. The Navy was misled by the experts into supposing that technology had changed more than was really the case. They assumed that if the systemization of leadership and command matched the mechanization of the Navy, the Royal Navy could regulate battle and disarm its hazardous nature.” (Gordon 2006, 168)

As Australia’s Forces Commander, I see it as my role to ensure that, at the same time as we introduce so much technological improvement into the Army, we never lose sight of the need to remain adaptable, indeed mentally agile, with our eyes firmly focused on winning the fight whatever it takes. The only certainty that I have

is that the next fight will be as different from the ones that we are now in as they are from those that we fought before.

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The Author: David Morrison joined the Army in 1979 after completing a Bachelor of Arts degree at the Australian National University. He graduated from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and between 1980 and 1992 held a variety of regimental and training postings. In 1993, he became Brigade Major of 3rd Brigade and, following promotion to lieutenant colonel in 1994, spent two years at Army Headquarters before becoming Commanding Officer of 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in 1997.

In 1999, he was appointed as a member in the Military Division of the Order of Australia (AM), was promoted to colonel and was posted as Colonel Operations, Headquarters International Force East Timor (INTERFET). On return to Australia, he was posted to the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters as Chief of Staff. In 2001, he attended the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Canberra, graduating with a Master of Arts degree in Strategic Studies. Following promotion to brigadier in November 2002, he commanded 3rd Brigade until December 2004, when he became Director-General Preparedness and Plans–Army.

Following promotion to major general, in 2006 he became Commander of the Australian Defence Colleges and led a review into Defence’s joint education and training system. In 2008, he became Deputy Chief of Army and led a review of Army’s command and control structure which resulted in the *Adaptive Army* initiative and proposed the creation of Forces Command to be responsible for force generation and the development of foundation warfighting capability. He was appointed Land Commander Australia in December 2008 and became Army’s first Forces Commander on 1 July 2009. He was appointed as an officer in the Military Division of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2010. [Photo of General Morrison: Department of Defence]