

Raising and training the Australian Army

an address to the Institute on 28 June 2016 by

Major General P. W. ('Gus') Gilmore, AO, DSC
Commander, Forces Command, Australian Army¹



With Plan Beersheba now well into implementation and generating one of three combat brigades, in rotation, always ready for operations, Forces Command's priorities are shifting to preparedness, modernisation and resilience. It is seeking to ensure that sophisticated technology, focused preparedness and evolved resilience combine to optimise the output it can deliver in the defence of Australia's interests.

Key words: Australian Army; Plan Beersheba; training; preparedness; modernisation; resilience; digitisation; battle-space awareness; amphibious capabilities; cyber warfare; simulation.

In 2013, the then Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, introduced the Institute to Plan Beersheba and Army modernisation (Morrison 2013). Today I will update you on these developments, focusing on how the Army is raising and training its forces.

Plan Beersheba

Plan Beersheba was introduced as Army's modernisation plan in the 2013 Defence White Paper (Defence 2013). It remains a significant influence on the Army and our ability to operate as an integrated component of the joint force². The key aspects of Plan Beersheba have now been implemented, or are well into their implementation. The central tenets of Plan Beersheba are:

- A known and systemic **force generation cycle**: Formations rotate through a 36-month cycle, annually progressing through 'Reset', 'Readying' and 'Ready' phases. This replaced the previous *ad hoc* generation of forces for emerging missions.
- **'Like' combat brigades**: Plan Beersheba moved Army away from a specialised (mechanised, motorised and light) brigade model, to three sustainable and similar combat brigades. Plan Beersheba cemented the combat brigade as Army's primary 'unit of action' for contingencies, and Headquarters 1st Division has evolved as the operationally deployable headquarters to command and control joint land manoeuvre.
- **Integration of new capabilities**: Plan Beersheba focused on modernising the Army to allow us to effectively operate in contemporary conflicts. Vehicle fleet renewal, digitisation and networking of tactical forces, re-introduction of amphibious capabilities, and significant enhancement to battle-space awareness, are key efforts. These modernisation initiatives are underpinned by our ability to integrate with joint and coalition partners.

- A **total force construct**: Plan Beersheba seeks to maximise the output from all resources available to the Army. The merging of regular and reserve capabilities is a key initiative.

How have we progressed against this government-agreed plan? First, the force generation cycle is in its second 36-month cycle. It has proven very effective in maximising the output from the resources assigned to Army. The cycle allows us to recognise limitations across a range of 'enabling' functions, such as logistics, and to optimise capability apportionment. We have maintained Exercise Hamel as the annual centrepiece of preparedness. It is a great example of the efficiencies achieved through the amalgamation of Land and Training Commands to form Forces Command.

Second, we have taken action to standardise the combat brigade structure, including the establishment of armoured cavalry regiments within each combat brigade. The evolution of Headquarters 1st Division as the deployable headquarters to command and control joint land manoeuvre has been important, simplifying Army's interface with Navy, Air Force and government agencies. It has allowed the combat brigade to focus on tactical operations, rather than more strategic responsibilities. It has provided additional support for allocation of enabling assets, such as unmanned aerial systems. Headquarters 1st Division is now integral to Exercise Hamel, enhancing the exercise and ensuring that Army's command and control is fully rehearsed for complex war-fighting contingencies.

Third, Forces Command has benefited from modernisation efforts. For example, the transition from an 'analogue Army' to a 'digital Army' has continued apace, with brigades and training centres experiencing digitisation's revolutionary benefits. While it is an ongoing effort to stay at the front of the digitisation curve and the transition has been challenging, overwhelmingly it has improved Army across all capabilities.

Finally, we have achieved good success in 'pairing' Reserve combat forces with Regular combat brigades, creating a 'total force' output that is more effective than

¹Email: peter.gilmore@defence.gov.au

²'Joint force' in this context refers to the deployable elements of the three services which comprise the Australian Defence Force and which would deploy on operations together as one or more unified task forces.

Regular and Reserve components in isolation. This has built on the operational tasking that the Reserve has recently experienced. During this calendar year, over 550 deployments and international engagement activities were undertaken by the Reserve within Forces Command, demonstrating how active the part-time component of Army is.

Forces Command Priorities

With Plan Beersheba well into implementation, Army's senior leadership must ensure that we are well postured for future operations. Foremost is Army's ability to operate as a trusted joint and coalition partner across a wide range of different operations.

When I commenced my appointment as Commander Forces Command in January 2015, six years after the Command was formed, I felt that a short period of reflection would be beneficial. This would help us recognise things we were doing well, and identify areas requiring more effort and resources. After a 100-day assessment, I articulated my inter-related priorities – preparedness, modernisation and resilience – knowing that none of these priorities can be considered in isolation. I will now outline Forces Command's progression across these priorities.

Preparedness

The improvements in Army's force generation resulting from Plan Beersheba have been immense. The sustainable combat brigade rotation model has proven to be effective in determining force provision and in ensuring efficient resource allocation.

A key aspect of preparedness to meet the challenges of contemporary warfare is the ability of land forces to project firepower, mobility and protection, in a manner that is interoperable with joint and coalition partners. A significant progression has been the creation of armoured cavalry regiments within each combat brigade. The armoured cavalry regiment combines tanks, light armoured vehicles and armoured personnel carriers within a single unit, offering exceptional firepower, battle space mobility and protection to the combat brigade. The digitisation of many platforms means that we are highly interoperable with other militarily-sophisticated nations, and can effectively co-ordinate joint effects³.

With more force projection options, including additional C-17 strategic transport aircraft and the two Canberra-class Helicopter Landing Docks (LHD)⁴, the Army is better postured than it has previously been to operate in the type of contested environment recently seen in the Middle East and the Ukraine, and which could present in the nearer-region.

Some aspects of assigning an armoured cavalry regiment to each combat brigade are still being undertaken. For example, disaggregation of the M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank squadrons into each combat brigade is occurring, with tank squadrons now physically located with the 1st and 3rd Brigades, and it is likely that tanks will form part of the 7th Brigade structure by 2018.

Further consideration needs to be given to ensure that other elements of our combat force are effectively prepared for future operations. Projects such as LAND 400 are crucial to ensure that the basic building block of the Army, the infantry section, is afforded sufficient firepower, mobility, communications and protection to counter the lethality of contemporary weapons systems being used by conventional and non-conventional foes. The armoured personnel carrier entered service in the Army and was deployed to Vietnam in 1965. It is planned for service until at least 2025, 60 years after first entering service. While it has offered great service to Army, we must advance to the next generation of protection, mobility and firepower for our infantry, and this will be done through Project LAND 400 Phase 3.

The armoured cavalry regiment progression has been an extremely important initiative for the Army, markedly improving our preparedness and response to different threat scenarios. It is a central capability to Army in the modern battlespace.

Preparedness exercises – Exercise Hamel

Exercise Hamel is the largest annual Australian Army training activity. It is focused on preparedness, assessing the combat brigade that is about to enter the 'Ready' phase of our force generation cycle. Exercise Hamel 2016 is being staged at Cultana Training Area in South Australia, with 9000 participants. While this is currently a predominantly land-based training activity, there is important growing involvement from Navy, Air Force and partner nations. The 2016 Exercise Hamel includes an LHD and air combat, mobility, and reconnaissance and surveillance assets. It also includes contingents from the United States, New Zealand and Britain.

Exercise Hamel offers highly challenging military training for participants. In the current exercise, an active hybrid force – comprising conventional and irregular components – presents a realistic and potent threat, with significant lethality available to test the combat brigade under assessment. Other contemporary threats are incorporated, including active electronic and cyber forces, air threats, and improvised explosive devices. Some threat forces are simulated; an area of growing expertise.

Inter-service alignment of force generation

In the near future, Exercise Hamel may be adjusted as Defence further improves the generation of joint military forces. In his 2015 address to the Institute, the Maritime Commander, Rear Admiral Stuart Mayer, identified the importance of Australia's amphibious capability and the need for greater alignment of force generation between the services (Meyer 2015). This is

³Joint effects' encompasses artillery, air ground attack, naval gunfire and similar firepower provided by Army, Air Force, Navy and coalition partners.

⁴Canberra-class LHDs are amphibious assault ships optimised for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, but able to support some combat missions, especially in conjunction with the naval, air and amphibious capabilities of coalition partners.

important and it is something that we seek to achieve. The Air Commander, Maritime Commander and I remain closely engaged on defence matters and force generation issues. An age old lesson, on display today in Iraq, is the benefit of combined arms teams and joint operations. Air power is extremely important to land forces, and campaigns prosper where air parity is achieved. A strong air campaign will punish an enemy, but conflict remains a human pursuit and air power must be applied in concert with ground forces for each service to be most effective. Understanding our respective service's force generation requirements and aligning them wherever possible, particularly in the amphibious capability area, is important.

Doctrine

We maintain volumes of doctrine, but it is not well used, it is often difficult to access, and there is too much to keep it all contemporary. Through a comprehensive review of training, education and doctrine, the Director General Training and Doctrine, Brigadier Mick Ryan, is instituting a programme of doctrinal reform and reinvigoration. This includes declassifying a significant amount of doctrine, making it more accessible to our people and to regional partners. Doctrine development will be included in the project development process to ensure that new systems are preceded by doctrine that will allow us to immediately optimise use of those systems. Doctrinal education will be emphasised for junior officers and soldiers, similar to the way that most professions expect their members to deeply understand the basics and be aware of contemporary developments. Our use of online forums is also increasing and this provides exciting opportunities for the future.

Modernisation

Forces are only 'prepared' when they are postured to respond to contemporary threats, so it is impossible to speak about preparedness without reference to Army's ongoing modernisation.

Recent conflicts have consistently demonstrated that even the most rudimentary militia and terrorist forces have access to highly lethal weapons, with the cost of such weaponry continually reducing. Observations about modern military lethality can be made from conflicts such as the Ukraine, where sophisticated capabilities – such as anti-aircraft weapons, electromagnetic and cyber interference, and tanks – are fielded by all combatants. Ukrainian separatists use advanced military technology such as the BTR-82 amphibious armoured personnel carrier, sophisticated howitzer artillery technology with advanced radars, and military-grade global positioning system jammers. While these separatists are backed by a powerful geostrategic actor, it demonstrates that the devolution of military technology to conventional and non-conventional forces continues apace, and this is the future for which Army must be prepared.

It is therefore paramount that the combat brigade and supporting elements have technologically sophisticated capabilities to deploy where required. Central to this is

integral mobility, communications, firepower and protection. Professor Alan Dupont foreshadowed this to the Institute in 2014, highlighting the Australian Government's planned \$23 billion investment in armoured vehicles and land transport to mitigate the risk from rapidly emerging threats (Dupont 2014). This is a topic of deep interest to Army's senior leaders. Defence projects such as LAND 400 offer an important mechanism to ensure that Army, as part of a joint or coalition force, can perform the tasks required of it by government in contemporary conflict.

Hardening and networking the Army

I referred earlier to armoured cavalry regiments within each combat brigade and the commensurate hardening of combat support and logistic units. As the Chief of Army recently said: "Protection is the price of credible participation in the contemporary battlespace, no matter what the role". It is hard to imagine a military scenario where sophisticated armoured and digitally-networked vehicles will not be extensively required, or where the situational awareness now available to many of our armoured platforms will not be of enormous benefit in a joint or coalition military operation. The lethality available to the most unsophisticated enemy combatants is immense. ISIL⁵ is a contemporary example, and threats posed by technologies such as airborne improvised explosive devices cannot be understated. When combined with sprawling urbanisation and when complicated by strategic concerns such as resource competition, Australian governments will require us to operate in challenging and dangerous situations.

Even humanitarian assistance missions face growing threats. In his 2016 presentation to the Institute, Admiral Chris Barrie argued that problems such as climate change were 'threat multipliers' in these types of missions (Barrie 2016). The Army and Forces Command are well attuned to the challenges referred to by the many pre-eminent experts from whom the Institute has recently heard.

Simulation in training

New land-based armoured capabilities are extremely sophisticated, and training on these systems requires time and resources. Related to the continued inuring of our force is the need to conduct the most sophisticated training possible, in a resource-constrained environment.

Simulation provides part of the solution to that enduring challenge. Army has significant simulation experience in individual and collective training, such as the 16th Air Land Regiment's RBS-70 surface-to-air missile system simulator – an example of a simulation system that greatly reduces the requirement to fire extremely expensive missiles. The 2016 White Paper

⁵Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant; also called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Islamic State, and Daesh.

foreshadowed the replacement of the RBS-70 in the early 2020s and the procurement of a long-range rocket system in the mid-2020s (Defence 2016). Simulation will continue to be a critical component of these systems to reduce the costs associated with missile technology.

Army's leaders see significant opportunity through the implementation of Joint Project 9711 to provide a virtual environment for sophisticated, large-scale collective training. This may include the adoption of a hybrid enemy model able to be applied across the simulation network. Similar to the use of simulation for pilot training in aircraft, simulation will be an important feature of our investment in projects such as LAND 400. In particular, 'constructive' simulation – the taxonomy for the type of simulation that relies on a computer programme rather than a soldier to determine an outcome – will be progressed, enabling us to practise command and control in challenging synthetic environments.

Amphibious capability

Amphibious development is ongoing, although with increasing exposure across Defence, the amphibious capability is becoming more 'business as usual'. Ongoing training has rapidly advanced the amphibious force, and certification of various vehicle and aviation platforms for LHD operations provides policymakers with more contingency options. The deployment of HMAS *Canberra* to Operation Fiji Assist, the Australian response to Tropical Cyclone Winston (February 2016), demonstrated an important role for Australia's amphibious capability.

A key aspect of amphibious modernisation will be developing the capability so it can operate in higher-threat environments. The 2016 White Paper foreshadowed the enhancement to our amphibious warfare capacity to conduct combat operations (Defence 2016). Training and procedural development are important aspects of this, and acquisition of modern armoured equipment will significantly increase the government's options to employ amphibious capability into combat situations.

Cyber capability

I also commend the Institute for contributing to our understanding of opportunities and threats associated with the cyber and digital technology revolution. The prioritisation of cyber advancement was foreshadowed in the 2013 White Paper (Defence 2013), with significant emphasis placed on cyber development for Defence and Army in the 2016 White Paper (Defence 2016).

One of Army's brigade commanders, Brigadier Marcus Thompson, contributed to the Institute's recent Cyber seminar, a valuable initiative (Thompson 2016). This followed an earlier presentation to the Institute on Chinese cyber capabilities by Dr Tobias Feakin (Ingleby 2013). Cyber opportunities and risks must be an ongoing discussion. We have only scraped the surface of what this disruptive technology offers to us, and what combat vulnerabilities it exposes. The value and availability of

information is changing, and through the modernisation process we must ensure that we are structured to maximise the benefits and mitigate the risks of the cyber and digital revolution.

Innovation

In modernising the force, Forces Command must consistently innovate at all levels. Innovation has been an important priority for me and, in many ways unique to the military, we demand innovation from our junior ranks and not just from management levels.

From initiatives to improve shooting skills, to enhancing veterinary capacity of our military working dogs, to our ability to survey WIFI networks in conflict zones, our innovative soldiers have taken personal ownership of the Army's future capability. We have implemented measures to support innovation, such as our online 'innovation portal', where soldiers can present innovative plans for consideration. Our 'good ideas expositions' have proven useful. Our sophisticated 'soldier systems' result from a direct link between users, designers and project managers.

Army has a long history of innovation. The famous 'pop off' improvised self-firing weapons used to mask the ANZAC withdrawal from Gallipoli in 1915 are an excellent example. Combat operations quickly spur innovation. We, however, must foster innovation so it is institutionalised in periods where we are not committed to combat operations to ensure that innovation is expected of soldiers within the Army no matter what their rank.

Resilience

Even the most modern military force can fail when presented with challenging military situations if it lacks resilience. With the soldier at the centre of Army capability, modern equipment and processes cannot be divorced from the need to develop resilient soldiers, teams and organisations.

Resilience is a concept that goes well beyond 'hard training' or 'toughening up' that many may intuitively associate with the term. Within Forces Command, I have defined resilience as: "the capacity of individuals, teams and organisations to adapt, recover and thrive in situations of risk, challenge, danger, complexity, adversity and loss". The greatest military forces throughout history have demonstrated outstanding resilience, and resilience has regularly been the difference between victory and defeat.

Resilience is often just expected of the Australian soldier. The resilient Australian soldier, who battled the Japanese through the jungles of New Guinea and the Germans on the Western Front, is part of our strategic culture. The reality is that our soldiers, teams and organisations have different resilience levels, and resilience must be continually fostered.

Emerging operations also mean that our understanding of resilience must be broad. The tragic consequences from combat operations are readily evident in many public accounts of post-traumatic stress disorder.

As an Army and as a society, we now understand some of the challenges and we can increasingly offer a positive response. It is important to understand that emerging types of military operations, such as natural disaster recovery efforts or remote operations through unmanned platforms, can have a similarly traumatic effect on individuals.

Often when we think of resilience we gravitate towards individual resilience, where Forces Command maintains an extensive training programme. We are about to introduce a new resilience 'app' for Forces Command soldiers to access on their personal smartphones.

One of the Institute's outstanding contributions to global security discussions has been its ability to identify aspects of broader organisational resilience that must be considered. For example, the Institute has long played a central role in energy security analysis, both nationally and for the military. Recently, the Institute hosted Admiral Chris Barrie, where strategic challenges of fuel security and climate change were examined (Barrie 2016).

Forces Command is seeking to enhance organisational resilience in numerous ways. The 2nd Division, comprising the majority of the Army's Reserve force, resides in Forces Command. Expansion of the military in times of need has consistently been central to Australian defence policy and the 2nd Division remains critical in this regard. The Reserve offers organisational resilience that is unparalleled in any other workforce. It is a large, historically respected, geographically-dispersed institution that is well integrated into the Australian community. The Reserve is undergoing a major transformation and revitalisation, including to training and recruitment, to ensure that it continues to provide the immense organisational resilience capacity that it has over many decades.

Resilience cannot be divorced from my other priorities of modernisation and preparedness. Army's modernisation initiatives, such as LAND 400, offer exceptional and necessary enhancement to individual, team and organisational resilience in Forces Command.

Resilience is a priority that needs to be explicitly trained, and not deeply buried in Australia's strategic culture as a trait that is just expected of our soldiers.

Conclusion

Sophisticated technologies in isolation, such as armoured systems that may be delivered under Project LAND 400, do not make for a resilient soldier or team. Similarly, excellent preparedness in isolation does not mean that Army is well postured for future missions. My aim in Forces Command is to ensure that sophisticated technology, focused preparedness and evolved resilience combine to optimise the output that our women and men are able to deliver in the defence of Australia's interests. This must be easily integrated into joint and coalition operations, and must be sustainable and affordable.

Each decade presents different security challenges to Australia, but every strategic policy document

highlights that uncertainty is a feature of the time. We cannot be sure where the Army will be required to serve next. On 10 September 2001, I did not anticipate being the first commander of Australian forces in Afghanistan only two months later, or that we would be militarily supporting that nation 15 years on. What this tells me is that we must ensure that our organisation is prepared, modern and resilient to allow us to best support Australia's diverse interests.

I commend the work that the Institute has done to address prominent contemporary issues, and I hope that Forces Command can continue its association with this pre-eminent institution into the future.

Author: Peter Warwick Gilmore graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps in 1983 and then saw regimental service with the 8th/9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, and the Special Air Service Regiment, which he commanded in 2001-2002 when he led the first Australian Special Forces Task Group into Afghanistan. On promotion to Brigadier in 2005, he commanded the Coalition Advisory Support Team at Iraqi Joint Headquarters, Baghdad. In 2010, he commanded all NATO and other Special Forces assigned to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. He was appointed Special Operations Commander Australia in January 2011; Deputy Chief of Army in September 2013; and Commander Forces Command in January 2015. He was awarded the Centenary Medal and the Distinguished Service Cross in 2002; and was made a member of the Order of Australian in 2009 and an officer of the Order in 2013. He is also an officer of the United States Legion of Merit and has been awarded the United States Bronze Star and Meritorious Service Medal [Photo of General Gilmore: Department of Defence].

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