



*If you want peace, prepare for war.*

— Vegetius

# The Future Army

## Preparation and Readiness

General Robert W. Cone, U.S. Army

**F**OR TWO HUNDRED years, Rome preserved a tentative peace in the Western civilized world. We still remember this “Pax Romana” as one of the world’s long periods of interstate harmony. It did not arise out of a superior economic or political system. In fact, the attractions of soft-power held little sway with those threatening civilization. Rather, as English historian Edward Gibbon tells us, the Roman world’s internal peace and prosperity was “guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valor.”

Rome’s legions stood on the empire’s frontiers, often finding themselves in combat against barbarians set on destroying civilization. As long as the legions were held in readiness, Rome remained safe. Since the legionaries could never let down their guard, such a state of readiness entailed a significant investment in people and materiel.

When not campaigning, legionary training and preparation, almost as hard and as expensive as war, consumed the Roman army. Josephus tells us that “their drills were bloodless battles, their battles bloody drills.” Only when such endless preparation for war ceased did decay set in, allowing what Gibbon called “the fairest part of the earth, and most civilized portion of mankind” to fall into the nihilistic barbarism of the Dark Ages.

For the past seven decades, the U.S. military has accepted a role similar to that of Rome’s legionary army, guaranteeing peace through training and discipline. Our Army and our sister services have stood as the final underwriter of global order and stability. The world has enjoyed an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity free of full scale war. When crisis, conflict, and war emerged, America’s Army returned the peace. American soldiers fought and died in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Moreover, when not fighting, our Army stood guard against the Soviet Union’s military formations.

GEN Robert W. Cone is the commander of Training and Doctrine Command.

PHOTO: *Vercingetorix throws Down his Arms at the Feet of Julius Ceasar* (1899), Lionel-Nöel Royer, Crozatier Museum at Le Puy-en-Valey, France

Those decades of preparation left the Army well positioned to crush Saddam Hussein's military might in two major conflicts—Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In addition, the Army's commitment to professional learning—aimed at producing intellectually flexible leaders—made possible the rapid adaptation of the force in the face of two violent and widely disparate conflicts. As it always has, the U.S. Army answered the nation's call after 9/11.

Today we stand at a historical inflection point: the end of a decade-plus of war while facing an uncertain and dangerous future. The kind of conflict we will fight next is as unknown as the location or date. What is certain is that our Army will again be called on to deploy and engage our nation's foes—perhaps sooner, perhaps later.

While we must never lose track of the fact that we still have soldiers deployed and in danger across the globe, we must also prepare our Army for the future. After over a decade of war, rebalancing the near-term

### **Doctrine 2015**

2012 saw the release of Doctrine 2015 – *A Common Professional Language*. The new, simple, and hierarchical framework allows rapid updating of techniques, tactics, and procedures in the lower levels of doctrine through a wiki-like process overseen by school commandants. More importantly, the effort completes 30 of 31 ADPs and ADRPs that capture the immutable principles of our profession in a concise format. Doctrine 2015 provides the foundation and flexibility for thinking through the future of our profession.

readiness for today's missions with long-term readiness required to prevent or win tomorrow's conflicts requires three simple investments:

- Put the intellectual ahead of the physical.
- Invest in the process.
- Develop tomorrow's leaders.

Readiness is ensured only if our Army is poised for the contests to come; for when we are again called, our nation will not accept excuses if we are ill-prepared. The good news is that these involve the strongest traditions of our Army. We build great leaders and have a long tradition of operators who are intellectuals and deep thinkers who know how to fight. We just need to discipline ourselves and integrate the lessons of ten years of war with our view of the future.

### **Put the Intellectual Ahead of the Physical**

During the wars, the superb support we received allowed us to rapidly solve the problems that confronted us. There was one standard: save lives from immediate wartime threats. Our leaders, industry, and military focused on delivering physical solutions now without worrying about the long-term integration and sustainment of those solutions.

Now we face a different problem set: what will future Army leaders require in 20 years and how do we prepare for it?

Answering this question is arguably the most important issue facing the Army today. Whether tens of billions of dollars in future investments are wasted or put to use building an Army that remains second to none, rests on today's decisions. Unfortunately, peering into the future to determine how warfare will evolve is fraught with uncertainty and risk. Questions as varied as the role of cyber in ground warfare, the implications of China's rise, the Arab Spring, weapons of mass destruction proliferation and the continuing effects of failing states remain unanswered and require deep exploration. Moreover, we are only on the cusp of information and technological revolutions that will dramatically affect the character of war. Investing wisely requires us to pick our way through a host of competing choices while maintaining the flexibility to adapt when we get some things wrong.

The Army Capabilities Integration Center, our Centers of Excellence, and the Combined Arms Center are the experts at leading our professional debate about the future of war and discerning the requirements of that future. Venues such as the Strategic Landpower Task Force and the Campaign of Learning are essential in sharpening our thoughts on landpower's role in future warfare.

## ***7th Warfighting Function / Human Domain***

Institutionalizing the lessons of the wars will require structural imperatives that capture the key aspects of the lessons and ensure they are resourced and captured in our professional body of knowledge. To support this process, TRADOC is currently working concepts for a 7th Warfighting Function, examining the possibility of a human domain and working with the U.S. Marines and SOCOM to articulate the role of strategic Landpower in compelling and influencing people, governments, and their military.

At the same time, we need to encourage a healthy debate within our schools and professional journals about the face of future war. Our goal is to constantly challenge our own thinking through internal debate and to build a consensus on the way forward.

Out of these debates, future concepts will evolve. In turn, rigorous testing of these ideas will either convincingly display their relevance or demonstrate the need to discard or refine them. The Combat Training Centers, Battle Labs, and the TRADOC Analysis Center, possess world-class testing, experimentation, and analytical systems, all of which are available to augment our professional opinions. Only after they have passed through these crucibles will the best ideas pass into our profession, through doctrine, training, and future acquisition plans.

In the future, we will invest in thinking, and only after that is done will we spend our nation's precious treasure. Along the way, we will make sure that all of that investment goes toward maintaining an Army that remains unbeatable on any future battlefield. In the words of our former Chief of Staff, General Gordon Sullivan, it is time to put the intellectual in front of the physical.

## **Invest in the Process**

In many ways, the easiest part of preparing for the future is translating that thought into a winning force. Our Army has not been defeated on the battlefield in seven decades and remains a force without equal. This was no accident. Investments in the right equipment (the Big Five), innovative training (Combat Training Centers), and extensive leader development (unparalleled institutions for professional military education), created today's Army. Maintaining all of these strengths remains at the top of TRADOC's priority list, but doing so does require us to rededicate ourselves to investing in the processes that build a force for the long term.

That investment begins by returning to our operational-intellectual tradition. We need soldiers, after gaining operational experience, to invest their time in the institutional Army as trainers or by helping to think through complex problems. Continuing the wartime emphasis on near-term readiness will not allow soldiers to take time out of careers for education and other broadening activities. Moreover, it creates a reluctance to place top quality talent into the institutional Army. Yet, our forefathers invested their best talent into the future

## ***Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG)***

Afghanistan in 2010 saw a sudden and marked rise of insider attacks that threatened to drive a wedge of distrust between ISAF and the Afghan security forces. The AWG, in their role of global scouts, had already identified the potential threat. In the preceding year, they had developed the *Insider Threat Handbook* and the Advanced Situational Awareness Training Course. Both were ready at the time of the spike and provided immediate solutions that rapidly addressed the threat.

efforts and delivered us a superb Army. We owe our successors the same professional stewardship.

Fine-tuning that force will also involve a delicate balance of redisciplining ourselves to follow our proven methods for force development. During

### **Returning to Competitive Command and General Staff College**

The foundation of improving talent management in the Army was returning to OER block checks. Junior officers felt they did not receive meaningful feedback on where they stood until their first major's OER. Meanwhile a return to optimized ILE was essential in restoring the quality of CGSC, but boards could not distinguish between officers. The return to senior rater block check for captains and lieutenants allowed a transition to competitive CGSC, more discerning promotion rates, and other selective actions to shape the force.

the wars, the immediacy of requirements and fiscal support allowed us to seed numerous independent initiatives when pursuing a problem. Some continue and some ended, and the process delivered rapid, short-term results. However, it was very expensive and these efforts rarely possessed the tools to deliver innovation—solutions that would last for decades. Furthermore, few could develop the institutional underpinnings, such as sustainment training, that made their solutions endure. While I do not advocate return to a rigid bureaucracy, I think long-term success ultimately lies in our proven capability development process.

That does not mean we should abandon the innovative processes developed during the wars. Rather, TRADOC is trying to improve our investment process by thoroughly examining the structure that evolved

to support the wars and then integrate them into the Army's system. We brought the Asymmetric Warfare Group into TRADOC to serve as global scouts who can go to future battlefields and provide real-time intelligence and lessons learned to guide the investment process. Now the trick is to integrate and evolve other successful activities, such as the Rapid Equipping Force or the Joint IED Defeat Organization so that we maintain their innovation through the coming fiscal challenges.

### **Develop Tomorrow's Leaders**

Great leaders remain our ultimate strategic reserve as well as the key guides along the path of preparation. When faced with unforeseen situations, we count on smart and adaptable leaders to ensure the "Army we have" can be rapidly transformed into the "Army we need." Moreover, soldiers deserve the best leadership the Army can deliver, and that requires investing in leader development not just money, but also time. War necessitated delaying the professional education of many of our leaders. In reality, we mortgaged our leader development system to provide immediate battlefield leadership. That bill is now due.

Thankfully, leader development remains the Army's great strength. We know what it requires of the institutional Army and we still possess the people who know how to develop great leaders. All that remains is for the Army to signal our young leaders, through promotions and other selections, that education and broadening experiences are once again crucial to their advancement.

Developing leaders means investing in our schools. For the most part, our junior professional military education institutions continue to do a spectacular job turning out professional and competent leaders. In the future, we are going to maintain this performance, while turning our attention to improving our mid-level and senior professional military institutions. There is no reason not to demand the equivalent of Harvard on the Missouri at Leavenworth, or a Princeton-level education in strategy from the Army War College. We will increase the rigor of both institutions by putting in place a challenging curriculum, recruiting or building a world-class faculty, and by investing in the newest equipment and latest networking capability. Our ultimate goal is to return Leavenworth and Carlisle to their former status as leaders in operational and strategic thought. As we cannot possibly confront the

## ***Expanding Warrior Leader Course***

WLC has undergone a transformation in the last 12 months. During the height of the wars, WLC was reduced to 15 days to return leaders back to the fight faster. That reduction came at a cost in the fundamental leadership skills, such as counseling and property accountability. A critical task selection board of CSMs from the Active, Guard, and Reserve components determined the need to add more training on leadership, counseling, training management, and some field craft, such as land navigation. They also felt the contact time – often up to 16 hours a day – was too high to remain in all of the training. Based upon the board’s input, senior leaders from across the Active and Reserve Components agreed to expand WLC to 22 days.

future environment without access to the best strategic thinking available, we will make the development of strategic leaders a core competency.

However, building leaders for the 21st-century Army is much broader than developing quality leaders; it also requires the creation of the right mix of both experts and generalists. Such leaders cannot be mass produced. Our personnel systems are going to have to resist the temptation to treat people as a commodity and evolve to look at each as an individual.

That implies the Army’s future success rests on its ability to make talent management a core competency. The system requires the capability to provide some future Army leaders opportunities to acquire expert skills, while sending others, particularly those marked for senior level leadership, along paths that expose them to as many experiences as possible. By helping our leaders find where their unique talents best fit, we allow every soldier to obtain the training, education, and experience necessary for them to best contribute to the Army’s total well being. Moreover, by building the right balance

of experts and generalists, the Army is creating a talent pool capable of confronting any obstacle an uncertain future might throw in our path. We have typically done well managing the top ten percent of our personnel. Now we must leverage technology and experience to assist all of our people in reaching their fullest potential.

Finally, by exciting our current leaders about the future of our Army, we help ensure that the best and brightest will continue in the ranks. By managing them based on their unique contributions and investing appropriately in their education and the development, we send a strong signal about the value we place on our junior leaders—the irreplaceable core of our success.

## ***Advance Strategic Plans and Policy Program***

During the wars, senior leaders noted that while we had talented, adaptable, intelligent officers, few could frame strategic problems effectively for them. Fewer still could stand toe to toe with a four star and argue a point. The Advanced Strategic Plans Program was developed to take officers who have demonstrated the right talent set and send them for doctoral studies in strategic disciplines. These officers will then serve as advisors to combatant commanders and help shape policy at the highest levels.

## **No Accident**

Rome’s legionaries no longer stand watch along the Rhine. Instead, the American people and many of our allies look to the U.S. Army to guarantee a civilized peace. We will not let them down.

Our Army possesses the people and tools necessary to successfully meet any challenge awaiting us, just as Rome’s legionaries did for so long. Our task is to put our people and our tools to good use, as we prepare the future force so that our Army remains without rival. This will not happen by accident. Rather, it will be the result of a deliberate process, one that TRADOC will lead but in which every soldier must participate. **MR**