

# **Major Combat Operations versus Stability Operations: Getting Army Priorities Correct**

**A Monograph  
by  
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<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> <p>This monograph analyzes whether major combat operations or stability operations should be more of a priority for United States Army general purpose forces given the likely future threat, future operating environment, requirements and resources.</p> <p>Title X of the Congressional Code tasks the Army to prepare to accomplish “any national objective.” It goes on to prioritize those objectives in paragraph 206.2.b which reads, “in general, the Army. . . is responsible for the preparation of land forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war except as otherwise assigned and. . . it will be organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations on land.”</p> <p>Policy documents such as the <i>National Security Strategy</i> and <i>Quadrennial Defense Review</i>, as well as <i>Department of Defense Directive 3000.05</i> expand the Army’s core tasks from its Title X responsibilities to include stability operations as an equal priority for army preparedness. Army doctrine codifies these priorities in <i>Field Manual 3-0: Operations</i>, and in its operational construct, full spectrum operations.</p>					
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## Abstract

MAJOR COMBAT OPERATIONS VERSUS STABILITY OPERATIONS: GETTING ARMY PRIORITIES CORRECT. By LTC William E. Benson, United States Army, 61 pages.

This monograph analyzes whether major combat operations or stability operations should be more of a priority for United States Army general purpose forces given the likely future threat, future operating environment, requirements and resources.

Title X of the Congressional Code tasks the Army to prepare to accomplish “any national objective.” It goes on to prioritize those objectives in paragraph 206.2.b which reads, “in general, the Army. . . is responsible for the preparation of land forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war except as otherwise assigned and. . . it will be organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations on land.”

Policy documents such as the *National Security Strategy* and *Quadrennial Defense Review*, as well as *Department of Defense Directive 3000.05* expand the Army’s core tasks from its Title X responsibilities to include stability operations as an equal priority for army preparedness. Army doctrine codifies these priorities in *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, and in its operational construct, full spectrum operations.

The thesis of this monograph argues that maintaining proficiency in major combat operations is more important to the Army’s general purpose forces than sustaining proficiency in stability operations. In support of this thesis the monograph begins with a review of the environment. This review includes an analysis and definition of common terms such as major combat operations and stability operations. It also includes a discussion of likely threats and the future common operating environment. The environmental section finishes with an analysis of the current state of Army combat skills. The problem section of the monograph portrays the existing gap between the requirements expressed in the Congressional Code and policy documents when analyzed against the current plan, the Army Force Generation Model, to resource those requirements. This section concludes with a short case study of two modern armies, the Russian Army and the Israeli Defense Forces, both of which failed in recent conflicts primarily because they did not prepare sufficiently for major combat operations. The solution section of the monograph makes several recommendations that mitigate the shortfalls outlined in the previous chapters.

The conclusion of the monograph confirms the thesis that major combat operations demands a higher prioritization than stability operations for the United States Army’s general purpose forces.

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# Introduction

Traditionally the American people have considered the Army as the military force that fights and wins the nation's big, conventional, land wars. This view has persevered despite a long Army history of involvement in "small wars," peacekeeping operations and nation-building missions. In fact, throughout the history of the United States, the Army has spent far less time fighting declared wars involving major combat operations between states than it has conducting irregular wars or supporting other non-warfighting operations. Though there is some disagreement between military historians and commentators as to which American conflicts to refer to as "war," there is near unanimous agreement that the United States has spent exponentially more time conducting operations other than war than it has fighting in sustained combat, against conventional, state sponsored, military forces.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the amount of time the Army has historically spent conducting operations other than war, until recently, the Army still viewed war—"armed conflict between major powers in which the total resources of the belligerents are employed, and the national survival. . . is in jeopardy"<sup>2</sup>— and related combat tasks as its first priority. This priority was, and still largely is, reflected in U.S. national security documents, Congressional Code, and Army doctrine, training and organization. Though the United States Army's experiences in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s caused a reconsideration and expansion of army doctrine to consider stability operations as an equal part of full spectrum operations (FSO), until midway through the first decade of the twenty first century, "fighting and winning the nations wars" was clearly recognized as the Army's most important task.<sup>3</sup> The 2001 version of Army Field Manual (FM) 3.0: *Operations*, for example, explicitly denotes fighting and winning the nations

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<sup>1</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 1-1—1-2. FM 3-07 references eleven wars the U.S. has been involved in since inception. Lawrence Yates in his occasional paper *The US Military's Experience in Stability Operations* also references eleven wars though there is some disagreement about which conflicts to label as war.

<sup>2</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0: Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), Glossary -7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

wars as the Army's primary task; "fighting and winning the nation's wars is the foundation of Army service—the Army's non-negotiable contract with the American people and its enduring obligation to the nation."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, language in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review further defines the Army's responsibilities with respect to winning the nation's wars by stating,

"At the direction of the President, U.S. forces will be capable of decisively defeating an adversary in one of the two theaters in which U.S. forces are conducting major combat operations by imposing America's will and removing any future threat it could pose. This capability will include the ability to occupy territory or set the conditions for a regime change if so directed."<sup>5</sup>

It was not until Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 in 2005 that the Department of Defense prescribed that stability operations be given the same priority for training and resourcing as the more traditional offensive and defensive operations. "Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations."<sup>6</sup> Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 marked a significant change in course for the United States Army with which it is still struggling to come to grips. In effect, the Army was told to adjust its institutional bias of focusing almost exclusively on major combat operations, and to begin giving at least equal footing to stability operations. Since that time, and in light of ongoing stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan that continue to consume the majority of the Army's intellectual, financial and temporal resources, the Army has struggled to balance these tasks. Some, including current and former Army brigade and division commanders, argue that because of the current emphasis on stability operations there is a growing degradation of core warfighting skills that threaten to leave the Army and nation at risk in future conflicts. These pundits argue for a quick return to a more traditional focus on major combat operation skills.

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<sup>4</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0: Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), 21.

<sup>6</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive 3000.05* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005).

The conundrum of balancing MCO and SO tasks is recognized at the most senior levels of the U.S. Army. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General George Casey, recently stated, "You have no doubt observed that over the past several years we have been embroiled in a rather awkward argument about whether our Army should be optimized for irregular threats or for major combat."<sup>7</sup> He made these comments in prepared remarks when addressing senior leaders of the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense in the summer of 2010. In this statement, General Casey acknowledged and articulated the precise issue this monograph will address—whether the Army should be optimized to fight irregular threats or for major combat. The relevance and importance of this debate is given further emphasis by a myriad of Army senior leaders who are having to set priorities and develop future capabilities to posture the Army for success.

The sections and chapters that follow will make the case that major combat operations should remain the first priority for Army general-purpose forces across all of the force capability areas of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) because failure in major combat operations poses more of an existential threat to the nation than failure in stability operations. This paper excludes consideration of U.S. Army special operations forces—special forces units, civil affairs brigades, military information support groups—since preparing predominantly and habitually for stability tasks and the unconventional operational themes of irregular warfare, limited intervention, and peacetime military engagement are among the special operations forces stated and historic core competencies.<sup>8</sup> The paper is broadly organized into three sections; the environment, the problem and the solution. As part of the problem frame, two case studies will be presented in order to provide context and relevance to the problem.

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<sup>7</sup> General George Casey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "The Failure of Imagination" (lecture, Kermit Roosevelt Lecture Series, England, 2010). Written transcript from the Combined Arms Center Research Library Archives (accessed September 2010).

<sup>8</sup> United States Army Special Operations Command, *Fact Book* (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: 2010), 7.

Section one, the environment, will examine and define doctrinal terms in order to set a common baseline for further discussion. It will also include a review of likely future threats and environments/conditions in which the Army will have to fight. Finally, the environmental section will conclude by providing evidence of weakening major combat operation skills that used to represent the core competencies of the Army's general-purpose forces. Other factors, such as future budgetary constraints and reductions in troop levels are outside the purview of this paper, but will be referenced to provide context. The fact that allied nations have already begun to slash defense budgets, and that future cuts to U.S. defense spending and troop levels have been announced, adds a sense of urgency to the debate on prioritizing the military missions.<sup>9</sup>

The second section of the monograph will frame the problem. For the purposes of this paper, the problem is defined as whether the Army has correctly prioritized between major combat operations and stability operations given the likely future operating environment, requirements and resources. To understand the scope of the problem, it is important to dissect whether a gap exists between what the Army has been told to do—its requirements—and what the Army has stated it is going to do—its capabilities and missions. Chapter 4 will begin with a discussion of Army requirements and missions as found in Congressional Code, Presidential Directives and policy documents such as the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy. Understanding what the Army is required to do by law and executive order is essential to determining where gaps exist when those requirements are matched against what the Army has said it is prepared to do as outlined in Army documents such as the 2010 Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) Campaign Plan and the two Army capstone manuals, FM 1-0, *The Army*, and FM 3-0, *Operations*. The size and composition of the Army is unquestionably relevant to this discussion, so a review of the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model that promises to provide a force

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<sup>9</sup> "Gates Proposes Cutting Army and Marines," *Los Angeles Times*, (January 2011), <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sc-dc-0107-gates-20110106,0,05983251.story> (accessed January 31, 2011). Web site no longer available. URL has expired as of March 15, 2011. A copy may be available from the LA Times Archive. No author was noted in the original article.

structure consisting of 1 Corps, 5 Division, 20 Brigade Combat Team and 90,000 enabling forces on a rotational basis will also be presented.<sup>10</sup>

The final two chapters in the problem section present historic examples that illuminate the consequences of modern armies that fail to prepare for major combat operations. The Russian experience in Chechnya during the 1990s and the Israeli experience in Lebanon in 2006 each provide examples of the consequences for a modern army unprepared for major combat operations when faced with an unconventional/hybrid threat in the contemporary operating environment. These examples provide more relevance than older conflicts such as the U.S. experiences in Vietnam or the Philippines, or the Soviet experience in Afghanistan, because they are truly modern, occurring after the Cold War and within the context of the contemporary environment as outlined in chapter two.

Finally, the chapters of the solution frame will provide conclusions and recommendations supporting the thesis that preparing for major combat operations is more of a priority to the Army's general-purpose forces than preparing for stability operations given the likely future operating environment.

## **Section One — The Environment**

Before properly understanding the problem, it is important to understand the environment in which the Army is now operating and will most likely operate in the future. For the purposes of this paper, the factors that comprise that environment are the current and future enemy threats and likely battlefield conditions that affect how the Army fights now and in the future. Fortunately there is more agreement than disagreement on the type of threats facing the Army as well as general agreement on the

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<sup>10</sup> United States Army Forces Command, *U.S. Army Forces Command Campaign Plan 2011-2015*, (October 2010). The ARFORGEN model is also known as the 1/5/20/90 ARFORGEN Rotation Model that provides a mix of Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) forces on a 1:2 active component dwell and 1:4 reserve component dwell time.

operating environment. These factors are discussed in detail in the Army capstone doctrinal manuals FM 1-0 and 3-0, as well as in the various national security documents and contemporary books, studies and articles. The nature of the future threat and operating environment is reviewed in chapter one below.

There is also growing agreement that the Army's combat skills have atrophied as a result of nine years focusing on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism tasks in Iraq and Afghanistan. This view has been voiced publicly in writing by former brigade commanders, is generally regarded as fact by Army senior leaders, and is detailed in Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) commissioned studies on trends at the Army's Combat Training Centers. These atrophied skills are outlined in chapter four.

The area least agreed upon or understood relative to the thesis presented in this monograph is the language and terms used to discuss the problem. The terms "major combat operations" and "stability operations" for example are widely mis-associated and difficult to compare directly without clarification. Major combat operations is doctrinally one of the Army's operational themes. Stability operations is one of the four elements of full spectrum operations (FSO) alongside offense, defense and civil support operations. Because these two terms are central to the thesis of this paper, meaningful debate requires a comprehensive review and definitive delineation of terms. Another example of confused use of terms is the use of the acronym "COIN," referring to Counter Insurgency Operations. COIN is often used synonymously with or as a subset of stability operations. Army leaders frequently make statements such as, "the Army has to move away from training in just COIN and back to training full spectrum operations."<sup>11</sup> Statements such as these are misleading because counterinsurgency operations by definition are full spectrum operations. "All full spectrum operations executed overseas—including COIN operations—include offensive, defensive, and stability operations that commanders combine to achieve

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<sup>11</sup> Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship (AOASF) field work, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army War College Fellowship, Command and General Staff College, November-December 2010). Fieldwork included visits to Joint Task Force South (JTF SOUTH), Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), Army Central Command (ARCENT), Forces Command (FORSCOM), United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).

the desired end state.”<sup>12</sup> The evolution and misuse of terms of reference central to this paper such as major combat operations, stability operations and even the definition of war itself require review and clarification before an adequate vetting of the problem can be undertaken.

## Chapter One—Definition of Terms and Doctrinal Review

In the 2001 version of the Army’s operations manual, FM 3-0, the Army officially institutionalized the term full spectrum operations as the operational construct to describe how it would succeed across a spectrum of conflict that included everything from peacekeeping operations to general war. The introduction to the 2008 version of FM 3-0 described the change this way: "The Army established full spectrum operations in FM 3-0 (2001), shifting sharply from an ‘either-or’ view of combat and other operations to an inclusive doctrine that emphasized the essentiality of nonlethal actions with combat actions."<sup>13</sup> Under the initial construct of full spectrum operations, the Army grouped potential conflicts into two categories—war and military operations other than war (MOOTW). Offensive, defensive, stability and/or support operations were conducted as needed to achieve success. However, while the Army recognized the need to operate across the spectrum of conflict, its priorities remained preparing for and winning ground combat as reflected throughout the manual with statements like:

The doctrine holds warfighting as the Army’s primary focus and recognizes that the ability of Army forces to dominate land warfare also provides the ability to dominate any situation in military operations other than war. . . .  
...Fighting and winning the nation's wars is the foundation of Army service--the Army's non-negotiable contract with the American people and its enduring obligation to the nation. . . .

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<sup>12</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 1-19.

<sup>13</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), viii.

. . . Commanders focus their METL, training time, and resources on combat tasks unless directed otherwise.<sup>14</sup>

This doctrine reflected the thinking of the time, that preparing for combat was the Army's most important task and being well trained in high-end combat skills would lead to success across the spectrum of conflict. This thought paradigm was summarized in the 2008 version of *FM 7-0: Training the Force*.

During the Cold War, Army forces prepared to fight and win against a near-peer competitor. The army's training focus was on offensive and defensive operations in major combat operations. As recently as 2001, the Army believed that forces trained to conduct the offense and defense in major combat operations could conduct stability and civil support operations effectively.<sup>15</sup>

This paragraph from *FM 7-0* concludes by stating that the Army had it wrong in 2001, "However, the complexity of today's operational environments and commander's legal and moral obligations to the population of an area of operations has shown that approach to be incorrect.<sup>16</sup> This blunt, forthright statement was accepted as fact within the Army by 2008, and represented a monumental shift in the way the Army thought about and prepared for war. The observations of Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni captures this paradigm shift explicitly: "The truth is that military conflict has changed and we have been reluctant to recognize it. Defeating nation-state forces in conventional battle is not the task for the twenty-first century. Odd missions to defeat transnational threats or rebuild nations are the order of the day, but we haven't yet adapted."<sup>17</sup>

The 2008 version of *FM 3-0* captures the paradigm shift conclusively in Army doctrine and elevates preparing for stability operations to equal status with offensive and defensive operations.

Army doctrine now equally weights tasks dealing with the population—stability or civil support—with those related to offensive and defensive operations. . . .this parity is critical. . . .

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<sup>14</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2001), vii—1-17.

<sup>15</sup> United States Army, *FM 7-0, Training the Force* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 1-6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-6.

<sup>17</sup> Clancy, Tom, General Anthony Zinni and Tony Koltz, *Battle Ready*. (New York: Putnam Adult, 2004), x. The marines are also experiencing a doctrinal evolution similar to the one taking place in the Army as a result of experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

. . .operational experience demonstrates that forces trained exclusively for offensive and defensive tasks are not as proficient at stability tasks as those trained specifically for stability. For maximum effectiveness, stability and civil support tasks require dedicated training, similar to training for offensive and defensive tasks.<sup>18</sup>

Elsewhere in FM 3-0, stability operations even eclipses traditional combat tasks:

Winning battles and engagements is important but alone may not be decisive.

Shaping civil conditions (in concert with civilian organizations, civil authorities, and multinational forces) is just as important to campaign success. In many joint operations, stability or civil support are often more important than the offense and defense.<sup>19</sup>

Passages such as these in FM 3-0 and other current doctrinal manuals clearly reprioritize and broaden the Army's focus. However, taken in its entirety, the language, constructs and messages used throughout the 2008 version of FM 3-0, other military publications and even among Army senior leaders demonstrates that there is still some confusion on what constitutes full spectrum operations. For example, the terms stability operations and counterinsurgency operations are often used interchangeably as are full spectrum operations and major combat operations. Army leaders routinely make statements such as "we need to get away from training just counterinsurgency and focus more on full spectrum operations."<sup>20</sup> Statements like this imply a difference between full spectrum operations and counterinsurgency when by doctrinal definition counterinsurgency operations are full spectrum operations. The Army's Counterinsurgency manual states, "All full spectrum operations executed overseas—including COIN operations—include offensive, defensive, and stability operations that commanders combine to achieve the desired endstate. The exact mix varies depending on the situation and the mission." By definition then, "COIN is a combination of offensive, defensive and stability operations."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0*. (2008), vii—3-2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-2.

<sup>20</sup> Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship (AOASF) field work, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army War College Fellowship, Command and General Staff College, November-December 2010) JTF SOUTH, SOUTHCOM, CENTCOM, ARCENT, USSOC, USASOC, JSOC.

<sup>21</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-24* (2006), 1-21.

Some of the confusion in the use of terms is undoubtedly due to institutional lethargy within an Army that for decades focused exclusively on preparing for major combat. Another cause to consider is the very nature and organization of Army doctrine that leads to misuse and misunderstanding by Army leaders. For example, the foreword of FM 3-0 leads off with the statement “America is at war. . . .”<sup>22</sup> Traditionally, the term war evokes images of large, conventional battles between armies that are often fought to determine national survival, or at least survival of a particular form of government. Certainly war is classically considered to be a violent conflict of existential proportions. Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz in his seminal book, *On War*, defined war as an “act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfill our will” that was divided into two forms, “attack and defense.”<sup>23</sup> The Army has adopted the joint definition of general war as “armed conflict between major powers in which the total resources of the belligerents are employed, and the national survival of a major belligerent is in jeopardy,”<sup>24</sup> but has also expanded the definition to include “guerilla and unconventional war” as part of general war.<sup>25</sup> While the debate over whether the U.S. is currently in a *de facto* war or not is not pertinent to this monograph, the definition of the term “war” is central. If war is now considered something less than a violent struggle for national survival, it has neither been captured in Joint or Army doctrine, nor is it reflected in Congressional Code or national policy documents.

The Army’s expanded definition of general war makes it clear that irregular or unconventional war may be fought simultaneously with general war. It is also clear the Army recognizes that its formations will be required to perform offensive, defensive and stability task simultaneously as part of full spectrum operations. Since full spectrum operations apply across the spectrum of conflict, general

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<sup>22</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), foreword.

<sup>23</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated by Colonel J. J. Graham ( London: N. Trubner, 1873), Chapter 1. [http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/grimsley1/h380/on\\_war.htm](http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/grimsley1/h380/on_war.htm) (accessed February, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> United States Department of Defense, *JPI-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2008) 225. As of December 2010 JP 1-02 no longer includes a definition of “general war” or “war”. An apparent recognition that the definition of war may be changing.

<sup>25</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), 2-2.

war is included as a co-equal subset of that spectrum as opposed to the dominant one. To help the Army communicate how these operations inter-relate, FM 3-0 describes operational themes and corresponding operations and then super-imposes them over the spectrum of conflict. The charts from FM 3-0 below illustrate the construct. The first chart denotes the operational themes and the second outlines where the operational themes fit within the spectrum of conflict.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 2-1. Examples of joint military operations conducted within operational themes**

<i>Peacetime military engagement</i>	<i>Limited intervention</i>	<i>Peace operations</i>	<i>Irregular warfare</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multinational training events and exercises</li> <li>• Security assistance</li> <li>• Joint combined exchange training</li> <li>• Recovery operations</li> <li>• Arms control</li> <li>• Counterdrug activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noncombatant evacuation operations</li> <li>• Strike</li> <li>• Raid</li> <li>• Show of force</li> <li>• Foreign humanitarian assistance</li> <li>• Consequence management</li> <li>• Sanction enforcement</li> <li>• Elimination of weapons of mass destruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peacekeeping</li> <li>• Peace building</li> <li>• Peacemaking</li> <li>• Peace enforcement</li> <li>• Conflict prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign internal defense</li> <li>• Support to insurgency</li> <li>• Counterinsurgency</li> <li>• Combating terrorism</li> <li>• Unconventional warfare</li> </ul>
<p><i>Note:</i> Major combat operations usually involve a series of named major operations, such as Operation Desert Storm, each involving significant offensive and defensive operations and supporting air, land, sea, and special operations.</p>			

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2-1 and 2-2.

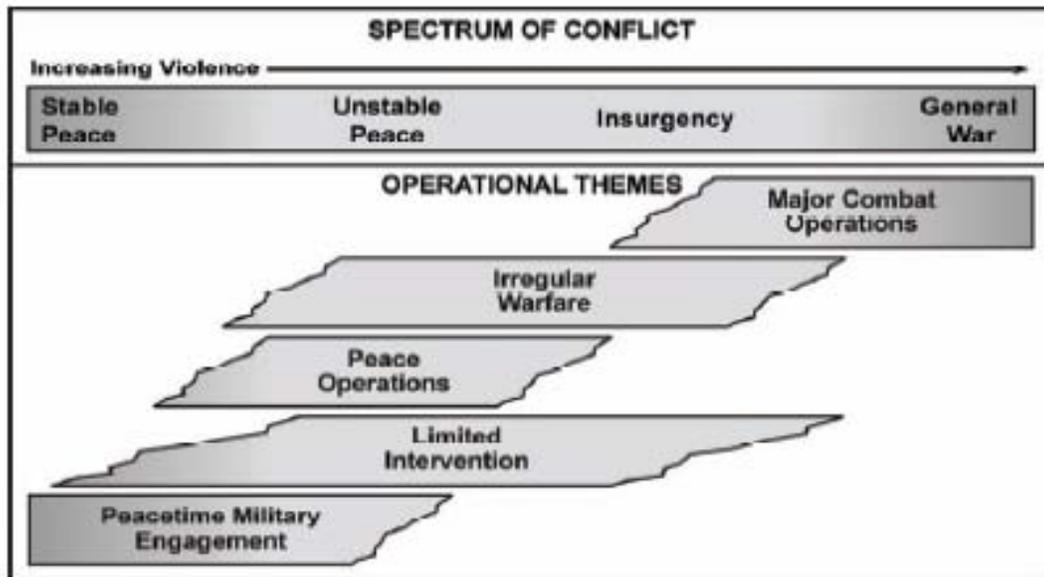


Figure 2-2. The spectrum of conflict and operational themes

It is interesting to note that major combat operations is included merely as a note on table 2-1 and not highlighted as a major operational theme. Additionally, there are no joint military operations listed under major combat operations as there are under the other operational themes, nor are there any listed in the expanded definition of major combat operations found elsewhere in the manual. From an Army operational theme perspective, major combat operations appear to be downplayed with respect to other themes like irregular warfare and peacetime engagement. That said, there is enough in the expanded definition of MCO to conclude that major combat operations describe “combat between uniformed armed forces of nation-states,” and ultimately result in the defeat or destruction of the enemy or seizing of terrain.<sup>27</sup> The expanded definition of MCO reads;

Usually characterized as "general war". Typically between uniformed, state sponsored armies, high casualties, high tempo, high consumption of resources. Successful major combat operations defeat or destroy the enemy's armed forces and seize terrain. Commanders assess them in terms of numbers of military units destroyed or rendered combat ineffective, the level of enemy resolve,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2-13.

and the terrain objectives seized or secured. Major combat operations are the operational theme for which doctrine, including the principles of war, was originally developed.<sup>28</sup>

What is not clear from a doctrinal standpoint is whether major combat operations includes combat against irregular forces, and if so, at what echelon. FM 3-0 repeatedly uses Vietnam to illustrate the complexity of the doctrinal framework but fails to provide conclusive answers when it states:

Major combat operations often include combat between the uniformed armed forces of nation-states. Even then, these operations tend to blur with other operational themes. For example, in Vietnam both the United States and North Vietnam deployed their national armed forces and, although major battles occurred, the United States characterized much of the war as counterinsurgency.<sup>29</sup>

The current doctrinal definition of major combat operations found in FM 3-0 is therefore only partially useful in answering the thesis posed in this monograph because the definition remains somewhat ambiguous. Because the definition is ambiguous, it is difficult to compare or contrast major combat operations directly with stability operations, which is an element of full spectrum operations but not listed as an operational theme. In order to make the terms more comparable, major combat operations, for the purposes of this paper, will include both offensive and defensive operations as defined under the elements of full spectrum operations. This allows for the comparison of MCO with SO as co-equal, or at least similar, in terms of doctrinal definitions. Now that major combat operations have been defined and placed within the operational context, it is important to come to a common understanding of how the term stability operations is used doctrinally. To do so requires a more in depth discussion of the Army's operational concept- full spectrum operations.

Full spectrum operations is the Army's operational concept and is defined in FM 3-0 as; "Army forces combine offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations simultaneously as part of an interdependent joint force to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative, accepting prudent risk to create opportunities to achieve decisive results." It further states that "the mission determines the weight of the

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<sup>28</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), 2-4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-13.

elements.”<sup>30</sup> Figure 3-2 delineates the primary tasks associated with each of the elements of full spectrum operations.<sup>31</sup>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Offensive Operations</i></b></p> <p><b>Primary Tasks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement to contact</li> <li>• Attack</li> <li>• Exploitation</li> <li>• Pursuit</li> </ul> <p><b>Purposes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dislocate, isolate, disrupt, and destroy enemy forces</li> <li>• Seize key terrain</li> <li>• Deprive the enemy of resources</li> <li>• Develop intelligence</li> <li>• Deceive and divert the enemy</li> <li>• Create a secure environment for stability operations</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Defensive Operations</i></b></p> <p><b>Primary Tasks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile defense</li> <li>• Area defense</li> <li>• Retrograde</li> </ul> <p><b>Purposes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deter or defeat enemy offensive operations</li> <li>• Gain time</li> <li>• Achieve economy of force</li> <li>• Retain key terrain</li> <li>• Protect the populace, critical assets, and infrastructure</li> <li>• Develop intelligence</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Stability Operations</i></b></p> <p><b>Primary Tasks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil security</li> <li>• Civil control</li> <li>• Restore essential services</li> <li>• Support to governance</li> <li>• Support to economic and infrastructure development</li> </ul> <p><b>Purposes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a secure environment</li> <li>• Secure land areas</li> <li>• Meet the critical needs of the populace</li> <li>• Gain support for host-nation government</li> <li>• Shape the environment for interagency and host-nation success</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Civil Support Operations</i></b></p> <p><b>Primary Tasks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support in response to disaster or terrorist attack</li> <li>• Support civil law enforcement</li> <li>• Provide other support as required</li> </ul> <p><b>Purposes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Save lives</li> <li>• Restore essential services</li> <li>• Maintain or restore law and order</li> <li>• Protect infrastructure and property</li> <li>• Maintain or restore local government</li> <li>• Shape the environment for interagency success</li> </ul>

**Figure 3-2. The elements of full spectrum operations**

As previously discussed, offensive and defensive operations and their corresponding tasks are considered part of major combat operations for the purposes of this monograph. Civil support, the fourth of the elements of full spectrum operations, falls outside the purview of that discussion. The remaining element of full spectrum operations, stability operations, is however central to the thesis and warrants further review and description. Particularly important is how stability operations relates across the

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<sup>30</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), 3-1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-1.

spectrum of conflict and operational themes. The FM 3-0 definition of stability operations begins with the joint definition found in JP 3-0.

*Stability operations* encompass various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief (JP 3-0).<sup>32</sup>

The definition goes on to state that “stability operations can be conducted in support of a host-nation or interim government or as part of an occupation when no government exists.”<sup>33</sup>

FM 3-07, the Army’s stability operations manual, recognizes civil security as a subordinate task to stability operations. Civil security is a “necessary precursor to the success in the other primary stability tasks,” and the most likely for the Army to take the lead in.<sup>34</sup> FM 3-0 confirms Army preeminence in the civil security task; “Army forces provide most civil security while developing host-nation capabilities.”<sup>35</sup> Curiously, the Army includes defeating external threats as one of its primary missions within the civil security task. This is where the definition of stability operations and its relation to the operational themes, particularly major combat operations, becomes confusing.

Civil security involves protecting the populace from external and internal threats. Ideally, Army forces defeat external threat posed by enemy forces that can attack population centers. Simultaneously, they assist host-nation police and security elements as the host nation maintains internal security against terrorists, criminals, and small, hostile groups. In some situation, no adequate host-nation capability for civil security exists. Then, Army forces provide most civil security while developing host-nation capabilities.<sup>36</sup>

Defeating external threats implies conducting offensive and defensive operations (i.e. major combat operations). If that is the case, then major combat operations becomes a subset of the civil security task within stability operations. More confusing is the statement in paragraph 3-74, on the same page of FM 3-0 as the definition of civil security, which states “stability operations require the absence of major threats

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 3-12

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 3-12.

<sup>34</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-07*, 2-10.

<sup>35</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), 3-13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 3-13.

to friendly forces and the populace.” If the absence of major threats is the precursor to stability operations then how are offensive, defensive and stability operations conducted simultaneously? Two sentences later it states “. . . if a unit is decisively engaged in combat operations, it should not be diverted from its mission to perform stability tasks.”<sup>37</sup> Again, this is contradictory with other parts of the manual which calls for the conduct of simultaneous offense, defense and stability operations.

One potential solution to this contradiction is to prioritize and separate operations by echelon. A discussion on echelon is presented later on page 3-21 where it considers the range of full spectrum operations including offense and defense, not just stability operations.

Division and higher echelon operations normally combine three elements simultaneously. Brigade combat teams may focus exclusively on a single element when attacking or defending, shifting priority to another element as the plan or situation requires. Battalion and smaller units often execute the elements sequentially, based on their capabilities and the situation. However, simultaneous execution of offensive, defensive, and stability tasks at lower echelons is common in irregular warfare and peace operations.<sup>38</sup>

FM 3-07 advances the discussion of echelon when it explains, "in stability operations, the brigade combat team remains the principal means of executing the broad range of tasks required for success."<sup>39</sup> The 2010 version of TRADOC PAM 525-3-1: *The United States Army Operating Concept*, however, calls for simultaneous full spectrum operations down to the company level; “The need for forces able to conduct simultaneous full-spectrum operations applies broadly from the JTF to company level.”<sup>40</sup> The discussion of echelon is extremely relevant when framing the problem and/or discussing possible solutions. If preparing for full spectrum applies equally at all echelons from Joint Task Force (JTF) to company, than arguing to prioritize between MCO and SO by echelon is less of a viable solution.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 3-13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 3-21.

<sup>39</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-07*, 3-85.

<sup>40</sup> United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1: The United States Army Operating Concept 2016-2028* (Fort Monroe, Virginia: August 2010), 26.

It appears then that doctrinally stability operations is not only a subset of full spectrum operations, but that it includes elements of major combat operations- offensive and defensive operations- within the construct of civil security. This may be why the term counterinsurgency operations is often used synonymously with stability operations, because its definitions are so closely aligned. However, according to Army doctrine, COIN is a subset of irregular warfare—an operational theme like MCO, not of stability operations—an element of full spectrum operations. Furthermore, COIN includes offensive and defensive operations; implicitly assuming a threat. As noted above, stability operations require the absence of a “significant threat.” These discrepancies become important when determining how the Army should prioritize between major combat operations and stability operations going forward. If stability operations cannot succeed in the presence of a threat, then eliminating the threat must be the first priority. Therefore, eliminating a threat requires offensive and defensive operations *a priori* to successful stability operations.

Further complicating this doctrinal quagmire is the repeated sprinkling of traditional, warfighting language throughout FM 3-0 and other doctrinal manuals that confuse the message by returning traditional combat tasks to preeminence.

Modern conflict occurs in many domains; however, landpower normally solidifies the outcome, even when it is not the decisive instrument. **Landpower is the ability--by threat, force, or occupation--to gain, sustain and exploit control over land, resources, and people..** ...the capability to prevail in close combat is indispensable and unique to land operations. It underlies most Army efforts in peace and war. **Close combat is warfare carried out on land in a direct-fire fight, supported by direct, indirect, and air-delivered fires.**<sup>41</sup>

These are specific and emphatic statements that seem to imply that dominating in close combat (offensive and defensive operations) on land is the unique skill the Army provides to the Nation.

While specific recommendations to improve doctrinal conflation will appear in the final section of the monograph, for the purposes of further discussion major combat operations is defined as a combination of offensive and defensive operations, as currently found in FM 3-0. Stability operations are

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<sup>41</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), 1-15—1-17. Bold print in original.

defined using the Joint definition found in JP 3-0 and outlined above, but the definition excludes language referring to elements of major combat operations found in some Army doctrine. Fortunately there is far more agreement on the threat and future operational environments. These two areas will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Two—Threat and Operational Environments

In contrast to the doctrinal construct, there is general understanding and agreement on the general nature of likely threats and future operational environment. While history is replete with examples of nations and armies that prepared for the last war against the last enemy, the ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have grounded the current force in the realities of the common operating environment and institutionalized the need for agile and adaptive leaders and organizations to meet emerging threats. While there is agreement about the general nature of future threats, it is also commonly understood that the Army cannot predict what the *specific* threat of the future will look like or where it will be asked to fight. Thomas Donnelly and Fred Kagan write in their book, *Ground Truth*, that “beyond the war on terror, there is no agreement at all about the nature and scale of the threats America faces.”<sup>42</sup> Colin Gray, another author hypothesizing on the future of the U.S. military writes, “The core problem for those who are charged with the strategic function of conducting defense planning for national security is the need to prepare prudently for a future about which almost everything in general is known, but nothing is known in reliable detail. There are question marks everywhere as to why war, with whom, when, where, how and with what?”<sup>43</sup> The lack of a specific threat is in part what led to the emergence of the current doctrinal

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Donnelly and Frederick W. Kagan, *Ground Truth; The Future of U.S. Land Power* (Washington DC: AEI Press, 2008), 6.

<sup>43</sup> Colin Gray, “War—Continuity in Change, and Change in Continuity,” *Parameters* (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Summer 2010): 5.

construct of full spectrum operations. In theory, it provides an army prepared to engage across the spectrum of conflict; the priorities of which are the subject of this monograph.

While the specifics of the future threats are unknown, there is broad general agreement about future threats and operational environments that are surprisingly consistent. Common threads include the continued proliferation and use of technology, the emergence of non-state actors and demographic and social trends portending future conflicts will take place in and among the people. The combination of these factors combined together to create the term “hybrid threat.” Hybrid threat is generally defined by military analysts and U.S. Army doctrine writers as a combination of irregular and conventional warfare fought among the people using the latest available technology and information operations to counter advantages in military hardware. It describes not only the future threat but the future environment U.S. forces will most likely encounter.

Many defense analysts suggest that future conflict will be multimodal, combining various methods of warfare to increase both their frequency and potential lethality. This threat is frequently described as hybrid warfare where adversaries can employ unique combinations of all forms of warfare specifically targeted to U.S. vulnerabilities.<sup>44</sup>

Neither the struggle against terrorism nor the conflict in Iraq conform to traditional American military definitions and expectations. We may want war to conform to the heroic dimensions of World War II, but that is not what war really is today. Now, our adversaries. . . are elusive, intermix with the civilian population, employ the weapons of terror, and require us to respond more with patrols than with divisions<sup>45</sup>

The continued emergence and use of technology in warfare is widely chronicled. Many authors believe it has led to the emergence of a new revolution in military affairs. Whether that is true or not is appropriate for debate, but is not within the purview of this monograph. What is undoubtedly clear is that unlike any other time in history, the ability to violently and repeatedly strike an adversary, near real time, with accuracy approaching one hundred percent, anywhere on the globe, and without the shooter being

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<sup>44</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, “The Challenge of Hybrid War: America’s Security Role in a Changing World.” *Global Strategic Assessment* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2009): 146.

<sup>45</sup> John A. Lynn, *What War Should Be, What War Really Is, Turning Victory Into Success: Military Operations After the Campaign* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 43.

exposed to any risk, has changed not only how Western militaries execute wars, but has also changed societal expectations of war's consequences as well as how the enemy will choose to fight. One account of the 2003 U.S. campaign against the Iraqi Army is used to exemplify how the U.S. has changed the way it fights wars; a move away from the "conventional" clash of large formations.

What does not appear debatable . . . is that in terms of how wars are fought, the era of guided munitions is quite different--qualitatively different--from that of unguided munitions and aimed fires. The most telling example, once again, is the outcome of open combat between Iraqi and American forces in March-April 2003. . . Against US guided munitions and battle networks, the industrial-age heavy forces of the Iraqi Army were virtually reduced to an array of targets and aim-points waiting to be serviced.<sup>46</sup>

The fact that the enemy understands the implications of this new way of war is also clear. While many view the U.S. 2003 victory in Iraq as the latest (and perhaps final) vestige of two conventional armies fighting for supremacy in traditional combat, this belies the truth about the type of fighting that actually took place. The fact is that both the way the U.S. fought and the way the Iraqis defended were far from traditional. The book *Cobra II* and others describe a CENTCOM commander that went to combat in Iraq with far fewer troops than traditional planning and force ratios warranted. Gone also was the long preparatory fires that preceded the 1991 Gulf War offensive. Targets were shifted away from conventional military formations in favor of command and control centers, infrastructure and Iraqi political leadership. The enemy also changed tactics. U.S. forces were confounded by irregular fighters operating out of the back of "technical trucks," without uniforms but with a plethora of the latest rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons. In one of the few uses of a doctrinal conventional operation, Apache helicopters were sent to execute a deep attack. The attack failed not because of the latest in shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, but because of concentrations of small calibers weapons fired from urban areas, a threat for which no one apparently considered or prepared.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Barry Watts, *Six Decades of Guided Munitions: Progress and Prospects* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, March 2007), 265.

<sup>47</sup> Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 261-281. As described in *Cobra II*, on March 24, 2003, the 11<sup>th</sup> Attack Helicopter Regiment from V Corps conducted a deep attack to destroy elements of the Iraqi Medina

Other modern examples of “hybrid” threats fighting conventional forces include the Chechen fight against the Russians in the 1990s and Hezbollah’s fight against the Israeli Defense Forces in 2006. In the case of Chechnya, one author concluded back in 2000 that the likely threats the U.S. would face in the future would look much more like the Chechen insurgency than Soviet mechanized formations when he wrote, “There is excellent reason to believe that future enemies of the United States will look more like the Chechens than the Russians. Therefore, it behooves the United States to prepare for urban combat. U.S. planner should also recognize that a resident insurgency force enjoys significant advantages over even a technically superior foreign aggressor.”<sup>48</sup>

The Army has since embraced the notion that it faces an array of non-traditional and traditional threats and increasingly complex environment. FM 3-0 describes the operational environment as one of instability and persistent conflict and defines the nature of the threat more expansively than in the past.

Threats are nation-states, organizations, people, groups, conditions, or natural phenomena able to damage or destroy life, vital resources, or institutions. . . . Threats may be described through a range of four major categories or challenges: traditional, irregular, catastrophic and disruptive. . . adversaries may use any and all of these challenges in combination to achieve the desired effect against the United States.<sup>49</sup>

*The Army Operating Concept*, which looks at threats out to the year 2028, lists the most likely threats as:

Existing military powers with advanced technical capabilities; regular military forces equipped with advanced conventional weapons and in some cases WMD. Terrorist groups, insurgents, militias, drug cartels, and less advanced militaries- will use irregular warfare, terrorism, and information campaigns; low cost asymmetric weapons such as IEDs.

Emerging military powers and advanced non-state actors will seek limited advanced military capabilities- air defense, anti ship weapons and resort to irregular warfare.<sup>50</sup>

The Army has properly identified the wide array of potential future threats and acknowledges the difficulties of operating in the contemporary operating environment. It has also developed an operational

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division. Iraqi “anithelicopter” ambush teams using small arms fire and irregular tactics to target U.S. helicopters thwarted the attack. The attack was deemed a failure.

<sup>48</sup> Olga Olikier, *Russia’s Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2001), xv.

<sup>49</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), 1-4.

<sup>50</sup> United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, *TRADOC PAM 535-3-1*, 9.

construct—full spectrum operations—that attempts to explain, in theory, how the Army will meet those challenges. However, the Army accepts risk by not prioritizing the threat and by requiring all types of Army units at all echelons to prepare for all operations. The risk of preparing for all types of operations against all types of threats has the potential for leaving Army units unprepared for the most dangerous, existential missions, especially when operational necessity prevent routine training on certain skills sets. This issue has surfaced in the U.S. Army because of ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the form of atrophied combat related skills associated with major combat operations. The evidence of these atrophied skills is now largely accepted as fact within the Army and will be detailed in the chapter below.

### Chapter Three—Major Combat Operation Atrophied Skills

That major combat operations collective training skills have atrophied among the Army’s general-purpose forces is evidenced by Army senior leader statements and literature, anecdotal evidence provided by general-purpose forces commanders, and detailed analysis of unit performance at the combat training centers. A brief review of these three areas will complete the exploration of the environmental frame. Taken together with the definition of terms/doctrinal review and discussion of the likely future operating and threat environments, this evidence provides adequate context to allow a detailed and comprehensive development of the problem.

*The 2009 Army Posture Statement* states that “current operational requirements for forces and insufficient time between deployments require a focus on counterinsurgency training and equipping to the detriment of preparedness for the full range of military missions.”<sup>51</sup> *The Army Training and Leader Development Strategy* more explicitly states the challenge of refocusing the Army’s efforts away from COIN and irregular warfare (IW) by stating, “To meet this central challenge we will have to rekindle our Major Combat Operations (MCO) skills, taking advantage of the combat experience of our Soldiers and

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<sup>51</sup> United States Army, *Army Posture Statement* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Press, 2009), 5.

leaders, while resting our combat-seasoned force without losing our Irregular Warfare skills.” This same language was attributed to the Chief of Staff of the Army in 2009 when he addressed the need to “rekindle” MCO skills at the Combat Training Centers during the 2009 Combined Arms Center (CAC) combat training center (CTC) conference. The full text from the article clearly articulates the condition the Army finds itself in after then five years of almost exclusive focus on other than MCO skills.

The challenge for the CTCs is that, just as the operational Army’s MCO skills have atrophied, so have the OC and OPFOR MCO skills and knowledge; their ability to replicate this environment will also need to be polished off. The CTCs may require 2 to 6 months to posture themselves for a full MCO rotation. We have to figure out what a “good enough” solution is to support this MCO training environment.<sup>52</sup>

The recognition that the Army is losing some of its core fighting skills is also reflected anecdotally by some of its combat arms commanders. The debate was brought public in 2008 when three former army combat arms brigade commanders circulated a white paper entitled, “The King and I: The Impending Crisis of Field Artillery’s Ability to Provide Fire Support to the Maneuver Commander.” In the paper, the authors conclude that many brigades have lost their ability “to integrate fires with maneuver.” They cite recent combat training center observations that fires annexes are rarely produced as part of the orders process, that most firing platoons would have fired “out of safe” if not prevented from firing by an observer/controller (OC), that the entire sensor to shooter chain is “broken,” and that second lieutenants are often the most competent fire direction officers.<sup>53</sup> Added to this list of degraded MCO skills are those highlighted in an unattributed white paper circulated by the Second Infantry Division (2ID) stationed in Korea. The authors of this paper identify traditional MCO skills such as conducting intelligence preparation of the battlefield for a conventional threat, decision-making in a fluid/maneuver

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<sup>52</sup> Colonel G. Brown, “Semi-annual CTC Conference-MCO and Comprehensive Approach Integration and Training,” Combined Arms Center Training Directorate blog, entry posted April 9, 2009, <http://usacac.leavenworth.amry.mil/BLOG/blogs/cac-t/archive/2009/04/09/semi-annual-ctc-conference-mco-and-comprehensive-approach-integration-and-training.aspx> (accessed December 22, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> Colonel Sean McFarland, Colonel Michael Shields and Colonel Jeffrey Snow, “The King and I: The Impending Crisis in Field Artillery’s Ability to Provide Fire Support to the Maneuver Commanders” (May 2008), <http://www.npr.org/documents/2008/may/artillerywhitepaper.pdf> (accessed August 2010).

battle, anticipatory logistics in support of maneuver, combined arms maneuver and weapons system gunnery as examples of atrophied skills.<sup>54</sup> This observed degradation in skills within its own unit has led the Second Infantry Division to focus training exclusively on these and other documented major combat operation tasks with its single heavy brigade, aviation brigade and artillery brigade.<sup>55</sup> Important to highlight is the fact that because the Second Infantry Division is manned on a rotational basis by individual replacements from across the rest of the Army, the training levels of its Soldiers' provides a unique and potentially significant barometer of the training skill set of the entire Army.

Lending further credence to the Army's declining ability to conduct MCO is a Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) commissioned study in 2007 confirming these trends. Among its findings were that MCO skills were declining within brigade and battalion staffs, that Army majors were less confident in MCO skills than SO skills and that attempting to train both MCO and COIN skills concurrently was likely to inhibit proficiency in both.<sup>56</sup> Since then, the Army has conducted only one MCO focused CTC rotation, the first such training rotation in several years, implying that MCO skill atrophy has continued. In fact, continued operational requirements do not allow the Army to conduct another MCO focused rotation, the first for a heavy brigade in years, until the summer of 2011 ensuring that the skill degradation continues.<sup>57</sup>

That there has been MCO skill degradation among general-purpose forces, particularly at the collective task level, does not seem debatable. Another modern Army, The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), experienced a similar reduction in MCO skills after a deliberate shift to focus on stability operations and support to civil authority as a way to counter the internal threat of Palestinian suicide bombers within

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<sup>54</sup> Second Infantry Division, "Maintaining the Combat Edge in a Modular-ARFORGEN Force" (23 June 2010): 9-15. Unattributed white paper.

<sup>55</sup> Major General Tucker, "Lessons Learned in a Modular-ARFORGEN Force" (Presentation on Second Infantry Division training focus, Fort Leavenworth, KS, September 27, 2010).

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Bryan W. Hallmark "Skill Proficiency Trends" (presentation, TRADOC Doctrine and Concepts Conference, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, November 2007).

<sup>57</sup> Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship, fieldwork, NOV 2010.

Israel. This shift of focus was later blamed for the dismal performance of the IDF during the 2006 Lebanon War as detailed in numerous reports, including one by the National Defense Institute that concluded, “the intifada operations that had dominated IDF concerns in the years before the war were allowed to take precedence over training for other types of missions, one effect of which was a loss of combined arms and joint proficiency, with crippling effects of the battlefields of southern Lebanon.”<sup>58</sup>

While the lessons learned from the 2006 Lebanon War will be detailed in later chapters, the fact the IDF experienced degradation of MCO skills because of its focus on stability operations lends legitimacy to the idea that U.S. skills have also degraded.

In summary, the chapters relating to the environment have defined the terms major combat operations and stability operations, discussed the likely future operational and threat environments and detailed the apparent loss of MCO skills across the Army. Understanding these three aspects of the environment provides context for an informed discovery of the problem which will now take place in the chapters below.

## **Section Two—The Problem**

The problem under consideration is whether the Army has correctly prioritized between major combat operations and stability operations given the likely future operating environment and stated national requirements. To be clear, the Army’s self proclaimed priority is to prepare across the full spectrum of operations, without prioritizing between them. The Army position is defined repeatedly in FM 3-0 which states quite succinctly, “The Army’s operational concept is *full spectrum operations*.”<sup>59</sup> It also explains that the Army as a whole needs to be capable of conducting FSO: “Units must be agile

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<sup>58</sup> Russell Glen, “All Glory is Fleeting, Insights from the Second Lebanon War” (National Defense Research Institute, Santa Monica, California, 2008), xii.

<sup>59</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), 3-1. Italics in original.

enough to adapt quickly and be able to shift with little effort from a focus on one portion of the spectrum of conflict to focus on another."<sup>60</sup> To the Army then, it seems the debate is over. There is no prioritization of Army missions. The Army needs to operate equally across the spectrum of conflict and among all operational themes. The doctrine writers captured the essence of the new Army philosophy in the introduction to the 2008 version of FM 3-0 when they wrote, "within the context of current operations worldwide, stability operations are often as important as—or more important than—offensive and defensive operations."<sup>61</sup> This statement demonstrates unequivocally that stability operations are at least equal to and sometimes *more* important of a skill set for Army soldiers and leaders than major combat operations skills.

In order to understand whether this is the correct approach to the problem, it is important to dissect whether any gap exists between what the Army is required to do by Congressional Code, regulation and Presidential directive and what the projected Army capabilities are. Simply put, if the Army can meet its requirements without placing the nation at risk to an existential threat than there is no problem with its stated priorities. This section begins with a discussion of Army requirements and missions as found in Congressional code, Presidential directives and policy documents like the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy. This is important because understanding what the Army is required to do by law and executive order is essential to determining where gaps exist when those requirements are matched against what the Army says its missions and capabilities are. Central to the discussion is a brief review of Forces Command's (FORSCOM) 2010 Campaign Plan and the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle that describe a rotational model for U.S. forces to meet stated requirements. While a detailed analysis of this process is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to understand if there are enough forces available to meet all of the nation's requirements for the Army. Simply put, if the Army is big enough and has enough resources, then training for all contingencies may

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 1-20.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., vii.

be a feasible course of action. Prioritizing between MCO and SO is only important if there is a limited force structure or training resources. An important element of the review will be a discussion of echelon. Whether preparing for FSO applies fully to the army and corps levels but less to the division, brigade and battalion will effect whether the Army is meeting its requirements and correctly preparing across the areas of DOTMLPF.

## Chapter Four—Requirements

The oft referred to Title X of the Congressional Code, specifically chapter 307—The Army, details specific requirements and obligations of the U.S. Army. It states,

It is the intent of Congress to provide an Army that is capable, in conjunction with the other armed forces, of; 1) preserving the peace and security, and providing for the defense, of the United States; 2) Supporting the national policies; 3) Implementing the national objectives; and 4) Overcoming any nations responsible for aggressive acts that imperil the peace and security of the United States.<sup>62</sup>

While these requirements are general and leave the Army open to accomplishing any “national objective,” follow-on paragraphs clearly prioritize the mission-set envisioned by Congress for the Army. Paragraph 306.2.b reads, "in general, the Army... is responsible for the preparation of land forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war except as otherwise assigned and... it will be organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations on land."<sup>63</sup> As previously detailed in chapter one, war is defined doctrinally and historically as a violent struggle between nations or, as FM 3-0 defines general war, as “armed conflict between major powers in which the total resources of the belligerents are employed, and the national survival of a major belligerent is in jeopardy.”<sup>64</sup> To

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<sup>62</sup> United States Congress, *Congressional Code Title X, Armed Forces: The Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 2010), paragraph 3062a.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 3062b.

<sup>64</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0 (2008)*, Glossary-7.

paraphrase then, the Army's priority, its default position, from a national perspective is to prosecute "war," and the Congress views war as necessitating "prompt and sustained combat" on land. The type of language found in the Congressional Code, as understood in its historic context, clearly relates more to major combat operations skills than stability operations, implying that MCO preparedness is more of a priority for the Army. How do presidential directives and policy documents codify these priorities into actionable efforts and programs? A review of the *National Security Strategy* (NSS), Presidential Directives and other policy documents will provide that answer.

The *National Security Strategy* is largely silent on Army priorities in general and combat/warfare specifically. Basically, it says the military will prevail in today's wars and be ready for all other missions, by stating:

We are strengthening our military to ensure that it can prevail in today's wars; to prevent and deter threats against the United States, its interests, and our allies and partners; and prepare to defend the United States in a wide range of contingencies against state and nonstate actors. We will continue to rebalance our military capabilities to excel at counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, stability operations, and meeting increasingly sophisticated security threats, while ensuring our force is ready to address the full range of military operations.<sup>65</sup>

The only reference to actual combat preparedness is in a section set apart from the base document entitled "Use of Force" which explains,

While the use of force is sometimes necessary, we will exhaust other options before war whenever we can, and carefully weigh the costs and risks of action against the costs and risks of inaction. When force is necessary, we will continue to do so in a way that reflects our values and strengthens our legitimacy, and we will seek broad international support, working with such institutions as NATO and the U.N. Security Council.<sup>66</sup>

There is no reference in the NSS to actual combat or when use of force is warranted, and the section that does discuss use of force is filled with qualifiers that placate the reader by promising that use of force will only be the last option. Indeed, much of the NSS focuses on other elements of national power besides that of the military. To look for specifics about Army priorities, it is necessary to delve further into

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<sup>65</sup> United States of America, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2010), 14.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

subordinate policy documents like the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and Quadrennial Roles and Mission Review.

Language in the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* embraces the Army role of defeating enemy land forces in combat, but does so in the context that this is one mission among many. The introduction categorizes the requirements as, "In the mid- to long term, U.S. military forces must plan and prepare to prevail in a broad range of operations that may occur in multiple theaters in overlapping time frames. This includes maintaining the ability to prevail against two capable nation-state aggressors, but we must take seriously the need to plan for the broadest possible range of operation."<sup>67</sup> Further on in the introduction, it states three broad DoD initiatives; increasing availability of rotary wing aircraft, increasing UAV capabilities and increasing special operations forces. While these initiatives clearly impact general-purpose forces and the ability to conduct MCO, they are a far cry from previous QDRs that stressed building new combat platforms like the Future Combat System to counter more conventional threats. Certainly, the language in the QDR emphasizes the importance of non-MCO tasks across the Department of Defense with statements like,

Stability operations, large-scale counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism operations are not niche challenges or the responsibility of a single Military Department, but rather require a portfolio of capabilities as well as sufficient capacity from across Americas Armed Forces and other departments and agencies. Nor are these types of operations a transitory or anomalous phenomenon in the security landscape. On the contrary, we must expect that for the indefinite future, violent extremist groups with or without state sponsorship, will continue to foment instability and challenge U.S. and allied interest.<sup>68</sup>

Specific to the Army and Marines it states, "U.S. ground forces will remain capable of full-spectrum operations, with continued focus on capabilities to conduct effective and sustained counterinsurgency, stability, and counterterrorist operations alone and in concert with partners." Nowhere in the QDR does it discuss a need to improve or sustain MCO skills. Contrarily, it states a requirement to "increase counterinsurgency, stability operations, and counterterrorism competency and capacity in general-purpose

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<sup>67</sup> Department of Defense, *QDR* (2010), vi.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

forces"<sup>69</sup> Other documents, like the 2009 *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review*, solidify the requirement to prepare for all missions with passages such as,

Historically, the Department has focused its efforts on the ability to defeat a state adversary's conventional military forces. However, the 2006 QDR assessed that while conventional threats will remain and U.S. Armed Forces must maintain the capacity to defeat them, current and future adversaries are more likely to pose irregular and asymmetric threats. The Department therefore developed a force planning construct (Figure 2) that recognizes the need to maintain abilities to defend the homeland and prevail in conventional campaigns while concurrently developing a mastery of irregular warfare comparable to that which our armed forces have achieved for conventional warfare.<sup>70</sup>

Department of Defense Initiative 3000.05 signed in 2009, replacing the 2005 DODD 3000.05, captured all of this policy into a directive that stated, "Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations." DODI 3000.05 went on to detail requirements to the military departments to make sure the policy was complied with.<sup>71</sup>

Policy documents such as the NSS, QDR and DODD 3000.05 all of which equate the importance of stability operations with major combat operations appear to be at odds with the priorities for the Army outlined in the United States Congressional Code which emphasizes winning sustained land combat. This does not represent a true gap, per se. The Army fully embraces its traditional wartime mission as captured in FSO doctrine; however, the doctrine also adds to this mission the myriad of SO tasks and at times elevates them in importance over MCO skills. Theoretically, this is not a problem. As long as the United States Army has enough force structure, the right kind of force structure and/or the time to train to proficiency in both SO and MCO tasks, there is no gap. To determine whether a gap does exist, a brief discussion of the Army Force Generation Model is important.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.,viii-x.

<sup>70</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Mission Review* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 20.

<sup>71</sup> Department of Defense, Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 (September 2009).

The ARFORGEN Model as described in the 2010 FORSCOM Campaign Plan “is the structured progression of readiness over time to produce trained, ready, and cohesive units prepared for operational deployment.”<sup>72</sup> The goal of the ARFORGEN Model is to provide 1 Corps, 5 Divisions, 20 Brigade Combat Teams, and 90,000 enabling troops in the available forces pool (active and reserve components) starting in the second quarter of fiscal year 2012. Based on forecasted operational requirements, this allows for a one year deployment followed by a two year refit/retrain window for active duty forces. By fiscal year 2015, the Army goal is to increase the deployed to home station time ratio to one year deployed for every three years at home station for active duty forces. This model would provide a force of 1 Corps, 4 Divisions, 15 Brigades and 72,000 enabling troops. Some key assumptions influencing the ARFORGEN Rotational Model are that troop strengths will return to the 547,400 authorization from the current temporary increase of 569,4000 and that the Army budget will remain consistent with increases not to exceed inflation. Despite the reduction in troop levels and steady-state budgets, the FORSCOM Campaign Plan also assumes that “COCOM requirements will increase for Army forces to conduct overseas engagement activities over this period.”<sup>73</sup> It also commits FORSCOM units to preparing for “full spectrum operations in conflicts against a range of hybrid threats in unpredictable locations,” and postulates that “security activities will be as essential to success in war as combat,” that must not be “relegated to a few special-purpose units, but instead must be treated as a competency required of all Army forces.”<sup>74</sup> In other words, with 22,000 fewer soldiers and a static budget the Army is committed to providing fewer forces than are currently deployed in support of OIF/OEF, trained to proficiency at a greater range of FSO tasks while at the same time supporting Combatant Commanders with increasing requirements for overseas engagements. The projection for an increase in Army requirements for forces is not limited to the *FORSCOM Campaign Plan*. The *2009 Army Posture Statement* describes a future that

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<sup>72</sup> United States Army Forces Command, *U.S. Army Forces Command Campaign Plan 2011-2015*, (Atlanta, GA: October, 2010), 22.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-9.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

includes an “increased potential for conflict” against “adept and ruthless adversaries who exploit technological, informational and cultural differences to call the disaffected to their cause. Future operations in this dynamic environment will likely span the spectrum of conflict from peacekeeping operations to counterinsurgency to major combat.”<sup>75</sup>

Others, such as authors Thomas Donnelly and Frederick Kagan, believe the Army has been embroiled in persistent conflict since the 1990s. In their book *Ground Truth*,<sup>2</sup> Donnelly and Kagan refer to the 1990s as “one of the busiest decades the American military has ever had;” citing the 600,000 soldiers deployed to oust Saddam from Kuwait in 1991, the missions in Somalia, Haiti and later Bosnia, as well as subsequent deployments to Kuwait in 1994 and 1998, the Kosovo campaign in 1999 and other lower profile deployments like the military mission to Macedonia as harbingers of what the Army will contend with during the next couple of decades.<sup>76</sup> Donnelly and Kagan further postulate that “beyond the war on terror there is no agreement at all about the nature or scale of threats America faces.”<sup>77</sup> Because specifics about future threats are so difficult to predict, and in light of the ongoing counterinsurgency fights and two decades of involvement at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict, Donnelly and Kagan embrace the idea of an Army prepared to conduct all types of operations and categorically reject the notion of returning to an Army focused almost exclusively on major combat. They blame this type of single mindedness for some of the early follies in Iraq and Afghanistan explaining that the military and Army in particular

changed the description of its mission in a deliberate effort to avoid involvement in peacekeeping efforts. By the middle of the decade, senior army officers described the army's primary purpose as "fighting and winning the nation's wars," relegating "operations other than war" (including peacekeeping and stability operation) to secondary status.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> United States Army, *Army Posture Statement* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2009), 1-2.

<sup>76</sup> Donnelly, *Ground Truth*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

They even offer the armed forces a mission statement: “The United States maintains and uses its armed forces for the purpose of defending, supporting, and advancing its interests around the world,” justifying such abstract language by explaining “that is the basic reason all states maintain militaries.”<sup>79</sup> In effect, Donnelly and Kagan embrace the Army doctrine of full spectrum operations. They agree with and promote the notion that the Army must prepare to accomplish any mission across the spectrum of conflict.

While full spectrum operations is embraced by the majority of military leaders and thinkers, and is reflected in policy documents and Army strategies; however, there is an opposing view. This opposing view argues that preparing for major combat operations should remain the Army’s primary focus because this is the most difficult and important skill set to maintain. Donnelly and Kagan for example, while arguing effectively that the military must be prepared to fulfill any mission given to it, still identify Iran as the most serious threat to U.S. interests and China as a “distant second.” So despite all the talk of hybrid, non-state actors, the two most significant “enemies” Donnelly and Kagan identify are states possessing relatively significant and growing conventional military capacity.<sup>80</sup> This coincides with the threats identified in the most recent *Army Operating Concept* (AOC). While not identifying Iraq and China by name, it lists the primary threat to the United States as “existing military powers with advanced technical capabilities; regular military forces equipped with advanced conventional weapons and in some cases WMD.” The AOC identifies violent extremism as the most likely threat, but not the most dangerous; going as far as to say, “though not directly threatening vital interests” extremist acts may require U.S. intervention. In contrast, the AOC cites nation-states possessing both conventional and WMD capabilities with the intent to use them against U.S. interests as the “most dangerous” threat, noting that “adversaries will seek to fight “wars of exhaustion” against the U.S. while preserving their WMD capability.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>81</sup> Training and Doctrine Command, *Army Operating Concept* (2010), 10-11.

The Army's own research institute concluded that

major combat operations take place in circumstances usually characterized as war. When states or coalitions embark on MCOs it is usually because significant national or coalition interests are threatened. MCOs are the most demanding military operations and they demand the highest levels of collective performance and training. Major combat operations are therefore those for which armies should spend most of their time and resources preparing.<sup>82</sup>

Even the *2009 Army Posture Statement*, which extols the need for full spectrum operations, recognizes that, "A core competency of land forces is to effectively, efficiently, and appropriately apply lethal force. The lethal nature of our forces enables our ability to deter, dissuade, and, when required, defeat our enemies."<sup>83</sup> Still others postulate that even when conducting stability operations, the Army's ability to apply lethal force is its most important attribute: "In stability operations, close combat dominance is the principal means Army forces use to influence adversary actions. In all cases, the ability of Army forces to engage in close combat, combined with their willingness to do so, is the decisive factor in defeating an enemy or controlling a situation."<sup>84</sup>

The idea that preparing for combat should remain the top priority within the Army perseveres in official Army papers and publications as well. For example, the December 2010 Army White Paper, titled "The Profession of Arms," quotes James H. Toner when describing the "core purpose and reason the Army exists." The quote from Toner's book, *Faith and Allegiance: The Burden of Military Ethics*, included in the Army White Paper reads, "The preeminent military task, and what separates [the military profession] from all other occupations, is that soldiers are routinely prepared to kill. . .in addition to killing and preparing to kill, the soldier has two other principal duties...some soldiers die and, when they

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<sup>82</sup> American, British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Armies' Program Office, *Report on the Continuum of Operations* (Armies program office, Rosslyn, Virginia), 10. From the archives of the Combined Arms Center Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. No date appears on the report.

<sup>83</sup> United States Army, *Army Posture Statement* (2009), 11.

<sup>84</sup> Major Kenneth Burgess, "Transformation and the Irregular Gap," *Military Review* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: 2009): 29.

are not dying, they must be preparing to die.”<sup>85</sup> Using this quote to describe the “core purpose” of the Army certainly implies that preparing for combat supersedes preparing for all other tasks. While the paper goes on to describe the need for proficiency across the full spectrum of operations, phrases describing the profession as a “vocation comprised of experts certified in the ethical application of land combat power,” as well as describing Soldiers and leaders who “aspire to be experts and use their lethal expertise” seem to imply that it is the lethal skills and tasks that should have priority.<sup>86</sup>

To review, Congressional Code broadly states that the Army is generally responsible for “preserving the peace . . . supporting national policies . . . implementing national objectives and overcoming any nations . . . that imperil the peace and security of the United States.” Congressional Code then qualifies these responsibilities by prioritizing the requirement to execute “sustained land combat” as its core mission.<sup>87</sup> Policy documents ranging from the NSS to Department of Defense Directives, QDRs and Army doctrine have embraced full spectrum operations as the relevant operating construct. These policy documents and doctrine go as far as to call proficiency in stability operations as important as, and in some cases, more important than major combat operations. The ARFORGEN Rotation Model as outlined in the FORSCOM Campaign Plan describes how the Army plans to prepare forces for success in FSO while acknowledging that operational requirements will not necessarily diminish in an era of “persistent conflict.” It also acknowledges that current operational tempo has left an Army out of balance to meet its FSO obligations. The *2009 Army Posture Statement* states that “after seven years of continuous combat, our Army remains out of balance, straining our ability to . . . maintain strategic depth.”<sup>88</sup> In fact “restoring balance” is referred to over sixteen times in the Army Posture Statement.

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<sup>85</sup> James H. Toner, *True Faith and Allegiance: The Burden of Military Ethics* (1995), 22-23, quoted in the *Army White Paper on the Profession of Arms* (December 2010), 2.

<sup>86</sup> United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, *Army White Paper: The Profession of Arms* (Fort Monroe, Virginia: December 2010), 4.

<sup>87</sup> United States Congressional Code, section 306.2.a.

<sup>88</sup> United States Army, *Army Posture Statement* (2009), 1.

Finally, despite the official mandate to prepare for full spectrum operations, there remains a vibrant undercurrent within the Army and academic community that continues to postulate that preparing for combat should be the number one priority of the Army. This idea is so pervasive that it permeates recent Army documents discussing the future of the profession of arms with language extolling combat as the “core purpose and reason the Army exists.”<sup>89</sup>

That a gap exists between the requirements directed in Congressional Code, national policy documents, Army doctrine and projected available forces provided by the ARFORGEN Rotational Model with the requisite training to meet those requirements is apparent. That this situation places the nation at risk can be inferred from the undercurrent of academic and military writing that maintains combat skills and major combat operations should return to the fore of military preparedness. This notion of risk is captured in David Wood’s article “Busy with Afghanistan, The U.S. Military Has No Time to Train for Big Wars,” when he writes in December 2010,

The risk of being unready for major combat operations is partly a matter of choice: Defense Secretary Gates has directed the military to focus its time, resources and energy on winning the counterinsurgency struggle in Afghanistan. It is also true, senior officials acknowledge, that the armed forces lack the time to train for and equipment to fight a major conflict that might ignite from friction with Iran, say, or China or deal with a completely unanticipated crisis that requires American forces to quickly intervene—like Korea, 1950.<sup>90</sup>

Given that a gap exists between requirements and resources, the question remains, which skills are a higher priority for the Army, those for MCO or SO? An examination of the consequence of two modern Armies that failed to prioritize for major combat operations will help shape the answer to that question.

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<sup>89</sup> Training and Doctrine Command, *The Profession of Arms*, 2.

<sup>90</sup> David Wood, *Busy with Afghanistan*, “The U.S. Military Has No Time To Train For Big Wars,” (politicsdaily.com, December 2010). <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/12/27/busy-with-afghanistan-the-u-s-military-has-no-time-to-train-fo/> (accessed January 17, 2011).

## Chapter Five—The Russians in Chechnya

The Russian Army deployed to Chechnya in December 1994 to defeat a band of Chechen separatists who were looking to carve an independent Muslim state from Southern Russia. The separatists wanted autonomy for Chechnya in much the same way the populations of Bosnia and Croatia wanted autonomy from the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. In his report to the U.S. Marine Corps titled “David Slays Goliath: A Chechen Perspective on the War in Chechnya,” Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Jackson relates that the Russians entered Chechnya "with the intent of removing Chechen separatist leader, Jokhar Dudayev, and replacing his government with one more favorable to Moscow. Two years later, the last units of the Russian force withdrew from Chechnya" without fulfilling their objectives.<sup>91</sup> The Russians returned to Chechnya in 1999 to complete the mission they failed to accomplish in 1994. This time, after observing U.S. success with long range precision strikes in Kuwait and Kosovo, the Russian military planned to rely on artillery and airstrikes to defeat the Chechens. Because of this, “Russian troops had once again not been trained for the urban environment, they were again not prepared for the fight they faced.”<sup>92</sup> While the political decisions and issues surrounding the Russian experience in Chechnya are not relevant to this monograph, the poor performance of the Russian Army in Chechnya and its unpreparedness to fight the threat it found there are extremely so. A Rand study commissioned to study the results of the conflict concluded that "there is excellent reason to believe that future enemies of the United States will look more like the Chechens than the Russians. Therefore, it behooves the United States to prepare for urban combat. U.S. planner should also recognize that a resident insurgency force enjoys significant advantages over even a technically superior foreign aggressor."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Timothy Jackson, *David Slays Goliath: A Chechen Perspective on the War in Chechnya (1994-1996)* (United States Marine Corps), 2-4. No additional publication data found.

<sup>92</sup> Olikier, *Russia's Chechen Wars*, x.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

Descriptions of the threat environment found in Chechnya bear a strong resemblance to current and future threats depicted in Army doctrine. Key elements of the threat environment included characterizing the Chechen rebels as a “high end counterinsurgency” where improvised explosive devices, stacked mines, snipers and “thermobalic” weapons were common; where the enemy fought in small semi-autonomous groups of six to ten; and where intermingling with the population by friendly troops was a necessity for success but the cost to Soldiers in terms of psychological stress was high. The need for proficiency in urban operations, night operations and the use of armored vehicles was also highlighted.<sup>94</sup>

The Russian lack of preparedness in 1994 was calamitous. A brief synopsis of events follows:

On 11 December 1994, Russian forces attacked into Chechnya on three axes, all aimed at the Chechen capital Grozny. By late December all three columns had reached the outskirts of the Grozny in the West, North and East, and mechanized and armored units were poised to initiate the assault on the city. Approximately 6,000 Russian assault troops were in position to attack against not more than 1,000 Chechen regulars and irregulars defending in the city. On December 31st, after a ten day aerial and artillery bombardment the assault into Grozny commenced. The 131st BDE and 81st MRR conducted mounted attacks along separate avenues of approach. After seizing initial objectives the units were ordered further into the city to complete the destruction of the rebel forces. The units were ambushed by "skilled swarms of Chechen infantry, armed with automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades." Over the next three days the 131st would be totally destroyed with only a handful of 1,000 troops surviving and the 81st suffered 50% casualties.<sup>95</sup>

Though it eventually controlled the city of Grozny, the Russian Army never recovered from its first major battle. It struggled for two more years to control Chechnya, but on August 6, 1996, the Chechen rebels launched an attack to retake Grozny. In three weeks of fighting, the Russians suffered 500 dead and 1400 wounded.<sup>96</sup> By August 21, 1996 the Russians sued for peace, negotiated a withdrawal and

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<sup>94</sup> Ed Wagamon, “Lessons from Chechnya: Tactical Threats to the Solider System” (lecture for U.S. Army Installation Command). The term “thermobalic” is most likely referring to thermobaric weapons. Thermobaric weapons are designed to cause a longer duration explosion by burning the oxygen in the surrounding air after detonation, <http://secondsightresearch.tripod.com/id77.html>.

<sup>95</sup> Timothy Jackson, *David Slays Goliath*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Olikier, *Russia's Chechen Wars*, 31.

left the Chechen's with "de facto independence."<sup>97</sup> Critiques of the Russian Army show it was ill prepared for the threat it faced. The 2001 RAND Study points to a lack of night training, lack of urban combat training, lack of ability to do intelligence preparation of the battlefield, poor coordination between units resulting in fratricide, and ad hoc units fighting together for the first time as key reasons for the Russian Army's poor performance, areas eerily similar to U.S. forces' skills atrophy described in chapter three. The RAND study concludes "The Russian approach to Grozny, in both its conception and its implementation, provides damning evidence of the loss of (or disregard for) a tremendous body of knowledge. The Soviet Union had learned a great deal about urban fighting in World War II."<sup>98</sup> Another critique cited the failure of the Russian Army to conduct any division or regimental level exercises since 1992 as a key reason for the failure of the Russian Army in Chechnya. Unfortunately for the Russians, they learned the wrong lessons from their first experience in Chechnya which led to a repetition of some of the same mistakes when they reentered Chechnya in 1999. The RAND study concluded,

The one thing the Russians had truly learned from the nightmare of 1994-1995 was that urban combat was to be avoided at all costs. Fighting in a city was difficult, bloody, and very manpower-intensive. It was the most difficult and unlikely way imaginable to attain the sort of quick military success that played well in the media and with the electorate. The Russian military leadership therefore decided to avoid close combat altogether. Its forces would instead bypass towns and make deals with village elders. Because the Russians so feared urban combat, and were so determined to avoid it, they were largely unprepared for it when it came.<sup>99</sup>

The takeaway from the Russian experience in Chechnya is that the Russian Army failed in its combat tasks. It was unprepared for major combat operations, including small unit combat in an urban environment, fighting at night, integrating and coordinating between units, integrating fires and conducting intelligence preparation of the battlefield. Nowhere are shortfalls in traditional stability operations tasks/skills like negotiations, cultural awareness, security force assistance or support to local governments identified as reasons for the Russian Army's defeat. While these skills would certainly have

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<sup>97</sup> Jackson, *David Slays Goliath*, 17.

<sup>98</sup> Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars*, 6.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

been useful and necessary in follow-on operations, the fact that the Russians never dominated in major combat operations left the Chechen insurgents believing they could win. Ultimately, the Russian's return to Chechnya in 1999 resulted in somewhat better success, but the Russian still find themselves fighting an insurgency there to this day. This fight has resulted in over 10,000 Russian soldiers dead according to official Russian government counts (2003), with as many as 20,000 dead reported by unofficial sources.<sup>100</sup> It is interesting to note that training deficiencies in skills like intelligence preparation of the battlefield and unit coordination and planning are similar to the deficiencies noted in today's U.S. Army as outlined in the previous chapters. The 2006 Israeli Defense Forces' experience in Lebanon provides another, arguably even more compelling example of a modern Army unprepared to conduct major combat operations against its most dangerous threat.

## Chapter Six—The Israeli Defense Forces in Lebanon, 2006

On July 6, 2006, the Lebanese-Muslim militia group Hezbollah conducted a raid along the northern Israeli border killing three Israeli soldiers and capturing two others. This was the latest in a string of attacks by Hezbollah against Israel, which included the firing of rockets from southern Lebanon against Israeli civilian targets and represented an unacceptable escalation of Hezbollah capabilities and intent. The response from Israel "was quick and violent, surprising Hizballah's [sic] leadership and triggering a month long conflict that has become known as the Second Lebanon War."<sup>101</sup> The stated goals of the Israeli government during this conflict included recovering its two captured soldiers and defeating

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<sup>100</sup> Jamestown Foundation, "Chechen Casualties," Russian Weekly Volume 4, Issue 5, Center for Defense Information, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/245-14.cfm>, February 2003 (accessed January 17, 2011). No reliable casualty figures since 2003 were found.

<sup>101</sup> Glenn W. Russell, *All Glory is Fleeting, Insights from the Second Lebanon War* (National Defense Research Institute, Santa Monica, California: February 2008.), xi.

Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.<sup>102</sup> By the time a cease fire had been declared on August 11, after more than a month of fighting, neither aim was accomplished. In fact, by most accounts, Hezbollah had achieved a strategic victory. The leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Naralla, actually declared a “Divine Victory” over Israel and played on “the David-versus-Goliath image of a few thousand dedicated youths, blessed by God, holding back the strongest army in the middle east.”<sup>103</sup> Despite a United Nations-brokered cease fire and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701, establishing a peace keeping force in southern Lebanon, calling for the return of the Israeli soldiers and demanding the disarmament of Hezbollah; Israeli efforts were largely seen as a failure. In fact, as of January, 2011, despite the deployment of United Nations’ Peace Keepers, Hezbollah still has not been disarmed. The remains of the two captured Israeli soldiers were finally returned to Israel in 2008.

The Second Lebanon War, to which it is referred in Israel, is almost universally viewed as a tactical, operational, and strategic defeat for Israel. Chief among the criticism is the poor performance of the Israeli Defense Forces during the conflict. The Israeli Government’s own report on the implications of the 2006 Lebanese War concluded:

The IDF was not ready for this war. Among the many reasons for this we can mention a few: Some of the political and military elites in Israel have reached the conclusion that Israel is beyond the era of wars. It had enough military might and superiority to deter others from declaring war against her; these would also be sufficient to send a painful reminder to anyone who seemed to be undeterred; since Israel did not intend to initiate a war, the conclusion was that the main challenge facing the land forces would be low intensity asymmetrical conflicts.<sup>104</sup>

Other studies also point to the conscious decision by the Israeli Defense Forces to concentrate on stability operation tasks at the expense of major combat operations as the primary reason for it unpreparedness.

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<sup>102</sup> LTC Scott Farquhar, *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead*, (Fort Leavenworth, Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 11.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>104</sup> Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “The Winograd Committee Submits Final Report,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000\\_2009/2008/Winograd%20Committee%20submits%20final%20report%2030-Jan-2008](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2008/Winograd%20Committee%20submits%20final%20report%2030-Jan-2008),) (accessed January 11, 2011).

The intifada operations that had dominated IDF concerns in the years before the war were allowed to take precedence over training for other types of missions, one effect of which was a loss of combined arms and joint proficiency, with crippling effects of the battlefields of southern Lebanon.<sup>105</sup>

Matt Mathews, in his Long War Occasional Paper written for the U.S. Combined Arms Center titled, “We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War,” observed that “for six years, the IDF conducted a counterinsurgency campaign against the Palestinians and developed a doctrine rooted in EBO and high-tech wizardry. However, in the summer of 2006, when confronted by a conventional war with Hezbollah, the Israeli military proved incapable of defeating a minor adversary.” He also concluded that “after years of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the Gaza Strip and West Bank territories, IDF ground forces were tactically unprepared and untrained to fight against a determined Hezbollah force that conducted what was, in many ways, a conventional, fixed-position defense.”<sup>106</sup> These shortfalls in combat skills were so pronounced because “officers and enlisted soldiers alike” were “lacking basic war fighting skills, and in many cases basic combat equipment . . . both tankers and artillerymen had for too long been separated from their equipment, causing competence and proficiency to suffer.”<sup>107</sup> The experiences of the Israeli Defense Forces provide a telling example for U.S. forces because

the missteps committed by the IDF in this war provide the US Army with valuable examples of potential difficulties when counterinsurgency operations are abruptly changed to major combat operations. For the US Army, which has been almost exclusively involved in irregular warfare for years, this issue is of paramount importance. While the US Army must be proficient in conducting major combat operations around the world, it is possible that years of irregular operations have chipped away at this capability.<sup>108</sup>

Perhaps most important and relevant to U.S. Army future preparedness and priorities is the subsequent reaction of the Israeli Defense Forces to their experiences during the 2006 Lebanon War and

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<sup>105</sup> Russell, *All Glory is Fleeting*, xii.

<sup>106</sup> Matt M. Mathews, “We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War,” *The Long War Series Occasional Paper 2* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press), iii. EBO stands for Effects Based Operations, an operational construct used by the IDF in the 1990s.

<sup>107</sup> Farquhar, *Back to Basics*, 34.

<sup>108</sup> Mathews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 65.

the changes they implemented to rectify their shortcomings. The most relevant action the IDF took was to make “a conscious decision to refocus on major combat operations.”<sup>109</sup> This included a shift in “training focus from LIC to HIC and a ‘back to basics’ approach that emphasized joint combined arms fire and maneuver training.”<sup>110</sup> Specifically, the IDF recognized the role of the tank to provide protection and precision fires, production of the Merkava IV was resumed, work on fielding the Namer Infantry Fighting Vehicle was initiated, forward tactical air controllers were returned to the brigades, artillery and air fires were worked into training, and training priorities went from 75% focused on low intensity conflict scenarios to 75% focused on high intensity conflict.<sup>111</sup> As part of this high intensity conflict training, tanks returned to their traditional roles emphasizing “speed and firepower.” Israeli armored brigades trained for months at the Israeli Ground Forces Training Center, training in urban and maneuver warfare, relearning how to use their smoke generators and driving to avoid an anti-tank guided missile threat. Combat training for reserve forces was also reinvigorated, integrating combat and combat support forces and conducting large, live fire exercises for the first time in years.<sup>112</sup>

The Israeli Defense Forces in 2006 and the Russian Army in Chechnya in 1994 each failed in their fights against a modern “hybrid threat” because, for different reasons, they had lost proficiency in combat skills, particularly their ability to conduct combined arms maneuver- integrating/synchronizing infantry, armor, artillery and aviation in their traditional combat roles. As the RAND report concluded in its chapter on the relevance of the IDF experience for the U.S. Army, “the basics of combined arms fire and maneuver are necessary for successful operations against opponents with capabilities like Hezbollah.” The study further concluded that,

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<sup>109</sup> Clint Anker, notes from Israeli Defense Forces Doctrine Conference, Tel Aviv: October 2010.

<sup>110</sup> David E. Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza* (Rand 2010), 4-5. LIC is an acronym for low intensity conflict. HIC is an acronym for high intensity conflict.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>112</sup> Farquhar, *Back to Basics*, 24.

precision, standoff fires are critical but not sufficient, to cope with hybrid warfare opponents, particularly if they are operating “among the people;” responsive and adequate air, artillery and UAV support are critical . . . and heavy forces . . . are key elements of any force that will fight hybrid enemies that have a modicum of training, organization and advanced weapons . . . light and medium forces can complement heavy forces, particularly in urban and other complex terrain, but they do not provide the survivability, lethality, or mobility inherent in heavy forces.<sup>113</sup>

That the U.S. Army faces a similar challenge of preparedness for major combat operations is apparent from comments made by Army senior leaders, like the one quoted recently in an article at politicsdaily.com; “There’s a belief that the president of the United States can pick up the red phone and order forcible entry operations: like the 2003 invasion of Iraq,” said Army Maj. Gen. Dan Bolger, who commands the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana. “But that takes practice, and we don’t get a lot of practice.”<sup>114</sup> In the same article, Secretary of the Army, John McHugh, is quoted as saying “we are trying to get back to full-spectrum operations . . . that is difficult given the high operational tempo we continue to face.” The article concludes by presenting the findings of a 2010 Congressionally-mandated task force commissioned to challenge Defense Department planning that said the U.S. Secretary of Defense had “focused too greatly on the short-term threats and not enough on big-war challenges.”<sup>115</sup> These statements seem to confirm that senior Army and Defense Department leaders recognize that the ability to conduct major combat operations has indeed atrophied. This has resulted in a gap between what the Army says it is going to do and what it can do, with potential consequences illustrated by the experiences of the Russian Army and the Israeli Defense Forces. The relevant question for the U.S. Army remains which actions to take and how to prioritize resources to mitigate or alleviate this gap.

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<sup>113</sup> Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War*, 7-9.

<sup>114</sup> Wood, *Busy With Afghanistan*, 2.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Section Three—The Solution**

### **Chapter Seven—Review and Recommendations**

The thesis presented in this monograph postulates that maintaining proficiency in major combat operations is more important to the U.S. Army's general-purpose forces than sustaining proficiency in stability operations. The preceding chapters provided context and relevance to this thesis by framing the environment—defining doctrinal terms, describing the future threat and operational environment and documenting the existing deficiency in combat related skills within the Army's general-purpose forces—and framing the problem—examining the gap between legal/policy requirements and capabilities given planned force structure under ARFORGEN. The last two chapters examined the consequences experienced by other modern Armies that failed to maintain proficiency in major combat operations. A brief review of these chapters will provide an opportunity to recommend solutions and formulate a definitive conclusion about the merits of the thesis.

The environmental section began with a review of current and emerging Army doctrine. Existing Army doctrine is exhaustive and comprehensive at its best, but is also misunderstood, complicated and at times contradictory. The fact that leaders throughout the Army confuse and conflate terms and acronyms like COIN, stability operations, full spectrum operations and major combat operations is a symptom of the problem. Even the definition of “war” appears to be without consensus. Lack of consensus and understanding of these key terms makes it difficult to determine adequate solutions. As it was also shown, there remain deep-seated beliefs, cultural legacies and doctrinal remnants within the Army that argue for prioritization of major combat operations (offense and defense) over stability operations. It was not until after 2001 that Army doctrine recognized that a “shift” had occurred away from prioritizing combat

operations “to an inclusive doctrine that emphasized the essentiality of nonlethal actions along with combat actions.”<sup>116</sup>

Now, however, the terms major combat operations, FSO, COIN and stability operations are so intertwined that they have begun to lose usefulness as terms in any debate on future Army priorities. In his 2010 Parameters article, “Combating a Combat Legacy,” Chad Serena highlights this issue when discussing the impact of the Army’s traditional combat focus on future preparedness. He quotes former Secretary of the Army Pete Garen and Chief of Staff George Casey as saying “to reset our force [because of the imbalance caused by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan] we must . . . retrain our soldiers to accomplish the full spectrum of missions they will be expected to accomplish.”<sup>117</sup> This statement implies that because the Army has been focused on counterinsurgency operations, it is not prepared for full spectrum operations. He goes on to write however, that, “the definition of the term full-spectrum is difficult to discern given the differing qualities that are attributed to this capability.” Depending on the source, it either means maintaining the “capacity for fighting future combat-centric wars,” or “maintaining the capacity to fight a range of threats in a multitude of environments.” He concludes his discussion of the term full spectrum operations by writing that, in his opinion, the Army’s “official use of the term full spectrum does not actually refer to the range of operations on this spectrum but only the narrower band(s) of combat.”<sup>118</sup>

As the terms major combat operations and full spectrum operations are often confused, so too are COIN and stability operations. Doctrinally counterinsurgency operations and stability operations are not equitable. COIN is a subset of the irregular warfare operational theme and by definition includes offense, defense and stability operations. Stability operations, however, is a subset of FSO, on equal footing with offensive and defensive operations. Further clouding the discussion is the inclusion of major combat

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<sup>116</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-0* (2008), viii.

<sup>117</sup> Serena, “Combating a Combat Legacy,” 48.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-50.

operations like tasks—defeat internal and external threats—as a subset of stability operations under the “provide civil security” task found in the Army’s Stability Operations Manual.<sup>119</sup> And, while COIN is clearly considered full spectrum in Army doctrine, it is not recognized as such in much of the common Army correspondence/dialogue and is most often equated with stability operations. Statements like “the Army must get away from COIN and return to FSO training,” punctuate this reality.

The purpose of the chapter on doctrine was twofold. First, to illustrate the doctrinal conflation of terms as they are currently used in the Army; and second, to provide a working definition of stability operations and major combat operations in order to inform a comprehensive recommendation of which of these operations should have priority within the Army. To improve understanding of these key doctrinal terms, the Army should consider removing major combat operations-related tasks—defeat internal and external threats—as a subset of stability operations. While the removal of threats to friendly forces and the population are a precursor to successful stability operations, the task “defeat” is already accounted for in offensive and defensive operations as part of FSO. Including the “defeat” task under stability operations only confuses the issue. Likewise, using the term COIN as an example of a type of stability operations is not doctrinally accurate and confuses the discussion. COIN is rightly considered full spectrum in current Army doctrine as part of the irregular warfare operational theme. Stability Operations is a subset of COIN along with offense and defense, not the other way around. Doctrine already states that “COIN is a combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations . . . the proportion of effort devoted to offensive, defensive, and stability operations within COIN is changed over time in response to the situation and can vary geographically and by echelon.”<sup>120</sup> Restructuring the doctrinal terms in this way reduces conflation and correctly gives major combat operations tasks (offense and defense) priority since security of the population and defeating internal and external threats are *a priori* to successful stability

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<sup>119</sup> United States Army, *FM 3-07*, 2-10.

<sup>120</sup> United States Army, *FM 2-24*, 20.

operations. The fact that combat operations are a precursor to successful stability operations argues they should take precedence for training and resourcing.

The second chapter of the environmental section presents the threat and operating environment. There seems to be little disagreement on either front. The term used most frequently to describe the future threat and environment is a hybrid one where enemies and adversaries “employ unique combinations of all forms of warfare specifically targeted to U.S. vulnerabilities.” Hybrid warfare is loosely defined as a blend of

the lethality of state military power with the irregular protracted conflict. Accordingly, potential adversaries such as states, state-sponsored groups, and self-funded actors will exploit advanced capabilities, including encrypted command systems, man-portable air-to-surface missiles, and other lethal systems. They will employ insurgent tactics such as ambushes, improvised explosives, and assassinations, and also combine high-tech capabilities such as antisatellite weapons with terrorism and cyberwarfare directed against financial targets.<sup>121</sup>

The relevant part of the threat discussion is how it relates to prioritization of training for MCO or SO. At least one author believes “it is time to stop talking about the relative priority of conventional forces, asymmetric capabilities, long-range strike, special forces, and other structural characteristics of the armed forces and time to start talking about enemies, threats, challenges, and requirements.”<sup>122</sup> This is an argument that moves the Army away from a capabilities-based force which focuses on preparing across a range of capabilities, to a force organized and trained to defeat specific threats, with Iran as the “most immediate and potent threat” and China a “distant second.”<sup>123</sup> An argument could be made in the wake of the 2010 attacks by North Korea against South Korea that conflict with North Korea is also increasingly probable.<sup>124</sup> Military conflict with any of these “threats” would involve major combat operations, at least initially, as opposed to stability operations, with failure in major combat placing vital national interests—

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<sup>121</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, “The Challenge of Hybrid War,” *America’s Security Role in a Changing World*, (2009): 146-148.

<sup>122</sup> Donnelly, *Ground Truth*, 13.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>124</sup> Seo Yoonjung and Keith B. Richburg, “2 civilians killed in North Korean artillery attack,” *The Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/23/ar2010112300880.html>, November 24, 2010 (accessed February 2011).

access to resources and trade—and allies—Taiwan, South Korea and various middle eastern countries—at risk. A review of the most dangerous, as opposed to most likely, threats then argues for maintenance of major combat skills as more of a priority than skills associated with stability operations.

There are those, however, who disagree with this conclusion and assessment of threat. Strategic analyst Nathan Freier captures the essence of the disagreement when he writes, “The strategic and operational-level frustrations associated with irregular conflicts . . . might convert some of the concern regarding readiness into a reversal back to a primary focus on a "big war" status quo, a move that is totally inappropriate for any reasoned assessment of strategic circumstances." In a statement with direct bearing on the thesis of this monograph, he writes that if “MCO (is) established as the sole contingency the US cannot afford to lose- this is an important but grossly inadequate view of risk" which is "rooted more in military culture and tradition than strategic priorities." He goes on to argue that

containing the hazards associated with the collapse of a nuclear state, restoring responsible control over its arsenal, reestablishing essential stability; halting and reversing widespread civil violence in a state (or region) whose stable functioning is essential to US security; or underwriting American civil authorities crippled by a resource-intensive, multistate domestic catastrophe. Today all of these hazards are a compelling and equally, if not more likely to be, a point of defense failure than traditional warfighting.<sup>125</sup>

Despite these arguments, the importance and priority of MCO skills does not diminish. In contrast to the views expressed above, there are those within the military community with extensive experience conducting counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq who believe that it is precisely the U.S. Army’s unequalled proficiency in combat skills that provide the foundation for its success in the contemporary environment against a hybrid threat. Colonel Craig Collier writes in an article for *Military Review* that,

our nonlethal effects were far less important than is usually credited. This is especially true of the billions of dollars we spent on projects and services . . . economic incentives were useful to

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<sup>125</sup> Nathan Freier, “The Defense Crisis, it’s a hybrid world,” *Parameters* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Autumn 2009): 87.

reinforce success, but not before taking down the insurgents. Our experience in Iraq verified that lethal operations remain the decisive element of combat power.<sup>126</sup>

Statements like these hearken to pre 9/11 Army beliefs and doctrine that prioritized combat skills over stability operations. These beliefs were reflected in key Army documents like the 2004 Army Comprehensive Guide to Modularity which states,

In stability operations, close combat dominance is the principal means Army forces use to influence adversary actions. In all cases, the ability of Army forces to engage in close combat, combined with their willingness to do so, is the decisive factor in defeating an enemy or controlling a situation.<sup>127</sup>

If these statements are true, and the U.S. Army's success in stability operations is founded on its ability to conduct combat-related tasks, then prioritizing combat operations over stability operations is a must.

The prioritization of MCO tasks takes on added urgency when considered in light of the acknowledged degradation of MCO skills within the Army. The Army is attempting to correct this degradation by increasing dwell time of units as part of its ARFORGEN process, giving units more time to train, and changing the conditions at the Combat Training Centers to include more major combat operation tasks and scenarios. The degradation of MCO skills means Army units are less likely to be able to conduct intelligence preparation of the battlefield against a conventional threat, to integrate indirect fires and aviation in maneuver and less likely to be proficient at collective combat skills like tank gunnery and deliberate breach.<sup>128</sup> The implication of this degradation of skills is that of an Army unprepared to conduct its traditional wartime mission as related recently by Lieutenant General Bulger when he said

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<sup>126</sup> Colonel Craig A. Collier, "Now That we're Leaving What Did we Learn?" *Military Review* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: September-October 2010): 89.

<sup>127</sup> United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, *Army Comprehensive Guide to Modularity Version 1.0* (Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and doctrine Command, Task Force Modularity, October 2004), 6-3. <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/7239627/Army-Comprehensive-Guide-to-Modularity> (accessed 19 January, 2011). This publication is significant for two reasons. First it was published after the Arm was already engaged in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Second, it justified changes in Army organizations intended to last for several decades. The Preface of the document reads, "This publication describes why and how the Army is changing its fighting concepts, organizations, training and operations."

<sup>128</sup> Second Infantry Division White Paper, "*Maintaining the Combat Edge in a Modular-ARFORGEN Force*," 9-10. No publication data in original.

“There’s a belief that the president of the United States can pick up the red phone and order forcible entry operations’ like the 2003 invasion of Iraq, ‘but that takes practice and we don’t get a lot of practice.’”<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, degradation of combat skills may also influence the Army’s ability to conduct stability operations as discussed in the preceding paragraph. If these two statements are true, then returning to a major combat operation orientation for Army training and resourcing of general purpose forces is essential to future success regardless of the threat.

Together, the combination of confusing doctrine, a hybrid threat operating in a global, high tech environment, and a degraded ability for the Army to conduct major combat operations presents a challenging environment for the Army of the future in which to succeed. The challenges become more acute if a gap exists between stated Army requirements and the forces or capabilities the Army has to meet those requirements. A review of the problem section of this monograph will allow an assessment of that gap.

The requirements laid out in Congressional Code, policy directives and doctrine are clear. USC Title X requires the Army to prepare “land forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war except as otherwise assigned and . . . it will be organized, trained and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations on land.”<sup>130</sup> Executive and DOD directives expanded that mission from the traditional military tasks connoted by the terms “war” and “land combat” by elevating stability operations to be equal to the Army’s combat role. Doctrine and policy now state that stability operations may even eclipse combat (MCO) in importance depending on the mission.

In an environment unconstrained by resources, the expansion of the Army’s core missions may not be problematic. In other words, as long as there are enough forces to accomplish the expanded missions, there is no issue. However, the environmental section of this paper makes clear the Army has been unable to maintain its MCO skills with current manning and operational tempo (OPTEMPO). The

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<sup>129</sup> Wood, *Busy With Afghanistan*, 1.

<sup>130</sup> United States Congressional Code, *Title X*, paragraph 306.2.b.

Army's solution to this problem is the introduction of the ARFORGEN process. ARFORGEN is a supply-based model that attempts to increase the amount of time units have at home station. The theory being that longer time at home means more opportunity to train across the full spectrum of operations. By the Army's own models, however, the appropriate deployed-to-dwell time does not materialize for the first active component unit 2014, and that assumes a troop dividend realized with the conclusion of US troops deployed to Iraq without the introduction of additional requirements.<sup>131</sup> This is a critical and potentially flawed assumption given language in U.S. policy documents like the QDR that state, "In the mid- to long term, U.S. military forces must plan and prepare to prevail in a broad range of operations that may occur in multiple theaters in overlapping time frames. This includes maintaining the ability to prevail against two capable nation-state aggressors, but we must take seriously the need to plan for the broadest possible range of operations."<sup>132</sup> The *2009 Army Posture Statement* also portends a coming requirements shortfall with statements such as "current operational requirements for forces and insufficient time between deployments require a focus on counterinsurgency training and equipping to the detriment of preparedness for other missions. . . overall we are consuming readiness as fast as we can build it."<sup>133</sup>

These are ominous admissions given recent guidance from the Secretary of Defense for the Army to reduce the number of active component soldiers by 51,000 by fiscal year 2015.<sup>134</sup> Sustained/increased OPTEMPO with fewer soldiers guarantees a continued gap in MCO capabilities. The potential consequences of not addressing this gap were highlighted by both the Russian and IDF experiences in Chechnya and Lebanon. In each case, modern armies facing hybrid threats failed to meet their national objectives because they failed in major combat operations. This failure was the direct result from lack of preparedness, namely training and equipping, for major combat operations. In particular, the case of the

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<sup>131</sup> United States Army Forces Command, *FORSCOM Campaign Plan 2011-2015*, (Atlanta, Georgia: October 2010), 9.

<sup>132</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (2010), iv.

<sup>133</sup> United States Army, *Army Posture Statement* (2009), 5.

<sup>134</sup> "Gates Proposes Cutting Army and Marines," *Los Angeles Times* (January 2011).

Israeli Defense Forces is prescient because their move away from combat operations proficiency involved a choice to focus more on nonlethal, stability operations type tasks. The U.S. Army clearly recognizes this trap of preparing for the most likely tasks (stability) versus the most dangerous (combat), and has devised a doctrine (full spectrum operations) and force generating plan (ARFORGEN) to counter it. Though the doctrine is often misused and misunderstood, the inconsistencies are not overly specious; even though the misunderstanding of terms has contributed to the wrong conclusions being made about the priority of SO over MCO tasks.

The ARFORGEN model, however, presents a more difficult challenge. It assumes a reduction in Army commitments and was formulated before the reduction of 51,000 additional Army soldiers was announced. It also assumes that a two-year dwell time is enough for a soldier/unit to train to proficiency across the full spectrum of operations. While two years may be enough time in theory, it is not intrinsically clear how this is so and no unit has yet tested the theory. In fact, the first (and only) combat training center rotation to feature major combat operations for a heavy combat brigade is not scheduled until the summer of 2011.<sup>135</sup> If the Army was bigger, this would not be an issue. More brigades, combat and otherwise, or bigger brigades, or even a substantial “float” of soldiers that resided in the institutional army could get deployment-to-dwell time down to and beyond the two-to-one ratio espoused in Army plans. Authors Donnelly and Kagan make the argument in their book, *Ground Truth*, that a larger army is the best solution.

It is time to return the military to a traditional understanding of the challenges it faces and the likely solutions to them. That means above all addressing the needs of the ground forces. The strain on the ground forces, which originated in the crises in the Balkans in the 1990s, has forced them to accept increasing imbalance among components and missions. The ground forces must begin by increasing their numbers dramatically . . . .<sup>136</sup>

Major Ken Burgess likewise adds specific recommendations for increased force structure in his 2009 *Military Review* article where he wrote, “The Army should increase the number of intelligence,

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<sup>135</sup> Anthony Howard, Interview by Author, January 3, 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Donnelly, *Ground Truth*, 143.

construction, civil affairs, and information domain specialists. It should increase the number of infantry battalions and military police units within the brigade combat team.” He also argues for “larger more inclusive staffs at the battalion level.”<sup>137</sup> As has been shown, however, despite the utility of these recommendations, the Army will decrease in size rather than increase over the next several years. A gap between requirements and resources appears unavoidable.

One recommendation to mitigate this gap is to ensure there remains a force within the Army not only proficient, but expert in major combat operations. This would involve dedicating part of the force to remain focused on major combat operations regardless of the predominant operations of the Army. This is occurring de facto within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division in Korea, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division encompasses only one ground combat brigade, and the twelve-month rotational policy means it is difficult to inculcate expertise. A better example may be the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the 1990s which was labeled the “Experimental Division” as part of the Force XXI construct, and was sequestered to test emerging military equipment, policies and tactics. While this force was fenced from normal operational use, it always remained in the pool of available forces in case of an emergency. Results of successful experimentation with equipment, doctrine and tactics, techniques and procedures were shared with the force as applicable. Additionally, soldiers and leaders trained in the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division provided an informal cadre of experience when the systems and procedures developed were eventually proliferated throughout the Army.<sup>138</sup> Another example of this type of unit was the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the 1980s. The 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division served as a “‘test bed’ or field laboratory for equipment organization, and operations,” which ended in the design of a motorized division that could be “airlifted anywhere in the world;”<sup>139</sup> an obvious harbinger of the Stryker Brigade. In each case, the Army chose to dedicate a

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<sup>137</sup> Burgess, “Transformation and the Irregular Gap,” 31-33.

<sup>138</sup> Military Analysis Network, “Division.” Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/army/unit/division.htm> (accessed February 08, 2011).

<sup>139</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, “9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division ‘Old Reliables’.” GlobalSecurity.org, <http://globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/9id.htm> (accessed February 08, 2011).

portion of its force to a mission or set of conditions different than the rest of the general-purpose forces in anticipation of a future need. Likewise, the Army should now earmark a portion of its force to become expert in a different mission, under different conditions (major combat operations) than it currently faces in Iraq and Afghanistan, in anticipation of future requirements and likely threats.

## **Conclusion**

The Army cannot fix the gap between its requirements and resources without additional money, troops and time, none of which will be available in any view of the future. The Army will not grow under any conceivable current plan, is actually on a path to shrink, and will likely continue to decline in size and capability as the reality of the ongoing fiscal tightening takes hold. While doctrinal changes should improve understanding and allow for a more informed prioritization of tasks, ultimately, changing doctrine is not decisive and will not fix the underlying problem.

What remains to the Army is a choice of which threats for which to prepare. The thesis of this monograph argues that major combat operations is the correct choice for preeminence in Army preparedness because high-end hybrid threats—like Iran, North Korea, Hezbollah and the Chechen rebels—present more of an existential threat to the U.S. and its interests and allies than those posed by terrorist groups, nuclear proliferation or failing states. And, even when the U.S. ground forces are required to engage the latter, it is their expertise in major combat operations skills which provide initial access and credibility. Currently there are few, if any, military forces in the world with the combat credibility of the U.S. Army. It is this skill and credibility that led to the success in Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2003, and Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, among other areas, in the 1990s. Juxtapose those American successes with the perceived U.S. Army failure during combat operations in Somalia as an example of the

consequences of failing in MCO tasks; the consequences of not maintaining that preparedness are readily apparent and amplified by the experience of the Russians in Chechnya and the Israelis in Lebanon.

A recommendation to return to a combat operations focus for the Army's general-purpose forces does not imply avoiding all stability operations tasks. The Army must train at all times to win the fight it is in. However, the information in this monograph has shown that prioritization and preparedness for major combat operations, ahead of stability operations, is the best way to ensure future success and mitigate the risks associated with the existing and evolving threats. Prioritization of major combat operations is also the best way to mitigate the growing gap between requirements and resources. It is time to rededicate at least a portion of the force to maintaining major combat operation expertise as its primary, sustained competence.

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