

A Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army

25 November 2009

“At the intersection of globalization, environmental calamity, resource scarcity, demographic strain, and international political-military competition lies a complex interconnected future that will be filled with persistent conflict and instability.”

— Institute for Land Warfare (May 2009)

The Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS) builds on our Army’s experiences since the end of the Cold War including the past eight years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan and on our assessment that the future operational environment will be even more **uncertain**, **complex**, and **competitive** as **hybrid threats** challenge us across the **full spectrum of operations**.

Our enemies – regular and irregular – will be well armed, well trained, well equipped, and often ideologically inspired. We must overmatch their training with our training and with the development of our leaders. We must counter their ideologies with our history and with a sustained commitment to our values. They will be patient, and they will adapt. We must learn faster, understand better, and adapt more rapidly. Our enemies will decentralize, partner, and network to form syndicates of threats against us. We must form our network by partnering with our Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational (JIIM) teammates to defeat their networks. We are developing our leaders in a **competitive learning environment**, and it is in this environment above all others where we must prevail.

This Army Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army responds to this competitive learning environment and is the outcome of a campaign of learning over the past year. It has been produced by an extensive **enterprise** of stakeholders both inside and outside the Army. It is informed by comprehensive lessons learned from our on-going conflicts, assessments of the future operational environment, the Army Capstone Concept, the CSA’s Green Book article “The Army of the 21st Century,” and our doctrine especially FM 3.0 (Operations). It articulates the characteristics we desire in our Army leaders as they progress through their careers (**ends**). It establishes eight imperatives for the integration of policies, programs, and initiatives to produce Army leaders (**ways**). It provides guidance for career-long development of Army leaders through education, training, and experience (**means**). Implementing annexes for officer, noncommissioned officer, warrant officer, and DA civilian describe how we will make certain that our Army’s most important core competency—leader development—will produce confident, competent, versatile leaders for our 21st Century Army.

It is well known that over the past several years we have become an Army out of balance. It is less well known but increasingly evident that we are out of balance in developing our leaders. We are out of balance in preparing our leaders for full spectrum operations. We are out of balance in building a bench of leaders not only through operational experience but also through professional military education and assignment in broadening experiences. We are out of balance in setting objectives and providing resources for our leaders to train their units at home station, at the Combat Training Centers, and while deployed. This leader development strategy seeks to restore balance and prepare for a future of full spectrum operations by introducing a series of imperatives which will become the “touchstone” for policies, processes, and resources to support our leader development programs.

It is one of the enduring strengths of our Army that throughout our nation’s history we have developed leaders capable of meeting both current and future national security challenges. Yet, we must not take our past success in developing leaders for granted. Our leaders are performing superbly in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan today, but we must review and revise our leader development strategy to prepare the next generation of leaders for the complexities of the future operational environment waged across the spectrum of conflict. This requires continual adaptation.

In this leader development strategy we will discuss how our institution will adapt the way in which we develop our leaders. We will describe the challenges of the operational environment, the implications of the operational environment on leader development, and the mission, framework, characteristics, and imperatives of our strategy. Finally, we will discuss how we intend to implement this strategy.

THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

“In the years ahead, the United States will confront complex, dynamic and unanticipated challenges to our national security and to the collective security of our friends and allies. These challenges will occur in many forms and will be waged across the spectrum of conflict – ranging from peaceful competition to general war and at all points in between.”
— The Army of the 21st Century - GEN Casey, Army Chief of Staff, 2009-10 Green Book

The Capstone Concept for Joint Operation (CCJO) and *The Army Capstone Concept (ACC)* describe a future characterized by uncertainty, complexity, rapid change, and persistent conflict. The emerging global trends that will define the future security environment include:

- Globalization
- Increased access to new and improving technologies
- Population growth
- Resource demand

- Climate change and natural disasters
- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- Failed and failing states

These trends make it likely that the next decades will be an era of persistent conflict; that is, protracted confrontation among state, non-state, and individual actors who are increasingly willing to use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends. The result will be friction and increasing competitiveness as interests collide across the globe. Our pre-9-11 commitment of military forces was episodic. Our commitments in the future will be continuous. Conflicts will arise unpredictably, vary in intensity and scope, last for uncertain duration, and will always be complex.

Future conflicts will also present an array of threats that will defy simple categorization. We will face hybrid threats – combinations of conventional, unconventional, criminal and terrorist groups, intermingled with local populations, and syndicated to counter our advantages. To gain an advantage, they will use combinations of activities including political, economic, ideological, informational, and military activities.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ON OUR LEADER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The increasing competitiveness of the future security environment suggests that we may not be able to dominate everywhere and within and across all dimensions of the spectrum of conflict as we have for the past quarter century. However, we must remain capable of dominating at times and in places of our choosing. Moreover, this increasing competitiveness exists in an environment of increasing complexity requiring leaders who are confident, versatile, adaptive, and innovative. They must also function in a variety of situations against myriad threats and with a diverse set of national, allied and indigenous partners.

Such an environment demands that we develop leaders who **understand** the context of the factors influencing the military situation, **act** within that understanding, continually **assess and adapt** those actions based on the interactions and circumstances of the enemy and environment, **consolidate** tactical and operational opportunities into strategic aims, and be able to effectively **transition** from one form of operations to another. We seek to develop leaders who will thrive in this environment.

The Army and its leaders must be capable of Full Spectrum Operations (FSO) in this operational environment. We have identified three paradigm shifts in this environment that must be addressed in our leader development strategy:

- **The effect of complexity and time.** The Army is our nation’s campaign-quality force. Therefore, we must prepare leaders to execute missions in extended campaigns – campaigns mean time, time means change, and change requires leaders who can anticipate change, create opportunities, and manage transitions. We must prepare our leaders for increasing “**complexity**” and for the challenges of operating over “**extended time.**”
- **The effect of decentralization.** Our adversaries will decentralize, network, and operate among the people to overcome our advantages. We are also decentralizing. As a result, at increasingly lower echelons, leaders must be able to string actions and activities together with their JIIM partners into campaigns. As we continue to modularize our force and to decentralize decision-making, we must adapt our strategy to develop leaders for this increased responsibility.
- **The need to frame ill-structured problems.** In response to increasing complexity and to the shifting balance of tactical to operational art, we require leaders who are proficient in understanding and framing difficult and complex problems. We will introduce **Design** to complement the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). Design provides the cognitive tools for commanders to understand and frame the ill-structured problems they will encounter in this complex environment.

PARADIGM SHIFT #1: THE EFFECT OF INCREASING COMPLEXITY AND TIME

We have traditionally developed leaders by challenging them with “**mass**” and with “**compressed time.**” Simulations were attrition-based, training scenarios were designed against an enemy predictably arrayed on the battlefield, and leaders had to master the factors of time and distance. To “raise the bar” on the leader in training, we added another enemy formation or we compressed time. This was effective in developing a leader to operate in the context of well-defined problems against an enemy confronting us with a single threat – generally traditional combat in attack or defend scenarios.

Now, we must develop leaders who are effective in the context of ill-defined problems against an enemy likely to present us with a variety of threats. We must develop leaders by challenging them with “**complexity**” and “**extended time.**” We “raise the bar” on the leader in training and education by adding the complexities of societal, religious, tribal, and economic factors – and occasionally by adding mass – and we develop leaders who can anticipate the adaptations and transitions an enemy will make during the course of an extended campaign.

That is, over extended time. If, as conventional wisdom suggests, necessity is the mother of invention, then, in our terms, complexity is the mother of innovation. The task, then, is to replicate the challenges of complexity and extended time in the training environment – at schools, training centers, and home station.

It's important to note that an operational environment characterized by complexity and extended time challenges military leaders and civilian leaders alike. Institutional policies and processes optimized for a world of mass and rapid decisive campaigns against predictable peer competitors must adapt to the new norm of uncertainty and protracted conflict.

PARADIGM SHIFT #2: THE EFFECT OF DECENTRALIZATION

An emerging insight from our on-going operations reinforced by observations in recent wargames is that the operational environment requires greater decentralization of capability and decision-making authority. Stated another way, leaders at lower levels of command will assume greater responsibility for the accomplishment of the joint force commander's campaign objectives. Through modularity, we have significantly decentralized our organizational structures in response to this emerging insight. Our preparation of leaders to operate in this environment and to lead these decentralized organizations has not kept pace.

The responsibilities of the empowered and enabled leader in a decentralized environment clearly increase. As always, military leaders will be responsible for delivering military capability. However, in the operational environment we have described in this strategy, the most important insights into mission accomplishment often come from bottom up, not top down. The decentralized leader has a much greater and much more important role in assisting echelons of leaders above them to understand the "context" of their operations. Therefore, we have to decentralize, but we also have to be able to aggregate the "wisdom" of those leaders at lower echelons whom we have empowered and enabled. Moreover, our leaders must become teammates with the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) partners operating in the complex environment with us.

Here, too, the shifting nature of the operational environment affects development of our military and civilian leaders alike. Our Army is hierarchical by nature, but we must match tactical agility with institutional agility, and we must develop military and civilian leaders who can create an environment of collaboration and trust to promote adaptation and innovation.

Simply stated, this paradigm shift requires us to increase our commitment to leader development.

PARADIGM SHIFT #3: THE NEED TO FRAME ILL-STRUCTURED PROBLEMS

We have learned many lessons from our eight years of wartime experience. Few would dispute the assertion that the challenges we will continue to face in this era of persistent conflict will be ill-defined and multifaceted. Concurrent with this Leader Development Strategy, we will introduce the concept of **Design** into our doctrine (FM 5-0: The Operations Process). Design is a methodology that provides leaders with the cognitive tools to **understand** a problem and appreciate its complexities before seeking to solve it. Design complements the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) and will be incorporated into leader education and training. Design will not only assist our leaders in the initial stages of campaign development but also in anticipating change, creating opportunities, and managing transitions during the course of a campaign. The creative thinking accessible to us through an appreciation of Design will be a cornerstone of our leader development strategy for both military and civilian leaders.

MISSION

The mission of Army leader development is to educate, train, and provide experiences to progressively develop leaders to prevail in Full Spectrum Operations in a 21st Century security environment and to lead the Army Enterprise.

FRAMEWORK

The ALDS requires **balanced** commitment to the three pillars of leader development: **training, education, and experience**. It guides our effort in the development of officers, noncommissioned officers, warrant officers, and civilian leaders of our Army. It considers the development of leaders to be a career-long process (Figure 1).

Leader Development Framework



Figure 1

Our leader development strategy builds on our Army's eight years of combat experience but recognizes the need to broaden leaders beyond their demonstrated competency in irregular operations to achieve proficiency in Full Spectrum Operations (FSO).

The strategy seeks balance between the manpower demands of the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cyclic readiness model and the demand for education and broadening experiences in this Leader Development Strategy. This balance requires predictability in assignment timelines for Key Developmental (KD) positions and better alignment of Professional Military Education (PME) courses to ARFORGEN cycle.

Our Leader Development Strategy is part of a campaign of learning. It seeks to be as adaptive and innovative as the leaders it must develop. The leader development strategy is grounded in our leadership doctrine (FM 6-22: Leadership) and seeks to deliver the leader qualities described in both Army and Joint Doctrine and capstone concepts: FM 3-0 (Operations), the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO), and the Army Capstone Concept (ACC).

LEADER QUALITIES

Our future leaders must expect complexity and understand that they will have to operate decentralized. The strategy challenges us to enrich leader training and education by leveraging technology and adapting training methodologies to replicate complexity and hybrid

threats in the classroom, at home station and while deployed. Our junior leaders have access to capabilities while they are deployed today that we cannot currently replicate in the training base. If we are to develop leaders prepared for the future security environment, we must ensure that the “scrimmage is harder than the game.” Our doctrine describes the leader qualities we seek.

We seek to develop leaders who are:

- Competent in their core proficiencies
- Broad enough to operate with a global mindset and across the spectrum of conflict
- Able to operate in Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) environments, and leverage other capabilities in achieving their objectives
- Capable of operating and providing advice at the national level
- Culturally astute and able to use this awareness and understanding to achieve an intercultural edge
- Courageous enough to see and exploit opportunities in the challenges and complexities of the operational environment and
- Grounded in Army values and the warrior ethos

Leadership in the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) environment also requires:

- Innovative and adaptive leaders to the lowest levels
- Joint commanders who are masters of operational art
- Senior leaders who are experts not only in the operational employment of the joint force but also in the development and execution of national strategy
- Greater language and cultural capabilities and capacities
- Improved service and institutional adaptability to deal with rapid change

LEADER CHARACTERISTICS

Many aspects of leader development are timeless, and these will not change. To achieve desired leader qualities throughout the Army, we must develop leaders over time with enduring attributes and core competencies. Army doctrine describes essential leadership attributes (character, presence, and intellect) and core competencies (lead, develop, and achieve). These attributes and competencies continue to mature through life-long learning.

LEADER ATTRIBUTES

Army leaders must possess and model key attributes in order to reach their full professional potential. An attribute is defined as a characteristic unique to an individual that moderates how well learning and performance occurs. Leader development must build on the foundation of an individual's existing qualities developing well-rounded leaders that possess three critical leadership attributes.

- **Character** . A leader of character internalizes the Army Values, lives by our Professional Military Ethic, reflects the Warrior Ethos, and displays empathy towards Soldiers, Families and those people affected by the unit's actions. Character is central to a leader's core identity. In our profession, competence places an individual in position to lead – character makes him or her an effective leader.
- **Presence**. A leader of presence has credibility, exudes confidence, and builds trust. Presence is conveyed through actions, appearance, demeanor, and words.
- **Intellect**. A leader of intellect has the conceptual capability to understand complex situations, determine what needs to be done and interact with others to get it done. Leaders must have the ability to reason, to think critically and creatively, to anticipate consequences and to solve problems.

LEADER CORE COMPETENCIES

Army leaders apply their character, presence, and intellect in leading our nation's soldiers. The expectations for what leaders should do regardless of the situation are captured in the Army's core leader competencies. Core leader competencies are defined as groups of related behaviors that lead to successful performance, common throughout the organization and consistent with the organization's values. There are eight leader competencies that fall into three areas:

- **One who leads**. Provides vision through purpose, motivation, universal respect, and direction to guide others. Extends one's influence beyond the chain of command to build partnerships and alliances to accomplish complex work. Leading is conveyed by communicating (imparting ideas) and setting the example.
- **One who develops**. Leads organizations by creating and maintaining a positive environment and by investing effort in their broadening, and that of others, to

achieve depth and breadth. Developing includes assessing needs to improve self, others, and the organization.

- **One who achieves.** Focuses on what needs to be accomplished. Has an expeditionary mindset and can adapt to unanticipated, changing, and uncertain situations. Achieving in the short term is about getting results but in the long-term it is about setting the vision to obtain objectives.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVES

The Army will adhere to eight leader development **imperatives** that will guide policy and actions in order to develop leaders with the required qualities and enduring leader characteristics. These guiding principles remain constant and consistent from initial service affiliation to retirement creating a leader development process that is deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive. These imperatives will drive the synchronization and implementation of the ALDS.

- Encourage an equal commitment by the institution, by leaders, and by individual members of the profession to life-long learning and development. The Army, as a learning organization, will create and resource the capability for life-long learning and the policies to support it. Leaders will match the commitment by establishing a climate that values life-long learning and holds subordinates responsible for achieving their leader development objectives. Individuals will demonstrate commitment by establishing and achieving their individual leader development objectives.
- Balance our commitment to the Training, Education, and Experience pillars of development. Education and training create the necessary context for assignments and experiences to develop leaders. Leaders will ensure their subordinates get the right mix of developmental opportunities at the right time. Individuals will actively pursue specific training, education and experience goals.
- Prepare leaders for hybrid threats and full spectrum operations through outcomes-based training and education. The Army will use common scenarios for training and education based upon the operational environment to ensure we develop leaders prepared for full spectrum operations. Centers of Excellence (COEs) and Force Modernization Proponents will identify *branch and functional specific* outcomes for each cohort at each level of a leader's career.
- Achieve balance and predictability in personnel policies and professional military education in support of ARFORGEN. In an era of persistent conflict, we must adjust

personnel policies to ensure we can meet both PME and operating force requirements with predictability and consistency. Tour lengths and course lengths as well as operational, institutional, and broadening experiences must contribute to our efforts to win the fight, develop our leaders, and allow them to balance personal and professional obligations.

- Manage the Army's military and civilian talent to benefit both the institution and the individual. Managing talent requires the recognition that knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences develop at different rates. The Army needs and values a mix of generalists and specialists that collectively provide diverse talents to meet all of the Army's requirements for Full Spectrum Operations (FSO).
- Prepare our leaders by replicating the complexity of the operational environment in the classroom and at home station. When the operating force is rotating in and out of tactical and operational missions, the pressure on training and education to provide relevant experiences increases. The Army will develop an Operational Environment Concept that reflects the hybrid threats and complexity we expect to face, and then we will replicate that environment in the classroom, at home station, and in our combat training centers.
- Produce leaders who are mentors and who are committed to developing their subordinates. It is an enduring principle of Army leadership that we mentor, coach, and counsel subordinates. Senior leaders have a moral and ethical responsibility to develop subordinates while balancing both short and long term Army needs. Leaders must create the conditions for development. Our reorganization into modular formations has introduced new challenges into mentoring and leader development. This strategy will address those challenges and reinforce the critical role of mentoring in our all-volunteer, cyclically-deploying force.
- Prepare select leaders for responsibility at the national level. The Army needs leaders who are both accomplished warfighters and who have the confidence to contribute to the development of policy in an interagency environment. The Army will develop processes for identifying high performers and provide them with additional opportunities for broadening and advanced assignments that prepare them for positions of senior leadership at the national level.

Against these imperatives, the ALDS will drive a portfolio of initiatives to produce leaders with the proper training, education, and experience to lead our Army in the future.

DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME

Our leader development strategy is designed to build capable leaders for this increasingly complex and competitive environment. The ALDS builds on an accrual of skills, at each level and over time, to prepare leaders for increased responsibility. It is important to note that any developmental model we pursue must be built on a foundation of **lethality** as the unique capability we deliver to the nation. Army leaders bring myriad capabilities to the fight. Uniquely, they deliver the use of force in the pursuit of national interests. The following officer career progression describes the model accrual of skills and attributes that will be similarly prescribed in the NCO, Warrant Officer, and civilian leader cohort group implementation annexes of the ALDS.

- From pre-commissioning through first unit of assignment, entry-level leaders will work to achieve competence and proficiency in the weapons and equipment integral to the units they lead. They must lead their units by personal example and understand how to build teams and to be team players. Entry-level leaders embrace the ideals at the core of the profession and aspire to take a place among the successful leaders who have gone before them. We want them to develop a passion for the Soldiers and Civilians they lead, understand their role within their formations, and develop a deep sense of honor and ethics. We want them to appreciate the complexity of the security environment in which they operate and have sufficient knowledge of geo-politics, culture, language, and information operations to recognize the need to consult experts. We want them to perceive and to act on opportunities within the scope of their units' collective knowledge and capability.
- Our junior leaders must achieve and sustain mastery of mission essential weapons, equipment and systems. In addition, junior leaders must achieve competence in the conduct of combined arms operations supported by joint fires and information engagement. They apply troop leading procedures to guide their units in employment of tactics, techniques and procedures specific to assigned missions roles and functions. These junior leaders will understand and employ principles of staff coordination across JIIM boundaries. They must remain current as information technology advances. They will gain an increasingly more sophisticated understanding of geo-politics, culture, language, and information operations and in the process, recognize and manage the strategic impact that they and their units can influence. We want our junior level leaders to anticipate transitions within tactical operations and act upon opportunities. We want these leaders to create climates that support our warrior ethos and Army values, develop subordinate leaders, build teams, and inspire their Soldiers to service.

- We want mid-grade leaders to lead units and teams, understand their responsibility to lead up and laterally as well as down, serve as experts on division, corps, Army, and joint staffs, integrate with Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIIM) partners, and demonstrate competence in ambiguous and complex situations. We expect them to become masters of military science; those who display an inclination will become apprentices in operational art. The emphasis in individual development begins to shift from increased depth of knowledge to increased breadth of perspective. Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIIM) environments become the norm. Mid-grade leaders will possess self-awareness skills in order to come to grips with the reality that their subordinates possess individual proficiencies that exceed their own. The examples they learn to set are examples of character and intellect more than of skills or knowledge. These mid-grade leaders continue to develop themselves but also guide the development of their subordinates in geo-political and cultural awareness, language skills, and information operations. It is at this level that leaders begin to understand how their formations enable the work of the multitude of civilian organizations they will encounter outside the joint and coalition formation. These leaders must counsel, coach, and mentor to develop subordinate leaders, identify future leaders, and inspire their junior officers, NCOs, civilians and Soldiers to a lifelong career of service.
- Senior leaders contribute to the development and implementation of national and geo-political strategy. They astutely manage complexity, and anticipate transitions at campaign level. They embody the expertise and the wisdom within our Army. These leaders operate within the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIIM) environment as a matter of routine and lead across those boundaries to advance national interests. They coordinate and synchronize combined operations with allied and coalition partners, interagency organizations, and a range of civilian organizations. They determine and deliver effects across the spectrum of conflict. Senior level leaders continue to develop themselves, mentor others, and encourage leaders to seek geo-political, cultural, language, and information skills. The character of our senior leaders withstands public scrutiny and the enormous pressures brought to bear by the scope of their authority and the impact of their decisions. They develop and describe a broad vision – establishing frameworks upon which lower level leaders build. Senior level leaders possess a sense of responsibility for the Army as a profession, regardless of where they serve, and act on their responsibility to develop their subordinates as future leaders of the Army.

IMPLEMENTATION

In its implementation, the Army Leader Development Strategy will not only prescribe how we develop leaders grounded in tactical and operational art, with an appreciation for strategy and policy, it will also account for the requirement to identify and develop leaders with expertise for the Army in areas of financial management, program management, acquisition, education, strategic planning, and force development. Implementation of the strategy recognizes the necessary balance between leadership and technical expertise within our leaders. It also acknowledges the need for appreciation of both the Generating and Operating Forces within our Army and for the “art” of managing the Army Enterprise.

Moreover, it is clear that we cannot wait to develop leaders capable of operating at the strategic level until they are about to be assigned there. The demands of the current conflicts have resulted in extended tactical tour lengths and backlogs at our professional military education institutions that have exacerbated this problem. We are not building an adequate “bench” of senior leaders for the future. The new norm is persistent conflict, and we must adapt our processes to balance risk to current mission and risk to leader development. This cannot be an either-or proposition. The implementation of this leader development strategy will balance the risk through initiatives including revision of personnel policies, more careful management of key and developmental tours, and a mix of operating and generating force assignments, Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIIM) assignments, and foreign exchanges.

Implementing annexes for officer, noncommissioned officer, warrant officer, and civilian leaders will guide our efforts.

Summary

“...People accomplish the mission. It is this human dimension with moral, cognitive and physical components that enables land forces to deal with the situational complexity of tactical actions with strategic impacts and adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Leadership is of paramount importance, and land forces must continue to develop agile and adaptive leaders who can handle the challenges of full spectrum operations.”

– GEN Casey, Army Chief of Staff, October 2008, *Army Magazine*

This leader development strategy seeks to develop the agile, adaptive and innovative leaders for our Army within a flexible, relevant, and enduring framework. An uncertain and complex future security environment demands that Army leader development prepare leaders to operate with competence and confidence in ambiguous, frequently changing circumstances. Our leaders deserve the best possible leader development process to enable them to effectively lead our Soldiers and protect and promote our national interests. In this era of persistent conflict, we must increase our efforts to develop each of our leaders, and we must ensure that we are managing our most talented leaders to lead our Army into the future.