



# Defining Force 2025

Lt. Col. Brandon Smith, U.S. Army

Sgt. Joshua Oakley, a team leader for 2nd Platoon, B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, pulls rear security while on patrol in the village of Shengazi, Afghanistan, 3 January 2012.

(Sgt. Michael Blalack, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division Public Affairs)

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As the Army of 2020 takes shape, it is clear that looming budget and personnel cuts mean the Army will have to do more with less. Investment in science and technology can help overcome the limitations, but the breakthroughs needed are 10 to 30 years in the future. The Army needs a strategy for the future, beyond 2020, that provides interim goals for structure and development. The concept to fulfill this need is known as “Force 2025.” The Force 2025 concept outlines the development of the right mix of expeditionary capability to support regional engagement while retaining the capability to win on the battlefield. This will be the force design needed to apply strategic landpower.

The concept of strategic landpower is gaining momentum in military circles and is

informing discussions about landpower in the future. It introduces a clear narrative on how landpower supports national security and affects influence and engagement strategies. Army leaders are realizing that our force design, our approach to science and technology, and our force employment decisions will need to change significantly. Our focus as a force must go well beyond the next annual budget cycle.

## Recent Force Design Efforts

TRADOC’s effort in framing the strategic landpower concept has been an informative process for Army leaders.<sup>1</sup> According to Gen. Robert W. Cone, it has exposed many shortfalls in our training, resourcing, and developing—a result of constant deployment and readiness requirements over the past

10 years.<sup>2</sup> Cone states that for the last decade, science and technology efforts have aimed to meet the Army's needs in Iraq and Afghanistan—mostly short-term requirements.<sup>3</sup> The result has been a force focused less on combined arms and more on counterinsurgency and wide-area security. The battle labs, justifiably, became Iraq and Afghanistan. As we slowly lost our long-term, over-the-horizon focus and concentrated on the close fight, we became less well prepared to meet ongoing national security requirements.

More recently, the Army has begun to devote significant resources to exercises and experiments designed to determine and understand over-the-horizon requirements. The Army's interim solution to meeting those requirements was known as "Army 2020." This concept directed reshaping the current force structure into a smaller force with balanced capabilities. This would bring the Army back from a counterinsurgency force to an Army capable of fighting across the range of military operations.<sup>4</sup>

## The Force 2025 Concept

The next step must lead the Army further into the future. The Force 2025 concept answers the call from U.S. leaders to determine way points, based on strategic landpower requirements, that will guide long-term development and innovation.<sup>5</sup> The Force 2025 concept describes how the Army will implement strategic landpower, employing a force that can stay regionally engaged to prevent and shape while maintaining the capability to win.

Force 2025 integrates two approaches to force design. The first is outlining future concepts and capability requirements to guide investment in science and technology. The second is refining ways to test, evaluate, and field new technologies in order to get them into use rapidly. Force 2025's goal is to integrate developments in science and technology quickly so we can build a more lethal and agile expeditionary force in the midterm. This will buy us time for scientific breakthroughs in 2030 and beyond.

The starting point for the application of strategic landpower and the design of Force 2025 was a prediction of instability in the future global security environment. We must continue trying to anticipate the capabilities needed in a future force—even though the Army has a poor record of predicting the next fight.

An inclusive picture of the future security environment does not focus on a single threat but rather on overall conditions. This broad depiction is guiding developers to outline capabilities more like a multi-tool than a single-purpose bayonet. By considering these future requirements, as well as the capabilities our Army has retained from conducting unified land operations, and then taking a detailed look at our experiences and lessons learned over the last decade, Army leaders are building a blueprint for the future.<sup>6</sup>

This blueprint will guide the application of science and technology in building a leaner and more expeditionary Army. The Force 2025 design will use fewer resources to get the necessary assets to the fight and keep them there until the work is complete. It will lead to a force that is as lethal and protected as our current force but more mobile and sustainable. The force will need the network capability for operating in austere and dispersed environments, and the right leaders and soldiers to bring these capabilities together.

Once the Force 2025 concepts are refined and put into a development strategy, we will need a practical way to transition from concepts to reality. As our forces draw down, we are losing the "battle labs" of Iraq and Afghanistan that we have been using for over 10 years. What remains is a limited Army experimentation capability consisting of local testing and fielding operations, center of excellence battle labs, and exercises known as network integration evaluations.<sup>7</sup> "Force 2025 Maneuvers" is the Army's vehicle for coordinating the evaluation of new capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

## Force 2025 Maneuvers

Force 2025 Maneuvers provides an operating plan that directs a series of exercises and experiments focused on validating capabilities required by Force 2025. It offers a listing of venues to conduct "best-fit" testing and evaluation. Force 2025 Maneuvers incorporates center of excellence battle labs, war games, combat training center rotations, and major objective experiments into a coordinated series of events that enable more rapid developing, testing, and fielding of future capabilities.

Force 2025 Maneuvers differs from previous evaluation approaches such as 4th Infantry Division's testing of the Army's Force XXI concept in 1998.<sup>9</sup> It is not like a single-unit test in which training is driven



by the concept developer. The new idea is to establish a test venue and procedures dictated by the type of training and unit rather than the developer or evaluator. The testing hub may continue to be the Brigade Modernization Command at Fort Bliss, but that is not where the testing stops. Building a process that rapidly gets the right equipment to the field requires a menu of options—a series of tailored exercises that allow developers, testers, and units to work together to create a better product in a timely manner.

## Conclusion

Force 2025 and its associated maneuvers strive to maximize the use of Army resources. Directed investment in the development of future capabilities aligned with future operational requirements should drive the design. As a mid-term progress review, Force 2025 is needed for the Army to check its work, make necessary adjustments, and most importantly, put the right mix of capabilities on the ground.

The Army of 2020 will sustain our capabilities in the short term,

but we risk losing our overmatch if we continue to rely on adaptation. The concept of strategic landpower calls for an expeditionary force fully trained and equipped for the next fight. Force 2025 will guide our Army to develop the right mix of capabilities to be regionally engaged and, if the Nation calls, to win decisively on the battlefield. ■



UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters assigned to U.S. Army Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade land to pick up soldiers during a combined arms live-fire exercise at the Grafenwoehr (Germany) Training Area, 28 March 2014.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Glenn M. Anderson, USAREUR Public Affairs)

## Notes

1. To read about the strategic landpower concept, see U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Special Operations Command Strategic Landpower Task Force, "Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills," by Raymond T. Odierno, James F. Amos, and William H. McRaven, May 2013, <http://www.arcic.army.mil/Initiatives/strategic-landpower.aspx>.

2. Robert W. Cone, "Strategic Landpower" (lecture, 2013 Association of the United States Army [AUSA] Annual Meeting & Exposition, Washington, DC, 21 October 2013), <http://www.army.mil/professional/ilw/landpower.html>.

3. Ibid.

4. Robert W. Cone, "Shaping the Army of 2020," *Army Magazine* (October 2011): 71-76; U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-0, *The Army Capstone Concept* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 21 December 2009), <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/capstone.pdf>.

5. U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center white paper, "Army Vision: Force 2025," (Washington, DC: GPO, 23 January 2014), [http://www.arcic.army.mil/app\\_Documents/USArmy\\_WhitePaper\\_Army-Vision-Force-2025\\_23JAN2014.pdf](http://www.arcic.army.mil/app_Documents/USArmy_WhitePaper_Army-Vision-Force-2025_23JAN2014.pdf).

6. For information on unified land operations see Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC: GPO, May 2012), [http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR\\_pubs/dr\\_a/pdf/adrp3\\_0.pdf](http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/dr_a/pdf/adrp3_0.pdf).

7. For more information on network integration evaluations, see the U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center website, <http://www.arcic.army.mil/Initiatives/network-integration-evaluation.aspx>.

8. U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center white paper, "Army Vision: Force 2025 Maneuvers" (Washington, DC: GPO, 23 January 2014), [http://www.arcic.army.mil/app\\_Documents/USArmy\\_WhitePaper\\_Force-2025-Maneuvers\\_23JAN2014.pdf](http://www.arcic.army.mil/app_Documents/USArmy_WhitePaper_Force-2025-Maneuvers_23JAN2014.pdf).

9. William Hartzog, "A Time for Transformation: Creating Army XXI," *Army* (1 January 1996): 53-59.