



Leader Development and Talent Management

The Army Competitive Advantage

Gen. Raymond T. Odierno

For 240 years, America's Army has been a premier institution for developing and providing leaders and soldiers of character who selflessly serve the Nation. We stood for freedom and liberty in 1775. We reaffirmed our commitment to that freedom in 1812, thereby demonstrating to the world that America would endure. We kept this Nation together during the U.S. Civil War. The ingenuity, heroism, and indomitable spirit of our soldiers were displayed in World War I and World War II. Whether in Vietnam, Korea, Panama, the Middle East, or anywhere else our soldiers have been deployed, quality Army leaders have uniquely influenced the world around them and have stood as our Nation's competitive advantage to meet the many security challenges we have encountered.

Today we find ourselves at a strategic inflection point in the history of the U.S. Army. Despite our depth of experience acquired from almost fourteen

years of continuous conflict, we must ensure that our Nation and our Army are prepared for future security challenges. The velocity of instability in the world today is greater than ever, with an increasing number of failing states potentially risking vital U.S. interests. Technology and weapons, once the exclusive tools of states, now find their way into the hands of disaffected individuals and disruptive groups. The volume and speed of information exchange, the rise of megacities, urbanization and demographic trends, and the sheer number of connections between people and societies has led to sudden, unpredictable, and fluid social, political, and security upheavals.

History has shown that we cannot predict the future with any reasonable degree of accuracy, but we can assert with absolute certainty that the Army will be called upon time and time again. Working with our partners and allies, the U.S. Army will continue to do what it has always done—lead the way as the foundation of the U.S. military's joint force, while bringing together diverse groups to solve seemingly insoluble problems.

As we implement *The Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World*, our number-one priority must remain the development of our competitive advantage—our leaders.¹ The Army must develop leaders who are agile, adaptive, and innovative, who thrive in conditions

Left: Competitors at the 2014 Army Drill Sergeant of the Year and the Advanced Individual Training Platoon Sergeant of the Year competitions prepare to take the stage 12 May 2015 at the awards presentation at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Staff Sgt. Jonathan Miller, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, was named as the 2014 Drill Sergeant of the Year; Staff Sgt. Christopher Croslin, U.S. Army Reserve, Norman, Oklahoma, as the 2014 Army Reserve Drill Sergeant of the Year; and Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Russell, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as the 2014 Advanced Individual Training Platoon Sergeant of the Year.

(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brian Hamilton, 108th Training Command PAO)

of uncertainty and chaos, and who are capable of visualizing, describing, directing, leading, and assessing operations in complex environments and against adaptive enemies. This will not happen by accident. It requires deliberate, purposeful, and sustained leader development programs, soundly based on our core values and professional ethic. It also requires institutional processes that optimize the performance of Army professionals through rigorous education programs and a superior talent management process. We must then forge these leaders together into cohesive teams through the crucible of tough, realistic training that fully replicates the complexity of the future operating environment.

The Army Leadership Foundation

Many commentators have noted the stark differences between the art and science of leadership. Practitioners will tell you that leadership is an evolutionary process with desired skills evolving over time. But amidst changing demands, our core values remain constant. Our core values and qualities are central to our professional ethic. Over the last four years, I have consistently emphasized the importance of competent leaders of character who are committed to the defense of the Nation. Competence, commitment, and character are the bedrock principles that reinforce trust: trust between soldiers; trust between leaders and the led; trust among soldiers, leaders, and the institution; and, trust between the Army as an institution and the American public.²

At its core, the Army's professional ethic is rooted in the Constitution and the words duty, honor, and country. Our duty is to defend our country and to lead our most precious resource, our soldiers. We must do so with honor and integrity, many times under the most difficult and chaotic of conditions. As soldiers join the military, they raise their right hands and swear an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic."³ Throughout our Nation's history, Americans have made tremendous sacrifices to fulfill this commitment. The oath has served as the foundation of leader development practices for generations and will guide us through the myriad complexities that we will encounter in the future.

The *Army Operating Concept* is the intellectual foundation for an evolutionary undertaking that will drive change and enable solutions across the force.

While some solutions may not yet exist, we begin today by changing our mindset. If there is one overarching requirement for the future force, it is that we must remain laser-focused on developing leaders who are skilled at optimizing the performance of individuals, teams, and organizations. These Army leaders must think critically and creatively, embrace innovation and change, and foster focused collaboration to drive future force development.

Leader development is the most important contributor to shaping the Army of the future. To put this into perspective, many of tomorrow's Army leaders—the sergeants, lieutenants, and captains that will be making their mark in the coming decade—are still in middle school and high school, and today's captains will lead battalions and brigades in the next decade. We are continuing to adapt our professional military education and to develop the tactics, tools, and techniques they will need. So, the most important task today is to form the processes and management strategies to enable our leaders of tomorrow to thrive in the uncertain, ambiguous, and complex world they will undoubtedly face.

The Army Leader Development Strategy

The *Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS)* 2013, provides a roadmap to develop Army leaders for the challenges our Nation faces.⁴ Leader development is a deliberate, continuous, and progressive process that grows soldiers and Army civilians into competent, committed professional leaders of character. The ALDS identifies the competencies and attributes expected of every leader—active and reserve officers, warrant officers, and noncommissioned officers (NCOs), as well as civilians—through the Army Leadership Requirements Model.⁵ Leader development is achieved through the career-long synthesis of training, education, and experience. It is fostered in the institutional (schools and courses), operational (duty assignments), and self-development (selected activities) domains, supported by peer and developmental relationships. This strategy must begin by attracting those with leadership potential; by identifying and assessing unique talents, skills, attributes, and behaviors early on; and then by providing a career-long synthesis of training, education, and experience acquired in our institutions and operational units. We must foster talent to ensure that the Army



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Mikki L. Sprenkle, CSA photographer)

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno provides feedback 26 February 2015 during the 2015 Captain's Solarium discussion at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

retains, challenges, and inspires its best, brightest, and most battle-tested young officers and NCOs to lead the service in the future, and we must complement these efforts by encouraging and supporting our leaders to continuously self-develop.

The Institutional Domain

The institutional domain represents a powerful element of the Army's leader development program. It is where we set expectations and a foundation of understanding for our leaders. As stewards of the profession, we must always strive to improve and adapt, and we are instituting several new initiatives to support this endeavor. Our strategy begins with precommissioning for officers and continues all the way through the general officer ranks. Similarly, our NCO Corps develops leaders from initial entry training and intermediate NCO development through the Sergeants Major Academy.

We are evolving and transforming this process as we prepare for a more complex future. One of the ways we are doing this is by launching *The Army University*, which will apply rigorous academic standards and

credentials to our existing professional military education programs. While The Army University will have many impacts on the educational enterprise, one of its most important features is to provide full college-level accreditation to many existing Army education programs and to record those credits in a universal transcript for every soldier and civilian. This will allow Army professionals to pursue their educational goals while they serve the Nation and give them full credit for the work they have already completed.

The Army University is the next logical step in the continued professionalization of the Army that began with the creation of the all-volunteer force in 1973. This effort organizes all U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC's) existing educational programs into a single university structure to promote greater academic rigor, improve internal integration, and enhance external collaboration with many of the Nation's best universities and colleges. The Army University expands the ability of soldiers to integrate their military and civilian education and to receive valid academic credit for their educational investment.

In so doing, it enables growth and development across a career of service. It also supports the Total Army with increased educational opportunities for soldiers in the U.S. Army Reserve and the National Guard. Additionally, the credentialing opportunities generated by The Army University will assist soldiers while they are on active duty and when they transition as “Soldiers for Life.”⁶

Through several Army leader exchange events—from the Army Senior Leader Development Program for general officers, to solarium-style listening sessions for junior officers and NCOs, to town hall meetings throughout the Army—the sergeant major of the Army and I have heard the need to inculcate critical thinking into all Army curricula. As the Army adopts the philosophy of mission command, this kind of learning will grow in importance. Mission command empowers subordinates at every echelon, encouraging them to think critically and creatively and seize the initiative: to understand, visualize, describe, direct, lead, and assess.⁷ Army leaders create the conditions for the execution of mission command when they build cultures of trust within their organizations and create shared understanding through clearly articulated commander’s intent.

As part of our increased investment in education that will encourage this kind of critical thinking, we are expanding access and opportunities for advanced civil schooling, training with industry, fellowships with universities and think tanks, and interagency assignments. We have tripled the number of post-war college fellowships for colonels and have launched the Advanced Strategic Planning and Policy Program, which allows selected officers to pursue a PhD at our country’s best universities.⁸ We are identifying and developing strategic-minded leaders early in their careers by initiating junior leader broadening programs for our company and field grade officers, NCOs, and civilians. These programs provide the opportunity to examine strategic issues and apply understanding to current and future problem sets. At each of the TRADOC centers of excellence, we are updating the programs of instruction for our tactical-level leaders and are selecting the very best instructors. The institutional domain is the foundation of our leader development program, and we will continue to invest in it despite budgetary challenges.

The Operational Domain

In the operational domain, we are updating our live, virtual, and constructive training to enable junior leaders to achieve tactical and technical competence; mid-grade leaders to hone their skills at commanding units and organizations; and senior leaders to develop and implement strategic plans and policy. We are developing adaptive leaders who can lead change by empowering subordinates while managing risk, and by encouraging mutual trust and shared understanding throughout their formations.

We are not walking away from our experience of the past fourteen years; rather, we are building upon it. The operating force is seeing the implementation of regionally aligned forces, which enables our leaders to remain intellectually and internationally engaged with allies and partners across the globe. We believe that the future will be even more complex, and we are preparing for this future through a comprehensive total force training and leader development strategy.

At the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels, Germany, we are investing in and adapting our training model to increase multi-echelon joint and multinational exercises with our allies and partners, which is especially important at this time for NATO. Our combat training centers in Germany, at Fort Irwin, and at Fort Polk replicate highly complex decisive action environments featuring hybrid threats reflective of the complexities that our Nation faces, including guerrilla, insurgent, criminal, and near-peer conventional forces woven into one dynamic environment. We are including multiple components in rotations to include Special Forces, interagency, multinational, and interservice in order to train our total force to operate in today’s multidomain environment. Combat training centers, as a leadership crucible, improve the leadership skills of our officers and NCOs while assessing their performance and development. By continually challenging them in training to plan for the unknown and the unexpected, we build upon our successes in the operational domain.

The Self-Development Domain

As our leaders grow through schooling (the institutional domain), and training and operations (the operational domain), they must always strive to develop themselves (the self-development domain)



(Photo by Sgt. Brian Erickson, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division PAO)

Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, take a knee as they participate in a training exercise 8 May 2013 at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. The exercise targeted critical thinking and tactical skills.

to be life-long learners. In the self-development domain, we are incorporating 360-degree assessments into our mentorship and counseling processes. Multidimensional feedback is an important component of holistic leader development. By encouraging input from peers, subordinates, and superiors alike, leaders become more self-aware. A 360-degree approach applies equally to junior leaders at the squad, platoon, and company level, as well as to senior leaders. The willingness to seek honest and candid feedback facilitates leadership growth, and it is the responsibility of every leader, soldier, and civilian to provide candid feedback to those seeking it.

Growth within the self-development realm is also occurring through expanded access to broadening assignments earlier and more frequently throughout leaders' careers. Leaders, both junior and senior, are encouraged to pursue personal and professional development through interagency assignments, military schooling, civilian credentialing and licensing, and progressive civilian degrees. We are providing our soldiers with necessary tools and

resources, such as GoArmyEd and tuition assistance, to seek self-development opportunities.⁹ In sum, our structured self-development program stimulates individual growth and development while building upon and complementing the institutional and operational domains.

We are implementing this strategy from a position of advantage, with the most combat-seasoned force the Army has ever had. We are harnessing our experience in conducting complex operations with joint, interorganizational, and multinational partners to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic objectives on the ground. Leader development is about investing in our single most precious resource: our people.

Talent Management

Talent management and leader development are intrinsically linked. Talent management accounts for the individual skills, knowledge, attributes, and behaviors of Army professionals and the potential that they represent. The Army seeks to select, develop, and effectively employ well-rounded leaders based on the talents they

possess—talents derived not only from operational experience but also from broadening assignments, advanced civil schooling, and professional military education. We will broaden career paths, providing leaders the opportunity to diversify their professional development and increase their value to the organization.

As we build cohesive teams comprised of high-performing individuals with the right talents, we build a stronger Army. At the same time, we are evolving our evaluation and assessment systems to more effectively identify, measure, and track the social, cognitive, and physical indicators required to assess performance and potential. Finally, we value diversity in our workforce and embrace the varied cultural and demographic dimensions of our country. We are deliberately working to attract and retain top talent from the wide range of personal and professional backgrounds and perspectives that arise from our cultural differences, attributes, and experiences.

Maintaining the Army Advantage

As we continue moving forward in the years ahead, conflict will evolve, and the Army must

evolve with it. While we cannot predict the trajectory of that evolution with certainty, we can be confident that Army leaders of tomorrow must have highly developed critical and creative thinking skills that enable them to make informed and effective decisions in the midst of chaos. These decisions will demand tactical expertise, cultural intuition, and a deep understanding of strategic context. We will synchronize the *Army Leader Development Strategy* with the new *Army Operating Concept*, ensuring we continue to build tomorrow's great leaders. Our Nation continues to send its finest citizens to fill our ranks, and it is our solemn responsibility to be effective stewards of this trust. These soldiers and civilians are talented, courageous, and ethical, and they enable us to accomplish any task, to meet any challenge, and to defend our Nation whenever and wherever asked.

The strength of our Nation is our Army. The strength of our Army is our soldiers. The strength of our soldiers is our families. And that's what makes us Army Strong! ■

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Notes

1. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 2014) <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/tp525-3-1.pdf> accessed 14 May 2015. In October 2014, the Army published *The Army Operating Concept* as the foundational framework to enable leaders to adapt at the pace of change. The *Army Operating Concept* describes how future Army forces, operating as part of the joint force and working with interorganizational and multinational partners, will prevent conflict, shape security environments, and win in a complex world. In this endeavor, a renewed emphasis on leader development is vitally important, as the security challenges facing our Nation multiply.

2. Army Doctrine Reference Publication 1, *The Army Profession* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], June 2013), 1-5.

3. U.S. Army Center of Military History website, "Oaths of

Enlistment and Oaths of Office," <http://www.history.army.mil/html/faq/oaths.html> accessed 14 May 2015.

4. U.S. Army, *Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS) 2013* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/CAL/repository/ALDS5June%202013Record.pdf> accessed 5 May 2015.

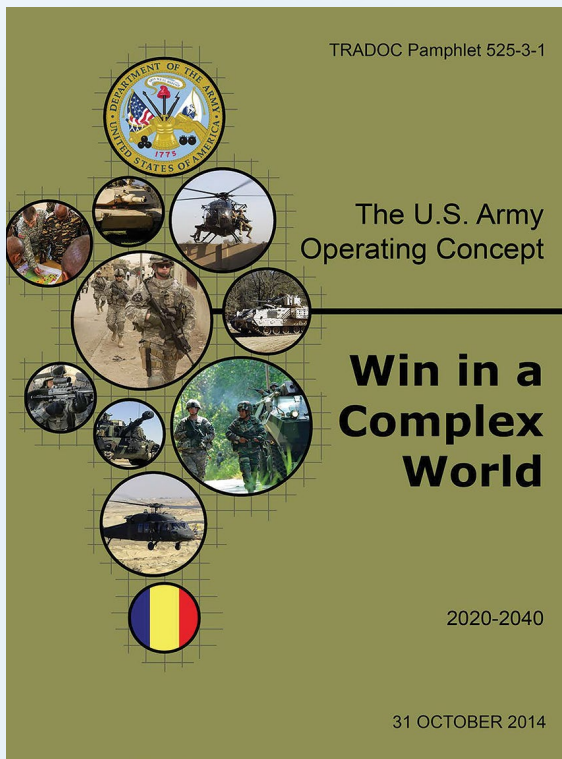
5. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, August 2012), 5.

6. U.S. Army website, "Soldier for Life," <http://soldierforlife.army.mil/> accessed 14 May 2015.

7. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, May 2012), iv.

8. U.S. Army Combined Arms Center website, "School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS)," <http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/cace/cgsc/sams> accessed 14 May 2015.

9. GoArmyEd website, <https://www.goarmyed.com/> accessed 14 May 2015.



The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, describes how the Army will employ forces in a more complicated operational environment and, as necessary, against increasingly capable opponents. It also describes the Army's contributions to globally integrated operations and addresses the need for Army forces to provide foundational capabilities for the joint force in projecting land power. Additionally, it serves as a guide for force development through the identification of first order capabilities that the future force must possess to accomplish missions in support of policy goals and objectives.

<http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/TP525-3-1.pdf>

The *Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS)* provides a strategic road map for the development of the next generation of Army leaders in the face of an operational environment that is expected to be complicated and extremely threatening to national interests. Leadership undergirds every aspect of the Army. In an era of shrinking resources, the Army must depend on educating and training its leaders to promote courageous and resourceful analytical thinkers as well as ethical managers, who can prepare for, and operate in, an era of austerity.

<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/CAL/repository/ALDS-5June%202013Record.pdf>

