



(Photo by Sgt. Christopher Johnston, 3rd Infantry Division PAO)

Spc. Joseph Schrider, a Firefinder radar operator assigned to 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, reports to Command Sgt. Maj. Mark A. Aaron, the board president, during the battalion's "back to the basics" promotion board 4 January 2013 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The board was designed on the total soldier concept. The board members evaluated the soldiers' knowledge and skills in a variety of subjects such as drill and ceremony, Army leadership, radio communication, map reading, and first aid.

Developing Leaders

Col. Frank Wenzel, U.S. Army, Retired

If you asked a dozen Army leaders at various echelons what leader development means, you would probably receive a dozen different answers, including the following:

- ◆ unit-level officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) professional development sessions
- ◆ counseling
- ◆ career timelines
- ◆ professional military education or the civilian education system
- ◆ succession planning and leader slating
- ◆ combat training center rotations
- ◆ self-development, including nongovernment educational institutions
- ◆ broadening experiences

This article will answer the question—what is leader development? Although each of the above

answers is an example of leader development functions, objectives, or tasks, the answers only scratch the surface in describing how the Army develops leaders.

According to the *Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS) 2013*,

Leader development is the deliberate, continuous, and progressive process—founded in Army values—that grows soldiers and Army civilians into **competent, committed** professional leaders of **character**. Leader development is achieved through the career-long synthesis of the training, education, and experiences acquired through opportunities in the institutional, operational, and self-development domains, supported by peer and developmental relationships.¹

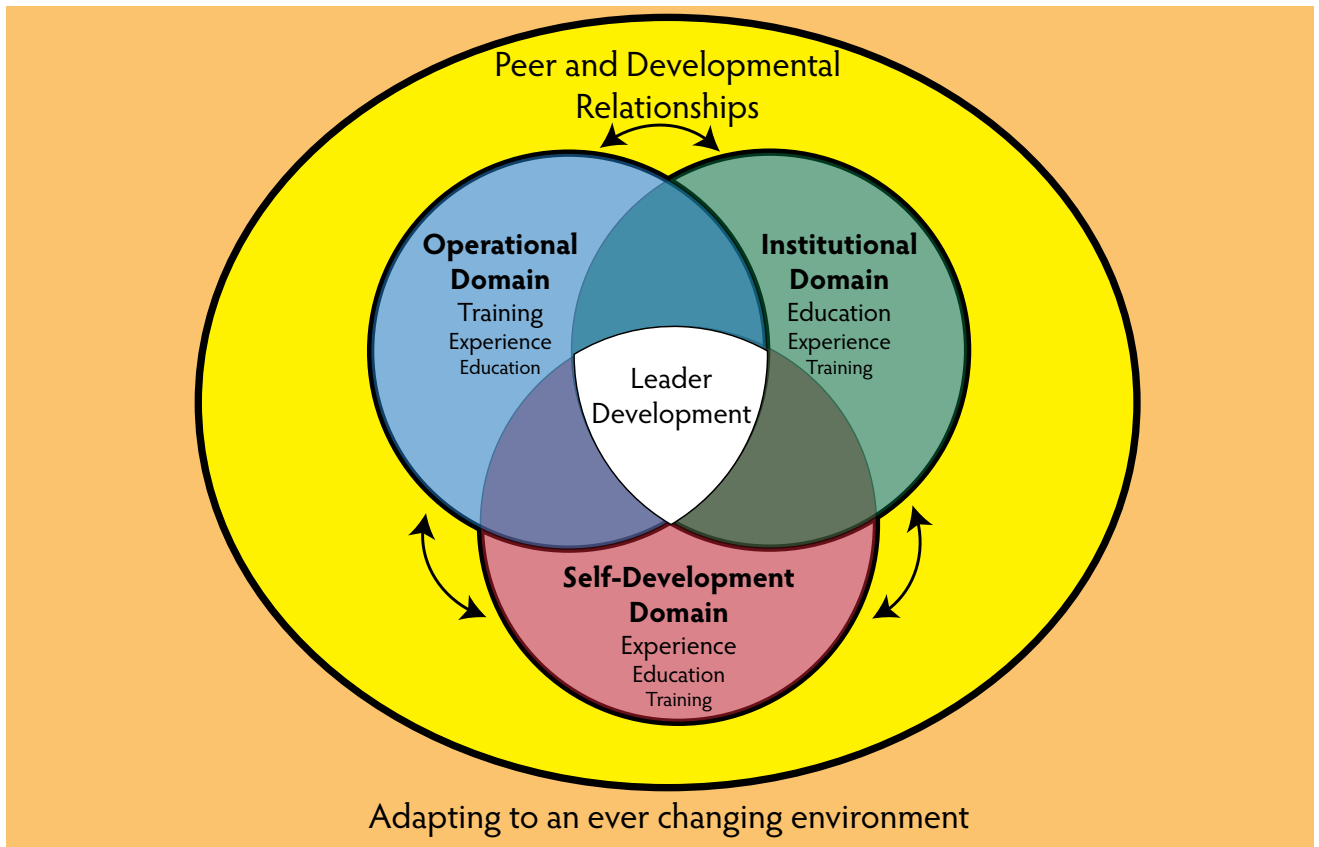


Figure 1. Army Leader Development Model

The Army leader development model (figure 1) illustrates this definition graphically.²

Leader development ranks very high on the priorities list of the chief of staff of the Army (CSA) since it is imperative that today's leaders develop themselves and their subordinates to meet the current and future needs of the Army. Leader development encompasses different elements at different echelons.

At higher echelons, the Army ensures there are systems in place for developing leaders—this is the purview of general officers. At the unit level, leaders are responsible for personally developing their subordinates. This hands-on work is the purview of unit commanders and NCOs. Though both Army- and unit-level perspectives are focused on meeting current and future needs, a major difference is the developmental period. Unit leaders ensure subordinate leaders are ready to operate in their current and next duty positions. In contrast, the Army as a whole takes a long-term view with the intent of ensuring systems are in place to develop today's junior leaders into the senior leaders the Army will require during

the coming decades. The purpose of this article is to briefly review major features of both the condition-setting Army leader development system and the execution of leader development at unit level. Also discussed are a few potential leader development initiatives for consideration.

Army-Level (Strategic) Leader Development Systems

The U.S. Army builds leaders for the Nation. For the foreseeable future, the Army will increasingly need individuals who can operate in complex and ambiguous environments. According to the *ALDS 2013*, “the number of global and regional actors who can threaten the United States through asymmetric responses and technological advances is increasing.”³ The *ALDS 2013* describes how increasing trends toward globalization through technological advances, which increase uncertainty in the strategic environment, have been well analyzed in recent national strategic and global assessments. These include *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, the *Capstone Concept*

for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020, and the National Intelligence Council's *Global Trends 2030*.⁴ Such key documents describe the challenges tomorrow's leaders likely will face, and they help Army leaders anticipate those challenges.

Threat analyses in these studies have yielded a description of the attributes and competencies future leaders must possess. These attributes and competencies are included in the Army leadership requirements model, depicted in figure 2, on page 36.⁵

Since Army leader development crosses all commands, agencies, and staffs, the CSA appointed the commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to serve as the senior responsible official (SRO) for Army leader development.⁶ Working closely with the assistant secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, the SRO is the focal point of all Army-level leader development efforts. He is supported in this effort by a wide variety of Army commands and agencies, including the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (G-3/5/7); the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G-1); and the commanding general, Human Resources Command.

To identify issues and develop recommendations, the Army Profession and Leader Development Forum (APLDF) was established as a key part of the Army Leader Development Program. The SRO uses the APLDF to shape and lead Army-wide leader development efforts. In this forum, leader development initiatives are developed, tracked, and approved for implementation across the Army. To ensure synchronization of implementation efforts, participating organizations share emerging or existing leader development topics, issues, and best practices that are developed in other key Army forums such as the Army Training and Leader Development Conference, the Human Capital Enterprise Board, the Training General Officer Steering Committee, and the Civilian Workforce Transformation General Officer Steering Committee.⁷

The APLDF is a decision-making body chaired by the SRO. The SRO leads and executes the Army Leader Development Program and makes leader development recommendations to the CSA. Consequently, the SRO is vested with the authority to shape and lead efforts to develop officers, warrant officers, NCOs, and civilians. The APLDF membership includes Army commands; Army Service component commands; direct reporting

units; the National Guard Bureau; U.S. Army Reserve Command; Headquarters, Department of the Army staff principals; Human Resources Command; and other members as the SRO directs.

APLDF members critically examine leader development initiatives and programs, discuss issues, and draw upon their experience and judgment to advise the SRO.⁸ Current initiatives include Regional and Strategic Broadening, Commander 360 Assessment, NCO 2020, America's Army—Our Profession, and the Advanced Strategic Policy and Planning Program.⁹ Successful completed initiatives include the Army Career Tracker, the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) Program, and the Command and General Staff Officer Course (CGSOC) Interagency Exchange Program.

Consistent with the *ALDS 2013*, the APLDF works to rebalance the three crucial leader development components of training, education, and experience to ensure that leaders are properly trained to meet the challenges of future operating environments.¹⁰ The *ALDS 2013* "provides vision and guidance on ends, ways, and means for developing leaders of all cohorts ... [Army] leaders must understand the strategic environment, be able to think critically and creatively, visualize solutions, and describe and communicate crucial information to achieve shared understanding, collaborate, and build teams."¹¹

Necessity for Hands-On Training

Leaders are developed at various echelons by planning and participating in training activities. According to the *ALDS 2013*,

Training is an organized, structured, continuous, and progressive process based on sound principles of learning designed to increase the capability of individuals, units, and organizations to perform specified tasks or skills. The objective of training is to increase the ability of leaders to competently perform in operational situations. Individual task training builds competence and confidence to perform the necessary tasks in support of both collective training and operations.¹²

Classroom Education

The Army University will organize TRADOC's educational institutions within a university construct

ATTRIBUTES (Be and Know)



COMPETENCIES (Do)

Figure 2. Army Leadership Requirements Model

to create the learning environment required to produce agile, adaptive, innovative Army leaders prepared to accomplish the mission and win in a complex world. There are enormous potential opportunities in the education component as yet unrealized. First, fully integrating the CGSOC at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College with additional opportunities to participate in master's degree programs would expand our officers' professional vision and capabilities.

Second, by creating a midcommand program, the Army would increase Precommand Course exposure. This would not only benefit the midcommand officer,

but would also give incoming commanders an opportunity to interact with their peers.

Experience

Looking to the future in the experience component, senior leaders have a number of options available to build and shape a force that best meets the Nation's demands both today and tomorrow with limited resources. These include changing to a thirty-year career timeline as a standard model. This would ease the time constraints that cause angst for individuals and their Human Resource Command managers as years are

closely managed (often at the expense of the individuals or units) to ensure one gets through all of the wickets to facilitate progression to the next rank. The Army can also consider making promotion after a certain grade dependent on experience and certification rather than time and cohort year groups. Expanding opportunities for breaks in service for family or educational needs, or increasing lateral entry to allow personnel with specific talents and skill sets to enter service would have major positive impacts on retention and expertise available in the ranks.

Unlike large organizations in the private sector, the uniformed Army does not routinely recruit, select, and assign midgrade and senior-level leaders from outside its ranks. The uniformed cohorts are largely dependent upon the Army itself to develop leaders. The process of developing a senior uniformed leader begins twenty-plus years prior to the organization's need for the individual.

Talent Management Complements Leader Development

Talent management is the combination of processes the Army uses to ensure the right leader is assigned to the right job at the right time. The leader development philosophy must align with practice because the right leader might not always be the most qualified individual for a position. Often, the best leader for a position is one who the Army needs to help learn and develop within that assignment, to satisfy immediate organizational needs as well as future Army requirements. Talent management takes into account the individual preferences and talents of an officer, warrant officer, NCO, or Army civilian—the unique distribution of his or her skills, knowledge, and behaviors, and that individual's potential. The Army looks to develop and put to best use well-rounded leaders based on the talents they possess—talents that derive not only from operational experience but also from broadening assignments, advanced

civil schooling, professional military education, and demonstrated interests.

Leader development and talent management together are built on fundamentals. Army leaders must exemplify the “Be, Know, Do” concept as described in *ALDS 2013*.¹³ They must possess and demonstrate traits such as adaptability, agility, flexibility, responsiveness, and resilience. Mastering these fundamentals is a professional obligation and provides the basis by which Army leaders operate effectively with joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners.



(Photo by Spc. Michael J. MacLeod, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division)

Staff Sgt. George Richards, a platoon fire direction chief with 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, describes how to translate data from a forward observer into “gun talk” of deflection and quadrant for gunners 21 February 2010 at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. Richards shared his observations with an Iraqi 7th Division army captain through an interpreter as Iraqi and U.S. forces conducted training on U.S. 105 mm howitzers.

To support this, the Army must restructure promotion timelines so that leaders have the opportunity for a broader set of experiences that—taken together—improve an individual’s leadership skill set. Further use of 360-degree assessments that include input from superiors, peers, and subordinates may someday support talent management and help individual leaders identify in themselves strengths to sustain and weaknesses to overcome.

Developmental programs such as the MSAF program and the Commander 360 program are steps in the right direction because they increase leaders’ self-awareness. These initiatives are developmental programs and do not provide the Army with assessments of performance or potential. Evaluation reports alone are not sufficient for assessing performance or potential. The Army must consider additional ways to evaluate leader potential and the potential of industry-standard assessment centers for selection and promotion in order to truly engage in talent management.

Unit-Level Leader Development

A commander’s first priority is a trained and ready unit. At the lowest level, leader development makes an essential contribution to any unit’s ability to train effectively and accomplish its mission. Efficient implementation is achieved by integrating leader development into day-to-day activities. This develops soldiers and civilians into leaders who are competent, confident, and capable of decisive action. The operational (unit) assignment is the most effective setting for leader development. In leader development surveys, captains and majors ranked leading a unit, personal example, and mentoring as the three most effective ways their leadership qualities are developed.¹⁴

To effectively develop subordinates, commanders must provide face-to-face counseling and feedback. Timely feedback is essential to capitalizing on the myriad of leader development opportunities that are present in units every day. This ever-present leader development environment allows for quick application and makes it possible to prioritize the practice of developing leaders even in an age of dwindling resources. An essential part of a leader development program is the deliberate face-to-face counseling of subordinates. In these sessions, leaders ask subordinates to develop a personal development plan for the next five years. This plan should address training, education, and experience

in all three domains that subordinates identify as necessary to meet their personal and professional five-year goals. This individual development plan is reviewed at subsequent counseling sessions, and it serves as each subordinate’s developmental road map.

Although everyday activities provide a wealth of opportunities for leader development, it is important to stress that leader development does not just happen on its own. To be effective, leaders must develop an effective plan to develop subordinate leaders in their units. Identification of desired outcomes is an essential part of this plan. Essentially, leaders must identify what they are trying to develop subordinates to be, know, and do.

Unit-specific outcomes should consist of the rank-specific leader competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and attributes required of agile and adaptive leaders capable of accomplishing the mission while confronting complex environments and adaptive enemies. Unit leaders develop desired outcomes by analyzing critical task lists—by their career management field or military occupational specialty at the appropriate skill level, unit task lists, and unit training doctrine and leader development resources. The results of this analysis allow the unit leader to bridge the gap between higher-level general learning outcomes and the desired unit-level leader development program.

Aids in this analysis include the *Commander’s Handbook for Unit Leader Development* and other resources found on the Leader Development Resources page of the Center for Army Leadership website.¹⁵ The handbook translates leader development guidance into application and integrates unit-level leader development into already occurring day-to-day activities. Unit-level MSAF events can provide leaders with aggregate-level information that can be used in identifying areas for additional emphasis as they tailor their leader development programs.

Unit leaders must set conditions—by personally modeling behaviors that encourage leader development, creating an environment that encourages on-the-job learning, and knowing the subordinate leaders within their command. Unit-leader feedback to subordinates does not need to be withheld until formal counseling sessions. Immediate, short bursts of feedback on current leadership actions enhance leader development in operational assignments. Unit leaders should leverage subordinate leaders who are role models in their units



(Photo by Marie Berberea, Fort Sill Cannoneer)

Electronic Warfare Specialist Course students enhance their skills inside a secure classroom 21 January 2011 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. During the course, the students learn how to integrate, coordinate, execute, and assess electronic warfare capabilities with ground operations across the full spectrum of joint military operations. Courses are also offered for commissioned officers and warrant officers.

and encourage mentoring, training, reflection, and study. Learning from other leaders is one of the most effective and efficient methods of development. Finally, unit leaders should strive to create a legacy, being deliberate about the selection and succession of leaders, evaluating effectiveness, and being willing to modify job assignments to challenge subordinate leaders.

Regardless of the type of unit or organization, successful leaders recognize that they must continually develop their subordinate leaders by maximizing opportunities in all three domains of the Army leader development model: operational, institutional, and self-development.¹⁶ Today's leaders guide their units and organizations through today's challenges, but their subordinates are the ones who will guide tomorrow's units and organizations through the challenges of tomorrow. As leaders in all domains develop their subordinate leaders, those subordinate leaders reciprocate with an investment of their own efforts. Leaders at all levels will model this desire to learn and strive to inculcate it in subordinates.

In the operational domain, conditions should include leaders who communicate, listen, and care. Leaders should create a mission command climate and

a learning environment where subordinate input is valued. In this type of environment, a sense of shared responsibility and trust yield candor and open dialogue at all levels. This environment fosters a freedom to exercise initiative where honest mistakes are forgiven and from which lessons are learned and applied. Leaders provide their subordinate leaders with active role modeling as coaches, counselors, and mentors, providing honest developmental feedback during relevant, challenging, and complex education and training. Leaders give appropriate levels of thought to their goals for developing leaders when planning organizational assignments and extra duties. This will aid in developing leaders to succeed in their current and future duty assignments as well as at their next level of education.

Finally, operational leaders must allow their subordinates adequate time to pursue educational and self-developmental opportunities. In the institutional domain, leaders create conditions for quality leader development by providing clear plans to promote achievement of desired learning outcomes, assessing individual readiness to learn before classroom experiences commence, and providing opportunities for "sense-making" and reflection. The classroom must

be manned by qualified and inspirational instructors who are prepared to teach and facilitate learning in an adult learning environment. These instructors must use challenging, relevant, and timely curricula that promote critical and creative thinking, interpersonal skill development, and communication development. The institution should provide a robust capacity to create, archive, and deliver digitized learning products. These must be available in all three domains and accessible by the individual, the classroom, and the field.

A completely revised Field Manual 6-22, *Leader Development*, is scheduled to be published in June 2015. This manual will fill a void by codifying doctrine for what the Army expects organizations and leaders to do in order to develop subordinate leaders.

The required conditions in the self-development domain follow lifelong learning models. An individual must develop a personal commitment to gain knowledge and to learn. Ideally, there should be few or no boundaries regarding topics of personal and professional interest. The Army must continue to make appropriate resources available that are meaningful, engaging to use, and accessible when needed and as needed. Resources such as the Virtual Improvement Center are useful guides as leaders plan their self-improvement.¹⁷ Leaders must limit their desire to direct subordinates to pursue fields of study



(Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team PAO, 2nd Infantry Division) Airman 1st Class Paul Nguyen, a tactical air control party specialist with 5th Air Support Operations Squadron, sets up a satellite communications antenna on an observation point 11 June 2012 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. Soldiers of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, worked alongside airmen from 5th Air Support Operations Squadron during a joint air attack team mission to destroy a simulated insurgent training camp.

for self-development, and then encourage and expect that subordinates seek knowledge on a topic or field of study that interests them.

Conclusion

Training, education, and experience each contribute to development in a unique way. The *ALDS 2013* describes training as “an organized, structured, continuous, and progressive process based on sound principles of learning designed to increase the capability of individuals, units, and organizations to perform specified tasks or skills.”¹⁸

While training teaches skills (i.e., *what* to do and think), education teaches *how* to think. The *ALDS* describes education as “the process of imparting knowledge and developing the competencies and attributes Army professionals need to accomplish any mission the future may present. ... Education focuses on intellect and the moral character of leaders to improve judgment and reasoning, and hone the habits of the mind: agility, adaptability, empathy, intellectual curiosity, and creativity.”¹⁹

Experience is where it all comes together—this is where and when all the training and education are put into practice. The *ALDS 2013* describes experience as the continuous progression of personal and professional events. ... Experience includes war and peace; the personal and the professional; the private and the public; leading and following; [and] training and education. Career-long learners reflect on all experiences, develop lessons learned from those experiences, and apply those lessons in future experiences. The Army uses assignment progression, development and broadening opportunities, and outside influences to provide leaders with the experiential opportunities required to reach full potential.²⁰

In today’s resource-constrained environment, it is important to note that investments in leader development can often mitigate other budget-induced shortcomings. If the leaders at the tip of the spear are properly developed adaptive thinkers, they can overcome almost anything. While fourteen years of combat have yielded a tremendous wealth of valuable combat experience in our formations, it is important to remember that the Army must

continue rebalancing the three components of leader development: training, education, and experience. The valuable experience the Army gained in Iraq and Afghanistan must be complemented by the education and training necessary to develop the leaders the Army needs for its complex future—including the ability to lead Army and joint enterprises. The Army has done this well in the past and will develop leaders in order to do so again in the future.

According to the *ALDS 2013*, the Army continually examines past paradigms and assesses their relevancy to prepare leaders for the operational and strategic challenges of the future. ... Leaders at all levels embrace both their direct responsibilities for developing leaders as well as understand and support the “big picture” of how the Army deliberately, continuously, and progressively develops leaders.²¹

Leader development is essential to the Army’s success today and in the future. The Army’s strategic leaders of tomorrow are serving in entry-level ranks and positions today. The Army’s senior leaders have charted the course by publishing the *ALDS 2013*. To maintain an Army of competent and committed leaders of character with the skills and attributes necessary to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, leaders must train, educate, and provide experiences to progressively develop subordinate leaders so the Army can

prevail in Unified Land Operations using Mission Command in a 21st century security environment. ... Leader development is a mutually shared responsibility between the institutional Army (education or training institution), the operational force (organization or unit), and the individual.²² ■

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Notes

1. U.S. Army, *Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS) 2013* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013) 3, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/CAL/repository/ALDS5June%202013Record.pdf>, accessed 5 May 2015.

2. Figure reconstructed from the Army leader development model, illustrated in *ALDS 2013*, 8.

3. U.S. Army, *ALDS 2013*, 4.

4. U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, by Leon Panetta (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2012), http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf, accessed 5 May 2015; U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 10 September 2012), http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/concepts/ccjo_jointforce2020.pdf, accessed 5 May 2015; National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council: December 2012), http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf, accessed 5 May 2015.

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6. Army Regulation (AR) 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 19 August 2014), 26.

7. *ALDS 2013*, 23.

8. AR 350-1, 6.

9. Army Leader Development Division, “Initiative Summaries,” Army Profession and Leader Development Forum 15-2, 24 Feb 2015, <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/517997>, accessed 25 March 2015. This site is accessible only with an Army Knowledge Online account.

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16. U.S. Army, *ALDS 2013*, 8.

17. The Virtual Improvement Center is available at the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback website, <https://msaf.army.mil>, accessed 5 May 2015.

18. U.S. Army, *ALDS 2013*, 11.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 12.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., 6.