



U.S. Army Soldiers work together in teams to complete the Green Mile physical endurance course during week three of the Jungle Operations Training Course at the Lightning Academy, Wahiawa, Hawaii, Apr. 8, 2019. JOTC spans over three weeks where Soldiers learn to communicate, navigate, and maneuver in any tropical jungle environment. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Valencia McNeal, 28th Public Affairs Detachment)

Operations to Shape and Operations to Prevent

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Today's Army is much more than just pulling a trigger. There is an in-depth strategy and reason behind everything we do as Soldiers. This article takes a closer look at two styles of operations — operations to shape and operations to prevent — as outlined in *FM 3.0* and *ADRP 3.0: Operations*, in order to present a thorough explanation of the concepts for Soldiers at all levels in order to increase their theater-level understanding of what's happening beyond their unit.

Operations to Shape

Operations to shape consists of various long-term military engagements, security cooperation, and

deterrence tasks, missions, and actions. Shaping activities help counter actions by adversaries that challenge the stability of a nation or region contrary to U.S. interests. Ultimately, *operations to shape* focuses on four pillars:

- Promoting and protecting U.S. national interests and influence.
- Building partner capacity and partnerships.
- Recognizing and countering adversary attempts to gain positions of relative advantage.
- Setting conditions to win future conflicts (Department of the Army, 2017a).



A U.S. Army Soldier patrols the perimeter at the Vicenza Military Community during its full-scale Lion Response 2018 exercise on Caserma Del Din, Italy, May 9, 2018. The purpose of the annual training exercise was to test and validate force protection and emergency management plans and procedures in response to an emergency situation. (U.S. Army Photo by Laura Kreider, U.S. Army Garrison Italy Public Affairs)

Shaping activities that promote and protect U.S. national interests are accomplished through a variety of missions, tasks, and actions. They are often focused on understanding and influencing human perceptions. By influencing regional perceptions and improving the ability of partner nations to secure themselves through unilateral security partnerships and regional alliances, Army forces can isolate adversaries and prevent behaviors that run counter to U.S. interests.

These operations also ensure regions remain stable, a crisis does not occur, and there is no need for an escalation of force. Army forces build partnerships and partner capacity by providing security cooperation capabilities within an area of responsibility. This includes building defense and security relationships and partner military capacities through multi-national exercises and engagements, gaining or maintaining access to populations, supporting infrastructure through assistance visits, and fulfilling executive agent responsibilities (Department of the Army, 2017a).

The partner army provides a critical role in gaining positions of relative advantage during operations to shape. This involves analysis of current adversary intent and capabilities as well as potential future intent and capabilities. *Operations to shape* must be persistent and consistent to maintain continuity, and they must be adjusted based on changing conditions.

Other activities that fall under the *operations to shape* umbrella include de-

veloping intelligence, countering weapons of mass destructions, providing support to humanitarian efforts, conducting information operations, and organizing and participating in combined training and exercises (Department of the Army, 2017a).

"Shaping by itself cannot prevent conflict, but it nudges global regions away from military confrontation and increases the effect of diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments of national power" (Department of the Army, 2012a, p. 1-5).

Operations to Prevent

The purpose of *operations to prevent* is to deter actions from our adversaries that are contrary to U.S. interests. They are typically conducted in response to activities that threaten unified action partners and require the deployment or repositioning of credible forces in a theater to demonstrate the willingness to fight if deterrence fails. Army forces perform the following major activities during operations to prevent:

- Execute flexible deterrent options (FDOs) and flexible response options (FROs).
- Set the theater.
- Tailor Army forces.
- Project the force.



U.S. Army Pvt. 1st Class Benjamin Alley, an infantryman serving with A Company, 5th Battallion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division, stages in a security posture while more of his fellow Soldiers exit a C-130 Hercules on Palau International Airport, April 13, 2019, as part of Exercise Palau. The exercise is part of Pacific Pathways, an annual U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) operation, demonstrating the U.S. Army's commitment to the Palau nation, security cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Whitney C. Houston, 128th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) Col. Kim, Seong-jong, ROKA 13th Aviation Group commander, U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Johnta Daniels (right), and Warrant Officer Bradley R. Fuller (center), both UH-60 Blackhawk pilots with 2-2 Assault Helicopter Battalion, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division/ROK-U.S. Combined Division, discuss the scheme of maneuver to effectively contain and extinguish the wildfire in Gangwon province, northeast of Seoul, South Korea, Apr. 5, 2019. (Courtesy photo by Republic of Korea Army Public Affairs)

Flexible deterrent options facilitate early strategic decision making, rapid de-escalation, and crisis resolution by laying out a wide range of interrelated response paths. They are established to deter actions before or during a crisis (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017). The basic purpose of flexible response options is to preempt and/or respond to attacks against the U.S. and its interests. According to *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations*:

“FROs are intended to facilitate early decision making by developing a wide range of prospective actions carefully tailored to produce desired effects, congruent with national security policy objectives. While FDOs are primarily intended to prevent a crisis from worsening and allow for de-escalation, FROs are generally punitive in nature (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. VIII-9).”

“Set the theater” serves as an umbrella term encompassing the activities associated with establishing the conditions for executing operations” (Gaines and Snell, 2015, para. 5). It is the broad range of actions conducted to establish the conditions in an operational area for the execution of strategic plans. Setting the theater in order to achieve U.S. interests requires collaboration and involves a whole-government approach among the departments and agencies.

“Force tailoring is the process of determining the right mix of forces and the sequence of their deployment in support of a joint force commander” (Department of the Army, 2017a, p. 5-7). Tailoring the force is a complicated

and intensively managed Army-wide process, and the theater army plays a critical role in it.

Force projection is “the ability to project the military instrument of national power from the United States or another theater, in response to requirements for military operations” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, p. GL-9). Force projection encompasses mobilization, deployment, employment, sustainment, and redeployment. “Force projection is a race between friendly forces and the enemy or adversary forces” (Department of the Army, 2017b, p. 1-25). The side that achieves an operational capability first (a position of relative advantage) can seize the initiative. Operations to prevent create the conditions required to quickly transition, if necessary, into large-scale ground combat. The ability of an Army force to prevent stems from an adversary’s realization that further escalation would result in military defeat (Department of the Army, 2017a).

NCO Roles and Responsibilities

Training is the most important thing the Army does to prepare for operations. Effective training and non-commissioned officer (NCO) development form the cornerstone of operational readiness and the Army’s *operations to shape*. Effective NCOs take the unit from a training start point, attain the required training proficiency, and maintain that proficiency over time. As the unit trains, NCOs mentor, guide, listen to, and think with subordinates to challenge their depth of knowledge and understanding.

NCOs “ensure that their subordinates know how to think instead of just what to think. They develop their subordinates’ confidence and empower them to make

independent, situational-based decisions" (Department of the Army, 2016, p. 1-5). NCOs must also convey information and provide day-to-day guidance to subordinates to get the job done. According to *FM 7-0*:

“NCOs need to be able identify specific individual, crew, and small-team tasks that support the unit’s collective mission essential tasks. They will also evaluate training and conduct after action reviews (AARs) to provide feedback to the commander on individual, crew, and small-team proficiency. (Department of the Army, 2016, p. 3-12)”

NCO development represents a balanced commitment to education, training, and experience. It is a NCO’s responsibility to ensure subordinates receive the appropriate education, training, and experiences at the proper time for promotion as well as increasing their potential in current and future assignments (Department of the Army, 2012b). Education includes other opportunities

to increase one’s knowledge, skills, and attributes. NCOs ensure their subordinates attend appropriate educational opportunities. Training is for Soldiers, leaders, and units to achieve tactical and technical competence that builds confidence and agility. NCOs ensure subordinates conduct training to accomplish missions and prepare for future responsibilities. Experiences comprise knowledge and skills gained through involvement or exposure to an event. Experiences include deployments, assignments, jobs, training events, and educational opportunities. NCOs should offer and encourage broadening opportunities and professionally developing assignments to their subordinates (Department of the Army, 2012b).

In conclusion, shaping activities improve security within partner nations, enhance international legitimacy, gain multinational cooperation, and influence adversary decision making. Preventive activities align with deterrence and crisis response and limited contingency operations (Department of the Army, 2017). And executing these operations is the backbone of the Army: The NCO. ■

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