



(U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Chantel Green taken May 7, 2019) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Luis Alicea and Staff Sgt. Ashley McLeod, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, build an antenna during the Electronic Warfare Competition at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, May 7, 2019.

Modernizing Multi-Domain Operations for Large-Scale Combat Operations

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As the U.S. plans for future conflicts, it is currently faced with existing near-peer threats capable of striking U.S. and allied forces in multiple domains. Recognizing the need to prioritize modernization and regain a competitive advantage, U.S. military leaders have shifted their focus to Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) and the Army's Vision for 2028:

“The Army of 2028 will be ready to deploy, fight, and win decisively against any adversary, anytime and anywhere, in a joint, multi-domain, high-intensity conflict, while simultaneously deterring others and maintaining its ability to conduct irregular warfare. The Army will do this through the employment of modern manned and

unmanned ground combat vehicles, aircraft, sustainment systems, and weapons, coupled with robust combined arms formations and tactics based on a modern warfighting doctrine and centered on exceptional Leaders and Soldiers of unmatched lethality. (Milley & Esper, n.d., para. 6)”

Given the extensive time and resources required to mobilize, deploy, and employ conventional forces, there is a need to reduce the time it takes to counter adversary actions and protect U.S. interests worldwide. A modern Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) possesses the capabilities to synchronize kinetic and non-kinetic effects to gain positions of relative advantage in LSCO. This article will discuss the importance, assets, and uses for an effective MDTF.

The Importance of a MDTF

While the U.S. was engaged in conflicts in the Middle East, its adversaries increased their global partnerships as well as military capabilities, including hypersonic missile technology and upgrades to their space and cyber domains (Garamone, 2020; Magni, 2020). The U.S.'s focus has shifted from counter-insurgency operations back to the great power race. China is competing with the U.S. for global influence, to include its robust economic engagement strategy (which could lead to restricted access to involved countries should conflict arise) connected to the Belt and Road Initiative spanning from East Asia to Europe (Chatzky & McBride, 2020; Department of Defense, 2019). And Russia is increasing its capability to conduct operations through proxy forces, while also using conflicts in Ukraine and Syria to test and refine new equipment and tactics (Aguilastrat, 2020; Kofman et al., 2017).



U.S. Army Spc. Kemonte Williams and Pfc. Daniel Stanton, unmanned aircraft systems repairers assigned to 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, conduct maintenance on a RQ-7Bv2 Shadow unmanned aircraft system at Evans Army Airfield, Fort Stewart, Georgia, Sept. 22, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Andrew McNeil)

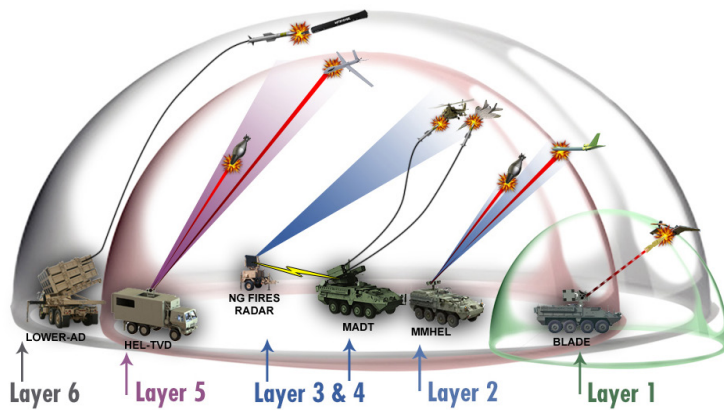
enablers that the force needs to do their mission. (Judson, 2019, para. 6)👉

Strategic Assets at Tactical Levels

The use of multi-domain operations (MDO) is not a new concept. The U.S. military has shown throughout its history it excels at synchronizing different domains and assets for a common mission (Rein, 2017). But the need to quickly defend assets and partner nations utilizing all operational domains has resulted in the U.S. Army creating MDTFs for dedicated units committed to rapid response times. Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville stated:

👉 We're building capabilities of the multi-domain task forces around information intelligence, cyber, electronic warfare and space capability. And then based on that, they'll be integrated into long-range precision fires and effects capability and then supported by the other types of

By synchronizing lethal and non-lethal fires, MDTFs will be maneuverable units capable of providing target preparation and effects across multiple domains. The MDTF centers on a Long Range Precision Fires unit, High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System and Multiple Launch Rocket System, which have unparalleled mobility and range. Enhancing those capabilities is a new force structure called the Intelligence, Information Operations, Cyber, Electronic Warfare, and Space Battalion that enables fires while operating within the range of an enemy's Anti-Access and Area Denial capabilities (A2AD) (Kimmons, 2019; Minor, 2020). As competition transitions into conflict, the MDTF will already be forward-postured and mission ready. Negotiating or competing against the positional advantage of an adversary, the MDTF will enhance the Joint Force's ability to maneuver, secure, and establish U.S. dominance in any area of operations (Prewitt, 2020).



Air and missile defense capabilities are being developed that will create a tiered, layered defense. (U.S. Army graphic by the Combat Capabilities Development Command)

MDTF Capabilities in a Conflict

After the MDTF has enabled air, maritime, and/or ground forces to gain entry and reduce enemy A2AD capability, the MDTF will continue to operate using lethal and nonlethal fires throughout the conflict. Utilizing space and cyber domains, the MDTF will have tactical elements capable of inflicting crippling effects on enemy networks and systems. Furthermore, because environmental factors such as dense urban areas or supply chain resources may limit lethal strike capabilities, nonlethal effects, such as limiting an enemy's ability to detect and target our forces, or inhibiting the ability to command and control

their forces through disrupted communication channels, will greatly enhance the U.S. military's operational success in any environment (Judson, 2018).

Moving Forward

In 2017, the U.S. Army established a MDTF pilot program under the U.S. Army Pacific Command. This program participated in multiple national and global exercises and training events, proving to be a successful combat multiplier (Kimmons, 2019). Due to its success, the Army intends to set up another stand-alone MDTF in Europe in 2021, and a third MDTF in the Pacific by 2022. Ultimately, the Army plans to establish MDTFs

in multiple forward locations in hostile, or potentially hostile regions where they can act as a deterrent, or react quickly to any aggressive actions from state and non-state actors (Kimmons, 2020).

Conclusion

The future of warfare will be high-paced, multi-dimensional, and connected. To prepare for LSCO, MDO, and the speed at which missions and tasks will come from commanders, MDTFs will be the preferred units of future conflicts. Threats and near-peer rivals have continued to evolve, but the ability of the U.S. Army to adapt to changing conditions will always be its greatest advantage. ■

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