THE OBJECTIVE FORCE: TRANSFORMING TODAY’S CONCEPTS INTO TOMORROW’S JOINT WARFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

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“Absent innovative thought and a willingness to integrate social advancements, triumphant warrior systems frequently become fossilized in their moment of glory.”

John Keegan
A History of Warfare

Introduction
The timeless quest for combat speed and mobility has prompted many historic army transformations. Approximately 2,400 years ago, Philip II reformed the Macedonian army. Seeking to gain the battlefield initiative through speed and mobility, Philip instituted new acquisition and logistics procedures that drastically restricted the traditional baggage train that followed armies of that era. His combat successes were legendary in the Greek world. Philip’s military legacy passed to his young son, who went on to conquer an empire and establish himself as Alexander the Great.

America’s Army has launched once again a search for strategic speed and mobility. More specifically, the Army’s transformation effort seeks to develop new fighting doctrine, organizations, and capabilities designed to ensure the creation of a strategically responsive, agile, and lethal Objective Force (OF). Tailored to become the 21st century’s pre-eminent land power, the OF will perform a broad range of missions that will vary from the domestic challenges of homeland security to the complexities of decisive overseas warfighting.

On tomorrow’s battlefield, the OF will deploy as a combined arms, full-dimensional maneuver force. Offensively oriented, the Objective Force will secure and maintain the combat initiative at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. Now in its fourth year of development, the OF signals the Army’s sustained commitment to become the cornerstone asset within every joint force commander’s (JFC’s) future campaign plan.

Charting The Joint Path
The Army is developing the blueprint for OF formations specifically tailored to support regional combatant commanders and emerging joint operational concepts. Synchronized with current DOD reform guidance, the Army’s transformation efforts are responding to the goals articulated by the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Defense Planning Guidance, Joint Vision 2020, and the recently published National Security Strategy. Designed for rapid response and deployment, the Objective Force will have the capability to conduct operational maneuver across strategic distances and become the decisive complement to air, sea, and space operations.

Guided by an aggressive concept development and experimentation strategy, the Army will be fully integrated into tomorrow’s joint force. The OF will fulfill force requirements for strike capabilities that encompass both precision engagement and precision maneuver. These Army units will create combat synergy within joint task forces by controlling people, resources, and large areas of land and by rapidly defeating opponents regardless of terrain conditions.

Evolution
The conceptual roots for the OF reach across the Atlantic Ocean into the historic hallways of General Headquarters, London, England. In the spring of 1918, British Army Major General J.F.C. (John Frederick Charles) Fuller became impressed with the immature technology of the internal combustion engine. Emphasizing the characteristics of speed, maneuverability, adaptability, and
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with simultaneous employment of combat-ready units on arrival.

Seeking to retain the combat initiative while avoiding the vulnerabilities and time penalty associated with traditional employment phases, the OF will avoid large, fixed-air terminals and seaports. On arrival, UAs will immediately be able to conduct operations. While sustaining simultaneous and continuous day and night operations, the Objective Force will either destroy the enemy or force opposing units to abandon protective sanctuaries and face destruction by precision fires.

**Today’s Forces**

Today’s forces generally fight linear, sequential engagements that are driven by system constraints rather than campaign design. At the tactical level, fire and maneuver frequently become distinct events. Lack of intelligence and situational awareness requires cautious actions in the early stages of an operation. This battlefield uncertainty often demands exploratory movement to contact against the enemy. Once an opponent is discovered, the integration of fire and maneuver frequently causes tactical pauses. These delays often reduce momentum while increasing casualties.

The Unit of Action will demonstrate a seamless integration of fire and maneuver. Using a complex network of fires in conjunction with precision maneuver, the UA will be able to achieve battlefield dominance from either stand-off ranges or close battle. Each UA will be able to execute multiple engagements simultaneously or in rapid succession across a large area of operation.

**A Sense Of Urgency**

Past success, unfortunately, does not ensure victory on tomorrow’s battlefield. There is a sense of urgency to develop these leap-ahead concepts and capabilities. Because the past rhythm of the transformation cycle generally takes military organizations 15 or more years to execute, time is of the essence. A heuristic approach to future warfare, guided by the wisdom of past experience, will yield a sense of understanding as the first clues are deciphered and the hidden formulas for future victory discovered.

**Conclusion**

During times of security crisis, land-power becomes a vital force projection capability and one of the key pillars of America’s military power. For more than a century, there has been a symbiotic relationship between America’s world status and America’s Army. In an increasingly uncertain security environment, Army forces will become an indispensable signal of American political determination. Tomorrow’s challenges will vary significantly. On one extreme, rogue or failing states with common access to space and conventional weapons may become sophisticated opponents capable of integrating the complex realms of a surface-to-space battlefield continuum. Conversely, the menace may not be fleets or armies but rather the unsophisticated rifles and car bombs of determined terrorists. With a multitude of possibilities between these two extremes, the shape and outline of future warfare environments will require flexible, adaptable Army units. The Objective Force, organized with Units of Employment and Units of Action, will be capable of responding across this diverse array of military operations.

The rhythms of history and the cycles of war, without question, are altering where, when, and how America’s Army will serve this Nation. It is only a matter of time until America’s national resolve is again tested. When that challenge arrives, a transformed Army will be the commander’s primary instrument for decisive operations. The development of Objective Force capabilities clearly demonstrates the Army’s commitment to ignore the siren call that has fossilized so many historic battlefield victors. America’s Army is aggressively seeking to transition from its Cold War, forward-deterrent posture to a strategically responsive member of tomorrow’s joint warfighting team.

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