

RUSI Land Warfare Conference – 1 June 2011
Delivery of Military Capability – Training, Basing and Living: Brigadier R R Smith

I propose to offer a Field Army perspective to some of the key issues we will need to address in delivering future military capability in this post-SDSR era. At the outset, the Field Army recognises the significant level of change, including reduced force structures, which must be undertaken in an austere financial climate at least in the short-term. But it is also keen to embrace this change as part of a continually evolving process to update and adapt the way in which Land Fighting Power will be delivered so that it is truly relevant for the contemporary environment and the future character of conflict. The **challenge will be in managing the process of Transition**, so that as new policies are implemented looking to the future we are not only able to continue delivering critical Operational Outputs, especially in Afghanistan which remains the Main Effort, and but also ensure that 'People' are at the heart of our capability, feeling valued throughout and remaining committed to the vision and path for the future.

Turning first to training, there are real opportunities here to continue evolving a training construct which is relevant for the demands of the Twenty First Century. It will first need to take account of the hard won-lessons which we have drawn out from a period of unprecedented operational activity over the past 10 years in Iraq and Afghanistan. Amongst these have been the requirements for **coherent and layered all sources ISTAR** to deliver proper 'understanding' of the social, cultural, economic, political and enemy environment – a capability where we had to relearn and develop some key skills; **Joint Effects** (precise, soft and hard) to deliver influence that changes human behaviour – Air/Land Integration has been pivotal here and we must work hard to maintain the tangible progress which has been made; **Battlespace management** including the most-effective and timely passage and use of information; **partnering and mentoring indigenous forces**; and, of course, being able to maintain freedom of manoeuvre and a tempo of operations in order to counter a **significant IED threat**, often based on cheap, ubiquitous but devastating roadside bombs. Of note, many of these requirements have been implemented through **Op ENTIRETY**, which has served to focus the effort and resources of Land Forces to the most effective Force Generation of Force Elements in support of Defence's Main Effort in Afghanistan. It has been very much about adaptation, 'bending existing structures and modus operandi out of shape' whilst in contact and the rigorous identification and implementation of operational Lessons.

But these requirements, forged in the face of bespoke campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, **are signposts for the future**. We also need to take account of the wider demands of the future 'congested, cluttered and connected' battlefield in which all terrain (real and virtual) will be 'contested'. **Manoeuvre**, including the integration of firepower and protection will continue to be an indispensable feature of Land Fighting Power so that we can outmatch any potential adversary and operate at a tempo at which they cannot anticipate or react to in time, but it will need to be

continually adapted and updated. Central to this adaptation will be the need to **reset some of the combined arms manoeuvre skills** which we have deliberately suppressed during recent campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, to reinforce an expeditionary culture and, in particular, an ability to operate in complex environments including the urban environment as evidenced by recent events in N Africa and, specifically, Libya.

Guided by the principle that this Land Fighting Power cannot be created on the day, the reasons why we train, as ‘the lifeblood of any organisation’, will remain essential and enduring. These include the need to prepare for operations; to educate and encourage development; and to drive both change and individual and collective improvement. But there are also opportunities to address the way in which training is delivered:

- More than ever, we will need to optimise the **training estate** available to us. The battalion or regiment will remain the core unit of currency and it must have access to critical backdoor training areas to maintain its fundamental skills. But beyond that, we should also look to make maximum use of our principal training areas such as Salisbury Plain and Otterburn and, where it makes sense, we should **consider the functional grouping of key capabilities** such as armour, armoured infantry, close support artillery or light role infantry without removing the importance of cohesion at formation level. The future rebasing of forces from Germany will provide an opportunity to look at this. In addition, the training estate will need to reflect the contemporary and future environment such as the COIN village at Stanford Training Area. But we need to go further, for example, in replicating urban environments which I mentioned earlier.
- Here, we should continue to review our requirements to **train overseas**, as part of an expeditionary culture, and also to build on the need to **train alongside key Multinational Allies** and partners in preparation for potential Coalition operations of the future. Exploring new opportunities here might well allow us to achieve an economy of force through reduced or shared security, training and financial risks as well as delivering the most relevant training. Our engagement in the French Divisional and digitised CPX, Exercise FLANDRES in France later this month, may well point the way to greater interoperability for contingent operations and potential access to the CENZUB Urban training Facility at Sissonne may also offer an indicator for the future
- In terms of **access to equipment for training**, future models are likely to see contractors playing a more active role in the management of Land Component vehicles when not in the hands of Units. Building on the recent initiative of the Land Reinforcing Fleet concept, units will routinely hold a smaller core Unit holding to maintain their essential equipment DNA but which will be reinforced by centrally and contractor-managed training fleets, coordinated by the chain of command, for the conduct of progressive collective training. Moving to this model will enable us to ‘sweat our assets harder’ – to get more out of a smaller fleet of

vehicle – but we can't fully realise these benefits until we have the right infrastructure and support solutions in place.

- A critical part of future training will also focus on **the role of simulation** which will continue to expand and grow in importance, as technology becomes cheaper and systems become more flexible, accessible and deployable. There will always need to be a balance drawn between the benefits of simulation and the need to train in the actual frictions of the Land environment including weather, distance, terrain, human dynamics and live firing. That said, there is an increasing and complementary inter-action between the 2 components rather than being seen as an either/or choice. The honing of critical Joint Fires and ISTAR procedures between BG HQs, close artillery, aviation and air assets in a realistic and current Afghanistan scenario, through Exercise MOUNTAIN DRAGON at the Distributed Synthetic Air Land Training facility at RAF Waddington, is a case in point.

As for commanders and the individual in this future environment, the Field Army will need to continue to develop a robust culture of risk-management from operations back into training. The intent is encouraging commanders to take informed risk to achieve a particular mission and supporting those who take considered risk. Part of this will depend on the cultivation of a more dynamic attitude to risk and part on education. Indeed, the overall relationship between training and education will be a central theme throughout.

On basing, I have already mentioned the key relationship between how we will train in the future, the training estate and where the Field Army will be based. But this consideration goes further than training. As we move towards an intent for greater stability under the New Employment Model, we will need to find basing solutions which also meet the aspirations of partners, families and dependants.

A further consideration in a more stable and predominantly UK-based Army in the future will be the intent for the Field Army to play its **full role in support of the Firm Base**. This would see the Field Army being fully integrated into the critical eco-systems near their permanent bases, binding together the Regular and Reserve components, the Cadets and the Regimental Associations with the local communities which they support and on which they will draw. Such a model would further reinforce the Military Covenant in both directions – from the Army to the local community and wider Nation and vice-versa. From a Field Army perspective, it would provide that 'binding glue' in moving towards the Whole Force Concept, including the Regular-Reserve balance, as well as offering the chance for greater integration with the community amongst whom it will live.

Finally, I wish to turn to **Living and People**. A constant theme running through the New Employment Model, Exercise AGILE WARRIOR designed to inform and shape the future

transformation of British Army and FCOC has been the paramount requirement to maintain 'people' as the strategic and agile edge. Certainly within the Field Army, our personnel are seen as the core capability. Critically as we enter a period which demands smaller Force Structure through redundancies and manpower reductions, it is essential that we include both military and civilian considerations in this equation, for the civilian component plays and will continue to play a critical and indispensable role in delivering military capability. Maintaining coherence between military and civilian measures as we go through the process of Transition will be both difficult but also key.

For the Field Army, the **New Employment Model** is the 'vital ground' - we recognise it as such and the key need to get it right. The principles of 'choice', 'simplicity', greater 'flexibility aligned with stability' and fairness are enshrined at the heart of the New Employment Model which the Field Army recognises, supports and is poised to embrace. Inevitably, however, there will be challenges we need to address, particularly during the transitional period of change post the SDSR and as we head towards the Future Structures of 2015 and 2020.

- We must ensure that we enable '**genuine choice**' on the way personnel live their lives and pursue their careers. For example, for the greater majority of 'partnered' personnel, accompanied service is critical to the maintenance of moral and fighting power and our future systems must be able to cater for this. Equally, an affordable model should be available for the minority who wish to serve unaccompanied for a range personal, economic, educational, career stage or partner-based reasons.
- Next, it will be some time before we achieve significantly greater geographical stability and with forces currently due to remain out in Germany until 2020. Hence, we will need to guard against the risk of policies getting significantly ahead of the reality on the ground.
- Equally, as the process of rebasing from Germany develops the increasing challenge will be to man those remaining units, before they withdraw, with **personnel of the right quantity and quality**. This will require to be carefully monitored while units and formations remain earmarked on the Operational Commitments Plot for Afghanistan up and until the end of 2014.

In sum, the Field Army is poised and ready to embrace the potential opportunities of evolving a model and modus operandi for the 21st Century in the post-SDSR era. The challenge will be managing the inevitable uncertainty during the period of Transition so that innovative and rightly forward-leaning initiatives for the future remain cognisant of the realities and pace of change 'on the ground'.