Clear The Way

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In the last issue, we started a discussion on this page on one aspect of how we intend to change the organization and operations of the Regiment as we transform the Army. From that, and from many other venues, we have received lots of great feedback on those thoughts from the field, and I really appreciate it. The strength of our Regiment has always been—and will always be—our people, and your thoughts reflect that strength.

The key concepts from the last issue are perhaps best described as ***force pooling*** and ***modularity***. In this issue, I want to open a discussion with you on the ideas of what ***information superiority*** can really do for us in the future. Let's look at it from today's perspective first.

In the past, the Army wrote combined-arms warfighting doctrine, knowing that we would not have real information superiority. The reason we, the mobility and countermobility BOS, fight the way we do is that, in many ways, we are reacting to the enemy's efforts. Through very sophisticated efforts, we seek to put mobility assets in the right formations so they can be at the right place and time on the battlefield with the right tools and techniques to overcome enemy countermobility efforts. But what that means is that the enemy has already conducted countermobility operations, and now we must reactively task-organize to perform mobility operations for our maneuver forces. Thus, mobility operations were, at best, described as predict/confirm, avoid if possible (bypass), and neutralize by breaching. Fundamentally, that's a reactive way of doing business. And many of us have experienced the tremendous frustration of having some part of that approach break down.

With the information superiority that underlies the Objective Engineer Force, we are trying to achieve a much more proactive approach. If we know what the enemy is capable of doing and how he typically does it, and we see indicators of what he is getting ready to do, then we can be proactive. With this information superiority, we have the ability to *predict* his efforts, search for and *detect* them, *prevent* them, *avoid* them altogether or *neutralize* them, and *protect* our soldiers in this effort. This simple description of predict, detect, prevent, avoid, neutralize, and protect is part of the broader concept of assured mobility, but it represents how we can use information superiority to operate. Using a tactical example, with advanced C4ISR technology, we are able to *predict* and *detect* enemy countermobility operations that will affect us. When we do detect enemy sappers moving out to place minefields in a maneuver corridor we must use, we *prevent* the operations by using systems to destroy those sappers. Let's say that for some reason we don't get them all, and some minefields are emplaced. Then, using ASTAMIDS, GSTAMIDS, HSTAMIDS, and C4ISR to precisely locate the minefields allows us to *avoid* them. If that avoidance cannot be achieved, we will use that information to *neutralize* the mines on our approach. We might maneuver forward an unmanned mine neutralization vehicle controlled remotely to destroy the mines in our path. And finally, in addition to neutralizing the danger of the obstacle, we will develop vehicles that can *protect* the lives of our soldiers by withstanding the effects of a mine blast. This is but one example of the difference on a tactical level.

Today, I think we are seeing some aspects of that ability to develop information, apply knowledge to it, and enable proactive operations. And I'm not just talking about information-processing systems. I think we are seeing it in such areas as increased initiative and flexibility in real-world missions, tremendously improved situational awareness/understanding, and so on. But that's just an echo of what we could be. Essentially, information superiority will allow us to see first and understand and then be able to act first and finish decisively (the proactive part). I believe it is easy to see that this is an important departure from the past, but one that is challenging on all levels—strategic, operational, and tactical. With that challenge, we need all engineer leaders to look toward the future.

We have to address this all the way from the physical act of seeing (sensors of every type, from human to stationary to robotic, from national to tactical) through the analysis and distribution (and we all know that's really tough business) to the ability for a commander to see all that and decide what to do (we call it battle command). That's a serious set of ideas, but the combat power in such an approach simply cannot be denied. We want to be part of that combat power, so think about it, talk about it, work on it, and tell us here at the school about it. After all, people are the absolute key to information as part of combat power.

Thanks, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Essayons!