

Commandant's Note

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THE OBJECTIVE FORCE ROLE: SECURING THE FUTURE

This is an exciting time to serve as Chief of Infantry, and I particularly welcome the opportunity to represent the interests of our Branch at a time when we are preparing to realize the full benefits of the Army Transformation. Building upon the readiness, morale, and professionalism of the Legacy Force, we have committed assets toward Interim organizations with potential for significantly enhanced mobility, lethality, sustainability and survivability, and are gaining a clearer picture of what we will demand of the Objective Force once it becomes reality.

The changes that we see unfolding—in doctrine, in weapons and the target acquisition systems that complement them, and in the training that will develop and maintain the professional competencies of the Infantry—are all part of a commitment that we share. To be sure, our soldiers and our loyal, productive civilian work force are already committed to the defense of our nation, but we must also accept the commitment to fully support this evolutionary process upon which so much depends.

Although the threats facing our nation have changed significantly in just the past decade, our role as Infantrymen in protecting our nation, her people, and our institutions is fundamentally the same as it has been for more than two and a quarter centuries. The values that sustained the spirit and resolve of our forbears at Valley Forge are no less relevant today, as we confront adversaries who operate unrestricted by national boundaries and impelled by motives not easily understood in the context of a free and open society.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, demonstrated sharply the scope, commitment, and asymmetric nature of the threat against the United States. These

events brought home clearly the need to proceed without further delay in arming and training an Army that can anticipate and neutralize adversaries with similar aspirations, as well as responding to threats of a more conventional nature. We had already selected an azimuth for an orderly transition from Legacy Forces to an Interim structure that would prevail over near term threats, and finally yield an Objective Force to meet the challenges of adversaries whose capabilities are as yet unmeasured. Unfortunately, predictions of violence on transnational and national levels have already come true, and circumstances demand that we waste no time in transitioning to an Army capable of executing even more diverse and demanding missions. We must shorten our time line to build our future force.

During the next year, this Objective Force will start to take shape as our Combat, Materiel, and Training Developers wrestle with putting form to our future Infantry. The exact shape will not come into sharpest focus for several years, but we know now what this force must do. I want to share my thoughts on the need for the Objective Force, what some of its key capabilities must be, and what our role as Infantrymen will be.

We have amply demonstrated our technological lead to those who would challenge us, and the lesson has not gone unheeded. Aware of their vulnerability to U.S. detection and subsequent precision strikes, adversaries will avoid massing their forces in linear offensive and defensive echelons. Instead, they will attempt to employ selective strikes, conduct rapid maneuver from areas of sanctuary, engage in terrorism, incite civil and political unrest, and initiate other asymmetric actions aimed at destabilizing allies and attacking U.S. interests worldwide. From this posture, the enemy will also at-

tempt to marshal attacks against selected targets in the hope of creating a perception of U.S. vulnerability, inflicting casualties, and exerting some degree of influence on world opinion and the way our national resolve is perceived.

An adversary may well plan and time his actions to increase uncertainty and expand their opportunities to surprise us. Conventional lines of communication may be difficult to secure, jeopardizing sustainment operations. Asymmetric tactics will focus on degrading our advantages in engagement standoff. An adversary will also attempt to maintain continuous pressure on our forces and those of our allies in an effort to reduce opportunities for reorganization and maneuver. But we are not without experience in such operations: In virtually every action since our Revolutionary War, we have either encountered—or ourselves executed—partisan operations, and we have also amassed a considerable data base on other armies' successes and failures in similar operations.

This assessment of current and future military operations provides our framework for defining requirements for the Objective Force and allows us to develop a force that is based on both threat and capabilities. Infantry forces must retain a quality of *adaptive dominance*—we will win regardless of situation or enemy actions by retaining the agility and initiative to put our adversary on the defensive and keep him there.

Regardless of the structure of our Infantry forces, we must have the capability to see the enemy first, fix his position, and destroy him in depth and in detail. This will present a technological challenge as well as a training challenge as we train our soldiers to realize the full potential of the digital tools offered by our nation's technological and industrial base.

With this in mind, here are some key characteristics we know our Objective Force Infantry must possess to ensure victory in future conflicts.

Responsiveness and Deployability. We must get there quickly and minimize the reception and staging support requirements. We can no longer afford the luxury of a slow and predictable force build-up such as we enjoyed prior to the Gulf War.

Agility. Our future infantry forces will continue to be able to dominate any tactical situation. As infantry leaders and soldiers, we will need the mental agility to respond to any “come as you are” contingency, and this is a learned skill, one that can be taught, enhanced, and sustained.

Mobility. We will not be constrained by rugged mountains, desert sands, or watery rice paddies. Our transport systems will allow us to reliably get our soldiers to the right place at the right time.

Versatility. Soldiers and leaders will be able to fight and win in the full spectrum of conflict. Our units will dominate all battlespace from low level, stabilization actions to the intensity of a major theater of war.

Lethality. We will dominate the close, personal fight with overwhelming fires. When necessary, we will bring in the full force of our indirect and joint fires to destroy any potential enemy force.

Survivability. Soldiers and systems will be survivable against a full threat array. We will take full advantage of stealth and materiel technologies to make sure that we lighten the soldier's load and reduce his risk.

Sustainability. We have to be able to strike quickly and stay for the long haul. We will lead the assault and stay for the mop-up.

What can we expect as infantrymen preparing to serve in this Objective Force? First and foremost, it will not change the enduring infantry mission of dominating the close, personal fight; rather, it will harness technology to give us enhanced situational awareness, lethality, mobility, and survivability to help us do our job quicker and better. Technology will not give us a silver bullet or a platform that avoids combat, but it will give us more tools in our combat toolbox. Serving in the Infantry of the future, we will need to possess and demonstrate the Infantry “warrior ethos” we've always required to close with and destroy the enemy. The battle does not end until one warrior dominates another warrior.

With these new tools and systems, we will operate confidently and efficiently in urban terrain and deny the enemy his sanctuaries. Our sensors will find them and infantrymen will destroy them. We will not only own the night; we will own the battlefield under all meteorological conditions, and obscurants will be our allies. Our Objective Force will be able to convert low visibility into a force multiplier that no adversary can match. We can expect to lead and serve in units that are more agile, more versatile, and more lethal. New platforms will give us revolutionary freedom of maneuver to get us quickly and securely into our close fight. We also must work harder to ensure that we and our soldiers know how to use the new tools of our trade. We must master both the art and science of war, and we must be smart enough to know the difference.

The Objective Force that we are building will allow our Army to execute the orders of our National Command Authority. It will provide our nation a dominant force, capable of operating equally effectively across the entire spectrum of conflict, and with the ability to defeat any threat in any environment and under any conditions. The architects of this Objective Force know that the soldier is the centerpiece of this structure. The Infantry's unique capability to close with and destroy the enemy will continue to be just as critically important as it has been since the birth of our nation. As Infantrymen, the same qualities and spirit that have made us successful throughout our country's past will continue to lead us to success on tomorrow's battlefields.