

Running head: NEEDED CHANGE FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Needed Change for a Changing World

SGM Ronald N. Sampson

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

R02-- Class 58

SGM (R) James Perdue

20 March 2008

Abstract

Military transformation is necessary to keep pace with the ever-changing world and operational environment. To ensure decisive victory in combat, the United States must keep pace with what is happening in the world and be ready to meet both the current and future threat. We will discuss how the United States' biggest force, the Army, has transformed over the years to meet the known and perceived global threat. From as early as the end of the Revolutionary War, the United States military has gone through numerous transformations. The United States Army specifically, has seen some of the biggest change throughout its history. Rapidly changing technology, economical conditions, and perceived threats all have had an affect on transformation or changes within the US Army. The US Army's success or failure will depend upon its ability to meet and defend the future challenges the world has in store for it. We will discuss two types of transformation, Force XXI and the most recent, modularity.

Needed Change for a Changing World

Introduction

I believe military transformation is necessary to keep pace with the ever-changing world and operational environment. From as early as the end of the Revolutionary War, the United States military has gone through numerous transformations. The United States Army, specifically, has seen some of the biggest change throughout its history. Although not all of its changes were the best decisions at the time, someone perceived changes must take place and acted upon it. Rapidly changing technology, economical conditions, and perceived threats all have had an affect on transformation or changes within the US Army. In a 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review Conference speech, Defense Secretary William Cohen stated, “We need to be like a decathlon athlete -- fast, agile and able to do many things well” (Cohen’s Speech, 1997, ¶46). The US Army’s success or failure will depend upon its ability to meet and defend the future challenges the world has in store for it.

The purpose of this research is to attempt to spell out to the importance of (US Army) transformation by analyzing two approaches the United States Government, the Department of Defense (DOD, and the Department of the Army (DA) used to bring about change. The US Army, based upon guidance from DOD, used many approaches to change or transform the way it does business. The two approaches to change we will discuss are Force XXI and modularity. We will compare and contrast Force XXI and modularity as an effort by the US Army to affect change. The goal of this research is to identify key factors that led to the perceived or actual need to transform. In addition, we will identify two to three strategic policies enacted to affect the desired transformation, the leading forces that shaped policies pursued in order to achieve transformation, and provide an assessment into how well the US Army achieved its desired end

state. This paper will try to capture the combined efforts of DOD and DA to show why there is a need for transformation.

Identify the Need for Change

In the mid 1990's DOD and DA recognized a need to change the force and prepare it to fight in the 21st century. Many leaders thought that the force needed to be smaller, lighter, and more lethal. According to a PBS Frontline report, the Clinton administration reduced the military force by approximately 30 percent (Rumsfeld's War, 2004, ¶3). The force of approximately 2,140,000 personnel was reduced to 1,470,000 by the end of fiscal year 96. It seemed at the time that this was more a political move based on economics. The Clinton administration was attempting to balance the budget and felt a good place to start was with the defense budget. At the same time downsizing was taking place, the US Army was in the process of identifying changes for the future fight in the 21st century.

Force XXI

According to a report on Army Modernization from the General Account Office (GAO) of the United States, the Army Chief of Staff testified before congress to request funds for the Warfighting Rapid Acquisition Program (WRAP) that would purchase new technologies to support a new concept that would be known as Force XXI (1998, p. 1). The Force XXI Advanced Warfighting Experiment (AWE) completed the formation of the first digitized division in 1997 (GAO, 1998, p. 1). The 4th Infantry Division was the test division for a concept that would allow commanders the ability to have a virtual picture of the Battlefield. Force XXI was part of the Department of Defense's overall Joint Vision 2010 whereby the Army, along with the sister services, would transform into a more technologically advanced military by year 2010. The Force XXI concept, according to Global Security, would change a division by

reducing the size, increasing fire support, expanding reconnaissance and intelligence capabilities, consolidating logistical support, and providing additional infantry (Force XXI, ¶2). The technology developed as a result of the Force XXI initiative, transformed the Army into a more knowledge based digitized force. The developed systems for the first time were given commanders a virtual operational picture of the battlefield. The most significant contribution Force XXI AWE made to the fight was Force XXI Battle Command for Brigade and Below (FBCB2). According to Global Security, FBCB2 gives commanders a real-time operational picture and allows for command and control at the lowest level (Military, n.d, p. 1). Today's Army is reaping the benefits of this technology through blue-force tracker and global positioning satellite (GPS).

Modularity

In year 2003, the buzzword changed from Force XXI to transformation. Prior to transformation starting, the then Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shenseki, pushed for the current changes the Army is seeing today. As a result of his vision, the Army began in 2003 to transform into a modular force. Transformation picked up where Force XXI left off and expanded to another level. Under the modularity concept, it affects both the active and reserve forces. According to a GAO report, the 10 active divisions would go from having 33 brigades to 48 Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) (Force Structure, 2005, p. 2). The National Guard by 2010 will transform from 38 brigades down to 34 modular BCTs.

The transformation is not only affecting the force structure by technology as well. We see the new Stryker BCT that fielded the new Stryker vehicle that is lighter and easier to deploy than the M1 tank and Bradley fighting vehicle. As the newly developed Brigade Combat Teams come on board so to is technology such as the Joint Network Node System for better

communications, ground sensor such as Long-Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System, and Blue Force Tracker for better command and control on the battlefield. The individual Soldier is receiving better equipment to train and fight. We are seeing weapon systems with advanced optics, better body armor through the IBA (Interceptor Body Armor) and outer tactical vest, and up-armored vehicles, all designed to better equipped and protect the Soldier. This transformation is more challenging than Force XXI because its focused change is affected the entire Army at once and Force XXI only affected the 4th Infantry Division during its reign. In addition to the transformation, the Army has a huge slice of its force fighting the Global War on Terrorism in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Force XXI did not have near the challenges experienced under the current modularity transformation.

The United States Army transformation, restructuring, or downsizing must take place to keep pace with the changing environment. Force XXI AWE concentrated on a lighter more digitized force that could rapidly deploy anywhere in the world. The technology advances achieved due to the Force XXI concept helped pave the way for many of the systems used by the modular Brigade Combat Teams. This is where Force XXI transformation stops being affective. Force XXI used the cold-war doctrine as its plan for fighting future wars. When the Berlin Wall fell, the cold-war doctrine should have as well. Force XXI transformation brought about some much needed technological advancements, but failed to change the way we fight. Under the current transformation of modularity, the re-writing of doctrine is occurring everyday. This is due much in part to the BCT concept where brigade level commanders no longer have to rely on outside support from combat support and combat service support assets. He has those assets under his command to flex as he sees fit. In addition, the ongoing operation in both Iraq and Afghanistan proves that the mindset can no longer be linear. The enemy has shown us that on an

asymmetrical battlefield, where there are no lines, there are also no rules. The two campaigns give Army leaders fresh data to flex doctrine and make it relevant to the threat of today.

Conclusion

When the US Army invaded Iraq in March 2003, it expected a force-on-force battle with a potentially lethal enemy. The force the Army met with proved to be no match for the big green machine. The technological superiority proved to be overwhelming for the Iraqi forces. The advancement in technology from the US was only possible because someone recognized that it was time for change. The insurgency in Iraq began and the true test and need for change was steering the US military right in the face. US Soldiers were losing lives due to poorly protected vehicles and substandard body armor. The US responded through a rapid fielding initiative that provided up-armored vehicles, ballistic helmets, and the IBA with outer tactical vest as a start. It responded by purchasing proven counter IED equipment such as the South African vehicle called the Buffalo. Change happened quickly for one of the first times in military history.

The desired end state of the current transformation is to grow the Army by 30,000 Soldiers and form 48 active duty BCTs. I say however, transformation should never have an end state. Today, in the fight against the Global War on Terrorism, we must fight asymmetrically. One day the lines could change and we will fight once again on a linear battlefield. The US Military must continue to develop technology, train, and transform to fight on any type battlefield, asymmetrical or linear. We are the premier super-power in the world today and to stay that way we must continue to transform.

References:

- Cohen Speech At QDR Conference June 23. (1997, June 26). Retrieved March 12, 2008, from <http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/defence/archive/1997/june/dd10627.htm>
- Force XXI. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2008, from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/force-xxi.htm>
- Frontline. (2004, October 26). Rumfeld's War: U.S. Military Deploiments 1969 to Present. Retrieved March 10, 2008, from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pentagon/maps/7.html>
- GAO. (1998, November). Army Modernization: The Warfighting Rapid Acquisition Program Needs More Specific Guidance. Retrieved March 12, 2008, from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/gao/ns99011.pdf>
- GAO Testimony. (2005, March 16). Force Structure: Preliminary Observation on the Army's Plan to Implement and Fund Modular Forces. Retrieved March 13, 2008, from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2005_hr/050316-pickup-laurent.pdf
- Global Security. (n.d.). Military: *Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade-and-Below (FBCB2)* Retrieved March 15, 2008, from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ground/fbcb2.htm>