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The U.S. Army's Initial Impressions of Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle

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“...the historical lessons of the military art, the principles of war, the tenets of Army operations, and our warfighting tactics, techniques, and procedures—all the fundamental imperatives—boil down to several rules of thumb applicable to every level of war...”

These rules of thumb require commanders to master transitions... Mastering transitions is key to setting the conditions for winning decisively.”

GEN ERIC K. SHINSEKI
Chief of Staff, United States Army
(Forward, FM-1)

The Army has achieved significant successes, to date, in the global war on terrorism, demonstrating proficiency in all six of its core competencies. The experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere also reveal important challenges for the “Army of Excellence” and warfighting systems designed for mass industrial age warfare.



During a 26-29 August 2002 conference conducted at the Collins Center for Strategic Leadership of the United States Army War College, a group of 51 representatives, from throughout The Army gathered to examine initial impressions from Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle (OEF/NE). Conferees represented select Army major commands including; U.S. Army Forces Command,

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U.S. Army Europe, U.S. Army Central Command, U.S. Army Pacific, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, the United States Army War College (USAWC), the Center for Army Lessons Learned, the Army Center of Military History, the United States Military Academy, the Army Staff, RAND, and the interagency community. Led by the Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy, Army G-3, they examined the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), at home and abroad, seeking ways to improve The Army's overall performance as well as capture, organize, and exploit lessons learned over the long term.

The intent of the conference was to develop and publish an unclassified conference report, provide an opportunity to cross fertilize ideas across The Army, and to develop recommendations to facilitate collection, analysis, and dissemination of Army strategic and operational Global War on Terrorism lessons learned over the long term.

Participants divided into three breakout groups, which analyzed a series of command briefings to establish impressions and trends applicable broadly to The Army's Core Competencies. For each core competency— Shape the Security Environment, Prompt Response, Mobilize The Army, Forcible Entry Operations, Sustained Land Dominance, and Support to Civil Authorities, the breakout groups sought an understanding of what went right, what went wrong, and what we can do better in the future. Deliberations considered after action reviews conducted by units at all levels.

The goal for each breakout group was to summarize the myriad impressions into three to five core themes for presentation in the plenary session. During the plenary, conferees further analyzed the impressions and trends to develop the themes that would provide the framework for the conference report.

Discussions about The Army Lessons Learned system focused on its efficacy in dealing with the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfighting. Conferees considered what improvements to the system are necessary to organize for a long term GWOT, to capture, vet, promulgate, and capitalize on lessons in a timely and efficient manner.

Some of the conference's key findings are:

- The Army has served the nation well during the first year of the global war on terrorism demonstrating considerable proficiency in all six of its core competencies:
 - Army forces including Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) contributed to “Shaping the Security Environment” through Security Cooperation Plans that facilitated access, exploited established relationships, destroyed terrorist cells, contained the spread of violence, and maintained peace and stability.
 - The Army responded promptly to this crisis. While Active and Reserve soldiers assisted in securing border sites, airports, and other vulnerable targets in the homeland, ARSOF were among the first ground forces deployed to the Central Command and Pacific Command areas of responsibility. Army Forces later expanded initial operating bases, and supported ongoing operations.
 - Despite legacy mobilization procedures and systems, designed for mass industrial age warfare, The Army successfully met combatant command requirements.



- Army Special Forces and Rangers played key roles in establishing the initial American presence in Afghanistan.
- The Army is providing security for the establishment of a new Afghan government, training an Afghan Army, and completing civil affairs projects all over the country. None of this would be possible without the sustained land dominance that the U.S. Army provides better than any other force in the world.
- The Army responded rapidly and efficiently to emergency civil support requirements for homeland security and consequence management.
- The global war on terrorism demands the increased levels of agility and innovation envisioned at the core of the Objective Force. Current operations are adding overwhelming evidence for developing concepts and solutions associated with Army Transformation which provide for responsive and creative logistics, decentralized execution of operations, modular and scalable organizations, improved planning and mobilization systems, more advanced and robust C4ISR capabilities, and all-weather 24-hour-a-day fire support for land forces.
- Some technological challenges are limiting operational capabilities:
 - War in the information age requires responsive networks supported by considerable bandwidth. Competition for bandwidth is straining current capabilities. The demand is particularly heavy for military and commercial satellite resources. Wherever possible, long-term communications infrastructure should be emplaced regionally in advance of potential conflicts to reduce demands on field forces' limited resources. Communications equipment packages must become more modular, and deployable, and provide for much larger volumes of information transfer at greater ranges.
 - Integration of ARSOF and the leveraging of multi-lateral capabilities more seamlessly with conventional operations must be another priority.
 - Army tactical and Air Force strategic lift platforms strained to meet demands imposed by the threat, the environment, and the magnitude of this global effort. Demand for the capabilities of the CH/MH-47 and C-17 and their respective utility in the GWOT warrant reconsideration of program funding levels.
- Some force structure and manning issues are impacting operations and the force:
 - Today two-thirds of ARSOF are deployed in 85 countries. The rate of increased employment since 9/11 cannot be sustained within current structures. The force cannot be expanded quickly. Interim measures, including better SOF-conventional force integration and more joint training, must be executed to husband ARSOF for the many essential missions they will perform in the ongoing war against terrorism.
 - Manning of major headquarters and combatant command staffs at reduced levels during peacetime, prior to 9/11, was insufficient to address requirements for the global war on terrorism. Immediate actions augmenting various headquarters to mitigate staffing levels had a deleterious effect at subordinate echelons that support the augmentation. These augmentations also created headquarters with little team experience or cohesion. Sufficiently manning these organizations for the development of experienced teams and preparing for a long war must be a priority.
 - Many military occupational specialties and organizations that are important (high demand) for winning the global war on terrorism, are of low density based on previous strategies. Force structure must be reevaluated and adjusted to meet the exigencies of the global war on

terrorism. Notable elements of the force requiring increased emphasis include ARSOF, Military Police, and logistics.

Participants believed the conference was very successful in achieving its goals. Recommendations that similar events be conducted routinely in the future to improve The Army Lessons Learned system are under consideration.



The Strategic Studies Institute, USAWC is preparing the final conference report, which will be forwarded to Army G3 for staffing with participating major commands and key participants. The Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy, Army G-3 anticipates publication and distribution of the report by the end of November. It should be read by anyone truly interested in The Army's evaluation of insights evolving from the Global War on Terrorism.

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