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Operationalizing Assured Mobility

By Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey A. Bedey and Major Ted Read

The assured mobility framework enables increased situational understanding to yield increased freedom of maneuver as it ties together the elements of combat power for existing and future formations. The framework is a proactive thought process that is not tied to equipment capability, but rather is a way to systematically refine the combined arms assets available to assure maneuverability of the decisive force. Essentially, the framework enables Legacy, Interim, and Objective Force units to harness situational understanding as a fundamental enabler to attack the threat before he impedes our ability to maneuver.

To recap, the assured mobility framework was originally developed to leverage information and the other elements of combat power to determine mobility requirements for the Objective Force (see Figure 1). As an analysis tool, it is very successful in ensuring that mobility requirements are adequately defined in the Objective Force Organizational and Operational Plan for the unit of action. Essentially, it is an exemplar that enables units to proactively identify “predict-to-detect,” “detect-to-prevent,” and “predict-to-prevent” linkages to generate superior situational understanding and focus on the maneuverability of the decisive force. The key is

to build these linkages to prevent the threat from affecting our ability to maneuver and protect ourselves from the threat’s effects.

The current Legacy/Interim Force assured mobility framework definition is “actions that give the force commander the ability to deploy, move, or maneuver where and when he desires, without interruption or delay, to achieve his intent.” The framework of assured mobility entails four imperatives (see Figure 2, page 16):

- *Develop the mobility common operational picture (COP).* Gain improved situational understanding geographically by using geospatial tools to combine improved intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities with terrain data and an integrated reconnaissance and surveillance to help the commander visualize the battlefield.
- *Establish and maintain operating areas.* Identify enemy engagement areas (EAs), named areas of interest (NAIs), targeted areas of interest (TAIs), choke points, operating areas, and lines of communication (LOCs) connecting those areas in order to determine enemy capability and intentions.
- *Attack the enemy’s ability to influence operating areas.* Allocate combat power and sensors to negate the threat’s efforts to impede maneuverability. In addition, secure our ability to maneuver where needed (operating areas, LOCS, TAIs, and EAs),
- *Maintain mobility and momentum.* Synchronize all Battlefield Operating System (BOS) capabilities to protect and sustain our established ability to maneuver when and where we wish, enabling us to maintain pressure and lethality despite the threat.

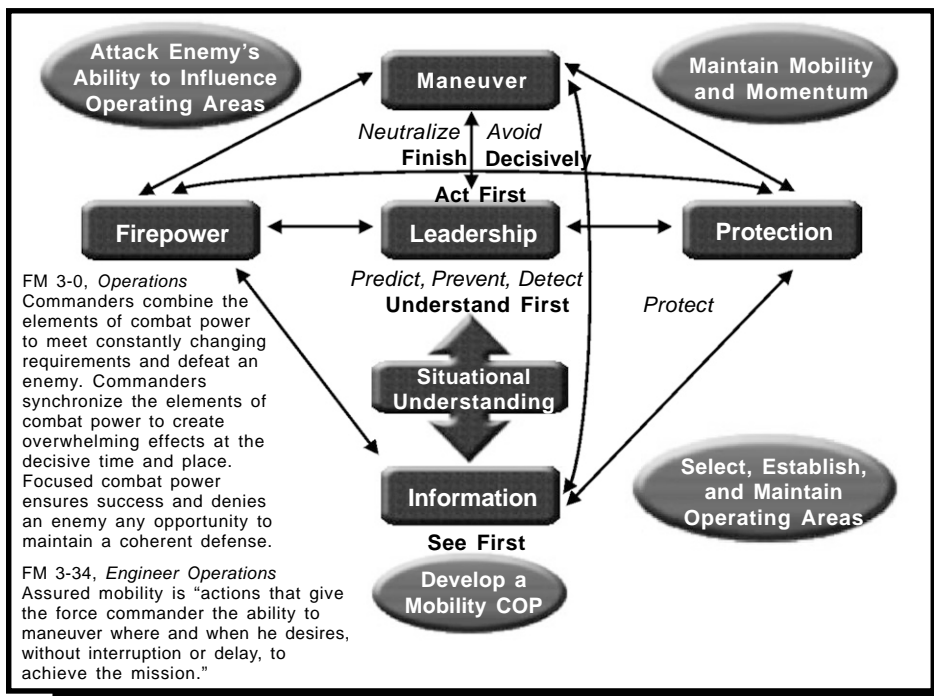


Figure 1. Assured Mobility Framework

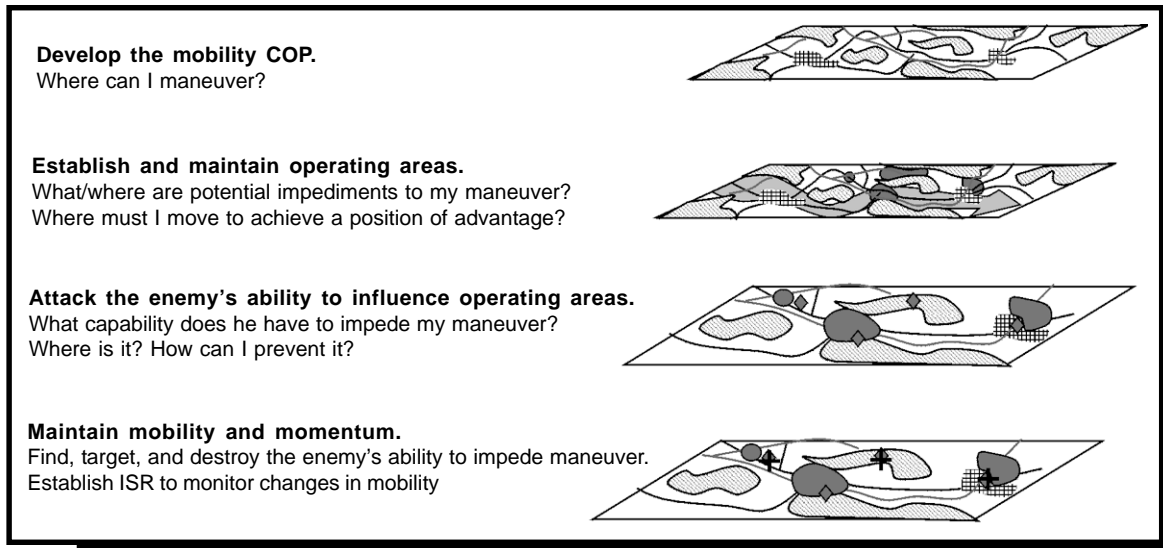


Figure 2. Assured Mobility Imperatives

The assured mobility fundamentals tie the imperatives together and must be proactively viewed from two perspectives (see Figure 3). The six fundamentals are:

- *Predict* actions and circumstances that could affect maneuverability.
- *Detect* early indicators of impediments to battlefield mobility.
- *Prevent* potential impediments to maneuverability from affecting battlefield mobility of the force. A key is to develop predict-to-prevent linkages to detect impediments and identify alternative mobility corridors needed to . . .
- *Avoid* battlefield impediments.
- *Neutralize*, reduce, or overcome impediments (from traditional mines to industrial chemicals) that cannot be prevented or avoided.
- *Protect* against the effects of enemy impediments. Successful application of assured mobility analysis is

gained through a sequential and continuous application of the fundamentals throughout the imperatives en route to, on, and beyond the objective.

The linkage of assured mobility to FM 3-0 begins with information—the newest element of combat power. FM 3-0 refers to information as an element that “...enhances leadership and magnifies the effects of maneuver, firepower, and protection.”¹ Later, the manual describes information superiority as the “...force being able to *see first, understand first, and act first.*”² These additions to FM 3-0 were a concrete start to enabling the information edge within the operational art as foreseen by Generals Frederick Franks, William Hartzog, and Gordon Sullivan in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-5, *Force XXI Operations*.³

Assured mobility is a model that enables commanders to see first, understand first, act first, and finish decisively from a mobility perspective. Furthermore, when used as a layered system of proactive refinement in complex environments, it

can provide a way to enumerate the amount of combined arms assets required to assure freedom of maneuver of the decisive force. The definition of “provide assured mobility” in the Objective Force shifts to “...actions that guarantee ...” from “...actions that give...,” and it becomes an imperative to our future BOS as “provide assured mobility.”⁴ (See article on page 12.) In the Objective Force, we will *guarantee* freedom to maneuver through a system-of-systems approach that capitalizes on embedded standoff capabilities. Until the assured mobility system of systems is built, proofed, fielded, and embedded, the Army must maximize existing combined arms capabilities to *give* mobility to the maneuver commander. To that end, assured mobility

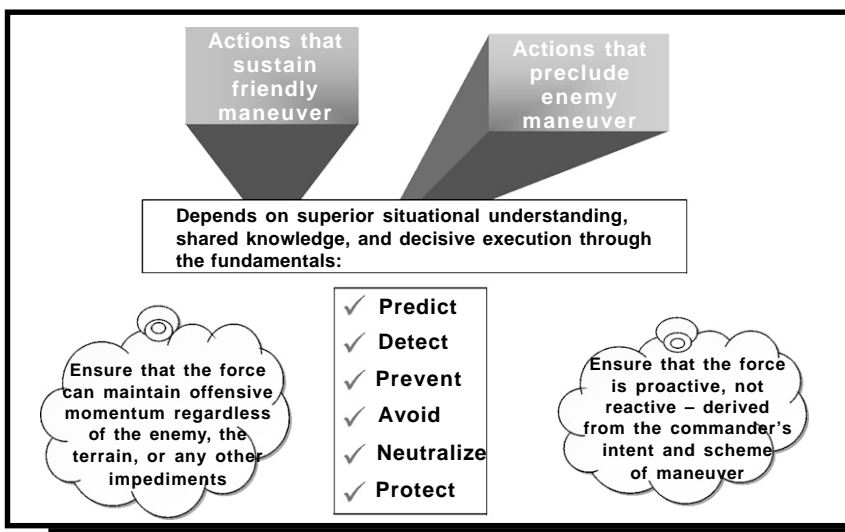


Figure 3. Assured Mobility Perspectives

provides a framework that helps transform increased situational understanding into decisive maneuver. Essentially, the assured mobility framework is the transmission that transfers power from the elements of combat power to the wheels of time, space, and purpose within the operational framework.

An example of doctrinal application today is how the U.S. Army Engineer School is helping the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) leadership maximize its capabilities to provide mobility to the decisive force. Assured mobility was the centerpiece of an interactive practical exercise that proactively used enhanced situational understanding and situational awareness to build linkages among the assured mobility fundamentals to enable maneuverability. Assured mobility provides the SBCT leaders a framework to mobility solutions by addressing a few considerations (listed below) to help focus their analysis of the fundamentals against each imperative. The analysis was shaped to ensure that both an enemy and friendly perspective were accounted for en route to, on, and beyond the objective.

■ *Develop the mobility COP.*

- √ Leverage terrain and reconnaissance technology to determine mobility corridors, defensible terrain, and choke points.
- √ Determine who is using what mobility corridor and why.
- √ Predict when, where, and why the enemy will maneuver.
- √ Develop a sensor web and reconnaissance plan to confirm enemy maneuver.

■ *Establish and maintain operating areas.*

- √ Determine friendly operating-area needs.
- √ Identify key terrain, and implement an ISR plan to support mobility.

■ *Attack the enemy's ability to influence operating areas.*

- √ Allocate combat power to attack the enemy's ability to influence the maneuverability of the decisive force.

■ *Maintain mobility and momentum.*

- √ Predict, detect, and then prevent the enemy from using situational obstacles, and when prevention fails, avoid or breach/bridge obstacles as necessary.
- √ Maintain multiple routes to enable maneuver flexibility.
- √ Anticipate and allocate assets to reduce civil/cultural impacts.
- √ Anticipate and prevent the use of toxic industrial chemicals and weapons of mass destruction.
- √ Counter enemy reinforcement attempts.

The SBCT leadership used the considerations to focus the discussion within a continuous and sequential analysis of the assured mobility fundamentals to successfully tie FM 3-0's see first, understand first, act first, and finish decisively to physical assets owned by the maneuver commander. The result was an innovative and proactive application of information

enablers and combat units to ensure the mobility of the decisive force in complex and urban terrain specific to that mission.

Assured mobility is a framework leaders can use to envision the elements of combat power in allocation of assets to multiple engagements in time, space, and purpose. The SBCT leadership has proven that the assured mobility framework contributes to the freedom to maneuver for existing Legacy and Interim Force formations—not just the Objective Force. The key to implementing assured mobility is altering thought processes from reactive-centric to proactive-centric methods that build decisive maneuver linkages with the assets available.

The hard part may have been said best by Sir Basil Liddell Hart in *Thoughts on War, 1944* "...that the real challenge is not to put a new idea into the military mind but to put the old one out...."⁵ Assured mobility provides a new idea to help the commander maximize information, in conjunction with the other elements of combat power, to achieve decisive results within an operational framework. Assured mobility is how a maneuver commander can, as envisioned in FM 3-0, enhance the elements of combat power and build successful engagements within time, space, and purpose.

Endnotes

¹ Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, Washington, D.C., 14 June 2001, p. 4-10.

² *Ibid.*, p.11-2

³ Department of the Army, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, *Force XXI Operations, A Concept for the Evolution of Full-Dimensional Operations for the Strategic Army of the Early Twenty-First Century*, Washington, D.C., 1 August 1994, p. 1-3.

⁴ TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-25, *The United States Army Objective Force Maneuver Support Operational Concept, Coordinating Draft*, v1.3, 6 November 2002, Chapter 6, p. 32.

⁵ TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5.



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