Rumsfeld vs. LaRouche

'Military Transformation' Or Strategic Defense

by Carl Osgood

In July of 1942, Gen. Douglas MacArthur was faced with the task of preventing a Japanese invasion of Australia with almost no forces, and little promised in the way of reinforcements, such that many lower ranking officers in his own command felt that the invasion was inevitable. MacArthur decided that the only way to defend Australia was to attack the Japanese before they could consolidate a strong position in New Guinea, the easternmost island of what was then called the Dutch East Indies. However, to the east and southeast, the Japanese had already built large bases in Bougainville, New Britain, New Georgia Island, and in the Solomon Islands. Members of MacArthur's own staff fretted that attacking these bases would be well-nigh impossible. He explained that, rather than attacking these strong points, he intended to "envelop them, incapacitate them, apply the 'hit'em where they ain't, let'em die on the vine' philosophy."

Throughout the New Guinea campaign, MacArthur used his air forces, and naval power when it was available to him, to land ground forces behind the Japanese strong points, enabling him to isolate them, cut them off and make them irrelevant. Where it was necessary to do so, this strategy simplified the task of destroying Japanese forces; and where it was not necessary, they simply "died on the vine." MacArthur carried this philosophy through to the liberation of the Philippines, which he had identified as key to strangling Japan economically, because its war industries depended, heavily, on the raw materials that it was extracting from Indonesia, and those shipping routes could be blocked easily from the Philippines. MacArthur applied the new technologies that matured during the 1930s—most notably, the airplane—to aid in effecting the strategic goal of bringing the war to an end as rapidly as possible on terms most beneficial to both sides.

What Is Military Transformation?

Today, the technology of warfare is changing as rapidly as it did during the period between the two World Wars, and bringing with it fundamental changes in the conduct of war. But what is the strategic outlook that is driving the present transformation of the military? Is rebuilding the military around "information-age" technologies, special forces, and precision-guided munitions serving the same strategic goal that MacArthur set for himself in the Southwest Pacific?

"Military transformation," as it is being implemented under Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, places great emphasis on information-age technologies to replace the massed forces of the industrial age; to increase the speed and lethality of employed forces while shrinking their logistical tail. During the early phase of the U.S. operation in Afghanistan, Rumsfeld was fond of pointing to U.S. special forces troops—riding horseback, using satellite radios and global positioning system (GPS) receivers to call in air strikes from 40-year-old B-52's dropping GPS-guided bombs—as an example of what military transformation means. Two years later, however, the political situation in Afghanistan remains unstable, and the ousted Taliban appears to be regaining strength in some parts of the country.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq is also given as proof that transformation works. Gen. Tommy Franks, who, as commander of U.S. Central Command, led the invasion, has often been quoted saying that it was the "most joint" military operation he'd ever seen in his career. In other words, the services worked the more closely together than they ever had. Indeed, one of the goals of transformation is to integrate the services seamlessly, rather than have to expend effort to keep each one out of the other's way. Iraq is also seen as another triumph of the use of precision-guided munitions and the networking of combat forces together so that commanders always knew what was happening anywhere in the theater of operations; as well as the integrating of different types of forces together in different parts of the country simultaneously.

While the major combat phase of the operation may have "succeeded," the subsequent occupation of Iraq has done nothing to strengthen the argument that the United States can transform the Middle East using this kind of military force—as some, such as former chairman of the Defense Policy Board Richard Perle, argued so strenuously prior to the invasion.

The Blitzkrieg Model

The engineering, so to speak, of transformation is done by the U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCom), headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia. JFCom's work focusses on the development and implementation of joint operational conceptions, such as operational net assessment, effects-based operations, and rapid decisive operations; concepts that were tested in the last year's Millennium Challenge 2002 exercise. JFCom's concept developers will argue that transformation is not so much about technology as it is about military concepts, and the people who will employ those concepts. Since Millennium Challenge, JFCom's efforts have turned to developing a new set of concepts, sort of a second phase of transformation. This effort is the focus of a series of war games that JFCom is co-sponsoring with the services. The series began with last Spring's Unified Quest war game at the U.S. Army War College, continued with Unified Course at the Naval War College from Oct. 6-9, and will continue in 2004 with similar games with the Marines and the Air Force.

General Douglas MacArthur in Melbourne, Australia in 1942. His campaign from there, of enveloping attacks around and behind Japanese forces, avoided the mass-slaughter of head-on attacks, and evinced the method of strategic defense he used successfully through to the liberation of the Philippines. His was the traditional intention in fighting war, to make the most successful peace; the opposite of the objective of the advocates of "military transformation."

JFCom is working on what Dave Ozolek, assistant director for joint experimentation in its Joint Experimentation directorate, described to *EIR* in an Aug. 7 interview as a "four-path approach" to transformation—the first of which is the concept development approach described above. The second part is *interoperability,* or "making sure the systems that the services are building truly are built" so that they can, in effect, talk to each other. The third is joint training, which includes an effort by JFCom to build a "joint national training capability." Among other things, this would include linking the major service training ranges together. The fourth piece is JFCom's provision of forces that have the capabilities to conduct the kind of operations seen in Afghanistan and Iraq. "It's also the road-map for the way ahead," explained Ozolek, "and that will be the process by which we continue to adapt to the changes that we see in the operational environment; to the identification of new threats. . . . Our job is to anticipate what those challenges are going to be, and to have the capability of dealing with that challenge ahead of the next enemy's ability to operate that way."

The process of experimentation used by JFCom dates back to 1997, when Senators Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Dan Coats (R-Ind.) inserted language into the 1998 Defense Authorization bill, calling for a "joint experimentation" capability to develop the basis for the concepts that are now associated with "transformation." In a 1997 article published in the *Joint Forces Quarterly,* Coats offered the German

Blitzkrieg as a model for how a military can be changed. It was through the efforts of Generals Hans von Seekt and Heinz Guderian, he wrote, that the Germans "leveraged" the new technologies of the tank, the airplane, and radio communications "with new organizations and doctrine, to develop more effective warfighting capabilities. Thus the development of the Blitzkrieg offers insight into creating change."

But Coats forgot to mention that not only was the Blitzkrieg a tool of an aggressive war policy; it failed as a military strategy when used against the Soviet Union, an adversary with both the will and means to resist.

Platforms Versus Systems

One feature of the transformation debate might be termed "platforms versus systems." Platforms are the airplanes, ships, and ground vehicles that deliver weapons, or carry troops into combat. The utopian side of the debate, represented by such as Andrew Marshall, the Pentagon's Director of Net Assessment, maintains that the systems are more important than the platforms. The systems provide the intelligence, reconnaissance, command and control, and communications of the weapons and forces that are taken into combat by the airplanes, ships, and ground vehicles. They argue that the investment in those systems is far more important than any investment in platforms. Secretary Rumsfeld's decision to kill the Army's Crusader artillery system in 2002 is an example of the "systems" outlook prevailing over the "plat-

forms" outlook.

Some of the most thoughtful critique of transforming the military in this direction has come, most notably, from the U.S. Army, which has been a particular target of Rumsfeld's vitriol. One indication of this were the remarks of Col. Douglas McGregor, a senior research fellow at the Center for Technology and National Security Policy at the National Defense University, at an all-day Oct. 15 forum on military transformation sponsored by the Heritage Foundation. Following half a day of remarks from other speakers on the importance of networks, MacGregor declared, "We are irrationally exuberant about non-existent technology!" He acknowledged that networks have tremendous potential for military operations. "The problem is," he said, "we can't get the network at the National Defense University to stay up for any length of time." Nor will the network, contrary to the assertions of the utopians, confer perfect knowledge of the enemy on its users.

So, McGregor's advice to commanders in the field is to bet on their weapons systems, their platforms, and above all, the human potential of their organizations, including training and good battle drills, "because the technology will periodically fail." He demonstrated that there are times when the only thing to go into battle with is a tank, because its armor-protected fire power is sometimes all that can get the job done.

McGregor also took on the issue of benchmarking, in response to *EIR*'s question on JFCom's "Lessons Learned" study of the Iraq war. He said that the problem in examining these operations is, "We have trouble listening to the people who actually fight." He noted that both the Army and the Marines have thousands of combat-experienced troops "who can do more for transformation than anyone else in uniform, if we listen to them." The problem, he said, is that when someone at the top gets a "vision," and says "this is how we can make things work," then everyone feels obligated to try to make it work, "even if it doesn't make any sense."

Instead, McGregor said, "We've got to come up with a series of ideas, different organizational structures; when it comes to equipment, different prototypes. Don't sink $9 billion into some platform [referring to the Army's Stryker wheeled combat vehicle] that *somebody liked.* Run some number of these prototypes, organize it differently, employ it, test it, come back; and make a decision as to whether or not you want to go forward. Learn what you can and go into new prototypes, new pieces of equipment and new organizations as deemed necessary."

Prof. Stephen Biddle of the U.S. Army War College has done studies of the combat operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, focussing, in particular, on the effectiveness of long-range precision strikes in different circumstances. He told the Heritage forum that in the early phase of the Afghanistan operation, the Taliban militias were poorly trained and poorly motivated, and were easily defeated by the use of precision-guided weapons called in by combat controllers on the ground. The Northern Alliance was then sufficient to mop up

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's pet "military transformation" has substituted the military uses of information-age artificial intelligence, for the military uses of human intelligence and mission-orientation. The reason is the intent, or purpose, of the vaunted military transformation doctrine: To fight pre-emptive war, nuclear war, perpetual war.

the mess afterwards. However, as the campaign progressed, the fighting shifted from the Taliban to hardened, well-trained, and well-motivated al-Qaeda fighters, who were very competent at using the mountainous terrain for cover and concealment. During Operation Anaconda in March of 2002, for example, about 50% of the enemy fighting positions remained undiscovered until U.S. troops drew fire from them. They could not be detected by airborne and satellite reconnaissance, and therefore, could not be targetted by long range precision strikes. The only method by which they could be destroyed was by close combat.

Addressing the House Armed Services Committee on Oct. 20, Biddle warned—perhaps with the German Blitzkrieg example in mind—that the combination of skills and technology the U.S. employed in Iraq "would probably not produce comparable results against a more skilled opponent." He said that a skilled force the size of the Iraqi Army in March of 2003, would have required a much higher troop level to destroy, and would have inflicted much greater losses. "This is because skilled militaries can survive stand-off precision engagement, and compel close combat on terms unfavorable to us, as al-Qaeda has already demonstrated to us in 2001-2002 in Afghanistan; and because such close combat, even with modern technology, is inherently dangerous and labor intensive."

Artificial vs. Human Intelligence

Another instructive critique was published on Oct. 23, by the Army's Center for Army Lessons Learned, based at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas—focussing on intelligence and fire support to the ground combat operation in Iraq. The team examined the use of unmanned air vehicles as intelligence platforms; the management of intelligence collection efforts;

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and the training and utilization of intelligence assets, among other things. Its findings on the use of intelligence included the following:

• Intelligence collection is poorly managed, because the officer responsible "had only a general understanding of the collection management process and a very limited understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the assets he was tasking."

• Junior military intelligence officers and enlisted soldiers showed poorly developed skills. They did not understand the targeting process, had weak intelligence-briefing skills, little to no analytical skills, and were unable to develop the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance plan. They lacked the fundamentals of collection management. The report concluded that no one takes responsibility for the training of these junior soldiers after they leave the Intelligence Center and School at Fort Huachuca, Ariz.

• Tactical human intelligence teams are not providing the support they should be. There are 69 such teams in Iraq and the investigators determined that these teams should be submitting about 120 reports per day to the Human Intelligence Operations Cell (HOC). Instead, the teams are sending in only about 30, because of "the lack of guidance and focus provided by the HOC."

• There are too few translators available, and they are often poorly utilized. Nor do soldiers using interpreters have the proper training and experience for the cultures they're operating in.

The overarching conclusion to be drawn from the team's findings, is that ground forces are not trained to use intelligence effectively, leading to a lack of thinking or mission orientation. Given that, the over-abundance of real-time intelligence provided by super-sophisticated technology is not as effective as Rumsfeld and his co-thinkers claim.

What Is the Mission of War?

While the tactical considerations raised by both MacGregor and Biddle can be life-or-death issues for soldiers engaged in combat, it is the strategic policy of the administration in power that determines whether or not they go to war, and if they do, *for what purpose.* MacGregor described the Bush Administration policy as one of "joint global expeditionary warfare." In other words, Macgregor said, "we will project the military power of our active component forces overseas to the places where the enemy lives, and attack him on his own ground." At the same time, the homeland will be defended by "a mix of civil and military capabilities."

In practice, this has meant an attack on Afghanistan—ostensibly in response to the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington—and an unprovoked invasion of Iraq for reasons that have proven not to be truthful. In reality, the *purpose* of both operations has been an imperial war policy first written by then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and others back in 1991, and promoted in the interim by a collection of right-wing Washington-based think-tanks led by the American Enterprise Institute. As *EIR* has previously documented, this is a recipe for perpetual, Clash of Civilizations warfare.

What, in fact, is a constitutionally tolerable concept of warfare for the United States? As Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly reminded, in the republic military tradition, "The mission of war is peace." The only legitimate reason for going to war is to secure the conditions for a durable peace, just as MacArthur had oriented his strategy not only for his conduct of the war in the Pacific, but also his post-war occupation of Japan.

Such a strategic outlook cannot be served by Cheney's imperial war policy, but rather, only by the application of strategic defense. LaRouche described MacArthur's conduct of the war in the Pacific as "the most brilliant case-history of the military-strategic applications of the principles of strategic defense in my lifetime."

LaRouche further emphasized that the only constitutionally tolerable military policy of the United States "is the adoption of the overall-ruling, long mission of fostering the bringing into being of a global community of principle among sovereign nation-states." Corollary to this is the principle of the flank, which "expresses . . . the ability of the individual human mind to discover and employ efficiently a newly discovered, or neglected universal principle, of physical science or Classical artistic culture."

The natural advantage of the individual human mind is the source of technology, and MacArthur was able to absorb that advantage into his grand strategic outlook of winning the peace. This is the difference between "strategic defense," and Cheney's and Rumsfeld's transformation of the military for a world of perpetual war.