Leader Development

By GEN Martin E. Dempsey

"We are often better served by connecting ideas than we are by protecting them."
—Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*

Connecting ideas is important; connecting the right ideas is even more important. In previous articles in this series, I've expressed some ideas that I believe will set the Army on the proper course to confront the challenges that lie ahead for our Army and our nation. I've discussed why our conceptual foundation grounded in *The Army Capstone Concept* and *The Army Operating Concept* should serve as the basis for why and how we must adapt in the future. I've discussed the changing roles and responsibilities of our leaders as we increasingly decentralize capabilities and distribute operations. I've discussed why we're adopting mission command as a warfighting function. With our shift to mission command, we must take a careful look at how we adapt our leader-development programs and policies to develop leaders who can effectively operate in a much more transparent, complex and decentralized

operational environment. Aligning and connecting our leader-development programs and policies with our conceptual foundation and doctrinal changes such as mission command become the most critical adaptations we can make within our campaign of learning.

I want to reassure you that we have always developed and will continue to develop leaders based on the fundamentals of "move, shoot and communicate." Moreover, we will continue to measure the effectiveness of our leader-development programs against clearly defined tasks, conditions and standards. What I'm suggesting here, however, is that our leader-development programs must also produce and reward leaders who are inquisitive, creative and adaptable.

It should be clear to all after more than nine years of conflict that the development of adaptive leaders who are comfortable operating in ambiguity and complexity will increas-

> *The dynamic nature of the 21st-century security environment requires adaptations across the force. The most important adaptations will be in how we develop the next generation of leaders, who must be prepared to learn and change faster than their future adversaries. Simply put, developing these adaptive leaders is the number-one imperative for the continued health of our profession.*

ingly be our competitive advantage against future threats to our nation. I'm personally convinced of this because it's clear we will never predict with any accuracy what the future holds. To reinforce this point, I often make a series of promises to students in precommand courses as they prepare to lead our great young men and women as battalion and brigade commanders and command sergeants major. I promise them that the future security environment will never play out exactly the way we've envisioned. History confirms this. I promise that we will not provide the optimal organizational design nor perfectly design the equipment that they will need when they enter into a future mission. History—especially recent events—confirms this as well, although we do our best not to get it too wrong. And I promise that the guidance they receive from "higher headquarters" will always come a little later than needed. We would be ill-advised to think that we will do much better than our predecessors in

GEN Martin E. Dempsey is the commanding general, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. Previously, he served as acting commander, U.S. Central Command, and commander, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, he holds master's degrees in English, military art and science, and national security and strategic studies.

this regard. What I also promise, however—and this, too, is confirmed by our history—is that it is *always* the leaders on point who are able to take what we give them, adapt to the environment in which they are placed and accomplish the mission. Leader development becomes job number one. Thus we've undertaken a series of substantive adaptations to rebalance the three pillars of leader development—training, education and experiences—and have also proposed several personnel policy changes to make it clear that we are elevating the importance of our leader-development programs.

There are two documents that will guide our efforts to adapt our leader-development programs and policies. They are the Army "Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army" (ALDS) released in November 2009 and "The Profession of Arms," a white paper released in December 2010. The ALDS reflects what we've learned after more than nine years of war and presents nine leader-development imperatives that will drive how we adapt our training, education and experiences across the Army. In particular, the ninth imperative of the ALDS highlights the need to renew our understanding of what it means to be a professional within the profession of arms in an era of persistent conflict. This imperative forms the basis for "The Profession of Arms" white paper that will serve as the catalyst for a period of introspection and dialogue in 2011.

Throughout this year, we will discuss which attributes are essential for Army professionals and for our profession. This focus on the profession will be inextricably linked with our efforts to evolve our leader-development policies and programs in accordance with the ALDS imperatives.

Training

One of the imperatives that we highlight in the ALDS is to "prepare our leaders by replicating the complexity of the operational environment in the classroom and at home station." We cannot expect to capture the imagination of combat-seasoned forces that have been in some of the most complex environments imaginable for almost a decade by sitting them in a classroom and bludgeoning them with PowerPoint slides. We must make the "scrimmage" as hard as the "game" in both the institutional schoolhouse and at home station.

One of the important initiatives under way to ensure that we make the scrimmage hard enough for our leaders-in-training is the Army Training Concept (ATC). The ATC is designed to make training more rigorous and relevant by leveraging technology to create challenging training environments for our leaders. A core enabler of the ATC is Training and Doctrine Command's "Training Brain," which is a data repository operating out of the Joint Training Counter-IED [Improvised Explosive Device] Operations

Integration Center near Fort Monroe, Va. The Training Brain allows us to pull streams of real-world data from current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, declassify it and use it to build realistic scenarios to support training throughout the Army. We are also using the Training Brain to create videos of real-world scenarios in a virtual format based upon recent battles and operations and make them accessible on the Army Training Network. Soldiers can use this as a tool to facilitate their own learning, whether they're in a schoolhouse environment, conducting home-station training or even deployed.

In addition, the Training Brain is helping us to evolve massive multiplayer online role-playing games that will allow soldiers and leaders to interact and collaborate using common scenarios in a virtual environment with other soldiers within their units and across the Army. This enables us to provide realistic and relevant training and learning opportunities at the point of need. Moreover, this exploits the growing expectation for collaboration among leaders and orients our training more toward a student-centric model instead of an instructor-centric model. This capability exists today, and it's already taking off across the Army.

I recently received an e-mail forwarded to me from one of our schoolhouses in TRADOC. The message described a class of captains in their career course and how they were voluntarily organizing into teams to compete against one another in an online role-playing game based on a relevant scenario for training. These officers were giving up their lunch hour, and even coming in early and staying late, to continue their training and learning experience on their own time. This Army training captures the imagination, challenges the participants and allows them to adapt the material to facilitate their learning needs—a far cry from the death-by-PowerPoint approach with which many of us are all too familiar. As I often say, "It's good to be for what's going to happen," and I'm not surprised in the least that our junior leaders are seizing emerging technologies to address their own learning needs.

Education

A commitment to continuing education has always been a hallmark of the Army profession. We invest tremendous resources to develop the best educational opportunities for our soldiers. There are two areas in particular, however, that require immediate attention. One is the need to move away from a platform-centric learning model to one that is centered more on learning through facilitation and collaboration. The "sage on the stage" will give way to the "guide on the side" who will facilitate learning and focus on problem solving in the classroom.

The other is the development and introduction of a structured self-development program for officers using the successful NCO self-development program as a model for what right looks like.

It's important to note, however, that these initiatives will work only if we consider our professional military education (PME) an investment in—and not a tax on—the profession.

Because of the demands of the last nine years of war, we haven't been sending the message to our leaders that we value education as an essential element of leader development. The significant backlogs for the Noncommissioned Officer Education System and the rapid increase year after year of Senior Service College deferrals are just two examples of a growing problem that we must address immediately. We have to put "teeth" back into our personnel policies to ensure that we balance our support to the current fight with the imperative to invest in the development of our future leaders. Don't get me wrong; I actually like the problem we have. We have an Army of combat-tested soldiers and leaders who are eager to broaden the aperture and build on their experiences. In other words, we have an Army that wants to develop. Our policies must encourage this development.

To ensure that the policies we put in place are reflective of our goals to support and encourage education and development, we have made some recent changes to existing policies. These policy changes will require some time to be made fully institutional across the force, but the enforcement of these policies will be essential to effectively rebalance our commitment to the three pillars of leader development. I will discuss specific policy changes that affect our Officer Corps, but we are also addressing similar policy adaptations for our NCO Corps and warrant officers.

One of the policy adjustments is to mandate that officers complete intermediate-level education prior to competing for battalion command and for

Leah McGlynn, director of the Training Brain at the Joint Training Counter-IED Operations Integration Center, briefs Secretary of the Army John McHugh during his visit with GEN Dempsey.

GEN Dempsey addresses students—field-grade officers from all services, multinational officers and interagency civilians—at the Joint and Combined Warfighting School in Norfolk, Va., last July.

promotion to lieutenant colonel. We will also mandate completion of Senior Service College programs prior to assuming brigade command and reinforce the idea that joint service before brigade command is a desired goal. With the cooperation of leaders "in the fight," we must ensure that our deployed captains and majors serving in combat are afforded the opportunity to rotate out to attend required PME according to their career time lines. Likewise, we will reinforce key and developmental assignment standards of 24 months for field-grade officers to ensure adequate time for PME and for broadening experiences. Lastly, we assess that it is time to revise the Officer Evaluation Record system and NCO Evaluation Record system to ensure that they adequately assess the attributes we seek in our future leaders according to the "Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army."

All of these policy changes will better enable us to more effectively manage our Army's talent and provide leaders more opportunities to broaden themselves beyond their tactical experiences. Assignments and experiences that expose our leaders to different ways of thinking will broaden and better prepare them for continued service.

Experience

In addition to providing opportunities for key and developmental assignments based on their branch of service, it is important that we afford our leaders the opportunity and time for broadening assignments and experiences. Service inside the institution allows leaders to understand how their Army functions. Service on the Joint Staff or on a combatant command staff allows Army leaders to gain firsthand expe-

rience working with the other services. A tour working with one of our interagency partners—or participation in a fellowship with industry, a think tank or an academic institution—provides exposure to a different type of mind-set and way of doing business. In addition, for years now we've emphasized the importance of cultural awareness and empathy as an Army, and yet we've consistently provided fewer candidates for the Olmsted Scholar Program than the other services. All of these experiences enable our developing leaders to form and build a network of contacts through a variety of experiences that will serve them well in future assignments of increased responsibility and scope.

Of course, the experience pillar of leader development is the hardest to achieve as an Army at war. We will always meet the needs of deployed commanders to the very best of our ability. As tactical demands allow, however, and in cooperation with deployed commanders, we must also begin to deliberately broaden our leaders. We are in the process of reviewing and revising our definition of *broadening* to ensure that we are developing the kind of leaders we need for the future. Only when we adequately address all three pillars of leader development—training, education and experience—can we state that we have an effective and functioning leader-development program.

The dynamic nature of the 21st-century security environment requires adaptations across the force. The most important adaptations will be in how we develop the next generation of leaders, who must be prepared to learn and change faster than their future adversaries. Simply put, developing these adaptive leaders is the number-one imperative for the continued health of our profession. ★