



Fighting Army Aviation At The Tactical Level

America's Army is a force projection Army with the mission to rapidly deploy decisive force anywhere in the world under any circumstance. Though smaller than the Cold War Army, the 21st century force will optimize emerging technologies to meet any adversary. Technology will dramatically increase force lethality and battlefield mobility. Battlefield command and control will greatly improve through information management derived from the power of the micro-chip. The battle calculus will become more complex as operational tempo increases.

The Army must be capable of supporting national and international interests. The post-Cold War environment demands a focus on regional conflicts, crisis response, power projection, and joint and combined operations.

Operations from civil disturbances, national disasters, to lesser and major regional contingencies are certain to challenge future planners. The force must be a total force consisting of National Guard, Reserve, and Active forces trained together and capable of delivering decisive victory with minimum casualties.

Fast moving forces, instantaneous information, and unprecedented lethality will characterize the battlefield. While there are certain to be close battles, many high-technology weapons arrays will have the "effects of mass" yet may be elusive, low dwell time targets operating from ranges beyond the close fight. There may be a blurring between the tactical and operational level as commanders simultaneously focus close and deep fires against the enemy's arsenal, his intent and will. Armed recon-

naissance and attack aviation commanders will need to possess a degree of mental agility to think simultaneously in tactical and operational terms.

Real-time information will be required to develop intelligence and synchronize the employment of forces and systems to destroy the enemy's warfighting capabilities. Sensors will find and accurately locate targets; lethal weapons will engage enemy forces, many beyond visual range. Land maneuver forces, operating in all dimensions of the ground regime, will overwhelm and destroy the enemy around the clock in all types of weather.

Battle tactics will be inextricably linked to our ability to project contingency forces into a battle area. Once deployed, we must be capable of protecting the force, winning the information war, con-



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ducting precision strikes throughout the battlefield, and dominating the maneuver fight.

Now, you might be saying what do all these operational notions have to do with tactics? Because the intended purpose of the *U.S. Army Aviation Digest* is to provoke discussion and dialogue, I make the hypothesis that the difference between tactics and operational art in the third dimension of the ground regime (the dimension of Army Aviation operations) is a difficult distinction. In a classical sense, tactics often are described as maneuvering to gain an advantage or success. However, when force agility is increased such that maneuver can be done at speeds more than 100 knots, one might argue there is a blurring between tactical and operational maneuver. A dash across the battlefield, a quick-stop, and final positioning to attack a high-value target compress the essentials of tactics and operational maneuver into a very short period.

Attack helicopters, modern artillery, and missiles with requisite range and munitions are paramount to conduct these precision strikes. Even now we are quite advanced in achieving digital communication across the battlefield. Targeting information in bits and bytes is burst-transmitted at lightning speed to a firing system. These firing data, possibly derived from a laser spot and correlated with position location confirmed by global positioning systems, require virtually little effort from the aircrew. Certainly, such communication networks are essential to

conduct synchronized, decisive operations against enemy forces throughout the battlefield.

Decisive operations culminate with the destruction of the enemy's land combat capability. The Army will maintain an overmatching combined arms maneuver force. Real-time, fused intelligence must be available to the maneuver task force commanders. To win, the commander must combine direct and precision fires to achieve land force dominance and swift, decisive victories.

Army Aviation brings powerful capabilities to the combined arms team in the form of security, armed reconnaissance, attack, assault, logistics, and special electronic mission aircraft operations. The ability to place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of this combat power in the third dimension is the notion advanced through maneuver by air. These operations are essential in the project, protect, win the information war, conduct precision strikes throughout the battlefield, and dominate in maneuver battle notions just discussed. However, such operations are not for much duration without a "lead with logistics" commitment.

Tactics associated with screen, cover, guard, all forms of reconnaissance, and attack battledrill are necessary but not a sufficient condition to win on future battlefields. Such tactics must be given rapid expression in agile maneuvers at the operational level to challenge enemy weapons that have the effects of mass. Theater ballistic

missiles are appearing in increasing numbers around the world. Such weapon systems are relatively cheap compared to large, standing forces and have considerable destructive potential.

Given our emergence into the post-Cold War environment, it seems our battledrill regimes need expansion to practice simultaneous close and deep operations. These "expanded tactics" certainly will stress the communications networks and challenge logistics support capabilities of the combined arms team. Today, aviation tactics must be practiced with the combined arms team in terms of projecting the force, protecting the force, winning the information war, conducting precision strikes throughout the battlefield, and dominating the maneuver battle.

More than ever before, we must exploit simulation and combined arms training opportunities to achieve a total force that is trained, ready, and capable of decisive victory. As commanders of all components begin to address the challenges of operational maneuver, it is Army Aviation that offers that extra dimension of capability—operational capability in the third dimension.

