

UNITED STATES ARMY

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The 3d Battalion, 321st Field Artillery Regiment, 18th Fires Brigade, fires a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) during training on Fort Bragg, NC. (U.S. Army photo)

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By Captain Philip Neri

Introduction

The 21st century has presented unique challenges for U.S. Armed Forces. Threats are emerging in different regions of the world on a weekly basis. Furthermore, the force must recover after more than a decade of conflict and face significant budgetary constraints. The former spans a broad spectrum of irregular, hybrid, and conventional forces while the latter has the nation averse to any kind of sustained land conflict in the near future. As the Pentagon determines the best way to confront the mixture of potential adversaries, the U.S. Army must begin taking steps of investing in long-range fires, specifically in the form of rocket and missile artillery forces. Investment in this capability will give the Army what it needs to significantly contribute to the emerging Air-Sea Battle (ASB) doctrine and capabilities currently under development. International security developments are challenging America's way of waging war across the range of military operations (ROMO). U.S. commanders have not had to face significant enemy challenges to the buildup of combat power into a theater. Just as important, ground and sea forces have not had to look up in fear of enemy air attack due to complete air superiority by US air forces. Military modernizations around the world are changing that dynamic though. Even if intent is unclear, the capabilities are there and the risk of the use of these new capabilities is growing.

The Threat

Today's headlines are filled with the threat of potential diplomatic contention and military conflict somewhere in East Asia. Much of the threat is in the form of anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities posed by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). In 2003, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) defined anti-access as enemy actions which inhibit military movement into a theater of operations, and area-denial operations as activities that seek to deny freedom of action within areas under the enemy's control.

Important to understand is that A2/AD capabilities are not only located in an adversary's territory, but beyond it. In their article published in *Foreign Policy*, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Greenert, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Welch, describe how the world depends on these areas of air, sea, space, and cyberspace that no one owns, yet we all depend on; the global commons.¹ It is not probable that there will be open hostilities with the PLA anytime soon, but what is cause for alarm is the PLA's ability to challenge U.S. and allied interests.

A more short-term threat is the exportation of these capabilities to U.S. adversaries, or if China decides to engage in proxy wars using recently developed A2/AD weapon systems. The PLA is building an integrated network of anti-ship missiles, mines, aircraft, and submarines that can challenge a blue water fleet's ability to move and maneuver in the region. The Dong Feng 21D (DF-21D) anti-ship ballistic receives much press attention due to its ability to threaten US carrier battle groups. Additionally, the PLA Navy's (PLAN) increasing ability to project power is also receiving much deserved attention.

Fires Solution

The doctrinal concept to counter the A2/AD threat lies in the ASB concept. ASB is primarily a two-service doctrine concept between the USAF and USN much like AirLand Battle was in the 1980s for the USAF and USA, but it doesn't have to be. Much of ASB's focus is in countering A2/AD threats in East Asia and the Persian Gulf. The Army has an opportunity to leverage the land domain in the developing ASB doctrine.

The Pentagon has established the Air-Sea Battle Office (ASBO) to conduct mission analysis and fully develop the concepts to be employed. Army leaders and intellectuals throughout the force should be providing input to the ASBO as the ASB concept gains substance and is transformed into doctrine. This requires the Army to recognize what is necessary to shape the ASB concept into approved doctrine.

First, the Army must understand its significant role in shaping the area of responsibility for air and sea forces. In all regions of the world the Army has potential to deliver long-range fires against surface and aerial targets from the shore. Secondly, it is imperative that the Army develops compatible doctrine in conjunction with the air and sea services. The doctrinal concepts that will be integrated with ASB allow the force to implement current platforms and lay the groundwork as new technologies become available. Lastly, the Army will need to acquire technology for task organizing expeditionary long-range fires forces.

The community best suited to meet these challenges can be found in the Army's two fires branches; Field Artillery (FA) and Air Defense Artillery (ADA). As described in the ASB concept, anti-access primarily disrupts movement into a theater of operations while area denial disrupts friendly forces' ability to maneuver in the battlespace.

The FA branch requires long-range surface-to-surface forces that can supplement the USN's surface combatants. The ADA branch must be properly integrated in order to defend ground forces and deny enemy air forces freedom of action in the region. This integration comes in the form of being able to conduct target handover with AEGIS warships, airborne C2, and other detection radars to detect and engage hostile forces. The good news is that the Army is currently making the case to acquire these platforms.

The July-August 2013 Fires Bulletin mentions the development of the next generation of radars and launchers. These multi-mission launchers (MML) and multi-mission radars (MMR) are versatile enough to conduct a wide array of missions in various theaters of operations.² They will be able to support a maneuver force conducting Combined Arms Maneuver (CAM) with close and deep fires, or a Wide Area Security (WAS) mission with precision fires. They also contribute with expeditionary long-range fires. In the latter case the supported force may be a Carrier Strike Group or a Fighter Squadron conducting movement and maneuver in the littorals.

Investment in long-range fires and sensor platforms also creates possibilities of reducing communication challenges posed by units over vast distances in complex terrain. The increased range of the firing or detection platform reduces the amount of distance required to effectively cover the battlespace. Survivability against counterfire or counterattack becomes the primary planning consideration for separation of units. Combined with electronic warfare fires this force package can contribute not only to ASB, but for sustained land operations across the ROMO.

Operational reach continues to be a key element of operational art that commanders and planners have to consider in future operations. Long-range fires enable the supported commander to penetrate deep in the enemy's rear or security areas to interdict uncommitted forces. This will prove equally decisive in CAM or ASB. Currently the Army has to rely heavily on joint fires provided by USAF, USN, and USMC fixed-wing aircraft.

Army Commitment

The Army would have to give the fires force a significant makeover to cover the spectrum of fires supported commanders would require in ASB. The time, energy, and fiscal commitments to revamp the fires force will be substantial. Fortunately, there's good news here too. The Army has already begun reorganizing its FA branch.

The Army is reinstating Division Artillery (DIVARTY) for each division and Field Artillery Brigades (FAB) for its three Corps and Eighth US Army (EUSA) in Korea. The FAB becomes the Force Field Artillery (FFA) headquarters for the Corps and EUSA. The FAB has the ability to shape the operational level with close and deep fires to mass at the decisive place and time and interdict uncommitted forces. The DIVARTY is the FFA headquarters for the division and provides training oversight to the division's artillery battalions.

The Army is also discussing the possibility of a Theater Fires Command to oversee the planning and execution of fires for the Joint Force Commander (JFC). The Theater Fires Command would become the central clearing house for all surface-to-surface and surface-to-air fires.² This would allow for the deliberate integration of current and future fires organizations into ASB. In the case of these organizations, key

to their effectiveness and contribution to ASB is their integration into ASB doctrine with the other services and acquisition of the required technologies.

The Army institution will be challenged by trying to retain all the knowledge learned from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and regaining its core competencies. The Army must not neglect the opportunity ASB presents in the DOD's (strategic guidance) new focus. It is critical that these forces be as expeditionary as possible to enable rapid buildup in times of crisis. For example, in the case of U.S. Pacific Command this would allow the U.S. to make Japan or The Philippines the most formidable "vessels" afloat by arming them with battalions or batteries of launchers. U.S. fires forces located on allied soil would drastically change the PLA's battlefield calculus. The PLAN's surface vessels, for example, could be contained by long-range fires limiting their ability to project power beyond their shores.

Another benefit of having forward deployed land forces is that it gives the U.S. the ability to reassure its allies with forces based on allied soil. This reassurance derives from the fact that allies understand that the U.S. is sharing in the risks by placing forces on allied soil during contentious times. U.S. air forces based at an allied air base have a similar effect.

Conclusion

As the Army continues to train the force to confront different threats in a decisive action environment, integration into the emerging ASB doctrine is a viable opportunity. As the nation defines its new strategy and priorities the Army must capitalize on this prospect to enhance the JFC's options and abilities. Acquisition of long-range sensors

and firing capability with the command structure to integrate with joint and allied forces is how the 21st century force must look.

The threat has been defined and is evolving every day. The Army has a solution with the operational and institutional leadership to see it through. The fiscal constraints of today must not be allowed to deny the Army the opportunity to invest in the future at this critical juncture. It is preferred to sacrifice what is necessary now rather than try and play catch up with the USAF and USN a decade from now. The choice the Army makes today will decide how much it will do to ensure peace and stability in the global commons tomorrow.

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