

Esper outlines Army goals for coming decade

By Devon L. Suits, Army News Service 27 March 2018



Army Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper outlined some of Army's key priorities for Futures Command and its potential impact to the force during the opening ceremony at the 2018 Association of the U.S. Army Global Force Symposium and Exhibition, March 26, 20

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HUNTSVILLE, Ala. -- By 2028, the U.S. Army will be fully ready to deploy, fight and win decisively against any adversary, anytime and anywhere in a joint, multi-domain, high-intensity conflict, said the Army's secretary. While doing those things, the Army will also be able to simultaneously deter the aggression of adversaries and conduct irregular warfare.

Secretary of the Army Mark T. Esper laid out his vision of U.S. Army capabilities during opening statements at the 2018 Association of the U.S. Army Global Force Symposium and Exhibition here.

"The Army will do this through an employment of modern, manned and unmanned ground combat vehicles, aircraft, sustainment systems and weapons coupled with robust combined arms formations and tactics based

on a modern warfighting doctrine and centered on exceptional leaders and Soldiers of unmatched lethality," he said.

Also helping achieve that goal will be the Army Futures Command. That new command was announced in October, and is expected to stand up this summer. It will be the Army's fourth command and will have equal footing with U.S. Army Forces Command, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and U.S. Army Materiel Command, said Under Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy, during his own opening remarks.

The creation of the new command requires the Army to rewire and delay itself to support the new command structure, McCarthy said.

As the initial operating capability of Futures Command continues to be defined, McCarthy said, the Army's integration, research and development, acquisition, and science and technology communities should expect to see some changes in their organizational alignment.

However, the undersecretary emphasized that realigning under the Futures Command organizational structure does not suggest that existing organizations will physically move to a new location.

The undersecretary also said the Army will need to be judicious with existing funding if it wants to meet its modernization goals.

"The budget control act looms large in 2020," McCarthy said. "In order to maintain momentum and not fall off the pending fiscal cliff, we will initiate a robust reform effort that will require a comprehensive relocation of resources within our portfolios to support modernization efforts."

THE LOCATION OF FUTURES COMMAND

Eventually, the Army will name a location for the Futures Command headquarters. Right now, Army leaders are in the process of narrowing down a list of about 150 possible locations to just 10. McCarthy said the basing decision for the new command will be based on proximity to talent, the private sector, and academia. The Army is also looking at quality-of-life measures, cost, time assessment, as well as civic and regional support.

Once the Army determines those 10 cities, McCarthy said, he and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. James C. McConville will visit each location to decide which one will best support the Army's newest command.

"We will then announce the Futures Command location, with initial operating capability, this summer," McCarthy said. "As much as the location is important, so is selecting the right leaders."

McCarthy said the Army expects to announce the commander for Futures Command within the next few weeks.

MAKING A NECESSARY CHANGE

While the Army has been focused on fighting and winning in the Middle East, Esper said, "China and Russia have invested in advanced technologies, professionalized their militaries ... and have reduced our military advantage."

Even if the U.S. never faces either of those nations on the battlefield, Esper said, the effects of their military advancement will be felt.

"We should expect to see their weapons and equipment and tactics used by adversaries against us," Esper said. "This brings to mind North Korea and Iran, (which) will continue to threaten regional stability, our allies, and U.S. security interests."

While U.S. adversaries are bolstering their own militaries, Esper said, the U.S. Army is doing the same.

That effort, he said, currently involves modernization focused on six areas, which include long-range precision fires, a next-generation combat vehicle, future vertical lift platforms, a mobile and expeditionary Army network, air and missile defense capabilities, and Soldier lethality. Supporting those modernization efforts are eight newly-created cross-functional teams, which will eventually be a part of Army Futures Command.

In addition to those six modernization priorities, Esper outlined five areas of consideration for the Army as it faces the threats posed by an increasingly complex global security environment. Those areas include doctrine, organization, manning, training and equipping.

DOCTRINE

"Doctrine is how the Army fights, and it's fundamental to transforming the Army of 2028," Esper said. "Much like a transmission synchronizes inputs through gears and produces a stronger output, doctrine synchronizes the

Army's core functions to produce greater lethality."

According to Esper, the doctrinal concept of multi-domain battle must be embedded at all levels of leadership and propagated at all levels of Army education. And with the implementation of Futures Command, all Army leaders will need to understand the new command's purpose, application, and impact on the global force.

With the goal of developing and improving Army doctrine, the Army has slated to prototype a multi-domain task force in 2019 within the Pacific region. This is an area Esper said Army senior leaders have identified as "truly a multi-domain fight."

Moving forward, the development of the multi-domain battle construct also helps to establish more interoperability between U.S. and coalition partners.

"We all recognize that we could benefit through greater collaboration," Esper said. "I like to say that, I'm working on a 500 piece puzzle. I'm halfway done, and maybe the Air Force has 30 of those pieces. Maybe, the Navy has 40. Maybe I have some of theirs. The more we can collaborate ... (the more) it has the promise of getting us to the end-state much more quickly and efficiently."

ORGANIZATION

Moving forward, the Army must be organized appropriately to reach its 2028 goals, Esper said.

"A decade from now, our formations must be more robust, agile, and lethal," he said. "We've already begun making these organizational changes. For example, we are increasing the capability of our formations, returning short-range air defense and multiple launch rocket systems battalions to our divisions."

MANNING

By 2028, the total Army will need to reach 500K active Soldiers, with similar growth in the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Most importantly, the future Army must "focus on recruiting and retaining high quality, physically fit, mentally tough Soldiers, who will deploy, fight and win decisively on any future battlefield," Esper said.

However, the force is facing a more significant issue as only 29 percent of Americans can meet the standards to enter the U.S. Army, McCarthy said. Although the Army is doing what it can to ensure it receives the best Soldiers possible, Army leaders should be doing more to connect the nation with the all-volunteer Army force.

Moving ahead, the Army is also looking into new ways to manage and leverage its current pool of talent. One way the Army will do that is with the Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army, McConville said.

Currently, the Army relies on three separate systems to track active, Guard and Reserve personnel. Under the current systems, the Army is only able to track Soldier by rank, service affiliation, career field, and other Army career-related identifiers.

With IPPS-A, the Army hopes to identify Soldiers with different certifications and credentials, which aren't tied to their MOS. In addition, the Army will be able to track other skills and attributes that could be used support the warfighter. For example, these skills could range from proficiencies in other languages, to having an understanding of farming, engineering, and crisis management, McConville said.

TRAINING

The future of Army training will be "tough, realistic, and dynamic," Esper said, with a focus on urban operations -- to include operating in megacities -- and electronically harsh environments. To accomplish this, Futures Command must expand upon the synthetic training environment and implement a broad distribution of inter-connected simulation capabilities, Army-wide.

Reforms to training also include a decrease in "mandatory training" and additional duties unless it had a direct tie to readiness and lethality, Esper said.

EQUIPPING

The modern Army must be equipped with the most advanced, capable and survivable combat systems industry can provide, Esper said.

"A decade from now, preferably sooner, we will see our formations begin to fill with a variety of manned and unmanned combat vehicles, aircraft,

sustainment systems and weapons," Epler said. "Greater use of autonomous systems, robotics, and artificial intelligence promises to make our units more lethal, our Soldiers less vulnerable, and the Army far, far more effective."

To accomplish this, the Army challenges industry partners and academia to generate ideas that apply to future operating environments, McCarthy said.

McCarthy said the Army recognizes that the private sector outpaces the Army when it comes to innovation. The Army, he said, must efficiently connect with the private sector and optimize its decision-making process to ensure the Army receives the best equipment in the shortest amount of time possible. The Army Futures Command will be a large part of that effort, he said.