

ARMY PREPARES FOR POST-AFGHANISTAN

by Paul Mooney

DND photo (Imagery Section Garrison Valcartier) VL2009-0012-09 by Corporal Marc-André Gaudreault.



Introduction

The Canadian Army has completed plans to ensure that vehicle fleets returning from Afghanistan in 2011 can be reconstituted and redeployed as soon as the Government of Canada asks the land force to carry out another mission.

Entitled *Army Reorientation*, the plan is designed to support the mission in Afghanistan until July 2011, bring the Army home by the end of that year, and reconstitute the Army's fleets and posture the Army for future operations. It will move the Army from the current single line of operation that is Joint Task Force Afghanistan to the requirements of the four lines of operation set by the outgoing Chief of the Land Staff, Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie.

The Army has made its requirements known to the Canadian Forces (CF) central staffs, where they are now being considered against CF resources and requirements.

"Since 2002, not only has the Army commitment to the war in Afghanistan grown, so has our combat capability," LGen Leslie noted in a letter to senior officers and officials. "The unprecedented situation where US units are operating

under Task Force Kandahar's command speaks volumes to the combat leadership of our commanders and to the combat effectiveness of our forces. Army Reorientation will ensure that the Army maintains its ability to generate combat-effective, multi-purpose land forces to meet Canada's defence objectives."

Brigadier-General Denis Thompson, Chief of Staff for Operations, led the months of planning for Army Reorientation. In a recent interview, he explained that resetting the Army's fleets will be synchronized with ongoing maintenance and procurement.

"The Army is coming home, but it will be ready to go back out immediately," he said. "The Army is not tired. Despite our high operational tempo, we still have soldiers lining up to volunteer for overseas service. We're taking on the challenge to ensure that the Army is properly resourced to reset the fleet."

Revised Lines of Operation

Under its Managed Readiness Plan, the Army will deliver land forces in support of the Canada First Defence Strategy as follows:

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- Lines of Operations 1 and 2, such as the regionally based Immediate Response Units (IRU), Ranger Patrols in the Arctic, and support to special domestic projects, such as the Olympics or G8 summit meetings;
- Line of Operation 3, to lead and/or conduct a major international operation in a non-permissive environment for an extended period. This task is based upon an infantry battalion, enablers such as artillery and tanks, formation enablers such as engineers and logistics, and a formation headquarters, all maintained at high readiness to be operationally effective within 90 days of mission identification. It will require 1700 to 2000 personnel with over 200 armoured vehicles, and a further 400 wheeled vehicles from various fleets;
- Line of Operation 4, enabling the Army to concurrently deploy into a permissive environment in response to crises elsewhere in the world for shorter periods. It is based upon an infantry battalion of 800 to 1000 personnel with key enablers, 65 armoured vehicles, and 220 other wheeled vehicles maintained at 60 days notice to move, with shorter move times mandated for the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO).

Line of Operation 4 (International Surge) will be constituted first, and will be deemed ready by January 2012. It will permit a Canadian response to international crises for up to three six-month rotations.

Estimates for the recovery and repair of the Army's major armoured vehicles from Afghanistan indicate that Line

of Operation 3, a sustained international deployment in a hostile environment, will not be ready until July 2012. Vehicles will go through a 'triage' process at Kandahar airport before being brought back to Canada. Some will go back into the Army's fleets immediately, some will undergo minor maintenance, others may require major maintenance at Army workshops, while still others could go to General Dynamics, the manufacturer of the LAV III, for major overhauls.

The Army also plans to upgrade the armour and other components of LAV III armoured vehicles that have been in Canada and have not been upgraded to the same standard as those deployed in Afghanistan.

Fleet Renewal

Along with Army Reorientation, the force will continue its Fleet Renewal program, which includes major acquisitions to modernize the fleets for today's battlefields. Fleet Renewal includes:

- A LAV III upgrade program;
- The acquisition of 108 Close Combat Vehicles, with a purchase option for another 80;
- The acquisition of 500 Tactical Armoured Patrol Vehicles (TAPV) to replace the *Coyote*, the RG-31 and the G-Wagon, with an option for 100 more, and;
- The acquisition of 13 Armoured Engineer Vehicles (AEV), and two Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARV), with options for additional vehicles in both cases.

The Army has run its vehicles very hard in Afghanistan, and resetting the fleets will be a massive undertaking. Private contractors will be required to augment the personnel at Army workshops. The Army will also offer soldiers who have completed three years of service – almost all of them now combat veterans – the opportunity to join Combat Service Support units and train as vehicle technicians, weapons technicians, and the other trades required to repair and maintain the Army's fleets and weapons.

As the Army begins withdrawal from Afghanistan in July 2011, it will have a brigade headquarters from Line of Operation 3, and a light infantry battalion group from Line of Operation 4, using materiel and fleets that are currently in Canada. These could be used in situations of all kinds that require rapid response, and this force package has been identified for the NATO Response Force Pool.



DND photo AR2010-0177-31 by Sergeant Daren Kraus.

A convoy of light armoured vehicles (LAVs).

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After issuing his instructions for Army Reorientation, Lieutenant-General Leslie also directed the Army to maintain live-fire training at Level 5, considered moderate readiness. He said the Army has built a firm foundation for force generation that has been forged in combat, and he has instructed his staff to prepare for a post-2011 force posture for the Army. He noted that Level 5 live-fire training is the point at which all members of the combined arms team come together to train.

“In the 1990s, we neglected this basic tenet and suffered, dramatically, in operational readiness,” the outgoing Commander wrote. “I am steadfast that we will not repeat the mistakes of the past. Accordingly, my vital ground is the institutionalization of collective training up to Level 5 live-fire.”

Brigadier-General Thompson had a final word for soldiers across the Army:

“Keep your powder dry – and do what you can to help us get our equipment suites back up to speed so that we can answer the call when the government asks us to go out again.”

Paul Mooney is the official strategic writer for the Canadian Army, and has worked with the Land Staff since 1997. Previously, he served as a journalist for the Canadian Press, where he wrote strategic analysis based upon actual ‘boots on the ground’ operational experiences, including those garnered during the first Gulf War.



DND photo IS2010-4024-04 by Master Corporal Pierre Thériault.

A CH-146 *Griffon* lands at Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, Ontario, after providing air mobility support to the 2010 Muskoka G8 Summit.

“Building upon a firm foundation of force generation, which has been forged in combat, the Army is well situated to move into the era beyond Afghanistan.”

~Lieutenant-General Leslie

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~Brigadier-General Thompson