

# Examining the Vision & the Issues

**The buzzword across NATO and the US military is “Transformation.” Under the leadership of General Rick Hillier the Canadian Forces (CF) is in the process of prosecuting the transformation vision. To understand the nature of CF transformation (specifically the Army) in context of the early 21st century battlespace we must take a closer look at the process envisioned by General Hillier.**

In context of Fourth Generation War and the subsequent asymmetric and idiosyncratic battle space that modern Western militaries find themselves in, the Canadian Army’s transformation process is outlined in the 2002 *Advancing with Purpose* and the *Army of Tomorrow* guidelines, and was premised on the *Land Force Strategic Direction and Guidance (LFSDG) 98*.

The overall CF (and therefore the Army’s) transformation plan is heavily underpinned by the Pentagon’s vision of transformation as enshrined in its strategic document *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*. Intrinsic to this evolutionary process, senior Army commanders have focused on the concept of the Three Block War and the Strategic Corporal as first envisioned by USMC General Charles C. Krulak. So the question is, does General Hillier and his staff have the right vision, and if so can it be executed without governmental and bureaucratic bumbling and regional pork barrel politics?

## The Vision

The Army Commanders intend to transform the Army in a three-phase approach that will take approximately a decade to execute, ending sometime around 2012. Phase one was to develop the actual transformation strategy, phase two is developing an “Interim Model,” which finally, in phase three, will become the “Army of Tomorrow.”

The goal is to create an Army that is “command centric, knowledge-based, strategically relevant and tactically decisive.” In theory this means the Army will become a “medium weight force” that is

“knowledge-based” and uses “information dominance”— meaning a heavy reliance on Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR).

Theoretically, this force will have speed, agility and “enhanced lethality” to win in a fourth generational battlefield. In short, the Army’s traditional structure, based on individual unit types such as infantry and artillery, will be reorganized to reflect force structures that are more in line with fourth generation war in the three-block war context.

## What Does It All Mean?

From a practical sense, the Army will move to vehicle platforms based on the LAVIII APC. The Leopard MBTs will be replaced with the Mobile Gun System (MGS), aging M109s will be replaced with the notional multi mission effects vehicle (MMEV) which is based on the existing Air Defense Anti-Tank System (ADATS). Existing C3 105mm guns will be adapted to truck mounts to give the artillery a “shoot and scoot” capability.

A key aspect of the vehicle changes will be that units will no longer have their own intrinsic vehicle complements. This in turn will mean that the physical number of weapons systems and platforms will be reduced. The Army’s Whole Fleet Management System will create three distinct stocks of equipment: (1) equipment that is deployed; (2) same equipment as above, but held at the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre (CMTc) for collective training, and (3) sufficient equipment at garrisons and armouries to allow for sub-unit training.

From a structural perspective, during the Interim Model phase, the Army will focus its efforts on operations in urban and non-open terrain environments, while still trying to maintain traditional maneuver warfare skills.

The end state is to have a three-year cycle for Army assets in what has been dubbed the “Managed Readiness System.” In short, units will move from a (1) post-operational/recovery to regeneration and collective training phase (21 months), to a (2) human resources training phase (9 months), which will have units ready for a (2) High Readiness phase (6 months) allowing for deployment into operations. This cycle is intended to allow units to rest and regenerate after operations and avoid personnel and equipment burnout that is the present status quo.

Training will be conducted for the three-block war environment at the new CMTc being built in Wainwright, Alberta. The objective is to have force-on-force exercises that can be captured on computer for lessons-learned and future evaluation by staff. In theory, this will also facilitate the validation of unit readiness up to the battle group level.

As part of the larger Army transformation, some 3,000 new personnel will expand the Army Reserves. The focus of the Army Reserve will be in areas such as Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC), psychological operations (Psyops), and defensive chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear capabilities.

## Some Issues

It is important to note that transformation makes sense in the present threat environment of the fourth generation battlefield, as conventional forces and conventional maneuver warfare (3rd generation war) have little impact in a nonlinear and non-contiguous battle space that extends into cyberspace. The Canadian Army will become highly reliant on technological innovation to garner ISTAR as viable and make transformation a reality. Therefore, for transformation to be viable, I offer the following caveat:

It is important when developing and executing the CF’s transformation strategy in context of fourth generation war to avoid the intellectual pitfall of technological determinism as envisioned in the military dogma of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).

Though new and advanced technologies may change the face of war, superior technology and equipment rarely, if ever, determine the outcome of a conflict.

Sadly, the West has been sold on the idea of high-tech as a solution over manpower and sound strategic and tactical thinking and robust intelligence capabilities. Both Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that military victory does not necessarily lead to peace or stability.

The question remains does the Army intend to stick to its six-month deployment cycle, which merely was a Cold War expediency for peacekeeping operations. It is clear from the Afghanistan experience and the Balkans in the 1990s that minimum deployments must be at least a year long for all ranks even if the CF raises its manpower levels. If the one-year deployment timeframe is accepted as the functional reality of the 4th generational battlefield, then there has to be an adjustment to the Management Readiness System.

Another issue is the statement that the Army will become a “medium weight force” – an unclear concept in an asymmetric threat environment. This point has been acknowledged by Army planners, but remains an issue that must be clarified further.

One of the drawbacks of the 3-block war vision is that there is an inherent assumption that friendly forces may not encounter enemies with major conventional arms capabilities – such as heavy weapons like MBTs. This of course is not

strictly true, as Afghanistan proved. Also, the U.S. Marines’ experience in Falujah, and in general the US Army’s experience in Iraq, has shown that even in the 3-block war environment there is still an intrinsic need for heavy weapons – even if the enemy has none.

U.S. Stryker (our Mobile Gun System) brigades are backed by traditional heavy armour support and tactical fixed and rotary-wing air assets. This raises the issue of a lack of these assets in the CF and, as General Hillier admits, “Priority number one for me is tactical airlift” and priority number two is “an overwhelming requirement for heavy lift in-theatre.” These issues need further clarification for the Army.

Another issue that becomes apparent is the lack of direct artillery support during the Interim Phase of transformation. This issue has been acknowledged by Army planners, but as of yet has not been fully resolved. Colonel Bob Gunn, the CF’s Director of Artillery, has pointed out that the mounting of the C3 105mm howitzers on new medium weight trucks (that are replacing the existing MLVWs) will provide highly mobile artillery support that can be easily dispersed (therefore harder to destroy) and when combined with ISTAR capabilities will still allow mass of fire on a target. Also with improvements in ballistics of the 105mm class of field gun and advanced artillery shells the potential range of the 105mm can be improved from approximately 18kms out to 40kms.

In addition, both regular and reserve artillery units will be using the same platform which will enhance training, require only one set of spare parts and allow for easier interoperability between reserves and regular personnel. The lack of artillery support is exacerbated by the fact that the MMEV is notional.

It is as unproven, and like the Sergeant York system of the 1980s, the MMEV may prove to be completely unworkable in a real battlefield environment. It should also be noted that the US Army found ADATS unsatisfactory mainly because of low reliability and cancelled the program in 1992. The MMEV is based on the existing Canadian ADATS system.

Equipment issues aside, the larger issue of recruiting and retention has not been addressed, which then raises the spectre that the CF will be unable to reach its new manning levels. Also the manpower and resources wasted within the bureaucracy of DND and NDHQ may seriously limit the ability of CF transformation to occur.

Finally, the elephant in the room is the cost. As General Hillier observed when he was still Chief of the Land Staff “...we will enter into some difficult discussions about how we will be able to meet that cost...” This situation has been mitigated somewhat with the recent budget allocation of nearly \$13 billion over the next five years.

## Will it Work?

It is clear that General Hillier and his team, with limited resources and budgets, are at least trying to resolve many of the fundamental issues that face the Army in the present fourth generational war battle space. However, it is too early to tell, but assuming that changing governments do not impose their will on the military and that recruiting can achieve the manpower levels required, General Hillier may in the future be remembered as one of Canada’s visionary military leaders. As the early nineteenth century military thinker Baron Antoine Jomini observed, “A government which neglects its army under any pretext whatever is thus culpable in the eyes of posterity...” **FL**

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*Aging M109s will be replaced with the notional multi mission effects vehicle (MMEV) which is based on the existing Air Defense Anti-Tank System (ADATS) shown here.*



PHOTO: SGT RICK RUTHVEN, CANADIAN FORCES COMBAT CAMERA