

CHIEF OF ARMY SPEECH

ASPI

27 AUGUST 2008

General Peter Abigail, Executive Director ASPI, Mr Paul McClintock, Chairman Thales Australia, Council Members, Members of ASPI, Ladies and Gentlemen - thank you for inviting me here this evening. ASPI plays an important role in the strategic debate on national security issues in this country. And, while I have made some short public addresses since assuming command, it is appropriate that my first substantive address is delivered through the auspices of this organisation. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk to you tonight.

This is an exciting time for me to serve as the Chief of the Australian Army. The first decade of the new century has proved to be a demanding time for our men and women. The tempo of our global operations has challenged our personnel and our material resources. We have certainly seen many successes, but at times we have experienced the painful loss or injury of our soldiers. Through all this, the men and women of the Australian Army have maintained an enviable focus and dedication to their mission while being quite prepared to adapt to the changes which been necessary.

However, at the same time as we are providing highly capable, tailored forces for our operational commitments, we need to keep a weathered eye on the future of the Army. Developing a strategic approach and plans to maintain Army's long-term capability and health is a central part of my responsibilities as the Chief of Army. And the future we are planning for will be defined by a convergence of three challenges.

Our first challenge is to continue to excel on operations. Our tempo is high and is very likely to remain so. The Army has been on operations in many areas of the world, without respite, conducting a variety of tasks since 1999. The planning, execution, and support to these operations has resulted in the Army becoming a more operationally focussed, and vastly more experienced, organisation. This is good. But we cannot rest on our laurels – we need to continue to seek every way we can to improve.

Our second challenge is to ensure our Army remains capable, responsive and relevant now and into the future. Our continued implementation of the Hardened Networked Army and Enhanced Land Force initiatives and philosophy will ensure that we have the capacity to undertake a broad range of operations in a wide variety of environments.

Our third challenge is to ensure that Army's structure, organisation and processes are best suited to get the most from our existing capabilities and resources, and that we can develop capabilities as they are required. Our command and control of Army must be adaptive to the changes that the Australian Defence Force has undergone in the last few years. The Australian Defence Force has significantly changed the way it plans and conducts operations. Our conduct of force generation and preparation needs greater alignment with the new command and control paradigm. Intimately related to this, is the need to ensure that we are able to more effectively employ and manage Army's complex fleet of equipment.

Essential to meeting these challenges is the recruitment, training and retention of first class soldiers, officers and public servants. Our people are not just A fundamental input to capability – they **ARE** our capability. They are not A priority – they are **THE** Army priority.

Our success or failure in responding to these three challenges will be determined by our ability to recruit sufficient numbers of quality men and women, train them in the requisite skills and trades, and then ensure we employ them in a manner that gives them meaning

and a desire to remain serving in what is a unique and trusted national institution - our Army.

Now, we face these challenges at a time when our population is ageing and our robust economy is developing job opportunities in many sectors. Our Army is aiming to grow from its current size of around 26 000 people, to a figure of about 31 000 over the next eight years. This is an ambitious undertaking but it must be achieved if we are to remain a potent and capable force for the future security needs of our nation.

With this in mind, I want to tell you where I intend to take Army over the next three years.

Getting the Thinking Right

We must get the thinking right. We must continue our focus on the support of our soldiers deployed on operations. They provide a highly distinctive contribution to our nation's security and many of them are in harm's way. The conduct of operations is our core function and we must constantly pose questions to ourselves on how we can better enable the success of our deployed soldiers.

Contemporary operations are characterised by the need for our deployed land forces to work *among the people*, and establish a

broad relationship with the supported population. Simultaneously these same soldiers need to conduct a range of operations to deprive our adversary of his support base. This requires extensive employment of Civil Military Cooperation, Humanitarian Assistance and other non-warlike roles, as well as the synchronisation of conventional land operations within a joint or coalition – and often interagency - environment. Such warfare requires small teams of highly skilled and flexibly employed soldiers, who can rapidly transition between different types of operations.

As if these demands are not enough, the individual soldier is also affected by the increasing importance of the law of armed conflict, humanitarian issues and international law. Combine this with the growing pervasiveness of domestic and international media (both traditional and new media) and community expectation and it leads us to an environment that demands we prepare our people for levels of contextual awareness, flexibility, expertise, sensitivity and precision which have rarely been required of the soldier in past conflicts.

This is not to say there is a lesser imperative to sustain and develop our conventional warfighting skills. Indeed, the opposite is the case. And this is why **PAUSE** training and structuring for high-

level combined arms warfighting provides a crucible for the growth of highly-developed leadership skills and individual and institutional adaptation mechanisms. No other form of training hones these essential components of land force manoeuvre to such high levels. Conventional war fighting skills provide the essential foundation for all other types of operations we may undertake.

Therefore, initiatives that will prepare our soldiers for this environment are key to our ongoing development as an Army. Our contemporary, and likely future, operations are about rebuilding (and often building for the first time) and influencing civil societies. Our operations will often be less about killing the enemy than about making them irrelevant to the population.

The role of conventional operations in this context is to keep the enemy at arms length while others undertake the capacity building essential to re-starting societies. This will require a level of precision and discrimination for non-kinetic operations that we have previously demanded from kinetic operations.

But training and equipping for operations is not enough. Our adaptability and our capacity to out-think an adversary is critical for operational success. We have recognised this through the development of our core philosophy – *Adaptive Campaigning*.

This is the product of much of what our Army has learned in the past decade. It builds upon the hard learned lessons of our forebears, from places such as Vietnam, Korea, New Guinea, North Africa and Europe and it ensures our operations achieve the appropriate balance of land combat, population support, protection, public information and indigenous capacity building regardless of the scenario.

Our developing doctrine for counter-insurgency operations is now at an advanced level. Combined with the training and equipping of our soldiers, the intellectual foundation for contemporary operations that this doctrine provides will help to ensure our soldiers remain among the best prepared troops in the world.

Ensuring Army remains capable, responsive and relevant

Organisations that want to remain successful – and our Army does - must continually look at themselves to ensure they remain relevant to a changing environment. This means we need to be:

- **FIRST**, an Army that is ready, and able, to deploy at short notice with our joint and interagency partners to undertake a range of missions anywhere in the world our Government requires.

- **SECOND**, an Army that is both physically and mentally hardened against the rigours of modern close combat and the austere physical environments into which it deploys.
- **THIRD**, an Army that first and foremost recruits, trains and retains the finest Australian men and women, and gives them the physical and intellectual wherewithal to complete the missions we assign them.
- **FOURTH**, an Army that thinks that the status quo is never, ever good enough and is continually seeking to adapt and improve its performance – at all levels, on operations and in the force generation and preparation realms – while at the same time retaining important lessons from the past.
- **FIFTH**, an Army that supports the families of our soldiers, in the good times and in the bad, and
- **AND FINALLY**, it is an Army that never forgets the ideals and aspirations of the nation we serve, and it acts in a manner which brings credit upon itself and Australia.

Continuing Army's Modernisation

Over the next few years, Army will introduce a range of capabilities that will improve our firepower, mobility, survivability and our capacity to collect and analyse information. Platforms such as the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter, upgraded Armoured Personnel Carriers, the Bushmaster, new troop-lift helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and new communications systems will challenge our training and maintenance systems. We will also need to integrate these platforms into combined arms teams which are able to base themselves on, and launch from, the new Canberra Class Landing Ships.

None of this will be possible if we don't recruit and train the right men and women to operate and maintain these essential new capabilities. This will require us to have innovative strategies to train sufficient numbers of people, while also retaining people with experience and specialist skills.

If this was all we had to do it would challenge us. But we will introduce these platforms while remaining involved in operations in many different theatres and concurrently re-aligning our command and control to reflect 21st century realities. This will

require careful synchronisation, prioritisation and allocation of resources. **But most of all it will require leadership.**

At the same time as we seek to modernise the Army, we are starting to recognize the effects of what we call personnel tempo. We must recognise that multiple deployments place significant strain on our soldiers and their families. Another impact of high personnel tempo is that the same soldiers who conduct multiple deployments – and who gain a significant amount of experience of benefit to our Army – are missing the chance to do individual training between operations.

Part of the solution is that we need to find some more innovative ways to deliver individual training. Our current system produces outstanding outcomes, and there's no doubt that the quality of our individual training is one of the reasons for our operational success. But even when there is 12 month's respite from operations, time spent away from home on training can cause difficulties. So we have some work to do here.

An Adaptive Army

On assuming command of the Army last month, I forecast changes in how Army will operate. In particular, I undertook to review our structures and organisation to ensure that we adapt to changes in

the security environment, and in the ADF's joint command and control, over the last decade.

Our current approach reflects the pre-HQJOC command and control arrangements. It would be fair to say that Army's higher level command and control has not evolved significantly at a time when we have seen huge changes in ADF command and control. There are, arguably, too many headquarters. This slows down decision cycles, constricting the passage of information in an age of email, Blackberries, weblogs and VOIP communications. It retards the sharing of lessons learned and it challenges the implementation of mission command. So we need to address this situation.

The last time that the Army undertook such a wide ranging re-examination of itself was in the early 1970s. Then, General Hassett introduced Army's extant Functional Command structure. This was based on aggregating regionally-based units into Commands focussed on individual and collective training as well as logistics. While the regional approach had been appropriate for periods of Australia's early history, by the late 1960s it had become clear that the disadvantages of the approach outweighed its advantages.

So General Hassett revised how we structured ourselves and how we conducted the range of force generation activities we are responsible for. The result of this was that Army was restructured into three Functional Commands: Land Command, Training Command and Logistics Command. While there have been some changes since that time, the fundamental approach has remained essentially intact for the last 35 years.

The changes proposed by General Hassett possessed a logic driven by the strategic circumstances and Government requirements of the time. The Functional Command structures he implemented served us well in the 1970s, the 1980s and into the early 1990s. However, as our operational tempo increased in the late 1990s, this structure started to show its age.

As we have transitioned to an Army that is constantly deploying and re-deploying force elements, it has made us focus more on our supporting mechanisms. In particular, we have learned much in the last decade about the strengths and weakness of our current structures and processes for generating and preparing personnel and organisations for operations. I believe we need a more systemic approach to adaptation within the force generation and preparation of Army force elements.

To this end, since early this year a team of planners from across the Army have developed and war-gamed a range of options to ensure that Army's generation and preparation of land forces is conducted more effectively and efficiently, and in better alignment with the new joint command framework.

This evening I would like to announce that, based on the work of this team, Army will commence an initiative called *Adaptive Army*. Under this initiative, I intend that Australian Army will restructure its higher command and control arrangements. This will be complementary to the Defence White Paper initiatives but is neither central to the White Paper process nor dependant on its outcomes. The principal aims of this restructuring are:

- Improve Army's alignment with, and capacity to inform, ADF's strategic and operational joint planning.
- Better execute force generation and preparation, in a manner that balances operational commitments and contingency planning.
- Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of training within Army.

- Improve the linkage between resource inputs and collective training outputs within Army's force generation and preparation continuum.
- Improve the quality and timeliness of information flows throughout Army in order to enhance Army's adaptation mechanisms at all levels.

The restructuring will be a phased activity and will be executed concurrently with our preparation of force elements for operational commitments and contingencies. Army Headquarters will be restructured, with two divisions, commencing 01 February 2009. One will focus on Army's current activities and one will focus on Army's force development and strategic planning.

The Army Headquarters restructure will be followed by the re-rolling of Headquarters 1st Division in Brisbane to focus on the force preparation of Army force elements for current operations and contingencies. To support the Commander of the 1st Division in this role, a new higher-level training assessment organisation will be established, and it will use robust collective training standards that are to be articulated across Army. The mounting, assessment and certification of force elements will be standardised within this new organisation to free up our Brigade commanders to

focus on training their own headquarters for operational missions. I also expect that this centralisation will lead to further efficiencies in how we employ our resources.

The First Division will also have as one of its core tasks the provision of technical land advice for joint operational planning, primarily interfacing with the Headquarters Joint Operations Command. An important element of this will be to ensure that there is a more rapid feedback of operational lessons into the Army for our force generation and preparation activities.

In July 2009, Army will raise a Forces Command which will focus on the force generation of Army individuals and collective organisations. Our individual training at present is world-class and has been a key determinant in our operational success.

However, our systems for collective training require improvement. As such, unifying our collective training with individual training within a single Command aims to bring our systems for collective training up to the same high standards as those for individual training.

Because we seek to ensure a manpower neutral transition to the new structures, I have decided that we will dis-establish the

existing Land Headquarters, which is based at Victoria Barracks in Sydney. The functions of this headquarters will, in the main, be absorbed into the new Forces Command. Personnel freed up by this measure will be re-assigned to the headquarters of Forces Command and other high priority Army and Joint units.

Another important consideration in this restructure has been to ensure that our new structures align with Army's learning cycles. As such, Headquarters 1st Division's primary focus will be the short learning cycle to ensure those about to deploy receive the benefits of the lessons learnt by force elements currently on operations. Forces Command will focus on the medium term learning cycle, ensuring Army is well postured, and prepared, for contingencies.

These measures will ensure Army is better able to contribute to the conduct of joint operations, and do so in a manner that balances our current commitments with preparations for the future. The *Adaptive Army* initiative will result in a more effective Army, and one that is well positioned to continue its adaptation to changes in the security environment in the coming decades.

This is a natural and evolutionary step in Army's continuous modernisation. Thanks to my predecessor we are introducing into

service a range of capabilities that will cement our role as a first class military force. I would like to acknowledge here the leadership of my predecessor LTGEN Leahy, for the tremendous advances in the capability of Army over the past six years.

I would also like to thank him for his grace in allowing the *Adaptive Army* work to be carried out for me in the last months of his command. It is my aim to build on the very sound foundation he has provided to continue improving the ability of Army to provide first-class people and units when and where our nation requires them. We will continue the development of a hardened, networked, adaptive – and above all – ready Army.

Conclusion

The last decade has challenged Army's conduct of its core role: the generation and preparation of land forces for operations. And while Army has met the challenge on every occasion, we have learnt much that we can exploit to more effectively and efficiently provide land forces for operations.

Our soldiers are of the highest quality. They continue to perform at exceptional levels of individual and collective performance even when under significant pressure. But, we need to accept that

operational excellence requires constant re-evaluation of how the Army as a whole thinks and operates.

This is an ongoing process; I see one of the principal challenges of my time in command of the Army as ensuring we are postured to be able to continually adapt to the environment around us. The *Adaptive Army* initiative is part of this process of adaptation and it will position us well to respond to the requirements of Government.

We must ensure that Army's structure and organisation is appropriate for the challenges we face – now and in the future. We must ensure that our command and control is adapted to the changes that the Australian Defence Force has undergone in the last few years. We must ensure we improve the conduct of our force generation and preparation with the resources we are given. These are not insignificant undertakings. But we owe it to our soldiers deployed on operations, and those who will do so in future, that we apply to the task every measure of intellect and energy we possess.

I would be happy to now take your questions.