U.S. Ground Force Capabilities Through 2020

October 13, 2011

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES | New Defense Approaches Project

Principal Findings

1. **U.S. ground forces provide three key advantages:**

    - They seize and hold terrain.

    - They operate discriminately among and in close proximity to vulnerable populations; and,

    - Their presence demonstrates physical commitment to partners and interests.

2. **U.S. ground forces are highly relevant to a range of future contingency demands and increasingly unique in a community of like-minded states.**

- *The risks associated with the loss of any of these advantages should be carefully weighed as DoD makes choices about future defense investments.*

Principal Findings (continued)

3. **Demand may be greater than anticipated in three capability areas: strategic responsiveness, forcible entry, and armored maneuver.**

4. **Supply may be greater than needed in two capability areas: security force assistance and stability operations.**

- *Judgments about warning, contingency types, lethality associated with the range of contingencies, and environmental complexity informed the former.*
- *The latter is based on an assessment of operational demands and the opportunity costs associated with maintaining specialized capabilities.*

Analyzing Demand: Future Types and Tasks

- **Future Operational Types: Identified 14 future ground-centric operational types and their basic characteristics.**
  - Scale, duration, operating environment, probability of occurrence, and strategic warning, etc**.**

- **Key Operational Tasks: Identified 19 subordinate missions, some combination of which are decisive to success of a given operation.**
  - Tasks include conduct of various forms of entry, operation, and egress; intelligence, combat, security, stability, and security force assistance missions; and logistics and command and control.

- *A cross-walk of the operational types and key tasks resulted in some important conclusions relevant to capabilities.*

Analyze Demand > Assess Supply > Findings
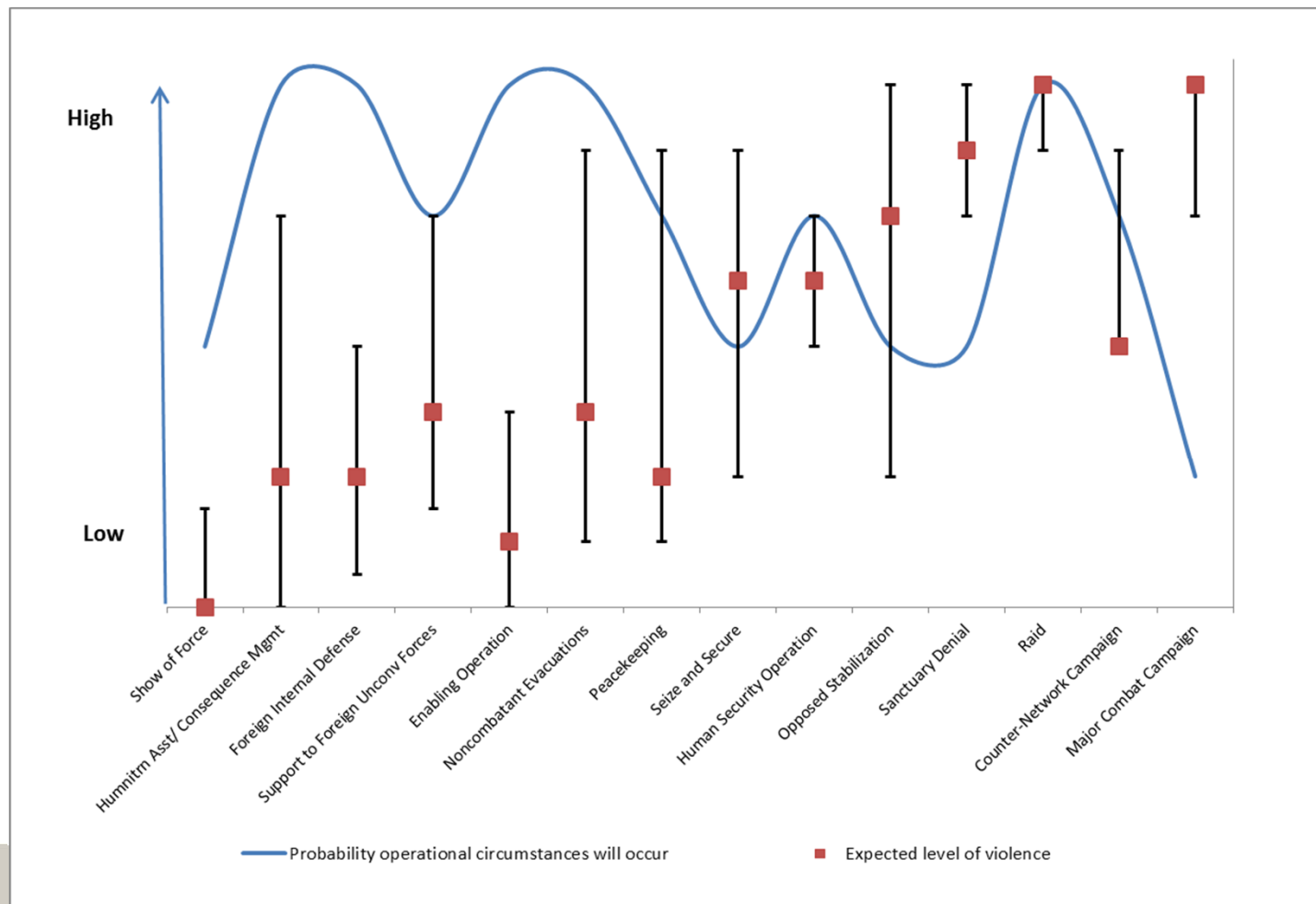
Operational Types and Key Tasks

Key Operational Tasks	Operational Types													
	Show of Force	Humanitarian assist/ consequence mgmt	Foreign internal defense	Support to foreign unconv forces	Enabling operation	Non-combatant evacuation	Peacekeeping	Seize and secure	Human security operation	Opposed stabilization	Sanctuary denial	Raid	Counter-network campaign	Major combat campaign
PROBABILITY	*High*	*Extremely High*	*Extremely High*	*Moderate*	*High*	*Extremely High*	*High*	*Moderate*	*High*	*Moderate*	*Moderate*	*Extremely High*	*Extremely High*	*Low*
Conduct distributed mission-oriented military operations.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Exploit all-source intelligence, information, reconnaissance, and surveillance.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Gain and exploit information advantages.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Defend networks, conduct operations in a degraded information environment, and exploit advantages in the cyber/EMS domain.	M	M	M	S	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Project forces over strategic and operational distances.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Conduct deliberate theater entry and opening.	S	M	M		M	F	M		M	F				S
Conduct entry under uncertain or ambiguous conditions.	S	F	F	M		M	F	M	F	S	S	S	S	S
Conduct forcible theater entry and opening.						F		S		S	M	M	S	S
Conduct operations in permissive environments.	S	M	S		M	F	S	F	S					
Conduct operations entirely in contested or denied territory.		F	S	M		S		M	F	S	S	M	M	M
Employ combined arms forces in combat.				S	F	F	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M
Employ combined arms forces in security operations.	F	S		F		S	S	M	M	M	F			M
Conduct stability operations.		M					S		S	M	F			S
Improve capability, capacity, and performance of foreign security forces (Security Force Assistance).			M	M			S			S				S
Conduct operations under uncertain security conditions.	F	S	F	M	S	M	S	S	S	M	M	S	S	S
Conduct an opposed egress or egress under uncertain security conditions.		F		F		M	S	M	S	M	S	M		
Operate against and/or recover from a large-scale biological hazard.		S			F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	S
Operate against and/or recover from a large-scale chemical or nuclear hazard.		F			F	F	F	F	F	F		F	F	F
Sustain distributed military operations for extended periods		M	S	M	M		M	F	S	F			M	M

Key	
Most	Would apply in 50 percent or more instances of this operational type
Some	Would apply in 25 to 49 percent of the instances of this operational type
Few	Would apply in 6 to 24 percent of the instances of this operational type
Blank	Does not apply, or would apply in 5 percent or less of the instances of this operational type

Analyzing Demand: Implications

- **Future operations will be more complex.**
  - e.g., wars *within* states against multiple lethal adversaries.
- **Certain operational types merit increased consideration.**
  - e.g., Seize and secure, opposed stabilization, sanctuary denial.
- **Future operations will be global.**
  - A form of every operational type could be anticipated in virtually every region of the world.
- **Significant violence more likely across operation types.**
  - "Democratization of violence" and proliferation of lethal capabilities increase the prospect for sophisticated resistance regardless of initial operational circumstances.

Analyzing Demand: Probability and Levels of Violence

Analyzing Demand: Implications (continued)

- **Five key tasks decisive across all operational types.**
  - Distributed ops, exploiting intelligence, exploiting information, conducting cyber and electronic warfare, and projecting forces.

- **Ground forces will need significant combat capabilities.**
  - E.g., hostile or uncertain conditions present in 10 of 14 op types; 6 of 14 types are predominantly combat missions.

- **Responsiveness will be at a premium.**
  - Short warning/response time associated with many missions.

- **Security force assistance and stability operations are an essential part of some, but not most future operations.**
  - Decisive in 5 of 14 op types but force is either sufficient or sufficiently adaptable for future demands.

Analyzing Supply: Trends

- **U.S. Army undergoing planned cuts to a near-term final endstrength of 520,400**
  - Maintaining a mix of heavy/medium/light capabilities.
  - Significant support structure still needed to support joint forces.
- **U.S. Marines undergoing planned cuts to a near-term final endstrength 186,800**
  - Maintaining "middleweight" emphasis.
  - Emphasizing crisis response role.
- **U.S. SOCOM – endstrength of 60,000 across all service components.**
  - Projected to continue expansion at projected annual growth rates between 3-5%.
- **Traditional allies largely reducing already modest capabilities for ground operations; costly heavy forces are likely target.**
  - Protecting capabilities for SFA and stability operations.
- **U.S. Interagency acknowledges their role in future contingencies and have undertaken significant institutional reform. However, the budget environment is undermining their best intentions in practice.**

Analyzing Supply: Bottom Line

- **U.S./partner inventory of general purpose ground forces is falling.**

- **Special operations capabilities are robust and growing.**

- **U.S. capabilities for armored maneuver are increasingly unique.**

- **Foreign partners have "middle weight" forces with limited independent reach.**

- **Deployed ground forces will continue to perform a range of "non-military" stability operations' tasks.**

Analyze Demand Assess Supply Findings
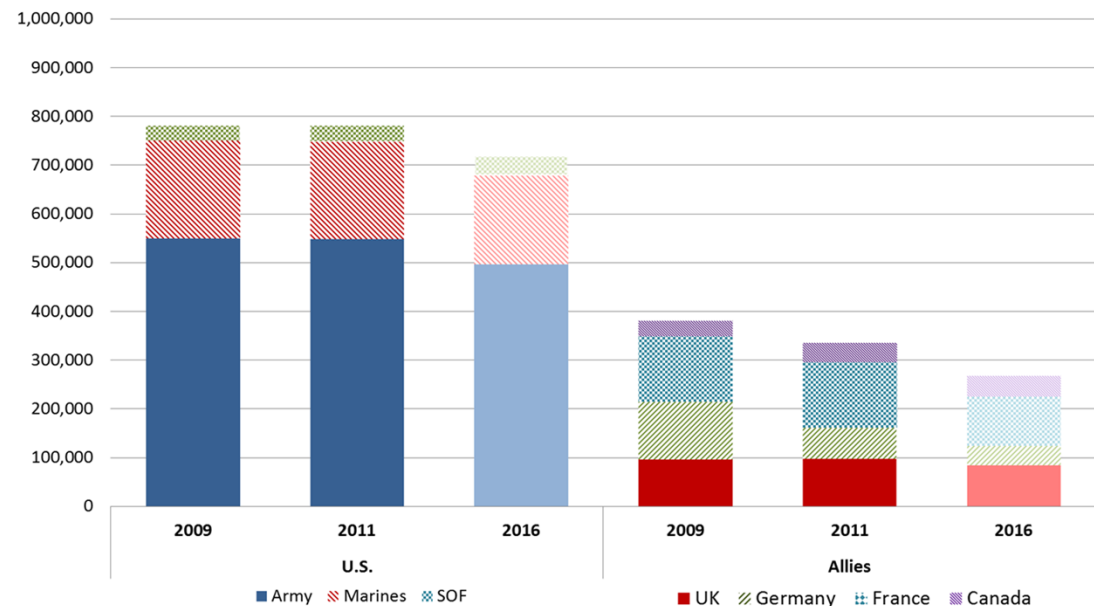
Implications for Future Ground Force Capabilities

- *Lower demand for stability operations capabilities.* U.S. forces will continue to perform and secure future stabilization efforts. But, demand may be overstated and current capabilities are sufficient or sufficiently adaptable.

- *Lower demand for security force assistance capabilities.* This remains important but it is a smaller proportion of contingency demands than conventional wisdom suggests; U.S./allies are currently preserving capabilities and moving toward more specialization.

- *Greater demand for capabilities to support strategic responsiveness.* Uncertainty and the likelihood that many contingencies will emerge with limited strategic warning place a premium on rapidly deploying forces that can operate immediately upon arrival.

- *Greater demand for forcible entry capabilities.* U.S. has clear advantages over allies in this regard and its capabilities are more broadly applicable than many currently acknowledge.

- *Greater demand for armored maneuver capabilities.* Like forcible entry, these capabilities are increasingly unique to U.S. forces and applicable across a wider range of contingencies than currently acknowledged.

Analyze Demand > Assess Supply > Findings

Conclusion

The United States will continue to require ground forces whose principal characteristics include the ability to:

- Respond in force under severe time constraints;

- Force entry into theater;

- Initiate complex operations immediately with little or no requirement to stage or reconfigure;

- Maneuver effectively, protected from a variety of threats; and, finally,

- Fight in a distributed fashion discriminately against an array of lethal adversaries.

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Future Operational Types

1. Show of Force
2. Humanitarian Assistance and Consequence Management
3. Foreign Internal Defense / Support to Foreign Unconventional Forces
4. Support to Foreign Unconventional Forces
5. Enabling Operations
6. Noncombatant Evacuation
7. Peacekeeping
8. Seize and Secure
9. Human Security
10. Opposed Stabilization
11. Sanctuary Denial
12. Raid
13. Counter-Network Campaign
14. Major Combat Campaigns

Criteria

1. Executed principally on land.
2. Could be conducted independently as a named operation.
3. Similar operational types separated if probability differed or key tasks were significantly different.

Exclusions

Missions that are exclusively domestic; routine military activities, and exercises.

Operational Characteristics

- Typology was informed by key operational characteristics

  - *Scale* – size of U.S. response

  - *Duration* – length of U.S. commitment

  - *Environmental characteristics* - command and control, host/ally/partner nation contribution, adversary type, and threat level

  - *Probability of occurrence*

  - *Strategic warning*

  - *Potential theaters of operation*

- Interesting insights when operational types and their characteristics are mapped

Operational Types

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Assessing Operational Characteristics

Operational Type	Scale (expected)	Scale (range)	Probability (expected)	Probability (range)	Strategic Warning	Duration	Adversary Types	Permissiveness
Show of force	Medium	Medium to Large	High	Moderate to High	Extremely Short	Short to Moderate	M, L, S	Uncertain
Humanitarian asst/consequence mgmt	Small	Very Small to Large	Extremely High	Extremely High	Extremely Short	Short to Moderate	C, T	Permissive to Uncertain
Foreign internal defense	Very Small	Up to Medium	Extremely High	Extremely High	Moderate	Long to Very Long	C, T, I, M	Permissive
Spt to foreign unconventional forces	Very Small	Up to Medium	Moderate	Low to Moderate	Long	Short to Long	T, I, M, L, S	Semi- to non-permissive
Enabling operation	Small to Medium	Very Small to Large	High	Moderate to Extremely High	Extremely Short to Moderate	Short to Long	C, T, I, M, L, S	Permissive to non-permissive
Non-combatant evacuation	Very Small	Up to Medium	Extremely High	Extremely High	Extremely Short	Very Short to Short	T, I, M, L	Semi-permissive to Uncertain
Peacekeeping	Small to Medium	Very Small to Medium	High	High to Extremely High	Moderate	Long to Very Long	I, M, L, S*	Semi-permissive
Seize and secure	Medium	Medium to Large	Moderate	Low to High	Extremely Short	Moderate to Long	I, M, L, S	Non-permissive to Uncertain
Human security operation	Medium	Small to Large	High	Moderate to Extremely High	Moderate	Long to Very Long	M, L	Permissive to non-permissive
Opposed stabilization	Large	Medium to Large	Moderate	Low to High	Short to Moderate	Long to Very Long	I, M, L	Semi-permissive to Hostile
Sanctuary denial	Medium	Very Small to Large	Moderate	Moderate to High	Moderate	Short to Long	C, T, I, M	Non-permissive to Hostile
Raid	Very Small	Very Small to Small	Extremely High	Extremely High	Extremely Short	Extremely Short to Short	C, T, I, M, L, S	Non-permissive to Hostile
Counter-network campaign	Small	Very Small to Small	Extremely High	Extremely High	Long	Long to Very Long	C, T, I	Uncertain to Hostile
Major combat campaign	Large	Medium to Large	Low	Low to Moderate	Long	Moderate to Very Long	M, L, S	Hostile

Keys							
Scale		*Probability conditions will arise over next decade*		*Strategic warning/Duration*		*Adversary*	
Very Small	Up to batallion	Low	25 percent or lower	Extremely Short	Hours	C - Criminal	L - Limited Capability military
Small	Smaller than brigade or MEU	Moderate	26 to 50 percent	Short	Days	T - Terrorist	
Medium	Brigade or MEU to division	High	51 to 75 percent	Moderate	Weeks	I - Insurgent	S - Sophisticated Capability military
Large	Larger than division or MEF	Extremely High	76 to 99 percent	Long	Months	M - Militia	
				Very Long	One to several years		