



# Senior Officer Professional Digest

Selected readings from the world's military journals

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Compiled by:





## **The CA's Introduction**

**Professional reading is a commitment to our Army's future. The Senior Officer Professional Digest (SOPD) has been designed to assist you to learn more about the issues that will shape the future of warfare. I commend the SOPD to you and ask that you make the time to read the articles and to reflect on their content.**

## **Editor's Note**

**This will be the final issue of the SOPD for 2005.  
Publication will resume in February 2006.**



<b>Article</b>	<b>'In Support of the Military Decision-making Process: A Relevant Tactical Planning Tool for Today and Tomorrow'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Major Bret P. Van Poppel
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Armor</i> , vol. CXIV, no. 5, September–October 2005, pp. 34–6

### SYNOPSIS

In this article the author examines the current United States Army military decision making process (MDMP). He analyses this process and its relevance and utility in the contemporary battlespace. In outline the MDMP is a prescriptive process and analytical tool that covers seven steps: receipt of the mission; mission analysis; course of action (COA) development; COA analysis; COA comparison; COA approval; and orders production. Preparation and execution follow on from the MDMP.

The author sketches the advantages of the MDMP. In essence he views its key advantages as being the process that is both prescriptive and flexible, thus catering for the relative experience levels of staff and commanders. It is also clearly integrated into US doctrine and hence well understood by all officers. Finally the analysis of COA through the medium of wargaming allows the analysis of the possible courses and aids the synchronisation of battlefield operating systems.

Van Poppel then offers some suggestions on how the MDMP may be tailored and enhanced in practice. First, it can be adapted to accommodate the specific operational conditions. Second, it can be improved with the early and active participation by the commander, blending the more analytical approach of the staff with perhaps a more conceptual approach by the commander. Finally, if time is short, an abbreviated approach may be taken whereby the staff focus its effort on a single detailed course that may or may not be adapted by a second course derived by the commander. The author concludes by suggesting that the MDMP is an effective tactical planning tool that is relevant to the modern battlespace and in his experience it has proven its worth in current operations.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'The Law of War: The Rules have not Changed'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Lieutenant Colonel David P. Cavaleri (Retd)
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Armor</i> , vol. CXIV, no. 5, September–October 2005, pp. 26–33

### SYNOPSIS

David Cavaleri—currently a researcher–historian at the US Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth—observes that the Global War on Terror has highlighted a disparity in combatant conduct that has prompted some to question the continued



application of the current Law of War principles. This article provides the historical background to the Law of War in order to assist readers to draw conclusions about the applicability of the Law of War to the contemporary challenges facing the US Armed Forces.

The author offers a detailed historical background to the Law of War, and discusses its purpose, unifying themes and the factors involved in its activation. This summary of the Law of War's origins is comprehensive and illustrated with historical examples.

He believes that the time is right for the international community to review the Law of War in the light of the Global War on Terror but concludes that the most probable result will be that the current form is adequate for the task. The challenge is to remain true to the letter and spirit of the Law of War in the face of an enemy who refuses to acknowledge customary and conventional international law. The author suggests, as some would advocate, a middle ground that better reflects the realities of the Global War on Terror.

Cavaleri finishes by highlighting that the events of Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay and Iraq have shown that not remaining true to the letter and spirit of the Law of War carries significant implications for the nation's international reputation and strategic goals.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Revisiting Established Doctrine in an Age of Risk'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Michael Williams
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Royal United Services Institute Journal</i> , vol. 150, no. 5, October 2005, pp. 48–52

## SYNOPSIS

Williams examines the European concept of the 'Precautionary Principle' and compares it with the American doctrine of pre-emptive war. He begins by outlining the changes in the NATO security environment since the collapse of the Soviet Union, arguing that unlike the relative certainty of Cold War threats, where deterrence was the central platform of the Western military doctrine, today NATO faces a variety of multifaceted and multi-directional security threats. These threats have necessitated a shift from an essentially defensive stance to a more proactive risk management position. Despite this change he suggests that, to date, there has been little serious discussion about the connection between the Bush Administration's vision of pre-emptive warfare and NATO's precautionary principle.

The author outlines the historical roots of the 'Precautionary Principle' from its German legal roots in the 1930s where it meant 'to have foresight in planning' to the 1980s where the United Nations (UN) developed the concept in relation to environmental issues where it came to mean 'better safe than sorry'. In essence the precautionary principle encourages action to regulate a risk where evidence and



causal hypothesis indicate that harm may occur, regardless of how remote the chances may be. Under this principle, evidence to act does not need to be conclusive but rather it may be undertaken where there is 'good reason' and there may be 'harmful effects'.

In the security environment, where the lack of evidence of risk does not equate to an absence of risk, he suggests that the principle may be applied where policy-makers have reason to believe that harm may result from inaction. Although there are no current guidelines for using the precautionary principle, he suggests that there is sufficient material in European and UN sources on which to base such a set. He summarises these factors as:

- A solid case for using the precautionary principle hinges on establishing **credible scenarios**. The potential risk has to be identified and if analysis is unable to provide complete certainty, this lack of clarity might then trigger the use of the principle.
- Because of the potential costs of applying the principle, **decision-making** has to be based on a thorough **cost-benefit analysis** and policy-makers have to be convinced that the potential benefits will offset the anticipated costs.
- **Openness and transparency** are necessary to make the proposed action valid because employing the principle will be controversial.
- Traditionally, Western legal systems place the **burden of proof** on those lodging the case. Under the precautionary principle the burden of proof is reversed and shifts so that those representing the potential threat have to prove that they intend no threat.
- The precautionary principle should not be the sole tool at the disposal of those who have to regulate the risk. There should be a **hierarchy of control measures** and these should be **proportional** to the risk. This situation implies that the use of the principle should be non-discriminatory and consistent, with comparable situations treated in the same manner.
- Finally, the use of the principle should be kept under **review**.

Williams compares the precautionary principle to the US Precautionary War, or pre-emptive war, doctrine. He suggests that pre-emptive war is simply the application of the precautionary principle, albeit one at the end of a long series of control measures to manage security risks. He uses the example of Iraq to argue that the US response did, from their point of view, meet the broad criteria of the precautionary principle. He then concludes by suggesting that, if the West is to effectively deal with the broad security threats of the 21st century, it will require a new military doctrine to manage such risks and one platform of this program might well include the precautionary principle. This development will, however, require the matter to be discussed seriously, openly and honestly.



<b>Article</b>	<b>‘The Shape of Brigades to Come’</b>
<b>Author</b>	Major General Robert Scales (Retd)
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Armed Forces Journal</i> , Issue 143, October 2005, pp. 28–32

### SYNOPSIS

In this article, Major General Robert Scales, a distinguished former Commandant of the US Army War College, examines recent trends in the debate over ‘transformation.’ He argues that before 11 September 2001 the transformation debate was couched exclusively in terms of ‘network-centric warfare’ (NCW). According to Scales, NCW represented the ‘one big idea’ through which ‘technology would replace boots on the ground’.

However, recent operational experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has reaffirmed the importance of capable Land Forces. Three distinct transformational pathways have emerged in response to the apparent lessons of these conflicts. The author classifies them as:

- the constabulary view;
- the European view; and
- the expeditionary view.

Proponents of the constabulary view—notably associated with Professors Thomas Barnett of the Naval War College and Hans Binnendijk from the National Defense University—contend that land forces should transform to become more proficient at stabilisation operations, entailing the restoration of basic services and civilian control in the aftermath of combat operations.

The ‘European’ view of transformation favours limited doctrinal and organisational transformation of heavy legacy forces originally designed to combat the Soviet land forces in Europe. The author identifies retired Colonel Douglas McGregor as the most vocal advocate of the ‘European’ view.

Scales asserts that the Europeanists remain the most influential school in the transformation debate. They have been vindicated by the reduced casualties among troops mounted in heavier armoured vehicles in the Iraq theatre. Moreover, legislators are currently reluctant to commit to substantial recapitalisation of US land forces. While the author does not dispute the greater effectiveness of infantry mounted in armoured vehicles, he argues that heavier vehicles do not afford better protection against agile suicide bombers in the contemporary battle space.



Finally, the author identifies an expeditionary view of land power. This view, championed by retired Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czega, postulates the ability to deploy lighter mechanised forces by air. Under the expeditionary paradigm, deficiencies in combat weight, force density and protection would be offset by speed and the intrinsic protection of precision killing power would be linked to information dominance. Proponents of this view were inspired by the US successes in Panama and the First Gulf War.

The success of the Army's Stryker brigades in Iraq over the past two years supports the view that armoured forces, capable of deployment by air, can achieve the synthesis between survival in close combat and long-range deployment that are necessary in the contemporary warfare. The evidence suggests that transformation can only be achieved through the introduction of the Future Combat System (FCS) rather than reform of heavy legacy armoured formations.

The author concludes that the lessons from operations since September 2001 provide limited vindication for each of these transformational paradigms. He ultimately advocates a 'melded vision'—one that incorporates some elements of the competing visions. Therefore, the Army has adopted the constabulary view that modern warfare will demand soldiers who are comfortable in alien cultures and who can transcend cultural barriers to build new societies.

Yet the requirement for robust, lethal formations capable of very-long-range autonomous operational manoeuvre will remain. This requirement will involve costly investments in transformation. As Scales ends by observing, 'Certainly, complete transformation will be expensive. But the challenge of future warfare on land cannot be met without building modular, FCS equipped aero-mechanised brigades that will form the aerial blitzkrieg of the future. Until these units appear, transformation will continue to be a paper vision, not a reality'.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Fighting and Writing: Officers have a Duty to Communicate—in Print'</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>Ralph Peters</b>
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Armed Forces Journal</i> , Issue 143, October 2005, pp. 38–44

### SYNOPSIS

In this article, author and military commentator, Ralph Peters, makes a strong case for military officers writing about warfare and their profession. Peters's argument is simply that, if officers do not write about their profession, others will. The others to whom he refers are ideologues and defence industry salesmen, each with their own vested interest in swaying government and public opinion. Peters goes further, noting that officers have *duty* to write if only because, in societies such as the United States, fewer and fewer politicians and citizens have any first-hand knowledge of the armed



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forces of their nation. He believes that serving officers, especially those with combat experience, must publish in professional journals while retired officers must engage with the media and the broader public to communicate effectively with them.

For those serving officers who might think that publishing articles and books will ruin their careers, Peters has a simple message: 'That's utter nonsense'. While some commanders may not welcome officers who publish, Peters states that the US Armed Forces are broadly supportive of such intellectual endeavours. There are limits to how far an officer can or should go. Of course, as Peters notes, serving officers should only write for professional journals and about professional matters.

Citing his own career he notes that, when he felt the need to criticise national policy, he left the Army. Peters firmly believes that 'Writing honestly, constructively and well is far more likely to advance an officer's career than to hinder it.'

Noting the development of websites such as <www.companycommand.com>, Peters states that, while these sites are excellent for discussing professional matters and getting lessons learnt into circulation quickly, they are not enough. He thinks that the Internet requires the traditional medium of print to give it legitimacy. According to Peters, both are useful. Articles soon gather dust on library shelves, but the Internet has given them what Peters calls an 'electronic eternal life'. Nevertheless, he concludes that print still has a credence that the Internet lacks because decision-makers are more likely to read journals or newspapers.

Another aspect of writing that Peters discusses is the time it takes to introduce a new idea into the military. He likens this process to attrition warfare, saying that it will take up to five years and many articles on the subject before the organisation begins to take notice. Peters believes that the Marines are the best of all the US armed services at using the print media to push new ideas and to progress the interests of the service. The article concludes with encouragement to company and field grade officers to write about their experiences. Peters reminds them that, though they may not become millionaires from their efforts, they will enrich their service by passing on their knowledge.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Route Ownership Versus Route Concession'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Captain Robert Gillespie, 3rd Battalion, 101 Airborne Division, US Army
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Armor</i> , vol. CXIV, no. 5, September–October 2005, pp. 18–20

### SYNOPSIS

This article details one of the more important, but as the author notes 'least sexy', aspects of logistics operations from the war in Iraq—the need for combined arms commanders to plan and execute logistics operations. The article discusses convoy



security as an important way in which the combined arms commander can ensure combat service support (CSS) for the units.

The author notes how the system of dividing routes within an area of operations (AO) into main and alternative supply routes (MSRs and ASRs) was flawed. Each route was assessed as green, amber or red, depending on the number of enemy contacts experienced by combat forces. CSS convoys could not travel on red routes and required armed security to travel on the amber routes. The problem was that, although this system was designed to minimise the risk to CSS convoys, friendly forces tended not to travel on the red routes. This situation resulted in a decrease in the number of reported enemy contacts and therefore red routes would revert to amber after a period of one week without incidents. As the author observes, nothing had really changed in terms of the actual threat, and such routes fluctuated between red and amber.

In essence, this behaviour meant that the US Forces allowed the insurgents to determine where they went. Even new routes, selected for safety and not speed, became dangerous after a few days and limited the Americans' freedom of manoeuvre within the AO. Convoys required a significant security detachment in order to reach their destination. Based on his experiences, the author believes that the US Forces should conduct continuous route security operations on key MSRs and ASRs. This mission includes the use of intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), screening operations, patrols, observation posts, cordon-and-search operations, and ambushes. The use of these techniques would minimise the risk to CSS units and allow combined arms commanders to maintain the initiative in their AOs. Added benefits to this method of operation are that a more offensive approach to convoy operations minimises the exposure of CSS units to enemy action, gives local people confidence that the US Forces control the area and thus acts to enhance intelligence collection from local sympathisers. As the author concludes, these methods save lives and send the right message.

<b>Article</b>	<b>'Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Operations: Combined Support Group Operations in Sri Lanka'</b>
<b>Author</b>	Lieutenant Colonel Daren Margolin
<b>Publication Details</b>	<i>Marine Corps Gazette</i> , vol. 89, no. 10, October 2005, pp. 10–14

### SYNOPSIS

Lieutenant Colonel Margolin's article presents an assessment of the problems and lessons observed from the Marine's command support group (CSG) that provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in Sri Lanka in the wake of the December 2004 tsunami. The article describes how the CSG coordinated the US response through the creation of a combined disaster relief centre (CDRC). The CDRC provided a single point of contact for US government agencies, American aid



agencies, the United Nations, non-government organisations and, of course, the government and military forces of Sri Lanka.

The role of the CSG was to coordinate air assets in the relief effort, engineering support and medical assistance. All three of these aspects required detailed coordination of assets from other agencies and nations in order to achieve a rapid response to the disaster. The United States was able to supply much of the air, sea and ground transport required to move specialists and supplies into the affected areas. The most important lesson that the author notes was the wisdom of keeping the CSG and the CDRC separate from each other in order to ensure that the overall coordination effort of the CSG was not affected by CDRC business. Another important issue was the rapid establishment of clear command relationships to allow for the best use of transport and other vital assets within the operation. Margolin believes that the use of joint chains of command, rather than separate single-service command chains, makes for more effective coordination and use of assets. Other communication lessons included early allocation of joint satellite frequencies and the use of commercial Internet, telephone and other resources to reduce the strain on military communications systems needed to contact personnel operating in isolated areas.

The author concludes that, while there are aspects of the operation that might be improved (such as coordination with other US agencies), the disaster relief operations provided the Marines with an opportunity to build experience in this area and develop new intergovernmental and inter-agency relationships that should not be allowed to deteriorate.