CHAPTER NINE

Australian army operations in East Timor and the Solomon Islands in 2006

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There have been literally hundreds of unexpected events – incidents that you would not encounter in your wildest dreams. That is when we all fall back on training and adaptability.

– Brigadier Mick Slater, East Timor (2006)

INTRODUCTION

In April 2006 the Australian Army was committed to the provision of a battle group and training team in Iraq, a special operations task group in Afghanistan, a regional combat team in the Solomon Islands and support for domestic operations and peacekeepers in the Middle East, East Timor and Sudan. To support these elements there were a number of staff officers at joint task force headquarters and embedded in multinational coalition headquarters. By June the Australian Army had deployed a battle group to the Solomon Islands and a task force to East Timor. These commitments meant that of a ready combat force of approximately 10,000, the army had over 3,500 committed, with a further 3,500 preparing to sustain operations. In August 2006 the government announced the raising of another two battle groups over the next few years to be prepared to meet likely domestic and international commitments. So what did the army learn from these deployments and what is it doing to change (if needed) the way it does business in the new world order?

In East Timor and the Solomon Islands the army confirmed that the modern battle space is complex, diverse, lethal and diffused,
regardless of the level of intensity. For the army, conflict continues to be a human, societal activity that has the enduring features of friction, danger and uncertainty. Furthermore, although the context of conflicts differs, these differences arise from a small number of variables that can be described as the level of human interaction, diverse physical environments, adaptability of adversaries and chance. To address a conflict situation successfully, land forces must be able to support Whole of Government solutions.\(^1\) This action requires the army to continue to become more adaptable and agile in performing and transitioning between different types of tasks that are not related to the traditional view of war-fighting. The response is the army’s Adaptive Campaigning concept, which focuses on managing populations and perceptions as the central and decisive activity of conflict.

The past has been marked by a clash of wills that resulted in armed conflict between the military forces of nation states. The decisive act was defeating the enemy’s will through either direct confrontation or indirect actions. This goal assumed, however, that the enemy was a rational actor that could recognise loss, apply a cost-benefit analysis and ultimately accept defeat. The conflict environment now contains many non-state actors that have separate selfish goals, which in most cases seek to undermine the state. But a clash of wills remains central to understanding the interaction between all actors. The main change is that the fight is now ‘among the people’, not between people.\(^2\) Clearly, this desire must mean that the control of populations is at the heart of any Whole of Government initiatives that seek to set the conditions to achieve a favourable outcome.

The desire to control people and manage their perceptions means that the ability to put high-quality individuals and small teams into an area of operations, in close proximity to any adversary and the population, is critical to the military contribution to those Whole of Government initiatives. Therefore, the quality of soldiers that are placed ‘among the people’ and the management of their actions as part of the Whole of Government initiative is the key determinant of success. A large number of poorly-prepared soldiers in a complex environment will diminish the commander’s ability to control the population. Moreover, the environment will require soldiers and junior leaders to be in personal contact with and close proximity to the population. Both these facts are important if the commander is to ensure that his operational actions support the strategic-level objectives.
In 2006 the Chief of Army, Peter Leahy, made it clear that his Hardened and Networked Army (HNA) initiative, announced in late 2005, ‘will permit the army to deploy small, agile [and mobile] combined arms teams. They will be mounted behind armour and have access to an enormous array of joint direct and indirect fires … ultimately each soldier will be a node in a seamless network of sensors and shooters’. The initiative does seem more focused at the high end of war-fighting but he goes on to say:

Our conventional forces are likely to be confronted by vaguely defined militia and terrorists, which will hug the population centres and culturally sensitive infrastructure. They will attempt to provoke us into the indiscriminate use of superior killing power to mistakenly harm civilians, or damage religious or cultural sites. This is calculated to undermine our centre of gravity – namely the respect and trust of the population that we are trying to persuade or protect.

This paper seeks to draw the key lessons from the deployments to East Timor and the Solomon Islands in 2006 and indicate how they reflect the army’s response – Adaptive Campaigning.

BACKGROUND

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

In July 2003 Australia led a regional assistance mission to support the restoration of law and order in the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The regional initiative was a response to a formal request by the Solomon Islands’ government to assist in re-establishing the conditions in which a functional (and respected) police force and enduring sound governance mechanisms could be developed to allow the government to operate effectively. A military component of 1800 personnel drawn from across the region (Australia, Fiji, Tonga, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea) was deployed to assist the participating police force (PPF) in the restoration of law and order. This force was reduced in July 2004 to a steady state of approximately 100 personnel in-country to provide a security guarantee.

In mid-April 2006 a general election resulted in a change in government that was not well received in Honiara. The announcement on 18 April
that Mr Snyder Rini was to become prime minister prompted rioting and looting in Chinatown. Seven PPF officers were injured and the Australian government deployed the Ready Company Group on 19 April to demonstrate resolve and a desire for calm to be restored. This action was in response to a letter from Mr Snyder Rini to Australian Prime Minister John Howard, seeking military support to assist the police in stabilising the situation and to give general reassurance to the Solomon Islands population. The force was expanded to a regional Australian-led battle group in late April and quickly established a strong visual presence that set the conditions for the police to re-establish the rule of law and order. The force was drawn down to approximately 150 personnel in June and will remain at that level into the foreseeable future.

EAST TIMOR

In 1998, as part of his reform process, Indonesian President B J Habibe proposed a vote on special autonomy for East Timor to be conducted on 11 June 1999 and monitored by the United Nations. The result was badly received by those who believed that East Timor should remain part of Indonesia and widespread militia violence broke out within days. On 13 September 1999, after significant international pressure, Habibe allowed an Australian-led international peacekeeping force (INTERFET) to stabilise the situation in preparation for a handover to the United Nations in February 2000. The United Nations’ presence created a secure environment to allow democratic elections to take place on 30 August 2001. The Fretilin Party, led by Mari Alkatiri, was announced the winner and the United Nations began the process of transitioning authority to his government with a view to having left East Timor by June 2006.

The recent instability in East Timor arose out of long-standing ethnic tensions, discontent with the police and military and the failings of the Alkatiri government to deliver on expectations. The tensions escalated in February 2006 when elements of the military staged a peaceful protest in front of President Gusmão’s Dili office. The Chief of Defence (Brigadier Taur Matan Ruak) dismissed 600 striking soldiers, who dispersed peacefully to their home towns. During a televised address the president condemned the military leadership’s handling of the situation. On 28 April approximately 400 demonstrators, including ex-soldiers, conducted a protest in Dili that quickly turned violent. When the police
could not deal with the situation the military was deployed and up to 15 demonstrators were killed. After the violence there was another split in the military, with Lieutenant Commander Reinado leading a group of dissident police and soldiers in the call for an enquiry into the actions of the Alkatiri government. On 24 May it is believed that this dissident group fired on police being escorted by United Nations personnel, killing ten, after Alkatiri was re-elected prime minister at the Fretilin Congress (17–20 May 2006). This action resulted in a letter from the president to the Australian prime minister requesting the deployment of a stabilisation force to restore law and order in the country.

The Australian defence intelligence community had warned of a deteriorating situation in April 2006 and as a result the army was warned to be prepared to conduct evacuation operations of Australian nationals and to deploy a battle group to stabilise the situation. This action included the pre-positioning of force elements in Darwin and Townsville to demonstrate that Australia was ready to commit if the situation deteriorated. Coalition partners (New Zealand, Malaysia and Portugal) indicated willingness to support an Australian-led stabilisation operation, and a joint task force headquarters was established in Townsville. On 26 May the combined joint task force was deployed to conduct evacuation operations and to stabilise the situation in Dili to allow the United Nations to mediate a solution. The deployment involved approximately 3,000 defence personnel, 2,000 of whom were army. The drawdown to a steady state of approximately 900 personnel, including a task force headquarters and a battle group, commenced in July 2006. This size force is likely to remain until mid-2007, when a review will be conducted post-election, but it is expected that a military presence will remain for a number of years to guarantee security.

So what did the army learn?

The recent deployments to East Timor and the Solomon Islands are still being analysed to understand the lessons learned at the tactical and operational level. Therefore the following observations represent the author’s first impressions of what occurred with those deployments.

THE CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT

The terrain in which these land forces operated was highly complex at the physical, human and informational levels. First, the soldiers operated in cities and villages close to the sea and in mountainous jungle regions.
Such terrain typically comprises a mosaic of open spaces (acting as manoeuvre corridors, killing areas or compartments) and patches of restricted terrain that prevent movement and deny observation. The result is that land forces can be drawn easily into close combat without warning. For example, during the initial days of the deployment into East Timor there were many running battles in the confined streets of Dili between youths and coalition forces. Secondly, the soldiers found themselves in areas in which they confronted many different groups that co-existed peacefully, ignored each other or competed (with or without violence) for self-motivated outcomes. These included rioters and demonstrators, youth gangs, disgruntled police and military (East Timor) and organised criminals (Solomon Islands). Those groups continued to adapt to counter the tactics used in both operations to gain a positional and/or temporal advantage. Thirdly, the situation is complicated further by the multiple data sources or transmissions (including news media) that make it impossible to control information flow in the area of operations. For Brigadier Slater (Commander, Joint Task Force 631) in East Timor:

There are layers of complexity. We came into a society on the brink of civil war. Although the ethnic divisions were very emotive to the local population there was no visible distinction between them in our eyes. So we had a very complex human terrain, with gangs, ethnic groups, mutinous soldiers and police alongside those who considered themselves loyal to the government. Overlaying all that we had a potential humanitarian disaster with large numbers of people seeking refuge in temporary camps. And of course every incident had the footloose global media on hand to scrutinise our handling of it. While we did not have a lethal conventional enemy in that mix, there was a period when it was conceivable that we could face formed bodies of police or soldiers in complex urban terrain. (Slater 2006:12-13)

The many different groups that were found in the conflict environment were not threats in the sense of traditional armed opposition, but applying military force against them was problematic in legal, moral and technical terms. The crucial point that commanders needed to appreciate was that these groups would exploit the key differences in the ‘defeat threshold’ to gain an advantage over the soldiers. Therefore, soldiers had to exercise ‘mature judgement in a very demanding environment in the face of a lot of provocation’ (Slater 2006:13).
The traditional view is that stabilisation operations require limited force protection measures (i.e. combat body armour, ballistic goggles, etc.) because they are low-intensity operations. In East Timor the soldiers faced youths with slingshots, darts and machetes and mutinous soldiers and police with weapons. The Solomon Islands did not present as direct a threat, although there were high-powered weapons cached in the community and rocks were often thrown at military vehicles travelling through Honiara. Therefore protection, firepower, mobility and situational awareness remain critical for land forces to operate in order to survive regardless of the perceived level of threat.

COALITION OPERATIONS

The development of a coalition of interested parties (in particular those from the region) is critical for establishing legitimacy and sharing the load. The coalition partners in both operations did provide substantial manoeuvre forces (by their standards) but the key enablers (health, helicopters, etc.) were provided by the army. The issue for the army is that in most cases Australia will initially have to provide key enablers before a contracted solution can be sought in the long term. This observation will require more work to be done in building redundancy into the current force structure of the army.

With any coalition there remain differences in what the troop-contributing nations (TCN) perceive are the mission, levels of acceptable risk and attitudes towards the local population that a commander needs to consider in achieving the mission. Bearing these points in mind, there were a number of situations in the Solomon Islands that highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each TCN. For example, the ease with which personnel from Pacific Island countries were able to establish a good rapport with the local population was noticeable. In particular the ability to speak and understand Pidgin greatly assisted patrols conducted by the Papua New Guinea Defence Force to gather good, relevant and timely information. The downside, of course, is the differing degrees of doctrine (or lack thereof), operational experience, levels of understanding of acceptable force and standard of training of the Pacific Island personnel. This observation was countered by the conduct of in-theatre task-specific training packages to build a collective capability to conduct subunit operations (if required) and built on the force preparation training conducted in Australia. The next
step must be to instigate a regional initiative to develop doctrine and standardisation of training across South Pacific countries that support a rapid deployment of a combined force anywhere in the region. The issue of standard of training was less of a problem in East Timor, as the Australian, Malaysian, New Zealand and Portuguese forces had worked previously in the same environment from 1999 to 2003 and had operational experience and relevant doctrine for stabilisation operations. But Brigadier Mick Slater (2006:12) has acknowledged that there were issues of acceptable risk and ‘differences in style and mindset’.

**INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONS**

The underlying theme behind the planning and conduct of inter-agency operations is that the military is providing the secure environment in which other agencies can achieve the aim of developing the governance mechanisms required to allow a country to govern itself. To that end inter-agency operations, like all operations, require agencies to have a single and mutually-agreed purpose. Australia is becoming more adept at inter-agency operations based on previous experience in East Timor and the Solomon Islands, but there are a number of issues that still need considerable work.

First, a number of the operations conducted in support of the PPF in the Solomon Islands and Australian Federal Police (AFP) in East Timor demonstrated that there is a significant difference in the planning methodology and descriptive language that each agency employs. Whereas the army has a proactive planning culture, the police were more reactive, with little appreciation of the response timings required to conduct actions overseas. Simply put, they did not fully grasp the concept of an operation with multiple tasks as part of a wider campaign plan, which translated into many short-notice requests for military support, an inability to prioritise tasks (and assets) to achieve a particular effect and inadequate force protection measures. This compartmentalised task-specific tendency was further exacerbated by the differing threat assessment methodologies across all agencies and the lack of a common operating picture. This ‘stovepiping’ creates significant interoperability issues that require key personnel (logistics, intelligence, operations and plans) to make an effort to build effective working relations. In the Solomon Islands the establishment of a joint operational planning group, which sought to make certain that all
operations were integrated and mutually reinforcing, and a technical user group, which would manage information and threat appreciation effectively, supported this effort.

Secondly, a critical factor in the success of operations in the Solomon Islands and East Timor was that police and military personnel were able to work together at the tactical level to maximise the effectiveness of respective capabilities to complete assigned tasks. In the Solomon Islands the security provided by the military consisted of a presence at designated police outposts (no less than a section), and targeted RAMSI presence patrols to deny any adversary freedom of movement. The RAMSI presence patrols also sought to make contact with outlying communities to pass on information and build situational awareness. This action was a deliberate attempt to disrupt criminal activity by restricting access to supplies and secure hideouts and countering their intimidation tactics used to control the local population. To complement these patrols, the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) would have greatly assisted in building situational awareness of village layouts (including routes to and from the villages) and providing a visual deterrence that indicates ‘we can see you’ – highly effective in a country where the majority of people live in outlying villages and have a high opinion of technology.

Thirdly, the importance of ensuring that the police are involved in the majority of arrest operations cannot be understated. During the initial stages of the East Timor operation the joint task force established a detainee centre that processed individuals before handing them over to the local authorities. Once international police arrived, the military handed over the policing function to the United Nations to indicate to the population that the rule of law had returned to East Timor. In the Solomon Islands the guidance to soldiers supporting police stationed outside Honiara was that each police patrol was to have two soldiers (with radio), as a minimum, to provide protection and communications to the outpost. If the patrol was likely to encounter a person of interest (POI) who had access to a weapon, then a four-man fire team with a medic and communications was the minimum requirement. This guidance was a deliberate attempt to avoid any chance of the military being independently involved in the arrest of any POI and ensured that the police were attributed with the success of the operation. Moreover, these actions assisted in reassuring the local population that normality had returned to the Solomon Islands.
MEDIA OPERATIONS

The consensus is that the management of the media during the East Timor and Solomon Islands deployments was a success. Australian soldiers are routinely trained to meet the media challenge and were aware of the political and military imperatives of their actions. Therefore, at the tactical level the most effective way for soldiers to deal with the media was to assume they were a non-military friend or family member. This assumption ensured that all ranks were consistent and did not stray into areas that might prove difficult or embarrassing. The following are the three rules that underlie Australian soldiers’ interaction with the media:

- Comment only on those activities personally conducted
- Do not lie or bluff (say ‘I do not know’)  
- Do not offer a personal opinion

This management was carefully co-ordinated by the media liaison teams to ensure the messages were simple, reassuring and clear to the local population.

In the Solomon Islands the Office of the Special Co-ordinator (Department of Foreign Affairs representative), who maintained tight control of public relations, restricted the commander’s ability to shape the information environment. There were some major differences of opinion on the need for an information operation to support a campaign plan. More work needs to be done by the army to educate other government agencies about the benefits of developing a campaign plan that is supported by a communications strategy that seeks to shape the environment by managing the local perceptions and the general public both in-theatre and at home.

FORCE STRUCTURE

The two deployments indicated that the structure of land forces must continue to be centred on small autonomous teams that can generate the key combined arms effects of manoeuvre, firepower, situational awareness and command and control. These teams must be able to access additional logistic and mobility support as required to supplement their own organic capabilities. The use of small teams that
can disperse to cover a large area of operations but are networked to be able to congregate at a specific time and place is key to controlling the population and managing perceptions. The focus in designing modules is to allow the commander to extend his footprint and create the illusion that he is everywhere without requiring extensive ‘boots on the ground’. This tactic requires the commander also to have a lightly-equipped mobile element to reinforce the patrolling forces (or sensor nodes). In East Timor the tactic was to have small teams spread across Dili with two mobile forces (air and armoured personnel carrier) of subunit size to react to the shifting rioters and local gang activity. Those patrols eventually included members of the United Nations police force. The tactic in the Solomon Islands was to centre the deployed forces on the towns of Honiara (Guadalcanal Island) and Auki (Malaita Island) and influence the regions by aggressive patrolling of small teams to dislocate the adversary.

**COMMAND AND CONTROL**

The evidence of the ‘on-scene commander’, who has control of a situation regardless of rank until a superior has sufficient situational awareness, seems to indicate that there is a separation between the traditional concepts of command and control. In the traditional sense the functions of command and control tended to go together with the superior controlling the situation from afar. Now the superior assumes control of the situation when a tactical pause allows or through a process of ‘battle handover’ with the on-scene commander. This method of operating is familiar to emergency and paramedical services, police and special forces who habitually operate in complex conflict environments. The key is for the commander to be able to defer decision-making to his subordinates, with his actions supporting their decisions.

The deployments indicated that the army has come a long way in creating informed situational awareness and placing trust in the on-scene commander, but more work can be done to improve the ability to conduct co-ordinated interdependent actions across the area of operations. When rioters and youth gangs are shifting their activities quicker than land forces can react there is a genuine need to get inside the cycle of violence to regain control of the situation. This observation was evident in the early stages of the East Timor deployment.
SOLDIERS’ SKILLS

A number of observations have been made by commanders in both operations on what is essential for soldiers. First, soldiers must be proficient in their weapon and communication skills and patrolling techniques and expert at unarmed combat. To reassure the population and establish psychological ascendancy over the adversaries there is a need, early in the operation, to commence an aggressive patrolling programme. Secondly, more work needs to be done in developing soldiers’ thinking and decision-making skills. Underlying this development is a sense of being able to apply precise, discriminating and tailored solutions to a problem. The understanding of the application of lethal force was good in both operations, but developing other techniques (and non-lethal weapons) to subdue an adversary will increase the number of options available to soldiers.

Thirdly, there is a need to have soldiers who are culturally adept at working as part of an inter-agency force. Skills include the ability to negotiate, understand and appreciate the organisational culture of other agencies and be prepared to ‘take a back seat’ to support the other agencies’ actions. These skills are a key enabler for the conduct of information operations. Fourthly, the army needs to develop more soldiers with the linguistic and cultural skills to allow them to operate in the likely regional conflict areas. For Brigadier Slater in East Timor (2006:14), ‘the decency of our people gets us there, but we need more linguists. They are a force multiplier and … invaluable in helping us to avoid recourse to force’.

Fifthly, soldiers need to be inured to hardship, exertion, ambiguity and stress, in line with the view that the more austere a force is the more it is able to rely on its own resources without recourse to large or sophisticated support systems. The more mentally and physically robust the soldiers, the better they will be in achieving their tactical objectives. This action will require more conditioning during training.

SO WHAT IS THE ARMY DOING ABOUT IT?

The Adaptive Campaigning concept is based on the army’s recent operational experiences across a range of deployments since 1999 and seeks to place land forces action within a Whole of Government response. The concept acknowledges that conflict is a political instrument and that
our adversaries will often attempt to apply tactical pressure in order to achieve a direct strategic advantage (or specific effect). Therefore the key is the ability of land forces to influence and control people’s perceptions, behaviour and allegiances. To win that acquiescence armies must be capable of developing intimacy with the population while conducting operations within the complex conflict environment.

The main objective is to shape the environment to allow peaceful political discourse and a return to normality, which is achieved along a number of interdependent lines of operation. Those lines of operation are described below:

- **Joint land combat.** Joint land combat operations include actions to remove organised resistance and set the conditions to allow the prosecution of actions within the other lines of operation. Joint land combat operations are the core business of land forces and represent the army’s unique contribution to Whole of Government initiatives. They are predicated on land forces having the ability to:
  - Understand and direct actions within the conflict environment
  - Manoeuvre and survive in complex terrain
  - Adapt to the evolving challenges in the area of operations
  - Access responsive joint fires
  - Organise tasks rapidly

- **Population support.** Population support operations are the integrated actions of land forces, other government agencies (OGAs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide essential services to affected communities. These operations are predicated on land forces having the ability to:
  - Understand and prioritise the needs of the environment and effectively integrate effort across agencies and indigenous communities
  - Respond and meet the basic essential requirements
  - Transition responsibility to the appropriate agencies (including indigenous structures)

- **Indigenous capacity-building.** Indigenous capacity-building includes action taken by land forces to assist in the development of effective indigenous government, security, police, legal, financial and administrative systems. These operations are predicated on land forces having the ability to:
○ Understand the unique governance and civil service requirements of the environment
○ Initially supply specialist staff (if required) to assist with development
○ Engage and monitor developments to ensure alignment across all lines of operation within a Whole of Government campaign plan

• **Public information.** Public information is a collection of capabilities brought together and focused on informing and shaping the perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and understanding of targeted population groups. They are predicated on the ability to:
  ○ Understand the social, cultural and values framework of a target population group
  ○ Disseminate key information messages to targeted population groups
  ○ Measure the effectiveness of the message and adapt if required

• **Population protection.** Population protection operations include action to provide immediate security to threatened population groups. They are predicated on co-ordination between the police and military, enhanced non-lethal capabilities, increased military police capacity and enhanced logistical support, soldiers’ linguistic and cultural sensitivity and positive perceptions.

**CONCLUSION**

Since 1999 the Australian Army has been involved in a number of significant operations, from the liberation of Iraq and fighting the ‘war on terror’ to permissive intervention operations to stabilise deteriorating domestic situations in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. In East Timor and the Solomon Islands the army has discovered that the battle space in which soldiers operate is complex, diverse, lethal and diffused, regardless of the perceived level of intensity. To succeed in this conflict environment, land forces in the future will have to be able to orchestrate the required effects as part of Whole of Government responses. In reality the army will continue to be the foundation for these responses, as it is the only government agency that is capable of projecting power offshore and initially supporting other government agencies in-theatre. This action requires the army to become more adaptable and agile in
performing and transitioning between different types of tasks that are not related to the traditional view of war-fighting.

A scan of the daily newspapers highlights security issues in Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu, which indicates that there is a reasonable chance that another Whole of Government response is possible to prevent an increase in the number of failed Pacific Island countries. If that is the case, the army will be expected to make soldiers available to offer security and logistic support to the mission. The level of commitment, of course, will depend on what effect is required on the ground and how far other agencies have developed their own support capabilities. A good guess is the provision of logistic support as a minimum simply because the Australian Defence Force can project power offshore and support operations quickly, before handing over to civil contractors when the environment is secure. In addition it is highly likely that there will be a quick reaction force required in-theatre (or on reduced notice in Australia) to guarantee a secure environment that allows other agencies to achieve their goals in support of the government’s objectives.

Therefore, it is essential that work be done now to develop inter-agency doctrine for command and control, intelligence assessment, conduct of operations and logistical support. Selling the joint military appreciation process as a basis for developing a methodology for inter-agency planning is a good starting point. The goal must be to get all agencies thinking in the same way. This action will need to be supported by considerable work to review how to develop an inter-agency campaign plan supported by a communications strategy that will shape the information environment and the development of in-theatre training packages to build familiarity and confidence of the agencies in each other. Furthermore, there is a need to explore the feasibility of a regional initiative to develop doctrine and standardise training across Pacific Island countries to support the rapid deployment of a regional military force in dealing with failed neighbours.

Within the army the focus must be on developing the thinking and decision-making of soldiers and junior leaders. These soldiers must be physically and mentally robust and culturally adept at working ‘amongst the people’ and with other agencies. The leaders need to have skills that allow them to act within their superiors’ guidelines as the on-scene commander to achieve networked effects. The soldiers must be part of small autonomous teams that have improved individual force protection
measures, protection, mobility, access to instantaneous firepower and enhanced situational awareness. This modular design of force structure needs to be expanded to incorporate other agencies and coalition partners that the army is likely to work with, and should form the basis for the development of tactics, techniques and procedures.

The army’s response to these challenges is defined in a wider body of knowledge that underpins the *Adaptive Campaigning* concept. The main purpose of *Adaptive Campaigning* is to influence and shape the perceptions, allegiances and actions of target groups within a population to allow peaceful political discourse and a return to normality. To be proficient at *Adaptive Campaigning*, every soldier, regardless of specialisation, must be able to influence people and manage their perceptions. This desire will require soldiers to be able to work in a complex conflict environment that is characterised by personal contact, proximity and enduring presence. *Adaptive Campaigning* comprises five interdependent and mutually-reinforcing lines of operation: joint land combat operations, population support operations, indigenous capacity-building operations, public information operations and population protection operations. The key to success will be the army’s ability to orchestrate efforts effectively by shifting the main effort within a line of operation, and across the five lines of operation, in response to and in anticipation of a constantly changing environment.

The recent deployments to East Timor and the Solomon Islands were successful for the army thanks to some intense planning, ongoing positive support to other agencies and a desire to secure the environment to allow other agencies to achieve the Whole of Government aims. The two operations pushed many people to the limits of their expertise and there was a need to make soldiers constantly aware of the broader aspects and political sensitivities of the mission. But they grew from that experience and demonstrated, once again, the adaptability of junior leaders and soldiers. Moreover, they maintained the image of a capable, disciplined and professional force that was sensitive to the culture of the local people and was a model for military support to similar missions in the future. Those missions will see soldiers performing what some perceive as non-conventional ‘warrior’ tasks but – with thinking leaders and soldiers who remain adaptable and team orientated and who never give up – the Australian Army will be ready to contribute.
NOTES

1 The notion of a Whole of Government response first found practical form in Australia with the establishment in 1996 of the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC). The NSC brought ministers from outside Foreign Affairs and Defence into the primary security policy forum along with many of the secretaries of their departments. This action acknowledged that the conduct of national security operations affects numerous government portfolios. Below the NSC the inter-departmental committees (IDC) are the key mechanisms by which co-ordination is achieved across a number of government departments.

2 General Sir Rupert Smith raised the notion of a paradigm shift to a ‘war among the people’ in his recent publication *The Utility of Force*.

3 The Australian Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) defines complex terrain as terrain where weapon range exceeds sensor range. Therefore, land forces cannot achieve unobstructed situational awareness to the maximum effective range of their weapons.

4 The ‘defeat threshold’ is the level and degree of damage required to a force in order to defeat it. The army tends to have a low strategic ‘defeat threshold’ because operations are vulnerable to changes in public opinion, political will and (perceived or actual) casualty-aversion. But it has a high tactical ‘defeat threshold’ as it is hard to defeat Australian land forces when conducting operational actions. Conversely, many potential adversaries have low tactical ‘defeat thresholds’ (i.e. they are easily beaten in close combat) but because they are often small, non-state, semi-autonomous groups they are relatively invulnerable to changes in political will, community support or public opinion and therefore have a higher strategic ‘defeat threshold’.

5 A member of the PPF (Constable Matt Dunning) was shot and killed in December 2004 by one of the many weapons cached outside Honiara.

LIST OF REFERENCES

