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Adapting the Army's Training and Leader Development Programs for Future Challenges

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Summary

Background and Purpose

Trained units and competent leaders have always been, and remain, critical elements of Army operational success. The Army Training and Leader Development (ATLD) system is illustrated in Figure S.1. Six primary ATLD activities work in concert to have a direct role in achieving ATLD outputs, of trained units and competent leaders, with both of these outputs supporting the ultimate objective of near- and long-term operational readiness.

Figure S.1
Training and Leader Development Strategies, Primary Activities, and Outputs
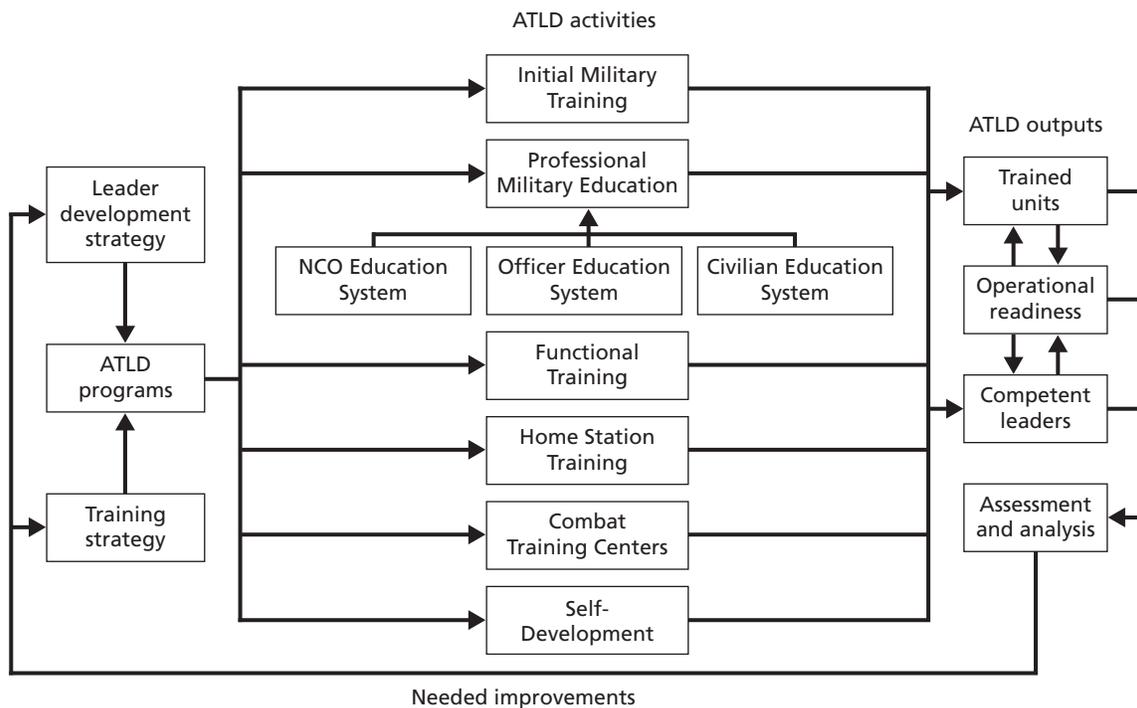
RAND TR1236-S.1

The six primary activities are the following:

- Initial Military Training (IMT) (top of Figure S.1) teaches soldiers and officers the tasks, supporting skills, and knowledge needed to be proficient at the first unit of assignment.
- Professional Military Education (PME) involves structured leader education courses.
- Functional Training involves courses designed to train specific functional tasks, skills, and knowledge.
- Home Station (HS) Training involves individual, leader, and collective training done at unit home stations.
- Combat Training Center (CTC) Training involves major collective training exercises conducted at a set of training centers with abundant resources.
- Self-development involves all of the learning activities done by the individual soldier for self-improvement.

The ATLD system is undergoing great change. The range of tasks and skills at which soldiers, leaders, and units must be proficient has increased. Traditionally, ATLD programs could focus training on the defeat of conventional enemy forces, but this is no longer the case. Now, Army units also must be able to defeat unconventional forces, develop partner forces, protect local populations, and support civil functions. At the same time, the requirement to have a significant portion of the operational force deployed is expected to be reduced but continue. Given these operational demands, the Army has implemented a process called Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) to manage the preparation of its units through phases and provide regional commanders with the range of full-spectrum–capable forces needed to meet ongoing and contingency requirements.

While ATLD requirements have increased, future reductions in Army budgets will make it even more difficult to obtain funding for ATLD programs. This combination of increased requirements and limited resources means that ATLD strategies and programs must change as a part of a wider Army effort. To support needed changes, the Army has embarked on an Institutional Adaptation initiative, which contains three key elements:

- support of operational force readiness and ARFORGEN processes used to manage the force and ensure the ability to support demands for Army forces
- adopt an Enterprise Approach in which decisions are made for the overall good of the Army
- resource stewardship.

This initiative requires the institutional Army to re-examine its processes at a fundamental level and to make whatever changes are required to provide better support to the operational force.

The Department of the Army (DA)'s Director of Training and the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center's Deputy Commander-Training asked RAND's Arroyo Center to support these efforts. The study's primary objective is to identify directions that the Army can take to improve DA-level ATLD management processes and architectures.

While the major research for this report was completed in in 2010, follow-on research and coordination shows that the major findings, conclusions, and suggested directions with regard to adapting ATLD management processes remain valid and relevant.

Assumptions
We made three assumptions: First, that the Army will continue to deploy and conduct actual operations, but the level will decline to a point in which active units will have two or more years between deployments and reserve component units will have four to five or more. Second, that the Army will have to train units and develop leaders on a wide range of combat and non-combat skills and tasks. Finally, that there will be greatly increased pressure to reduce ATLD budgets.

Approach
We first examined ATLD processes in four key areas to understand how they function and to identify the organizations that participate in them. Based on the main Institutional Adaptation elements, we asked the following questions to assess the extent to which change to an Institutional Adaptation approach is warranted and is being achieved:

- **Support Operational Readiness and ARFORGEN Processes**. To what degree have management processes been adapted to support changing unit operational readiness requirements in the context of ARFORGEN processes?
- **Adopt an Enterprise Approach.** Do management processes focus on overall ATLD benefit and are they supported by structured assessment architecture?
- **Stewardship of Resources.** To what extent are decisions made after a systematic consideration of overall costs and benefits?

Based the answers to these questions, we developed conclusions about the adequacy of overall ATLD management processes, identified areas for improvement and developed directions that the Army could take to improve its ATLD management process.

Supporting Research Efforts
Our approach included the use of a new case study and three previous ATLD-related research efforts. As described above, a large number of different activities and a large number of Army organizations are involved in ATLD's management and execution. For this reason, an examination of a wide range of ATLD activities and management processes was necessary to develop valid conclusions about overall ATLD process improvement.

The case study examined a Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) course for junior leaders and focused on ATLD strategic management. The first previous research effort examined directions for improving the Army's Distributed Learning Program. The last two efforts focused on unit training and its support. Taken together, the four research efforts provide a reasonably broad basis for drawing conclusions about improving ATLD management processes.

Case Study: Advanced Leader Course (ALC). In the case study, we examined ATLD management in the context of a specific TRADOC Professional Military Education course: the Advanced Leader Course for junior noncommissioned officers (NCOs).

The Army Distributed Learning Program (TADLP). TADLP seeks to use multiple means and technologies to deliver training and learning to soldiers and leaders whenever and wherever it is needed. Distributed learning (DL) capabilities are increasingly important, because the time soldiers can spend in formal resident courses is becoming more limited. The

purpose of this study was to assess TADLP performance in 2007 and 2008 and to outline options to improve its performance.

Brigade Combat Team Training Strategy Enablers. This study sought to help the Army identify options for improving the Army's training strategy for modernized Maneuver Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs).

Training Support for Operational Forces. The second unit training study, conducted between 2007 and 2008, focused on improving Training Support System (TSS) management processes. There are eleven specific TSS Management Decision Evaluation Package (MDEP) programs that support unit and institutional training. TSS management involves the programming, budgeting, and execution of TSS resources as a part of the Army's Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution System (PPBES).

Conclusions

Based on our ALC case study and other ATLD-related research, we draw the following conclusions:

1. ATLD Programs Have Changed, But the Need for Major Change Remains

The Army is now entering an era in which it must be prepared to face a far wider range of possible missions and mission conditions than was the case in the 2001–2002 baseline period or, more currently, when the focus has been on counter-insurgency and stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This situation widens and complicates training and leader development activities. As a result, training strategies and activities must change as well, and these changes must be made within the resources available to ATLD programs. ATLD programs have historically been funded at less-than-required levels, and there is no reasonable expectation that the level will increase. In fact, given the current Army budget outlook, the level is far more likely to decline.

2. Implementing Needed Changes Will Require Difficult Decisions

The changes needed are not a matter of going back to baseline strategies and programs. For example, full-spectrum scenarios at maneuver CTCs will be very different from the major conflict–focused scenarios of the baseline period or from the counter-insurgency–focused scenarios in recent CTC mission rehearsal exercises. The ATLD resources needed to support these new scenarios will change considerably.

Changes such as these will be needed across a wide range of training and leader development activities to meet a different balance of critical tasks, skills, and conditions. In a period of no-growth or declining budgets, increases in one area will inevitably require decreases in other. Many hard decisions will have to be made.

3. The Current ATLD Management Processes Are Not Set Up for Major Change, Nor Are They Flexible

Current ATLD management processes were developed to sustain and make incremental improvements to successful, well understood, and generally stable ATLD strategies. As a result, ATLD programs can be adapted in small increments. Future ATLD processes must also have increased near-term flexibility. The Army's efforts to adapt and meet emerging training require-

ments for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan were made possible because of major efforts, ad hoc processes, and the use of supplemental and operations funds, and a needed improvement is developing a system that is more capable of responding to new and unseen operational training support needs.

4. Better Integration of Training and Leader Development Strategies and Programs Is Needed

There are no systemic processes in place to integrate training and leader development strategies and programs for overall readiness benefit. At the strategic level, both a Training Strategy and a Leader Development Strategy have been developed by different Army organizations, DA and TRADOC, respectively.[1] Both have identified the desired aggressive ends (e.g., full-readiness, adaptable leaders) but are only beginning to come to grips with the difficult task of developing a consensus concerning feasible ways and means for reaching them. For each, a wide range of initiatives has been outlined but not how they fit together. Importantly, nor has the source of the time and resources for these initiatives been delineated.

Even within unit training strategies, there is a need for better integration. Gunnery strategies are developed by different organizations than are the broader Combined Arms Training Strategies, and overall those strategies outline a far more extensive set of activities than units generally are capable of executing.

Integrated, well-defined ATLD strategies are important inputs to effective ATLD program management. They outline what the individual programs are to achieve in the context of the overall readiness requirements and provide a basis for reasonable allocation of resources across activities and programs.

At the program level, current processes focus on individual ATLD programs with little consideration across the programs for overall benefit to readiness outcomes within available resources.

5. The Training Program Evaluation Group's (TTPEG's) MDEP System Makes It Difficult to Make Decisions in the Context of Overall ATLD Benefit

Unit proficiency and leader competencies are achieved through direct training and leader development activities, such as the ALC (and other PME) and CTC rotations. Thus the logical management focus would be on direct ATLD activities.

However, the Army's process for managing resources, using MDEPs, defines programs at a much finer level of granularity and in a way that makes it difficult to manage major shifts in resources to support changing ATLD priorities. A few MDEPs in the TTPEG are "direct" in the sense that they focus on a key direct training or leader development activity. Many more are "support" MDEPs in that they provide resources to many different activities, but the full range of resources allocated to direct ATLD activities is not directly visible. This makes it difficult to associate resources and costs at the activity level. Along with the large number of supporting MDEPs, this makes complex as well as time-consuming the process of coordinating, integrating, and justifying resources for direct ATLD activities.

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[1] This is based on a review of the *Army Training Strategy*, dated April 2011; *A Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army*, dated November 2009; and TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-3, *Army Training Concept, 2012–2020*, dated January 2011.

6. Lack of Data Hampers Effective Stewardship of ATLD Resources and the ATLD Community's Ability to Make a Case for Needed Resources

The lack of activity cost data, discussed above, is coupled with the general lack of activity benefit data-objective measures of the effects of an activity's effect on unit training readiness or leader competencies. The result is that ATLD management processes do not give managers the capability to make objective decisions about the effective allocation of ATLD resources. Instead, decisions are made from the perspective of individual programs and types of resources, and not the overall ATLD benefit.

Even more importantly, the Army has no system for objectively determining unit training readiness or leader competency levels, or ATLD areas in need of improvement. Thus the ATLD community, compared with the Manning and Equipping communities, lacks the ability to match resource levels with quantifiable readiness outcomes. The overall result is that the ATLD community lacks the data to make an objective case for the resources it needs.

7. Complexity and Lack of Integration Limit Operational Focus and Strategic Decisionmaking

The lack of a "big picture" view of ATLD program performance and needs, the focus on ATLD strategy components and individual programs, and complexity of the strategic management process all make it difficult to focus on overall readiness goals. Many decisions are made in terms of component strategies, programs, or MDEPs rather than in the context of what these mean to overall ATLD improvement.

These considerations also make it difficult to include effective operational force representation in the large number of advisory forums and councils that underpin the processes. Moreover, these considerations mean that the potential for effective collaboration between the institutional Army staffs and operational force commands for time-constrained budget and execution-year decisions is even more limited.

Areas for Improvement

Our overall conclusion is that current ATLD management processes, which were developed to manage incremental change, now require fundamental changes. Based on our research, we identified three interrelated, general areas for ATLD program management improvement. These areas align with the Institutional Adaptation goals:

- more direct understanding and focus on operational force needs
- increased integration across strategies, ATLD programs, and other Program Evaluation Groups (PEGs)
- development of a more structured cost-benefit approach to making ATLD program decisions.

What to Do?

Based on this research, we conclude that broader institutional adaptation could significantly improve ATLD management processes, and so we have developed a number of directions to

move toward this goal. These directions represent conceptual approaches. The basic thrust is to improve analytical capabilities and strategic governance architectures.

## 1. Improve the Overall Analytical and Data-Collection Processes

An overall analysis process is needed to support effective ATLD programs adaptation to changing requirements and conditions. The six-step process we propose is shown in Figure S.2. The overall goal is for the ATLD community to have a common understanding and a synchronized plan for improving key elements of ATLD.

Step One: Document ATLD activity outputs and costs. The first step involves understanding and collecting data on current individual ATLD program costs. It also involves understanding the amount of training or learning that resulted from each activity. Improving ATLD programs requires an accurate understanding of existing major activities to establish a starting point (base case) from which changes can be initiated.

Step Two: Quantify unit and leader performance needs. This step involves a systematic data-collection and analysis effort to understand general and specific training and leader development areas, skills, and tasks needing improvement. To focus effort, changes in ATLD programs should be based on an informed understanding of areas of unit weakness.

Step Three: Identify and prioritize areas for unit training and leader development improvement. The third step (boxes in the middle of Figure S.2) involves a structured analysis process that identifies and prioritizes critical areas of needed ATLD improvement as objectively as possible. The understanding of current unit and leader performance needs gained from Step Two is an important input. But new and changed requirements, such as those generated by new equipment, organizations, concepts, or operational requirements must also be considered. In this regard effective collaboration with Combatant Commands (COCOMs)

Figure S.2
Proposed ATLD Analysis Process

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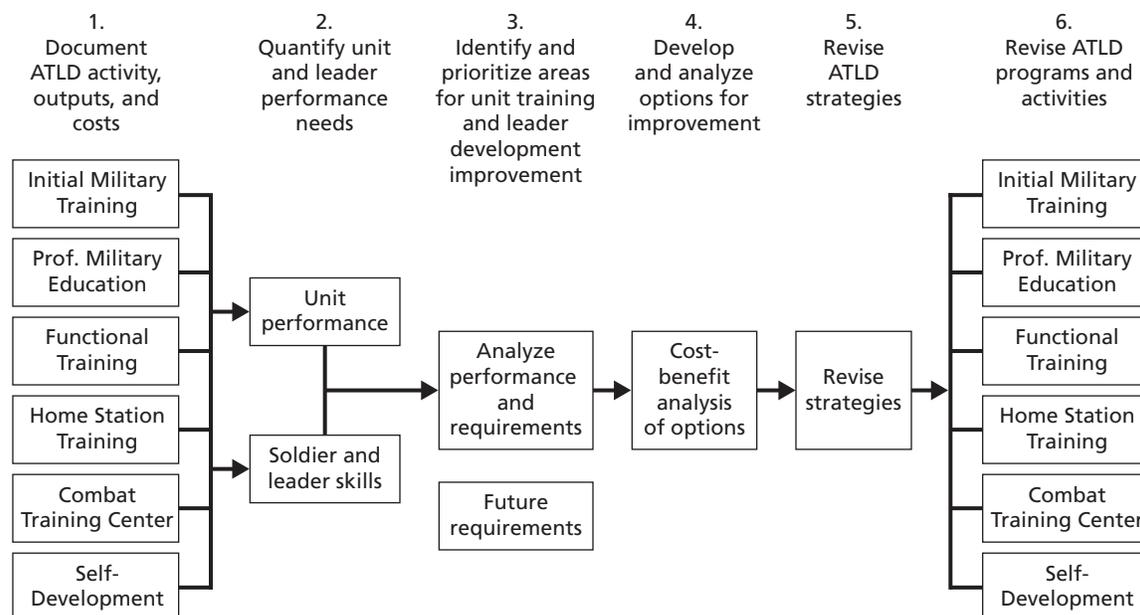
and Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) to understand their changing operational needs and what these mean to prioritizing ATLD goals and objectives is highly important.

Step Four: Develop and analyze options for improvement. This requires a cost-benefit approach. It is perhaps the most complex step, because unit training readiness and leader competencies result from many activities, and effective improvement options often will require a multi-activity approach.

Step Five: Revise ATLD strategies. This step involves revising overall ATLD goals and objectives, not only in terms of what is of increased importance, but also what is less so. It also involves defining broadly, but with sufficient specificity to understand how ATLD activities should be reshaped and how resources should be reallocated.

Step Six: Revise ATLD programs and activities. This final step will require difficult decisions. In most cases, resources for enhancement in one area must be taken from other areas. Implementation plans should include a process for continued assessment and revision; the process we outline is iterative, not linear.

2. Improve Systems for Collecting Data on ATLD Achievements, Nature, and Needs

Making the best possible decisions on training and leader development programs and policies, program design, where to invest resources, and the level of investment needed requires a clear understanding of the nature of these programs. They also require data. Currently, data to inform such an understanding either do not exist or are not easily accessible. However, it is possible to set up a data-collection effort by taking advantage of ongoing efforts.

For the data that exist, the challenge is to establish systematic and coordinated collection. Many organizations are already collecting relevant data, but it is often difficult to get these into decisionmaking processes.

3. Create Improved Mechanisms for Managing by Direct ATLD Activity

As discussed earlier, the MDEP system complicates processes for managing by ATLD activity. Stronger mechanisms for cross-MDEP and cross-PEG management and visibility are needed, and DA could modify current program management mechanisms to enable management by primary training activity.

Management by direct ATLD activity would require modifying the current MDEP system to show the level of support provided by each activity from the range of supporting MDEPs. Under this system, MDEPs supporting direct training activities would be aligned directly under the activity they support, providing greater visibility to the degree of support for each. Note that supporting MDEPs would thus be affiliated with multiple direct training activities.

4. Unify Responsibility for Data Collection and Analysis and for Supporting ATLD Strategy and Program Management

Given the deficiencies in data and analysis capabilities that we have noted, and the complexity and difficulty of adapting the current training and leader development system, we believe a centralized effort will be required to fill in the gaps. We recommend forming a single, permanent staff organization to provide data and analysis support for ATLD strategy and program management.

While data collection and analysis are the two primary tasks required, they must be performed in an integrated, iterative process, as outlined in Figure S.2 above. Moreover, the data

collected and functions performed should be brought into an overarching ATLD information technology (IT) system as quickly and as completely as possible.

The most feasible direction for improvement would be to establish within TRADOC, out of existing staff resources, a single organization for ATLD data collection and analysis. The majority of the organizations supporting the functions described above exist within TRADOC. TRADOC also owns a large portion of the Army's analytic capability, and has responsibility for integrating Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facility (DOTMLPF) capabilities.

While the proposed organization would fall under TRADOC and support its current training and leader development roles, it would have a charter giving it a "direct support" relationship to the DA Director of Training to support its training and leader development policy and programming responsibilities.

5. Enhance ATLD and Army-Wide IT Architectures to Improve Data Collection and Analysis

An improved IT architecture would provide better support to ATLD analytical processes by increasing the amount of information available and by reducing the workload of collecting and analyzing that information. For a variety of reasons, we do not see any potential for a large near-term improvement, but taking steps to synchronize and focus the ongoing development of the Army Training Information System could result in improved support. To obtain broader support for the longer term, these efforts could move in the direction that IT architecture throughout the Department of Defense (DoD) is evolving toward a generic new approach known as service-oriented architecture (SOA), which holds the potential to provide greatly improved interoperability among systems.

6. Evolve Emerging ATLD Governance Structures and Processes to Improve Focus on Operational Force Readiness

Our research indicates a need to revise the strategic architecture to support ARFORGEN processes more effectively, to involve U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and other unit-owning commands in ATLD decision processes, and to achieve a better balance across ATLD programs.

We outline three major directions for improving strategic governance:

- Re-establish an over-arching Training and Leader Development General Officer Steering Committee (GOSC) to support Army efforts to integrate training and leader development strategies and programs.
- Formalize FORSCOM's role as the Army's Readiness Core Enterprise to include a stated role of representing the operational force with a commensurate level of authority for influencing decisions and recommendations.
- Streamline governance forums to increase the ability of the operational force to effectively contribute to ATLD processes.

Implementing Suggested Changes

The directions we suggest would require major change, but are reasonable, feasible, and would provide significant improvement. We realize that reasonable alternatives exist, but the overall

point is that significant changes in ATLD management processes are needed to focus more directly on operational force readiness and to foster resource stewardship through a more objective, analytical, cost-benefit approach. Compromise and rational risk assessment will be required to shape and resource revised ATLD strategies, and an objective cost-benefit approach to developing and selecting options for improvement will be key to making these decisions. Once in place, such an approach could better support both Program Objective Memorandum planning and short-term ATLD decisions, such as reacting to changed budget allocations in the budget and execution years.

- Moving in these directions could start in the near term and provide benefits, with an incremental implementation approach being used to continually improve data-collection and analysis processes. Moreover, the Army can and should make this incremental movement using existing organizational resources, without needing to add to them.

Broader Implications

Our examination reinforces the obvious conclusion that achieving needed training and leader development levels involves decisions and actions both inside and outside the TTPEG. Manning, equipping, and installation policy and programming decisions affect training and leader development, and resources from all PEGs provide critical support to ATLD activities. Goals among PEGs can conflict and require difficult decisions about what is best overall for the Army enterprise, so cross-PEG coordination is needed, with an especially important area being synchronization between the Training and Manning PEGs.

A reasonable argument is that the current operating environment has increased the scope of training and leader development requirements, justifying increased claims on resources. Nevertheless, the ATLD community has historically had difficulties presenting objective analysis to support balanced resource decisions among training, manning, and equipping functions. Absent such analysis, the result can be decisions to accept risks in training, because there is no real way to display analytically the effects on readiness. The training and leader development community must be able to make its case in a way that better informs the leadership of the risks and rewards of the hard decisions needed to take a synchronized Army Enterprise view across PEGs. This will, in turn, require that decisions across all PEGs consider training and leader development impacts and needs, and also that TTPEG decisions must consider broader readiness needs.