

M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks, AAVP7 RAM/RS amphibious assault vehicles, and M88A1 Hercules from 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit train during exercise in 5th Fleet area of responsibility, April 23, 2013 (U.S. Marine Corps/Edward Guevara)



The Pace of Change

The ability of the Joint Force to anticipate, recognize, and adapt to change—and to innovate within a rapidly changing environment—is absolutely critical to mission success.

As I reflect back on four decades of service in uniform, it is clear that the pace of change has accelerated significantly. Few things illustrate this more than when I compare my experiences as a lieutenant to those of today's young officers. As a lieutenant, I used the same cold weather gear my dad had in Korea 27 years earlier. The radios I used as a platoon commander were the same uncovered PRC-25s from Vietnam. The jeeps we drove would have been familiar

to veterans of World War II and, to be honest, so would the tactics. Despite incremental improvements in weapons and the dawn of the nuclear age, a lieutenant from World War II or Korea would have been comfortable with the exercises I participated in during the 1970s. My infantry company still attacked two-up and one-back on a 300-meter frontage and defended across 1,500 meters. If things were not going as planned, I could quickly find my subordinate leaders, look them in the eye, and make the necessary corrections.

This is not the case on today's battlefield. In fact, there are very few things that have not changed dramatically in the Joint Force since I was a lieutenant.

I was reminded of this several years ago when I visited a Marine lieutenant in Afghanistan. It took nearly an hour by helicopter to travel from the battalion headquarters to his outpost in Golestan, in Farah Province. This platoon commander and his 60 Marines were 40 miles from the adjacent platoons on their left and right. His Marines were wearing state-of-the-art protective equipment and driving vehicles unrecognizable to Marines or Soldiers discharged just 5 years earlier. They were supported by the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, which provided precision fires at a range of 60 kilometers. The standard for me as a lieutenant was a 105-millimeter cannon at a range of 11 kilometers. Moreover,

the platoon at Golestan received and transmitted voice, data, and imagery via a satellite in real time. Compared to my experience as a regimental commander in Iraq just 5 years earlier, this was hard to believe. When we crossed the line of departure in 2003, there were only four systems in an entire Marine division that provided that capability.

Similar examples can be found across the Joint Force. New technologies are fielded faster than ever before. Leaders at lower and lower levels utilize enabling capabilities once reserved for the highest echelons of command. Tactics, techniques, and procedures are adapted from one deployment cycle to the next.

This accelerated pace of change is inextricably linked to the speed of war today. Proliferation of advanced technologies that transcend geographic boundaries and span multiple domains makes the character of conflict extraordinarily dynamic. Information operations, space and cyber capabilities, and ballistic missile technology have accelerated the speed of war, making conflict today faster and more complex than at any point in history.

While the cost of failure at the outset of conflict has always been high, in past conflicts there were opportunities to recover if something went wrong. In World War I and II, despite slow starts by the Allies, we adapted throughout both wars and emerged victorious. The same was true in Korea. Today, the ability to recover from early missteps is greatly reduced. The speed of war has changed, and the nature of these changes makes the global security environment even more unpredictable, dangerous, and unforgiving. Decision space has collapsed and so our processes must adapt to keep pace with the speed of war.

The challenge we face with North Korea highlights this point. There was a time, not long ago, when we planned for a conflict that might be contained to the peninsula. But today, North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missile, cyber, and space capabilities could quickly threaten the homeland and our allies in the Asia-Pacific region. Deterring and, if necessary, defeating a threat from North

Korea requires the Joint Force to be capable of nearly instant integration across regions, domains, and functions.

This means more than just fielding cutting-edge technologies that ensure a competitive advantage across all domains—something we must continue to do. Keeping pace with the speed of war means changing the way we approach challenges, build strategy, make decisions, and develop leaders.

As we approach challenges, we can no longer consider capabilities such as information operations, space, and cyber as an afterthought. These essential aspects of today's dynamic environment cannot be laminated on to the plans we have already developed. They must be mainstreamed in all we do and built into our thinking from the ground up.

The Joint Force must also develop integrated strategies that address transregional, multidomain, and multifunctional threats. By viewing challenges holistically, we can identify gaps and seams early and develop strategies to mitigate risk before the onset of a crisis. We have adapted the next version of the National Military Strategy to guide these initiatives.

Our decisionmaking processes and planning constructs must also be flexible enough to deliver options at the speed of war. This begins with developing a common understanding of the threat, providing a clear understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the Joint Force, and then establishing a framework that enables senior leaders to make decisions in a timely manner.

Underpinning our ability to keep pace with the speed of war are adaptive and creative leaders. In today's complex and dynamic environment, the Joint Force depends on leaders who anticipate change, recognize opportunity, and adapt to meet new challenges. That is why we continue to prioritize leader development by adapting doctrine, integrating exercise plans, revising training guidance, and retooling the learning continuum. These efforts are designed to change the face of military learning and develop leaders capable of thriving at the speed of war.

Adaptation is an imperative for the Joint Force. The character of war in the

21st century has changed, and if we fail to keep pace with the speed of war, we will lose the ability to compete.

The Joint Force is full of the most talented men and women in the world, and it is our responsibility as leaders to unleash their initiative to adapt and innovate to meet tomorrow's challenges. We will get no credit tomorrow for what we did yesterday. JFQ

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