

People, Ideas, and Things in that Order: Some Observations

Greg Wilcox
12 October 2012
Boyd Symposium
Quantico, VA
wilcox@wdc.sri.com

Prologue

I was struck by the announcement by the Army of up to a 80,000 plus man drawdown over the next 5 years late last year.¹ This was the reaction to the President's announcement of July 2011 of troop withdrawals from Afghanistan by 40,000 by the end of 2012.² Since that time, I have seen various new figures of the impending Reduction in Force (RIF) upwards of 120,000 soldiers.

My belief at the time was that the decision makers got it all wrong. So Hypothesis #1 is that the Army decision makers have Boyd's principle: "People, Ideas, and Things, In that Order" reversed in favor of Things, ideas, and people.

Clearly this is emotionally disturbing, as it is my belief that the U.S. Army has the most professional combat experienced Army in its entire history, and it has taken a long time, a half-century, to build this incredible fighting machine made up of all-volunteer professional soldiers with high morale and esprit de corps

Yet, Boyd warns not to react without analysis/synthesis and a new look

So I went back to basics: where did this Boyd axiom, "People, Ideas, and Things in that Order" derive?

I could not find any reference to "People, Ideas, and Things" in any of Boyd's presentations, and so I sent out an extended Boyd "help desk" query to several of the acolytes. Chuck Spinney came back with the response that he and everyone else had heard it 1,000 times from Boyd, but it was not written. Tom

¹ Viola Gienger and Roxana Tiron, "Pentagon May Oust Troops Involuntarily To Meet Reductions In Budget Plan", Bloomberg News, Feb 13, 2012, Bloomberg.com: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-13/pentagon-may-oust-troops-involuntarily-under-budget-reductions.htm>

² U.S. Dept. of Defense Public Affairs Office, Jim Garamone, "Obama Announces Troop Reductions, Way Forward in Afghanistan", American Forces Press Network, June 22, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=64428>

Christie confirmed that he had heard it from Boyd at least a 1,000 times, but as far as he knew, there was no written reference or Boyd presentation that recorded this thought.

Winston Wheeler, however, remembered that John Boyd had made a presentation in front of the Military Reform Caucus in 1991, and he sent me a video tape of that presentation that Boyd expounded on the meaning of the principle.³

With the explanation established, that it was a Boyd principle he preached along with his many other lessons proscriptions, what is the significance of this message to the current situation of a vast drawdown of military personnel – with the appearance of trying to hang onto the vast hardware and software “things” in the Acquisition System?

PEOPLE

The People concept includes leadership, professionalism, and values (morals), and recruiting.

The professional Army versus the draft Army: A little history

VOLAR got its start through a study called Project VOLAR in 1971. The intent was to shift from a draft Army to a professional army, and in large part it succeeded beyond the wildest dreams. The fundamental idea was to reduce the size of the Active Duty Army based on the many problems of a draft army experienced in Vietnam. The move to a Volunteer Army, a more professional motivated army, was instituted in 1976 with most of the draftees gone by 1980. The difference was the price for an All Volunteer Army. Fewer soldiers cost about the same as for the draft army of about 3 times the size. The real difference was in quality.

While the focus of this concern is the Active Duty Army, we cannot forget that there is the Reserve Components which have mostly been made up of volunteers from the beginning.

³ CNN Tape Provided by Winslow Wheeler, Project on Government Oversight (POGO) web site, Nick Schwellenbach, “Air Force Colonel John Boyd’s House Armed Services Committee Testimony”, March 26, 2011, file: <http://pogoblog.typepad.com/pogo/2011/03/air-force-colonel-john-boyds-1991-house-armed-services-committee-testimony.html>

One could say that even with a draft Army, the NCO corps and most of the Active Duty officer corps were all voluntary soldiers – or professionals – at least since WWII.

Personnel costs in a VOLAR Army are the sticky points. The issue is can we afford a VOLAR Army? Further, what will we do if we have to go to a draft if we find we cannot fight 2 MRCs with a limited-size Army? The BIG Three:

- Pay
- Retirement
- Health care

There is no escaping the escalating costs of a VOLAR army, but can there be a balance if you have to buy fewer tanks, truck, weapons, cots, and other equipment for a smaller professional army as opposed to a bigger draft army?

But because the Army of 2010 was comparatively small (482,000) and the Army Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN) kept calling for more and more soldiers and the end strength figures rose dramatically over the last ten years (565,000), we have experienced a serious problem: How much can we afford without resorting to a draft?

Promotion of unqualified officers

For about 10 years, the promotion rate from major to lieutenant colonel stood around 98%. The most recent promotion list the rate was 94% which is still too high.

Don Vandergriff, among others, has continually stated that we have too many officers, and we are not really selective in those we choose to lead. This is not a problem of the draft army versus the VOLAR, it is a problem of the way the personnel system works or doesn't work.⁴ Don has pointed out that the Human Resources Command virtually runs the U.S. Army with archaic personnel models developed a century ago.

Boyd would demand that the first thing to go ought to be the top heavy general officer corps. The Army has 7 four star generals and by law 250 generals total. It depends on whom you believe, but some references show that the Army

⁴ Don Vandergriff, Ed., Spirit Blood and Treasure: The American Cost of Battle in the 21st Century, Novato: Presidio Press, 2001; The Path to Victory, Adaptive Leadership Training: America's Army and the Revolution in Human Affairs, Presidio Press: Novato, 2002.

actually has over 300 general officers.⁵ Overall, the Department of Defense has almost 1,000 general/flag officers serving on active duty. The Army has had an increase of 13 three and four star general officers since 2001.⁶ This suggests that we have about one general for every 1,500 soldiers. If brigades were commanded by brigadier generals, this would not be too bad a statistic, but brigades in the U.S. Army are commanded by colonels.

Leadership breaks down and why it breaks down

Toxic Leaders

The Army has developed a class of leaders we think of as toxic. These are the Courtney Massengales of the 21st Century.⁷

There are many other reasons for toxic leadership, but careerism is included in a long list of reasons emanating from studies of the phenomenon.⁸ Other reasons include the impersonal e-mail access to subordinates, and the question of professional competency on the part of toxic leaders. GI Wilson wrote eloquently about this toxic subject in *The Pentagon Labyrinth*. Speaking of peacetime military service, GI said:

[Careerists] are so prevalent because bureaucracies are in effect designed by and for careerists propagated by reams of regulations and layers of superfluous commands. Bureaucracies give careerists a place “to be somebody” rather than an opportunity to do something. They are promoted because of a zero defect record of playing it safe, making no controversial decisions and requiring others to do the same.⁹

⁵ Andrew Tilghman, *Army Times*, “‘Brass Creep’ Begins to Reverse Course”, Gannett Publications, September 10, 2012, p. 20.

⁶ Dina Rasor, “The Pentagon’s Biggest Overrun: Too Many Generals”, *Solutions: Making Government Work*, 5 Jan 2012 04:06 <http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/5920:the-pentagons-biggest-overrun-way-too-many-generals>.

⁷ See Anton Myrer, *Once an Eagle.*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2002. The conflict is between careerism, portrayed by Courtney Massengale, and service to country, portrayed by Sam Damon. The book written at the height of the Vietnam War ends in the success of Courtney Massengale.

⁸ U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, “Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army”, Colonel Denise F. Williams, United States Army, 18 March 2005, Carlisle Barracks.

⁹ G.I. Wilson, Essay 5: “Careerism”, writing in *The Pentagon Labrynth: 10 Short Essays to Help You Through It*, ed. Winslow T. Wheeler, Straus Military Reform Project, Center for Defense Information, World Security Institute, February 2011, p. 46 .

The break-down is a failure of military culture and values. Can we oust the toxic leaders? The answer is still out on that one in my opinion. Boyd himself couldn't do any more than find ways around what might be called toxic leadership in the U.S. Air Force, but ultimately there is some hope that we can achieve a moral victory and reduce the more poisonous leaders.

Trust

The entire concept of a professional army hinges on this one word, "trust", but do we have it? GEN Martin Dempsey, writing about Mission Command, states that "Smaller Units enabled to conduct decentralized operations at the tactical level with operational/strategic implications will be increasingly the norm."¹⁰ This is nothing really new, GEN Charles Krulak, 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, wrote extensively about the "Strategic Corporal" in the late 1990s. Yet have we achieved this level of trust? The strategic surveys of many years would say no.

Writing in the Harvard Business Review's October 2012 issue, Tom Ricks addresses the question in an article: "What Ever Happened to Accountability?".¹¹ He examines the U.S. Army from pre-WWII until the Vietnam War and finds that while GEN George Marshall was ruthless in enforcing accountability by firing generals who could not or did not perform, that accountability had gone out the window by the Vietnam war where generals were booted up rather than out. Ricks rightly points out that weeding out the senior leadership that does not perform is no longer a part of American military culture.

Direction of the Army

In December 2011, the Army surveyed 17,000 commissioned and non-commissioned officers¹²

26% agreed with the statement that the Army is headed in the right direction. Compared to the 2007 survey where 33% believed the Army was headed in the right direction at that time. While the full results are not public, this surely has

¹⁰ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman, "Mission Command White Paper", GEN Martin E. Dempsey, 3 April 2012

¹¹ Thomas Ricks, "What Ever Happened to Accountability", Harvard Business Review, October 2012. <http://hbr.org/2012/10/what-ever-happened-to-accountability/ar/1>

¹² Jeff Black, NBC News, "Faith in Army's Direction Falls to a New All-Time Low, Survey Shows," usnews.nbcnews.com, August 23, 2012.

to point directly to a people problem and reflects poorly on the military leadership at the highest levels.

But what about the National Guard and Army Reserves?

One might ask, do we need two armies? The fact of the matter is: we already have many more than two armies: a conventional army, and an unconventional army (SOF), the Reserve Army, the National Guard, and some state militias. And I would even say that there is an Army within the Active Duty Army: The Acquisition Corps.

The “Acquisition Corps” is beyond the reach of even the Chief of Staff of the Army. It reports to the Assistant Secretary of the Army as a career branch. Pardon the sarcasm, but the Acquisition Corps may be the only reserves the U.S. Army has left to plug the gaps in any future conflicts because of the protected species of the Acquisition Corps versus the professional soldier in the ranks where the rubber meets the road. The fact is that no one is addressing the many problems of multiple armies. The Army pretends that this is the “TOTAL ARMY” when in fact, it is unhinged.

As to the issue of sequestration, GEN Dempsey said, ““If we don’t get the people right, the rest of it won’t matter. We’re going to put the country at risk,”¹³

IDEAS

Boyd made clear that people create ideas and ideas are directly related to strategy, operational art (or grand tactics), and tactics. There is no doubt that there is a very delicate balance between people and things, both of which huge dollar items, but ideas are not costly unless they prove to be very wrong. Churchill’s idea of a landing on the coast of Gallipoli in World War I was a disastrous idea which cost 300,000 casualties on the Allied side with 90,000 KIA. So ideas can be costly in other ways than budgets and programs. And just maybe this concept should put people, ideas, and things into better perspective.

¹³ Andrew Lapin, “Dempsey Maps Sequestration Cuts at Pentagon”, <http://www.govexec.com/voices/andrew-lapin/2334/>; 6/20/2012 1:15.

Our friend Frans Osinga dedicated a great part of his book on Boyd to proving that Boyd was a strategic thinker as well as an operational/tactical thinker.¹⁴ Boyd clearly saw strength in looking at the ideas of others and other disciplines to see how their ideas applied to warfare. Osinga proved the strategic value of Boyd's ideas, not just the tactical applications. And it is instructive to note that in a recent document on Mission Command, The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) General Martin Dempsey mentioned Boyd by name in a 5 page document on how to think – crediting his OODA Loop concept.¹⁵

In Vietnam, our strategy was containment of Communism and within Vietnam, winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese to accept democracy. On the other side, Ho's strategy was wearing us down by using Mao's three stage strategy. Over time and through trial and error, Ho, Giap, and the NVN leadership found the strategic vulnerability of America, our center of gravity, to be the American public. This war might have been called the first TV war. The information presented nightly on TV was one-sided and clearly influential to an entire generation. It brought the war into the home. It brought the casualties, both Vietnamese and American, into the home as never before.

General Westmoreland's operational art was to find and fix the enemy and then kill them with firepower. Unfortunately, the terrain was not conducive to cornering an elusive enemy who used tunnels and camouflage as their third dimension to our control of the air.

In Iraq, the strategic goal was ostensibly to take away weapons of mass destruction from the ever-more tyrannical Saddam Hussein. Other reasons have been suggested such as the economics of oil, but after the march up, and the capture of Saddam, American strategy had to change. It was a war against Al Qaida and the rest of the Iraqis. Without understanding the consequences, we chose an end-state which was a democratic regime made up of both Shia and Sunni living in democratic Iraq. As the insurgency grew, strategy became to be secondary to force protection. But out of all this, the United States Army with the help of the Marine Corps and a lone Australian, David Kilcullen, there grew a doctrine for fighting a counterinsurgency that was, in my opinion a very worthy effort. But doctrine is not strategy. The Iraqis, both Shia and Sunni considered all foreigners as invaders and worse, infidels. It tended to solidify the war until the Iranians taught the Shia to pretend to comply. With Sadr relatively under control, the Americans convinced some of the Sunni to join the coalition against the Al Qaida in Iraq. This strategy would have worked had the

¹⁴ Frans P.B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

¹⁵ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman, "Mission Command White Paper", op. cit. p. 4

Americans included the Shia, but they did not. Al Qaida used the information networks provided to spread the word and to recruit. They video-taped every IED event and put it up on the net for all to see. One might call this a tactic, but in fact, it was a strategy as it was a successful recruiting tool worldwide. Moreover it taught other Islamic radicals that they could effectively fight the mighty armies of the Crusaders. Wisely, America declared success and got out of Iraq – similar to Vietnam.

The other tar baby, Afghanistan, is still a war to reckon with. The Taliban and many tribes have been very resilient in this long war, and expect they will dominate again politically after the “NATO” forces leave. The strategic goals of America in Afghanistan are still unclear. There is no oil in Afghanistan. There may be precious metals, but they are difficult and expensive to extract, but to establish a democratic regime and expect the many diverse Afghani tribes to become pacific under such a regime is too far-fetched for even a schoolboy to believe. It was in Afghanistan that the American technique of using drones to take out the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership came into the forefront of tactics and this had unforeseen strategic implications. The Islamist radicals continually used the Pakistani border as a sanctuary. Well over 3 million Afghans had fled Afghanistan in the Russian–Afghanistan war. Most refugees lived in refugee camps in Pakistan, and only about half are reported to have returned to Afghanistan after that war. The support of the Pakistani ISI to the Afghani warlords in the Russian–Afghanistan war is well documented.

American commanders started using the drones for reconnaissance in the 2004 time frame in both Iraq and Afghanistan. As the platform developed into a weapons carrier as well as a reconnaissance tool, the American military started using the drones or Unmanned Aerial Systems to also drop ordnance on the enemy that were identified both within Afghanistan and Pakistan in a deliberate focus on killing the leadership. Many have been killed by death from the sky, but the drone is considered particularly hateful by the Muslims as a means of killing enemies. The second and third order effects of the use of drones are still not understood.

Rex Rivalo, a former analyst at the Institute of Defense Analysis, was contracted to study the war against IEDs in Iraq. His report to General Casey concluded that we were going after the wrong end of the enemy. He said that the leadership was the wrong target. We should be going after the farmers and others who were planting the bombs, not the leaders. His claim was that we wanted the old leadership to stay in position as we understood their tactics and the Iraqi and Afghani followers were unhappy with their leadership. By killing off the leadership we introduced younger and more dynamic leaders whose tactics we did not know or understand, and the IEDs and attacks became more

intense. Rex said that if we made it clear that anyone caught planting an IED would be killed, the word would get around pretty fast, and the Islamists would be blamed.

As we try to withdraw from Afghanistan, we might say that Rex Rivalo may have been right. There does not seem to have been much of a change – even with the death of Bin Laden.

It is almost like the United States is adopting another RMA technique of killing the enemy as our strategy. In fact, we have yet to understand the power of words, images, and social media. The pen is indeed a very powerful weapon, but I personally fear we simply do not know how to use it effectively. This is another IDEA that is better understood by our adversaries than by us.

Retired Marine Gunny Sergeant John Poole has spent a considerable effort trying to educate American military forces on the threat to the Nation in many different books, many of which are on the bookshelves of our PX, but apparently not well read. One of John Poole's great suggestions was that our Special Forces be used to train our conventional U.S. Army in unconventional warfare when that is the fight to be fought. Poole's books appear to be focused on tactics, but a closer read will reveal a very Boydian approach to strategy for defense of the United States.

West Point and many ROTC programs are today teaching adaptive leadership methodology; a technique to teach young leaders not what to think, but how to think in crises, and it has become institutionalized in the Army's Basic Officers' Leadership Course – much to the credit of Don Vandergriff. How to think in war goes far beyond doctrine, which when repeated gives the enemy knowledge of what we will do next and thus anticipate. The trick is to continuously do the unexpected and out-OODA loop the adversary. One can question whether or not we are able to execute Boyd's OODA loops in either tactics or strategy today. The courses in Adaptive Leadership will help, but it is personal understanding and creative ideas that must spring from individuals and leaders to turn engagements into victories.

I have to tell you about a serious Marine I met via e-mail only a short year ago at Chuck Spinney's recommendation. You will hear from him later in this symposium. He is Captain Paul Tremblay Jr., Commanding Officer Co B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines who described his use of Boyd in Afghanistan in an after

action report so riveting, I could not put it down.¹⁶ He actually put Boyd's ideas into practice in Afghanistan, and effectively countered the enemy. Listen well to his story.

One Man's Measure of Effectiveness

One of my measures of effectiveness of how the Army thinks is the post bookstore and military books available in the PX. Recently I had a chance to look at the bookstore in Lewis and Clark Hall at Ft Leavenworth. Guess what: Not one book on John Boyd. No Chet Richards; No Don Vandergriff, but there were a few books by John Poole, one by Bruce Gudmundson, On Artillery. The military books in the Military Clothing Sales stores at Fort Belvoir and Fort Myer are embarrassingly limited in quality and quantity. Compare this with the book stores on Marine Corps Bases. I have seen the Marine Corps book stores at Quantico, Lejeune, and 29 Palms, and they are marvelous. I commend the USMC book stores to you all. These book stores confirm my thought that the Marines are serious thinkers about war. I am not so sure about my own Army.

Ideas imply the need for healthy debate. In a democratic society, this is commonplace, but in an Army, it is not so much. Top down leadership and a very structured bureaucracy has little tolerance for debate. The Army seems to be uncomfortable with thinking about war rather than doing. But do not think I'm going to let the Marine Corps off that easily. Despite being the torch carrier for Boyd's ideas and putting maneuver warfare into action, the Marines have made mistakes along the way.

Still the question is does the Army really think?

The new ideas on Air-Sea Battle in the Pacific Rim are offered up by the Air Force and the Navy as a scam to keep defense budgets high. It is clear that the focus is on hardware. It reminds me of poking the eye of the tiger. The Army has had to come in late, but the Army message is "Me too, Me too!". Is this a serious strategy? Should not it be debated not only in military circles but also in political and economic arenas? I see it as being taken as a serious strategy being offered up without such debate. The unintended consequences of such a strategy will be the start of a new Cold (or maybe even hot) War. In other words, I smell a rat.

¹⁶ Capt. P. D. Tremblay, Jr., USMC, Commanding Officer, B-1/6 Infantry, "Black Iron After-Action Report for Operation Enduring Freedom 11.2 for the period of July 2011 - January 2012. Marine Corps Lessons Learned Program.

The institutional Army appears to me to be all about keeping the debate at the fringes and defend the ramparts of Clausewitzian theories of war on the European plains. The Strategic Studies Institute at the Army War College seems to be the defenders of the realm – despite the fact our troops have seen the elephant and it does not conform much to that we have learned from Clausewitz other than the fog of war.

The top down direction of the Army is toward a “Balanced Force” meaning a conventional army capable of reacting to a Major Regional Conflict (MRC) with traditional forces and firepower. Once the Army withdraws from Afghanistan, the danger is that the NEW IDEA will be to forget unconventional war (similar to the post-Vietnam era) and think about the more comfortable things that we think we do well. Martin van Creveld has said that there are solid military reasons why modern regular forces are all but useless for fighting “what is fast becoming the dominant form of war in our age.”¹⁷

But if the Army really wanted a more “balanced force” would that not require more soldiers and more brigades than we currently have to fight a conventional war? Is the thinking convoluted or merely reactive to budget pressure?

And then along came this concept of Cyberspace and the confusion of non-military and military operations within the ether, both defensive operations to protect systems and infrastructure and offensive operations to shut someone else down or to deceive, disrupt, deny, or damage an adversary. Could Cyberwar be the Blitzkrieg of the future (or of the present)? How do we integrate cyber operations into conventional military tactics, operations, and strategy? What does it mean organizationally, financially, and militarily? Is it another attempt to jack up military budgets, especially intelligence budgets which are relatively free from scrutiny? And what about that porous border to our South? Posse Comitatus?

The jury is still out on the Army being able to provide ideas to contribute to strategy and tactics. There may have been a golden age where the Army actually teamed with the Marine Corps in thinking about small wars, but that era seems to have passed.

I have to suggest that we all re-read T.X. Hammes, put in a larger context of war, and consider the DIME equation of diplomatic, intelligence, military, and economic measures for application to any foreign policy (or even internet action) with the military option being the last resort. And even when

¹⁷ Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York: The Free Press, 1991, p. 29.

committed, military forces must be fully supported by those other elements in any form of warfare.¹⁸

THINGS

And the “things” of an army, meaning equipment, facilities, and weapons, come last in the Boyd Trinity. It was suggested by the G-3 of the Army that there has to be a balance between people, ideas, and things, and that balance is Readiness.¹⁹ Boyd would not agree. If there is to be a balance, it must be heavily weighted to having the right people, leaders and soldiers, to carry out the mission of defending the nation. Unfortunately, defense industry has convinced us that technology is more important than people. The Army (and the other Services) have been suckered in by the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) crowd. The enticing promise of technology lifting the fog of war is too appealing to many to seriously examine the promises and the reality.²⁰

“Machines don’t fight wars, people do, and they use their minds!” (Boyd Saying). Yet it appears that we have it reversed today – “the drone syndrome” “Let machines fight wars”. A recent study by Stanford and NYU suggests, however, that we have not yet figured out the second and third order effects of the use of drones for instruments to carry out attacks on enemy leaders in Pakistan.²¹

The military mantra of “zero defects” has turned into “zero U.S. casualties”, and force protection is the buzz word meaning expensive translation to “things”.

Recently, a very brave lieutenant wrote an article in the Cavalry and Armor Journal questioning the wisdom of force protection versus agility of a counter-insurgency force.²² Here is the essence of the debate. Can a 1LT challenge the Generals who subscribe to more body armor and vehicles like the MRAP – even

¹⁸ Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and The Stone: On War in the 21st Century*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zenith Press, 2004.

¹⁹ Paul McLeary and Michelle Tan, *Army Times*, “A Refitted Force”, September 10, 2012, p. 20. LTG John Campbell states “The key is readiness” in discussing the coming drawdown.

²⁰ Cf.: Admiral Bill Owens with Ed Offley, *Lifting the Fog of War*, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2000.

²¹ International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic, Stanford University and Global Justice Clinic, NYU School of Law, “Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians from U.S. Drone Practices in Pakistan”, September 2012, <http://livingunderdrones.org/>

²² 1LT Kaleb S. Blankenship, *Cavalry and Armor Journal*, “Protection vs. Agility: Which is Better for Full-Spectrum Operations, July–August 2012, pp. 26–28.

if it results in an inability to close with and destroy the enemy? If not, can we survive as a thinking Army?

The conventional Army has been quite successful in the recent decade in terms of acquiring the largest share of the budget pie – which was never the case in the past 40 years. But the conventional Army squandered a lot of funds to buy things that were beyond the capabilities of industry to produce or provide – such as the ill-fated Future Combat System, the retinue of which the Army is trying to dress up as the “Ground Combat System, Land Warrior System, and other names not yet invented.

The conventional Army has bitten into the RMA apple of high technology, and it tastes good. Only the unconventional Army has been able to begin to cope with this new and dominant type of war, and that is the SOF. Would Boyd have supported the unconventional SOF and their Title 11 status and funding? I think so. He recognized the need for unconventional thinkers and organizations. That is, he recognized the need for \$ for outside the box thinking.

But was John Boyd anti-technology? No! Far from it. He won several prestigious scientific achievement awards for his innovative energy maneuverability theory that shaped the designs of the F-15 and F-16. He was an applied engineer and his theories centered on the use of technology available in a unique and transitional way. Robert Coram²³ describes best how Boyd created the F-16, which he later rejected as it was transformed into something well beyond what Boyd envisioned. The F-16 remains, however as one of the great interceptors of the World. It was Pierre Sprey, co-father of the F-16 along with Boyd, who, in what is now DOD PA&E, developed the greatest ground support aircraft the Army has ever known in the A-10.

Would Boyd have supported the Army’s Future Combat System in the 90s? Probably not. He would have developed a much more practical version of what tank-like system that was quick shooting, easy to control individually and in groups (including communications), tactically fast, but strategically mobile and easy to repair and support logistically, and perhaps most important, easy to train on. I think this idea parallels his concept of designing F-16.

The Army brass, like most other Service Senior leaders, has vested interests in keeping the defense industry happy and prosperous. There is no question that

²³ Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002.

the Armed Forces rely heavily on industry to provide the weapon systems that are used in defense of the nation, but in so many cases, the Government, and particularly the military, has not been a good steward of protecting the dollars provided from mis-use. We all know the stories of senior military officers stepping out of uniform to mufti and sitting on defense industry boards and committees with very lucrative commissions. The recent regulations established to cut down on “mentoring” both the military and industry at the same time and being paid by both has not really affected the practice.²⁴

The largest of the military lobby organizations is the Association of the U.S. Army. The sponsors of the AUSA read like a who’s who list of defense industry. Semi-annual conferences and exhibitions act as a money laundering operation for AUSA to push for the industry’s programs as an independent non-profit organization ostensibly representing a large majority of soldiers in the US Army Active Duty and Reserve Components.

CONCLUSIONS

It might appear that I’m very anti-U.S. Army. Nothing could be further from the truth. The reason I am writing this essay is to make our Army better, a more capable thinking Army that will be up to any mission anytime, anywhere. But....

If we line up the arguments about priorities within the Army, it seems clear to me that the Army is definitely not placing the priorities in the right places. Yes, people are expensive, but we need to retain the right people, select the right commanders, and nurture the right thinkers. It all starts with people and the Personnel Management Systems. Step one is to revamp the OPMS totally. Start with cutting the number of generals in the Army. We have to learn to be selective in choosing leaders at every rank and grade. No more mass promotions of everybody. With the right people the good ideas ought to start flowing, provided the bureaucracy can adapt. Debate has to be encouraged, and this starts with happy hour, camaraderie, and trust. It starts here in this room with people of imagination. It starts when some have the balls to stand up and take a position contrary to the PC version of how things are done.

The majority of the cuts to the budget ought to be felt in the area of technology where we have wasted so much treasure. One place to start in this regard is to field a rigorous and ruthless operational test and evaluation activity to weed out the techno junk. Operational tests should be done with operators in free play exercises and red teams should be set up to see if they can make the systems

²⁴ Tom Vanden Brook, “Full Disclosure Required for Military Mentors,” USA Today, Oct 14, 2010 6:05:53 EDT

fail. New hardware should be tested against the hardware it is replacing to determine if any improvement is worth the cost. I believe strongly, with this kind of decision making discipline, which puts the interests of the grunts at the pointy end of the spear ahead of the interests of the contractors the Army can absorb a majority of these draconian budget cuts in Acquisition programs that are under scrutiny already, and be the better for it. We have to re-look the VOLAR concept in terms of what we have and where we might be going.

In this context, I now think that sequestration and budget cuts in defense spending are a good idea! With the right people, we can get back into reading, debating, and thinking about war. We need to study what has happened in the Middle East and our potential role. We need to determine if we should base a new strategy in the Pacific and exactly why we need to do this. We need to divorce the Military-Industrial-Congressional Triad and focus on Boyd's Trinity of Priorities: People, Ideas and Things, in that order.

DISCLAIMER: The thoughts and ideas expressed in this paper are entirely my own. They do not reflect the position of either the U.S. Army or SRI International.