



How Can We Prepare for Something We Can't Predict?

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INTRODUCTION (Siovahn Daly)

We've all heard every excuse under the sun as to why something hasn't been done on time: "I was having IT issues", or "I've just been too busy." Well, I'm afraid to say that those excuses aren't viable anymore. Every future battlespace we may be employed in will be different, challenging and undoubtedly chaotic, and we won't be able to fall back on excuses to justify why we weren't ready. Luckily for us, the best way to combat the unknown is to be prepared.

Every member is responsible for their own degree of preparation through Individual Readiness, Professional Military Education (PME), or role currency standards, and every Unit is responsible for upholding certain preparedness or standby requirements. So you could say that we are "ready", right? But can you think of any Squadron in Air Force that could be deployed at a moment's notice, with ALL of its members, required stores and/or aircraft? The answer isn't "no", it's "we could try". But we can change that.

We can better prepare our people through improved education in the joint military space and encourage greater clarity and palatability from our strategic intent. Let's train as joint forces, in challenging domains, with no forward planning; shift our perspective on the future force in order to get comfortable being uncomfortable. If we change our methods now, we won't need to predict what's coming because we will be prepared for anything. So let's begin with joint education ...

EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL, AT EVERY RANK (Dearnna McEvoy)

As military members, we are passionate about delivering air and space power as part of the joint force and developing an intelligent and skilled workforce. However, there are areas where we could further develop to aid in achieving strategic effects. I'm sure everyone has had some sort of exposure to PME, but what about collective education in the joint space?

As a military, we could further educate our junior ranks across all three services, paving the way for an innovative and knowledgeable joint force. Giving our members access to joint training will help in continual development and progression throughout our military careers. Why should we have to wait until a certain rank to be further educated on topics such as strategic intent, leadership in the joint space, innovation and joint cohesion? The Air Force Strategy (AFSTRAT) states that we need to emphasise ongoing air and space power learning and development, yet nothing is mentioned about joint service initiatives. Could we benefit from creating Joint Strategic Objectives incorporating learning and development for all three services?

Speaking from experience as a junior member, more opportunities to learn about the Defence Force as a whole

would aid immensely in professional development and overall strategic understanding. PME shouldn't be the start or the end. How can we be prepared for anything when our knowledge only extends to the limit of what is taught to us at our rank level and within a single service? We cannot effectively lead from the bottom if we don't know enough to lead or what the strategic intent is ...

WHAT'S THE INTENT HERE? (Adam Dahmer)

Effective, timely and accurate are a few of the keys to success of any high performing team and all high performing organisations when communicating strategic intent. In line with AFSTRAT, all methods of communication moving forward must be both relatable and relevant at all levels within the Air Force workforce. Elongated professional development profiles and training continuums are no longer conducive with strategic timelines and preparedness directives.

Economy of effort, a fundamental principle of war, must be considered as the metric when disseminating information to all Force Elements. This is demonstrated by the ease and simplicity that a junior Aviator can communicate Strategic Intent.

How we as an Air Force and Defence Force modernise and innovate will be shaped by how well we convey and interpret orders. Information dissemination to a Corporal conducting health checks in the Pacific is as important as a Senior Leader on exchange to the Pentagon - each must understand how they contribute to Air and Space Power projection. The right words at the right time motivate teams and ensure mission success. Similarly poorly chosen language and ill-considered messaging can erode morale and stifle momentum.

Integration, lethality and efficiency is the language of the contemporary battle space. No longer are overly complex orders acceptable as this contributes to ambiguity and ultimately decision paralysis. Effective communication and interoperable language ensures all Air and Space Power force elements are prepared to support Joint and Coalition Forces. Now we just need to train the way we plan to fight ...

FIGHTING FORWARDS, NOT BACKWARDS (Sam Trew)

Training to deliver potent and effective warfighting effects has always been the fundamental business of the ADF. Historically, lessons learned are not truly identified and rectified until post-theatre, which often bears the adage, "too little, too late."

Moving into an unprecedented era of 5th generation warfare, the focus on training to deliver kinetic military effects (still relevant in certain battlespaces) is beginning to shift. In the current geopolitical climate, the non-kinetic threat is evolving at an exponential rate. The introduction and ongoing development of artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and potent social engineering strategies means that we need to evolve our training philosophies to adapt to this very real and credible threat.

Throughout Initial Military Training (IMT) and certain Initial Employment Training (IET) courses, as an introduction to 'Ground Defence Phase' training, many of us would have spent long, cold and tired nights trying to absorb a plethora of compressed courseware while filling sandbags, digging weapon pits, sleeping bays and carrying out staggered 24hr piquets; all while attempting to sleep for more than an hour at a time under a poorly constructed hootchie.

We need to analyse the relevance of such training philosophies and determine the level of priority, given the nature of current adversarial threats and environments that we will be required to operate from. Targeted rapid deployment training already exists post IMT/IET, so is there a more effective way that we can train to capture rapid non-kinetic response techniques from the outset? Should we be looking to alter our perspective and remodel/modernise our ab-initio training philosophy entirely?

PERSPECTIVE IS KEY (Cyrelle Mitchell)

The way we fight and deploy is rapidly evolving as we transition to a 5th Generation fighting force. Our adversaries are evolving with us and as stated in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, we are no longer granted

the 10 year strategic timeline to prepare our forces for conflict. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) needs to shift perspective from the long war game to that of short notice and immediate responses. Our personnel do not have the luxury of having six or more months to prepare for a deployment anymore. Our people and equipment need to be ‚Äòready‘ to deploy at a moment’s notice.

So how do we alter our perspective and enable our force to develop into a readily deployable one?

This is a tough question and there isn’t a single correct answer. One way to improve our preparedness would be to develop efficient and dynamic force generation cycles that enable a large proportion of our force to be readily deployable at all times. These cycles should consider preparedness on various scales - individual, Unit, Force Element Groups, Services and the ADF as a whole. Our understanding of preparedness needs to evolve to not only consider deployment availability, but also interoperability capability on a day-to-day basis. Without a successful joint strategy and command and control system we are still functioning as separate units and services. Our preparedness should revolve around this. To successfully shift our perspective and have a more prepared force this should be considered by all levels of the organisation.

When we combine: collective joint education, palatable strategic intent, future oriented training and a forward thinking perspective; we generate a workforce that is driven by preparedness and that is exactly what this military needs.