

COMPLEX TECHNOLOGY BUT PEOPLE ARE THE KEY

By Judith Martin

The biggest challenge in developing a network enabled Army is communicating complexity in simple terms, says the former director of the Networked Enabled Army (NEA) Programme Chris Mortiboy.

He has been awarded a Chief of Defence Force Commendation for his role as technical director for the NEA programme, developing the architecture for the Land Tactical Information Network. This is the foundation document for a major project under implantation over the next ten years.

The architecture is the first of its kind in the New Zealand Defence Force and will provide a model for the development of architecture for other related capabilities across the organisation.

It describes the C4ISR system in the technical terminology necessary for detailed systems design to proceed.

Mr Mortiboy, a former Army officer who is now Director of Architecture and Policy within the NZDF's CIS branch, says the networked capability is complex but in reality no more complex than any other military capability.

"And that is the secret – we need to treat the network like any other military system, while recognising that change occurs in information technology at a much

faster cadence. At the heart of that is not losing sight of our people – although NEA has a large technological component it is the skill of our people that is key."

The potential of a network enabled Army to enhance the force's ability to command, inform, protect and sustain itself is significant. New Zealand's work with NEA has been well received by British and US experts and representatives of the Australian Defence Force communications community have requested copies to help with the development of their own architecture. After presenting his work at the NZ Army Battlefield Digitisation Seminar last year, Mr Mortiboy was asked to present it at the prestigious Military Communications and Information Systems Seminar in Australia.

What got this former Sigs officer interested in battlefield digitisation?

"A large part of my uniformed career was focused on the development and application of information and communication services to support the operational environment. It started back in 2006 when I was appointed as engineering project officer for the NZ Army command and control battle-lab. This is where I worked closely with Signals, Infantry, Logistics and other Corps supported by the Defence Technology Agency and industry partners to develop many of the networked concepts and capabilities in use today.

While the subject is complex, he says at the heart of it is not losing sight of people.

"Although NEA has a large technological component it is the skill of our people that is key. I guess for me I am fortunate in that the work is both a profession and a passion. It is really about the potential that the networked capability affords the Army and indeed the broader Defence environment. The potential of NEA to enhance our ability to command, inform, protect and



sustain the force is significant. I also believe it is an area where we can excel as a nation – I call it the last bastion of the No 8 wire culture where we can leverage our relatively small size and Kiwi ingenuity to deliver disproportionate effects.

"I think the benefits will extend well beyond the land force. At its core is a significant increase in the Army's ability to plan and execute operations at pace in a highly complex environment with our partners."

