

# MAXIMISING OUR WARFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

By Land Component Commander Brigadier Jim Bliss

**In the October issue of the New Zealand Army News, our Chief of Army Major General Boswell provided his vision of a modern, agile, highly adaptive, light fighting force.**

For those who have been in the Service for a few years, this will resonate well as it harnesses the best attributes and characteristics of the NZ soldier and how we approach the profession of arms. Our Army has always been a comparatively light force, but has punched above its weight by its resilience, adaptability and innovation, the calibre of Officers and NCOs, and the fighting spirit of its soldiers. For those new to the Service, we are at a unique point in time as we “up-gun” our operational capacity and lethality through both modernisation and integration of our weapons, vehicle and communications fleets, and we introduce and enhance capabilities to meet current and future operating environments. As the incoming Land Component Commander, perhaps the most compelling statement that struck me in CA's article, however, were the last two words – “crack on”.

What does “cracking on” in the Land Component look like? The purpose of the Land Component is to deliver the land force of today and posture the land force for tomorrow. To me, that entails four key responsibilities to bridge the strategic direction (from Government, NZDF and CA) to the tactical actions and activities to be undertaken by 1st (NZ) Bde and TRADOC (NZ) units at home and on operations.

## 1. Setting the Land Training Environment.

This is about creating the environment to empower and support tactical commanders to prepare land capabilities for operations, whilst holding them accountable and responsible for outputs, performance and stewardship of their units. It also includes operationalising (and simplifying where possible) land outputs for both the Regular and Reserve Forces to prepare to. We intend to do this by the end of the year. If this sounds like mission command and directive control, then, yep, you are bang on.

## 2. Securing Resources and Opportunities.

Some of the resources we need to generate our wide range of land outputs reside outside of the Land Component either in other components, Services or, at times, Government departments. We also have opportunities to leverage partner military training, especially capabilities like close air support and high end collective training where platforms and larger formation activities are more readily available overseas. It is the Land Component Command's responsibility to chase these opportunities and resources on behalf of our Formations and Units. What does this look like? Exercise Lightning Matawai (see p.6) with 25th (US) ID in Louisiana and Exercise Steel Knight with MARFORPAC in California are good examples for two of our combat units training in environments, and with capabilities, that are not readily available at home.

## 3. Owning the Combat Narrative.

The Land Component is responsible for the preparation of Force Elements and individuals for military operations, and in particular, combat operations. This includes training and preparing for potential mission sets that might appear outside of our stated outputs and responses. It is to the credit of our individual training system within TRADOC and our collective training environment at 1 (NZ) Bde that we have the agility to adapt to emerging and complex missions with relatively little reorientation or extra training. Our NCO and Officer promotion courses are prime examples where these skills immediately transfer into military capability such as the BPC mission in Iraq, or Coalition Staff appointments in South Sudan, Iraq, Sinai or Afghanistan. The Land Component is currently reviewing how we train and prepare for the Integrated Land Missions set; Joint Land Combat, Capacity Building, Population Protection, and Population Support. More on this later, but what we are seeking is greater alignment of the Land Tasks and METs with missions, outputs and outcomes, and ultimately more focused individual and collective training; in essence “getting better bang for our buck”.



## 4. Building Relationships.

One of the key responsibilities of the Land Component is to remove barriers to success. This includes championing innovation, hooking up organisational experts with the war-fighters in the unit to progress initiatives and capability integration, growing cross-component and cross-military interoperability, and shaping understanding of what the Land Component brings to the fight. We all have our part to play in this, and leveraging the power of a conversation or face to face engagement. As a visiting U.S. Army General remarked recently “we don't want to start making friends when the shooting starts”.

One of the challenges of our Land Force is how do we grow or enhance our lethality? This is the question I put to our Formation Leadership Teams earlier this month, and one I would ask you to consider. Recent exercises Sari Bair and Phantom Major would suggest that through the combined arms effect of our combat teams (and the robustness of our combat support and combat service support elements training in complex scenarios), development of multi-mission capability forces, operational experience, and safe but challenging training environment, we are making some good progress. I would offer that even greater interaction and interoperability with the Special Operations Component, enhancing our personal and unit deployability states, and investment in innovation and technology on the fringes of our core capabilities, will help pull us toward our goal of mastery of operations in the land domain. I look forward to catching up and hearing your thoughts in the near future.

