Now that Air and Missile Defense (AMD) is one of the Chief of Staff of the Army’s (CSA) top six priorities, the air defense artillery formations need to change how we see mission preparation and readiness. The future of AMD lies within our ability to rebuild an unfamiliar skill set in today and tomorrow’s formations: air defense integrated in combined arms maneuver (CAM) in order to meet and exceed the capability of a near-peer competitor. This type of operation resides within a select few senior leaders, lieutenant colonel, sergeant major and above, who served in the pre-9/11 Army and participated in corps and division warfighter exercises.

Very few, if any, of today’s company-grade and field-grade leadership are familiar with corps-level integration and support. To build proficiency and increase understanding of mission command in a multi-domain battle, we must understand that AMD is both a “vertical” AND “horizontal” process. We must integrate and support our joint partners and corps headquarters regularly and effectively.

Background

The majority of the active ADA force has been executing latest arrival date (LAD) based deployment training cycles for the past 13 years. Historically, Patriot rotations to the Central Command area of responsibility (AOR) have consisted of the static site defense of strategic theater-level assets. This mission set has caused a gradual atrophy and almost complete lack of familiarity with CAM in a large-scale combat operation (LSCO).

While all AMD commanders doctrinally fulfill the three roles of deputy area air defense commander, theater army air and missile defense coordinator, and senior ADA commander, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command has two additional roles unique to CONUS: global force provider with training readiness authority that balances AMD enterprise modernization efforts. As the sole AMD force provider to every combatant commander and the owner of nearly 80 percent of the ADA force, 32nd AAMDC has the enormous responsibility of constantly generating and validating readiness to meet known requirements and dynamic force employment opportunities.

Last year, CENTCOM reduced its posture from three Patriot battalions to two. This force reduction and posture shift made more units available at a higher readiness posture than in recent years. The short-lived spike in available units provided 32nd AAMDC its greatest opportunity: evaluate ADA forces in a combat training center (CTC)-like environment in support of a maneuver corps engaged in LSCO.

Roving Sands: Capstone......Validation.......Crucible

Roving Sands is a command-directed annual capstone exercise designed to validate readiness. The second iteration of Roving Sands was conducted in March 2019 at Fort Bliss, Texas, and White Sands Missile Range, N.M. The 32nd AAMDC exercised and evaluated one ADA brigade headquarters, four Patriot battalions in mixed software configurations, one Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery, and several external enablers in support of a national corps commander engaged in LSCO. The exercise served three purposes: validate 25 percent of the CONUS-based ADA forces combat readiness, stress battery and battalion leadership with a mix of engagement operations and force operations scenarios of increasing complexity, and teach the
ADA force the necessity of training rigor at the battery level. While the exercise and readiness objectives were met, a considerable portion of the command learned firsthand what the ADA force has been lacking: familiarity with maneuver doctrine and integration. Further, it proves that centrally managed LAD-based training strategies result in the attrition of four core competencies: shoot, move, communicate and sustain. The ability to maneuver and sustain forces are the building blocks of combat readiness at the tactical level.

Upon notification of participation, units built a home-station training strategy that utilized a mix of live, virtual and digital training tools to prepare for their unit’s “crucible” exercise. Because most air defenders had never experienced a CTC rotation to date, the preparation, movement and occupation were eye-opening experiences. When decisive action commenced, units learned quickly that preparation for -- and synchronization of -- force operations is far more challenging than they anticipated.

Defending against ground attacks, a myriad of ballistic and cruise missiles and air-breathing threats while coordinating with ground elements at an established location in support of a maneuver commander showed participant units the complex reality of a sustained operation against a state actor with comparable lethality. While the decisive action “box” was 10 days in duration, the preparation took months and the leader development impacts will pay dividends for years to come.

While nearly 2,500 troops and almost 600 pieces of rolling stock arrived at the Fort Bliss railyards during reception, staging, onward movement, and integration, a “real-world” mission was quietly sourced just two miles away. The 32nd AAMDC quietly deployed one THAAD battery via Strategic Air from Fort Bliss, Texas, to Israel. The operation, known as a “Dynamic Force Employment,” was an “out-of-cycle” deployment intended to demonstrate ease of access.
into theater AORs while reducing predictability of deployment location, duration, transition and force posture. The unit had three weeks from notification to deployment, which it executed in commendable fashion. During the after-action review, we used this as a real-time case study about the relevance of self-imposed training rigor and to instill a “ready now, for anything” mentality, reinforcing the message with, “this is what you train for.” Pursuant to the National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and the Missile Defense Review, Roving Sands in its current and future iterations will continue to build readiness and meet the CSA’s “two-thirds of the active duty force ready for near-peer competition in 2022.”

Modernization: Technology enables tomorrow

While current and future commanders implement lessons learned from the decisive action training environment scenario, the Patriot force continues to upgrade its fleet from post-deployment build (PDB) 7.4 to PDB-8. All 11 CONUS-based Patriot battalions will receive the technology that the previous operational tempo prevented from fielding. Soldiers and units will become familiar with the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 Missile Segment Enhancement, which is optimized by the new software. THAAD launch-on-remote capabilities are also within reach, and the Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems market is expanding into every branch. Ad-
Additionally, one Patriot battalion, 3rd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, out of 11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, Fort Bliss, Texas, will support the multi-year Army Integrated Air and Missile Defense (AIAMD) testing effort at White Sands Missile Range, N.M. AIAMD is the largest modernization effort the Patriot force will undergo in over two decades. However, modernization is not to be viewed as a constraint or limiting factor. While installation and new equipment training/new equipment fielding may take several months to complete, leaders at all echelons can maximize training opportunities in digital and virtual environments.

**Conclusion**

Technological advancements only increase the complexity of combat operations. There is no substitute for self-imposed training rigor in preparation for war. Our present AMD force can implement the lessons learned from Roving Sands in support of our joint and coalition force in future operations. The challenge that present and future tactical battery and battalion commanders will face is two-fold: develop and maintain a rigorous training strategy that builds proficiency and expertise against a near-peer competitor, and effectively build leaders who are expertly familiar with engagement and force operations in support of a higher echelon. The balance of training management, rigor and the processes that sustain the force in combat are skills that will build the force of tomorrow.

Brig. Gen. Clement S. Coward, Jr. is the commanding general of 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, he is the former deputy director for Force Protection on the Joint Staff J-8 as well as the former director, Joint Integrated Air and Missile Defense Organization, and the former director of the Joint Requirements Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense.