

The Army Operating Concept (AOC): US Army Drafts Blueprint for World War III

By [Bill Van Auken](#) and [David North](#)

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With US politicians and the American media engaged in an increasingly acrimonious debate over the strategy guiding the latest US war in the Middle East, the United States Army has unveiled a new document entitled the Army Operating Concept (AOC), which provides a “vision of future armed conflict” that has the most ominous implications. It is the latest in a series of documents in which the Pentagon has elaborated the underlying strategy of preventive war that was unveiled in 1992—that is, the use of war as a means of destroying potential geopolitical and economic rivals before they acquire sufficient power to block American domination of the globe.

The document was formally released at this week’s Association of the United States Army (AUSA) conference, an annual event bringing together senior officers and Defense Department officials for a series of speeches and panel discussions, along with a giant trade show mounted by arms manufacturers to show off their latest weapons systems and pursue lucrative Pentagon contracts.

Much of this year’s proceedings were dominated by dire warnings about the impact of cuts to the Army’s troop strength brought about by sequestration. Gen. Raymond Odierno, chief of staff of the Army, told reporters at the AUSA conference Monday that he was “starting to worry about our end strength” and regretting having told Congress in 2012 that the Army could manage with 490,000 active-duty soldiers.

In addition to the 490,000, there are 350,000 National Guard soldiers and 205,000 reservists, for a combined force—referred to by the Pentagon as the Total Army—of well over one million American troops. The answer to why such a gargantuan armed force would seem inadequate to Gen. Odierno can be found in the new Army Operating Concept (AOC), a reckless and dangerous document laying out a strategy of total war that encompasses the entire planet, including the United States itself.

The document makes clear that in regard to the ongoing debate over “boots on the ground,” for the top brass of the US Army there is no question: there will be boots and plenty of them.

At the outset, the AOC states its “vision” for the coming wars to be fought by the US Army. In language that recalls former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s invocation of the “unknown unknowns,” the document asserts: “The environment the Army will operate in is unknown. The enemy is unknown, the location is unknown, and the coalitions involved are unknown.”

The only logical explanation for this paranoid scenario is that the US military views every

country beyond its borders as a potential enemy. Starting from the premise that the environments, the enemies, the locations and the coalitions involved in future conflicts are unknown, the US Army requires a strategy for war against all states and peoples. This strategy is derived from the unstated, underlying imperative that US imperialism exert hegemony over the entire planet, its markets and resources, and that it be prepared to militarily annihilate any rival that stands in its way.

The document states bluntly that the “character of armed conflict” will be influenced primarily by “shifts in geopolitical landscape caused by competition for power and resources.” For the Army’s top brass, such wars for imperialist domination are a certainty.

The Army’s strategic aim, according to the document, is to achieve “overmatch,” which it defines as “the application of capabilities or use of tactics in a way that renders an adversary unable to respond effectively.”

What do these words entail? In the case of a confrontation with another nuclear power, they encompass the implementation of a first-strike doctrine of mass annihilation. In regard to the subjugation and domination of other areas of the globe, they call for massive ground operations to quell popular resistance and enforce military occupation.

Significantly, after more than a decade of the so-called “global war on terror, “ when countering a supposedly ubiquitous threat from Al Qaeda was the overriding mission of the US military-intelligence apparatus, “transnational terrorist organizations” are rather low on the Army’s list of priorities.

First and foremost are “competing powers,” a category that includes China, followed by Russia. In the case of China, the document evinces serious concern over Chinese “force modernization efforts,” which it says are aimed at achieving “stability along its periphery,” something that the US military is determined to block. China’s military efforts, it states, “highlight the need for Army forces positioned forward or regionally engaged,” and for “Army forces to project power from land into the air, maritime, space and cyberspace domains.”

Based on recent events in Ukraine, the document accuses Russia of being “determined to expand its territory and assert its power on the Eurasian landmass,” precisely US imperialism’s own strategic goal. Only a powerful deployment of US ground forces, it argues, can deter Russian “adventurism” and “project national power and exert influence in political conflicts.”

From there, the paper proceeds to “regional powers,” in the first instance, Iran. It also accuses Iran of “pursuing comprehensive military modernization” and argues that “Taken collectively, Iranian activity has the potential to undermine US regional goals,” i.e., undisputed hegemony over the Middle East and its energy resources. Iran’s activities, it concludes, “highlight the need for Army forces to remain effective against the fielded forces of nation states as well as networked guerrilla or insurgent organizations.”

The document does not limit the “vision” of future military operations to war abroad, but includes the need to “respond and mitigate crises in the homeland,” which it describes as “a unique theater of operations for the Joint Force and the Army.” The Army’s mission within the US, it asserts, includes “defense support of civil authorities.”

The AOC document is stark testimony to a military run amuck. Involved in these strategic conceptions are advanced preparations for fighting a Third World War, combined with the institution within the US itself of a military dictatorship in all but name.

Gen. Odierno's complaints about troop strength will not be satisfied by any minor congressional adjustments of the Pentagon budget. The kind of warfare that the Army is contemplating cannot be waged outside of a massive military mobilization by means of universal conscription—the return of the draft.

The founders of the United States repeatedly expressed grave distrust of a standing army. The military as it presently exists and its plan for global warfare represent a hideous modern-day realization of their nightmare scenario. The implementation of this doctrine of total war is wholly incompatible with democratic rights and constitutional government within the US. It requires the ruthless suppression of any political opposition and all social struggles mounted by the American working class.

Within the US ruling establishment and its two political parties, there exists no serious opposition to carrying the militarization of life within the so-called "homeland" to its ultimate conclusion. Civilian control of the military has been turned into a dead letter, with politicians routinely bowing to the generals on matters of policy, both foreign and domestic.

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and [David North](#)

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