

**HYBRID WARFARE & FUTURE  
CONFLICT SCENARIOS:  
PREPARING FOR THE UNKNOWN**



Interview with

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**Throughout your military career, have you observed early signs or shifts that indicated the emergence of what we now call 'hybrid warfare', and how did your experiences shape your understanding of the blend between conventional and non-conventional strategies?**

Misinformation and redirection of your thoughts is an old weapon of hybrid warfare (and magicians). One of my early exposures to hybrid warfare came in studying the United Nations Operation in Somalia 2 (UNOSOM2) mission into Somalia in the early 1990s. Here the combination of information warfare laid bare some faults in our approach to the local situation. My then commander had just returned from serving on the UN staff in Somalia and was talking about General Aidid, the Somali warlord. General Aidid has distributed to the local population a small portable AM radio that was tuned to his radio station.

General Aidid used his supporters to report upcoming cleaning and rebuilding actions planned and scheduled by the UN and then broadcast that on his own local radio station in Mogadishu – and ahead of the UN detailing its upcoming activities - ensuring that his supporters thought he was controlling the UN and winning the hearts and minds of his supporters. Winning the local population's hearts and minds has always been a priority in warfare and this was my introduction to how hybrid warfare was going to disrupt the usual ways I had been taught. My Colonel wanted to know how my armed helicopter tactics would help me in the future and how might I need to change and innovate to win!

I saw in later years a growth in the innovation to thinking that advances in technology and the internet of things are bringing to hybrid warfare but the key standout is the thinking that takes a resource – designed and optimised for use in one way - and then used in a different way. It's that thinking that I have always seen in my military career and consider it to be the most potent in hybrid warfare. Surprise is an important element of warfare.

**Considering hybrid warfare, how vital is it for the military to evolve its training to encompass areas like cyber and information warfare?**

The development of individuals to understand, adopt and then use in unexpected ways the resources available

to them – especially when those resources are available in restricted quantities or usability – is crucial to future successful warfare. Innovation and innovative thinking can be taught. The best solutions are often those that are simple and reusing simple solutions on new problems often is very successful – but it's the thinking that drives this. As part of this, rapidly expanding (exploding) areas of warfare (such as cyber, drones, AI, advanced manufacturing (eg 3D printing)) need to be able to be understood just as rapidly. The basics of these topics need to be taught. AI can speed our ability to absorb information through improving the quality of what we read and write. How to use AI effectively (and with an understanding of how it can mislead) is a skill that can add that important resource – time – back into everyone's tactical thinking

Data is central to warfare and in hybrid warfare. Knowing how to understand, manipulate and use data is what must be taught. The source of the data and how it was measured and captured is critical to its use. Information overload is a problem, but worse is using (and mis-using) in the first place. The old adage of: 'lies, damned lies and statistics' applies to the data we use or misuse. Understanding data is critical to successful cyber warfare. Avoiding data / information overload is difficult, especially when most systems process and then present data onboard the platform without any real time filtering. Slowly, we are acquiring the capability to take data from sensors, send the data off-board - where it can be more thoroughly and quickly processed - and then share with the operators what information they need without over providing.

**Based on historical conflicts, can you provide insights on how traditional military forces can effectively counter unconventional threats, especially misinformation campaigns?**

Winston Churchill said that in time of war, truth is so precious that she must be provided with a bodyguard of lies. To counter this, and other unconventional threats, we must gain the ability to think counter-intuitively and to be able to trust this style of thinking. We must learn not to fear, but to embrace, the unusual methods we can use to disrupt and break the strategies of those who oppose us. If we are going to use truth to win, then we must be there first – with trusted honesty and transparency – to prevent the misinformation campaigns gaining a foothold in the first place.



**Given the rise of both state and non-state actors using hybrid tactics, how do you see the future of international military alliances evolving?**

Alliances have been around forever, and trust is the key to them all. Today, what is changing the manner and speed with which alliances can form and dissolve.

As a defensive tool, alliances can help spread the cost of developing and acquiring the equipment of war and can ensure more effective spending in research and development. This is currently seen in such weapons programs as the European OCCAR, in AUKUS, but also in individual weapons programs such as the Joint Strike Fighter where nations invest in the cost of development and therefore gain the ability to acquire the weapons systems. For this to be effective, it also requires the development of joint standards – such as Electronic Vehicle Architectures for all platform types as well as other military technology standards (STANAGs, NILSTDSs, etc) The importance of alliances has long been understood throughout South-East Asia, but is currently being accelerated in the Pacific region – a place where previously a peaceful outlook from the nations was enough. Now there is competition from the major nations and stakeholders, to cement their positions in the region and secure the stability they seek through alliances and treaties. This will continue to be a major issue for the coming decade.

**How has your personal military experience informed your perspective on the integration of conventional and unconventional warfare strategies?**

As a military aviator, I have learned the need to be flexible and resourceful in how to best to contribute the limited resource I operate to the broader joint forces that I support. With a technology background and always being challenged to think differently to defeat conventional strategies, I have always viewed unconventional and conventional warfare more from a perspective of contemporary warfare – ie it is what it is and I have to do what I can, with what I have right now, in order to win the battle. In my role I have also been an advisor to senior commanders and learned the ability to do so in a way that reflects that contemporary warfare setting.

**What recommendations would you give to current military academies and training centers to adequately prepare the next generation of soldiers for hybrid warfare challenges?**

They must teach the following:

Independent thinking; Innovation; Artificial Intelligence; Data and data sciences; Cyber warfare.

These topics sound small and simple but collectively they are a force multiplier.



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