

# Space Control and the Objective Force

By LTC Tim Coffin

**F**or the past six months I have had the opportunity to work with the Objective Force Task Force in Washington, D.C. The mission of this task force is to impart irreversible momentum to the Army's transformation to the Objective Force and to bring together the various organizations responsible for transformation to achieve synchronization and synergy between their efforts. As the Space Systems Integrator, I had many discussions about the role of Space in the Objective Force. I rapidly found out that when using terms like the "Objective Force" or "Space Control" it was important to ensure we had a common understanding of what we mean by these terms before we moved into the more difficult parts of the topic.

The term "Objective Force" conjures up a different image for each individual who hears it. Part of that problem is that the Objective Force cannot be pinned to a single event or the fielding of a single system. It is an era that we will go through that will start with the first operational unit in 2010 and will continue to evolve gaining more and more capabilities through at least 2030. The Objective Force is not a definitive end state but rather a process by which the Army will continue to transform to meet the ground warfighting demands of the future. For those who are today decisively locked in the close fight of Enduring Freedom combat operations or who are providing support to our corps, divisions and other elements, the Objective Force is a far off dream of futuristic combat systems that sound like a Buck Rogers fantasy. To those at the Department of the Army level doing programming, budgeting, and material development the Objective Force is more like an express train that demands constant attention to keep on track and in control. To those in the science and technology field, the Objective Force represents the opportunity to deploy many technologies we have invested billions of dollars in during decades of development.

While many views of the Objective Force exist, they

are rapidly converging as new material programs are established, doctrine is being published and existing systems are identified to equip the first Objective Force units.

Fielding the Objective Force is different from anything else the Army has ever attempted. The closest parallel in military terms would be if the Navy were to redesign the carrier battle group from the submarines below, to the aircraft above the carrier while demanding that the group deploy in one-tenth the time it previously took, with one-third of the tonnage the fleet previously had, having twice the lethality of its former systems while maintaining the same protection afforded by their existing systems. It is a tremendous task and it is the right thing to do. For the Army to accomplish this task in the time allotted it will require the breaking and rebuilding of the way we do system acquisition. Formerly weapons systems followed fairly independent pathways from development to fielding. Major weapons system can take decades from the first proposal to operational fielding of the system. Just this year, the first Army unit took possession of a weapon I first saw at the annual Association of the United States Army Convention more than 20 years ago when I was still a cadet. This must become a part of our history as it has no place with our future. The Objective Force is building on the lessons we learned with digitization and Force XXI to launch capabilities for a fully integrated digital battlefield providing unparalleled information dominance over our opponents. The Objective Force is being designed from the start to go from mud to Space and must be seamless in between.

The Objective Force is about dominant speed of knowledge and precision application of firepower. U.S. and allied Space systems enable the Objective Force to achieve these goals just as our enemies seek to use commercial and national Space systems to nullify our technological advantages. The wide spread use of commercial Space systems has handed the power of Space to all

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our potential adversaries for a relatively low cost. With this in mind the need for Space control becomes more essential for the Objective Force as it cannot rely on its sheer mass to ensure success. To maintain information dominance, the Objective Force must be able to deny observation, communications and precision navigation to its enemies ground, air or Space based capabilities.

Outside the Army, I often hear the argument that Space Control should be an Air Force function. The Air Force certainly should take the lead in conducting air-to-Space and Space-to-Space control functions. However, the Army has a vested interest in denying adversaries the ability to observe, report and communicate or attack its deployed forces. Space control which provides temporary or local effects from ground-to-Space should be conducted by mobile units that can move with the deployed forces. These embedded units must be responsive to the ground commander conducting combat operations. These same units can provide contributing sensors to the Space surveillance network and have the capability to provide real time characterization of Space assets being used against allied forces. This augmentation of the Space surveillance network would provide robustness and global capabilities to the current system. Existing radars developed for missile defense could be purchased to provide a dual capability in-theater. When required these units could then degrade, disrupt or deny the Space system to achieve the desired effects.

The ideal Objective Force Space Control Unit would consist of Space surveillance assets and a variety of engagement capabilities that could degrade or deny Space assets to our adversary. These units will be enabled by the technology developments currently underway in areas like Hybrid Electric Propulsion, Solid State Lasers, Advance Communications Systems and High Energy Microwave Systems. These units would deploy with the Objective Force unit of engagement to ensure information dominance during key portions of

ground operations

Key to achieving this type of support to the Objective Force are several steps that must be started now. First we need a clarification of roles and missions in the Space control arena. The Army should be designated as the responsible agent for temporary and reversible ground based Space control effects against Space systems which could be used against Army forces. The basic concept here is that the Army be authorized systems which provide self defense against hostile Space systems. Second, the Army must establish a program of record to develop and build these systems. The Army currently has tremendous capabilities and technology but lacks the focus that a program of record would bring to the material development and fielding of these systems. Third, we must establish the doctrine and manning for these systems. The creation of these units should be the event which also establishes the first Space enlisted MOSs to ensure that the skills and capabilities of these systems continue to grow over time.

Space control is a recognized need for the Objective Force to successfully accomplish the missions it is designed for. In my view, dedicated Army units embedded in the force would provide the highest level of support to deployed units. The decisions on how to accomplish this support have not yet been made but will depend on negotiations between the Army, Air Force and the Joint Staff and the commitment of Army funds to establishing viable Space control units—manned and equipped to accomplish this extremely important mission.

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