



**Opposing Force
Doctrinal Framework
and Strategy**

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HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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FOREWORD

In today's complicated and uncertain world, it is impossible to predict the exact nature of future conflict that might involve the U.S. Army. So the Army must be ready to meet the challenges of any type of conflict, in all kinds of places, and against all kinds of threats. This is the nature of the contemporary operational environment (COE), and training for such an environment requires a different type of Opposing Force (OPFOR) than that of the past.

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (DCSINT) of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is the Executive Agent for the development, management, administration, integration, and approval functions of the OPFOR Program across the Army. Thus, the TRADOC DCSINT is responsible for documenting the doctrine, organization, and capabilities of a contemporary OPFOR that is appropriate for training the Army's leaders, soldiers, and units for the COE.

In the FM 7-100 series, the TRADOC Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (ODCSINT) has created a flexible baseline for an OPFOR that can be adapted to meet a variety of different training requirements in a number of different scenarios that reflect the COE. The OPFOR doctrinal framework and strategy outlined in FM 7-100 represent a realistic composite of potential adversaries the Army might encounter in the real-world situations of the foreseeable future. However, the world is continually changing, as are the threats and challenges for which the Army must be prepared. The Army must remain flexible, as must the OPFOR designed to serve as a challenging sparring partner in the training environment.

This manual is approved for use in all Army training venues. However, as the contemporary OPFOR and other aspects of the COE are integrated into Army training, the TRADOC ODCSINT and the intelligence community will continue research and analysis of real-world developments and trends. The goal of this continued effort is to keep our OPFOR and our understanding of the COE truly contemporary and relevant as the world around us changes. Thus, this manual is intended to be a living document, and the ODCSINT will modify and change it as often as necessary in order to ensure its continued relevance in light of changes and developments in the COE. In anticipation of such changes, this manual will be published primarily in electronic format with only limited distribution of hard-copy, printed manuals. Users need to monitor the Reimer Digital Library (<http://www.adtdl.army.mil>) and the DCSINT-Threats Web site (<http://www.leavenworth.army.mil/threats/index>) for periodic updates.



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Opposing Force Doctrinal Framework and Strategy

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Preface

This manual is one of a series that describes a contemporary Opposing Force (OPFOR) for training U.S. Army commanders, staffs, and units. See the Reference section for a list of the manuals in this series. Together, these manuals outline an OPFOR that can cover the entire spectrum of military and paramilitary capabilities against which the Army must train to ensure success in any future conflict.

Applications for this series of manuals include field training, training simulations, and classroom instruction throughout the Army. All Army training venues should use an OPFOR based on these manuals, except when mission rehearsal or contingency training requires maximum fidelity to a specific country-based threat. Even in the latter case, trainers should use appropriate parts of the OPFOR manuals to fill information gaps in a manner consistent with what they do know about a specific threat.

The proponent for this publication is HQ TRADOC. Send comments and recommendations on DA Form 2028 directly to the OPFOR and Threat Integration Directorate of the TRADOC Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence at the following address: Director, OPFOR and Threat Integration Directorate, ATTN: ATIN-T (Bldg 53), 700 Scott Avenue, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1323.

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Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns or pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.

Introduction

This manual is the capstone document for the FM 7-100 series, which describes a **contemporary Opposing Force (OPFOR)** that exists for the purpose of training U.S. forces for potential combat operations. This OPFOR reflects the characteristics of military and paramilitary forces that may be present in the **contemporary operational environment (COE)**. Like those real-world threats, the OPFOR will continue to present new and different challenges for U.S. forces. The COE is **constantly changing**, and it is important for U.S. Army training environments to keep pace with real-world developments.

CONTEMPORARY OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The DOD officially defines an *operational environment* (OE) as “a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of military forces and bear on the decisions of the unit commander” (JP 1-02). The *contemporary operational environment* (COE) is the operational environment that exists today and for the clearly foreseeable future. There are some “constants” or common threads that define the general nature of this COE:

<p>Contemporary Operational Environment (COE)</p> <p>The operational environment that exists today and for the clearly foreseeable future.</p>
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- The United States is not likely to have a peer competitor until 2020 or beyond.
- However, nations will continue to field armed forces and use these forces as a tool to pursue national interests.
- As nations use their armed forces (or other instruments of national power) in pursuit of national interests, their actions may cause U.S. intervention, either unilaterally or as a coalition partner, with or without United Nations mandate.
- Nations that believe the United States may act to counter their national interests will develop diplomatic, informational, economic, and military plans for managing U.S. intervention.
- Nations will continue to modernize their armed forces within the constraints of their economies, but in ways that may negate U.S. overmatch.
- Advanced technology will be available on the world market for a wide variety of nation-state and non-state actors.
- Non-state actors will play an important role in any regional conflict—as combatants or noncombatants.
- All combat operations will be significantly affected by a number of variables in the environment beyond simple military forces.

Thus, one of the constants is that there are variables. Those “variables” in the COE result in a number of different OEs that can occur in specific circumstances or scenarios.

CRITICAL VARIABLES

Any OE, in the real world or in the training environment, can be defined in terms of eleven critical variables. While these variables can be useful in describing the overall (strategic) environment, they are most useful in defining the nature of specific OEs. Each of these “conditions, circumstances, and influences” and their possible combinations will vary according to the specific situation. In this sense, they are “variables.” These variables are interrelated and sometimes overlap. Different variables will be more or less important in different situations. Each OE is different, because the content of the variables is different. Only by studying and understanding these variables—and incorporating them into its training—will the U.S. Army be able to keep adversaries from using them against it or to find ways to use them to its own advantage.

Critical Variables of COE

- Nature and Stability of the State.
- Regional and Global Relationships.
- Economics.
- Sociological Demographics.
- Information.
- Physical Environment.
- Technology.
- External Organizations.
- National Will.
- Time.
- Military Capabilities.

Nature and Stability of the State

It is important to understand the nature and stability of the state (or states) with which or in which the conflict takes place. Study of this variable measures how strong or weak a country is and determines where the real strength of the state lies; it may be in the political leadership, the military, the police, or some other element of the population. Understanding this variable will allow U.S. forces to better understand the nature of the military campaign and the true aims of an enemy campaign, operation, or action. It also helps determine what kinds of threats may be present in a particular country. The real threat to U.S. forces may come from elements other than the military.

Regional and Global Relationships

Nation-states and/or non-state actors often enter into relationships, which can be regional or global. These partnerships support common objectives, which can be political, economic, military, or cultural. An actor’s membership or allegiance to such a relationship can determine its actions of support and motivation. Virtually all conflict will occur with alliances and coalitions, some involving the United States and some involving its adversaries. When actors create regional or global alliances, it can add to their collective capability and broaden the scale of operations and actions.

As the world moves away from the traditional long-term, fixed alliances of the past, regional and global relationships are much more fluid and unpredictable. The choice of a state to be nonaligned does not mean that it will not become involved in a conflict or crisis. It simply means that the state does not make a commitment to another state, alliance, or cause before a situation arises. This lack of precommitment makes it difficult to predict how actors and forces may align when a situation does arise. Alliances can form or change rapidly, even during the course of an operation or campaign.