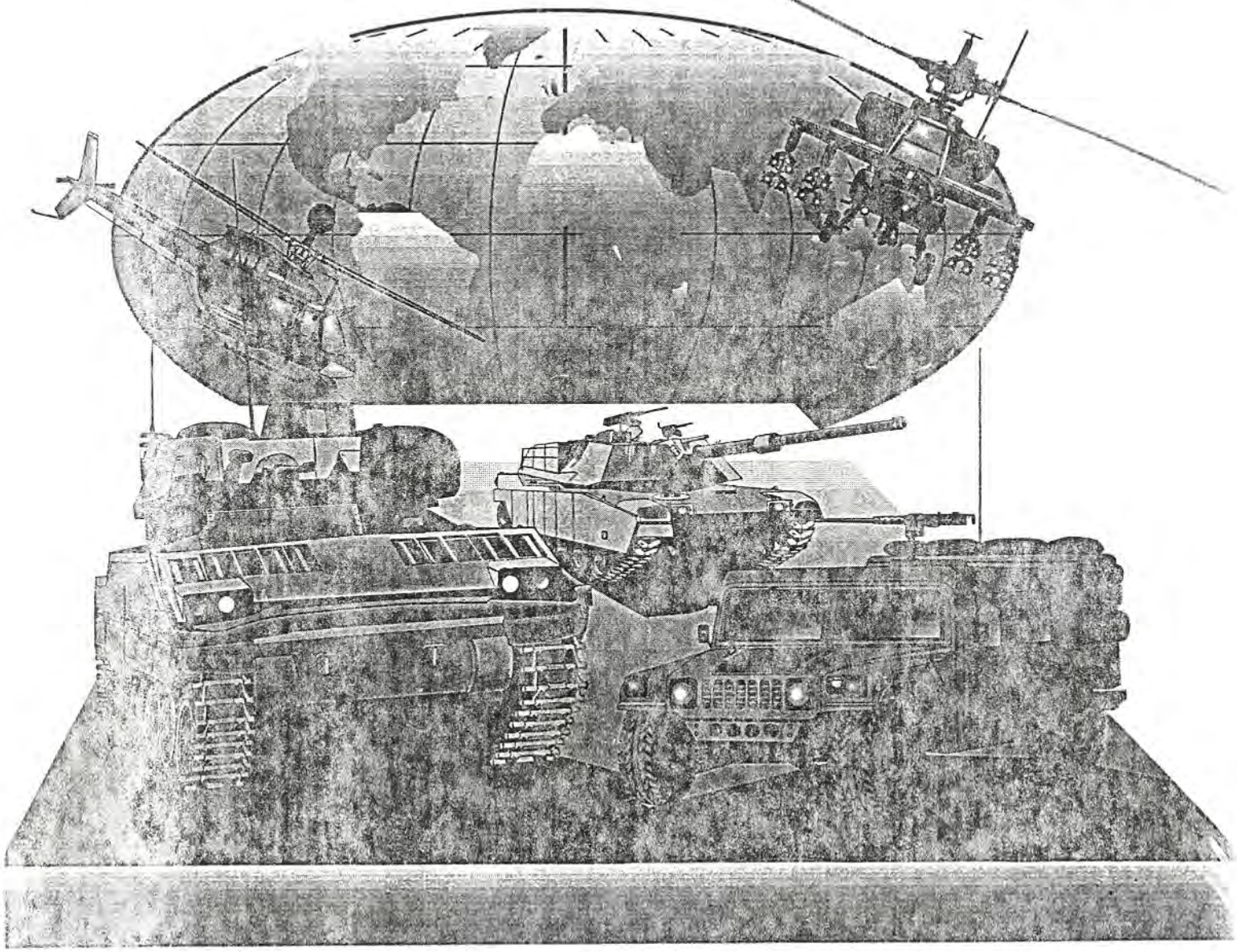
Headquarters
Department of the Army

FM 17-95

CAVALRY OPERATIONS



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CAVALRY OPERATIONS

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PREFACE

FM 17-95 is the Army's doctrinal manual for cavalry operations. It is primarily designed to assist cavalry commanders, their staffs, and subordinate troop and company commanders in the conduct of combat operations. It also serves as a guide for corps, division, and brigade commanders, and their staffs. This manual discusses the organization, capabilities, and employment of cavalry units.

This manual applies to the armored cavalry regiment (ACR) and all division cavalry squadrons (armored, light, air). While the focus is on regiment and squadron, principles and fundamentals presented apply to all subordinate troops and companies and separate cavalry troops.

FM 17-95 sets forth doctrinal principles that guide the conduct of cavalry operations. It addresses specific tactics, techniques, or procedures as necessary to clarify or emphasize these doctrinal principles. Field manuals and mission training plans that support this manual contain more specifics on tactics, techniques, and procedures. Users must apply this doctrine within the capabilities and limitations of their units and develop standing operating procedures that address specific techniques and procedures.

This manual is fully compatible with Army doctrine as contained in FM 100-5 and is consistent with conventional (non-digitized) doctrine in FM 100-15 and FM 71-100. It assumes that the user has a fundamental understanding of FM 71-100, FM 100-5, FM 100-15, FM 101-5, and FM 101-5-1, and it does not repeat the concepts contained therein except as necessary to explain cavalry operations. It serves as a reference for personnel involved in the development of subordinate unit doctrine, combat development, materiel development, and the conduct of training.

This manual complies with the contents of NATO Standardization Agreement (STANAG)/Quadripartite Standardization Agreement (QSTAG) 2025.

The proponent of this publication is HQ TRADOC. Send comments and recommendations on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) directly to Commander, US Army Armor Center, ATTN: ATZK-TDD-C, Fort Knox, Kentucky 4012-5000.

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

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"Altogether, cavalry operations are exceedingly difficult, knowledge of the country is absolutely necessary, and ability to comprehend the situation at a glance, and an audacious spirit, are everything."

Maurice de Saxe
Mes Reveries, 1732

This chapter defines the role, organizations, and missions of cavalry; describes the Threat and the battlefield cavalry units can expect; and outlines the seven battlefield operating systems commanders must coordinate and synchronize.

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Section I. The Role of Cavalry

FUNDAMENTAL ROLE

The fundamental purpose of cavalry is to perform reconnaissance and to provide security in close operations. In doing so, cavalry facilitates the corps or division commander's ability to maneuver divisions, brigades, and battalions and to concentrate superior combat power and apply it against the enemy at the decisive time and point. Cavalry clarifies, in part, the fog of battle.

Cavalry is, by its role, an economy of force. The flexible capabilities of cavalry allow the commander to conserve the combat power of divisions or brigades for

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engagement where he desires. The combat power of cavalry units, in particular, makes them ideal for offensive and defensive missions as an economy of force.

Cavalry serves as a catalyst that transforms the concepts of maneuver warfare into a battlefield capability. Maneuver is the essence of US fighting doctrine. Maneuver, in the tactical sense, is the swift movement and positioning of combat forces to attack an enemy's vulnerability, such as flanks, rear, lines of communication, service support capability, or isolated elements. Maneuver is the means to seize or retain the initiative, and to create or exploit offensive opportunities. Maneuver is also the means to concentrate superior combat power against the enemy at the right time and place. For maneuver to be successful, the commander must have a high degree of situational awareness. He must reduce the enemy, terrain, and friendly unknowns of the battlefield to fight effectively and to operate within the enemy's decision cycle. The successful execution of maneuver warfare continues to be the product of thorough reconnaissance and continual security. As the "eyes and ears" of the commander, cavalry provides the commander with situational awareness and enhances his ability to maneuver successfully.

HISTORICAL ROLE

Cavalry has historically served as a flexible multipurpose force. Capitalizing upon a significant mobility advantage over infantry, cavalry performed long-range reconnaissance and security for commanders. These missions gave commanders the ability to maneuver and concentrate forces on a battlefield for decisive battle. Once on the chosen field, cavalry continued to play key roles such as—

- Close reconnaissance to detect enemy weaknesses.
- Close security to protect the flanks or rear of the infantry line.
- Countering enemy cavalry.
- Counterattacking enemy infantry attacks.
- Reserve.
- Administering the decisive blow to a faltering enemy.
- Covering retreat.
- Pursuing a retreating enemy.

To perform these varied operations, European armies developed a highly specialized cavalry. The US never developed specialization on this scale. Faced largely with frontier operations during the nineteenth century and an unconventional threat, the US Army developed cavalry similar to European light cavalry.

European light cavalry was largely equipped and armed with sabers, carbines, and pistols. It focused on wide-ranging reconnaissance and security tasks. The US cavalry differences were a reliance on pistols and carbines versus bladed weapons and dismounted fighting once in contact with the enemy.

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As modern weapons increased in range, precision, and lethality, horse cavalry lost much of its ability to perform these traditional roles. Traditional capabilities were restored with mechanization, which placed modern weapons on armored platforms. The tank assumed some of these traditional cavalry roles, especially those associated with armored cavalry. Modern cavalry, with both air and ground assets, began to focus on reconnaissance, security, and the flexible employment capabilities of nineteenth century cavalry.

A historical example illustrates the value of a flexible cavalry force. The operations of the newly organized Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac during the Gettysburg campaign were a substantial factor in the Union's success. For the first time, the Union Army was able to employ an effective cavalry force working directly for the commanding general of the Army.

In early June 1863, General Lee began moving the Army of Northern Virginia toward the Shenandoah Valley to invade the North. Fights ensued between the Confederate and Union cavalry. The Confederate cavalry attempted to secure the army's movement while the Union cavalry conducted reconnaissance to determine the Confederate's intent. These cavalry actions confirmed other intelligence on the movement of the Confederate Army, but did not reveal the intent of General Lee. Based on this information and orders from Washington, General Hooker began moving the Union Army north. After these fights, General Stuart took the bulk of the Confederate cavalry on a ride around the advancing Union Army and lost contact with General Lee.

Both General Hooker and his successor, General Meade, protected the approaches to Washington and Baltimore. Both commanders were forced to move in response to the Confederate Army. Recognizing the critical need for information, both commanders emphasized the need for the cavalry to provide "reliable information of the presence of the enemy, his forces, and his movements . . . ." At the same time, the cavalry was ordered to "guard the right and left flanks and the rear, and give the commanding general information of the movements . . . of the enemy in front."

On 30 June, the 1st Cavalry Division had a meeting engagement with a Confederate infantry brigade in Gettysburg. At the same time, the 3d Cavalry Division had a meeting engagement with General Stuart at Hanover, 12 miles to the east. General Stuart was repulsed and swung further north in his attempt to link up with the Confederate Army. General Lee felt the absence of his reliable cavalry reconnaissance and faced the Union forces of unknown size in the town. The Confederates conducted a reconnaissance in force with an infantry division the next day. General Buford, commanding the 1st Cavalry Division, recognized the decisive nature of Cemetery Ridge. He sensed from constant reconnaissance patrols in all directions the massing Confederate Army to his front. Thus, he determined the necessity to defend well forward, securing the decisive terrain for the approaching Union Army. His information and assessments were continuously reported to General Meade.

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On 1 July, General Heth's infantry division attacked General Buford. The cavalry was armed with Sharps carbines, which were superior to the rifled musket. Fighting dismounted, he successfully defended against a much larger enemy until relieved by the infantry moving rapidly to his support.

On 3 July, during the preparation for General Pickett's charge, General Stuart attempted to envelop the right flank of the Union Army. He was met by General Gregg of the 2d Cavalry Division and repulsed.

Throughout this campaign, the Union cavalry was continuously conducting operations in support of the main body. They successfully covered the movement of the army, denied the Confederates information, maintained contact with the advancing Confederate Army, and continuously reported combat information. Once apparent that the armies were about to meet, General Buford transitioned into a defense, successfully securing the decisive terrain for the Union Army. Once the battle was joined, the cavalry continued to secure the positions of the army.

PRIMARY ROLES

The fundamental purpose of cavalry on the battlefield translates into roles that cavalry performs for the commander (see Figure 1-1). These roles are not necessarily missions themselves, but are translated into mission statements by the regimental commander or the squadron commander. These roles may represent the intent of the corps or division commander when he assigns a mission to the cavalry unit.

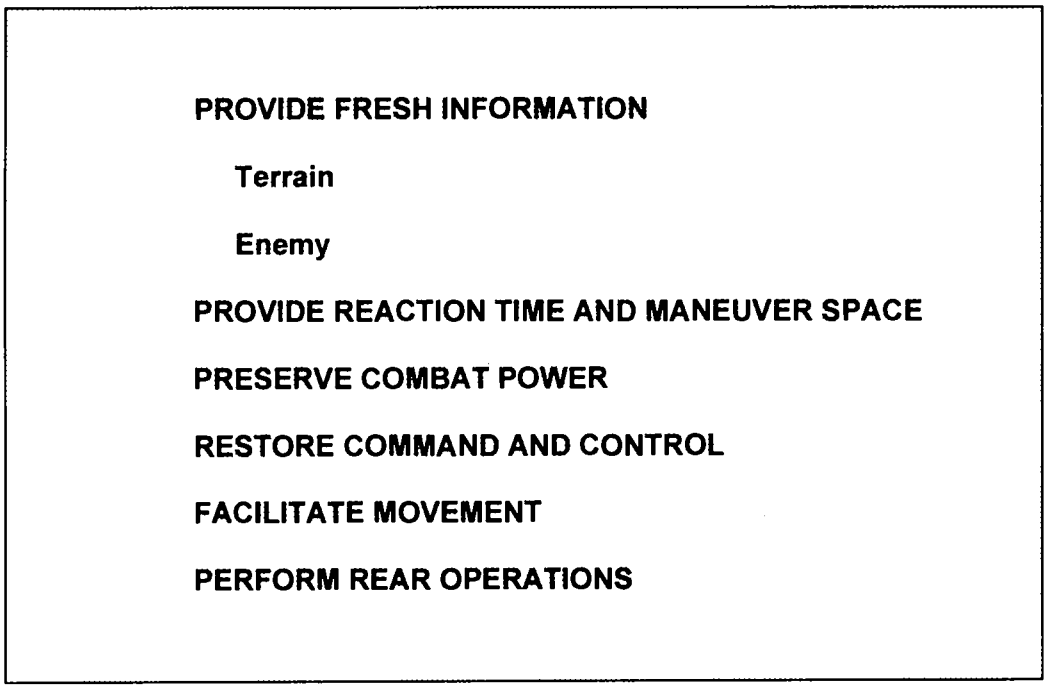

Figure 1-1. Primary roles.

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Provide Fresh Information

The corps or division commander's ability to seize or retain the initiative and concentrate overwhelming combat power at the right time and place depends on having fresh information about the enemy, such as his current dispositions, size, composition, direction of movement, and rate of advance. The precise application of combat power and effective synchronization of maneuver and supporting fires require a fresh and accurate picture of the enemy's current dispositions and activity within the area of operations. Concentration of combat power, through maneuver, also depends on the ability of divisions and brigades to move swiftly and predictably. Consequently, the commander must know which routes and cross-country terrain are suitable to maneuver forces into decisive engagements with the enemy.

To piece the puzzle together, the commander has a wide variety of intelligence assets available to him, such as national intelligence sources, military intelligence units, long-range surveillance detachments, aviation, combat electronic warfare and intelligence platforms, cavalry units, and any unit in contact. These intelligence collection sources facilitate intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), the target development process, and execution of ongoing operations. Many intelligence systems orient well forward of the forward line of own troops (FLOT) to identify enemy force concentrations and movements, as well as high-value targets whose loss may have a paralyzing effect on the enemy's ability to fight. The analytical control element at the division and regiment collates, analyzes, and disseminates this information to support planning of future operations and targeting for indirect-fire systems. This information serves as a basis for the commander to dispose and concentrate his forces for future combat operations. While this type of intelligence information is necessary, it is not entirely sufficient. Commanders need fresh, real-time information during the execution of current operations to be precise in the maneuver and application of combat power against the enemy. A major source of fresh information for the commander during battle is his cavalry.

Cavalry has decisive advantages over other intelligence resources because it—

- Works through and counters enemy deception efforts better than any sensor system.
- Provides the fastest, most reliable means of assessing terrain that the enemy is trying to configure to his advantage.
- Is not a passive source. Cavalry not only finds the enemy but can further develop the situation and force the enemy to reveal more information.
- Can more effectively disseminate information to commanders with an immediate need (eavesdrop, liaison officer).

Performing reconnaissance, cavalry provides the commander with combat information he needs to strike at the right place and time, such as the actual size and composition of the enemy, his exact dispositions, where he is strong, where he is weak, and where and when the precise application of superior combat power could have a decisive effect. Cavalry shows the commander where to move forces to

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ensure their uninterrupted advance to objectives despite battlefield conditions, such as impassable routes, blown bridges, unfoldable streams, contaminated areas, refugee columns, converging friendly units, and enemy forces. At the decisive point, cavalry guides maneuver units into engagements with the enemy, assists in rapidly massing and dispersing maneuver units, controls routes and choke points, and monitors the movement of combat support and combat service support units.

Provide Reaction Time and Maneuver Space

A commander thinks and plans in terms of the time and space required to maneuver and concentrate subordinate units against enemy weaknesses. There are two ways to create sufficient time and space. First, he detects and comprehends enemy developments well forward of the FLOT in sufficient time to array forces. Second, he directs aggressive security actions that buy the time and space required for an effective response to enemy initiatives. Reconnoitering or performing security operations well forward or to the flanks of the main body, cavalry develops the situation and prevents the commander from fighting at a disadvantage-unwarned, poorly disposed, or not poised to fight. By virtue of where cavalry performs the mission, it provides time for the commander to assess the situation, determine a course of action, issue orders, and maneuver. Cavalry also provides space to maneuver divisions or brigades, creating flexibility for the commander to respond to unanticipated enemy initiatives. The amount of time and space provided may be determined by the commander's intent. It is defined by the assigned mission. Time and space are physically provided by where the cavalry unit operates relative to the main body and the amount of combat power available.

Preserve Combat Power

When fighting a bigger, echeloned enemy, sustainment and preservation of combat power are critical. Winning the current battle is only part of the fight. Performing security for the corps or division, cavalry protects and preserves combat power until the commander determines where to concentrate forces so they can be maneuvered into engagements with the enemy. During offensive operations, the cavalry prevents premature deployment and attrition of combat power before reaching the objective. In defensive or retrograde operations, cavalry provides early warning of enemy approach, destroys or repels enemy reconnaissance elements, and fights enemy lead elements as required. If required, the cavalry protects the main body from engagement under unfavorable conditions and prevents the commander from having to divert forces from his main effort.

Restore Command and Control

On a battlefield that is fluid and chaotic, with communications systems frequently destroyed or jammed, command and control within the corps and division is fragile. When communications are lost with subordinate units, or the commander

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is unsure of their location and situation, cavalry is particularly suited to restore command and control. Performing reconnaissance, cavalry finds and reestablishes physical contact and communications with subordinate units, finds dead spaces not covered by any unit, or fills gaps between units that could be exploited by the enemy. Cavalry reports directly to the corps or division commander on the status of subordinate units. Serving as liaisons, cavalry carries the commander's request for information or instructions to a subordinate commander when communications are lost. General Patton effectively used a cavalry group for this task in the Third Army during World War II.

Facilitate Movement

The cluttered and confused battlefield requires firm control of unit movements. The history of mechanized warfare demonstrates that the most frequent task a division performs is movement:

- From port of debarkation to assembly area.
- From assembly area to attack positions or defensive sectors.
- During repositioning in the defense.
- When conducting a counterattack.
- When repositioning forces for the attack.

Cavalry units execute this task largely by performing reconnaissance. They monitor progress of subordinate elements for the commander. They man contact points and passage points, and coordinate with higher and adjacent units or headquarters.

Perform Rear Operations

The threat can attack throughout the depth of the battlefield. They do this simultaneously with an attack along the FLOT. Rear areas are not safe. FM 100-5 establishes the critical link between rear operations and the overall battle. When not employed in other missions, cavalry may perform rear operations tasks to supplement the capabilities of other rear area units/assets or to relieve combat units of contingency missions that may detract from their primary focus.

By performing continuous reconnaissance of rear areas, cavalry keeps its fingers on the pulse of rear operations. Cavalry identifies problems, performs area damage control after a major disruption, restores command and control, and facilitates movement of forces. Rear operations may also include serving as, or as part of, a tactical combat force.

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Section II. The Threat

Cavalry units no longer face a single, monolithic, or well-defined threat. During the cold war, planning centered on confronting numerically superior armored opposing forces in Europe, the Far East, or Southwest Asia. Now cavalry units focus on conducting contingency operations as part of a force protection operation. Today's cavalry regiments and squadrons must be able to conduct these operations across the range of military operations (peace, conflict, and war) against threats ranging in size from major regional powers, lesser powers, and terrorist groups to insurgents.

Emerging regional threats are more diverse and less predictable than former cold war adversaries, but just as deadly. These threats reflect the more traditional threat concept such as armor, infantry, and artillery formations maneuvering on a battlefield with close air support and the possibility of using weapons of mass destruction. However, cavalry units may also be called upon to conduct operations in the midst of a nontraditional threat.

Cavalry regiments and squadrons may be among the first units to deploy into an area to conduct stability and support operations, or they could conduct these operations as part of the post-conflict phase of some other contingency operation.

With the diversity of the threat, the IPB process becomes even more important at the regimental and squadron level. No longer will the threat always fit into a neat time-distance scenario. Potential adversaries may use a variety of doctrine, tactics, and equipment. The staff supports the commander by conducting IPB throughout the entire operation.

Section III. The Battlefield

OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

The potential operational environments facing the corps and division are war, conflict, and peacetime. Commanders apply doctrine with the operational environment foremost in mind. They design operations to meet the threat being faced. The states of peacetime, conflict, and war can exist all at once in the theater commander's strategic environment, requiring cavalry units to respond to requirements across the range of military operations simultaneously. Military operations in the three environmental states are classified as war and stability and support operations. (See Figure 1-2.)

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STATES OF THE ENVIRONMENT	GOAL	MILITARY OPERATIONS	EXAMPLES
WAR	Fight and Win	WAR (COMBAT)	• Large-scale combat operations.., • Attack • Defend
CONFLICT	Deter War and Resolve Conflict	OTHER THAN WAR (NONCOMBAT)	• Strikes and raids • Peacemaking • Support to insurgency • Antiterrorism • Peacekeeping • NEO
PEACETIME	Promote Peace	OTHER THAN WAR (NONCOMBAT)	• Counterdrug • Disaster relief • Civil Support • Peace building • Nation assistance
The states of peacetime, conflict, and war could all exist at once in the theater commander's strategic environment. He can respond to requirements with a wide range of military operations. Noncombat operations might occur during war, just as some stability and support operations require combat.			

Figure 1-2. Range of military operations in the theater commander's strategic environment.

War

Operations in this environment are characterized by mechanized, highly structured, weapons-and-firepower-intensive combat. This battlefield will be chaotic, intense, and destructive. The Army will not operate alone. In war, the Army will operate jointly with other services, agencies, and allies of the US government. Conventional doctrine and tactics as well as nonlinear, fluid, and even unconventional operations will be aspects of this battlefield framework. Distinguishing war from conflict may be a matter of scale. War will likely involve alliance warfare, full national mobilization, and national survival. Use of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons is possible.

Stability and Support Operations

Stability and support operations are divided into two states of environment: conflict and peacetime.

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