



## “New Type” PLA Units Emphasize Mobility, Joint Operations

**OE Watch Commentary:** Globally, ground forces have seen their role diminished as air and naval forces’ strike and power projection capabilities become more prominent. This is particularly true within the PLA, which is attempting to rebalance its resources to better suit its strategic environment, in which threats (and targets) are expected to be in the air or across the ocean, rather than from land borders as in previous decades. The accompanying excerpted article is part of a special feature in the June issue of the PLA’s official newspaper *PLA Daily* and in an editor’s note explaining the future of Ground Forces development, Hou Yongbo challenged readers to be creative in imagining new ways to employ ground forces and join in a debate.

The author(s) given for this piece, Yuan Yunshan and Dai Yue, likely a pseudonym or pseudonyms for multiple people, argue that China’s military must re-examine the most basic components of combat and develop a new theory of ground forces combat, focusing on dispersion and greater combat capability through the use of networking. The author analyzes trends in future warfare and attempts to build a survivable, more powerful model starting with the smallest combat unit: the individual soldier. The goal of this proposed “single-soldier intelligentized integrated ground-air combat system [单兵智能化地空一体作战系统]” is to maximize the individual combat capability of each soldier, while increasing their survivability given the realities of modern precision weaponry.

The PLA ground forces are reinventing themselves and making important investments in combat equipment to be much more effective than what was considered the poorly-equipped soldier lacking effective command and control that featured in many of China’s previous wars. This discussion, while a first step, is part of what is already happening on a larger scale, as the PLA is already moving in this direction through its emphasis on “informatization” [信息化] and “System of Systems” [体系], which seek to create significant gains in combat capability through networking command, sensors and strike platforms. It also matches discussions of swarm warfare, where networked individuals are distributed in way that increases their individual survivability, prior to coalescing and striking together in groups from multiple vectors. If successful in making these upgrades to the PLA’s combat-capability, combined with more realistic training, it could make the PLA’s ground forces a more potent force. **End OE Watch Commentary**

(Wood)

“As long as we keep up with the pace of scientific and technological development, and develop combat methods in response to these developments, the future ground force will play the main role in winning future wars.”

**Source:** “隐形陆军可成为未来发展方向—对建设现代化新型陆军的探索思考 (Stealthy Ground Forces Could Be the Future Direction of Development—Reflections on building a modernized New Type Ground Forces),” *PLA Daily*, 12 June 2018. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/1/2018-06/12/07/2018061207\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/1/2018-06/12/07/2018061207_pdf.pdf)

*The author believes that the development of “single-soldier intelligentized integrated ground-air combat system” [单兵智能化地空一体作战系统] is the core method of creating a “stealth army” [隐形陆军]. In the battlefield environment, (from the enemies’ point of view) the individual soldier is the most basic “target” unit when “dispersed” [散]. As the individual soldier is also the most important combat unit, its combat ability is very important. The goal of the “single-soldier intelligentized integrated ground-air combat system” is to make full use of modern scientific and technological means, fundamentally altering the traditional soldier’s way of warfighting, making a qualitative change to their combat capabilities. The “single-soldier” is no longer an individual in the traditional sense, but is now equipped with weapons that are “networked,” “informationized,” and “intelligentized.” Not only do they have a high individual combat capability, but also has constant situational awareness, network data communications and the ability to command intelligent unmanned combat platform. Imagine, then that the intelligent individual’s “fist, eyes and ears” are being extended, allowing the single soldier to detect the enemy at beyond-visual range, and conduct air attacks, so that its ability to conduct combat are extended from the traditional two-dimensions to three-dimensions, and even extended to four-dimensional cyberspace, making a qualitative change to their combat capabilities. The main technical means of “fusing” these scattered battlefield elements—such as intelligentized single-soldiers, unmanned combat platforms, command and control nodes, logistic support bases, etc.—are network, informationized, and intelligent technologies, which optimize the proportion of firepower strike ability according to changes in the battlefield environment to achieve fast and efficient aggregation, maximizing the impact.*



**China’s cyber policy appears to have three vectors—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—that dominate China’s cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.**

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