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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Sustaining and Decentralizing the Rapid Acquisition Alternative

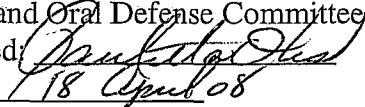
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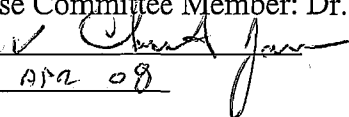
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Executive Summary

Title: Sustaining and Decentralizing the Rapid Acquisition Alternative

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Thesis: Lasting success in meeting urgent warfighter needs against current enemies and future threats requires Department of Defense (DoD) sustainment of rapid acquisition organizations and best practices beyond the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), and decentralization of rapid acquisition authority and structure to the Service level.

Discussion: The character of defense acquisitions fundamentally changed with the advent of the GWOT in 2001 and the ongoing military campaigns around the world in support of U.S. strategic objectives. Variants or incremental legislative reforms of the traditional, bureaucracy-laden DoD acquisition process no longer sufficed to answer the urgent call of the American warfighter in harm's way for immediate operational capabilities required to accomplish the mission and/or prevent significant U.S. casualties. The Defense Acquisition System (DAS) was proven critically flawed, for the vital purpose of swiftly addressing emergent battlefield needs, resulting in unnecessary costs in blood and treasure paid with the lives of American service members and the wealth of the nation. Confronting and defeating a remorseless enemy skilled in the use of irregular warfare tactics and the adaptation of lethal asymmetric capabilities instead demanded an essential organizational adaptation of the DAS itself.

Interim reforms implemented under existing acquisition organizational structure and significant resource constraints have proven critical to both warfighter mission accomplishment and force protection in countering the enemy's evolving tactics and asymmetric advantages. Rapid acquisition and the DoD organizational adaptation in support of the warfighter are still perceived as temporary in nature, however, without explicit DoD acknowledgment that the GWOT heralds an epochal change in the character, if not the nature, of future conflict and war. Any return to traditional "business as usual" practices that fails to sustain and reinforce the success and/or best practices of rapid acquisition alternatives will imperil American forces engaged in future conflicts with adaptive, irregular enemies, where the stakes for the both the warfighters and U.S. national security interests may prove far more dire.

Conclusion: In the context of the complex and ambiguous Long War, a conceivably interminable conflict of unachievable strategic ends, rapid acquisition demonstrates decisive comparative advantage over traditional acquisitions in its prioritization of the warfighters' mission and survivability over traditional legislative and statutory oversight requirements. The sustainment of rapid acquisition and the JRAC organization is nothing less than a requirement, in recognition of the character of the Long War and DoD's strategic need to align operational and support organizations to effectively confront the relentless threat of modern irregular warfare. The decentralization of rapid acquisition authority and structure at the Service-level also strengthens U.S. capabilities to innovate and achieve lasting success in confronting adaptive current enemies and future threats.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The character of defense acquisitions fundamentally changed with the advent of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) in 2001 and the ongoing military campaigns around the world in support of GWOT strategic objectives. Variants or incremental legislative reforms of the traditional, bureaucracy-laden Department of Defense (DoD) acquisition process no longer sufficed to answer the urgent call of the American warfighter in harm's way for immediate operational capabilities required to accomplish the mission and/or prevent significant U.S. casualties. The Defense Acquisition System (DAS) was proven critically flawed, for the vital purpose of swiftly addressing emergent battlefield needs, resulting in unnecessary costs in blood and treasure paid with the lives of American service members and the wealth of the nation. Confronting and defeating a remorseless enemy skilled in the use of irregular warfare tactics and the adaptation of lethal asymmetric capabilities instead demanded an essential organizational adaptation of the DAS itself.

Temporarily and under specific circumstances, that organizational adaptation has proven capable of prioritizing the warfighters' mission success and battlefield survivability over previously inviolable oversight, testing, affordability, and other legislative requirements. The change has given rise, as a result, to a new clarity and purpose in the post-September 11th, 2001 definition of the term "rapid acquisition," with irrefutable mission-critical and live-saving operational effects across the GWOT. Lasting success in meeting urgent warfighter needs against current enemies and future threats requires DoD sustainment of rapid acquisition organizations and best practices beyond the GWOT, and decentralization of rapid acquisition authority and structure to the Service level.

A. BACKGROUND

The DAS of the modern era has effectively, if not efficiently, provided the American warfighter with the operational capabilities necessary to accomplish the diverse missions required by U.S. national security objectives. No acquisition reforms have decisively quelled recurrent criticisms that the system remained bureaucratic and unresponsive, despite over 30 years of reform initiatives to improve and refine the process through various legislative oversight and streamlining measures. The GWOT has reinforced and elevated these criticisms, with U.S. forces confronting a transnational and irregular adversary across multiple campaigns and theaters of conflict. That enemy's capacity to rapidly adapt and develop asymmetric weapons and tactics to exploit U.S. capability shortfalls outstripped the ability of the traditional DoD acquisition process to respond to urgent operational requirements to counter the evolving threat.

With Administration and Congressional support and empowerment, DoD and the Services initiated comprehensive but temporary reforms to decisively address this critical Department-wide deficiency. At the DoD level, the establishment of the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC) to expedite Combatant Commanders' immediate warfighter needs (IWNs) provided a direct path to surmount institutional and legislative bureaucratic barriers to rapid response. The Services both exploited existing regulations and developed Service-specific acquisition process initiatives to speed their fielding responses to urgent battlefield requirements.

These interim reforms were implemented with varying degrees of success under existing acquisition organizational structure and significant resource constraints, but they have proven critical to both warfighter mission accomplishment and force protection in countering the enemy's evolving tactics and asymmetric advantages. Rapid acquisition and the DoD organizational adaptation in support of the warfighter are still perceived as temporary in nature,

however, without explicit DoD acknowledgment that the GWOT heralds an epochal change in the character, if not the nature, of future conflict and war. Any return to traditional "business as usual" practices that fails to sustain and reinforce the success and/or best practices of rapid acquisition alternatives will imperil American forces engaged in future conflicts with adaptive, irregular enemies, where the stakes for the both the warfighters and U.S. national security interests may prove far more dire.

B. METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

This thesis uses an extensive review of current literature, DoD regulations, directives, and instructions, and Congressional legislation and recent testimony in establishing the imperative to sustain DoD-level rapid acquisition organizations beyond the GWOT and to decentralize rapid acquisition authority and structure to the Service level. Chapters II and III develop a basic, progressive understanding of the traditional acquisition process of the DAS and the GWOT-driven DoD and Service-level rapid acquisition initiatives. Building upon that knowledge foundation, Chapter IV uses a comparative analysis to establish the key distinctions between the processes. The chapter also asserts the clear need for permanent, complementary rapid acquisition alternatives to the traditional processes at the DoD and Service levels, due to mission-critical, life-saving advantages in responding to warfighters' urgent requirements. Chapter V, finally, concludes with a summary of the thesis' supporting arguments and recommendations for further research and application.

II. TRADITIONAL DEFENSE ACQUISITION

An explanation of standard defense acquisition must precede any assertion of the distinct conditional advantages of rapid acquisition over the traditional process in support of rapid acquisition sustainment and decentralization. This chapter provides a brief, high-level overview of the fundamentals of the traditional defense acquisition process, with an emphasis upon those problematic aspects examined in Chapter IV through a comparative analysis with the rapid acquisition response to GWOT warfighter imperatives.

A. DEFENSE ACQUISITION OVERVIEW

Three principal documents collectively define the principles, procedures, and interrelationships of the Department of Defense Acquisition System. DoD Directive (DoDD) 5000.1, first published in 1971 and revised ten times through 2003, establishes the process for the management of U.S. investments in technologies and programs necessary to achieve National Security Strategy objectives and support current and future capability requirements of the Armed Forces.¹ The companion DoD Instruction (DoDI) 5000.2, first issued in 1975 with the initial DoDD 5000.1 revision, establishes the Defense Acquisition Management Framework for translating approved mission needs and capability requirements into “stable, affordable, and well-managed” weapon system and automated information system (AIS) acquisition programs.² The Defense Acquisition Guidebook (DAG) is an official encyclopedic electronic reference, rather than a policy document, that provides discretionary best practices and regulatory and statutory requirements of the acquisition process. The DAG also includes an overview of the two other DoD decision support systems, external to the DAS, that directly affect acquisitions:

¹ U.S. Department of Defense Directive 5000.1, The Defense Acquisition System (Washington, D.C.: USD (AT&L, 12 May 2003), 4.1.

² U.S. Department of Defense Instruction 5000.2, Operation of the Defense Acquisition System (Washington, D.C.: USD (AT&L, 12 May 2003), 1.3, 3.1.

the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process, and the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS).³

As interrelated decision support systems, the PPBE process, the JCIDS, and the DAS collectively provide a strategic, integrated approach for planning, resource allocation decisions, military capability requirements determination, and systems acquisition. While the focus of this chapter remains the DAS, both the PPBE process and the JCIDS require a brief introduction relevant to their respective influence over aspects of defense systems acquisition.

The PPBE process uses the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) as the foundations for defense strategy and business policy resource allocation decisions within the DoD, balancing objectives, priorities, and policies against fiscal constraints. Throughout the four phases that comprise the PPBE process, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff, the DoD Service Components, the Undersecretary of Defense for the Comptroller (USD(C)), and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are variously engaged ensuring that proposed and ongoing acquisition programs are properly prioritized, funded, and justified for presentation to Congress as part of the overall DoD budget.

Although the PPBE process results in a two-year budget submitted to Congress for every even-numbered fiscal year, Congress does not in fact provide biennial appropriations. While DoD submits an “amended” budget justification for every odd-numbered fiscal year, the PPBE process in those “off-years” is far more restrictive, allowing for no significant strategy, policy, or fiscal guidance changes. In practice, from a defense acquisition perspective, this self-imposed

³ Defense Acquisition University, *Defense Acquisition Guidebook*, 20 December 2004, <https://akss.dau.mil/dag/DoD5000.asp?view=document> (3 February 2008).

constraint severely limits DoD's ability to leverage the PPBE process as a decision support system in response to urgent warfighter requirements.⁴

The JCIDS is a capabilities identification process focused on future joint military challenges, examining current and proposed operational capabilities in the context of future joint concepts in order to identify potential capability gaps and pursue their possible solutions. In doing so, JCIDS leverages warfighter collaboration and government and private sector expertise in defining joint, interoperable capabilities that satisfy future force requirements. The warfighting capabilities identified, assessed, and prioritized by JCIDS support the DoD acquisitions process as the requirements basis for the development and acquisition of weapons and automated information systems. Figure 2-1 portrays this approximate relationship with defense acquisitions.⁵

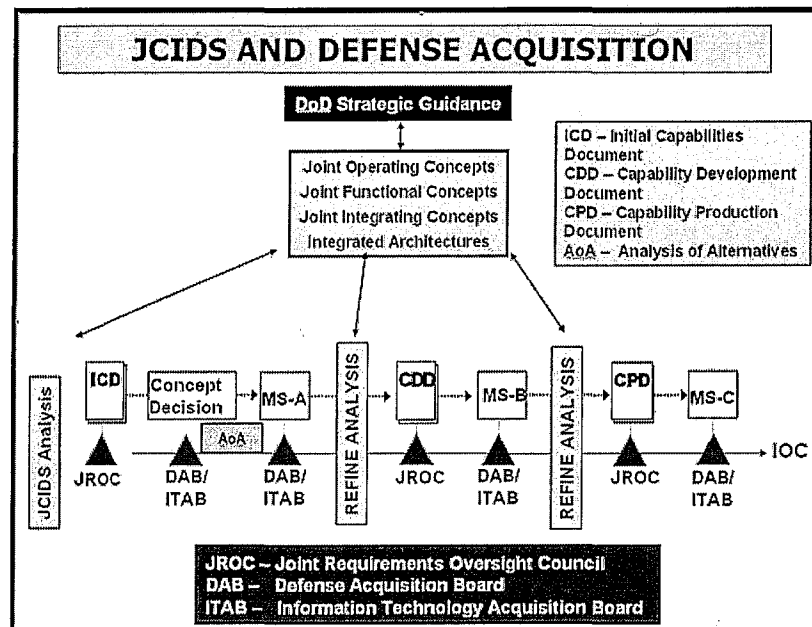


Figure 2-1. JCIDS and Defense Acquisition

⁴ Defense Acquisition University, "Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Process," Defense Acquisition Guidebook, 16 December 2004, <https://akss.dau.mil/dag/DoD5000.asp?view=document> (3 February 2008).

⁵ Defense Acquisition University, "Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System," Defense Acquisition Guidebook, 1 August 2006, <https://akss.dau.mil/dag/DoD5000.asp?view=document> (3 February 2008).

Within the JCIDS process, top-down analyses of DoD strategic guidance from the NSS, the QDR, the National Military Strategy (NMS), and Joint Vision 2020 assess integrated and interoperable systems capabilities in terms of their relevance to future joint warfighting concepts. Where the operational risks of perceived capability gaps are sufficient to justify a materiel solution, JCIDS documentation directs the development, testing, and procurement of the resulting acquisition program at each milestone in the acquisition process.⁶

This top-down emphasis on aligning capabilities with overarching future concepts serves the Department effectively in the development and acquisition of major and/or high-interest weapons and automated information systems. JCIDS directly supports the review and validation functions of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and the Defense Acquisition Board (DAB) or the Information Technology Acquisition Board (ITAB), senior advisory groups that support the designated Milestone Decision Authority (MDA) for such acquisition programs. From the perspective of the warfighter, however, this high-level, long-term joint focus and its associated bureaucracy also sharply limit DoD's ability to leverage the JCIDS as a decision support system in responding to immediate joint or Service-level needs in a combat environment.

B. THE DEFENSE ACQUISITION SYSTEM

The traditional defense acquisition process is the exclusive province of the DAS, the decision support system that governs all DoD acquisition programs using the Defense Acquisition Management Framework (DAMF). This extensive, event-based oversight process, depicted in Figure 2-2, implements U.S. government acquisition policies and principles through

⁶ Defense Acquisition University, "Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System," Defense Acquisition Guidebook, 1 August 2006, <https://akss.dau.mil/dag/DoD5000.asp?view=document> (5 February 2008).

a succession of sequential milestone reviews and decisions that control entrance to their associated program phases.⁷

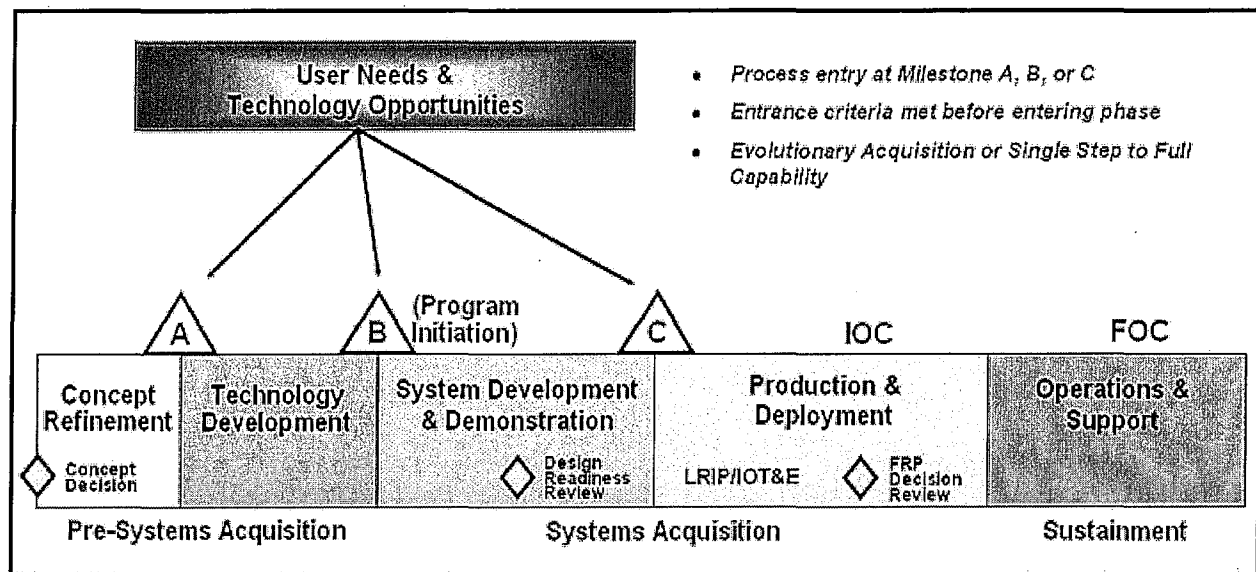


Figure 2-2. The Defense Acquisition Management Framework⁸

Potential acquisitions may theoretically enter the process at Concept Decision or any subsequent milestone, subject to technological maturity and MDA authorization. Any acquisition entering the process at Milestone B or C is initiated as a formal program of record, however, and must already possess full funding from the PPBE process. Moreover, every milestone and other decision points internal to particular program phases have specific and extensive statutory, regulatory, and other reporting and information requirements that must be met for the acquisition program to progress through, or enter the process beyond, that event.

One other DAS principle essential to a basic understanding of the traditional process is the required use of acquisition categories (ACATs) that classify programs according to their

⁷ Defense Acquisition University, "Defense Acquisition System," Defense Acquisition Guidebook, 1 August 2006, <https://akss.dau.mil/dag/DoD5000.asp?view=document> (5 February 2008).

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense Instruction 5000.2, Operation of the Defense Acquisition System (Washington, D.C.: USD (AT&L), 12 May 2003), 3.

anticipated cost or level of DoD and Congressional interest. At the high end of either spectrum, "ACAT I" programs are designated as Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs), in the case of weapon systems, or Major Automated Information Systems (MAISs), and possess the most stringent oversight and reporting requirements. For all MDAPs and MAISs, the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks and Information Integration/DoD Chief Information Officer (ASD(NII)/DoD CIO) serve as the respective MDAs. Delegation by exception to the Component Acquisition Executive (CAE) of a particular Service is possible, but in either instance these OSD and Service-level executives receive advisement from the senior OSD, Joint Staff, and Service officials comprising the JCIDS process DAB and ITAB. These senior oversight and advisory groups are supported in turn by subordinate Overarching Integrated Product Teams (OIPTs) and the chartered Working-level Integrated Product Teams (WIPTs) they manage.⁹

The preceding layers of bureaucratic oversight in support of MDA review and decision are by no means exhaustive, and exclude the Congressional inquiries and functional area oversight and reporting requirements inherent to the organization of every Program Executive Office (PEO) and Program Management Office (PMO). ACAT II and III programs may receive less scrutiny and retain a greater capacity to innovate within their acquisition strategies, but program execution must still maintain the integrity of the DAMF and its associated reporting requirements. In effect, the same DAS bureaucratic qualities that translate capability requirements over time into successful, long-term materiel solutions are the same qualities that also prevent the rapid response of traditional defense acquisition to immediate warfighter needs.

⁹ Defense Acquisition University, "Defense Acquisition System," Defense Acquisition Guidebook, 1 August 2006, <https://akss.dau.mil/dag/DoD5000.asp?view=document> (5 February 2008).

III. THE RAPID ACQUISITION RESPONSE

In response to numerous and urgent warfighter imperatives for equipment critical to GWOT mission accomplishment or force protection, DoD and the Services established separate rapid acquisition initiatives as essential alternatives to the traditional defense acquisition process. This chapter provides an overview of the rapid acquisition responses among the Services and DoD, with an emphasis upon the major DoD-level organizational response as the basis for the following chapter's comparative analysis of the distinct conditional advantages of GWOT-driven rapid acquisition initiatives over the DAS.

A. SERVICE-LEVEL RAPID ACQUISITION OVERVIEW

In 2004, Congress and DoD finally concluded that a Department-wide rapid acquisition process was critical to GWOT mission success and force protection imperatives. At the time, existing Federal and Service-level regulations already allowed the use of some streamlined processes for the limited acquisition of specific types of equipment, such as commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) systems.

By the end of 2004, however, every Service and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) possessed at least a formative rapid acquisition process specifically focused on GWOT capability gaps that endangered mission accomplishment or risked excessive casualties on the battlefield. Within existing Service acquisition frameworks, these baseline rapid response initiatives are similar in their limited focus on urgent, service-specific warfighter needs below the ACAT I major program threshold.¹⁰

The Marine Corps uses the Urgent Universal Needs Statement (UUNS) process to respond specifically to the immediate warfighting needs of deployed forces. Standardized

¹⁰ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3470.01, Rapid Validation and Resourcing of Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONS) in the Year of Execution (Washington, D.C.: CJCS, 15 July 2005).

UUNS requests from the operating forces rise through Marine Force or Marine Component chains of command to the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration (DC, CD&I) for action. Upon Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) validation, the Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) acquires and fields the capability within a 90-day objective, with the Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources (DC, P&R) separately adjudicating all funding requirements beyond the capability of MCSC to address.¹¹

The Army uses the Operational Needs Statement (ONS) process in a manner similar to the Marine Corps UUNS to respond to operational field commanders' urgent needs that impact mission accomplishment. Any general officer in the chain of command can submit the ONS in a prescribed format to Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) for consideration.¹²

Although Army regulations specify a 120-day objective for ONS action, the 2005 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3470.01 comments upon the objective's replacement with a "do it now" approach.¹³

The Army also has a separate support unit, the Rapid Equipping Force (REF), which is permanently staffed and specifically focused on rapid acquisition. The REF is an operational activity, reporting directly to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army under guidance from the Army G-3. With a mission to rapidly provide materiel solutions that enhance lethality and survivability, the REF partners with a broad spectrum of Army commands, industry, and academia to focus on the urgent needs of deployed units, within funding thresholds, which

¹¹ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, HQMC Realignment Meeting, 4 August 2005, https://www.mccdc.usmc.mil/featuretopics/reorg/ReOrg_Files/DC,CDI%204%20Aug%2005%20MROC%20Brief.ppt (19 February 2008), 6.

¹² Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Regulation 71-9, Force Development: Materiel Requirements (Washington, D.C.: HQDA, 30 April 1997), 3-4.

¹³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3470.01, Rapid Validation and Resourcing of Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONS) in the Year of Execution (Washington, D.C.: CJCS, 15 July 2005).

neither the traditional acquisition system nor supply chains can meet. REF teams also deploy with operational commanders to directly assist in articulating urgent needs, finding materiel solutions, and initiating their rapid acquisition process, drawing a clear distinction between a unit or theater-specific equipping solution and a service-wide acquisition-like fielding solution.¹⁴

The Air Force provides a rapid acquisition process to respond to warfighters' urgent requirements at the lead major command (MAJCOM) level, with the identification of an immediate need submitted by a subordinate unit that threatens mission failure or loss of life. Upon approval of the requirement, the lead MAJCOM submits the urgent need to Headquarters, U.S. Air Force for action in the form of a combat capability document (CCD), if internal programming authority or an off-the-shelf procurement cannot provide an immediate materiel solution. The CCD is unique to the Air Force, and expedites the acquisition process by serving in place of the traditionally required initial capability document, capability development document, and capability production document to rapidly respond to the warfighter with an interim materiel solution.¹⁵ As a rapid acquisition alternative, the Air Force process does not otherwise appear bound by format, time/schedule, or funding constraints.

The Navy uses the Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) program to react immediately to new enemy threats or urgent safety situations by streamlining the dialogue among requirements, budgetary, and acquisition communities, and expediting associated decisions critical to the procurement and contracting processes. Combatant Commanders must submit requests for RDC initiation to a Navy program sponsor or requirements division, which must in turn prepare a

¹⁴ MAJ Andrew P. Brickson, USA, The Need for Rapid Acquisition Programs in the Army to Face an Adaptive Enemy (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 24 May 2007), 15-16.

¹⁵ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3470.01, Rapid Validation and Resourcing of Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONS) in the Year of Execution (Washington, D.C.: CJCS, 15 July 2005).

detailed memorandum for validation through Navy or Marine Corps channels and the final approval of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition (ASN(RD&A)). If approved, ASN(RD&A) forwards the RDC requirement to the appropriate PEO, Direct Reporting Program Manager (DRPM), or MCSC, and charges them to develop an RDC strategy that expedites the materiel solution and transitions it to a standard ACAT program, if appropriate.¹⁶ The Navy rapid acquisition process alternative appears to remain highly bureaucratic; although Navy regulations do not specify a time limit objective for the RDC, the 2005 CJCSI 3470.01 estimates six months for process completion and four to six months for fielding a capability as best case Navy scenarios.¹⁷

USSOCOM, finally, as the sole Combatant Command with Service-equivalent acquisition authority, uses the Combat Mission Need Statement (C-MNS) process for rapid acquisition of materiel solutions for special operations forces (SOF) preparing or deployed for combat or contingency operations. The C-MNS must originate from operational SOF units for endorsement through the USSOCOM chain of command for validation. For approval, C-MNS must satisfy critical deficiencies that threaten either mission failure or loss of life for SOF personnel engaged in specific operations, after which the materiel solution is not sustained unless transitioned to a formal acquisition program through standard documentation. HQ USSOCOM forms rapid response teams of subject matter experts for action upon the C-MNS, funding and fielding USSOCOM rapid acquisitions within a 180-day objective after C-MNS approval.¹⁸

¹⁶ Secretary of the Navy Instruction 5000.2, Implementation and Operation of the Defense Acquisition System and the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (Washington, D.C.: 19 November 2004), 2.8.1, 2.8.2.

¹⁷ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3470.01, Rapid Validation and Resourcing of Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONS) in the Year of Execution (Washington, D.C.: CJCS, 15 July 2005).

¹⁸ Ibid.

Collectively, the Service-level rapid acquisition processes formed a rapid response baseline within existing acquisition frameworks, with the exception of the Army's REF, to address Service-specific GWOT capability gaps that endangered missions or risked excessive battlefield casualties. Executed with varying levels of effectiveness and efficiency, the Service initiatives have nonetheless successfully proven the wartime viability of rapid acquisition alternatives to the traditional DAS, equipping and fielding operating forces with materiel solutions that have ensured mission accomplishment and saved the lives of service members.

While these measures of success are irrefutable, however, the Services' rapid acquisition processes are limited by definition to acting within their specific mission and capability sets, under existing constraints of Service funds usually allocated for other purposes. Again, with the exception of the Army's separate REF, the enhanced speed and flexibility inherent in the Service rapid acquisition initiatives are also limited by the significant manpower constraints of existing acquisition force structures among the Services to effectively staff the urgent, complex, and management-intensive response required. Finally, the redundant layers of the traditional DAS limited innovation and dialogue on efficiencies that circumvented, and thus threatened, the bureaucracy, with its mandatory oversight requirements and the pervasive threats of career and freedom-ending reprisals for violating them. Congress and the DoD established a Department-level joint rapid acquisition process and authority in 2004, responding to the GWOT imperative to confront operational military capability gaps that risked mission failure or loss of life, as well as the limitations imposed upon the Services' latitude and capacity to execute rapidly.

B. JOINT RAPID ACQUISITION

Two National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs) collectively provided the direction, authority, and resources for the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) to implement a joint rapid

acquisition process and establish a separate joint organization to facilitate and monitor it. Signed into law after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and on the eve of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the Bob Stump NDAA for Fiscal Year 2003 first directed the SecDef to implement procedures for the rapid acquisition and deployment of materiel urgently required to counter enemy threats or prevent loss of life. It also required the specific establishment of a process that streamlined communications among the Combatant Commands, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the acquisition and research and development communities, thus enabling the execution of rapid acquisition efforts.¹⁹

The Ronald W. Reagan NDAA for Fiscal Year 2005 amended and greatly expanded the prior legislation, directing the SecDef to designate a senior DoD official to lead the rapid acquisition process. More significantly, it authorized that senior official to waive any law, regulation, directive, or policy, so long as civil or criminal laws were not violated, that impeded the rapid acquisition or deployment of the materiel urgently required. The legislation also allowed the SecDef to fund the rapid acquisition using any budget resources available to the DoD, regardless of appropriation type, but specified a \$100 million limit to this authority in any one year. Finally, the act imposed a time limit on the execution of any rapid acquisition, requiring a transition to the traditional DAS no more than two years after its initiation.²⁰

In response to this empowering Congressional legislation, the DoD formed the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC) in late 2004 to monitor, coordinate, and facilitate resolving the immediate warfighting needs (IWNs) of Combatant Commanders.²¹ Subsequent memoranda

¹⁹ US Congress, Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, 2 December 2002, Section 806, Pub. L. No. 107-314.

²⁰ US Congress, Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, 28 October 2004, Section 811, Pub. L. No. 108-375.

issued by the SecDef and Deputy SecDef established direct JRAC reporting requirements to their respective offices, while placing the organization administratively under USD(AT&L). They also outlined the JRAC's unique staffing structure and specific role in providing critical visibility on requests for and execution of the SecDef rapid acquisition authority across the DoD, and placed a three-year time limit on the JRAC's existence.²²

In 2005, CJCSI 3470.01 formalized the rapid validation and resourcing process for Combatant Commanders' Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONs), warfighter requirements distinct from the variant Service-specific urgent needs in their inherently joint nature outside the scope of Service initiatives and the traditional DAS. The instruction also codified the responsibilities of the Joint Staff in validating and further designating specific JUONs as IWNs, high-visibility, mission-critical, and life-saving JUONs for JRAC resolution requiring a fielded capability within 120 days or less.²³

1. JRAC Organization & Staffing

The JRAC staffing structure consists of a Core Group and a supporting Advisory Group, and functions much like an Overarching Integrated Product Team. The Core Group is comprised of two senior-level officials, a Director staffed from USD(AT&L) and a Deputy Director staffed from USD(C), and an administrative assistant. General/Flag Officers or Senior Executive Service civilian representatives from the DoD General Counsel, the CJCS, Defense Procurement

²¹ Dr. Robert Buhrkuhl, Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell Presentation to the 39th Annual DoD Cost Analysis Symposium, 15 February 2006.

²² Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Meeting Immediate Warfighter Needs (IWNs), 15 November 2004. See also Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Fiscal Year 2005 Rapid Acquisition Authority (RAA), 25 January 2005.

²³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3470.01, Rapid Validation and Resourcing of Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONS) in the Year of Execution (Washington, D.C.: CJCS, 15 July 2005).

and Acquisition Policy, and the Combating Terrorism Technology Task Force also serve part-time as members of the JRAC Core Group.²⁴

The Core Group determines the composition of the supporting JRAC Advisory Group by the specific type of IWN and the areas of subject matter expertise required for action. Senior representatives for the USDs for Intelligence (I), Personnel and Readiness (P&R), and Policy (P); the ASD(NII); the Directors for Program Analysis and Evaluation (D,PA&E) and Operational Test and Evaluation (D,OT&E); the Combatant Commanders; and the Military Services serve on the JRAC Advisory Group as necessary to resolve IWN issues under their respective areas of authority or expertise. All officials formally designated to support the JRAC Core Group in this capacity as principal interfaces are required to possess rapid decisionmaking authority for their respective organizations.²⁵

2. JRAC Process Execution

The process by which the JRAC executes the rapid acquisition and deployment of materiel critical to mission accomplishment and survivability begins in the GWOT operational environment, where American service members confront lethal and adaptive enemies. The chain-of-command generates an Urgent Operational Need (UON), a general term for a Service-specific request in that Service's respective format, where commanders perceive a capability gap in the conduct of operations severe enough to risk mission failure and/or loss of life. Upon validation and approval, that Service may engage its own rapid acquisition process to field the required materiel solution. If the UON either exceeds the capacity of the Service to respond or

²⁴ Dr. Robert Buhrkuhl, Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell Presentation to the 39th Annual DoD Cost Analysis Symposium, 15 February 2006. See also Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Meeting Immediate Warfighter Needs (IWNs), 15 November 2004.

²⁵ Dr. Robert Buhrkuhl, Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell Presentation to the 39th Annual DoD Cost Analysis Symposium, 15 February 2006. See also Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Meeting Immediate Warfighter Needs (IWNs), 15 November 2004.

possesses joint implications affecting multiple services, however, the Combatant Commander may instead validate and prioritize the critical request as a JUON.²⁶

Once the JUON is validated, the Combatant Commander submits the request to both the CJCS and the JRAC, where the JUON is reviewed, validated, and potentially further designated as an IWN within 14 days of submission. Upon concurrence from the CJCS, the JRAC assumes specific responsibility for tracking and coordinating the rapid acquisition and fielding of the mission-critical materiel solution within 120 days.²⁷ In execution of this crucial responsibility, the JRAC Core Group summons designated Advisory Group members to form a flexible support team of empowered subject matter experts relevant to that specific IWN.

The assembled JRAC staff simultaneously engages the full spectrum of organizations required to resolve IWN issues, focusing on near-term acquisition, materiel, logistics, and funding considerations that balance operational risk, deployability, supportability, and affordability parameters with warfighter capability performance requirements. Secondary considerations focus on systems integration, interoperability, sustainability, and other longer-term systemic issues for future compliance with the JCIDS. The JRAC also designates a lead Service to assume responsibility for contracting, procuring, and/or managing the IWN rapid acquisition materiel solution, with the intent for its eventual transition into a standard acquisition program within that Service's portfolio.²⁸

Although the process effectively assigns a specific Service some aspects of program management for the rapid acquisition, the JRAC concurrently addresses initial funding of the

²⁶ Michael W. Middleton, Assessing the Value of the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 17-19.

²⁷ Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Meeting Immediate Warfighter Needs (IWNs), 15 November 2004.

²⁸ Michael W. Middleton, Assessing the Value of the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 22, 23, 26.

material solution as a separate issue. Leveraging the authority granted the SecDef by Congress to finance IWNs with budgetary resources throughout the DoD, including Congressional GWOT supplementals, the JRAC's Deputy Director from the USD(C) ensures the proposed strategy to fund the IWN is legal, appropriate, and prioritized.²⁹

With the coordination and resolution of these IWN issues, the JRAC Core and relevant Advisory Group members review and validate the comprehensive rapid acquisition proposal, and submit the resulting materiel solution recommendation to the Budget Office Director (BOD) and the SecDef or Deputy SecDef.³⁰ Upon their approval and direction, funding is reallocated as required from across the DoD and the rapid acquisition is executed, while the warfighters deployed to the distant fronts of the GWOT gain the critical capability required to accomplish the mission and/or protect the lives of American forces in harm's way.

²⁹ Ibid., 23, 24, 26.

³⁰ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3470.01, Rapid Validation and Resourcing of Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONS) in the Year of Execution (Washington, D.C.: CJCS, 15 July 2005).

IV. SUSTAINING AND DECENTRALIZING RAPID ACQUISITION

The preceding two chapters developed a basic, progressive understanding of the traditional DAS and the rapid acquisition processes at the Service and DoD-levels established in response to urgent operational needs from forces engaged in the GWOT. This chapter builds upon that foundation of understanding through a comparative analysis of traditional and rapid acquisition processes at the Department level. The comparative advantage of rapid acquisition for the specific purpose of immediately response to critical warfighter operational requirements clearly supports the subsequent arguments for both the sustainment of a joint rapid acquisition alternative and the decentralization of rapid acquisition authority among the Military Services.

A. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ACQUISITION PROCESSES

Objective comparison of traditional acquisition and the rapid acquisition alternative must first account for the context in which the processes are compared. This context, of course, is the GWOT, the complex and ambiguous conflict fought primarily by the U.S. military for over six years, and far more aptly termed “the Long War” for its interminable, grinding character and unachievable strategic ends. The transnational, irregular enemy’s capacity to exploit U.S. asymmetric vulnerabilities and evolve faster than traditional acquisition’s ability to respond first gave rise to the rapid acquisition concept under consideration as an outright requirement for operational success. By the very nature of its original purpose in effectively prioritizing the warfighters’ mission and survivability over traditional legislative and statutory oversight requirements, rapid acquisition demonstrates comparative advantage when assessed in this context.

The DAS currently serving the nation is the result of over 30 years of carefully crafted legislation, regulation, and reform, and the greatest testament to its effectiveness since its

inception is the existence of the unequivocally most powerful, survivable, and far-reaching military in the world, which it has successfully equipped. Traditional defense acquisition is firmly focused on the future capabilities the Armed Forces require to maintain this supremacy and to secure U.S. national security interests. Through the highly structured and sequential process of the JCIDS, future capability requirements are identified, prioritized, and thoroughly assessed in consideration of the full spectrum of conceivable alternatives for their achievement. The determination of materiel solutions that satisfy future capability requirements usually entails extensive concept exploration, developmental technologies, and other system factors that result in long-term research and development program phases. In execution, such major defense acquisitions require extensive investments in time and resources, with anticipated funding required for the program planned years in advance through the PPBE process. As a result of their strategic importance to future capabilities and the magnitude of the processes to successfully fund, develop, procure, and field them, the programs acquired through the DAS possess high levels of visibility before Congress, DoD leadership, and the American people.³¹

By comparison, the Service and DoD rapid acquisition processes are the result of the specific inability of the DAS to respond to the immediate operational needs of the American warfighter, engaged against a continuously evolving threat adapting asymmetric tactics and weapons to exploit the warfighter's capability gaps. Rapid acquisition processes such as the JRAC are instead focused on the urgency of the present, with an inherently flexible, requirement-specific process that executes component elements concurrently to the greatest extent possible. Potential urgent operational needs rise from a broad spectrum of mission-critical and life-saving requirements, with the priority of the rapid response severely constraining any assessment of

³¹ Dr. Robert Buhrkuhl, Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell Presentation to the 39th Annual DoD Cost Analysis Symposium, 15 February 2006.

alternatives beyond the relatively narrow scope of technologies immediately available, or requiring minimal development and adaptation, for fielding. In execution, the urgency of the operational requirement and the imminent deployability of the materiel solution also limit the investments in time and resources dedicated to its resolution, with funding availability and flexibility of decisive importance. As a consequence, while no structured rapid acquisition program of record initially exists in any well-defined format for the scrutiny of the nation's leaders, the mission-critical and life-saving *results* of successful and timely execution on the fronts of the Long War are of the highest visibility.³²

Key aspects of this overarching comparison merit further assessment in the interminable context of the Long War. With the criticality of meeting operational requirements that directly impact mission accomplishment, the importance of rapidly fielding a capability to the warfighter that ensures his success and survivability is inherently prioritized over parameters of cost and technical performance. This conflict-driven prioritization of schedule represents a shift from traditional acquisition, where the DAS must otherwise execute programs of record managing cost as an independent variable within the budgetary constraints of the PPBE process, and rigorously conform to the performance specifications established in the JCIDS requirements. While matters of schedule remain among the three principal metrics in traditional defense acquisition, and cost and performance concerns factor into any IWN materiel solution, rapid acquisition's effective management of schedule as an independent variable proves a decisive comparative advantage in response to the urgency of the Long War's operational needs.

Another key comparative advantage of the rapid acquisition process lies within the staffing and structure of the independent organization directly accountable for its successful execution. Designated JRAC Core and Advisory Group subject matter experts are direct

³² Ibid.

representatives of higher-level organizations, with the authority to make binding decisions on their behalf. This stands in stark contrast to DAS-bound program management offices, which are required to obtain decisions and authorizations sequentially up the chain of command or externally from other stakeholders.

The JRAC is authorized to fund IWNs through the SecDef using *any* DoD budgetary resources, up to a \$100 million limit in any one year, where a traditional acquisition specifically requires full funding through the PPBE process upon its formal designation and must defend its budget from other stakeholders throughout execution. The JRAC may also waive any of the bureaucracy's extensive regulatory and statutory oversight and reporting requirements that present an impediment to rapid acquisition and deployment of the IWN, so long as civil and criminal laws are upheld, while DAS programs and leadership remain subject to their full measure. Within the JRAC, the Core and Advisory Group members effectively *are* the stakeholders, as a prerequisite for their presence, and the speed and decisiveness with which they can collectively resolve IWN issues and field a mission-critical capability are unparalleled in support of the warfighter in the modern era of irregular warfare.

The essentially simultaneous execution of actions internal to the JRAC's process itself constitutes a final conditional advantage of the rapid acquisition process when compared against the DAS in support of the Long War. From a JUON's validation as an IWN under JRAC authority, every staff action except for the organization's internal validation of its comprehensive proposed solution and the approval of the BOD and the SecDef or Deputy SecDef is executed with near-concurrence. The key integration and coordination of empowered subject matter experts to resolve urgent operational needs absolutely minimizes the number and influence of any "critical path" sequence issues, effectively eliminating the structured linearity that

characterizes traditional defense acquisition. The Defense Acquisition Management Framework through which the DAS is executed, in contrast, is by design an event-based implementation of oversight policies through a succession of reviews and decisions that control entrance to sequential program phases.³³ For an acquisition and fielding initiative in support of the Long War, any conceivable failure to satisfy an IWN due to critical path impediments or the intransigence of external decision-makers is unacceptable, with the consequences of dependence upon a process defined by such limitations measurable in missions failed and lives lost.

B. SUSTAINMENT OF THE RAPID ACQUISITION ALTERNATIVE

The indefinite sustainment of rapid acquisition and the JRAC organization is nothing less than a requirement, in explicit recognition of both the interminable character of the Long War and DoD's strategic need to align operational and support organizations to effectively confront the adaptive, incessant threat of modern irregular warfare. This requirement does not lessen the necessity of the DAS and its accompanying decision support systems; on the contrary, the evolution in the character of war makes a long-term focus on acquiring the future joint capabilities necessary for strategic success or deterrence all the more imperative. At its core, the issue of sustaining rapid acquisition is the decision to preserve an alternative that is already proven to possess distinct comparative advantages over traditional acquisition in responding to warfighters' urgent requirements against an evolving, continuous threat.

DoD's *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (NMSP-WOT) would oppose the sustainment of a joint rapid acquisition alternative beyond the JRAC's three-year lifespan, due to expire this year, on the basis of the current official characterization of the GWOT, the misguided official term used in the document's latest edition. From a national

³³ Defense Acquisition University, "Defense Acquisition System," Defense Acquisition Guidebook, 1 August 2006, <https://akss.dau.mil/dag/DoD5000.asp?view=document> (5 February 2008).

strategic perspective, the NMSP-WOT defines denial of the enemy's means to survive as a measure of victory in the GWOT,³⁴ yet no war declared against a tactic as old as conflict itself as a means to an end will ever result in a conclusive strategic victory. An enemy's use of terrorism is usually an asymmetric adaptation of violence to sustain a conflict when that foe lacks resources or confronts a militarily superior force,³⁵ and continued outright U.S. conventional military dominance still leaves enemies pursuing such irregular means as terrorism to exploit U.S. conventional vulnerabilities. The lack of a rapid acquisition alternative after the currently mandated end to the existence of the JRAC and its attendant authority would imperil American forces with the return to traditional processes already proven incapable of responding to emergent requirements in time to prevent needless mission failure and loss of life.

The official DoD characterization of the GWOT as a "winnable" war in the NMSP-WOT also fails to grasp the long-term requirement for constant vigilance and rapid response against a continuously adaptive enemy. National strategic guidance within the plan defines strategic ends as the defeat of "violent extremism as a threat to our way of life as a free and open society," and the creation of "a global environment inhospitable to violent extremists and all who support them."³⁶ Achieving terrorism's defeat, however, presents a conflict between long-term strategic ends and shortsighted ways and means that would eliminate the proven rapid acquisition response capability, when the enemy exploits the very freedoms and openness of a globalized society that the Long War is specifically fought to defend.³⁷

³⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism (Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (February 1, 2006), 5.

³⁵ Laurence A. Dobrot, The Global War on Terrorism: A Religious War? (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, November, 2007), 1.

³⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism (Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (February 1, 2006), 5, 19, 20.

The achievement of a global environment inhospitable to violent extremists also proves difficult to reconcile with current operational realities and the prospect of any near-term end to the Long War that would allow for a return to acquisition “business as usual.” State adversaries that either overtly or covertly support the terrorists’ objectives and operations, as well as “allies” that allow the enemy safe haven within their territories or oppress their own people and incite terrorism, already prevent the realization of the plan’s latter strategic end. Other dangerous trends, such as the population explosion in the developing world, the rise of non-state actors and movements that ignore national borders, the increase in ethnic and sectarian segregation, and the mounting competition over constrained energy resources, will almost certainly aggravate future conflicts.³⁷ Failure to sustain the successes and best practices of the rapid acquisition alternative will threaten the missions and lives of American warfighters engaged in such wars of the future, where the stakes for U.S. national security interests and way of life may prove far higher.

The urgency and clarity of the U.S. Armed Forces’ present and foreseeable future role in an incessant Long War unequivocally requires the sustainment of a rapid acquisition alternative capable of executing with the same critical speed and decisiveness as the warfighters it supports. In contrast to the official DoD characterization of the GWOT, the imperative to sustain rapid acquisition is based upon the operational reality of U.S. forces remaining deployed across the globe to the distant fronts and ambiguous operating environments of the Long War, against an enemy that relentlessly outstrips the capability of the DAS to counter the evolving threat.

³⁷ David J. Kilcullen, “New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict,” eJournal USA: Foreign Policy Agenda, US Department of State (May, 2007), 2.

³⁸ Lieutenant General Peter W. Chiarelli, with Major Stephen M. Smith, “Learning from our Modern Wars: The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future,” Military Review (September-October 2007), 6.

C. DECENTRALIZATION OF THE RAPID ACQUISITION ALTERNATIVE

The decentralization of rapid acquisition would effectively expand the JRAC's sustained mission-critical, life-saving capability to answer the call of the warfighter in harm's way to the Service-level. The Services and USSOCOM already possess formative rapid acquisition processes focused upon urgent, service-specific warfighter needs below the major program threshold, but all of them function within traditional acquisition frameworks. Existing Service-level alternatives are executed with varying levels of effectiveness and efficiency, and still impose funding use constraints, manpower and organizational resource constraints, and redundant bureaucratic oversight. Decentralization of the JRAC paradigm for rapid acquisition using a Service-level Rapid Acquisition Cell (SRAC) concept would mitigate such Service limitations to warfighter responsiveness, and expand the capacity to field materiel solutions that ensure mission accomplishment and save the lives of service members.

The majority of rapid acquisitions are service-specific, aligning with the missions and capabilities by which the Services separately organize, train, and employ their forces. Decentralization of the DoD-level rapid acquisition process would inject greater technical innovation and process efficiency into the Armed Forces' distinct capabilities-based responses to urgent warfighter requirements. Under existing acquisition constraints, Service budget resources are rigidly allocated by appropriation and program of record through the PPBE process, with strict limitations and oversight on the transfer or reprogramming of funds for other purposes. SRAC establishment, however, would conceptually authorize the Service Secretary or CAE to fund IWNs using any service-specific budgetary resources, up to a suggested limit in the \$20-\$35 million range in any one year. Decentralization would thus address the decisive importance of funding flexibility and availability in responding to urgent service-specific operational

requirements, with IWNs that are inherently joint in nature or beyond Service funding thresholds rising to the JRAC for action.

Current manpower and organizational resource constraints also limit Service-level capabilities to effectively staff and execute rapid acquisition processes, above and beyond the management-intensive formal programs of record under the DAS focused upon JCIDS-driven future capability requirements. SRACs established with the decentralization of the DoD-level rapid acquisition paradigm would provide the independent organizational structure and staff required to lead the Service-level rapid acquisition processes. The senior leadership of the SRAC structures would directly represent the stakeholders within the Service-level acquisition, requirements, and comptroller organizations, and possess the critical authority to make binding decisions on their behalf in response to immediate warfighter needs.

Excessive oversight remains another persistent constraint on Service-level rapid acquisition. With few exceptions under the existing acquisition framework, redundant layers of Service bureaucracy continue to limit innovations in response to urgent operational requirements with the majority of the same oversight measures enforced upon traditional programs of record. SRAC establishment at the Service-level would also decentralize the DoD authorization to waive laws, regulations, directives, or policies that impeded rapid acquisition, so long as civil or criminal laws were not violated, while holding SRAC leadership directly accountable for its successful execution.

The Services have proven the wartime viability of rapid acquisition alternatives to the traditional DAS, equipping and fielding operating forces with materiel solutions critical to mission accomplishment or force protection even while confronted with the limitations and constraints that originally gave rise to the DoD-level JRAC. Decentralization of rapid

acquisition authority and structure to the Services strengthens U.S. capabilities to achieve lasting success in confronting future threats, with the clear imperative to sustain joint rapid acquisition against the lethal, adaptive enemies of the interminable Long War. In expanding the Services' flexibility and responsiveness to urgent warfighter needs, rapid acquisition decentralization also serves the DoD requirement to align operational and support organizations to the realities of irregular warfare's dominance of the strategic environment.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous chapter established the comparative advantage of rapid acquisition over bureaucracy-laden traditional acquisition in the response to IWNs, with the cost of failure to rapidly respond due to dependence upon a broken process measurable in missions failed and lives lost. It also asserted the requirements for both the sustainment of a joint rapid acquisition alternative and the decentralization of rapid acquisition authority and organizational structure to the Service level, in recognition of the operational realities and character of the interminable Long War, and its unachievable strategic ends as presently defined by the DoD. This final chapter provides a summary conclusion of supporting arguments, and offers recommendations for further research and application.

A. CONCLUSION

Lasting success in meeting urgent warfighter needs against current enemies and future threats requires DoD sustainment of rapid acquisition organizations and best practices beyond the GWOT, and decentralization of rapid acquisition authority and structure to the Service level. DoD and the Services established separate rapid acquisition initiatives as essential alternatives to the traditional defense acquisition process, in response to numerous and urgent warfighter imperatives for equipment critical to GWOT mission accomplishment or force protection. Service rapid acquisition processes, however, remained limited by existing constraints on funding use, manpower and force structures, and redundant layers of traditional DAS bureaucracy and oversight. Congress and the DoD established the joint rapid acquisition process and authority in response to GWOT imperatives to confront operational military capability gaps that risked mission failure or loss of life, as well as the limitations imposed upon the Services' latitude and capacity to execute rapidly.

In the context of the complex and ambiguous Long War, a conceivably interminable conflict of unachievable strategic ends, rapid acquisition demonstrates decisive comparative advantage over the traditional acquisition process in its prioritization of the warfighters' mission and survivability over traditional legislative and statutory oversight requirements. The DAS remains firmly focused on the future capability requirements of the Armed Forces to maintain military supremacy and to secure U.S. national security interests. By comparison, the Service and DoD rapid acquisition processes are the result of the specific inability of the DAS to respond to the immediate operational needs of the American warfighter, engaged against a continuously evolving threat adapting asymmetric tactics and weapons to exploit U.S. capability gaps.

Rapid acquisition processes such as the JRAC are focused on the urgency of the present, with urgent operational needs rising from a broad spectrum of mission-critical and life-saving requirements. The effective management of schedule as an independent variable proves a decisive comparative advantage in response to the urgency of the Long War's operational needs. Another key comparative rapid acquisition advantage lies within the staffing and structure of the independent JRAC organization directly accountable for its successful execution, with members possessing the authority to make binding decisions on behalf of the higher-level organizations they represent. The JRAC is also authorized to fund IWNs using *any* DoD budgetary resources, up to a \$100 million limit in any one year, and may waive any regulatory and statutory oversight and reporting requirements that present an impediment to rapid acquisition and deployment of the IWN, so long as civil and criminal laws are upheld. Members of the JRAC effectively are stakeholders, as a prerequisite for their presence, and the speed and decisiveness with which they can collectively resolve IWN issues and field a mission-critical capability are unparalleled in support of the warfighter in the modern era of irregular warfare.

The sustainment of rapid acquisition and the JRAC organization is nothing less than a requirement, in recognition of the character of the Long War and DoD's strategic need to align operational and support organizations to effectively confront the adaptive, relentless threat of modern irregular warfare. This requirement does not lessen the necessity of the DAS and its accompanying decision support systems; on the contrary, the evolution in the character of war makes a long-term focus on acquiring the future joint capabilities necessary for strategic success or deterrence all the more imperative. In contrast to the official DoD characterization of the GWOT, the imperative to sustain rapid acquisition is based upon the operational reality of U.S. forces remaining deployed across the globe to the distant fronts and ambiguous operating environments of the Long War, against an enemy that relentlessly outstrips the capability of the DAS to counter the evolving threat.

The decentralization of rapid acquisition would effectively expand the JRAC's sustained mission-critical, life-saving capability to answer the call of the warfighter in harm's way to the Service-level. Decentralization of the JRAC paradigm for rapid acquisition, using a Service-level Rapid Acquisition Cell (SRAC) concept, would mitigate Service limitations to warfighter responsiveness and expand the capacity to field materiel solutions that ensure mission accomplishment and save the lives of service members. Rapid acquisition authority and structure expansion at the Service-level strengthens U.S. capabilities to achieve lasting success in confronting future threats, and reinforces the imperative to sustain joint rapid acquisition against the lethal, adaptive enemies of the Long War.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Research and results in the development of the thesis and supporting arguments recommend several important areas for further research, analysis, and/or application of thesis

conclusions. The future evolution of the traditional defense acquisition system clearly merits further research, in confrontation of the progression of revisions and refinements over the past 35 years that “reformed” the process into limited relevance in responding to urgent operational needs in an era of warfare characterized by an adaptive, relentless and irregular enemy. The character of the Long War invariably warrants further research as well, in response to disagreement with the thesis’ characterization of the conflict or other significant events with the capacity to alter perceptions of the new era of conflict or provide insights for overcoming the continuously evolving threat.

Conclusions also warrant consideration for application. The proposed implementation of a conceptual SRAC within a Service that effectively decentralizes the joint paradigm for rapid acquisition authority and structure while integrating Service-level stakeholders would prove of foremost interest. Alternatively, an attempt to define rapid acquisition best practices among the Services and propose implementation of joint rapid acquisition authority through a variant benchmark structure would also warrant significant interest, particularly in a comparison to the former concept. DoD and Service-level commands and organizations will invariably establish grounds for objection based upon current missions, operations tempo, resource constraints, and/or span of control issues to such implementation proposals. The resulting dialogue, however, may serve as the grounds for establishing greater rapid acquisition capabilities to support the warfighter in harm’s way, facing a lethal and adaptive enemy on a distant front of the Long War where a rapid counter to an emergent threat may prove critical to some elusive measure of victory.

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