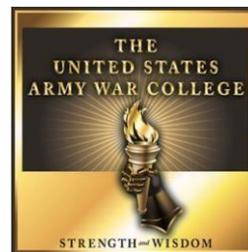


## Agile Acquisition: How does the Army Capitalize on Success?

by

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### Abstract

Ask any Soldier about acquisition and they will say it takes too long. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Department of Defense undertook several initiatives to get Soldiers badly needed equipment in a timely manner. Some of these initiatives were effective and should be emulated by Army rapid acquisitions leaders going forward. Leaders in organizations such as the Rapid Equipping Force, the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell, and the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization achieved some notably short turnaround times on requests for materiel solutions. The lessons learned were about how they organized, how they managed requirements, how they obtained funding, and how they managed the acquisition and fielding. Recently the Army established a new Rapid Capabilities Office to expedite the delivery of critical combat materiel capabilities to the Warfighter. To learn from the lessons of those organizations this paper recommends what innovative approaches the Army Generating Force leadership should incorporate into the Rapid Capabilities Office to meet the demand for rapid response with materiel solutions and exploit advantages technology that can give the Soldier a competitive advantage on the battlefield.

## **Agile Acquisition: How does the Army Capitalize on Success?**

The Army's acquisition process is a very large process that is very bureaucratic. It's still very slow, and the system, left to its own devices, is in fact frustrating, slow and complicated. It is not designed for the world we are now entering.

—General Mark A. Milley<sup>1</sup>

When the call comes, a Commander must fight with the Army he has on hand.<sup>2</sup>

At the start of operations in Afghanistan in 2001, the United States (US) Army was equipped with the same major systems envisioned and acquired to support defeating the Soviet advancement through Europe. The M1 Abrams main battle tank, the M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, the UH-60 Blackhawk cargo helicopter, and the MIM-104 Patriot Missile System, collectively referred to as the "Big 5," were all conceived in the 1970s and fielded in the early 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

Each of these systems had undergone several iterations of improvements since their initial purchase, but they were built to counter the Soviet Air Land Battle construct.<sup>4</sup> When Operation Iraqi Freedom started and Army units moved quickly toward Baghdad these systems worked exceptionally well, but with the quick transition from large fast sweeping maneuver to Forward Operating Base stability operations, Soldiers quickly started to identify equipment-related capability shortfalls. With strong support from Congress, funding became available to resolve these capability shortfalls. The challenge was how to get the needed equipment to Soldiers quickly to meet these emerging shortfalls. It was here Army leadership identified the shortfalls of the existing acquisition processes and even the mindsets of acquisition professionals hardened in the rigid steps of the acquisition process reinforced through acquisition training and education.

In as early as 2001, leadership on the Generating Force side of the Army were getting calls for more agile acquisition methods to acquire capabilities. The challenge still exists today as the Commander of US Pacific Command recently called for the Army to obtain a land based anti-ship capability.<sup>5</sup> This is the type of immediate need the Warfighters are facing and drives the need for improved acquisition approaches to support these needs. The key question I will answer is: what innovative approaches should the Army Generating Force leadership incorporate into the Rapid Capability Office to meet the demand for rapid response with materiel solutions and exploit technological advantages that can give the Soldier a competitive advantage on the battlefield.

To capture best practices from innovative acquisition efforts started in the Post-September 11, 2001 Department of Defense (DOD), this paper will start with examining why there is a negative connotation. This perception is eloquently reinforced in General Milley's quote on the first page of this paper. Next, this paper will provide a baseline context of the 'by the book processes' of the three major DOD decision support systems that must interact to support these acquisition efforts. The integration of these three systems together is often called "Big 'A' Acquisitions" to identify the integration of all three systems from the specific "Little 'a' Acquisition" of the Defense Acquisition System.<sup>6</sup>

With a basic understanding of the DOD Decision Support Systems, I will then identify three organizations that emerged because of the warfighter's demand for new capabilities. The first is the Rapid Equipping Force (REF), an Army organization with rapid acquisition objectives. The second is an organization in the Office of the Secretary

of Defense (OSD) called the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC). The third is the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIDO). Within each organization, I will describe some organizational aspects as well as unique approaches to operating in each of the decision support systems. I will then introduce the Army's newest rapid acquisition office. Finally, I will identify best practices from the last 15 years supporting the Warfighter this new office should adopt in order to continue the success of these other organizations.

### Background

At the beginning of the War of Terrorism in 2001 individual Soldiers did not have the body armor they have today. At best, they had vests designed to protect from fragments of exploding artillery shells. With the availability of news reporters and video on the battlefield, families could witness Soldiers getting shot. This drove an outcry by the general public and family members who began purchasing commercially available body armor (like what police officers wear) and shipping them to their family member.<sup>7</sup>

Another capability shortfall was when Soldiers were using soft skin trucks and High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles to move around the battlefield. These vehicles were part of the original linear construct of battle space where they were used behind friendly lines. In Iraq, anything outside of your Forward Operating Base was considered a threat environment. Since so many units other than Armor and Mechanized Infantry were performing missions outside of their operating base, Soldiers were often wounded by gunfire and explosions when riding in soft skin vehicles. Innovative mechanics in the field could fabricate armor plates using existing materials and provide some measure of protection, but this was still insufficient.<sup>8</sup>

To be a bureaucracy an organization must have “by the book” fixed rules or processes to accomplish something.<sup>9</sup> For the DOD to obtain a new system, three major but independent systems, pictured in Figure 1, must align. The process starts when a capability shortfall is documented using the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) that determines when a materiel solution is needed. This decision then informs the budget and programming sections of the department to allocate funding at some point in the future to acquire this capability. With both in place, the Acquisition professional begins the process of designing, building, testing, and delivering the capability to the field. Each of these processes has their own driving timelines and own approval methods. Each of these systems is centrally managed by different portions of the bureaucracy so synchronization is hard to achieve among the decision support systems.

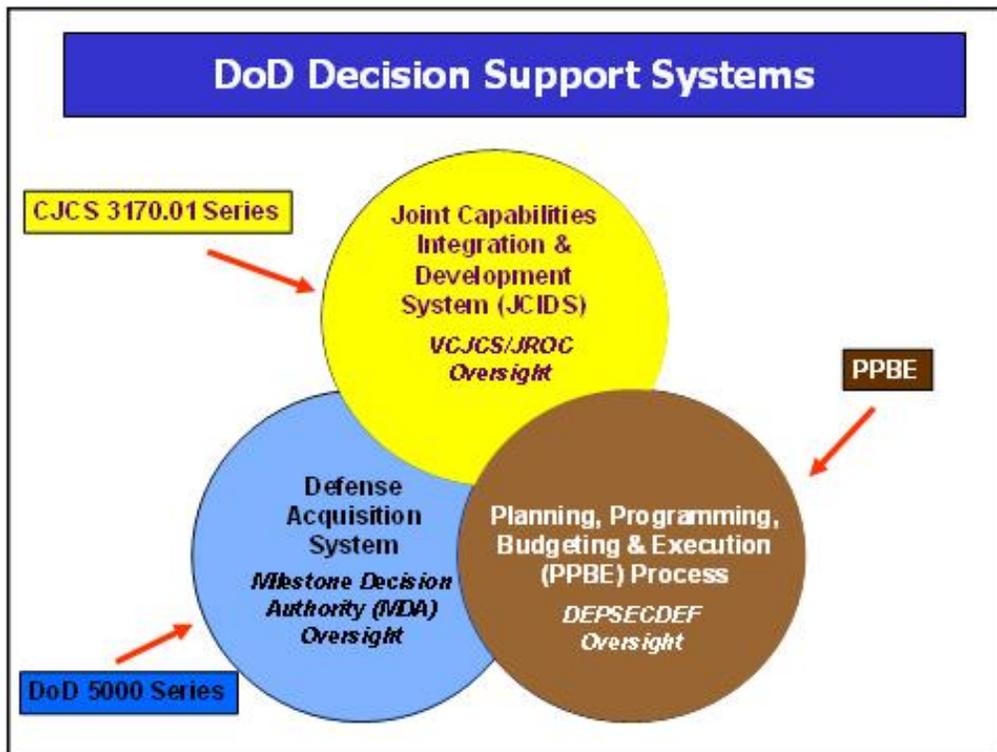


Figure 1. Visualization of the Integration of the DOD Decision Support Systems Intersecting to Support Delivery of a Capability to Soldiers<sup>10</sup>

The JCIDS is the decision support system for documenting capability shortfalls. This system includes both the procedures for documenting as well as review and approval for capabilities that senior leaders use when making joint capabilities decisions.

The JCIDS process exists to support Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) responsibilities in identifying, assessing, validating, and prioritizing joint military capability requirements. JCIDS provides a transparent process that allows the JROC to balance joint equities and make informed decisions on validation and prioritization of capability requirements.<sup>11</sup>

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, in the *2001 Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (QDR) initiated a change in how requirements are generated citing that the US could not know what “nations, a combination of nations or non-state actor will pose a threat to vital US interests.”<sup>12</sup> He changed the process from looking at defeating specific threats

to a capability-based approach to focus on how the enemy may fight. Prior to this change, requirements were driven from the bottom up with the Services initiating requirements from their point of view. JCIDS changed that to be top down, jointly integrated and aligned with strategic direction.<sup>13</sup> Informed by strategic documents like the Chairman's Program Assessment and Combatant Commander's Integrated Priority List, leader assessments of the current force will determine if that capability exists or not. When a capability does not exist an analysis of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership/Education, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy (DOTmLPF-P) occur to assess what needs to change to fill that capability gap.<sup>14</sup>

If a change is needed in anything except a materiel solution, a DOTmLPF-P Change Request is developed.<sup>15</sup> When a materiel solution is needed an Initial Capabilities Document, a Capability Development Document, and a Capability Production document are written and staffed. These documents are how the Joint Requirement Oversight Council communicates materiel capability shortfalls to the Planning Programming Budget and Execution process for resourcing as well as the Defense Acquisition System for acquiring. The drafting and approval of these documents take an average of 10 months, per a 2008 Government Accountability Office study.<sup>16</sup> My personal experience with one complex capability document from the Cyber Center of Excellence indicated the development of a JCIDS document can take 18-24 months.<sup>17</sup>

Following validation of a JCIDS requirement document, known as the Initial Capabilities Document, a materiel development decision occurs. At this point in the process, one must analyze the strategic guidance and combatant command needs,

conduct a capability shortfall analysis that determines whether a new or modified materiel solution is needed. A Materiel Development Decision then occurs and a plan on how to achieve that materiel solution is developed. Once approved, the capability becomes a program and enters the Materiel Solution Analysis Phase. In this phase, the responsible acquisition office develops a budget estimate and submits the request into the Planning Programming and Budget Execution (PPBE) process. Department of Defense Directive 7045.14 outlines the PPBE process stating:

The PPBE shall serve as the annual resource allocation process for DOD within a quadrennial planning cycle. The QDR, force development guidance, program guidance, and budget guidance are the principal guides used in this process. Programs and budgets shall be formulated annually. The budget shall cover 1 year, and the program shall encompass an additional 4 years.<sup>18</sup>

As part of this process, each Service submits their Program Objective Memorandum (POM) describing how the Service plans to allocate resources for a program(s) to meet the Service Program Guidance and Defense Planning Guidance. The acquisition and requirement leaders conduct an analysis of alternatives, which include estimated life cycle costs to assess potential solutions to meet the JCIDS requirements described above. The budget for the most viable alternative is submitted to the Army G8 for inclusion in the development of the POM and Budget Estimate Submission (BES).

The Services must submit their POM/BES to the Office of the Secretary of Defense by July 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.<sup>19</sup> If a program is not prepared with an approved budget estimate and signed JCIDS document before this date, it is unlikely the program will have any funding allocated in the POM. The Service's POM submission is amalgamated at OSD to become the DOD submission to the President's budget, which



meet threshold requirements and stay within appropriated funding. The assigned acquisition leader will manage the tradeoffs of cost, schedule, and performance risks in order to deliver the required capability at the most affordable value and in the fastest time possible. To provide oversight on the decisions made to balance these risks, the Defense Acquisition System requires the approval of several documents leading up to Flag Officer level decision reviews at major phases. Most programs include several of these type reviews with each requiring an update of those documents.

The guiding document for Defense Acquisition System is the Department of Defense Instruction Number 5000.02 (DODI 5000.02). This document outlines the procedures for establishing and management of programs, with detailed instructions and authorities. There are 75 listed reference documents at the beginning of the current DODI 5000.02, with 18 references to provisions of public law.<sup>21</sup> When programs have total life cycle costs of several billion dollars, many different leaders get involved in reducing risks associated with obtaining the expected item that performs as requested, is delivered when promised, and within cost estimates. The DODI 5000.02 and the supporting Service acquisition regulations allow delegation of authorities and tailoring of procedures and documents commensurate with the risk levels.<sup>22</sup> Congress enacted the significant list of public laws established to guide defense acquisition programs because of perceived failures in past acquisitions, where they felt compelled to establish oversight. The DOD first issued the 5000 series of Defense Acquisition instructions in 1971 because of reform initiatives under the Nixon administration.<sup>23</sup>

Under the current DODI 5000.02, once a JCIDS document is approved the sponsor requests a material development decision from the appropriate authority. The

results of the decision is an Acquisition Decision Memorandum (ADM), signed by the Milestone Decision Authority (MDA), that is the foundation of how to structure the program and exit criteria for that phase of acquisition.<sup>24</sup> The ADM provides limitations and instructions to the Project Manager on how much funding, what type of activities, and what documentation and actions the MDA require before authorizing the next step.

Throughout this process, the MDA asserts control over the program and allows the Project Manager latitude commensurate with tolerable levels of risk. Figure 3, see below, provides an example of the major steps DoDI 5000.02 outlines for programs, with each step having internal processes and lists of documents requiring approval or revalidation. This model is a basic start to finish process with all the basic phases and decision points. Notice that the basic design does not include any mention of time between steps. The duration between steps is based on completion of tasks and risk tolerance for reviews or documentation of those tasks hence it is event driven not time driven. The more tolerance for risk the more rapid a system can move through the process.

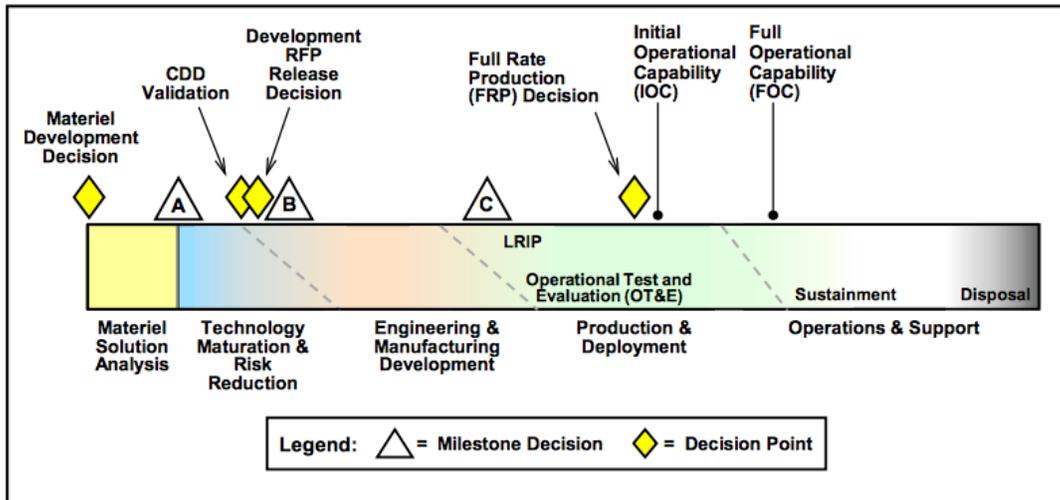


Figure 3. Defense Acquisition Program Models – Model 1 Hardware Intensive Program Provides an Example of the Major Acquisition Lifecycle Steps.<sup>25</sup>

Having reviewed the challenges of each of these three major decision support systems individually as well as conceptually how they interact with each other, it should be clear why the Army Chief of Staff and predecessors for decades called for reform of these systems. In a time of peace, the government implements risk averse steps and procedures to guide these processes. In a time of war when Soldiers are dying or being injured the emphasis shifts from minimizing program risk to minimizing Soldier risks. This shift was true in the Post September 11, 2001, world when Soldiers were facing an asymmetric threat.

Almost immediately after conventional troops deployed to Afghanistan, forward units began to identify capabilities gaps. This was a new way of fighting in an extremely contested battlefield environment. There were materiel solutions to assist in closing some of these capabilities gaps. As a result of these capability shortfalls, several organizations emerged to shortcut the traditionally slow acquisition processes in order to provide equipment to Soldiers in this asymmetric fight. These organizations started

small, and those who were successful gained momentum in their ability to find and deliver solutions. One of the early institutional approaches to addressing the process for the Army was the REF.

### Rapid Equipping Force Lessons Learned

The Army Vice Chief of Staff established the Rapid Integration of Robot Systems effort in 2002 with the initial mission of identifying and procuring robotic systems to assist Soldiers in clearing caves in Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> This effort transitioned into the REF and expanded its approach to other technologies. In 2005 the REF became a permanent organization assigned to the Army G3/5/7.<sup>27</sup> The mission had grown to seek out any unmet materiel needs Soldiers identified after they are deployed--unforeseen requirements given the unique aspect of their new missions. The REF approach focused on filling those needs with commercial products, sometimes with some ruggedizing or sometimes with prototype items in very short turnaround times of 90-180 days from the request.<sup>28</sup>

Some unique aspects of the REF organization supported their expedient approach. The solutions were generally for specific units at the Company or Battalion level, hence the scale was small compared to traditional acquisition programs across the whole Army. To understand how such a new and small organization could be so responsive to warfighter needs, I will examine what leaders in the REF did differently from the traditional acquisition process. There are key lessons learned from how they organized, how they managed requirements, how they interacted with the PPBE process, and how they managed acquisition projects.

The REF organization consisted of a mix of specialties from operational, logistics, program management, research and development, and contracting backgrounds. It

included Soldiers, Civilians, and Contractors.<sup>29</sup> The director is an operationally experienced Colonel with a civilian Deputy and an acquisition experienced Colonel as the Project Manager. Teams had been embedded with operational units in Afghanistan in 2002 and in 2003 following the invasion of Iraq, the REF embedded a team with units in Baghdad. These teams consisted of an Operations Officer and a non-commissioned officer, who were the primary liaisons with units to learn and understand their equipment shortfalls. They also had some electrical and mechanical engineers forward with a slew of bench stock materiel and an innovative mentality who would often create solutions on the fly with direct Soldier input.<sup>30</sup> Problems not solved by the forward team were sent back to the rear Operations team for prioritization and assignment to a Project Management team.

In opposition to the top-down JCIDS approach described earlier, the REF took a bottom-up approach. The close integration of REF personnel with the actual unit submitting the request supported this approach. The REF Soldiers and contractors worked with units after their missions to identify where technology could help. When they identified a gap, they worked with the unit and prepared a one or two-page document describing that gap. The document became known as a 10-liner, and it captured the capability gap as well as appropriate administrative data.<sup>31</sup> The forward team Officer in Charge would review the document and send it back to REF headquarters the same day. The simplicity of the requirement definition provides a general capability but leaves the REF latitude to find a quick solution. Because of the small scale approach, the REF Director could approve most requirements that had lower dollar value thresholds without any higher level reviews.

A significant advantage for the REF was the establishment of dedicated appropriations. To reinforce the importance of this initiative, Army Secretary and Chief of Staff Posture Statements included support for funding the REF as a compelling need.<sup>32</sup> These funding lines allowed the REF to quickly respond in small scale to many requirements. Because the REF focused their delivery on small scale prototypes rather than fielding to the entire force, the cost per project was low, which triggered fewer oversight hurdles. The REF budget included Research and Development, Procurement, Operations and Maintenance funding from both base and supplementation appropriations.<sup>33</sup> The REF supported acquiring, testing, fielding and sustaining their projects. This was also done on a small scale. When projects were successful the REF, working with Army G3 and the Training and Doctrine Command, transitioned these rapid projects over to traditional acquisition organizations for the long term and large scale lifecycle management. The immediate availability of funding was a tremendous time saver. Once a requirement was approved, the project leader could transfer funds to the contracting activity the same day. This is much quicker compared to the hypothetical acquisition and funding timeline identified in Figure 2.

The fourth aspect of the REF was the highly-experienced acquisition and project management staff that included a mix of management, contracting, and logistics personnel. The project lead prepares statements of work and other contract documents for one of many contracting organizations with dedicated staff supporting the REF mission. Because the need is an urgent requirement from the theater, actions were usually exempted from competition in accordance with procedures outlined in the Federal Acquisition Regulations.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, given the scale of most REF projects, acquisition and contract approvals were delegated to the lowest levels possible. The risk level in terms of dollars for most REF projects were lower given projects were usually in the \$100,000 range rather than the multi-million-dollar range of traditional acquisition programs.<sup>35</sup> Because of the smaller scale of REF projects, Army leadership allowed the REF latitude to work within statute and regulation and to tailor their approach commensurate with the balance between the urgency and risk level by waving and delegating to the maximum extent. The project management team would search out commercially available parts, acquire them with expedient contracting methods, and ship them directly to that unit. The forward team would then help with installation and training the unit. After some initial use, the REF Soldiers obtained feedback from the unit on how well the solution met the shortfall. In parallel with the emergence of the REF, the Office of the Secretary of Defense saw the need and established the JRAC to help address joint requirements.

#### Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell Lessons Learned

Another approach used to speed up acquisition processes, from the DOD level, in support of urgent needs was the JRAC. The JRAC was formed in response to emerging requirements coming from theater and with the expressed intent of Congress. The *2003 Bob Stump National Defense Act* provided the authority and requirement for the Secretary of Defense to establish both Rapid Acquisition and Deployment Procedure as well as a Quick Reaction Special Projects Acquisition Team.<sup>36</sup> The Department of Defense established the JRAC in September 2004 via a Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum stating:

In order to break through the institutional barriers to providing timely, effective support, I am directing the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics) (USD (AT&L)), and the Under

Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) to stand up a Joint Rapid Action Cell (JRAC) to facilitate meeting the urgent material and logistics requirements which Combatant Commanders (COCOM) certify as operationally critical.<sup>37</sup>

A memo on November 16, 2004, from Paul Wolfowitz to Secretary Rumsfeld changed the name to JRAC and included an attachment memo outlining the process.<sup>38</sup>

*The Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005* modified the original task and authority by allowing the Secretary of Defense to designate a capability urgently needed to eliminate combat fatalities. Once designated, the Secretary of Defense would assign a senior official “to ensure that the needed equipment is acquired and deployed as quickly as possible, with a goal of awarding a contract for the acquisition of the equipment within 15 days.”<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the establishment of the acquisition team, Congress also codified a need for a “process for the commanders of the combatant commands and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to communicate their needs to the acquisition community and the research and development community.”<sup>40</sup> Prior to this implementation, each Service would submit their own requests through Service procedures. The establishment of the Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statement (JUONS) process allowed the Combatant Commander to “identify, validate and prioritize JUONS that are not being met within their AOR [Area of Responsibility] and forward those that are urgent and compelling to the Joint Staff...”<sup>41</sup> This allowed DOD to prioritize efforts, assign lead Services for joint interest solutions and inform the long-term requirements process of capabilities shortfall. This process supplemented the existing Service-specific approaches and allowed DOD Senior Leader attention on those highest priority efforts. The submission of a JUONS was the process to activate the JRAC’s process and authorities. The attention and

timeline associated with JUONS brought warfighter shortfalls to the attention of senior leaders. It also ensured that responses to JUONS got the same attention, which helped push solutions quickly.

Once a requirement was designated urgent and a senior official was assigned, that official could waive law and use any funds available to the DOD.<sup>42</sup> The initial authority did not bring new funding, only the ability to repurpose existing funding up to \$100 million dollars per fiscal year. The JRAC identified that the process to repurpose existing funds was slowing their response, citing seven to eight-month delays repurposing funding supporting JUONS projects for Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa and another from US Southern Command. In fiscal year 2009, the Department established a dedicated Rapid Acquisition Funding line, just over \$100 million to directly resource the JRAC actions.<sup>43</sup> The new budget authority and the new funding line allowed expedited funding of contracts and other methods to acquire new capabilities.

The new budget approach allowed action in days rather than months or years. The JRAC completed some exceptionally responsive acquisition efforts using these new authorities and processes. One of the first significant JRAC accomplishments was to acquire Counter Remotely-controlled-[improvised explosive device] IED Electronic Warfare devices, which they cite was under contract in less than 12 days from request.<sup>44</sup> Another success story for the JRAC was “approval and funding in less than 30 days to purchase commercial radios to improve communications and interoperability among US and coalition forces in countering terrorist operations in remote, rugged border regions.”<sup>45</sup> From understanding some successful accomplishments of the Joint Rapid

Acquisition Cell, I will now transition to assess how the JIDO grew into a focused application of similar processes and authorities.

#### Joint Improvised Threat Defeat Organization Lessons Learned

The JIDO, which is probably more recognized under their older name and acronym of Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), became the DOD lead for defeating improvised threats. Originally founded as the Army and later as a Joint Task Force, JIDO focused on improvised explosive devices, as this was a major threat coming out of US Central Command area of responsibility. The Secretary of Defense issued DOD Directive 2000.19E, dated February 14, 2006, to establish a DOD lead activity reporting to the Under Secretary of Defense to “focus (lead, advocate, coordinate) all Department of Defense actions in support of the Combatant Commanders’ and their respective Joint Task Forces’ efforts to defeat Improvised Explosive Devices as weapons of strategic influence.”<sup>46</sup> This organization included a significant investment of highly trained and experienced personnel from all aspects of the Defense Department, with many organizations tasked to provide General Officer or Senior Executive Service membership on the new boards established.<sup>47</sup> Much like the REF and JRAC, the selection of highly trained and experienced professionals contributed to the success of JIDO efforts.

The significant threat of IEDs to lives of Soldiers and the impact on the US mission in Iraq and Afghanistan garnered significant support for this organization in Congress. The JIDO had a \$4 billion budget in 2008 to support responses to IED threats.<sup>48</sup> This funding was not labeled with a specific appropriation type, commonly referred to as Colorless (unlike most Defense Appropriations) and was available for obligation for up to three years.<sup>49</sup> Lieutenant General Barbero in his statement to

Congress in 2012 specifically cited the unique funding approach as an enabler to the success in the counter-IED fight. He said; “The establishment of the Joint IED Defeat Fund by Congress in 2007” and “The flexibility of the three-year, colorless appropriation ensures JIEDDO is able to rapidly respond to urgent warfighter (counter) IED needs.”<sup>50</sup> Given the significant focus of talent and resources, the JIDO contributed some significant and rapid capabilities to the Warfighter.

A significant success story for the JIDO was the rapid promulgation of Jamming devices to protect from Radio Controlled IEDs. A 2008 source cites over 37,000 jammers fielded with “every U.S. military vehicle traveling outside of an operating base in Iraq and Afghanistan is supposed to be protected by a jammer.”<sup>51</sup> Another success occurred in 2011 when they received a warfighter request for lightweight man-portable robots to detect Improvised Explosive Devices. The JIDO developed and fielded 1,157 robots within 10 months of receiving the request.<sup>52</sup> Using the same sense of urgency and authorities used in establishing the JRAC, the JIDO response timeline has been in weeks and months rather than the years and decades expected from traditional acquisition processes.

#### The Army’s New Rapid Acquisition Organization

The Rapid Capabilities Office (RCO) was officially established in August 2016 by Secretary of the Army Eric Fanning.<sup>53</sup> An article by Defense News paraphrases Secretary Fanning stating that these projects have to be doable in a one- to five-year time frame.<sup>54</sup> The RCO team is looking at operational needs statements from the combatant commanders and is looking to pair those needs with existing or prototype technologies so they can then accelerate developing and acquiring a capability.<sup>55</sup> The mission of the Rapid Capabilities Office is:

The Army Rapid Capabilities Office rapidly develops, acquires, integrates and equips selected capabilities; implements streamlined acquisition methods, processes and techniques; and acts as an agent of change by challenging traditional approaches. The Army Rapid Capabilities Office is primarily focused on the highest priority Army requirements with an intent to deliver an operational effect within one to five years. This mission is complementary to Programs of Record that aim deeper into the future and to equip the entire Army for the full spectrum of war. The Army Rapid Capabilities Office is also distinct from the Army Rapid Equipping Force, which typically has a turnaround time of less than a year and delivers specific equipment to meet the urgent operational needs of forward-deployed units. The Army Rapid Capabilities Office provides select formations and areas of responsibility with broader capability solutions that cross portfolios, delivering a combined operational effect.<sup>56</sup>

The RCO differentiates itself from the Rapid Equipping force by focusing on those larger or longer term programs exceeding the REF 180-day goal. Additionally, the RCO intends to focus on the integration of capabilities beyond just materiel. Among the key operating principles of the new RCO is “The Army Rapid Capabilities Office provides expertise not solely focused on materiel; it seeks to provide holistic solutions that inform the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Policy (DOTMLPF) impacts of implementing new capabilities within the operational Army.”<sup>57</sup> This concept is backed up with the assignment of Mr. Doug Wiltsie, an acquisition professional who was formally a Program Executive Officer and the Director of System of Systems Integration as the Director. Major General Walter Piatt former Director of Army Operations in Headquarters Department of the Army G3/5/7, Commandant of the Infantry School, and Deputy Division Commander was assigned as the Director for Operations of the RCO.<sup>58</sup> The second aspect likely to encourage the success of this new organization is access and emphasis from the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army who both sit on the Board of Directors.

The one aspect unclear with the RCO that was key to the success of the REF, JRAC, and JIDO is the availability of a dedicated appropriation for new initiatives. Even with Secretary level focus, transferring funding will take time and impact the speed of this new organization. The initial efforts the RCO undertakes are focused on projects or pieces of projects already underway within the Army they can accelerate with some included in the Army Warfighter Assessment in November 2016 at Fort Bliss, Texas.<sup>59</sup>

#### Recommendations for the Army Rapid Capabilities Office

Each of the organizations described had unique approaches for accomplishing similar missions; however, there are some unique approaches and authorities that enabled varying degrees of success. For the Army's new RCO to be effective, I will identify key aspects Army leaders should incorporate from the REF, JRAC, and JIDO that contributed to these organization's success. These recommendations are focused on processes and do not address the need for senior leadership influence which is a key requirement for overall success. The recommendations described below include organization makeup, approach to requirements, and funding lessons all of which need to be incorporated into the RCO.

One key aspect of all three organizations reviewed is the highly qualified staff members. Two aspects these organizations implemented that should be included in any rapid acquisition effort are staff and connection to the warfighter. The first recommendation is the need for highly skilled and experienced personnel. The RCO should not be a developmental assignment for a new employee. With both the experience and training to understand the normal processes and rules, leaders in these organizations were motivated to see where to cut corners. Each organization described had the pick of personnel from each specialty. The second warfighter focused

recommendation is the integration of the RCO as close to the end user as possible. Too many echelons dilute the need and add time to the process. The REF placement of operationally experienced personnel in operational theaters with the deployed units provided an exceptional responsiveness between the units and the REF. Including operational specialty (e.g., Infantry, Engineer, and Communications) personnel rather than just acquisition specialty reinforced the important balance of program risk with the impact on Soldiers lives a system could provide.

The three organizations examined used an accelerated process that differed to the original top down JCIDS approach envisioned by Secretary Rumsfeld. Currently, the REF and RCO have separate processes for submitting requirements. Hence, I recommend that the Army directly link the requirements process for the RCO and the REF to avoid over or underlap on priorities. Even with the inclusion of the JUONS process into JCIDS, these organizations must continue to lean forward, working in parallel with the requirement generator to fast track submission and approval. The informal approach the REF used, combined with the proximity to the user allowed for the communication of needs to go from Platoon level to the REF leadership in hours. The combination provided by the REF 10 Liner and the JCIDS Joint Urgent Operation Need Statement provide the range of tools to document needs.

A critical aspect that enabled the success of these three organization was a dedicated source of funding available with minimal red tape. The Army's RCO cannot match the quick turnaround time of these organizations without dedicated funding sources. Hence, I recommend the simplest approach to implement this would be for the Army to combine the REF and the RCO into one organization. This would allow the

existing REF funding lines to serve as the basis for all Army rapid capability efforts. Without dedicated funding, reprogramming efforts could take 6-9 months depending on the size. Initiation of new funding requests can take years (see figure 2).

The best practices learned on the Acquisition processes were twofold. First the recognition and inclusion of tailorable processes commensurate with the urgency and risk tolerance of the decision authority. The most recent version of the DOD 5000.02 allows for tailoring of procedures.<sup>60</sup> Hence, I recommend the RCO examine each requirement to assess the prioritization of cost, schedule, and performance with associated risks. This would allow Army leaders to tailor an approach and timeline commensurate with the appropriate balance. General acquisition programs take a risk-averse approach to achieve the long list of threshold requirements in detailed test events. To implement this, the second recommendation is to focus on changing the acquisition culture to look for ways to expedite, while assuming risk appropriately and smartly. This ties closely with the organizational recommendation for including operational personnel in the acquisition process. This would be just one step in what would need to be a deliberate leadership embedding and reinforcing approach to change that culture. The REF already embodies this culture. The establishment of the RCO by the Secretary of the Army reinforces that culture. Merging the RCO and the REF would provide a foundation of high performing acquisition capable organization with both the mandate and the culture.

### Conclusion

To ensure the success achieved over the last 15 years of rapid acquisition, the generating force leadership should incorporate these organizational, approach to requirements, and funding recommendations into the Army's new Rapid Capabilities

Office. The Defense Acquisition System can move rapidly with focused leadership support both inside the Department of Defense and with Congress but these three recommendations will help enable success. The perception of speed likely lies in the difference between what can be done vs what is normally done for more risk-averse non-urgent efforts. The speed of an acquisition is driven by the risk tolerance level from both direct and periphery leaders. While procedures exist to manage risk, incorporating lessons learned from the success of the REF, JRAC, and JIDO can ensure a more balanced responsive approach in the future for the Army's RCO.

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