

Strategy Research Project

Managing a Globally Engaged Army: ARFORGEN and Regionally Aligned Forces

by

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Abstract

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This research paper examines the impact of the United States Army's Regional Alignment of Forces (RAF) Policy on the Army's ability to generate trained and ready forces through the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) process, and impact on the six geographic combatant commands. Regional alignment of forces provides combatant commands with Army units prepared for employment across the range of military operations specific to a geographic region of the world. Maintaining the Army Force Generation process allows the Army to prioritize resources and manage readiness for Army operating units supporting regionally aligned and contingency missions. However, refining both the Regional Aligned Force and Army Force Generation policies allows the Army to better prepare and manage Army forces for combatant command employment. Twelve policy recommendations are provided to enhance Regionally Aligned Force and Army Force Generation policies within the doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) construct.

Managing a Globally Engaged Army: ARFORGEN and Regionally Aligned Forces

The United States Army's concept to regionally align units to geographic combatant commands is over five years old.¹ Operation New Dawn's end and the falling requirement for Army units in Afghanistan have allowed the Department of the Army to accelerate regional alignment from concept to force management policy since January 2012.² Despite recent modifications to the concept, the fundamental purpose of regional alignment has not changed--how can the United States Army best prepare units for combatant command employment to protect or preserve United States' interests--shaped by military experiences in the Middle East since 2001, the constantly changing international security environment, domestic budget constraints, and historical experiences in preparing and maintaining Army unit readiness when units are not employed?³

This research paper examines the impact of the United States Army's Regional Alignment of Forces (RAF) Policy on the Army's ability to generate trained and ready forces through the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) process, and subsequent impact on the six geographic combatant commands. Regional alignment of forces provides combatant commands Army units prepared for employment across the range of military operations specific to a geographic region of the world. Maintaining the Army Force Generation process allows the Army to prioritize resources and manage readiness for Army operating units supporting regionally aligned missions.⁴ However, refining both the Regionally Aligned Force and Army Force Generation policies allows the Army to better prepare and manage Army units for combatant command employment. Twelve policy recommendations are provided to enhance Regionally Aligned Force and Army Force Generation policies.

The global security situation is complex. Fifteen United Nations' peacekeeping operations and over fifty armed conflicts are in progress around the world, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence highlights a multitude of threats the United States faces in the 2014 Annual Worldwide Threat Assessment.⁵ The 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance *U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* establishes priorities and missions for the Department of Defense.⁶ Despite ongoing conflicts, known threats, and strategic planning guidance, no one knows exactly when, where, or in what magnitude Army units will be employed to defend United States' interests. In a speech at the United States Military Academy in 2011, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates highlighted the United States' predicament in preparing for future conflicts when he stated that the United States Government had no idea one year before missions began in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait or Iraq, that the United States would be so involved.⁷

Domestically, the Department of the Army is shaped by the effects of the 2011 Budget Control Act and future defense budgets, the reduction of Army troop end strength due to the end of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and debate regarding the future role of the Army in United States foreign policy.⁸ Regardless of these debates, Army units will be trained and ready to respond.

Regional Alignment of Forces

General Odierno approved the Army's current definition of Regionally Aligned Forces in July 2013:

Regionally Aligned Forces provide the Combatant Commander with up to Joint Task Force capable headquarters with scalable, tailorable capabilities to enable him to shape the environment. They are those Army units assigned to combatant commands, allocated to a combatant command, and those capabilities Service Retained, Combatant Command

(CCMD) aligned and prepared by the Army for combatant command regional missions. Includes Army Total Force organizations and capabilities which are: forward stationed; operating in a combatant command area of responsibility; supporting from outside the area of responsibility, including providing reach back; prepared to support from outside the responsibility. Regional missions are driven by combatant command requirements. This requires an understanding of the cultures, geography, languages, and militaries of the countries where they are most likely to be employed, as well as expertise in how to impart military knowledge and skills to others.⁹

This broad definition encompasses the majority of active-duty soldiers assigned to units in the operating force combined with United States Army Reserve and Army National Guard units that are assigned, or allocated to combatant commands and available for employment within a fiscal year. The definition does not differentiate the specialized capability the Army is building. However, the definition does focus the Department of the Army, United States Army Reserve Command, National Guard Bureau, United States Army Forces Command, and Army Service Component Commands' efforts to continue development, synchronization, and implementation of the policy.

The Army developed regionally aligned force policy over the last several years. United States Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) published TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 *United States Operating Concept 2016-2028* and TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-6 *United States Army Functional Concept for Movement and Maneuver* in 2010. These pamphlets introduced regionally aligned force concepts and established the theory that by regionally aligning Army units with combatant commands, Army units would be trained and prepared with the capability to rapidly understand the operating environment, the capability to act more effectively, and the ability to accomplish mission objectives in any cultural situation in support of combatant command requirements.¹⁰

The Department of the Army formally introduced the "Regionally Aligned Brigade" policy

during the Department of Defense press briefing on Major Budget Decisions and in concert with the defense strategic guidance release in January 2012.¹¹

General Odierno stated his vision for a broader regional alignment of forces in addition to brigade combat teams that are focused on security cooperation in a post to his blog on Army Live in March 2012.¹² General Odierno envisioned that regionally aligned forces would improve the Army's contributions to geographic combatant commands by spreading cultural and regional awareness that had previously been reserved for select Army units, such as Special Forces or Civil Affairs, to all Army units and leaders in the conventional force.¹³ Since that blog post, regionally aligned force policy developed into one of General Odierno's top five priorities and one of the main efforts for the Department of the Army Staff.¹⁴ Fiscal year 2014 represents the second year of a five-year plan to develop and implement the regionally aligned force policy.¹⁵

Regionally aligned forces supports the 2012 strategic guidance objective to build a strong global security environment and build partner capacity by pursuing new partnerships while reinforcing existing ones, participating in multi-national exercises, providing rotational presence, and participating in security cooperation activities.¹⁶ In addition, the Army's regionally aligned force policy directly addresses four of the eleven strategic themes identified by the Joint Staff J-7's Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) Division's *Decade of War Study, Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations*.¹⁷ The four areas are: Understanding the Environment, Special Operations Forces (SOF) and General Purpose Forces (GPF) Integration, Coalition Operations, and Host-Nation Partnering.¹⁸

The six geographic combatant commanders testified to Congress on the posture of their areas of responsibilities in March 2013. The commanders' testimonies shared a common theme by highlighting the need to engage the countries in their region by building and strengthening partnerships and alliances.¹⁹ In order to support combatant command mission requirements, the Army's 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, was the first Army unit designated and trained under the regionally aligned force policy to conduct missions in support of United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) in 2013.²⁰ Second Brigade conducted more than one hundred missions in more than thirty countries in support of USAFRICOM in the first ten months of employment.²¹ Meanwhile, 1st Armored Division's Headquarters was the first division headquarters under the regional alignment policy that participated in United States Central Command's (USCENTCOM) 2013 Eager Lion Exercise in June 2013.²² The Army announced that in fiscal year 2014 over 60,000 soldiers would participate in over 5,600 events in 162 countries, many as part of the new regional alignment policy.²³

Army Force Generation

Army Regulation 525-29, *Army Force Generation*, states that the Army force generation (ARFORGEN) process is:

The structured progression of unit readiness over time to produce trained, ready, and cohesive units prepared for operational deployment in support of the combatant commander and other Army requirements. The ARFORGEN process is the Army's core process for force generation.²⁴

Approved in 2006, ARFORGEN is the Army's cyclical system to manage units' training, manning, and equipment readiness levels.²⁵ ARFORGEN systematically allowed the Army to concurrently generate operating forces required to deploy in support of Iraq and Afghanistan operations, complete transformation to a modular force, and increase the

size of the Army.²⁶ Prior to 2006, the Army managed units based on tiered readiness according to the geographic location of the unit and the unit's deployment timeline required to support a contingency plan.²⁷ In order to implement ARFORGEN, the Army identified and synchronized no less than twenty-one major manning, equipping, or training policies.²⁸

ARFORGEN created three categories for Army units. The first category is RESET, or those units that recently returned from a mission and are at the lowest levels of readiness in manning, equipment-on-hand, and are not resourced or scheduled to conduct collective training events. The second category is Train/Ready, or those units that are training, or completed training and available to conduct a mission. The Army increases levels of manning, equipment on hand and resources for training for the Train/Ready unit category. Finally, the Available force category is those Army units that are at the highest state of readiness. Available units have the most soldiers and equipment-on-hand, and have conducted a capstone collective training event such as a combat training center rotation.²⁹

ARFORGEN provides the Army two important force management features that generate units to support combatant command requirements. ARFORGEN timelines are adjustable, based on the demand for Army units, to meet steady state, surge, or full-surge requirements.³⁰ For example, between 2004 and 2012 the Army generated forces to support unit deployments of twelve months, fifteen months, twelve months, and nine months based on specific requirements from USCENTCOM.³¹ ARFORGEN also allows the Army to prioritize equipment, personnel, and training resources to manage units

based on combatant command demand.³² These two aspects display the Army's flexibility in building forces ready to meet combatant command requirements.

Army Force Generation Modifications

Since its inception, the Army refined ARFORGEN to meet the demand for forces, as resources available fluctuated, and based on the institutional policies the Army used to manage units.³³ In February 2012, General Odierno hinted at changes coming to ARFORGEN by mentioning the "Future Force Generation Model."³⁴ General Odierno approved ARFORGEN changes in April 2012 which allowed the Army to make a public announcement regarding upcoming changes during the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Sustainment Symposium and Exposition in May 2012.³⁵

Army Regulation 525-29, *Army Force Generation*, was published in March 2011; however, a revised regulation has not yet been released. Despite the absence of a new regulation, recent Army budget and strategy documents and news articles identify three significant changes in the way ARFORGEN manages Army units.³⁶ These changes also impact regionally aligned force policy implementation. The 2011 ARFORGEN regulation managed all operating forces as one group as they progressed through an ARFORGEN cycle.³⁷ ARFORGEN now creates three groups to manage forces as they progress through the reset, trained/ready, and available cycles: the mission force pool, the rotational force pool, and the operational sustainment force pool.³⁸

The mission force pool is comprised of Army units assigned to combatant commands and low-density priority units that must maintain a high level of readiness; these units do not have the opportunity to rotate through the ARFORGEN process based on demand.³⁹ The rotational force pool contains Army units that are allocated to fill combatant command's mission requirements, apportioned against a combatant

command's contingency plan, or required to conduct a rotational deployment to a geographic combatant command theater.⁴⁰ Army forces conducting regionally aligned missions are managed in the rotational force pool.⁴¹ Finally, the operational sustainment pool includes Army units that are not assigned to a combatant command, allocated against a contingency operation, or apportioned against a contingency plan.⁴² The Army resources sustainment pool units at reduced manning and equipment-on-hand levels.⁴³ The reduced demand for units to conduct operations in Afghanistan allows the Army to maintain units at a level of readiness based on their actual or planned utilization and the resources available.⁴⁴

The second significant change for Army units is the decision to transition training at Fort Irwin and Fort Polk to "Decisive-Action" training from the "counter-insurgency" focused training conducted over the last decade.⁴⁵ For over ten years, units conducting mission rehearsal exercises (MREs) at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin and the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk focused on counter-insurgency scenarios in preparation for operations in Iraq or Afghanistan.⁴⁶ Decisive-action training builds on the lessons Army units learned while operating in Iraq and Afghanistan while returning unit focus to the Army's core competencies of combined arms maneuver and wide area security identified in Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*.⁴⁷ Decisive-action is the Army's ability to conduct continuous and simultaneous combinations of offensive, defensive, and stability missions, or defense support of civil authority tasks as the mission requires.⁴⁸

Beginning with the March 2012 NTC and the October 2012 JRTC unit rotations, units not designated to deploy to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom are

scheduled to conduct decisive-action training.⁴⁹ In fiscal year 2014, nineteen of the twenty-one scheduled combat training center rotations will be decisive-action training based.⁵⁰ The shift in training focus is critical to prepare Army units for contingency response first, then for other missions like regionally aligned missions. Army units supporting regionally aligned missions will conduct decisive-action focused training despite the unit's focus on theater security cooperation activities in order to support contingency operations if required.⁵¹

The third change to unit management is the decision to have active-duty units in the rotational force pool move from a 36-month to 24-month ARFORGEN cycle in October 2012.⁵² The Department of the Army Fiscal Year 2014 Budget highlights the shift to a 24-month readiness cycle as a major program change in order to support decisive-action training.⁵³ Despite the reduced requirement for brigade combat teams to support operations in Afghanistan and budget uncertainty, the Army requested funding for combat center rotations for twenty-one brigades, five mission command team training events (MCTPs) for division headquarters, and one mission command team training event for a corps headquarters in fiscal year 2014.⁵⁴ Army forces supporting regionally aligned missions are managed under the 24-month readiness cycle.⁵⁵

Managing readiness challenges is not unique to the United States Army. The British, German, and French Armies are also balancing budget reductions while maintaining unit readiness.⁵⁶ The British Army adopted a 36-month tiered readiness cycle known as the Army 2020 Formation Operational Readiness Mechanism (A-FORM) to manage British units while German and French Armies adopted rotational readiness models similar to ARFORGEN.⁵⁷ Experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, other

recent military operations, defense budgets, and how each respective country views future conflicts shape British, German, and French readiness decisions.⁵⁸ A “one-size-fits-all” approach to training and resourcing military units to maintain readiness does not exist.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN) learned important force generation lessons while leading combined military operations. NATO synchronizes unit readiness complexities for countries participating in International Security Force Assistance (ISAF) in Afghanistan while the UN brings troop contributing countries (TCCs) together to support UN approved missions.⁵⁹ Key observations from NATO, UN, British, German, and French Army force generation experiences include: developing a long-term strategic vision for readiness management, managing unit readiness according to a unit’s assigned mission, conducting scenario-based readiness simulations to determine future force and resource requirements, conducting regular force generation synchronization conferences, and making force generation responsive to operational requirements based on unit capabilities.⁶⁰ The Army should consider these observations to inform and facilitate unit ARFORGEN cycles when planning regionally aligned missions.

Regionally Aligned Forces and Army Force Generation Synchronization Challenges, Opportunities, Implications, and Recommendations

As the Department of the Army implements the regionally aligned force policy and transforms ARFORGEN, every Army unit will feel the impact. Regionally Aligned Forces and ARFORGEN policy refinement allows the Army to prepare and manage Army units for combatant command employment. The Army Force Modernization Proponent System manages change by outlining how a capability or function impacts

Army doctrine, organizations, training, material, leadership and education, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF).⁶¹ Evaluating current or new capabilities, policies, and procedures against the DOTMLPF areas offers the Army a comprehensive problem-solving method to manage change and synchronize solutions in order to enhance warfighting capabilities.⁶² DOTMLPF analysis is not unique to the Army, but supports the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) if Joint Doctrine or Joint Capability Areas (JCAs) are impacted.⁶³ After each analysis area, twelve Regionally Aligned Force or ARFORGEN policy recommendations follow in the areas of doctrine, organizations, training, and personnel.⁶⁴

Challenges

In less than two years, the “Regionally Aligned Brigade” concept became the “Regionally Aligned Forces” policy.⁶⁵ The definition’s evolution over time, as well as the Army’s willingness to modify the original definition and vision into terms that would gain acceptance in the Army and the broader defense community, contributes to policy confusion.⁶⁶ The Army must clearly define what the regionally aligned force policy is, and what the policy is not, in order to establish a common understanding and terms of reference for the defense community. Currently, organizations within the Army, as well as outside the Army, have different visions and understandings of the regionally aligned force policy.⁶⁷ Despite limited regionally aligned unit experience, the Army is now building the regionally aligned force policy to include an entire force package to include enabling units based on initial feedback from combatant commands.⁶⁸ A doctrine recommendation is to return to the original regional alignment vision with the brigade combat team as the central core capability. The Army creates confusion regarding the definition of the policy by not focusing on the core capability as the Army addresses

external stakeholders' acceptance of the policy. Not every combatant command can justify the requirement for a brigade combat team, or an Army force package, to conduct regionally aligned missions.

The Army must develop the regionally aligned force policy despite internal and external pressures regarding its merit as a capability.⁶⁹ Any contingency that requires a large commitment of Army forces prior to implementation may put policy realization at risk. The five-year implementation plan illustrates the Army's bureaucracy and failure to show institutional agility and urgency to generate new force capabilities to support combatant command missions. Policy change is one contributor preventing faster policy implementation. A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to accelerate institutionalizing regional aligned force policy. By refining and focusing on a core capability, producing twelve habitually aligned brigade combat teams for example, the Army could expedite implementation.⁷⁰ Policy modifications, to include growth, can be made in the future based on combatant commander feedback and mission demand.

Current Global Force Management timelines require combatant commanders to submit their initial requirements for forces to the Joint Staff twenty-one months before the fiscal year employment begins.⁷¹ ARFORGEN allows the Army to identify units to fill these requirements and enter the reset and training cycle prior to employment. The assumption that geographic combatant commanders can identify missions and the Army can identify forces to conduct those missions twenty-one months in advance may be difficult. Stakeholder planning efforts may not be synchronized.⁷² The Secretary of Defense approves forces for employment in January prior to the fiscal year of employment; however, global force management rules allow a combatant commander

to request forces 120 days prior to employment.⁷³ The 120 day request for forces does not allow a unit to realize the ARFORGEN resourcing benefits unless the unit is habitually aligned to a combatant command. A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to be responsive in supporting late, or out of cycle requirements by building flexibility into ARFORGEN and training and manning policies; support combatant command requirements. Habitual alignment of brigade combat teams to regionally aligned missions enables the Army to support emerging requirements due to unit familiarity with the region despite where the unit may be in the ARFORGEN cycle.

ARFORGEN allowed the Army to generate forces to support global operations by prioritizing resources for deploying forces since 2007. ARFORGEN revisions allow the Army to avoid the pre-2001 “tiered readiness” institutional stigma that remains.⁷⁴ Future demand for Army forces and budget resources will determine ARFORGEN’s long-term role as the system the Army utilizes to manage force readiness.⁷⁵ One way to overcome tiered readiness is to separate and manage units by mission. For example, the British Army creates forces based on the three primary missions the Army is assigned.⁷⁶ The reaction force is designed to respond to contingency operations and is maintained at the highest readiness levels.⁷⁷ The adaptable force conducts stabilization and engagement missions and maintains lower readiness levels.⁷⁸ A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to retain ARFORGEN in order to manage readiness according to unit mission. ARFORGEN allows the Army to synchronize manning, equipping and training policies. The Army must be careful to not create too many unit force pools cycling through ARFORGEN that create conflicting resource prioritization.

Army unit readiness reporting allows commands to provide comments, and based on the commanders' opinion, subjectively upgrade or downgrade readiness levels.⁷⁹ ARFORGEN manages the progressive unit readiness levels of training, manning, equipment on hand, and equipment readiness; however, force reductions, budget constraints and the Army RESET Program's synchronization pressures the Army to resource units. As resources reduce, the Army must have an objective assessment of units' resourcing levels. A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to temporarily suspend a command's ability to subjectively upgrade the unit's overall readiness assessment. Quantitative data should define Army unit readiness regardless of how important commander's comments are to the unit status reporting process as the Army draws down. Commands must resist the pressure to subjectively say a unit can accomplish mission tasks the unit is not trained or resourced to conduct as budgets and resources reduce.

The decision to maintain active-duty brigade combat teams assigned to the rotational force pool in a 24-month ARFORGEN cycle while conducting decisive-action training is ambitious and may prove to be financially unsustainable. Twenty-four month readiness matches the most demanding unit ARFORGEN cycle over the last decade.⁸⁰ Supplemental contingency funding supported increased readiness, but is now reducing as forces depart Afghanistan.⁸¹ By assigning all brigade combat teams, to include regionally aligned units, to the ARFORGEN rotational force pool, the Army is inherently creating future resource prioritization decisions due to declining resources. A training recommendation is for the Army to explore alternative courses of action to a 24-month ARFORGEN cycle for regionally aligned brigade combat teams, and alternative courses

of action to decisive-action training. The Army must give priority training and resourcing to global response forces, contingency forces, and then regionally aligned forces. Generating fully trained and resourced brigade combat teams that are not aligned to a contingency force mission may not be fiscally possible.

Cultural awareness takes time to develop. ARFORGEN unit training plans are as important for preparing a soldier to support a mission as the actual mission itself. As regionally aligned force policy matures, soldiers will benefit from repetitive cultural training events and missions, and repetitive regionally aligned unit assignments. As the size of the Army falls, and twelve to fourteen percent of Army manpower turns over annually, the fastest way to culturally develop soldiers is by repetitive assignments to regionally aligned units.⁸² A personnel recommendation is for the Army to overhaul mid-grade and senior personnel assignment policies in order to display commitment to the regionally aligned force policy. The Army should adapt manning policies to maximize assignments in regionally aligned units in order to support the long term viability of the policy and achieve a return on investment in soldier capabilities. For example, manning guidance should specify progressive assignments in aligned units, or units focused on the same geographic region; a battalion commander who supported regionally aligned missions in support of USCENTCOM would be an ideal candidate to serve as a staff officer in United States Army Central Command (ARCENT) or USCENTCOM.

Opportunities

Regionally aligned force policy focuses on conducting military-to-military engagements with host nations. However, as the policy matures, combatant commands and the Army should look at what capabilities United States allies possess that multi-lateral engagements can integrate into campaign plans. Strategic guidance highlights

the fact that the United States will partner to solve international problems; however, just as the United States is reducing defense budgets, so too are allies.⁸³ Lack of synchronization with United States allies, who are also experiencing reduced defense budgets, may expose capability gaps at a critical time. For example, Britain and France announced the development of a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force in order to respond to any crisis that impacts combined interests in 2012.⁸⁴ A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to work with combatant commands to expand regional engagements to include allies in the region while conducting regionally aligned missions in order to establish long term multi-lateral partnerships.

Regionally aligned force policy increases soldier awareness by training on culture and language. As the Army implements regionally aligned force policy, ARFORGEN will produce aligned units that increase Army capabilities for combatant commands to employ to accomplish theater objectives. Repetitive missions in support of combatant commands allow Army units to establish relationships with host nation militaries. An organizational recommendation is for the Army to commit to habitually aligning brigade combat teams to geographic combatant commands and extend the alignment to multiple ARFORGEN cycles. Habitually aligned units remain available to support contingency operations if required.

Regionally aligned force and ARFORGEN policies display the Army's flexibility to develop tailored force packages that originated when the Army developed the modular force. Modularity demonstrated the Army could generate and synchronize diverse force capabilities in order to accomplish combatant command missions.⁸⁵ Retaining units not assigned to combatant commands allows the Army's flexibility to generate a tailored

force in support of combatant commands. Combatant commands can request force packages if missions require; however, a brigade combat team can fulfill a preponderance of security cooperation activities. An organization recommendation is for the Army to retain Army units not assigned to combatant commands in order to centralize training and resources and to generate tailored forces to support combatant command mission requirements.

The Army should retain all forces as “Service Retained, Combatant Command Aligned” and not assign forces to combatant commands in order to conduct regionally aligned missions. FORSCOM will centralize training and readiness management for unassigned, service-retained units. As the Army’s force structure reduces, centralized force management synchronizes and prioritizes resources, provides the Army, Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense flexibility to fulfill mission requirements with a robust pool of Army forces, and prevents a duplication of efforts, competition and consumption for budget resources required to expand Army service component commands ability to train and resource units. A training recommendation is for the Army to create “Cultural Centers of Excellence” at Fort Polk and Fort Irwin to support centralized regionally aligned programs of instruction. The fourteen Army installations with brigade combat teams will create local training centers similar to “Dagger University” at Fort Riley.⁸⁶ Local training centers require complex coordination to create; local community resources can constrain their effectiveness. Habitually aligning units with combatant commands allows units to develop quality local training by developing long-term relationships with regional subject matter experts at home station. Failure to

habitually align units with combatant commands results in units and installations requiring resources to customize training for each ARFORGEN cycle.

The synchronization of ARFORGEN and regionally aligned force policy allows the Army to overhaul personnel policy. Current personnel policies provide the Army flexibility to meet requirements, and in the case of commissioned officers, expose them to diverse experiences, yet at times fails to make practical decisions that would be best for the Army.⁸⁷ The Army personnel system is focused on individual career progression, and not unit effectiveness.⁸⁸ The Army announced the extension of enlisted tours to 48 months in 2013; however, the Army has yet to reform personnel policy as a result of regionally aligned force policy.⁸⁹ A personnel recommendation is for the Army to modify enlisted, officer and command tours, and extend brigades to multiple ARFORGEN alignment cycles with the same combatant command. This allows the Army to realize a return on investments made on culture, language and regional expertise training.

Implications

A contingency that requires a substantial commitment of Army forces in the near-term places regionally aligned force policy implementation in jeopardy due to the multi-year rollout plan. The Army can realize “quick-wins” if it identifies, and habitually aligns brigade combat teams to the six geographic combatant commands. The Army could then determine, based on demand, the need to align division headquarters, or enabling units. Failing to habitually align brigade combat teams to combatant commands results in an increase in training resources required during future ARFORGEN cycles, complicates future ARFORGEN alignment cycles, fails to establish personal, long-term relationships with host nations and combatant command staffs, and fails to capitalize on soldiers’ regional experiences.

Combatant commands request forces through the global force management process based on Secretary of Defense validated requirements. Service retained, combatant command aligned forces should be retained by the Army to support global requirements. Regionally aligned force policy alone does not justify Army force assignment to combatant commands. Once Army forces are assigned to combatant commands, the Secretary of Defense is the approval authority to change the assignment. The Army loses the ability to centrally manage and synchronize training and resources for Army units, and does not determine unit priorities.

The Army is committed to ARFORGEN to manage unit readiness. ARFORGEN allows the Army to manage resources and identify how much of the Army is trained and ready to conduct a mission at any point in time. Future resources will dictate whether a 24-month, 36-month, or alternate ARFORGEN cycle is sustainable. The Army must use ARFORGEN to set the operating force in a predictable cycle to generate units to meet combatant command planned or unplanned mission requirements. The Army must balance the costs and resources required to generate units that are not a response or contingency force, or identified to conduct other missions in support of combatant commands.

The 2004 Global Defense Posture Review and 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) determine current Army unit locations.⁹⁰ ARFORGEN and regionally aligned force policy synchronization allows the Army to support current and future global mission requirements despite the Army being concentrated in the Continental United States. Regionally aligned force policy keeps Army units globally engaged.

Conclusion

Regional alignment of forces provides combatant commands with Army forces prepared for employment across the range of military operations specific to a combatant commander's area of responsibility. The Army modified the policy to increase regionally aligned force capabilities over the last two years, but external factors have championed alternative policy visions in contrast to the Army's vision. The Army should seek regionally aligned force policy "quick-wins" and advance full implementation earlier. Regionally aligned force policy concepts alone do not justify an Army force package, or Army unit assignment to combatant commands.

Maintaining the Army Force Generation process allows the Army to prioritize resources and manage readiness for Army operating forces supporting regionally aligned and contingency missions.⁹¹ However, refining Army Force Generation policy allows the Army to synchronize resources required to generate and manage Army unit readiness. The Army must prepare to adjust ARFORGEN resourcing policies to support future mission requirements.

Soldiers with twenty years of service today have witnessed the post-Desert Storm drawdown, conducted "military operations other than war" and experienced tiered readiness in the 1990s, witnessed a shift from a forward-based to a Continental United States-based Army, participated in major combat operations in the Middle East, and spent over a decade conducting counterinsurgency and stability operations. Throughout these experiences, one key lesson resonates. Regardless of the unit of assignment or location, the Army will train and resource units to accomplish the mission.

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