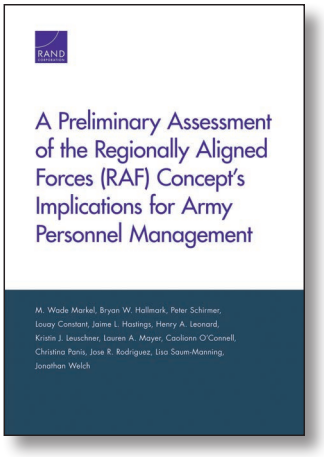

A Preliminary Assessment of the Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) Concept's Implications for Army Personnel Management

M. Wade Markel, Bryan W. Hallmark, Peter Schirmer, Louay Constant, Jaime L. Hastings, Henry A. Leonard, Kristin J. Leuschner, Lauren A. Mayer, Caolionn O'Connell, Christina Panis, Jose R. Rodriguez, Lisa Saum-Manning, Jonathan Welch

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RAND Arroyo Center explored how the U.S. Army might need to adapt its personnel management policies and practices to support the Regionally Aligned Forces concept. Authors estimated the scope and scale of the requirement for regional expertise; modeled the Army's current ability to produce soldiers with the required expertise; and identified changes to the personnel management system to develop and match such soldiers with appropriate positions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What changes are required to personnel management practices and capabilities to implement the Regionally Aligned Forces concept?
- What are the potential scope and scale of the Army's requirement for personnel with regional expertise?
- What is the Army's ability to develop and maintain the appropriate personnel inventory?

KEY FINDINGS

The Army Has Relatively Little Empirical Information About the Personnel Implications of Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF)

- At this point, there has been almost no opportunity to compare different approaches to manning the force in support of RAF and determine that one alternative is superior to others.

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Potential Demand for Regional Expertise Appears Likely to Be Moderate

- Demand for regional expertise currently appears to be concentrated at the operational level, at the division echelon and higher, and in theater-level enablers, particularly intelligence, logistics, and signal units.
- The eventual requirement might not exceed 4,300 soldiers.

Acquiring Regional Expertise Need Not Conflict with Traditional Career Development Patterns

- Acquiring appropriate regional expertise need not conflict with normal career progression, at least not substantially.

The Army Will Probably Produce Enough Soldiers with Relevant Expertise to Meet This Modest Demand

- After several years of RAF implementation, the Army will likely accrue sufficient inventories of personnel with the required degree of regional experience. The Army should be able to fill positions with regionally experienced personnel and still retain a modicum of selectivity.

Current Personnel Management Practices and Recordkeeping Systems Do Not Enable the Army to Match Supply with Demand

- A sufficient number of soldiers will probably have the needed expertise, but it is very hard to match the supply with the demand given the level of information currently in Army personnel data.
- For the most part, data about soldiers' regionally relevant experience, education, and training are available neither to assignment personnel nor to units in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enable a regional qualification system to evolve. Army personnel managers should analyze assignment decisions made in this context over time in order to determine which positions benefit from regional expertise and which do not.
- Leverage the Army's adoption of talent management to support Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF). Leveraging talent management would enable the Army to learn from experience which billets require what degree of regional expertise, rather than trying to guess correctly in advance.
- Make soldiers' RAF-relevant education and experience available to personnel managers. Personnel development skill identifiers (PDSIs) provide a ready-made vehicle for doing so. Although a soldier can acquire many PDSIs over the course of a career, the Army could prioritize RAF-relevant PDSIs for inclusion in this field on the Soldier Record Brief.

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