Readiness Reporting for an Adaptive Army

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This study examines the readiness reporting system in light of changes experienced by Army units in the past decade, a period in which the Army learned to adapt to emerging requirements by adding new capabilities quickly and flexibly. The current readiness reporting system captures only a portion of those changes in capabilities and has some important limitations. The study recommends ways to improve the reporting system for an adaptive Army.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How has the Army adapted to create new capabilities?
- How well are newly developed unit capabilities captured in current readiness reporting?
- What is the nature of past changes and how should those impact future readiness reporting?

KEY FINDINGS

Accelerated capabilities development (ACD) has significantly increased the Army's readiness for its current missions, but these improvements are largely not captured in MTOE-based readiness reporting.

The Army has yet to develop a robust, systematic, and enduring set of processes and organizations for ACD.

Managing ACD in peacetime will be challenging, but it is critical that this capability be in place at the beginning of major operations.

The MTOE has great and continuing value as a planning, resourcing, and reporting document, but is not a sufficient basis on which to gauge unit readiness in all circumstances.

The Army has adapted the unit status reporting system to provide readiness information for which an MTOE-based assessment could not in all cases account, though that mission readiness assessment is not as transparent as it should be.

The reporting system does not communicate the extent of units' "drift" from their design, and it appears to exacerbate a lack of appreciation within the Army for just how much units may have changed with respect to readiness and capabilities.

The audience for readiness reporting may have an inaccurate understanding of what Army units are ready to do and capable of doing, in part because of overuse of the term "full-spectrum operations," in part because the readiness system does not require greater precision, and in part because there may be a lack of appreciation within the Army for the distance separating particular bands of the capabilities spectrum.

The reporting system is not adapted optimally for ARFORGEN.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Bring greater precision to the "numerator," i.e., the actual state of a unit with respect to inventory, manning, organization, and skills, which in this case requires capturing the various adaptations experienced by a unit as it goes through ARFORGEN, whether to its equipment inventory as it substitutes rapidly acquired items for MTOE-authorized equipment, to its task organization—which has ramifications for manning and military occupational skill qualification—or to its training curricula. The Army should provide clear guidance on how mission-specific equipping lists are to be used and reported upon.

- Army should develop a robust, systematic set of processes and organizations for ACD, and maintain these capabilities in peacetime.

- Modify the readiness reporting system and AR 220-1 so as to bring clarity and fixity to the "denominator," i.e., the standards against which readiness is compared, particularly with regard to the meaning of "full-spectrum operations"; the precise skills, capabilities, and training curricula required for such operations; and the documentation that supports the reporting of readiness. To do so, Army (1) needs to find ways to look beyond the MTOE, (2) should preserve and enhance mechanisms to evaluate the MTOE, (3) should develop more systematic and uniform guidance on preparing for possible future missions (aligned or assigned), and (4) needs to adapt reporting to ARFORGEN sequencing.

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