Rapid Acquisition of Army Command and Control Systems

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Recent conflicts have driven the U.S. military to acquire new capabilities rapidly to meet urgent operational needs. These needs have forced the U.S. Army to rely on nontraditional practices to acquire new systems. By examining nontraditional acquisition practices used during the conflicts, this study examines how U.S. Army program managers can better manage rapid acquisition, focusing on command and control systems.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How can the DoD better perform rapid acquisition within the current framework of policies and procedures?
- Based on analysis of selected recent successful rapid acquisition efforts, what issues and challenges have been posed by rapid acquisition of C2 systems?
- What are the factors that have enabled successful rapid acquisition of C2 systems?

KEY FINDINGS

High-level champions are critical to the success of rapid acquisitions.

Organizational and user flexibility enable rapid acquisition of new capabilities.

- Wartime environments motivate bureaucratic flexibility.
- For needed equipment, with good program office communication, users will tolerate operational risk and less than 100 percent of desired performance.
- Ongoing user feedback enables interactive capability enhancement.
- Rapid acquisitions require an immediate, flexibly-tasked source of funding

A large variety of designated rapid acquisition processes have supplied wartime capabilities for DoD and the Army.

- These designated processes have not met every rapid acquisition need of the Army.
- The rapid acquisitions selected as cases studies for this research effort did not rely heavily on these designated processes.

Relying on existing technology and documentation speeds acquisitions.

- Leveraging requirements, contracts, and documentation from existing programs can help speed new technologies into the force.
- Conducting rapid acquisition requires the underlying technology to be mature.

C2 rapid acquisitions have ensured field support and sustainment via contractor warranties and eventual transition to an Army program of record.

- C2 rapid acquisitions have relied on multiyear warranties.
- Transition planning and staffing consistency during the transition is essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regularly and systematically capture "lessons learned" from rapid acquisition.
- Convince Congress to allocate flexible funding for rapid acquisitions of a needed type of capability on an ongoing basis.
- Promote awareness of and strengthen existing Army processes for transition of non-programs of record to official standing, such as the Capabilities Development for Rapid Transition.
- Explore ways to expedite testing in support of rapid acquisition.
- To expedite a rapid acquisition, train the institutional Army to support program managers who tailor their acquisition strategy to abridge or omit standard parts of the 5000.02 acquisition processes, fully exploiting the flexibility permitted by law.
- Make the requirements change process for rapid acquisitions easy and unencumbered to enable program managers to prioritize and make tradeoffs.
- Both the institutional Army and program managers should view existing related programs as structures they can leverage to help acquire related capabilities quickly.
- For future rapid acquisitions, the Army should require program managers to assess the rapid acquisition enabling factors from this report and to account for whether they have appropriately included those factors in their program.

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