

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2012, a division commander requested the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) consider the challenges of turning a division headquarters into a joint task force (JTF) headquarters. The USAWC provided onsite assistance to help explore this challenge. One year later, a combatant commander requested that the USAWC consider the challenges of the Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) concept. The combatant commander's deployed headquarters faced many of the same challenges identified in 2012. A division headquarters of approximately 150 personnel, deployed under the RAF concept, is smaller than would be expected as an operational JTF. Although focused on division-level challenges, the commander forward asked the USAWC team to consider the broader implications of implementing RAF across the Army. In response, the USAWC established a student/faculty study group to address this strategic issue. The USAWC Study Group examined the RAF concept, explored capability and capacity shortages, and considered the compounded effect of related implications from the different Warfighting Functions. Organized across the Army Warfighting Functions (WfFs)¹ and through the lenses of Doctrine, Organizations, Training, Materiel, Leadership and education, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF),² this compendium reports the results of that effort.

The Army defines Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) as: 1) those units assigned or allocated to combatant commands, and 2) those service-retained, combatant command-aligned forces prepared by the Army for regional missions. They are drawn from the total force, including the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve.³ RAF consist of organizations and capabilities that are forward stationed, operating in a combatant command area of responsibility, and supporting (or ready to support) combatant commands through reach-back capabilities from outside the area of responsibility. Furthermore, RAF conduct operational missions, bilateral and multilateral military exercises, and theater security cooperation activities.⁴ In theory, the RAF concept provides a scalable, tailorable capability to meet combatant commanders' steady-state and phase zero shaping requirements. Additionally, the RAF concept improves the Army's ability to provide culturally and regionally aware forces for specific missions. As U.S. bases overseas are reduced, the challenge will be to maintain robust regional engagement. The RAF concept is designed to meet this challenge.

Neither the Secretary of Defense nor any combatant commanders have directed the Army to implement RAF. Since 2001, the revised global defense posture and the pursuit of increased cost savings have shifted force basing back to the United States. Increased emphasis on U.S.-based forces could undermine our current global posture. The RAF concept, however, increases the operational tempo of the U.S.-based troops and correspondingly increases annual operating costs. When compared to traditional U.S.-based training activities, RAF is an Army-induced cost that must be addressed when explaining the concept.

The Army's mission, and the justification for force structure, remains to fight and win the nation's wars. The Army force generation (ARFORGEN) model directs Army units to prepare for likely military scenarios as prioritized in the defense strategy. ARFORGEN drives the prioritization of training resources. RAF is the supporting concept that drives force alignment for shaping operations within a theater or region. Shaping operations should be aligned with the prioritization of resources in ARFORGEN and the defense strategy. In a resource-constrained environment the supporting nature of the RAF concept should not be confused with the primary mission. In earlier times, combatant commands were assigned troops to perform

the supported mission. Assigned forces conducted shaping operations and performed across the spectrum of conflict, to include theater and regional security cooperation activities. The RAF concept provides forces to a combatant commander without the full expense of forward basing. Regionally Aligned Forces, however, cannot easily prepare for ARFORGEN and RAF missions simultaneously. Opportunity costs among conflicting activities, training opportunities, and missions will occur. The strategic narrative must clearly articulate that RAF support combatant commanders' missions to prepare to fight and win the nation's wars. Current confusion about why the Army is implementing the RAF concept makes it appear that the RAF concept is a self-generated mission designed to ensure relevancy of a U.S.-based Army. The RAF concept is not the supported mission of the Army, nor should it appear to be.

As with any new management concept, however, adopting RAF comes with both opportunities and challenges. RAF provide the Army with planning predictability, i.e., the ability to provide forces to the combatant commander if and when needed. Forecasting operational requirements more effectively will enable the Army to better anticipate costs and prioritize budgets. In order to mitigate the effects of reduced budgets, the Army will continue to reduce its overall end strength. Reduction initiatives will require the force to be efficiently manned, trained, and equipped to meet global security requirements. The RAF concept provides a fresh and responsive means for managing the force, while providing better support to the combatant commander.

USAWC Study Group Leads

Gregory L. Cantwell, Ph.D.

Colonel Tarn D. Warren

Colonel Mark E. Orvat

Notes

¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 16, 2012, p. 3-6. The six warfighting functions are: Mission Command, Movement and Maneuver, Intelligence, Fires, Sustainment, and Protection. "Commanders use the warfighting functions to help them exercise command and to help them and their staffs exercise control. A *warfighting function* is a group of tasks and systems (people, organizations, information, and processes) united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions and training objectives. All warfighting functions possess scalable capabilities to mass lethal and nonlethal effects. The Army's warfighting functions link directly to the joint functions."

² Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 1, *The Army*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 14, 2005, p. 4-1.

³ Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh, *Army Total Force Policy*, Army Directive 2012-08, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 04, 2012, p. 2.

⁴ Kimberly Field, James Learmont and Jason Charland, "Regionally Aligned Forces; Business Not as Usual," *Parameters* Vol. 43, No. 3, Autumn 2013, p. 56.