

RAF and ARFORGEN

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The United States Army's concept to regionally align units to geographic combatant commands is over 5 years old.¹ Operation New Dawn's end and the falling requirement for Army units in Afghanistan have created an opportunity for the Army to accelerate regional alignment from concept to force management policy.² Despite recent concept modifications, 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 in the face of a constantly changing international security environment, domestic budget constraints, and recent historical experiences in preparing and maintaining unit readiness?³

This essay examines the impact of the 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. Maintaining the Army Force Generation process allows the Army to prioritize resources and manage readiness for 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 advanced for enhancing Regionally Aligned Force and Army Force Generation policies.

The global security situation is complex. Fifteen United Nations' peacekeeping operations and over 50 armed conflicts are in progress worldwide. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence highlights a multitude of threats in the 2014 Annual Worldwide Threat Assessment.⁵ Additionally, the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance 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 activated to defend United States' interests. In a 2011 speech, 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 debate outcomes, Army units must be trained and ready to respond.

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 in the operating force plus combined Army Reserve and Army National Guard units 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. The definition does, however, focus all Army command elements to continue to develop, synchronize, and prepare for policy implementation.

The Army developed the RAF 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 RAF 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 in concert with the defense strategic guidance released in January 2012.¹¹

General Odierno stated his vision for a broader regional alignment of forces in addition to brigade combat teams focused on security cooperation in a blog post 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 the province of select Army units, e.g., Special Forces or Civil Affairs, to all units and leaders in the conventional force.¹³ Since then, RAF policy has developed into one of General Odierno’s top five priorities and an essential concern for the Department of the Army Staff.¹⁴ Fiscal year 2014 represents the 2nd year of a 5-year plan to develop and implement Regionally Aligned Force policy.¹⁵

Regionally Aligned Forces support 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, Regionally Aligned Force policy directly addresses four of the 11 strategic themes identified by the Joint Staff J-7’s Joint Center for 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: the need to engage the countries in their respective AORs 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 RAF force policy to conduct missions in support of United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM).²⁰ The 2nd Brigade conducted more than one hundred missions in over 30 countries in support of USAFRICOM in the first 10 months of employment.²¹ Meanwhile, 1st Armored Division’s Headquarters was the first division headquarters under RAF to participate in United States Central Command’s (USCENTCOM) 2013 Eager Lion Exercise (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 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 unit's geographic location and the deployment timeline for supporting a contingency plan.²⁷ In order to implement ARFORGEN, the Army identified and synchronized no fewer than 21 major manning, equipping, or training policies.²⁸

ARFORGEN created three categories for Army units. The first category is Reset, or those units recently returned from a mission that 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. The Army increases levels of manning, equipment on hand and training resources for those units in the Train/Ready category. Finally, the Available force category refers to those Army units at the highest state of readiness. Available units have the most Soldiers and equipment-on-hand, and have completed a capstone collective training event such as a combat training center rotation.²⁹

ARFORGEN provides the Army two important force management features that support combatant command requirements. First, 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 12-months, 15-months, and 9-months based on specific requirements from USCENTCOM.³¹ Second, ARFORGEN also allows the Army to prioritize equipment, personnel, and training resources to manage units based on combatant command demand.³² These two force management features accommodate the Army's need for flexibility in building forces in accord with combatant command requirements.

Since inception, the Army has refined ARFORGEN to meet the demand for forces in accord with institutional policies even as available resources fluctuated.³³ In February 2012, General Odierno hinted at likely ARFORGEN changes 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 and a revised regulation has not yet been released. Despite the absence of an updated regulation, recent Army budget and strategy documents as well as news articles identify three significant changes in the way ARFORGEN manages Army units.³⁶ These changes will impact RAF policy implementation. The 2011 ARFORGEN regulation managed all operating forces as single composite 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, more specifically 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. Mission force pool 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 in response to 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 are 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 consistent with 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" training conducted over the last decade.⁴⁵ For over 10 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 lessons learned while operating in Iraq and Afghanistan while focusing on the Army's core competencies: combined arms maneuver and wide area security, as identified in Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*.⁴⁷ Decisive-action refers to the Army's ability to conduct continuous and simultaneous combinations of offensive, defensive, and stability missions, or defense support of civil authority as a mission might require.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 for decisive-action training.⁴⁹ In fiscal year 2014, 19 of the 21 scheduled combat training center rotations will be decisive-action training.⁵⁰ The shift in training focus is critical if we are 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. Doing so supports contingency operations should they be 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 during budget uncertainty, the Army requested fiscal year 2014 funding for combat center rotations for 21 brigades, five mission command team training events (MCTPs) for division headquarters, and one mission command team training event for a corps headquarters.⁵⁴ Army forces supporting RAF 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 with enhancing 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 the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission 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 using these observations to inform and facilitate unit ARFORGEN cycles when planning RAF missions.

RAF and ARFORGEN Recommendations

As the Regionally Aligned Force policy is implemented, thereby transforming 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, while not unique to the Army, does support the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) if joint doctrine or joint capability areas (JCAs) are impacted.⁶³

Challenges

In less than two years, the “Regionally Aligned Brigade” concept became the “Regionally Aligned Forces” policy.⁶⁴ The definition’s evolution, as well as the Army’s willingness to modify the original definition and vision to win acceptance in the Army and the broader defense community, contributes to policy confusion.⁶⁵ The Army must clearly define and precisely articulate what the Regionally Aligned Force policy is, and what the policy is not, if there is to be any hope of establishing a common understanding and terms of reference for the defense community. Currently, organizations within and outside the Army have different visions and understandings of RAF policy.⁶⁶ Despite limited regionally aligned unit experience, the Army is now building Regionally Aligned Force policy with an entire force package to include enabling units based on initial feedback from combatant commands.⁶⁷ A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to return to the original regional alignment vision with the brigade combat team functioning as the central core capability. Confusion is created by poorly articulated policy and thin definitions. By not focusing on core capabilities when seeking policy acceptance by external stakeholders, confusion results. Not every combatant command can readily justify requiring a brigade combat team or an Army force package to conduct RAF missions.

The Army must develop the Regionally Aligned Force policy despite internal and external arguments regarding its merit and capability.⁶⁸ Any contingency that requires a large commitment of Army forces prior to implementation may well risk the policy itself. The five-year implementation plan illustrates Army bureaucracy while highlighting failure to show institutional agility and urgency to generate appropriate force capabilities to support combatant command missions. Policy change is, in fact, one element that effectively prevents faster

policy implementation. With regard to doctrine, the Army needs to accelerate institutionalizing RAF policy. By refining and focusing on a core capability, producing, for example, 12 habitually aligned brigade combat teams, the Army could expedite implementation.⁶⁹ Policy modifications, possibly including growth, should occur in the future and be based on combatant commander feedback and mission demand.

Current global force management timelines require combatant commanders to submit initial force requirements to the Joint Staff 21-months before the fiscal year of employment begins.⁷⁰ 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 validly identify missions and the Army can identify appropriate forces to conduct those missions 21-months in advance can be difficult. Stakeholder planning efforts may not be synchronized.⁷¹ 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.⁷² The 120 day request for forces does not permit a unit to realize the ARFORGEN resourcing benefits unless the unit is habitually aligned with 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 in support of combatant command requirements. Habitual alignment of brigade combat teams to RAF 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.

Since 2007 ARFORGEN has allowed the Army to generate forces to support global operations by prioritizing resources for deploying forces. ARFORGEN revisions allow the Army to avoid the lingering pre-2001 “tiered readiness” institutional stigma.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ One way to overcome tiered readiness is to separate and manage units by mission. For example, the British Army creates forces based on three assigned primary missions.⁷⁵ The reaction force is designed to respond to contingency operations and is maintained at the highest readiness levels.⁷⁶ The adaptable force conducts stabilization and engagement missions and maintains lower readiness levels.⁷⁷ A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to retain ARFORGEN in order to manage readiness according to unit missions. ARFORGEN allows the Army to synchronize manning, equipping and training policies. The Army must be careful, however, not to create too many unit force pools cycling through ARFORGEN such that conflicts over resource prioritization result.

Army unit readiness reporting allows commands to provide comments, and based on the commanders’ opinion, to subjectively upgrade or downgrade readiness levels.⁷⁸ 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 impacts unit resourcing. As resources are reduced, the Army needs a valid and objective way to assess resourcing levels. A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to suspend, at least temporarily, a command’s ability to subjectively upgrade the unit’s overall readiness assessment. Quantitative, empirically verifiable data should define unit readiness in addition to the commander’s assessment and comments through the unit status reporting process as the Army draws down. Commands must resist the desire to maintain that a unit can accomplish specific mission tasks when the unit is neither trained nor resourced appropriately.

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 yet may well prove to be financially unsustainable. A twenty-four month period of readiness matches the most demanding unit ARFORGEN cycle over the last decade.⁷⁹ Supplemental contingency funding supported increased readiness, but that is no longer the case as forces are departing Afghanistan.⁸⁰ By assigning all brigade combat teams,

including regionally aligned units, to the ARFORGEN rotational force pool, the Army is posturing favorably for future resource prioritization decisions during an era of declining resources. A training recommendation is for the Army to explore alternatives to the 24-month ARFORGEN cycle for regionally aligned brigade combat teams, and alternative courses of action to decisive-action training. The Army must accord 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 with a contingency force mission may not be fiscally possible.

Developing cultural awareness is important and takes time. ARFORGEN unit training plans are as important for Soldier preparation in support of 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 overall size of the Army retracts, and 12 to 14 percent of Army manpower turns over annually, the fastest way to develop Soldiers culturally is by repetitive assignments to regionally aligned units.⁸¹ A personnel recommendation is for the Army to overhaul mid-grade and senior personnel assignment policies in order to encourage commitment to the Regionally Aligned Force policy. The Army should adapt manning policies that maximize assignments in regionally aligned units and support the long term viability of the policy while achieving a return on investment in Soldier capabilities. Manning guidance, for example, 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. As the policy matures, combatant commands and the Army should consider what capabilities United States allies possess that can integrate into multi-lateral engagement and campaign plans. Strategic guidance acknowledges and emphasizes the idea that the United States will partner to solve international problems. Yet our allies are reducing defense budgets just as we are.⁸² Lack of appropriate and necessary synchronization with United States allies may expose capability gaps at a critical time. For example, in 2012, Britain and France announced the development of a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force in order to respond to any crisis that impacts combined interests.⁸³ A doctrine recommendation is for the Army to work with combatant commands to expand regional engagements that necessarily include regional allies while conducting regionally aligned missions. The goal is to establish long term multi-lateral partnerships.

RAF policy increases Soldier awareness by incorporating and emphasizing culture and language training. As the Army implements Regionally Aligned Force policy, ARFORGEN will produce aligned units with the potential to significantly increase Army capabilities for combatant commands to accomplish theater objectives. Repetitive missions in support of combatant commands allow Army units to establish relationships with host nation military personnel. An organizational recommendation is for the Army to commit to habitually aligning brigade combat teams with geographic combatant commands and to extend the alignment to multiple ARFORGEN cycles. Habitually aligned units will then remain available to support contingency operations should they be required.

Regionally Aligned Forces and ARFORGEN policies can capitalize on the Army's flexibility to develop tailored force packages consistent with the modular force concept. Modularity demonstrated the Army could generate and synchronize diverse force capabilities to accomplish combatant command missions.⁸⁴ Retaining units not assigned to combatant commands allows the flexibility to generate a tailored force. Combatant

commands can request force packages when missions require. A brigade combat team can fulfill a preponderance of security cooperation activities, however. A recommendation is to retain Army units not assigned to combatant commands in order to centralize training and resources while generating tailored forces to support combatant command mission requirements.

The Army should retain almost all forces as “service retained, combatant command aligned” 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, and 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, while preventing a duplication of effort and unnecessary competition for budget resources needed to expand Army service component commands. A training recommendation is for the Army to initiate “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 could create local training centers similar to “Dagger University” at Fort Riley.⁸⁵ Habitually aligning units with combatant commands will allow units to develop quality 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 provide customized training during each ARFORGEN cycle.

The synchronization of ARFORGEN and Regionally Aligned Force policy allows the Army to overhaul personnel policy. Current personnel policies provide flexibility to meet requirements, and expose commissioned officers to diverse experiences, yet the existing policies sometimes fail to make practical decisions that best serve the Army.⁸⁶ The Army personnel system is focused on individual career progression, rather than unit effectiveness.⁸⁷ The Army announced the extension of enlisted tours to 48 months in 2013; however, it has yet to reform personnel policy in accord with RAF policy.⁸⁸ 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 returns on investment made in 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 approving 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 time.

Future resources will dictate whether a 24-month, 36-month, or alternate ARFORGEN cycle is sustainable. The Army must use ARFORGEN to position the operating force in a predictable cycle to generate the units needed to meet planned or unplanned combatant command 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) results determine current Army unit locations.⁸⁹ 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 aptly prepared and globally engaged at minimal cost.

Conclusion

Regional alignment of forces provides combatant commands with Army forces prepared for rapid employment across the range of military operations unique to a combatant commander's area of responsibility. The Army has modified the policy to increase Regionally Aligned Force capabilities over the last 2 years, but external factors have championed alternative policy visions. The Army should seek Regionally Aligned Force policy "quick-wins" and advance full implementation as soon as possible. Regionally Aligned Force policy concepts alone, however, do not justify an Army force package nor Army unit assignment to combatant commands.

Maintaining the Army Force Generation process allows the Army to prioritize resources and manage readiness for operating forces supporting regionally aligned and contingency missions.⁹⁰ Refining Army Force Generation policy, however, allows the Army to synchronize the resources required to generate and manage Army units for efficient and effective global engagement. The Army must prepare to adjust ARFORGEN resourcing policies to support future mission requirements.

Soldiers with 20-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.

Notes

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