

### THE TEMPO OF CAPABILITY DELIVERY

One theme that has run through *RUSI Defence Systems* over the last few years has been the delivery of required capability in a timely manner and, although the need for shorter procurement timescales has been acknowledged in recent MoD initiatives, there has only been marginal improvement. It is true that delivery of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs) has been generally excellent, but the improvement in delivery of 'normal' procurement has been small, which in turn gives rise to further UORs to fill gaps caused by delays to new equipment. Such heavy, and increasing, reliance on UOR processes has major disadvantages, including less coherence of the overall equipment programme, more buys off-shore thus undermining the Defence Industrial Strategy, and greater risk in interoperability.

In this issue, Lieutenant General Speakes, Assistant Chief of Staff of the US Army, discusses how timescales of capability delivery can be shortened in a rapidly changing defence environment, while Stu Olden suggests a way we can deliver FAST acquisition. Contrasting these views of what should and can be done is Bjoern Siebert's view that the UK is wrong to have stuck with the A400M programme with its cost overruns and delays.

# Delivering Capability to the US Army in the 21st Century

by *Lieutenant General Stephen M. Speakes and DeAnna Haggett*

*Stephen Speakes is the US Army's Deputy Chief of Staff, and DeAnna Haggett is the G-8 Deputy Chief, G-8 Initiatives Group. In this article, they discuss the delivery of capability to the US Army in a period of rapidly changing operational requirements, and say what has been, is being, and still remains to be done.*

Over the past eight years at war, we have accomplished a great deal. Through non-traditional, innovative processes and robust support from the Department of Defense (DoD) and Congress, America's Army has delivered an unprecedented level of capability to our soldiers. However, we have accomplished this task with a great emphasis from senior leaders in Congress and DoD, and with their help expedited conventional DoD statutory and regulatory requirements and procurement processes. Without this collective, single-minded focus to push through the morass of policies and procedures, success would have been unlikely. We are at a critical point in time when we need to make lasting changes in how we do business, in order to ensure that we will be able to quickly deliver needed capabilities in the coming years.

In theory, fielding major combat systems quicker makes perfect sense. But in practice, it is extremely challenging. The last major development and fielding of Army Combat systems occurred in the early 1990s, with the fielding of the 'Big Five' systems: the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Abrams tank, Blackhawk

utility helicopter, the Apache attack helicopter, and Patriot air defence system. The concept development and testing for these systems began as early as 1972 for the Abrams Tank, and were designed to counter a Cold War threat. Given our current operating environment, we cannot assume that the required capabilities we determine today will address what we will need even 10 years from now.

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To expedite fielding of material and non-material solutions to today's deployed forces, the Army and DoD have created several ad hoc organisations. These include the Asymmetric Warfare Group, the Rapid Equipping Force (REF), and Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization. Because

these organisations have operated outside the alignment of the traditional requirements, resources, and programmes construct, they have had a greater degree of flexibility and agility. For example, the REF can deliver materiel solutions within 180 days as opposed to traditional acquisition methods, which can take five to seven years or more. However, these organisations are limited in their scope and funding, and focus mostly on commercial 'off the shelf' solutions. They are also dependent on contingency funding (previously known as supplemental funding) which lacks the predictability to develop lasting programmes and processes.

We have also taken capabilities proven in our deployed environments and quickly evaluated them for use across our total force. Currently, the Army uses the Capabilities Development for Rapid Transition (CDRT) process to evaluate systems fielded on a limited scope to deployed units, to determine the potential for Army-wide application of the technology as a programme of record. By using the CDRT process, the Army has accelerated the development and fielding of proven capabilities delivered in response to Operational Needs Statements. The Army needs to continue the use of CDRT-type programmes to sharpen the institutional focus on required capabilities, and ensure that there is a strong linkage between the operational commanders and the acquisition community.

Another method of streamlining the acquisition of materiel solutions is to refocus our testing and evaluation process to concentrate on product improvement, not just for a 'go/no-go' decision for programme reviews. The concept of continuous evaluation and incremental improvements is not new, but it requires flexibility within our programmes to make changes as we field subsequent iterations of a system. An example of the successful application of incremental development includes the development and fielding of soldier body armour, with increasing levels of small arms protective inserts (Small Arms Protective Inserts (SAPI), Enhanced SAPI, and Experimental -SAPI). Some critics, after-the-fact, continue to question the manner in which this programme proceeded; however, delays

in providing these life-saving improved capabilities would have been intolerable.

We can also shorten developmental timelines by collecting test and evaluation data for new systems deployed to operational environments. In 2003, the US Army Test and Evaluation Command began to deploy Forward Operational Assessment (FOA) teams into the Central Command Area of Responsibility. These teams have two missions: (1) to gather data and feedback from soldiers on how fielded systems are performing in the operational environment, and (2) to inform soldiers about the capabilities and limitations of the systems, based on operational testing being performed concurrently in the Continental US. The FOA teams have been involved in the assessment of several recently deployed systems, such as Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles, PackBot (unmanned ground vehicle), and Task Force Odin. As a result, these programmes have been able to integrate lessons learned in operational environments quickly into system improvements for future increments.

Perhaps the most important factor to secure lasting improvement in the ability to deliver capabilities to the warfighter is continued fiscal support from DoD, Congress and the Administration. We all understand that our nation is facing significant economic challenges, and must make some hard decisions to prioritise federal spending. As we work with DoD to align our Army to be prepared for current and likely future threats, we must not forget that the Army must be prepared to respond across the full spectrum of operations, to include high intensity operations against an opposing nation-state. We must invest now to develop versatile technologies and build and sustain the industrial capacity to produce future systems, such as the next generation of ground combat vehicles, or we risk our industrial base not being capable of responding when we need it. We must also recognise the cost increases that result from changing requirements may be an enduring reality in this era. If so, then cost increases attributed to changing requirements should not be held against programmes.

It is necessary for us to acknowledge, as an institution and as a whole government, that the change and turbulence we have seen over the past few years is not transient, but here to stay. Along with this recognition must come an acceptance that some flexibility is needed in our budgeting and funding processes. Our success in rapidly adapting to our changing environment depends on our capability to transform all the organisations and processes that support acquisition to become more responsive and agile, while still maintaining a deliberate and comprehensive approach. This transformation will require holistic and lasting changes – not ad hoc ones – in the way we define requirements; develop, test, and acquire materiel solutions; and programme the resources needed to achieve this vision. Not to rise to this challenge, we put our ability to deliver the capabilities our soldiers need, when they need them, at risk. ■



Forward Operational Assessment (FOA) teams have been involved in the assessment of several recently deployed systems, such as the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle (MRAP), shown here [US DOD]