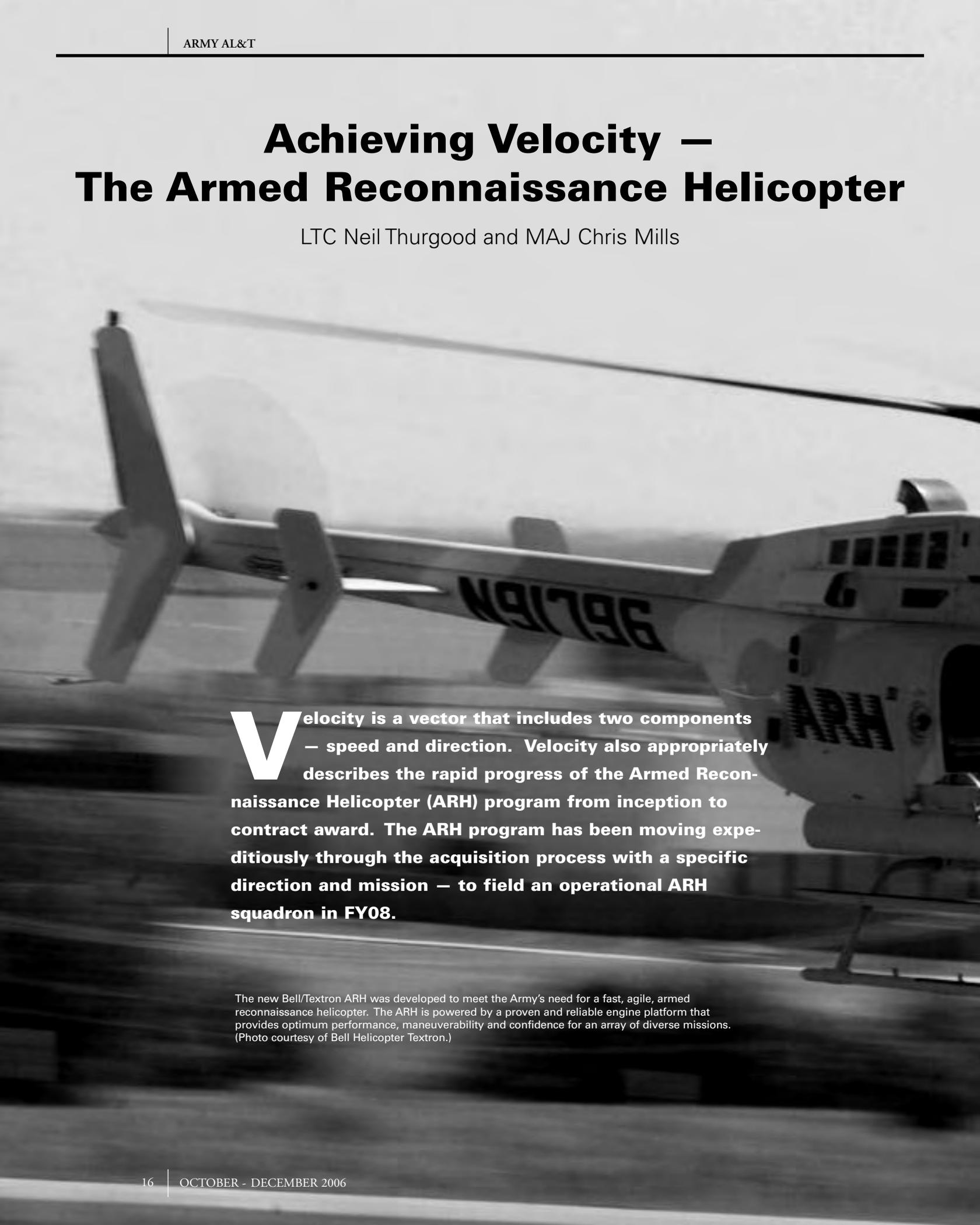


Achieving Velocity – The Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter

LTC Neil Thurgood and MAJ Chris Mills



Velocity is a vector that includes two components – speed and direction. Velocity also appropriately describes the rapid progress of the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH) program from inception to contract award. The ARH program has been moving expeditiously through the acquisition process with a specific direction and mission – to field an operational ARH squadron in FY08.

The new Bell/Textron ARH was developed to meet the Army's need for a fast, agile, armed reconnaissance helicopter. The ARH is powered by a proven and reliable engine platform that provides optimum performance, maneuverability and confidence for an array of diverse missions. (Photo courtesy of Bell Helicopter Textron.)

In June 2004, the Army approved a full and open competition procurement to meet the ARH program's requirements. A year later, an Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Overarching Integrated Product Team (OIPT) was convened. The OIPT gained approval for a successful Milestone (MS) B Defense Acquisition Board (DAB). One year is an amazingly short amount of time to accomplish the myriad requirements to get a successful MS B decision, as

highlighted by Figure 1 on Page 18. This article will provide insight and describe a few important lessons learned during the ARH effort and, hopefully, help prevent other acquisition programs from repeating mistakes and set the conditions so that others may capitalize on the ARH program's success.

The ARH is a fully-integrated, lightweight, armed reconnaissance weapons platform designed to support the Joint

force commander. It replaces the current OH-58D Kiowa Warrior and is interoperable with organic and Joint fires systems and manned/unmanned aviation platforms.

On June 17, 2004, the Army Systems Acquisition Review Council (ASARC) approved the ARH program. The Army proposed a streamlined acquisition strategy for the ARH program. At the initial DAB review in July



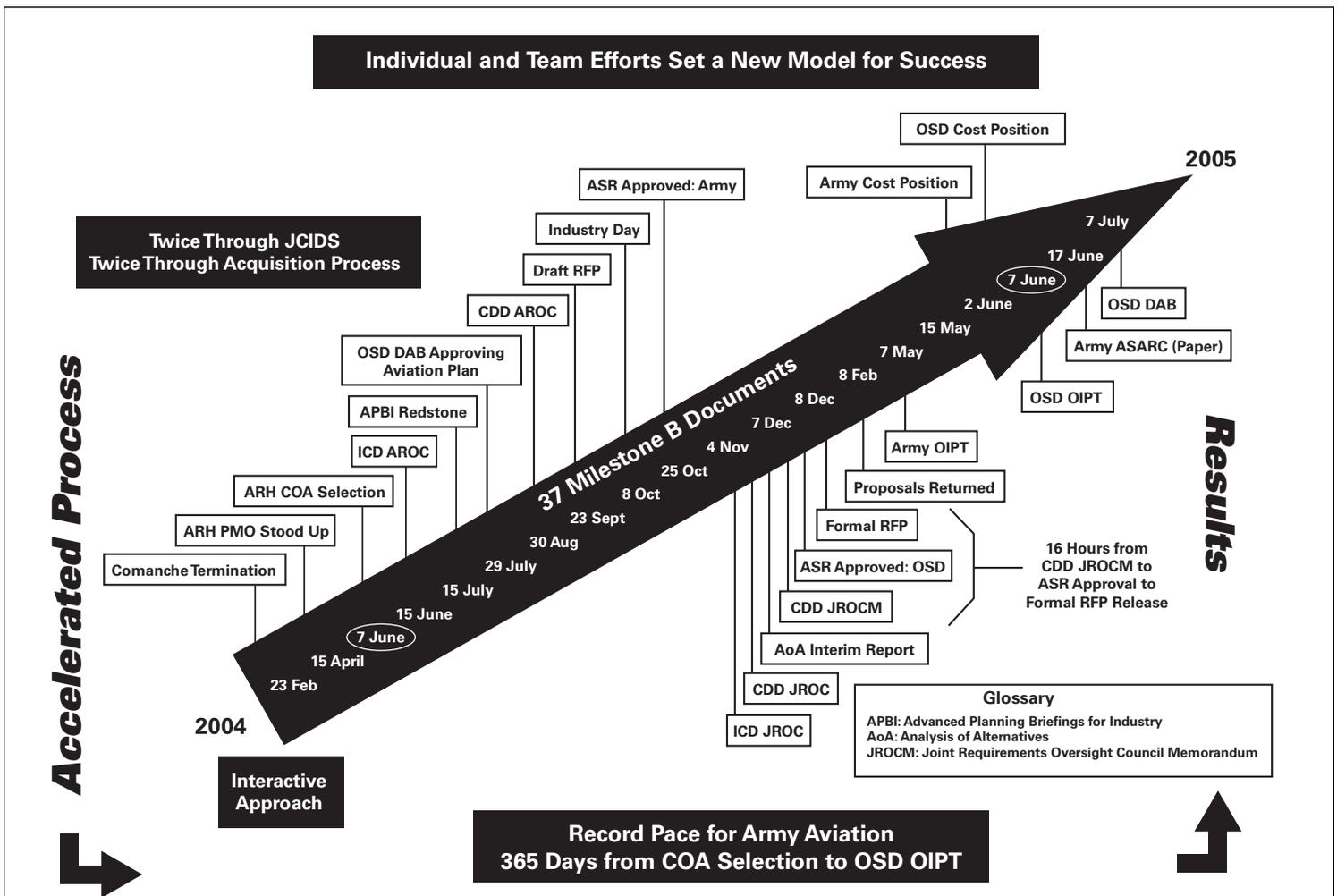


Figure 1. 365 Days of Acquisition Reform

2004, the ARH program was designated a prospective Acquisition Category (ACAT) 1D program. The ARH Acquisition Strategy Report (ASR) detailed the path ahead as a source selection, implementing full and open competition. The ASR set the conditions for the MS B decision in July 2005. An Acquisition Procurement Objective of 368 aircraft was set to fulfill the armed reconnaissance requirement across the force.

The ARH program's journey through the Joint Capability and Integrated Development System (JCIDS) process was aggressive. The ARH Initial Capabilities Document (ICD) was approved by the Army Requirements Oversight Council on June 8, 2004, and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council

(JROC) on Nov. 3, 2004. The ARH ICD recommended that a modified existing helicopter fulfill the ARH requirement. Following the ICD's approval, the ARH Capability Development Document (CDD) was approved by the JROC on Dec. 7, 2004. The ARH request for proposal (RFP) development was conducted in parallel with the requirements process to reduce time. Requirements risks were minimized by a close working relationship between the program management office (PMO) and the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Systems Manager (TSM). A draft RFP was provided to industry to permit as much planning as possible. Additionally, an "Industry Day" was held to provide as much detail on the program requirements to potential offerors as possible.

Within 16 hours of the CDD JROC, the formal RFP was released to industry. The RFP's quick release was the result of early involvement of the ARH PMO and matrix organizations while the CDD and RFP were being written.

The Army awarded a contract to Bell Helicopter Textron to meet the ARH requirement. The ARH consists of a modified Bell 407 aircraft integrating a nondevelopmental item (NDI) mission equipment package. The Systems Development and Demonstration (SDD) effort consists of integration of NDI subsystems (see Figure 2), and testing/qualification to support the MS C Low-Rate Initial Production decision.

There are three distinct areas where the elements of velocity proved crucial

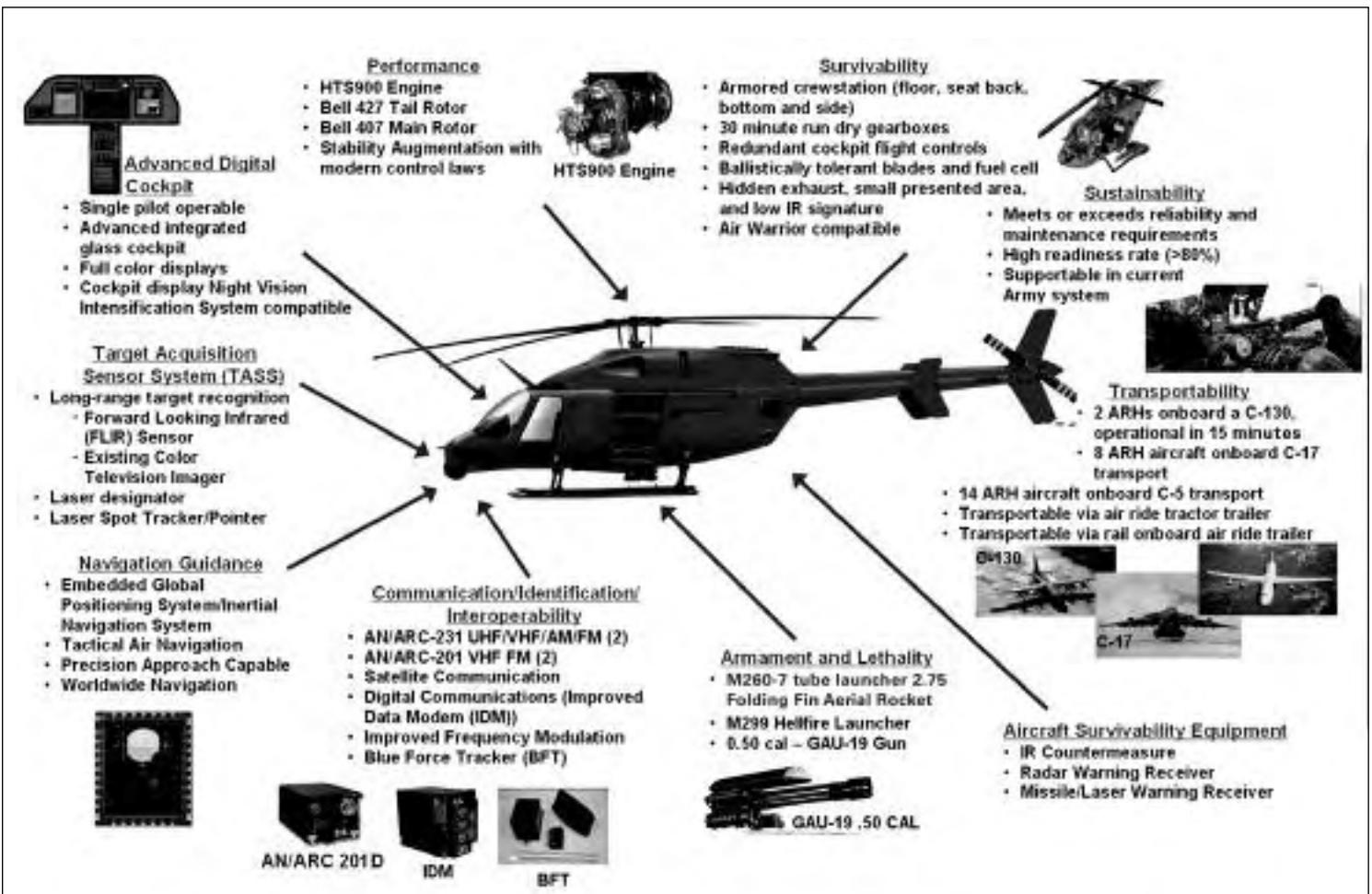


Figure 2. ARH System Description

in the battle to move the ARH program through MS B and to contract award: process, consistency and documentation.

Process

Learning to develop velocity within the established system is a key element of the ARH program’s success. Contrary to popular belief, the fundamental acquisition process works fairly well for the traditional development program. However, it is a one-size-fits-all solution and is cumbersome for short-schedule integration programs. There are three processes that PMs negotiate as they manage programs. PMs must track these three processes in parallel to ensure that they stay synchronized. It is important to understand that all parts of the process move at different speeds, and not

all parts of the process are treated with equal priority and effort. They should ensure that they have a primary contact leading each of those fights:

- For the JCIDS process, it should be the TSM.
- For the acquisition process, it is the PM.
- For the contracting process, it is the PM with assistance from the local contracting office.

PMs should remember that in terms of the process, the Army’s or OSD’s priority may not be the program’s priority. Therefore, the

The fundamental starting place for all programs is a thorough understanding of your ACAT level, what statutory and regulatory requirements a program must complete and what the MDA will accept.

PM should balance those priorities in terms of scheduling meetings, meeting locations and who will attend. It is not enough for PMs to understand just their program. They must also understand the impact of their program on other Army and OSD programs. It’s important that PMs realize the impact of what they are doing and their programs’ relationship with competing priorities and programs within the Army and OSD.

It’s also critical that PMs understand there are no short cuts. Every program is different,

but the fundamental starting place for all programs is a thorough understanding of your ACAT level, what statutory and regulatory requirements a program must complete and what the Milestone Decision Authority (MDA) will accept. PMs should choose to embrace the process of getting to the milestone decision. Understand early, via the ASARC secretary and through the OSD DAB secretary, what is required and what the MDA expects. The PM can then focus on what the MDA needs by working through the Integrating Integrated Process Team (IIPT) process.

The PM should strengthen ties with program allies. Conversely, the PM should find those who have issues and engage them directly. It's important that issues are defined and ownership

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is clearly identified. PMs should engage with as much information as possible when briefing primary staff elements from the Army and OSD. The ARH program chose to engage fully, and this proved a wise decision.

Consistency

Consistency is a critical element that facilitates velocity within the process. Creating consistency in terms of briefings, meeting formats and strategy saves time, reduces redundancy

and breeds familiarity with the program. The ARH team used the smartbook approach. The team started with a set of slides that was consistently used as the foundation as the program moved forward. This set the conditions for successful Army IIPTs, OSD IIPTs, OIPTs, ASARCs and DABs. Changes occur frequently. Managers must maintain

their smartbooks and track changes over time and keep everyone in the process on the same sheet of music.

Documentation

Documentation is a key tenet that enabled velocity within the ARH program. The JCIDS, acquisitions and contracting processes require documentation — more than 37 various documents. PMs should understand the start and end points of each document in the process. The ARH team created a matrix that included the document requirement, writer, reviewer, staffing chair and status.

Within programs, decisions will be made and changes will undoubtedly occur. These critical decisions must be tracked. The ARH program had about 10 key Army decisions over the last year. PMs should ensure that when a decision is required, clear courses of action (COAs) are laid out in a typical military decision-making format. The COAs

An OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter (lower left) and an AH-64 Apache helicopter conduct a combat air patrol over the city of Tal Afar, Iraq, last February. The ARH will replace the aging OH-58D fleet. (U.S. Air Force photo by SSGT Aaron Allmon, 1st Combat Camera Squadron.)





Fielding an operational ARH squadron by FY08 requires consistency, documentation and organization throughout the acquisition process. (Photo courtesy of Bell Helicopter Textron.)

should include the programmatic impact in terms of cost, schedule, performance, their relationship and their requirements. For example, the Army decides to go with a commercial-off-the-shelf solution to fulfill an aircraft requirement, which means that the Army accepts a Federal Aviation Administration certification that may, or may not, equal the military standard. It is important to consistently communicate the impact of critical decisions throughout the process.

A key aspect of this documentation effort is the program office organization. Generally speaking, a smaller program office provides the ability to perform the requisite tasks. Implementation of the Life Cycle Management Command concept is an integral piece of PMO organization. ARH collocated its testing, engineering, safety, logistics and software personnel within the program office.

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All these personnel teamed to write JCIDS, acquisition and contracting documents. Collocation facilitates ownership in the program and encourages a healthy IPT process, ensuring consistent synchronization to MS B and beyond.

The PM must keep documents coordinated. To efficiently coordinate the writing and staffing of documents, there must be a single point of contact or “documents master” in the PMO. Traditionally, program offices have hired contractors to write these documents, but the ARH program decided against this. The advantage of this approach is that everyone knows what is going on and eventually the same group of people will be making decisions during the program’s SDD phase.

Fundamentally, acquisition reform is not about the process — it’s also about the people. The acquisition reform that all programs

desire is not just a function of acquisition laws and processes. Acquisition reform is really about people going the extra mile. From a leadership perspective, that means ensuring that the team understands where they are going and why they are doing it. Once everyone clearly understands the purpose, the process is much easier. A sense of purpose supports the necessary element of direction required to obtain velocity. The areas of consistency, documentation and organization provide focal points where leaders can focus their efforts, gain efficiencies and create velocity throughout the acquisition process.

LTC NEIL THURGOOD is the PM ARH. He holds a B.S. in business management with a minor in communications from the University of Utah, an M.S. in systems management from the Naval Postgraduate School, an Executive M.B.A. from Harvard University and a Ph.D. in organization development and leadership.

MAJ CHRIS MILLS is the Assistant PM (Test) ARH. He has a B.S. in engineering and an M.S. in aviation systems, both from the University of Tennessee. Mills is Level I certified in program management.