

Providing Life Cycle Management (LCM) Support for Rapid Acquisition

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The Rapid Support Network (RSN) is a U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC)-wide effort to support immediate warfighter needs (IWNs) requirements initiated by combatant commanders through real-time support within the LCM acquisition, logistics and technology (AL&T) community. The purpose of the network, which was directed Dec. 28, 2006, by GEN Benjamin S. Griffin, AMC Commanding General, is to provide focused AL&T support to special customers, including the Rapid Equipping Force (REF), Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG) and Technology Support Working Group (TSWG). The U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM) Systems of Systems Integration (SOSI) office is leading the effort for AMC.

AMC's support for the program executive office/program management office (PEO/PMO) community is well organized and already established through the Life Cycle Management Commands (LCMCs). However, for a small group of high-profile customers, such as REF and JIEDDO, a gap in AMC's LCM support exists. First, these customers aren't assigned to a particular LCMC and, in fact, their actual needs cross multiple LCMCs. Second, they need rapid support and the RSN helps to fill that void.

The RSN is not an organization, but rather a much-needed process, leveraging existing AMC procedures and capabilities into an integrated and responsive network, focusing the AL&T community's robust capabilities to meet IWNs as illustrated by the figure on Page 52. Currently, special customers do not benefit from AMC for contracting, logistics and technology support to rapidly get warfighters what they need. The RSN will integrate and synchronize access to the LCMCs' extensive AL&T capabilities to support rapid customer fulfillment requirements, improving AMC's

response to the warfighter from weeks and months to hours and days.

BG Genaro Dellarocco, Deputy Commanding General (DCG), RDECOM SOSI, describes the RSN as "harnessing the jet stream of AMC" because AMC already provides AL&T support for Army products through systems and processes that are already in place. Accordingly, the support provided by the RSN will streamline the rapid acquisition process and provide better documentation so rapid acquisition can be institutionalized within the larger Army acquisition model.

An integrated process team (IPT) was organized to establish the RSN's operational policies and procedures and to fine-tune the rapid acquisition support process. The IPT is co-chaired by the RDECOM SOSI and AMC G-3 (Current Operations). It consists of

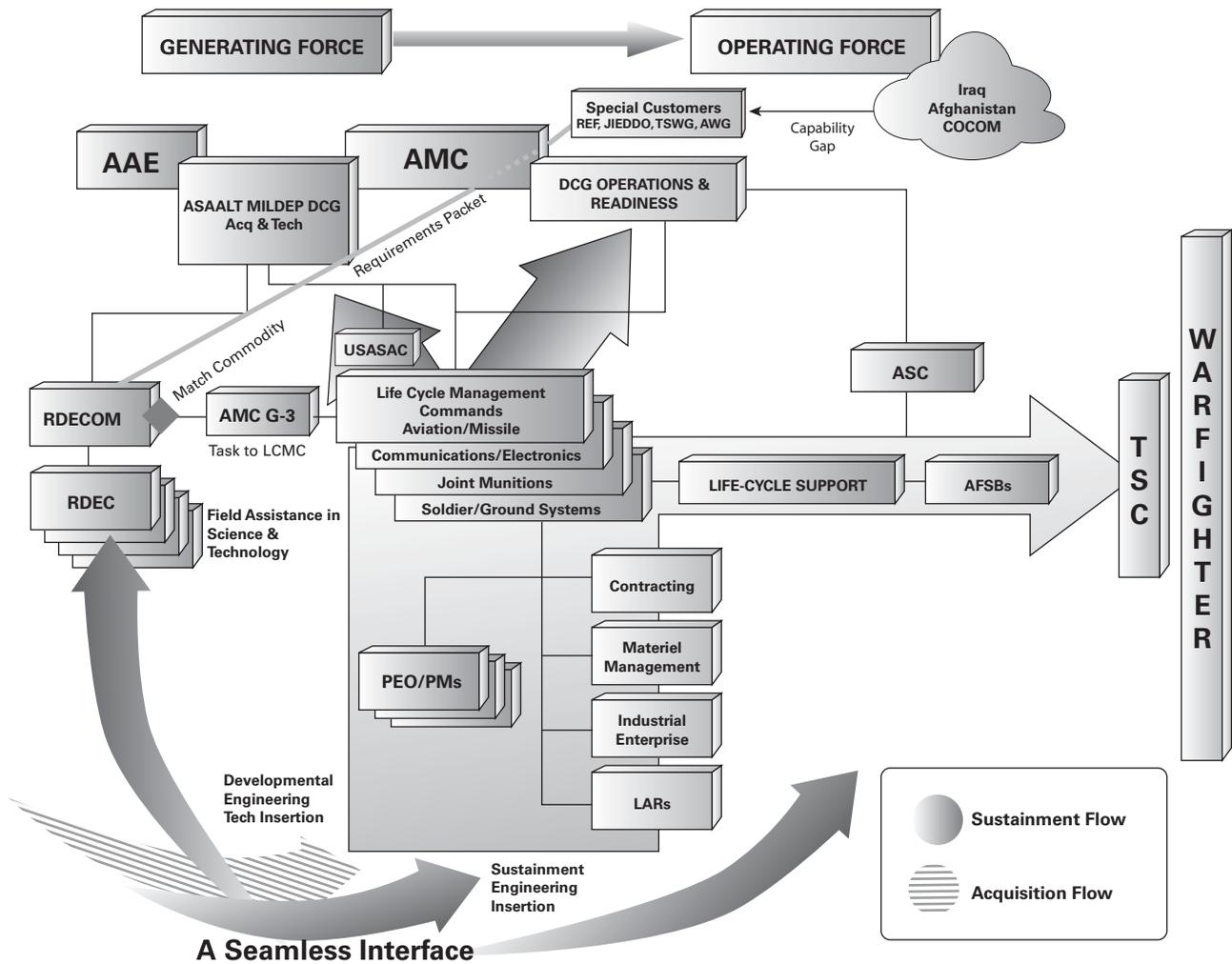
more than 40 members, including representatives from AMC, the LCMCs, RDECOM, REF, JIEDDO and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASAALT). This team of experts has met weekly since December 2006 through teleconferences to discuss how to best implement the RSN and work process sub-teams. The IPT will continue to meet until the pilot program is launched.

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Process and Goals

The RSN process, based on the existing AL&T network resident within the LCMCs, is designed to focus the capabilities of acquisition workforce experts to meet emergent needs. The RSN seeks to pull the LCMC capabilities forward in the acquisition timeline to support initial requirements development, ensuring that needs can be technically met and sustained once fielded.

The RSN is a process that leverages existing AMC logistics procedures and capabilities into a highly integrated and customer-responsive network addressing immediate Soldier battlefield requirements. Here, Soldiers from the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team fire an illumination flare from their M1129 Stryker Mortar Carrier in an effort to expose terrorists planting roadside bombs near Mosul, Iraq, last summer. (U.S. Air Force (USAF) photo by TSGT Jeremy T. Lock.)



The RSN will support the rapid acquisition process to meet IWNs by helping special customers such as REF, JIEDDO, AWG and TSWG speed their requirements through the existing acquisition process. An incoming requirement passes through the RSN and into the proper LCMC for analysis and, ultimately, procurement and fielding.

Key

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| Acq & Tech – Acquisition and Technology | MILDEP – Military Deputy |
| ASC – U.S. Army Sustainment Command | Opns – Operations |
| COCOM – Combatant Commander | TSC – Theater Support Command |
| LAR – Logistics Assistance Representatives | USASAC – U.S. Army Security Assistance Command |

To do this, the RSN will focus existing LCMC capabilities to develop new solutions for the complex challenges faced by Soldiers. The nature of the threat conditions change daily and so do the projects currently being worked by RSN special customers.

A primary reason AMC is undertaking this effort is to better support the rapid acquisition process. In the past, AMC's AL&T capabilities were not involved up front in the sustainment planning for the REF, JIEDDO,

AWG or TSWG. These four customers are focused on fulfilling immediate requirements — those fulfilled in 180 days or less — and thus have been pulled ahead of the traditional materiel development and acquisition capabilities. Traditional Army acquisition programs, which follow the *DOD 5000* process, have been viewed as requiring too much time to meet IWNs.

The *DOD 5000, The Acquisition Process*, series is necessary for prudent

planning for and sustainment of major weapons programs. However, *Operations Enduring* and *Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF)* have proved there is a need to address IWNs with acquisition programs that are more responsive. By focusing a network dedicated to supporting immediate requirements, the RSN initiative addresses a process gap in Army acquisition for IWNs.

The RSN is able to support the paradigm change of acquisition response time “from weeks and months to days

and hours” by progressing through the various traditional development phases simultaneously rather than sequentially. With the *DOD 5000* structure, each product idea must pass through a set milestone before it can move to the next phase with a normal time frame for meeting simplified requirements at 180-plus days. The RSN will help condense the initial materiel development process into 39 days by moving possible solutions through various acquisition phases concurrently. Decisions can be worked up front similar to milestones A, B and C in the first 39 days. For example, instead of spending 30-90 days looking at possible technical solutions to a problem, a “quick-look” technical solution is worked by the RDECOM Agile Development Center (ADC) within 72 hours. Developing an acquisition plan and contracting for the requirements would take an additional 19 days or less, rather than 6 months to 1 year.

RSN brings the Army one step closer to fulfilling the LCMC promise — to unite the Army AL&T functions of the PEO and AMC sustainment structures. Traditionally, AMC has been viewed as logistics and technology-focused and the PEOs as acquisition-focused. In fact, the technical expertise for all three functions (AL&T) resides within the LCMCs. For engineering support, the PEOs rely on the technological expertise of engineers within AMC’s Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center organizations, as they depend on the LCMC Acquisition Centers for procurement. In terms of logistics support, most of the equipment the PEOs field is sustained by the LCMC sustainment centers. The core acquisition capabilities are AMC capabilities with the exception of formal product management, which is the Army Acquisition Executive’s (AAE’s) function. With these capabilities

networked, rapid acquisition customers can outsource their AL&T processes to the RSN. The LCMC construct, through the RSN, will add more value to the Soldier and will support, not interfere with, the customer’s requirements. To a great extent, the LCMCs are engaged in “RSN-like” processes today, but there’s no overarching mechanism in place that can focus the best of each of these on a single IWN. The RSN pulls all efforts together into one process and then matches up a requirements need with the best LCMC organization to develop and execute it.

The RSN will add value Armywide by focusing sub-processes within a single LCMC to lean the rapid acquisition process overall, making it a great candidate for the Six Sigma approach. Currently, rapid acquisition is handled on a case-by-case basis, which includes learning curves for each acquisition. By placing the acquisition within a single LCMC, each product will be

procured by an organization that is already acquiring, sustaining and managing that commodity, thereby minimizing the learning curve associated with a new industry or industry business practices. This familiarity with a given commodity will reduce the time required for that acquisition, increasing overall effectiveness and efficiency.

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Filling the Gaps

In reviewing the current rapid fielding methods, several potential areas for improvement were identified. The Army Field Support Brigade (AFSB), which is ultimately responsible for supporting and sustaining the product once in theater, is often not involved in the rapid acquisition process. In many cases, AFSBs don’t find out about products until they show up in the field and need to be fixed. Additionally, PEO/PM involvement should happen up front. A match between the requirement and the program that can meet and ultimately serve as the



The RSN will pull LCMC capabilities forward to support initial development, ensuring that Soldier requirements can be met technically and are sustainable in operational environments. Here, two M1A2 Abrams tanks from the 5th Cavalry Regiment provide overwatch security for Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, during a search and seizure mission in the Al Doura district of Baghdad, Iraq, March 2007. (U.S. Army photo by CPL Alexis Harrison.)

life cycle manager for the product would result in a better overall acquisition process if coordinated prior to actual product acquisition. The PEOs/PMs must be aware of the procurement process from the start. After all, they may have to manage the product once it's fielded and has proven to be a candidate for broader fielding.

Another potential area for improvement involves current rapid acquisition projects that have not been procured through the LCMC most familiar with a given item. By going through the established acquisition center, the learning curve for procurement is minimized. A huge misperception is that the current acquisition centers should be bypassed if you want to quickly field products. This is

simply not true, and the RSN concept will prove that when used to its fullest extent. The procurement process, worked through an LCMC Acquisition Center, yields the best solution for our Soldiers and can do so in the shortest amount of time with an expected decrease in total project cost. A rapid acquisition requirement will be sent via the RSN into an LCMC in an accelerated time frame. The expectation is that within 72 hours, the RSN, working with the ADC, will have an initial assessment in terms of feasibility and the time it will take to field the requirement back to its customer. From there, developing a materiel solution begins, and the experts in the LCMCs assume responsibility for supporting their customer's requirements.

Finally, AMC needs to be involved in sustainment solutions up front — ones that are workable long after the REF fielding teams are gone. That's where follow-up and final recommendations come into play. Currently, a unit is issued an IWN product — fire-resistant gloves, for example — and they use the gloves, and they're great, allowing Soldiers to do their jobs and remain safe. But what happens when the unit's tour of duty is over? The Soldiers go home and take with them product knowledge and the final recommendation — that all units in a particular situation should be issued fire-resistant gloves. A final recommendation and an action plan must be formalized about that unit's experience so that other Army units can benefit from the collective experience as well.



Operations tempo certainly hasn't slowed down for the Soldiers serving on the front lines of OEF/OIF. Ongoing combat operations and the need to address Soldier battlefield requirements have necessitated acquisition programs like the RSN that are more responsive to emerging needs and immediate tactical requirements. Here, Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division board a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Camp Blessing, Afghanistan, on Jan. 26, 2007, in preparation for yet another patrol on mountainous terrain. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Michael L. Casteel.)



By focusing a network dedicated to supporting IWNs, the RSN bridges a process gap in Army acquisition for supporting U.S. and coalition forces on the battlefield. Here, a U.S. Soldier, embedded with the Multi-Iraqi Transitional Team, 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, tries to positively identify an insurgent before shooting during an operation in Buhriz, Iraq, as his Iraqi counterpart looks on. (USAF photo by SSGT Stacy L. Pearsall.)

Challenges and Benefits

One of the most significant challenges has been getting all parties within the RSN to agree on a common language to describe the processes being executed. The LCMCs each have differing ways of describing similar processes and procedures, and the development of a common language ensures that everyone understands what is being discussed and why. This is a challenge that we are resolving, because the RSN is using existing processes and procedures, not developing something completely new.

From a benefits standpoint, one of the greatest RSN successes has been the sincere desire of everyone involved to support the network and see it succeed. The RSN will, ultimately, support Soldiers with new and better equipment more quickly and efficiently, resulting

in Soldier systems that are more survivable and lethal than ever before.

Another benefit to those working the RSN process has been their involvement in developing the network's solutions. The RSN processes were developed and vetted at the level of those who will be involved in executing them with positive results. Each LCMC has described how the process will be conducted, and the best practices are being culled from each for a set of common processes that will be used throughout the RSN and weapons and communication systems LCM.

For those in the field, the RSN's establishment will result in a more synchronized sustainment capability for those products that Soldiers need quickly and, in some cases, a better materiel solution to requirements because of a

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wider range of experts involved in their development. Beyond the short-term benefits to the field, the RSN will also help the Army with long-term planning, as the outcomes of each fielded product will be captured and studied. Those products that successfully meet Soldier requirements can be considered through the Capabilities Developed for Rapid Development for fielding to all units. In addition, the institution of a common language and processes for the RSN could provide an evolutionary model for rapid acquisition in future Army regulatory guidance, policies and procedures.

Looking Forward

The RSN is already being put to the test. A pilot program was launched during the first quarter of 2007. The pilot program is actually processing incoming REF and JIEDDO requirements and running them through the RSN to see if it can meet expected time frames. Through AMC's creation of a strong acquisition support network, which can rapidly field and sustain the products our Soldiers in the field need most, we are one step closer to being Army Strong.

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