# THE ARMY MATERIEL RELEASE PROCESS

### Brian Churchman

## Introduction

The Army materiel release process represents a critical stage to ensure that our soldiers receive the best possible equipment to achieve their mission. Combat developers, materiel developers, and user commands all play key roles in the events leading to the juncture between identified need and fielded capability. The guidelines governing the materiel release process are in Army Regulation (AR) 700-142, *Materiel Release, Fielding, and Transfer* and the implementing procedures are in DA Pamphlet 700-142, *Instructions for Materiel Release, Fielding, and Transfer*. Both of these publications were recently rewritten to incorporate changes caused by revisions to the DOD-5000 series, the HQDA reorganization, and the latest directives regarding total package fielding.

## Purpose

The materiel release process is intended to ensure that Army materiel is safe, meets operational requirements, and is logistically supportable before release to users. It is essential that all three of these provisions are met before items are provided to soldiers. To that end, the materiel release process provides the Army leadership with the control and visibility necessary to ensure that items intended for issue have been thoroughly evaluated from both operational and supportability standpoints. Those items that do not meet all of the requisite requirements are tracked through the Materiel Release Tracking System (MRTS) to ensure that identified issues or deficiencies are quickly resolved.
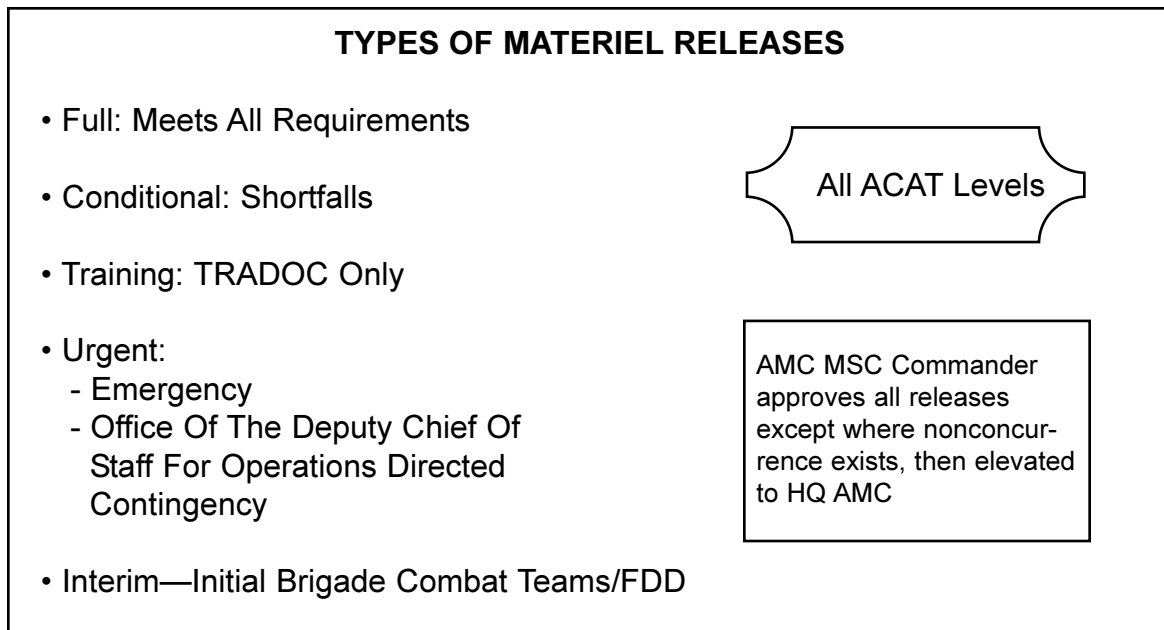
Materiel release is applicable to developmental, nondevelopmental, commercial-modified, and upgraded systems categorized as acquisition category (ACAT) I-III, to include software. It also applies to software revisions resulting from evolutionary development or pre-planned product improvement. However, software that is part of a new system or part of a hardware and/or firmware change is released as part of the prime end item release. There are exceptions to the materiel release requirement: materiel procured with nonappropriated funds; materiel developed for another Service, federal agency, or foreign government; and secondary items (Class 9)—spare/repair parts. Commercial construction materials, nonmilitary administrative items (file cabinets, word processors, etc.), and clothing and individual equipment are also exceptions. Special tools automatically assume the materiel release for the item that they support. A complete listing of exceptions can be found in AR 700-142, Paragraph 1.5.

## Key Players

There are several key players in the materiel release process. They include the Army Materiel Command (AMC), its major subordinate commands (MSCs), and other supporting agencies; the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology's (ASAALT's) Directorate for Integrated Logistics Support (ILS); materiel developers such as program executive offices (PEOs) and their respective program, project, and product management offices (PMOs); combat developers; and major commands (MACOMs).

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**MATERIEL RELEASE DEFINITION**

**Management Control Process To Ensure
That A System Is Ready To Be Fielded And**

- Meets Operational Requirements
- Is Safe
- Is Supportable
- Is Documented In MRTS

AR 700-142
DA PAM 700-142

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## TYPES OF MATERIEL RELEASES

• Full: Meets All Requirements

• Conditional: Shortfalls

• Training: TRADOC Only

• Urgent:
  - Emergency
  - Office Of The Deputy Chief Of
    Staff For Operations Directed
    Contingency

• Interim—Initial Brigade Combat Teams/FDD

All ACAT Levels

AMC MSC Commander approves all releases except where nonconcurrence exists, then elevated to HQ AMC

The Army's materiel release authority is the AMC Commanding General, who delegates release authority to AMC MSC commanders. MSC commanders convene a Materiel Release Review Board (MRRB) to review and determine that all prerequisites for release have been met. Members of the MRRB include directors of the involved functional research and development elements, engineering and quality assurance personnel, software engineering personnel, logistics support and/or readiness personnel, the Command Safety Office, the Functional System Office (air defense, tactical vehicles, etc.), and any other functional offices deemed necessary. Additionally, the Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) serves as the independent tester/evaluator and provides a position on operational effectiveness, suitability, and survivability for materiel release. Each AMC MSC has designated materiel release coordinators to assist PMOs in achieving materiel releases.

The ASAALT's Directorate for ILS serves as the Army's independent logistician and provides recommendations on release of Army ACAT systems and items (except for medical systems). The directorate provides continuous assessment throughout the acquisition process.

Materiel developers play a critical role as they plan for, fund, and ensure implementation, control, and documentation of the materiel release process.

Combat developers and trainers are responsible for providing the PEO/PMO/materiel developer an assessment of their ability to support the total materiel system concerning resident and nonresident instruction, extension training materials, and field manuals.

The MACOMs, however, may be the most important participants in the materiel release process. MACOMs assess the impact and acceptability of the systems proposed for release. They must accept the system by providing a signed Materiel Fielding Agreement. They also must verify that qualified personnel are available to operate and maintain the equipment and verify that facilities are available for that purpose.

## Types Of Materiel Releases

Materiel releases fall into one of five categories: full, conditional, training, urgent, and interim. Full materiel release is given when the system meets all of its operational, safety, and suitability requirements (AR 700-142, Paragraph 3.7). A conditional release is given when one or more of those criteria that are deemed significant are not met. This requires a plan that addresses and tracks all conditions preventing a full materiel release. Training releases involve the release of materiel related to training only and are specific to Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) schools and training sites.

Urgent releases are given on an extremely limited basis under circumstances where an item is needed to meet an *immediate operational requirement*, such as a contingency operation. Interim materiel release (IMR) is a new concept that is currently covered by a policy memorandum signed by the Army G-4 in January 2001. The IMR policy was implemented to cover systems that are in the early development cycle (pre-Milestone C). It is currently limited to equipment provided to the Initial Brigade Combat Team and the First Digitized Division (FDD). Consideration is now being given to extend this

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coverage to other eligible units as determined by HQDA.

The MRTS is an automated system used to track the status and forecast of materiel releases. The Army Electronic Product Support (AEPS) Office at Rock Island Arsenal, IL, maintains the MRTS, which is Web-based and password-protected. The AEPS Web site is at **http://aeps.ria. army.mil**.

### Independent Logistician Role

As the "independent logistician," ASAALT's Directorate for ILS plays an important role throughout the materiel life cycle. The earlier the combat/materiel developer involves the ILS experts in the development process, the fewer supportability issues will occur at the point of materiel release and subsequent fielding. The independent logisticians can provide positive feedback on requirements documents such as Mission Needs Statements, Operational Requirements Documents, and Capstone Requirements. They participate as members of integrated product teams and are being considered for inclusion on integrated concept teams. They review supportability strategies and provide input for logistics considerations in acquisition strategies. They provide input for logistics initiatives such as performance-based logistics and provide feedback on the results of cost models used to determine support requirements.

The independent logisticians also provide input on the logistics demonstration aspects of test and evaluation master plans. They also monitor the execution of total package fielding and are involved in block upgrades development and fieldings. In short, one of the keys to successful materiel release is early coordination with independent logisticians and local materiel release coordinators.

### Conclusion

The materiel release process encompasses many disciplines and is directly impacted by decisions made at the start of—and continuing through—the development process. It involves all elements of the Army—from the combat developers to the materiel developers to the user. In spite of the rigors of the process, it is important to keep in mind the ultimate customer—the soldier. The Army owes its soldiers fully compliant systems that have been granted full materiel release. When we do our part, the result is better for our troops.

For information or input to the process, contact Larry Hill, Directorate of the ILS Office, at DSN 223-0028, (703) 693-0028, or **Larry.Hill@ hqda.army.mil**; or Sally George, HQ AMC, at DSN 767-3171, (703) 617-3171, or **sgeorge@hqamc. army.mil**. You may also contact your materiel release coordinator. These points of contact are located at all AMC MSCs and the headquarters of ATEC, Army Forces Command, TRADOC, and the Military Traffic Management Command. A listing is in the MRTS, which is accessed via the AEPS Web site.

*BRIAN CHURCHMAN is a member of the FY01 Competitive Development Group serving in the ASAALT's Directorate of ILS Office. He has a B.A. in history and a master's degree in public administration from Fairleigh Dickinson University. In addition, he is a graduate of the Army Management Staff College and completed the Advanced Program Management Course.*