

Getting War Fighters What They Need and When They Need It

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In 1981 the Air Force completed the requirements for the Advanced Tactical Fighter (ATF) and began the longest fighter aircraft acquisition program in history. The ATF was to replace the F-15, 13 years old at the time, and counter the proliferation of Soviet Su-27 advanced fighter planes. Ten years later, in 1991, Lockheed's ATF prototype, the YF-22, won the flyoff competition against Northrop Grumman's YF-23. The initial program called for 750 F-22s to be Initial Operational Capable (IOC) in 1995.¹ Following the flyoff and 14 more years of development, the F-22A became IOC with 12 aircraft in December 2005, 10 years later than desired. Twenty-four years of acquisition developed the most capable and complex fighter in the world, but the schedule and cost overruns contributed to the Air Force being authorized to procure 187 of the 750 required to replace the F-15.

Almost 25 years after the initial ATF requirements, Marine commanders developed the requirements for the mine-resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicle in 2005.² This vehicle was developed to stem the horrific affects from improvised explosive devices (IED), accounting for 75 percent of all US casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan.³ Using streamlined acquisition processes, the MRAP became IOC in 2007, 33 months after identifying the need.⁴ As of July 2009, 16,204 MRAP vehicles have been produced, and over 13,000 have been fielded.⁵

Although it is unfair to compare the F-22 and MRAP vehicle acquisitions based upon weapon system complexity, urgent need, streamlined acquisition processes, and supplemental congressional funding, the MRAP example clearly points to the government's ability to quickly procure military weapon systems when required. These rapid acquisition processes are slowly being institutionalized throughout the services to meet urgent needs for our war fighters in the face of a rapidly evolving threat.

Currently, each service and combatant command (COCOM) has its own rapid acquisition process. The Defense Science Board (DSB) completed a study in July 2009 which states, "Current approaches to implement rapid responses to urgent needs were found to be unsustainable, and institutional barriers—people, funding, and processes—

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are power inhibitors to successful rapid acquisition and fielding of new capabilities.”⁶ The study found that rapid acquisition processes should be based on proven technology to deliver capability to the war fighter within two to 24 months. The study also recommends that the Department of Defense (DOD) “establish a streamlined, integrated approach for rapid acquisition.” Finding a rapid acquisition standard for all services is the focus of this paper.⁷

I propose the United States Special Operations Command’s (SOCOM) rapid acquisition process offers a benchmark that should be adopted throughout the military. SOCOM’s rapid acquisition process could be used to acquire a limited major weapon system (MWS) (e.g., a light attack aircraft) in less than two years.

Deliberate and Rapid Acquisition— What’s the Difference?

When people think of DOD acquisition processes, they are generally thinking about deliberate acquisition. Programs like the B-2, F-22, F-35, and the Army’s Future Combat System come to mind. These large programs take years and billions of dollars to develop. Many don’t survive the cost overruns and schedule delays associated with these programs. In May 2009, Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced the cancellation of the VH-71 presidential helicopter, the Air Force Combat Search and Rescue X program, ground components of the Future Combat System, and missile defense’s multiple kill vehicle.⁸ Secretary Gates stated the root causes for the cancellations were immature technology and unnecessary requirements, which led to cost and schedule overruns and fewer quantities procured.⁹

The 2009 DSB states, “Over the course of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it became apparent that U.S. forces were not adequately equipped for ongoing stability or counter insurgency operations.”¹⁰ The report also notes that “the reality is that the Department is not geared to acquire and field capabilities in a rapidly shifting threat environment.”¹¹ The deliberate acquisition process was not developed to handle urgent needs, so each service and COCOM developed its own processes. As a foundation for this paper, the deliberate acquisition process and selected rapid acquisition processes are examined.

Deliberate Acquisition

Deliberate acquisition is governed by the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) for requirements; the DOD 5000-series of regulations for acquisition guidance; and the Plan-

ning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) for funding.¹² Details of each process are beyond the scope of this paper, but as shown in figure 1, the JCIDS precedes the acquisition process to validate the joint capabilities required to counter current and future threats. Once a required capability is identified, a service (Army, Navy, or Air Force) is designated to acquire the weapon system to meet the capability shortfall. To develop the system, the designated service will request funding from Congress through the PPBE system.

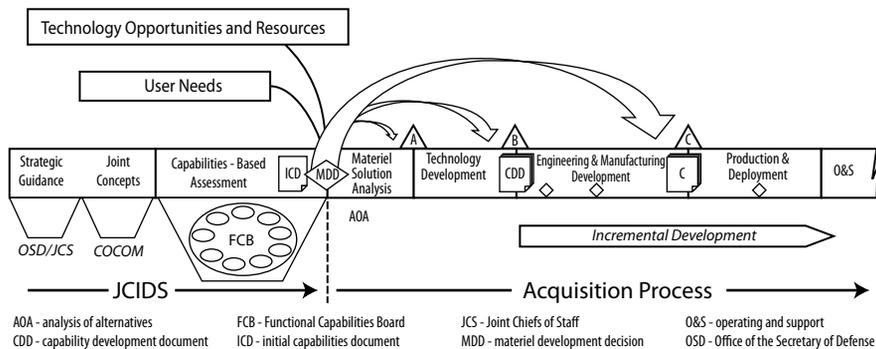


Figure 1. JCIDS/Acquisition Process

According to the Congressional Research Service, “the PPBE is intended to provide Combatant Commanders the best mix of forces, equipment, and support within fiscal constraints; the PPBE develops DOD’s proposed budget for all acquisitions.”¹³ Each service and COCOM plans and develops a five-year program to fulfill its mission responsibilities. This five-year plan is called the program objective memorandum (POM) and is submitted to the OSD for approval. Concurrent with the POM process, each service develops a budget estimate submission (BES) to support the POM and then submits it to the OSD. The OSD then consolidates each service’s BES for a DOD budget submission to the president. Following presidential approval, the budget is submitted to Congress for approval. Although this is a simplified explanation of the DOD’s deliberate acquisition process, it is clear to see the multistep process and review system to approve funding for a particular program.

In 1987 SOCOM was established to “oversee the training, doctrine, and equipping of all U.S. Special Operations Forces.”¹⁴ To meet the unique needs of special operations forces, SOCOM was granted certain exceptions to the deliberate acquisition system. Under provisions of Title 10, *US Code*, “the commander of special operations command

shall be responsible for, and shall have the authority to conduct, the following: development and acquisition of special operations—peculiar equipment and acquisition of special operations—peculiar material, supplies, and services.”¹⁵ No other combatant commander has been given direct congressional authority to develop and acquire equipment for their forces. Under this law, SOCOM developed its own version of JCIDS—the Special Operations Forces Capabilities Integration and Development System (SOF-CIDS). SOF-CIDS is a streamlined version of the JCIDS process, wholly owned by the SOCOM commander for SOF-particular acquisition. SOF-CIDS reduces the requirements of JCIDS documents and streamlines the coordination process within the command. Even with SOCOM’s acquisition exceptions, the deliberate acquisition process is unable to support the rapidly changing needs of the current war fighter. Based on these unique needs, each service and COCOM developed its own rapid acquisition process.

Rapid Acquisition

There are over 20 different urgent needs processes throughout the DOD, Joint Staff, COCOMs, and services.¹⁶ Each process carries varying and overlapping definitions of rapid acquisition. This paper discusses the documents, approval authority, funding, and timelines of the joint, Army, Air Force, Navy, and SOCOM rapid acquisition processes.

Joint Rapid Acquisition

Joint rapid acquisition is centered on fulfilling a combatant commander’s joint urgent operational need (JUON). A JUON addresses “urgent operational needs that: (1) fall outside of the established Service processes; and (2) most importantly, if not addressed immediately, will seriously endanger personnel or pose a major threat to ongoing operations.”¹⁷ The governing regulation for joint rapid acquisition is Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3470.01, *Rapid Validation and Resourcing of Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUONS) in the Year of Execution*, which details the JUON process and provides an overview for each service’s rapid acquisition process.¹⁸ The timeline to deliver a JUON is normally 120 days to two years to provide the 70–80 percent solution.¹⁹ If the material or logistics solution is needed in less than 120 days, the JUON is designated as an immediate war fighter need (IWN) and handled by the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC) for oversight of the process.²⁰ The JRAC tracks the IWN and provides updates to the deputy secretary of defense. The funding for an IWN has been sourced primarily from the Iraq Freedom Fund, which has been designated by Congress for the

funding of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.²¹ In contrast, there is no designated funding for a JUON, where the solution takes longer than 120 days. Funding for JUONs come from sources within the COCOM or a designated service. Funding approval for both the JUON and IWN comes from Budget Office Director's Board, cochaired by the OSD comptroller and the J-8, deputy for resources and acquisition.²² Based on the nature of the JUON or IWN, the J-8 designates a lead service to provide a material or logistic solution for the war fighter.

Army Rapid Acquisition

The core of the Army's rapid acquisition process is the operational needs statement (ONS) process and the Rapid Equipping Force (REF). Army field commanders and combatant commanders submit an ONS to fulfill an "urgent need for a materiel solution to correct a deficiency or to improve a capability that impacts upon mission accomplishment."²³ The ONS is submitted via the Equipment Common Operation Picture (ECOP), an information technology tool. ECOP allows commanders to submit and track ONS documentation and approval of the capability.²⁴ The ONS is validated and authorized by Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA). If the cost of the material solution is expected to be under \$100,000, commanders can submit a "10-liner" to the REF.²⁵ The Army established the REF in 2002 to rapidly respond to war fighter needs. The 10-liner consists of the following: (1) problem, (2) justification, (3) system characteristics, (4) operational concept, (5) organizational concept, (6) procurement objective, (7) support requirements, (8) availability, (9) recommendation, and (10) coordination accomplished.

The Army G3 (Operations Branch) runs the REF process, and the Army vice chief of staff normally approves solutions. Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) solutions generally take three to six months to field, whereas new technology may take 12–18 months.²⁶ The REF and ONS do not have a specific funding source but are normally funded through a number of joint and Army research, development, test, and evaluation funding based on the material solution (e.g., robotic or IED funding). The goal of the Army's rapid acquisition process is to quickly field the 80 percent solution to meet the war fighter's need versus waiting longer for the 100 percent solution.²⁷

Air Force Rapid Acquisition

The Rapid Response Process (RRP) is the Air Force's rapid acquisition method, detailed in Air Force Instruction (AFI) 63-114, 12 June 2008. The RRP begins when a major command or COCOM identifies an urgent operational need (UON). The requirements of the UON are

normally documented in a combat capability document and submitted to the assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition (SAF/AQX), the focal point for the RRP. No specific funding exists for the RRP; SAF/AQX recommends sources, and the chief of staff, US Air Force (CSAF), approves them.²⁸ According to AFI 63-114, "Capability must be fielded in time to impact an ongoing conflict or a crisis (nominally within 60 days of initial warfighter request)."²⁹ SAF/AQX represents the Air Force on the JRAC, and the RRP is the process used when the Air Force is assigned the responsibility of fulfilling a JUON.

Navy Rapid Acquisition

The Urgent Needs Process (UNP) is the Navy's rapid acquisition system, outlined in Secretary of the Navy Notice (SECNAVNOTE) 5000, 12 March 2009. A combatant, Navy, or Marine commander identifies an urgent need, defined as "an exceptional request . . . for an additional warfighting capability critically needed by operating forces conducting combat or contingency operations. Failure to deliver the capability requested is likely to result in the inability of units to accomplish their missions or increases the probability of casualties and loss of life."³⁰ The goal of the UNP is to provide the war fighter with a fielded solution in less than 24 months. Based on the technology readiness of the solution, the Navy employs a range of acquisition strategies to include COTS/government off-the-shelf (GOTS) procurement, rapid deployment capability for slightly modified COTS/GOTS, and rapid deployment and development when no commercial solution is available.³¹ The chief of naval operations (CNO) is the approval authority for the UNP, and the CNO staff is the focal point for the process. No separate funding exists for the UNP; the CNO approves funding sources. Similarly to the other services, the UNP supports the JUON process when the Navy is designated as the lead service to field the JUON.

SOCOM Rapid Acquisition

SOCOM's rapid acquisition process consists of the Special Operations Forces Capabilities Integration and Development System-Urgent (SOFICIDS-U). As described earlier, SOCOM is unique among COCOMs because Congress has granted it the ability to acquire its own solution to meet war fighter needs. SOCOM's rapid acquisition process is governed by USSOCOM Directive 71-4, *Special Operations Forces Capabilities Integration and Development System*, which states that "SOFICIDS-U may be used when a SOF unit, either deployed or during pre-deployment, identifies an urgent and compelling capability gap or requirement derived from combat survivability deficiency or risk to op-

erational success.”³² SOFCIDS-U is initiated through the chain of command by a combat mission needs statement (CMNS). The CMNS process is well defined in USSOCOM Directive 71-4 and consists of defining the capability gap, environment, material approach, concept of operations, and an analysis summary. Once the CMNS is submitted, the SOCOM J-8 convenes a rapid response team (RRT) within 24 hours.³³ The RRT provides expeditious review and coordinates the solution and fielding of the needed capability. The deputy SOCOM commander normally approves the solution, and designated CMNS funding provides resources. If CMNS funding is not available, funding may be sourced from other programs.³⁴ The goal of the SOFCIDS-U is to field the solution within 180 days of CMNS submittal. The solution is planned to be sustainable for the duration of the need or one year, whichever is less.³⁵ Sustainment of the solution expires after one year unless a CDD is approved through the normal SOFCIDS process. Other than the joint rapid acquisition process, the SOFCIDS-U is the only process with a separate funding source. Also, based on my review of existing documentation, the SOCOM rapid acquisition process is the most detailed and well defined.

The table below summarizes the numerous joint, Army, Air Force, Navy, and SOCOM rapid acquisition processes:

Table 1. Summary of rapid acquisition processes

	<i>Joint</i>	<i>Army</i>	<i>Air Force</i>	<i>Navy</i>	<i>SOCOM</i>
<i>Rapid acquisition process name</i>	Joint urgent operational need	Operational needs statement & Rapid Equipping Force	Rapid Response Process	Urgent Needs Process	SOFCIDS-U
<i>Primary document</i>	CJCSI 3470.1 (15 July 2005)	ECOP User's Guide	AFI 63-114 (12 June 2008)	SECNAVNOTE 5000 (15 March 2009)	USSOCCOM D 71-4 (9 June 2009)
<i>Approval</i>	Budget Office Director Board	HQDA	CSAF	CNO	Deputy SOCOM
<i>Funding</i>	No specific fund	No specific fund	No specific fund	No specific fund	CMNS fund
<i>Timeline to IOC</i>	IWN—120 days JUON—120 days—2 years	REF—90–360 days ONS—90 days—2 years	60 days	Less than 2 years	180 days—2 years
<i>Solution goal %</i>	70–80%	80%	None specified	None specified	80%

Defense Science Board Recommendations

Only five of the more than 20 rapid acquisition processes have been discussed in this paper. As shown, there are numerous documents, timelines, definitions, approval authorities, and funding sources for rapid acquisition. In response to the numerous processes, the undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics directed the DSB to study the situation and present recommendations. In July 2009, the DSB published the study *Fulfillment of Urgent Operational Needs*. The DSB makes five specific recommendations for the DOD rapid acquisition process:

1. The Secretary of Defense should formalize a dual acquisition path (deliberate and rapid).
2. Executive and legislative branches must establish a fund for rapid acquisition and fielding.
3. The Secretary of Defense should establish a new agency: the Rapid Acquisition and Fielding Agency (RAFA).
4. Initial funding and billets for RAFA will be based on absorbing and integrating existing programs and organizations.
5. DOD should establish a streamlined, integrated approach for rapid acquisition.³⁶

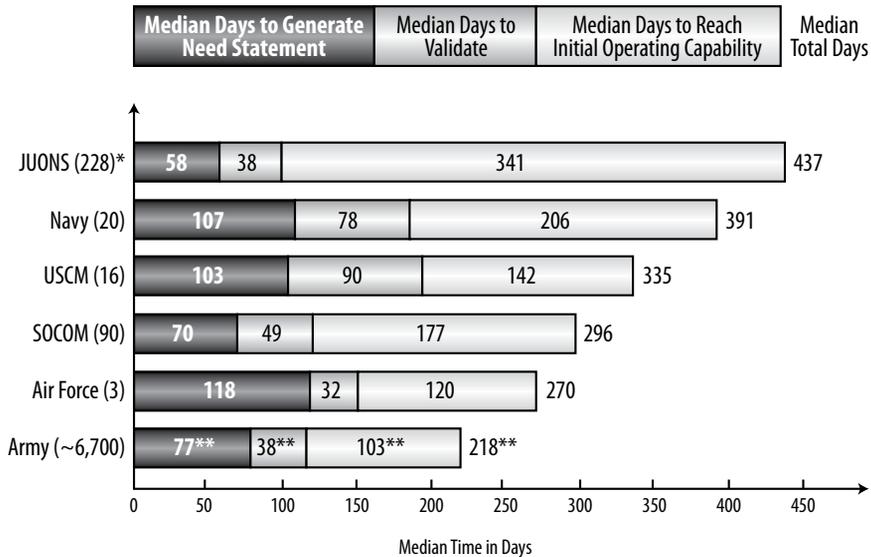
The DSB's final recommendation on "a streamlined, integrated approach for rapid acquisition" is a key finding and the premise of this paper. The DSB highlights the need for a process to validate the COCOM's request in 48 hours and then to use a tightly coordinated acquisition and funding framework to meet the COCOM's need.³⁷ Specifically, under the DSB's recommendations, the RAFA would concurrently assign acquisition responsibility to an appropriate organization that would analyze alternatives, approve funding, and work with the COCOM for concept of operations approval and IOC. This course of action would produce a solution for the COCOM within two to 24 months and is intended to have maximum flexibility to minimize time.³⁸ This paper suggests that SOCOM's SOFCIDS-U process is the benchmark to fulfill this streamlined, integrated approach for all services. The strengths and weaknesses of SOCOM's rapid acquisition process are examined next.

USSOCOM's Rapid Acquisition Success

This discussion supports the first half of my recommendation: SOCOM's rapid acquisition process offers a rapid acquisition benchmark that should be adopted throughout the military.

SOCOM's SOFCID-U process stands out for one main reason: results. Based on data that the DSB has collected, if the goal of any urgent needs process is to get a capability into the war fighter's hands, the SOFCID-U process has the lowest time to IOC for the war fighter. The data below were submitted by each major rapid acquisition organization and compiled by the DSB (see fig. 2).

The data indicate that SOCOM's process takes an average of 296 days to become IOC. Upon initial investigation, it appears the Army takes the least time to IOC. However, the Army process is skewed by 94 percent of the urgent needs being met by a redistribution of inventory. With only three UONs, the Air Force process does not meet requirements for statistical significance. Also, according to AFI 63-114, the Air Force goal is to fulfill the urgent need within 60 days. Based on the three submitted UONs, it takes 118 days just to generate the needs statement. With a lack of significant Army and Air Force data, SOCOM bears the shortest IOC time of 296 days. Although it appears that SOCOM's process is the fastest based on technicalities, it is also



*Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of needs statements evaluated.

**More than 94 percent of Army ONSs (~6,400) were for redistribution of inventory, which skews data to shorter times.

Figure 2. Urgent need data. (Reprinted from Defense Science Board [DSB] Task Force, *Fulfillment of Urgent Operational Needs* [Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, July 2009], 22.)

the only service or COCOM with a designated funding source and the congressional authority to acquire its own solution. This frees SOCOM from bureaucracy that exists in the other processes. These strengths of fastest to IOC, designated funding, and the ability to acquire its own solution are not without a few weaknesses.

The weakness of the SOFCIDS-U process is that it is only intended to sustain a war fighter solution for one year. Other urgent needs processes did not specify a specific length of time for sustainment. Sustaining a solution for one year cuts down on the planning and scope required for the solution and decreases the time necessary to field the capability. However, this limits the ability to perform a “system of systems” approach to acquisition, especially in the area of logistics. Ultimately, the war fighter desires the capability solution to integrate into other war fighting systems to enhance mission effectiveness. The logisticians want the solution to integrate into the existing supply and sustainment system. The planning required for the complete system of systems acquisition approach does not meet the war fighter’s urgent timeline. However, the war fighter knows that the 80 percent solution now is better than the 100 percent solution years from now. The compromise is that under the SOFCIDS-U process, if the solution needs sustainment beyond a year, a CDD must be submitted and approved. Fortunately, the SOCOM CDD under the SOFCIDS has fewer requirements than a CDD under the JCIDs process.

In summary, SOCOM’s rapid acquisition process rises to the top based on IOC results data, specified funding, and the ability to manage its own acquisition. This makes SOCOM’s SOFCIDS-U process a DOD benchmark for streamlined acquisition. Based on SOCOM’s success, a similar process could be used to acquire and sustain a limited major weapon system.

Two-Year Limited Major Weapon System Acquisition

Funding changes could support my premise that SOCOM’s rapid acquisition process is a model for acquiring a limited MWS, such as a light attack aircraft, in less than two years. Indeed, research shows that the Air Force has already accomplished something similar.

In a recent article, Gen David Deptula, the current deputy CSAF for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), states “We need to make accelerated acquisition the norm. An example is the MC-12W [ISR aircraft]. The first was delivered in less than eight months.”³⁹ The MC-12 Project Liberty was delivered in less than eight months from contract to combat missions. General Deptula goes on to say,

We are in an information age, but we have an industrial-age acquisition system. We have to be more agile in this regard because our adversaries are not limited by the same bureaucratic and legislative constraints that we have. Al Qaeda doesn't have a JCIDS (Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System) process. If we're going to succeed, we have to operate inside our adversaries' decision loop. To do that is going to require significant changes not just to the acquisition processes we built in the last century, but to our decision-making processes.⁴⁰

Using streamlined acquisition processes, Big Safari, the Air Force's ISR program office, turned a COTS King Air into an ISR platform to meet the war fighter's need in under a year. Big Safari's success is built on having a small acquisition team closely integrated with a contractor, in this case, L-3 Communications Corporation. Unfortunately, this streamlined process has yet to be institutionalized for programs outside of Big Safari. The following topics outline some requirements for institutionalizing rapid acquisition.

Entry Criteria

To develop a limited MWS in under two years, the solution needs to meet three specific criteria: (1) stable requirements, (2) a COTS platform, and (3) stable technology for systems integration. First, to meet an urgent war fighter need, the requirements must be thoroughly vetted before acquisition and not change during the rapid acquisition process. SOCOM would be unable to achieve its average of 296 days to IOC with changing requirements. Second, the primary platform needs to be a COTS item currently in production. For example, in the case of a light-attack weapon system, the primary platform could be the T-6 Texan II. The Air Force uses these aircraft for primary training, and Hawker-Beach is still producing them. Third, any technology added to the weapon system needs to be stable technology. Using the Navy guidance for rapid acquisition, the solution would require an 8–9 technology readiness level (TRL) or better.⁴¹ For example, in the case of weaponizing the T-6, a production small diameter bomb would be integrated versus developing a new weapon.

SOFCIDS-U Additions

Minor additions to the SOFCIDS-U process are required to support two-year limited MWS acquisition. Currently, the SOFCIDS-U process does not mandate a systems engineering plan, which would outline the cradle-to-grave implications of the MWS and integration with other weapon systems. A systems engineering plan needs to be developed for any MWS. A subset of the systems engineering plan is the supportability plan. Currently, the SOFCIDS-U process intends to

support a solution for only one year and does not include a robust sustainment plan. To support an MWS, a supportability plan would need to be developed for the intended life of a weapon system. Although these two items would increase the planning time upfront, they would provide the war fighter a sustainable system into the future.

Timeline

The current SOFCIDS-U process delivers capability to the war fighter in an average of 296 days; Big Safari was able to deliver the MC-12 in under a year. The limited MWS acquisition team could use either process as a timeline model. The crucial factors for maintaining an acquisition timeline are a small team of highly experienced acquisition personnel with an intimate oversight relationship with the contractor. As an example, Big Safari assigns program office personnel to oversee its contractor, L3 Communications, in Greenville, Texas.

Funding

Rapid acquisition funding needs to be a priority for the DOD and Congress. Currently, the SOFCIDS-U process uses CMNS funding specifically allocated to fulfill urgent needs. This should be accepted as the service model to fulfill urgent needs, including a limited MWS. Congress also provides the COCOM with the “Combatant Commanders Initiative Fund (CCIF) as a means to finance unforeseen contingency requirements critical to combatant commanders’ joint warfighting readiness and national security interests.”⁴² This fund is managed by J-7 and could be used as a source for a limited MWS. Institutionally, Congress has recognized the need for creating funding to meet urgent war fighting needs. However, other than SOCOM, no specific service is authorized such a fund. Each service normally resorts to its own sources to meet war fighter needs. The practice of robbing other programs to pay for urgent needs disrupts other acquisition programs and ultimately increases the cost to the taxpayer. The DSB recommended that 0.5 percent of the DOD budget be set aside for rapid acquisition, and such a fund could be used to procure a limited MWS.⁴³ The key for funding a limited MWS would be military transparency with Congress on how the money is managed and spent.

To summarize, the SOFCIDS-U provides a model for acquiring a limited MWS, but not the only model. Big Safari’s acquisition process could also be leveraged to acquire an MWS, provided the MWS meets specific entry criteria and incorporates systems engineering planning. The acquisition team also needs to maintain an intimate contractor relationship as well as work with Congress on funding.

Recommendations

Based on the research presented, I propose three recommendations:

1. *Rapid acquisition must be consolidated into one process.* I agree with the DSB findings that over 20 rapid acquisition processes are unwieldy and redundant. As shown, with the myriad of terms and processes between SOCOM, the Air Force, Navy, and Army, rapid acquisition is disjointed and inefficient. Like the DSB, I recommend creating and codifying a separate deliberate and rapid acquisition system. This would identify a single rapid acquisition process and bring clarity to cloudy process and funding issues.
2. *SOCOM's rapid acquisition process should be used as a benchmark.* SOCOM's SOFCIDS-U process offers a streamlined acquisition process with proven delivery to the war fighter. SOCOM's process should be adopted by OSD as the single rapid acquisition process.
3. *Future acquisition of limited major weapons systems (e.g., light attack aircraft) should use rapid acquisition processes.* Acquisition of a limited MWS to support the war fighter should use a rapid versus deliberate acquisition process. Taking five, 10, or 20 years to field a system is unacceptable in today's rapidly changing environment. Our acquisition system must adapt to defeat the threat. MWSs that meet specific entry criteria—stable requirements, COTS platform, and mature systems integration (8–9 TRL)—should be considered for rapid acquisition. The SOFCID-U or Big Safari processes offer benchmarks for limited MWS acquisition.

Conclusion

In 2008 the Government Accountability Office published four main causes for defense acquisition delivering war fighter capabilities an average of 21 months late: unstable requirements, frequent program manager turnover, overreliance on contractors to perform roles previously performed by government employees, and difficulty managing software.⁴⁴ While the DOD attempts to transform deliberate acquisition to repair the aforementioned problems, the need for rapid acquisition to support the war fighter has been recognized. Although the F-35 is in its 12th year of development with IOC still years away, rapid acquisition success exists with programs like the MRAP and

MC-12. All services desire to get the necessary equipment into the war fighter's hands to defeat the enemy, but no DOD institutionalized processes exists for this critical endeavor.

This paper outlined the difference between deliberate and rapid acquisition; discussed the joint, Army, Air Force, Navy, and SOCOM rapid acquisition processes; argued the success of the SOCOM model; and explored the possibility of acquiring a limited MWS with a rapid acquisition process. My proposal was that SOCOM's rapid acquisition process offers a rapid acquisition benchmark that should be adopted throughout the military and that could be used to acquire a limited MWS (e.g., a light attack aircraft) in less than two years. The limited data showed that SOCOM's rapid acquisition process consistently fulfills urgent needs in the least amount of time—296 days. However, when proposing a process to acquire a limited MWS, both SOCOM and Big Safari stand out as best practices.

This paper made three specific recommendations: rapid acquisition must be consolidated into one process, SOCOM's rapid acquisition process should be used as a benchmark, and future acquisition of limited major weapons systems (e.g., light attack aircraft) should use rapid acquisition processes. These recommendations are congruent with Defense Secretary Robert Gates's comments during a speech in July 2009: "The Defense Department needs to think about and prepare for war in a profoundly different way than what we have been accustomed to throughout the better part of the last century. What is needed is a portfolio of military capabilities with maximum versatility across the widest possible spectrum of conflict. As a result, we must change the way we think and the way we plan—and fundamentally reform—the way the Pentagon does business and buys weapons."⁴⁵

Changing the way the Pentagon buys weapons is crucial to our national security. Using SOCOM's processes as a model is a proven way to meet the war fighter's needs and posture our military's acquisition system to defeat future threats.

Notes

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39. David A. Deptula, "Fast Forward," *Defense Technology International*, December 2009, 46.
40. *Ibid.*
41. SECNAVNOTE 5000, "Urgent Needs Process," 5.
42. Beasley, "Institutionalization of DOD Processes," 15.
43. DSB Task Force, *Fulfillment of Urgent Operational Needs*, 33.

44. Statement of Michael J. Sullivan, director, acquisition and sourcing management, in *Defense Acquisitions: Results of Annual Assessment of DOD Weapon Programs: Testimony before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: GAO, 29 April 2008), GAO-08-674T, 2–3.

45. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (speech, Economic Club of Chicago, 16 July 2009), news transcript, DOD Web site, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4445>.

Abbreviations

AFI	Air Force instruction
AOA	analysis of alternatives
ATF	Advanced Tactical Fighter
BES	budget estimation submission
CDD	capability development document
CJCSI	chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction
CMNS	combat mission needs statement
CNO	chief of naval operations
COCOM	combatant command
COTS	commercial off-the-shelf
CSAF	chief of staff, US Air Force
DOD	Department of Defense
DSB	Defense Science Board
ECOP	Equipment Common Operation Picture
FCB	Functional Capabilities Board
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GOTS	government off-the shelf
HQDA	Headquarters, Department of the Army
ICD	initial capabilities document
IED	improvised explosive device
IOC	Initial Operational Capable/Capability
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
IWN	immediate war fighter need
JCIDS	Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JRAC	Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell
JUON	joint urgent operational need
MDD	materiel development decision
MRAP	mine-resistant ambush protected
MWS	major weapon system
O&S	operating and support
ONS	operational needs statement
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
POM	program objective memorandum
PPBE	Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution
RAFA	Rapid Acquisition and Fielding Agency
REF	Rapid Equipping Force
RRP	Rapid Response Process
RRT	rapid response team
SECNAVNOTE	Secretary of the Navy Notice

SOFCIDS	Special Operations Forces Capabilities Integration and Development System
TRL	technology readiness level
UNP	Urgent Needs Process
UON	urgent operational need
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command