

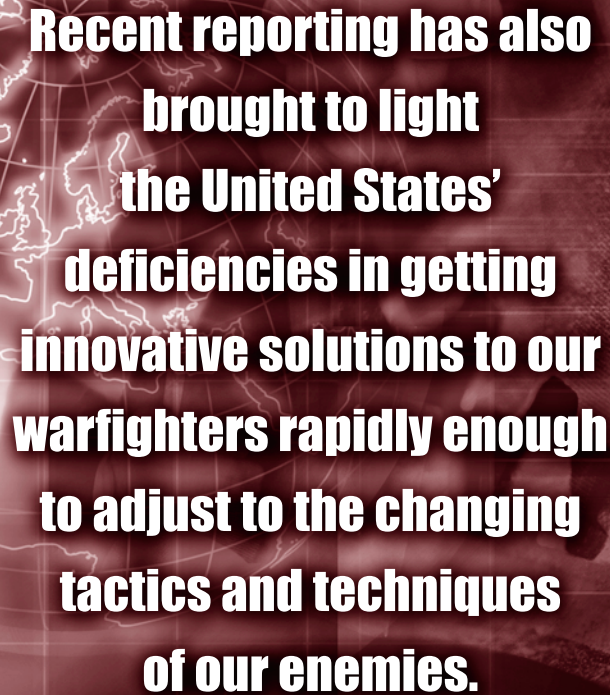
# When the Warfighter Needs it Now

Robert L. Buhrkuhl

**T**he presence of the news media on the battlefield ensures almost instantaneous reporting of the course of the battle to the world: destruction, casualties, human suffering—and the battlefield capabilities of our own forces as well as those of our adversaries. Recent reporting has also brought to light the United States' deficiencies in getting innovative solutions to our warfighters rapidly enough to adjust to the changing tactics and techniques of our enemies. Today, more than ever, with a smart and adaptive adversary, the Department of Defense faces an enormous challenge to quickly identify and validate solutions that will effectively counter the enemy's adaptability and to execute an acquisition process that provides warfighters with solutions in a timely manner with all required training and support.

The traditional defense acquisition processes, which include individual Services' acquisition processes, are designed primarily for major weapon systems costing billions of dollars in research, development, test and evaluation, as well as production, manufacturing, fielding, and sustainment. Because of the enormous resource investments required and because of congressional scrutiny, program decisions tend to be deliberative and tied to budgetary priorities, schedules, and vagaries. Consequently, the materiel solutions developed can take up to 10 to 15 years to get into the hands of the warfighter.

DoD weapon systems design, development, and acquisition cycles have steadily increased since the 1950s, forcing the Department to transform its ways of doing business to effectively address capability shortfalls unique to



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nonconventional warfare. As a result, much work is now being done within the Department to speed up the traditional acquisition processes, but it is problematic for these changes to be developed, proved out, and instituted quickly enough to address the ever-changing challenges of the global war on terrorism. Our military services have acknowledged the need to more rapidly field materiel solutions to the warfighter and have instituted processes—and in some cases, created whole organizations—designed to do just that.

## **Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell: Faster and Good Enough is Better**

In recent years, the Department has been aggressively pushing the concept of joint operations requiring interoperable and complementary capabilities among our warfighters. The Department's emphasis on jointness, as well as acknowledgment that traditional DoD acquisition

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methods are not as responsive as necessary, led then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, to create the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell in September 2004. The JRAC was specifically formed to help break down the institutional barriers that prevent timely and effective joint warfighting support. Unlike Service-specific rapid acquisition processes, the JRAC specifically serves the joint warfighter through the combatant commanders (COCOMs) and does not duplicate the functions of the Service-unique rapid acquisition processes.

The JRAC's responsibility is to assist in resolving issues in response to COCOMs' certified/prioritized joint urgent operational needs (JUONs) as well as the recommendations of the chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to validate JUONs as immediate warfighting needs (IWNs). By definition, a JUON is a COCOM-prioritized need that, if unfilled, could result in the loss of life, injury, or the failure of a mission.

The JRAC provides the single point of contact in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for addressing the urgent needs of the joint warfighter. The JRAC's structure and access to senior leaders make it unique and effective. The JRAC reports to the secretary of defense through the under secretary of defense, acquisition, technology and logistics (USD(AT&L)) and the USD (comptroller), and consists of a core and an advisory group composed of 26 flag officer- and Senior Executive Service-level representatives from the Services, COCOMs, and select defense activities. The core group representatives include experts in acquisition, law, funding, logistics, contracting, and technology; they are empowered to make rapid decisions on behalf of their organizations, within the scope of the effort. The JRAC Core meets only when necessary.

The advisory group supplements the JRAC Core with additional subject matter expertise and meets depending upon the nature of the JUON and the COCOM involved. When a JUON is submitted to the Joint Staff, the goal is for the Joint Staff to make a recommendation on its disposition within 48 hours, but no longer than 14 days. A JUON may be satisfied by the full range of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, education, personnel, and facilities options, as has occurred on two separate occasions. If the Joint Staff determines that the JUON would be best satisfied with a materiel or logistics solution, it recommends that the JRAC convene and consider designating the JUON as an IWN. The JRAC's goal is to provide a solution to the IWN in less than 120 days (well short of the time frame planned or possible within the normal DoD acquisition process). The JRAC does not provide direct funding for satisfying an IWN. Congressional supplementals, such as the Iraqi Freedom Fund, have been the primary source of funding for IWN solutions. If funding is not available through supplemental sources, the JRAC works with the USD (comptroller) to find funding through the military departments, defense agencies,

COCOMs, and the United States Special Operations Command.

During its initial days of operation, the JRAC conducted an extensive review of all existing federal and DoD acquisition and contracting regulations to determine if there were any significant legal or regulatory impediments to rapid acquisition. In general, the JRAC found that existing regulations provide sufficient flexibility to allow rapid procurement of urgent and unusual materiel solutions. However, there has been a tendency within the Department to overlook this latitude. The JRAC was successful in using the flexibility provided in these regulations to expedite some urgently needed equipment and supplies to warfighters in both Afghanistan and Iraq soon after the JRAC was organized.

Even greater rapid acquisition authority was granted to the secretary of defense with the passage of section 806 (c) of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (Pub. L. No. 107-314), as amended by section 811 of the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Pub. L. No. 108-375). This legislation, entitled Rapid Acquisition Authority (RAA), gives the secretary of defense the authority to rapidly acquire equipment that is urgently needed to eliminate a combat capability deficiency that has resulted in combat fatalities. This authority is limited to an aggregated amount of not more than \$100 million during any fiscal year. While not actually providing additional funding, the RAA allows the secretary of defense to reallocate DoD funds, if required, and provides the authority to waive laws and regulations dealing with testing and procurement to acquire critically required equipment. The secretary of defense designated the JRAC to be the administrator of the RAA. The RAA has been used twice since being granted by Congress. In both cases it was used to quickly procure equipment to counter IEDs [*improvised explosive devices*].

DoD has established numerous other organizations to adapt to the challenges of asymmetric warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the Joint IED Defeat Organization, the Combating Terrorism Technology Task Force, and the Army's Rapid Equipping Force. Each Service, as noted previously, has its own rapid acquisition processes to meet the battlefield needs of its servicemembers. Additionally, Congress has assisted the Department with funding rapid initiatives with the Iraqi Freedom Fund Supplemental, established for use in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and the global war on terror.

### **When Faster Saves Lives**

This concerted effort has led to numerous JRAC success stories, among them assisting in the rapid development, procurement, and deployment of the counter-rocket, artillery, and mortar intercept capability to enable base



Adm. Edmund P. Giambastiani, vice chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, addresses attendees at the Joint Rapid Acquisition Workshop held in Tampa, Fla., in June. Photograph by Sr. Airman Carlye Rodriguez, USAF.

engineering solutions with specialized industry, with the approach of our adversary who improvises from the readily available technology suppliers. Krieg asked the attendees to become more customer-centric and less supplier-centric while speeding our evolution toward more rapid cycles of change and technology adaptation.

Luncheon speaker Adm. Edmund P. Giambastiani, vice chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasized three points for improving rapid acquisition: track and account for delivery of capability to resolve urgent needs; address long-term sustainment of delivered capability; and assess and address the appropriate level of interoperability, balancing risk and the effects of unintended consequences.

camp to successfully engage and destroy incoming rockets, mortar, and artillery rounds. The JRAC provided acquisition management oversight and helped secure funding for Spiral 1 Development of the full-spectrum effects platform, which will provide COCOMs with a suite of non-lethal measures when fighting in urban areas. Funding obtained by the JRAC facilitated the development and enhancement of an improved situational awareness data link for better command and control capabilities for NORAD [North American Air Defense Command, now North American Aerospace Defense Command] aircraft over U.S. cities—a vital capability in the case of another catastrophe like 9/11. More recently, the JRAC gained approval and funding in less than 30 days to purchase commercial radios to improve communications and interoperability among U.S. and coalition forces in countering terrorist operations in remote, rugged border regions. Finally, the JRAC provided funding and continues to provide acquisition management oversight of a biometrics enterprise initiative—a capability that focuses on the heart of winning the global war on terror by enhancing the Department’s ability to identify and track terrorists. These are just a few examples of JRAC success stories.

### Joint Rapid Acquisition Workshop Focuses on Improving Process

In June of this year, the JRAC hosted a Joint Rapid Acquisition Workshop in Tampa, Fla., with the theme “Improving Rapid Acquisition – Meeting Immediate Warfighter Needs.” All the JRAC’s Flag and Senior Executive Service representatives, as well as Joint and Service acquisition officials, were invited. Ken Krieg, USD (AT&L), the keynote speaker, emphasized that speed and responsiveness to the customer must be driven with a focus upon the rapid acquisition of capability—not simply systems. He contrasted the time-consuming approach of developing and

assess and address the appropriate level of interoperability, balancing risk and the effects of unintended consequences.

Attendee comments included the need for readily available funding of initiatives occurring in the year of budget execution, and smoothly transitioning good ideas into Service programs of record. The JRAC intends to bring these improvements to fruition and has initiated a follow-up strategy that will keep senior leaders engaged in the joint rapid acquisition improvement process focused on the areas the Workshop attendees identified as the most immediate and opportune for improvement. These initiatives will not only better serve the warfighter, but will also provide valuable lessons learned as the Department’s acquisition processes continue to evolve in the 21st century. The JRAC’s efforts have brought positive effects for U.S. and allied troops on the battlefield—and in this business, that equates to lives saved.

In recent months, as joint requirements are better identified to counter the rapidly changing challenges in the global war on terrorism, there has been a significant increase in the number of JUONs submitted by COCOMs that have become IWNs. The JRAC is one of several innovative measures to effectively meet the demands of asymmetric warfare. The recent JRAC Workshop was a first step in documenting the lessons learned as DoD begins to institutionalize a more robust rapid acquisition approach and provide more rapid, capability-centric solutions to today’s warfighter.

More information on joint rapid acquisition is available on the DAU Web portal at <<https://acc.dau.mil/JRA>>.