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Institutionalizing Rapid Readiness

Program Executive Officer, Soldier Takes Over as Acquisition Authority for the Rapid Equipping Force

FORT BELVOIR, Va. – Mar. 24, 2014 – This month the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Ms. Heidi Shyu, designated [Program Executive Office, Soldier](#) as the new Milestone Decision Authority for the Rapid Equipping Force this month.

The decision immediately transfers acquisition oversight and supervision of the Program Management Office from the Army's Research, Development and Engineering Command to PEO Soldier. All authorities and responsibilities will undergo a seamless transition and the REF will continue to equip, insert and assess emerging technologies to address urgent warfighter requirements.

MDA refers to the designated individual with the overall responsibility for a program. The Project Manager serves as the materiel developer for the REF and is key to the organization's rapid acquisition capability. The PM approves acquisition decisions and is accountable for the cost, schedule, and performance reporting on all REF projects.

"The alignment of the REF PM under PEO Soldier will help us immensely," said Ms. Tami Johnson, REF Project Manager. "Access to their team of professionals will expand our capability and will support coordination with other PEOs and PMs."

This decision is significant and timely because it solidifies acquisition oversight structure for the REF as it prepares for its upcoming transition to the [Training and Doctrine Command](#).

In a memo signed by Under Secretary of the Army Dr. Joseph W. Westphal, the Army recognized the REF capability was something the service needs for the long-term and approved a plan for the stabilization of the REF.

"The Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff have determined that the capabilities afforded the Army by REF must be rendered enduring," Westphal wrote in his memo.

The plan transfers a smaller REF, its military and civilian personnel, along with their functions and funding, to the TRADOC, a transition that should happen no later than

Sept. 30, 2015, but may occur sooner. The REF will remain physically located at Fort Belvoir.

Most significantly, REF will maintain its two key authorities to both validate soldier requirements directly from soldiers and acquire solutions. The REF Director holds the requirement validation authority and the PM holds acquisition and funding authority. These are the building blocks that make the organization unique and enable it to provide gear in as little as 90 days.

“The REF may be known for bridging gaps, but its leadership recognizes that they accomplish no equipping success alone,” said Johnson. “As the organization transitions to be the REF of the future, it will continue to emphasize partnerships within TRADOC, ASA(ALT) PEOs and PMs, Army Materiel Command, the Research, Development and Engineering Command as well as the Centers of Excellence.”

One particular short-term goal is to grow the partnership with Asymmetric Warfare Group to further leverage their global scout capability. Together, these Army organizations, strengthened by REF understanding, authorities and bridging capability, will support an agile and adaptive Army that is poised to meet current, future and unexpected requirements.

While REF works internally with Army leadership on long-term implementation plan execution, its primary focus remains support to operations in Afghanistan. As posts close and realign in support of the retrograde, REF is receiving new requirements for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and small combat outpost force protection capabilities. The organization continues to maintain a forward presence at both the Kandahar and Bagram Airfields. REF is working closely with U.S. Forces Afghanistan commanders to properly distribute capabilities across theater and, where applicable, harvest technologies for use in other areas. Additionally, REF is currently providing solutions to requirements in the Horn of Africa.

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About the Army’s Rapid Equipping Force

The Rapid Equipping Force, headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Va., harnesses current and emerging technologies to provide immediate solutions to the urgent challenges of U.S. Army forces deployed globally. The Department of the Army formed the REF in 2002 to support critical warfighter requirements in Afghanistan, and during the past 11 years, the REF has met challenges as diverse as defeating improvised explosive devices, increasing tactical-level operational energy efficiency, gathering blast effect data to better understand traumatic brain injury and improving intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance capabilities in austere locations. The REF responds to global Army units of all types, combat, combat support and combat service support, to rapidly adapt to changing battlefield conditions and enemy tactics. Please visit us at www.ref.army.mil or visit our social media pages, Twitter: @USArmyREF, Facebook: Rapid Equipping Force, for more information.