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The Army's AimPoint and Army 2030 Force Structure Initiatives

Background

The 2018 National Military Strategy described how the U.S. military was to defend the homeland and retain its competitive advantage to deter competitors and defeat adversaries, whether great power competitors like China and Russia or from other security challenges. It was a fundamental departure from other National Military Strategies post-September 11, 2001, which focused on counterinsurgency and defeating violent extremist organizations. In essence, the 2018 National Military Strategy refocused the Army from fighting counterinsurgencies and violent extremist organizations to countering and possibly confronting Russian and Chinese military forces. The Army's 2020 AimPoint initiative was intended to be the means by which to build the force structure needed to implement the 2018 National Military Strategy's new focus.

Previous Army Force Structure Construct

During the Cold War, the U.S. Army was primarily a division-centric force whereby divisions, consisting of a mix of specialized brigades, battalions, and companies, were the primary warfighting organization. Within the division, the commander controlled a variety of assets such as artillery, engineers, and logistical units that could be assigned to subordinate infantry or armored brigades as the tactical situation required. Divisions were part of corps, which also had their own organic units such as artillery and engineers that the corps commander could allocate to divisions to support operations.

In the early 2000s, as the Army became committed to long-term counterinsurgency combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Army units would rotate in and out of these theaters on an annual basis. Based on observations of how these rotations affected soldiers and units, Army leadership determined that the division-centric force was not the best structure to support a rotational force.

In September 2003, the U.S. Army began converting from an organization centered on divisions (numbering from 10,000 to 18,000 soldiers) to a force based upon brigade combat teams (BCTs) of around 4,000 soldiers. This new brigade-centric force, known as the *modular force*, assigned a number of division-level assets to the newly formed BCTs, thereby lessening the operational and tactical roles of the division.

Multi-Domain Operations (MDO)

According to the Army, current conventional warfighting doctrine is still largely based on the Air-Land Battle concept developed in 1981 to counter Warsaw Pact forces

in Europe. As the name indicates, Air-Land Battle is primarily based on operations in the air and land domains. However, competitors now possess increasingly capable anti-access and area denial strategies, meant to separate the Joint Force physically and functionally and alliances politically. Furthermore, near-peer competitors are capable of securing strategic objectives by means other than armed conflict with the United States and its allies. More importantly, the Army can no longer guarantee dominance over a near-peer threat—an advantage that the United States has held for decades. Unlike Air-Land Battle, MDO addresses the notion that competition and conflict occur in multiple domains (land, air, sea, cyber, and space). The Army intends to achieve a full MDO capability by 2035.

Major Aspects of AimPoint Force Structure Initiative

The primary means by which the Army intended to build its MDO capability was through what it called the AimPoint Force Structure Initiative. The AimPoint Force developed by the Army Futures Command's (AFC's) Army Futures and Concepts Center was to be a flexible force structure. While little change was expected at brigade level and below, the Army suggested major changes would occur at higher echelons—division, corps, and theater command. Under MDO, higher field headquarters would be required to take the lead in coordinating large-scale campaigns against well-armed nation-states such as Russia and China. Because of the geographic distinctions between the European and Indo-Pacific theaters, individual higher-echelon AimPoint formation force structure might differ by theater as opposed to current one-size-fits-all units.

Major Proposed Force Structure Initiatives

The following sections provide a description of some of AimPoint's major proposed force structure changes.

Division, Corps, and Theater Level

The Army notes that over the past 20 to 30 years, the capacity to conduct campaigns at the division, corps, and theater level was "mortgaged" (i.e., assets and units at these levels were assigned to BCTs). Under AimPoint, headquarters at these levels would be developed and existing ones modified to build back a campaign capability (i.e., adding additional staff, specialists, capabilities, and units) to compete with near-peer adversaries and to employ information warfare and operate in the cyber and space domains.

As part of AimPoint, the Army announced on February 11, 2020, the activation of a fourth corps headquarters, designated Fifth Corps (V Corps) located at Fort Knox, KY.

The V Corps Headquarters consists of approximately 635 soldiers, of which approximately 200 support a rotational operational command post in Poland. The Army also planned under AimPoint to develop an unknown number of new Theater Fires Commands intended to coordinate long-range fires of Army missile and extended-range artillery systems and units presently under development.

Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTF)

To facilitate the conduct of MDO, under AimPoint, the Army is currently creating five Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTF). Based on a Field Artillery (FA) brigade and augmented with an intelligence, information operations, cyber, electronic warfare and space (I2CEWS) detachment, the first MDTF was established as a pilot program in 2017 and assigned to U.S. Army Pacific Command. The MDTF's mission is to penetrate an enemy environment, employing assets that can counter enemy A2/AD capabilities and enemy network-focused targeting of U.S. units.

Long-Range Artillery and Missiles

Under the auspices of AFC and AimPoint, the Army is developing long-range precision fires units and systems. Systems under development include a new Precision Strike Missile, or PrSM, which employs existing launchers and is to be capable of achieving greater ranges than current systems. The Army is also developing an Extended Range Cannon Artillery (ERCA) system to provide division-level indirect fires. The Army plans to create a number of longer-range missile units, including Long Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) units as well as Mid-Range Missile units using, wherever possible, existing missiles modified for ground launch.

Aim Point Becomes Army 2030

In January 2022, Army officials reportedly redesignated the Aim Point initiative (which had been re-named "Way Point 2028" in 2021) to "Army 2030." Under Army 2030, the Army envisions either redesignating existing divisions or creating new divisions into five new types of divisions:

- Standard Light,
- Standard Heavy,
- Penetration,
- Joint Force Entry Air Assault, and
- Joint Force Entry Airborne.

Standard light and heavy divisions are to be organized more flexibly than the joint force entry and penetration divisions by having different numbers and combinations of BCTs. The 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions could potentially serve as the Army's two joint force entry divisions. Most Stryker BCTs would be incorporated into standard heavy divisions, but Stryker BCTs could also augment standard light divisions as well.

Potential Issues for Congress

Potential issues for Congress include but are not limited to the following:

Plan to Reorganize into Army 2030

Arguably, the Army's January 2022 plan to create five new types of divisions is a significant organizational undertaking, not unlike its 2003 decision to convert from a division-based force to a brigade-based force. In essence, under Army 2030 the Army is returning to its original division-based force structure apparently based on a decision by Army leadership without much known public examination or discussion.

Potential issues for policymakers include the following:

- How does Army 2030 support the anticipated 2022 National Security Strategy?
- What is the Army's overall plan to achieve this force redesign initiative?
- What is the Army's unit conversion timeline, and how many units per year will be modified under the Army 2030 force construct?
- How will these changes affect existing units, and will the Army activate new units?
- How does Army 2030 affect the mission, organization, and force structure of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve?
- How will Army 2030 affect basing, both in the United States and overseas? Will bases be closed, downsized, or expanded/modified?
- How does Army 2030 affect overall Army modernization plans?
- Will Army 2030 require additional Active and Reserve endstrength, or will endstrength be reduced?

Estimated Costs for Army 2030

Army 2030 potentially represents a significant reorganization of Army combat forces and likely carries with it appreciable direct and indirect costs. What are the estimated costs for Army 2030 annually and over relevant Future Years Defense Programs (FYDPs)? How does the Army envision paying for these organizational changes and associated costs, given its current ambitious modernization plan which consists of, among other things, a replacement for the Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, as well as costly requirements for new hypersonic weapons and other long-range precision fires capabilities?

Additional References

- CRS Insight: CRS Insight IN11019, *The U.S. Army and Multi-Domain Operations*, by Andrew Feickert.
- CRS In Focus IF11797, *The Army's Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF)*, by Andrew Feickert.

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