

NIE process yielding rapid results

Signaleers,

We must be able to transform our information systems at the speed of technology to make certain that we always send our Warfighters into assigned missions with overwhelming advantage. This does not mean that we will change our systems with every new technological evolution, but this does mean that we must have the capacity to do so.

In the Signal Regiment, we must install, operate, and maintain a more capable, reliable, flexible, dependable, and defensible self-forming, intelligent network that properly stratifies, meshes, and delivers overwhelming information dominance. If we are going to stay ahead of our adversaries, both in the physical and cyberspace domains, we need to capture and integrate game-changing technologies sooner rather than later.

The Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System process was developed a decade ago to address several shortfalls identified by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to include (1) not considering new programs in the context of other programs, (2) not sufficiently considering combined service requirements and effectively prioritizing Joint service requirements, and (3) not accomplishing sufficient analysis. To its credit, these shortfalls have been greatly reduced while support to the statutory responsibility of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council to

validate Joint warfighting requirements has greatly increased. However, when it comes to the acquisition of advanced Information Technology, the JCIDS process may not be the most effective. One critical challenge is that JCIDS can take up to a decade to produce a capability. This is exacerbated in how we often surmise our future technology needs. We either tend to significantly underestimate or to way overestimate what technology will do for us in the future. The cancellation of a specific portion of one of our major Programs of Record is an example of the latter. Years ago when this program was being formulated, we overestimated advances in technology and assumed that there would be some breakthroughs in physics. The scientific advances did not happen. So the cost of one of the programmed radios became extraordinary as vendors tried to make every channel do everything. The unyielding requirement for a four-channel radio to do "Everything to anything" has resulted in nothing.

Concurrently, this same commercial industry continued to make iterative updates to communications devices marketed to the average civilian consumer. Large quantity buys of small relatively inexpensive devices was more than adequate to fuel commercial Internal Research & Development. Here is an example of underestimating future technology capabilities: industry continues placing more and more sophisticated devices into the hands of consumers, and our adversaries, while personal communications devices for the Department of Defense languish.

The Network Integration Evaluation is a semi-annual process designed to allow rapid integration of existing technologies into our current tactical network. It is a key element of the Army's emerging Network Strategy in which rapid acquisition is critical. We are already benefiting from it. Following a stream of focused laboratory testing at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., and the Detroit Arsenal, Warren, Mich., the NIE conducted at Fort Bliss, Texas is one of the seven phases of the developing biannual Agile Acquisition Process. This new process allows us to evaluate what commercial industry can offer us today, under assorted military scenarios to ensure the systems meet our expectations, and to integrate them into our current architecture prior to the systems' introduction in a combat environment.

As the RCWO, I am extremely proud to know that we have senior Signal warrant officers assigned to many of the organizations influencing the NIE. Later this year we will assign our first warrant officer to the Systems of Systems Integration department of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology. This is the organization responsible to oversee this entire process. This assignment will add to the positions already at TRADOC, G-3/5/7, CIO/G6, G8, and the BMC. Our Signal warrant officers are definitively value added.

Thank you again for your dedication and service in being "Ever Watchful for Our Country."



Todd M. Boudreau

