

Army Futures Command (AFC)

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The Issue

The Army's post-Cold War development of major combat systems has been characterized by a number of high-profile program cancellations, such as Crusader, an artillery system cancelled in 2002 after having spent \$2.2 billion; Comanche, a helicopter program cancelled in 2004 after having spent \$7.9 billion; and the Future Combat System (FCS), cancelled in 2009 after having spent \$18.1 billion. In addition to the expenditure of resources, these cancellations have impeded the development of newer, more capable systems, permitting potential adversaries to achieve battlefield parity and, in some cases, superiority over U.S. ground combat systems. [The Army describes the issue](#) as follows:

The Army's current requirements and capabilities development practices take too long. On average, the Army takes from 3 to 5 years to approve requirements and another 10 years to design, build, and test new weapon systems. The Army is losing near-peer competitive advantage in many areas: we are outranged, outgunned, and increasingly outdated. Private industry and some potential adversaries are fielding new capabilities much faster than we are. The speed of change in war fighting concepts, threats, and technology is outpacing current Army modernization constructs and processes.

The Proposed Solution: Army Futures Command

In November 2017, the Army established a Modernization Task Force to examine the options for establishing an [Army Futures Command](#) (AFC) intended to establish unity of command and effort that consolidates the Army's modernization process under one roof. Currently, Army modernization activities are primarily spread among Forces Command (FORSCOM), Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Army Materiel Command (AMC), Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC), and the Army Deputy Chief of Staff G-8. Intended to be a [4-star headquarters](#) largely drawn from existing Army commands, AFC was planned to be established in an urban environment with ready access to academic, technological, and industrial expertise. On July 13, 2018, [the Army announced](#) that AFC would be headquartered in Austin, TX, and that it had achieved initial operating capability on July 1, 2018. [Reportedly](#), a number of factors and incentives influenced the Army's decision, including cost of living and access to Army facilities and ranges. [According to the Army](#), when AFC reaches full operating capacity in summer 2019, the headquarters will comprise about 500 personnel (about 100 uniformed and 400 Army civilians). Sub-organizations, many of which currently reside within FORSCOM, TRADOC, and AMC, will transition to AFC, and there are no plans to physically

move units or personnel from these commands at the present time.

[Reportedly](#), AFC will cost approximately \$80 to \$100 million per year to operate and will manage a programmatic portfolio of \$30 to \$50 billion, but the Army is reportedly not setting aside extra money to operate the command. [Section 1068 of the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act \(H.R. 5515\) conference report](#) calls for the Secretary of the Army to provide Congress a detailed report no later than February 1, 2019, on a variety of issues, including the establishment, manning, and operation of AFC, to include associated costs in FY2019 and a cost estimate for each year between FY2020 and FY2023. At the request of a [Member of Congress](#), the Government Accountability Office (GAO) will investigate how the establishment of AFC will affect small business and the defense industrial base.

Army Futures Command Modernization Priorities

Eight AFC Cross Functional Teams (CFTs) are intended to manage the [Army's six current modernization priorities](#):

- **Long Range Precision Fires:** Modernize cannon artillery for extended range and volume and increased missile capabilities to restore Army dominance in range.
- **Next Generation of Combat Vehicles:** Develop prototypes leading to replacement of the current fleet of infantry fighting vehicles, and later tanks, in manned, unmanned, and optionally manned variants.
- **Future Vertical Lift:** Incorporate manned, unmanned, and optionally manned variant vertical lift platforms to provide superior speed, range, endurance, altitude, and payload capabilities.
- **Network:** Develop expeditionary infrastructure solutions to fight reliably on the move in any environment.
- **Air and Missile Defense:** Ensure future combat formations are protected from modern and advanced air and missile delivered fires, including drones.
- **Soldier Lethality:** Develop the next generation of individual and squad weapons; improve body armor, sensors, and radios; and develop a synthetic training environment.

Potential Issues for Congress

- How will existing Army Commands be re-aligned to support the creation of AFC? If the missions of existing commands are significantly changed as a result of re-alignment, is there potential to further consolidate existing Army Commands to create greater efficiencies?
- How will the creation of AFC change the Army's modernization process? Will AFC merely superimpose another layer of bureaucracy on a slightly modified process, or will it result in a completely new way of doing business?
- Will new or modified Department of Defense and/or legislative authorities be required to support AFC?
- How will AFC operate within the overall context of the Department of Defense acquisition process?
- How will AFC be funded? Will other Army Commands and programs be the "bill payer" for the establishment and sustainment of AFC? If so, what is the operational impact on these commands and programs?
- What is the Army's estimate on how AFC might affect the overall defense industrial base, including small businesses who either currently work with the Army or might want to in the future?
- What metrics will the Army employ to demonstrate to Congress that AFC has made a demonstrable improvement in the Army's modernization process?
- How will AFC manage dedicated contractors to ensure that it does not become "overgrown" with contractor support?
- While it is relatively easy to establish a new organization and related processes, it is much more difficult to change the culture of the organization. What are some of the anticipated organizational cultural change challenges associated with AFC, and how does Army leadership plan to address these challenges?