

## Army Force Structure Transformation

Throughout its history, the Army has transformed to keep pace with technology, accomplish national strategic objectives, and defeat ever-evolving threats. For nearly twenty years the Army's force structure reflected a focus on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations that dominated after the 9/11 attacks. The Army will continue to need capabilities related to these missions. But in light of the changing security environment and evolving character of war, the Army is refocusing on conducting large scale combat operations against technologically advanced military powers. To meet these requirements, the Army must generate new capabilities and re-balance its force structure.

Over the past year, the Army conducted a rigorous assessment of its force structure using a process known as Total Army Analysis. Following extensive consultations with Congress, Army leaders are moving forward with a significant force structure transformation that will build on the modernization and organizational shifts of recent years.

This transformation will enable the Army to bring in new capabilities to meet requirements under the National Defense Strategy. It will also allow the Army to narrow the gap between force structure, which was designed to accommodate 494,000 soldiers, and current Active Duty end strength, which is set by law at 445,000.

TAA decisions will bring down "authorized" troop levels to approximately 470,000 soldiers by FY2029. Guided by the results of the TAA process, the Army will shrink excess, largely unmanned "hollow" force structure and build new formations equipped with new capabilities needed for large scale combat operations. By bringing force structure and end strength into closer alignment, the Army will ensure its formations are filled at the appropriate level to maintain a high state of readiness. At the same time, the Army will continue to transform its recruiting efforts so that it can build back its end strength, which is needed to provide strategic flexibility, reduce strain on frequently deploying soldiers, and add new capabilities to the force.

### *New Capabilities*

The Army has already begun re-capitalizing its major weapons platforms, many dating back to the Cold War, with a modernization portfolio suited to deterring adversaries that have leveraged new military technologies to grow more potent and aggressive. As part of its force structure transformation, the Army will add more than 30 new or upgraded systems across six critical modernization portfolios into current and new types of units. These priority investments are essential for the Army to maintain overmatch on the future battlefield – from the theater to the brigade level.

One of the most significant new force structure additions is completing the build out of the Army's five Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTFs). These task forces are designed to increase the depth and scale at which Army forces can protect Joint and Coalition forces, conduct intelligence gathering and synchronization, deliver non-kinetic space and cyber effects to shape operations, and deliver long-range fires in support of joint force maneuver. These task forces are new theater-level assets which include a headquarters and headquarters battalion, a multi domain effects battalion, a long-range fires battalion, an indirect fire protection capability (IFPC) battalion, and a brigade support battalion. Three task forces will be assigned to U.S. Army

Pacific (USARPAC); one will be assigned to U.S. Army Europe-Africa (USAREUR-AF); and another will be service-retained with a likely focus on the CENTCOM area of responsibility. One MDTF headquarters is already in Germany and another is stationed in Hawaii. As discussions with allied countries progress over time, the Army will likely forward station elements of the MDTFs permanently, such as the multi domain effects and long range fires battalions, to strengthen deterrence.

The Army is also making significant investments in the force structure supporting integrated air and missile defense at the corps and division levels. New additions include:

- Four additional IFPC battalions, providing a short to medium-range capability to defend against unmanned aerial systems, cruise missiles, rockets, artillery and mortars;
- Nine counter-small UAS (C-sUAS) batteries nested within IFPC and division air defense battalions;
- Four additional Maneuver Short Range Air Defense (M-SHORAD) Battalions, which counter low altitude aerial threats, including UAS, rotary wing aircraft, and fixed wing aircraft.

The investments described above are only a representative sample of the Army's full capability growth. Bringing these and other capabilities into the Army requires adding roughly 7,500 more authorizations for soldiers in high priority formations.

### *The Need for Force Structure Reductions*

While making these investments and adding formations, the Army must also reduce force structure to protect readiness in light of decreased end strength. The Army is currently significantly over-structured, meaning there are not enough soldiers to fill out existing units and organizations. Army leaders seek to have at least 470,000 soldiers in the Active Component by FY29, which is nearly 20,000 above the current end strength but a reduction of about 24,000 authorizations compared to currently planned force structure. Given the addition of 7,500 new authorizations needed to bring new capabilities in the force, the Army needed to identify some 32,000 authorizations across the rest of the force that could be phased out.

These planned reductions are to **authorizations (spaces)**, and not to **individual soldiers (faces)**. The Army is not asking current soldiers to leave. As the Army builds back end strength over the next few years, most installations will likely see an increase in the number of soldiers actually stationed there.

The Army employed a multi-faceted approach to realigning and resizing its force structure.

First, the Army looked carefully at each military occupational specialty, and examined each skill set and functional area for efficiencies. For example, counterinsurgency-based engineer force structure assigns engineer assets to brigade combat teams. Based on the results of the analysis, the Army will reallocate these engineers to the division echelon, which allows the Army to reduce the overall number of engineer positions while giving division and corps commanders flexibility to concentrate assets as necessary during large

scale combat operations. Through identifying these kinds of efficiencies, the Army was able to reduce its authorizations by almost 10,000 spaces.

Additionally, the Army reduced 2,700 authorizations by based on modeling that included factors such as demand over time, capacity to meet National Defense Strategy requirements and past deployment stress. Units that deploy infrequently or not at all pointed to areas where the Army could reduce manning authorizations within a formation at minimal risk. The Army will also decrease the number of transients, trainees, holdees and students by approximately 6,300 authorizations as it resizes for a 470,000 soldier Regular Army.

As part of the TAA process, the Army also examined its special operations forces (ARSOF), which have doubled in size over the past twenty years. Recognizing the importance of these highly skilled and slow to mature forces, the Army conducted extensive analysis examining special operations requirements for large scale combat in multiple theaters and applied additional modeling to understand the requirements for special operators during the campaigning phase of great power competition. This analysis indicated that that existing Army SOF force structure meets or exceeds demand in large-scale conflict relative to other capabilities. As a result, working closely with Low-Intensity Conflict and U.S. Special Operations Command, the Secretary of Defense determined the Army could reduce Army special operations forces by approximately 3,000 authorizations. Specific reductions will be made based on an approach that ensures unique SOF capabilities are retained. Positions and headquarters elements that are historically vacant or hard to fill will be prioritized for reduction.

The preponderance of the remaining Army-wide reductions resulted from adjustments to the close combat forces. Using modeling and simulations, the Army identified targeted reductions in legacy formations that had previously been sized and structured for soldier-intensive COIN operations that will now be optimized for large scale or multi-domain combat operations. These reductions included:

- inactivation of cavalry squadrons in continental US-based Stryker brigade combat teams and infantry brigade combat teams
- conversion of infantry brigade combat team weapons companies to platoons, and
- elimination of some positions across Regular Army security force assistance brigades representing a decrement to capacity at minimal risk.

These close combat force adjustments, which focused on elements of brigade combat teams that are less relevant to large scale combat operations, account for roughly 10,000 additional reductions in authorizations.

Implementing these force structure changes represents a significant shift for the Army, moving the Army away from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations to a focus on large scale combat operations against highly sophisticated adversaries. As it transforms, the Army will work hard to meet current Combatant Commander and Joint Force needs while preparing simultaneously for future threats. To succeed in this effort, the Army will need to continuously absorb lessons from the battlefield and make necessary adjustments to planned investments, such as the recently announced rebalance of Army aviation programs.

Concurrent with its force structure transformation, the Army is undertaking a similarly important transformation of its recruiting enterprise so that it can man units sufficiently, continue

to bring the right types and amounts of new talent into the Army and rebuild its overall end strength. The Army must solve its recruiting challenges to successfully transform for the future. Building on successful initiatives like the Soldier Referral Program and the Future Soldier Prep Course, which has brought more than 14,000 new soldiers into the Army since its inception in the summer of 2022, the Army is now making more fundamental changes to its recruiting approach.

Most significantly, the Army is beginning to professionalize its recruiting workforce, starting with the creation of its first class of recruiting warrant officers this spring. The Army is creating a new recruiting military occupational specialty and will begin selecting, training, and assigning these recruiters far differently than in the past. These new recruiters will expand their focus on the prospect market beyond those with a high school degree and will aim to recruit a third of new trainees from the “college or some college” population by 2028. The Army will also create a much more significant experimentation capability within U.S. Recruiting Command and its five recruiting brigades so that it can quickly identify and scale up promising new approaches and discard recruiting practices that are no longer successful in a competitive and rapidly changing labor market. Finally, U.S. Army Recruiting Command will become a three-star command that oversees the five recruiting brigades, Army Cadet Command, and the Army’s Enterprise Marketing Office, and reports directly to the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army in light of its critically important mission.

The transformation of Army force structure and recruiting will not happen overnight, but changes in both areas are underway. In the years ahead, the Army will continuously transform and improve in order to become more ready, agile and lethal while fulfilling our critical responsibilities to our nation.

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