

DOD memo sets tone for Army's future after FCS

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Future Combat System is formally cancelled

June 24, 2009 -- The Defense Department has issued an acquisition decision memorandum (ADM) that sets the future direction for Army modernization and that formally cancels the Future Combat System (FCS) program, the largest of the Army's modernization efforts.

The memorandum issued June 23 confirms the recommendations made earlier this year by Defense Secretary Robert Gates to replace the single, giant program with a number of smaller modernization efforts.

FCS, particularly the manned combat vehicle portion, did not reflect the anti-insurgency lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, Gates said. The ballooning cost of the program and a contracting structure that didn't closely tie fees to performance were also major issues.

One of the new modernization programs includes plans to quickly spin out the FCS capabilities that have already been developed to seven infantry brigades.

David Ahern, director of portfolio systems acquisition in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, told a Senate Armed Services Committee panel earlier this month that limited user testing will be conducted this summer on various individual systems — the small unmanned ground vehicle, the class 1 unmanned air vehicle, unattended ground sensors and the Non-Line of Sight Launch System — as well as the network components needed to tie the systems together.

A Milestone C decision to move the systems into production is expected by the end of 2009, he said.

As well as this early infantry brigade acquisition, other programs so far identified for the new regime include a follow-on Brigade Combat Team (BCT) modernization, a ground combat vehicle modernization and an incremental ground tactical network capability.

The follow-on BCT program will expand the delivery of the early acquisition to remaining Army combat brigades by 2025. An acquisition plan for that will be presented for review in the fall, Ahern said.

The Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has been given the task of identifying just what the critical issues are for the new Army modernization approach. It formed a task force to conduct a comprehensive review of force designs, the overall BCT modernization plan, network integrated architectures and ground combat vehicle operations requirements.

The resulting modernization strategy will produce "a versatile mix of BCTs that will leverage mobility, protection, information and precision fires to conduct effective operations across the spectrum of conflict," said Lt. Gen. Michael Vane, director of TRADOC's Army Capabilities Integration Center.

This article can be found at <http://defensesystems.com/Articles/2009/06/24/Army-future-after-FCS.aspx?Page=1>