



Updated March 9, 2021

The Army's New Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model

Why Is Army Readiness Important to Congress?

The Army defines readiness as the capability of its forces to conduct the full range of military operations, including the defeat of all enemies regardless of the threats they pose. Readiness, then, is a function of how well units are manned, equipped, trained, and led. Congress, in its lawmaking, oversight, and authorization and appropriations roles, plays a vital role in ensuring the Army is capable of conducting its full range of military operations.

The Army's Proposed Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model (ReARMM)

In the past, the Army has claimed it has suffered from poor readiness due to a number of factors, including personnel, equipment, training, a high operational tempo (generally defined as a soldier's and/or unit's time away from home station for training or operations), and lack of funding. In October 2020, the Army announced its new Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model (ReARMM), which it hopes to have in place by 2022. This model is intended to better balance operational tempo (OPTEMPO) with dedicated periods for conducting missions, training, and modernization. The Army maintains that to correct its readiness problems, it has invested significant resources and leadership to improve readiness and equipment modernization so units have the most up-to-date equipment.

The Army admitted its past "readiness focus resulted in an unsustainable OPTEMPO and placed significant demands on units, leaders, and soldiers and families and stress on the force." The Army expects ReARMM will not only improve readiness and modernization but also ease the stress on both soldiers and their families.

The Current Readiness and Modernization Challenge

Lieutenant General Leopoldo Quintas, Deputy Commander of Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), describes the Army's current readiness and modernization challenge as follows:

Today, Army units operate in an environment of unpredictability, and arguably even instability. Units are placed on rotational missions based on their availability, and these missions vary in location, length, manning, readiness requirements and equipment just to name a few. Modernization today occurs when we can find a window to fit it in, or simultaneous with other activities. Every week, month and year is filled with constant change and high tempo for soldiers. Our soldiers and families

can deal with a lot of tempo, but unpredictability results in an incredible amount of stress on the force.

Past and Current Army Readiness Models

The term "Readiness Models" refers to a process by which the Army generates ready forces that are made available to Combatant Commanders for operations. From the 1980s until 2006, the Army employed a *Tiered Readiness Model* with units manned, equipped, and trained at different levels or tiers (often referred to as "C" ratings or levels) focused on fighting potential overseas adversaries. Reserve Components (RC) (Army National Guard [ARNG] and U.S. Army Reserve [USAR]) were largely relegated to the role of strategic reserve (i.e., to be employed in the event of a crisis or emergency exceeding the Regular Army's [RA's] capacity). In 2006 in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army adopted the *Army Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN)*, designed to provide fully manned, equipped, and trained forces for rotational deployment for those conflicts. ARFORGEN consisted of three distinct annual cycles (a postdeployment *Reset* cycle, a *Train and Ready* cycle; and a *Deploy* cycle) through which all units progressed in order to achieve a prescribed level of readiness. Under ARFORGEN, most RA units operated on a three-year cycle and RC units were on a five-year cycle (RA: two years preparation, one year available; RC: four years preparation, one year available).

In 2014, as the United States began to decrease troop levels in Iraq and Afghanistan and refocused on threats from Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, the Army determined ARFORGEN was no longer adequate for its needs. The Army began implementing the *Sustainable Readiness Model (SRM)* in FY2017. The Army's goal under SRM was to achieve two-thirds (66%) combat readiness of RA and ARNG brigade combat teams (BCTs) by 2023. Unlike ARFORGEN, under SRM, there were no fixed progressive cycles for RA units, and the RC was to remain on a five-year train up and deployment cycle. At present, the Army employs SRM to generate forces.

How ReARMM Is Intended to Work

Reportedly, ReARMM was intended to allocate Army units to different theaters for approximately one year to assist them in developing expertise in the parts of the world to which they could likely deploy during a conflict. Units would also acquire new and theater-specific equipment for potential operations. The model also intended to provide soldiers more predictability so units would have time to refine doctrine, and reorganize units if necessary based on theater-specific requirements.

According to the Army, ReARMM is currently approved for planning purposes to integrate and synchronize force employment and modernization across the Total Army (RA, ARNG, and USAR). Some of ReARMM's advantages are said to include the following:

- aligning units against regional priorities;
- optimizing time available to plan, train, and modernize;
- creating predictable windows to field capabilities to units;
- enabling the Army to transform into a multi-domain force and provide a predictable supply of ready units for the Army and the Joint Force; and
- building predictability for the RC, equippers, and personnel managers.

The Army claimed ReARMM was designed to facilitate consistent, manageable OPTEMPO, increase predictability for training and force employment, and prioritize modernization efforts. Originally under ReARMM, the Army intended to create predictable six-month cycles to field new equipment to units as opposed to the current practice of delivering equipment to units during their training cycle. Also as part of ReARMM, the Army intended to have at least three units of the same size, type, and modernization level aligned against known Joint Staff requirements for forces. It was also to provide rotational forces, with no overlap between rotating units, for Combatant Commands. Army units aligned under a Combatant Command were to have had the same assigned modernization level to ensure commonality of equipment and weapon systems. The Army also noted ReARMM would not create additional forward stationing of units or immediate changes to existing regional alignment of Army forces.

ReARMM Implementation

Reportedly, after completing exercises and testing, the Army plans to implement ReARMM for all Army components beginning October 1, 2021—the start of FY2022. Active forces are now to cycle through eight-month phases of modernization, training, and mission eligibility instead of the six-month cycles planned for in 2020. Guard and Reserve units will have extended phases, though the time lengths were not provided by Army officials.

Potential Issues for Congress

While the Army has publicly stated its expectations for and perceived benefits of its Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model, little has been discussed about how the model actually functions. Furthermore, a change of this magnitude for the Total Army raises a number of potential issues for congressional oversight, including, but not limited to the following:

- Why is the Army now using eight-month cycles for Active forces as opposed to the previously planned six-month cycles?

- Does the Army plan to release information on Guard and Reserve extended phases (cycles?) prior to October 1, 2021? Why isn't this information presently publically available?
- ReARMM represents the Army's third readiness model in 14 years. Because these models significantly influence the manning, equipping, and training of Army units, is it possible changing readiness models every four to five years, in and of itself, has also contributed to stress on Army forces, soldiers, and families?
- What input have regional Combatant Commanders had in the development of ReARMM and what role are they expected to play in its day-to-day execution? Is there a mechanism to inform the Army if ReARMM units are meeting or not meeting the Combatant Commander's expectations?
- Does ReARMM align with or support the other Service's readiness models, and how does this affect the readiness of the Joint Force?
- The Reserves are a major source of Army forces and capabilities. What role did the Reserves play in developing ReARMM? ARFORGEN and SRM had different "rules" and processes for the Reserves. Will this also be the case with ReARMM?
- How does ReARMM intend to better manage and potentially reduce OPTEMPO for soldiers and units? How does this differ from previous readiness/force generation models?
- Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy on October 13, 2020, noted the Army's readiness focus is on individual, squad, platoon, and company-level training. The goal is to build unit-cohesion at lower-levels to address spikes in suicide, sexual assault, and potential racism/extremism issues. How specifically does ReARMM intend to address these issues?
- What additional resources (e.g., personnel, equipment, training, and facilities) will be required to fully implement and sustain ReARMM?

Related CRS Products

CRS Report R46216, *The Army's Modernization Strategy: Congressional Oversight Considerations*, by Andrew Feickert and Brendan W. McGarry.

CRS In Focus IF10831, *Defense Primer: Future Years Defense Program (FYDP)*, by Brendan W. McGarry and Heidi M. Peters.

CRS In Focus IF11409, *Defense Primer: Army Multi-Domain Operations (MDO)*, by Andrew Feickert.

CRS Report R46559, *The Fundamentals of Military Readiness*, by G. James Herrera.

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