

Armor Units Should Prepare for Emergency Deployment-Readiness Exercises

by Diana Nalli, LTC William J. Shinn Jr. and MAJ Harry York

With recent and rapid changes to the strategic security environment, it is becoming increasingly critical for the Department of Defense to project expeditionary landpower globally. For example, the recent publication of the **2016 Index of U.S. Military Strength** by Heritage.org claims that many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, especially those of the former Warsaw Pact, see Russia's recent bellicose behavior as a threat to their existence. Simultaneously, the United States continues to draw down its permanent basing in Europe, consolidating its forces in the continental United States and requiring the Army to project power from U.S. bases for NATO exercises.

Senior Army leaders remain increasingly concerned that the Army's readiness to deploy quickly has atrophied over the last decade of rotational counterinsurgency-type deployments. For example, the last time an armored brigade conducted a sealift emergency deployment-readiness exercise (SEDRE) was 1998. Many leaders wonder if an armored brigade is actually capable of clearing its installation within a week of deployment notification, in accordance with Army Regulation (AR) 525-93, **Military Operations: Army Deployment and Redeployment**.

How can the Army shift toward an expeditionary mindset and improve on its ability to conduct deployment/redeployment operations? We are energizing two lines of effort. First, we will add "conduct deployment activities" to all operational units' mission-essential task list in the training plan. Second, we will conduct large-scale emergency deployment-readiness exercises (EDREs). These exercises test the readiness of not just the units that deploy, but also the organizations, installations and transportation networks responsible for deploying them. For example, recent studies suggest the possibility of industry-wide capability gaps in railcars and rail infrastructure, which can only be verified by conducting an EDRE. The EDRE program provides the next step in demonstrating global power projection.

The deployment-readiness program consists of three levels of training events, with each successive level building on the training from the preceding exercise in preparation for and execution of unit deployment. Level I tests the unit's ability to alert, assemble and conduct Soldier-readiness tasks. Level II adds an assessment of the unit's ability to conduct load-out operations and installation turn-in activities. Level III adds the movement of the unit's equipment and personnel off the installation via air or surface. An EDRE/SEDRE adds a no-notice element to a DRE, testing the Army's ability to rapidly deploy to support requirements unannounced.

Last year, the Department of the Army and Forces Command kicked off the deployment-readiness program with two EDREs conducted using Defense Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Enhanced Conventional Weapons Response Force units with a homeland-defense mission, and a rapid-ready force. Four events are planned for the current fiscal year, one of which is the first SEDRE in more than a decade, and integrates Reserve Component port-operations support.

The Army's Chief of Staff has directed even larger brigade-size EDREs to be conducted in the coming years, some in conjunction with overseas exercises such as Atlantic Resolve in Europe or Pacific Pathways in the Pacific Command area of operations. It is the responsibility of commanders to ensure their units are ready and capable of conducting deployment and redeployment operations, which is no small challenge after nearly 15 years of known rotational deployments.

AR 525-93 governs deployment and redeployment. Although deployment operations typically seem to fall under logistics and sustainment, it is an operational task and the proponent for the regulation is Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff G-3/5/7 Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate. The regulation describes four phases of the deployment process: pre-deployment activities; movement from installation to port of embarkation (PoE) (aka "fort to port") (Figure 1); movement from PoE to the port of debarkation; and reception, staging and onward movement and integration ("port to foxhole"). However, some senior Army leaders are describing it differently: "The PoE is the new line of departure." This suggests that Soldiers must be organized and ready for combat earlier in the deployment process.

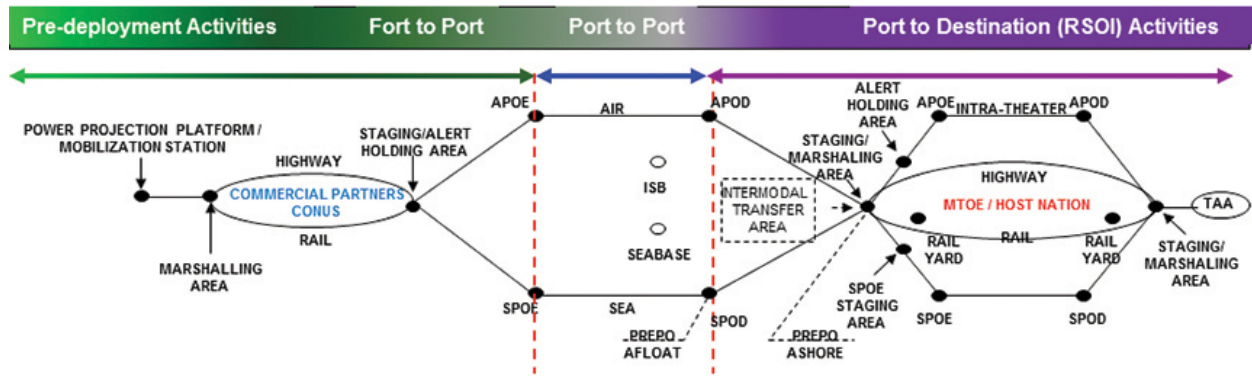


Figure 1. Phases of the deployment process.

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