

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-132](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In order for the Army to maintain its technological edge over potential adversaries, it plans to invest in near- and long-term modernization efforts. However, the Army has struggled with modernization initiatives in the past. For example, the Future Combat System was canceled after a cost of \$21 billion and delivery of few new capabilities.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 included a provision for GAO to report on the Army's modernization strategy. This report assesses (1) the status of the Army's near- and long-term modernization efforts; and (2) the extent to which the Army has applied leading practices to these efforts. GAO reviewed Army directives, procedures, and policies; and compared the Army's efforts with leading practices for requirements and technology development, effective cross-functional teams, and mergers and organizational transformations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations, including that the Army follow leading practices for maturing technologies to a higher level than currently planned and develop a plan to capture lessons learned from the cross-functional teams. DOD concurred with all the recommendations.

View [GAO-19-132](#). For more information, contact Jon Ludwigson at (202) 512-4841 or ludwigsonj@gao.gov

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ARMY MODERNIZATION

Steps Needed to Ensure Army Futures Command Fully Applies Leading Practices

What GAO Found

Since 2017, when the Army announced its initiative to update its forces and equipment with improved capabilities—known as modernization—it has

- prioritized six broad areas of capability needs as shown in the table below;
- established and assigned eight cross-functional teams to pilot how to address these needs;
- established the Army Futures Command as the focal point for modernization efforts, with a four-star general to oversee it; and
- realigned over \$1 billion in science and technology funding to support modernization efforts within the \$7.5 billion expected to be spent over the next 5 years.

Description of Army's Six Prioritized Capability Needs

| Army priority | Description of priority |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Long-Range Precision Fires | Capabilities, including munitions that restore Army dominance in range, lethality, and target acquisition. |
| Next Generation Combat Vehicle | Manned and unmanned combat vehicles with modern firepower, protection, mobility, and power generation. |
| Future Vertical Lift | Manned and unmanned platforms capable of attack, lift, and reconnaissance missions on modern and future battlefields. |
| Army Network | A mobile system of hardware, software, and infrastructure that can be used to fight cohesively in any environment where the electromagnetic spectrum is denied or degraded. |
| Air and Missile Defense | Capabilities that ensure future combat formations are protected from modern and advanced air and missile threats. |
| Soldier Lethality | Capabilities, equipment, and training for all fundamentals of combat—shooting, moving, communicating, protecting, and sustaining. This includes an expansion of simulated training. |

Source: GAO review of Army documentation. | GAO-19-132

To date, the Army has generally applied leading practices identified by GAO to its modernization efforts. For example, the cross-functional team pilots generally applied leading practices for determining requirements and technology development and for establishing effective teams. Similarly, as the Army began the process of establishing the Army Futures Command, it has started to apply the leading practices for mergers and organizational transformations by establishing a clearly defined mission and providing a clear consistent rationale for the command. However, GAO identified other areas where the Army has not fully applied leading practices to its modernization efforts including the following:

- Under the modernization effort, the Army plans to begin weapon systems development at a lower level of maturity than what is recommended by leading practices. GAO has raised concerns about this type of practice for almost two decades for other Army acquisitions, because proceeding into weapon systems development at earlier stages of technology maturity raises the risk that the resulting systems could experience cost increases, delivery delays, or failure to deliver desired capabilities. Taking this approach for acquisitions under the modernization effort raises similar concerns for the Army's six prioritized capability needs.
- The Army has not developed a plan for capturing the lessons learned from the cross-functional team pilots, and therefore may miss an opportunity to leverage the experience of these teams in applying leading practices.