

CASCOM—A Key Player in the Network Integration Evaluation Process

BY MAJOR GENERAL LARRY D. WYCHE

The Army Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) plays a major role in the Army's Network Integration Evaluation (NIE) exercises. It also has an integral part in the Army Agile Process Life Cycle.

Twice a year, the Brigade Modernization Command (BMC) at Fort Bliss, Texas, and White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, conducts a NIE exercise. Many believe that NIE exercises are stand-alone events, but in reality, they are only one phase of the much larger Army Agile Process Life Cycle.

The Army Agile Process Life Cycle is a 15-month, seven-phase process that focuses on meeting identified and prioritized capability gaps by integrating emerging technological (materiel) solutions (both network and non-network) and nonmateriel solutions. It also evaluates three types of capability solutions: type I, acquisition programs (for systems ready for testing); type II, developing capabilities (for systems under evaluation); and type III, emerging capabilities (for next-generation warfighting technologies). CASCOM is an active participant and provides support throughout the entire process.

Phase 0 begins the process under the lead of the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), which defines gaps and requirements in the current force. CASCOM representatives serve as members of an integrated process team (IPT) that identifies and prioritizes near-term capability gaps based on Army G-3/5/7 objectives, focus areas, and test priorities. Our objectives are to ensure that near-term gaps in sustainment and operational energy are identified, adequately considered, and prioritized in this process. During this phase, CASCOM begins to analyze the sustainment factors to consider during the operational assessment. This will ultimately determine the sustainment lifecycle of a materiel solution.

The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology (ASA[ALT]) is the lead for Phase I and solicits potential solutions from Government and industry for the requirements identified in Phase 0. CASCOM assists the ASA(ALT) in preparing solicitation packages for industry vendors submitting sustainment and operational energy solutions.

The Army Materiel Command (AMC) and CASCOM ensure that the solicitation packages provide information, such as software sustainment and supportability, the maintenance concept, documentation of system dependencies,

the concept for platform integration, and the availability of technical documentation for hardware and software, which can be used to assess the total impact of sustainment. Once the submission period ends, each potential candidate's solution is reviewed by the stakeholders from the ASA(ALT), TRADOC, the Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC), AMC, and the Army staff, who constitute the candidate selection panel. CASCOM provides the TRADOC representatives who serve as voting panel members during the selection process. The product of this phase is a rank-ordered and categorized list of potential solutions, linked to the near-term capability gaps validated in Phase 0.

Once all submissions are ranked and categorized, ATEC and the ASA(ALT) share lead agency responsibilities for Phase II, candidate assessment. This phase determines the viability of potential solutions for NIE testing and evaluation.

ATEC is responsible for narrowing all type I solutions and ASA(ALT) for narrowing type II and type III solutions. CASCOM works with both headquarters and AMC's laboratories in weekly planning meetings to screen and assess potential solutions for sustainability and operational energy.

Phase III is NIE preparation, where the BMC works with various stakeholders to identify the final manning, equipping, and training requirements of the evaluation unit. In this phase, CASCOM participates in weekly coordination and planning meetings, conferences, and workshops for the development of final test plans, vulnerability assessments, and the DOTMLPF [doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities]



collection plan and interoperability tests. Also, we review and validate type I systems training materials and vendor type II and III systems new-equipment training materials to ensure they are adequate for the NIE test and evaluation event.

Phase IV is the integration rehearsal under the supervision of the ASA(ALT) with close coordination from ATEC and BMC. The systems and concepts go through a series of exercises to confirm their performance and interoperability readiness to enter the NIE. This is primarily a risk reduction event to ensure technological readiness and interoperability. During this phase, CASCOM deploys operational controllers, analysts and capability developers (six to eight personnel on average) to support the evaluation of the sustainment and operational energy capabilities and systems for which it is assigned responsibility. Personnel attend training conducted by BMC to ensure that they understand the requirements and expectations for conducting the NIE test and evaluation event.

Phase V is the actual NIE exercise. BMC leads the operational assessment of the type II and III systems. The CASCOM NIE support team deployed during Phase IV remains through the completion of the evaluation event. The team deploys to the field with the testing unit and observes, evaluates and collects data on the systems' performance in an operational context.

The CASCOM assessment includes Soldier recommendations on systems and concepts and DOTMLPF changes required to integrate those systems and concepts. The capability developers with the CASCOM team also conduct a holistic DOTMLPF assessment of impacts to the existing brigade support structure if systems were to be fielded. This assessment also includes key sustainment factors (such as reliability, availability, maintainability, transportation, system dependencies, and integration) that allow

CASCOM to assess a total cost of ownership for a materiel solution. This ensures that the Army staff has visibility of both procurement and sustainment costs before making implementation decisions.

Following the evaluation, the Army staff takes the lead in Phase VI to develop an implementation plan based on the results of the NIE exercise. Once TRADOC receives the BMC DOTMLPF Recommendations Report, each center of excellence, including CASCOM, reviews and adds their assessments. Once finalized, TRADOC provides the DOTMLPF Implementation Recommendations Report to the TRADOC commander for approval. CASCOM provides input to BMC for developing the portions of the report dealing with the systems evaluated and provides any additional sustainment observations during the TRADOC review.

Although CASCOM's support for a single NIE process is already substantial, it is important to remember that these exercises are conducted semiannually. In reality, CASCOM is supporting three NIEs concurrently but in different phases. While the actual test and evaluation exercise (Phase V) is ongoing for one NIE, the next NIE is already in the detailed planning stages and a third iteration is in the gaps determination process.

CASCOM's involvement in NIE exercises and the overall Army Agile Process Life Cycle ensures that any recommendation that is ultimately approved for implementation is sustainable or the impact on sustainment and operational energy is well defined as we build the future force.

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LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Focus on Proper Electrical Equipment Use

In the May–June issue of *Army Sustainment*, there is an article titled “The Three Most Common Electrical Safety Issues in Deployed Environments.” It is a good article, but I believe the author may have missed the main causal factor for the fires and problems of using surge strips in deployed locations.

While some fires may be caused by thin or loose items in the strip, more often it is the improper use of these items that causes the fires. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) states that equipment needs to be used as the manufacturer intended. These surge strips are not designed to be used for the “multiple high amperage” items that the writer mentions in his article. They are

intended for use with multiple low amperage items most commonly found in office areas, such as computers, monitors, printers, and fans.

OSHA refers to those little devices as “portable power taps.” (They are not true surge suppressors in most cases.) The devices used with them cannot exceed the amperage rating for the device or fires can result.

I believe that the writer came to the wrong conclusion in the area of portable power taps. Being more vigilant about promoting proper use will probably reduce injuries and accidents better than focusing on who makes them (China or the United States).

—Barry W. Simmonds
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