

# Army deploying service-wide intelligence system

U.S. Army

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Dec. 20, 2012) -- The Army has been given the green light to fully deploy a combat-proven intelligence system to globally network forces with mission-critical information.

On Dec. 14, the Distributed Common Ground System - Army, or the "DCGS-A," as Soldiers call it, was approved for full deployment by the Defense acquisition executive, also known as DAE.

DAE is the highest approving authority in the Department of Defense for new systems.

"Previously, DCGS-A was a quick-reaction capability used successfully and extensively in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Maj. Gen. Harold J. Greene, deputy for Acquisition and Systems Management. "DCGS-A is now approved for use across the entire Army, which will allow standardized training, programs and future upgrades."

"Quick-reaction capability" refers to a system that is rapidly deployed to meet the most immediate and urgent needs of the Army, such as in a combat operations environment, but it is not necessarily approved for service-wide deployment.

DCGS-A is designed to task, process, exploit and disseminate intelligence throughout the Army, with other services, federal intelligence agencies and coalition partners, according to Greene.

DCGS-A replaced nine different legacy systems, he said, adding that it "is a critical component of the Army's modernization program."

Life before DCGS-A could be difficult at times, according to Maj. Gen. Stephen G. Fogarty, commander, Intelligence and Security Command.

Use of legacy systems developed before DCGS-A sometimes resulted in "intelligence snow fights," Fogarty said. Each had "proprietary formats and protocols which were managed differently across the services and even within each service.

"They were hard to understand, databases were incompatible with one another and could not be shared across the enterprise," he continued. "A lot of intelligence was lost because of that. The majority of time was often spent trying to find data rather than analyzing it."

Fogarty used the smartphone analogy in explaining how DCGS-A works. He said users of smartphones are able to communicate with other smartphone users who are on other networks, say Verizon or AT&T.

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But he said DCGS-A goes even further. Users can share apps, text documents, diagrams, photos, maps and more.

The system "gives Soldiers and commanders the intelligence they need for enhanced situational awareness," he said.

The DCGS-A technology was Soldier-tested and was developed by the best minds in government, academia and the private sector, according to Greene. He said there were 40 business partners working on the software development alone. They and others will be consulted in years to come, he said, for new solutions as capability gaps are identified.

Deployment of DCGS-A will result in cost savings, according to Greene. He said having one system reduces the hardware and software that needs to be purchased. The DCGS-A efficiencies will result in about \$300 million in savings from fiscal year 2012 to 2017, he said, and about \$1.2 billion from FY 2012 to 2034, the expected lifetime of the system.

DCGS-A is now being deployed to all brigades going through the Army Forces Generation cycle and will eventually be the de facto intelligence network for the entire service, according to Greene.

ARFORGEN is a model the Army uses in its unit deployment schedule. The ARFORGEN cycles are: reset, train/ready, and available for any mission.

The DCGS-A is not a magic bullet, however, according to Col. David Pendall, Army War College fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the former division intelligence commander of the 1st Cavalry Division.

"You still need human judgment," he said, meaning that it takes a well-trained Soldier to mine the intelligence, analyze it and derive useful information from it.

Also, he said DCGS-A "must be integrated into the demands and processes of the organization and its mission and intelligence requirements."

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