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## **ARMY ASSESSES COMMAND POST OF THE FUTURE IN NTC TRAINING EXERCISE**

A quick-start program, the Command Post of the Future, underwent operational assessments last week at the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, CA and at Ft. Hood, TX, according to a program official.

CPOF is often described as a "John Madden whiteboard" that allows general officers to circulate virtual game plans on the battlefield. But the CPOF's computer with three screens is more than that, said Darrell Davis, the product director for CPOF in a June 9 interview.

CPOF, produced by General Dynamics, is a situational awareness tool that brings together 14 different software threads from the Army Battle Command System, allowing the commander to do a "quick back-of-the-envelope" analysis, decide on a course of action and disseminate that information to subordinates, Davis said.

The command post will run over the best communications lines that are available at any given time, he said, including fiber-optic lines or satellite access provided by the Joint Network Node.

The program, which is "moving like a train," was recently cleared by the Battle Command general officer steering committee for use by the Marine Corps, Davis said.

In addition, III Corps, which will replace V Corps in theater in the next rotation in Iraq, is using CPOF stateside both to learn how to use the equipment and to receive updates on current operations in theater, he said.

The program picked up steam in March, when it moved from a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency effort to the Army, which has delivered the product to three divisions in the field for a baseline assessment. By August, the program faces another key decision point. If it performs well, the Army may opt to field CPOF to the entire service.

The operational assessments last week were conducted alongside initial operational test and evaluations for the JNN program and the Command Post Platform, Davis said. Those were conducted using soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division who are preparing for their next rotation in Iraq.

An IOT&E for CPOF is not currently planned. The decision was based on the program's utility in theater, and CPOF is nested in another Army procurement program, the Maneuver Combat System, Davis said. Accordingly, most of the paperwork and requirements for CPOF can be piggybacked onto MCS, he said.

Still, the testing and acquisition community will make decisions about the need for future testing, he said.

In this regard, the Army is mindful of what happened with the JNN program. Last fall, the Pentagon's general counsel ordered the program to undergo IOT&E, because the Army had spent so much money purchasing the off-the-shelf equipment that JNN qualified as a major acquisition program (*Inside the Army*, Nov. 21, 2005, p1).

The Army's plans to update the MCS requirements documents still require approval by the Army Requirements Oversight Council, Davis said. No review has been scheduled. — *Jen DiMascio*