



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Army Confirms Rapid Equipping Force's Enduring Status** *US Army REF Will Continue to Provide Rapid-response Equipping Capability for Deployed Forces Globally*

FORT BELVOIR, Va. – Jan. 31, 2014 – On Jan. 30, the U.S. Army affirmed the continued existence of its Rapid Equipping Force, thus maintaining the service's ability to quickly address soldier non-standard equipment needs.

Hon. Joseph Westphal, Under Secretary of the Army, signed an Office of Business Transformation memorandum on Jan. 30 stating, "the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff have determined that the capabilities afforded the Army by REF must be rendered enduring."

"This memo should dispel the misperception that REF would disband upon conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom," said Col. Steve Sliwa, REF Director. "With this decision, the Army ensures the institutionalization, not only of a rapid equipping capability, but the invaluable lessons learned after more than eleven, comprehensive years of delivering tangible results."

The memo outlines the implementation plan for transferring REF, its military and Department of the Army Civilian personnel, along with their functions and funding, to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command no later than Sep. 30, 2015. Additionally, it maintains the organization's mission set as established by REF concept plans to equip, insert and assess urgently required technology solutions.

"The move to TRADOC offers new opportunities for us to expand synergies among a number of organizations within the TRADOC family," said Sliwa.

Additionally, the REF will now be better positioned to compete for future base Army funds and to support deployed units in regions other than those covered by overseas contingency operations funds.

"The most important objective for the REF right now is to continue to support soldiers deployed to Afghanistan," said Sliwa. "However, we, at the REF, have always envisioned an organization that could provide global support and could expand and contract based on the level of requirements."

Most significantly, the REF will maintain its current authority to validate soldier requirements directly from commanders on the battlefield, as well as its authority to acquire solutions. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology provides a dedicated program manager to ensure REF's compliance and synchronization within the larger Army acquisition community.

REF's authorities to independently validate urgent requirements and buy equipment are key to their ability to provide urgently needed gear to deployed soldiers within 180 days or less.

"Regardless of where forces are deployed in the world, we must anticipate unpredictable and unique challenges that will need to be addressed with urgency," said Sliwa. "This memo ensures the REF will continue bridging these gaps with non-standard equipment."

The memo is a direct outcome of an Army Headquarters Transformation Focused Target Review, chaired by Lt. Gen. Thomas Spoehr, Director of the Army's Office of Business Transformation, and Mr. Thomas Hawley, Deputy Under Secretary of the Army. This effort was responsible for reviewing specific focus areas and proposing recommendations to best optimize Army headquarters elements and resources.

The REF will remain physically located at Fort Belvoir, Va.

For additional information about the Rapid Equipping Force, call REF Strategic Communications Officer, Kara Ewell at 703-704-9433.

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### **About the Army's Rapid Equipping Force**

The Rapid Equipping Force, headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, harnesses current and emerging technologies to provide immediate solutions to the urgent challenges of U.S. Army forces deployed globally. The Department of the Army formed the REF in 2002 to support critical warfighter requirements in Afghanistan, and during the past 11 years, the REF has met challenges as diverse as defeating improvised explosive devices, increasing tactical-level operational energy efficiency, gathering blast effect data to better understand traumatic brain injury and improving intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance capabilities in austere locations. The REF responds to global Army units of all types, combat, combat support and combat service support, to rapidly adapt to changing battlefield conditions and enemy tactics. Please visit us at [www.army.ref.mil](http://www.army.ref.mil) or visit our social media pages, Twitter: @USArmyREF, Facebook: Rapid Equipping Force, for more information.