

The 10 Things Warrant Officers Need To Know About ARFORGEN

by Chief Warrant Officer (W-4) Richard C. Myers, Jr.

If Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) is the process of the future, what do warrant officers need to know about it to be successful? I recently sent out a request for information on the Warrant Officer Net website (part of the Battle Command Knowledge System) to capture the warrant officer's perspective of ARFORGEN. Specifically, I requested information on ARFORGEN education, issues, challenges, solutions, and resources. As expected, my fellow warrant officers provided me with plenty of solid information. Thank you to those who answered my priority information request.

ARFORGEN is a model for how the Army intends to man, educate, fund, source, equip, train, and deploy cohesive units and individuals. The model is a way to synchronize operational requirements with predictable force availability in a rational, methodical process. For Active Army units, it entails a 36-month lifecycle program where the operational requirements are predictable so that families can benefit from greater stability. When ARFORGEN is completely functional, it will take the speculation out of when units will deploy.

Based on the feedback I received from Warrant Officer Net and my personal experiences, I have identified the 10 things warrant officers need to know about ARFORGEN.

1. Know That ARFORGEN Is Here to Stay

As warrant officers, we must recognize that ARFORGEN is relatively new and that it will naturally experience growing pains. That means we have to get past its deficiencies and make a conscious effort to identify and take advantage of opportunities to improve the process. The Army continuously updates or modifies policies, procedures, and capabilities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the ARFORGEN process. As technical experts, we warrant officers have a unique opportunity to improve the model, so let us focus on how we can make it work rather than why we do not like it.

2. Understand the Commander's Assessment

A unit progresses through the force pools based on the commander's assessment that the unit has achieved specific training proficiency and capability levels. The commander's assessment (with approval from the higher headquarters) establishes a unit as trained, equipped, and manned to meet capabilities designated by the commander. Warrant officers serve as advisers to commanders at all levels, and commanders depend on our honest assessment. We must make a conscious effort to ensure that the commander has the necessary information to make educated decisions, and for that reason, we have to take an active role in understanding the assessment process.

3. Obtain Information

Warrant officers should gain situational awareness and, more importantly, situational understanding of the Army Posture Statement and the intent of the ARFORGEN process. We need to educate ourselves and acquire as much information as possible. It is critical that you do the legwork and identify key players and capabilities. Make an effort to meet the contractors, civilian employees, and military members who affect the process on your installation. Those contacts have an enormous amount of information that they are willing to share. Using this information will streamline the process and ultimately make your unit's progression through ARFORGEN much easier.

4. Expect Personnel Shortages

The fact that the Army is involved in war and insurgency on two fronts has a detrimental effect on manning the force. Until things slow down, it is reasonable to assume that during the early stages of the ARFORGEN cycle, your unit will face significant personnel shortages. Soldiers of all ranks will

leave the unit to change duty stations, complete their military service, attend professional military schooling, or retire. Commanders depend on warrant officers to be creative, adaptive, flexible leaders who overcome difficulties. Seek alternative methods to accomplish your mission until you achieve the appropriate force makeup. Make use of the close bond among warrant officers to establish a professional relationship with the division-level human resources technician (a fellow warrant officer). Yes, personnel gains are the S-1's responsibility, but use your contacts to monitor the status of incoming personnel.

5. Plan Accordingly

The timing of senior Soldiers arriving undoubtedly will not correspond with key-leader planning cycles, midgrade noncommissioned officers (NCOs) likely will not be present for individual or collective training, and junior Soldiers will not be present for gunnery training or field exercises. You will field equipment and receive new equipment training even though the proper military occupational specialties for those tasks are not adequately available.

Overcoming these obstacles requires a significant effort on your part to synchronize events. Use your role as an adviser to work with the commander, executive officer, and S-3 to stress the importance of aligning training to the arrival of key players. By doing so, you are taking responsibility and making an extra effort to contribute to the readiness and survivability of your unit.

6. Play an Active Role in Equipment Fielding

Warrant officers administer, manage, maintain, operate, and integrate the Army's systems and equipment across the full spectrum of Army operations. Without a doubt, your unit will receive equipment from more places at one time than you ever thought possible. You will receive reset equipment, lateral transfers from within the installation, lateral transfers from external sources, and new equipment. As a technical expert, you are an invaluable resource in managing reset operations. It really is your responsibility to be onsite serving as the commander's eyes and ears. In fact, the commander is depending on you to provide him with an honest assessment of personnel and equipment readiness.

7. Be the Continuity Within the Unit

Soldiers will likely begin their time in a unit with one command group and finish their time with a completely different one. A typical commander's tour length is 2 years. When you couple that with 12-month assignments for executive officers, S-3s, and support operations officers, units often lack stability. Starting over can be painful, but it emphasizes the importance of the warrant officer who provides the continuity between commands.

Warrant officers are invaluable because of their willingness to master their role and gain situational awareness and situational understanding. The commander will seek key players within the organization, and because of warrant officers' active role in equipment fielding and understanding of the commander's assessment, the commander will depend on them to catch him up to speed. A warrant officer can help tremendously by serving as a key intermediary between outgoing and incoming commands.

8. Train Your Team and Build Relationships

If Army leaders truly expect to operate effectively and efficiently during the ARFORGEN process, they must establish cohesive teams, units, and organizations. Establishing a team that strives for common objectives encourages Soldiers to take pride in their accomplishments and enables leaders to maximize resources. The role of Army leaders is to build a team of well-trained Soldiers who are fully prepared to deploy and fight together. The ability to create group commitment is a critical ingredient to the solution that offsets many of the difficulties associated with ARFORGEN.

9. The Process Will Remain Compressed

As long as we have war and insurgency on two fronts, we will experience a compressed cycle. I am confident that the Army will continue to push new equipment to units and reset as quickly as

possible. However, a 36-month cycle may not be possible until the drawdown in Iraq and the force adjustment in Afghanistan are complete. I highly recommend that you remain proactive and begin the planning process while deployed. Capitalize on the opportunity to include ARFORGEN reset and training in the plan.

10. Empower Your Noncommissioned Officers

I personally love to think that I can accomplish everything on my own. In fact, most warrant officers believe they are one-person wrecking machines, but we can all use the assistance of a good NCO. Always ensure that your senior NCOs are integrated into the decisionmaking process.

When used correctly, NCOs can play a significant role in synchronizing personnel, equipment, and training. Once you provide NCOs with a clear intent, authority, and the resources necessary to accomplish the mission, take a step back and have confidence that the objective will be met. Use your NCOs to prepare, research, coordinate, and execute tasks relevant to the ARFORGEN process. NCOs accomplish critical missions day in and day out, and it is our responsibility to effectively use their abilities.

Commanders depend on warrant officers to be creative, adaptive, flexible leaders who overcome challenges associated with successful mission accomplishment. This even holds true for dealing with ARFORGEN's growing pains.

As the Army's technical experts who administer, manage, maintain, operate, and integrate the Army's systems and equipment across the full spectrum of Army operations, warrant officers have a responsibility to ensure that the commander has all of the necessary information to make educated decisions. I challenge my fellow warrant officers to continuously participate in creating and maintaining a database of information regarding the challenges, solutions, and resources available that will ultimately improve the ARFORGEN process.

Chief Warrant Officer (W-4) Richard C. Myers, Jr., is the proponent officer for the Warrant Officer Career College at Fort Rucker, Alabama. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration and is a graduate of the Warrant Officer Basic Course, Warrant Officer Advanced Course, Warrant Officer Staff Course, and the Intermediate Level Education Course at the Army Command and General Staff College.

[This article first appeared in *Army Sustainment* (formerly *Army Logistician*) Professional Bulletin of United States Army Sustainment]