UNDERGOING DIVESTMENT
EMARSS is currently undergoing divestment from the PEO IEW&S portfolio since early 2023. (Photo courtesy of PEO IEW&S)

SEPARATION FROM SERVICE

What happens after Army equipment and systems become obsolete.

by Megan Clark

Acquisition is a team sport, and according to Julie Isaac, project director for sensors-aerial intelligence (PD SAI) under the Program Executive Office for Intelligence, Electronic Warfare and Sensors (PEO IEW&S), divestments are no different when it comes to the Army's process of removing equipment from the field.

Equipment divestment, or "divestiture," is the process of removing excess and obsolete systems and equipment and either redistributing them to other government organizations, destroying them or, in some cases, donating them to museums.

The divestiture of legacy equipment is critical to ensure the goal of modernizing capabilities while supporting operational readiness. As technology evolves, it is important to transition from legacy systems to advanced solutions that meet today's mission requirements.

Every government organization has its own unique processes for handling the acquisition timeline. Whether it's a vehicle, rifle or plane, or an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) system, there is a specific approach to handling each. PEO IEW&S is no different, according to Darrel Fleetwood, division chief of product support management for PEO IEW&S.

"It really depends on if the program is considered a Major Capability Acquisition (MCA) pathway or a Quick Reaction Capability (QRC)," he said. "MCA systems are standardized and can [often] be reutilized before we make the decision to completely destroy it and remove it from the government supply chain."

The MCA pathway follows the typical acquisition process, meaning it has an approved authorization and a capability development document, or authorization documentation, showing that it is needed.

Once these MCA programs have received authorization and completed research, development, testing and evaluation, they will go to Soldiers in need of those capabilities. After a system has been out in the field for a while, it can be modified to ensure it remains relevant and usable for Soldiers, which is part of the sustainment process.

After sustainment, once the decision has been made to divest, the Army will begin a reutilization process, if possible.

In contrast to the MCA, which is a program that goes through the "typical" program of record acquisition process, a QRC is a program that comes out of an urgent need for a specific capability. A QRC is built and then fielded in real-time, which is not part of the standard supply chain, Fleetwood said. Given the nature of the organization's mission to deliver capabilities quickly through affordable and adaptable programs that pace threats, PEO IEW&S deals with a lot of QRCs.

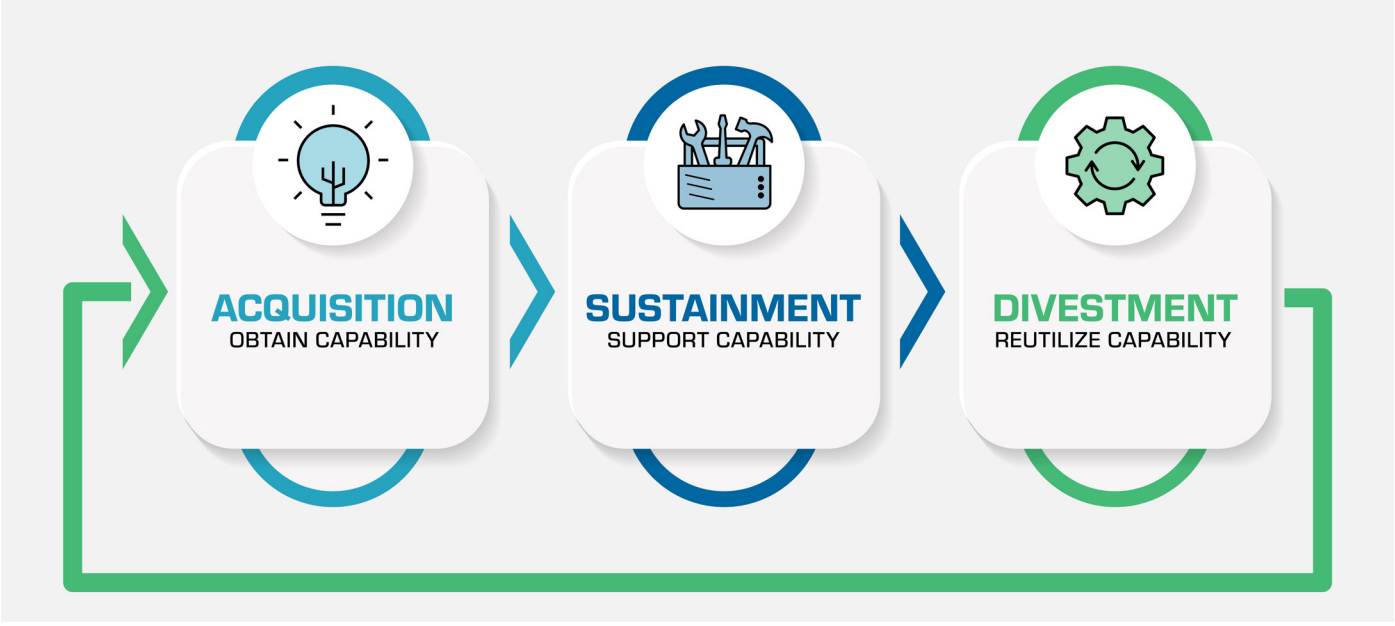
"Wherever the fight may be, we're supposed to—based on policy and process—utilize that equipment but treat it as almost a prototype," he explained. "[A unit will] use it for the fight in theater or any operation, but once they are done with it, they are supposed to destroy that system."

Fleetwood emphasized that QRC systems are different from traditional acquisition systems in that they are not meant to be reutilized and should not be redistributed to other organizations or industry.

"For PEO IEW&S, we follow a structured approach when supporting divestiture efforts made by HQDA [Headquarters, Department of the Army] or recommended by the program office," Fleetwood said. "While the ultimate execution of divestiture falls under the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) through the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO) process, our role involves ensuring equipment is prepared and transferred to DLA appropriately. The DRMO process includes reutilization checks within the Department of Defense and other government agencies, with DOD components given the first opportunity to utilize this equipment."

The decision to divest equipment ultimately comes from the HQDA level rather than the program office level.

"I've seen instances in the past where a program office makes a decision to divest and execute the divestment of legacy systems because they have a modernized version of that capability already in the field with Soldiers," Fleetwood explained. "We must understand that, as developers, we do not have that authority without



LIFE CYCLE AT A GLANCE
The life cycle of a military system is complex, but with a distinct beginning and end. (Graphic by Justin Rakowski, PEO IEW&S)

HQDA. This is a collaborative decision to ensure alignment across stakeholders."

Additionally, Fleetwood continued, before a system is divested, there must be confirmation that the capability has a viable alternative to ensure no gaps in mission needs.

THE IEW&S DIVESTMENT APPROACH

In some cases, HQDA may decide to divest a system based on its strategic planning and assessments of duplicate or redundant capabilities within the field. These decisions are outside the scope of program offices and reflect broader Army priorities. However, when PEO IEW&S offers a system for divestment, we ensure thorough checks are performed to verify that:

- The system is no longer actively supporting operations.
- The Life Cycle Cost code properly reflects the system's status as obsolete or unsupported.
- Army Futures Command's Capability Optimization and Reallocation Analysis data ensures the Line Item Number of newer capabilities are reflected in the capability development document or the capability production document.
- Coordination is made with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology so that office can support this request for divestment once it enters the Divest Army Requirements Oversight Council.
- Systems reflect on the Master Divestiture List prior to executing divestment.

Our process ensures that divestment decisions are responsible, data-driven and aligned with modernization priorities. By following these steps, we contribute to the Army's efforts to maintain operational effectiveness while transitioning to advanced capabilities.

DIVESTING EMARSS AND BEYOND

The Enhanced Medium Altitude Reconnaissance and Surveillance System (EMARSS) is one example of an IEW&S system currently in divestment within the PD SAI portfolio.

EMARSS's flexibility, endurance, sensor capabilities, communications architecture and processing, exploitation and dissemination abilities provide rapid prompting (or cross-cueing) of multiple on-board sensors. This enables timely target confirmation and positive identification of mobile, fleeting targets in direct support of brigade combat team operations, as well as providing general support to higher echelon and coalition forces across the full range of military operations.

The first of 25 Medium Altitude Reconnaissance and Surveillance Systems (MARSS) came online in the early 2000s as QRCs supporting U.S. Southern Command. PD SAI built out these aircraft to support aerial ISR missions around the world. The MARSS system changed several times over its 20 years of service, but its primary role in the Army remained the same.

While it was heavily utilized in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, mission needs changed over time and the Army's pivot away from counter-insurgency operations brought on new priorities. The Army began removing MARSS/EMARSS from the field in early 2023 and PD SAI introduced the High Accuracy Detection and Exploitation System to its portfolio.

According to Isaac, from the PD SAI perspective, the goal is to finish divesting EMARSS (which is the enhanced, final version of the MARSS system) in fiscal year 2025. Fleetwood said that from beginning to end, divestment can take anywhere from three to 18 months, sometimes longer.

"It'll take around six weeks to physically remove the sensors and systems and then sell or destroy the aircraft," Isaac said. "Some of the administrative processes are executed by other agencies and those processes may take longer."

Once EMARSS is fully divested, it is removed from each military unit's Modified Table of Organization and Equipment, the Line Item Number (which is unique to every system in the military) is categorized as obsolete and the National Stock Number is categorized as obsolete for all four variants.

Some assets of EMARSS will be provided to Project Lead Multidomain Sensing System within PD SAI and some will be provided to other Army organizations or services.

"Although EMARSS is being divested, the MARSS Program Office has been proactive in repurposing divestment assets internally at PD SAI, as well as externally," Isaac said. "Significant cost avoidance will be realized due to MARSS' concerted effort to reutilize divested technology that was successfully proven and used to conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions."

If a product or system is set to be sold to an outside organization, such as the public or industry, it must be "demilitarized."

CROSS-CUEING CAPABILITIES
The EMARSS's unique capabilities provide rapid prompting (or cross-cueing) of multiple on-board sensors to enable timely target confirmation and positive identification of mobile, fleeting targets in direct support of brigade combat team operations. (Photo courtesy of PEO IEW&S)

"If no one within the military can use an asset anymore, we will demilitarize it," Fleetwood said. "That way, it can be sold to the public. We try to look at other agencies first that may want our capabilities before we get to the de-mil portion of divestment."

There is a lot of interest among external agencies and industry for acquiring divested capabilities from PEO IEW&S, Fleetwood said, and sometimes other program offices will reach out on their own to see if they can use a divested product.

"They may want our capabilities before we sell," he said. "Some program offices will reach out to individuals to see if they want a product. It depends on the system."

Fleetwood said that his biggest goal with divestitures is to make sure an office is not "wasting something that could actually be used again by another agency."

CONCLUSION

For Fleetwood, the bottom line with divestiture is that there are multiple layers to the process.

It's a full-time job to deal in divestments, Fleetwood emphasized, and many commands will have a specialized team specifically dedicated to the process to be as efficient and effective as possible.

Fleetwood believes in not wasting money, especially taxpayer dollars. He said if someone else can further develop a capability or utilize a capability in a new way, especially if the unit it belongs to originally doesn't need it any longer, it is worth saving the government funding and pass the system along.

"Divestment does not mean 'destroyed,' " he said. "Divestment means [we have no use for] a system or product, but someone else could reutilize that capability."

For more information, contact Darrell Fleetwood at ***darrell.j.fleetwood.civ@army.mil****.*

MEGAN CLARK is a public affairs specialist contractor for PEO IEW&S. She has a B.S. in English composition from Towson University.