

Steps to Making the Public-Private Acquisition System More Agile

By Gary R. Bliss

No one seriously asserts that the US acquisition system is “agile” enough, in the sense that it can respond to the changing face of an ever-morphing threat environment sufficiently quickly or economically cost-effectively. This has always been true to an extent but what has made this characteristic particularly objectionable recently is the vastly increased scope, breadth, and velocity of the emerging multi-state threat environment. What to do? The much-maligned “waterfall” model should still get some credit: its successes have resulted in stunning military capabilities. Presumably we wish to keep those positives while increasing agility.

I will discuss major steps forward toward “Agile” on three fronts: 1) achieving better threat-evolution situational awareness across the acquisition enterprise; 2) management and contracting models that are better suited to adapting to a morphing threat; and 3) management criteria to apply when judging — and funding! — projects adjusting to changing circumstance.