

Army Promises: Our New Future Won't 'Creep'

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The phrase “requirements creep” is one of my favorite examples of Pentagonspeak. It neatly describes the tendency of the military bureaucracy to take a design task — say, developing a new armored vehicle — and keep slapping on more and more additions. What starts as a straightforward design with limited parameters often ends up being complex, expensive and impossible to build on time.

Case in point: The Army's [Future Combat Systems](#). In [testimony yesterday before the Senate Armed Services Committee](#), Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey blamed requirements creep for making the service's vision of a networked future force unaffordable. Asked by Sen. John McCain why FCS costs rose so spectacularly (“It was a 45 percent cost overrun before we got the first piece of equipment,” he said), Casey replied: “the (FCS) cost overruns that you speak about were largely generated by us increasing the requirements.”

As Casey told reporters after the hearing, the service is promising to come to grips with the problem — and wants a do-over on the next-gen ground vehicle. Emelie Rutherford of [Defense Daily](#) quotes him as saying, “We've got to control our appetites ... We're the ones that expanded the (FCS) program, contracted the program, took money out of the program. And every time we did that the cost of the vehicles went up. So it wasn't necessarily mismanagement, it was just... us changing the requirements. And so we're going to discipline ourselves to get this thing going.”

It's unclear at this point how, exactly, the program will be restructured or broken apart. Officials are now [describing a plan](#) to gradually introduce the surviving pieces of FCS — robots, unmanned aircraft, sensors and network tools — to all of the Army's brigades, instead of the 15 FCS-centric brigades originally planned. And as Casey indicated, the service is looking to kick-start a new vehicle modernization program, despite Gates' decision to axe the FCS manned ground vehicles. To paraphrase what he told reporters: No requirements creep this time, we promise.