

# Small-Scale Operations Logistics Support

Logistics support of small-scale operations in Africa involves transportation, supply, maintenance, services, host-nation support, and contingency contracting where organic U.S. logistics support is scarce.

■ By Lt. Col. Vincent C. Nwafor

When Soldiers support small-scale operations in an African country, logistics is an adventure. The host nation's stance on foreign military logistics footprints can make support operations challenging.

Knowing local idiosyncrasies and developing sustainable support are important to overcoming those challenges.

## Logistics Footprint Diplomacy

Most African partner governments are reluctant to embrace an enduring foreign military presence on their soils. Some see a foreign military presence as an invasion, and some perceive the persistent presence of foreign forces as the pursuit of hegemony over their homeland.

For these reasons, when supporting small-scale operations, U.S. military forces often tone down the employment of traditional U.S. logistics operations. In conjunction with host nations' foreign military footprint stance, U.S. chiefs of mission have the final say on the acceptable force footprint and scope of military mission within their diplomatic territories.

The relationships among Department of Defense (DOD) personnel and country teams are an intricate part of the footprint equation. Amiable relationships among the principal actors matter; they drive a force's footprint, freedom of action, and

level of logistics support.

## Local Idiosyncrasies

The logistics common operational picture of many African partner nations and their capabilities and processes are hard to come by. Access and knowledge of their logistics common operational picture will help expand the logistics support pool and focus assistance on their internal defense logistics.

It is important to learn partner nations' logistics doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities. Logisticians should use that information to understand a host nation's acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) capabilities, tactical-to-strategic logistics posture, and areas where DOD assistance is necessary. As an incentive for action, the DOD may cosponsor the operation with the host country.

The fact that the United States will assist in an operation is expected and invaluable. But any actions, spoken or unspoken, that appear to undermine the partner nations' pride will inadvertently feed the hegemony-pursuit propaganda. One-on-one discussions with key leaders are great way to gain their true perspectives on matters and build relationships and trust.

Command, control, and execution tend to be very centralized in many of these countries. Action officers

rarely have decision-making authority, which affects operational and transactional commitments. That is why prolonged talks are common before serious commitment on main topics.

Being aware of these local peculiarities can help eliminate relationship snafus, increase mutual understanding, and improve bilateral logistics agreements.

## Balanced and Integrated Support

Combining transportation, supply, maintenance, services, host-nation support, and contingency contracting in order to support small-scale operations where organic U.S. logistics are scarce is like walking a tightrope.

Does the fact that most African partners have a minimal force footprint stance mean that all supplies have to accompany the troops? Does it mean resupply items are to be flown from the United States or a third country? Does it mean in-country subsistence?

The accompanying troop supply concept demands high-volume, initial-lift mobility platforms and elaborate stock storage management. The routine resupply concept from sources other than the host nation entails pricey transportation arrangements with difficulties that include cross-country clearances, overflight rights, and hazardous materials endorsement clearances.

It is no wonder that logistics plan-

ners supporting small-scale operations leverage in-country capabilities as often as they can.

**Transportation.** Using a combination of commercial and military airlift quickly gets the forces to the frontline. Sustaining them is a different issue. Although commercial flights are a cheaper and less complex option, they cannot be used most of the time.

A special assignment airlift mission is exorbitantly expensive and has significant processing time. Strategic military airlift is great when overflight rights and access can be granted quickly.

Just as airlift is important, sealift of heavier cargo is vital. When cargo reaches the point of debarkation, in-country and cross-border ground line of communication challenges are daunting. Local customs clearance impediments and transshipment or transloading challenges cause problems.

Materials-handling equipment support is precarious, and road network dangers exist. Supplies are lost en route, delivery schedules shift for one reason or another, and funding issues sometimes require legal guidance.

**Supply.** Typical supply activities are bottled water procurement and fuel support. It can be difficult to meet DOD standards for fuel and water while acquiring them through local vendors. For one thing, preventive medicine personnel must approve the water supply.

The single fuel on the battlefield concept is not always a reality in Africa. Many partner nations' vehicles and aircraft come from various European and Eastern Bloc countries and use different fuels, including gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel.

Whether for self-support or to augment host nations' fuel requirements, U.S. Army logisticians should explore all fuel source options, including direct vendors, the Aviation Into-Plane Reimbursement Card, and blanket purchase agreements. In any case, early

planning is important to minimize delays.

**Maintenance.** Maintenance support for small-scale operations is either do-it-yourself or through local repair shops. Do-it-yourself, a function of a limited logistics footprint, often lacks depth and breadth. However, using local repair shops might take much longer. Patience is a virtue when making repairs locally.

**Services.** For services, interpreters are invaluable. They will facilitate meetings and, among other things, coordinate for port-a-johns and water delivery for laundry and bath.

**Contingency contracting.** The number of local commercial vendors that can meet U.S. Federal Acquisition Regulation standards is low. The lack of a contracting officer on the ground adds to the difficulty of employing contingency contracting in many African partner nations.

Logistics planners should be prepared to write performance work statements and gather independent government estimates for contracting officer reach-back support. It is common to have long lead times to complete even an expedited support contract.

In-country micropurchases are executed by the field ordering officer and pay agent. In Africa, the duo should be prepared for price haggling; the actual selling price is normally between 40 and 80 percent of the first quoted price. The field ordering officer and pay agent are potent logistics support enablers when they have generous operational funds allocation. Units should not leave home station to support a small-scale operation without those capabilities.

**Host-nation support.** Given the small U.S. logistics footprints in many African partner countries, host-nation support is integral. The ACSA is a bilateral international agreement that allows foreign militaries, U.S. forces, and partner-nation ministries of defense to exchange logistics support for train-

ing exercises or emerging situations. It must be a factor of the support equation and considered early in the logistics planning process.

ACSA transactions further U.S. interests and enhance partner-nation logistics capabilities. ACSA-eligible countries may conduct transactions in the form of cash reimbursements, replacement in kind, and equal value exchanges.

Sound knowledge of ACSA policies by logistics planners and essential partner-nation ministry of defense personnel will aid in the preemptive identification of commodities and services of common interest.

A lack of adequate knowledge about ACSA can cause Soldiers to underutilize the capability. ACSA training for both partner nations and U.S. logistics planners cannot be overemphasized if leveraging host-nation capability is to be taken seriously.

The Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management offers ACSA courses, including the Security Cooperation Management Action Officer Course and International Program Security Requirements Course, at <http://www.disam.dsca.mil>.

Understanding host nations' contributions, support parameters, and DOD logistics capabilities is important for successfully supporting small-scale operations in African partner nations. Gaining knowledge of partner nations' logistics processes and capabilities, extensively collaborating with stakeholders, and including the host nation in the support matrix should be priorities.

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Lt. Col. Vincent C. Nwafor is the G-4 integrator at the Army Sustainment Command. He is a certified Army demonstrated master logistician and a graduate of the Joint and Combined Warfighting School's Joint Professional Military Education II.