



*Soldiers of the 651st Quartermaster Company from Casper, Wyoming, empty a water storage bladder during a combat support training exercise at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, on Aug. 7, 2016. (Photo by Spc. John Russell)*

# Developing Sustainment Leaders for the Future Fight

Understanding the contributions of expeditionary logistics to warfighting formations could make the difference between winning and losing the next fight.

■ By Lt. Col. Adrian Gamez and Lt. Col. Matthew A. Price

Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom proved that the Army was absolutely ready to engage the enemies of our nation and defeat them on the field of battle. Our resolve was unmatched by our adversaries. While those operations taught us many important lessons, they made the Army complacent about preparing for expeditionary logistics.

## Understand Tomorrow's Fight

Forward operating bases (FOBs) represent the least expeditionary support the Army has used in recent times. FOBs in Iraq and Afghanistan were enclosed enclaves with hundreds of thousands of gallons of fuel, robust but static multiclass supply activities capable of storing millions of dollars' worth of equipment and repair parts, a plethora of contractors that repaired Army equipment and prepared meals in the dining facilities, and state-of-the-art medical treatment facilities with medevac capabilities ready to launch at a moment's notice.

Sustainers could recover from inadequate plans to provide just-in-time logistics because materiel and support were available. Maneuver commanders, as well as logisticians, acclimated to this steady support, and it is now what many officers expect.

However, tomorrow's fight will not be FOB-centric. It will require fighting in a linear battlespace where limited lines of communication and freedom of maneuver will challenge sustainers' ability to push supplies, stockpile commodities, or rapidly

evacuate casualties. It will require faster movement, advance planning, and more creativity and innovation.

Tomorrow's sustainers will have to understand tactical operations as well as who and what they are supporting. They will have to understand the logistics enterprise, where sustainment comes from, when it will arrive, and how it is distributed. They will have to think in terms of operational reach (defined by distance and duration), be able to foresee culminating points, and understand the inherent risks associated with combat operations.

## Understand Tactical Operations

Sustainers need to understand tactical operations in order to ensure that warfighting commanders are properly supplied to fight. For logisticians, threats could come from any direction at any time from near-peer adversaries with lethal, hybrid capabilities.

Sustainers must understand the type of operations and personnel they support. They must be able to support offensive, defensive, and stability operations simultaneously. And they must be able to support operations without any breaks in sustainment, even during periods of limited visibility. This will require timely and accurate logistics status reports, synchronized resupply operations, and common operational pictures that reflect the fight and can be used to plan follow-up operations.

## Understand Task Organization

Sustainers must understand the task organization of the units they support.

The task organization determines the requirements for sustainment, and logisticians nest capabilities within organic and attached units to support the entire formation.

Sustainment unit leaders need to comprehend the entire brigade combat team's (BCT's) modified table of organization and equipment as well as their own. This is essential in determining operational reach.

They also need to understand how having enabling organizations attached to the BCT unburdens organic capabilities. These enabling formations extend distance and duration. Not all formations are equipped in the same way nor do they have the same level of training, and most attached organizations will not understand the BCT's standard operating procedures.

A capabilities briefing will assist with receiving attachments. As the BCT grows, so will sustainment requirements. Once shortfalls caused by increases in personnel and equipment are identified, sustainers will need to know how to leverage the logistics enterprise to overcome them.

## Understand the Logistics Enterprise

Sustainment leaders need to understand the logistics enterprise in order to be successful. This requires establishing relationships with subordinate commands and higher echelon logistics elements. Sustainment does not just appear on the battlefield; it takes coordination and synchronization to move supplies and personnel.

Sustainment leaders need to know





*New York Army National Guard Soldiers of the 369th Sustainment Brigade conduct tactical lanes training at Fort Indian-town Gap, Pennsylvania, on Aug. 23, 2016, as part of training for a deployment to Kuwait. (Photo by Sgt. Cesar Leon)*

what information and training logistics enterprise-level organizations, such as the Army Materiel Command, the Defense Logistics Agency, and the Combined Arms Support Command, provide to assist them in streamlining sustainment management. If sustainers know the capabilities of theater support commands and sustainment brigades, they can leverage their expertise and eliminate shortfalls within the BCT.

Sustainment leaders have to be intellectually curious about how best to support their formations. Success depends on how well sustainers can establish relationships within the logistics enterprise and integrate the enterprise's collective knowledge into their sustainment operations.

### **Understand the Risks**

Every operation has inherent risk. Despite this risk, sustainment leaders must be bold and decisive and take violent action when necessary. There will be uncertainty during every convoy. The intelligence report a convoy commander receives may change two or three hours later. Logisticians must take risks to sustain formations and their missions, even when it seems safer not to conduct distribution operations.

In order to mitigate risks, leaders must consider all threats to the force and their missions while being aware of strategic and political perils. Risks to the force are mitigated by training formations to ensure the welfare of each Soldier. Mission risks are mitigated by understanding the unit's readiness, properly task organizing, and ensuring assigned units are resourced properly for mission accomplishment.

Finally, formations must understand the strategic and political implications of their formation's action or inaction. For sustainment leaders, assessing these risks is a fundamental mechanism for mission planning and is unique to sustainment missions. Soldiers must understand the operational environment and the rules of warfare.

Warfare is different, technology is different, and the enemy we fight tomorrow will be different. Sustainers at all echelons must understand that their contributions to warfighting formations may determine whether we win or lose the next fight. They must understand tactics and task organization. Sustainment formations need assistance, and savvy logisticians will leverage the logistics en-

terprise and echelons-above-brigade sustainment formations for support.

Finally, leaders must mitigate risks to their Soldiers during prolonged combat operations. In order to reduce risk, sustainment leaders must train Soldiers to be uncomfortable by training them in adverse conditions and at night. There are no resets in combat like there are at a combat training center. Through our best training efforts, we build competent and ready sustainment formations.

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