

Connecting the Dots

Soldiers and Army civilians must appreciate what the other services can provide in order to connect the dots and get the best solution.

■ By Lt. Gen. Aundre F. Piggee

Here is a quick pop quiz to get my fellow sustainers thinking about joint operations:

1. Vitally important Army prepositioned stocks are afloat around the world on ships built for the Navy. Who crews the ships?
2. Of the \$50 billion worth of munitions the Army stockpiles, what portion is for the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps?
3. Of the equipment that the Army's five maintenance depots work on, what percent is for our sister services?

Here are the answers:

1. Merchant mariners.
2. About one-third.
3. Thirteen percent.

If you answered the questions correctly, congratulations. But if you were stumped by some of them, you are not alone. Not enough Soldiers and Army civilians have worked with our sister services and can appreciate that we are part of a much larger and integrated joint supply chain.

Connecting the Dots

If you do not have that broad perspective for what other services can do for us, or what we can do for them, you end up with stovepiped solutions rather than using every available source and connecting the dots to get the best solution.

I learned that lesson from my joint experience as the J-4 at the U.S. Central Command and, before

that, at U.S. Forces Korea. Our major concern was setting the theater.

We had munitions, but we did not have them in the right locations, and we did not have the right types in stock. Fuel was another major issue. We could get fuel from the Defense Logistics Agency, but getting it to the port, to the forward location, or to the foxhole was always challenging.

In order to be able to facilitate the quick movement of adequate forces from ports, we needed early-entry forces to move quickly, to receive their equipment, and to be integrated for onward movement. We had many dots to thread together to make it all work.

This experience convinced me that if we had to fight in major operations today, starting in an expeditionary manner, we would be challenged to have the right equipment, munitions, and supply stocks in the right place at the right time. As the Army G-4, I have turned these concerns into my top policy priorities.

The Organic Industrial Base

First and foremost, the Army is working to ensure that its organic industrial base—the plants, depots, and arsenals—are viable and producing combat readiness. We have relied on them to reset nearly 4 million pieces of equipment used during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition to their work for the Army, the depots maintain the Marine Corps' mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles, M1A1 Abrams tanks, and radar sets. They also



"Not enough Soldiers and Army civilians have worked with our sister services and can appreciate that we are part of a much larger and integrated joint supply chain."





The Army's depots maintain vehicles, aircraft, and other combat systems belonging to the other services.

maintain the Air Force's Pave Hawk helicopters and firefinder weapon locating systems, among others.

The Army must be able to rely on its organic industrial base in case it deploys to a contingency operation and needs to surge to meet the demands of war.

Munitions Stocks

Second, the Army is working to grow its munitions supplies. We have adequate stocks for today's known requirements. But if we had to conduct two contingency operations simultaneously, I would be concerned that we would not have adequate munitions to execute those operations.

So, we are working to procure more munitions for future operations and to validate and extend the life of our current munitions.

Pre-positioned Stocks

Third, the readiness of Army pre-positioned stocks around the world continues to improve, but we have more work to do.

We are replacing equipment that we consumed during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are re-assessing our European stocks to assure our allies and deter Russian

aggression.

We are planning to configure equipment in ready-to-fight unit sets. Doing this will significantly reduce the time required for reception, staging, onward movement, and integration.

Technology

Fourth, we need to do a much better job of using technology and putting capabilities in the hands of Soldiers. One of the things I am demanding from my staff is that they take advantage of current technology and not depend on something that is not here yet.

Let me use smartphones as an example. When a smartphone app needs to be updated, the user simply presses a button and the app automatically updates. But some Army systems require a cumbersome, multistep process in order to receive updates.

If a smartphone can be updated in a matter of minutes and never lose capability, why are we not taking full advantage of this kind of technology for our systems?

If an existing technology can improve Army readiness, we need to procure, proliferate, and field that

equipment to our forces as soon as it is available.

Our progress in each of these priorities will have a significant impact not only on Army readiness but also on the readiness of all armed forces. I saw this firsthand this spring when I visited Europe as the Army was conducting brigade-level exercises in Poland.

The Army, with its allies and sister services, was participating in the exercises as part of the European Reassurance Initiative. It was the first time since Exercise Reforger during the Cold War that Soldiers deployed to an expeditionary environment over such a long distance on short notice with their home-station equipment.

I witnessed highly motivated Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, and the 68th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, executing operations at a very high level. They had to use Polish facilities. They had to build warehouses from scratch. They had maintenance challenges. They had to reach back to Europe and in some cases back to the continental United States to get resupplied.

What was most impressive was that they were able to maintain high operational readiness rates for all of their ground fleets. Through it all, the Soldiers learned basic principles of executing sustainment operations in an expeditionary environment.

They may not know it now, but they also built personal friendships and professional partnerships that may pay forward in immeasurable ways when they need each other's help on a battlefield one day. Keep connecting those dots!

Lt. Gen. Aundre F. Piggee is the Army deputy chief of staff, G-4. He oversees policies and procedures used by all Army logisticians throughout the world.