

What Would Gen. John J. Pershing Think of Army Readiness Today?

Although the name has changed since World War I, readiness is a concept that the Army G-4 believes Gen. John J. Pershing would embrace.

■ By Lt. Gen. Aundre F. Piggee

Media coverage of the 100th anniversary of America's entry into World War I highlighted one of the many reasons Gen. John J. Pershing is so well-respected. He led the nearly impossible transformation of the Army during the first overseas war. In a couple of short years, the Army grew from a 100,000-person ill-prepared military, with no reserves, into an organized force of four million Soldiers who helped the Allies defeat the Central Powers.

I admire Pershing for a personal reason too; he formally established the position that I now hold. After World War I, Pershing became chief of staff of the Army. Having seen how the Army scrambled to equip, clothe, transport, and feed the force, he reorganized the Army staff to look like the wartime headquarters he commanded, making today's Army G-4 position a permanent part of the force.

Pershing and Readiness

Pershing once said, "In each succeeding war there is a tendency to proclaim as something new the principles under which it is conducted But the principles of warfare as I learned them at West Point remain unchanged."

So I have to ask, if Black Jack Pershing were here today, what would he think of Army readiness? For starters, he would see that those principles of warfare have remained

intact. His priority as the chief of staff of the Army was preparedness; today, we call it readiness. Having properly manned, fully equipped, and well-trained units is the foundation of readiness that has not changed.

Sustainment is a key part of readiness, and Pershing would be pleased to know that senior leaders who followed in his footsteps understood that. Gens. Brehon Somervell, George Patton, and George Marshall all stated repeatedly that sustainment must be thought of both early and often. They understood that professional logisticians are the ones who make operational plans suitable, feasible, and executable and set the conditions for success in any combat operation.

Sustainment is not an afterthought. It must be built into plans from the very beginning. Pershing would approve that this mindset is evident in today's operations, from the fight against terrorists in Iraq and Syria to the preparations to conduct a full range of military operations to defeat any future enemy.

But as I sit in the position Pershing created, I know the Army has more work to do. Soldiers know the feeling of receiving the call to war. When the order is given, leaders must never wish that their units had done more to get equipment and Soldiers ready or that they had resourced more time and energy to



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train particular tasks. Those of us in the Pentagon must do our parts to prepare the Army for those orders.

Building Readiness

Here are some of the challenges we are working on to build readiness for a multidomain battle.

Fight without contracted support. First, during the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army contract-

Over time we have gotten better, but we are not yet in a position to provide the best materiel management to improve or maintain readiness. It is key that we keep improving materiel management by leveraging technology so that we can see ourselves, provide mission command, and have a common operational picture.

Find the next game changer. Third, sustainers have to find the next

pared to deploy in a timely manner. In light of the renewed emphasis on expeditionary operations, the Army is rebalancing its efforts to ensure that it has the required capabilities needed during the early stages of war.

Ensure the right force structure. Fifth, as the Department of Defense strategy changes, leaders are working on future budgets to ensure the Army has the right force structure and that sustainers get the resources to refurbish on hand equipment and to modernize fleets.

We want to make certain that the Army has sufficient munitions to fight emerging threats, that Army pre-positioned stocks are stored in ready-to-fight configurations, and that depots and arsenals have long-term funding to keep operational lines open.

During the past year, we have made good use of taxpayer dollars by redistributing more than 290,000 pieces of equipment to fill shortages. This has resulted in a 15-percent increase in the number of brigade combat teams that have reported having all of their required equipment on hand.

We plan to continue our efforts to increase sustainment training. Of all the things that Pershing would appreciate most, I think it would be the changes that have happened to the home of sustainment training, Fort Lee, Virginia.

Just weeks after President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany, the Army opened Camp Lee. The camp trained 60,000 doughboys before they departed for Europe. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Fort Lee this summer, we can all be proud of the Sustainment Center of Excellence and its modern training facilities for preparing sustainers for the expeditionary fights of the next 100 years.

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ed vast amounts of logistics support. In an expeditionary operation, the Army cannot rely on that ability, so we are ensuring that our sustainers are trained to have the appropriate level of confidence and ability to execute sustainment missions themselves, without contracted support. This means working on the fundamentals and doing those things that we have gotten away from over the past 15 years.

To be successful, we have to develop processes, procedures, techniques, and training at the tactical level. We have to be able to execute routine things routinely, like a basketball player following through on a free throw. An example of this would be conducting preventive maintenance checks and services in garrison in order to do them from muscle memory in combat.

Improve materiel management. Second, we have concerns about materiel management. When the Army restructured sustainment organizations and eliminated the division and corps materiel management centers, it lost critical capabilities to provide materiel management for its warfighters.

game-changing innovation. Global Combat Support System-Army has proven to be a logistics game changer, but it took 20 years to develop and field it. The Army cannot wait another 20 years for the next innovative technology; technology changes in months, not years.

We need big ideas that will improve readiness in the near term. It could be a process. It could be an autonomous robot or a remotely controlled convoy to deliver supplies. It could be how we turn in equipment. It could be an application to complete a transaction or a new way to employ big data.

Proven technologies are out there today, and we need to be creative and bold in our thinking to find, develop, and field them. We cannot expect them to be the be-all and end-all to all of our challenges. But if there are innovations that allow sustainers to do their jobs better in changing environments, we need to employ them.

Prepare the total force. Fourth, readiness requires a total Army force effort. The reserve component makes up 77 percent of the sustainment force and is key to the Army's success. It is absolutely critical that it is pre-