



Maj. Tyonne Carter, 3rd Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade, and Cpl. Tyrone Rowe, a Canadian air force movement control specialist, synchronize the movement of over 5,000 troops and one thousand pieces of rolling stock on May 7, 2017, in support of Exercise Maple Resolve. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Bohannon)

Sharing Sustainment Techniques and Practices During Maple Resolve 2017

■ By Lt. Col. David Carlson and Capt. Dexter Harris

Exercise Maple Resolve is the Canadian Army's largest and most logistically complex training exercise. This annual rotation is a joint and multinational exercise geared toward facilitating interoperability, international relations, and the certification of designated Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Air Force units to meet government-directed operational outputs.

Maple Resolve is a fully immersive

force-on-force training event similar to U.S. Army combat training center rotations. The 2017 exercise involved over 5,000 troops from New Zealand, Great Britain, Australia, the United States, and Canada.

U.S. Army North (ARNORTH), the Army service component command to the U.S. Northern Command, has the responsibility of strengthening military partnerships with Canada and Mexico. AR-

NORTH was the headquarters element for U.S. support during Maple Resolve and delegated tactical control of more than 800 Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Department of Defense civilians to the 3rd Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade (IDSB) Special Troops Battalion (STB).

After assuming control, the STB provided mission command, synchronization with the Canadian Army, administrative assistance, re-

deployment support, joint reception, staging, onward movement, and integration support, and logistics and sustainment support to all U.S. forces participating in the exercise.

An exercise of this scale is not possible without the shared understanding, forecasting, and execution of sustainment operations. The major sections that made the exercise possible were the Canadian Manoeuvre

support for maneuver, fires, and maneuver support organizations. The Canadian Army's administrative companies, commonly referred to as the "first line," provide similar but general support because of the size and design of the total force.

The next level of U.S. tactical sustainment support includes brigade support battalions, aviation support battalions, combat sustainment sup-

port battalions, STBs, and Army field support battalions. In the Canadian Army, the service battalions fulfill this level of logistics support.

technicians to be trained and proficient on multiple vehicle platforms, communication suites, and weapon systems. This diversified proficiency ensures that the limited pool of mechanics and technicians have a broad skill set and are able to service and repair a wide range of CAF vehicles and equipment.

For the most part, a CAF logistician wears an army, navy, or air force uniform, but that has no bearing on which service component he or she serves in. For example, a culinary specialist or supply technician who wears an air force uniform is equally employable on a naval vessel, at an air force base, or within an army unit. Additionally, enlisted logisticians across the CAF receive the same level of training within the same schoolhouses.

In recent years, the U.S. Army's massive amount of training requirements, high operating tempo, and budgetary constraints required the reorganization of its sustainment units. Merging similar military occupational specialties (MOSs) to restructure skill sets has been one means of efficiently managing the sustainment force. Some career fields were given new MOSs while their previous MOSs became additional skill identifiers.

As engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan turned from conventional operations to prolonged counterinsurgency and nation-building operations, the sustainment capabilities of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve became increasingly important to active duty component support. Today, more than 73 percent of the Army's echelons-above-brigade sustainment capability is in the reserve component. In the Canadian Army, nearly all of the sustainment footprint is in the active component.

In the last decade, the use of operational contract support to obtain supplies, services, and construction from commercial sources in support of joint operations has been a critical means of support for the United

On one hand, the U.S. Army's massive sustainment community can be seen as an advantage. On the other hand, its size is a disadvantage because of the multiple echelons of logistics that a requisition must transit in order to reach the end user.

Training Centre G-4 Logistics Staff for internal forecasting and execution and two joint teams that were created for the exercise, the Real World Life Support Team for external support and the Joint Reception, Staging, and Onward Movement Team for tracking all personnel and equipment. These three critical sustainment elements were integrated into the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre headquarters, the ARNORTH team, and the 3rd IDSB STB staff in order to support the entire rotation.

This article highlights some of the similarities and differences between Canadian and U.S. Army sustainment operations observed during Exercise Maple Resolve 2017 and what the two forces can learn from each other's approaches to organizational structure, use of information systems, and support operations.

Organizational Structure

At the tactical level, the organizational structure for U.S. Army sustainment forces begins with forward support companies that are specifically designed to provide di-

rect support for maneuver, fires, and maneuver support organizations. The Canadian Army's administrative companies, commonly referred to as the "first line," provide similar but general support because of the size and design of the total force.

The next levels of U.S. support includes the Army field support brigades, sustainment brigades, expeditionary sustainment commands, and theater sustainment commands. These entities interface at the operational, strategic, and national-provider levels and serve as sustainment advisers to division, corps, and theater commands.

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) generate task-tailored organizations that provide theater-level support to bridge the gap between the operational and strategic levels of sustainment. These organizations are normally referred to as joint task force support components and are responsible to theater commanders for all theater-level sustainment. Because a support component typically has between 100 and 300 regular and reserve forces, it takes the phrase "doing more with less" to a new level.

The modest size of the Canadian Army requires its mechanics and

States. In recent years, the Army has maintained a 1-to-1 ratio of contractors to Soldiers in both Afghanistan and Iraq, which has allowed Soldiers to focus more on inherently military obligations.

Likewise, the CAF relies on a wide range of contracted services that are not organic to the force. In particular, it leverages operational-level movement, life support, and general sea and ground transport contracts that enable the CAF to conduct both domestic and expeditionary operations effectively.

Information Systems

The Global Combat Support System–Army (GCSS–Army) is the U.S. Army’s premier logistics and finance enterprise resource planning system. It provides leaders and decision-makers with a single sustainment picture to manage combat power. The CAF uses the Defence Resource Management Information System (DRMIS), which has been progressively implemented over the past 10 years and delivers nearly the same information to its leaders and users.

Arguably, the biggest difference between the systems is that DRMIS is used by all elements of the CAF whereas GCSS–Army is used by only the U.S. Army. Although this difference does not make one system more efficient than the other, the point is that both armies are sustaining and resourcing themselves through an enterprise resource planning system.

Having these fully integrated systems gives leaders knowledge about ammunition accountability, operational and equipment readiness, property accountability, financial management, supply management, and total asset visibility. This knowledge allows them to maximize available resources while efficiently stewarding available funds.

A number of information and mission command systems, including the Combat Service Support Automated Information System Interface, Joint Capabilities Release Logistics,

and the Transportation Coordinators’ Automated Information for Movements System II, empower commanders and leaders in the Army to manage sustainment resources. In the Canadian Army, the Fleet Management System, the National Material Distribution System, DRMIS, and the Land Command Support System provide the same capabilities and decision-support tools. However, the Canadian systems are jointly used across its army, navy, air force, and special operations forces.

These streamlined systems give the Canadian Army a great advantage when requesting, transporting, and delivering resources for multiple services. For example, army supply technicians can send supply requirements to their counterparts in the navy, and the context and process of the order is easily understood by both services.

Support Operations

Forecasting is a term that nearly every logistician knows, but some understand its necessity better than others. So which army is better at forecasting requirements?

On one hand, the U.S. Army’s massive sustainment community can be seen as an advantage. On the other hand, its size is a disadvantage because of the multiple echelons of logistics that a requisition must transit in order to reach the end user. Furthermore, the U.S. supply system has 15 priorities for ordering parts and supplies, while the Canadian system uses only four.

The size of Canadian Army sustainment can be viewed as both a gift and a hardship. Even though the service battalions have entities that manage internal and external support to other units, they have neither the operational reach nor the prolonged endurance capabilities that exist in the second and third layers of U.S. Army sustainment.

Despite their differences in size, there are similarities in how U.S. and Canadian logistics units provide support. The logistics operations section

of the Canadian service battalion and the support operations section of the brigade support battalion work in a similar fashion.

Both sections are responsible for forecasting requirements based on the maneuver plan while remaining flexible and adaptable during times of adversity. Both use a fix-far-forward approach for maintenance support and a push-far-forward method for commodity support. These sections work with their respective administrative companies and forward support companies to handle internal commodity management with external resourcing.

The Canadian and U.S. sustainment communities must continue to invest in logistics developments in order to train, man, and equip the forces in order to improve readiness and interoperability for future contingency operations. Regardless of who has the most efficient sustainment force, each army can learn from the other at least one new way to approach the future unknowns in such a complex world.

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