



Soldiers assigned to the 13th Expeditionary Sustainment Command deliver food and water to Hurricane Harvey victims in Houston, Texas, on Sept. 5, 2017. (Photo by Sgt. Jazmin Jenkins)

Managing Money as a Commodity

With help from financial management support operations representatives, expeditionary sustainment commands manage financial resources like they do other battlefield commodities.

■ By Maj. Jose G. Cardenas

Is money just another commodity on the battlefield, like fuel or bullets? During the 13th Expeditionary Sustainment Command's (ESC's) first decisive action warfighter training exercise in over a decade, the command's financial management (FM) support operations (SPO) section facilitated the use of currency as a commodity for circulation around a

planned area of operations to support the ESC commander's intent.

Bringing this commodity to the end user (Soldiers on the battlefield) requires forecasting requirements. FM SPOs must use their intuition (based on previous experiences) to interpret (based on the operational environment) where FM units and assets provide the best support.

FM SPO Operations

The FM SPO tracks the location of all financial management support units, subordinate detachments, and teams. The positions of these FM elements represent monetary distribution capabilities, including the ability to exchange currencies, pay local vendors, and facilitate local currency circulation in areas where



Soldiers assigned to the 1st Medical Brigade and the 13th Expeditionary Sustainment Command deliver food and water to Hurricane Harvey victims in Houston, Texas, on Sept. 5, 2017. (Photo by Sgt. Jazmin Jenkins)

local banking systems have failed.

Instead of using U.S. dollars, FM elements can pay for contracts using local currency and issue local currency to field ordering officers and pay agents. Enacting such a monetary policy helps to stabilize the local economy by avoiding an influx of U.S. dollars.

Knowing how much currency an FM unit is authorized to carry equates to knowing a unit's capability. Understanding the cash holding authority and vault location for each FM element, how funds are transferred and transported from one FM element to another, and the associated security requirements is similar to knowing the distribution capability of a transportation battalion.

Additionally, the ESC commander needs to understand the FM support center's role in facilitating the flow of cash and cash equivalents into a theater of operations. The FM SPO works with FM units to provide cash holding authority information and communicate potential FM logistics concerns to the ESC commander. Support may include coordinating emergency currency resupply to identified locations. This information helps the ESC to properly manage currency as part of the commodity management process.

The FM SPO provides the ESC commander with financial counseling concerning emerging funding requirements. The section works with the organizational contracting support cell to execute contracting support, and it tracks available funding authorities that facilitate organizational theater funding objectives.

The FM SPO position requires a theaterwide, customer-centric perspective, as opposed to the G-8's perspective, which is organizationally focused. Like the G-8, the FM SPO helps the ESC commander and staff leverage financial resources within the theater by providing counseling on available funding, currency types, and recommended FM unit relocations to best meet customer demands.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned create institutional knowledge that improves tactical standard operating procedures and business practices related to FM operations. The ESC commander and staff learn about FM unit capabilities and security requirements when planning for future operations.

The 13th ESC FM SPO learned

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the following lessons during the warfighter training exercise.

Develop FM metrics. Working in logistics environments requires the rapid development of FM metrics to augment SPO section reporting requirements. Metrics include reporting how many field ordering officers and pay agent teams are available and how many FM support teams are available versus how many are authorized. Attrition may affect FM support unit and FM support detachment capabilities for battlefield circulation. Cash holding authority balances help to determine what locations require additional currency.

Track contract obligations. The FM SPO must track theater contract statuses to provide a theater perspective. This process includes tracking armed forces examining and entrance stations and postal currency support locations.

Define readiness in planning. One question that requires development and definition when planning operations is defining what black, red, amber, and green readiness statuses actually mean. An FM team may be out of funds, but that may not mean the FM support unit and FM support detachment cannot provide ad-

ditional funding in a timely manner.

Determine EagleCash kiosk requirements. The FM SPO should identify any EagleCash kiosk needs. This includes knowing what phase of the operation and which locations will require this support.

Facilitate travel. FM SPO representatives should work with human resources personnel to help shape

a cohesive Defense Travel System theater policy to facilitate service member travel.

Embrace the organizational culture. FM SPOs must embrace the ESC's organizational culture to understand how the unit operates. This will help FM Soldiers better support the ESC's operations

These lessons learned help both the FM SPO and the ESC continually learn about the FM environment. The result is an integrated learning loop that adjusts to the operational environment. This process allows the 13th ESC to manage financial resources in the same way that it does other commodities on the battlefield.

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