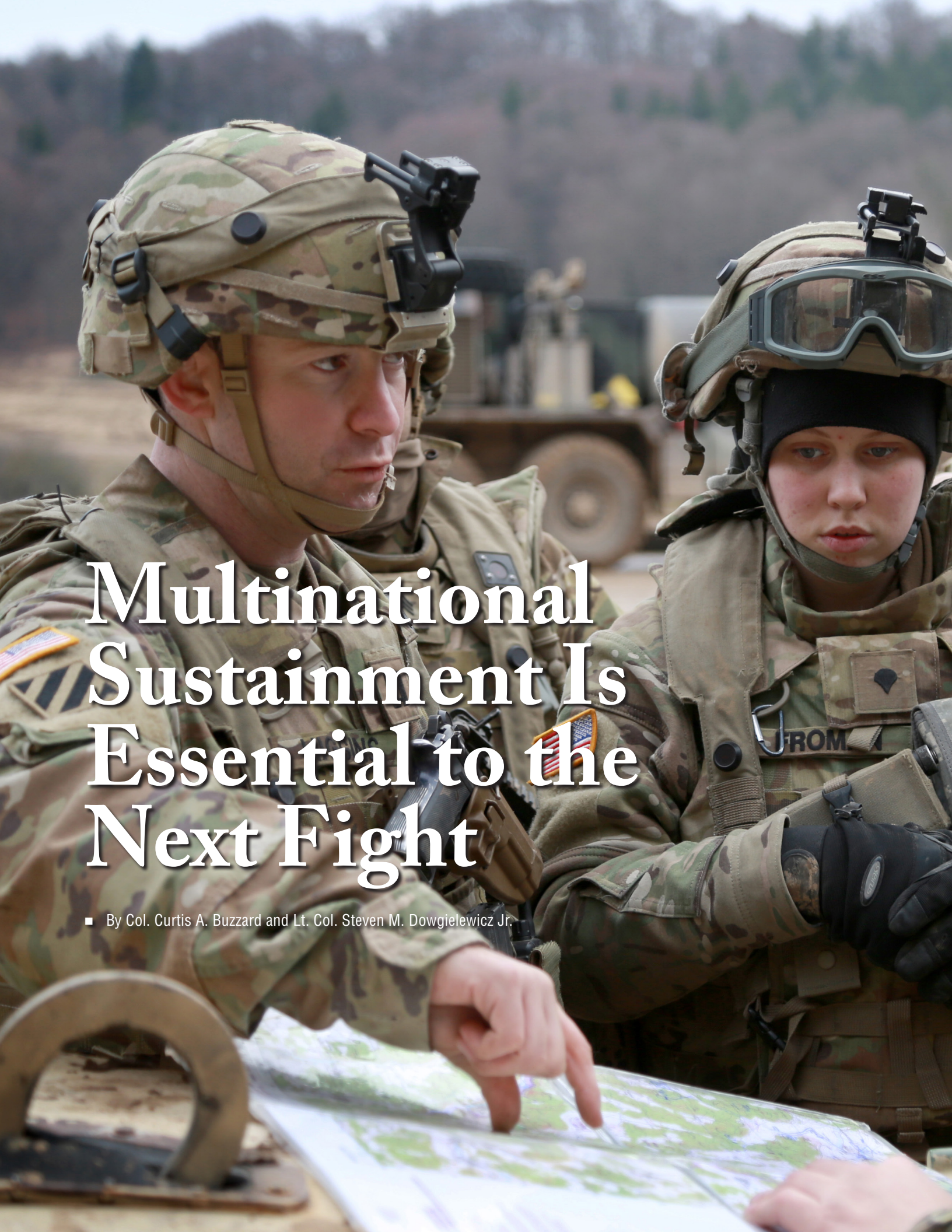
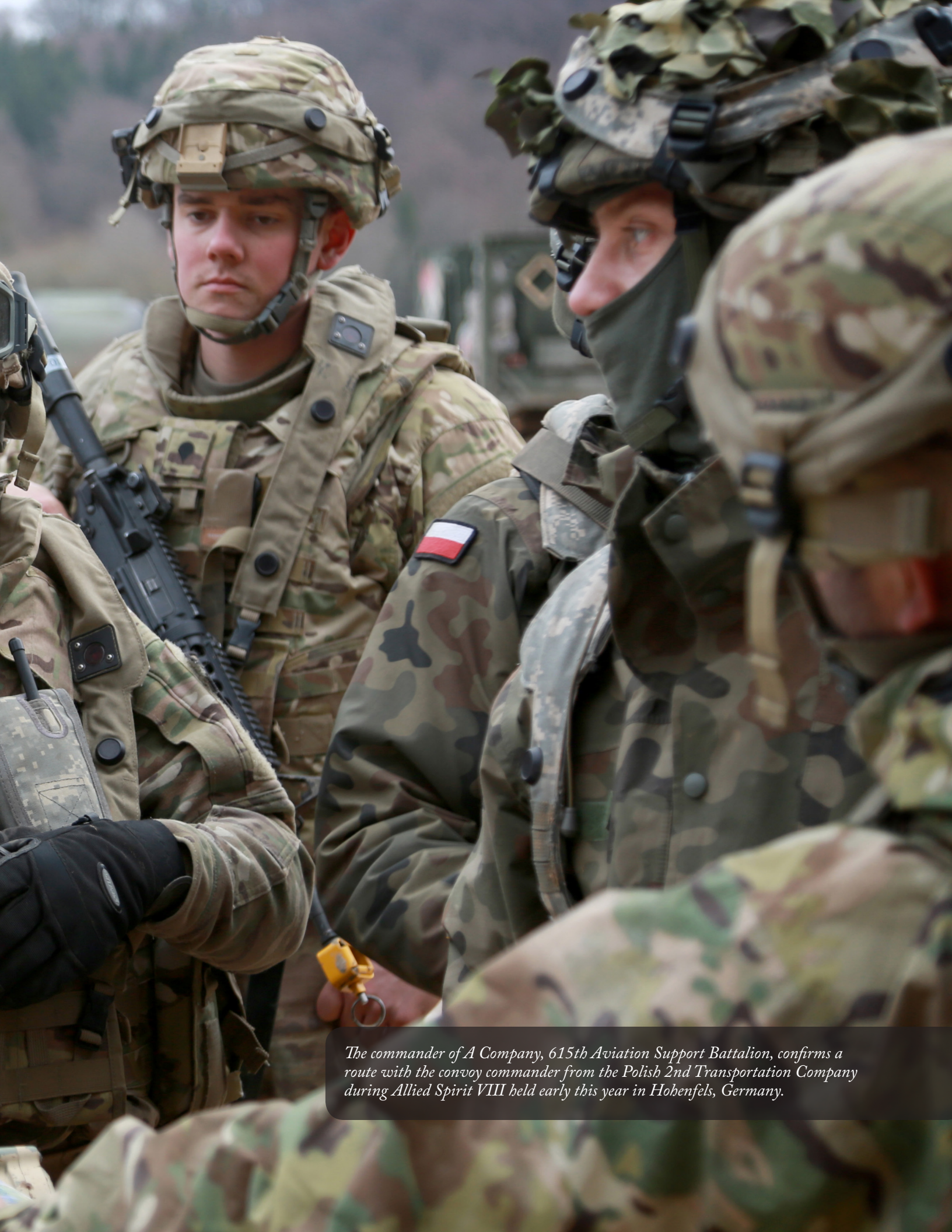


Multinational Sustainment Is Essential to the Next Fight

■ By Col. Curtis A. Buzzard and Lt. Col. Steven M. Dowgielewicz Jr.



The commander of A Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, confirms a route with the convoy commander from the Polish 2nd Transportation Company during Allied Spirit VIII held early this year in Hohenfels, Germany.

The Multi-Domain Battle environment requires the Army to operate as part of joint, multinational force down to the tactical level. This force will require integrated multinational sustainment of forces.

In a 1948 speech to the National War College, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower said that when it came to building a multinational alliance, "one of our great problems was what to do about the matter of administration, and particularly about administration as it applies to supply."

Undoubtedly, the effects of our past 16 years of conflict have conditioned leaders to have a very different understanding of how sustainment operations are executed. For the most part, units were based in large forward operating bases, stockpiled large amounts of supplies, managed a relatively small number of commodities (for example, small-arms ammunition and not tank rounds), had low casualty rates, and did not have to defend rear areas. U.S. allies enjoyed air superiority, uninterrupted communications, and a relatively slow operating tempo.

Fighting a near-peer adversary requires a much different approach, and units of all warfighting functions are challenged in meeting the demands of the European Multi-Domain Battle operational environment.

According to Field Manual 3-0, Operations, conducting large-scale combat operations presents the greatest overall challenge for the Army. The Army must prepare for the challenge of operating against near-peer adversaries that leverage multi-domain, anti-access/area-denial capabilities and contest all domains.

Recognizing current operational and strategic realities, the Army will need to operate as part of a joint, multinational force at every level of command, even the tactical level. At the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany, this is how we train. JMRC brings together multiple nations' militaries to train with U.S. forces. Unlike other combat training centers, JMRC's focus is multinational operations at the tactical level.

A multinational force faces the challenge of multinational sustainment operations. Field Manual 3-16, The Army in Multinational Operations, notes that failing to account for the differences in the ways our allies and partners sustain their forces affects logistics support to multinational forces. This article discusses the importance of coordinating sustainment operations and provides observed trends and best practices concerning expeditionary logistics challenges in multinational operations.

U.S. and Partner Preparedness

U.S. units are resourced and trained to independently deploy expeditionary forces around the globe and sustain themselves in a prolonged conflict. Many of our allies and partners are not. A coordinated sustainment effort is required to ensure unity of effort to complement allied and partner nations' capabilities and minimize their differences and challenges.

JMRC exercises are designed to replicate operational realities, which highlight the doctrinal, equipment, and procedural differences in logistics and sustainment operations and allow units to develop and reinforce best practices.

The scenario for these exercises is built upon the NATO Article 5 principle of collective defense—an attack against one NATO member is an attack against all. This operational environment blends live, virtual, and constructive components to replicate an adaptive, near-peer adversary that employs a mix of traditional, unconventional, and hybrid strategies. This training environment allows JMRC to ensure rotational training units operate in an intense, complex, and realistic environment.

Replicating highly adaptive enemies in a dynamic, ever-changing environment creates the necessary conditions for units to improve while learning to operate at the threshold of failure.

To help units understand multinational logistics and sustainment, JMRC incorporates units into an integrated multinational task force, which includes a higher headquarters, adjacent units, and unified action partners. Consider a training exercise

involving the French NATO Rapid Reaction Corps Headquarters with four multinational subordinate brigades: a Polish mechanized brigade, a Lithuanian mechanized brigade, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and the French and U.K. Airborne Combined Joint Expeditionary Force.

During the exercise, sustainment comes from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment (CR) Regimental Support Squadron (RSS), the 173rd Brigade Support Battalion (BSB), a Polish BSB, and the combined U.K. and French Combat Service Support Group. Given this task organization, interoperability is clearly a challenge.

Sustainment rapidly becomes the critical warfighting function as exercise participants are required to coordinate their efforts. Given theater requirements and the tactical scenario, there is no option to manage sustainment independently.

NATO Allied Joint Publication-01 states, "The effectiveness of Allied forces in peace, crisis or in conflict depends on the ability of the forces provided to operate together coherently, effectively and efficiently."

The replicated reality at the JMRC makes multinational sustainment challenges apparent. These challenges include a common understanding of the services to be provided, language barriers, units of measurement, and differences in classes of supply and reporting formats.

Logistics Versus Sustainment

A common understanding is the starting point for effective multinational operations. The difference in meaning between logistics and sustainment in the U.S. Army is very clear. Army Doctrine Publication 4-0, Sustainment, defines logistics as "planning and executing the movement and support of forces." It does not include personnel services or health service support. The publication describes sustainment as "the provision of logistics, personnel services, and health service support necessary to maintain operations until successful mission completion."

Within NATO, logistics is defined as the science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces, to include medical and health service support but not personnel services. When a U.S. organization is tasked with sustainment, personnel services are included and do not have to be added as a caveat. If that same organization were tasked to execute logistics, it would not plan for medical and health service support without a common understanding of what is meant by the term logistics.

Language Barriers

Sometimes the challenge is more than just the definition. Although the primary language of NATO is English, only three of the 29 NATO countries use English as their primary language. Many NATO countries have personnel, especially at the senior levels, who speak English or have attended U.S. military schools. However, more junior personnel tend to use only their native languages.

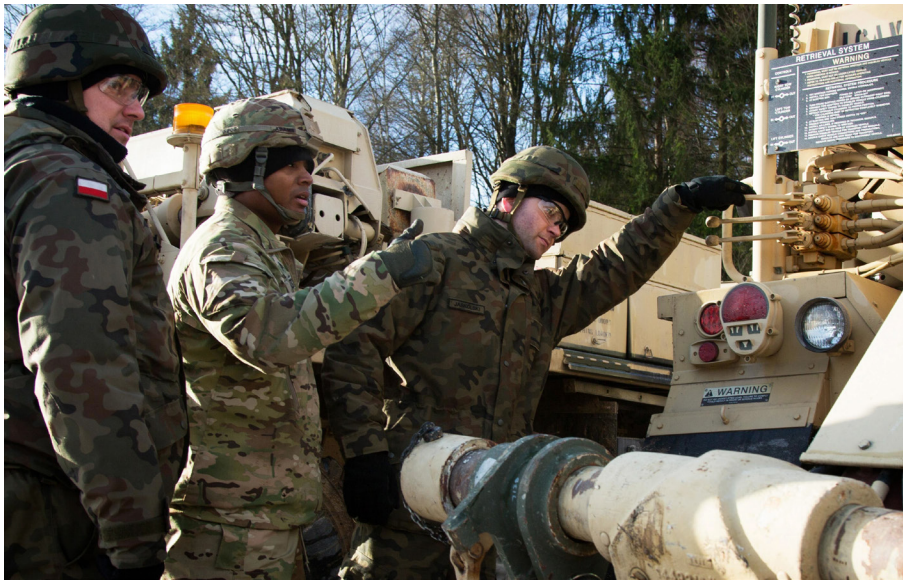
In a multinational environment, Soldiers who speak other languages can be powerful enablers. During Swift Response 2017, the 173rd BSB quickly identified a Soldier who could speak Italian and another who could speak Dutch and placed them at the critical logistics nodes. This significantly improved the sustainment process.

Units of Measurement

Another challenge is the different methods used to compute requirements. U.S. forces use gallons and pounds, but only two other countries do the same: Myanmar and Liberia. Further complicating requirements calculations is the fact that there are two different liquid gallon measurements. The United Kingdom uses an imperial gallon, which is equal to .83 U.S. liquid gallons.

To prevent confusion during resupply planning and execution, a common unit of measurement must be identified. During Allied Spirit VII, the 2nd CR RSS was the lead sustainment unit for a Lithuanian infantry brigade. During the brigade's joint and combined academics program, a pre-rotation weeklong development session, the RSS required all logisticians to follow NATO doctrine and use the metric system for logistics.

The human dimension of interoperability was easy to achieve, but it



A Soldier from the 82nd Engineer Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, assists Polish soldiers of the 12th Mechanized Division with using a M984 wrecker during exercise Allied Spirit VIII at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, on Jan. 19, 2018. (Photo by Spc. Randy Wren)

was the technical aspect that caused challenges. For example, U.S. tankers measure fuel in gallons, and the Logistics Estimation Workbook and other planning tools use gallons.

With a nonstandard unit of measurement, a fuel request may be converted between metric and imperial gallons four or more times as it moves from the forward support company back to a Defense Logistics Agency country contract. Repeated conversions will result in volume discrepancies, which can affect operations. Planners must determine differences in methods used to compute requirements and ensure units account for them.

Classes of Supply

U.S. Soldiers are taught 10 classes of supply early in their careers. No matter their military occupational specialty, Soldiers know a class I request brings food and class IX request brings repair parts. NATO operates with five classes of supply, and while this system is somewhat linked with the U.S. system, there are significant disconnects. There is no Rosetta stone for translating between the two systems. Instead, a common understanding must be agreed upon prior to a NATO operation.

Another challenge is how the classes of supply are understood by each country. U.S. Soldiers know to request class IV (construction and barrier materials) prior to going into defense in order to build obstacles using preconfigured loads that are based on obstacle size and depth. During an Allied Spirit rotation, one nation prioritized the use of natural materials as obstacles instead of transporting wire and pickets forward.

Before first contact with the enemy, the multinational force must be in agreement on the definitions of classes of supply in published orders.

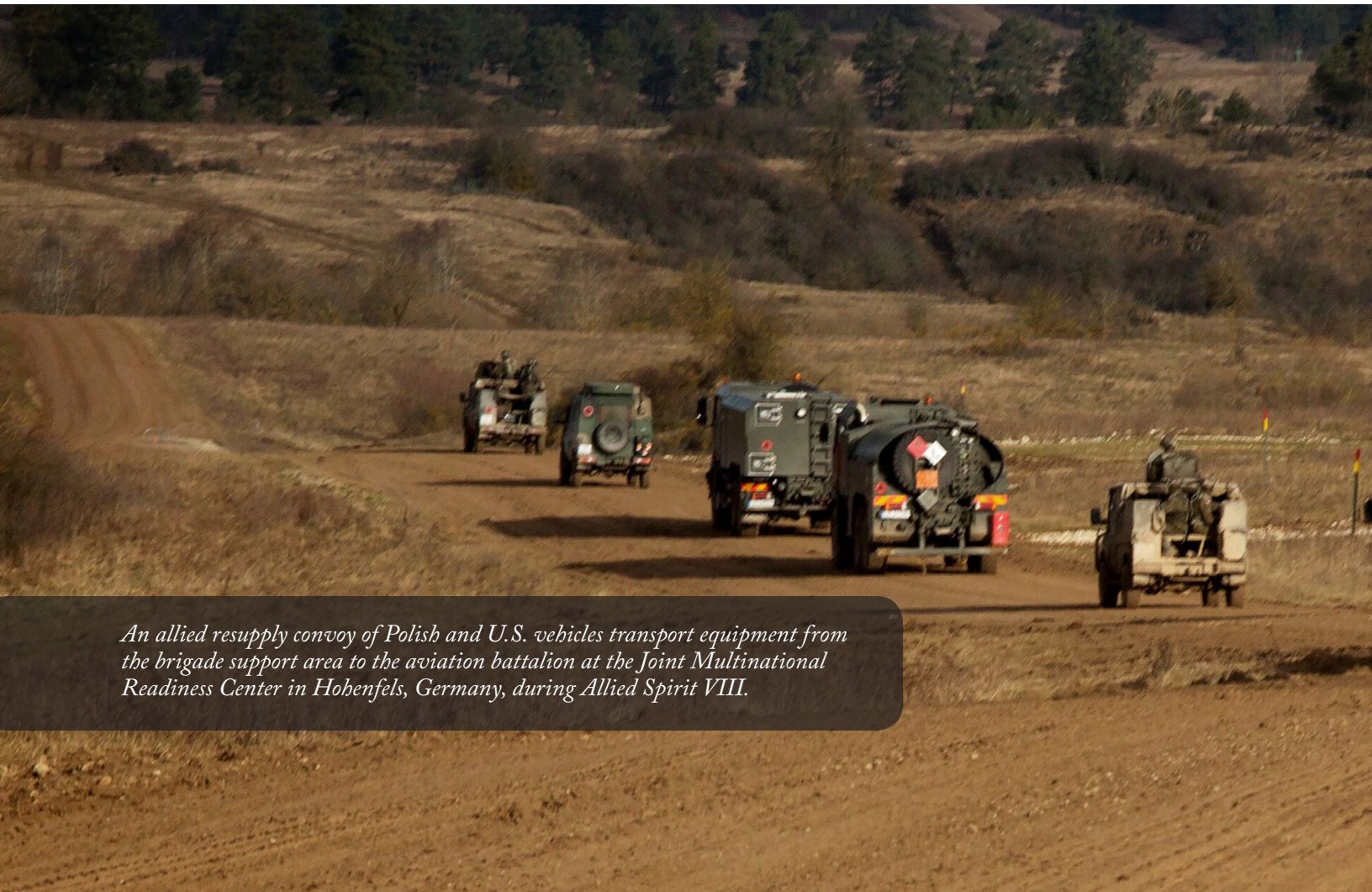
Reporting Formats

A survey of Army brigade combat teams would produce many different standards for logistics status reports and logistics estimates. The only common requirement for logistics reports and estimates is to be short, simple, and easy to transmit in a degraded communications environment.

Under a NATO task organization, reporting is based on standardized reports resident in the Logistics Functional Area Services (LOGFAS) system. There are four primary reports: the logistics assessment report (what you have), the move assessment report (route and node information), the logistics assistance request (what you need), and the medical assessment report (current capacity and status).

There is also a logistics assistance response, which is a form that is returned to the requesting unit to let it know what it will receive. Although NATO relies on LOGFAS, the system has not been adopted by the U.S. Army. From the U.S. perspective, these reports are cumbersome because of their length and required connectivity to LOGFAS or email.

At the JMRC, units have worked around differing formats in several



An allied resupply convoy of Polish and U.S. vehicles transport equipment from the brigade support area to the aviation battalion at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, during Allied Spirit VIII.

ways. During Allied Spirit VII, the 2nd CR RSS provided the Lithuanian brigade S-4 with its home-station format for logistics reporting and estimates. Most of the elements within the brigade were able to use the reports.

The logistics status report had all required U.S. munitions listed in addition to many NATO munitions. However, the RSS did not account for Italian, non-NATO, field artillery munitions. Those munitions were added in the comments block at the end of the form but were ultimately overlooked. After 24 hours of fire missions, the shortcoming in tracking these munitions was discovered and rectified.

During Allied Spirit VIII, the Polish 12th Mechanized Brigade S-4 initially wanted to use the NATO format for reporting, but its subordinate U.S. units had never seen the reports and did not understand how to use them. The brigade S-4 created a hybrid report that requested only information specific to the brigade task organization in order to simplify the process. Identifying friction points early helped achieve logistics efficiencies and provided greater flexibility and adaptability for the multinational force.

Current operational and strategic realities require tactical-level NATO interoperability; the United States cannot always be relied upon as lead nation for sustainment. Unity of effort is essential to increase flexibility, adaptability, and agility in support of multinational operations. Common logistics support and standardization across NATO has the potential to be much more efficient, but nations must agree to the standards, make interoperability a priority, and program the funds required to make it a reality.

There is no question that the next fight will be a multinational one. The question is whether the NATO logistics architecture will be able to sustain it.

At the JMRC, NATO units train the way they will fight in the future. The hope is that lessons learned here will help account for the differences in the way the United States, its allies, and partners sustain their forces to ensure a more coordinated and unified effort in multinational operations.

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