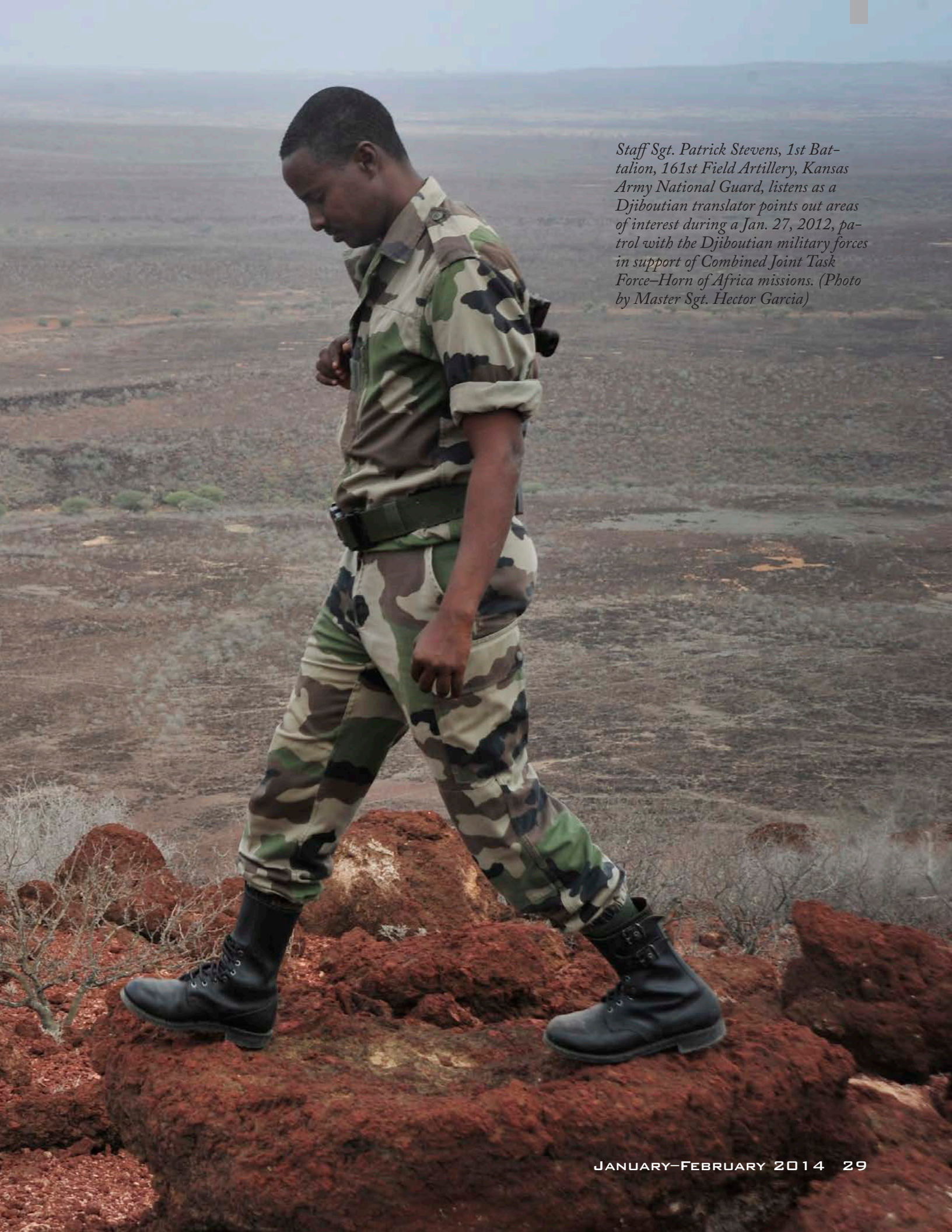


Overcoming Logistics Challenges in East Africa

The Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa has established a presence in East Africa to strengthen organic security capabilities, prevent conflict, and build partner-nation capacity.

■ By Lt. Cmdr. Akil R. King III, USN, Capt. Zackary H. Moss, USA, and Lt. Afi Y. Pittman, USN





Staff Sgt. Patrick Stevens, 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery, Kansas Army National Guard, listens as a Djiboutian translator points out areas of interest during a Jan. 27, 2012, patrol with the Djiboutian military forces in support of Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa missions. (Photo by Master Sgt. Hector Garcia)

Logisticians from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps have faced many overwhelming logistics obstacles over the course of our nation's illustrious military history. Logistics is the lifeline of military forces, and without the reliable availability and resupply of the requisite "bullets, beans, and black oil" necessary to sustain operations, warfighters are left in vulnerable situations and unable to accomplish their missions.

From those very first colonial-era battles to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, U.S. military supply professionals have adapted and overcome logistics hardships exacerbated by poor communications, inadequate planning, extreme weather, and a host of other issues.

Logisticians have benefited from logistics lessons learned from various conflicts on several continents over the last few centuries. So what challenging environment have we yet to encounter? It is the rarely mentioned continent and the one that remains largely undeveloped with tremendous potential for growth: Africa.

Attention on Africa

Africa is the world's second largest and second most populous continent, and it is also the poorest one. In recent years, powerful countries, such as the United States and China, have been paying increased attention to Africa.

The United States has come to realize that Africa holds significant strategic, political, and economic importance to its national interests. With 54 internationally recognized sovereign nations, at least one thousand languages, a multitude of distinct ethnicities, untold amounts of untapped valuable minerals and fossil fuel, and more than one billion people, Africa could be a vital player on the world stage.

With the 2002 stand up of the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa (CJTF–HOA) at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti (CLDJ), the United States established a positive

and enduring presence in East Africa and is now focused on helping to strengthen organic East African security capabilities, prevent conflict, and build partner-nation capacity.

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) is one of six unified geographic combatant commands within the Department of Defense unified command structure and has been headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, since Oct. 1, 2008. The United States has committed a vast amount of personnel, equipment, and materiel resources and has created a positive buzz throughout the continent.

In order to help facilitate efficient materiel support across the Horn of Africa, the CJTF–HOA Logistics Directorate (CJ–4) has established distribution networks to monitor and control logistics execution. In support of the CJTF–HOA commander's mission, the CJ–4 validates, prioritizes, deconflicts, and synchronizes logistics requirements before and during execution by fusing support capabilities in the combined joint operations area (CJOA) and in areas of interest.

In short, the CJ–4 serves as the lead staff element for logistics planning in support of at least nine forward operating locations (FOLs) and for implementing processes to streamline the sustainment pipeline. Joint logistics is the coordinated use, synchronization, and sharing of two or more military departments' logistics resources to support the joint force.

The CJ–4 integrates and synchronizes multifunctional sustainment operations for the CJOA, including supply, field services, transportation, maintenance, general engineering, human resources, financial management, legal support, religious support, health service support, resettlement, internment, and detainee operations. The CJ–4 develops interoperable logistics concepts and doctrine and clearly identifies and integrates the appropriate logistics processes, organizations, and command and control options to meet the commander's intent in the joint environment.

Tyranny of Distance

To gain an understanding of the logistics challenges present in East Africa, it is imperative to focus the lens on the unique challenges faced in meeting the logistics requirements in the CJOA. Perhaps the most pressing challenge is the "tyranny of distance" caused by the vast, highly diversified terrain spanning more than 1,500 miles across East Africa.

The term was coined based on the challenges faced while operating in a theater that is far greater in land mass than any other that U.S. forces have operated in thus far. The continent spans 11.7 million square miles—at least three times greater than the size of the United States—which presents many distribution challenges.

African countries in general lack infrastructure and have degraded road conditions that often make traveling very difficult. Some countries are more developed than others; however, logisticians cannot blindly apply logistics concepts and methods to all countries because they each have unique planning considerations.

As previously stated, Africa is a vast continent comprising individual sovereign nations. It is imperative to follow current customs and border procedures for each country in the assigned area of operations. Not having this knowledge could cause essential gear and equipment to be frustrated at an airport, seaport, or country border.

Overcoming Challenges

Implementing joint efforts and working with coalition and partner nations have allowed the CJ–4 to hone its skills and formulate methods to overcome logistics obstacles. In East Africa, logistics distribution commences at CLDJ, where the CJ–4 plans and coordinates in conjunction with the installation transportation office to provide finished products to the customers, which are the supported units at the FOLs.

Although the contingency contracting office and CJ–4 collectively work procurement from the point of

origin, CJTF-HOA stages the main logistics hub at CLDJ, which serves as the shipping and receiving hub for downrange FOLs.

Buying from local vendors can be difficult. Requesters are required to go through the available military supply systems before purchasing from a local vendor. If the supply system does not have the desired product and they do purchase from a local vendor, that vendor might not have the same quality of products that requesters are accustomed to.

Another challenge is the shipping time for the delivery of requested goods ordered through the supply system. Customers often wait 60, 90, and even 120 days for goods procured from the United States. At FOLs, this is counterproductive to mission accomplishment because it delays progress.

However, U.S. forces have avenues for receiving logistics products by land, sea, and air. The key global providers in the joint logistics environment are the military services, the Defense Logistics Agency, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and the U.S. Transportation Command. The U.S. Transportation Command controls distribution assets from the Air Mobility Command, Military Sealift Command, and Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command.

CJTF-HOA is strategically located adjacent to the Port of Djibouti, allowing access for commercial sealift, and near the Djibouti International Airport for airlift. With the approval of the joint task force commander, the CJ-4 finalized its own theater distribution plan in 2013, which defined transportation and distribution methods specific to East Africa.

AFRICOM and the CJ-4 established the African Surface Distribution Network, which controls the movement of cargo to outlying locations via surface transportation using prenegotiated contracts. This method was instrumental in significantly reducing the overall materiel delivery time from CLDJ to the FOLs.

Another method to maximize effi-

ciency and cost effectiveness, which also happens to be the fastest method, is to use air assets to move personnel and cargo to FOLs. CJTF-HOA is supported by airlift capabilities from various service components, and the Joint Movement Center (JMC) coordinates, prioritizes, and validates all air movements.

To identify cargo lift requirements, JMC created a "single voice" cargo report that consolidates individual customer cargo backlogs to supported locations. For example, if CJTF-HOA has a mission to support the

of companies that can be accessed online to help avoid redundancy.

For instance, because of a high turnover rate of personnel in the joint environment and having supported units in remote locations, incoming units can access the ALN portal and identify promising options for African companies to conduct business within a specific locale. This saves time and effort that would be wasted by searching for vendors.

East Africa is indeed an extremely challenging operating environment

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movement of distinguished visitors to Manda Bay, Kenya, and a 200-pound shipment of cargo has already been approved for airlift to Manda Bay, JMC would combine the movements as long as the planning requirements are met for the scheduled airframe.

Adaptive Logistics Network

The 10 East African countries located within the CJTF-HOA area of responsibility share the common characteristics of being emerging-market economies and containing largely undeveloped physical infrastructures and immeasurable untapped natural resources.

In an effort to help its African partners cultivate their resources and further develop an organic African business infrastructure, AFRICOM is developing the Adaptive Logistics Network (ALN) initiative.

ALN is a central database that documents credible African businesses and their capabilities with the intent of linking them with customers that include the U.S. military, nongovernmental organizations, contractors, and multinational corporations. In essence, it is a repository of resident knowledge about the core capabilities

with an abundance of unique logistics challenges to overcome. Despite the challenges experienced over the past decade throughout the Horn of Africa, the CJ-4 logisticians at CJTF-HOA press on smartly and take comfort in the saying, "If you can survive logistics here, you can survive logistics anywhere."

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