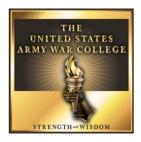
# Strategy Research Project

# Setting the Theater: Lessons Learned from Recent Operations

by

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United States Army War College Class of 2016

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### Setting the Theater: Lessons Learned from Recent Operations

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### Abstract

Often the largest force in a joint area of operations, the Army owns the majority of the tasks and responsibilities required to set the theater. With finite resources and the preponderance of its sustainment units in the Reserve Component, the Army's recent operational experiences in Afghanistan (2001-2002), Haiti (2010), and Liberia (2014) offer recurring and actionable lessons for planners, staffs, and commanders. The Army is often challenged to set the theater due to an inadequate logistics command and control structure, an inability to rapidly build logistics capacity to meet sustainment requirements, and incomplete planning and resourcing that routinely results in capability gaps during the opening phases of operations. The Army should improve the employment of its logistics force structure through a combination of different initiatives sponsored across the Army and the joint force. These initiatives will improve logistics command and control, provide more responsive support during contingency operations, and mitigate recurring capability gaps.

### Setting the Theater: Lessons Learned from Recent Operations

The days of predictable rotations are over...logisticians must prepare to support a military that is smaller but more responsive...It must be ready to support ground combat operations with what it has today and tomorrow.

-LTG Gustave "Gus" Perna<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the start of military operations, the Army owns the majority of directed tasks and responsibilities that are required to set the theater. Over the last fifteen years, the Army was challenged in its ability to set the theater in Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan, 2001-2002), Operation Unified Response (Haiti, 2010), and Operation United Assistance (Liberia, 2014). The Army was faced with similar questions and concerns across the three operations, especially with respect to sustainment unit force structure and the timeliness of its logistics response. The Army struggles to set the theater due to an inadequate logistics command and control structure, an inability to rapidly build logistics capacity, and incomplete planning and resourcing that contributed to capability gaps during the opening phases of operations.

To address these challenges, the Army should first relook and adjust its approach to assigning sustainment commands in support of Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) and Combatant Commands (CCMDs). Next, the Army must creatively work to improve the timeliness of its logistics response given that by 2020, 80% of the Army's sustainment structure will reside in the U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and Army National Guard (ARNG).<sup>2</sup> Concurrently, the Army should improve its planning and resourcing – in terms of both force structure and sustainment assets – to mitigate capability gaps that consistently degrade support during the opening phases of operations.

### The Army's Role in Setting the Theater

With a myriad of responsibilities, the Army plays an invaluable role in setting the theater and is the Service with the most capability and capacity to provide the joint force endurance and operational reach. Per Army Doctrine Reference Publication 4-0 (Sustainment), setting the theater includes "all activities directed at establishing favorable conditions for conducting military operations in theater, generally driven by the support requirements of specific operation plans and other requirements established in the geographic combatant commander's (GCCs) theater campaign plan."<sup>3</sup> Sustainment serves as a critical joint function, providing CCMDs the ability to conduct operations in depth for a prolonged duration.

The CCMDs provide sustainment in conjunction with the subordinate Service component commanders, combat support agencies, and subordinate commands.<sup>4</sup> The challenge for the CCMDs lies in the organization, integration, and synchronization of the sustainment mission. Logistics units and assets contributing to the joint sustainment operations rarely fall under the same command.<sup>5</sup> Executing the GCCs Directive Authority For Logistics (DAFL) enables the designation of lead service responsibilities, assigns agency tasks, and provides structure; the DAFL facilitates joint logistics command and control. In conjunction with the DAFL, the CCMD will designate common-user logistics (CUL) responsibilities to further organize assets, mitigate redundancies, and steward finite resources.

The Army often functions as the largest force with the joint area of operations. CCMDs rely on the Army's structure, capability, and capacity as they plan and execute set the theater tasks. Accordingly, the CCMD routinely assigns the Army CUL and other

joint force support responsibilities with its role as the dominant user, and in some cases, most capable Service for a particular common supply item or function.<sup>6</sup>

The Army's wide array of missions are daunting when it enables the joint force to set the theater. In addition to CUL assignments, the Secretary of Defense established Executive Agent (EA) responsibilities that delineate specific requirements for Service departments to provide to other Service departments. Issued through Department of Defense Instructions (DODIs) and Directives (DODDs), these enduring requirements enable planning, programming, and budgets.<sup>7</sup> The Army has 42 diverse EA responsibilities to include: the Military Postal Service; the Official Mail Program; production, coordination, and distribution of land-based water resources to the CCMDs; Single Manager for Conventional Ammunition; the Department of Defense Detainee Program; Armed Services Blood Program; and, the Defense Mortuary Affairs Program.<sup>8</sup> Other Army Support to Other Services (ASOS) includes: overland petroleum support in wartime; Common User Land Transportation (CULT) in overseas areas; airdrop of equipment and supplies; and, intra-theater patient evacuation.<sup>9</sup> These enormous, resource-intensive missions place significant demands on the Army's force structure, and especially on its sustainment units.

### Force Structure

In support of a CCMD, the ASCC is designated as a Theater Army (TA).<sup>10</sup> The TA serves as an enabling headquarters and conducts set the theater tasks that include: theater opening; port and terminal operations; joint reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (JRSOI); logistics-over-the-shore operations; force modernization; theater-specific training; administrative control; and, redeployment tasks

that support reverse JRSOI and the return of the force to home station.<sup>11</sup> To accomplish these tasks, the TA relies on the Theater Sustainment Command (TSC).

Assigned to the TA, the TSC serves as the senior Army sustainment command and operates as the engine behind the Army's support to joint, interagency, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as multinational forces. In order to synchronize and integrate sustainment, TSCs coordinate with, and leverage relationships across, the joint logistics enterprise (JLEnt). The JLEnt consists of multiple actors including: other Services, interagency partners, multinational forces and allies, NGOs, and the industrial base.<sup>12</sup> With the Army often the predominant land force, the TSC possesses the capacity to serve as the joint logistics headquarters providing sustainment in support of the Joint Force Commander (JFC).

The TSC executes its robust mission of port opening, theater opening, surface distribution, and sustainment by employing multiple modular units that help comprise the Army's logistics structure. Expeditionary Support Commands (ESCs) are Army logistics headquarters that serve under TSCs. With its focus on the broader theater mission, the TSC HQs is capable of serving as the joint logistics HQs in support of the JFC, but is not postured for rapid deployment. ESC HQs are smaller, more agile, and built to support expeditionary missions. ESCs enable the TSC mission by providing logistics command and control for theater opening, JRSOI, distribution, and sustainment, optimally in support of a Corps-sized land component or joint task force (JTF).<sup>13</sup> With augmentation from other services and agencies, the ESC can also serve as the joint logistics HQs within the operational area.<sup>14</sup>

Depending on the size and characteristics of an operational area, the TSC can extend its own reach through the employment of one of more ESCs, as well as one or more Sustainment Brigades (SUST BDEs). Sustainment Brigades are modular HQs that serve under TSCs and ESCs in a deployed environment, and help link operational to tactical level sustainment through the employment of multiple Combat Sustainment Support Battalions (CSSBs), and other functional sustainment units (to include finance and human resources support). The Sustainment Brigade, as of 2015 realigned with its parent Army Division at home station, provides area support to Army forces, and as required, to joint and multinational forces.<sup>15</sup> Similar to the ESC, SUST BDEs are modular HQs and normally deploy with few organic units. ESCs and SUST BDEs require and receive augmentation through total force employment of CSSBs and functional sustainment units. This requires the ESCs and SUST BDEs to conduct integration and team building of their own while concurrently executing the theater opening, distribution, and sustainment mission.

### Reliance on the Total Force

Across the total force, Army logistics relies heavily on the reserve component (RC) to accomplish its set the theater mission. As part of the Army's recent re-shaping and down-sizing efforts that started in 2012, the Army logistics community re-looked its force structure and, in response, developed the 2020 Army Concept of Support.<sup>16</sup> The 2020 Army Concept of Support integrates the concept of support across the total force – an operational imperative.

This shift of Army logistics force structure to the RC is not a new phenomenon. It started in the early-1990s following the end of the Cold War and Operation Desert Storm and continued in earnest as the Army transitioned away from Operation Iraqi

Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Over the past twenty five years, the restructuring of Army logistics resulted in several notable changes, including: the degraded ability of TSCs to rapidly deploy forward; the change from Corps Support Commands to ESCs; the reliance on the ESC as the rapidly deployable logistics command and control headquarters; the shift from Division Support Commands to SUST BDEs.

In 2017, 78% of the Army's logistics force structure will reside in the RC between the USAR and the ARNG; in 2020, that figure will rise to 80% -- 56% in the USAR and 24% in the ARNG.<sup>17</sup> Many of the Army's lower-density and unique logistics capabilities solely reside in the RC; for example: the Army's sole Petroleum Group is in the USAR, along with its only two Ammunition Battalions.<sup>18</sup> It takes time to deploy reserve forces. Per Title 10 U.S. Code, the Service secretary can mobilize reserve forces for 365 days.<sup>19</sup> Unit training, mobilization, deployment and demobilization may require up to 75 of the 365 available days.<sup>20</sup>

The Army operates with a mix of active component (AC) and RC sustainment HQs. The Army has 5 TSCs – 3 active and 2 reserve (ARNG – 1, USAR – 1). Each of the 5 TSCs supports a CCMD: 8<sup>th</sup> TSC in USPACOM; 21<sup>st</sup> TSC in USEUCOM; 1<sup>st</sup> TSC with USCENTCOM; 377<sup>th</sup> TSC (RC) in USSOUTHCOM; and 167<sup>th</sup> TSC (RC) in USNORTHCOM. The Army has 14 ESCs – 4 active and 10 reserve (ARNG -- 2, USAR – 8). The 4 active ESCs support a Corps or Theater Army: 593<sup>rd</sup> ESC supports I Corps; 13<sup>th</sup> ESC supports III Corps; 3<sup>d</sup> ESC supports XVIII ABN Corps; and 19<sup>th</sup> ESC supports 8<sup>th</sup> US Army in Korea. The 10 reserve ESCs provide rotational depth.<sup>21</sup>

Figure 1 provides a graphic depiction of the Army's TSCs and deployable ESCs (note:  $19^{th}$  ESC is not reflected as a deployable ESC, as it is committed to  $8^{th}$  US Army's mission in Korea).<sup>22</sup> Beyond the TSCs and ESCs, linking the operational level of logistics to the tactical, the Army functions with 30 SUST BDEs – 11 active and 19 reserve (ARNG – 10, USAR – 9).<sup>23</sup>

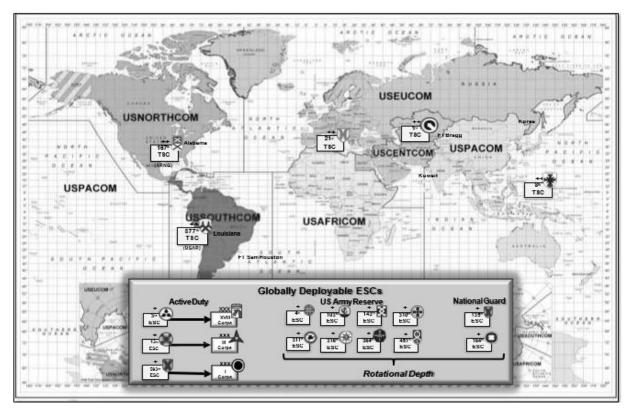


Figure 1: The Army's TSCs and Deployable ESCs<sup>24</sup>

## Persistent Challenges during Recent Operations

There are several important points to consider from the preceding review of the Army's logistics force structure. First, the Army logistics units that provide command and control from the strategic to the operational level – the TSC, ESC, and SUST BDE – are headquarters. These headquarters possess very limited actual logistics capability, and normally require the integration and team-building of units in theater to support the JFC.

With a limited number of TSCs and few active ESCs, circumstances may develop in crisis action planning scenarios where all the ESCs are either committed operationally, or not yet mission ready and trained (through the Army's Sustained Readiness Model) following a recent deployment. Next, the deployment of the bulk of the Army's logistics units and capabilities comes from the RC – and it takes time to mobilize those forces. Although logistics planners and leaders have worked endlessly to mitigate this friction, the requirements of timing and capability have not always meshed, resulting in capability gaps of units and logistics assets. During recent operational experiences in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Liberia all of these challenges have been on display.

### Logistics Command and Control

The Army's ad hoc approach to providing logistics command and control degraded synchronization and resulted in sub-optimal concepts of support as it set the theater during Operations Enduring Freedom and Unified Response. For the logistician operating in a wartime or crisis action scenario, there are an innumerable amount of variables to negotiate and overcome. Geography, weather, force protection, the establishment of secure Lines of Communication (LOCs), and the synchronization of sustainment across time and space are just some of the difficult challenges. Establishing the appropriate logistics command and control to address these challenges and support the JFC ranks at the top of the priority list.

### Afghanistan

The opening phases of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan demonstrate the ad hoc application of logistics command and control structure and the insufficient capacity of mismatched sustainment units. Following the attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, American forces began to deploy into the United States Central

Command (USCENTCOM) Area of Operations. Army Special Operations Forces established an operating base at Kanabad Air Base near Karshi, Uzbekistan – this base became known as Karshi-Kanabad Air Base, or K2. The 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group comprised the core of Joint Special Operations Task Force-North (JSOTF-N).

Led by COL John Mulholland, JSOTF-N's mission was to conduct unconventional warfare and eliminate safe havens for terrorist groups in Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> As JSOTF-N started to deploy special operations detachment alpha (ODA) teams into Afghanistan, K2's mission and footprint grew. This required Army forces to serve as a theater enabling force, providing force protection and sustainment for JSOTF-N and a host of other supporting forces at K2. With that requirement, some of the earliest arriving forces into K2 and the theater of operations were logistics forces.<sup>26</sup>

In an unusual arrangement, the 528<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Support Battalion (SOSB) provided the initial support to all units arriving at K2.<sup>27</sup> While the 528<sup>th</sup> SOSB was capable of supporting JSOTF-N's core ODA teams, its capacity was exceeded by the rapid expansion of the overall K2 mission, which included Air Force Special Operations units and conventional units executing base defense and other supporting missions. The conventional units providing base support for K2 comprised over 60% of JSOTF-N, or what became known as Task Force Dagger.<sup>28</sup> Providing further reinforcement and capacity, the 507<sup>th</sup> Corps Support Group (CSG) Headquarters with elements of the 530<sup>th</sup> Corps Support Battalion arrived in October 2001 to sustain forces in the region and execute base support for K2.<sup>29</sup>

With support flowing to K2 (and throughout Afghanistan) from the 21<sup>st</sup> Theater Support Command in Germany and more forces, equipment, and supplies arriving, the

overall logistics command and control mission grew exponentially.<sup>30</sup> Further stress on the developing logistics system occurred in late-November 2001, when the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) wanted to establish a forward operating base in Afghanistan to enable follow-on force projection, building on the tactical and operational success of the U.S. Special Forces and the Northern Alliance. ARCENT rapidly established Task Force Bagram in Afghanistan employing forces from the United Kingdom, Kuwait, and engineers and logisticians from K2.<sup>31</sup> The sustainment and base support mission, now at both K2 and Bagram, stressed the capacity of the 507<sup>th</sup> CSG.<sup>32</sup>

Constrained additionally by force caps and mobility limitations, ARCENT logisticians creatively worked to meet their set the theater and sustainment requirements throughout Afghanistan and the operating area.<sup>33</sup> Planners and staff positioned medical assets throughout the region to support K2, Bagram, and other joint bases while simultaneously coordinating base support and managing 140 different ASOS requirements.<sup>34</sup> This drove supporting units, like the 561<sup>st</sup> Logistics Task Force (LTF), to split out functional teams and command and control nodes to execute multiple missions. In the case of the 561<sup>st</sup> LTF, the missions included trans-loading commercial aircraft to intra-theater airlift at Doha International Airport in Qatar, while concurrently providing base support to staging areas in Pakistan.<sup>35</sup>

By early 2002, Bagram Air Base's population exceeded 4,000, overtaxing the original base infrastructure and the capacity of the supporting logistics units.<sup>36</sup> With burdens on water supplies, housing, sanitation, and power, the 129<sup>th</sup> Corps Support Battalion (CSB; a pre-cursor to later Combat Sustainment Support Battalions, or CSSBs), the 92d Combat Engineer Battalion (Heavy) and a Facilities Engineer Team

(FET) took on the mission of planning, construction, and sustainment. For the now-129<sup>th</sup> LTF, their command and control requirements expanded tremendously, taking on the mission of running the base itself, assuming responsibilities from TF Bagram.<sup>37</sup> This highlighted the prevailing themes of early OEF sustainment: consistently overtaxed units, sometimes split over larger distances, lacking the required depth and capacity, but "punching above their weight class" and exceeding their capability to provide creative and responsive sustainment solutions.

While the 528<sup>th</sup> SOSB, 507<sup>th</sup> CSG, and their supporting units ultimately met the demanding challenges at the outset of OEF, the depth and span of the mission required greater logistics command and control structure to set the theater and provide sustainment. The mission exceeded the scope of an ad hoc logistics force structure, reliant on brigade-level headquarters. In retrospect, a deployable TSC HQs (early entry command post) or an ESC construct would have been a better fit.

Haiti

Operation United Response in Haiti provides another example of ad hoc logistics command and control – in this case, a chaotic structure that impeded synchronization across stakeholders and slowed the development of the theater distribution network. Following the devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti on January 12, 2010, United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) established Joint Task Force-Haiti (JTF-Haiti) to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster to the Haitian people. Operating in support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), JTF-Haiti and its partners tirelessly and selflessly worked to save lives, mitigate suffering, and repair critical infrastructure in the devastated Caribbean country.

Confronting an immensely complex operating environment that included over 230,000 people killed and over 2 million more displaced and homeless, the "most significant challenge facing the U.S. military and the international community in the initial opening phase was logistics".<sup>38</sup> Under the direction of Lieutenant General Ken Keen (Deputy Commander, USSOUTHCOM), JTF-Haiti moved swiftly into action, coordinating a U.S. military flow of forces and resources that was "quick and effective, but not always efficient".<sup>39</sup> The logistics response was "proactive and robust", but had several challenges that included: an unintegrated, non-synchronized logistics command and control structure; gaps in situational awareness that impeded the determination of requirements and priorities; and, subsequently, an inability to adjudicate and enforce discipline in the flow of people and materiel. These challenges stressed a system that depended solely on the degraded international airport.<sup>40</sup>

The initial source of the unintegrated, and ad hoc logistics command and control structure can be traced back to a 2008 SOUTHCOM decision to operate with a non-standard staff, functionally aligned across directorates. SOUTHCOM's leadership disassembled the traditional CCMD J-coded staff model and replaced it with functional directorates in order to better interface with their interagency and NGO partners in the region.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, in January 2010, during the initial phases of Operation Unified Response, SOUTHCOM's response was hampered by the absence of an organized and functional J-4 team, the lack of a standing JTF, and a Global Response Force (GRF) without a joint logistics command and control element.<sup>42</sup>

Without assigned forces to a standing JTF, SOUTHCOM had to build out JTF-Haiti through the Joint Staff and Joint Forces Command, utilizing the Request For

Forces (RFF) process.<sup>43</sup> The RFF process moved quickly, but could not by itself, enable a rapid deployment of the 377<sup>th</sup> TSC (allocated to SOUTHCOM) or the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC. These modular logistics HQs required the mobilization of supporting logistics units -- primarily in the RC.<sup>44</sup> Without being resourced with supporting units, already assigned to a JTF or in support of the GRF, the 377<sup>th</sup> TSC and the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC were not structured for rapid deployment.

SOUTHCOM and the Joint Staff mitigated these initial obstacles through General Fraser's (CDR, USSOUTHCOM) decision to convert the GCC staff back to a traditionally J-coded staff and the deployment of the XVIII Airborne Corps Command Post to provide logistics leadership and planning. JTF-Haiti received contributions from across the JLEnt that included U.S. Transportation Command's (USTRANSCOM) Joint Task Force-Port Opening (JTF-PO) and Joint Forces Command's (JFCOM) Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC), which provided additional joint logistics planners.<sup>45</sup> Even with the mitigating reconfiguration and augmentation, most of JTF-Haiti's early accomplishments can be attributed to strong leadership, force of will, and ad hoc arrangements that coordinated operations and sustainment. In a moment of reflection several weeks into the operation, SOUTHCOM's Chief of Staff, Brigadier General David Garza stated that "the Haiti earthquake was a logistics centric event and a COCOM must quickly establish a theater logistics network to support and monitor all stakeholder demands."<sup>46</sup> The gap in logistics command and control structure continued as "two weeks after the Haitian earthquake, JTF-Haiti did not have processes in place to match relief needs with arriving supplies."47

The early logistics support of Operation Unified Response, led by the XVIII Airborne Corps Command Post and their logisticians, made an enormous difference for the Haitian people and the whole of government effort. While the XVIII Airborne Corps Command Post exists to plan, synchronize, and execute operations, it is not designed to serve as a TSC or ESC. SOUTHCOM's decision to re-organize its staff mid-stride to regain equilibrium and enable coordination with other military and interagency organizations was important, but the initial missteps caused irreversible confusion and slowed momentum. From the sustainment perspective, the lack of an established JTF with a ready-to-deploy TSC or ESC proved costly, and serves as the key lesson for future commanders and planners.

### Timeliness Concerns: An Inability to Rapidly Build Logistics Capacity

In recent contingency operations, the Army's logistics response has also been characterized by an inability to rapidly arrive and build logistics capacity. While the appropriate logistics command and control structure serves an absolutely critical role in setting a theater, there is equally intrinsic value in the timeliness of the response. Acknowledging the unexpected nature of contingency operations and their inherent challenges, the slow deployment of RC logistics forces (80% of the Army's logistics forces will be in the RC by 2020) negatively impacted Army's response in both Afghanistan and Haiti. Logistics units that can arrive quickly to a contingency response – and be among the very first arriving units – are vital to setting the theater and synchronizing sustainment.

### Afghanistan

During the early stages of OEF, ARCENT's need for theater enabling forces required a more responsive deployment of units and capabilities than originally

anticipated. Logistics, medical, and force protection units, with many deploying from across the USAR, proved challenging to request and took time to mobilize and deploy.<sup>48</sup> Characteristic of the total force employment at the start of OEF, the readiness of these enabling units did not match that of their active force counterparts, and temporarily degraded the quality of overall sustainment.<sup>49</sup> Consistent with the experience of reserve and National Guard units that followed later in OEF and OIF, these units did improve their level of readiness in the ensuing years, often providing great technical expertise, versatility, and a mature approach to planning and operations.

Haiti

Sustainment commands deploying in support of JTF-Haiti did not arrive rapidly to meet the required contingency response. When Operation Unified Response in Haiti began, the 377<sup>th</sup> TSC was SOUTHCOM's allocated theater level support unit. A reserve TSC, the 377<sup>th</sup> started to quickly mobilize, but because of several activation challenges, it could not meet a rapid deployment timeline.<sup>50</sup>

Needing a sustainment control and control unit to serve as the integrating element and synchronization arm in theater, the Army selected the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC. At the time of the earthquake, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC was the only active component ESC in the continental United States.<sup>51</sup> The 3<sup>d</sup> ESC redeployed from OIF August 2009, and by early January 2010, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC was 155 days into its reset as part of the Army's Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC was still in the process of working through replenishment of its personnel and equipment. In support of JTF-Haiti, the unit was only able to fill approximately 50% of the required positions in the joint manning document.<sup>53</sup> On the equipment side, the ESC still had tent shortages and lacked other life-support equipment needed to operate in an austere environment.<sup>54</sup>

The 3<sup>d</sup> ESC Commanding General, COL(P) Robin Akin, responded with all available personnel and assets and initially deployed herself with an initial group of planners on 16 January 2010. However, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC found itself in the challenging scenario of simultaneously gaining awareness of the operating environment in Haiti, establishing logistics priorities, controlling a chaotic movement of people and supplies into a country with only one operational airport, and coordinating to move its own people and equipment into Haiti. An advance party of 3<sup>d</sup> ESC soldiers (31) arrived in Haiti on 27 January, and the remainder of their main body closed (60) closed into theater by 7 February, 26 days after the earthquake.<sup>55</sup>

Even while echeloning their people and capabilities, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC quickly integrated with the XVIII Airborne Corps logistics staff and planners. They developed and leveraged relationships with supporting sustainment units, United Nations forces, and numerous interagency organizations and NGOs, assuming more and more of the logistics mission. By early February 2010, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC owned the JTF-Haiti sustainment mission, serving as the senior logistics command in theater, synchronizing units and capabilities from across the JLEnt. During this period, the 377<sup>th</sup> TSC continued its preparation and mobilization; the 377<sup>th</sup> TSC arrived in theater at the end of February 2010, and assumed the joint logistics mission from the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC in early March.<sup>56</sup> The 377<sup>th</sup> TSC continued on with the sustainment mission and ultimately enabled the military's transition of mission through multiple means, including the JTF-Haiti Deployment/Redeployment Coordination Cell developed by the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC.<sup>57</sup>

Both the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC and the 377<sup>th</sup> TSC responded effectively once deployed in support of JTF-Haiti and Operation Unified Response. However, the XVIII Airborne

Corps Command Post logisticians, supporting units, and enterprise enablers provided the timelier sustainment response to a crisis situation. The 377<sup>th</sup> TSC's challenges with rapid mobilization and deployment were consistent with ARCENT's experience in the CENTCOM theater nearly a decade earlier during the opening phases of OEF.

Liberia

When the Army deployed forces in 2014 to support Operation United Assistance (OUA), the Department of Defense's (DoD) support mission in response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the overall timeliness of its logistics support and ability to rapidly build capacity improved. However, tensions still existed during OUA with regard to unit deployment timelines for RC units. Those timeliness issues, coupled with sustainment challenges inherent to U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and its few assigned forces, did not detract from overall mission success, but did provide an obstacle to planning and execution.<sup>58</sup>

In September 2014, U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) established Joint Force Command-United Assistance (JFC-UA) to lead the OUA mission. Faced with a demanding timeline to respond, USAFRICOM chose to employ a JFC instead of a JTF, opting to primarily employ elements of U.S. Army Africa (USARAF), maintaining consistency with personnel, knowledge of the region, and avoiding personnel manning delays through the implementation of a joint manning document (JMD).<sup>59</sup> USARAF's Commanding General, MG Darry Williams, led JFC-UA.<sup>60</sup>

Owning few forces it could actually immediately send into theater, USAFRICOM and JFC-UA worked in conjunction with the JLEnt to build capacity. USAFRICOM employed assets from USTRANSCOM, Surface Deployment Distribution Command (SDDC), Air Mobility Command, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), 21<sup>st</sup> TSC,

Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), and Army Materiel Command (AMC) to deploy its assigned forces; they leveraged the capabilities of JTF-PO and the JECC to help set the theater. JTF-PO opened aerial nodes in Liberia and Senegal, the JECC provided additional logistics planning capacity, and DLA provided resourcing and contracting experts to help construct a theater logistics network.<sup>61</sup>

USTRANSCOM rapidly moved people, materiel and equipment via strategic airlift and sealift. In theater, JFC-UA's rotary-wing airlift and contracted host-nation transportation assets enabled movement of engineering and medical supplies required to build Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) and other key infrastructure endemic to USAID's mission.<sup>62</sup> Similar to Operation Unified Response in Haiti, USAID served as the Lead Agency for OUA.

JFC-UA's response was not without friction. Without owning many forces, USAFRICOM needed to remission its allocated units, including Navy Seabees from Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (JTF-HOA) and a special purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). USAFRICOM coordinated with USEUCOM to receive engineer support to accomplish set the theater tasks. Any delays were mitigated by previously coordinated written agreements between the CCMDs, but still required USAFRICOM's coordination with the Joint Staff to modify the original Execution Order (EXORD).<sup>63</sup> Although this all occurred quickly, it does reflect the challenges USAFRICOM faces with assigned forces, timing, and capacity.

Other enabling forces that required a Request For Forces (RFF) did not arrive in the timeline expected and drove other solutions. For instance, USAFRICOM submitted an RFF for the 416<sup>th</sup> Theater Engineer Command (USAR). Looking to employ the 416<sup>th</sup>

as part of its set the theater mission, USAFRICOM planners learned that because of training and readiness requirements, the unit would not be ready to deploy for 120 to 180 days.<sup>64</sup> USAFRICOM and JFC-UA worked through the force flow friction and employed engineering assets from across the joint force to meet their construction objectives. Throughout the duration of OUA, JFC-UA – and later, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) – provided invaluable and timely support to USAID and ably worked through additional planning and resourcing challenges.

### Planning and Resourcing Challenges: Contributing to Capability Gaps

Planning and resourcing are difficult missions that are inherent to sustainment operations, but prove absolutely vital during the early phases of operations. Logisticians get one chance to set the theater to enable follow-on sustainment operations. Planning and resourcing challenges certainly affected logistics command and control and the timeliness of set the theater tasks in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Liberia. In several instances, these challenges also contributed to capability gaps.

### Afghanistan

Analyzing the initial set the theater operations in OEF, it becomes apparent that there was tremendous effort and accomplishment from all units involved. However, the force structure planning and resourcing, which fostered the ad hoc logistics command and control structure, was insufficient. At both K2 and Bagram Air Bases, from October 2001-March 2002, there was a need for a true theater enabling headquarters, along with a logistics integrator and synchronizer in the region. The absence of a true theater enabling headquarters and supporting logistics integrator was a critical capability gap.

In 2001-2002, that mission could have been filled with a deployable command post from a TSC, or in the Army of Excellence (AOE) logistics structure of the time, a

Corps Support Command (COSCOM). Today, this would likely equate to an ESC at K2 and a Sustainment Brigade at Bagram. While the force structure employed by ARCENT and Third Army in late 2001-early 2002 was restricted and influenced due to force caps and other decisions, there are lessons to move forward with.<sup>65</sup> The most important lesson is the requirement to establish the appropriate level of logistics command and anticipate that the command will provide more than just sustainment. The command may fill the theater enabling HQs role to establish freedom of maneuver for the operating forces in the area, either SOF or conventional. In addition, the assigned command will need versatility and modularity to operate multiple enabling nodes across the theater.

### Haiti

During its deployment to JTF-Haiti in 2010, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC faced planning and resourcing challenges with their unit structure, organizational equipment, and communication support. Still emerging from the reset phase of the ARFORGEN process after returning from OIF in August 2009, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC had the opportunity to test its Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE). Deploying on short notice into an austere environment, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC deployed with its organizational equipment, without the benefit of Theater Provided Equipment (TPE).<sup>66</sup> During its previous deployment to OIF from 2008-2009, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC utilized TPE to resource its logistics command and control mission.<sup>67</sup> As it assumed the mission as the Joint Logistics Command (JLC) in Haiti, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC found itself without the appropriate equipment and resources to effectively communicate within the region and back to the United States.

According to doctrine and reflected in its MTOE, the ESC habitually gains the ability to communicate over extended distances with augmentation from a mutually

supporting Signal unit. During JTF-Haiti, and adding further stress on its short-notice deployment without completing the ARFORGEN reset cycle, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC first partnered with the JLC's supporting AMC element to establish its communications network. It then worked with the Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) to build a network that provided the appropriate level of communications infrastructure to enable their logistics integration and synchronization mission. Later, the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC partnered with the 24<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Group to gain additional access to voice and data services.<sup>68</sup>

The 3<sup>d</sup> ESC's challenges with its MTOE, organizational equipment, and supporting communications package proved difficult, but not insurmountable. The 3<sup>d</sup> ESC adapted and enabled JTF-Haiti's mission to support the Haitian people. The lessons learned in terms of planning and resourcing for the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC and the logistics enterprise extended beyond communications capacity and organizational experiment. It extends back to several key sustainment themes associated with the support to Operation Unified Response: there was no available ESC to deploy in crisis other than the recently returned-from-OIF 3<sup>d</sup> ESC; there was no standing JTF that had conducted training and rehearsals on set the theater functions; and, there were debilitating readiness challenges connected with the timely establishment of the JLC.<sup>69</sup> The planning and resourcing shortfalls contributed to capability gaps, even down to communications network infrastructure and organizational equipment, for responding JTF-Haiti units.

Liberia

During OUA, planning and resourcing challenges arose on several different fronts. The shortage of Joint Operation Planning Execution System (JOPES) operators across USAFRICOM, USARAF, and JFC-UA degraded the deployment planning and

execution.<sup>70</sup> Without qualified JOPES operators and an education gap across the staffs, JFC-UA never built or executed a prioritized list for personnel and equipment entering the joint operations area (JOA), resulting in equipment shipped that was never used nor needed at all.<sup>71</sup>

USAFRICOM and JFC-UA were also hindered by a Global Force Management (GFM) system that did not include a complete list of enablers to support the response required in OUA.<sup>72</sup> For example, the planners battled to catch-up and request the appropriate medical expertise, including laboratory capacity to diagnose the Ebola virus, through the GFM system. Multiple unique capabilities were not listed in the system, diminishing visibility of available assets, and in turn, the planners executed work arounds with the support of their medical counterparts to request forces.

As with JTF-Haiti, units supporting OUA were required to deploy with their organizational equipment; deploying units did not have the benefit of TPE that the joint force has grown accustomed to during the OEF and OIF-era.<sup>73</sup> Units were challenged to build load plans, prepare equipment for movement, and plan for an austere environment. OUA supporting units executed well, but units from across the joint force learned important lessons about deploying into immature theaters.

Other potentially deploying enablers, in addition to the Theater Engineer Command discussed earlier, were also unable to deploy within the required timelines.<sup>74</sup> These type of gaps can be exacerbated further in USAFRICOM and USARAF, commands who own few assigned forces. As the Army executes its broad set the theater mission responsibilities, the inability of enablers to deploy within the required timelines negatively impacts planning, synchronization, and execution.

Without an allocated or assigned TSC or ESC, the USARAF G-4 staff not only plans, but manages and executes sustainment over a vast continent with 54 independent nations. For 45 days during the planning and execution of OUA, the USARAF G-4 staff executed a dual mission, supporting its role as the ASCC and JFC-UA, on a 24-hour cycle.<sup>75</sup> This theme connects back to both OEF and JTF-Haiti, and it provides evidence the joint force is challenged with the pre-establishment of JTFs. This shortfall degrades appropriate planning, team building, and the conduct of rehearsals prior to crisis response situations.

### Moving Forward: Recommendations and Options

The U.S. Army's recent operational experiences in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Liberia provide valuable lessons that can inform future set the theater missions. There are certainly no easy answers to recurring and challenging problems when setting a theater, either – especially in an austere environment. Further complicating matters, in the next 5 to 10 years, the Army will not possess unlimited time or fiscal resources to completely restructure itself in the current operational and fiscal environment. With that all as context, the Army can still take prudent moves to prepare for future missions. The Army should adjust its approach to employing logistics HQs, improve the timeliness of its logistics response, and improve its planning and resourcing to mitigate capability gaps. Approach to Employment of TSCs and ESCs

To provide each CCMD with responsive set the theater capability and planning, the Army must reorganize its logistics HQs. USAFRICOM's recent experience in OUA, while well-executed across the JLEnt, provides lessons learned and an opportunity to alter the Army's logistics force structure and relationships. To reorganize its logistics

HQs, the Army should keep each of the 5 TSCs aligned with their respective CCMDs. The important changes should occur within the Army's ESC structure.

The Army should establish a rotating, global response sustainment HQs. One AC ESC would serve as the global response sustainment HQs. The global response sustainment HQs would establish the appropriate logistics command and control structure in response to contingencies. It would improve the timeliness of the logistics response and mitigate recurring capability gaps. In support of the global response sustainment headquarters requirement, the Army should permanently assign the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC against that mission. Similar to COL Allen Cassell's recommendation in *Army Sustainment Command and Control to Support Geographic Combatant Commanders*, keep the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC partnered with the Global Response Force (GRF) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to enable training, preparation, and rehearsals.<sup>76</sup> As part of this adjustment, establish a rotating "green-amber-red" cycle of active-reserve-national guard units as part of the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC's enabler package. This would provide the 3<sup>d</sup> ESC structure, a host of relationships across the Army logistics enterprise, and rapid deployment capability.

The Army can provide ESC support to XVIII Airborne Corps through multiple options. In agreement with COL Cassell's recommendation, the Army should build out a dedicated, deployable command post within the 1<sup>st</sup> TSC to align directly with XVIII Airborne Corps.<sup>77</sup> In addition, the Army can utilize the 82<sup>nd</sup> SUST BDE as a bridging solution during contingency operations and align one of the 10 reserve ESCs to the XVIII Airborne Corps, as its follow-on higher echelon logistics HQs.

Next, build on USAFRICOM's experience and lessons learned with OUA. The Army should establish a 5<sup>th</sup> active duty ESC and assign it to the 21<sup>st</sup> TSC as its

deployable command post to support USAFRICOM and USEUCOM. Then, codify the requirement for the 21<sup>st</sup> TSC and USEUCOM to support USAFRICOM.

Assigning another ESC to USEUCOM offers some flexibility across the logistics enterprise and for both CCMDs in the region. It provides USEUCOM depth in setting the theater across Eastern Europe, where currently only the 21<sup>st</sup> TSC and the 16<sup>th</sup> SUST BDE currently operate. The 21<sup>st</sup> TSC and 16<sup>th</sup> SUST BDE are challenged with an increasingly growing number of rotating U.S. military forces and exercises designed to reassure NATO allies faced with an adventuresome Russia operating in the region since 2008 (Georgia and Crimea). And, it provides USAFRICOM codification of theaterlevel support and a unit to engage with on planning and set the theater tasks.

Ultimately, there is no perfect solution without establishing another TSC and a supporting ESC or SUST BDE in each CCMD. However, the Army can work more collaboratively and creatively with what we have. If the cost to Army here requires one of the 10 RC ESCs to become an active component ESC in support of 21<sup>st</sup> TSC, USEUCOM, and USAFRICOM, it will be well worth the investment.

### Improve the Timeliness of Logistics Response

The ESC-aligned GRF support requirement should rotate to different supporting units every 9-12 months. This will deepen relationships in the logistics enterprise across the total force – a single logistics enterprise consistent with Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley's vision for total force employment.<sup>78</sup> It will further enable relationship building, training, and readiness.

This ESC-aligned GRF support requirement will align with the Reserve Component Sustained Readiness Model (RC SRM). The RC SRM is a five-year progressive model that enables RC units to train and build readiness for four years,

culminating with an available unit at its highest level of readiness during the fifth year.<sup>79</sup> The ESC support mission possesses the potential to further focus the training plan for RC logistics units, provide predictability for Soldiers and employers (knowing that they would be activated to the support the GRF mission in the 5<sup>th</sup> year), and be embedded within the GFM system. The rotating support requirement will mitigate the timeliness problems the Army has faced with its logistics and set the theater response, experienced primarily with RC units deploying to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Liberia.

This rotating group of active-reserve-national guard units can come from any part of the continental United States or its territories; geography is not an inhibitor. To train, it will require multi-modal movement (air, sea, and land), requiring self-deployment and forcing the exercise of each unit's organizational equipment. Logistics units from across the total force will receive important opportunities and training repetitions. Aside from supporting GRF units, this concept can be extended to active-reserve-guard Sustainment Brigade training exercises, "rounding out" forces and encouraging more team building across the logistics enterprise – through home station training, CTC rotation support, and virtual exercises.

### Improving Planning and Resources: Mitigating Capability Gaps

The joint force must work together, CCMD staffs, Joint Staff, and Service Components, to develop either standing JTFs or baseline crisis response force packages in all CCMDs. This will require planning, de-confliction of enablers, rehearsals, and continuous communication. The standing JTFs or crisis response force packages must be codified, approved, and entered into the GFM system and the Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF). These activities will force manning and equipping solutions across the joint community, and within the service components.

The DoD and Joint Staff should work in partnership with the CCMDs to build on the successes during OUA in Liberia. Employing the construct of a service component HQs operating as a short-term JTF bridging solution could lead to needed refinements in manning policies, authorities, and enabler packages, ultimately improving crisis response.<sup>80</sup> This CCMD JTF planning will enable the JLEnt to identify where there are resourcing and capability gaps, for example with GFM and JOPES training and capacity, and provide attainable objectives through collaborative training, during planned exercises or virtual training scenarios.<sup>81</sup> Capability gaps include not just seams with personnel, materiel, and equipment, but also with overall unit readiness and training proficiency. The Army logistics team will receive improved and more responsive units resulting from: the GRF-aligned ESC; the green-amber-red cycle units supporting the ESC; and, the units rounding out Sustainment Brigades.

### Conclusion

Is the Army's force structure adequate when it is required to set the theater? Yes, but that force structure is often not optimally employed. Over the last fifteen years, the Army's operational experiences in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Liberia offer recurring and actionable lessons. The Army is often challenged to set the theater due to an inadequate logistics command and control structure, an inability to rapidly build logistics capacity to meet sustainment requirements, and incomplete planning and resourcing that routinely results in capability gaps during the opening phases of operations.

The Army should improve the employment of its logistics force structure through a combination of different initiatives sponsored across the Army and the joint force, to include: re-aligning TSC and ESC sustainment relationships across the CCMDs; establishing a global response ESC; establishment of JTFs in all CCMDs; employment

and rotation of Army sustainment units in support of the GRF and the global response ESC; and, Sustainment Brigade round out missions across the total force. These initiatives will improve logistics command and control, provide more responsive support during contingency operations, and mitigate recurring capability gaps.

For Army logisticians, the ability to set the theater across the joint logistics enterprise and shape the environment is crucial. It makes all the difference in an operation, and it almost always determines the difference between victory and defeat, success or failure. In order to effectively set the theater, preparation is pivotal. It requires introspection, analysis, and adjustments. For the Army and its logistics enterprise, it's time for some needed adjustments.

### Endnotes

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