

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**FROM THE RED BALL EXPRESS TO THE OBJECTIVE FORCE: A QUEST FOR  
LOGISTICS TRANSFORMATION**

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## ABSTRACT

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Throughout history, logistics has been the linchpin to success or failure of most military endeavors. Yet, logistics has never been at the forefront of transformation initiatives or dialogue. Logistics transformation occurs largely in reaction to combat operations as opposed to establishing proactive systems to support future combat operations and capabilities. Instead, advancements in logistics doctrine traditionally originate with the ingenuity of the American Soldier. Our ability to adapt to combat imperatives in order to bring about success is the mark of the American Army. However, during the downtime between conflicts we have not taken full advantage of the opportunity to transform the logistics systems to better support the force. Funding priority and developmental focus invariably migrate to the combat systems while logistic transformation ideas have been bogged down by parochialism and institutional neglect. What follows is an examination of three cases in history demonstrating our inability to properly plan for logistics transformation: the Red Ball Express during World War II, supply system reform during the Vietnam conflict, and recent material management transformation initiatives. This paper will close with the current status of the logistics transformation process.



## LOGISTICS TRANSFORMATION LAG

Putting transformation on the back burner and focusing solely on the fight at hand is simply not an option. We are fighting a war unlike any we have fought before – it demands new ways of thinking about military force, new processes to improve strategic agility, and new technologies to take the fight to the enemy.<sup>1</sup>

—General Richard Meyers  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
4 February 2004

Throughout history, logistics has been the linchpin to success or failure of most military endeavors. Some notable and classic examples of this are the demise of Napoleon's Grand Army and the German Army in pursuit of winter operations against Russia in 1812 and 1941, respectively. Yet, logistics has never been at the forefront of transformation initiatives or dialogue. Logistics transformation occurs largely in reaction to combat operations as opposed to establishing proactive systems to support future combat operations and capabilities. Instead, advancements in logistics doctrine traditionally originate with the ingenuity of the American Soldier. Observations documented concerning Operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom in the official initial report concluded that central to the logistician's demonstrated level of proficiency in sustainment operations was a considerable level of innovation and agility.<sup>2</sup> The ability to adapt to combat imperatives in order to bring about success is the mark of the American Army. However, during the downtime between conflicts, Army leaders have not taken full advantage of the opportunity to transform the logistics systems to better support the force. Funding priority and developmental focus invariably migrate to the combat systems, while logistic transformation ideas have been bogged down by parochialism and institutional neglect.

For over a decade now, we have pursued transformational change. No doubt the recent events in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have catalyzed a stalled process to some degree. However, the radical and revolutionary change needed in the logistics world has yet to take effect institutionally and with enduring results. Logistics transformation must become a priority or the overall Army transformation process will be detrimentally affected. The lack of priority on logistic transformation is not new to the Army. An examination of the Red Ball Express during World War II, logistics initiatives during the Vietnam conflict, and Material Management Center transformation will illustrate well that logistics has largely changed and evolved out of real time necessity rather than well thought out and deliberate transformation. Moreover, these three examples will also highlight ad hoc logistics change driven by combat

operations, institutional neglect concerning true logistics transformation, and the effect of parochialism in pursuing logistics transformation.

### What is Transformation?

In order to fully understand military reform through history, one must understand transformation and how it differs from change. The dictionary defines change as “to make different the form, nature, content, future, course, etc,” or “to transform or convert.”<sup>3</sup> Simply put, it describes the transition when something goes from being the same to being different.<sup>4</sup> However, while change is inherent in transformation, there is a difference between changing and transforming. Change simply defines a shift based on current events or influences. It may be temporary or permanent. Transformation involves a thought process aimed at institutional and systemic shifts in education, doctrine, and culture. For transformation to be successful there must be an enduring change in culture and attitude.<sup>5</sup>

The 2001 Defense Science Board Report on Department of Defense Logistics Transformation conclusions indicate that the logistics systems in the United States military must be transformed in order to maintain our position of global leadership. Failure to do so will significantly impair our ability to deploy and sustain our forces to meet new and future threats.<sup>6</sup> The report indicates that our current logistics systems are based on a previous strategy of supporting in-place forces with scheduled deployment timelines as opposed to sustaining the expeditionary type force dictated in Vision 2010/2020. As such, we will not achieve our vision without logistics transformation.

Army Transformation is not just about new and improved equipment, it is about shifting from the Cold War linear battlefield construct to full spectrum combat operations. Maintaining and employing a logistical support system developed for the Cold War will not be supportive of full spectrum operations envisioned in future conflicts. To accomplish this change requires a shift in our logistics culture. Donald Rumsfeld, the former Secretary of Defense, set the stage for transformation in the Defense Planning Guidance published in 2003. He notes that transformation is...

...a process that shapes the changing nature of military competition and cooperation through new combinations of concepts, capabilities, people and organizations that exploit our nation’s advantages and protect against our asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position, which helps underpin peace and stability in the world.<sup>7</sup>

In simple terms, transformation is the process describing the current force becoming the future force as illustrated in Figure 1.<sup>8</sup>

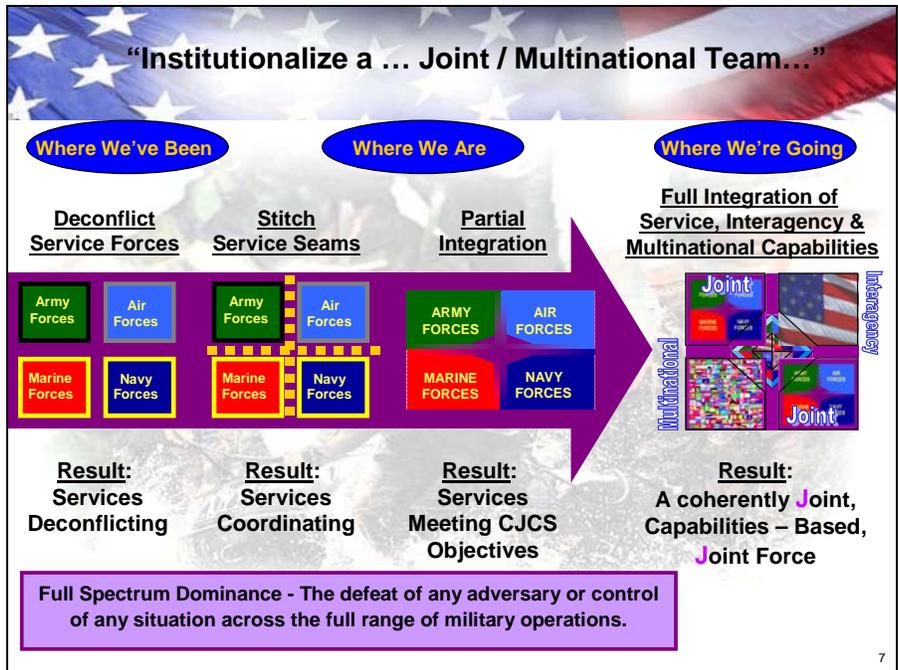


Figure 1: Depicts the transformation continuum from the Cold War era to the future joint force postulated for 2015. Successful logistics transformation remains an essential component of this process.<sup>9</sup>

Department of Defense Logistics Transformation Strategy was developed at the direction of the department’s fiscal year 2006 Strategic Planning Guidance. The guidance directed the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics) to reconcile three logistics concepts—force-centric logistics enterprise, sense and respond logistics, and focused logistics—into a coherent transformation strategy. Force-centric logistics enterprise is the Office of the Secretary of Defense’s mid-term concept (2005-2010), which encompasses six initiatives for enhancing support to the warfighter.<sup>10</sup> Sense and respond logistics developed by the department’s Office of Force Transformation is a future logistics concept that envisions a networked logistics system that would provide joint strategic and tactical operations with predictive, precise, and agile support. Focused logistics is a Joint Chiefs of Staff concept for force transformation that identifies logistics challenges and capabilities needed to meet the challenges.<sup>11</sup>

The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Peter J. Schoomaker, further established the Army Transformation Roadmap with six transformation imperatives in support of the modular force to improve near-term operational capabilities in a Joint operating environment and achieve joint interdependence in logistics, which is depicted in Figure 2. His vision for the end state is to produce:

- A modular “brigade-based” Army that is more responsive to regional combatant commanders’ needs, better employs joint capabilities, facilitates force packaging and rapid deployment, and fights as self-contained units in non-linear, non-contiguous battle spaces.
- An Army logistics structure that is responsive to the needs of a Joint and Expeditionary force.
- A logistics system that eliminates redundancy and streamlines support by reducing unnecessary layers.
- A logistics capability that leverages emerging technologies, links support to supported organizations, and couples the Army to Joint organizations operating world-wide.

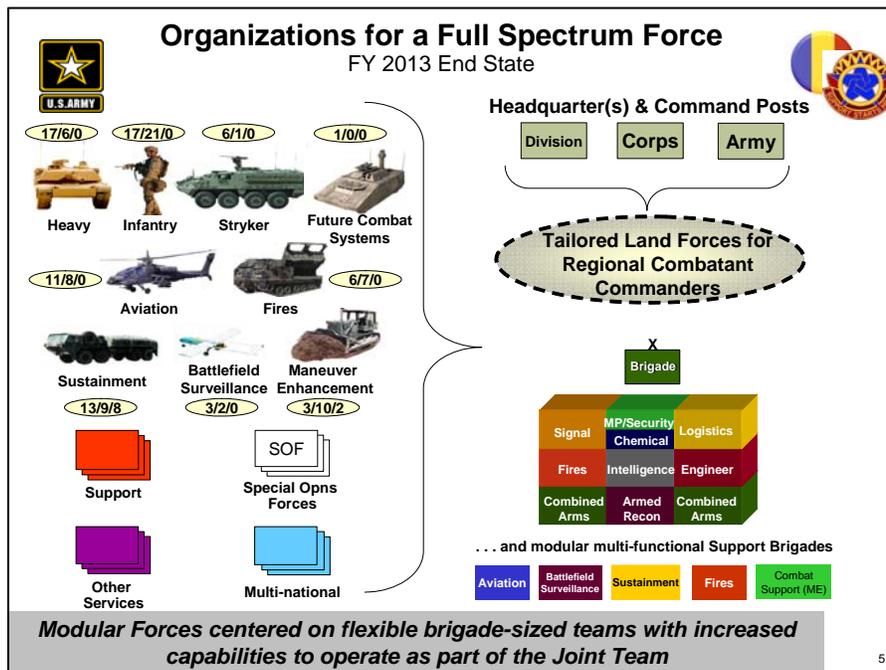


Figure 2: Army's Transformation to a Modular Expeditionary Force depicting its holistic nature. Logistic transformation is only a small portion of the overall plan.<sup>12</sup>

Logistics transformation, while a relatively small portion of the Army's current plan, underpins almost every aspect of Army Transformation and the effort is a major step forward in achieving this required future force. The Army will focus its logistics transformation efforts on four key initiatives, in no particular order. First, is the development of a logistics data network that enables the warfighter to see requirements on demand. Second, the Army will build a responsive distribution system that guarantees on time delivery thus reducing the forward storage requirements. Third, the design and development of a modular force reception

capability to receive joint and expeditionary forces that will facility immediate operational employment and sustainment. Finally, the Army will develop an end-to-end enterprise view of the supply chain that includes services and agency integration of processes, information, and responsibilities.<sup>13</sup>

Historically, transformation is not a new phenomenon in military units or with United States forces. As we approach transformation, there is merit in reviewing transformation efforts in the past in order to inform current initiatives. Of consequence, an analysis of historic case studies will reveal that logistics transformation efforts to date have proven to be ad hoc and temporary in nature. In short, true transformation has proven illusive and has fallen short of enduring, institutional change. An examination of the Red Ball express and sustainment efforts in Vietnam will well illustrate this point. The Red Ball express will demonstrate the reliance on ad hoc logistics solutions in the absence of true transformation, while the Vietnam example will illustrate the impact of mass, rapid change without regard to unintended ripples throughout the organization. In addition, we will analyze current material management transformation plans and initiatives to demonstrate how similar mistakes continue to thwart efforts to achieve real transformation.

### The Red Ball Express

The Allied Forces landing at Normandy in June of 1944 was a huge success in which logistics played a significant role. The decision to conduct the assault in Normandy, vice in the Mediterranean Theater, was logistically driven.<sup>14</sup> Upon the successful landing, General Dwight D. Eisenhower's plan called for a thrust from France and Belgium into the heart of Germany with a strategic goal of putting an early end to the war. The key to success of this plan would be logistics and the Allies' ability to conduct resupply operations. The march across France was succinctly planned based on logistics capabilities—specifically, a 30-day stowage capacity. This march was so successful that General George Patton's Third Army covered almost 200 miles in twelve days stopping at the Metz River. Likewise, British forces under Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, while markedly slower than the American march, conducted a surge across France and Belgium, capturing Antwerp and coming to a halt on the Meuse-Escaut Canal.<sup>15</sup> As warned by the logisticians of the time, the forward movement of the Allied forces was stalled based on an inability to react to the large logistics distribution requirements and the unforeseen lack of French rail systems and rolling stock in the aftermath of bombing operations. Supplies were sitting at the ports, beaches, and other hubs with no assets available to move them to the front where they were needed.

As a result, the “Red Ball Express” was born on 25 August 1944 in order to rush supplies to the rapidly advancing United States First and Third Armies. A clear example of adaptation while under fire, logisticians from across the theater pooled all available truck assets and created transportation trucking units to conduct theater distribution operations.<sup>16</sup> The intent was to conduct operations on one-way return highways, main supply routes, which were reserved specifically for logistics distribution. These routes ran from the supply hub to the forward bases and eventually forked at Versailles to the First Army in the north and Third Army in the south. By 29 August, the Red Ball Express reached its peak at 132 truck companies, employing 5,958 vehicles, and on that day hauled a record 12,342 tons of supplies.<sup>17</sup> In total, the Red Ball Express officially lasted only three months from 25 August to 16 November 1944. In those 81 days, 23,000 men using 6,000 trucks and trailers transported over 412,193 tons of supplies to the advancing American Armies from Normandy to the German frontier.<sup>18</sup> In his book, *The Bitter Woods*, Colonel John D. Eisenhower, son of Dwight D. Eisenhower and veteran of World War II, wrote that “Without it [Red Ball] the advance across France could not have been made.”<sup>19</sup> This was a stunning tribute to the logisticians of the time.

The Red Ball Express, while extremely successful, had limitations as well. Command and control of the operation was not as efficient and effective as it should have been; consequently, regional control was unmanageable. Likewise, shortages of Military Policemen led to a lack of control of the routes and failure to curtail the black market abuses. All these shortcomings could have been overcome had true logistics transformation occurred prior to the operation. While some innovations are born out of conflict, the Red Ball Express concept has helped sustain Army logistics for over 50 years even with the advent of current technological and organizational advances.

In Vietnam, for example, the Red Ball evolved into an emergency distribution process. A requisition would be submitted for a deadline piece of equipment to both the national inventory control point and to the supply base in Okinawa, Japan. The requisition would be processed by both organizations. If that part was immediately available in Okinawa, it would be walked through the system and placed on a Red Ball transportation asset. Whichever part arrived first would be used to bring the equipment to mission capable status and the other part would be placed on the shelf for future use in the hopes of avoiding a Red Ball request at a future date.<sup>20</sup> Obviously, this system was inefficient and ad hoc in nature.

The Army used the Red Ball concept as recently as 2002 in support of the 3/2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team in a National Training Center rotational exercise. The supply system was not able to adjust shipping addresses succinctly enough to ensure the right supplies arrived

at the National Training Center to support the brigade. As such, Brigade and Divisional leadership chose to abandon the conventional supply system in favor of a Red Ball Express workaround.<sup>21</sup> The Army's transformation to the Objective Force has focused on temporary units, mobility of the Authorized Stockage List (ASL), and flexibility of the Army's least mobile equipment. Distribution of supplies across the battlefield continues to be an issue. This challenge comes from sheer volume as opposed to true requirements. The lack of confidence in the system by the logisticians in line units drives them to double and triple order items and to execute requisitions "just in case" the item is needed as opposed to "by demand." The key to this failure is the lack of an automation system to control requisitions and provide tracking support. Ultimately, automation transformation efforts that would greatly improve distribution across the battlefield continue to remain under funded.

Because of the short term nature of the Red Ball Express, it can be argued that this was not transformation and one would be correct. The Red Ball Express is an example of an ad hoc process that has endured the ages as a valid, effective, agile, and adaptive response to the lack of transformational vision in conducting combat and training sustainment operations.

#### Logistics Reform in Vietnam

The Department of the Army conducted an extensive reorganization in 1962 to include comprehensive realignments within the supply system. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara decided in the name of economy and efficiency to direct a standard logistics structure that essentially eliminated the Technical Services Branch within each of the services. His objective was to manage common supply items with a single agency, now called the Defense Logistics Agency. This required a review of every item within the supply systems of each service to determine which were common to more than one service, and then transfer management of that item to the Defense Logistics Agency along with the requisite budgetary and procurement requirements. This action left a very significant mark on Army logistics and caused many actions to be taken without consideration to the impact on current operations.<sup>22</sup> This transition from technical services structure to a functionally based structure within the services was one of the primary reasons why the Army had logistics difficulties from the early Vietnam period up through 1968.<sup>23</sup>

The Army's reorganization effort from a technical base to a functional base was called COSTAR (Combat Support of the Army).<sup>24</sup> In August 1962, the Army Materiel Command was created and all the technical services were dissolved. Beginning in September 1962, the Commanding General of Army Materiel Command began a study on the realignment of depots,

commodities, and the National Inventory Control Points that was not complete until the spring of 1963. The outcome of this study provided for standardized methodology for accountability, inventory control, and depot management at the national level.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, all commodities, with the exception of medical supplies, were centralized under the Army Materiel Command, thereafter considered the Army's wholesale supplier as well as the supervisor of Army logistics worldwide. Within the Army Materiel Command, the management of supplies was organized by commodity and equipment type and assigned to subordinate commands and inventory control points—hence, the creation of Tank-Automotive Command, Missile Command, Aviation Command, Communications-Electronics Command, Ammunition-Munitions-Chemical Command, and the supply depots. (The Army Ammunition-Munitions-Chemical Command was reorganized subsequently as the Army Field Services Command and then again as the Army Sustainment Command in September 2006.) The management of worldwide inventories of assigned commodities fell to the national inventory control points. Each inventory manager, presently known as item managers, was responsible for specific items assigned to them. This responsibility included accounting, requirements computation, procurement, distribution, overhaul, and disposal of the item being managed.<sup>26</sup> However, initially in this reorganization there was no or limited visibility of stocks outside of the continental United States within the units and supply depots throughout Vietnam—simply, the automation systems had not been developed yet.

It is important to note that this reorganization was occurring as our involvement in Vietnam was beginning to escalate. The military supply system for the Army during the Vietnam Conflict had no single line of logistics control extending from the Chief of Staff, through the Army Materiel Command to overseas stockage points, or to stocks stored at posts in the United States under the Continental Army Command.<sup>27</sup> The creation of the Army Materiel Command was a significant move to streamline Army supply at the wholesale level; however, it did not streamline sustainment in theater to deployed units. During the Vietnam era, each major subordinate command managed its own supplies and materiel to include budgeting, stockage, and distribution without regard to the available assets or requirements of the other commands.<sup>28</sup> In addition, within Army Materiel Command, inventory managers did not have visibility of worldwide requirements or assets and would often make procurement, distribution, and disposal decisions in the blind. In essence, reorganization occurred without transformation in management systems, techniques, and procedures which led to uncoordinated and inefficient supply actions.

The Army in Vietnam therefore relied on “mass logistics.” In the absence of known and quantifiable requirements, users resort to, “just load the logistics system with supplies and inevitably what we need will be there.”<sup>29</sup> Commanders in the field typically ordered push packages of supplies without knowledge of what supplies they had on hand. The result of this was the total overwhelming of the Vietnam Theater with supplies. In 1966, General Creighton Abrams, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army at the time, summarized the problem:

As the evolution of our current logistic system continues, a major deficiency is apparent. No one at headquarters, Department of the Army level takes the overview of the total logistic system....Lack of overall logistic supervision at the Department of the Army level prevents the anticipation and identification of problems that develop between the source and the user....The staff supervision of the entire logistic system is a DCSLOG responsibility.<sup>30</sup>

He succinctly identified a single agency for accountability and responsibility of logistics issues. Once this decision was made and enforced, the gap created by the reorganization of the logistic systems could move forward very rapidly. The concerted effort taken by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics began to make significant positive impact by as early as 1968. The Pacific Utilization and Redistribution Agency was born to handle the surplus bogging down the Vietnam Theater. More than \$2.1 billion in surplus supplies were presented for screening. Of that, \$306 million was redistributed in the Pacific Theater, \$710 million was returned to the CONUS wholesale system, and over \$1 billion was distributed to the fighting force.<sup>31</sup>

What is remarkable is that the Army repeated this type of ad hoc logistics in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Even with our advances in supply automation and distribution capability, mountains of supplies were shipped in support of operations in 1991, which were accounted for or distributed forward to units requesting them. As such, multiple orders were generated, magnifying the problem exponentially. The majority of this was largely due to the lack of confidence in supply and distribution systems resulting from the lack of real transformation during peacetime.

### Material Management Transformation

Recent attempts at logistical transformation are to be found within ongoing material management initiatives. Material Management Centers previously provided the Army with centralized and integrated materiel management for Class I, II, III, IV, V, VII, and IX supplies and maintenance. The centers were resident within the Division Support Command, the Corps Support Command, and the Theater Support Command. In support of logistics transformation to support the modular, expeditionary Army, however, this force structure was changed. Consequently, the Material Management Centers have been deactivated. The tasks performed

by these units were spread throughout the logistics force structure resident in the Brigade Support Battalions, the Sustainment Brigades, and the Theater Sustainment Command as depicted in Figure 3.

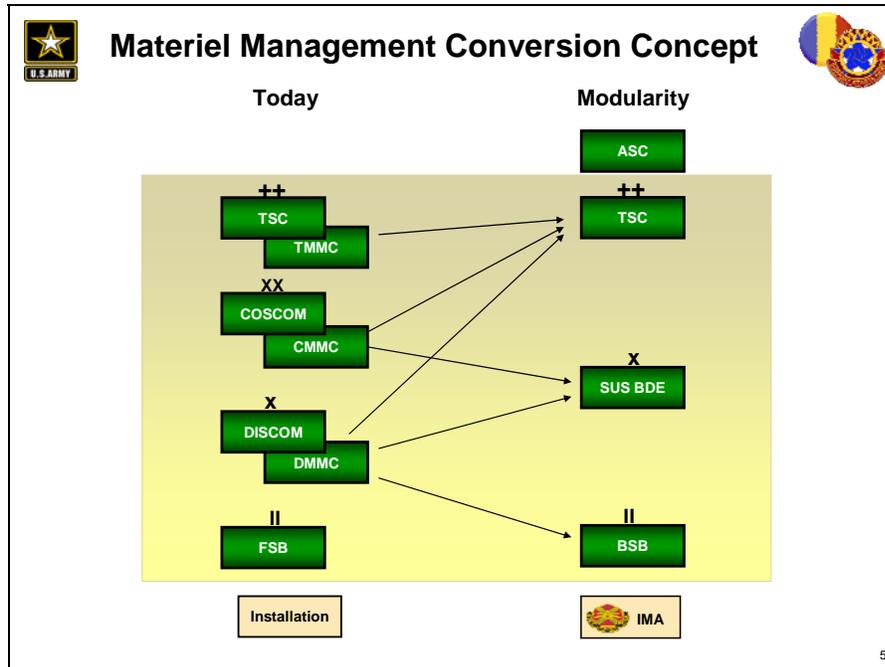


Figure 3: CASCOM's Materiel Management Conversion concept in support of the Army's Transformation to the modular force.<sup>32</sup>

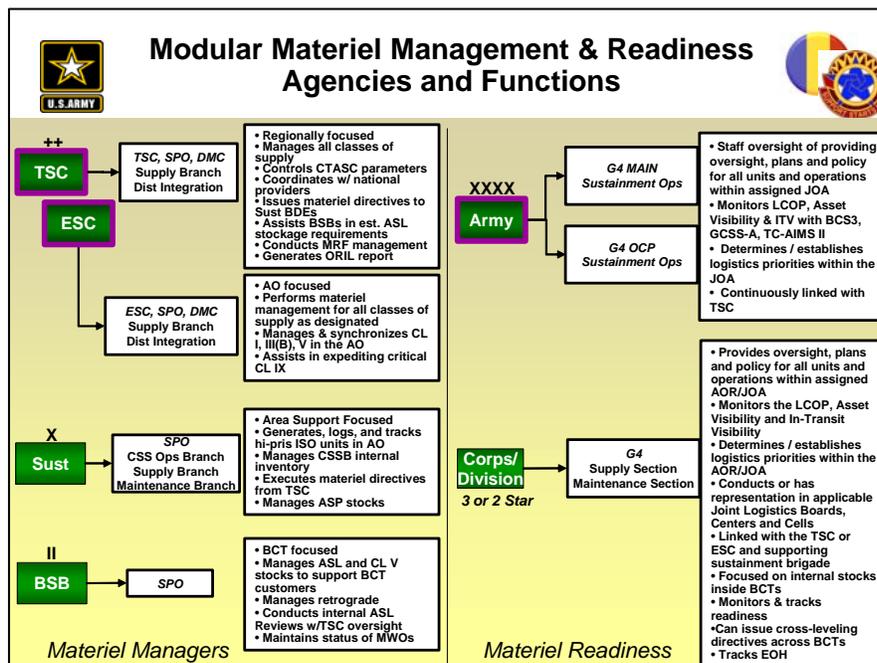


Figure 4: Materiel Management Functions arrayed under each major modular echelon.<sup>33</sup>

This conversion was an outstanding effort on the part of the Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) to ensure that the logistics organizational structure kept pace with the Army's shift to modularity in the operational units. They very succinctly defined what material management tasks would be conducted in the various units when the Division and Corps Material Management Centers began their deactivation. Figure 4 provides a summary of the tasks by unit. They also provided a detailed concept of how the distribution of tasks would be arrayed across the Theater of Operations. However, there were two key aspects that were overlooked. First was the synchronization of the transfer of functions from the Material Management Centers to the new modular logistics units. The second was the question of who would be conducting garrison support of material management functions.

The transformation plan developed by CASCOM was approved by the Department of the Army and accepted as the new construct for material management. However, the decision to deactivate the Material Management Centers was not synchronized with the activation of the modular logistical units. In the case of Fort Lewis, Washington, the 304<sup>th</sup> Material Management Center was deactivated in September 2006, yet the 593<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade designed to assume a majority of the material management tasks is not scheduled to activate until the summer of 2007. In addition, they were deployed in 2006 making it impossible for the unit to assume the material management mission early.

Fort Lewis was not the only installation with this issue. Fort Hood and Fort Bragg had similar synchronization issues. All three installations, in fact, were without organic material management capability and support beginning as early as the spring of 2006, with modular logistics unit activations not scheduled until 2007 at the earliest. This drove these installations to develop their own version of material management support without guidance. As such, three separate and distinct solutions were forwarded to Forces Command for approval and budgetary support—budgetary support that never came. Installations were forced to build support structures out of hide by pulling Soldiers from units and temporarily reassigning civilians to work material management tasks. These interim organizations developed by the installation were the bridge solving the synchronization problem, as well as the solution to the garrison material management gap.

As of 2006, Corps Support Groups, the future Sustainment Brigades, were on a biennial deployment schedule. This schedule introduced a significant road block to the material management conversion process. How could a unit that was perpetually deployed conduct material management in support of the garrison or the units stationed there that were not deployed? When the Corps Support Group at Fort Lewis was not deployed, they were

preparing to deploy, a trend that was continuing in support of future Operation Iraqi Freedom rotations, making them unavailable for the material management mission continuously. The Army and CASCOM's answer to this was the Army Sustainment Command. Unfortunately, the Army Sustainment Command was not aware of—or failed to acknowledge—this requirement and continued on this path until June 2006. This late start resulted in a rush to transform in order to meet the operational Army's needs. As an interim solution, the Army Sustainment Command saddled the newly formed Army Field Support Brigade's with the material management mission—a mission that their force structure currently does not support.

In order to streamline materiel management to the force, Army Sustainment Command developed their Distribution Management Center concept and organization and began implementation on 1 October 2006. The end state mission of this organization is to provide a focused national material management capability supporting the combat readiness of Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle units with maintenance management and readiness support (Reset), class VII asset visibility and management support, demand supported supply management, and monitoring the redistribution of excess. In addition, they will integrate and synchronize the capabilities of the Army Materiel Command Life Cycle Management Centers (LCMC) in order to provide an accurate readiness posture and near real time logistics common operating picture (LCOP).<sup>34</sup> To bridge the capabilities gap between assuming the material management mission and the establishment and transfer of efforts to the Distribution Management Center, the Army Sustainment Command created two-person material management teams assigned to each installation under the operational control of the Army Field Support Brigades. Also, the Army Field Support Brigades assumed operational control of the ad hoc material management organizations that each installation created in their own attempt to bridge the capability gap. As the Distribution Management Center stands up at Rock Island Arsenal, they will assume responsibility for each material management task as the center demonstrates its proficiency. As responsibility for each task migrates from the field material management teams to the Distribution Management Center, the material management teams will gradually stand down on each of the installations.<sup>35</sup> This process will be event driven as opposed to time driven, however, it is estimated that the Distribution Management Center will reach full operational capability in approximately 15 months, or February 2008.<sup>36</sup>

In our current zeal to transform in a rapid fashion, we have repeated the mistakes of the 1962 defense reorganization effort. That logistics reform effort took a full six years to implement workable processes to correct the gaps created in supporting the force. Currently, the Army faces a full three year process just to fill the capability gap created in the material management

process within the logistics transformation framework. The alarming part of this realization was the identification of the gap by the units in the field to Forces Command. Yet, there was blatant disregard for developing a solution due to a belief that it was not Forces Command's responsibility to do so, nor was there any urgent effort taken to spur action on the part of Army Sustainment Command to initiate reform.

### Conclusion

Transforming during a time of sustained campaigning will not be easy; but it is a practice that appears many times in the history of our great Army. We must examine, design, and develop new solutions for a new and dangerous world, as we have done so successfully in our past. This will require the deep and personal commitment of every member of the Army team – every leader, every Soldier, every civilian and every family member.<sup>37</sup>

While Secretary Rumsfeld focused the Defense Department's transformation efforts with the Defense Planning Guidance in 2003, the process has been riddled with a lack of focus, parochialism, and funding shortfalls in the logistics arena. Although such broad and significant transformation is what the services needed, the sudden shift in policy created enormous gaps within organizations, support structures, and systems. This phenomenon is not new to the Department of Defense. Secretary McNamara's reorganization of the Department of Defense in 1962 created similar issues—a lesson that has failed to inform current transformation initiatives.

The Government Accounting Officer demonstrated these issues in recent testimony on business transformation efforts stating that the Defense Department has not routinely assigned accountability for performance to specific organizations or individuals who have sufficient authority to accomplish goals. There still has not been a decision made on who will be accountable for the distribution process—the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics) or the Commandeer, U.S. Transportation Command (who was given overall responsibility as the Distribution Process Owner by the Secretary of Defense himself). Furthermore, DOD's current strategy to transform logistics lacks elements of an effective strategic plan, including specific performance goals, programs, milestones, and resources needed for achieving distribution objectives.<sup>38</sup>

The testimony also noted in regard to supply distribution that, although DOD has made progress, "the department's ability to make coordinated, systemic improvements that cut across the multiple organizations involved in the distribution system is stymied because of problems in defining who has accountability and authority for making such improvements and because the current logistics transformation strategy does not provide a clear vision to guide and synchronize future distribution improvement efforts."<sup>39</sup>

In March 2004, the Army Chief of Staff identified four focus areas for the service's initiatives to improve logistics support, including supply distribution. The four focus areas were connecting Army logisticians, improving force reception, modernizing theater distribution, and integrating the supply chain.<sup>40</sup> These initiatives clearly support the Secretary of Defense's transformation efforts. Yet resourcing and parochialism continue to bog down the transformation process, actions that continue to impact our combat operations negatively.

As of August 2005, the Army had not fully funded two new communications and tracking systems to better connect logisticians on the battlefield, and thus has placed their fielding schedules in question. Future deploying units are now at risk at not obtaining the necessary capability to submit and monitor their supply requisitions effectively. In addition, the U.S. Transportation Command was delayed in receiving funding to begin its interoperability of information technology supporting the distribution systems program and missed its deadline for developing a transition plan to guide future information technology investments. Moreover, due to parochialism, the Command has not been able to gain agreement from other DOD components on which of their existing information technology systems should be included in this effort to improve interoperability.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, there is continual rhetoric on the requirement to reduce our logistics tail, yet there remains no emphasis on the development and resourcing of the enablers, specifically communications and automation. The Army's Operation Iraqi Freedom Study Group noted that our "decade-long effort to digitize logistics, adapt 'business practices' and promote efficiency over effectiveness [is] insufficient for [the] contemporary operating environment."<sup>42</sup> A look at the past 10-15 years demonstrates a lack of focus for logistics transformation. This period is riddled with multiple goal changes that may be attributed to leadership changes and differing viewpoints. The challenge is not in our ability to describe what we want, but rather an inability to define the concrete steps needed to reach our ever changing end state.<sup>43</sup> The result is numerous great ideas never progressing past the MS Power Point slide or contractor's pamphlet, resulting in a reluctance and failure to provide the required funding to realize true logistics transformation. General Kevin P. Byrnes, Commander of Training and Doctrine Command, notes that "We need to create a culture of thinkers and innovators who look at a challenge and input a set of ways of doing it, not just apply band-aids and baling wire to fix old ways of doing business."<sup>44</sup>

Though discouraging, evidence of positive action is currently coming to light. The current Assistant Chief of Staff, G4, Lieutenant General Ann Dunwoody, is committed to obtaining the funding needed to get the Global Combat Support System - Army (GCSS-A) program moving in

a positive direction or taking the necessary steps to cancel the program for a more functional one. CASCOM is continuing to take aggressive, positive steps to keep the transformation process from stalling. In the interim, logisticians in the field will undoubtedly continue to demonstrate their operational agility and adaptive capabilities to provide ad hoc solutions to sustainment challenges until enduring logistics transformation can be realized.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> “Elements of Defense Transformation,” linked from Office for transformation website available from <http://www.oft.osd.mil/index2.cfm>; internet; accessed 19 November 2006, (Washington D.C., OCT 2004), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Conrad C. Crane, *Final Report: The U.S. Army's Initial Impressions of Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, August, 2003), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Jess Stein, Editor, *Random House College Dictionary*, (Random House Inc, New York, NY, 1980), 224.

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, Internet site <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Change>; internet; accessed on 14 January 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Steven W. Knott, “Knowledge Must Become Capability: Institutional Intellectualism as an agent for Military Transformation,” In *A Nation at War in an Era of Strategic Change*, ed. Williamson Murray, (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, SEP 2004), 39.

<sup>6</sup> Defense Science Board Task Force Report on Logistics Transformation – Phase II, (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Washington DC, available from [www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/log2.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/log2.pdf); internet; accessed on 14 JAN 07)

<sup>7</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *The Transformation Planning Guidance*, (Washington, D.C. Department of Defense, April 2003), 3.

<sup>8</sup> U.S Department of the Army, Field Manual 1 (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of the Army, June 2005), 4-3.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas G. Michels, “Army Transformation,” briefing slides with scripted commentary, Combined Arms Support Command, Ft. Lee, Virginia, 16 February 2006, slide 7. available from <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/portal/index.jsp> CASCOM Futures, File Exchange, Modular CSS Overview Portal; internet; accessed 16 November 2006.

<sup>10</sup> The six initiatives are depot maintenance partnership, condition-based maintenance plus, total life cycle systems management, end-to-end distribution, executive agents, and enterprise integration.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, *Defense Logistics: DOD has Begun to Improve Supply Distribution Operations, but Further Actions are Needed to Sustain These Efforts* (Washington D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, August 2005), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Mitchell, "Logistics Transformation," briefing slides with scripted commentary, Combined Arms Support Command, Ft. Lee, Virginia, 29 November 2006, slide 5; available from <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/portal/index.jsp> CASCOM Futures, Logistics Transformation Portal; internet; accessed on 17 January 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Office of Force Transformation, "2004 Army Transformation Roadmap," (Washington, D.C. July 2004), ix. Available at [http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library\\_files/document\\_386\\_ATR\\_Final.pdf](http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/document_386_ATR_Final.pdf); accessed 21 January 2007.

<sup>14</sup> James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775 – 1953*, (Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, Washington, DC, 1966), 523.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *Supplying War—Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, New York, 1977), 217.

<sup>16</sup> David Colley, *The Road to Victory: The Untold Story of World War II's Red Ball Express*, (Brassey's, Washington D.C., 2000), xiv.

<sup>17</sup> Huston, 526.

<sup>18</sup> Colley, xiv.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Government Operations, Military Operations Subcommittee, *Military Supply Systems: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations House of Representatives*, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2d sess., 25 June 1968, 52.

<sup>21</sup> Authors personal experience while assigned with the 1/25 Stryker Brigade Combat Team at Fort Lewis, Washington from 2003 – 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph M. Heiser, Jr, LTG (Retired), *A Soldier Supporting Soldiers*, (Center for Military History, Washington, D.C., 1991), 106.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-107.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Government Operations, Military Operations Subcommittee, *Military Supply Systems: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations House of Representatives*, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2d sess., 26 June 1968, 90.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Government Operations, Military Operations Subcommittee, 25 June 1968, 42.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Government Operations, Military Operations Subcommittee, *Military Supply Systems: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations House of Representatives*, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2d sess., 24 June 1968, 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Heiser, 134.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-136.

<sup>32</sup> Mitch Stevenson, MG, "Material Management for the Modular Force," Briefing slides with scripted commentary, CASCOM, Ft. Lee, VA, 12 DEC 2005; available in the author's personal files from her previous position as the Assistant G4, Transformation for I Corps from NOV 2005 to JUL 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Dan Mitchell, "Logistics Transformation," briefing slides with scripted commentary, Combined Arms Support Command, Ft. Lee, Virginia, 29 November 2006, slide 18; available on the internet at <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/portal/index.jsp>; accessed on 17 January 2007.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Army Sustainment Command, *ASC Distribution Management Guide and Update*, Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois, 20 September 06, available from [https://www.us.amry.mil/suite/portal.co?\\$p=270548](https://www.us.amry.mil/suite/portal.co?$p=270548); internet; accessed on 27 January 2007, 8.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Peter J. Schoemaker, *The Way Ahead: Our Army at War ... Relevant and Ready*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, January 2004), 14; available from <http://www.army.mil/thewayahead/foreword.html>; internet, accessed January 21, 2007.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Army Operation Iraqi Freedom Study Group, "U.S. Army Operation Iraqi Freedom Observations Quick Look," (Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned, August 2003, available from <https://call2.army.mil/oif/brief.asp>, Internet accessed 7 JAN 2007), slide 16 of 88.

<sup>43</sup> Victor Maccagnan, Jr, LTC, *Logistics Transformation—Restarting a Stalled Process*, (Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, JAN 2005), 13.

<sup>44</sup> Craig A. Triscari, MAJ, *Unit Transformation for Leaders Brigade and Below*, (Dog Ear Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2005), 19.

