



The ASC History Newsletter

The Evolution of the Army Sustainment Command

This
MONTH in
military
history ...

1777: British General Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga

1781: Cornwallis defeated at Yorktown

1811: Battle of Tippecanoe

1859: John Brown seizes Harper's Ferry

1864: Vermont town of St. Albans northern most action of Civil War

1918: Meuse-Argonne Offensive

1923: Teapot Dome Scandal

1942: Operation Torch

1942: Japanese attack on Guadalcanal's Bloody Ridge

1944: Allied troops encircled Aachen

1962: Cuban Missile Crisis

1972: Operation Linebacker I ended

1983: Attack on Marine Barracks in Beirut

1994: Operation Restore Democracy

2004: Battle for Fallujah

When discussing the evolution of ASC to its current structure the starting point is usually the creation of the Industrial Operations Command (IOC) in 1995. Why do we start there?

The IOC was created by merging the Armaments Munitions and Chemical Command (AMCCOM) and Depot Systems Command (DESCOM). AMCCOM had managed the production of conventional ammunition through the ammunition plants and contract. They also had research and development and program manager duties in developing weapons systems and chemical equipment. AMCCOM also controlled some of the arsenals. In sum, AMCCOM managed the entire life cycle of armaments and chemical equipment. DESCOM had managed the Army Ordnance depots system. This included maintenance and storage of all types of equipment and supplies. DESCOM work-loaded the depot system, provided resources, and was responsible for performance. The intent of IOC was to consolidate management of all of the Army's organic industrial base and depot operations.

These operations do not seem to be a starting point for where the ASC is today, but they are. The one non-industrial or manufacturing mission the IOC received was management of the Army War Reserves, which had also been a DESCOM mission. Prior to 1992 War Reserves had been a theater mission in Europe and Korea. After Desert Storm the Army consolidated ownership and management and assigned the mission to AMC. With the standup of IOC control of the mission came to Rock Island. What this provided the command at Rock Island was a global footprint. War Reserves were in place in Europe (the old POMCUS sets under Combat Equipment Group-Europe) and Korea. The War Reserves Afloat concept was in its infancy as was war reserves on the ground in SWA.

Immediately with the creation of IOC a small group of former DESCOM employees moved to Goose Creek, SC and founded what was at one time called the Combat Equipment Group Afloat and is now the Army Strategic Logistics Activity Charleston under the 406th AFSB. Simultaneously, the IOC continued plans to build stocks in Kuwait and soon began a significant construction program for humidity controlled warehouses in Qatar.

These activities established the IOC as a global Army logistics command, and started the evolutionary process to the ASC of today.

In January 2000, the OSC was created. At that time the AMC had developed concepts to enhance its role in monitoring and maintaining the readiness of the Army. The Army also needed to improve the ability to project force from home station to potential future contingency operations. This required improving the AMC's ability to understand the readiness picture across the Army, while also building a global capability to develop port facilities, and then receive, equip, and integrate deploying units. AMC assigned these missions to the new OSC to support the Army's vision.

When once asked in an interview why the old IOC received the mission, then Commanding General MG Joe Arbuckle said that it all came down to the global footprint IOC already had due to the War Reserve mission. The War Reserves were converting to Army Prepositioned Stocks with equipment afloat and in Europe, Korea, and SWA.

What were the new missions as IOC converted to the OSC? They were: LOGCAP, control of the AMC Forwards and Logistics Assistance Offices, and the Logistics Assistance Program management. These additions created a robust force set that allowed OSC to become AMC's "Single Face to the Field." Soldiers across the Army would gain access to AMC support by first coming into contact with an OSC element somewhere in the world.

The AMC Forwards and LAP/LAO were critical to improved understanding of Army Readiness. One AMC CG rhetorically asked why he was being questioned about systemic readiness issues by DA before he even knew the problem existed. The combination of AMC Forward and LAP was intended to collect 'logistics intelligence' and horizontally integrate that information across the AMC commodity commands. Meanwhile, the AMC Forwards and LAOs would convert to Logistics Support Elements in contingency operations to move forward with the fighting force and report logistics information to the rear.

The final piece of the puzzle was adding LOGCAP to OSC. LOGCAP could not only build base camps, but it could then fill capability gaps created by the reduction of logistics

units since the early 1990s. When 9/11 hit and the GWOT began, the OSC, with these new tools, was set to deploy, equip, and sustain the force in SWA.

The new, improved command headquartered at Rock Island, the Operations Support Command, immediately entered the fight on 9/11/01. While the first response was issuing ammunition (an OSC mission until the spin-off of JMC in 2006), the APS and Logistics Assistance Program also rapidly came on line. By November 2001 LAP elements were operating out of Karshi-Khanabad Airbase, Uzbekistan. By December Logistics Support Elements were in Bagram and Kandahar, Afghanistan supporting the force there. LOGCAP followed soon behind relieving the operation units' stretched organic combat service support forces at the locations above. This relatively quiet and unknown support mission began the process of establishing OSC as the go-to logistics support organization for deployed forces.

Over the next couple of years, the command would become the Joint Munitions Command (2003), then the Army Field Support Command (2003-2006), in 2006 it became the Army Sustainment Command. Each change to the name of the command here at Rock Island was more than a cosmetic change. In each case Army Materiel Command used us to adapt to the changing nature of war and Army logistics, and added missions to our portfolio. Army Preposition Stocks (APS), AMC's Single Point of Entry, LOGCAP, Logistics Assistance Program (LAP), Logistic Readiness Centers (LRCs), Army Field Support Brigades, Theater Provided Equipment, ARFORGEN synchronization, Left Behind Equipment, etc. were all missions the Army and AMC needed us to assume and perfect. Change did not stop in 2006. ASC has in the last ten years successfully adapted to changes while supporting the Army in the field and "On the Line".

