



*Soldiers from Delta Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, conduct a mission brief on April 17, 2016, before a logistics resupply mission during exercise Saber Junction 16 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. (Photo by Spc. Nathaniel Nichols)*

# Supporting a Multinational BCT Commander

■ By Lt. Col. Adrian Gamez



The Army has a long, successful history of working with multinational partners and allies to achieve common military objectives. Since World War I, Army logisticians have continually demonstrated their ability to plan, coordinate, and synchronize multinational logistics to meet the commander's intent and achieve mission requirements.

The concept of U.S. forces supporting a multinational brigade combat team (BCT) is simple, but the reality is hard. Logisticians must consider and understand each country's national caveats, logistics structures, equipment compatibility, and supply management procedures and find ways to mitigate any challenges.

So where does the senior brigade sustainer fit into the process? Observations made at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany, have substantiated the need to follow certain steps in order to properly support a multinational BCT.

First, senior sustainers must balance diplomacy and mission accomplishment. Next, they must understand interoperability and its effect on sustainment operations. Finally, they should develop a logistics

## FEATURES

In a multinational brigade combat team, the senior sustainer must balance diplomacy and mission accomplishment, understand interoperability, and provide the commander with information about how sustainers will support the mission.

common operational picture (LCOP) that satisfies mission requirements and provides the multinational BCT commander with the information needed to understand how sustainers will support the mission.

### Diplomacy and the Mission

The Army's experience for the past 15 years has been mostly in Afghanistan and Iraq training nascent military forces. But NATO allies and most Partnership for Peace nations have professional armies and logistics structures that are similar to those of the United States. Operating with them is not about building an army from scratch. When working with these multinational partners and allies, we cannot use the same template we used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The senior sustainer must develop a unity of effort and synchronize logistics activities across the multinational BCT. Keep in mind that all logisticians are committed to supporting their own maneuver commanders.

During the first engagement with all logisticians within the multinational BCT, the senior sustainer must determine how each nation will contribute to the major elements of sustainment. Army Doctrine Publication 4-0, Sustainment, describes those major elements as follows:

- Logistics—maintenance, transportation, supply, field services, distribution, operational contract support, and general engineering support.
- Personnel services—human resources support, financial management operations, legal support, religious support, and band support.
- Health service support—casualty care, medical evacuation, and medical logistics.

In addition to addressing the major sustainment elements, the senior sustainer must ask specifically about bulk fuel capacities, types of fuels required, evacuation platforms, recov-

ery assets, distribution capabilities, and other critical information. Each nation bringing forces to the fight will generate logistics requirements. Instead of the senior sustainer trying to make sustainment plans alone, he or she should ask the other nations' logisticians how they sustain their own formations.

For example, the senior sustainer should ask how the artillery battalion resupplies ammunition. Interestingly, the Czech Republic's army ammunition supply system is similar to the U.S. system in that it uses combat configured loads (CCLs). The first CCL is at the gun line, the second CCL is with the sustainment company (forward support company), and the third CCL is at the brigade support battalion.

Although there are similarities, the senior logistician still needs to know what types of ammunition are needed, how the multinational battalion will move and store it, and what types of primers, fuses, and charges are needed.

The senior sustainer must discuss who is doing what. Who is monitoring supply statuses, forecasting for the multinational BCT, and monitoring the BCT's internal logistics? Who is looking externally to bring in commodities and supplies to the brigade support area from a higher echelon? Who is executing the sustainment missions for each battalion or squadron within the BCT?

Once these responsibilities are delineated, the senior sustainer can establish clear roles and responsibilities to synchronize the multinational BCT field-grade logistics leaders. These roles and responsibilities should be agreed upon before mission execution.

Diplomacy, while valued, does not by itself produce the support plan, nor does it accomplish the sustainment mission. When a logistics issue arises, the time for diplomacy is over. It is time for accountability based on established roles and responsibilities. Having to apply diplomacy after the mission starts is

a course correction caused by not having a synchronized logistics plan.

The senior sustainer must use diplomatic techniques when a unit fails to plan logistics in detail, establish a logistics system capable of supporting the multinational BCT, or provide clear expectations up front for all of the logisticians involved. These mistakes leave logistics officers operating under assumptions.

It is not that the senior sustainer will never need to exercise diplomacy. However, sustainers must be open to professional discussions in order to understand each nation's logistics capabilities, capacities, and shortfalls. This understanding leads to recommendations on how to mitigate the shortfalls and provides the best way ahead to support the multinational BCT.

## Interoperability

When operating together, NATO-member militaries are guided by fundamental principles. Standardization agreements establish processes, terms, and conditions for common military or technical procedures and equipment use among all NATO members. They enable a member's military to use the support and supplies of another member's military. A national caveat is a restriction that a NATO member places on the use of its forces.

But NATO doctrine is primarily written at the strategic and operational levels of war. It does not describe how to support the multinational BCT at the tactical level of war.

To attain interoperability, multinational sustainers should not overthink or overcomplicate the mission. Tanks need fuel, artillery needs ammuni-

tion, vehicles need to be repaired, supplies need to be distributed, and Soldiers need medical support, food, and water.

Partners and allies bring knowledge on how best to support their own nation's requirements. U.S. sustainers should consider their techniques and procedures. Sustaining a multinational BCT is a collective problem, so we need a shared solution for it. The U.S. Army does not have the monopoly on great ideas.

For interoperability to occur in a multinational BCT, the senior sustainer must understand the multinational task organization, integrate communications, synchronize allied or partner capacities and capabilities, and develop agreed-upon standards and procedures.

**Task organization.** The foundation of interoperability is a full understanding of the task organization and



*Soldiers from Delta Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, unload supplies during a logistics resupply mission on April 17, 2016, as part of exercise Saber Junction 16 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. (Photo by Spc. Nathaniel Nichols)*

what it is intended to achieve. A task organization chart helps the multinational BCT commander to visualize the formation.

Using the chart, the commander can become familiar with the capabilities and procedures of the battalions or squadrons under the brigade and develop a plan that takes advantage of each partner nation's strengths. The commander can also discern if a particular nation cannot perform a specific mission because of personnel, training, or equipment constraints or national caveats.

Using the task organization chart, the commander can see which nations brought sustainment companies or health service support. The chart will identify possible friction points since a multinational task force may have different nations' forces task organized underneath the parent organization.

**Communications.** In the past 15 years, the Army has enjoyed well-established communications on built-up forward operating bases. A unit inherited the last unit's network and simply changed the domain account for network access.

But, combat training centers are teaching the opposite: units are conducting brigade-level operations in an austere environment with no pre-existing communications network. What the unit brings is what it has.

To be successful, senior sustainers should first understand the capabilities of the communications platforms organic to their battalions. They must then understand the capabilities, limitations, and constraints of the communications platforms in the multinational BCT.

For example, the Army has the Command Post of the Future, but multinational formations do not. Radio systems may be incompatible because of differences in encryption. In these cases, multinational formations may have to transmit over unsecure FM radios.

The S-6 communications officer has to know the senior sustainer's signal expectations. The senior sus-

tainer should be able to answer these questions:

- What do you want to do with the communications network?
- How far do you need your network to reach?
- Who do you need to talk to and why?
- Do you need collaboration tools, or does messaging satisfy the requirement?
- Have you identified dead-space locations where you cannot talk?
- For what you want to do, do you have sufficient bandwidth? If not, what can you do with the bandwidth that is available?

The BCT should consider all of the staff functions (personnel, intelligence, operations, internal logistics, external logistics, supply support activity, medical, and maintenance) when making the communications plan.

Although the senior sustainer may be task organized under the multinational BCT headquarters, the U.S. sustainment units will still require sustainment information specific to U.S. formations. Equally, the partners and allies that provide forces to the multinational BCT will have to report their own logistics information through their national channels, which means bandwidth requirements may increase.

The senior sustainer should also integrate the sustainment automation support management office (SASMO) into logistics communication planning. The SASMO is the primary operations center for organic sustainment information systems support.

The SASMO ensures that the Global Combat Support System—Army, Standard Army Ammunition System—Modernization, Transportation Coordinators' Automated Information for Movements System II, Electronic Military Personnel Office, and Medical Communications for Combat Casualty Care are working properly.

The SASMO is essential for sustainment communications planning. However, even by integrating the S-6 with SASMO, the senior sustainer may not be able to communicate with all multinational elements. Therefore, logistics liaison officers (LNOs) may be necessary.

Multinational partners may not have the same communications equipment; however, they do have command posts. If an ally or partner has a shortfall in communications capability, an LNO can capture pertinent logistics information for the command.

The JMRC observer-coach/trainers recommend using a two-person LNO team that includes an officer and an enlisted Soldier. The team should have a vehicle, Joint Capabilities Release, one long-range radio, and a Simple Key Loader.

**Capabilities.** The senior sustainer must be aware of all national caveats and support agreements among participating nations. This sets the stage for proper integration of logistics support of the multinational BCT. Commanders or senior sustainers must organize a working group to capture and understand each unit's capability and capacity.

It is a good idea for senior sustainers to conduct a logistics capabilities briefing to better educate themselves and their staffs about the multinational BCT's sustainment capacities. More importantly, the senior sustainer can identify the shortfalls in logistics and develop strategies to mitigate them.

**Standards and procedures.** The senior sustainer must develop standards and procedures for reporting, logistics status returns (time and frequency), and logistics synchronization meetings (meeting time and agenda).

A logical start point may be to use the U.S. logistics status report as a template, but keep an open mind; each nation has its own way of doing logistics reports, and another military may have a better product that can be used. Remember, this is a shared

problem set that requires a shared solution and understanding.

All multinational representatives should agree on report formats and on who is reporting to whom. For example, in an infantry task force within the multinational BCT, a German battalion headquarters may have one German mechanized infantry company, a Serbian mechanized infantry company, and a Romanian armor company.

It is reasonable to believe that the German battalion headquarters is responsible for reporting logistics information to the senior sustainer's support operations officer and the multinational BCT S-4. However, do not assume anything. Ensure the German battalion headquarters understands the reporting requirements and that it is responsible for the entire task force, not just its own national elements.

## The LCOP

When logistics standards and procedures are fully understood and agreed to by all nations, then the multinational BCT can produce the LCOP. The LCOP is a single display of relevant logistics information shared by more than one command.

But how do you display the LCOP to the multinational BCT commander? What logistics data is relevant? What does the multinational BCT commander need to know to make a decision? What feeds the LCOP? Have appropriate standards and procedures for timely reporting been established?

There are several ways to produce an LCOP at the brigade level. The JMRC recommends giving a quick LCOP "snapshot" to the multinational BCT commander. The snapshot should reflect the functionality of the multinational BCT's combat power and be tracked according to task force, battalion, or squadron.

The senior sustainer should track the combat power by key enabling systems and by warfighting function. The sustainer should also assess functional readiness using the framework

of shoot, move, communicate, and sustain.

A multinational task force requires more complex tracking of key enabling systems. Key logistics enabling systems are different than maneuver assets. What primarily concerns logisticians is the equipment used to distribute, refuel, store, lift, evacuate, and recover personnel and equipment.

The senior sustainer must also understand each nation's storage capacity for bulk fuel and water. Some countries may not have bulk fuel and water storage capacity; they may instead use 5-gallon cans. That kind of information is essential to know up front.

What does the data on a LCOP mean to the commander? The LCOP data is analyzed and consolidated to provide the commander with an understanding of the brigade's logistics status.

The staff officer must conduct an analysis and provide recommendations for the commander if the information is determined to be critical. A simple method to present that information is by capturing the "what," "so what," "which means," and "therefore" for all critical logistics shortfalls.

As an example, when a brigade S-4 is notified that the field artillery battalion's 155-millimeter high explosive projectiles are "red," that staff officer must present the data succinctly and efficiently to the commander. The munitions shortfall is the "what" of the unit's problem. The "so what" is how it affects the unit, why it happened, when the next resupply is scheduled, and whether or not external resupply is available.

The brigade S-4 continues by addressing the "which means" aspect of the problem. Questions to ask at this point help build recommendations to overcome the shortfall. For example, how does the staff mitigate the munitions shortage? What missions are affected, and how can the missions be changed if the munitions are not resupplied? Does the brigade have to delay a follow-on mission, attack, or

counterattack because of the lack of effects on the objective?

Finally, the S-4 must present the commander with the "therefore." The analysis of the original shortfall must end with the commander making a decision. How can the commander reallocate resources? What or who needs to be influenced? Do any changes need to be made to the tactical mission?

The senior sustainer must fully understand the multinational BCT's task organization and what the formation can and cannot do. Being diplomatic does not, by itself, develop the support plan, nor will it sustain the multinational BCT. Clear roles and responsibilities must be established.

The senior sustainer needs to create opportunities to develop a multinational logistics plan that considers interoperability. A communications plan must be developed to enable mission command of the multinational BCT's sustainment activity.

The senior sustainer should look for the gaps in logistics support and remedy them. Standards and procedures should be agreed upon by all participating nations. Finally, an LCOP will assist the multinational BCT commander in making logistics decisions.

A multinational environment is unique and challenging and offers opportunities to excel and highlight the talents of the Logistics Corps. Successful logistics commanders are the ones who remain open to new ideas and realize that they can learn from other nations' armies as they also learn from ours.

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