

Army Sustainment Command's Role in Replacing the Standard Army Retail Supply System with GCSS-Army

The Army Sustainment Command shares lessons learned and tools for a successful transition to the Global Combat Support System-Army.

■ By Chief Warrant Officer 3 Laureen A. Williams

Global Combat Support System-Army (GCSS-Army) is an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) commercial off-the-shelf application capable of managing a large volume of business transactions within a single database. In ERP, the “enterprise” is the Army organizational structure; the “resource” is the equipment, personnel, facilities, and funds; and the “planning” is the systematic scheduling, coordination, and execution of all Army sustainment business.

GCSS-Army is now being used within the Army Sustainment Command (ASC). Within the ASC, the logistics readiness centers (LRCs) are the primary users of GCSS-Army. The ASC Distribution Management Center (DMC) provides the materiel management for the LRCs. The LRCs provide substantial supply support to customers Army-wide, from supply support activities (SSAs) to central break bulk points on installations.

Getting Started

In June 2012, the ASC headquarters signed a GCSS-Army assumption of mission agreement with Project Management Office (PMO) GCSS-Army. The agreement allows the ASC DMC to assume the LRC Installation Fixed Base and Tactical Sustainment of the GCSS-Army Materiel

Management Levels I/II/III mission. ASC DMC materiel managers have been working with PMO personnel to create a seamless transition with this process.

GCSS-Army was fielded first to the LRC SSA at Fort Lee, Va., in November 2012. In February 2013, GCSS-Army was fielded to the LRC SSAs at Fort A.P. Hill and Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va. The first large installation LRCs (at Fort Bragg, N.C., and Fort Hood, Texas) were fielded GCSS-Army in the second half of 2013.

ASC DMC materiel managers work with the accountable officers at these installations and implement the daily release strategy, which identifies requisitions for further review based on specific business rules. The ASC DMC materiel managers also pull monthly performance metrics and oversee and monitor the SSAs on full solution (Waves 1 and 2) for the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Irwin, Calif., and the 47th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Keeping It Clean

To prepare for GCSS-Army, a unit must perform data cleansing. ASC has taken an active role in ensuring that each LRC understands the importance of early data cleansing before converting to GCSS-Army.

Taking a proactive role in cleansing data of supply and financial errors minimizes the impact of causative research during the GCSS-Army fielding.

The Logistics Support Activity Enterprise Data Management Office (EDMO) educates ASC sites on the importance of data cleansing by providing the tools to collect data, research errors, and correct data to ensure a smooth transition to GCSS-Army. Materiel managers monitor the errors identified according to business rules within the Logistics Information Warehouse EDMO portal to assist accountable officers and resource managers as needed.

Initiating a Requisition

In GCSS-Army, a supply request generates a purchase requisition that flows to ZPARK for an approval/release strategy. [ZPARK, which is similar to the shopping cart on a merchant's website, allows a user to validate financial status and supply requests.] Once the purchase requisition is approved, a commitment and obligation is recorded in GCSS-Army, creating a purchase order.

The financial data feeds back into the General Fund Enterprise Business System (GFEBs) Business Intelligence for Status of Funds (SOF) reports. SOF reports can also be gen-

erated in GCSS–Army, but GFEBs is the source of record for year-end financial reporting. Reconciliation should be performed periodically to ensure SOF balances in the two systems are synchronized.

Once users complete training, they are assigned financial roles by an access administrator so that they have the access and transaction codes needed for working in GCSS–Army.

GCSS–Army and GFEBs

GCSS–Army interfaces with GFEBs for the funding to process requisitions. Both the annual funding program and cash (allotments) are required to be passed to GCSS–Army unless the funding is reimbursable, in which case only an allotment is required.

GFEBs cost objects, cost centers, and work breakdown structure (WBS) elements need to be “federated” within GCSS–Army in order to process requisitions. All of the ASC cost centers were federated within GCSS–Army during ASC’s conversion to GFEBs. A WBS element is federated in GFEBs by clicking the GCSS–Army radio button on the “Customer Enhancement” tab within the WBS element.

This action triggers the WBS element to interface with GCSS–Army. Once cost objects pass to GCSS–Army, the GCSS–Army “ZACCTASSIGN” table is established with the appropriate cost object and fund code for each Department of Defense activity address code (DODAAC). The ZACCTASSIGN table replaces the “DOJOCON” table that was located in the funds control module of the legacy process.

Under the modular support structure, materiel management is broken down into execution management of Operations and Maintenance Army (OMA)/Plant 2000 and execution management of the Army Working Capital Fund (AWCF)/Plant 2001, each with three levels of materiel management.

OMA/Plant 2000 (motor pool,

shop office, and supply room) execution management is handled by the local brigade support battalion. The AWCF/Plant 2001 (execution management for tactical SSAs) starts with level I materiel management, handled by the sustainment brigade.

The expeditionary sustainment command handles level II materiel management, and the ASC or theater sustainment command handles level III materiel management. ASC DMC materiel managers handle all levels of materiel management for

ness rules check for specific materiel (such as compasses or laptops), high dollar, excessive quantity, sensitive items, reportable and restricted items, expendable, nonexpendable, or durable items. This check can only be completed after a purchase requisition goes through the ZPARK finance check and funds have been obligated.

Reducing the Productivity Dip

Just like with any new system, operators need to be proactive in the

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the installation LRC SSAs in the continental United States.

New Rules for a New System

As the ASC DMC branches transitioned to GCSS–Army, they reduced the parameters managed and reviewed daily in legacy standard Army management information systems (STAMISs), such as the Standard Army Retail Supply System (SARSS). ASC DMC is working with the Combined Arms Support Command and PMO GCSS–Army personnel to determine which new parameters and functions materiel managers will be responsible for in the future.

Another key change from SARSS to GCSS–Army is the reduced number of referral codes that a document number could pass through for verification before a manager can process the daily manager review file (MRF). After conversion, materiel managers must verify only eight release strategy codes before processing a purchase requisition.

The new release strategy busi-

ness learning phase to lessen the effect of the “productivity dip.” Hundreds of subject matter experts exist for each legacy system in use today. As a supply systems technician subject matter expert, I am specialized in today’s legacy systems. However, after converting to GCSS–Army, I am like a Soldier going through advanced individual training.

Yesterday I knew the regulations needed to perform research and where to obtain the knowledge for a well-thought-out answer; today I research several different policies and procedures, including training slides, websites, and posting questions on milBook, to get the correct information about GCSS–Army.

The more operators are willing to learn about GCSS–Army and how it works, the less significant their productivity dip will be. Working as a team, adhering to lessons learned from previous conversions, being proactive with data cleansing, and having strong command support that emphasizes education and training can also help.

Lessons Learned and Tools for Users

ASC captured key lessons learned during the fielding of GCSS–Army to the LRCs at Fort Lee, Fort AP Hill, and Joint Base Myer–Henderson Hall. The lessons learned provide guidance and recommendations on how to prepare future fielding locations to execute a seamless, effective, and efficient transition. Critical lessons learned include early data cleansing, DODAAC scrubs, and early involvement of the resource managers. All ASC lessons learned can be found at <https://ascsp.osc.army.mil/sites/FieldSupport/ELID/ELSMID/GCSSA>.

Completing the Web-based training in the Army Learning Management System is the first step in being comfortable with and knowledgeable of GCSS–Army. Once the training is complete, users can receive additional training and education for their functional business area.

The Advanced Lead User Training program provides a GCSS–Army orientation for command designees (accountable officers or SSA managers) and resource managers and prepares them to better advise their units on the conversion.

GCSS–Army new equipment training is instructor-facilitated training performed during the brownout/blackout time frame. This training is broken down by business area and segmented again within each business area. The business areas covered during the new equipment training are finance, warehouse operations, and execution and materiel management.

With assistance from PMO GCSS–Army, the SSA validates data for finance and materiel management during the blackout. Each business area has a specific range of transaction codes that have to be verified before going live.

Over the shoulder support is being provided by PMO GCSS–Army and ASC liaison officers who provide technical expertise and reach-back capabilities as deemed necessary by the customer. The liaison officers are regionally located to support each of the Army field support brigades and

their subordinate LRCs.

The End User Manual–Plus is electronic content that provides the end user instant access to the information about the GCSS–Army application. It provides access to downloads for each business area, training bulletins that discuss changes and updates, new equipment training that can be used as refresher training, cue cards, and Web-based training that can be downloaded to users' desktops.

The GCSS–Army website, <https://www.gcss.army.mil>, has more information. This website provides information about fielding schedules, training, keys to success, and contact information.

Information can also be found on the ASC SharePoint located at <https://ascsp.osc.army.mil/sites/FieldSupport/ELID/ELSMID/GCSSA>. The SharePoint also provides points of contact for specific agencies to help narrow a search for assistance. Specific questions about GCSS–Army can be posted at mil-Book, <https://www.milsuite.mil/login>, by signing in and joining the group called "GCSS–Army Lead Users."

GCSS–Army Benefits

As the Single Army Logistics Enterprise, GCSS–Army will fulfill all tactical Army logistics requirements in one place. GCSS–Army provides commanders at all levels with increased visibility of the supply pipeline and equipment availability and near-real-time data that improves reporting for planning, execution, and readiness.

The conversion of GCSS–Army from current legacy systems will significantly reduce the need for specific hardware, software, separate databases, and infrastructure support. Only one system will need to be maintained, and all personnel requiring access will need to be trained only on their specific roles within the application. The single database used by the GCSS–Army application ensures consistent catalog information and increases the ease of managing

a piece of equipment throughout its life cycle.

GCSS–Army Wave 1 fielding consists of the conversion of SARSS1 and Tactical Financials to GCSS–Army. It is scheduled to be completed in the 1st quarter of fiscal year 2016.

Wave 2 fielding, which is projected to be completed in fiscal year 2017, will fully integrate unit supply, property book, and maintenance with retail supply and tactical financial operations, bringing increased efficiency and responsiveness to commanders' requests.

ASC is currently performing a dual role in legacy STAMISs and GCSS–Army. GCSS–Army is operating for the LRCs and ASC with minimal issues, which are addressed as they are uncovered. As the Army transitions to GCSS–Army, its knowledge base continues to grow. The Army's logistics common operational picture will become transparent, allowing commanders to view how their units are doing at the lowest levels. GCSS–Army is here and no longer a mark on the wall as the next upcoming web-based system for the Army.

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