

# Data-Driven Logistics: Not Just Another Computer System

Merging our supply, maintenance, and property accountability systems into GCSS-Army will give us a consolidated picture that enables better-informed decisions.

■ By Lt. Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna



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In the next six months, we will be hitting new milestones in the fielding of the biggest game changer this decade for Army logistics: the Global Combat Support System-Army (GCSS-Army). The first wave, which involves fielding in warehouses to replace the Standard Army Retail Supply System, is 75 percent complete.

Even more important, we are starting to ramp up the second wave, which involves replacing Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced and the Standard Army Maintenance System-Enhanced. The second wave is seven times larger, more complex, and will require a team approach because all members of the Army are affected, not just logisticians.

Going from legacy sustainment information systems to GCSS-Army is similar to how the Army went from the Sherman to the Abrams tank. It was a difficult transition and required buy-in from all levels of command, but in the end, where would we be without the centerpiece of ground maneuver?

I used our current legacy logistics systems when I was a company-grade officer growing up in the Army—that is how old they are! They have become a part of a logistician’s kit bag and are hard to let go, but it is more than time for an upgrade. GCSS-Army finally gives us our “M1A1” capability, making supply, maintenance, and property accountability available to leaders in one system with one set of data.

Leader development is very im-

portant to the implementation and sustainment of the system, and we need to make it a priority. GCSS-Army gives not only logisticians but also leaders in all branches of the Army a factory-to-foxhole view of their formations and provides a single data source to build and maintain readiness.

Both the Ordnance and Quartermaster schools have implemented GCSS-Army training for our Soldiers, noncommissioned officers, warrant officers, and commissioned officers to build the knowledge base we need. Since many of our Soldiers and young officers have been operating computers their whole lives, learning new systems is not hard for them; we will rely on them to learn GCSS-Army and stay up to date with it as they move throughout their careers.

GCSS-Army will not perform miracles, and it is not about replacing people with yet another computer system. Our Soldiers and leaders will still have to execute maintenance and property accountability processes correctly.

But GCSS-Army can follow a piece of military equipment from the time it is purchased until it arrives at the unit. The system then predicts the equipment’s required maintenance upkeep and anticipates additional parts or maintenance needed to support the life cycle of the product. With everyone having access to this same centralized data, we will be able to optimize the supply chain and increase operational readiness.

Additionally, we are developing a business intelligence capability that will use information from GCSS-Army and other enterprise resource planning systems to extract critical data for decision-makers at all levels. One thing we have found over the years is that “data overload” can overwhelm leaders and staffs and make it hard to focus on the right information.

Business intelligence will allow users to search massive amounts of data and then quickly receive information essential to building unit readiness. It will also enable us to anticipate maneuver commanders’ requirements and, therefore, satisfy them more efficiently and effectively than in the past.

In the future, as the Army becomes more expeditionary and less reliant on forward operating bases, GCSS-Army will play a big role. All users will have the same data

from the same source. GCSS-Army is web-enabled, so users will be able to access it from anywhere in the world. Most importantly, it will allow users across the world to see a deployed unit’s readiness and be able to provide support at the click of a mouse.

The next 10 years will be even harder than the last 10, when we were engaged in two wars. Linking the global supply chain with multiple operations taking place that could easily grow into contingency operations makes a system like GCSS-Army vital to maintaining our expeditionary force.

I am excited to see what lies ahead as we continue to roll out GCSS-Army and begin merging our supply, maintenance, and property accountability systems into a consolidated picture, enabling better-informed decisions. I also know how hard it is to transition from something com-

fortable to something new. There will be growing pains, but the train is leaving the station and we need all leaders on board with us.

I am convinced that the single most important contributor to success for fielding and sustaining GCSS-Army will be leaders. The same things that make us the world’s preeminent land force—the quality of our leaders and the dedication of our Soldiers—will also be required to ensure success with this game-changing transition.

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*During a maintenance meeting at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, discuss using the Global Combat Support System-Army equipment situation report for near real-time information regarding unit readiness. (Photo by 1st Lt. Jonathon Hecker)*