

Synchronizing Sustainment Efforts in a Time of Change

The Army G-4 staff is using several approaches to generate focus, synchronize efforts, and make the most efficient use of limited resources.

■ By Lt. Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna



“It is important that we spend time thinking strategically five or more years into the future while the exceptional leaders in our sustainment and maneuver units take care of the present.”

Six months ago, I was honored to assume duties as the Army’s G-4. Not long after, I asked my team to explore the possibility of creating a regular column in *Army Sustainment* so that I can share insights from the Army staff level and from my visits with professional logisticians across our formations.

In this first column, I will discuss how I believe logisticians must approach the present challenges of supporting greatly increasing requirements with declining resources. In particular, I would like to share several approaches we are taking within the Army G-4, both for your awareness and because you may find similar approaches useful within your own formations.

The last 10 years have been hard on the Army as it fought difficult wars on two fronts. We succeeded, but it took courage, sacrifice from many Soldiers, civilians, and families, and support and resources from the nation’s people. I believe the next 10 years will be even harder as resources decline and demands for trained and ready Army forces increase.

Currently, we have nine of 10 divisions committed, and logisticians must find ways to support formations on all continents, restore and sustain readiness across the Army, divest equipment, reposition and modernize Army pre-positioned stocks, create and sustain equipment activity sets, field the Global Combat Support System-Army, and when directed, set a theater for

sustainment and onward movement in order to support forces in a complex and uncertain global environment—all while reducing manpower.

I am confident that we can succeed because we have great leaders and the finest Soldiers in the world. But as resources drop sharply, commanders and staffs must ensure they have processes and systems in place to focus and synchronize their efforts; we cannot afford an inadvertent waste of time, energy, or money.

Here is what logisticians on the Army staff are doing to generate this focus and synchronization and to ensure we make the most efficient use of our limited resources.

Prioritizing

First, in the G-4 we are focusing on what is really necessary. The G-4 is a small team that shoulders big responsibilities.

To ensure our limited staff focuses on what is really important, we are working to ensure that every team member has internalized the Army Chief of Staff’s (CSA’s) five priorities: Adaptive Army Leaders for a Complex World, a Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged Army, a Ready and Modern Army, Soldiers Committed to Our Army Profession, and the Premier All-Volunteer Army.

The G-4 team knows our work must support these priorities and that everything we do must be connected to them. If an effort does not

support one of these priorities, we do not need that program, do not have to create that policy, or do not have to attend that meeting. All G-4 personnel have a copy of the CSA's priorities sitting on their desks or hanging on the wall, so if they need a reason to do or not do something, they just have to look up.

Challenging the Status Quo

Second, G-4 leaders and experts are charged with challenging the status quo. The projects and processes that guaranteed success during a 13-year, forward operating base-centered war with an Army Force Generation Army may or may not be the same ones we need to restore the Army's ability to project large, trained and ready formations on short notice anywhere in the world. Determining what work we should continue or discontinue (so we can shift resources elsewhere) requires critical thinking.

It also requires a constant review of the CSA's priorities to ensure anything we spend time, energy, or money on provides a benefit that can be linked to a priority. The most important thing we can do in this turbulent time is determine what we are not going to do so that we focus the right resources and energy on the missions that we must do.

Operating at the Right Level

Third, to help ensure optimal use of our small staff, as well as to make sure that we do not detract

from important work being done elsewhere in the Army, G-4 leaders are ensuring we maintain our focus at the right level. Just as a battalion commander needs to focus on duties that are uniquely his or hers—and not try to command subordinate companies—we will work to keep Army G-4 focused within its own lane.

It is important that we spend time thinking strategically five or more years into the future while the exceptional leaders in our sustainment and maneuver units take care of the present. Accordingly, within G-4 we regularly talk about the Army five years from now as well as the Army of 2025 and beyond.

Our job is to describe clearly a vision for Army logistics in that time and then provide implementing guidance that synchronizes the efforts of the entire team toward that end state.

Implementation

To generate this synchronization within the G-4, we recently published logistics strategic planning guidance that focuses on three lines of effort (LOEs): leadership development, readiness, and the Army Operating Concept and Force 2025.

These LOEs directly support the CSA's priorities and help greatly with synchronization because we orient all major internal G-4 processes and meetings on the three LOEs. Every G-4 directorate is focusing its efforts on objectives

designed to support one or more LOEs.

At the individual level, all members of the G-4 are becoming conversant in how their daily efforts support both these LOEs and the CSA's priorities.

Further, as the G-4 staff operates within the overarching department-level processes used to plan and program for the Army—such as the budget program objective memorandum, the total Army analysis, and the long-term investment requirements analysis—we are using the new G-4 lines of effort to shape our inputs and to ensure we remain aligned within both G-4 and the larger sustainment community.

Finally, we have completely shifted our approach from a key department-level process, the Army strategic readiness assessment, to a metrics-based approach that allows us to measure progress along the LOEs toward the Army of 2025 and beyond.

Objectives for Force 2025

The G-4 leaders are developing objectives that fit within the new lines of effort and clearly support the CSA's priorities. Accordingly, here is a partial list of the objectives we are pursuing in coordination with key logistics stakeholders:

- Ensure the Army can provide trained and ready logistics forces to fulfill combatant command responsibilities.
- Ensure logistics forces are manned,



trained, and equipped to project, receive, and move forces.

- Ensure logistics force structure is properly aligned to provide support tactically, operationally, and strategically.
- Optimize field and depot maintenance processes to support tactical readiness and ensure strategic readiness.
- Operationalize materiel management and distribution management, and ensure we have the right structure at the right levels to execute operations in support of Army readiness.
- Operationalize operational contract support, and institutionalize the lessons learned from two wars characterized by unprecedented levels of contractors on the battlefield.
- Streamline central issue facilities and overhaul garrison dining facility operations.
- Implement the second wave of

the Global Combat Support System–Army, fielding it for motor pool, property book, and supply room operations. Set conditions to create and execute aviation, transportation, and ammunition modules.

- Improve tracking and reporting of worldwide sustainment operations so we can identify and mitigate issues before they become problems.
- Establish an operational energy mindset that drives innovation to reduce logistics structure on the battlefield.

Many of these objectives are obviously complex and far-reaching, but if we follow the adage of “think big, start small” and drive ourselves toward the end state with focused and synchronized efforts, I am confident that we can get there. Our Army and our nation require nothing less.

Over these next few years, the decisions we make as logisticians and leaders can lead to great success—I know we can get it right. I challenge logisticians of all ranks to be involved and help ensure Army leaders make the right decisions as we work through this period of sharply increasing requirements with declining resources.

I look forward to hearing about your ideas and experiences during my travels to our training centers, installations, centers of excellence, and schoolhouses. Army Strong!

Lt. Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna is the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-4. He oversees policies and procedures used by 270,000 Army logisticians throughout the world. Prior to joining the Army staff, he was the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/4, at the Army Materiel Command.

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