

An Expeditionary Mindset: Ready for Anything

The Army needs a well-planned and well-executed logistics leader development campaign in order to develop an expeditionary mindset.

■ By Lt. Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna



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The urgency of training logistics leaders to perform expeditionary logistics hit home for me earlier this year when I spoke to a thousand majors in the Command and General Staff Officers' Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Many of these top-quality officers had served on multiple deployments to Iraq or Afghanistan. However, they all entered the Army in 2003, so they are heading out to run battalions and brigades having never seen expeditionary tasks performed. They are not alone.

The State of the Force

Today, eight out of 10 Army officers and enlisted Soldiers joined after 9/11. The Army they know is an Army of nearly unlimited resources, with war materiel often delivered, stored, maintained, and even deployed by contractors.

The decisions to execute Army logistics in that way were made for the right reasons at the time; the resulting processes worked well for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We followed a well-defined model, Army Force Generation, which allowed us to focus readiness efforts for specific units, times, and missions. But gone are the days of predictable rotations. We have new missions all over the world, and now we have to be ready for anything at any time.

An Expeditionary Mindset

To make this transition successful, we must develop an expeditionary mindset among Army logisticians.

Developing this mindset will require a well-planned and well-executed logistics leader development campaign that provides logistics leaders with the training, education, and experience necessary to support an expeditionary Army.

As an initial part of that effort, the Army G-4, the deputy commanding general of the Army Materiel Command, and the commanding general of the Combined Arms Support Command are serving on a Logistics Leader Development Board. We are conducting whiteboard sessions and looking at how we will sustain a globally responsive and regionally engaged Army with fewer resources and with equipment far more complicated than it was before 9/11.

We are asking the following “big picture” logistics-related questions:

- Does logistics doctrine meet the needs of our nation and future operations?
- Do we have the right logistics force structure in the right place?
- Are logisticians taught what they need to know?
- Are exercises training logisticians for the next war or the last one?
- Are logistics leaders getting the right mix of developmental and broadening assignments?

A Good Start

I am happy to report that we are making progress. For example, at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, we



A 1st Armored Division Soldier ground guides a Stryker vehicle into position as part of a refuel on-the-move during Iron Focus at Fort Bliss, Texas, on March 30, 2015. (Photo by Staff Sgt. George Gutierrez)

are focusing on multinational expeditionary logistics.

This issue of *Army Sustainment* contains articles on the essential, but often neglected, logistics considerations that are being taught at that center and that will prepare us for the challenging missions we expect to receive.

Warrant officers and noncommissioned officers also are stepping up. We are integrating them into junior leader programs at the Army Logistics University so that young lieutenants can better relate to and learn from them.

More Change Needed

Junior Soldiers are not the only ones who need to transition. For those of us who have been around for a while, when was the last time you conducted a refuel on-the-move or set up a forward arming and refueling point? It has probably been at least 10 years because those techniques were rarely used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We have a generation of senior

noncommissioned officers and officers who have no experience with tactical water and fuel distribution, Army field feeding, forward ammunition handling, field maintenance, and many other basic life-support functions because we have been paying contractors and host-nation personnel to perform these tasks.

We also need to enable our Army civilians to think with an expeditionary mindset. During the recent wars, many civilians deployed forward and were invaluable; but because their focus was solely on supporting warfighters for so long, they missed opportunities for professional development, including going to school. This problem was compounded by the necessary use of contractor support, which eroded some of their existing skills just as it eroded Soldiers' skills.

As the Army transitions from more than a decade of scheduled deployments, it must renew its emphasis on training the fu-

ture force. This force likely will not have the predictable rotations that we became accustomed to and probably will not operate from well-established forward operating bases. However, it will be a force expected to respond with little or no notice to missions in austere areas anywhere in the world.

Based on all the leadership discussions incorporated in this issue, I am confident that we are heading down the right road. However, continued leader focus will be required to make sure we achieve the right balance of training, education, and experience to get there.

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