



U.S. and NATO paratroopers with Task Force Devil, a multinational force led by the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, conduct pre-mission combined training on Aug. 21, 2015, in Baumholder, Germany. (Photo by Erich Backes)

Solutions for Expeditionary Sustainment Mission Command

The 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command trained on providing an expeditionary mission command headquarters by validating its early-entry command post and deploying to Swift Response 15.

■ By Col. David Waddell and Maj. Paul B. Madden

Power projection is the ability of a nation to apply elements of national power to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain forces in and from multiple dispersed locations. It allows the nation to respond to crises, contribute to deterrence, and enhance regional stability.

By nature of its design, the expeditionary sustainment command (ESC) is the sustainment force of choice when a forward operational command presence is required to provide reach for the theater sustainment command (TSC). As described in Army Techniques Publication 4-94,

Theater Sustainment Command, the forward deployment of the ESC facilitates agile and responsive support by placing it in relative proximity of the supported force and its operational environment.

Continued rotational deployments over many years, however, have limit-

ed ESC operations to fixed facilities. This has atrophied the unit's expeditionary capability and its headquarters' responsiveness.

After returning from a deployment in early 2015, the 3rd ESC headquarters developed a new training path to validate and certify an early-entry command post (EECP). That path culminated in a deployment to Europe in August 2015 as part of Swift Response 15.

The EECP

The EECP is the initial deploying headquarters element of the ESC. The command post is modular and manned according to the mission requirements of the TSC, combined joint task force, or corps. Designed to provide operational-level sustainment mission command, the EECP benefits from these key capabilities:

- A rapidly deployable forward mission command element.
- An initial strategic and operational sustainment operations capability.
- The ability to respond to unified land operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, and defense support of civil authorities.
- The ability to be an operational sustainment mission command post for the Global Response Force.

The ESC may also use the EECP to plan, prepare, and execute theater opening operations. The ESC EECP extends the operational reach for the TSC and, if required, may form the basis of an expeditionary joint sustainment command.

Swift Response 15

As the aligned, operational sustainment headquarters of the XVIII Airborne Corps and the Global Response Force, the 3rd ESC proceeded down an aggressive training path to reach the culminating training event, Swift Response 15.

Built around a multinational airborne joint forcible-entry operation, Swift Response 15 was recognized

as the Army's largest combined airborne training event in Europe since the end of the Cold War. About 4,800 service members from 11 NATO nations took part in various crisis response exercises across four European countries.

The 3rd ESC deployed the EECP to Rhine Ordnance Barracks in Kaiserslautern, Germany, in early August 2015. Serving as the forward operational command post for the 21st TSC and directly supporting Combined Joint Task Force Dragon, the ESC was given an area of responsibility encompassing portions of Germany, Italy, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The ESC was charged with these responsibilities:

- Maintain mission command of two logistics task forces comprising Soldiers from the 16th Sustainment Brigade.
- Establish the intermediate staging base at the Baumholder Training Area, Germany.
- Manage the deployment processing centers at Rhine Ordnance Barracks and Nuremberg, Germany.
- Provide the combined joint task force sustainment common operational picture.
- Integrate partner nations.
- Maintain strategic reach back to the main command posts of the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 21st TSC, and the 3rd ESC.

Using the ESC in these ways established centralized mission command of supporting sustainment forces and enabled the TSC to remain focused on broader strategic sustainment requirements across Europe. This was the first time that an ESC had deployed to Europe in support of the U.S. European Command or under the mission command of the 21st TSC.

Lessons Learned

In December 2015, the 3rd ESC conducted a reverse collection and analysis team presentation to the Combined Arms Support Command

commander and his staff. Observations, insights, and lessons learned from Swift Response 15 were shared with the sustainment community, and a way forward was established to increase the expeditionary capability of all ESCs.

Signal support shortfalls. ESCs are limited in their expeditionary capability because of a lack of organic signal assets.

The ESC modified table of organization and equipment does not provide adequate signal support to enable current sustainment command, control, communications, and computer operations in an austere environment. It also does not take into account the ESC's intrinsic administrative, maintenance, and logistics management system requirements.

Strategic enablers. Early in the execution of Swift Response 15, strategic stakeholders from across the U.S. European Command were pulled into the EECP to synchronize sustainment operations; this proved to be a game changer.

Centralized sustainment mission command is reinforced when the ESC command post is the forward point of synchronization. Maneuver and sustainment planners quickly realized that the ESC was the point of entry for sustainment issues and challenges.

Educating the maneuver force. It was clear from the initial planning conference and through the exercise that maneuver leaders and their staffs, from the Army service component command down to the brigade combat team, do not clearly understand the roles and capabilities of an ESC. This might stem from the limited doctrine available for ESC operations.

The roles and responsibilities of the ESC continue to be refined, but meanwhile, the Army as a whole should seek opportunities to exercise centralized sustainment mission command with TSC and ESC involvement. It is also important to include the 10 Army Reserve and National Guard ESCs in these



Jumpmasters with 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, provide new equipment training to Polish paratroopers with Task Force Devil on Aug. 22, 2015, in Baumholder, Germany. The task force executed Swift Response 15, a multinational training exercise, from Aug. 15 to Sept. 17, 2015. (Photo by Capt. Jonathon M. Lewis)

training opportunities.

Supporting the Global Response Force. In order for the Global Response Force to execute its missions, such as the joint forcible-entry operations that were replicated during Swift Response 15, a sustainment organization with operational and strategic capability must be there to support it.

Centralized sustainment mission command must be established through the TSC down to the ESC command post so that the maneuver force maintains operational reach and freedom of maneuver.

ESCs have developed their own solutions for the layout of command posts and the resourcing of materiel to deploy them. No two ESCs look alike when deployed. The Combined Arms Support Command can help by standardizing command post options for all ESCs and establishing the doctrine and tables of organiza-

tion and equipment to source them. Experiences of active and reserve component ESCs over the past several years can provide a good base.

The lack of commonality has a number of second- and third-order effects. Not having a standard configuration inhibits the accurate forecasting of transportation requirements, which causes issues when units compete for airframes. The lack of a standard command post also impedes the ability to clearly define the expeditionary capabilities that the ESC brings to the maneuver commander.

Lastly, and most importantly, a common solution to the organic signal shortfall within the ESC command post must be resolved. Potential solutions from the field have been offered since 2013, and solutions continue to be explored today.

The bottom line is that if the ESC is expected to be expeditionary, it can achieve that only through its own or-

ganic capability. That capability does not exist today.

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