



The 16th Sustainment Brigade Sustains a Strong Europe

■ By Maj. Gen. Duane A. Gamble and Col. Michelle M.T. Letcher



Petroleum supply specialists from the 16th Sustainment Brigade refuel vehicles assigned to regionally allocated forces at Tapa, Estonia, during Operation Atlantic Resolve. (Photo by 1st Lt. Hannah Morgan)

FEATURES

An increasing number of commitments and reductions in the size of the force have generated unique challenges and opportunities for the only sustainment brigade in Europe.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command (TSC), headquartered in Baumholder, Germany, provides mission command of forces assigned to 16 locations in Germany and Italy. The unit is the single sustainment brigade responsible for enabling readiness and providing sustainment support across the U.S. European Command. It also supports the U.S. Africa Command and the U.S. Central Command areas of responsibility.

The brigade provides tactical-level support for theater sustainment and has a persistent presence in seven nations alongside NATO allies in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve. The 16th Sustainment Brigade ensures freedom of movement, endurance, and operational reach and is focused on strengthening the U.S. alliance with NATO partners and deterring Russian aggression.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade sustains a strong Europe by providing sustainment mission command, establishing the joint operations area (JOA), and following the U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) commanding general's guidance to make 30,000 assigned and rotational forces in Europe look and feel like 300,000.

Providing Mission Command

The 21st TSC provides mission command at the strategic level across the entire theater and at the operational level for the theater sustainment base. The 16th Sustainment Brigade provides operational- and tactical-level mission command across the Atlantic Resolve JOA and tactical-level mission command within the European theater. These assigned areas of responsibility focus the main effort in a theater with limited resources.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade deploys forces to execute theater opening, theater distribution, and theater sustainment. The brigade holds joint responsibilities to provide common user land transportation and traffic management services in selected

countries through its participation in national movement coordination centers.

Traffic management includes processing transportation requirements, determining transport modes, producing freight documentation, obtaining technical and diplomatic clearances, and coordinating with transportation providers. Additional joint requirements include mail delivery, common item repair, and Logistics Civil Augmentation Program support contracts.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade provides mission command across Europe through decentralized operations. The brigade currently has three subordinate battalions: the 39th Transportation Battalion (Movement Control), the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB), and the 16th Special Troops Battalion.

To support Atlantic Resolve mission requirements and sustain the theater, the 16th Sustainment Brigade task organizes its subordinate battalions to ensure that commanders and senior logisticians are present at the decisive points.

The 39th Transportation Battalion provides mission command of Atlantic Resolve–North, which consists of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. The 18th CSSB provides mission command for Atlantic Resolve–Central (in Budapest, Hungary, and Slovakia) and Atlantic Resolve–South (in Romania, Bulgaria, and Moldova).

The 16th Special Troops Battalion provides operational-level mission command for brigade assets at the forward command post, which is co-located with Multinational Corps–North East and NATO's force integration units across Atlantic Resolve.

Each battalion provides one company command team on a forward rotational basis to provide mission command for support elements across the JOA. The span of control for a single battalion or company commander in Atlantic Resolve stretches across an entire continent. This mission is accomplished with a

formation that reduced its capabilities following the Cold War and has recently faced force reductions.

Sustaining Atlantic Resolve

Atlantic Resolve demonstrates the continued U.S. commitment to the collective security of NATO and to enduring peace and stability in the region following Russia's actions in Ukraine. In 2015, there were more than 51 battalion-and-above-level Atlantic Resolve-related exercises and training events designed to improve interoperability, strengthen relationships and trust among allies and partnered nations, contribute to regional stability, and demonstrate the U.S. commitment to NATO allies and partners in Eastern Europe.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade currently has Soldiers in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary in support of Atlantic Resolve. It is not uncommon for one of the brigade's 22 company-sized elements to push distribution convoys across multiple international boundaries.

At times junior leaders lead convoys to Tallinn, Estonia, while others from the same company coordinate convoys to Bulgaria and Spain. Last year, USAREUR executed more than 5,700 diplomatic clearances, equating to more than 5,700 crossings of international boundaries.

In 2012, three sustainment brigades and an ESC provided sustainment support in Afghanistan while 19 movement control teams (MCTs)

operated across the country. Today, the 16th Sustainment Brigade provides expanded support using four MCTs working in 33 locations in Europe and Africa.

At each location, the MCT has several roles. The MCT is not only tasked with providing sustainment support to U.S. elements working in that area. It also works on NATO sustainment interoperability, builds partner capacity, and strengthens the NATO alliance.

Five Pillars of Strong Europe

Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the USAREUR commanding general, provided the key elements needed to maintain unity of effort in his command guidance, the Five Pillars of Strong Europe. The five pillars are as follows:



Spc. Tyler Hunt, 515th Transportation Company, 39th Transportation Battalion (Movement Control), assists French Cpl. John Parau in fueling a French tanker from a U.S. tanker using a NATO adaptor on Oct. 8, 2015, at Zaragoza Air Base, Spain. The two were part of Trident Juncture 2015's Modular Combined Petroleum Unit, which fueled vehicles from 35 countries for the exercise. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael O'Brien)

- Empowering junior leaders.
- Army Reserve and National Guard support.
- Allies and partners.
- Regionally allocated forces.
- Dynamic presence.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade supports the five pillars through tactical support to the theater sustainment base, through tactical and operational sustainment in support of Atlantic Resolve and training and operations in Ukraine, and by assisting the 21st TSC in setting the JOA.

Empowering Junior Leaders

The brigade mitigates the risks of stretching a command across a theater by empowering junior leaders to operate in decentralized locations. For example, the 39th Transporta-

tion Battalion rotates transportation management coordinators in and out of the national movement coordination centers in Eastern Europe. These junior Soldiers work directly with host nations to deconflict cross-border requirements and often provide movement recommendations to ambassadors and their senior staffs to reduce friction and allow for the freedom of movement in country and across the JOA.

Last year, more than 23,500 transportation movement requests were made to move convoys in support of major USAREUR training exercises and operations. Junior leaders led those convoys, which tallied nearly a million miles driven across Europe. Empowering junior leaders allows the single sustainment brigade, with a single transportation battalion, the

ability to provide operational reach and freedom of movement for both U.S. and allied forces.

Reserve and Guard Support

The MCTs remain one of the brigade's most demanded resources. Reserve elements that rotate in to augment units provide relief to forward assigned forces and continue to be key to providing freedom of movement for all U.S. elements operating in Atlantic Resolve.

Additionally, the State Partnership Program has 21 U.S. states partnered with 22 nations in Europe. For example, the Illinois National Guard partners with Poland, and the Maryland National Guard partners with Estonia. The Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine receives support from its



This map compares the distances traveled by 16th Sustainment Brigade units in Europe to stateside equivalents. The brigade travels these distances for missions supporting the theater base and multinational training such as Trident Juncture in Spain and NATO exercises in the Operation Atlantic Resolve operational area.

partner state of California.

Allies and Partners

The 16th Sustainment Brigade operates all missions in Eastern Europe as an allied force. The brigade is testing and measuring sustainment interoperability across Europe. As of February 2016, it had executed over 30 interoperability tests with a dozen nations. To prepare for potential contingency operations, the brigade is deliberately tracking sustainment functions and partner unit capabilities and interoperability.

Company commanders across the brigade maximize opportunities to test interoperability with allies. For example, the 317th Support Maintenance Company partnered with Hungarian forces during a training exercise in November 2015. The company commander brought recovery elements and tested the company's ability to recover the Hungarian fleet, while the Hungarian recovery assets tested their capabilities with the U.S. equipment.

In October 2015, the 515th Transportation Company supported Trident Juncture, the largest NATO training exercise in 10 years. This interoperability exercise brought together 36,000 troops from more than 35 countries. The Modular Combined Petroleum Unit, which included military members from six nations, provided fuel and other sustainment to support the allied forces participating in the exercise. The unit provided over 500,000 gallons of JP8 during the exercise.

Regionally Allocated Forces

The 16th Sustainment Brigade provides direct support to the 4th Infantry Division, Europe's regionally allocated division headquarters. The brigade also supports the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), and the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Although stationed in Western Europe, the 16th Sustainment Bri-

gade provides support across seven countries in Eastern Europe. The brigade also provides exercise support across Western Europe and echelons-above-company support for the brigade support battalions of supported units.

Readiness is the underlying theme of all that the 16th Sustainment Brigade does on the European continent.

Dynamic Presence

Working closely with allies requires creative, and sometimes non-doctrinal, solutions to logistics problems. The 21st TSC tasked the 16th Sustainment Brigade to develop a concept of support for Atlantic Resolve and Ukraine. Because the concept would encompass a vast operational area and maturation of the concept of support would be accordingly complex, the brigade co-located with NATO elements to assist in the process.

The sustainment brigade headquarters moved its forward command post to co-locate with the Multinational Corps-North East and six initial operating capability NATO force integration units in Poland. The brigade also nested its staff officers with the NATO units as they developed their NATO support plans in conjunction with the Army's concept of support for Operation Atlantic Resolve.

Readiness is the underlying theme of all that the 16th Sustainment Brigade does on the European continent. The brigade is not only responsible for the readiness of its assigned forces and for sustaining the forward-stationed and regionally allocated forces assigned to USA-REUR. It must also ensure the readiness of NATO forces through its planning and operations.

Over the last year, the brigade instituted a "shock" program designed to test the readiness of the brigade's subordinate units and their ability to provide expeditionary sustainment in a multinational environment. Across Europe, the 16th

Sustainment Brigade is ready to support U.S. forces and their NATO partners.

As the JOA matures, the 16th Sustainment Brigade continues to build readiness and combat power, exercise mission command across multiple nations at the operational level, and execute tactical-level sustainment support to sustain a Strong Europe.

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