



Sgt. 1st Class Brian Bevins, a multiple launch rocket system crew member assigned to the 6th Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 210th Fires Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, loads a pallet of ammunition onto the back of a light medium tactical vehicle during an exercise on Oct. 17, 2013, at Camp Casey, Republic of Korea. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Carlos R. Davis)

Ammunition Operations in Korea

From the strategic through tactical levels, ammunition operations in Korea exemplify the strong partnership between the U.S. Army and Republic of Korea Army.

■ By Maj. John Rich

U.S. Army ammunition operations within the Korean theater of operations (KTO) are unique from those conducted in other locations. This uniqueness is due in large part to the Korean Armistice Agreement, which ended Korean War operations in 1953.

An armistice is a ceasefire between military forces, whereas a treaty is an agreement between governments. The two nations never signed a peace treat-

ty, so the Korean War never officially ended. At any moment hostilities could break out, so the mantra for U.S. Army units in Korea is “Fight Tonight.” To ensure that U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) is ready to fight tonight, the ammunition community must be forward thinking and anticipate the needs of each unit in the KTO.

Combined Operations

USFK conducts combined ammu-

munition operations with the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army. The Single Ammunition Logistics System-Korea (SALS-K) governs ammunition operations in the KTO. USFK and the ROK Ministry of National Defense established SALS-K in a memorandum of agreement (MOA) dated Nov. 25, 1974.

The MOA, signed by the USFK commander at the time, Gen. Richard G. Stilwell, and the ROK min-

ister of national defense, Suh Jyong Chul, outlines the receipt, storage, transportation, accountability, inventory, surveillance, demilitarization, maintenance, security, and issue of U.S. conventional ammunition in ROK ammunition depots, ammunition supply points (ASPs), and other facilities.

SALS-K is a good example of the strong ROK-U.S. partnership from the strategic through tactical levels. At the strategic level, all U.S. ammunition, explosives, and components are stored in ROK ammunition depots and ASPs. USFK and the Army Materiel Command closely manage these items to ensure adequate ammunition is available and limited storage space is not overloaded.

At the operational level, ammunition managers at USFK, Eighth Army, and the 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) forecast future requirements and place requisitions to sustain operations, again without overloading storage space. Ammunition managers also plan the retrograde and demilitarization of obsolete ammunition and explosives to free up storage space.

At the tactical level, the 6th Ordnance Battalion (6th OD), a subordinate unit of the 19th ESC and the Materiel Support Command-Korea, manages all U.S. ammunition and explosives in Korea.

Supported U.S. units draw their ammunition from the 6th OD's ammunition companies, which are co-located at ROK ammunition depots and ASPs. Ultimately, the 6th OD coordinates from the tactical level with strategic enablers to ensure U.S. forces remain ready.

Transferring Ammunition

The SALS-K agreement also details the bygone War Reserve Stockpile for Allies-Korea (WRSA-K) program. WRSA-K required stockpiling U.S. conventional ammunition in the KTO to alleviate shortages in the ROK Army ammunition stocks.

Once a sufficient amount of U.S. war reserve ammunition was stock-

piled in the KTO, a strategic plan was required to transfer and position those assets at ROK Army ammunition depots and ASPs. This ammunition was owned by the United States but available to the ROK Army in the event of war.

As time passed, much of this ammunition became obsolete either because of changes in equipment or the age of the ammunition. This required a new plan to dispose of the obsolete ammunition.

The WRSA-K Termination Agreement became an act of public law in December 2005, and at the 40th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting in Washington, D.C., in October 2008, the United States and the ROK signed an MOA outlining the plan to transfer ammunition and terminate the WRSA-K program. The MOA outlines the specific transfer of munitions, equipment, and materiel from WRSA-K to the ROK and identifies what will be transferred and what the United States will retain.

To retrograde the obsolete ammunition, USFK receives one Military Sealift Command vessel in the winter and one in the summer to transport containers of former WRSA-K ammunition to the continental United States (CONUS). Since 2009, USFK has retrograded more than 160,000 short tons of ammunition out of the KTO. All former WRSA-K ammunition must be retrograded by 2024.

The WRSA-K MOA is an important part of ammunition management in the KTO because of the strategic implications of the negotiated time line and associated ammunition posture in Korea.

In 2008, the former WRSA-K retrograde program began with nearly 258,000 short tons of ammunition needing to be retrograded out of the KTO. By October 2015, the 6th OD had significantly reduced the remaining amount to approximately 97,000 short tons.

This mission requires the teamwork of U.S. Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians, ROK Army soldiers, Korean augmentation to the

U.S. Army soldiers, Korean general schedule civilians, and Korean Service Corps (KSC) personnel.

The team atmosphere in the KTO ammunition community enables innovative ideas to become reality. For example, starting in 2011, U.S. Army Pacific requested the use of Army pre-positioned stock landing craft utility ships to retrograde obsolete fuses and propellant to Japan for demilitarization. This forward-thinking idea led to cost savings. It shortened the time line for retrograde completion and is an example of partnership and collaboration in the KTO.

Demilitarization Facility

The ROK and U.S. governments also negotiated an agreement to construct a demilitarization facility (DEFAC) in order to further reduce the amount of obsolete and unserviceable ammunition in the KTO. A mutual logistics support agreement signed in November 2011 led to the completion of the DEFAC, which began processing munitions in September 2012.

The DEFAC is an eco-friendly, closed-loop facility that efficiently demilitarizes both U.S. and ROK munitions, reducing the amount that requires retrograde. Processing a large array of munitions that includes small-arms ammunition, artillery projectiles, and fuses enables the DEFAC to reclaim materials for future use. Reclaimed flaked trinitrotoluene (better known as TNT) is packaged, shipped, and reused for other applications.

By employing Korean nationals as operations and safety professionals, the DEFAC provides cost savings to the U.S. government and strengthens the ROK-U.S. alliance.

6th OD Operations

The 6th OD maintains all U.S. ammunition and explosives in the KTO and is the Army's only active duty ordnance ammunition battalion. Using ROK Army equipment, the 6th OD conducts daily combined ammunition operations with ROK am-

munition units at ROK ammunition depots and ASPs.

The 6th OD's operations include storing, accounting for, maintaining, and issuing ammunition, explosives, and components and using SALS-K and various web-based U.S. Army ammunition systems to maintain total ammunition visibility. The battalion also retrogrades former WRSA-K

deployment of U.S. combat forces to the Korean Peninsula during a crisis.

U.S. logistics units and equipment may reinforce or replace WHNS assets later in the fight. Usually, WHNS assets are in the form of trucks, facilities, communications, food, or personnel from the KSC. In the case of the 6th OD, WHNS includes the ammunition depots and ASPs, fork-

unique experience is only found in Korea, so the 6th OD may be a good fit for personnel with a sense of adventure and advancement.

Korea is also a great place for ammunition specialists to become experts in automation systems. On a daily basis, ammunition Soldiers use automated information systems such as the Standard Army Ammunition System-Modernization, Worldwide Ammunition Reporting System-New Technology, Total Ammunition Management Information System, Munitions History Program, and National Level Ammunition Capability.

The armistice mission in the KTO affords the same opportunities as a deployment for system users. For the Soldiers who actually work on the systems, this means that they have the opportunity to be mentored by experienced noncommissioned officers, warrant officers, and civilians who are experts in their trades. The KTO experience of mentorship and daily on-the-job experience molds well-rounded ammunition Soldiers.

As the United States continues to focus on the Pacific, the KTO will undoubtedly remain important. The many KTO-unique ammunition missions, such as the WRSA-K retrograde, SALS-K, WHNS, and the DEFAC, present rewarding challenges and are important to shaping the Pacific. KTO ammunition Soldiers are part of a future force that deters aggression by always being ready to fight tonight.

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ammunition and demilitarizes artillery ammunition and propellant at the ROK Army DEFAC.

The U.S. Army and the 6th OD are using ROK facilities, transportation assets, and personnel to receive, store, and issue U.S. ammunition. Under the SALS-K agreement, the United States pays a fair negotiated price for services rendered, which requires attention to detail during every step. Advanced planning, coordination, and meticulous record keeping aids in maintaining accurate accountability for expended resources.

U.S. Army ammunition units operating at CONUS ASPs and ammunition depots must exercise the same care. However, the Soldiers, civilians, and contractors working there generally come from a common background, receive the same training, enjoy the same holidays, and speak the same language.

KTO-based ammunition operations have an added challenge of a language barrier and a combined environment. This is a challenge that the wartime host-nation support (WHNS) ammunition units welcome as they work closely with their Korean counterparts.

The 6th OD is the Army's only WHNS ordnance battalion. WHNS is logistics support provided by the ROK government from military and civilian resources to allow the rapid

lifts and other materials-handling equipment, and site security provided by the ROK Army.

Full-time KSC personnel are also assigned to the 6th OD along with Korean national civilian workers. Every day, the 6th OD interacts with ROK Army ammunition units at the ammunition depots and ASPs.

KTO Benefits

Personnel from the 6th OD find unique opportunities to use their expertise in ammunition management, expand their knowledge, and challenge their skills in a diverse environment.

In the KTO, ordnance Soldiers conduct their branch-specific duties daily in the ammunition depots and ASPs. In contrast, CONUS-based ammunition Soldiers only augment civilian personnel as they conduct ASP operations.

Ammunition warrant officers are also afforded a unique opportunity in the KTO. Accountable officer positions are limited in CONUS, but there are three accountable officer positions in the 6th OD, each responsible for several ammunition depots or ASPs and each with a slightly different mission focus.

The accountable officers manage daily operations at several locations and work alongside Soldiers, Army civilians, Korean nationals, KSC personnel, and ROK Army soldiers. This