

Deployment Readiness Drives Mission Readiness For Global Requirements

■ By Lt. Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna



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Recently, I promoted a new colonel who had two very talented teenagers. Neither of these children had ever been educated in U.S. schools until his recent move to Washington D.C. Here's why: 14 years ago the Soldier was in South America supporting counter-drug trafficking efforts; 10 years ago he was in Germany and then deployed to Iraq during the surge; seven years ago he was in the Netherlands coordinating fuel supplies for 40 countries and then was deployed to Afghanistan twice; and four years ago he was in Korea overseeing a joint logistics support command during heightened tension on the peninsula.

This family's experience drove home to me just how dynamic our Army has been and will continue to be. We have 186,000 Soldiers in 140 countries, and despite the hope for a time-out after 14 years of war, it is not happening. The global demands for our Army remain high, which is why readiness is and will remain the Army's number one priority.

Readiness is how we win wars, deter our most dangerous threats, and prepare for a variety of future missions that can happen at any time and be dispersed over great distances. Success in those future missions will not happen by accident. It will happen with a lot of hard work that is now happening throughout the Army to rebuild our readiness.

Force Projection

This issue of *Army Sustainment* magazine focuses on a key element readiness: projecting the force. Army doctrine defines force projection as “the ability to project the military instrument of national power from the U.S. or another theater, in response to requirements for military operations.” Put simply, we should

be prepared to deploy tonight with the equipment we have on hand.

For any serious discussion of force projection, it is helpful to consider four kinds of activities: predeployment, fort-to-port, port-to-port, and port-to-foxhole. Each requires logisticians to not only know their own organizations but also to understand the great capabilities they have available to get their Soldiers and equipment to their mission locations.

Predeployment Activities

Predeployment readiness starts with home-station fundamentals. Have you developed movement plans, standard operating procedures, and a valid unit deployment listing using the Transportation Coordinators' Automated Information for Movements System II? Have you rehearsed load plans and executed roll-out activities as part of your unit's command deployment discipline program?

As the Army transitions to standardized mission-essential task lists, “conduct expeditionary deployment operations” will likely be added back to each operational brigade's and battalion's tasks. What will that mean to leaders? Commanders have to develop a realistic training strategy to maintain unit proficiency for all tasks designated as mission essential.

For so long, the process has been pretty automatic. You knew a year before leaving that you would deploy, and lots of equipment was already there. But that will not be the case next time. Units have to train and exercise the skills necessary to deploy on short notice so that those skills become second nature.

The best outcomes are generated when logisticians at their home stations develop enduring partnerships with installation support activities, whether provided by sister organi-



DEPLOYMENT READINESS



PREDEPLOYMENT
ACTIVITIES



FORT-to-PORT



PORT-to-PORT



PORT-to-FOXHOLE

zations, support headquarters, or logistics readiness centers. Many capabilities reside outside of deploying units, and leaders and logisticians need to know how to use them.

Fort-to-Port Operations

The fort-to-port segment of force projection begins when the unit hands off its equipment to an outside organization. This is the last time a unit can touch its equipment before it arrives in theater.

Fort-to-port movements frequently involve a range of supporting organizations to include loading teams, maintenance teams, arrival/departure airfield control groups, deployment support teams, and port support teams. These teams may consist of contractors, Department of the Army civilians, and other Army units.

Success relies on a unit's ability to properly manifest personnel and equipment, develop and certify load plans, create military shipping labels, complete shippers' declaration of hazardous cargo paperwork, and prepare or reduce cargo (like oversized vehicles or rotary-wing aircraft) for shipment.

Port-to-Port Operations

Port-to-port operations are carried out by sea, surface, or air and executed through a combination of Department of Defense and con-

tract support assets. How equipment moves from port to port should be a key element of a commander's planning process.

The type of strategic lift assets available may not be compatible with transported equipment and the movements' delivery time line, which potentially affects the operational maneuver plan. The ability to monitor and track in-transit visibility is an invaluable tool commanders should use to match equipment arrival dates to mission requirements.

Port-to-Foxhole Operations

Port-to-foxhole operations contain some of the most challenging aspects of force projection. The last tactical mile of getting the right stuff to the right place has always been the hardest to synchronize.

This is especially true in an anti-access/area-denial environment where regional intermediate staging bases, like the ones we have grown used to in Kuwait, are not employed.

None of these four phases stands alone. I believe the outcome of reception, staging, onward movement, and integration operations is determined by home-station readiness. Simply said, if you mess up at the beginning, it will be downhill from there.

Investments in a thorough command deployment discipline pro-

gram, well thought-out load plans, and analyzing how equipment is echeloned into an area of operations is what produces success.

The very same week that I promoted the new colonel, I retired a 34-year veteran, a good friend I first served with in 1993 at Fort Hood, Texas, and then went to war with in Iraq supporting the 4th Infantry Division. He had an accomplished career, from serving as a maintenance officer in Somalia to spending years helping to develop the Army's future vehicles.

He said that of all the missions he supported, some of the most important were rotations to the National Training Center; they had left lasting impressions on the importance of readiness, training, maintenance, and supply that carried him through his career.

I am confident that training every day, whether at home station or a combat training center, and understanding the intricacies of force projection will pay the same dividends to our new generation of Soldiers who are ready to defend our Nation.

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