

# GCSS–Army: Wave 1 Is Done

With the Wave 1 fielding of the Global Combat Support System–Army now complete, the product manager is currently working through the even greater task of fielding Wave 2.

■ By James P. McDonough

The Global Combat Support System–Army (GCSS–Army) is an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that facilitates near real-time management of all the Army’s sustainment missions.

GCSS–Army is a component of the Army’s logistics enterprise, which also includes the Logistics Modernization Program, General Fund Enterprise Business System, and Army Enterprise Systems Integration Program.

GCSS–Army replaces current tactical logistics management information systems, including the Standard Army Retail Supply System (SARSS), Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced (PBUSE) and Standard Army Maintenance System–Enhanced (SAMS–E).

It also replaces tactical financial management information systems, such as the Single Stock Fund Middleware (SSF–MW) and the Funds Control Module (FCM).

These systems performed their missions well, but GCSS–Army integrates all of their functions into a single database that provides accurate, near real-time tactical logistics and financial information for stakeholders throughout both Army components.

## Two-Wave Deployment Strategy

During the test and evaluation phase of GCSS–Army, the product manager (PM) learned a number of valuable lessons that were incorporated into the plans for the system’s future fielding. Operational assessments and continuous evaluations were conducted with the 11th Ar-

mored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Irwin, California, in 2007 and 2010. The initial operational test and evaluation was conducted with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, at Fort Bliss, Texas, in 2011.

One lesson that the PM GCSS–Army learned from these events was that implementing the full system presented the receiving units with a number of challenges. To mitigate the risks to the units and to Army readiness, the PM decided to divide the system’s fielding effort into two waves.

By fielding parts of the solution at different times to the same units, the PM reduced the amount of time that the units’ information systems were unavailable and reduced the overall turbulence resulting from the new system fielding.

## Wave 1 Fielding

The Wave 1 fielding began in February 2013 following the milestone decision authority’s full deployment decision in December 2012. Units in the Middle East were the last to receive the Wave 1 fielding. In November 2015, PM GCSS–Army achieved a major program goal by officially completing the Wave 1 effort.

In total, 281 supply support activities received the Wave 1 solution that replaced SARSS. Resource management offices throughout the Army converted from SSF–MW and FCM to GCSS–Army. The Wave 1 effort touched approximately 14,000 users Armywide.

To accomplish this major transformation, PM GCSS–Army employed as many as 25 materiel

fielding teams. To ensure that the transformations went as smoothly as possible, each team extensively prepared with the receiving units before switching over from the legacy systems to GCSS–Army.

The preparations included multiple checkpoints, beginning with teleconferences 180 days prior to the “blackout” before fielding (D-180) and continuing with on-site visits at D-120, teleconferences at D-90 and D-60, and on-site activities at D-30.

Receiving units prepared by having users take prerequisite web-based training, ensuring the accuracy of the data in SARSS, SSF–MW, and FCM, conducting leader awareness briefings, and preparing the site for the D-30 activities. D-30 activities included new equipment training for all users, data migration to GCSS–Army, data validation (ensuring that all data was migrated successfully into GCSS–Army), and the “go live” event.

Following the go live event, the materiel fielding teams left two team members behind for several weeks to provide over-the-shoulder troubleshooting and advisory support for the gaining users.

## Wave 2 Fielding

While the completion of Wave 1 fielding is a major accomplishment for PM GCSS–Army, an even larger challenge is ongoing: the Wave 2 implementation. Wave 2 replaces PBUSE and SAMS–E. The number of users directly affected by Wave 2 is about 10 times greater than Wave 1—about 140,000 users in both

Army components.

Early in 2015, the PM conducted several lead site verification tests for Wave 2 at seven Army units, and the results were good. The milestone decision authority for GCSS–Army approved the full Wave 2 launch in July 2015, and the PM started the full deployment effort in August 2015.

Because the Wave 2 fielding scope is so much broader than the Wave 1 effort, the PM changed several aspects of the preparation and implementation process from the Wave 1 model to allow the Wave 2 fielding to proceed on schedule.

The Wave 2 effort has 44 materiel fielding teams and roughly three times as many simultaneous fielding events as Wave 1 had. The large number of units and sites involved in Wave 2 warrants more emphasis on video-teleconferences versus on-site visits to track unit preparations.

The process for Wave 2 starts at D-240, 60 days sooner than Wave 1 preparations began. Within each Wave 2 fielding event, two blackout periods occur: one for PBUSE and one for SAMS–E. Wave 2 involves many more users than Wave 1, and with two data migration events per unit, the amount of time involved with this process is doubled.

### **A Major Logistics Transformation**

Aside from the differences in preparation for the Waves 1 and 2 fieldings, the overall deployment strategies for the waves are similar.

Because the implementation requires a major culture change in the Army sustainment community, GCSS–Army has adopted the industry best practice of establishing an organizational change management program to educate stakeholders about the changes. Key aspects of the program include the lead user program and new equipment training.

The lead user program identifies key leaders from the receiving Army units to attend advanced training before all other system users receive



*A team from the Product Manager Global Combat Support System–Army conducts new equipment training with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in September 2015. (Photo by Darrel Page)*

new equipment training. The lead user program ensures that certain users within receiving units can support the materiel fielding teams when the units convert from current systems to GCSS–Army.

New equipment training, which is critical to implementing a successful ERP, concentrates on core processes performed daily and weekly within the business areas. All new equipment training sessions are led by instructors who simulate actual scenarios online. The web-based training introduces and reinforces navigation techniques and self-help training aids within the GCSS–Army portal.

For the first time in history, Army commanders have access to logistics data in one data repository. ERP data in GCSS–Army is updated in near real-time and is available from any U.S. military computer with Internet connectivity and a common access card reader.

GCSS–Army makes managing the Army’s supply and maintenance programs more effective and efficient, provides commanders with immediate combat readiness infor-

mation, and requests and tracks materiel and equipment that Soldiers need to perform their missions. The system also tracks all maintenance performed on combat and service vehicles, weapons systems, and other equipment throughout their life cycles.

The worldwide fielding of GCSS–Army represents the largest ERP deployment in the Army’s history. It touches more than 154,000 users throughout the active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve, both inside and outside the continental United States.

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