

Sustainers Should Understand Operational Contract Support

The Combined Arms Support Command plays an important role in integrating OCS into sustainment concepts, capabilities, and doctrine.

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Fellow sustainers, if you do not understand operational contract support (OCS), you need to learn about it. We like to say, “You can’t spell sustainment without OCS.” It really is that important to current and future operations.

OCS is the process of planning for and obtaining supplies, services, and construction from commercial sources in support of joint operations, and it plays a critical role in the Army’s ability to deploy, fight, and win the nation’s wars. As the Army’s force modernization proponent for OCS, the Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) will play an expanded role in integrating OCS into current and future sustainment concepts, capabilities, and doctrine.

We Rely on Contractors

Joint Publication 4-10, Operational Contract Support, makes the point that the United States “has always used contracted support in military operations at various levels of scope and scale.” We have contracted for everything from shoes and rifles to medical support, maintenance and repairs, security, intelligence, engineering support, and much more.

According to the Center for Military History, the ratio of contractors to Soldiers was 1-to-5 during the Civil War. During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, that ratio dropped to 1-to-60.

Since then, our reliance on commercial support has dramatically increased in terms of both scope and complexity. A recent Department of

Defense report to Congress indicates that 41,922 contractors support military operations in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, and the ratio of contractors to Soldiers was 1-to-1 in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

OCS also factors prominently in our response to humanitarian assistance operations, particularly in the Pacific, and in our support to major training exercises and missions throughout Latin America, Europe, and Africa. The Army now uses more contractors in support of contingency operations than ever before, and the potential exists for their use to increase.

The U.S. Army Operating Concept, *Win in a Complex World*, describes a challenging and constantly changing future environment. Smaller, more lethal and dispersed formations capable of global deployment on moment’s notice will tax our ability to sustain operations.

This phenomenon, combined with the imperative to ensure preparedness to support combatant command contingency operations, will continue to stretch our military forces and thus drive greater reliance on OCS to fill critical capability gaps.

CASCOM’s Role in OCS

To prepare for this threat, the Training and Doctrine Command has identified 20 Army warfighting challenges (AWFCs). The Army Capabilities Integration Center is addressing each of these challenges within the centers of excellence. As the Sustainment Center of Ex-

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cellence, CASCOM is integrating and synchronizing efforts across all of its domains to address capability gaps identified in AWFC #16, Set the Theater, Sustain Operations, and Maintain Freedom of Movement.

Sustainment functions exist within each of the other 19 challenges, most notably AWFC #12, Conduct Joint Expeditionary Maneuver and Entry Operations. OCS will play a major role in bridging materiel and nonmateriel gaps within these AWFCs.

Further, the draft of the latest Army Functional Concept for Sustainment describes our approach to supporting the environment envisioned by the Army Operating Concept. The draft concept looks well beyond the near horizon and past 2025—an environment that is inherently uncertain. It recognizes the continuing requirement for future Army forces to conduct OCS activities to sustain joint combined arms operations.

The Army recently assigned CASCOM as the force modernization proponent for OCS. Specifically, it made CASCOM responsible for OCS functions other than acquisition (such as contract support integration and contractor management) and for coordinating the OCS acquisition function with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology. The OCS policy role remains, appropriately, with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-4.

To clarify governance and enterprise roles and responsibilities, CASCOM hosted an OCS senior leader forum with key stakeholders on Feb. 4, 2016. Participants included representatives from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-4, the Army Materiel Command, the Army Sustainment Command, the Army Contracting Command, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology. Follow-on sessions will continue to build on this momentum and ensure even more effective policy, doctrine, and support to Army and joint forces during contingency operations.

Some Hard Truths

As the Army seeks to streamline its approach to OCS, it must recognize a few hard truths. First, OCS will remain a critical warfighting enabler. OCS plays a decisive role in the way we train, deploy, and fight, and we must assist commanders in fully in-

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Second, we must embrace the fact that OCS is not merely a sustainment or logistics function. The Army employs contractors for many non-logistics tasks, from intelligence analysis to allied military training.

Moreover, the coordination required to effectively integrate OCS within military operations reaches across multiple functions and staff responsibilities, including personnel accountability, intelligence, force protection, facilities management, communications, financial management, and sustainment.

Many of us learn about these processes through on-the-job training. Fortunately, there is an easier way. Joint and Army doctrine for OCS is readily available in Joint Publication 4-10 and Army Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures 4-10, Operational Contract Support Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures. In addition, both Joint Knowledge Online and the Defense Acquisition University provide online training for various OCS tasks and functions.

Finally, officers, noncommissioned

officers, and civilians are eligible to attend the one-week Contracting Officer's Representative Course and two-week OCS Course at the Army Logistics University. Planners at operational and strategic headquarters may attend the Joint OCS Planning and Execution Course sponsored by

the Joint Staff J-4.

Over the past 15 years of combat operations, the Army has made significant progress in its ability to plan for and manage commercial support. These changes have improved the way we support unified land operations. As we respond to the challenges of an uncertain future, we need to sustain that momentum.

At CASCOM, we are pursuing a series of initiatives to enhance a commander's ability to leverage OCS and will provide further details on these initiatives in the months to come. In the meantime, every Army leader should learn what OCS is, how it works, and what it can and cannot do. If you do not understand OCS, it is time to get smart.

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