

GCSS-Army: The Future of Army Logistics

■ By Maj. Kimberly Deaton





Spc. Joe Emanuel Clark, a U.S. Army South supply clerk, receives office supplies from Henry Ford, a warehouse operator, on Jan. 15, 2016, at the Army South warehouse. The supplies were ordered and processed through the Global Combat Support System-Army. (Photo by Sgt. Mahlet Tesfaye)

FEATURES

The Global Combat Support System–Army is a game-changing tool that can be used to improve the Army’s readiness. But in order to fully realize its capabilities, preparation and training are necessary.

The Global Combat Support System–Army (GCSS–Army) fielding is a major modernization effort that will improve every warehouse, supply room, motor pool and property book office in the Army. GCSS–Army is based on commercial enterprise resource planning (ERP) software and has become the infrastructure for one of the largest ERP systems in the Department of Defense.

GCSS–Army is being fielded using a two-wave approach in order to avoid shocking the supply chain and disrupting ongoing operations. Wave 1, which was fully implemented in 2015, replaced the Standard Army Retail Supply System. Wave 2 replaces Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced and the Standard Army Maintenance System–Enhanced and brings all of their functionality into a single, integrated common operational picture.

Wave 2 will affect about 140,000 users from almost every command, unit supply room, field maintenance activity, and property book office in the Army. Wave 2 is nearly 50-percent complete, and should be totally fielded by December 2017.

System Benefits

Soldiers at every level and in every component will be able to use and benefit from GCSS–Army. This includes maintenance and warehouse clerks who use the system daily in their jobs and commanders who may use the system less frequently to check on readiness. Whatever the need, GCSS–Army brings together supply, maintenance, and property accountability functions and their associated financial data.

Uniformity of data. GCSS–Army integrates thousands of local databases into a single enterprise-wide view. No longer will the same data have to be updated in both Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced and the Standard Army Maintenance System–Enhanced. GCSS–Army will connect users at all echelons to a single database that can be accessed world-

wide. Commanders can leverage this information to assess the readiness of their formations in near real time.

Improved tracking and planning. GCSS–Army enables warfighters to order, move, track, account for, and maintain equipment from the beginning to the end of the supply chain. This will allow commanders to anticipate, allocate, and synchronize the flow of resources. Asset visibility, equipment status information, and life cycle maintenance records for each piece of equipment greatly enable planning. Detailed analyses of supply metrics are also available, further improving the planning process.

Financial accountability and auditability. For the first time, logistics and financial actions are available together because GCSS–Army is the tactical logistics system of record and is fully integrated with the General Fund Enterprise Business System, the national-level financial system of record. In GCSS–Army, a record of transactions enables full auditability, unit readiness, and stewardship. In accordance with the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act, GCSS–Army is an important part of the Army’s strategy to achieve audit readiness by 2017.

Leveraging Training

Like anything new, GCSS–Army requires training. To facilitate a successful conversion, units need to take advantage of all the training and resources that are offered. This ensures that every user can leverage the system’s capabilities and realize its full potential.

Since about 50 percent of the Army has already completed Wave 2, valuable lessons learned have been harnessed for units that are still converting. GCSS–Army fielding can be thought of in three different phases: pre-conversion, conversion, and post-conversion. Training opportunities, resources, and lessons learned that are unique to every phase can help units be successful.

Pre-conversion training. Early preparation is a key to success.

Preparation for conversion begins a year before the actual fielding date. A key to success is good data cleansing, because the key enabling factor of GCSS-Army is data uniformity. Units must ensure that their data is clean and correct prior to conversion to GCSS-Army. Errors will result either in data not being accepted or in the errors being perpetuated throughout the system.

Online training is another imperative. Currently all users must complete GCSS-Army familiarization; however, beginning in January 2017, users will be required to complete advanced standalone user training. This training is very intensive, so Soldiers must be given adequate time and resources to complete it.

Before conversion begins, all users must understand what their roles will be in the new system and what these roles require. A Soldier should not be surprised by what his or her duties entail.

Conversion training. Allow Soldiers the time and flexibility to take advantage of both classroom and over-the-shoulder training. The extra time put into training will pay huge dividends in the long run. Once the trainers leave, it will be much

harder to fix errors and relearn processes. Additionally, Soldiers should utilize the online post-deployment sustainment training, the virtual environment set up so that issues and questions can be resolved.

Post-conversion training. Just like marksmanship, GCSS-Army use is a skill that requires maintenance. At the unit level, GCSS-Army sustainment training should be incorporated into unit training plans and sergeant's time training. Constant practice and continued learning is key to GCSS-Army success.

Resources for Success

There are multiple resources to help users leverage GCSS-Army for their needs. One such resource is the GCSS-Army website, <http://gcss.army.mil>, which has links to tutorials, frequently asked questions, and multiple handouts and checklists. The website also has information about workshops and forums that walk users through different aspects of GCSS-Army. The resources also provide opportunities to collaborate and share best practices across units and components.

Another valuable resource is UPerform, which can be accessed at

<https://www.uperform.redstone.army.mil>. UPerform is a virtual environment that allows users to walk through transactions using step-by-step instructions and checklists for key functions and reports.

The GCSS-Army End User Manual should be the first place users look when they have questions. The manual is available at https://www.gcss-army.army.mil/GCSS-ARMY/EUMLaunch/garmy_jump1.html. It provides step-by-step instructions for all GCSS-Army processes.

If the manual does not provide enough detail and a user still needs assistance, GCSS-Army has a help desk that provides timely and constructive support. The help desk can be reached at <https://www.gcss-army.army.mil/GCSS-ARMY/EUMLaunch/page14458.html> or by calling 1-866-547-1349.

GCSS-Army is a logistics game changer. It is a tool that can improve the Army's readiness. In order to fully realize all of GCSS-Army's capabilities, Soldiers must prepare and train. There are a plethora of resources available to assist units and leaders as the conversion to GCSS-Army continues across the Army.

Once the Wave 2 conversion is complete and all of the tactical Army's property and ground maintenance functionality is in the system, the focus will shift to adding aviation maintenance and improved business analytics to the system. GCSS-Army is truly the future of Army logistics.

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Spc. Xavier Alvarado, a shop clerk with Bravo Company, 307th Brigade Support Battalion, reads about how Global Combat Support System-Army's upcoming integration will affect his daily operations. (Photo by 1st Lt. Jonathon Hecker)