



A Soldier presents property to Wayne Willis (center), from DLA Disposition Services, while Peter Bechtel (right), from the Army's Office of Supply Policy and Programs, observes the process on Aug. 2, 2016, at Fort Hood, Texas. Army officials are depending on the Defense Logistics Agency's disposal and distribution experts to help remove more than 1.2 million pieces of excess equipment from unit inventories over the next two to three years. (Photo by Joe Arnold)

Changing Times and Methods at the Defense Logistics Agency

■ By Col. Michael J. Arnold

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has to thoroughly understand the requirements of its customers wherever they are in the world. It must understand what the 80,000 Soldiers who make up U.S. Army Pacific need and how those needs differ from those of Soldiers who serve under U.S. Army Central.

DLA's Army national account manager team works to deliver the right solution on time, every time. The team acts as an interface for the Army between DLA and private industries.

The Army national account manager team is the Army's jack of all trades. It must understand just enough about every piece of the DLA enterprise so that when the Army asks a question—whether it is about the availability of operational camouflage pattern uniforms or spare parts for an Abrams tank—it can find the answer. The team connects the Army with the right subject matter experts who can leverage DLA capabilities and provide what it needs.

Responding to Change

The Department of Defense and the Army are in a time of massive change. Funding is decreasing, and the armed services have to stretch every dollar.

Manpower is also decreasing, and units are casing their colors. At the same time, the Army has to maintain its readiness to fight and win the nation's wars, conduct contingency operations, and support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations at home and abroad.

The Army counts on DLA to enhance its ability to complete those missions. That means DLA must look at things differently and offer support beyond what is typical. That also means that the Army national account manager team must ensure that DLA is tracking the right metrics to support the Army fleet's operational readiness, finding new ways to support the Army's weapon systems, and helping the Army shed a massive amount of excess equipment.

Critical Weapon Systems

The DLA director has made it clear that DLA must do its best to give its customers what they need. It has to look at how it does things, whether it has been that way since 1962 or since last week, and determine if those processes are the best way. DLA attempts to have available at least 90 percent of all the spare parts that the Army needs. This is called 90-percent materiel availability. While striving to meet this goal might be a good way to examine every widget in the supply chain, does it answer the Army's needs?

The Army G-4 says that what the Army needs is operational readiness for its key weapons systems, such as Apache helicopters, Abrams tanks, and Stryker vehicles. Maybe 90 percent is not the right materiel availability goal for these critical fleets. That number generally works in the industrial environment and at locations in the continental United States, but warfighters in deployed and training environments have different needs. When a tank needs tread, it needs it 100 percent.

The Army national account manager team is working with the Army to identify the key weapon systems that should be closer to the 100-percent materiel availability mark and the systems that do not necessarily require 90-percent materiel availability. There will have to be tradeoffs to support the Army's higher priority fleets, and DLA must know what the Army wants those tradeoffs to be.

It is also necessary to be fiscally

responsible because DLA still needs to provide spare parts for the lower priority fleets. One way DLA can ensure higher readiness and stay fiscally responsible during this effort is to clarify which national item identification numbers associated with key

identified, the Army has asked DLA to help it shed literally tons of excess equipment.

DLA Disposition Services and DLA Distribution are helping Army installations reallocate needed equipment and divest themselves of the

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weapon systems are not accurately cataloged.

Performance-Based Logistics

Another way the Army national account manager team is helping the Army maintain its operational readiness is by seeking performance-based logistics (PBL) agreements between the Army and industry. PBL is a key part of the Department of Defense's Better Buying Power initiative. Through PBL contracts, DLA is transitioning from its traditional role of managing supplies and suppliers to providing performance outcomes for the weapon systems that the contracts support.

DLA already has several contract arrangements that contain PBL-like features to support a wide range of weapon system components, from tires to depot-level consumables. This represents a big change in the way DLA does business.

Which is more important to a commander: knowing that DLA has Bradley parts readily available or knowing that those Bradleys are ready to go any time they are needed? DLA and the Army can be valuable partners as they learn where this paradigm shift will take them.

All-Army Divestiture

Another way the team is supporting the Army during a time of rapid change is by assisting with the All-Army Divestiture. As troop levels decrease and excess equipment is

things they do not need, such as computers, printers, canvas items, communications equipment, and rolling stock.

DLA has had deployable teams on the ground ensuring that Soldiers are able to turn in equipment to be properly transferred, disposed of, stored, or sold off by DLA Disposition Services. Commanders no longer have to go out and look for help; DLA is coming to them. This is a massive, ongoing effort that is taking place at multiple installations at a time.

These are just a few ways that DLA and its Army national account manager team are looking to support the nation's oldest military service as it moves into the future. The team is engaged with Army leaders at multiple levels and listening to what they need from DLA to manage assets and ensure the Army can shoot, move, and communicate whenever the nation calls.

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