Ensuring Materiel Readiness for the Joint Force
Soldiers deployed with D Company, 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, eat their Thanksgiving meal at Combat Outpost Cherkatah, Khowst province, Afghanistan, on Nov. 26, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Smith)
Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support provides the joint force with needed supplies to accomplish the mission.

By Brig. Gen. Charles R. Hamilton

Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Troop Support provided $14.5 billion worth of materiel to the joint force and other customers in 2016. But the agency’s support to the services goes all the way back to the Lewis and Clark expedition and to outfitting Union Soldiers for the Civil War.

DLA Troop Support provides strategic acquisition of materiel for the joint force. Based on the services’ needs, acquisition professionals use their supply chain expertise to work with DLA’s industry partners to fulfill those requirements. The strategic contractual relationships DLA Troop Support has with industry partners are designed to ensure the materiel readiness of the joint force.

However, DLA Troop Support has evolved from being a strategic enabler. Its workforce has taken on more tactical responsibilities to ensure warfighters have what they need, when and where they need it. No longer does DLA Troop Support’s job end when a contract is awarded. Now its team is involved at every point of the process until the product is in the hands of the Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine.

“Stratactical” Support

I have started using the term “stratactical” to describe how DLA Troop Support is more tactical than ever before, ensuring end-to-end logistics support. Here is how I define it:

Stratactical adj. operating across the full spectrum of levels of war, from factory to foxhole.

DLA Troop Support’s stratactical support begins with strategic acquisition processes and extends to tracking shipments, working customs issues, and answering phone calls from special operators in sensitive locations.

DLA Troop Support has been feeding U.S. troops in Afghanistan since 2001. It ensures class I (subsistence) readiness through its strategic subsistence prime vendor contract. Through this model, the shelves stay stocked at forward operating base (FOB) dining facilities and Soldiers in remote mountain locations have meals ready-to-eat.

A few months ago, when the only road from Kandahar Airfield to FOB Dwyer could not be used, DLA forward logistics specialists in Afghanistan helped find a tactical solution. They worked with Army sustainers and the prime vendor for the contract in Afghanistan to quickly arrange an airlift. Unit class I supply remained steady, and the troops at FOB Dwyer received their holiday meals on time.

Tailored Support

DLA is the Department of Defense’s largest combat support agency. DLA Troop Support, one of six DLA primary-level field activities, ensures joint force readiness by providing materiel that Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines use every day, including food, uniforms, medical supplies, protective equipment, and equipment repair parts.

DLA Troop Support’s relationships with the services allow it to provide the best customer support possible. The better the agency understands its customers, the better it can tailor its acquisition processes to serve them. Engaging each service and combatant command provides DLA Troop Support with the awareness necessary to anticipate customers’ mission requirements.

Plugging DLA Troop Support into strategic planning helps guide its acquisition strategies and craft its global support capabilities. With more than 2,900 civilian and military employees, DLA Troop Support has a forward presence throughout the United States and around the world that helps customers reach the best logistics solutions, no matter what the requirement is.

DLA Troop Support employees are located in each theater of operations, including Southwest Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Having boots on the ground, such as the forward logistics specialists who supported FOB Dwyer, promotes open communication between DLA Troop Support and
the joint force, allows DLA Troop Support to adapt quickly to changes, and decreases the wait time from requirement submission to the delivery of mission-ready equipment and supplies.

**One DLA Button to Push**

As a whole, DLA manages more than 5 million items within nine supply chains and conducts distribution and disposition operations. Despite DLA's massive size, customers can push one button to access its buying power and first-class customer support from military and civilian personnel in 48 states and 28 countries. DLA's regional commands are aligned with their respective geographic combatant commands and are dedicated to serving their respective areas of responsibility. These regional commands are positioned geographically to provide effective and efficient support to warfighters' day-to-day operations, especially in a contingency.

When customers have an urgent requirement for supplies to help in the fight against an enemy in the Middle East, they can initiate DLA support through DLA Central. If support is needed in response to a tsunami in Asia, DLA Pacific is the entry point. Those customer entry points simplify DLA engagement for customers, which stabilizes and enhances support. It also enriches support for expeditionary and emergency capabilities by providing regional commands with the ability to reach back to DLA's supply chain experts.

DLA Troop Support provides more than $14 billion worth of food, clothing and textiles, construction and engineering equipment, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and equipment, and industrial hardware items for U.S. warfighters and other valued customers worldwide.

Brig. Gen. Charles. R. Hamilton is the commander of DLA Troop Support. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Virginia State University, a master's degree in public administration from Central Michigan University, and a master's degree in military studies from the Marine Corps University. He is a graduate of the Quartermaster Basic and Advanced Courses, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, the Combined Arms and Services Staff School, and the Joint Forces Staff College. He is also a 2012 Office of the Secretary of Defense corporate fellow, and he has completed the Airborne, Air Assault, and Rigger Schools.

For more information on DLA support, visit http://www.dla.mil.