

Twenty Years in the Making: A Milestone in Materiel Management

■ By Lt. Gen. Aundre F. Piggee

I have some very good news for every active, reserve, and National Guard sustainer in the Army: we are completing the total fielding of the first increment of the Global Combat Support System–Army (GCSS–Army).

This achievement has been 20 years in the making. Every predecessor of mine since the late 1990s has struggled with how to improve materiel management, and they all had a hand in making this game-changing technology a reality.

So did many of you—154,000 users in 1,000 units have embraced and bought into this new capability at every supply support activity, resource management office, property book office, unit supply room, and motor pool throughout the Army.

A Successful Fielding

From the very first fielding of GCSS–Army to units at Fort Irwin, California, and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to the last fielding to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, at Fort Bliss, Texas, Soldiers have succeeded in making this the largest deployment of a materiel management information system to the tactical level in the Army's history.

What is most important to me is that the system has been fielded to the total Army—to all components at one time. This is the first time that has been done in recent history. I applaud all of you for what you accomplished.

The best news about the fielding is that it will increase our ability to manage materiel for the Army. This will result in a significant increase in readiness, not only in garrison formations but, more importantly,

during combat operations.

A few months ago, I visited the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, in Hawaii, and Warrant Officer Patricia Washington demonstrated how her unit operates with GCSS–Army. She showed me how it improved the timeliness of their receiving, storing, and issuing of repair parts. Their entire supply support activity is mobile. One month, they executed two exercises to ensure that they could move their entire supply support activity in a single lift, and they were successful.

This is the first time we have one system that provides us with a common operational picture from the tactical level to the strategic level. GCSS–Army has improved our ability to predict supply and sustainment requirements, and most importantly, it has been used in combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the coming years, we will field the second increment of GCSS–Army and add 28,500 more users. We will add aviation units, extend it to Army pre-positioned stocks, and provide the Army enhanced business intelligence/business warehouse capabilities. This will move us closer to our goal of achieving total asset visibility so that we can see ourselves in real time.

It could not come at a more important time. Materiel management has always been key to the success of combat operations and readiness, and with increased tensions and uncertainty in the world, it will continue to be crucial in the future.

Materiel Management Initiatives

At the Department of the Army headquarters, we are taking four other steps to get the Army on the right materiel management track.



The Army is successfully fielding the Global Combat Support System–Army and working on several other initiatives to improve its materiel management capabilities.





Soldiers from the Army Materiel Command conduct equipment layouts during the command's 2017 Best Warrior Competition on July 16, 2017, at Camp Atterbury, Ind. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Teddy Wade)

Common ASLs. First, we took an in-depth look at the repair parts that brigades are allowed to keep on hand—their authorized stockage lists (ASLs). When units arrived in theater during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, repair parts were usually already on the ground and available. But that will not necessarily be the case in future contingencies.

So, we determined which parts will likely be needed during the first 30 days in combat, and we are building common ASLs for infantry, armor, and Stryker brigades. The equipment on these lists will be fully mobile and transportable by the units.

By the end of this year, we will have completed 26 brigade conversions to the common ASLs; by next year, every active brigade will be converted. We also are discussing implementing this for the National Guard. This is a huge improvement that will have significant positive impacts on the readiness of our brigades for years to come.

Equipment reduction. Second, with your help, we are redistributing equipment to where it is needed and getting rid of excess and obsolete equipment that we do not have the resources, personnel, or time to

maintain to standard. This year, the Army removed more than 825,000 pieces of excess equipment from its inventory.

Our goal is to divest ourselves of another 1.7 million major end items in the next two years. By doing so, we will completely eliminate obsolete equipment from tactical-level organizations or move it to fill gaps throughout the Army. As a result of these efforts, more than 20 percent of brigades have already seen increased readiness levels.

Modern technologies. Third, we are continuing to look at cutting-edge technologies that will help us better maintain our vehicles and equipment, both at home station and during combat operations. A promising initiative is a condition-based maintenance program that integrates sensors into equipment and enables us to forecast catastrophic failures before they happen. We think this will save millions of dollars by allowing us to repair rather than replace an engine or transmission because we will predict a failure before it actually happens.

We are also exploring additive manufacturing to produce special tools or repair parts. In many cases

when we are in garrison or fighting on the battlefield, we do not have all the tools we need. We could use 3-D printing to manufacture special tools that would allow us to execute the mission. We think this capability would significantly improve our ability to execute maintenance and supply operations.

Automated equipment issue. Fourth, we are improving how we distribute organizational clothing and individual equipment. Depending less on brick and mortar facilities will result in significant cost savings. We must do more to automate our central issue facility operations with modern technology that can deliver the right equipment, in a timely fashion, at the point of need.

These tools will help us in our 20-year struggle to improve our materiel management capabilities and boost overall readiness. But tools in the box are only as good as the Soldiers who use them to reshape our Army.

During a recent visit to the 4th Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade at Fort Carson, Colorado, I saw a great example of how a sustainment brigade commander adapted his organization and implemented systems to improve sustainment synchronization across the entire division. GCSS-Army was the enabler to make this happen.

I encourage everyone to read in this issue Brig. Gen. Rodney D. Fogg's article, "GCSS-Army: Providing Big Data for Readiness," for a full description of the enhancements to readiness brought about by these extraordinary efforts.

Most of all, as I continue to visit sustainment units and Soldiers across the Army, I look forward to hearing your lessons learned and best practices for using these tools to manage our materiel.

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