



Soldiers from the 236th Inland Cargo Transportation Company use a Kalmar container handler to download shipping containers of ammunition at a railhead at the Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area, Poland, in support of Anakonda 2016.

Sustainment Mission Command for Anakonda 2016

The 364th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, an Army Reserve unit, ensured the sustainment of units participating in Operation Atlantic Resolve exercises.

■ By Col. Herold J. Hudson and Lt. Col. Kurt Lukins

Anakonda 2016 (AN16) was a multinational exercise that demonstrated military cooperation among the United States, Poland, and several other European allies. More than 12,000 U.S. troops and another 12,000 members of allied partner militaries participated in this exercise from May through June 2016. The exercise was held across 15 major training areas

(MTAs) within Poland.

AN16 demonstrated the depth of the Army's commitment to readiness and how it enables units to deploy anywhere they are needed in the world. The 364th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) provided sustainment mission command and served as the national support element for U.S. units participating in the exercise. This article

discusses the 364th ESC's perspective of various elements of AN16 and provides sustainment lessons learned from the exercise.

About AN16

Anakonda is part of the U.S. European Command's Operation Atlantic Resolve, an ongoing demonstration of continued U.S. commitment to the collective secu-

rity of NATO and enduring peace and stability in the region. AN16 was the largest exercise to date in Poland and encompassed most of the ground forces supporting U.S. Army Europe's Strong Europe concept.

Operations Swift Response and Saber Strike were two other military exercises held in conjunction with AN16. Operation Swift Response included airborne drops by the 82nd Airborne Division's Global Response Force (GRF). Operation Saber Strike involved the 2nd Cavalry Regiment's Dragoon Ride through Poland and the Baltic States.

The 364th ESC supported these exercises in Joint Operations Area (JOA) Poland, but its primary focus was AN16. The training value of AN16 was its real-world missions. If the 364th ESC failed to deliver, Soldiers would go without food and ammunition.

Large-scale exercises such as AN16 are perfect training venues for ESCs. Doctrinally, the ESC

plans, prepares, executes, and assesses sustainment, distribution, theater opening, and reception, staging, and onward movement operations for Army forces in the theater. The 364th ESC performed all of these tasks for the more than 12,000 U.S. troops participating in AN16 at the 15 MTAs throughout Poland. The requirements associated with supporting so many warfighters provided the ESC with realistic training on a scale close to that of a theater of war.

The Road to AN16

Prior to AN16, the 364th ESC had planned to participate in Warfighter Exercise 16-05 for fiscal year 2016. However, the unit was notified that it would instead participate in AN16 as the senior logistics command for JOA Poland.

The 364th ESC had less than five months to plan. In order to make up for lost time, an intensive process was initiated that included more than 50 planning meetings, confer-

ences, and a sustainment rehearsal of concept (ROC) drill. U.S. Army Europe and the 21st Theater Sustainment Command were key partners in this process.

Because of the size, complexity, and location of the mission, the planning process required a collaborative effort from all participants. Active duty, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard planners, along with their coalition and strategic partners, worked in harmony to ensure all participants were able to achieve their training objectives and the mission.

Setting the Theater

The 364th ESC deployed to Poland in early May 2016 and began the process of establishing the early-entry command post. The early-entry command post treated its location as an austere environment with tents for working and living, generators, and field communications equipment. What challenged the ESC most was trying to build its own capability while simultaneously setting



Pfc. Andrew Hampton, a Soldier with the 10th Brigade Engineer Battalion, tightens a cargo strap to secure boxes before loading them onto a truck in Poland during Anakonda 2016.

the theater for the maneuver units.

After gaining initial operating capability, the focus then turned to Phase I of the operation, setting the theater. This involved opening mayor cells at all 15 MTAs throughout JOA Poland and providing initial sustainment stocks for these locations. Brigade-and-above units performed mayor cell duties at the MTAs because no regional support groups were used in the exercise.

As the national support element, the 364th ESC oversaw the MTA buildup and worked with the various mayor cells to track fluctuating capabilities. This responsibility encompassed more than sustainment. The 364th ESC also worked with the mayor cells to coordinate force protection and engineer support.

Setting the theater included tracking all inbound planes, trains, vessels, and convoys. The 364th ESC also ensured that reception, staging, and onward movement occurred without delay.

Large elements from 11 different brigades were moved during this phase of the exercise, which made the task of tracking all inbound movements and sustainment extremely challenging. The ESC met those challenges by establishing working groups and boards that brought key people to the table to discuss issues and solve problems.

AN16 Execution

At the conclusion of Phase I, each unit officially began the exercise and the ESC experienced new and unexpected roadblocks. Executing the plan required attention to details, flexibility, and perseverance. The crossing of multiple international borders created unique challenges typically not faced in most exercises and operations. However, working together with coalition and strategic partners ensured success.

During AN16, the 364th ESC had mission command over several supporting units to include elements of the 16th Sustainment Brigade, the 230th Sustainment Brigade, the

30th Medical Brigade, the 405th Army Field Support Brigade, and the 409th Contracting Support Brigade. The ESC headquarters also had several liaison officers assigned to it from a number of elements ranging from the Defense Logistics Agency to the 4th Infantry Division.

The fact that little infrastructure existed at the 15 MTAs complicated an already complex sustainment

Many of the units arrived at their training areas at different times, so the estimated consumption levels were staggered and depended on the change in troop levels at each location.

equation. Many sustainers worked together to solve problems and developed the concept of support in order to provide operational logistics for the exercise.

The 364th ESC executed the concept by providing mission command for the 230th Sustainment Brigade from the Tennessee Army National Guard and the 16th Sustainment Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, from Baumholder, Germany.

The 364th ESC and the sustainment brigades provided several classes of supply throughout the exercise and redeployment phases. During AN16, the 364th ESC provided the following class I (subsistence) items: 1,341 pallets of bottled water, 30,048 cases of meals ready-to-eat, 2,899 unitized group rations (option A), and 6,246 heat-and-serve unitized group rations.

The ESC also provided 1.4 million gallons of fuel and 79 20-foot equivalent unit containers of various types of ammunition. The ESC performed 106 convoys into Poland, moved 795 pieces of equipment from the seaport of debarkation using military convoys and host-nation trucks, and moved 1,532 pieces of equipment by rail into Poland.

Lessons Learned

The following are some of the lessons learned by the 364th ESC during its mission in support of AN16.

Prepare for reserve component constraints. Although many Soldiers from the 364th ESC were interested in being present for the whole exercise, most could not get orders for the entire two months. Because

of the reserve component's annual training construct, the decision was made to split the formation into two main-body echelons with similar capabilities; one echelon would start the exercise and the second would finish it. Having key personnel who had been involved in upfront planning participate in the entire exercise reduced friction at the midway point.

Know all movement approval processes. Each country in Europe had its own movement approval process that is outlined in the Department of Defense Foreign Clearance Guide. The need to gain full awareness of how convoy approvals are completed in both Germany and Poland and the lead times involved was a significant lesson learned for the 364th ESC and the units that had to convoy from Germany into Poland for the exercise. Understanding these requirements and the timelines associated with them is critical for on-time movement in Europe.

Another movement concern was the process for tracking movements inside Poland. The Polish movement process, codified in Polish Law, requires a "permit to deploy" for convoys that fall into three categories: convoys containing five or more ve-

hicles, convoys including oversized vehicles, and convoys carrying hazardous material.

The normal lead time for requesting this permit is 30 days. The Polish government compressed the lead time to five days for the exercise. At the start of the exercise, the movement control battalion was responsible for consolidating and submitting movement requests to the Polish national movement coordination center. However, shortly before the start of phase II, the process changed. Everyone's effort can be improved if process changes are communicated and understood well before the deployment.

Have the tools for a common operational picture. The lack of an existing, sharable, centralized database or process to track movements hindered operations. Each command had brought its own process with them from home station for establishing a common operational picture. However, insufficient coordination decreased the effectiveness of these tools. The lack of a movement common operational picture further complicated the handoff of convoys from Germany to Poland.

Ensure convoy communication and visibility. The ESC had both the Blue Force Tracker (BFT) and the Joint Capability Release–Logistics (JCR–Log). However, the benefits of these systems were decreased because not all convoys had these same capabilities. In the future, each convoy should identify its tracking capabilities and make sure that at least one vehicle has BFT or JCR–Log.

Technology could improve logistics tracking. Another logistics function that could be improved through a common operational picture is the ability to track the consumption of pre-staged stocks. Many of the units arrived at their training areas at different times, so the estimated consumption levels were staggered and depended on the change in troop levels at each location.

Logisticians learned that a logistics common operational picture is a

moving target that must be tracked and managed. A logistics status report was created and a daily mayor cell working group was instituted to help track logistics statuses. Much of the information already existed in the various logistics information systems used by the 364th ESC. Consequently, this became an additional set of spreadsheets to manage.

An enterprise resource planning system that could pull and synthesize the information for the staff would be more effective than spreadsheets. In the past, this was attempted with the Battle Command Sustainment Support System.

Plan for DTAS resources. In regard to manning the force, the Deployed Theater Accountability System (DTAS) posed various challenges ranging from a lack of communications capability to a lack of authorized DTAS users. This shortfall in management processing system capabilities led to spreadsheet-driven tactics. In the future, units should solidify the requirements and capabilities for DTAS at the planning conferences prior to the exercise.

Liaison officers are vital to partnerships. Proper employment of liaison officers between the various organizations reduces friction. The 364th ESC's use of this simple tactic, more than any other, allowed the commands to communicate better, understand intent, and accomplish the mission.

While it may be painful to lose a good Soldier in a particular section, choosing one of your "best and brightest" as a liaison officer will be greatly appreciated. The liaison officers were truly the unsung heroes for AN16 sustainment.

Partner resources ensure success. The 364th ESC has built an incredible relationship with the Polish army in Warsaw and with the Polish 1st Armored Brigade. The Polish 1st Armored Brigade was extremely helpful in providing life support services for the 1,000 U.S. personnel based at their headquarters. The brigade also provided short-notice

transportation and materials handling equipment support at other locations.

Bringing together land forces to train as one military demonstrated that the alliance is ready and capable. AN16 was a challenging exercise that supported the Strong Europe concept. AN16, the largest exercise in Europe since 1991, has set the stage for future cooperation between the U.S. and Polish militaries. The 364th ESC and the other sustainment units involved proved themselves capable of early-entry operations and sustaining the force.

By working through the challenges of this operational environment and successfully completing the exercise, the 364th ESC improved its own readiness as well as the readiness of the other units that participated in AN16. The lessons learned from this experience will be useful for other ESCs' future deployments into austere environments.

Col. Herold J. Hudson served as the chief of current operations for the 364th ESC during AN16. In his civilian profession, he is the command executive officer for the 364th ESC. He holds a bachelor's degree from Central Washington University in accounting and a master's degree in strategic studies from the Army War College. He is a graduate of Advanced Joint Professional Military Education at the Joint Forces Staff College.

Lt. Col. Kurt Lukins is the commander of the 382nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. He served as the support operations mobility branch chief during AN16. In his civilian profession, he is a project manager at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. He holds a bachelor's degree from Central Washington University in business administration and a master's degree in logistics management from the Florida Institute of Technology. He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College and the Logistics Executive Development Course.