



Maj. Gen. Les Carroll, the commander of the 377th Theater Sustainment Command, Col. Lillard Evans, 595th Transportation Brigade commander, and members of the 840th Transportation Battalion watch as equipment is loaded onto the USNS Mendonca at the Port of Shuaiba, Kuwait, on March 3, 2017. (Photo by Lt. Col. Cinnie Mullins)

Changing the Culture to Set the Theater

The Transportation Corps needs a change in culture to set the theater for future operations and maintain readiness.

■ By Col. Lillard D. Evans

While the Army has been focused on stability operations during the past 10 years, the Transportation Corps' tactical-, operational-, and strategic-level skills have atrophied. Additionally, capabilities that were readily available in the active component have been repositioned to the reserve component through Army force realignments. These capabilities now require activation or mobilization in order to perform critical deployment and redeployment tasks at ports of

embarkation and debarkation. This stresses the Transportation Corps' ability to maintain readiness.

Stability operations shifted the Transportation Corps' focus from deployment operations to distribution operations. This resulted in a loss of critical force movement and projection skills. To maintain readiness, the Transportation Corps needs a culture change that will allow it to effectively set the theater for future operations.

The 595th Transportation Brigade is changing its culture by develop-

ing adaptive leaders who get results through active engagement, training efficient and effective expeditionary port operations teams, and preparing organizations to have mission command over elements designed to provide maneuver commanders with options.

The Focus on Distribution

The focus on distribution operations has led the transportation community to distribute cargo with an administrative mindset. This mindset

was effective while the Army was operating in permissive environments. However, one needs to consider that the Army will likely set the theater in nonpermissive environments in the future.

In nonpermissive environments, the transportation community must focus on its core functions of deployment and redeployment. Providing deployment and redeployment expertise to maneuver commanders at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels remains a core function of transportation experts.

Changing the Culture

As a prerequisite to setting the theater for future operations, the 595th Transportation Brigade's focus is on leader development. In particular, the brigade is developing junior transportation officers and training leadership skills for planning and coordinating expeditionary port operations.

As part of leader development, the military decisionmaking process (MDMP) and troop leading procedures (TLPs) focus battalion and company leaders on planning and executing operations. Learning these systematic processes is critical to developing leadership skills.

The MDMP and TLPs help identify areas of accountability and responsibility. They help leaders ask critical questions that eliminate assumptions and unnecessary risks. The processes also force leaders to be actively engaged in the entire operation and assume ownership at the appropriate levels.

In the past, leaders who were accustomed to managing and distributing cargo were reluctant to direct or communicate with experienced carriers, contractors, and civilians. Essentially, the distribution system was on autopilot with very little leader engagement. In stable and permissive environments, this approach has limited success; however, it presents problems when employing independent teams in nonpermissive environments.

Being actively engaged in all aspects of operations and leading Soldiers to

be accountable and responsible will drive change in the transportation community. It also will allow leaders to train and develop the teams needed for future operations. Using the MDMP and TLPs will help leaders develop effective operations to ensure success in all environments.

Measurable Success

The measure of success for the 595th Transportation Brigade in setting the theater for future operations is the ability to provide trained expeditionary port operating teams to the combatant commander. However, the Army's force realignment has moved most deployment capabilities to the reserve component. Reserve organizations are essential and must maintain the same level of proficiency as their active duty counterparts.

In training active and reserve personnel, the 595th Transportation Brigade's emphasis is on operations and leadership, as opposed to technical transportation training. The decision to focus training on operations, particularly port operations, and leadership demonstrates the importance of accountability and responsibility for Soldiers, units, and teams. Operations and leadership training empowers leaders with the confidence to deliver combat forces at the speed of war, and it changes the culture to focus on being responsive to maneuver commanders.

A culture focused on operations and leadership training has merit for the future. This culture change will contribute to guiding the transportation community back to its core missions of deploying and redeploying combat forces, essentially delivering readiness to warfighting organizations.

Mission Command

Because force realignments moved distribution capabilities to the reserve component, mission command is essential to setting the theater for future operations. The 595th Transportation Brigade has two subordinate battalions charged with mission command

of active and reserve component port operations teams. The 840th Transportation Battalion operates in the northern Persian Gulf, while the 831st Transportation Battalion operates in the southern Persian Gulf.

To set the theater for future operations, both battalions will receive critical assets and capabilities to execute their core missions of deploying and redeploying combat forces. These assets will come from both the active and reserve components.

To ensure consistency in training and shared understanding, the brigade and subordinate battalions will contribute to the training, certification, and validation of all port operations teams. By contributing to this process, battalions are able to cultivate relationships with leaders and Soldiers. These relationships are essential to fostering the culture change needed to set the theater for future operations.

The transportation community needs a culture change that emphasizes an operational approach to assigned missions and leadership at the individual level, TLPs at the company level, and the MDMP at the battalion level. A culture change will assist commanders in setting the theater and refocus the transportation community on its core missions of deploying and redeploying forces rapidly.

A change in culture will cultivate confidence, trust, and credibility in the transportation community to address unforeseen challenges, ultimately providing warfighting commanders with readiness at the point of need.

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