



Maj. Gen. Mark Palzer, commanding general of the 79th Theater Sustainment Command, speaks to his troops on Sept. 17, 2016, during Exercise Lion Focus '16 in Vicenza, Italy. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alexandra Hays)

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Setting the African Theater

By Maj. Gen. Mark Palzer and Maj. Joel M. Machak

Africa is a vast and fascinating continent with incredible potential for opportunities and challenges. To adequately understand the role of sustainment in setting this theater, it is important to first understand what setting a theater means, the conditions within the theater, and U.S. Army Africa's (USARAF's) approach to the doctrinal responsibility of setting a theater.

Setting a theater is by no means a task that any Army service component command or warfighting function can accomplish alone. It involves a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational approach that includes nongovernmental organizations, embassies, and warfighting functions other than sustainment. The sustainment inputs are critical to this effort, but alone they are insufficient.

According to Field Manual 3-94, Theater Army, Corps, and Division Operations, setting the theater refers to a broad range of actions necessary to employ land power before and during a crisis. These actions include base development, theater opening, reception, staging, onward movement, and integration, and other sustainment-related support.

In order to accomplish these sustainment functions in the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), the Department of Defense has aligned the 79th Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) to USARAF.

Setting the African Theater

Setting the theater is nested within the AFRICOM theater campaign plan and the USARAF mission state-

ment. The USARAF commander recognized the complexity of setting the African theater, so the staff developed a conceptual framework that describes the stakeholders, prioritizes countries and regions, and provides a framework for assessment.

The five categories in this framework are access and partnerships, protection, mission command, intelligence, and sustainment. By doctrine, access and partnerships could have been divided among the other categories; however, they were deliberately kept separate to ensure they received adequate visibility given their importance.

Based on doctrine, orders, and command guidance, USARAF identified 166 key tasks necessary for setting the African theater. These tasks were grouped into requirements that correspond to doctrinal warfighting function elements. The result was clearly defined criteria that provide a common understanding among stakeholders about their responsibilities.

The Continent and the COCOM

Fifty three of Africa's 54 countries are within the AFRICOM area of responsibility. Africa is 3.5 times the size of the United States. Its geography ranges from desert to triple canopy tropical rainforests. The rainy and dry seasons in certain regions present additional challenges. The diverse conditions and terrain, coupled with poor transportation infrastructure, limit the composition and delivery methods of support packages.

Each country has its own set of customs clearance laws and regulations

that must be successfully navigated to ensure timely delivery of equipment and supplies. Many African countries have achieved independence within the past 40 years, which means that many laws and policies regarding cross-border imports and transportation are constantly changing.

The more than 1,500 languages and dialects that are spoken across the continent add further complexity to cross-border movement. Other complicating factors include mass migrations due to civil strife, religious conflicts, and food and water shortages. Combined, these factors make deploying and supporting units on the continent complex.

TSC Support to AFRICOM

Unlike most combatant commands (COCOMs), AFRICOM is relatively new. It was established in 2008. Other COCOMs have had decades to develop their areas of responsibility and, most importantly, to cultivate relationships with their partner nations. AFRICOM, by comparison, is not yet a decade old. It published its first theater campaign plan in 2016.

Additionally, AFRICOM is somewhat unique in that it still relies heavily on the U.S. European Command and the 21st TSC for basing, sustainment, and force projection.

Perhaps most significantly, until recently, AFRICOM has been the only COCOM without an assigned TSC. This meant that the USARAF staff had to replicate the functions of a TSC through memorandums of agreement with the U.S. European Command and the 21st TSC. This

The Department of Defense has tapped the 79th Theater Sustainment Command to become the senior logistics integrator for U.S. Africa Command.

required significant staff-to-staff coordination in order to ensure efforts were synchronized.

The 79th TSC is being aligned to USARAF to bring more capabilities and logistics support to the continent. In fiscal year 2017, the 13th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) was assigned to AFRICOM with operational control assigned to USARAF. The 13th ESC deployed a forward element to the USARAF headquarters in Vicenza, Italy, and to several nodes throughout Africa.

The ESC's forward presence laid the groundwork for the 79th TSC to assume these missions and bring additional capabilities to USARAF as the senior logistics integrator for AFRICOM. Integration efforts will provide improved logistics incorporation in the initial stages of operations and exercise planning.

Efforts and Initiatives

USARAF has established a broad range of logistics capabilities for setting the African theater. These capabilities include the West Africa Logistics Network (WALN), cooperative security locations (CSLs), acquisition and cross-servicing agreements (ACSAs), and the capabilities of partners in the Defense Logistics Agency, the Army Sustainment Command, the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP), and regionally aligned forces (RAF).

The WALN. The WALN is an AFRICOM regional distribution concept consisting of a light logistics hub with associated spokes that support forces employed throughout West and Central Africa by air and surface modes. In support of the WALN, AFRICOM tasked USARAF to provide traffic management in West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin. Traffic management is primarily executed through contracts, such as African Surface Distribution Services, LOGCAP, and blanket purchase agreements. USARAF acts as AFRICOM's executive agent for common-user land transportation throughout the continent.

CSLs. CSLs are made up of host-

nation facilities and have few permanent U.S. personnel. They contain pre-positioned equipment and serve to enhance support contracts, blanket purchase agreements, security cooperation activities, and contingency access. These sites are intended to reduce the time and transportation assets required to deploy and sustain approximately 300 Soldiers for 30 days.

AFRICOM has a total of 12 CSLs throughout the continent, four of which are managed exclusively by USARAF. To improve command supply discipline at these locations, the Army Materiel Command is working with USARAF to expand theater property book capabilities. As the AFRICOM and USARAF training plans mature, USARAF intends to include the CSLs in training when possible.

In the future, the 79th TSC will monitor, inspect, and rotate the CSL stocks into training exercises. While CSLs are designed to enhance logistics capabilities in support of exercises and operations, their existence is possible because of the access and partnership efforts of the AFRICOM Security Cooperation Division.

ACSAs. ACSAs are negotiated bilaterally between U.S. forces and their allies or coalition partners. They allow U.S. forces to exchange the most common types of support including food, fuel, transportation, ammunition, and equipment. Whenever possible, USARAF executes ACSAs with partner nations. This reduces the U.S. footprint in Africa and has the additional benefits of building mutual trust and strengthening ties with partners.

In the past fiscal year, the value of services exchanged with partner nations was \$2.97 million. It is on track to surpass \$3 million this fiscal year. This investment seems small compared to other military endeavors, but it generates substantial returns in building partner capacity and cultivating relationships.

Sustainment partners. LOGCAP has the capacity to provide a wide range of support to Soldiers. USARAF currently leverages the capabilities of LOGCAP to provide

long-term solutions.

In addition to providing some materials handling equipment support, LOGCAP provides 24/7 facilities maintenance support to all CSLs. The Defense Logistics Agency assists USARAF by partnering with host-nation businesses to place fresh fruit and vegetable suppliers in strategic locations throughout Africa. This significantly reduces the transportation costs associated with sustaining Soldiers on the continent.

To reduce U.S. forces' dependence on bottled water and the associated transportation costs and waste, USARAF is developing bulk water solutions. These capabilities include well pumps, water purifiers, and water chillers.

Additionally, USARAF is working with the Army Materiel Command to tailor Army pre-positioned stocks in Africa to best support future missions. These efforts will ensure that deploying units can rapidly draw the equipment they need and will minimize lift requirements from the continental United States.

RAF. RAF units are vital to theater security cooperation and setting the African theater. RAF units are the U.S. face of any partnership effort on the continent. They support AFRICOM exercises and events that train host-nation militaries in logistics, intelligence, land navigation, first aid, and communications.

Planners must consider how to balance the employment of RAF units with RAF readiness requirements. Additionally, as RAF units rotate to support the AFRICOM mission, it is important that unity and momentum are maintained from one organization to the next.

The Way Ahead

In support of AFRICOM and USARAF initiatives, the 79th TSC will focus on filling the logistics capabilities shortfalls of partner nations to help develop solutions. As USARAF cultivates relationships with African partners, it must demonstrate and impress upon those partners the impor-

tance of incorporating logistics into the initial stages of any operation. To do this, USARAF must institutionalize and professionalize the logistics functions within its partners' security forces.

During the logistics plenary session at this year's African Land Forces Summit in Malawi, senior leaders from more than 35 African nations gathered to discuss how to improve logistics. The following methods were developed to accomplish this goal.

Shape the force. In conjunction with its partners, USARAF must assess the knowledge base and establish realistic and agreed-upon performance goals. It must empower noncommissioned officers and allow them to enforce standards and develop a list of standardized terms to facilitate accurate communication between partners.

Cross-train with partner nations. What is the best way to train our troops together? What cross-training method aligns with each nation's strategic plan and vision? Partner-nation units must train for the situations and conditions they will face during peacekeeping or other operations.

Create distribution management priorities. Partner nations must determine how to best use their forces. Recognizing that they cannot meet all transportation needs at all times, they must allocate forces in accordance with established priorities. Planning is essential when synchronizing logistics between depots and Soldiers in the field.

Institutionalize maintenance. When maintenance problems occur, distribution capability suffers. Operator-level preventive maintenance is critical, but partner nations also need the next higher level of maintenance support. Leaders should think about maintenance at all times. Inculcating a culture of readiness is paramount in this effort.

Ensure transparency and accountability. Logistics can be a noncontroversial platform and can be used to facilitate dialogue and build trust between partners. Public trust is also important. Taxpayers should feel confident that their money is being spent wisely.

Ensure interoperability. Commonality in logistics is critical, particularly when nations partner with one another for an operation. As partners modernize their forces, it is important that they do so with an eye toward commonality and interoperability.

All of these initiatives will help create an enduring presence for logistics and help foster much-needed institutions centered on logistics capabilities.

Setting the African theater involves more than the sustainment warfighting function. USARAF has made significant progress toward setting the African theater and with the addition of the 79th TSC will continue to shape this effort in concert with partner nations. Investing in these partnerships and building trust are the keys to success.

In his 1962 State of the Union address, President John F. Kennedy said, "The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining." In other words, now is the time to build relationships, not during a crisis.

As its partners progress through this transformative period, USARAF's ongoing investments in Africa are in the nation's best interest and will pave the way for a bright and prosperous African future.

Maj. Gen. Mark Palzer is the commanding general of the 79th TSC. He has a master's degree in strategic studies from the Army War College and an MBA from Pacific Lutheran University. He is a graduate of the Quartermaster Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the Combined Armed Services and Staff School, the Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College.

Maj. Joel M. Machak is the chief of the mobility operations branch for USARAF. He holds a bachelor's degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, a master's degree in business and science from the University of Kansas, and a master's degree in public administration from Troy University.