

# When Time Is Not on Our Side

■ By Lt. Gen. Aundre F. Piggee

The most precious asset the Army has when preparing to go to war is the one thing we all wish we had more of in our lives: time.

Time available to conduct the myriad tasks required to properly set the theater will be even more scarce in future contingencies. Our adversaries observed how we prepared for Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and other recent operations, and they are unlikely to allow us months of uncontested access to build combat power in a neighboring country again.

Today, as the multidomain battlespace continues to evolve, the task of setting the theater has expanded. It is now really a matter of setting the entire globe, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph Dunford, explains it. Exactly where on the globe that next conflict will be, no one knows.

## Efforts to Save Time

During my career, the Army was called to serve in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, and other places where no one thought we would go just six months before we landed. So here at the Pentagon, we are working to ensure we have the correct commodities in place to build combat power when time is not on our side.

Do we have sufficient fuel? Are there enough munitions? Do we have the right maintenance and required medical capabilities? Have we established robust distribution capabilities? Do we have the right units and force structure in place?

We ask these questions every day. Unless all of these factors are in place well before the start of a contingency operation, we cannot count on being able to deliver supplies and equipment while our enemies employ anti-access/area-denial capabilities.

We have taken a number of steps to speed up our delivery processes. We have increased Army pre-positioned stocks, which are integral to equipping forward combat forces quickly. We are now assembling the stocks into ready-to-fight configurations to save time.

We are implementing a \$100 million program to ensure all units have a common authorized stockage list that is 100 percent mobile and will provide 30 days of repair parts in a combat environment. In addition, the Defense Logistics Agency will stock 45 days of supply at their forward storage locations.

We are growing our ammunition supplies. We have enough for what we need today, and we are working to ensure we have enough to conduct two contingency operations almost simultaneously.

Many key sustainment capabilities are required early on in the opening phases of setting the theater. We have identified key enabler units that are required in an expeditionary fight to enable successful reception, staging, onward movement, and integration, and we are working with our reserve component to ensure that it is ready to deploy first.

Reserve component units must sustain a high level of readiness and make sure their personnel are trained and have the right equipment to execute tasks to standard on short notice. Since 78 percent of Army logistics capability resides in the National Guard and Army Reserve, readiness is critical.

This year the Army is also finishing the fielding of Global Combat Support System–Army for ground systems. This will give commanders the situational awareness to make better decisions.

## Training to Save Time

There are also things you can do in your units to prepare. Tasks associated



The Army must consider how to save time in order to allow units to deploy faster.



with setting the theater are not easily trained since they involve resources that units do not always directly control.

Coordination is difficult since the Army works with other nations during reception, staging, onward movement, and integration. The Army does its best to build skills and practice these tasks during emergency deployment readiness exercises, sea emergency deployment readiness exercises, and combat training center rotations.

But it is hard during training exercises to get the full impact of everything you might encounter in actual combat. So I encourage you to start asking questions about how you can prepare for that day when time is not on our side.

#### Four Considerations

Here are four questions, based on lessons I have learned and things I have seen lately, that sustainers should consider for training.

***How can I be fully nested with the operational planners?*** Sustainment is absolutely instrumental in developing the initial contingency plan. Logistics planners must be fully nested with operators during planning to ensure sustainment considerations are carefully considered and that missions are supportable.

So, stay shoulder to shoulder in every phase of operational planning to ensure warfighters consider the sustainment capabilities that must be in theater, especially early on, before combat maneuver forces arrive. Also, stay shoulder to shoulder with Logistics Civil Augmentation Program organizations, and make certain these organizations have relationships with host nations.

***What actions can I take to save time?*** I recently was able to observe two brigades engaged in setting the theater when the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, entered Europe. What stood out to me was the rapid implementation of lessons learned between these successive operations.

Lessons learned from the 3rd Ar-

mored Brigade Combat Team's deployment were rapidly applied in the deployment of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade when it shipped and discharged its helicopters and equipment in Greece.

The 10th Combat Aviation Brigade intentionally procured a vessel that was tall enough so that when it loaded its helicopters in the continental United States in preparation for deployment, the rotors did not have to be removed. This made it much easier to place the helicopters into operational configurations when discharged.

To my amazement, when the helicopters were offloaded in Greece, it took only two hours before they were flying to their tactical assembly areas.

The brigade was able to achieve these results not only through great planning but also by working closely with the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command to procure a vessel appropriate for the type of equipment that had to be loaded and the mission on the other end. This also is an example of the impact logisticians can have; if we are involved early in the planning, we can decrease the time it takes to set a theater.

***Am I training every day in garrison to do the basics correctly?*** Before we went to Afghanistan and Iraq, we were good at sustaining ourselves, but we have had little practice since, and an entire generation of Soldiers is used to maintenance and resupply being done for them.

These lost skills showed up as lost time during the exercises in Europe. In one case, equipment was not loaded onto a ship in unit sets, so it first had to be downloaded, moved to a holding area, and then moved a second time to a tactical assembly area where it could be configured. That wasted several days; we would not have had those extra days if we were executing an actual contingency.

We also lost time because we did not have drivers with the appropriate licenses to drive the combat equipment at the port. Nor did we have the right equipment at the rail site to handle the equipment that we

needed to download there.

These are the details you have to plan for. If you have not trained in a European environment, it is difficult to know all the NATO requirements, such as how to move hazardous materials or fuel. In the end, the units were successful and learned a great deal, but if this had been a real contingency, precious time would have been lost.

***Do I have capabilities in place well before a contingency?*** During my assignment as the U.S. Central Command J-4, we developed what we called the Trans-Arabian Network. It was a ground transportation network that allowed precoordinated movement of U.S. supplies through Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

We had been steadily operating in this area since Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and then we were in a continuous state of conflict there since 2002, but we did not have a comprehensive ground distribution network.

Therefore, we did not always have the right commodities. We did not place them where they would be needed, and we were handicapped if we had to expand and execute another reception, staging, and onward movement operation. That all changed with the new road network. It is important that these types of capabilities be put in place well in advance of a contingency operation.

In an interview in this issue of *Army Sustainment*, one of my predecessors in the G-4, retired Lt. Gen. Raymond Mason, offers insights from his experience in setting theaters in both the U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Central Command.

War waits for no one. Asking and answering the right questions will save time when it is needed, allow units to quickly build combat power, and possibly save lives.

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