

Force Projection and Force Reception Doctrine Update

■ By Maj. Gen. Paul C. Hurley Jr.

Doctrine is the vital bridge that links national-level guidance to tactical-level execution. It provides a common language and framework for operations for both a brand-new recruit just learning the Army and a seasoned commander on the battlefield, even though their individual tasks differ.

It captures lessons from operations and codifies them as guidelines that enhance operations and mission effectiveness across the Army. Find a unit with a library of dog-eared, highlighted, tabbed doctrine, and you will likely find a highly effective unit that is laser-focused on mission success.

Doctrine's Purpose

Doctrine has the twofold purpose of providing relevant, timely, and detailed guidelines that shape how we train and fight and providing maximum flexibility for the maneuver commander so that the force can capitalize on opportunities. It is developed for an Armywide audience rather than a specific unit, mission, or operation.

Army Doctrine Publication 1-01, Doctrine Primer, says that “doctrine serves as a starting point for thinking about and conducting operations,” and when used as intended “makes six basic contributions to the conduct of operations and the development of military professionals. Each is vitally and equally important. Each contributes directly to the conduct of operations and mission effectiveness.”

Doctrine makes these six contributions to the conduct of operations:

- Provides a coherent vision of warfare.

- Enhances operational effectiveness.
- Provides a common frame of reference and cultural perspective.
- Provides a common professional language.
- Discusses Army contributions to unified action.
- States and fosters desirable traits in Soldiers and leaders.

The individual contributions are important, but all six pieces of the puzzle highlight that an operation has one designated commander and, through mission command, all actions are coordinated to support the commander's intent.

Striking a balance between the right level of detail and maximum flexibility is a challenge; the more complex the operation, the bigger the challenge. Force projection and force reception are operations that fall into this category.

Force Projection and Force Reception

According to Army Regulation 525-93, Army Deployment and Redeployment, force projection is “the ability to project the military element of national power from CONUS [the continental United States] or another theater in response to requirements for military operations. Force projection operations extend from mobilization and deployment of forces to redeployment to CONUS or home theater.”

Force reception is a non-doctrinal term that describes the functions of reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI), which is “a phase of joint force projection occurring in the operational area during which arriving personnel,



The Combined Arms Support Command is revising doctrine and training in order to operationalize force projection and force reception policies.



Lithuanian soldiers and Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade, the 4th Infantry Division, and the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, load a Bradley fighting vehicle onto a heavy equipment transport system during the reception, staging, and onward movement phase of Exercise Saber Strike. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jill People)

equipment, and materiel transition into forces capable of meeting operational requirements.”

Force projection and force reception have the common goal of enhancing the ability to meet operational requirements. To assess whether force projection and force reception doctrine as currently written is adequate to support contemporary operations, several key points about force projection and force reception must be understood:

- They are the processes by which combat power is generated.
- They are not just a logistics problem but are critical operational challenges that rely on the logistics infrastructure for successful execution.
- The ability to execute any mission largely depends on the speed with which combat power can be assembled at required locations.
- They are about much more than merely bringing Soldiers and equipment into the theater; seg-

ments must be efficiently received, rapidly formed into units, expeditiously moved to tactical assembly areas, and seamlessly integrated into operations.

- The numbers, types, and sequencing of these units must support the commander’s concept of operations.
- They must be included in the earliest stages of operational planning.

In other words, force projection and force reception, especially as they relate to setting the theater, are not logistics or maneuver discussions but instead are a series of coordinated actions to rapidly and effectively accumulate combat power to achieve tactical and positional advantage over the enemy.

Current Doctrine Considerations

At the height of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, sustainment operations in Kuwait were robust. With few exceptions, the ground and air lines of communication were fully capable of support-

ing ground-centric operations.

While manning and equipping were near maximum levels, “patch chart” rotations and an established relief in place/transfer of authority process provided stability and predictability. The theaters of operation were set, forces and footprints were in place and mature, and support agreements were negotiated and funded. Redundant capability existed to mitigate almost all risk.

Fast-forward to Operations Inherent Resolve and Freedom Sentinel, and the landscape is markedly different. The 1st Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) in Kuwait supports Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, and myriad operations scattered across the U.S Central Command area of responsibility.

Operations are air-centric and coalition-driven. Force manning levels are restricted, and operating at the speed of war has stressed processes and systems close to the breaking point.

This new operational environment

has also, in many areas, pushed day-to-day operations past what is covered in regulation and doctrine. In response to the environmental stressors, the 1st TSC adapted current and developed new sustainment solutions that must be analyzed for inclusion in doctrine.

Here are some examples of the solutions the 1st TSC adopted:

- Virtual, distributed mission command to coordinate and synchronize efforts across theater.
- Widely dispersed sustainment structure leveraging systems and ad hoc methods to report statuses, shortfalls, and requirements.
- Embedded personnel at all echelons to support concurrent planning.
- Strategic assets achieving tactical effects by using reachback capability.
- The development of an operational contract support integration center at the corps and Army service component command (ASCC) levels to streamline processes to operate at the speed of war.
- Reachback to the U.S. industrial base to meet emerging demands.
- The use of U.S. war stocks to bridge the required supply rate gap.

High-velocity, extremely lethal, decentralized operations are necessary to survive and win current and future conflicts, and doctrine must recognize this reality.

Operationalizing This Doctrine

Before digging into operationalizing force projection and reception doctrine, a few nondoctrinal terms need to be discussed, namely “set the theater,” “speed of assembly” (SOA), and “speed of integration” (SOI). In the absence of official doctrinal definitions for these terms, here are some working definitions for the purpose of this discussion.

Set the theater. Set the theater includes the broad range of actions conducted to shape the operational environment, deter aggression, and establish conditions in an operation-

al area for the execution of strategic plans. Set the theater is a geographic combatant command responsibility, is continuous, and includes the whole-of-government initiatives, including bilateral or multilateral diplomatic agreements.

Set the theater serves the purpose of establishing favorable conditions for conducting military operations and the support requirements for a specific operation plan during crisis or conflict. It addresses the requirements necessary to support the geographic combatant commander’s theater campaign plan, including agreements that allow U.S. forces access to ports, terminals, airfields, and bases within the area of responsibility to support future military contingency operations.

SOA. SOA includes all actions and functions associated with reception of equipment, containers, and personnel and all tasks required to transition materiel into combat power.

SOI. SOI includes all actions and functions associated with the staging, onward movement, and integration of combat power from a port of debarkation to forward battle positions.

SOA and SOI should be understood as relating primarily to rapidly configuring entire unit or mission sets to support the concept of the operation while synchronizing arriving personnel and equipment with movement and maneuver requirements. Setting the theater is not a separate function but, rather, a sub-function of mission command.

Mission orders are not intended to restrict but, instead, to focus all organizations on the commander’s intent and operational endstate—the “what to do” rather than the “how to do.” As part of this, doctrine provides guidelines for all Army warfighting units and organizations and integrates the actions of joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multinational, and commercial partners.

Operationalizing doctrine starts during the planning and predeployment phases of a deployment. As

doctrine evolves to discuss setting the theater, SOA, and SOI, it must also discuss, at a minimum, these topics:

- Establishing access to theater agreements.
- Deployment timelines for Army pre-positioned stocks.
- Operational contract support roles and responsibilities.
- Army support to other services and multinational agreements.

Command Authority

A critical principle to understand is unity of command. Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations, states that the “operation of all forces must be under a single responsible commander who has requisite authority to direct and employ those forces in pursuit of a common purpose.”

Taken in the context of operationalized force projection and force reception doctrine, the designated ASCC for a theater has authority and responsibility for all operations, including force projection and reception. Those functions are part of movement and maneuver to set the theater and not separate logistics functions that happen before the fight begins.

The TSC or designated senior sustainment unit executes force projection and force reception operations in theater in accordance with the commander’s intent. Within a theater, the G-3 or J-3 is responsible for the overall synchronization of operations, while the G-4 or J-4 provides oversight and support for sustainment.

Setting the European Theater

When the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, rotated to Europe in early 2017, one of the U.S. European Command’s stated goals was to stress the ability of units to conduct RSOI in the European theater of operations. As part of set the theater operations, SOA and SOI were critical metrics in measuring success.

Two distinct challenges affected

force projection and force reception operations. First, operations of this type were last conducted in Europe when V Corps, the 1st Armored Division, and the 1st Infantry Division were in place with all their associated enablers and joint and multinational support.

Second, previous doctrine contained more robust language to guide force projection and theater-specific regulations, policies, and agreements. These guidelines accounted for the requirements unique to Europe and its surrounding countries.

What the U.S. European Command commander was interested in was how fast units could be configured for combat and moved forward to execute operations. Receiving masses of preconfigured equipment and containers was simply considered part of the process.

Overall, the operation was considered a success. Just as important were the valuable lessons learned that will inform future doctrine, process, and policy updates. The lessons learned include the following:

- RSOI is a mission-essential task for the ASCC in order to ensure coordination across operational- and strategic-level units and organizations.
- TSC roles and responsibilities must be coupled with appropriate staff augmentation and expertise.
- Armywide doctrine and processes must account for local policy, supplemental requirements, and multicountry agreements.
- Gaps in doctrinal language create confusion, especially relating to theater-unique capabilities such as the European Activity Set, road clearance and border crossing requirements, and in-transit visibility of equipment on host-nation transportation assets.

While the 21st TSC and 16th Sustainment Brigade provided the backbone for execution of operations, coordination across the many organizations was an ASCC critical task.

Keeping Doctrine Current

At any given time, Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) doctrine developers have multiple publications in various stages of development, revision, and staffing. Events and changes in the operational environment can also drive out-of-cycle updates to specific doctrine.

For example, the 2016 Army Materiel Command-hosted Army Senior Logistics Summit directed the analysis and revision of force projection, distribution management, and materiel management doctrine. These publications are a sampling of the doctrine that is currently under revision:

- Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-35, Army Deployment and Redeployment.
- ATP 4-16, Movement Control.
- ATP 4-93, Sustainment Brigade.
- ATP 4-94, Theater Sustainment Command.
- Field Manual 4-95, Logistics Operations.

Parent and subordinate doctrine publications individually reflect operations fairly consistently, but they have gotten out of sync. Efforts are ongoing to “re-sync” definitions, roles, and responsibilities across all documents

For example, the revision of ATP 4-16 included language and references about the roles and responsibilities of operational contract support units and personnel as they relate to movement control in a theater of operations. This information is missing from the current version.

Significant gaps exist that require major revisions or the development of new publications. For example, ATP 4-94 is under revision to further define the roles and responsibilities of the expeditionary sustainment command and to clarify the differences between TSC and expeditionary sustainment command responsibilities in a theater of operations.

Doctrine has a couple of challenges.

First, doctrine is authoritative but requires judgment in application. The proper balance of direction will enhance the maneuver commander’s agility and flexibility to adapt to the operational environment; having too much or too little direction can hinder that agility.

Second, doctrine is written for an Armywide audience to provide a common framework and language for operations. In-theater operations require additional and more specific instructions that cover the type of operation, rules of engagement, theater-specific agreements, and operation plans.

As the Army’s lead for sustainment and logistics, CASCOM is analyzing and revising doctrine and training to meet the needs of the institutional and operational force. Feedback is critical to this process. Events like the quarterly combat training center collaboration, reverse collection and analysis team engagements, and formal events and activities like force design updates, wargames, and rehearsal of concept drills, provide this vital link.

The CASCOM Deployment Process Modernization Office is working with organizations and directorates internal to CASCOM and across the Army and joint communities to revise, staff, and publish doctrine updates that will mitigate future challenges relating to deployment, force projection, and force reception.

Force projection and force reception are at the heart of Army readiness. This fact is guiding and directing CASCOM efforts to develop doctrine, organizations, and concepts that support the warfighter. The commander owns all aspects of operations, to include force projection and force reception, but everyone has a role to play.

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