Mastering the Deployment Basics:

An Interview With Retired Lt. Gen. Patricia McQuistion

■ By Arpi Dilanian and Matthew Howard

Lt. Gen. Patricia McQuistion, deputy commanding general of the Army Materiel Command, listens to a brief overview of Vibrant Response 14 at Camp Atterbury, Ind., on July 25, 2014. (Photo by Sgt. Thomas Belton)

During her 35-year Army career, retired Lt. Gen. Patricia McQuistion was involved in many major logistics movements. She served as deputy commanding general of the Army Materiel Command and as the commanding general of the Army Sustainment Command, the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, and Defense Supply Center Columbus.

Now as the Association of the United States Army's (AUSA's) senior director for membership, McQuistion continues to be a strong advocate for the Army. In this interview, she describes the importance of having everyone understand their roles in the complex deployment process.

Why is force projection so important to readiness?

Readiness of the force and being able to project that force anywhere in the world are absolutely critical for our ability to support the defense of the United States. Gen. Mark Milley talks so consistently about readiness being the number one priority because readiness gives you options. Those options allow leaders to make the right choices for our nation.

We talk a lot about playing away games—that if we had the choice, we'd always want to play an away game. To play that game, we have to get to where military activity is occurring before it can be projected upon our nation. It's a big world, and the ability to get from one part of it to anywhere that the U.S. military is asked to go is a big part of readiness.

Gen. Darren McDew, commander of the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), says that the strategic advantage over near-peer adversaries is the ability to project forces. How will we maintain this advantage?

I certainly agree with him. That is a strategic advantage. I'd add that the ability to sustain forces while they're employed is also critical, and USTRANSCOM certainly provides a lot of resources to enable that to happen.

To master the basics, you have to focus on that problem set and maintain a good balance across the strategic mobility triad. This includes assets from the air and sea that will get you there, coupled with our Army pre-positioned equipment, ensuring we've got that postured correctly. The one thing better than getting there quickly is already being there. The balance among the three components is essential to maintaining strong capabilities. And how do we maintain those capabilities? By focusing attention and resources on them.

How will sustainment operations for force projection be affected as we encounter new domains?

A topic that repeatedly comes up from our experiences over the past 17 years is metering demand signals. How do we rationalize the demand signals and do it in a way that is probably different than we did in recent decades?

We do it by taking a look at all the algebraic equations to get a full understanding of how increasing "x" forces drives additional requirements for "y" and "z" support. For example, as you bring additional Soldiers, Marines, or Airmen into a theater, what are the requirements for things like security, repair parts, and life support services? How many more containers and trucks do you need to put on the road, and how much more fuel do you need? Will you bring additional civilians and contractors into a theater? How will your sustainment operations affect the local populace? Having a better understanding of those equations is important.

Understanding how one new element drives all of those other requirements—the tooth-to-tail ratio—is essential. Even in the early

A retired lieutenant general describes the importance of force projection, training, partnerships, and technology to the Army's effort to become more expeditionary.

stages of planning for deployment, always keep the redeployment and the retrograde required in mind. It shouldn't drive all the decisions, but it should always be a factor that you're thinking about throughout the length of the campaign and your operations.

What role will technology play in enhancing deployability? Do you foresee any game-changing innovations?

There are game-changing technologies right around the corner. Whereas cyber technology may understandably be the current hot topic, I think we'll see artificial intelligence and autonomy as the next inflection points that will further change the nature of warfare.

There are many benefits we can apply from deep machine learning, artificial intelligence, and being able to process the copious amounts of data required to help understand the deployment, employment, and redeployment processes. The Army can take great advantage of new technologies to help inform the requirements, but the security of that information is another important consideration.

Another technology we talk about is additive manufacturing. Even 10 years ago in Kuwait and Afghanistan, we were producing repair parts on-site. Some of that was done in mobile parts hospitals. They relied on subtractive manufacturing, where you put a blank [raw material] in and the tools take off everything you don't need for the part. In Afghanistan, we used additive manufacturing.

New manufacturing techniques will help the Army answer some demand. They're not the full solution for reducing the total requirement for shipping things to a theater, but they'll help.

The Army is focused on getting "back to basics." Can you describe the importance of emergency deployment readiness exercises, sealift emergency

deployment readiness exercises, and other exercises as the Army works to become more expeditionary?

Hearing the terms emergency deployment readiness exercises and sealift emergency deployment readiness exercises brings me back to my early days in the Army. As a second lieutenant, I was in charge of the departure airfield control group inspection process for the 25th Infantry Division. I recall walking through all of the requirements just to load a Humvee and send it somewhere in the Pacific region, and I always thought, "What happens next?" I wondered what happens at the other end when this stuff gets off.

I think it is important for Soldiers to know what happens next. If I were in charge of deployment training, I'd focus a lot of energy on laying out end-to-end processes for deployments. This would help teams understand and visualize how that process works and what happens next to that piece of equipment, that force, or that unit in the deployment and employment processes.

Do you have any examples of your use of visualization in an end-to-end process?

In my last assignment, we did that to tremendous effect to help get everyone's mind in the game. We mapped out the redeployment and the retrograde process out of Iraq and Afghanistan through multiple routes and then were able to watch a simulation of how the equipment actually moved.

We took a Stryker brigade and mapped out its redeployment. A local firm helped us put that information into a visualization tool so we could watch on screen as that equipment moved to Kuwait and then from Kuwait to an airfield in Saudi Arabia. It showed when we took out the communications packages, which were flown to Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pennsylvania, for reset. And it showed when

the Strykers were put on ships at a nearby seaport and sent back to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, for reset.

This visualization allowed us, from the most senior to the most junior person present, to understand the complexity of the routes, the required maintenance actions, and the time it takes to get that equipment home, reset, and back out to the force. The more the Army can do to put visualization tools and synthetic training environments in place to describe this very complex series of actions that has to happen, the better. When people can see where they fit into the big picture, it gives everybody a leg up.

How important is the reserve component's readiness to the total Army's ability to deploy in today's environment?

It is absolutely critical. Somewhere north of 75 percent of sustainment functions and force structure are in the reserve component. They're part of the total Army, they're critical operational forces, and we've learned a lot over the past 17 years about how to bring all that goodness together. It only makes sense to continue to build upon that understanding, trust, and mutual dependence.

We recently had Lt. Gen. Timothy Kadavy [director of the Army National Guard] here at AUSA talking about the role of the National Guard. He's looking at new ways for employing his part of the total force, and certainly the Army Reserve is doing so as well. There's a great deal we gain from the civilian job and military experiences of National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers. And let's not forget to give a great deal of credit to Army civilians and all they do to ensure current and future readiness.

How can the Army better synchronize efforts with its partners to improve force projection?

Retired Lt. Gen. Patricia McQuistion, former deputy commanding general of the Army Materiel Command.

There are so many areas where the Army does very well with the help of many partners. Continual improvement comes with clear requirements and partner engagement. Understanding what the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program provides is important. It's a brilliant construct to have agreements with industry partners in different regions of the world and to have capabilities already on the ground and ready to employ when you need them.

We rely on our maritime partners and airlines that augment Air Mobility Command and Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command assets. Strong relationships build the Army's ability to operate at the speed of trust. That shouldn't be undervalued.

Having good relationships and building trust with our allies also cannot be overstated. Understanding their processes and the systems they use is critical so that you can exercise together, as well as understand the differences in border agreements, where you can travel, what you are allowed to send, and how you have to send it. You need to know, for example, if there's a change in rail gauges in Europe that will affect your planning.

There is much we've learned about working with our allies, such as the difference in equipment and employment of forces for multinational operations. Capturing and sharing all of that with future generations for when they consider deployment can save them time and effort.

Army pre-positioned stocks give the Army options. So do the exercises with partners, such as Pacific Pathways and U.S. Army Europe's extensive exercises with allies, such as Saber Guardian and Rapid Trident. To synchronize well, you have to practice.

What would you tell unit commanders and Soldiers to do to be more prepared to deploy?

Surprises are not force multipliers. The more you learn and the more you understand about the deployment process is to everyone's advantage. Start with the training schedule. The calendar is a forcing function, so schedule training, plan it well, adhere to it, and then really evaluate and assess how well you and your unit did.

Time is not on the side of a unit trying to deploy somewhere distant. Commanders may not have all the time they need, but they do have all the time that there is, so it's how they make use of time that will make the difference. Home-station training is very important—being on a red team and then using red teams to assess your unit's capabilities.

I've heard this a lot lately and it has really resonated with me: If you want to learn something new, read an old book. There's a tremendous amount of material published about how to do this. It doesn't have to be a surprise. It doesn't have to be learned on your own; you can learn from others, both their successes and mistakes.

And don't be too afraid to fail. I would say the first time you do something, it might be pretty ugly. Okay—just get on with it. Drive on, learn from it, and get better. Get better every time. Like your predecessors, you can and should master the basics.

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Arpi Dilanian is a strategic analyst in the Army G-4's Logistics Initiatives Group. She holds a bachelor's degree from American University and a master's degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Matthew Howard is a strategic analyst in the Army G-4's Logistics Initiatives Group. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Georgetown University.