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A long line of military vehicles, including Humvees and a tank, on a road. The vehicles are white and blue, and are moving along a paved road. The background is a clear sky.

The 1st ID Sustainment Brigade Exercises International Teamwork for Multi- Domain Battle

■ By Lt. Col. Seth Olmstead, Maj. Shawn Robertson, and Maj. Neal Sivula

A Humvee from the 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, leads a multinational convoy during a joint war-fighting assessment exercise in Grafenwoehr, Germany, on April 23, 2018. (Photo by Pfc. Maximilian Huth)

The 1st Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade provides lessons learned from working with NATO partners during a joint warfighting assessment.

The Joint Warfighting Assessment (JWA) 18.1 was a multinational training event that focused on joint and multinational interoperability. Assessed by the Army Joint Modernization Command, the exercise was intended to generate Soldier feedback on the concepts and capabilities required for the joint force to win tomorrow's fight.

The exercise included six three-star headquarters and 10 partner nations. It exercised multinational sustainment friction points and the sustainment warfighting function in division-level, U.S. forces-led, multinational operations.

The most prominent friction points of the JWA were the role of sustainment in Multi-Domain Battle (MDB), creating shared understanding across the coalition, and interoperability of systems.

The MDB Framework

According to MDB doctrine, convergence is the integration of capabilities across domains, environments, and functions in time and physical space to achieve a purpose. The battlefield framework used during JWA introduced the concept of the "convergence window." The 1st Infantry Division (ID) Sustainment Brigade used the window to advance U.S. mission command goals and objectives while the division pursued corps-level objectives using a multinational force structure.

The 1st ID's mission command of a multinational force structure presented multiple opportunities for the 1st ID Sustainment Brigade to exercise sustainment from the support area command post (SACP). Because multinational partners' national supply chains are activated by their respective countries, integrating national mission elements into sustainment operations challenged the integration of sustainment operations from the SACP.

National caveats and acquisition and cross-servicing agreements created friction points that affected

sustainment mission command and interoperability. Simply understanding these national differences went a long way toward mission accomplishment. Each partner nation's national support element executed sustainment differently, largely because of their view of what was effective and efficient.

While the 1st ID Sustainment Brigade attempted to orchestrate sustainment operations from the division SACP, partner nation practices affected all classes of supply. For instance, the Canadian Army's desire to throughput class VII (major end items) created challenges for route deconfliction and combat power tracking.

Skipping echelons of sustainment support expedited delivery to Canadian units, but it reduced equipment visibility and situational awareness for commanders at the division and higher levels. The French military desired to maintain its battalion support area in the division support area rather than distributing its sustainment force structure along the axis of advance. That challenged terrain management of the consolidation area.

Each task force within the 1st ID during the JWA was purely based on nationality. This structure affected combat power tracking because the division could not aggregate reporting at the division level. Each task force had greater fidelity, but the structure increased the amount of data and discussion that had to take place at any one time.

One learning point is that integrating partner countries' national mission elements is key to moving repair parts through the supply chain at the right time. Without the national mission elements reaching back to wholesale, a task U.S. sustainers are unable to accomplish, reconstitution of class VII is unrealistic.

International Teamwork

The JWA environment created a sustainment team of teams. Each nation had its own staffing solutions for

sustainment. Some incorporated maneuver personnel into sustainment operations, while others employed only personnel with sustainment backgrounds.

With each nation organizing sustainment manning differently, the separate staffs had to find ways to create shared understanding. Face-to-face became the preferred method for understanding requirements at echelon. Liaison officers (in ranks equivalent to U.S. majors and lieutenant colonels) had permanent seats in the SACP and were empowered to make decisions and provide feedback to fill gaps.

Perhaps a NATO logistics status report works well above the division level, but below the division level significant friction points get in the way of producing a logistics common operational picture.

Interoperability of equipment was a challenge. The 1st ID Sustainment Brigade discovered nuanced differences in ammunition types, weapon systems, and storage techniques. Combat power was fairly easy to track, but class V (ammunition) consumption reporting was extremely difficult.

Ammunition operations in an MDB environment will be a challenge for the foreseeable future in terms of not only throughput but also safe storage of the tons of multinational ammunition that will invariably be staged at multiple locations in the consolidation area.

Multinational distribution systems and operations are crucial for maintaining forward momentum. The 1st ID Sustainment Brigade conducted a coalition movement review board that organized routes, movement times, and multiclass convoys throughout the battlespace.

Managing multinational distribution in MDB presents significant mission command challenges for any headquarters, and the European theater presents significant challenges that must be overcome. Managing both routes and command relationships is critical to leveraging the

convergence windows utilizing the distribution cycle.

Distribution occurs in the window of opportunity when mass (as a characteristic of the offense) decelerates, thereby creating a window of opportunity offset from the convergence window that allows for sustainment actions to occur.

During the JWA, NATO forces were under the NATO operational command of the 1st ID. According to AAP-06, NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions, NATO operational command is “the authority granted to a commander to assign missions or tasks to subordinate commanders, to deploy units, to reassign forces, and to retain or delegate operational and/or tactical control as the commander deems necessary. Note: It does not include responsibility for administration.”

The division transportation officer must be keenly aware of battlefield transitions and work with the division G-3 to take advantage of the key moment in time between the offense and defense. This key moment, the tangential diffusion space, is when the division uses ground and air lines of communication to offset the consumption of tons of supplies.

Systems Interoperability

Any discussion regarding sustainment interoperability comes down to the passing of basic logistics status (LOGSTAT) reports. How much fuel, ammunition, and food does a unit require? Although LOGSTATs are a cornerstone of sustainment operations at the tactical level, the Army currently has no single system that supports the passing of this information, let alone a multinational system.

The solution to the multinational LOGSTAT gap during this exercise was Microsoft Excel, the Army’s unofficial LOGSTAT reporting system. Using Excel for LOGSTATs had the unexpected benefit of providing a like platform that each nation was familiar with and could use to manage reporting differently.

Passing the LOGSTATs was a challenge. During the JWA, the 1st ID Sustainment Brigade used an internal network that relied on the network infrastructure of Grafenwoehr Training Area. In a tactical environment, the U.S. Army relies on the Combat Service Support Very Small Aperture Terminal and satellite-based communications to pass LOGSTATs and other unclassified sustainment information.

The future of the sustainment warfighting function requires multi-domain, multinational, coalition teamwork in a decisive action environment. Sustainment must be integrated across supply classes and distribution pipelines, and efforts associated with sustainment must be multinational in focus.

For sustainers to remain effective, they must understand how to adapt to national caveats and communicate across multiple capabilities and methods.

International teamwork is important in MDB for creating shared understanding, especially with regard to the consolidation area. The consolidation area is where most multinational interoperability will take place and where the sustainment warfighting function will predominantly demonstrate its value.

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