

# The 1st Cavalry Division Sustainment Brigade: *Building a Modular Sustainment Team*

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*Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division Sustainment Brigade's combined operations and intelligence center process updates for current operations during Warfighter Exercise 18-05 at Fort Hood, Texas.*

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Sustainment units face unique dynamics in executing mission command. The modular nature of sustainment formations means that combat sustainment support battalions (CSSBs), sustainment brigades, and expeditionary sustainment commands (ESCs) will be task-organized to include units they have never worked with in order to support unfamiliar organizations while deployed. The ability to rapidly build a capable sustainment team at echelon is imperative to mission success.

During a recent warfighter exercise, the 1st Cavalry Division (CD) Sustainment Brigade staff experienced this dynamic and exercised a number of tasks and systems to provide the support and services necessary to ensure freedom of action, operational reach, and prolonged endurance.

The exercise helped the sustainment brigade identify critical sustainment components, such as the co-location of critical sustainment staff elements and maneuver leaders, logistics synchronization (both vertical and horizontal), and a comprehensive orders development process.

#### **Co-Location of Staff Elements**

One crucial, yet often underappreciated, aspect of sustainment planning is building the multi-echelon sustainment team. Field Manual 6-0, Commander and Staff Organization and Operations, directs command post staffs at echelon to establish a cell dedicated to the sustainment warfighting function.

It's easy for a small group of personnel to plan in a vacuum, to the detriment of other units, in an environment with many modular sustainment cells. A potential solution, which the 1st CD Sustainment Brigade exercised, is physically connecting the division sustainment area command post and the sustainment brigade tactical operations center.

By physically connecting the two operations centers, significant por-

tions of the division sustainment staff, including elements of the G-1, the G-4 with a robust division transportation office, the G-8, the sustainment brigade support operations (SPO) section, and elements of the maneuver enhancement brigade, were able to seamlessly coordinate with the protection cell. Co-location expedited sustainment planning and mitigated the confusion often associated with a complex and dynamic operation.

The close quarters facilitated constant communication and the development of ad hoc working groups and relationships. This environment allowed planners to adjust to the sudden changes of the decisive action environment. The dynamic was superior to the timed and strictly scheduled interactions of voice-only communication used in previous operations.

#### **Logistics Synchronization**

Supporting an armored division in theater requires investments from numerous stakeholders across the sustainment enterprise. These stakeholders include higher echelon units, such as the ESC and Army field support battalions, and subordinate sustainment elements such as the sustainment brigade's CSSB, divisionally aligned brigade support battalions, and forward support companies.

All of these elements come together to support both divisional and nondivisional units within the division's area of responsibility. It is absolutely imperative that stakeholders synchronize the requirements, capabilities, and movement tables at echelon with the maneuver plan in order to create the overall distribution plan.

Only by conducting rigorous logistics synchronization meetings, placing liaison officers with units that are separated by significant distance, and ensuring communication and requests flow smoothly are we able to integrate all of the sustainment assets necessary to



win in today's complex operational environment.

The sustainment brigade has the most logisticians in the division consolidation area, so it must act as the nexus for coordinating these various stakeholders into a cohesive team that carries the support from the strategic to the tactical level.

A frequent friction point in this process is the priority of support from the ESC. Each echelon operates within a different planning horizon. The sustainment brigade is driven into a dynamic planning cycle and often adapts the plan inside of a 48-hour window. An ESC has a much longer planning cycle because of its responsibilities that support corps-level operations.

Constant communication between the sustainment brigade and the ESC is essential in order to mitigate that friction point. Designating individuals to have the sole responsibility of communicating between the two units is a potential solution. Having personnel dedicated to this task maintains communication and improves teamwork.

Communication needs to focus on or beyond the 72-to-96 hour planning horizon so that the sustainment brigade and ESC can anticipate potential changes to the maneuver plan so that the sustainment brigade can influence the deep sustainment fight and shape sustainment operations in depth. Sustainment brigades and ESCs are extremely well-served when they take the time, in advance of exercises and operations, to develop relationships between their staffs that facilitate communication.

The next step is to put the staffs to work. They must anticipate the requirements of the supported unit and balance them against available capabilities. The most successful teams not only plan their movements but also project where each member of the sustainment enterprise will be on the battlefield and what actions they will take. In order to develop a sustainment team in

a decisive action environment, the sustainment brigade and ESC staffs must project not only what they will do but also what other sustainment elements around them will do.

For example, if the sustainment brigade monitors inbound vessels and knows that the ESC will receive 10 tanks, it can anticipate how long it will take to move those assets forward and coordinate with the ESC to reconstitute combat power accordingly. Prioritizing cargo movement within the intratheater strategic pipeline will determine whether or not the warfighter receives major end items.

This process of anticipation begins before crossing the line of departure and continues throughout all phases of the operation. To be most effective, sustainment organizations must maintain situational awareness of ongoing operations throughout the battlefield. The relationships built with fellow sustainers can further facilitate a common understanding of the dynamic sustainment situation.

### **Comprehensive Orders**

Standardized processes and procedures are required to delineate and synchronize efforts. Tactical standard operating procedures provide a baseline for how to conduct operations, but conditions change rapidly in a decisive action environment.

The 1st CD Sustainment Brigade used orders to convey changes in procedures and provide guidance to subordinate units. These orders covered everything from requesting movements for supplies to establishing attachments for supply distribution to providing support for an external brigade.

During the 1st CD Sustainment Brigade's warfighter exercise, the corps headquarters and ESC published orders for the release and delivery of supplies to the sustainment brigade. From there, the sustainment brigade coordinated orders for the delivery of supplies and support to the maneuver units. The orders

from both the division and sustainment brigade were equally important because they worked together to outline the delivery and receipt of support.

Building relationships and facilitating communication across all echelons are the main elements that enabled the practices described above. Many planning factors for developing a staff or a tactical standard operating procedure focus on a schedule for reporting, working groups, briefings, and back briefings. These factors ensure that information flows in both directions. But the most important element of all is the relationships developed with the supported units, the supporting units at higher echelons, and other assets in theater.

Those relationships ensure that the sustainment warfighting function can achieve its most important goal: gaining the maneuver units' trust and confidence. As sustainers of the force, it is imperative that we devote the time and energy necessary to build relationships between organizations that enable responsiveness to the ever changing needs of the maneuver force commanders who rely on us to help build and maintain combat power.

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