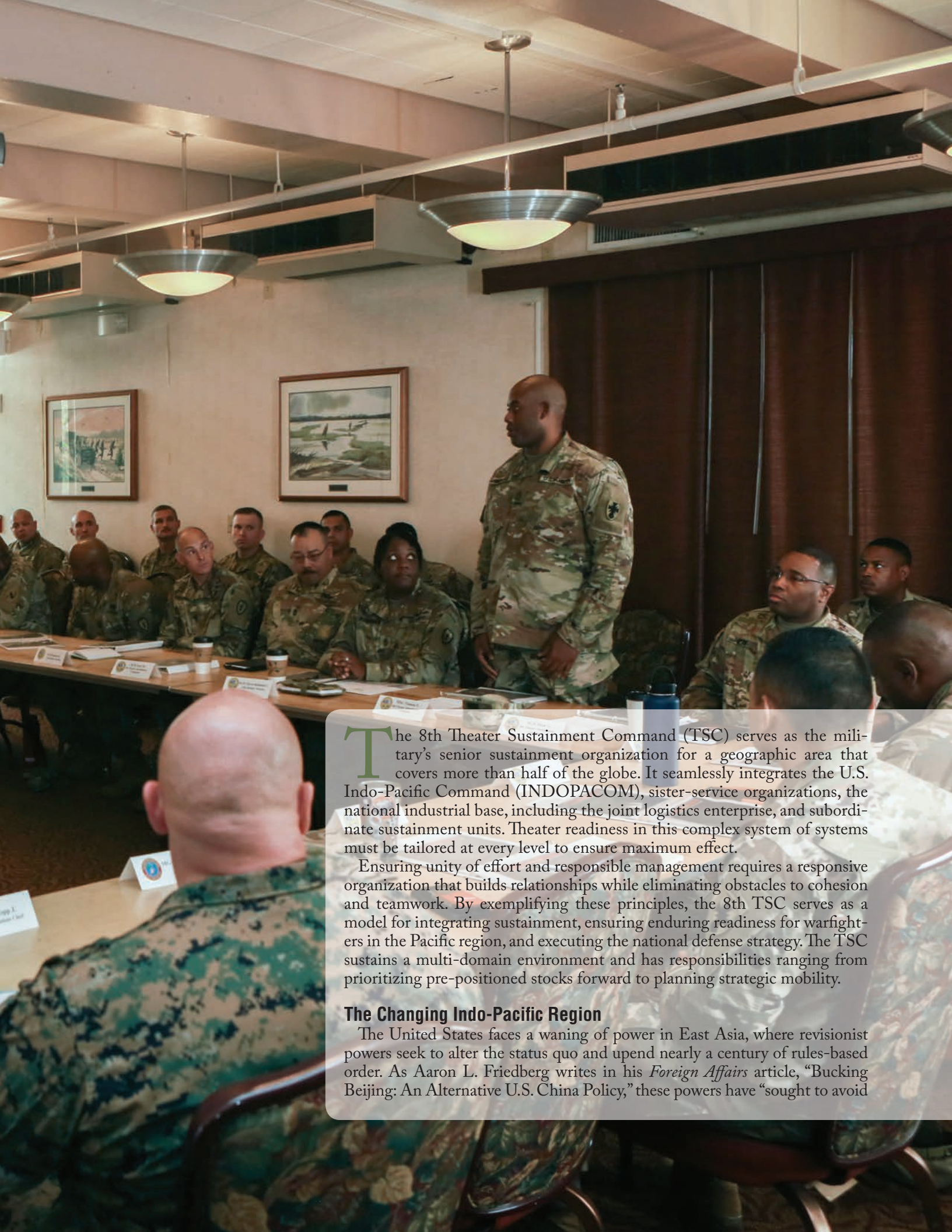


Shaping a Sustainment Community From Half a World Away

■ By Maj. Gen. Charles R. Hamilton and Maj. Aaron J. Shattuck

Joint Senior Enlisted Logistics

Senior enlisted leaders from the Army and Marine Corps gather for the second Joint Senior Enlisted Logistics Forum on June 28, 2018, at Marine Corps Base Hawaii. The forum, developed by the 8th Theater Sustainment Command, allows logistics leaders to improve relationships and better organize joint capabilities. (Photo by Cpl. Patrick Mahoney)



The 8th Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) serves as the military's senior sustainment organization for a geographic area that covers more than half of the globe. It seamlessly integrates the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), sister-service organizations, the national industrial base, including the joint logistics enterprise, and subordinate sustainment units. Theater readiness in this complex system of systems must be tailored at every level to ensure maximum effect.

Ensuring unity of effort and responsible management requires a responsive organization that builds relationships while eliminating obstacles to cohesion and teamwork. By exemplifying these principles, the 8th TSC serves as a model for integrating sustainment, ensuring enduring readiness for warfighters in the Pacific region, and executing the national defense strategy. The TSC sustains a multi-domain environment and has responsibilities ranging from prioritizing pre-positioned stocks forward to planning strategic mobility.

The Changing Indo-Pacific Region

The United States faces a waning of power in East Asia, where revisionist powers seek to alter the status quo and upend nearly a century of rules-based order. As Aaron L. Friedberg writes in his *Foreign Affairs* article, "Bucking Beijing: An Alternative U.S. China Policy," these powers have "sought to avoid

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confrontation with the United States while pursuing economic growth and building up all the elements of its ‘comprehensive national power.’”

Indeed, the situation in the Pacific is changing. The nation’s decades-long policy for the region has been one of engagement and balance—engaging multilateral institutions and bilateral trade while balancing against growth by preventing aggressive attempts at coercion. The dynamic nature of the geopolitical landscape is heightened when one considers the dynamic character of war itself.

In an *ARMY* magazine article on the changing character of war, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Mark A. Milley wrote, “Technology, geopolitics, and demographics are rapidly changing societies, economies, and the tools of warfare. They are also producing changes in why, how, and where wars are fought—and who will fight them. The significantly increased speed and global reach of information (and misinformation) likewise will have unprecedented effect on forces and how they fight.”

These changes are especially true in the Indo-Pacific area of operations (AOR). Subversive actions below the threshold of armed conflict, adversaries with the ability to deftly pursue a decades-long strategic vision, the integrated and interconnected use of national power, and the ability to conduct cross-domain fires all challenge our preconceptions of armed conflict.

The Changing Character of War

To meet these emerging strategic challenges, the U.S. military must rethink the way it integrates operations across an area as wide as the Indo-Pacific AOR—an area that contains over half of the world’s population, the world’s three largest economies, half the world’s declared nuclear powers, 24 of the world’s 36 megacities, and key passages through which over half the world’s liquid fuel travels on a daily basis.

Charged with overseeing military operations in the AOR, INDO-

PACOM and its subordinate units routinely conduct military exercises, exchanges, and cooperative humanitarian relief efforts with six of the world’s 10 largest standing armies. It also maintains close military relations with six treaty allies. Combine these key operations with the fact that INDOPACOM’s AOR covers half the world’s surface and 14 time zones, and it is clear that the command faces significant strategic challenges.

The changing character of war has implications not only for conducting war but also for sustaining war. Across the Indo-Pacific AOR, from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, sustainers work to ensure the joint force is able to function at optimal levels.

This integrated and distributed network of maintainers, human resources personnel, medical support personnel, and logisticians must transform to meet the evolving demands of future conflict.

Executing the intent and guidance provided by the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) commander, the 8th TSC works to integrate and synchronize not just Army sustainment but joint sustainment as well. The TSC executes mission command for its subordinate military police and engineer brigades and provides strategic and operational direction to sustainment units across the theater.

The expeditionary sustainment commands, sustainment brigades, and Army field support brigades throughout the theater, although assigned to other headquarters, rely on the 8th TSC for synchronization of sustainment operations. Given the geographic spread of the AOR, this is no small feat.

The 8th TSC is also tasked with providing support to other services by coordinating common-user land transportation and logistics. These functions of “Army support to other services” prevent redundancy and help the services achieve a desired level of interdependence. Additionally, enabling partners from the

joint logistics enterprise, such as the Defense Logistics Agency and the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, provide reach-back to the national strategic base to assist with readiness and responsiveness. Navigating this complex, interconnected web in a dynamically changing environment requires not just oversight but also strategic direction.

Building a Cohesive Community

To adequately meet the demands of a geographically distributed joint force in an evolving security environment, the 8th TSC is working both internally and externally to provide the sustainment community with leadership and organizational mentorship.

At the behest of the USARPAC commander, and in concert with its responsibility as INDOPACOM's senior sustainment command, the 8th TSC directs and organizes the sustainment community to meet the requirements of the combatant commander.

First and foremost, the commander provides a strategic vision for the AOR along with a desired end state. With this vision, subordinate sustainment units can exercise mission command and execute sustainment operations within the commander's intent, preventing the need for constant reaffirmation or approval.

Through operation plans and orders, the 8th TSC disseminates tasks, assigns priorities, and ensures unity of effort in sustainment operations. With clear lines of communication and mission command structures, commanders at all levels gain a far greater logistics common operational picture and a more rapid decision cycle.

Through organizational mentorship, the 8th TSC does not assert command authority so much as it influences the culture of the sustainment community across the AOR. Building relationships between organizations enables not only cooperative planning but also a more rapid

flow of information. In a dynamic environment, relationships will prove essential to the conduct of operations; you don't have to own to influence.

The 8th TSC also assists subordinate commands with developing their own contingency plans. The organization has sent planners on multiple visits to Japan and Korea to assist with the refinement of plans. Finally, the 8th TSC enables reach-back to key enabling organizations, such as the Army Materiel Command, the Defense Logistics Agency, and U.S. Transportation Command. Influencing the conduct and culture of the sustainment community remains as important a priority as exercising command.

To provide a more holistic management approach to the Indo-Pacific AOR, the 8th TSC is reaching out to provide more synchronizing touch points. Regular meetings between the command teams of critical stakeholders help set the tone and direction of the sustainment community. Through these summits, commanders realign their visions and proceed with a focused unity of effort. In turn, they also provide direction for subordinate staffs.

The TSC has been hosting a monthly theater-wide sustainment plans synchronization video teleconference. This endeavor, hosted by the 8th TSC G-5, undergirds existing and future planning processes with the commander's vision for the theater. Through this forum, the organization not only imparts direction and guidance but also receives bottom-up refinement of plans and processes. It serves as a medium to revisit planning assumptions and ensure planning efforts remain synchronized. This is arguably the most important job of the TSC.

As with any large planning effort, the action officers are the individuals who carry out the vision. The 8th TSC strives to participate in any relevant tabletop exercise, rehearsal, or other event. It dispatches its best planners to major events not only to represent 8th TSC interests but also

to lend support to subordinate planning efforts.

The command readily offers support across the theater, whether to help with reception, staging, onward movement and integration plans in Korea or the development of deployment orders in the state of Washington. The implementation of a cohesive theater-wide sustainment vision may start with the TSC commander, but it is carried to fruition through the dedicated work of subordinate officers.

The Indo-Pacific AOR remains a strategically challenging environment. The difficulty of conducting operations in the AOR is compounded by the evolving nature of conflict and its implications for sustainment. Through leadership and organizational mentorship, the 8th TSC remains committed to building a cohesive sustainment community that is responsive to the needs of the USARPAC commander.

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