

# Proficiency First, Innovation Follows

Logistics modernization requires us to plan early, update systems and processes, and overcome resistance to change.

■ By Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna



**B**ecause of this complex and unstable world, our Army requires technological advances far beyond what it has today to ensure warfighters outmatch any contending force. Innovation and modernization—the theme of this edition—remain the action words across the Army as the force implements the future-focused National Defense Strategy. As logisticians, we must be fully embedded within every modernization effort and initiative to resolve sustainment issues in lock-step with planned improvements and upgrades to equipment and processes.

In order to innovate, we must first do the basics well. That foundation is built through training, experience, and continued self-assessment with an honest picture of our current competencies and capabilities.

Professional logisticians must be able to forecast the second- and third-order effects that new systems, equipment, and processes will have on movement, maintenance, supply availability, and life-cycle sustainment. Only through a strong foundation in logistics can we effectively contribute to the modern-

ization effort and provide beneficial information to shape the innovation and modernization process. As a materiel enterprise, we must ensure we get it right.

With proficiency in our basic skill sets, modernization from the logistics point of view calls for three main efforts. First is planning for sustainment requirements early in the new equipment development process. Second is modernizing and updating our own logistics systems and processes. Finally, we must counter and overcome the natural resistance to change.

Sustainers must be embedded in the development of new programs, equipment, and systems across the Army's six modernization priorities early in the acquisition phase. From defining reliability requirements to providing input and expertise on reducing the sustainment tail, we provide critical information that affects the entire life cycle of systems.

We sustainers are the subject matter experts, and it is our responsibility to ensure engineers and developers consider how each piece of equipment operates on the battlefield—from fuel and battery use to maintenance and global supply chain requirements. Today's logisticians must advocate for innovative ideas that drive supply chain and sustainment efficiencies.

Practical initiatives like using similar components across systems can ease the supply chain burden. Additive and advanced manufacturing can speed repair parts to the field. Making sound recommendations early on intellectual property rights and technical data ensures our Soldiers have the information they need to maintain our critical systems on the battlefield.

We also need to look internally at

ways to improve our own logistics processes and systems. Advanced technology has given us predictive analytics and more data at our fingertips than ever before. We must know, understand, and use that data to get better, faster, and more efficient at supplying the warfighter.

From dispersing equipment to the right unit at the right place to diagnosing faulty equipment early, predictive analysis can get logisticians ahead of the decision cycle. But it will require leaders at all levels to learn and then teach, mentor, and coach the field.

When logisticians are technically competent on the systems and know how to read and understand the resulting data, they can make informed decisions to increase materiel readiness across the force. We must capitalize on technology to innovate and modernize the way we, as logisticians, support the warfighter.

Organizational cultures inevitably struggle with sweeping transformation, and the Army logistics enterprise is no different. As logisticians, we must embrace new thinking and methods and be active participants in the process of modernization and innovation.

Logistics has always given our military the strategic advantage. With a solid foundation and proficiency in our basic logistics tasks and skills, modernization is how we will remain relevant. Innovative logistics that keeps pace with the Army's modernization efforts will enable the lethality and success of our force.

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