

# Mission: Logistics Assistance for Lebanon

by Lieutenant Colonel Bruce A. Block

The mission was clear, but the question remained:  
Could a repair parts supply system be set up  
in just 90 days?



**W**hen I was notified that I had been selected to head a logistics technical assistance team, dozens of questions—like, What is this team? What will we be asked to do? Who will make up the team? Where will we be? Who will we have to work with?—sprang into my head. Answers to some of them were soon forthcoming. More answers and additional details were provided as team preparations progressed.

A logistics technical assistance team is a group of logistics specialists assembled and sent by the U.S. Army to assist a foreign army in resolving a logistics problem or problems. I was told that my team would assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in Beirut, Lebanon. We would help them establish supply operations, particularly in handling repair parts supply. As events of the past several months have unfolded in that area, our mission came none too soon!

The assistance mission requirements were coordinated with the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and executed by the Army Institute for Military Assistance (USAIMA) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Based on the known requirements, USAIMA had tasked TRADOC and the Army Materiel Development and Readiness Command to furnish the individuals to comprise the team. Nine individuals—all with supply experience—were selected. Fortunately, personnel with maintenance experience were included in the team's composition to assist in item identification. The team represented a well-rounded pool of logistics talent. I was selected to head the team because I hold military occupational specialties (MOS's) 91 (maintenance management) and 92 (supply management). Two warrant officers were on the team, one with MOS 630 (automotive maintenance technician) and the

other with MOS 721 (supply technician). The remainder of the team were noncommissioned officers representing MOS's 76P (stock control) and 76V (warehouse operations). Team members came from the former Army Troop Support and Aviation Materiel Readiness Command, the Army Tank-Automotive Command, and the Army Quartermaster Center and School.

I soon learned that our specific mission would be to train Lebanese military personnel in class IX accountability procedures and storage operations. Technical assistance was to be provided in processing an estimated 40,000 receipts of U.S. materiel that had accumulated over the past 7 years. Initial plans indicated that we were to rewarehouse nine warehouses of materiel. We were also to establish an outside, hardsurfaced storage area and conduct training in supply accountability procedures and warehousing operations. The mission was certainly challenging, particularly since we were to accomplish these things in just 90 days!

The supply officer and I made a predeployment trip to Beirut to determine what materials we would need to support this mission. En route, I visited the Army Security Assistance Center at New Cumberland Army Depot, Pennsylvania, to review past and future logistics cases concerning Lebanon. This proved beneficial by providing information on the quantities and types of materiel that had been shipped to Lebanon. The center also provided a listing of repair parts requisitions and equipment publications.

The predeployment trip, in early January 1983, gave us the chance to meet with U.S. Army and Lebanese Armed Forces personnel with whom we would work



□ Kfarshima Depot streets in January were congested with unopened crates of supplies (left). When the team departed in May, streets were cleared and supplies properly stored (below).



once we deployed. We held meetings with key Lebanese officers to explore problems and identify possible solutions. We discussed with them the training needed, existing and proposed supply procedures, work schedules, facilities, and team support capabilities. As a result of these meetings we were able to identify things like publications, blank forms, and equipment that the team would need to carry out the mission. We were able to send those requirements back to USAIMA by message so that action could begin on accumulating the needed items. We were also able to visit Kfarshima Depot, the site where our work would be done, as well as other logistics offices in the Beirut area. At the depot, we found supplies stacked on roadways, on warehouse ramps, and in open areas. All would have to be inventoried, located, and accountability established for them.

By the end of the trip, we were able to draft a concept of operations and procedures. That first-hand look enabled us to assess the problems early and identify our support needs to help solve them.

As soon as we returned, we devoted our efforts to gathering the required publications, fulfilling administrative requirements, and contacting team members to update them on the mission requirements. Because of the team's geographical dispersion, the latter task was something of a problem, but then so were some of the other tasks. Materials needed were being assembled on an expedited basis, and over 90 manuals were put on emergency requisition. Because of the volume, funds had to be obtained to provide overtime pay for personnel at the St. Louis Adjutant General's Publications Center to pick and pack the publications.

Once the administrative tasks were completed, the

team was assembled at Fort Bragg for orientation and 3 days of training. Personnel from USAIMA provided a country orientation, survival and counterterrorist training, weapons familiarization, and a public affairs orientation.

The few spare minutes we could get, I used to provide the team with background information gained from the predeployment trip and to provide advance information on the living and working conditions and current situation in Beirut. The 3 days proved invaluable for developing team unity and cohesion and by providing essential mission information. At the end of the 3 days, we departed for Beirut on 13 February 1983.

Upon arriving in Beirut, work began in earnest on our 90-day mission. Each team member worked with a Lebanese counterpart, and each NCO had a team of Lebanese soldiers to train in a specific supply function, such as stock control or storage operations. In the initial storage operations training the teams worked together in one warehouse; but once initial training was complete, each team was placed in a separate warehouse in order to expedite the inventorying and locating processes—that is, actually counting the items and providing a specific space on a warehouse shelf for particular stock-numbered items. This increased efficiency and allowed us to complete two additional warehouses in the allotted time we had.

Stock control training focused on preparing manual stock records (DA Form 1296) and a computer worksheet for each stock number. Emphasis was on establishing a simple, yet effective, system with as few forms as possible and one that could readily be automated in the future.

Warehousing was an integral part of the operation.



□ Team members worked closely with Lebanese counterparts (left) in planning the warehousing of the mounds of supplies (below). Kfarchima, as it appeared in May (right), was well on its way to becoming an efficient, effective depot.



The first step in each warehouse was to prepare location labels. The number of locations in a warehouse ranged from 3,550 to 6,000, depending upon available shelving and how shelves were labeled. As work progressed and the need for more locations became apparent, shelves were relabeled to provide four or five locations rather than the original two. The next step was to inventory and properly place materiel on the shelves. Only about 20 percent of the materiel on hand had been shelved; consequently, placing materiel on shelves became a very time-consuming task.

The final step was to inventory and locate all the materiel that had been stacked and piled in aisles, entrances, and along the warehouse walls. Once this task was accomplished, the normal warehouse functions of receiving and issuing could begin.

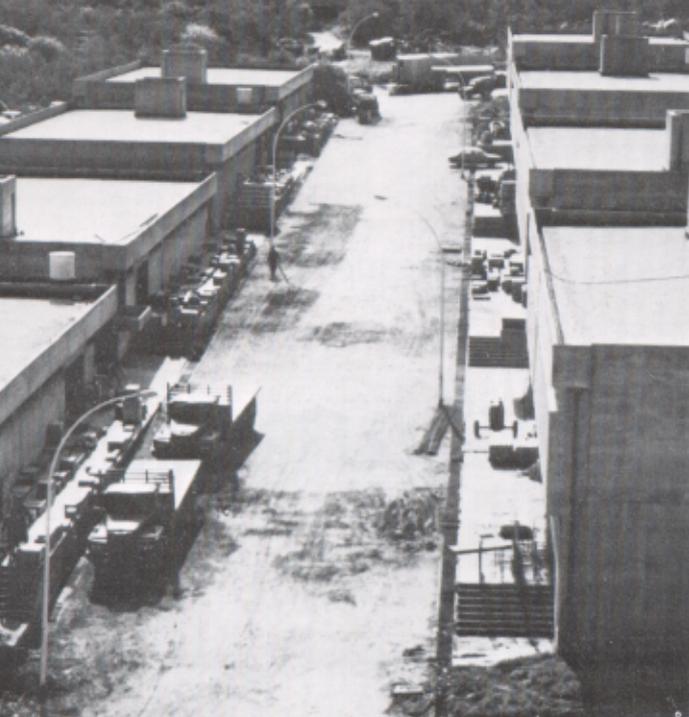
Balancing the workload among the warehouses was difficult. Each warehouse had been commodity-oriented, such as one for armament, one for the M113, one for 2 1/2- and 5-ton trucks, and one for 1/4-ton trucks. The workload for the 2 1/2- and 5-ton truck warehouse was much heavier than that for the armaments warehouse, for example. To balance this out and as added shelving became available, automotive parts were stocked in the armaments warehouse. The warehouse operation was complex, varied widely with workload, and required considerable attention and effort.

Computer support played a key role in our mission. The Kfarchima Computer Center, equipped with an IBM 370, provided us with computer listings that gave us the national stock numbers (NSN's), nomenclature, quantity, and warehouse location. Manual records were prepared initially by the soldiers in the warehouses and the data was turned in to the stock control section. From

the data, the stock control section prepared computer worksheets from which the listings were generated. When we would accumulate an inventory of about 3,000 NSN's, we would ask for a new computer listing to be run. As inventorying continued, each part was checked against the computer listing for a warehouse location. If the part was on the list, it was sent to the existing warehouse location and the quantity was checked off for stock control to add to the quantity on hand. If it was not on the list, a location was assigned and the new NSN was entered on the computer worksheet. The listings were prepared once or twice a week, depending upon the computer workload and the number of new NSN's to be added. The computer listing proved to be a prime tool in providing item locations and identifying duplicate locations of the same NSN's—all critical elements in warehousing.

As I said in the beginning, many problems were anticipated but still others were not. Lebanese support for things such as shelving, boxes for small parts, and routine supply items was slow in coming. Operating elements were at the mercy of a prolonged administrative process. To try overcoming this, we forecast requirements as far in advance as possible, but the actual delivery of materials required personal attention to keep deliveries on schedule.

Another unanticipated problem was the English literacy level. We learned that some Lebanese soldiers could not read English, for we noted some errors in parts nomenclature and locations early in the training. For example, if the nomenclature printed on a box read, "box, fibreboard; Detroit Diesel; Ford Motor Co.," the soldiers were transcribing exactly whatever was on the box. Location errors were also noted on the



cards, and we discovered that location labels were being read from right to left, as in the Arabic language, instead of left to right, as in English. Several intensive training sessions and follow-up training were required to correct these problems. Oral communication was less of a problem. Working through our Lebanese-officer counterparts, who spoke English, we found the soldiers quickly learned methods and procedures—the “how to do it.” Explanations of concepts, however, were more difficult, and we discovered in many cases there were no Arabic words to adequately describe the concepts we were trying to teach.

We also encountered a problem with the Lebanese method of a 100-percent direct exchange of repair parts. Every requisition was accompanied by the unserviceable part. However, there was no segregation of unserviceable repairable items and items that were obviously scrap. Also there was no program to repair the repairable items, such as clutch disks, brake shoes, and electrical components, although repair parts and kits were on hand. Persistent effort on our part finally resulted in separating the repairables from the scrap.

The 100-percent exchange practice was continued since it afforded training in requisitioning. Requisitions contained nomenclature written in Arabic on French forms. It was often difficult to translate into English the specific description of an item, although the Lebanese civilian translators were very capable. Personnel bringing the requisitions to the depot were supply personnel or drivers and not those with a full knowledge of the required part. The unserviceable part brought in often had a part number on it that provided a basis for comparison and enabled the edit section to come up with a correct stock number.

Another problem, though not totally unanticipated, was the weather. In February and early March, Lebanon endured the worst Winter in living memory. While no snow fell at Kfarchima because of its low elevation, daily rains, mixed with sleet, fell. Not only did this hamper outside operations, but some roads became impassable and caused forklift operations to stop. Six weeks elapsed before the outside storage area could be hardsurfaced because of the rains.

Considering the obstacles, accomplishment of the mission was a significant achievement. During the 90 days, 65,832 receipts were inventoried and located. Over 60,100 locations were labeled and stock record cards were prepared on 26,691 stock numbers. Over 1,700 requisitions were processed during the last 45 days with a 54 percent demand accommodation and satisfaction rate.

At the end of the 90 days, several hundred multipack boxes containing an estimated 30,000 receipts remained to be opened, inventoried, and located. All the multipacks, however, had been moved inside, properly stacked, and protected. All materiel had been removed from roads, curbs, and ditches and properly stored. Unserviceable materiel had been moved to a central area and general policing of the area had been accomplished.

Cooperation by the Lebanese was outstanding. The personal interest and desire to improve their army resulted in an enjoyable professional relationship with the team. Logistics information was readily exchanged, which contributed to the professional knowledge of both U.S. and Lebanese personnel.

To have accomplished this mission was a professionally rewarding experience for all team members. It provided us a unique opportunity to put into practice the leadership skills and logistics knowledge gained during our military careers. Results of our efforts were readily visible. Materiel was cleared and located in the warehouses and, upon our departure, Kfarchima was well on its way to becoming an efficient, effective depot to support the Lebanese Armed Forces. The appreciation expressed by the Lebanese reinforced our sense of accomplishment.

More importantly, and I guess what would be popularly expressed as “the bottom line,” was the fact that this combined U.S.-Lebanese effort established a viable logistics base. The depot operation will provide a sustaining capability for the Lebanese Armed Forces.

*Lieutenant Colonel Bruce A. Block was team chief for the logistics assistance team to Lebanon and currently commands the St. Louis Area Support Center, Granite City, Illinois. He is a graduate of the University of Nebraska, holds an M.S. degree in systems management from the University of Southern California, and is a graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College.*