

Introducing the Royal Logistic

The British Army combines five combat service support branch

In this century, and particularly since the start of World War II, the United States has often gone to war alongside allies with which it has close economic and cultural ties. No ally has had closer ties to the United States than the United Kingdom. Recent multinational operations under both the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have included joint operations between the forces of the United States and the United Kingdom. U.S. Army personnel should be aware of how our British ally conducts combat service support. They also need to know about recent, significant changes in the British Army's logistics structure.

On 5 April 1993, as part of a major reorganization, five combat service support elements of the British Army were combined to form a Royal Logistic Corps (RLC). The combat service support corps that merged into the new RLC were the Royal Corps of Transport, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Royal Pioneers, the Army Catering Corps, and the Defence Postal and Courier Service of the Royal Engineers. While the members of the old corps are justly proud of their past, they carry forward the traditions and heritage of the old units into the RLC.

The Formation Day parade on 5 April was both regal and royal, with proud bands marching and Her Royal Highness Princess Anne, the Regimental Colonel-in-Chief, taking "The Salute." The event was celebrated with numerous displays, demonstrations, and fly-bys, punctuated with tree plantings, plaque unveilings, lunches, and formal dinners. U.S. Army exchange personnel attending the ceremonies included Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Hamilton, Major Kevin Connelly, Major John Hoffman, Staff Sergeant Stephen Whitworth, and myself.

The creation of the RLC is the latest change in the continuing reduction and downsizing of the British military forces and promises to provide a new focus and efficiency for logistics in the British Army. The reorganization resulted from a review of combat service support functions called the logistic support review. Begun in 1990, this was the third major review of

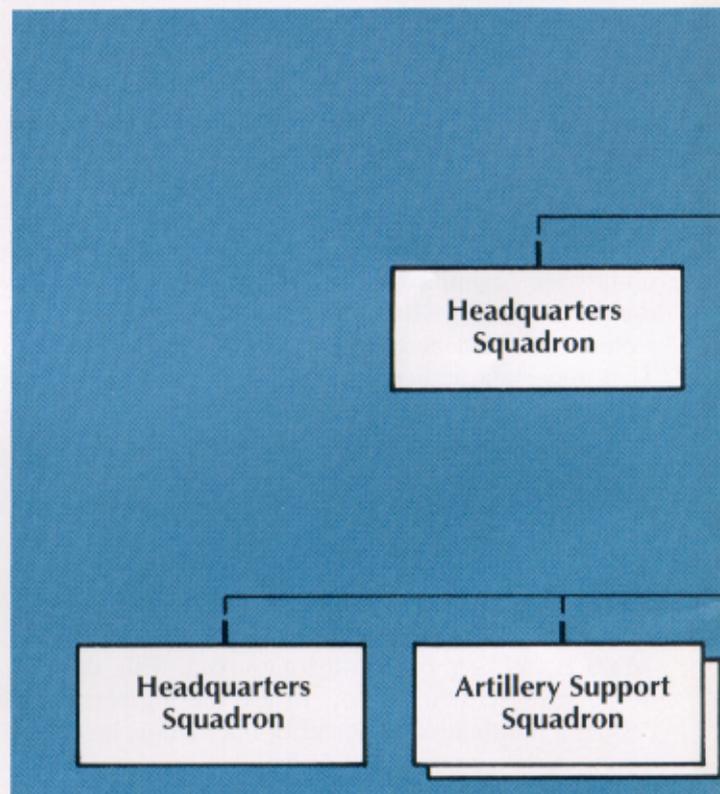
□ An example of the organization of British Army close support and general support regiments within the division.

British Army logistics since the end of World War II.

In this latest change, the British Army Quartermaster General relocated his office, staff, and headquarters out of London, moving west into the peaceful Hampshire countryside near Andover. This move preceded the formation of the RLC but was a part of the overall restructuring. The Quartermaster General is a four-star general who is equivalent to the U.S. Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics but with wider responsibilities.

Although some changes in support arrangements had been planned before the demise of the Warsaw Pact threat and British participation in the Persian Gulf War, both of those events had the effect of speeding the reorganization. The Gulf War in particular highlighted the need for an improved logistics system to meet the increased demands of modern, high-intensity armored operations.

The new RLC does *not* provide maintenance support and medical support to the British Army. These areas remain the responsibility of the Royal Electrical



ic Corps

by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph W. Lewis

es to form a new logistics organization.

and Mechanical Engineers (REME) and the Royal Army Medical Corps, respectively. Separate organizations and chains of command execute maintenance and medical support parallel to the logistics support of the RLC. In a tactical scenario, all support functions are melded together to create a seamless combat service support system and are commanded as a single entity by a division chief of staff, who is similar to a U.S. Army assistant division commander for support.

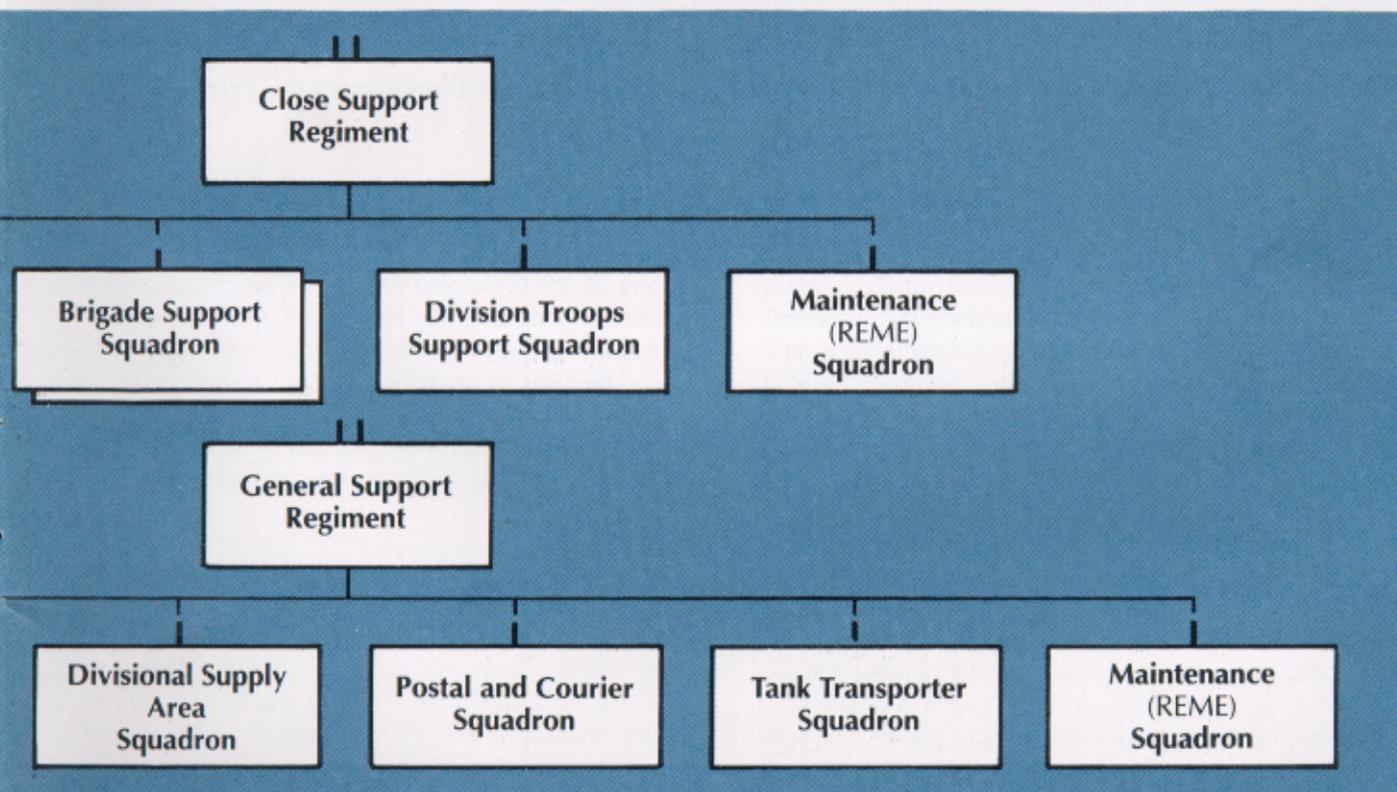
The RLC is primarily responsible for supplying, arming, fueling, feeding, clothing, and transporting the field army. The RLC also has a myriad of other missions, including running the wholesale logistics system through a network of base depots (for ammunition, vehicles, and general and technical stores), providing pioneer services to major headquarters, operating port terminals with its port and maritime regiments, training and providing chefs to all Army units, manning the explosive ordnance demolition and improvised explosive devices teams, and training drivers of wheeled vehicles for all branches of the Army. The

RLC also retains the job of handling military postal services.

The RLC is headed by a two-star director general (the first is Major General David L. Burden), to whom approximately 14 one-star officers report. The corps comprises 16 percent of the regular army and 11 percent of the British Army reserves (the Territorial Army).

About 450 units and subunits carrying the designation "RLC" are spread around the world. Soldiers of 35 separate occupational specialties serve not only in Great Britain but also in Cyprus, Hong Kong, the Falkland Islands, Belize, and Northern Ireland. RLC soldiers are also currently serving in Bosnia with United Nations forces. The RLC is an equal opportunity employer and has a large contingent of women who are fully integrated into almost all trades.

The RLC units in the field army are designed to provide dedicated support to maneuver units. Each maneuver brigade has its own brigade close support squadron. A higher level close support regimental headquarters provides the robust communications





□ Two soldiers of the new Royal Logistic Corps meet their Regimental Colonel-in-Chief, Princess Anne, on the corps' Formation Day last April.

needed for strong command and control links.

Divisions are also supported by general support regiments, which are similar in function to the U.S. Army's main support battalions. But unlike a main support battalion, one of the missions of a general support regiment's subordinate squadrons is dedicated artillery ammunition resupply using the newly fielded demountable rack offloading and pickup system (DROPS), which was the forerunner of our own palletized loading system (PLS).

Providing support in an allied rapid-reaction corps offers an example of how the RLC will operate. In this hypothetical situation, lines of communication run from a base in the United Kingdom to ports of entry in the theater. In the rear of the allied rapid-reaction corps, the rear support groups and the combat service support groups operate to provide combat supplies and services through the forward support group and into the division rear areas. In the division support group, the general support regiment is the main operator.

Whenever possible, supplies will be throughput on DROPS platforms, thus avoiding inefficient transloading and multiple handing.

Many of the principles of RLC support are already operating in British units deployed to Operation Grapple in Bosnia and are proving effective and appropriate. All the units of the new RLC will soon be in place with their new designations, but they will be doing what they have always done extremely well—supporting the British soldier in both war and peace. **ALOG**

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