

Refining Sustainment Priorities in an Era of Change

BY MAJOR GENERAL JAMES L. HODGE

In 1963, John F. Kennedy observed, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.” This statement applies to the Army as much as it does to any other governmental agency; after a decade of war, it should be no surprise that the Army is posturing itself, yet again, for significant adjustments to the force.

The war in Iraq has come to an end, and nearly all of the equipment retrograded back to Kuwait has been shipped from the theater or incorporated into pre-positioned stocks. We are also decreasing our force presence in Afghanistan and beginning the transition toward a security and assistance mission.

In light of this changing operational environment and anticipated force reductions, the sustainment community is now presented with a unique opportunity to closely evaluate our organizational structure, doctrine, and training strategy to provide an agile sustainment force postured to meet future sustainment requirements.

Improving Energy Use and Doctrine

In the past two issues of *Army Sustainment*, I highlighted two supporting efforts in our strategy to continue “leaning forward” in anticipation of future requirements: Operational Energy and Doctrine 2015.

The operational energy initiative will capitalize on capabilities developed by the industrial sector to reduce our overall energy use. This will extend the operational reach of maneuver force commanders by reducing their overall sustainment requirements and reducing the need to “stockpile” resources within easy reach.

Similarly, the restructuring of our doctrine in accordance with the Army Training and Doctrine Command’s Doctrine 2015 initiative will provide flexible publications that we can adapt over time as we continue to learn as an Army.

Two other ongoing programs complement these initiatives as we shape the future sustainment force: the ongoing force design review process and the Army Learning Model 2015 program.

Restructuring to Meet Future Requirements

The Army of 2020 must be postured to prevent conflict, shape the environment and, most of all, decisively and dominantly win our Nation’s wars. In order to do this, we must all take the lessons learned from the past

decade of conflict and mesh them with the need to meet the hybrid threat of the future while remaining operationally adaptable as codified in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3–0, Unified Land Operations.



This operational adaptability must enable us to respond to not only military actions but also to humanitarian disasters and security risks as they emerge throughout the world. In understanding that the Army of 2020 is going to be a leaner and more agile organization, we must refine the sustainment force to ensure that our resources are positioned to provide the greatest flexibility to the maneuver force commander. As defined in ADP 3–0, our goal must always be to ensure freedom of action, extend operational reach, and prolong endurance.

In reshaping the force, we must continuously reassess how we have our forces and our equipment assets arrayed and at which echelon to best meet the Nation’s defense strategy. For example, the Army’s current tactical wheeled vehicle fleet is out of balance with its requirements. As the Army wrestles with a reduction in vehicles, we must do so in an orderly fashion while ensuring that we have sufficient modernized assets to meet the distribution requirements in 2020 and beyond.

In addition to ensuring that our modernization strategy is sound, we will also seek to increase capabilities by providing organic convoy protection platforms to many of our formations. Modernizing the fleet while increasing existing capabilities, and doing so in an era of diminishing resources, is a tall order, but I have every confidence that we can accomplish this and more.

As we reshape the force, we also have an opportunity to align some of our sustainment force structure to min-

imize the turbulence caused by the over-modularization of certain capabilities. As we have observed over the years, our force structure provides tremendous flexibility but often with the expense of increased turbulence and friction. For example, the typical sustainment brigade experiences an average of 14 relief in place/transfer of authority actions a month when deployed.

By aligning some capabilities within our combat sustainment support battalions and sustainment brigades and synchronizing their deployment timelines, we can reduce that turbulence. The alignment of these units and capabilities will improve mission command and training and command relationships with supported organizations, both in garrison and while deployed.

Enhancing Soldier and Leader Skills

As we reshape and build the organizations of the future, we cannot understate the importance of reassessing our systems for developing the necessary skills in our Soldiers and leaders to meet the hybrid threat. The Army Learning Model (ALM) 2015 has been developed to meet these challenges and develop our future fighting force.

ALM 2015 is a student-centric system that will identify the needs of the individual learner and develop a career-long learning approach that combines training, education, experience, and access to increased self-development tools. This program, enabled by available technology such as mobile applications, will help increase our capacity to learn faster and adapt quickly. Assess-adapt-learn is the principle that we will use to guide our efforts in implementing this new program.

Assessments are conducted at the onset of a training cycle as well as throughout the training to help tailor instruction to the learners' needs and experience and allow Soldiers to test out of instruction they have already mastered. These ongoing assessments are a key enabler of the core element of ALM 2015: the ability to adapt training to the needs of the individual.

Adaptability is truly the central idea of ALM 2015. The ability to develop realistic, tailored, and continuously adaptable training to meet the needs of individual students and small groups is paramount to improving our educational processes. Gone are the days of "death

by PowerPoint" instruction, replaced by analysis of complex scenarios designed to enhance teamwork, adaptability, and critical thinking skills. Instructors must be able to facilitate discussion in a small-group setting to maximize the sharing of information and increase peer-to-peer learning (a hallmark of the experiential learning model espoused in ALM 2015).

The final principle, learning, is something we all need to impart to our Soldiers and leaders at every level. We must all recognize that learning is a continuous adaptive process, not one that exists only when a Soldier is sent to the advanced leaders course or captains career course. Learning must be integrated into everything Soldiers do at each level of their careers.

By leveraging developmental assignments, civilian educational opportunities, professional readings, and distributed learning opportunities for our Soldiers, we are working to create a self-directed learning capability that can be integrated into an individual Soldier's personal professional development plan. This will allow for the continuous learning environment necessary to ensure that we maintain the best trained fighting force.

Change is inevitable, more so in the Army of today than in any other time in the recent past. Living in a time of change can be challenging. However, change can also open up tremendous opportunities to reshape the Army to meet the demands of the future.

As leaders, we have the responsibility to stay abreast of the latest information to ensure that we meet the needs of our Soldiers and our Army. By embracing a learning continuum, tailored to the individual Soldier, we will continue to become more efficient in everything we do, from the delivery of needed resources to sustain our fighting force to how we train our Soldiers and our leaders.

MAJOR GENERAL JAMES L. HODGE IS THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE ARMY COMBINED ARMS SUPPORT COMMAND AND SUSTAINMENT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE AT FORT LEE, VIRGINIA.

Try Our New QR Code

This quick response (QR) code allows readers to access the *Army Sustainment* website instantly on a smart phone or mobile device. To use the QR code, first download a QR code-reading application (app) onto your smart phone or mobile device and then use the app to scan the QR code. You will be taken immediately to the website.

