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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES DO NOT
NEED A JOINT LOGISTICS COMMAND**

by

COL Paul T. Inman

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LTC(P) Donald Yates
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Paul T. Inman (COL), USA

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With the current emphasis on joint operations, training, and doctrine, some of our senior leaders believe that it is time to form a joint logistics command at the strategic or theater level. Perhaps it is time for a "LOGCOM", a joint logistics command which would be a functional unified command much like TRANSCOM. However, our history, the current reductions in budget and force structure, problems in training multifunctional logisticians, and our experience with centralized DOD logistics agencies support the position that a LOGCOM is not needed. Each CINC's area of operations is unique. Each CINC has an adequate plan for logistics command and control during contingencies in his area of operations that conforms with METT-T. As the services struggle with downsizing and increased optempo, there is a search for efficiencies. A major reorganization of logistics command and control, when the evidence suggests that logistics command and control is not a problem, will not necessarily produce more efficient organizations. Increased efficiency should be obtained by reengineering and streamlining current processes.

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INTRODUCTION

"The nature of modern warfare demands that we fight as a joint team. This was important yesterday, it is essential today, and it will be even more imperative tomorrow."

Gen John M. Shalikashvili
Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The above quote by General Shalikashvili was taken from Joint Vision 2010. Joint Vision 2010 provides a framework for how the Armed Forces of the United States must be prepared to address the changes in the strategic environment in the coming years. Its stated purpose is to provide a common direction to our services in developing their unique capabilities.¹

The emphasis on "jointness" in recent years has been a result of several factors. The inability of the services to properly coordinate operations in Grenada, the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, and the fact that modern military operations are always conducted by more than one service have all supplied the impetus. Our combatant commanders have joint commands to execute the war fighting, and we have a joint staff at the national level to coordinate our overall strategy. A question being asked in some military circles is "Should we have a joint logistic command at the national level to properly integrate logistics into joint operations?" The answer to this question and the thesis of this paper is "The Armed Forces of the United States do not need a joint logistics command."

One could make the case that our country already has a joint logistics command--the Defense Logistic Agency (DLA). Although DLA does, in fact, do joint logistics, it is limited to managing common items under the notion that efficiency is achieved by central procurement, storage, and distribution. Major weapon system acquisition, depot maintenance, and munitions

are still managed by the services. DLA is, thus, not an all encompassing joint logistics command. The effectiveness of DLA will be discussed later in this paper.

THE CURRENT ARGUMENTS

The most effective arguments put forth for the establishment of a unified logistics command were made by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Paparone in his article, " Case for a Unified Logistics Command," in the March-April 1995 issue of Army Logistician. The essence of Lieutenant Colonel Paparone's position is that we have a strategy - logistics mismatch. Each of the services protect their logistics infrastructure without direction, guidance, or a plan to match logistic requirements to our national military strategy and reduced resource environment. As Paparone points out, our doctrine is that logistics is a service responsibility. The services are charged with organizing, training, and equipping the force. Services hate to unify logistics for fear of violating their organizational essence.²

Paparone puts forth two alternatives. Alternative one is to continue to consolidate logistic missions. There have already been several consolidations. As previously mentioned, DLA has the responsibility for several logistic functions. Paparone asserts that we could continue to go down this route. An example would be to give one service or agency responsibility for aviation maintenance. Paparone's second alternative is to create a unified logistics command (LOGCOM). Although Paparone believes alternative one is an improvement, he believes that alternative two is the solution. His position is that a unified logistics command would establish an efficient chain of command to support CINC requirements, provide more effective support, and reduce overhead.³

In rebuttal of Lieutenant Colonel Paparone's position, General Leon Salomon, the commander of the Army Materiel Command sent a memorandum to Army Logistician on 13 June 1995. The memorandum was published as an open letter to the readers in the September-October 1995 issue. General Salomon makes several valid counter arguments. General Salomon points out that there is no strategy-logistics mismatch. The mismatch is strategy-resourcing. The resourcing is not available to support *The National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement and The National Military Strategy of Flexible and Selective Engagement*.⁴

General Salomon points out that reduced resources are not a reason to reorganize into a centralized national organization. He believes the first step should be to reshape current organizations and reengineer processes. Reorganization should be a last action. The Army Strategic Logistics Plan, and Force XXI are examples of reshaping/reengineering the Army. General Salomon goes on to point out that no organization can be successful when trying to reshape while a reorganization is going on that looks at the same processes. General Salomon's most important points are the lack of flexibility and customer service a centralized organization would have. The President's National Performance Review (NPR) theme of decentralization and empowering organizations--works better and costs less. Decentralized decision making, holding employees accountable for results, and giving workers the tools needed are key points in the NPR cited by General Salomon.⁵

Although General Salomon and Lieutenant Colonel Paparone both make solid arguments for their positions, the issue requires an even more detailed investigation. Before our Armed Forces embark on any plan for a unified logistics command, some other factors require examination. We need to look at logistics in our military history for lessons learned, the training and professional development of logisticians, any current trends or problems in joint logistics, effectiveness of current joint logistic organizations, downsizing, resourcing, and our best guess of what lies in the future that will impact on the logistics. Finally, we need to solicit the advice

of some of our senior logisticians who have a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field of logistics.

LOGISTICS IN MILITARY HISTORY

Military history has demonstrated that logistics, like strategy and tactics, is one of the primary functions necessary to win wars. This is best illustrated by Martin Van Creveld in his book Supplying War when he states that when commanders fail to take cognizance over the fact that they cannot do all they want to do (because of logistic constraints), it has led to many campaigns being ruined than ever were by enemy action.⁶

Logistical problems led to Napoleon's defeat in Russia in 1812.⁷ The victory by union forces in the American Civil War can be attributed to superior logistics. The agrarian South could not compete with the industrialization of the North.⁸ There are numerous examples in history where a lack of logistics contributed to a military defeat, in addition to those just mentioned. Looking at history to analyze the effects of "joint logistics" is another matter. Joint operations have come to the forefront in the Twentieth Century.

The United States Joint Staff had its origins in the beginning of World War II. Although a need for joint planning had been recognized earlier, leading to the establishment of the Joint Army and Navy Board and Joint Army and Navy Munitions Board, this approach was not altogether sufficient. The need for joint planning with the British forced further development. When the British came to talk, it was with a joint staff. This led to a combined staff of British and Americans.

The Americans decided that it was advantageous to get together among themselves prior to meeting with the British. This led to a Joint Chiefs of Staff that met periodically to do joint

planning. The original group was the Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Naval Operations, Commanding General, Army Air Forces and later the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief. Although there was no statute or charter, the Joint Chiefs of Staff operated effectively throughout the war. Eventually, they took over the functions of the Army and Navy Board.⁹

The magnitude of logistical considerations in fighting World War II cannot be overstated. Support of our armed forces and support provided to our allies was the greatest challenge in history from a logistical point of view. The Joint Chiefs used several boards and committees to accomplish this immense effort. The War Production Board, the Joint Logistics Committee, the Joint Specifications Board, the Joint Production Survey Committee, and other arrangements for textiles, food, and petroleum are examples. Logistics considerations underwent the most dynamic change during this period. Our joint staff proved to be a flexible organization that could meet the logistical demands of modern warfare and succeed.¹⁰

Throughout World War II our strategy was often determined by logistic capability. The amount of materiel available to the Pacific Theater or European Theater was a function of logistic availability. When Operation Overlord (cross channel invasion) would take place, was a function of when the required resources would be available. The production of landing craft for amphibious operations played an important role in the decision making. Allocation of resources determined what commanders could execute and was of immense consternation to strategic planners who only looked at the operational aspects of warfare.¹¹

One could say that the primary disconnect in joint logistical planning was a result of a lack of overall operational planning. Although the Allies and their joint staffs agreed that World War II would be fought with a Europe first strategy, practical application dictated otherwise. The concept of defeating Germany first was sound. The British and the Russians both needed assistance, and Germany was, in fact, the major threat to the world.

However, a lack of logistical resources seem to dictate that America should concentrate on one enemy at a time. The attack on Pearl Harbor galvanized the American people against the one enemy, Japan, who had attacked American soil. Yet the strategy actually adopted by the Joint Chiefs was an operational strategy of opportunity. The Battle of Midway is a superb example. The European , Central Pacific, and Southwest Pacific theaters all competed for resources. Although Europe was the stated first priority, many times the Pacific theaters were on the receiving end of valuable resources.¹²

The competition between the Army and the Navy in the Pacific for resources exacerbated the resource problems. Trying to support a two-pronged attack balanced between Mac Arthur and Nimitz was a daunting task. The Joint Chiefs failed to make hard decisions on priority of effort and resource allocation.¹³

In looking at the history of World War II, one can see that the availability of resources affected operations. This appeared to be a function of production capacity and a lack of true strategic direction. There is no evidence to support the theory that a joint logistics command would have improved the situation. The joint planning was conducted by the joint staff with its subordinate committees and boards and executed by the services. Although there were obvious logistical problems, there appears to be little evidence that any other type of organizational structure would have helped, nor is there any military historian who supports a different logistics structure other than the one employed.

Since World War II the system of joint planning has evolved into today's structure of a more powerful chairman with his own joint staff. The chairman is the military advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the President. The authority of the various services has diminished. The Goldwater-Nichols act established the primacy of "jointness." Although logistics is still a service responsibility, several Department of Defense agencies have been established with the goal of increasing the efficiency of several common logistical functions through centralization.

We will look at that effectiveness of these organizations in greater detail a little later. However, the one glaring lesson learned from World War II is that overall national strategy plays the dominate role in logistics effectiveness, not logistical organization. It was true in World War II, and it is true today.

WHERE WE ARE, WHERE WE ARE GOING: AN ANALYSIS

Joint logistics has come a long way since the days of World War II. Today we have a robust joint staff that includes a J4 to provide staff planning, coordination, and direction for logistics. As previously stated, many common logistic functions are executed by Department of Defense organizations. Although the services are still responsible for maintaining and supplying their forces, The Defense Logistics Agency has assumed a large share of the responsibility. The DLA is responsible for:

- a. Providing integrated material management of wholesale subsistence, clothing, bulk petroleum, and medical materiel.
- b. Providing supply support for all DLA managed materiel commodities and items of supply.
- c. Performing logistic services directly associated with furnishing materiel commodities and items of supply.
- d. Providing property disposal services.
- e. Providing contract administration services.¹⁴

The Defense Logistics Agency is not the only DOD level organization that provides centralized logistics support, but it is the largest. DLA reports to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology.

The services remain responsible for all logistics not managed by any DOD level organizations. These include maintenance of equipment, establishing reserves of supplies and equipment, acquisition of service related weapon systems, conducting research, equipping forces, and maintaining an infrastructure.¹⁵

A Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) with representation from all of the services provides the coordination, budget analysis, and requirements analysis necessary for the Chairman to make solid recommendations to the Secretary of Defense concerning service requirements.

A current initiative to revamp theater level logistics could have an impact at the national level and upon the question concerning the need for a CINC LOGCOM. Our current logistics doctrine for joint operations for a combatant commander specify that unity of command is essential to coordinate national and theater logistic operations. "For a given area and a given mission, a single command authority should be responsible for logistics."¹⁶

Although the doctrine written above for theater level joint logistics makes good sense, implementation is another matter. A combatant commander has no doctrinal subordinate commander to oversee logistics functions. The combatant commander has directive authority over logistics, but has not necessarily been given the assets to carry out this function. This problem leads us to a current issue and provides insight to where we are going in the area of joint logistics.

In an effort to improve joint logistics and provide a more responsive logistics structure for the combatant commanders, the United States Army Logistics Integration Agency (LIA), a field operating agency for the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, took on this problem.

In a concept paper published on 13 October 1995, LIA put forth the idea of a national provider. The concept definition was the proposal for "a joint command charged with providing logistics above the tactical level to service components and war fighting CINC's throughout the continuum of military operations."¹⁷

The description of the proposed national provider was

- a. A jointly-staffed specified command, commanded by a "CINCLOG," reporting to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff with the war fighting CINC's. It would be truly joint, with totally integrated Service Components.
- b. Subsumes the logistics functions currently performed by DOD and agencies such as DLA, Army Materiel Command, Air Force Materiel Command and TRANSCOM.
- c. Comprises radically reengineered organizations which bear little resemblance to existing agencies.
- d. Supports war fighting CINC's in theater through its subordinate Support Commands (SUPCOMs).¹⁸

Although the above concept for a national provider/CINCLOG solves the issue of a joint logistics commander for the CINC, it radically changes the entire national level organization for logistics. It could be considered radical surgery for a minor medical problem. The concept does not address the costs for creation of a new command, the training of the new host of joint logisticians, or any projection for increased efficiency, or projected cost savings. Standardizing the numerous automation systems in the various services could prove an impossible task in the near future. The LIA concept also assumes that more centralization is necessarily a good thing.

In December 1995, the LIA presented the national provider concept to Army senior logisticians in a meeting at the Army War College. The attendees at the meeting believed that

the concept needed more work. In a memorandum dated 6 March 1996, LIA provided some alternative concepts for senior leaders to evaluate. The proposed alternatives were

a. Alternative #1. Most centralized (the original concept). CINCLOG could conceivably control down through the tactical level. The theater CINC is relieved of much of the logistics burden. This could permit a higher percentage of combat forces in the theater, reducing CSS TPFD load.

b. Alternative #2. Intermediate centralization. Theater CINC controls down through the tactical level. CINC draws on National/Strategic level resources and capabilities, and orchestrates throughout the theater. The tactical level receives logistics support without the associated burden.

c. Alternative #3. Least centralized. Tactical units retain responsibilities for equipment on hand, equipment serviceability, and sustainment of those capabilities in war. Tactical commanders draw on the pool of strategic and theater resources and orchestrate the application of those resources to meet requirements.

d. Alternative #4. The blended alternative. Look at each function in detail to see where it should be centralized. It requires a sophisticated analysis.

e. Alternative #5. Privatization. Contract out everything at and above theater level. Questions arise as to who controls. Moreover, it begs the question if combat missions can also be contracted out--as other nations have in the past.¹⁹

In order to analyze the five alternatives presented by the Logistics Integration Agency, we need to revisit some of our logistics doctrine. Logistics is the foundation of combat power. The combatant commander has directive authority in his theater. Logistics must be focused to ensure the commander has the resources to execute his mission.

Alternative #1, the national provider/CINCLOG concept supports doctrine but as mentioned earlier, it is a radical concept, not necessarily efficient, possibly cost prohibitive to implement, and with the current non standardized automation among the services, impossible to implement in the near term. The costs to train a large joint logistic specialty of officers is an additional consideration.

Alternative # 2, Intermediate centralization, is a variation of what we should be doing now. It suggests the CINC should control logistic assets in his theater with no change in the national/strategic level organization. That is, in fact, the doctrine, except the CINC does not have a joint logistics command which this alternative implies.

Alternative # 3, Least centralized is exactly what our CINC's are doing now. This fails to address who manages/commands theater logistics for the CINC.

Alternative # 4, The Blended Alternative appears to take a common sense approach to logistical problems and organizations. It supports General Salomon's approach of reengineering or changing the processes. We should analyze the processes to affect efficiency. Centralize where it makes sense and do not reorganize for the sake of reorganization or under the assumption that more centralization is efficient.

Alternative # 5, Privatization does not appear to be a viable alternative. Without logistical organizations above theater level, there could not be an assurance that adequate logistical planning for contingencies would be accomplished. Some resources that may require "stockpiling" may not be available in time of war since commercial activities are profit driven. Also as stated by LIA, "who would provide control?" Although not explicitly stated in Alternative # 4, some privatization should be considered when choosing the most efficient "blend" for logistics support. However, privatization should be a method that complements our capabilities or alleviates some of our short comings, as was done in Bosnia, Somalia, and Desert Storm.

The Logistics Integration Agency has done the yeoman's work in getting the Army senior leadership to look at the challenges of joint logistics. In that effort, they have focused the logistics community to think ahead, to have a vision, and to plan for the future. Their efforts have caused us to look critically at a national provider/CINCLOG concept. An analysis and general consensus by senior logisticians is that work needs to be done, but not the establishment of a Unified Logistics Command.²⁰

In an effort to assist the CINCs to fulfill the doctrinal requirement to have one person in charge of logistics at the theater level, the J4 Joint Staff has recently taken the initiative to refine the doctrine for theater logistics. The initiative was to also address a Joint War fighting Capabilities Assessment (JWCA) issue, "Joint Theater Logistics C2." In conversation with members of the Joint Staff, it became apparent that there was no support for a LOGCOM at the national level but some variation at theater level may be viable.²¹

The J4, Joint Staff put together five courses of action and scheduled a meeting during the period 2-4 December 1996 to present their courses of action to representatives from the services, DLA and the CINC's. The approach was to form workshops to hammer out issues, advantages/disadvantages of each course of action, and present them to flag officer representatives on 4 December 1996 for resolution or a consensus on which approach to take. Although the conference looked at other joint issues, the issue of command and control of logistics is the only one to be discussed in this paper.²²

There was a general consensus among the flag officers at the conference concerning the logistics mission at the theater level. The approved mission statement was "Synchronize, prioritize, direct, integrate, and coordinate the common user and cross service logistics functions of service organizations." However, many of those present believed that Joint Theater Logistics C2 should not have been a JWCA issue.²³

The Joint Staff presented the following courses of action for Logistics C2 for consideration:

a. Adapt a service organization under the CINC. An example of this course of action would be to take a Theater Army Area Command (TAACOM) out from under the Army Service Component Commander and have it report directly to the CINC. Give the TAACOM Commander responsibility for joint logistics in accordance with the mission statement previously mentioned.

b. Adapt a service organization under the service component commander. Again, using the TAACOM as an example, the TAACOM commander would have the joint responsibility but would report to the Army Service Component Commander.

c. Restructured J4. This course of action would plus-up the CINC J4 staffs to give them more capability to execute joint logistics operations. Although, the J4 should be a planning and policy staff, the general consensus was that CINC J4's were, in fact, operators in many functional areas, such as movement control and host nation support.

d. Form a new joint logistics command (SUPCOM). This course of action proposes forming a new command in each theater that would report directly to the CINC. This would be something like a LOGCOM at the CINC level.

e. Form a Joint Logistics Management Center (JLMC). This course of action proposes forming a battle rostered organization that could be deployed in war time to assume authority over joint logistics in theater. In peace time, a small cadre could be placed in the J4 that would expand and become the JLMC in war time. It is envisioned that this organization would be approximately 100 people at full strength. It would report directly to the CINC.

The Joint Staff recommended the last course of action--Form a JLMC. Its advantages would be that it would be a truly joint organization and would report directly to the CINC, can exist as a cadre in peace time, use the CINC's automation and communications that are currently

available, assume the functions of the joint boards and centers, and be modeled after a JFACC. This course of action was generally rejected by the services and the CINC J4's.²⁴

To understand the rejection of the Joint Staff proposal we need to examine the comments and arguments from the CINC J4's. Every CINC has his own method of executing the logistics mission that fits his theater, operational missions, and organization. The CINC J4's do not believe logistics command and control should be a JWCA issue.

CENTCOM plans to use its reserve component TAACOM to execute its joint logistics mission. Since most common item support is provided by the Army anyway, it seems apparent that an Army organization fits the requirement. The TAACOM would report to the Army Service Component Commander as usual. To add clout to the logistics mission, a Lieutenant General (Deputy Commanding General, Army Materiel Command) would become a deputy commander for support.²⁵

ACOM is satisfied with forming an ad hoc logistics organization to accompany any Joint Task Force they must deploy. Since ACOM does not have an MRC, this is their preferred approach. The 1ST COSCOM executed this mission in Haiti for ACOM.²⁶

PACOM is content to use a similar approach in the Pacific, except in Korea. Korea has an Army TAACOM to assume the mission in a Korea MRC scenario.²⁷ Both EUCOM and SOUTHCOM would use the same approach as ACOM. However, an Army TAACOM is available in EUCOM. The op tempo in EUCOM with JTF's in several locations dictates more than one approach.²⁸

From this one could summarize the CINC J4 input is that we do not have a problem, and we have a plan. Furthermore, the CINC has responsibility for his theater and should be allowed the authority to execute his mission any way he deems appropriate.

To conclude this analysis of where we are and where we are going, it is obvious to say there is little support for any formal joint logistics organization. Neither the LIA proposals for a

LOGCOM/National Provider, nor any of the Joint Staff proposals for a truly joint logistics command at the CINC level appear to be acceptable to most of our senior logisticians. The services wish to continue their responsibilities for equipping and supplying their forces. Most feel that we cannot afford a change in force structure. The CINC's do not believe logistics command and control is a problem they cannot solve. Most are satisfied that the Army's responsibility for providing common item support in an MRC scenario, and the service executive agency responsibilities are adequate.

However, before unilaterally dismissing the concept of a LOGCOM/National Provider I will examine some additional areas that bear on this issue, such as force structure, budget, and training. If the CINCs want a LOGCOM, can we afford it? Where is the starting point for building a new joint organization?

THE BUDGET AND FORCE STRUCTURE

Since the end of the Cold War, we have seen dramatic cuts in the DOD budget. In his book Blunting the Sword, Dennis Ippolito predicts that the cuts are not over and that uncontrolled spending on entitlement programs will leave the defense budget as a major bill payer well into the future. According to Ippolito defense budgets are caught in a squeeze between domestic programs and deficit reduction.²⁹

Since the cost for forces is a major factor in the Defense budget, force structure has been reduced significantly. As an example, the Army has been reduced from 18 active divisions in 1989 to 10 active divisions in 1996. The Air Force and Navy have seen similar reductions in air wings and ships, respectively.³⁰

It is apparent that maintaining the existing force structure is tenuous. If Mr. Ippolito is correct, then further reductions in Defense spending and resulting reductions in force structure are to be expected. This downward trend in force structure is a significant reason that new organizational structures such as a LOGCOM would be too expensive. We simply do not have the money to create a new command.

A case can be made that existing structure could be eliminated to create a LOGCOM. However, to do this, existing organizations must remain functional until a new logistics organization could be created. There is simply no way to fund this in the near term. With procurement and research and development at an all time low, there is no discretionary money in the budget to fund a joint logistics organization at the national level and maintain current readiness at satisfactory levels. If the Defense Logistics Agency was used as a nucleus for a LOGCOM, it would probably still be too expensive to execute in the near term. A LOGCOM would cost money that we do not have.

TRAINING MULTIFUNCTIONAL LOGISTICIANS--AN ARMY PERSPECTIVE

The establishment of a LOGCOM would create problems in the training of technically proficient staff officers to properly run the command. The technical nature of modern logistics requires the development of professional officers from company through field grade. In the Army, logisticians at the company grade level should learn the elements of their specialty/branch such as transportation or ordnance. As officers progress to the field grade ranks, the requirements increase for an officer corps of multifunctional logisticians. The designation of multifunctional logisticians in the Army began in 1992 and has been met with mixed reviews.

In an effort to produce multifunctional logisticians in sufficient quantities, the Army began to train captains in a multifunctional advanced course at Ft Lee, VA. Upon graduation the captains were designated as multifunctional logisticians. Commanders in the field provided feedback on this system during the Army Logistic Leaders conference held at the Combined Arms Support Command at Fort Lee in April 1996. Many Colonel level commanders were not satisfied with the system. Training a captain does not make him multifunctional. Commanders believed that training plus experience should lead to a multifunctional designation. The multifunctional designation should not be conferred until an officer reaches the field grade ranks. Even then, it is difficult at best to make a multifunctional logistician.³¹

There is, in fact, a need for specialists in the complex area of logistics. Multifunctional officers cannot always attain the in-depth knowledge required in some areas, such as petroleum operations or aviation maintenance. As General Carter Magruder stated in his book, Recurring Logistics Problems as I have Observed Them, "In a technical age the Army needs specialists."³²

As the Army struggles with logistics specialists versus multifunctional generalists, it seems clear that the current doctrine of services supplying and equipping their own forces has been the right approach. The magnitude of the training problem may be insurmountable if we try to create multiservice logisticians to operate a LOGCOM. Training Army logisticians has been difficult enough. The services have produced the necessary specialists in supplying and equipping their forces in this era of high tech weapon systems. It appears to be a successful approach.

If we overcome resourcing or training problems in creating a LOGCOM, we must still come to grips with centralization issues such as the effectiveness of centralized organizations. An examination of the Defense Logistics Agency may shed some light on this issue.

THE DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY--A POTENTIAL LOGCOM?

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) is the agency that best resembles a national provider at the strategic level. If we were to build a unified command for logistics, DLA would be the obvious choice for the initial nucleus.

DLA has its roots with the establishment of the Defense Supply Agency in 1961. In 1965 contract management was added to its responsibility, and in 1973 fuel and bulk fuel were added. In 1977 the name was changed to the Defense Logistics Agency. Since then, strategic materials and defense disposal operations have been added. The purpose of the consolidation of several functions under DLA was to gain efficiency and provide uniformed financial management practices.³³

Whether DLA has been successful as a centralized national logistics provider is a matter of conjecture. There is no yardstick to gage performance. Essentially, DLA passes its costs to its customers. If we look at budget growth as an indicator, DLA fails the efficiency test. With the DOD budget in a steady decrease since 1989, DLA has failed to make the reductions that the individual services have had to make. If we look at the DOD staff and its operating agencies, their percentage of the DOD budget has steadily grown. It seems that the DOD staff and its centralized agencies (DLA is the largest DOD Agency) have no plans to gain efficiencies. The "overhead" to run DOD steadily increases. For example, the number of civilian positions in DOD agencies in 1989 was 99 thousand. The number in 1996 has grown to 142 thousand.³⁴

The best indicator of problems with the centralized agencies in DOD, such as DLA, comes from the *Report of the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Services*. Several problems were noted by the commission. Among the problems noted were responsiveness to customers, effective business practices, and leadership. The commission made several

recommendations to improve operations, but none of them advocated the establishment of a LOGCOM.³⁵ The best comparison one can make would be similar to General Salomon's recommendation that we need to reengineer processes, not reorganize.

CONCLUSION

In summary we can conclude that a LOGCOM at the strategic level is not only unnecessary, but also cost prohibitive. The major factors that bear on this conclusion are

- a. Our strategy is not resourced.
- b. Our successful military history supports our organizational concepts and doctrine.
- c. Our senior leadership does not support a LOGCOM.
- d. There is no indication that current centralization has been effective. In fact, it has seen uncontrolled growth.
- e. The CINCs are not satisfied with customer support from centralized DOD agencies.
- f. The services have their hands full training their logisticians. Training multiservice logisticians may prove impossible.
- g. In an era of declining defense budgets, we cannot afford to establish a new command.

The above arguments that support the status quo appear to be unchallenged except for the unsubstantiated assertion that more centralization is better. Undoubtedly, some centralization is efficient. The procurement of fuels by the Defense Fuel Supply Center (a DLA activity) is a fine example. However, the many service unique logistical requirements dictate a decentralized approach as the obvious course of action.

Each service brings a service unique combat capability to a war. That capability is best understood and supported by that service. For instance, logistic support of sea power is best

handled by the Navy, not a centralized logistics command. Our doctrine has served us well. From World War II to the Gulf War, our logistics capability has been unmatched. Our doctrine that charges each service to supply, train, and equip its forces has been a successful one. Maybe the old adage that goes "don't fix it if it ain't broken" is truly applicable to our logistics doctrine.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen John M. Shalikashvili, "Vision 2010", Washington, 1996, 1.
- ²Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Paparone, " Case for a Unified Logistics Command , " Army Logistician (March-April 1995): 1-2.
- ³Ibid., 4-6.
- ⁴General Leon Salomon, " Open Letter on a Unified Logistics Command, " Army Logistician (September-October 1995): 8.
- ⁵Ibid., 8-9.
- ⁶Martin Van Creveld, Supplying War, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2.
- ⁷Ibid., 2.
- ⁸Thomas R. Palmerlee and Richard G. Green, A Short History of Logistics, (Ft. Lee, VA, US Army Combat Developments, 1966), 20-21.
- ⁹James A. Hutson, The Sinews of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953. (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1966), 420.
- ¹⁰Ibid., 422-423.
- ¹¹Ibid., 431-435
- ¹²Ibid., 426-435.
- ¹³Ibid., 435.
- ¹⁴The Joint Staff, Doctrine for Logistics Support of Joint Operations, Joint Pub 4-0. (Washington: The Joint Staff, 27 January 1995), A-3.
- ¹⁵Ibid., A-2.
- ¹⁶Ibid., II-5-II-6.
- ¹⁷Logistics Integration Agency, National Provider Concept Paper, 13 October 1995. 1.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 1.
- ¹⁹Mary E. Minor, Chief, Strategic Planning Division, LIA, "National Provider Concept Alternatives," Memorandum for Senior Logistics Seminar Analysis Group. Alexandria, VA, 6 March 1996.

²⁰In May 1996, LIA presented the alternatives with the CINCLOG concept to Army senior logisticians at a conference at Redstone Arsenal. The general consensus of the attendees was to drop the CINCLOG/national provider concept. The author attended the meeting as a representative of US Forces Korea.

²¹Telephone conversation with members of the Joint Staff in November 1996 initiated by the author.

²²Joint Logistics Off-site Conference sponsored by the J4, Joint Staff 2 December 1996 at Fort Lee, VA. attended by the author.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Dennis S. Ippolito, Blunting the Sword, (Washington: National Defense University Press Publications, 1994), 3.

³⁰Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management, The Army Budget, (Washington: Department of the Army, 1996), 8.

³¹The Logistic Leaders Conference in April 1996 was attended by the author as a representative of US Forces Korea. The conference included 06 level commanders from active and reserve units. Additionally, the general officers in charge of each logistic branch were in attendance as well as other GO's in the Army logistics community.

³²Carter B. Magruder, Recurring Logistics Problems as I Have Observed Them, (Washington: Center of Military History, 1991), 55.

³³Defense Logistics Agency Historical Summary, <<http://www.dla.mil/hist-sum.htm>>. 14 Dec 1996.

³⁴William J. Perry, Secretary of Defense, Annual Report to the President and the Congress, (Washington: Department of Defense, 1996), C-1.

³⁵John P. White, Report of the Commission on the Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, (Arlington, VA, Department of Defense, May, 1995), 3-24 to 3-27.

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