

Strategy Research Project

The Need to Proactively Develop Flexible, Adaptable Plans for Logistics

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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In an age of shrinking defense budgets and the potential for unforeseen expeditionary operations, the Department of Defense needs to proactively develop flexible, adaptable plans for logistics to support the global application of land power into austere theaters. While the need for an expeditionary response capability will remain, DOD resources will dwindle in the near-term. A better system can be designed by proactively planning to support strategic logistics operations. An inter-agency construct is needed for securing route options that overcomes institutional differences, looks beyond individual country portfolios, and can implement solutions with the timeliness required. The potential solutions can be found in establishing an interagency strategic logistics coordination cell and fully implementing TRANSCOM's development of a Global Campaign Plan for Distribution.

The Need to Proactively Develop Flexible, Adaptable Plans for Logistics

Sound logistics forms the foundation for the development of strategic flexibility and mobility. If such flexibility is to be exercised and exploited, military command must have adequate control of its logistics support.

—RADM Henry E. Eccles
Logistics in the National Defense

Importance of Logistics

Logistics have long been a prominent factor in warfare, and history is full of examples of logistical deficiencies limiting operational options. The great war theorists all had comments on the impact of supply on warfare. Carl von Clausewitz noted that “There is nothing more common than to find considerations of supply affecting the strategic lines of a campaign and a war.”¹ Antoine Jomini highlighted that “logistics comprises the means and arrangements which work out the plans of strategy and tactics. Strategy decides where to act; logistics brings the troops to this point.”² Sun Tzu said that an “army perishes if it has no equipment, it perishes if it has no food, and it perishes if it has no money.”³ These quotes illustrate the timeless nature of the importance of logistics to success in war, and the need to properly address supply and transportation functions in any future endeavors.

Wake Up Call

In 2007, while the fight in Afghanistan was grinding away, the political, military, and social situation in Pakistan was becoming more volatile. Over eighty percent of the U.S. supplies for Afghanistan flowed through the increasingly hazardous Pakistan roadways.⁴ As thefts and attacks on U.S. cargo increased, U.S. leaders looked for back up routes. This led to the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) concept encompassing

a vast logistics network through Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Several nations recognized the importance of the NDN to the U.S. and attempted to extract the maximum benefits from the U.S. The NDN took over twenty-four months to go from concept to reality. Fortunately, the U.S. still had access to the Pakistan ground lines of communication (GLOC) while the NDN was being stood up—the U.S. will not always enjoy such a luxury as we establish logistics networks to support expeditionary operations. The closure of the Pakistan GLOC to U.S. access from November 2011 to June 2012 also provides clear warning to create multiple routes to support operations. Pakistan expected a desperate response from the U.S. to the GLOC closure, but the NDN provided strategic room for the U.S. to negotiate a more favorable outcome.

The Need for Action

In an age of shrinking defense budgets and the potential for unforeseen expeditionary operations, the Department of Defense (DOD) needs to proactively develop flexible, adaptable plans for logistics to support the global application of land power into austere theaters. The creation of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) provides an example of the challenges of rapidly establishing the components of a logistics network (airlift, sealift, truck/rail transportation, fuel supplies, and local procurement) with interagency cooperation. These challenges ranged from different Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of State (DOS) cultures with varying paces of operations, to developing ad hoc frameworks for access and transit. While the need for an expeditionary response capability will remain, DOD resources will dwindle in the near-term. A better system can be designed by proactively planning to support strategic logistics operations, which would ensure required access and logistics support to contingencies. The creation of a Global Distribution Network (GDN) would be cost

effective in the long-term, as it would establish a long-term, integrated logistics network (instead of the current ad hoc logistics efforts) and would reduce expensive, short notice transportation and access costs. An inter-agency construct—involving staffs from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, combatant commands, State Department, and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)—is needed for coordinating the GDN that overcomes institutional differences, looks beyond individual country portfolios, and can implement solutions with the timeliness required. The potential solutions can be found in establishing an interagency strategic logistics coordination cell and fully implementing TRANSCOM's development of a Global Campaign Plan for Distribution. If this need for proactively developing an adaptable global plan for logistics is not tackled, the ability to support expeditionary operations in austere theaters will be called into question based on access, capacity, and expense challenges. An examination of strategic logistics will provide a better understanding of the complexities involved with the entire supply chain.

Strategic Logistics Background

Joint Publication 4-0, *Joint Logistics*, provides the foundation for understanding strategic logistics efforts, which is vital to tackling challenges of supporting operations in austere environments. The United States' ability to project and sustain military power depends on effective joint logistics, which delivers sustained logistic readiness through the integration of national, multinational, Service, and combat support agency capabilities.⁵ The integration of these capabilities ensures forces are physically available and properly equipped, at the right place and time, to support the joint force and provide the joint force commander with flexibility, endurance, and the ability to extend operational reach.⁶ The deployment and distribution capability moves forces

and logistic support globally and on time meeting the required delivery date and providing time definite delivery to meet the needs of the combatant commander.⁷ The demands and complexities of global operations require that joint logistic planning be an integral part of all planning activities to deliver adaptive, integrated, and synchronized joint logistic support that anticipates requirements, minimizes duplication of effort, resolves shortfalls, and mitigates risk.⁸ Looking at the principles of logistics further focuses the lens on the key issues.

The principles of logistics serve as a guide for analytical thinking when assessing logistics courses of action or plans, which will be useful to developing and analyzing solutions to theater sustainment. Responsiveness is providing the reliable, swift support where it is needed, such as responding to the requirement to rapidly transport Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles to Afghanistan when the Secretary of Defense made it a top priority.⁹ Simplicity is defined as a minimum of complexity in logistics operations, such as contracting commercial carriers to handle all facets of transportation and delivery, which fosters efficiency in planning and execution.¹⁰ Flexibility is the ability to improvise and adapt logistic structures and procedures to changing situations, missions and operational requirements, and was illustrated by the ability to shift equipment/supplies from the Pakistan supply route elsewhere when that environment became unpredictable.¹¹ Economy is using the fewest resources within acceptable levels of risk, which was illustrated by consolidating supplies to fill “block trains” of one hundred containers on the NDN so that trains efficiently traversed the route in less time and at lower costs.¹² Attainability is the assurance that the minimum essential supplies and services required to execute operations will be available, which

can be seen in the way the NDN provided additional line of communication capacity to ensure sufficient supplies during the surge of troops into Afghanistan.¹³ Sustainability is the ability to maintain levels of support necessary for the duration of operational activity, which is reflected in the way that logistics leaders managed the supply flow into Afghanistan and maintained an extra thirty days worth of supplies to handle any hiccups in the flow.¹⁴ Survivability is the capacity of an organization to prevail in the face of potential threats, and can be seen in the engagement with Pakistani officials to protect critical logistic infrastructure and security on routes.¹⁵ These principles of logistics provide a useful framework to assess solutions to logistics challenges.

Developing mutually supportive relationships to enhance coordination between regional partners and combatant commands is an important enabler for joint logistic operations, and will be critical to future efforts.¹⁶ The U.S. and multinational partners collaborate in order to expand mutual support and leverage each others' capabilities to quickly and flexibly respond to future contingencies, as was demonstrated by the cooperation with NATO Allies when developing the NDN.¹⁷ Specific issues that can be addressed in peacetime—which will be critical to secure for future operations/planning—include:

- (1) Securing interagency approvals and permissions, normally through the country team, to execute events and establish the supporting infrastructure for DOD activities.
- (2) Address partner nation (PN) and regional sensitivities, changing politics, and overall stability. PNs often need extended timelines before they are prepared to permit additional bilateral or multilateral events.
- (3) Determining optimal presence and posture: persistent DOD presence in other nations is generally less supported by both country teams and partner nation governments. Maintaining a low visibility signature to U.S. DOD presence and activities is often the only way we can secure requisite interagency and PN permissions.

(4) Developing formal agreements/permissions between the U.S. and many developing nations: U.S. law and military regulations often involve long approval processes and restrictions on the types of funding authorized.¹⁸

Theater Logistics

Building a logistics network to support a modern military campaign requires a complex system of transportation components and storage facilities; knowledge of these requirements will provide insights into what the GDN would need to provide. The fastest means of transportation is airlift, which requires a fleet of large transport aircraft and suitable airfields. Airfields within the theater of operations where the strategic transportation of personnel and cargo is completed are referred to as aerial ports of debarkation (APODs), and the routes used to get into theater are called air lines of communication (ALOCs). Airlift is often used initially for all transport, while other means of transportation are developed. Coordination is still required to gain approval for over flight of countries en route, but due to the non-invasive nature, over flight is often more quickly approved than any ground transit. Once more robust ground lines of transportation are developed, airlift is then reserved for priority or sensitive items (such as ammunition, weapons, and high value items) due to the limited number of transport aircraft and the high cost involved with airlift (over ten times the cost of ground transport). In an era of reduced resources, alternatives to expensive airlift will be crucial.

Sealift is the least expensive mode of transportation, so planners try to unload cargo in the closest ports to military operations. Sea ports within the theater of operations where the strategic transportation of cargo is completed are referred to as are referred to as sea ports of debarkation (SPODs). These ports require infrastructure

to quickly offload ships (cranes, roll off ramps, stevedore personnel), rapidly process/track cargo (streamlined customs procedures, radio frequency identification trackers), and large holding areas for offloaded cargo containers.

Ground transportation is the critical link to deliver logistics material to combat units. The main supply routes into theater are referred to as ground lines of communication (GLOCs). Rail transportation can often cheaply deliver large quantities of material to major hubs, but truck transportation will still be required to reach the actual units. These trucks can be military cargo vehicles or contracted trucks. Modern war also requires large quantities of fuel to be sourced and transported. The nature of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan meant that GLOCs were vulnerable to attack, and required planning efforts to mitigate the impact to the logistics flow. The coordination for approval to use GLOCs across various countries can be more complicated due to the large footprint of cargo, customs/trade considerations, and the fear of transportation infrastructure being targeted by opponents.

Local procurement is another important component of the logistics network that needs to be addressed. Purchasing items along the route to the theater, or actually locally in theater, can produce beneficial results—but complications, as well. Positive outcomes of local acquisition include winning favor with the host nations where you are acquiring items, reducing transportation costs, and sometimes taking trucks off of the road, thus reducing vulnerability. However, complications abound in the arena of local procurement: competing with Congressional requirements to “buy American,” ensuring the quality of the products meet U.S. standards, and dealing with potential local corruption.

Despite the popularity of “just in time” delivery, the military still requires storage capacity. This storage can range from prepositioned stocks of equipment and supplies for an entire armored brigade, to stockpiles of lumber or relief supplies kept in forward locations. The military must constantly evaluate storage space requirements, the permanence needed, and the use of allied facilities in order to adjust as needed to ensure the most economical storage solutions are maintained.¹⁹

Northern Distribution Network Example

The Northern Distribution Network (NDN) provides many illustrative points on the challenges of establishing a logistics network to support land power deployed to a distant, austere theater that can inform future solutions. The length of time required to go from concept to working network, ad hoc procedures that were established, and interagency coordination all provide insights for developing proper proactive constructs around a Global Distribution Network. The initial concept for the NDN was developed in early 2007, in order to augment vulnerable Pakistan GLOCs. At the time, no logistics crisis was present to serve as a forcing function, as supplies were moving efficiently through Pakistan. The northern routes were more expensive, so there was not a keen interest in shifting cargo away from the cheaper Pakistan route. But the situation changed drastically by the time the NDN actually became operational eighteen months later, as will be discussed later.

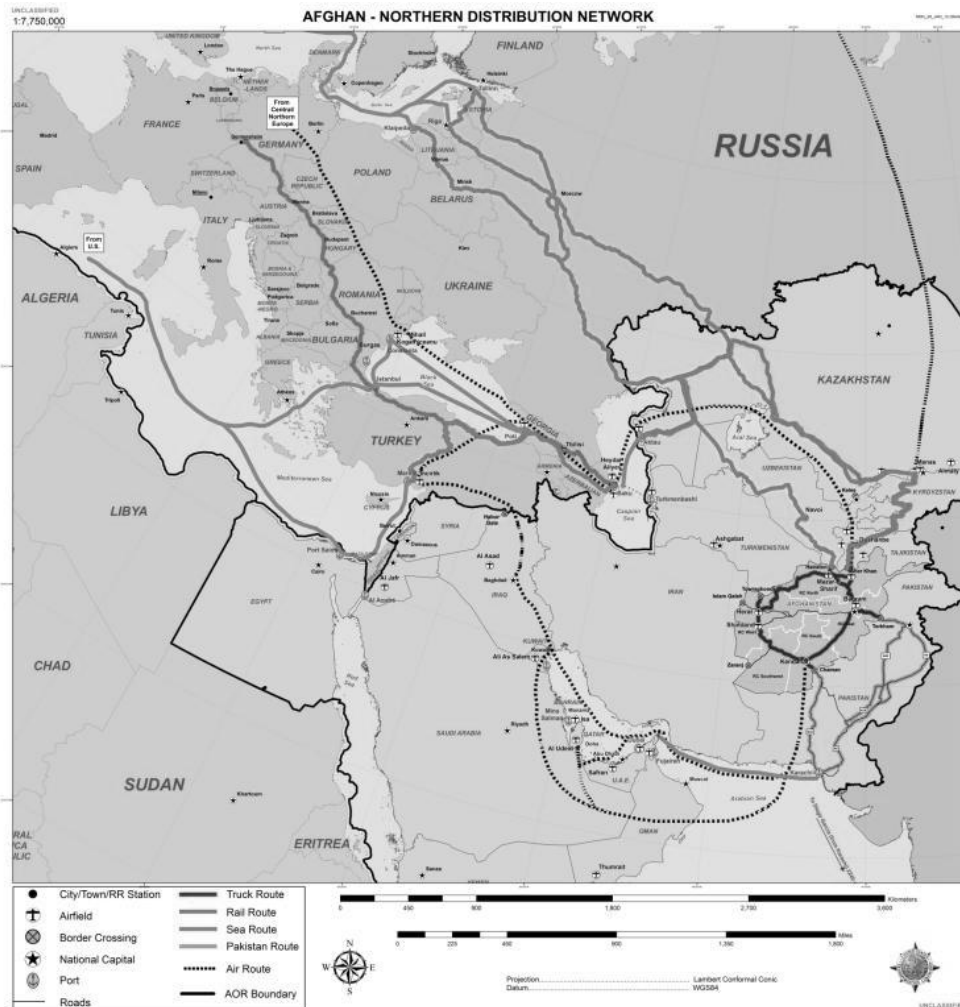


Figure 1 Northern Distribution Network Map.

The initial steps for coordinating the NDN involved gaining approval for transit from a variety of nations that the U.S. did not have close ties to. The proposed Russian route started in Riga, Latvia and ran through Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan while the Caucasus route ran through Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. While USTRANSCOM was adept at working with commercial carriers to draw up proposals and cost estimates, establishing a significant logistics network in this part of the world required a strong diplomatic effort.

The USTRANSCOM staff had to overcome many institutional challenges as it delved into interagency coordination for the NDN. The first challenge was finding the right people to coordinate with, especially in the State Department. While USTRANSCOM's Political Advisor (POLAD) worked tirelessly on connecting the staff with State Department personnel, the NDN was not her sole focus, and she was frequently traveling overseas with the USTRANSCOM Commander. Even after the USTRANSCOM staff connected with its State counterparts, there were misunderstandings and instances of talking past one another due to institutional cultural differences—such as the use of terms like “coordinate, negotiate, and approve.”²⁰ State Department personnel were much less focused on rank, which led to jumping the chain of command (going from action officer to four star general) and considering a lowly lieutenant colonel's statements as the overall DOD position.²¹ Cultural differences between departments took time to understand and work through—things as small as DOD operating in Power Point and State working in textual products to State valuing relationships more than rank.²² Clarifying the boundaries of what combatant commanders could do to move the agenda along with host nations—which meant DOD acceptance that only DOS was empowered to negotiate a deal—provided clear direction for the way ahead.

Transit agreements were key to moving forward. The USTRANSCOM POLAD approached the State Department asking for a transit agreement template to build off of. State replied that there was no template; each transit agreement was crafted individually for the nation and specific situation. An examination of the Pakistan transit agreement uncovered a series of faxes, memorandums, and other informal documents

that served as the basis of approval for shipping over 35,000 containers per year through Pakistan.²³ At a very opportune time, Russia unilaterally offered NATO transit of non-military cargo en route to Afghanistan. The USTRANSCOM staff fashioned a transit agreement off of the Russian transit offer to use for the other nations along the route. A lesson learned from the USTRANSCOM legal advisor was to list prohibited items (such as ammunition, weapons, fighting vehicles) with all other cargo being considered approved (versus writing a list of approved items that would need to be updated often).²⁴

The Department of Defense had multiple players involved in NDN discussions (OSD, USTRANSCOM, USCENTCOM J4, Joint Staff J5 and J4, and DLA). The OSD Central Asia desk officer attempted to corral the DOD players, and speak as one voice on the interagency arena. Discussions occurred at regional levels in the State Department and the majority of the work was done at the individual country desk officer level and with the individual ambassadors in countries along the route. Coordination also occurred with NATO, which was attempting to craft NATO-level transit agreements; however, since most of the transit nations concerned preferred bi-lateral agreements, the U.S. was able to make faster progress.

Diplomatic negotiations often take more time than military leaders would prefer. The length of time to coordinate NDN agreements was a major source of friction between DOD and State. Involvement of the USTRANSCOM and USCENTCOM Commanders—from congressional testimonies and meeting with industry to direct interaction with governments in the region—highlighted the importance the military placed on securing the NDN.²⁵ Actual diplomatic negotiations were in the State

Department realm, and though the military kept pressing for speed, diplomats cautioned that the groundwork must be properly laid for long-term success. The pressure for speed grew as CENTCOM looked towards potential surge logistics requirements looming in the future. One attaché posted in Central Asia cautioned the need to allow the diplomats time to socialize the NDN with host nations and not launch commercial shipments until agreements were in place; he compared it to pressing on a glass storm door—you can apply a certain amount of pressure, but once you shatter it, you will never achieve host nation support.²⁶

A key element of the appeal to host nations was the commercial nature of the NDN. Virtually no U.S. military footprint existed throughout the entire proposed logistics network. While the U.S. did have an already established footprint at Manas airbase and some USAF refueling teams elsewhere, the rest of the NDN was a commercial enterprise. This led to repeated calls from some in CENTCOM J4 to simply launch the supply containers prior to agreements being in place since it was just like “shipping lumber to a Home Depot store.”²⁷ The attachés again emphasized a cautious approach since a large influx of supply containers would certainly be noticed, and the host nations would not view the U.S. military shipping supplies to a combat zone as a benign activity.²⁸

To gain insights on the length of time required to establish a logistics network to support ongoing operations, it is useful to examine the timeline for developing the NDN. While initial guidance to develop an alternative route to the Pakistan GLOC was generated in late 2006, the concept for the NDN started to coalesce in early 2007, as the USTRANSCOM Deputy Commander began meeting with commercial carriers.²⁹ In

July 2007, after an initial test shipment was discontinued due to the length of time to gain commercial shipping approvals, USTRANSCOM came to the conclusion that government-to-government coordination was required, although the State Department was less than confident in the prospects of reaching such agreements in Central Asia.³⁰ By February 2008, the situation in Pakistan was becoming more volatile, and USTRANSCOM instituted a weekly teleconference with participants from the Joint Staff, OSD, USCENTCOM, DLA, and the USTRANSCOM POLAD.³¹ After NATO concluded a surface transit agreement with Russia, individual national transit agreements still had to be painstakingly hammered out.³² On 23 May 2008, USTRANSCOM launched a proof-of-principle shipment of one container of meals-ready-to-eat (MREs) through Poti, Georgia.³³ Just to highlight the complications involved with every step of a logistics network: because the MREs were being shipped as commercial cargo (vice military/government cargo), the Department of Agriculture had to stamp each of the 700 cases of MREs.³⁴ This container eventually arrived in Poti, Georgia on 7 August; however, on 8 August, Russia troops entered Georgia and the MREs were provided by USTRANSCOM to Georgia as humanitarian assistance.³⁵ The end of the test run closed out this initial phase of piecemeal efforts.

As more senior officers began focusing on the NDN, the levels of effort and progress increased exponentially. On 2 September 2008, USCENTCOM hosted an NDN conference to place added focus on the problem; USTRANSCOM emerged from the conference with the responsibility for pushing the transit agreements, in coordination with OSD, USCENTCOM, and the State Department.³⁶ The DLA staff examined the potential for local procurement, but was hampered by the restraints of the Trade

Agreement Act and the Berry Amendment which directed most products be purchased from U.S. producers, and most of the transit countries were not on the list of nations designated for purchasing by exception.³⁷ In October, USTRANSCOM sent a delegation led by the USTRANSCOM J5 to NATO headquarters, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan to socialize the NDN concept and gain host nation understanding and support.³⁸ The USTRANSCOM Commander and the USCENTCOM Commander followed up with trips to continue building support.³⁹ The ambassadors in each transit nation were actively working on the transit agreements, but these took time: time to gain support in the lower bureaucracy, time to gain support at the higher government levels, time to work the specific language, time to get presidential approval, and time to be ratified by parliaments. While some of the nations involved were competitive with their neighbors—for economic gain, regional leadership, and prestige—they realized the importance of moving forward with the agreements to assist the U.S. in its Afghanistan efforts. Eventually, agreements were secured, and the first one hundred container block train rolled out of Latvia on 27 February 2009—almost two full years after the concept went forward.⁴⁰

The NDN provided tremendous logistics capabilities in an austere theater with few transportation options. The NDN came on line just in time to support the surge of troops and equipment into Afghanistan, and this additional capacity enabled the planners to maintain the velocity of logistics flow required to handle the additional surge requirements in 2009-2010. At its peak, the NDN was handling 27,000 containers per month.⁴¹ Later agreements also secured reverse transit, which will facilitate the retrograde of equipment as we approach the 2014 drawdown. The critical nature of this

network became most clear when Pakistan shut off our main ground lines of communication for several months (November 2011-July 2012), expecting a desperate response from the United States. While shifting logistics from the Pakistan GLOC to the NDN cost an additional \$100 million per month, the NDN provided strategic room for the U.S. to negotiate a more favorable settlement for re-opening the Pakistan route.⁴²

When the NDN is examined through the prism of the Principles of Logistics, some clear strengths and weaknesses become visible. Responsiveness, survivability, and flexibility were well represented as the NDN provided reliable, secure support that expanded as needed. Simplicity, economy, and attainability were harder to achieve when putting together this logistics plan on the fly, and thus the complexity of the arrangements was high, the dollar cost was high, and the capacity was not high enough to sustain operations in Afghanistan without the Pakistan GLOC or maximizing reliance on costly air cargo.

While the NDN provided great capabilities in transporting the necessities for war to U.S. soldiers, there were some limitations. Restrictions on the type of cargo that could transit limited the flow to primarily non-military logistics: lumber, food, and basic supply items. The cost of transporting a container on the NDN was more than twice as much as shipping it on the Pakistan GLOC (see Table 1 below). While this additional cost was justified by the need to maintain the speed of the surge flow and to maintain alternate routes, high costs will be more of a challenge in a future environment of reduced resources. Countries along the route recognized their importance, and tried to leverage this in relations with the U.S. (such as Uzbekistan requested a significant

package of military equipment). Expectation management was also an issue, especially with local procurement.

Table 1 Transportation Costs of NDN vs Pakistan GLOC.⁴³

East Coast to Destination	Price for 20 foot Container
Kabul via Riga, Latvia	\$15,100
Kabul via Poti, Georgia	\$16, 700
Kabul via Karachi, Pakistan	\$6,100

The Defense Logistics Agency made great strides in local procurement through special legislation, Section 831 of the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, to provide enhanced authority to acquire products and services produced in the Central Asian states, but the economic impact fell below host nation expectations.⁴⁴ Although the “Central Asian States First” policy initiated by USCENTCOM directed procurement officials to seek supplies locally from NDN host nations to reduce overall transportation costs and help local economies, local procurement did not provide as large of an input as expected, leading to disappointments in the transit nations.⁴⁵ Part of the problem was expectation management—the transit nations heard “local procurement” and anticipated enormous economic benefits. One nation reserved an entire convention center to highlight potential products to the small DLA team making initial surveys of local items. The U.S. could have placed more emphasis on the very limited scale of purchasing DLA was considering. The DLA staff was comfortable with the large volume suppliers they already had in place, and supplies were flowing smoothly. In some ways, DLA could have been more flexible. While standards on food are understandably high,

the quality of lumber being used as walkways and in bunkers does not have to be top-notch “panel grade.” There were opportunities to expand the amount of local procurement if DLA had been more willing to work with the local producers to improve quality, quantity, and delivery of goods. There were success stories, such as the building of a water bottling plant in Kabul, utilizing the Nestle water plant in Uzbekistan, and fuel procurement.

Many lessons were learned during the course of establishing the NDN. The current procedure for arranging strategic logistics consists of waiting for an event or crisis that requires a deployment of forces, which then triggers ad hoc logistics coordination. This reactive posture leads to short suspenses to coordinate access to basing and transit, often involving multiple nations. Our diplomats require time to socialize prospective bi-lateral transit and basing agreements with host nation officials. These tight timelines can also lead to negotiating from position of weakness, which can result in more costly settlements. The challenges that the coordination of the DND exposed—twenty-four months to establish, negotiating from a time-pressured disadvantage, quickly building partnerships with nations the U.S. had cool relations with, and spending a lot of money on the whole process—should make policy makers think twice about continuing with ad hoc strategic logistics. The U.S. will not always have the luxury of time, international goodwill, and money—a better way of doing business must be implemented.

Global Campaign Plan for Distribution

The bleak outlook on budgets and resources will limit the options available to support expeditionary efforts. In the past, with enough money directed toward a

logistics problem—even a complex one—a solution could be developed. The U.S. could contract planes to fly in fuel to remote theater bases, but this is not a very economically efficient solution—especially if the operations are enduring. In an era of tightening budget, the U.S. will no longer have the luxury of spending whatever it takes to get supplies through. A flexible logistics network already in place will keep costs down when supporting expeditionary operations. The challenge is how to design a system can proactively plan to support operations.

The USTRANSCOM staff is developing a Global Campaign Plan for Distribution (GCP-D) to synchronize worldwide distribution and transportation planning across multiple combatant command boundaries prior to transportation or sustainment being required. This broad campaign plan evaluates the full range of potential demands on the network and encompasses pre-positioning material, coordinating partner capacity, and maximizing use of private sector strengths.⁴⁶ This campaign plan will synchronize efforts across the DOD and will allocate limited resources against the highest priority requirements. Analysis is being conducted to optimize the ability to rapidly, effectively, and efficiently move and sustain forces utilizing multiple combinations of air, land, and sea platforms.⁴⁷ A key goal is to establish a broad network with resilient capacity to handle unknowns and provide uninterrupted support.

Access and logistics support must have built in redundancy to conduct distribution operations across multiple paths to ensure it is not at risk of a single point failure.⁴⁸ The United States can no longer assume it will have unfettered access across the globe. In addition to threats from terrorists, pirates, and hostile nations, the sensitivity to U.S. presence has grown, and even allies might determine that it is not in

their national interest to grant the U.S. access (such as Turkey not allowing transit for a northern front into Iraq in 2003). Strengthening relationships takes work, and the GCP-D will need to be synchronized/integrated with theater campaign plans and theater security cooperation plans, leveraging combatant command assistance.

The GCP-D should ensure that the Global Distribution Network (GDN) supports contingency plans and “builds on mutual interests, maximizes strategic flexibility, mitigates risk, and provides resilient end-to-end distribution that enhances the future operating environment.”⁴⁹ The GDN utilizes key infrastructure, access, and international agreements, and requires coordinated protection of priority segments/capabilities.⁵⁰ Since the GDN includes a complex array of non-U.S. capabilities, commercial providers, and allied/cooperating nations, and it operates across multiple combatant command boundaries, a collaborative community will need to be established to evolve the network.⁵¹

The GDN also encompasses the storage and staging of supplies, with the intent of optimizing global material positioning in preparation for contingency operations. The Defense Logistics Agency has lead for this line of effort, which will require coordination with interagency teammates, allies, and commercial partners. Proactively staging material can reduce overall costs by reducing the need for short notice airlift of materials, and can be a pooled resource cost-shared with allies and, in the case of relief supplies, international partners such as the United Nations and the International Red Cross.

The USTRANSCOM staff’s rigorous, global campaign planning effort will need to be married with robust interagency coordination. USTRANSCOM can identify the

potential worldwide infrastructure, routes, basing, storage, and other logistics needs, but the interagency team will need to proactively work to secure access to this logistics network and coordinate actions across the entire GDN—coordination activities that are very time consuming, as the NDN establishment illustrated. Bringing together a cohesive, cooperative interagency team effort will be critical to the success of the GDN.

Inter-Agency Coordination

Establishing a logistics inter-agency coordination cell (LICC), consisting primarily of OSD, State, Joint Staff, combatant command staffs, and DLA, would provide a synchronized effort at the national level that would avoid duplication of effort and provide an umbrella organization for a “single face” to interact with international partners. As expeditionary operations come on the horizon, this inter-agency coordination cell would look beyond individual country portfolios and develop multinational visions for regional distribution networks. The LICC could develop templates to quickly secure international agreements for logistics networks. This cell could propel issues to the National Security Staff or Deputies Committees to quickly implement in national level strategy.

The vision for the LICC is for a small four person standing staff element, with the remainder of the players coming together for monthly meetings. The small full time staff would be responsible for coordinating the meetings (rotating between OSD and State), tracking progress on ongoing lines of effort, and working low-level coordination tasks. The more significant coordination and synchronization tasks will be accomplished by the players in the monthly meetings.

While individual responsibilities of each player are important, the most critical function of the LICC will be the synchronizing of these actions on a global scale. The

OSD staff would oversee the DOD actions, ensuring that combatant commands plans mesh well across area of responsibility (AOR) seams and within the global plan—for instance, USEUCOM may not see the need to maintain logistics facilities in Spain, but these facilities may be crucial to USTRANSCOM support of CENTCOM operations. The DLA staff would continue to expand local procurement activities, fuel sourcing, and storage facilities in a comprehensive global network. The most critical coordination piece is lashing the DOD effort with the State effort, which will be described further later in the paper.

The LICC could also integrate logistics as an engagement tool into broader U.S. diplomatic and economic development efforts. In addition to the military cooperation with the host nations involved, engagement on the logistics front provides opportunities for coordinated economic and infrastructure development among DOD, State, and USAID. While this option does carry a fiscal price tag involved with securing portions of a logistics network that provides latent capabilities, this global network will reap benefits on the engagement arena and will prove more economically beneficial in the long run by saving costs with each expeditionary operation conducted. Some of the money already earmarked for aid/development for a country could be earmarked to fund GCD-P requirements, and the DOD-State Global Security Contingency Fund could be tapped for specific projects. In addition to the national security players already cited, this option will need to be socialized with Congress, as it could involve purchasing materials locally at overseas locations instead of in the U.S. (as has been done ad hoc with the Afghan First and other policy initiatives).

Coordination for the LICC can fall under the broader planning umbrella of Diplomacy, Development, and Defense (3Ds)—as represented by the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and Department of Defense. A 3D context helps identify opportunities for coordination, ensure plans are properly aligned, and account for each other's priorities.⁵² The 3D collaboration provides ample opportunities for building trust and sharing knowledge, and incorporates conferences, professional development programs, and other outreach opportunities to build a spirit of cooperation among the organizations.⁵³

A key part of establishing the LICC will be the full integration of the State Department. The State Political-Military Bureau International Security Operations (ISO) office is best positioned to draw together all of the players at State. The ISO serves similar to a J35 staff function, and would be the ideal mechanism to lead the LICC stand up at State, and to sustain the effort over the long-term. The next biggest State player is the Political-Military Bureau Plans, Programs, Analysis (PPA) that functions similarly to a J5 shop and would be more heavily involved initial planning effort. The Security, Negotiations, Agreements (SNA) office would be involved in formulating templates for coordinated actions to establish new distribution paths, and then being part of the team to execute specific negotiations. Lastly, the Administration, Logistics, Management (ALM) office will have a role in the coordination of LICC interactions. The ISO office can also work the integration of the GCP-D into regional and country planning efforts.

The State Department is now doing more "planning"—though not exactly military-type planning—and there are opportunities to integrate the GDP-D into these efforts. State's regional bureaus are putting together long-range goals, which could

easily incorporate GCP-D goals in a regional perspective. Since State's regional bureau maps do not line up with DOD's combatant command maps, this provides another opportunity to coordinate "seam" issues. Each embassy/country team has an integrated country strategy that could capture specific country-by-country GDN requirements. Defense attachés can assist with the integration at the embassy level.

The NDN showed how much engagement could be spurred by logistics operations, and many in the State Department are well aware of this successful combination. The State Department has to balance this engagement with other U.S. interests. The embassies are the focal point for implementing whole of government policies within host nations, and they have to balance concerns over human rights, democratic practices, and corruption with "rewarding" a country with increased engagement or profits from logistics support. State was always keen to highlight their lead role in actual negotiations for diplomatic agreements—not combatant commanders. State desires the maximum lead times for socializing the engagement concepts and prepping the diplomatic playing field—the GCP-D's macro plan should reduce the need for urgent transit deals during a crisis.

DOD can assist with jump-starting inter-agency coordination on the GCP-D in several specific actions. Assigning additional planners/liaisons (LNOs) to State would greatly assist in State planning efforts—in particular a TRANSCOM LNO to assist with initiating the GCP-D and LICC coordination. Having a planner that understands the GDN would be invaluable as a member of the State team. Combatant commands possess Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Groups (JIACGs), which can be used as another element of inter-agency collaboration on the GCP-D. DOD can also set up

inter-agency outreach events in Washington, DC to socialize and promote cooperation on the GCP-D.

Recommendation

In order to proactively develop flexible, adaptable plans for logistics to support the global application of land power into austere theaters, the U.S. needs to execute the immediate stand up of a logistics inter-agency coordination cell (LICC) and rapid approval and implementation of the TRANSCOM Global Campaign Plan for Distribution. The Global Distribution Network needs to be established to provide a long-term, integrated framework that will be responsive to future crises. Many crisis response missions, such as foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, require time-sensitive sourcing of critical commodities and capabilities, and rapid delivery to the point of need.⁵⁴ Other contingency operations require rapid deployment of forces to austere areas for lengthy engagements. The U.S. does not have the luxury of assuming access will be automatic, quick, inexpensive, or even sufficient to sustain the operations.

The main challenge to implementing the GDN and the LICC are coordination and synchronization. The scale of global logistics operations is hard to comprehend, let alone effectively coordinate. But USTRANSCOM has made great strides towards an achievable outcome. The institutional inertia needs to be overcome to get agencies to take action and implement the interagency coordination aspect. A portion of the cost of the GDN can be covered by focused foreign aid channeled into required logistics infrastructure requirements, and the engagement generated by these logistics efforts can further America's diplomatic endeavors.

If this need for proactively developing an adaptable global plan for logistics is not tackled, the ability to support expeditionary operations in austere theaters will be called into question based on access, capacity, and expense challenges. America's ability to "throw money at the problem" is rapidly evaporating. Churchill once remarked, "Gentlemen, we are out of money, now we have to think."⁵⁵ It is time to think about how we do strategic logistics; more importantly, it is time to act. The Global Distribution Network and the Logistics Interagency Coordination Cell provide a feasible, acceptable, and suitable solution that is needed now.

Endnotes

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