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On the Cover

LROs in the 731st Air Mobility Squadron at Osan Air Base in the Republic of Korea lead cargo movement operations in a simulated chemical environment during Exercise VIGILANT ACE 17-01. Quarterly exercises like this help Logistics Officers and 2T2s practice and hone their aerial port capabilities, so they can be war time ready should the armistice between North and South Korea ever be broken.
Spring is in the air and your LOA National Board is busy charting the course for the next year and beyond, planning the symposium, inducting new board officers and strengthening LOA as the nation’s premier logistics professional development organization.

The LOA Executive Board finalized the annual strategic plan recently and aligned association activities to the following three pillars: professional development, education, and engagement centered on the membership. The Executive Board will ensure that value and content is delivered at the chapter and national level through meaningful interaction.

Education opportunities will continue to enhance LOA through LOA University and partnerships with learning institutions. Lastly, LOA will strengthen outreach and engagement with our diverse membership.

Planning is well underway for the 2017 Logistics Symposium and University November 14-17, 2017, at the Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center in National Harbor, Maryland. This world-class facility will serve as the backdrop to celebrate 35 years of professional development. Please check the web and social media for details as they develop.

The National Board welcomed Lt Col Jason Kalin as the new LOA Membership Officer and Maj Abbi Johnson as the new Corporate Membership Officer.

Both positions are instrumental in strengthening the LOA brand, growing our numbers, and increasing Corporate Engagement. Fundraising continues to honor Lt Gen Leo Marquez through the installation of the iconic “Crew Chief” statue at Sheppard AFB, preserving Lt Gen Marquez’s legacy and paying tribute to the beginning of each logistician’s career. Please check the LOA website to learn more about the Heritage Program and how you or your organization can contribute.

Finally, I enjoyed the privilege of spending time with the Sonoran Chapter at Luke AFB. The chapter is the life-blood of LOA and I was very happy to see the dynamic leadership and enthusiasm at Luke. I am also sure that energy is indicative of our chapters across the globe in an on-going effort to fostering the next generation of informed and connected logisticians.

Thank you for all that you do.

Looking Forward,

Col Dennis P Dabney, USAF (ret)
President
Logistics Officers Association

By: Mr. Dennis Dabney
Greetings Log Nation and welcome to the New Year! What a great 2016 it was…our Logisticians and Maintainers made news over and over again and I am incredibly proud of everything you were a part of. In fact, I get no greater joy than when I share your successes and accomplishments with my colleagues on the E-Ring. Without fail, Log Nation always gets the job done!

In past Exceptional Release (ER) articles, I discussed the most important logistics fundamentals Airmen have lived by over the past seventy years: the LOGTRUTHS. The final truth I discussed was “all good logistics work is done in process.” This truth implies a critical yet unwritten tenet: we must continuously improve and innovate our processes. At the 2016 Logistics Officer Association Symposium, many of you had the opportunity to hear our A4 Chief Information Officer, Maj Gen Cedric George, speak about Logistics IT and the task of bringing Synthesized Logistics Information to the battlespace. To remain the greatest Air Force on the planet, one of our challenges is to ensure you have the tools and technology you need. We must allow you the time and freedom to explore, innovate and improve logistics processes without forcing you to negotiate the challenges of outdated technology.

Unfortunately for many of our processes today, getting the job done means manual workarounds, old and unreliable IT, outdated technology and redundant data entry into various systems. This is unsatisfactory. We need to get the right tools and technology in your hands and at your fingertips. We need to be able to deliver new capabilities, technologies, systems and other services quickly and consistently. We need to quickly react and adapt to the changing world. We can only do this by making our enterprise more agile. Technology changes at a rapid pace and our Logistics enterprise needs a technology insertion process that can keep up.
Today, we struggle with two competing challenges: (1) sustaining legacy systems while (2) negotiating established acquisition processes that are designed to slowly and methodically field new capabilities. This may work when fielding a new aircraft or major weapons system but simply does not meet the need when addressing information technology. Adhering to these acquisition processes results in dollars, time and effort lost…resources better spent deploying new technology to support the agile logistics our Warfighters need.

Working through these two challenges is absolutely imperative to providing the requisite agility our decision makers need when planning and executing operations. Better IT and technology equals more agile logistics which equals enhanced decision space for joint operations. To be blunt, speed and relevance of logistics data improves airpower operations.

To improve our speed and relevance, we must transform how we do business. Transformation of this magnitude requires us to question previously accepted paradigms: organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, even our decision making process. Only through these transformational changes are we able to rapidly and continually field new technology, delivering precision capability to our nation and thus ensuring our logistics and maintenance enterprise continues to be the best in the world.

We are a large and diverse organization – from the Program Offices to the ALCs; from DLA warehouses to Air Force parts stores; and on the flightlines both at home and deployed. We are all one team dedicated to providing mission-essential capabilities to meet and enhance mission generation. To support this vast enterprise, we have started implementing some of these process innovations by delivering several new technological capabilities to our Log Nation. For example, modern technology allows us to take our information anywhere we go. But even though Tech Orders are currently stored on tablets, how many of you have been able to take these tablets to the flightline when you work on an aircraft? Current Air Force policy has prohibited the use of portable electronic devices in classified processing areas (such as tablets and phones in mission briefing areas and aircraft cockpits…especially when preparing for a classified mission). To work through this policy-versus-need gap, our team collaborated with the aircraft authorizing official to wargame the use of devices in classified processing areas. They were able to
develop processes for turning off certain features which was then codified into a guidance memorandum allowing you to start using this technology – at the discretion of your base commander – more freely. These guidance memos for mobile devices in classified processing areas are on their way to the field, providing this additional capability both on and off the flightline.

But even with this updated guidance, today’s tablets only have one function for flightline use: scanning capability. Our own innovators knew we could do better. MSgt Zeshan Meer, a munitions expert from ACC, and his team submitted an idea through the Airmen Powered by Innovation website to field multi-functional tablets with Wi-Fi, cellular connectivity, a CAC reader, Microsoft Office Suite, and mobile apps connected to the Maintenance, Supply, Logistics and Munitions systems that house our data. Once fully fielded, these systems will allow our professionals to scan an item and instantly update the correct IT system. This effort saves time by eliminating redundant tasks and reduces opportunities for human error.

These changes do not just happen. The tireless dedication of you and your teammates to improve our processes coupled with the relentless pursuit of “yes” to deliver those technology capabilities to you is how these innovations become reality. All good logistics work is done in process… but it is up to you in the field to improve and innovate those processes to make them that much better.

In the next ER, I would like to continue to further explore our Logistics IT. I will discuss how agility, both in technology and leadership, brings Logistics to the order of battle. I encourage you to chat about this at your local LOA chapters. We need to hear new and innovative ideas from you on how to make our processes better. What tools, authorities and flexibility do you need to do your jobs better? Please do not hesitate to send me your ideas and inputs via Twitter @AFCoopA4 or submit your innovative ideas to the Airmen Powered by Innovation website by going to the Air Force Portal at https://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af/USAF/site/API. Thank you for all you do every day for Air Force Logistics!

Lt Gen John B. Cooper,
Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection
Headquarters US Air Force, Washington, DC
Many have heard of the 635th Supply Chain Operations Wing (SCOW), but you may not be aware of what the wing actually does for the Air Force...

The SCOW is one of eight warfighting components assigned to the Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC). AFSC provides long term and day-to-day logistics combat capabilities to Numbered Air Forces and Combatant Commands (COCOM) around the world. The center is much more than just “aircraft parts and depots.” Aircraft and parts production are still a critical requirement, but AFSC provides operational logistics capabilities to include War Reserve Materiel (WRM), tactical and base support vehicles, POL and cryogenics, space systems laboratory support, etc. AFSC is the bridge to wholesale and retail support and is blurring those lines daily to improve awareness, reduce decision making timelines, and shorten the logistics kill chain.

The SCOW is one of the Warfighting wings assigned to the Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC). However, this wing is much more than just “aircraft parts.” Over the last year, the SCOW has expanded to include the Air Force Petroleum (AFPET) Office assisting in fuels operations and installation management; a Materiel Maintenance Group responsible for Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources (BEAR); and the stand-up of a new Vehicle Management Squadron (formerly Vehicle Equipment Management Support Office) at Langley AFB. Coupled with two materiel management groups, the War Reserve Materiel Global Management Office, nuclear weapons related materiel transactions support and Air Clearance Authority operations; the wing provides significant combat support across the Enterprise. Additional enterprise support includes behind the scenes “backshop” supply functions such as managing funding and requirements collection for the Air Force’s $2.8B Supply Management Activity Group, stock control functions and worldwide supply systems support that enables the ordering of supplies and equipment. The wing performs its mission from twelve worldwide operating locations providing supply chain command and control for Warfighters around the globe. Our goal is to provide any customer logistics solutions to meet their requirements; 24-7/365 days a year.

Why was the SCOW created? The figure below illustrates the convoluted and disjointed way the Air Force managed its supply chain just 10 years ago. Regardless of the commodity (aircraft spares, vehicles, WRM, etc.), the process to obtain support was con-
fusing and cumbersome. An individual would need to call multiple organizations just to find an individual who could provide status on their issue and often that person would forward you to someone else who could effect change. Regardless, the individuals working the issue did not understand the mission priority because every customer priority was Number One. As logisticians, there were definitely better ways we could conduct business. Mr. W. Edwards Deming said, “Two basic rules of life are: 1) Change is inevitable. 2) Everybody resists change.” However, as an Air Force we needed to evolve to achieve efficiencies while still delivering combat effects. We needed to look beyond the way we were doing business in the 1980s and 1990s. Enter the SCOW. The SCOW’s goal is to serve as the single focal point for the customer. This allows the customer to focus on their day-to-day job, while the SCOW engages with the remainder of the logistics enterprise to provide the capability required to achieve the desired effect.

Here’s another example, but this example illustrates a larger fundamental need for logistics Command and Control (C2). In 2010, Air Force logisticians who deployed to Haiti as part of the earthquake response Joint Task Force quickly discovered that the Air Force did not have a single reach back point to request logistics support. They had to call multiple agencies or their home station to request shelters, generators, vehicles and even replacement uniforms. Today, the SCOW provides that “one-stop” capability (see figure below). As Sun Tzu said, “The line between disorder and order lies in logistics…” The SCOW is that line.

Enterprise management is still relatively new, and admittedly, more needs to be done to make it successful. But if we cannot move outside of our
existing stovepipes, the Air Force will not be successful. Centralization and Enterprise management are here to stay...there is no going back. At the Enterprise level, we must balance tactical needs with the need to focus on long-term requirements, which strategically postures logistics capabilities to ensure the right material is in the right place at the right time. This is not a cliché, but art and science driven by experience and education. It may mean one unit has to go without for a short period of time, while another unit who has a more immediate need receives the asset. Who makes that decision? It is not done in a vacuum, wing Weapon System Team Managers, MAJCOM staffs, SPOs and supply chain managers are all involved to ensure the right enterprise decision is made.

Our long range vision is to be postured to resolve customer requests, regardless of commodity, with one phone call...true supply chain C2. To do that, we need good communication up and down the supply chain. It is a two-way street. Bases need to notify the SCOW of weapon system changes, deployments, redeployments and exercises in order for the SCOW to posture the “sustainment machine” to meet the needs of the Warfighter. Help us understand your requirements and challenges.

The SCOW is focused on building and expanding relationships with all our base-level customers (not just the LRSs), as well as agencies and organizations outside the Air Force such as United States Transportation Command, Defense Logistics Agency and General Services Administration. The CSAF has stated that the future of warfare will be very fast...speed will be critical. As logisticians, we need to understand how to
read demand signals and improve responsiveness to meet the rapid nature of future warfare. Future warfare, where the US faces another equal or peer nation, will be measured in weeks, not months or years. The nation that can master their logistics forces and be responsive with that support will win the fight. This is the SCOW’s charge, to overcome obstacles and aggressively engage to ensure our supported weapon systems and bases achieve their mission.

Lastly, it is important to remember that the supply chain does not stop at a base’s front gate. The supply chain ends when the customer receives the commodity…again, it doesn’t matter if it’s an aircraft part, vehicle, WRM equipment, etc. Bases play a vital role in maximizing supply chain performance. For example, quick evacuation of DIFMs from a base enhance asset availability across the enterprise. A primary conduit for the SCOW is the base’s Logistics Readiness Squadron (LRS). The traditional LRS has four flights: Materiel Management, Fuels Management, Vehicle Maintenance/Management and Deployment and Distribution. The SCOW provides support or engages with the first three flights. Understanding the linkage improves situational awareness on the supply chain and, ultimately, your combat support.

This is one of a series of articles that will be published in upcoming ERs highlighting the capabilities of the SCOW. It is important to note that this is not the same SCOW as six to eight years ago. It is a robust organization that is data informed, developing logistics solutions to meet the Warfighter’s needs. Success is built on relationships, which includes but is not limited to, feedback. As logisticians, we are all part of the supply chain and must work together to make it successful. The SCOW’s charge is to make your wing successful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colonel David J. Sanford is the commander of the 635th Supply Chain Operations Wing, Air Force Sustainment Center, at Scott AFB, Illinois. He is responsible for leading and directing operations for two supply chain groups, a Materiel Maintenance Group, the Air Force’s Petroleum Office, Vehicle and WRM Global Management offices.
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The Logistics civilian career field is the largest in the Air Force. There are over 43,000 civilian Logisticians. This number is staggering, especially when compared to only 60,600 active duty officers of all career fields, only 2,700 of which are from the three Logistics officer career fields. We are a large, diverse, and complicated career field.

To simplify expectations, we have developed “stalls” and “anchors”. Our four logistics stalls help bucket our 150 series into four main communities – Supply; Maintenance; Life Cycle Logistics; and Deployment, Distribution and Transportation. These stalls directly correlate to the Logistics Workforce Categories as defined in the DoD Logistics Human Capital Strategy, May 2008. Every Logistician should be able to find their job in one of these four stalls.

Our stalls serve two purposes. First, it provides a standardized definition of who we are and what we do. It provides a common language. Often as Logisticians we define ourselves by who we are not. We are not operators. We are not medical. We are not engineers. These four stalls (Figure 1) create a common frame of reference for all 150 occupational series, because regardless of your job title, in essence we all work...
together to ensure the availability of the right stuff to the right place at the right time. Secondly, our stalls also help communicate career paths, and valued experience for depth and breadth at the appropriate grade levels.

To help communicate these expectations, we have developed grade appropriate anchors (Figure 2). These anchors define expectations of depth and breadth in any one of these four stalls. They also go further and define “what we value” with respect to leadership and education for each grade.

GS-11/NH-02 and below: These positions represent over 80% of the workforce. While individuals may enter the civilian workforce at any grade level, these positions are our technical positions or entry level management positions that focus on learning core capabilities. The expectation is to know your job and to do it with excellence. Attention to detail, adherence to standards, following the technical data, thinking about innovation and better ways to do things are the responsibility of every Logistician at these grades.

For our GS-12s, GS-13s, and NH-03s the expectations grow. These grades represent only about 17% of the workforce. Not only do we want you to have technical depth of at least 1-3 years in one of the core stalls, we would also like to see a complementary assignment in another area. This can be formal or informal. It can also be in a different stall or a different area of the same stall. Additionally, it is appropriate to have a bachelor’s degree, some leadership experience, and the appropriate level of Professional Military Education (PME). We have all heard debate about the value of these additional requirements for civilians. “I know my job. Why isn’t that enough?” However, these positions are frontline leaders and junior staff officers; it is important to have a wider world view than a single job. A degree and PME both ensure some exposure to the larger world around us and some basic understanding of the Air Force and the “company business”. It is not just about a single task. At this level you need a larger perspective. These positions will also begin to formally or informally lead and supervise. Realistically, there are only so many supervisory positions available, but we still value development of leadership skills and encourage individuals to have at least 12 months of experience as a supervisor or leader. This can be formal or informal and does not have to be part of position description.
GS-14s, GS-15s and NH-04s represent the top of the pyramid and are our enterprise leaders. The expectations for these grades are understandably higher. In addition to demonstrated proficiency and job performance in a specific stall, at least 1-3 years corporate breadth in another stall or at a staff or program office is required. Additionally, at this point leadership experience is no longer optional and at least two years as a supervisor is expected. And to ensure our leaders are well rounded both a master’s degree and Air War College (or other grade appropriate PME) are valued.

I have outlined a lot of expectations but this is not a checklist and there is no one magic career path. The beauty of service as a civil servant is your career can take many twists and turns along the way. Unlike our military counterparts, we do not have mandatory gates and our timing is flexible. For those that were not able to attend this year’s Logistics Officer Association in Washington DC, we had a civilian force development panel that you can watch on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7YEV63wl.do&feature=youtube. 

Like snowflakes, no two careers are the same. And while we have deliberately tried to take the mystery out of the standard expectations that come with promotions and each level of responsibility, there is plenty of room for your career to genuinely reflect your own personality, goals, and interests.

I hope this has been helpful to provide a baseline to our Civilian Airmen and their military counterparts and supervisors. In future additions of the Exceptional Release we will continue to provide additional information on civilian force development. In the meantime, if you ever have any questions or ideas, our lines of communication are always open at any time to: Mrs. Lorna Estep, our Functional Manager at 703-697-2822; Ms. Jennifer (Jenna) Fletcher, our AF Career Field Manager, at DSN 222-4127; or Ms. Andrea Truman, our Logistics Career Field Team Chief, at DSN 665-1009.

Authors:

**Lorna B. Estep**, a member of the Senior Executive Service, is the Director of Resource Integration, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. She is responsible for the planning, programming and budgeting of weapons systems sustainment, equipment, and logistics and installations resource requirements.
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Repair Network Integration: Connecting the Dots

A Primer on RNI

As Logistics professionals, we look to the Logistics Officer Association as a platform to bring people and ideas together, making Log Nation greater than the sum of its parts. Similarly, the fundamental concept of Repair Network Integration (RNI) is to link together repair resources and expertise across the Air Force enterprise to maximize responsiveness, agility and operational effectiveness. The purpose of this article is to reach a better understanding of the RNI Initiative, explore the applicability of the LOGTRUTHS presented by Lt Gen Cooper in previous editions of the Exceptional Release, and to display the link for RNI’s relationship to the greater Enterprise Logistics Strategy.

RNI is one of several Enterprise Logistics Strategy Initiatives, and it began following CORONA in Fall 2008. The Air Force Chief of Staff approved the Initiative with the intent of transitioning the Air Force from the concept of multiple levels of repair operating within MAJCOMs and the ANG, to an enterprise of all Non-Mission Generating maintenance organized to optimize support to the Warfighter.

RNI is a process-focused effort to develop an enterprise-wide view of select off-equipment repair capability. The initiative’s primary goal is to design networks of similar repair capability in order to harness the power of the Total Force and maximize support to Mission Generation. To this end, integrating those repair networks into the broader end-to-end supply chain is also required. Thus, you may sometimes hear a more descriptive title for the overall effort: Repair Network Integration-Supply Chain Integration (RNI-SCI). Synchronization of repair with the supply chain affects the physical components (maintenance shops, inventory storage and distribution networks), as well as the processes that guide decision making. This means RNI-SCI must involve the supply chain from “rear to
“front” and must be designed to support peacetime and contingency operations.

The RNI initiative is executed by a team of maintenance and supply professionals at HQ Air Force and HQ Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) in coordination with representatives from each MAJCOM, Air National Guard, Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC) and Air Force Life Cycle Management Center (AFLCMC). To date, RNI has established Repair Networks for Engines, Precision Measurement Equipment Laboratory and Hydraulics, linking intermediate-level repair in back shops, Centralized Repair Facilities (CRF), and in some cases Air Logistics Complexes (ALC). Analysis and network set-up has taken place for avionics and E&E repair networks; however, implementation will be phased beginning in 2017 based on manpower filling the Repair Network Manager (RNM) role.

Enterprise management of repair introduces a new lexicon for some maintenance and supply personnel. At the repair execution level is the Node—the individual maintenance activity (e.g. CRF or repair shop). The Node Manager is the shop chief, and he or she will have a collaborative relationship with the RNM to meet enterprise needs in cases where their node’s capability and/or capacity is not adequate to meet Mission Generation needs. The Node Manager’s chain of command does not change, and most of the work they do remains unchanged. A Repair Network is a collection of nodes with similar repair capability and is overseen by a RNM. The RNM resides in either AFSC or AFLCMC, which are both organizations within AFMC. The RNM has no direct authority over the Node Manager, but has liaison authority to collaborate among all stakeholders to meet enterprise needs. A Product Repair Group (PRG) is a collection of related networks required to support specific groups of weapons systems, engines or commodities (i.e., hydraulic component repair, engine repair, etc.). Finally, a Product Repair Manager (PRM) is an O-6 or GS-15 level leader of the PRG, who is responsible for strategic oversight. A key point is RNI does not replace the Chain of Command, but rather creates a matrixed team to facilitate more rapid stakeholder communications across organizations to quickly resolve repair constraints.

With the roles and structure defined, let’s take a closer look at the duties of the key players. The RNM serves as the central focal point for matching enterprise needs with available Capability and Capacity (CAP2) using the collaborative concept identified in AFI 20-118 and Log
IT enablers, such as LIMS-EV Repair Network View. The RNM facilitates collaboration with affected nodes, MAJCOM Functional Managers (MFM), appropriate depot-level repair shops, the Defense Logistics Agency, Item Managers (IMs) and other applicable supply chain representatives to resolve repair constraints. The RNM aids in eliminating barriers between repair activities within the MAJCOMs and supply entities within AFMC. This collaborative process enables efficient and effective communication of repair constraints and establishes a faster method to develop optimum solutions for the enterprise.

Under the RNI concept, enterprise visibility holds the potential for increased throughput, agile response to changing mission needs, and an overall increase in operational effectiveness given existing resources. In order to track progress towards these concepts, Repair Network Managers conduct an annual Network Performance Assessment (NPA). The NPA, prescribed in AFMAN 20-118, is a tool for assessing network effectiveness and identifying potential efficiencies. Through this tool, the RNM can highlight concerns and make recommendations to the PRM for network improvements. The PRM then considers all inputs across the PRG to determine the next steps to balance the right amount of repair CAP2 with Air Force enterprise needs. Above all, it’s important to understand RNI is a process, not a product. As with any progressively successful process, RNI focuses on continuous improvement and tools like the NPA to ensure RNI continues to meet the demands of the enterprise.
Applying the Logistics Truths

LOG TRUTHS

1. Rear operations must be connected and respond to forward operations
2. You don't have to own it to use it / benefit from it
3. A better trained Airman is a more capable Airman
4. Accurate requirements = effective logistics
5. AF Logistics cannot succeed without Joint Logistics
6. All good logistics work is done in process

As Lt Gen Cooper wraps up his series on the six Logistics Truths, we’d like to highlight those that have a particularly close relationship to the RNI Initiative. These LOGTRUTHS speak for themselves, but it helps to see them applied.

LOGTRUTH 1: Rear ops must be connected and respond to forward operations - RNI is about moving the USAF from the concept of multiple levels of repair operating within MAJCOMs, to a single repair enterprise focused on providing agile and responsive support to Mission Generation maintenance, in garrison or deployed. It does not matter if the repair is happening in a contingency AOR or in a CONUS back shop, the RNI concept posits that all repair supports an interconnected enterprise, and empowers a RNM to facilitate optimum support to the Warfighter.

LOGTRUTH 2: You don't have to own it to use it / benefit from it - RNI is about leveraging all existing resources to maximize operational effectiveness. PRGs are designed to organize non-mission generating repair into networks of like weapon systems. Through RNM coordination and enterprise awareness, if Base X loses a test stand, their work can be quickly diverted and absorbed by Base Y. Execution of repair at the Node-level remains within MAJCOM chain-of-command; however, with coordination, every node has the potential to mitigate a temporary constraint and feed the supply chain to support a need anywhere in the Air Force. We have specific examples of interaction between Active Duty and Air National Guard resulting in great success within the Hydraulics PRG, and RNI made it possible. ANG units with available capability and capacity have assisted the enterprise by taking on intermediate-level repair when constraints existed elsewhere - exemplifying LOGTRUTH 2.

LOGTRUTH 4: Accurate requirements = effective logistics - RNI seeks to fully utilize substantial investments in maintenance, repair and overhaul capabilities across the Air Force enterprise in a manner that increases throughput to meet Mission Generation needs. With an accurate view of enterprise repair capability and capacity, parts supportability, and demand; RNI provides a capability to network across MAJCOM lines in response to requirements. Furthermore, as we can no longer afford excess or underutilized repair capacity, the networked paradigm can help identify when too much or too little repair CAP2 exists at any one
LOGTRUTH 6: All good log work is done in process - The RNI team is focused on developing standardized and repeatable processes to organize non-mission generating repair into networks aided by centralized planning and coordination of RNMs within AFMC. This initiative is transformational, involves the Total Force, and touches a wide variety of products; therefore few “one-size-fits-all” solutions have been found. Though RNI processes are still relatively new to our logistics community, these activities remain an RNM’s central focus: Proactive identification of repair issues negatively affecting Mission Generation, awareness of CAP2 reported by networked nodes, monitoring of network performance measures, and collaboration with repair nodes and supply chain managers to resolve enterprise constraints.

RNI and Enterprise Logistics Strategy

Effective organizations must ensure major process changes are driven by a strategic vision that respects the threats that may hinder and opportunities that may enhance organizational success. The first Air Force Enterprise Logistics Strategy (ELS) was developed by the Logistics Board in May 2012. In 2014 the SECAF and CSAF fundamentally revamped how the Air Force executes Strategic Planning. Three seminal documents; the “Call to the Future,” the Air Force Future Operating Concept (AFFOC), and the Air Force Strategic Master Plan (SMP) were published in 2014 and 2015. The ELS became the Enterprise Logistics Flight Plan (ELFP) supporting the SECAF and CSAF strategic vision.

Aligned to the SMP and AFFOC, the ELFP is the logistics community’s strategic framework to fulfill a 2035 vision. The ELFP or “Flight Plan” presents a unified logistics strategy, outlines Capabilities that we must enable, and demands game-changing initiatives to move us forward to achieve a sustainable logistics model to win future conflicts. One of those key Capabilities is the ability to operate responsive, resilient supply chains, and RNI is one of the primary initiatives that is helping to create that Capability. The ELFP structure is outlined in Figure 31: Enterprise Logistics Strategy, and you can see RNI is one of several initiatives at the bottom of the graphic. If you have not had the opportunity to read our ELFP, it can be found at: https://cs1.eis.af.mil/sites/elg/ELFP Page Drafts/ELFP.aspx.
Rather than discuss how RNI relates to all the layers and components of the ELFP, we’d like to highlight tangible examples of how RNI contributes to the Enterprise Logistics Strategy. At the core of the ELFP are 10 Capabilities required of the future Log Nation. As you may expect, there are disparities between our current state and the desired future capabilities. The major efforts to fill these gaps are recognized by the ELG as Initiatives, and this is where RNI fits in. RNI is intended to mitigate specific gaps in four of the 10 Capabilities: Responsive, Resilient Supply Chain; Set the Theaters; Logistics Multi-Domain Command & Control; and Collaborative Integrated Planning.

Each of the Capabilities are described strategically in the ELFP and are further clarified with specific “Ability to…” statements. For example, in order to achieve a Responsive, Resilient Supply Chain, the Air Force requires the “ability to rapidly adjust repair capability and capacity in response to changing demand patterns or disruptions to individual sources of repair.” This kind of resilient response has become commonplace within the Propulsion PRG. When engine production capability or capacity at one location is disrupted due to any number of constraints, the appropriate RNM can redirect engines and parts to other locations to maintain required levels of readiness.

The standup of the Hydraulic PRG in FY16 has resulted in the same success. RNMs worked with repair nodes,
Item Managers, and MFMs to collaboratively develop solutions to move carcasses and piece parts to available repair capacity in order to resolve parts shortages.

As another example, enabling the future capability to perform Multi-Domain Logistics Command & Control, the Air Force requires the “ability to provide agile allocation, adjudication and delivery of all logistics resources globally and respond to changing requirements.” Under the RNI Initiative, the implementation of PRGs established an Air Force-wide common operating picture of intermediate-level repair capability through PRM management and oversight. Furthermore, the collaborative processes established through RNI improve communication and collaboration with supply chain managers, facilitating agile response to enterprise needs. Through annual NPAs, RNMs continuously assess network effectiveness, highlight trends and make recommendations to the PRM. The PRM then has a unique perspective that spans similar repair capability across every MAJCOM and weapon system. From that perspective, the PRM may offer recommendations for resource adjustments to meet changing requirements. Both the enterprise view and collaborative processes improve support to the Warfighter at home and across all AORs.

The RNI Initiative challenges the Log Nation to think differently about how repair is organized today and in the future. The ever-evolving threats to national security and growing demands on defense resources drive a necessary but difficult shift from deeply redundant capabilities and processes to reliance on an agile and responsive networked capability. Look for more information on RNI in future editions of The Exceptional Release. In the meantime, contact the RNI PMO with any questions at AFMC.RNI.PMO@us.af.mil.

About the Authors:

Maj James P. Chevalier is the Implementation Branch Chief, RNI Program Management Office, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. He is responsible for developing guidance and procedures for implementation of this CSAF initiative, and leads efforts to strengthen enterprise management of repair across the Total Force. Maj Chevalier is an Aircraft Maintenance Officer (21A) from the Air Force Reserve Command, assigned to AFMC to work full-time in support of RNI. Major Chevalier has served in various maintenance leadership roles in support of the A-10C Thunderbolt II.

Danielle Langefeld is a Consultant with Deloitte Consulting supporting the RNI PMO. Prior to joining Deloitte, Danielle served in the USAF for six years in a variety of leadership positions as a Munitions Maintenance Officer (21M). She currently serves as a Captain in the Air Force Reserve Command.
Paul Tracy is a Consultant with Deloitte Consulting supporting Air Force Logistics and the RNI PMO. Prior to joining Deloitte, Paul served 6 years as a C-21 and C-5 pilot (11M).
In August 2016, I had the opportunity to volunteer at a camp where refugees and migrants waited for their asylum applications to be processed. My experience was eye-opening, to say the least, and I learned a great deal about the refugee situation, the humanitarian world, management, leadership, working in an international environment, and empathy. That said, this article will focus on logistics; implementing an inventory management process from scratch and having a small role in a foreign work environment taught me new lessons and reiterated old ones that are worth sharing.

The route has been open for decades, but in 2015 waves of refugees and migrants made a brave and desperate decision to cross the Aegean Sea from Turkey. This made international headlines as the “Refugee Crisis.” During the peak of the crisis in October 2015, up to 6,000 people every day were making the four to ten mile journey from Turkey to the Greek island of Lesvos. Turkey and the EU made a deal in March 2016 which drastically decreased the numbers leaving Turkey to a present daily average in the dozens.

I was the storage manager for the Humanitarian Support Agency (HSA), a small Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) charged with distributing clothes and operating a chai tea point at Kara Tepe Refugee Camp. There are about 5,300 refugees and migrants on Lesvos divided mainly amongst two camps: Moria with 4,400 and Kara Tepe with about 900. When I arrived, some of the aid workers and organizations seemed to be still coming off of the “high” of emergency response, and therefore HSA did not have a process in which to store or count their stocks. I was given a great amount of autonomy and came up with three very simple goals: 1.) accurately account for everything we have; 2.) organize the items so they are easy to find; and 3.) create a sustainable process that any volunteer can understand which will allow HSA to maintain an accurate inventory in the future.

From 17 August to 3 October, my fellow volunteers and I worked hard to meet those goals. As storage
manager I was responsible for a roughly 4,000 square foot outdoor storage area consisting of five large tents, one 40 foot shipping container, and one 20 foot shipping container. “In the back,” as it was referred to, we received, sorted and counted donations (clothes, shoes, hygiene items, blankets, etc.) or items which had previously been uncounted. For my first four weeks I had two to six volunteers working with me throughout the day. When the school year started our numbers shrank drastically, and I would have help from one or two volunteers for only a couple of hours in the afternoon.

By the time I left, we had organized the 40 foot container and four tents and had sorted 42,746 counted items into 76 categories (my successor is still working to achieve the first goal). To best convey what I learned, the following paragraphs will first explain the process and implementation, then provide the scenarios and situations which led me to the takeaway of each lesson.

**Process and Implementation**

The process we implemented followed a rudimentary reason: “Keep It Simple, Stupid.” Often volunteers would only come for a few weeks, so it was simpler to have them use paper to write down what they took or added to the inventory instead of teaching them to use the computer system.

Implementation took the duration of my time at Kara Tepe because we had a lot of sorting and counting to do. Here is an example of before, during and after:

To make items easily findable, we had maps of box and bin locations for the 40 foot container as well as maps and listings for each tent. The goal with the tents was for everything to be in a general area described in each map and to be treated as deep storage, so only entire boxes were removed and the box was marked off of the listing. Additionally, we created an aisle-way so boxes could be more easily removed or added when necessary.

When I first arrived, we were able to combine the inventories of the storage area and a second 20 foot container for clothing distribution. Think of it as a store: items are received and added to the inventory in the storage area and then removed when a customer makes a purchase, which for HSA was when a family was given clothes at the distribution container. One location, one inventory; makes sense, right? A few weeks before I left, I noticed a large error in our numbers and decided to remove the distribution container from the inventory (I will explain more in the lessons learned section). The change made us operate more like a corporate distribution center, where items were added or removed from the inventory whenever they arrived or departed the storage area, not when they were given to a family.
Lessons Learned

Centralization Has its Benefits

Every Friday I would send the inventory to HSA management who would then forward it to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). However, the UNHCR did not control the central distribution warehouse; that was instead operated by a group of independent volunteers who were outside of UNHCR authority. These volunteers did a great job of quickly providing us with clothes upon request, but the fact that the clothes needed to be requested is part of the problem. As I mentioned earlier, there was a larger camp on the island but our stocks were totally separate. With no one having oversight of both our inventories and independent warehouse, there was no clear way to resolve shortages or redistribute excess supplies between the camps. In my opinion, having one entity with visibility over both camps while running the warehouse would minimize the requests for donations or the amount of money spent by every NGO to fulfill their requirements.

Take away: This affirmed the saying, “centralized control, decentralized execution” because centralized entities can ensure that the large scale objectives are being met, rather than only seeing what is in front of us at the execution level.

Processes and People Must Use the Same Language

HSA was truly international, and we spoke many languages, but it was important for us to use the same terms. An example of this is the confusion created between t-shirts for teenagers and men. We received a donation of 10 teenager t-shirts, the receipt thus increasing the inventory by that quantity. The following morning, the distribution team took the 10 teenager t-shirts to their container. Throughout the day, all 10 teenager t-shirts were then distributed to six teenagers and four men. Since the distribution team logged who was given what, not what was given to whom, the daily distribution log showed an inventory decrease of six teenager t-shirts and four men’s t-shirts. Now compound that problem over three weeks and 28 potentially confusing categories, and you get the picture. Differences of terminology and processes between storage and distribution started to become too complicated to overcome. This scenario applied to many different categories and is the reason I had to remove the distribution container from the inventory. When we properly accounted for what was in only the storage area, our actual numbers were 11,093 lower than what was in the computer. We estimated there were about 2,000 clothes in the distribution container; that was a 9,000 item discrepancy or 23% of our inventory.

Take away: Standardize terminology across the organization (which regulations typically do for us in the military), and find the sustainable way to overcome confusion. Additionally, be careful using jargon or acronyms when working with people outside of your organization or career field in order to avoid confusion.

Data: You Must Know What You Have and What You Have Used to Know What You Need

HSA was given the opportunity to purchase new winter clothes through a large NGO. A decision was made to disregard our on-hand quantities, so we ended up requesting $280,000 worth of clothes. Unfortunately, we didn’t know
that two-thirds of the requested items were not available because they had to be purchased through a different pot of money (even the humanitarian world has colors of money). That pot’s budget was only $33,000. Using the clothing distribution log and the distribution team leader’s experience, we were able to establish our customer demographics by sizes and male, female and children. Then in Excel we were able to forecast winter clothing demand based on a 1,200 person population (the worst-case camp capacity) receiving clothing three times over the winter.

Meeting the winter clothes requirement ended up being under the $33K budget, so we had money left over to purchase other clothing items.

**Take away:** Data is not there to make our evaluations and decorations look good, but has to be actionable to best support the customer’s requirements, whether it be gloves for the winter or engine parts.

### Always Have an Idea of What Resources Are Available

Working for an NGO taught me that when a disaster strikes people truly do their best to help—especially through clothing donations. It also taught me that being on the receiving end of a push supply system can be very difficult as I always had to know what space was open to store a new donation. We were inundated with baby clothes, kids’ socks and women’s underwear and also received junk clothes or inappropriate clothing (booty shorts, corsets, military uniforms), which were a burden to dispose of properly. The only resource of which I had an ample amount was space, and having an accurate knowledge of what space was available allowed us to handle unexpected (and sometimes large) donations. This also applied to knowing the inventory; I definitely did not have it memorized, but my goal was to be able to say what we were out of, low on, or had excessive quantities of.

**Take away:** Having a good, up to date pulse of the organization and resources allows you to make more accurate decisions on your feet.
Stay Clean and Organized

This is surprisingly simple but very important. If an area looks messy, the perception is that keeping clean and organized no longer matters. In my case, it was ensuring clothes that were not taken to the distribution container got back in the boxes from which they were removed. Without process adherence, items are put into the wrong locations, counts get messed up, and eventually the whole inventory is inaccurate and useless.

Take away: The smallest item out of place has the potential to cause a domino effect which will create a larger problem.

Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) is Continuous and Requires Flexibility

Looking back, perhaps I should have attempted a CPI event, but instead I just tried to apply some CPI principles. For example, simplicity: I thought it would be simple if receipts happened in storage and issues happened at distribution. Through trial and error, we realized that was not the case and changed to the process in Figure 2. Additionally, we had to remain flexible with the container and tent layouts. In September, the camp started making preparations for winter, which meant I had to find space in an already full container for jackets, sweaters, gloves, winter caps and winter scarves. By removing some summer items and consolidating boxes, we were able to do that. When spring rolls around, the storage manager will have to revert to or improve upon the summer design. In the tents, I knew that I wanted boxes to be easily found, removed and added, so I developed this layout:

It looked good at first, but had a couple of flaws. First, the boxes we used were not always in the best condition, so we had multiple collapsed columns over the course of a week. Second, and most importantly, it was not the most effective use of the space. By switching to this layout and separating each tent by gender, we increased the storage capacity by 14%:

Before I left, I told my successor there were still areas for improvement. For one, we essentially double counted
items by: 1.) counting a donation; and 2.) counting a box to add to storage. Additionally, we were going to do a large sweater distribution, as well as receive the ordered winter clothes, so a redesign of the tents may have been necessary.

Take away: We often identify a process which needs work, do a CPI event, codify the changes in a local regulation, congratulate ourselves, then move on. In this, we often overlook the importance of installing mechanisms to periodically evaluate the process or searching for new methods to improve it. As officers, every job we do is for a short time, so making sure our enlisted and civilian counterparts are empowered to keep the project moving forward and maintaining a good continuity for our successors is the best way for the organization to always improve.

The final lesson I learned is really a life lesson:

**Attempt to Disregard Preconceived Notions about the People with Whom You Are Going to Work.** We are all taught as children; “do not judge a book by its cover”, but that is a hard lesson to practice (hence “attempt”). I learned it again while on Lesvos. Before going, I expressed concern to my friends and family about working with the “yuppies” of the humanitarian world. I determined before my arrival that I was going to work with a bunch of peace-loving, tree-hugging do-gooders who did not really understand what it meant to work or what is actually happening in the world. Boy was I wrong. For 49 days I was fortunate to work—dare I say serve—with a well-educated, well informed, highly motivated, and genuinely a goodhearted group of people whom I am proud to call friends. They did not judge me for being military and instead, embraced my experiences which occasionally provided them a different perspective. They allowed me to bounce ideas off them and vice versa. Their perspective and opinions were how “we” implemented a new inventory management process, not how “I” implemented it. As our Air Force continues to expand its advising mission and operations in the multinational arena, we have to avoid arrogance and remember that our allies will do things different from us, and those processes might actually be better.

**For more information, please use these links:**


**Capt Daniel Dale** is currently a participant in the Career Intermission Pilot Program and will return to active duty in July 2018. He was assigned to the 35th Logistics Readiness Squadron at Misawa AB, prior to entering the program and served as the Installation Deployment Officer, Deployment and Distribution Flight Commander, and Operations Officer. Capt Dale earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and his commission through AFROTC at the University of Tennessee in 2011. He completed the Master of Managerial Logistics program through North Dakota State University in 2015.
Focus on a Chapter Leader

Name: Kevin M. Walton
LOA Chapter: Northern Lights Chapter, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
Position: President
Hometown: Augusta, GA / Columbia, SC
College(s): Clemson University, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and of course, Air University
Degree(s): BA in Psychology, MAS Human Factors in Aviation,
Commissioning Source: ROTC
Family (names): Wife - Celeste
Children: Bryce (4), Sebastyen (2)
Technical Training:
Professional Duty Title: 732 AMS Director of Operations
First Duty Location and Duty Title: Misawa Air Base, Fabrication Flight Commander

What do you like most about being a loggie?
Logistics is life. Quite simply, there is no other profession that commands as much attention to detail, ability to network and encompasses such a broad spectrum of skillsets. If you read doctrine, books on how to win wars or listen to leaders past and present, they all stress the importance of logistics to accomplish the mission and win wars. As Sun Tzu said, the line between disorder and order is logistics. The constant pressure to perform at a high level and then watching the professionals in our Air Force and Joint Services who “make magic happen,” that is what I like most about being a loggie!

What was your biggest learning moment?
The biggest learning moment for me came while I was deployed to Afghanistan. The power of relationships and joint coalition logistics is amazing. We were faced with a situation where the Afghan National Police were scared to be transported via ground because of IEDs and other forms of terror attacks from Kandahar to Herat. As part of the team responsible for coordinating their movement to the regional training center, I had overheard our British counterparts in the Regional Command - South headquarters discussing a desire to utilize their tactical airlift more. With one conversation, we were able to secure transport for two rotations of trainees, greatly bolstering their confidence in the coalition and also ensuring their safety.

What are you most proud of in your time on active duty?
Leading Airmen. Easy answer here. I am most proud of the Airmen I have had the privilege of leading, watching them grow, developing their own leadership styles and then taking care of their own Airmen. When people thank me for my service, I very quickly tell them I love what I do and I appreciate their support. It is easy to serve when you have an amazing team to lead.

As a recognized leader in your local LOA Chapter, what activities/events are you most proud of?
I’m most proud of our “All-In” initiative. We have truly expanded our reach to include our Army, Marine and Navy partners who work around the base. We have also incorporated our Civilian counterparts and acted as a venue for their professional development. We have also included our Total Force partners from the Reserve and Guard components on-base. Lastly, we have included international officers into our meetings when they have been on JBER. The foundation that was built before the current LOA leadership team and the incredible heights the current leadership team has achieved garnered interest from across the LOA network. My great hope is to inspire a new generation of Logistician to believe in the power of this amazing network!

What trips and tours do you plan on taking with LOA?
We have a strong partnership with our local National Defense Transportation Agency president and his connections throughout the Anchorage community have provided us more opportunities than we can possibly experience in a single year. We visited the Port of Anchorage and FEDEX with our eyes on experiencing the “Logistics of Beer” at a local brewery. We also plan to visit our Army counterparts and go through their com-
bat convoy simulator and learn more about how they prepare to execute their mission as Arctic Warriors.

Do you have any shout-outs?

A huge shout out to my right hand man and the engine behind most of our ventures, Rob Fekete. I’d also like to thank our executive council for their great ideas, passion and willingness to think outside the box for our events. Mike Bliss and the previous and future Presidents and their leaderships teams of the Northern Lights Chapter, I truly understand and appreciate the sacrifice, energy and passion it requires to stoke the flames of interest for this great organization! Lastly, my wife Celeste and boys Bryce and Sebastyen, I appreciate the patience and sacrifice and understanding y’all give me with not only a demanding job but also this passion project.

Focus on a CGO

Name: Chris Piha
LOA Chapter: Pudgy Chapter
Position: Member
Hometown: Carol Stream, IL
College(s): Southern Illinois University Carbondale

American Military University, VA.
Degree(s): Bachelors of Arts, History
Masters of Arts; U.S. Military History
Commissioning Source: ROTC
Family (names): Wife-Capt Cari Piha
Children: One on the way! EDD 29 April
Technical Training:
Professional Duty Title: Maintenance Operations Officer
First Duty Location and Duty Title: Travis AFB, 860 AMXS Ast AMU OIC

What has been your proudest moment?

Witnessing one of the NCO’s I worked for beat cancer while serving as the MOF OIC at Travis AFB. After experiencing some minor abdominal comfort and a follow up exam one of our units most dedicated NCO’s was diagnosed with cancer. It couldn’t have happened at a worse time as him and his wife had just had their first child. He fought harder than anyone I have ever met. We united as a family & unit to support him and his family throughout the process. I’ve never been more proud as a leader to watch someone fight with such determination while maintaining a remarkable positive attitude. We all learned a few life lessons from spending time with him during the process. After multiple surgeries (some lasting up to 24 hours) and rounds of Chemo he ended up kicking cancers butt. We threw a huge squadron party for him after. I don’t think there was a single person who didn’t cry at it.
How do you keep your leadership skills honed?
I read A LOT and I’m not afraid to fail. I’ve pretty much burned through the last 6 years of the CSAF reading list and I love to pick fellow Airman’s minds on good books to read. I will usually keep a pad and pen handy and jot down things that I think can be applicable. I’ll try it out and see where it goes. What’s the worst that can happen haha?

What are your personal aspirations?
Continue to grow as a leader so that I can better lead our Airmen. I’m lucky enough to be in my dream job and couldn’t be happier. At the same time I’m always striving to be a good husband while maintaining a great marriage with my wife.

Do you have any shout outs?
Just a quick thanks to ALL the phenom 21A’s & 21R’s that have taken the time help me along the way. Oh… and go Salukis!

What leadership skills/traits are most important to logistics officers?
Developing your down field vision. Understanding the first, second, third, and forth order effects of you or your leadership team’s decisions is a vital part of logistics game. If you pull this lever, what will happen? We’re blessed to be surrounded by some of the most talented tacticians if the Air Force. As problems arise it’s our duty to think through the lasting effects of our decisions and the larger strategic implications.
In January 2016, we began our 365-day deployment in Kabul, Afghanistan as Logistics and Aircraft Maintenance Advisors to the Afghan Air Force. As senior aircraft maintenance officers, we were tasked with one of the most challenging missions of our careers, to Train, Advise, and Assist (TAA) the Afghan Air Force (AAF) as it led an effort to improve security for its country through air power. Although the AAF celebrated its 95th anniversary in 2016, the AAF has had many challenges to overcome which understandably explains its nascent aviation sustainment capability. Surprisingly, AAF manpower is approximately 8,000 personnel of the nearly 350,000 members in the Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF). Currently, the AAF fleet consists of six types of aircraft: Mi-17, Mi-35, MD-530, C-208, C-130, and A-29. The varied fleet includes cargo and attack helicopters, large and small fixed-wing cargo, and fixed-wing attack platforms varying in age from the 1970s to brand new airframes. While the maintenance members assigned to the 440th and 442nd Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadrons focus on day-to-day tactical maintenance activity to keep the fleet operational, our role as AAF Advisors is centered around strategic sustainment efforts to keep the AAF aircraft viable and in the fight to support the Afghan government in securing Afghanistan. The goal of this article is to capture our experiences as Air Advisors and provide insight to the cultural differences we experienced, the challenges faced, and potential future advising efforts in the context of four axioms that were largely passed to us by our predecessors:

1. It doesn’t have to make sense.
2. You just can’t make this stuff up.
3. You can’t want it more than they want it.
4. Five Monkeys.

It doesn’t have to make sense: Cultural differences

Our US Air Force training and career experiences indoctrinate us with principles and standards that provide the basis of our profession and understanding. Moreover, when tasked with a deployment as an Air Advisor, they receive eight-weeks of training to prepare for the deployment environment and advisor mission. However, experience and training cannot fully prepare an Advisor for the cultural aspects encountered when dealing with the TAA mission. To some Advisors, it can come as a shock that the rest of the world does not always see things the same way or approach problem-solving in a similar manner.

Cultural differences with our Afghan counterparts and our Coalition partners are prevalent. Simply put, our cultural biases as Americans and military personnel can be difficult roadblocks to successfully conducting the advising mission. From our perspective, Advisors must check their egos at the door. It doesn’t have to make sense! Advising demands a greater acceptance of innovative, controversial, and sometimes illogical methods and solutions that confound and often frustrate US Advisors. Advisors must learn to get used to this uncertainty. To achieve fruitful TAA for the Afghan counterparts required understanding and navigat-
ing cultural differences without becoming frustrated. It is alright to challenge solutions, but Advisors shouldn’t always expect that activities and solutions which make sense to them will be the chosen, or correct, path forward. In the following paragraphs, we provided some examples of cultural differences that often don’t make sense, but successful Advisors are able navigate solutions within the boundaries of those differences.

One of the most perplexing differences an Air Advisor first encounters is the difference in work ethic and perceived dedication between Afghan, Coalition and US military personnel. This statement is not meant to demean anyone’s work ethos; it is simply meant to bring attention to cultural differences in this area. It is not uncommon for Afghan military personnel to take their holidays and days off, while deployed members away from families work long days, often with only a single day off each week (if at all), all while the country is essentially at war. Additionally, many Afghans depart work early to travel home before dark. Some Advisors get frustrated and begin to question and doubt their Afghan counterparts’ duty concept and commitment. We recommend Advisors learn to work with or around these differences. Advisors must recognize that we go home after 6 or 12 months, while, for our Afghan counterparts, this is their way of life. They never leave and the conflict has been going on for years. Some of their habits are in response to their country’s lack of security.

The concept of time is also a cultural difference. When a society has very few resources, the one resource they have plenty of is time. In the Afghan culture the meaning of time is very different from our American notion of time. US Air Advisors are often focused on timelines. Advisors arrive in country with a limited amount of time on the ground, and have in their minds that they are going to solve problems and make monumental improvements during our tours. Advisors are often disappointed because in Afghanistan, and especially in advising, progress is often dependent on our Afghan counterparts, and is often slow and achieved through small, incremental victories.

The availability of human capital to perform technical tasks, such as those required in aviation, is also an issue in Afghanistan. Americans come from a society where there is abundant human capital. Literacy and education are essentially assumed for almost all of our society. The same is not true in Afghanistan. Illiteracy and lack of education are significant obstacles for all fields of the AAF, but present a particular problem for the technical disciplines such as aviation maintenance. Essentially, the challenge becomes training, advising and assisting the Afghans to get the best and most out of the available human capital talent because there are not many highly qualified personnel in this category.

An additional cultural difference is the Afghan leadership’s unwillingness to delegate responsibility or
authority. Our Afghan counterparts are very protective of their positions’ authorities. By retaining authority, they protect and strengthen their wasa, or ability to influence. Wasta is essential to their self-perceived usefulness and importance. In a culture that places significance on tribal connections and ethnic background, strengthening positions of power by retaining authority is essential to retain and improve wasa.

Afghan counterparts can gain wasa through the ownership and management of resources. One of the big differences in Afghan society from our society is the lack of an abundance of resources. As a result, AAF leaders tend to have a hoarding or stockpiling mentality. They hoard and hide resources, all the while continuing to ask for more from the coalition. As Advisors, we are accustomed to having sufficient resources to meet our mission’s need. We also leverage our resources to strengthen the organizational mission as a whole. However, the AAF approach is very similar to our supply concept prior to the mid-1990s, where base personnel had their own supply stockpiles and tried to protect or hide assets to ensure their wing’s mission success, regardless of the overarching enterprise needs. Each AAF wing tends to support only its own platforms and leaders will normally not move supplies and resources to other units to help another other base’s readiness. For US Advisors, this runs contrary to the way we now operate and dealing with these issues can be uncomfortable and frustrating.

Bottom line, just because a process or solution doesn’t make sense, it doesn’t mean it’s wrong. We are trained to understand cultural differences exist. However, our training does not and cannot adequately prepare Advisors for what they will experience on the ground. Advisors must be patient in their duties, understanding that enduring solutions are likely to be developed by
Afghans, even if they don’t make sense to us.

You just can’t make this stuff up: Contractual, organizational, resource challenges and other stuff

Just when you think you’ve seen and heard it all, someone or something will top it. Expect the unexpected. Sometimes it feels like we are in a never-ending episode of Ripley’s Believe it or Not. As Advisors, we have been asked to provide promotions, incentive pay, protein powder, CDs, water, office supplies, paper, aspirin and allergy medications, among other things. We have been involved in situations where we just have to shake our head in disbelief.

The Afghan Air Force continues to grow since assuming the lead for combat operations at the conclusion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in 2014. However, while it is exciting to see an Air Force grow, adding new platforms and continually evolving capabilities, it does not do so without growing pains. There are many conflicting factors which make the Train, Advise, and Assist Command-Air’s (TAAC-A) mission to successfully mentor the AAF to self-sufficiency difficult to achieve. First, is the myth that the AAF will ever achieve self-sufficiency. It is our opinion there will always be a requirement for the AAF to rely on coalition assistance and contractor support. Even our own Air Force is not self-sufficient as we rely on a wide variety of contractors and outside support. Furthermore, to sustain the contracts and support they will need requires financial resources they do not possess.

Evolving capabilities create additional challenges, and the Coalition continues to push new capabilities at an alarming rate. For example, as additional aircraft are added to the AAF inventory, the fleet becomes increasingly diverse. A diverse fleet drives increased support requirements. As of this writing, the AAF has 27 new MD-530s with varying capabilities, eight new A-29s in country, with another 12 A-29s in the United States for pilot training. There are 24 relatively new C-208s which are for the most part are homogenous, however there are efforts under consideration to build sub-fleets with new capabilities. Additionally, the Afghan Air Force possesses four C-130H aircraft manufactured in the 1970s. These aircraft are old and expensive to sustain, yet they were transferred to a frail AAF with limited re-
sources. Finally, the 48 aircraft Mi-17 fleet varies in type (1V and V5); age (from the 1980s to as recently as 2013); capabilities (rockets/guns to cargo only); and even production factory variants. The AAF also has Mi-24/35 aircraft that are not supported by the Coalition.

As anyone can imagine this fleet diversity and variety creates second and third order effects. The first of these is the hodge-podge patchwork nature of contracts that cover the various sustainment requirements of weapon systems, new capabilities, supply systems and training requirements. The many required contracts drive up sustainment costs, increase management complexity, and create support gaps in some areas while also duplicating capability in others. Unfortunately, these contracts are a result of evolving platforms, capabilities and requirements with no set end state, or planned or adhered to platform baselines. Furthermore, the variety of platforms and requirements stretch the limited human capital in Afghanistan. Most qualified personnel are vectored to become pilots, while the remaining non-pilot qualified personnel are selected for the technical fields in aviation maintenance and information technology. Even then, there is typically not enough qualified human capital to meet the growing needs of the AAF, increasingly forcing the coalition to use contractors to provide sustainment for the AAF.

Another challenge the AAF faces is the cessation of the coalition forces leading combat operations in Afghanistan. NATO’s ISAF mission ended on 31 December 2014 and transitioned to the Resolute Support mission. As a result, there was a significant reduction of US forces in Afghanistan. US forces reduced from nearly 100,000 to under 10,000 military personnel. A consequence of this manpower reduction was the departure of coalition forces from many locations across Afghanistan. One of those locations was Shindand Air Base in western Afghanistan, south of Herat. This base hosted AAF pilot training and has 12 Mi-17s and six C-208s assigned. When the coalition left this location, and could no longer provide security, CLS support also ceased. As a result, these aircraft have suffered and Shindand Air Base has experienced significant degradation of operational readiness and availability. Considering this base represents about 20% of the AAF airlift capability, this has a significant impact on the AAF, and drives increased operational usage of the remaining fleet. In fact, the Mi-17 fleet typically operated at a 16-18-hour utilization rate (UTE) prior to the start of the NATO Resolute Support mission, and they have averaged a 30-35-hour UTE rate since Resolute Support began. This amplified operational usage drives increased inspection requirements, quicker consumption of blade hours before overhaul, as well as increased parts and petroleum product consumption. As a result, the Mi-17 fleet in particular has become increasingly unsustainable in the long term without Contractor Logistics Support (CLS).

The combination of limited human capital; diverse and complex CLS and training contracts; and the higher operational tempo mix together to create another problem in the TAA mission of the AAF. These factors make Afghan-led sustainment of their AAF aircraft a very difficult task. The CLS contractors have a dual objective to maintain operational readiness and availability, as well as make progress in training. These objectives often times are in conflict with one another. It is very difficult to balance the requirement of training against the necessity for aircraft availability. There are ways to accomplish the management of these intertwined objectives, but it often requires adjustment of the various performance work statements to implement concepts, such as non-reportable time (NRT) or training withholds. This challenging balance; combined with common AAF issues of attendance, limited duty hours, and personnel mismanagement; creates significant roadblocks in the effort to transition sustainment to an AAF organic sustainment capability. As a consequence,
the transition effort is hard to measure and moves at an uncomfortably slow pace. That said, see Axiom 1.

In addition to the previously identified challenges, there are several more underlying factors which further complicate an already complex environment in which the TAA mission operates. For example, the AAF is not an independent service and remains part of the Afghan National Army. This comes with the complication of using Army-centric processes; perceived reduced priority in the Ministry of Defense; and the lack of airpower expertise and advocates in the Afghan National Army. It is not dissimilar to what the USAF experienced prior to becoming an independent service. Another factor that muddles coalition advising efforts is the desire of senior AAF members to cling to the past. Many of them are very familiar and comfortable with the Mi-35s and Mi-17s because of the Soviet training they received decades ago. They understand the eastern European approaches, processes and concepts of sustainment. Advisors must understand this is the basis of experience for many of the AAF senior personnel. It is important for them to stick to these systems and processes in order to retain relevance and wasta in their service. Change can be considered a threat to their livelihood.

Overall, the environment and high number of challenges create many “you just can’t make this stuff up” situations as described. Air Advisors must come prepared to deal with these challenges, and must understand they are going to perform one of the most difficult duties of their lives. We often say that we bring the full extent of our career experience to bear here, often all in the same day.

You can’t want it more than they want it: Relationship building

You can’t want it more than they want it: This axiom is a key factor to advising. It is our nature to
identify, engage, attack and fix problems as fast as we can. This differs from our Afghan counterparts’ approach. They understand if we want something bad enough to happen, as Americans we will become impatient and do it for them. The key is to make the AAF want or need something bad enough so they are willing to make the effort themselves. Until we exert the patience, discipline and willpower to allow the AAF to take action, we will be unable to wean them from over-reliance on coalition support. This process is difficult because Advisors must balance the viability of the fragile military/government and security situation with the requirement to let the Afghans experience some mission degradation in order to become self-sufficient.

The role of an Air Advisor demands from those tasked their technical expertise, seasoned experience and the ability to synthesize all of one’s skills and experiences to bring about results in a challenging environment. However, Advisors must build a personal and professional relationship with their counterparts in order to effectively TAA. When we first began our advising efforts with our Afghan counterparts, there was uncertainty and unknowns on both sides of the table. Literally, we sat on opposite sides of a table and interacted very formally. It was not a relationship conducive for what we wanted to accomplish in our mission. The relationship was extremely transactional, where each side presented their requests to each other. If advising continued in this manner, it was going to be a long, slow, difficult experience.

The Afghan culture is a high context culture. As Americans, and particularly, Airmen, we are often accustomed to a low context environment, such as that previously described. We are good at taking directions and being blunt with each other. The Afghans are not like us. We began with small steps to establish mutual respect and build trust. The methods used were the elimination of meeting in a formal environment; sharing meals together; ensuring our AAF counterpart had as much information as possible; following through and delivering results; and taking a personal interest in families, experiences and goals. We eventually have evolved our relationship from a transactional engagement to a personal interactive discussion. We share ideas, information and work through problems together. As Advisors, we finally knew our relationship had evolved to a new level when we started exchanging e-mails (a real leap for the AAF) and started receiving phone calls directly from our counterpart rather than through our interpreter. This relationship is vital to the TAA mission and has resulted in both parties equally wanting to solve the AAF’s problems.

Five Monkeys: Making change despite social norms

Five monkeys refer to the fabled study of five monkeys placed in a cage with a ladder. Bananas are placed at the top of the ladder. When the monkeys go to climb the ladder to get the bananas they are all punished by being sprayed with cold water. One monkey is replaced with a new monkey. When the new monkey goes to climb the ladder for the bananas, the monkeys who were previously sprayed, yell and abuse the new monkey. Slowly each monkey is replaced, and the new monkeys each learn to yell and abuse the newest monkey when it goes for the bananas. Eventually all of the monkeys are replaced and have adopted this new social norm with no context for the original reason why they prevent new monkeys from reaching for the bananas. The message reveals that social standards eventually lead to a non-innovative culture that does not understand why things are done, just that this is always the way things have been done. This is true of the Advisor role as we rotate through our tours, eventually losing context of why certain procedures, processes and practices exist.

Progress is hard to achieve or measure with the frequent rotation of Advisors every 4, 6 or 12 months. It usually takes an Advisor 2-3 months just to get a grasp of the situation and start to make sense of the challeng-
es of advising. There are many processes in place for both coalition activities as well as for the AAF which are not challenged for relevancy frequently enough because that is the way things have always gotten done. Nobody likes the new people who come in and challenge the established routine. The challenge for Advisors is to continue to be that new monkey who climbs the ladder despite the protests of the other monkeys. Advisors need to break the status quo to make incremental improvements. Sometimes our own resistance to change is our greatest barrier to making progress in advising the AAF. It is difficult, it is uncomfortable, and no one likes risking getting blasted with a hose.

Way ahead

The story here is not all bad news. The Afghans have decades worth of experience on the Mi-17; however, the coalition has depended on contractors to teach foundational training courses for the past six years. The Afghans have the capability to instruct and they have started instructing again. One of the recent significant achievements for the AAF was establishing its own organic 3-level (apprentice level) maintenance training courses. This is a major milestone in growing its own aircraft mechanics as well as maturing its maintenance instructor capacity and experience. The Kabul Air Wing graduated its first Afghan instructed/led Mi-17 Engine and Body Level-3 class with 13 students this past year, and they are currently training another 22 personnel.

While much of the leadership and senior members of the AAF maintenance community are very experienced and have slowly adapted to the methods and western thinking of aircraft maintenance management, it is the younger Afghans who have embraced the challenge of being professional aircraft mechanics and pilots, eager to increase their capability and hungry to sustain their mission to succeed against the insurgency. These talented young mechanics and pilots are the future of the AAF. They embrace innovative ideas and, by just observing the flightline, one can tell the influence TAAC-Air coalition Advisors have had on them and their progress. The young AAF mechanics strive to emulate their Advisors. Although the road ahead is difficult, the future of AAF is heading in the right direction.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Lt Col William C. Kossick previously served as Deputy Commander, 515th Air Mobility Operations Group, Yokota AB, Japan and recently completed a deployment as the Air Advisor and Deputy Director of Maintenance and Logistics 438th Air Expeditionary Wing / Train, Advise, Assist, Command-Air Kabul, Afghanistan

Lt Col Matthew A. Douglas previously served as an Assistant Professor at the Air Force Institute of Technology and recently completed a deployment as an Air Advisor and Director of Maintenance 438th Air Expeditionary Wing / Train, Advise, Assist, Command-Air Kabul, Afghanistan
“A little neglect may breed mischief: for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost.”

-- Benjamin Franklin

INTRODUCTION

How can a small Defense Supply Center in Richmond, VA, better known for one of the largest elk herds east of the Mississippi River, play such a vital role in sustaining joint airpower Warfighters across the globe? And more surprisingly, how can this same center go virtually unrecognized to the very customer base whose mission accomplishment relies so heavily on the abilities of the people and services this center provides?

These are the questions this article addresses as it seeks to bring the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Aviation out of the shadow of the aforementioned elk herd and into the light for the logisticians it supports every minute of every day.

Who and what is DLA Aviation, and what role does it play in the Department of Defense’s mission? Before addressing this question, it is important to recognize why an organization like DLA exists. This article dives headfirst into this issue, but it is often beneficial to start with a simplified version of a complex issue to develop a framework of understanding. To this end, imagine sitting in a pizza parlor with several of your friends and when the server asks for your order everyone orders a single slice of pizza, because each of you only have an appetite for one piece. Recognizing the ordering pattern of your friends, and because individual pizza orders fail to leverage economies of scale and individual appetites, you convince everyone at the table to instead order an entire pizza, resulting in a lower per-piece cost per person. If you can easily imagine this situation unfold-
ing, you now gain insight into the genesis of discussions leading to the passage of the National Security Act in 1947. This Act laid the groundwork for the creation of a Department of Defense (DoD) organization responsible for consolidating purchasing requirements across the military services to leverage the full consumable material buying power of the DoD, much the same way the simplified example consolidated pizza requirements and lowered overall costs.

This article will explore the creation of the Defense Logistics Agency, detail the responsibilities of its six Primary Level Field Activities (PLFAs), and discuss the role the organization plays in supplying a majority of the parts and services needed by the military services. Furthermore, it will examine the critical role of DLA Aviation in supporting the aviation and nuclear components of the DoD and other federal agencies. The ultimate goal of this discussion is to educate logisticians about the resources and services available to leverage against the myriad challenges confronting them as they engage in supporting America’s Warfighting mission.

“The line between disorder and order lies in logistics…”

-- Sun Tzu

Defense Logistics Agency

DLA is America’s combat logistics support agency, rendering material support to the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy, federal agencies and many coalition partners. The organization has evolved since 1961 when the Defense Supply Agency was formed, but ultimately the roots of the agency stretch back to the National Security Act. In addition to establishing the Air Force, the
Act also sought to eliminate overlap and began to consolidate roughly 25 supply systems between the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. More than 50 years later DLA continues to evolve, and today all customers interface with DLA using the DoD Electronic Mall (EMALL), a single supply system used to leverage the expertise and capabilities of the organization.

Rendering support to each service and federal agency accounts for approximately $42B in sales annually. As DLA is a government entity and operates with a working capital fund, the organization does not meet the requirements for consideration on the Fortune 500 List. However, and in order to comprehend the relative scale of the supply operations of DLA, comparing the $42B in sales to companies listed on the Fortune 500 List reveals that DLA would rank in the top 80, with sales more than Nike, Time Warner, McDonalds and Allstate, to name a few notable companies. DLA has developed a deliberate organizational structure through the implementation of regional commands, Defense Logistics Information Services (DLIS), as well as six PLFAs – Aviation, Energy, Land & Maritime, Disposition, Distribution and Troop Support. Each of these directly links a logistics, acquisition or technical service of DLA to the Warfighter or branch of service supported. For instance, DLA Energy provides the DoD and government agencies with energy solutions such as petroleum products, heating oil and lubricants, natural gas, electricity and several other services. DLA Troop Support provides all services’ uniform items, food items ranging from Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) to turkeys on Thanksgiving Day, medical equipment and supplies for uniformed members and families worldwide, and building materials used for natural disaster relief efforts, refugee support and the establishment and maintenance of global operating locations.

DLA is able to leverage multifaceted support only through close ties with customers, Warfighters, and partners worldwide. To that end, DLA embeds strategic regional touch points for forces overseas.

- USCENTCOM is supported by DLA Central & Special Operations Command
- USEUCOM and USAFRICOM are supported by DLA Europe & Africa
- USPACOM is supported by DLA Pacific

These touch points are in-place and positioned so DLA customers located in these regions may access an “easy button” to reach DLA for all support inquires and to meet the requirements of the services. Warfighter first is DLA’s No. 1 goal, as practiced and detailed in the DLA Strategic Plan 2015-2022.

“Every unit that is not supported is a defeated unit.”

-- Maurice de Saxe, Mes Reveries, XIII, 1732
As DLA realigned itself under the “We are DLA” campaign in 2010, it adopted a supply chain/demand chain construct to better support the Warfighter. The supply chains are traditional in the sense they execute primarily consumables procurement actions; however, the demand chains are slightly different. Under the aforementioned “We are DLA” initiative, the role of customer facing divisions at each of the PLFAs was expanded to provide better accessibility and support to the customers purchasing from each respective PLFA; additionally, the campaign rebranded the PLFAs to more clearly identify how each function contributes to the Warfighter.

For example, units at locations that fly and repair aircraft were aligned to customer facing teams at DLA Aviation, whereas units at locations that operate and repair land vehicles and maritime vessels were assigned to DLA Land and Maritime. These units are linked to the demand chain through a Department of Defense Activity Address Code (DODAAC). Regardless of which PLFA procures a particular item, the PLFA managing the DODAAC, and thus the demand chain, is responsible to the customer in terms of requisition fulfillment. This simplifies the relationship between DLA and its customers, and provides a clear line of sight to customers seeking assistance. DLA Aviation solidified its position as the most relevant PLFA to the Air Force and its sister services, in terms of aircraft readiness, with the alignment of flying unit DODAACs under its umbrella.

Over time, DLA Aviation has continuously proven its value and focus on the Warfighter through its innovation and continuous process improvement. We utilize the same commercial-off-the-shelf Enterprise Business Systems software used by commercial industry leaders to assist in the standard procurement process of gathering aggregated requirements (both historical and forecasted), planning procurement actions, generating purchases, soliciting and purchasing. Much of this process is conducted within DLA’s Internet Bid Board System (DIBBS), an automated procurement evaluation system to make award decisions on qualifying procurements up to $100,000.

Furthermore, in response to the DoD’s 2010 Efficiency Initiative that created Better Buying Power (BBP) 1.0, and laid the groundwork for BBP 2.0 and BBP 3.0, DLA Aviation has become a leader in employing this cost-saving initiative. DLA Aviation’s increased

**DLA Aviation by the Numbers**

- **Manage 1.2M NSNs**
- **$4.4B in annual revenue**
- **92 Military & 3.5K Civilians**
utilization of long-term and performance-based contracts as a result of BBP has benefitted the DoD’s supply chain relative to the amount of risk and variability within the chain.

Elevating BBP initiatives to the next level, DLA Aviation leadership hosted executives from major industry partners, and asked “What types of contracts would you like to see in place that would allow your organization to better support the Warfighter?” The result was a contracting vehicle in the form of a long-term commitment and a capped dollar amount, commonly referred to as a Captains of Industry (COI) contract. This variation of a long-term contract is not limited to requisition fulfillment, but is also used for non-traditional support including engineering, to achieve a specific outcome like reducing line stops in Programmed Depot Maintenance (PDM) lines across the service enterprises. These COI-type contracts represent the innovation required to provide outstanding customer support in today’s constrained fiscal environment.

Another contracting vehicle used by DLA Aviation is the Industrial Prime Vendor (IPV) contract for benchstock material at the military service’s industrial sites. These IPV contracts were first introduced 15 years ago and as of the publication date of this article, the third generation of IPV support contract is in solicitation, with award expected in March 2017. The contracts have built-in incentives and are designed to reduce excess Air Force-owned inventory levels while still meeting the Air Force’s requirements through a contractor-owned, contractor-managed inventory construct. Through benchmarking this common commercial practice, DLA Aviation has been successful in ensuring frequently used benchstock material is available to the mechanic in the depot over 99% of the time.

While DLA Aviation continues to cultivate a culture of excellence, it seeks opportunities to improve processes impacting customer support. DLA Aviation adopted a modified version of the Air Force Sustainment Center’s “The Art of the Possible (The AFSC Way)”; known as DLA Aviation Process Excellence (APEx) as its preferred process management system. Also, to achieve DLA Aviation’s potential, it adopted a common sight picture creating the environment for success. The APEx Leadership Model provides enduring principles to drive the activity to meet common
goals through developing people, managing resources and improving processes. DLA Aviation’s Commander, Brigadier General Allan E. Day, recognizes the benefit of employing a defined process management system and his comments echo many other Air Force leaders on the subject of customer-focused continuous process improvement, “The goal of APEx is simple – to enhance Warfighter support by ensuring every member of our organization knows if they are having a good day,” said Brig Gen Day. What this entails, according to Brig Gen Day, is “a good day starts with good processes where each person knows what is required to move the readiness needle each day. If our employees lack clarity on what tasks need to be done and when they need to be completed to remain on the readiness critical path, we could be wasting precious effort. Giving your best effort each day on the tasks that matter most is key to having a good day.” The new process management system provides the framework for tiered communication, constraint removal, and performance management necessary to create and maintain meaningful, significant changes within the organization. It also dovetails perfectly with the process improvement initiatives introduced within our customers’ individual organizations. As DLA Aviation moves forward with APEx implementation, and improves its customer support processes, the resulting impact on readiness and parts availability is significant.

“He conquers who endures.”

-- Aulus Persius Flaccus, 34-62 A.D.

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

As an Air Force logistician it is important to realize DLA Aviation’s level of involvement in providing support to both the operational customer in the field, and the industrial support activity customer at the Air Logistics Complex. After understanding DLA Aviation’s role as a significant supplier of parts and the various opportunities for collaboration between the Air Force and DLA Aviation, Air Force logisticians can help eliminate supportability gaps by working together to generate greater cross-organization synergy. DLA Aviation understands each distinct customer faces a unique subset of missions and unique requirements, thus DLA Aviation’s Customer Operations Directorate has injected itself into multiple levels of the Air Force’s sustainment construct to facilitate information sharing and provide improved part support.

DLA Aviation identifies the Air Force operational customer as the maintenance activity primarily performing day-to-day maintenance to ensure aircraft are mission ready for the operational or training missions being performed at locations worldwide. This customer’s demand signal creates greater variability than the industrial customer, with consumable part requirements
typically filled via Logistics Readiness Squadron (LRS) warehouses. The LRS warehouses maintain levels of inventory based on historical and projected ordering patterns. In a simplified system, for DLA-sourced items, an order is placed and filled through the base warehouse if the part is available…if not, the requisition flows to the wholesale level signaling DLA to fill the requisition from one of its 24 distribution centers, or initiate a procurement action at the responsible PLFA.

Customer Account Specialists (CASs) at DLA Aviation manage requisitions from assigned DODAACs, and remedy backorders resulting from a lack of available stock. These CASs pay particular attention to MICAPs and other high priority backorders identified by the customer. CASs use several federal, Air Force and DLA systems to evaluate possible opportunities to fulfill requisitions, including recommending lateral support, surplus buys, or initiating emergency buy requests.

Separately, at the Air Logistics Complexes, DLA Aviation provides the same piece part support for PDM activities as it does for the customers at operational bases; however, the services provided differ slightly because DLA executes an expanded role at the retail level including Supply, Storage and Distribution (SS&D), and procurement of depot-level reparables.

The Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) of 2005 required the DoD to transfer to DLA all SS&D functions at specified depot maintenance locations colocated with a DLA Distribution warehouse. Per a 2007 Government Accountability Office report, this directive applied to 13 cross-service locations, including Oklahoma City ALC, Warner-Robins ALC, and Ogden ALC. Additionally, DLA assumed procurement of depot-level reparables from the Air Force after the 2005 BRAC, and embedded contracting officers at the ALCs who buy Air Force-managed end-items repaired at the ALCs. The integration of DLA Aviation employees at the ALCs reduced redundant functions within the DoD supply chain and provided increased visibility and situational awareness as the source of supply moved closer to the requirement.

In terms of strategic sustainment efforts, Weapon System Program Managers (WSPMs) from DLA Aviation remain in constant contact with Air Force counterparts at program offices. Each major Air Force weapon system has a dedicated WSPM at DLA Aviation who is responsible for driving DLA-managed item support to improve the health of the platform. DLA Customer Support Representative (CSR) counterparts are located at various locations across the CONUS, providing the Air Force customer an immediate conduit to resolve
Continuing with the theme of expanded collaboration efforts, under the direction of DLA Headquarters, DLA Aviation founded a Nuclear Enterprise Support Office (NESO) to guarantee additional emphasis on the Air Force’s No.1 priority (USAF Posture Statement, 2016). The expansion of this team at DLA Aviation already paid huge dividends relative to the customer support provided during planning for PDM efforts designed to overhaul 45 Minuteman III Launch Control Centers (LCC) and 450 Launch Facilities (LF). DLA Aviation’s NESO team has worked seamlessly with the Air Force’s Program Office in the development and procurement of 41 separate maintenance task packages to ensure sufficient material is available for the maintenance teams. DLA Aviation leaned forward by investing in the procurement of more than 40,000 line items, totaling over $37M to ensure this effort stays on track.

At the end of the day, aircraft readiness is simplified into the summation of two variables: parts availability and maintenance activities. DLA remains relevant in this equation for as long as it is the source of supply for repair parts and depot-level repairables. Maximizing Air Force mission outcomes requires an integrated supply chain strategy built on enterprise-wide communication and understanding. Air Force and DLA logisticians play a huge role in ensuring the success of this complex system. Increased understanding of DLA services and capabilities, a knowledge of how each part fits into and supports the larger supply chain enterprise, and a willingness to work closely with one another to build synergy and understanding results in an Air Force better postured for part support, aircraft readiness and mission accomplishment.
CONCLUSION

Hopefully, it is now abundantly clear how the DLA enterprise, and more specifically DLA Aviation, plays a significant role in every logistician’s ability to successfully accomplish increasingly challenging mission sets, but why is this outcome a driving force for each and every person within DLA? To answer this, remember the elk herd. These amazing animals were originally introduced to the land now occupied by Defense Supply Center Richmond in 1887 by James Bellwood. When Mr. Bell-wood sold the property to the War Department in 1941, he made a handshake deal to ensure the US Government would forever care for the herd. Until 2013, even without a contractual requirement to maintain this herd, DLA Aviation employees collectively funded care of the herd as a personal expense. Since then the government, and more specifically DLA Aviation, has taken over financial support of the herd, but the sense of responsibility and great pride DLA personnel display in ensuring the well-being of the elk never waned.

In much the same way, the men and women of DLA Aviation take enormous pride in their responsibility to ensure the 1,340 weapon systems they support are supplied with the necessary parts and services to fly, fight and win!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lt Col Michael Allison is the Chief of the Air Force Customer Facing Division for DLA Aviation at the Defense Supply Center in Richmond, VA. He is an aircraft maintenance officer with 32 years of experience, and he possesses a Doctorate degree in Business Administration.

Capt Broderick Morris is a Logistics Career Broadening Officer at the Defense Supply Center in Richmond, VA. He earned his Bachelor's degree and commission from the United States Air Force Academy in 2010, and holds a Master’s degree in Operations Management from the University of Alabama.

Capt Rob Delaney is also a Logistics Career Broadening Officer at the Defense Supply Center in Richmond, VA. He is a University of Cincinnati alumni. Prior to his DLA assignment, he spent time in various roles between the Logistics Readiness Squadron and Aerial Port Squadron at Joint Base-Charleston, SC.

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THE VALUE OF
ENSURING THAT OUR
WARFIGHTERS ARE
NEVER ON THEIR OWN.

When mission success is the only option,
Northrop Grumman delivers. For over 80 years,
we’ve proudly stood shoulder to shoulder with our
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