

# An Operational Concept for Future Logistics Development

The call to modernize

by HQMC I&L Vision and Strategy Branch

As described by the Deputy Commandant for Installations and Logistics, recent strategic objectives within the National Defense Strategy (NDS) resulted in sweeping changes in the way the military will prosecute warfare in the coming decades. The NDS provides clear direction on how the DOD intends to curtail our diminishing military overmatch and deal with the rise of “revisionist powers.” It expands the battlespace to include rear area and non-combat operations, incorporating them into four layers of steady-state competition with our adversaries. In doing so, the NDS highlights the shortcomings of the current force and the need for significant and rapid modernization, which is reflected in Secretary James N. Mattis’ direction to “foster a culture of experimentation and calculated risk-taking.”

Significant change to the logistics enterprise must begin immediately to support this reorientation and continuously ensure the lethality of the MAGTF. This headquarters is already busy innovating and developing new ways to modernize a rapidly aging logistics enterprise, using guidance such as the hybrid logistics vision and the still developing expeditionary advance based operations (EABO) concept as points of reference. The Next Generation Logistics (NexLog) team continues to



***Our intent is to provide support to sustain our forces. (Photo by Sgt Katelyn Hunter.)***

carry out our Commandant’s mandate to “innovate to stay ahead of our adversaries.” Using a mix of crowd sourcing and private industry partnerships, they actively explore and exploit new ideas and technologies. In conjunction with the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), they made significant strides in developing ways to employ pre-existing and emerging technologies like additive manufacturing (AM); unmanned logistics systems, air (ULS-A); and ground (ULS-G). Our wargaming

and experimentation cell is also involved with tangibly measuring the effectiveness of new technologies through ensuring their integration into Phase II of the SEA DRAGON experimentation plan. Simultaneously, we are leveraging the ground logistics advocacy program to look at ways to accomplish the specified logistics tasks in the *Marine Corps Operating Concept* (Washington, DC: HQMC, September 2016) and mitigate shortfalls identified in the Marine Corps Gap List (MCGL).

The *Sustaining the Force in the 21st Century* concept (Washington, DC: HQMC, January 2018), which we will refer to as *Sustaining the Force* for short, is meant to synergize the current efforts of the logistics enterprise by articulating an aim point for the future of Marine Corps logistics and provide direction for how we will get there. It is a descriptive, vice prescriptive, document serving to guide resource alignment in the future. The concept will also assist in capability development and integration with the Deputy Commandant, Combat Development & Integration.

As depicted in Figure 1, *Sustaining the Force* introduces four lines of effort (LOEs) that we will use to organize our endeavors to continuously support the lethality of an evolving MAGTF. These lines of effort describe, in the broadest terms, what we must do to generate and sustain combat power in future contested environments.

The first line of effort, Enable Global Logistics Awareness, is required to lay the foundation for the largely data-driven operating environment of the future in order to rapidly gain and maintain situational awareness. This means that before arrival into a theater, we must be aware of available resources, including those present in both the joint force and within the area of operations. We will also require the ability to assess friendly force posture and accurately identify warfighter requirements throughout a given operation. Actions along this line of effort will allow us to leverage a very mature, yet still rapidly developing, field of technology to maximize our responsiveness to the demands of the force.

The Diversify Distribution line of effort addresses the need to capitalize on both legacy and emerging distribution capabilities to support geographically dispersed forces throughout a highly contested operating environment in multiple warfighting domains. We must maintain the ability to re-aggregate and mass sustainment whenever distributed operations are either impractical or inhibited altogether, but massed sustainment becomes a vulnerability in distributed operations (e.g., EABO). Improvements within this line of effort should result in distribution methods

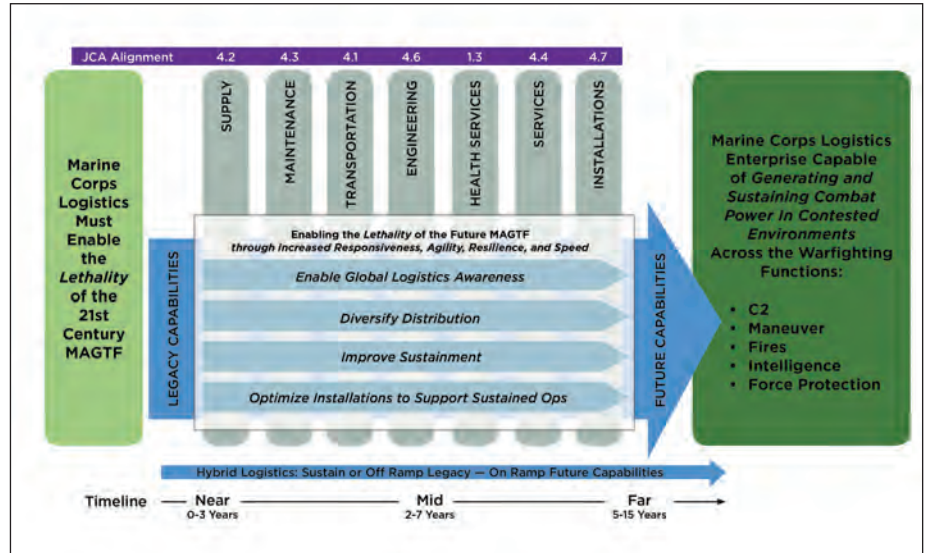


Figure 1. Sustaining the force in the 21st century.

that are unpredictable, resilient, and enable the highest degree of precision delivery to maximize the MAGTF's speed, agility, and reliability.

The Improve Sustainment line of effort is, perhaps, the most comprehensive in that it becomes completely realized once actions within the previous two LOEs are achieved. It includes advances that reduce demand on the distribution network by expanding and integrating sources of supply. This will involve leveraging joint, interagency,

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and coalition support capabilities at the operational level as much as it will involve providing capabilities to our most forward maneuver and logistics units at the tactical level. Actions along this line of effort will enable sustainment over extended lines of communications, reduce overall demand on the supply chain, and enable independent opera-

tions for longer periods of time; thereby, maximizing both the efficiency and effectiveness of the support we provide.

The final LOE, Optimize Installations to Support Sustained Operations, is integrated with the other three LOEs. Today, our bases, stations, and depots are operationalized more than ever. Their primary mission is to generate and sustain combat power. Specifically, in the *Sustaining the Force* concept, this LOE addresses the requirement in the NDS to support operations at every level of the global operating model. Our installations are the start point for force generation and are key nodes in a distribution network that begins at the industrial base and extends deep into forward areas of operation. In the present global operating environment, our installations are under constant threat of attack both at home and abroad. Actions along this line of effort will require continued resourcing to support installation modernization efforts while strengthening the ties between the Supporting Establishment and the Operating Forces.

**Applying the Concept**

The LOEs in the *Sustaining the Force* concept follow a natural progression that should help to prioritize and contextualize our efforts. Enabling Global Logistics Awareness will be our main effort in 2019 as it establishes the con-

ditions for success in the other LOEs. As we begin to make progress along these LOEs, we expect the main effort to shift with the direction of the Deputy Commandant.

Regardless of the LOE, we will approach capability development through seven lines of operation which are aligned to the six traditional functions of logistics and installations. In this way, *Sustaining the Force* leverages our current advocacy process, which is functionally aligned and incorporates input from the Operating Forces and the Service staff. It will also serve as a forcing function to coordinate subject matter experts and communities of interest actions in support of these LOEs—perhaps leading to a re-alignment of many of our logistics operational advisory groups sometime in the future.

There are many ways to improve logistics support to the warfighter that can be applied through changing the way that we organize, train, and employ

the logistics force. Simple changes to the way we do business (e.g., doctrine and policy) will have a lasting and impactful effect beyond their apparent scope. Successful application of this concept is only possible when we leverage the collective experience and brainpower of every Marine and civilian Marine in the logistics enterprise. Future capability development will be aligned to the LOEs and this concept will serve as the logistics capability roadmap for the next fifteen years or more. Detailed capability requirements will be identified and a full doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facility, and policy assessment will be completed by the operational advisory groups to support the Marine Corps capability-based assessment process.

### Conclusion

The *Sustaining the Force* concept does not replace hybrid logistics. Rather, it

reinforces and moves the hybrid logistics vision into execution. The lethality of the MAGTF is increased when the logistics enterprise is fully responsive. Ultimately, the logistics enterprise must extend the operational reach and enable improved response time and maneuverability of the MAGTF, while remaining integrated within the Naval and Joint Logistics enterprise. The end state is a logistics enterprise that will be able to sustain the 21st century force, providing a diverse mission set that enables distributed MAGTF operations in any environment with the ability to aggregate for the high-end fight, or provide support in lower spectrum operations. This article is a starting point to initiate and continue purposeful discussion and debate as emerging concepts and plans are solidified.



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