Logistics Command and Control

CLC2S in a garrison environment

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"All logistics systems have two fundamental elements: a distribution system, made up of bases and distribution procedures, and command and control."
–MCDP 4, Logistics[1]

Walk into any combat operations center and you will see a diligently working staff surrounded by radios, big screen televisions, monitors, maps, and charts displaying various types of information from personnel numbers to significant events. In this booming technology age, the ability to capture raw, real time information has allowed commanders and higher headquarters to maintain situational awareness on the battlefield like never before. Watching the live feed from a Raven or monitoring troop movements over a blue force tracker allows commanders to utilize intelligence to seize fleeting opportunities that can tip the scales of an engagement in their favor. The Marine Corps leverages the use of these technologies to assist commanders in the control of maneuver, fires and effects, intelligence, and force protection, but we tend to ignore the warfighting function that can determine victory and extend operational reach in a conflict: logistics.

Talented commanders and all logisticians understand that every Marine is a rifleman, but his effectiveness and operational reach is a function of transportation, supply, health services, maintenance, general engineering, and services. Discovering the multitude of requirements just to get into and prosecute operations is just the beginning. Command and control of logistics enhances the effective employment of resources on the battlefield. Although logistics command and control is often ignored and the practices are archaic, the Marine Corps already has a program of record and the tool in place; that tool is called the Common Logistics Command and Control System (CLC2S). CLC2S is a tactical, web-enabled logistics information management system designed to provide MAGTF commanders and logisticians with capabilities to plan, request, monitor, and command logistics resources in order to achieve operational and tactical logistics situational awareness of the battlefield.

Young logisticians have learned many different procedures and methodolo-

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A T5 Caterpillar D9 bulldozer passes a CLC2S during MPF offload in South Korea. *(Photo by Sgt Justin A. Bopp.)*

gies for tasking and requesting logistics support. During high tempo or kinetic operations, Marines rely on handwritten documents from field notebooks built from taking reports over radios. Once operations transition to slower stabilization and support operations, spreadsheets developed by the computer-savvy take over. During these later phases of a conflict, logistics command and control eventually gets formalized using local documents, giving off the impression that they are official documents. From the logistical support request and tactical movement request to automated message handling system messages and email traffic, each unit seems to have a different way of formally requesting and providing logistics support. CLC2S is a standardized system that the Marine Corps already has in place, and one which Marines coming to your unit will already understand and have working knowledge of. For some odd reason, we just don't like using this program and it has faded from use.

Why We Never Really Adopted CLC2S

While many commanders desire a comprehensive and realistic concept of support, they rarely pay much attention to it, especially when competing for air time with the concept of operations. Logistics is not the function that wins firefights, but it is crucial in deciding the achievement of both operational and strategic objectives. And yet, it is assigned the lowest priority for command and control system development, fielding, training, and refinement. True logistics command and control uses comprehensive data from a variety of sources, accessible by a communications and information system architecture. This communications architecture must allow users to interact with the system and request and coordinate service support—which means it needs bandwidth.

In expeditionary environments, bandwidth is shared with operational and intelligence data, which commanders assign a higher priority than logistics. The result is that in a tactical environment, logisticians have relied on manual coordination via white boards and voice communications, in conjunction with several legacy stovepiped supply and maintenance systems that can be used in theater. This dispersion of logistics data leads to an inaccurate and out-of-date common logistics operating picture, hampering effective command and control decision making. Utilizing these untimely methods of command and control causes logisticians to work primarily in a reactionary mode, leaving commanders with no ability to influence logistics. In the garrison environment, an environment that we now find ourselves in more due to the drawdown in Iraq and Afghanistan, the major subordinate elements of the MAGTF are on an equal playing field. The limitations of field communications do not exist. If anything, the need for a more accurate common logistics picture is greater due to our posture as a force-in-readiness, with multiple SPMAGTFs and crisis response forces being created to respond to developing crises around the globe.

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What Does CLC2S Really Get Me?

CLC2S has multiple functions and tools built into it, but the best and most relevant tools include Enhanced Combat Service Support Operations Center/Combat Operations Center System (ECS), Rapid Request Tracking System Plus (RRTS+), and Logistics Planning and Execution (LOG P/E).

The ECS provides asset and inventory management capability, with the ability to view and edit the status of personnel, equipment, and supplies at the asset level. It is the combat service support operations center's version of command post of the future-like systems. Units in a headquarters can see assets that are available in their subordinate units, and they can appropriate limited assets, delegate tasks, or assign missions that suit the capabilities of their units without blindly tasking. ECS provides the ability to integrate transactional activity with logistics capability.[2]

The RRTS+ provides request management and order management functionality, in which users can request supplies and services as well as monitoring the status of submitted requests. This serves as a single point of entry for generating requirements by a unit, allowing all requirements to be properly vetted before submission and giving higher headquarters the ability to appropriately prioritize requests. Duplication of efforts are limited using this tool, and best of all, knowledge on this process is transferable between units. In the true spirit of the MAGTF, units unknown to each other can be placed together and have the ability to gain mutual understanding of each other's assets and the process for requesting additional support.[3]

The LOG P/E tool provides the ability to capture unit readiness and aid in CSS mission planning. It assists staffs in determining requirements for a mission and allows for development and analysis of courses of action. Supported units can have a better understanding of their logistical requirements prior to executing missions, and supporting units will better understand the concept of operations as it relates to logistics. Commanders also have the ability to define and insert system alerts when asset status approaches or falls below designated criteria, allowing a commander to execute "pull" logistics prior to his assets limiting his ability to continue operations.[4]

Conclusion

In an era of scarce resources and the demand to run at peak efficiency, the Marine Corps has an opportunity to

improve processes unlike any other. Marine Leadership can capitalize on the scarcest of all resources—time—with a system that is already in place. As the Corps transitions from the Force Structure Review Group to the Quadrennial Defense Review Integration Group to the 175,000 structure, the resources and time left to commanders will be even more precious. It is unlikely that operations tempos will accompany the structural drawdown. Efficiency gained by employing CLC2S in a training, garrison, field, and forward deployed environment will not only allow leaders to have a better understanding of their own unit's capabilities, but also allow them to focus on other priorities that are constantly competing for their time.

In addition to the clarity of capabilities gained by commanders, the use of CLC2S in a garrison environment will facilitate the effective use of limited resources to support operations. By training Marines in the usage of one core system, the Marine Corps does not have to require multiple training events for systems that are used in different settings, and the inevitable rotation of Marines who gained proficiency in asset requesting and management will not be seen as a total loss to a unit.

The enforcement and use of CLC2S will create a standardized method of providing logistics command and control, no matter the environment. By ensuring that there is a smooth transition between garrison and deployed logistics management, units will be able to overcome the initial friction of deployment, reception, staging, onward movement and integration, and maneuver due to the fact that logistics Marines are familiar with the system that facilitates logistics functions to supported units. CLC2S is an efficient, time saving, and helpful tool that will provide commanders the ability to exercise command and control of the most important function of warfighting in situations that transcend environment; the Marine Corps already has the system in place.

Notes

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 4 (MCDP–4), Logistics*, (Washington, DC: 1997).

2. Marine Corps Systems Command, *Common Logistics Command and Control (CLC2S) Desk Reference Guide*, (Washington, DC: 2008).

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.