

Haiti Disaster Relief

Logistics is the Operation

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OPERATIONS are logistics centric operations. In contrast to other operations, logistics as a Joint function becomes the main effort. Joint operations typically emphasize command and control, maneuver, fires, and intelligence. In humanitarian assistance, the value of military forces is logistics command, control, and execution. When a Joint task force (JTF) arrives to respond to a disaster, it is a behemoth of capability compared to all other interagency, international, and nongovernmental agencies. The unique capability that makes a Joint task force valuable is the ability to organize and execute logistics operations in a chaotic environment.

Operation Unified Response in Haiti was no different. The essential task that defined success was the rapid distribution of sustainment to the Haitian people. The responsiveness of Joint Task Force Haiti was essential; getting there saved lives while influencing the strategic communications battle in meeting the response expectations of the international community.

Humanitarian Assistance Considerations

This article uses lessons learned from Operation Unified Response to present the following considerations for humanitarian assistance operations:

Humanitarian assistance operations are logistics centric. There is the need for a robust expeditionary logistics organization to deploy rapidly to meet expectations for humanitarian assistance operations. This organization must be able to receive and stage deploying DOD forces and facilitate or execute the reception and distribution of relief supplies and materials.

We must think differently about how Joint task forces support humanitarian operations. The JTF headquarters must be focused and resourced to command and control logistics functions. This capability must be more robust than the capability normally found in a maneuver-centric Joint task force J-4 section designed to sustain the force.

The command and control function of the Joint task force must include the ability to capture and display a common logistics operational picture. In humanitarian assistance operations, U.S. military forces will

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PHOTO: Earthquake survivors look on as members of the U.S. Air Force assess a potential air delivery drop zone during Operation Unified Response in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 19 January 2010. (U.S. Air Force, TSgt Dennis J. Henry Jr.)

always assume a supporting role to other agencies, but paradoxically, they will have the most capacity. This is certainly the case in command and control. Therefore any U.S. military common operational picture must include the activities of the interagency, the international community, and nongovernmental organizations.

Command relationships for logistics units are important. This was obvious in Haiti with multiple logistics organizations deployed from multiple services. But how does the Joint construct of logistics as a service function in humanitarian assistance operations? Does a Joint functional component command for logistics subordinate to the Joint Task Force Headquarters make sense?

Background and Initial Deployments

While U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) is well suited for responding to natural disasters and has frequently done so in its area of responsibility, nothing could have prepared SOUTHCOM for the magnitude of the earthquake that devastated Haiti. The epicenter of the 7.2 quake was about 10 miles

southeast of Port-au-Prince, the densely populated capital of the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. More than 220,000 people perished in the earthquake, and more than a million found themselves without shelter. The earthquake devastated the infrastructure of Port-au-Prince, including buildings that housed the Haitian government. The road network was largely impassible, and the communications infrastructure badly damaged.

The quake captured the immediate attention of our Nation's leaders, resulting in a heightened state of urgency. The urgency led to constant demands for detailed information at the tactical level, and this contributed to friction within SOUTHCOM and JTF Haiti headquarters. The most difficult challenge in the initial days of the response was understanding what the population needed. In the absence of defined requirements, SOUTHCOM leaders had to rely on their experience, intuition, and limited communications with those in Haiti to tailor the available forces and deploy them as quickly as possible to Haiti.

The security situation in Haiti had been tenuous enough to warrant 10 years of the United Nations



(U.S. Navy, SPCO Spike Call)

U.S. Air Force GEN Douglas Fraser, commander of U.S. Southern Command, and Army LTG Ken Keen, Joint Task Force-Haiti, meet with UN leaders at a logistics base in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 6 March 2010.

Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a standing United Nations peacekeeping force. Many Haitian government and MINUSTAH leaders died in the collapse of their headquarters. A focus on preventing an environmental tragedy from devolving into political violence and chaos accounted for early decisions to deploy the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, the Global Response Force. Because of airfield limitations, deploying a force capable of ensuring security came at the expense of deploying other capabilities, mostly logistics capabilities.

As a result, logistics capabilities and logistics command and control diminished after the initial response. While the United States Transportation Command's Joint Task Force Port Opening (JTF-PO) deployed within the first week and made an enormous positive impact, it could not coordinate the total logistics effort. The unit prevented an unmitigated disaster at the Port-au-Prince Airfield by bringing order to the chaos of arriving material and personnel, but it could not organize distribution inland from the port and airfield.

The Need for an Expeditionary Logistics Capability

The earthquake in Haiti reinforced the requirement for an expeditionary logistics capability. This type of organization does not exist as part of any global response force. The 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) deployed to Haiti to serve as the Joint Logistics Command. The 377th Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) subsequently replaced it. Both units are logistics command and control elements without assigned forces and neither is postured for rapid deployment. However, when they do stand up and deploy, each unit has tremendous capability.

Working through the process to identify units to attach to 3rd ESC and subsequently working the request-for-forces process through Joint Forces Command precluded rapid deployment. What was required immediately in Haiti was an expeditionary version of a "corps level or above," multifunctional logistics unit capable of pulling together the entire logistics effort and fully resourced with subordinate units for command and control and to execute logistics.

To mitigate the tragedy in Haiti, the immediate requirement was for planning and executing logis-

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tics operations in concert with United States Agency for International Development and the World Food Program. Relief supplies pre-staged in World Food Program warehouses or coming through Port-au-Prince had to be organized into correctly sized packages for onward movement to distribution points. There was an enormous demand for contingency contracting support, which had the dual benefit of reducing the force footprint and employing the local population. Logistics planning was also required for medical and engineering operations and reception, staging, and force sustainment considerations for deploying U.S. forces and relief supplies.

In a perfect world, a logistics unit with this capability would have been the first to deploy. As noted, security concerns and physical limitations for force reception precluded this approach in Haiti, and the force required was not available or ready for expeditionary operations. Post-deployment dwell time concerns raised availability issues, and the 377th TSC reserve unit had unique activation concerns. Soldiers motivated to deploy manned both units, but neither unit was deployable or expeditionary.

Joint Task Forces for Humanitarian Assistance

The leadership and staff from JTF-PO were immediately incorporated into the Joint headquarters. This demonstrated Joint Task Force Haiti commander Lieutenant General Ken Keen's intuitive sense early on for the need for logistics command and control within the headquarters to meet the demands of the operation. U.S. Army South, the obvious choice to form the JTF, had been reserved by the commander of U.S. SOUTHCOM to be employed in the event of a disaster-motivated mass migration. Lieutenant General Frank Hemlick, commander of the 18th Airborne Corps, recognized the need for a core to form the Joint task force and offered the Corps' assault command post. Although not normally part of the Global Response Force,

(USAF, TSgt Dennis J. Henry, Jr.)



The U.S. Air Force aerially assesses a potential air delivery drop zone during Operation Unified Response, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 19 January 2010.

the assault command post provided a competent and capable staff upon which to build Joint Task Force Haiti.

The focus of the 18th Airborne Corps is that of a maneuver headquarters. The logistics command and control capability is resident in the G-4 staff section and is organized, focused, and equipped to support the commander as he plans and directs the sustainment of forces assigned to the corps. The G-4 staff section became the core JTF-Haiti's J-4. In spite of valiant efforts, the J-4 was not resourced to plan and direct the logistics associated with humanitarian assistance operations well beyond the scope of force sustainment activities.

By convention, Joint task force operational planning and execution must be a lead "J-3 operations" activity. Therefore, we must weight the operations section with logistics planners possessing the requisite skill sets for success in humanitarian operations. While this seems intuitively obvious, we often fail to recognize humanitarian relief operations as logistics-centric and fail to organize properly. The typical JTF works with a J-3 designed to support the planning, integration, and direction of maneuver, fires, and intelligence. This is not optimal for humanitarian

assistance. Two options exist to correct this situation.

The first option is to develop and resource a Joint manning document with logistics planners, drawing skill sets from service components or by requesting individual augmentees. A second option is to employ an above-the-corps level U.S. Army logistics organization, such as a theater support command or an expeditionary sustainment command.

Line-by-line development of a Joint manning document in the midst of crisis is challenging. It also has the disadvantage of producing a unit that lacks cohesion because its members have never trained together or developed internal staff procedures. The individual augmentation approach might be the best solution for small-scale humanitarian assistance operations where a logistics unit with significant capability and capacity would be overkill.

The second option, building the JTF from a logistics unit core, guarantees unit cohesion, consistent training, and established staff processes. Logisticians who can plan and execute the functions of the main effort are part of the operations section. Individual augmentation to a core JTF logistics unit might be required, but these augments would be in intelligence, communications, and maneuver functions.

Rarely do we consider forming a Joint task force around a logistics unit, but this approach is perhaps the most practical for humanitarian assistance.

A Logistics Common Operational Picture

The tragedy in Haiti and the response effort captured the world's attention. The insatiable demand for information on the progress of the operation from all levels of the U.S. government reflected this interest. Much of the demand was to demonstrate the extent of the response and measure its success, or to gain situational awareness in a world of near instantaneous access to information. For logisticians the majority of requests for information focused on comparing requirements with capabilities. Logistics planning is requirements based. In the absence of requirements, how does a commander know what capabilities he needs?

Early challenges in depicting information were the result of chaos and uncertainty. General Keen indicated immediate requirements determination

was impossible. At first, communications between the forming JTF and the rest of the world were limited to a Blackberry-based cell phone network. The communications situation improved over time, as did Joint Task Force Haiti's ability to determine its requirements and daily activities. However, the default communications medium remained PowerPoint briefs, which were laborious to build and maintain on the fly.

Operation Unified Response required a "common operational picture" for logistics. Future operations will as well. This common operational picture should at a minimum capture and display requirements, daily logistics activities, logistics centers, supply routes, medical centers, and engineering projects. It should be unclassified in a humanitarian assistance environment, allowing anyone to access the information with a few mouse clicks or key strokes.

Updating the information in the logistics common operational picture should be easy. Ideally, it would automatically access information from



(U.S. Navy, P02 Laura A. Moore)

LTG Keen, second from the left, talks to Marine Corps BG Mike Dana, a Joint Task Force Haiti logistics officer, about the effects of the recent earthquake, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 20 January 2010 .

many sources, self-populate, and update itself. For example, in addition to displaying information on the activities of Joint Task Force Haiti and its subordinate units, it would have been optimum to have had visibility on the activities of all inbound shipping and civil and military aircraft. Information on the actions of other nations and nongovernmental activities would also have been helpful.

A number of organizations are working to develop logistics common operational pictures. We cannot develop a usable and deployable version fast enough, however. Access to information in real time has become an everyday expectation. The faster and more accurately we can develop and share an information picture, the more accurate, focused, and effective our response will become. A logistics common operational picture also mitigates the need to inform higher headquarters through laborious PowerPoint briefings requiring hours of preparation and adding little value to the overall effort.

Joint Logistics Command Relationships

The efficacy of a Joint functional component command for logistics continues to be a question pondered in the Joint logistics community. Current doctrine provides for this option as well as the more traditional approach of logistics as a service responsibility. In Haiti, as in all humanitarian and disaster relief operations, the question has two dimensions—logistics support to the affected population, and logistics sustainment to the deployed force.

A Joint logistics component command to the Joint task force makes sense for planning and executing support to the affected population. This is particularly true if the forces the services deploy are logistics forces consolidated under a single commander as a subcomponent to a large Joint task force. In this situation, span of control would suggest battalion-sized or equivalent forces that require a level of command between them and a three-star Joint task force commander. This was the case in Haiti.

The magnitude of the effort should be the key consideration in deciding to establish a Joint logistics command. Perhaps the Joint task force itself could most effectively perform command and control for multiple service logistics forces during a small humanitarian crisis. Establishing a Joint component

command for logistics would result in ineffective and inefficient layering of the Joint task force. It rarely makes sense to establish a Joint functional component commander for logistics to accomplish force sustainment. We resource, organize, and design our forces to be self-sustaining. As the theater matures, service support usually shifts to a common-user logistics relationship and is the responsibility of an Army logistics command. While perhaps inefficient, service-based logistics is certainly effective and flexible, at least in the initial stages, and aligns with Title X roles, responsibilities, and resourcing. In a humanitarian effort such as Operation Unified Response, speed to respond is a critical consideration, and effectiveness trumps efficiency.

The command relationships established during Operation Unified Response were effective. Everyone remained focused on working to assist the Haitian people, and we achieved unity of effort. However, as in all operations, getting the command and control relationship correct was difficult, and a different personal dynamic could have caused friction due to organizational chart challenges. The more we define relationships along doctrinal lines, the better they work.

Planners from the Joint Staff J-4 and SOUTHCOM designed the logistics force and defined command relationships among logistics units during the first few days of the response. This effort did not transfer effectively into execution. The 3rd ESC, designated as the Joint Logistics Command, was to serve as the Joint logistics functional component. However, there was little in this command that ended up Joint. It remained Army-centric, as 3rd ESC. This is not a criticism; it simply reflects the reality of what occurred.

Other logistic unit command relationships that required definition were the Army and Navy components of Joint Logistics Over the Shore and an ad hoc organization, self-dubbed “JTF-PO.” Led

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by Rear Admiral Sam Perez, previously assigned as the deputy to SOUTHCOM's Joint Interagency Task Force South, the JTF-PO's mission was to run the port at Port-au-Prince. It had an enormous positive impact on operations there, but the presence of this non-doctrinal organization added confusion to the logistics command relationships. Indeed, a post-crisis effort to capture and depict the command relationships between logistics units required 16 drafts to arrive at any level of consensus among those involved.

Obviously, we have more work to do to define the command and control structure. Unity of effort and unity of command are both important considerations. TRANSCOM's JTF-PO is designed to achieve unity of effort, through a "coordinating" relationship with the combatant commander, but it is not set up to achieve unity of command, which requires a tactical control relationship with the JTF or functional logistics component, if established. We must consider these relationships as well as those among critical logistics organizations.

An Exception to Normal Operations

The magnitude of the disaster in Haiti and the size of the response made Operation Unified Response an exception to normal operations. The Department of Defense rarely responds to foreign disasters and when it does, the requirement is generally more manageable. Consequently, we must take care concerning the lessons we draw from this large-scale crisis.

One could argue that structuring and organizing U.S. forces for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief does not make a great deal of sense, especially in the current environment of fiscal

constraint and given the continued requirement to meet our enemies abroad. We should recognize the strategic luxury we enjoy. We live in a world in which we can employ (and if we are not careful, dissipate) our military capability providing foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Our leaders need to think hard before deciding to build specific capabilities for this purpose.

The capabilities required to respond effectively to a humanitarian assistance crisis are the same capabilities required for any expeditionary operation. This is certainly true for logistics units. The term "expeditionary" defines the capability required for logistics units in support of Operation Unified Response or any other humanitarian operation. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan tend to take the edge off our expeditionary capability. Forces deploying to these operations tend to fall in on mature forward operating bases with established sustainment systems.

The time has come to develop a system to capture and display a common operational picture for logistics that incorporates information from all participants in an operation. We must be able to access strategic and tactical information and precise information on logistics requirements. Effectiveness and efficiency literally save lives.

Command relationships among logistics units are important. Humanitarian assistance operations are logistics-centric. Logisticians must consider much more than pure sustainment of the force. They should consider the practicality of a Joint functional component command for logistics. If not, the ideal "core" of a JTF humanitarian assistance mission is a logistics unit trained and predisposed to tackle challenges common to such events. **MR**