



As Private 1st Class Christopher Gilbert wears a bomb protection suite, Staff Sgt. German Sanchez discusses the capabilities of the 8th Theater Support Command's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team in April at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. (Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester)

# NCOs Develop an Expeditionary Mindset in the Pacific

By Jonathan (Jay) Koester

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Perhaps the largest challenge for the NCOs of U.S. Army Pacific is the vast area they conduct missions in. Handling Army logistics for a theater that covers 9,000 miles of land and water is a daunting task.

Lt. Gen Francis J. Wiercinski, commanding general of U.S. Army Pacific, "calls this theater a logistics theater; that's very telling," Hunt said. "One of his phrases we're all carrying around now is 'the tyranny of distance' — just trying to move from one location to another. Every time you leave Hawaii, you're on a boat or a plane, and logistics, moving stuff and per-

sonnel, is quite a challenge in this theater. For us, as a theater sustainment command, it's a tough challenge, but we're up to it."

The 8th TSC has been focused on leaving behind its past as a static headquarters. Its NCOs have quickly adjusted to an expeditionary mindset, said Command Sgt. Maj. Toese Tia Jr., the command sergeant major of the 8th TSC's 8th Special Troops Battalion at Fort Shafter.

"I've been here two years now, and I've seen the culture of this theater sustainment headquarters



Sgt. Gray of the 8th Theater Support Command explains the use of the command's palletized load system truck in April at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. (Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester)

transition to where expeditionary has become a way of life for us," Tia said. "It wasn't like that before. The responsibilities of understanding that this tiny little island that we're on is really just a platform to go somewhere else — I think that is starting to register. That's a monumental step for us.

"I think that anyone who reassigns to the headquarters now understands when they come on board here, they have to be ready to deploy," Tia said. "You're not just coming up to the flagpole so you can take a knee, putting your rucksack down and sitting up in your office, nice and neat. You have to be ready to move."

The NCOs in the 8th TSC may have already developed the proper expeditionary mindset, but putting those ideas into practice will still take some training, focus and drive, said Sgt. Maj. Robert Canterbury, the G-4 (Logistics) sergeant major at the 8th TSC.

"For 10 years or more, our 'expeditionary mindset' was, you got on an aircraft with your weapons systems and a laptop, and you fell in on everything you needed on the other end," Canterbury said. "Now we have to

be able to load out and actually perform theater-opening operations. And that's going to require a lot of training and a lot of focus. So, it's an exciting time to be in the Army, and we are probably in the most exciting place on the globe right now to see some of those capabilities implemented."

What those expeditionary skills and experiences offer NCOs who come to the Pacific theater is an extra level of responsibility. The NCOs in USARPAC often travel to foreign countries and then are the point people for the missions there, Canterbury said.

"We have a lot of young NCOs out there who have been performing leadership roles that 15 years ago would have been a lieutenant leading a squad of Soldiers, and we've given those NCOs a taste of what it's like to have that responsibility," Canterbury said. "I think this theater gives us the opportunity to build on that. We can take the expertise, the confidence that those young NCOs have developed, and really utilize it in the mission that we have here."

Seeing those young NCOs out in the field, getting missions done, is truly inspiring, Hunt said.

“The level of responsibility that some of our NCOs have is amazing,” Hunt said. “I just visited Guam, and there are young sergeants and staff sergeants out there responsible for projects, whether it’s building schools, or hospitals, or whatever the case may be. When you

come over the horizon and you see this bulldozer, and there is a sergeant out there with two Soldiers, alone and unafraid, making it happen — our noncommissioned officers are truly the backbone of the Army.”



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