



# Joint Logistics in the Future

Soldiers unload humanitarian supplies in Afghanistan

55<sup>th</sup> Signal Company (Jerry T. Combes)

*Leaders win through logistics. Vision, sure. Strategy, yes. But when you go to war, you need to have both toilet paper and bullets at the right place at the right time. In other words, you must win through superior logistics.*

—Tom Peters, “Rule # 3: Leadership Is Confusing as Hell,” *Fast Company* (March 2001)

By C. V. CHRISTIANSON

**T**he logistic capacity of the U.S. military is unmatched, and the Nation’s ability to project military power provides the joint warfighter unprecedented capabilities. However, a constantly changing operating environment and budgetary constraints demand that we optimize joint logistics to enhance capabilities. We are at a point where we have the opportunity to advance efforts to design and implement systems, processes, and organizational changes that

will improve the support of tomorrow’s joint warfighter.

The necessity of joint logistics is almost unanimously accepted throughout the Department of Defense (DOD) logistic community, and most agree that the effective delivery of logistic support is essential to the joint warfighting commander, the ultimate customer. Achieving harmony between and among Service- and agency-funded systems, processes, and programs, however, is challenging. Harmony is only possible with a common

understanding of the purpose of joint logistics. This agreement comes from determining what joint logistics is and why we need it.

*Joint logistics* is the deliberate or improvised sharing of resources by reducing or eliminating constraints and restraints and developing ways to facilitate this process. This is needed because the Services seldom have enough resources, especially during initial expeditionary activity. Sharing resources can optimize the apportionment of assets to provide maximum capability to the supported commander. The overall purpose of joint logistics is thus to achieve logistic

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synergy—getting more out of what we collectively have than we could by ourselves.

### The Joint Logistic Environment

The war on terror and other threats frame the joint logistic environment. Gone are the days when we had the time and resources to position large stores of assets in response to a stable, predictable threat. Future operations are likely to be distributed and conducted rapidly and simultaneously across multiple joint operational areas within a single theater, or across boundaries of geographic combatant commands. In that environment, force projection operations give the Nation the ability to close the gap between early entry and follow-on combat operations and simultaneous stabilization and reconstruction operations. The requirement to harmonize force projection operations in a complex operating environment offers the greatest challenge to the joint logistician. This article describes the three imperatives that frame that challenge. While these imperatives are not goals in themselves, they define the outcomes of a confederation of systems, processes, and organizations that are agile, effectively adapting to a constantly changing environment to meet the emerging needs of the supported joint force commander (JFC). These outcomes are delivered within an operating environment that spans tactical, operational, and strategic spaces.

## gone are the days when we had the time and resources to position large stores of assets in response to a predictable threat

The effect of joint logistics is freedom of action for the JFC. The success of this effort must be measured in the *tactical space*, where readiness is the principal deliverable. Sustained joint logistic readiness enables freedom of action and results from the synchronization and coordination of all logistic capabilities. The readiness achieved within the tactical space results from the cumulative efforts of Services, agencies, and other players across the entire operating environment. There is a high price in the tactical space for inefficiencies within the operational or strategic spaces.

*Operational space* is where joint logistics must deliver and where the ability to integrate logistic capabilities provides the greatest opportunities. Moreover, operational space is where the joint logistician



U.S. Navy (Laura A. Moore)

must bridge Service, coalition, agency, and other organizational elements and capabilities, linking national and tactical systems, processes, and organizations to enable the freedom of action the JFC must have. The essence of joint logistics is in the operational space, where the work of joint logistics should concentrate.

The U.S. ability to project and sustain military power (its campaign quality) comes

of interest. This collaborative network of relationships should be based on the pre-eminence of the Services because they are responsible to raise, train, equip, and sustain forces for the joint force commander. Since the Services lie at the heart of the joint logistic network, the joint community of interest (processes, systems, programs, organizations) should measure *value* with the Service components of the joint commands. Every logistic program, system, and initiative should be viewed within the framework of these critical strategic relationships, which describe key strategic interdependencies.

The JFC, through his Service components, acts as the commander of joint logistics in his area of responsibility and as the principal focus of the national organizations described below. These organizations comprise the backbone of joint logistics and provide and sustain logistically ready forces to the supported JFC. These organizations may be seen as global providers, responsible for the end-to-end synchronization and coordination of processes that deliver outcomes to the supported commander. They constantly strive to improve their capabilities in concert with each other, integrating deployment/redeployment, supply, distribution, and readiness processes to ensure that the supported commander receives both forces and logistic sustainment on time and where needed.

from the *strategic space*. This national system enables sustained operations over time and leverages our most potent force multiplier, the vast capacity of the industrial base. At this level, modern, clearly defined, well-understood, and outcome-focused processes drive efficiencies across Service, agency, and commercial capabilities. The power of robust and efficient global processes, combined with agile global force positioning, gives the Nation the foundation for success. This system is fundamental to global flexibility in the face of constantly changing threats.

### Strategic Framework

The strategic framework for joint logistics can be built around the roles and accountabilities of the global players within the joint logistic domain and its community

The Services—which can be viewed as defense readiness process owners—form the foundation of this joint framework and are the supported organizations for logistic readiness. In this role, they are responsible for the life-cycle readiness of their systems and are focused on the product they are chartered to deliver: logistic readiness at best value.

The Services and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) share responsibilities as joint supply process owners. In that shared role, they are supporting organizations to the components of the joint force for logistic readiness. The Services and DLA are responsible for strategic supply support and, supported by the distribution process owner (DPO), are focused on their product: perfect order fulfillment.

U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) serves as the joint deployment process owner and is the primary conventional force provider and global force manager. In this role, USJFCOM globally manages forces to ensure that the supported commander is provided with the forces needed to achieve national objectives. The command coordinates and makes recommendations for the global conventional force and, supported by the DPO, is focused on its product: perfect capability fulfillment.

U.S. Transportation Command serves as the Defense DPO and is the supporting organization to DLA and the Services for sustainment and to USJFCOM for the movement of force capability packages. The command coordinates and synchronizes the defense distribution system and is focused on its product: time-definite delivery.

### Imperatives for Success

The supported joint force commander expects joint logistics to give him freedom of action—to enable execution of his mission according to his timetable. The value of joint logistics can be measured by how well three joint logistic imperatives are achieved: unity of effort, domain-wide visibility, and rapid and precise response.

**Unity of effort** is the coordinated application of all logistic capabilities focused on the JFC's intent and is the most critical of all joint logistic outcomes. Achieving unity of effort requires the seamless integration of U.S. joint, multinational, interagency, and nongovernmental logistic capabilities and is built around three enablers:

- *Effective organizational capabilities and authorities* provide the means to execute joint logistics.

- *Shared priorities* across the logistic domain drive unity by focusing capabilities against the joint warfighter's most important requirements. Key tasks are the integration of priorities across joint, combined, and interagency domains and the continuous sorting of them in space and time.

- *Common critical processes* drive synergy across the joint force. Understanding how a joint logistic process works, how members of the joint force access it, and how the JFC measures success frames this enabler.

**Domain-wide visibility** is the ability to see the requirements, resources, and capabilities across the joint logistic domain. Three fundamental enablers frame the ability to achieve this imperative:

- *Connectivity* is access to a network 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to synchronize and coordinate efforts of supporting DOD agencies, interagency participants, multinational partners, host nations, contractors, and commercial sector participants.

- *Standard enterprise data architecture* is the foundation for effective and rapid data transfer and the fundamental building block to enabling a common logistic picture and high logistic situational understanding. This



21 Force Service Support Group (Brian A. Jacques)

Soldiers escort a convoy of trucks bringing supplies to U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq



U.S. Air Force (Maurice Hessel)

enabler fosters warfighter confidence by facilitating visibility across the entire global supply chain.

■ *Global focus* over the processes that deliver support to the joint warfighter is paramount to effective joint logistics. Logistic support to the joint force is global business, and any view of joint logistics that operates below this level will suboptimize processes and deliver less than acceptable readiness.

*Rapid and precise response*, the third imperative, is the ability of the supply chain to meet the constantly changing needs of the joint force. Lack of key supplies, regardless of the reason, undermines readiness and increases mission risk. The following performance measures indicate how well the supply chain is responding to the needs of the joint force:

■ *Speed* is the core of responsiveness and its most critical aspect to the warfighter. Ideally, all logistics should be immediately available all the time, but that is not possible given cost and resource constraints. The focus should be on what is *quick enough*, recognizing that not all supplies are equally vital. Items that truly drive readiness deserve special treatment.

■ *Reliability* is the ability of the supply chain to provide the warfighter predictability of supply or time-definite delivery. When items are not immediately available, the joint logistic system must provide immediate and reliable estimates of delivery to enable the warfighter to make decisions regarding mission options.

■ *Visibility* is closely aligned with speed and reliability and is the supply chain feature that provides rapid and easy access to order visibility information. Fundamentally, this tells the warfighter where a shipment is and when it will arrive.

■ *Efficiency* is directly related to the supply chain’s footprint. In the tactical and operational spaces, where every human resource is limited and every moment spent chasing information in the supply chain drains these resources, the footprint can be viewed in terms of the personnel resources needed to compensate for the inefficiencies of the current supply chain. In the strategic space, efficiency can be viewed as measure of the cost per outcome.

Joint logistics exists to give the JFC the freedom of action to meet mission objectives. It delivers this effect by integrating all logistic capabilities within the operational space,

bridging the national strategic sustainment base with the complex operational environment in a way that guarantees freedom of action to the supported JFC. Through rigorous self-assessment, discussion, analysis, and collaboration, significant progress can be made toward this objective.

Programs and initiatives that truly support joint logistics must move forward. Planners cannot wait until every issue is resolved to make decisions. Viewing initiatives through the lens of the imperatives above should offer a reasonable starting point for assessing an initiative’s value. The challenge of integrating Service- and agency-funded programs and systems not designed to support joint operations holistically cannot be underestimated. However, the importance of this effort must be all-prevailing.

Current logistic systems reflect inefficiencies, redundancies, and process gaps that are driving unacceptable risks across the joint force. We have a responsibility to the American people and the next generation of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines to do better. **JFQ**