Joint Force Maritime Logistics

Understanding the JFMCC's command logistics structure

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As the Marine Corps shifts focus to operations under a Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC), logisticians must consider the difference in capabilities and approaches associated with a maritime logistics system. Over the past twenty years, Marine logisticians sustained most operations utilizing a landbased logistics system supported by a Joint Force Land Component Commander (JFLCC). In these campaigns, Army forces maintained an accessible logistics infrastructure utilized to support all joint forces in a theater. In maritime campaigns, a robust, accessible, logistics infrastructure will not always be in place. Marine logisticians will need to be prepared to tap in to a more austere and mobile JFMCC structure that differs in several important ways from the landbased system. These differences lead to significant disparities in approaches at the operational level in regard to sustainment, force closure, and inter-theater lift for Marine forces. As the Marine Corps continues to emphasize integration with the Navy, it is essential for logisticians to understand how to leverage the unique aspects of a maritime logistics system to support both large- and small-scale operations. This understanding, achieved through application in training, education, and exercises, will increase the readiness and operational reach of Marine units.

Recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan provide clear examples of the type of logistics system Marine Corps units utilize during land campaigns. In past operations, the JFLCC provided a robust sustainment network specifically for provision of common user logistics items such as class I and III. In addition, the Army units under the land component possessed large stocks of class V(W) and even class IX, which could be utilized by Marine units if that use was coordinated by the MARFOR headquarters for that specific combatant commander. In each theater of operation, the JFLCC established a Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) tasked with planning, resourcing, and accomplishing lead service logistics. Subordinate to each of these TSC's is an Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) that can provide mission command for theater sustainment in forward areas. In landbased operations, the ESC is a vital resource and coordinates sustainment actions such as the delivery of bulk fuel direct to Marine Logistics Combat Element locations for follow on distribution. Furthermore, the ESC can establish robust contracts for provision of class I. Using subordinate Forward Logistics Elements, the ESC can tie Marine units at established bases into the operational-level logistics chain with every type of action from establishing

NAVELSG Sailors man a Roll On/Roll Off Discharge Facility (RDDF) while conducting lighterage operations during in-stream offload of vehicles and equipment. *(Photo by Chief Petty Officer William Parker.)*

NAVELSG provides expeditionary logistics capability for the Navy and joint Service customers. *(Photo by Chief Petty Officer William Parker.)*

fuel farms to servicing dining facilities. These examples display how the JFLCC ability to develop a robust sustainment network at established bases enabled Marine Corps operations in landbased conflicts over the past twenty years. To replicate the long-term sustainment requirements that Marine forces once leaned on the JFLCC to provide, a keen understanding of Naval logistics capabilities is required. In addition, it is important to understand what the JFLCC will not be able to provide in a more maritime focused theater of operations.

The JFMCC sustainment network varies significantly from the JFLCC network of TSCs and ESCs. Under the JFMCC, the key sustainment arm is the Combat Logistics Force (CLF). The CLF coordinates logistics requirements for the JFMCC. They use T-class shipping and aircraft to move sustainment within a theater from key hubs to naval forces. T-class ships will normally conduct scheduled re-supplies from established nodes to key locations. Finally, the JFMCC depends on elements of the Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Group to perform functions such as opening of air and seaports of embarkation/debarkation. Overall, maritime sustainment is more mobile and more susceptible to enemy attack and weather effects. In addition, access to large stocks of ammunition and repair parts will be less likely due to the significant distances between support nodes in a maritime environment.

There are several ways in which the specific aspects of operational-level logistics vary between the land-based (JFLCC) and maritime-based (JFMCC) systems. The first way in which these systems vary is sustainment, which is defined as the delivery of personnel, logistics, and other support required for operations. In future operations, the JFMCC will be responsible to support Marine forces with necessary sustainment, especially for items which cannot be sources through Service-specific chains. The JFMCC primarily utilizes Fleet Logistics Centers located at key points to flow scheduled and on call supplies from these key locations. Another important source of sustainment is the previously mentioned CLF located in each theater associated with each numbered fleet. The CLF receives logistics requirements from all of the fleet's subordinate task forces and consolidates these requirements by mainly utilizing Military Sea Lift Command ships. The JFMCC's capacity to provide long-term sustainment will hinge on its ability to distribute sustainment from these ships to both sea and land-based forces. In a maritime environment, the ability to augment the sustainment received from the FLCs and CLF entities is vital since distribution is limited by available connectors and subject to influence by environmental factors. Concepts such as expeditionary foraging and multi-functional logistics units are important ways to fill the gaps that may be created by these limitations and perform certain functions, like contracting, that JFLCC entities carried out in land campaigns.

Another way in which logistics will differ when Marine forces participate in a maritime campaign is the manner in which units conduct arrival and assembly of forces. Arrival and assembly encompass the receipt of personnel and equipment to constitute a force and the actions that force takes to establish capability and echelon to a final location. In a landbased campaign, Marine units were able to conduct arrival and assembly at secure bases often managed by the Army or Air Force. Pre-positioned stocks such as Marine Corps Pre-positioning Program Norway and MEU Augmentation Program Kuwait were utilized as sources of equipment near CFLCC managed bases. Once this equipment was drawn, Marine units arriving in the theater relied on the

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CFLCC's transportation and sustainment network to receive necessary supplies to prepare for onward movement. Once units were prepared to echelon, forward lift was conducted using military air at well-established airfields like Ali Al Salem Airbase in Kuwait, which is managed by Air Force units, or the JFLCC's contracted landbased lift to move assets forward. Arrival and assembly under the JFMCC will be a more dispersed and dynamic activity. Forces will close into austere nodes that could be managed only by Marine forces or with the assistance of Navy Seabees and Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group entities. Pre-positioned stocks will not be aggregated in one location but will be dispersed throughout the theater, sometimes in various containers being moved using various modes. Once units receive sufficient combat power to transition from the assembly phase, their onward movement will be accomplished using surface and air connectors. The time to perform force closure using these connectors may be much more extended compared to relatively fast force closure that occurred in the past using numerous theater assets to close forces from established bases. Overall, Marine logisticians will need to be well versed in working with elements of the naval force to receive equipment and personnel at a given location and closing this personnel and equipment to its final destination utilizing organic ships and aircraft.

A final consideration as the Marine Corps increases operations under a JFMCC is that Marine forces will increasingly depend on differing agencies for intra-theater lift. Intra-theater lift consists of the air or surface assets utilized to move personnel, supplies, and equipment within a theater of operations. In landbased operations, the TSC provided robust capabilities to move supplies and equipment via ground means. An example of this is the long convoys of contracted commercial trucks used to move sustainment between forward operating bases in Kuwait and Iraq. In addition, air lift in land campaigns was readily available between established forward operating bases. As operating locations take on a more naval aspect and are removed from common locations associated with the Air Force and Army, Marine forces will be increasingly unable to utilize the heavy airlift arranged by the Air Force organized by the Director of Mobility Forces. In addition, the distributed nature of operations in the maritime environment will stress whatever airlift is available to near the breaking point. To leverage all available resources, Marine logisticians need to look to utilize the Navy Air Logistics Office to coordinate airlift. While Navy Air Logistics Office offices manage only a small fleet of aircraft, with access to C-40s and C-130s, the use of these aircraft for lift can allow movement of small amounts of passengers and valuable repair parts. In addition, Marine logisticians need to become proficient in utilizing various forms of surface lift like T-class shipping as intra-theater lift to move supplies and equipment from key nodes to surface vessels. Being able to tie into these various forms of intra-theater lift will enable successful movement of personnel and equipment during distributed maritime operations.

Familiarization with the specific aspects of a JFMCC centered logistics system will lead to more effective support in the future operating environment. While a landbased system—supported by Army forces at critical nodes—is a system that today's logisticians are more comfortable and familiar with, proficiency at using a maritime-based system will occur over time and with increased exposure to the maritime environment in training and education opportunities. Furthermore, integration across Marine and naval staff elements will lead to an increased ability for Marines to leverage naval logistics resources to support actions in a maritime environment. Achieving this integration is critical to ensuring the sustainment of Marine forces in the future.

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