Multifunctional Logistician

A new MOS construct

by Maj Karl Eisenmann

Current resupply methods and MOSs employed to sustainment amphibious operations since the 1940s are no longer tenable. The future operating environment (FOE) presents new challenges to current and future Marine logisticians. As the proliferation of ubiquitous sensors accelerates, so too does the manifestation of vulnerabilities in the supply network creating the need to operate in a new and more covert manner to support future Marine organizations. Logisticians will form much smaller detachments to disperse capabilities and avoid target worthiness to reduce vulnerabilities. These factors, when coupled with a peer competitor's ability to create a communication degraded or denied environment, mean that Marine logisticians will be forced to operate with little direction from higher headquarters; thus, a more mature logistician is required. When the reduced frequency of resupply or reinforcement from sources outside the weapons engagement zone is also considered, it becomes clear that the cumulative effects of the FOE place much greater demands on the future Marine logistician than today. The current Marine Logistics MOS construct is not designed to sustain operations in the future operating environment and must be completely redesigned.

Determining Requirements

Logisticians must first develop and understand sustainment requirements in the FOE before establishing a new MOS construct. Using new and emerging baseline threats, technologies, and operating environments, it is possible to form an operating concept for future Marine logisticians. A new operating concept allows for analysis on the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) required in the new multifunctional logistician (MFL) based on how sustainment operations will be conducted. The first step in the analysis is the complete destruction of the current Logistics MOS construct. In *Destruction and Creation,* John Boyd wrote, "we must first shatter the rigid conceptual pattern, or patterns, firmly established in our mind" as a method that leads to the creation of new and novel concepts. By discarding current MOSs, but retaining the KSAs inside those MOSs, it is possible to determine what is required at the appropriate location and time in the battlespace, the relationships between MOSs, and which KSAs are no longer required. After this, gaps and groupings will become apparent. Gaps are those KSAs the Marine Corps does not currently possess. The groupings of current and new KSAs are the new MOSs.

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MFL Requirements and Training Continuum

As the new MOS construct is formed, base-level KSAs that every Marine logistician requires will begin to develop. These are KSAs that may exist now as an MOS in their own right or carry such

The Marine logistics community has spent years operating in the model of sustaining forward operations bases. The FOE will require different skills. *(Photo by LCpl Alexander Quiles.)*

Future expeditionary logistics will require interoperability with naval, joint, and allied forces. *(Photo by Sgt Anthony Ortiz.)*

importance in the logistics operating concept that every MFL must be trained to standard. Training for these skills should take place directly after graduation from the Marine Recruit Depot. This basic logistics school combines base-level logistics training and skills currently taught at Marine Combat Training. Essentially, this accomplishes two critical training objectives for the MFL: equipping the logistician with the KSAs necessary to be successful inside the logistics operating concept and combat skills required to thrive and win in combat.

From the groupings of KSAs, themes will appear. These themes will eventually become the new families of MOSs required by the logistics operating concept. MOS families guide the next step in the MFL's training. From the basic logistics school, MFLs will attend a school based on the grouping they will eventually belong to. Easily identified groupings, even without a published tactical-level logistics operating concept, are throughput, material readiness, and engineering. Each of these schools is responsible for the KSAs required to act as part of small interdisciplinary logistics detachment capable of operating without direct guidance or resupply for long periods. While a single logistician is preferred, it is unrealistic both fiscally and from a learning capacity standpoint. Contracts must still return useful service to the Corps outside the training pipeline, and it is unlikely the average person could learn and retain every KSA required.

Multifunctional logisticians will receive orders to a functional logistics battalion based on the same themes as the MOS families. Here, more experienced MFLs will conduct on the job training with newly arrived logisticians. This balances schoolhouse training with real-world application and allows MFLs to learn local standard operating procedures. Upon achieving the proper qualifications, new MFLs are prepared for deployment as part of a functional battalion support detachment, prepared for orders to another element of the MEF, or for a deployment cycle in a Combat Logistics Battalion.

New Systems, Concepts, and Risks

To manage the development and flow of MFLs through the Marine Corps, new systems are required. To monitor qualifications of individual Marines as they progress through on the job training in preparation for deployment, the logistics enterprise requires a system capable of monitoring training and readiness as well as qualifications. As Marines move throughout the MEF in support of operational deployments, localized control of personnel movements is required. The traditional manpower model only partially facilitates the MFL pipeline. Given the volume of moves required, a representative at the MEF-level and below should be able to generate orders, ensuring Marines are properly tracked. The MFL career path is dynamic. The traditional lock-step approach to advancement is ill-suited for talent management. The MFL's value lies in enabling sustainment and critical thinking about logistics problems in stressful situations. This should be valued.

Of course, there are risks associated with this model. There are two principal risks with MFL: the quality of Marine produced and materiel readiness. Despite rigorous training throughout the entry ascension pipeline, MFLs produced could vary in quality. This may be a result of fixation on the qualification system with less emphasis on critical thinking and maturity or driven by the time constraints created by operational requirements an unprepared Marine is deployed. The next principal risk is to MEF's materiel readiness. Functional battalions, responsible for materiel readiness, are also serving as a training ground for new MFLs. This may result in time lost to training instead of maintenance and supply. The opposite is also a concern. Materiel readiness operations may become prioritized above teaching and training, resulting in a less qualified Marine. Given that the MFL pipeline is designed to support deployments, it is possible personnel management situations create an experience gap at units tasked with MEF material readiness.

The future operating environment places increased demand for skilled logisticians. Creating logisticians equipped with additional knowledge, skills, and abilities is required to meet the challenge. These logisticians must also be critical thinkers and problems solvers. To achieve these new multifunctional logisticians, a complete redesign is required in both the MOS structure and training.

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