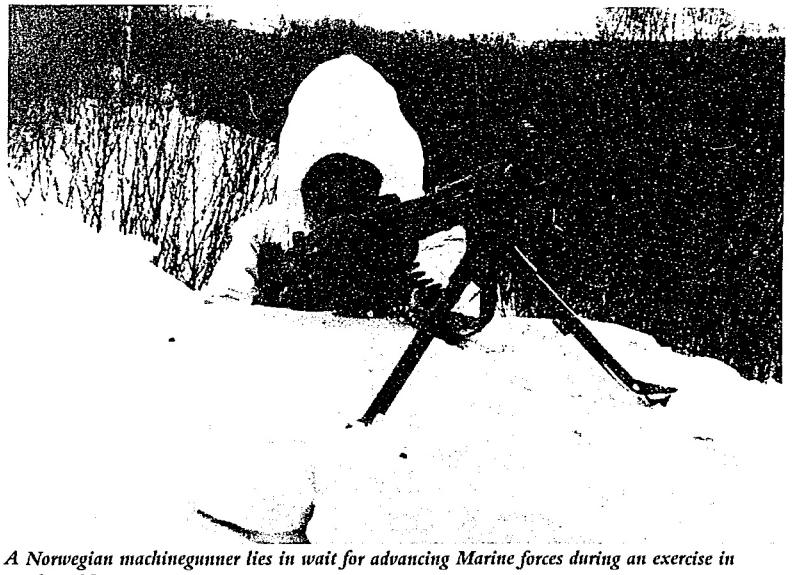
The Logistics of the NALMEB Program

by Capt Raymond M. Poinsette

The Corps' only land-based prepositioning program provides numerous logistics lessons.

During the period 7–11 March 1993 units from II MEF participated in Exercise BATTLE GRIFFIN '93 in northern Norway. The BATTLE GRIFFIN series of exercises is used to refine the plans for marshaling, deployment, reception, activation, and withdrawal of the Marine forces and the stored equipment that is prepositioned in Norway. The exercising forces withdrew from the storage sites a total of 476 items of equipment, 2,743 batteries, 6,700 cases of cold weather rations, 325 cases of fuel bars (Trioxane), and 25,929 liters of diesel fuel. In addition, the operating forces received 78 repair parts from the care in storage (supply block located at the storage sites. Before accepting this equipment, the exercising forces conducted limited technical inspection (LTI) of the items.There were 475 of these items accepted with no discrepancies. The one item that did not initially pass the joint LTI was a forklift. This item had a defective oil pressure gage. The forklift was exchanged for another forklift which passed the LTI. The defective oil pressure gage on the first forklift was repaired later the same day it was discovered.

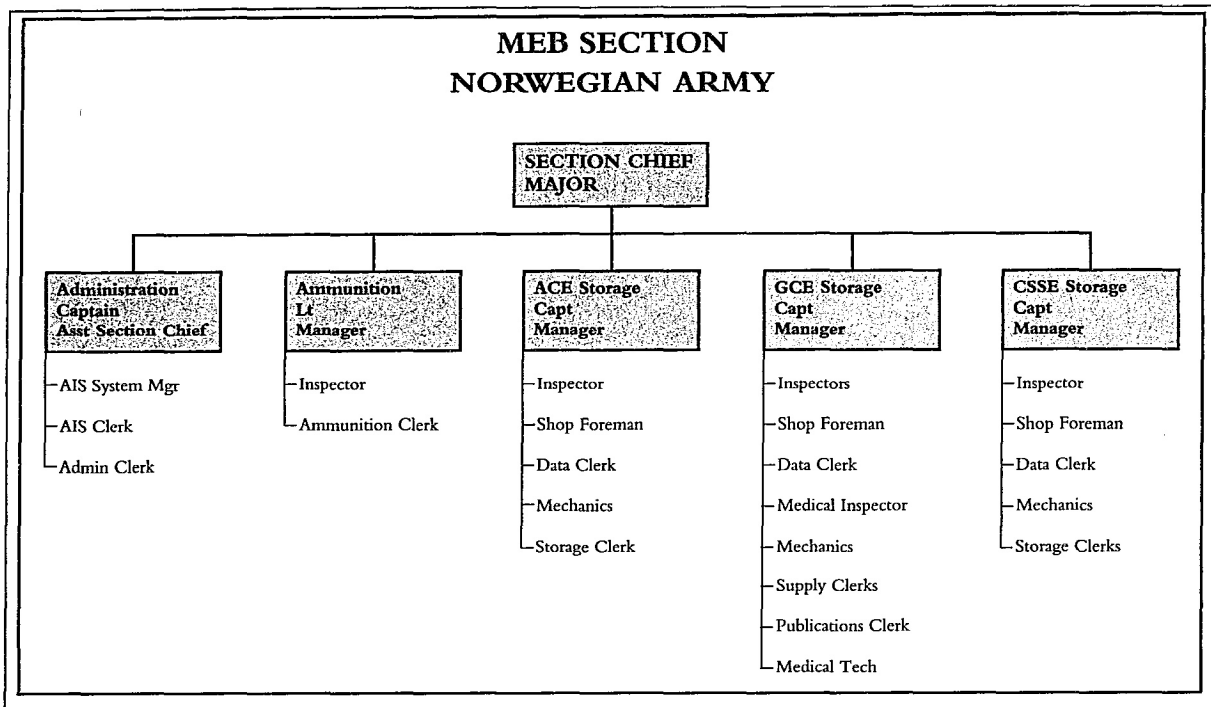
This record certainly suggests that the items prepositioned in Norway are at excellent levels of readiness. The units that utilized this equipment were not responsible for the preventive maintenance, corrective maintenance, modifications, inventory, or stock rotations of these assets while they were in storage. These critical tasks, however, needed to be accomplished to ensure that the stored equipment and supplies were ready and up to usable standards when they were needed. Therefore, the logistician may ask, "How are these tasks completed?" In the maritime prepositioning ships (MPS) program these maintenance and supply support functions are conducted by the Blount Island Command (BICmd) and the Marine Corps Maintenance Contractor located in Jacksonville, FL. The MPS vessels return to BICmd on a periodic basis for an MPS maintenance cycle. During this maintenance cycle the equipment and supplies are downloaded, maintained, rotated, and back-loaded for redeployment. However, in the NALMEB (Norway air-landed Marine expeditionary brigade) program the equipment and supplies are not returned to BICmd on a regular basis for maintenance and stock rotations. The Government of Norway (GON) conducts these functions continuously throughout the year through the use of a Norwegian contractor. The purpose of this article is to explain the logistics functions of the NALMEB ground program and the units and organizations that provide this support. To understand the logistics functions of the program, the reader must be familiar with the concept and purpose of the Norway air-landed Marine expeditionary brigade.



A Norwegian machinegunner lies in wait for advancing Marine forces during an exercise in northern Norway.

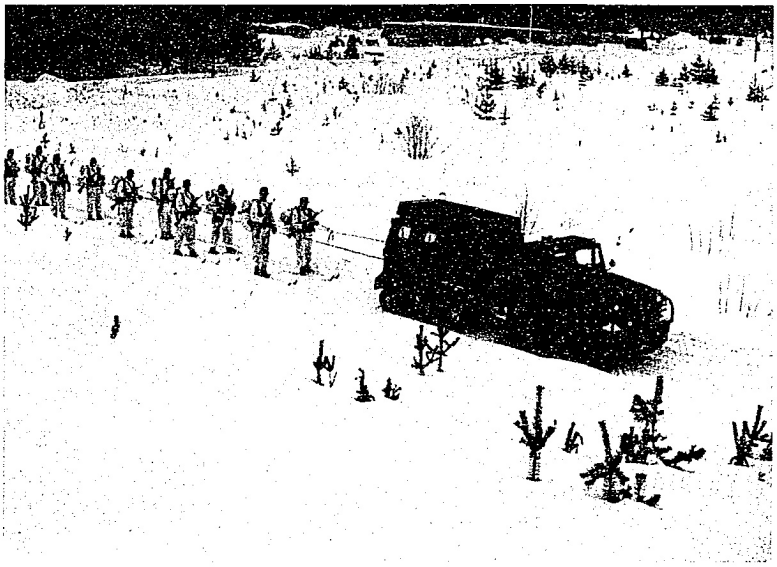
The NALMEB Program

The NALMEB is the only Marine Corps land prepositioning program. On 16 January 1981 the governments of Norway and the United



States established a bilateral agreement. In this document the United States agreed to provide a Marine expeditionary brigade for the reinforcement of Norway. To allow for rapid deployment of this brigade, the GON agreed to provide prepositioning facilities, airbases, and maintenance of prepositioned assets. A bilateral storage agreement was signed by the two governments in October 1982 that established the storage details. Initial operational capability of the program was achieved on 31 December 1989. Materiel that is prepositioned is mission essential, suited for long-term storage, heavyweight, high volume, and not available through host nation support. In-rock storage was chosen to store equipment because of space, protection from the harsh elements, and security considerations. A Norway air-landed Marine expeditionary brigade operation is a strategic deployment of a U.S. Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) to reinforce the defense forces in Norway. Norway is located on the northern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries in Europe. The country is surrounded by the sea on the north and west sides, and shares a common border (approximately 120 miles) with Russia. The NALMEB prepositioning program involves the storage of selected items of equipment and 30 days of supplies and ammunition for a MEB-sized MAGTF. These supplies and equipment are maintained in temperature and humidity controlled in-rock storage sites. Due to security reasons, such items as aircraft and some electronic and communications equipment are not prepositioned and are part of the fly-in-echelon of the MEB. The fly-in-echelon of the NALMEB is slightly larger than that for an MPS squadron, 276 sorties. All equipment stored is maintained in a ready-for-issue condition with a minimum of 90 percent by commodity area of on-hand assets operationally ready.

The concept of the NALMEB program is for a MEB-sized MAGTF to fly into reception airfields in central Norway. The MAGTF would then link up with the prepositioned equipment and supplies and redeploy to threatened areas within Norway. There are three equipment storage sites and three ammunition storage sites. All stored classes of supplies are divided into 3, 7, and 20 days of supply (DOS). The stored ammunition is divided into 2, 8, and 20 days of ammunition (DOA). Prior to the NALMEB arrival in Norway the GON will transport the seven-DOS and eight-DOA packets to the key employment area (KEA). The NALMEB outload preparation party (OPP) from the MAGTF will fly in as part of the advance party and receipt for all equipment and the three-DOS consignment of supplies from the GON at the storage sites. Upon arrival of the MAGTF at the reception airfield, the main body personnel and fly-in equipment are transported by the Host Nation Support battalion (HNSBn) to designated staging areas. The HNSBn is provided by the GON. Unit drivers and equipment operators are transported to the storage sites by the HNSBn. The unit drivers and equipment operators draw their vehicles and the three-DOS supply allotment for their unit from the OPP personnel. The drivers and equipment operators then drive their ve-



Norwegian "Band Wagen" provides a principal host nation means of transport in Scandinavian climates.

hicles to the designated staging areas and rejoin their units. The HNSBn transports the two-DOA packets to the units at the designated staging areas. In the staging areas, unit commanders organize their units, install communications assets, and prepare for embarkation on board Norwegian coastal vessels. The coastal vessels transport the units to the KEA. The MAGTF redeploys via coastal vessels because this would be the most effective and time efficient means of travel for a large force to move within Norway during a contingency. On order from the MAGTF commander the GON transports the 20 DOS/DOA block to the KEA. The NALMEB will then be ready to conduct exercises or operations in the designated area.

Equipment and Supplies

Prepositioned ground equipment is stored in ready-for-issue condition. Vehicle diesel fuel tanks are full, including the cold weather additives. Equipment gasoline tanks are stored empty. Rolling stock items are stored with snow chains on. Five-ton cargo trucks are stored without erected bows and canvas. HMMWVs have canvas and bows erected. Nonactivated wet cell batteries are in the vehicles and equipment during storage. The OPP team has the responsibility of activating the batteries before the main body of the MAGTF arrives. During exercises, the OPP exchanges nonactivated batteries with activated batteries which are maintained in a battery bank at each of the equipment storage sites. This procedure is conducted to reduce exercise costs. Once the exercise is completed the activated batteries are removed and stored back in the battery bank for future exercises. All equipment and vehicle items are issued with SL–3 components and collateral equipment. Specific serial numbers of equipment are not normally predesignated to arriving units. This concept enhances the flexibility and speed of removing vehicles and equipment from the storage sites. This also allows for changes in the air transportation flow to be accommodated without the reshuffling of equipment in the storage area. It should be understood that vehicles, equipment items, and general supply items (nonconsumables), that are issued for exercises must be returned to level "A," level "B," or level "B drive away conditions" for storage. The authorized levels of preservation for stored items are prescribed in a Marine Corps technical manual and the international agreement between the United States and the Government of Norway. This ensures that when these prepositioned assets are needed for a contingency operation they are at the highest levels of readiness to support the operating forces. To achieve these levels of equipment readiness the Government of Norway uses Norwegian mechanics and skilled workers to maintain equipment in modern equipment storage facilities. The maintenance guidance and resources are provided by Blount Island Command.

Maintenance

The maintenance concept for Marine Corps assets prepositioned in Norway is that the Government of Norway provides continual maintenance of the prepositioned equipment using Norwegian labor. There are 51 management and maintenance personnel in the Norwegian MEB section who conduct the supply accounting and maintenance production efforts for the program. The maintenance is performed at maintenance facilities collocated with the equipment storage sites. This alleviates the need to transport the equipment to maintenance facilities away from the storage areas. There is limited use of Norwegian regional depot facilities and local civilian subcontractor support in conjunction with this maintenance effort. The Blount Island Command provides tools, publications, and equipment as well as repair parts to support the maintenance program. Funding for the maintenance program is provided by the Marine Corps. The storage workers utilize the Marine Corps Integrated Maintenance Management System (MIMMS) and the Asset Tracking for Logistics and Supply System with the Supported Activity Supply System (SASSY) to manage the maintenance effort and to requisition repair parts. These automated systems are run using a personal computer (PC) based system which is linked to the Blount Island Command. The MIMMS and SASSY cy-

cles are run on a weekly basis. The Norwegian maintenance and supply personnel keypunch the MIMMS and SASSY data into the PC system that creates data sets. These data sets are then drawn down by personnel at Blount Island Command and sent to the mainframe system at MCLB Albany, GA, via electronic modem. Once the data has been processed and status provided, the data transfer from MCLB Albany to Norway occurs in the same manner as the input sequence. Repair parts are sent from the SASSY management unit general account at Blount Island Command to Norway on a weekly basis. This process ensures that the repair parts for corrective and preventive maintenance are requisitioned and shipped to Norway in an efficient and timely manner. Most of the vehicles and equipment stored in the NALMEB program are on a 3-year preventive maintenance cycle. Therefore, one-third of the equipment assets are removed from storage sites and preventive maintenance performed on them every year. Corrective maintenance is performed as needed. The GON performs modifications to equipment as directed by the Blount Island Command.

All urgent modifications are performed in accordance with Marine Corps instructions. Normal modifications to equipment are performed in accordance with the desires of the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) operating units and instructions provided by the Blount Island Command. This is because some modifications are left to the decision of the commanding officer as to whether they should be performed or not. In these cases the GON will perform the modifications as directed and in the priorities provided.

The calibration of test equipment is performed by Norwegian technicians. Throughout the year these technicians will form teams and visit each storage site. Items that cannot be calibrated at the sites are evacuated to a calibration laboratory in Norway and then returned to storage. The inventory and stock rotations are one of the largest areas of the logistics effort in the NALMEB program.

Inventory and Stock Rotations

Annually the Blount Island Command conducts a shipment and retrograde of equipment, vehicle, and supply items to and from Norway. This shipment is conducted to facilitate the changes in T/E (table of equipment), induction of new equipment into the Marine Corps inventory, and extraction of old items out of the inventory. This is how the equipment keeps pace with changes in the FMF. In addition, this movement is used to rotate shelf-life items such as cold weather rations, petroleum, lubricants, oils, medical supplies, and batteries. Presently, none of these stocks are containerized, which can present a logistical burden when planning transportation for large quantities of these supplies. The containerization of these assets is one change that could enhance the NALMEB program.

Presently, the 30 days of supplies to support the MAGTF are maintained as break bulk cargo in over 15,000 boxes and cases. Plans are being made to store these items in containers that would greatly reduce the time needed to load them for embarkation and movement. In addition, changes are being considered for the means of data transfer between the United States and Norway. This would include the utilization of the Streamlined Alternative Logistics Transmission System (SALTS). This system would enable the Norwegian computer operators to download and retrieve data at anytime without the assistance of the Blount Island Command system operators. The SALTS would also allow for other types of information to be transmitted, such as modification and calibration data.

"A Norway air-landed Marine expeditionary brigade (NALMEB) operation is a strategic deployment of a U.S. Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) to reinforce the defense forces in Norway. The NALMEB prepositioning program involves the storage of selected items of equipment and 30 days of supplies and ammunition for a MEB-sized MAGTF."

Summary

Prepositioning of equipment and supplies, whether afloat or land-based, is a logistical challenge for any organization. The fact that the equipment inventory within the Marine Corps is in a dynamic environment increases the number of obstacles that must be overcome to reach the goal of high equipment and supply readiness. This is the reason the Blount Island Command and GON strive to ensure that the maintenance and supply functions of the NALMEB program are continually performed. With the support of dedicated personnel and an adequate flow of resources the concept of prepositioning assets can provide great benefits to any deploying unit. However, without these resources and logistics support, prepositioned equipment can become an outdated, and unusable pile of scrap.

USMC

>Capt Poinsette is the NALMEB maintenance management officer stationed at Blount Island Command Jacksonville, FL. He is a logistics officer and a graduate of the U.S. Army's Transportation Officers Advance Course, Fort Eustis, VA.