

# **Rethinking Logistics Organization of the Marine Expeditionary Force: A MAGTF Solution**

**A Monograph  
by  
MAJOR Kevin G. Collins  
USMC**



**School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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Major Kevin G. Collins

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Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark E. Monroe, COL, USMC

Monograph Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin C.M. Benson, COL, AR

Director,  
School of Advanced  
Military Studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

Director,  
Graduate Degree  
Programs

## **Abstract**

**RETHINKING LOGISTICS ORGANIZATION OF THE MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE: A MAGTF SOLUTION** by MAJOR Kevin G. Collins, US Marine Corps, 67 pages.

In the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom I, the Marine Corps decided to reorganize and re-name the Combat Service Support Element (CSSE) to address perceived logistics shortcomings in the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). The Combat Service Support Element of the MEF thus became the Logistics Combat Element (LCE), composed of the Marine Logistics Group (MLG), formerly the Force Service Support Group (FSSG). While the new MLG potentially solves problems of unit training, unit cohesion, and lack of established rapport with supported units, reorganization created alarming gaps in the logistics coverage of the MEF. This monograph begins with a brief history of the LCE and analyzes the reorganization effort to determine its risks and benefits. Ultimately, this monograph argues that a rigid adherence to bureaucratic boundaries prevented the Marine Corps from imposing the optimal solution for the logistics structure of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force. With alarming gaps in both the coverage of supported units and the distribution network of the MEF, rather than improving logistics support in the MEF, reorganization created additional risks with which the MEF Commander must contend. This monograph identifies those risks and poses a potential solution.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In his bestselling book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins posits that an important distinguishing feature of great companies is their ability to achieve a culture of discipline through disciplined thought. In such companies, disciplined thought emerges from an honest and diligent effort to determine the truth and confront the brutal reality behind any situation. As Collins contends, making good decisions depends on an organization's ability to face the brutal facts.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom I (OIF I), it would have been understandable for Marine logisticians to highlight the campaign's dramatic success as proof of the Force Service Support Group's (FSSG's) ability to support a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) in combat. Instead, the leadership within the Marine Corps chose the path of critical self-assessment, underscoring the fact that to be successful, the FSSG had to grow well beyond its normal size and completely reorganize. However, a culture of bureaucracy pervaded the effort to correct the perceived shortcomings of the FSSG, leading to a less than optimal solution for improving logistics in the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). This monograph will explore the Marine Corps' effort to stimulate progress and improve MAGTF logistics while preserving the core purpose of the Logistics Combat Element (LCE) and its role in the MAGTF. Specifically, this monograph will evaluate the Marine Corps' recent reorganization of the LCE in order to understand the cause and intent of the reorganization and to evaluate the execution of the reorganization in the context of theory, doctrine, and commander's intent. Examining the brutal reality of reorganization will ultimately allow a judgment regarding the culture of discipline or culture of bureaucracy within the Marine Corps.

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<sup>1</sup>Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2001), 69-70.

## **Methodology**

In order to outline the development of logistics structure within the Marine Corps, detect the rationale behind logistics organization and reorganization, and make a judgment regarding the reorganization, research relied on multiple sources. Historical documents, professional journal articles, and other published works provided the sources necessary to explain the history and evolution of logistics structure within the Marine Corps. Official message traffic, published articles, official briefings, published Tables of Organization (T/Os), Marine Corps Orders, and after-action assessments provided information that proved vital to understanding the rationale behind and impetus for reorganization. Military theory, doctrine, and other relevant works allowed for the critical analysis of the reorganization. Finally, primary sources filled in numerous gaps and highlighted the concerns of Marine Corps' leadership as the service faces the challenges of reorganization.

## **Structure**

In addition to introducing the purpose of the monograph, Chapter One provides an historical perspective on the evolution of the logistics structure within the MAGTF, tracing that development from the 1940s through Operation Desert Storm. Chapter Two begins with OIF I and examines the impetus and rationale behind the reorganization of the FSSG, and outlines the result of the reorganization effort. Chapter Three provides a critical analysis of the reorganization and identifies the resultant capability gaps. Chapter Four proposes assumptions that become guiding principles for the solutions to gaps identified in Chapter Three and identifies implications of reorganization. The monograph concludes in Chapter Five with a summary of the research and analysis contained in the previous four chapters and highlights areas for further study.

## **Limitations of Study**

Renaming and reorganization of the FSSG is merely one of six logistics modernization initiatives in the Marine Corps. As the foundation initiative, logistics operational architecture

(LOG OA) forms the basis for each of the other five initiatives. The focus of this study is on reorganization. Though worthy of critical examination, the effect of reorganization on the efficacy of LOG OA is beyond the scope of this study. Reorganization also has important implications for how the Marine Logistics Group (MLG) staff functions, particularly with respect to fulfilling its potential role as a Marine Logistics Command (MLC), providing Title X support to Marine component commanders. The implications that reorganization present for the MLG staff are beyond the scope of this study. Finally, the force structure within the three MEFs is somewhat different in all cases and significantly different in the case of III MEF. This study is, therefore, limited to the force structures of I and II MEF, given the geographical dispersion and relatively smaller size of III MEF. Although III MEF shares the problems with the MLG force structure that I and II MEF have, the solution is somewhat different given III MEF's unique situation. Therefore, I and II MEFs form the focus of the analysis and recommendations in this monograph.

## **Marine Logistics Organization at the Tactical Level: An Historical Overview**

Logistics units in modern military forces find their historical roots in the “train service” of von Moltke’s Prussian Army of 1870. Organized in echelon down to the battalion level, Prussian logistics units included battalion trains that closely followed the combat troops and provided spare horses, pack horses, a medicine cart, and a mobile canteen. Small baggage trains were the next echelon of logistics support, providing the division with wagons which carried the baggage of the division staff, ammunition for the infantry, field forges, troop provisions, and a field hospital. Finally, the heavy baggage trains carried additional ammunition, officer’s baggage, a field bakery, field hospitals, provisions, pontoons, and a remount depot.<sup>2</sup> Just as von Moltke’s divisions had the requisite logistics capabilities to provide a measure of self-reliance and mobility

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Van Crevald, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 97.

on the battlefield, when the Marine divisions were initially organized in 1940 they, too, possessed the necessary logistics structure to make the divisions “self-contained amphibious fighting forces well suited for combat on rugged tropical islands.”<sup>3</sup>

## **The War in the Pacific: A War of Logistics**

On 7 May 1942, the Secretary of the Navy approved the activation of two Marine divisions. The new divisions would continue the tradition of Marines fighting in integrated, combined arms formations that had been standard practice since the Fourth Marine Regiment’s assault on Las Trencheras, Dominican Republic on 27 July 1916.<sup>4</sup> Marine units committed to combat would thus possess a combination of infantry, artillery, special troops, and service troops. Initially, the T/O for the Marine Division included engineer and medical battalions. Later, revisions added service battalions to provide additional logistics capability to the divisions. Marine planners recognized the unique and difficult nature of over-the-shore logistics by identifying logistics as one of six major components of amphibious operations.

By the time Marine forces were preparing for the Guadalcanal campaign, the approved structure of the Marine division, outlined in the D-100 series T/O of 1 July 1942, was the largest division-sized organization in the US Armed Forces, with 19,514 authorized personnel.<sup>5</sup> Each of the initial five battalions within the logistics structure was functionally aligned to provide specific capabilities to the division. The engineer battalion’s mission was to enhance the mobility, countermobility, and survivability of the division, a mission that remains today in the division’s combat engineer battalion. The pioneer battalion provided ship-to-shore movement of supplies and supplemental engineer support. The service battalion’s charter included the provision of supplies, ordnance maintenance and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and originally motor transportation support. The motor transport companies within the service battalions were later

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<sup>3</sup>Gordon L. Rottman, *US Marine Corps World War II Order of Battle* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2002), 113.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-114.

consolidated into the division's motor transport battalion, with the mission of providing truck transport to the division in a general support role and to the regiments in a direct support role. Finally, the medical battalion provided both direct and general medical support to the division.

When task organized for combat, the capabilities within the engineer regiment and service troops were attached down to regimental, battalion, and even company level. Infantry regiments would thus gain pioneer, medical, engineer, and motor transport companies and supply and service platoons and detachments. When the First Marine Division waded ashore at Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942, the Division's infantry regiments were designated as Combat Groups, and were weighted logistically with attached companies from 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Pioneer Battalion, 1st Medical Battalion, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, and a transport platoon from the 1st Service Battalion.<sup>6</sup>

By the time of the Okinawa campaign, the logistics capabilities within the Marine divisions had expanded based on the lessons of conducting amphibious operations and extended operations ashore throughout the Central Pacific. With expanding capabilities came command and control innovations, as functional logistics battalions were task organized into regimental-sized functional groups. Figure 1 below reflects the logistics organization of the First Marine Division for the Okinawa campaign. The Division continued to attach functional companies and detachments to the infantry regiments, which were now designated regimental combat teams. Thus, each regimental combat team went ashore with attached companies from the engineer, pioneer, medical, and motor transport battalions, and detachments from the supply and service battalion.<sup>7</sup> After attaching down logistics capabilities to the infantry regiments, the logistics battalions employed their remaining companies as functional capabilities in general support of the Division.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 272-273.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 362-363.

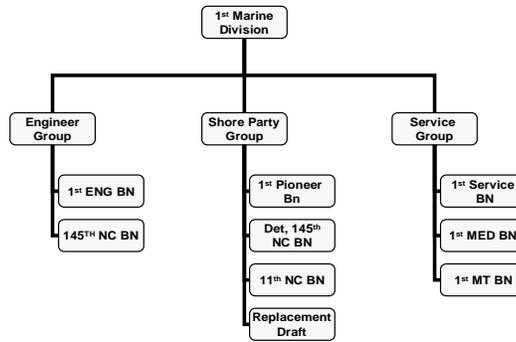


Figure 1. Logistics Structure of the First Marine Division, Operation Iceberg  
 Source: Gordon L. Rottman, *US Marine Corps World War II Order of Battle* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2002): 362-364.

Marine logistics capabilities were not limited to the divisions. The Amphibious Corps and Fleet Marine Force-Pacific (FMFPac) each brought significant logistics capabilities to the fight. On 1 October 1942, the Marine Corps activated the I Marine Amphibious Corps (IMAC). Within IMAC the Marine Corps established corps-level functionally-aligned logistics organizations to provide support for the divisions. Organized under Corps Troops, the IMAC logistics capabilities included the 1st Corps Motor Transport Battalion, 1st Corps Medical Battalion, 1st Corps Naval Construction Battalion (53d Naval Construction Battalion), IMAC Supply Service, and 1st Corps Service Battalion.<sup>8</sup> During the Pacific War, the Marine Corps added III and V Amphibious Corps, dropping the “Marine” designation in order to reflect the joint character of the organizations that usually included US Army units. Logistics capabilities added to IMAC included graves registration, laundry, bakery, EOD, and air delivery units. The additional logistics capabilities within III Amphibious Corps were arrayed in groups commanded by colonels, similar to the logistics structure of the First Marine Division. Figure 2 below reflects the logistics structure of III Amphibious Corps for the Okinawa campaign.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 108-109.

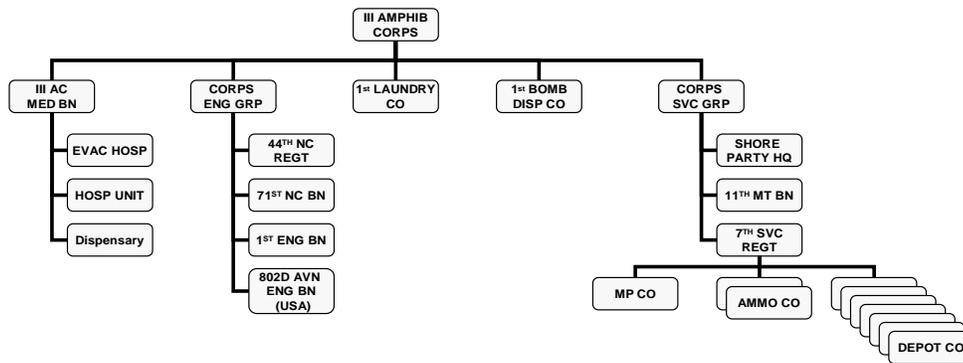


Figure 2. III Amphibious Corps Logistics Structure, Operation Iceberg  
 Source: Gordon L. Rottman, *US Marine Corps World War II Order of Battle* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2002): 359-362.

Directing the logistics efforts of the Marine Corps in the Pacific was the Service Command, FMFPac. The Service Command was responsible for supply, salvage, evacuation, construction, personnel management, quartering, and sanitation for all FMFPac units. The Service Command functioned as a theater logistics command for the Marine Corps, with ties to Pacific Fleet, Army Service of Supply, and Commander-In-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) logistics agencies. The first FMFPac-level logistics agencies were the First and Second Base Depots, established 1 August 1941, at Norfolk and San Diego, respectively. In preparation for the Guadalcanal campaign, the First Base Depot was stationed in New Caledonia, and the Second was stationed in Wellington, New Zealand. Each depot possessed company-sized units with headquarters, general supply, engineer, transport, ordnance, signal, military police, and ammunition companies. The Corps established nine depots throughout the war to provide additional logistics support to the divisions and other FMF units. By the end of the war, the Service Command included each of the nine depots, the provisional field service commands established to assist logistical planning for the invasions of Okinawa and the Japanese mainland, and two separate motor transport

battalions.<sup>9</sup> In June 1945, the 7th and 8th Field Depots were redesignated as the 7th and 8th Service Regiments, respectively. As Gordon Rottman points out, the Marine Corps established the service regiments in order to “restore esprit de corps in frequently derided service units.”<sup>10</sup> The regimental moniker was to give the logistics unit a designation similar to combat outfits, with the accompanying unit identity. The regiments were multi-functional organizations, with functional battalions assigned as depicted in Figure 3. By the end of the war, most of the depots were deactivated. The 7th and 8th Service Regiments, however, were redeployed to the United States. The 7th was stationed at Camp Pendleton and deactivated. The 8th, however, was stationed at Camp Lejeune and remained active as a subordinate to the Second Marine Division.<sup>11</sup> The Regiment was later redesignated as the 2d Combat Support Group (Medium) and would eventually become the 2d FSSG.<sup>12</sup> The modern MLGs, therefore, can trace their original lineage not to the logistics commands within the corps and divisions of the World War II Marine Corps, but to the FMFPac level Base Depots.

## The Force Service Regiments

The end of the war in the Pacific brought the deactivation of a large portion of the FMF, to include the various logistics units. Though the divisions retained much of their logistics structure, few of the logistics units above division level remained. In 1957, the Marine Corps chartered the Marine Corps Organization and Composition Board to recommend changes in service organization to the FMF. The Board approached the issue of logistics organization with the following precept:

The concentrations of supply and service installation characteristics of World War II and the Korean War are totally out of the question in modern warfare. The modern doctrine places a premium on speed, shock and surprise. This presupposes that optimum flexibility and a high order of tactical and strategic mobility must be present in the Fleet Marine Force. Service elements are inherently the heaviest, the least mobile, and the least flexible

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 243-244.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 245.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 247-248.

<sup>12</sup>US Marine Corps, *Lineage of 2d Force Service Support Group* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 26 May 2005).

of all units. How then, can they be organized to increase their mobility and flexibility and at the same time give them the capability to provide the required support?<sup>13</sup>

At the time the Board convened, the logistics structure within the FMF included a service regiment within the divisions and a combat service group at the FMF level. The Division Service Regiment included a service battalion, engineer battalion, medical battalion, motor transport battalion, and assault amphibian vehicle battalion. At FMF level, the Combat Service Group included an engineer battalion, bridge companies, EOD company, motor transport battalion and surgical, hospital, and dental companies.

The Board identified four specific problems with the logistics structure as it existed in 1957. First, the Board perceived that the division commanders shouldered too great a burden for logistics support. Second, with multiple echelons of supporting units, the Board saw too many echelons in the support chain. Third, as alluded to above, the Board saw the heavy logistics units as detrimental to the mobility and flexibility of tactical units, and further considered them unable to adequately support mobile and dispersed units. Fourth, given emerging doctrinal concepts, the Board foresaw a requirement for a FMF-level logistics organization capable of supporting what would eventually be called the MAGTF.<sup>14</sup> With the preponderance of logistics assets at the division level, task organizing integrated air-ground-logistics teams would be more problematic. Additionally, the Board acknowledged its goal of reducing support overhead to retain maximum combat power within the post-war resource-constrained Marine Corps

The Reorganization and Composition Board put forth a number of recommendations in order to address its findings:

1. Concentrate wing-specific support assets at Marine Air Wing and Air Group level and concentrate support common to both the wing and division at the Force level.
2. Concentrate the principal service support for ground elements at division and Force level.
3. Develop a Force-level logistics organization capable of providing common supply, service, and maintenance functions to task-organized air and ground units.

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<sup>13</sup>“Composition Board Report: Service Elements,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 1957): 20.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

4. Eliminate the regimental echelon in the logistics support chain while providing individual battalions the capabilities to effect internal distribution and organizational maintenance.
5. Remove from the division those logistics capabilities not habitually required in combat.<sup>15</sup>

The Board developed the logistics capabilities of the division to provide the minimum sustainment requirements of the division for initial assault operations out to twenty days. The Board further posited that any logistics organizations within the division must possess a degree of mobility and flexibility equal to their supported units. Moreover, in keeping with its charter, the Board sought to reduce administrative and support overhead within the division to the greatest extent possible.<sup>16</sup> The Board's conclusions and recommendations notwithstanding, the Marine divisions still retained a robust logistics capability possessing organic service, pioneer, medical, and motor transport battalions. The most notable reductions in the division's logistics structure were the elimination of the service regimental headquarters, the replacement of the shore party battalions with a multifunctional service battalion with embedded landing support capabilities, the renaming of the engineer battalions in favor of the pioneer battalion moniker, the deletion of two hospital companies within the medical battalion, and the reduction of motor transport capabilities due to the emergence of helicopter mobility.<sup>17</sup>

The Board Report indicates that the Force Service Regiment (FSR) concept was being studied at Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) prior to the convening of the Board. The Board, therefore, went forward with a recommendation that the Marine Corps adopt the FSR as the logistics link between theater level logistics agencies and FMF combat units. The result was a Force level logistics command with three functional battalions. The FSR, as depicted in Figure 3 below, furnished logistics services such as bakery, laundry, air delivery, graves registration, freight forwarding and salvage, and provided task organized multifunctional logistics units to support up to two separate air-ground elements. Additionally, the regiment provided requisition,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 21-23.

storage and issue of all classes of supply and up to fourth echelon maintenance on ground equipment.<sup>18</sup> The Marine Corps activated the 1st and 2d FSRs in March 1957. The Board report indicates that the Marine Corps applied intellectual rigor and disciplined thought in assessing logistics command and control, allowing an approach to logistics structure that focused on roles and responsibilities.

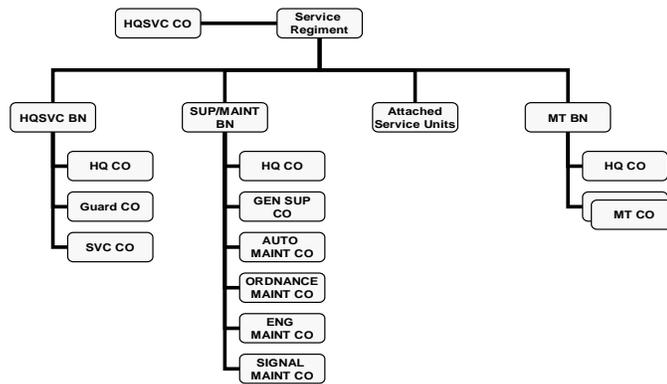


Figure 3. Force Service Regiment

Source: Gordon L. Rottman, *US Marine Corps World War II Order of Battle* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2002): 245.

## The Force Service Support Group is Born

By 1965, the FSRs were included under the organization of Force Troops, a command that contained additional logistics capabilities such as motor transport and engineer battalions.<sup>19</sup> The Marine Corps later combined the division's service battalion with elements of the FSR to create the Force Logistics Command, and later the Force Logistics Support Group. Unsatisfied with the results of these expedients, Marine Corps leadership directed a formal study to recommend a better logistics structure. The resulting study, conducted by the Naval Warfare Research Center of the Stanford Research Institute and published in March 1974, recommended

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>19</sup>Frank Beardsley, "Force Troops," *Leatherneck* 49, 12 (December 1965): 20-23.

the creation of the FSSG.<sup>20</sup> The subsequent “Haynes Report” on the force structure within the FMF cited the Stanford study and upheld the study’s recommendations.<sup>21</sup> The Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) approved the activation of the FSSG on 29 April 1975.<sup>22</sup>

Fleet Marine Force Atlantic (FMFLant) was the first command to implement the FSSG concept. Built on the existing structure of the 2d FSR and Force Troops, the FSSG would usher in a new concept of combat service support within the Marine Amphibious Force (MAF). The new concept had force structure implications throughout the MAF, as it shuffled capabilities between the division, wing, and FSSG to achieve a balance that would relieve combat units of the burden of sophisticated maintenance and logistics while affording the division and wing commanders single subordinate regimental and group-sized commands to provide essential CSS needs specific to the division and wing. The Division Support Group (DSG) and Marine Wing Support Group (MWSG) were thus created. The DSG included a combat engineer battalion, a headquarters and service battalion with motor transport and shore party capabilities, and later tank and assault amphibious vehicle battalions from Force Troops. The MWSG gained functionally aligned engineer, headquarters and ground maintenance and motor transport squadrons. The new commands were created to assure the division and wing commanders that they would still retain the capability to meet their essential needs even as they relinquished a large portion of their logistics capabilities.

Colonel Paul E. Wilson explained in his 1978 *Marine Corps Gazette* article that creating the FSSG “did not come easy because there were some hostile Marines--some in very high

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<sup>20</sup>W. L. Edwards, H. B., Wilder, Jr., T. H. Allen, W. Schubert, and J. L. Brenner, *Organization and Operations of Combat Service Support Elements of the Fleet Marine Force (1975-1980): Final Report of the Preferred Combat Service Support Structure* (Menlo Park, CA: Naval Warfare Research Center, Stanford Research Institute, March 1974).

<sup>21</sup>Although the Haynes Board Report was a comprehensive study of the FMF and its requirements given emerging threats and available structure, the report did not address the structure of the FSSG, citing the preceding study on combat service support by the Naval Warfare Research Center/Stanford Research Institute (NWRC/SRI). The Haynes Board recommended that the Combat Service Support Study’s findings be approved and implemented as part of a broader reorganization effort within the FMF.

<sup>22</sup>Paul E. Wilson, “Developing a Better Combat Service Support System for the Marine Corps,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 52, no. 1 (January 1978): 40.

places.”<sup>23</sup> While the wing and division relinquished the medical battalions and dental companies and postal, disbursing, and exchange capabilities with little angst, the loss of other capabilities proved much more contentious. The fiercest bureaucratic fight involved the elimination of the division’s shore party battalion. The division commander saw the shore party battalion as an essential element of the landing force as it provided the immediate sustainment needs of the assault echelon. Being critical to the success of any amphibious operation, the division commanders felt the shore party battalion belonged within the division. The FSSG, however, saw this unit as another logistics unit that had its logical place in the FSSG. Although the division retained a company-sized landing support capability within the DSG, the initial structure that emerged from the Combat Service Support Study did not include the shore party battalion. The argument resurfaced once it became obvious that the shore party battalion was an instrumental piece of the logistics structure. In the end, CMC approved placing the shore party battalion within the FSSG, activating the battalion as the Landing Support Battalion. Figure 4 below depicts the organization of the FSSG, as approved by CMC. As Figure 4 reveals, the FSSG’s organization followed functional lines with multifunctional units created later to support Marine Air Wing (MAW) units located at remote locations.

Though the FMF relied on the FSSG to support deployments and exercises throughout the 1980s, the command provided support by employing task organized, multifunctional Logistics Support Units (LSUs) or Combat Service Support Detachments (CSSDs) that were temporarily activated for contingencies, deployments, or exercises. The Persian Gulf War of 1991 would provide the first opportunity for the FSSG as a unit to function as a single entity on the battlefield.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 46.

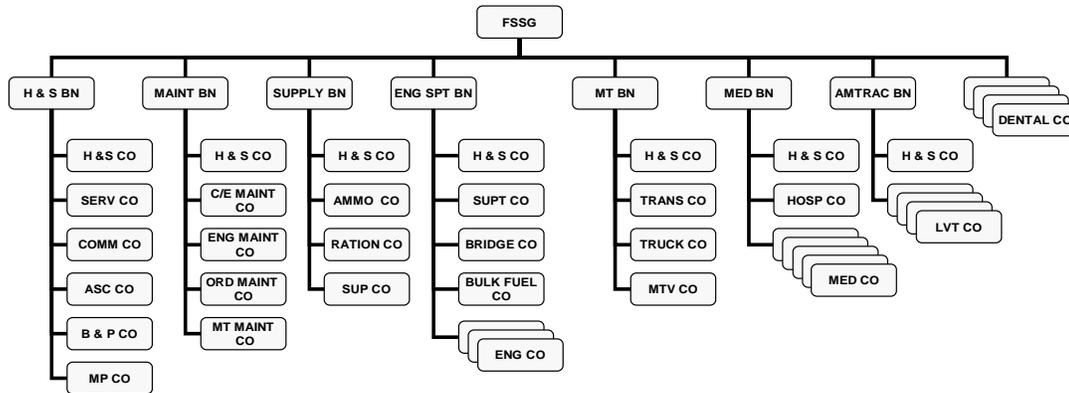


Figure 4. Initial Organization of the Force Service Support Group

Source: W. L. Edwards, H. B. Wilder, Jr., T. H. Allen, W. Schubert, and J. L. Brenner, *Organization and Operations of Combat Service Support Elements of the Fleet Marine Force (1975-1980): Final Report of the Preferred Combat Service Support Structure* (Menlo Park, CA: Stanford Research Institute, March 1974), 29.

## The FSSG at War: Operation Desert Storm

Providing combat service support to a reinforced MEF over extended distances necessitated heavily reinforcing and reorganizing the FSSG. To support the initial combat forces that deployed to theater in late 1990, Brigadier General James Brabham, then Commanding General of 1st FSSG, organized the functional battalions under his command into three groups: a direct support group to provide direct support to the 1st Marine Division and 3d Marine Air Wing, a general support group to provide general support to I MEF headquarters, and a headquarters group to provide internal support to the FSSG. Within the direct support group, the FSSG task organized four company and battalion-sized CSSDs to provide direct support to the division and wing and subordinate elements within those commands.<sup>24</sup> With ample time to train and organize for combat once in theater, the FSSG tailored its subordinate CSSDs to meet the unique requirements of supported units and was able to mitigate the detrimental effects such as lack of unit cohesion and unit training and unfamiliarity with supported units that normally results

<sup>24</sup>Steven M. Zimmeck, *US Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991: Combat Service Support in Desert Shield and Desert Storm* (Washington, DC: United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, 1999), 36-37, 52-53.

from expedient task organization. As combat forces expanded in anticipation of a ground campaign to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the 2d FSSG joined the 1st FSSG as a subordinate command to I MEF. With two FSSGs in theater to support I MEF, Lieutenant General Walter Boomer, Commanding General of I MEF, approved the organization of the FSSGs into direct and general support commands under the overall command of Brigadier General Brabham's 1st FSSG. 2d FSSG provided the nucleus for the direct support command, with two subordinate direct support groups. The direct support groups, consisting of elements from the functional battalions of both FSSGs, established eight CSSDs of varying size that provided direct support to the various Regimental Combat Teams (RCTs), task forces, and Marine Air Groups (MAGs). The remainder of the capabilities within the two FSSGs composed the general support groups, built around elements of both FSSGs and containing two general support groups that supported the direct support groups and the MEF. Table 1 depicts the task organization of 1st and 2d FSSGs that was based on the MEF scheme of maneuver and the division and wing task organization for combat.

Table 1. Task Organization of 1st and 2d Force Service Support Groups, Operation Desert Storm

Units	Subordinate Units	Task Organized Units (formed from elements of subordinate units)	Supported Units
1 <sup>st</sup> FSSG Headquarters	H&S Bn (-), 1 <sup>st</sup> FSSG	N/A	I MEF
Direct Support Command	H&S Bn, 2d FSSG 7 <sup>th</sup> Engineer Spt Bn 8 <sup>th</sup> Engineer Spt Bn 8 <sup>th</sup> Motor Transport Bn 2d Medical Bn Det, 2d Maintenance Bn Det, 2d Supply Bn	Direct Support Group-1 CSSD-10 GS 1 <sup>st</sup> Marine Div MCSSD-11 DS 1 <sup>st</sup> Marine Regt CSSD-13 DS 3d Marine Regt MCSSD-17 DS 7 <sup>th</sup> Marine Regt  Direct Support Group-2 MCSSD-26 DS 6 <sup>th</sup> Marine Regt MCSSD-28 DS 8 <sup>th</sup> Marine Regt	
General Support Group-1	2d Supply Bn (-) 2d Maintenance Bn (-) 1 <sup>st</sup> Landing Supt Bn (-) Det, 1 <sup>st</sup> Dental Bn	CSSD-131 GS 3d MAW CSSD-132 DS MAG 16/26	
General Support Group-2	Det, H&S Bn, 1 <sup>st</sup> FSSG 7 <sup>th</sup> Motor Transport Bn 2d Landing Supt Bn 1 <sup>st</sup> Medical Bn Det, 2d Maintenance Bn Det, 2d Supply Bn Det, 8 <sup>th</sup> Engineer Supt Bn Det, 2d Dental Bn		Direct Support Command

Source: Steven M. Zimneck, *US Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991: Combat Service Support in Desert Shield and Desert Storm* (Washington, DC: United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, 1999), 66-67, 80.

The combat experience of Desert Storm highlighted a number of strengths and weaknesses in the FSSG organizational structure. Perhaps the greatest advantage that the FSSG organization held was the ability of the FSSG commander to mass certain capabilities on the battlefield at appropriate times and places, particularly engineer and motor transport capabilities. As Colonel John Woodhead argued in his post-Desert Storm commentary on the organization of the FSSG, “the massed power of the engineer support and motor transport battalions [was] key to

success in Desert Shield and Desert Storm.”<sup>25</sup> Particularly in the case of the engineer support battalion, retaining these capabilities in a functional structure enabled the FSSG commander to move his engineer assets around the battlefield, in order to reinforce the combat engineer companies within the RCTs, provide support to constructing combat service support areas, and provide engineer capabilities to support other maneuver elements and the CSSDs dispersed throughout the MEF's battlespace. Likewise, the massed effects of the motor transport battalion allowed the 1st FSSG commander, functioning as the general support logistics provider, to move large quantities of supplies to keep the maneuver units and direct support CSSDs in the fight. The functional battalion structure compelled the FSSG commanders to form new organizations from portions of the functional battalions, while retaining the functional battalions as capabilities that supported the newly-formed multi-functional organizations. This organizational agility allowed the FSSG commanders to support a diverse and dispersed MEF while also responding to changing battlefield conditions during the campaign; however, the organizational flexibility of the FSSG highlighted a tension between the ability to task organize and the requirement to rapidly deploy. Clearly, the requirement to make significant changes to the task organization of the FSSG does not facilitate rapid deployment. Additionally, changes in task organization meant a disproportionate focus on the internal functioning of the FSSG vice the external focus necessary to effectively plan for and meet the needs of the supported units. Large numbers of personnel required “Group Special Orders” moving them to adjacent battalions or newly-formed CSSDs, thus generating internal friction that detracted from the external focus necessary to effectively plan logistics support.<sup>26</sup> Adding to the distraction created by internally focused activities, some logistics units were continually reorganizing to respond to changing demands, with predictable effects on unit and staff cohesion. Particularly troublesome was the fact that most FSSG units were providing support to units with whom they had no prior experience in training. As Carlton

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<sup>25</sup>John A. Woodhead, “Reorganization of the Force Service Support Group,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 75, no. 10 (October 1991): 38.

<sup>26</sup>Zimmeck, 50.

Meyer argued in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, the trust that develops from habitual relationships often translates to better responsiveness.<sup>27</sup> These habitual relationships between supporting and supported units were largely non-existent during Desert Storm. Finally, the numbers and diversity of CSSDs presented significant challenges for unit commanders within the FSSG to respond to the information requirements of higher headquarters while executing their planning and command and control responsibilities over subordinate units. As one direct support group commander noted, a large portion of his time was spent keeping his higher commander informed of his activities, vice monitoring the logistics requirements exigent to intense combat operations.<sup>28</sup>

Although these challenges stimulated post-conflict debate over the structure of the FSSG, they were not enough to serve as the impetus for change. Another conflict against Iraq would highlight the tension between flexibility and rapid deployability from a different perspective, stimulating yet another change in Marine Corps logistics structure. Chapter Two will continue with an examination of the reorganization and renaming of the FSSG that the Marine Corps initiated in the wake of OIF I.

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<sup>27</sup>Carlton W. Meyer, "The FSSG Dinosaurs," *Marine Corps Gazette* 75, no. 10 (October 1991): 36.

<sup>28</sup>Zimmeck, 137.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Introduction

In his 2002 speech to the graduating class at West Point, President George W. Bush signaled the end of the nation's decades-long containment strategy. In its place, the President introduced a new strategy of preemption, whereby the US would undertake preventive war where necessary to neutralize threats before they materialized.<sup>29</sup> OIF would embody this strategy. Focusing on system disruption and paralysis vice destruction, the US effort to unseat the Iraqi regime was one of operational maneuver relying upon momentum and velocity to achieve operational shock to the Iraqi military system. Considering continuous logistics as an element of operational art, OIF placed a tremendous demand on the logistics resources of the MAGTF. The rapid deployment necessitated by a preemption strategy, combined with a need to provide continuous logistics while enabling momentum and velocity created cognitive tension between flexibility and rapid deployability when considering the logistics structure of the MAGTF. This chapter examines the cognitive tension highlighted by post-campaign criticisms of the CSSE and will explain the reaction to those criticisms and shortcomings that ultimately resulted in the reorganization of what would become the LCE. Finally, this chapter provides a synopsis of the reorganization and identifies the rationale and intent behind the reorganization.

### Operation Iraqi Freedom I

OIF was an impressive feat for a service that was organized, trained, and equipped to fight campaigns of limited duration in a littoral environment. During the campaign, I MEF advanced under fire over 700 miles while covering over 2,300 miles of road distance in 3 weeks.<sup>30</sup> Martin van Crevald, in *Supplying War*, notes that "it is relatively easy to support an

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<sup>29</sup>George W. Bush, Graduation Speech, United States Military Academy, 1 June 2002, Available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>; Internet; accessed on 2 November 2006.

<sup>30</sup>Matthew W. Blackledge, "Professionals Talk Logistics," *Marine Corps Gazette* 87, no. 8 (August 2003): 41.

army while stationary, but almost impossible to do so when moving forward fast.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, supporting I MEF’s scheme of maneuver proved beyond possibility for the garrison-optimized 1st FSSG; enabling such an endeavor required the FSSG to drastically alter its existing structure<sup>32</sup> and grow far beyond its normal size.

With five months to prepare and plan for OIF, Brigadier General Edward Usher, the 1st FSSG Commander, realized that the FSSG’s functional battalion organization, while suitable for garrison operations, would not suffice for the anticipated campaign.<sup>33</sup> With requirements to provide direct support combat service support (CSS) to units of the 1st Marine Division, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB), and 3d Marine Air Wing (3d MAW) while providing general support CSS to the MEF, the FSSG reorganized from purely functional units into a combination of multi-functional and functional units. To provide direct support to the division, the FSSG formed Combat Service Support Group 11 (CSSG-11) around the nucleus of Brigade Service Support Group 1 (BSSG-1). The Combat Service Support Companies (CSSCs) within CSSG-11 were built from the existing transportation support companies within 1st Transportation Support Battalion (1st TSB) to provide direct support to the division’s RCTs. In addition to the direct support CSSCs, the FSSG organized Combat Service Support Battalion 10 (CSSB-10) to give CSSG-11 a general support capability to provide resupply to the CSSCs and direct support to the division’s artillery regiment (11th Marines) when needed.<sup>34</sup> With these capabilities, the FSSG provided the division with a “fully embedded CSS capability.”<sup>35</sup> The functional supply battalion provided the nucleus around which the FSSG formed CSSG-15, the general support logistics organization. CSSG-15 included CSSB-12 (1st Maintenance Battalion), CSSB-18 (Headquarters

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<sup>31</sup>Van Crevald, 233.

<sup>32</sup>Enduring Freedom Combat Assessment Team (EFCAT), “Force Service Support Group Garrison Organization and Transition to Expeditionary Operations,” United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, August 2003, 1, 3.

<sup>33</sup>The Commander and Staff of 1st FSSG, “Brute Force Combat Service Support: 1st Force Service Support Group in Operation Iraqi Freedom,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 87, no. 8 (August, 2003): 34-35.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>John J. Broadmeadow, “Logistics Support to 1st Marine Division during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 87, no. 8 (August, 2003): 44.

and Service Battalion), the Health Service Battalion (1st Medical Battalion and 1st Dental Battalion), and CSSB-22 (Marine Expeditionary Unit Service Support Group 22 (MSSG-22)), tasked to provide direct support to 2d MEB. With its companies forming the nucleus of each of the CSSCs, 1st TSB provided the headquarters that became the functional Transportation Support Group (TSG). The FSSG maintained the 7th Engineer Support Battalion (ESB) as a separate element, with the responsibility to augment the division's Combat Engineer Battalion (CEB) in providing mobility, countermobility, and survivability for the RCTs. MSSG-11 became CSSB-19 to initially provide the FSSG a reserve. Thus the existing one multi-functional and two functional units commanded by colonels provided the capability to organize one multifunctional direct support group, one multifunctional general support group, and an additional functional general support group, with existing battalions and companies aligned either beneath these groups or as separate units, as in the case of 7th ESB and MSSG-11. With the units of the FSSG thus realigned, however, there were still shortfalls in the FSSG's coverage of MEF requirements.<sup>36</sup>

To fill the gaps in CSS that still persisted after reorganizing, the FSSG received reinforcing capabilities from throughout the Marine Corps and beyond. The TSG, possessing a headquarters and remaining elements of 1st TSB, gained the 6th Motor Transport Battalion from the Marine Corps Reserve's 4th FSSG and two truck companies from the US Army. With numerous engineer tasks to be accomplished beyond 7th ESB's mission, the FSSG received 8th ESB from 2d FSSG, and 4th FSSG's 6th ESB. To provide direct support CSS to 3d MAW, 4th FSSG's Landing Support Battalion (LSB) provided the headquarters for what became CSSB-13. Gaining a military police battalion from the US Army, the FSSG placed its own military police and those of the 4th FSSG beneath this headquarters. Finally, to provide for security, headquarters, and mortuary affairs functions, the FSSG formed CSSB-16 from both active and reserve components. The US Army provided a chemical company and separate platoons to assist the FSSG with its detection and decontamination responsibilities. Within the individual battalions

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<sup>36</sup>The Commander and Staff of 1st FSSG, 34-35.

and companies, additional reserve units provided further augmentation. With these reinforcements, the FSSG swelled to almost twice its normal size, attaining a strength of over 14,000 Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers.<sup>37</sup> Figure 5 below depicts the wartime structure of the 1st FSSG for OIF I.

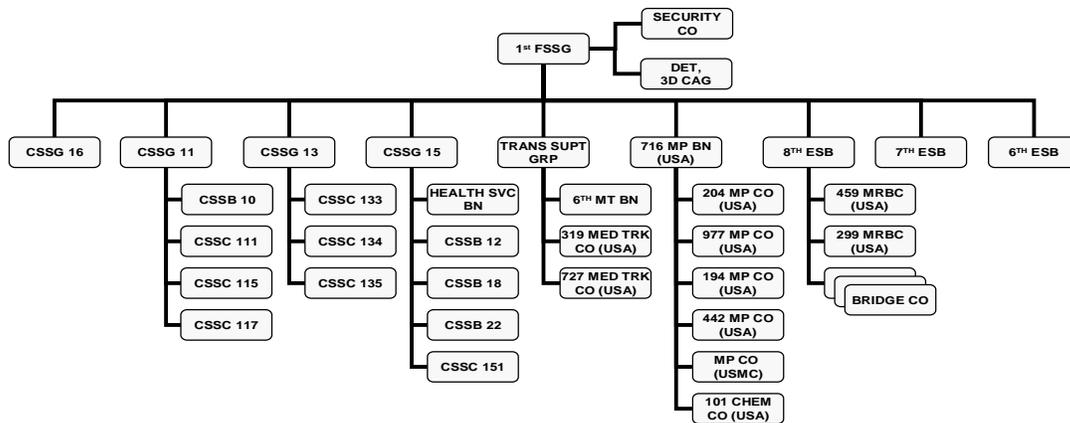


Figure 5. 1st Force Service Support Group Operation Iraqi Freedom I Wartime Organization  
*Source:* Enduring Freedom Combat Assessment Team (EFCAT), “Force Service Support Group Garrison Organization and Transition to Expeditionary Operations” (US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, August 2003), 2.

## Measuring Performance: The Brutal Reality

In measuring their command’s performance in OIF I, the commanders and staff of 1st FSSG noted the reorganization of the FSSG as one of the campaign’s successes while conceding that the normal organization of the FSSG deserved a critical reassessment. Based on the experience of OIF I, the commanders of 1st FSSG saw a need to create standing multi-functional logistics units that could deploy with minimal friction and that maintained habitual relationships with supported units.<sup>38</sup> Notwithstanding the 1st FSSG’s critical assessment of the FSSG’s

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 39.

peacetime functional organization, the Enduring Freedom Combat Assessment Team (EFCAT) provided the most noteworthy and visible post-OIF assessment of the FSSG organization.

In August 2003, the EFCAT published its findings on the efficacy of the FSSG garrison organization. The key observation of the report harkens back to the cognitive tension between flexibility and rapid deployability that surfaced during Desert Storm. While Desert Storm highlighted the flexibility of the FSSG, the EFCAT report highlighted this flexibility as the FSSG's primary liability given the need to rapidly deploy cohesive, combat ready units. Although the FSSG commander decided to task organize into multi-functional units as early as October 2002, on the eve of combat operations some five months later the equipment and personnel moves that such a task organization necessitated were still not complete.<sup>39</sup> The EFCAT report reveals that the almost total reorganization consumed months of the FSSG's pre-war planning time, and created self-generated friction that caused commanders to place a disproportionate focus on internal FSSG issues vice external issues that related to providing support to the customers. Once completed, the task organization for combat resulted in CSS units that lacked internal cohesion, had little or no unit training, no established and practiced unit standard operating procedures (SOPs) and little or no familiarity among key personnel.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, the EFCAT report looked beyond OIF, noting that Marine forces are most often employed as MAGTFs, necessitating the formation of a new CSS unit for almost every exercise and contingency. The report noted that the functional structure did not align with this reality, as logistics units were almost always employed as multi-functional units. By the time the EFCAT report was published, Brigadier General Usher had already sought and gained the approval to retain the wartime organization upon redeployment to Camp Pendleton. When the FSSG was notified of its OIF II deployment in the fall of 2003, with the wartime organization largely in place, the command was able to rapidly transition its focus to providing logistics in support of

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<sup>39</sup>EFCAT, 3.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

OIF II requirements. Without this task organization already in place, the short-notice deployment of nearly the entire FSSG would have been nearly impossible to accomplish.<sup>41</sup>

## “The Imperative to Change”

The bottom line is we must get beyond the philosophies driven by narrow experiences and geographic perspectives and come to a common conclusion and execute what is right not just for the community, but more importantly the entire MAGTF.

-CSSE Advocacy Board Commander’s Round Table Read Ahead

The Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics (DC, I&L), as the Corps’ senior logistician and advocate for the LCE, periodically takes the opportunity to apprise the Corps of priorities in the logistics community in the *Marine Corps Gazette*. The August 2003 issue of the *Gazette* reveals that reorganization of the FSSG was not one of the Corps’ priorities. In fact, the DC, I&L, Lieutenant General Richard Kelly, argued that the recent experience of OIF I should not lead the Corps to conclude that reorganizing the FSSG was the answer to the logistics shortcomings of the late campaign.<sup>42</sup> However, at the general officer executive offsite in the fall of 2003, CMC approved 1st FSSG’s plan to remain in the wartime organization and test the organization from November 2003 to July 2004, a plan that was later put on hold due to the FSSG’s redeployment to Iraq for OIF II.<sup>43</sup> The August 2004 *Gazette* contained Lieutenant General Kelly’s subsequent annual update on logistics, wherein he listed the six logistics modernization (LOGMOD) initiatives. Of those initiatives, reorganization of the FSSG again did not appear, though renaming of the FSSG did.<sup>44</sup> While reorganization may not have been an issue worthy of mention by the Corps’ senior logistician in his annual logistics update, it was clearly an issue that was receiving attention within the FSSGs and at I&L. In February 2004, Lieutenant

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<sup>41</sup>Lieutenant Colonel David Kluegel, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 1st FSSG, Camp Pendleton, CA, interview by author, 11 December 2005.

<sup>42</sup>Richard Kelly, “Excellence in Logistics Supporting Excellence in Warfighting,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 87, no. 8 (August 2003): 15.

<sup>43</sup>Commander, First FSSG, Message (draft), 1st FSSG Expeditionary Warfighting Template Proof of Concept, November 2004.

<sup>44</sup>Richard Kelly, “Logistics Modernization: A Marine Corps Warfighting Imperative,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 88, no. 8 (August 2004): 20.

General Kelly decided to move forward with pursuing renaming and reorganization of the FSSG, with the following objectives:

1. Fully capitalize on present resources;
2. Establish commonality as practical;
3. Enhance joint interoperability;
4. Reap the full benefit of implementation with other LOGMOD initiatives.<sup>45</sup>

The key tenets under which renaming and reorganization were to proceed were the desire to capitalize on the benefit derived from establishing and maintaining habitual relationships with supported units and the necessity to rapidly deploy FSSG units from garrison in support of MEF-level combat operations.<sup>46</sup>

Providing further guidance on renaming and reorganization in September 2004, DC I&L directed that the renaming would include standard naming conventions and standard terminology that would identify Marine logistics units based on standard unit sizes and capabilities while using the term “logistics” vice “combat service support,” and that the reorganization would be a “zero sum game,” with no gain in structure and no impact on the MWSG.<sup>47</sup> Notably, Lieutenant General Kelly’s guidance did not address the Marine divisions or the MEF headquarters. The guidance and decisions of Lieutenant General Kelly in late 2004 would provide the momentum to effect significant change during the following year.

Carrying forth Lieutenant General Kelly’s guidance of September 2004, the CSSE Advocacy Board convened their annual meeting in February 2005. The board, composed of senior logisticians from throughout the Marine Corps, received direction from DC, I&L to arrive at a final decision regarding renaming the FSSG and agree upon an “eighty percent solution” on

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<sup>45</sup>Commander’s Round Table Read Ahead, “FSSG Renaming and Reorganization” (Quantico, VA: CSSE Advocacy Board, 1 February 2005).

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

the form that the reorganized FSSG would take.<sup>48</sup> The board thus devised a solution on renaming and reorganization that Lieutenant General Kelly presented to CMC for decision. Concurrently, I&L undertook two actions to begin effecting the reorganization. First, I&L submitted the necessary Urgency of Needs Statement (UNS) to register the reorganization in the combat development process. Second, Lieutenant General Kelly directed 1st FSSG to proceed with the “proof of concept” that had been approved in 2003 and postponed due to OIF II. In June 2005, Lieutenant General Kelly presented his plan to the Corps’ senior leadership at the annual Executive Offsite; the Commandant subsequently approved the renaming and reorganization concept of the FSSG on 27 June 2005. In August, Lieutenant General Kelly made his final *Marine Corps Gazette* report on logistics in the Corps, noting that the FSSGs were to be realigned in order to be optimized for deployed vice garrison operations and to reduce the friction associated with moving from garrison to deployed operations.<sup>49</sup>

On 22 July 2005, Marine Corps Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 335-05 announced the realignment and renaming of the FSSG.<sup>50</sup> To promulgate the changes, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) published a series of directives under Marine Corps Bulletin (MCBUL) 5400. The first of the bulletins, released on 2 September 2005, directed the renaming of the FSSGs to the MLG. MCCDC released subsequent bulletins to direct the reorganization of the newly-renamed MLGs in March 2006. The MCBUL 5400 series stated that the reorganization was being directed in order to “more effectively support current and future warfighting requirements.” In particular, the directives declared that reorganization would improve planning and execution, enhance deployability and the ability to task organize, increase the lethality of the MAGTF, and extend the operational reach of the MAGTF. In order to

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Richard Kelly, “Logistics Modernization: Lethality and Effectiveness,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 89, no. 8 (August 2005): 16-19.

<sup>50</sup>Commandant of the Marine Corps, Marine Corps Administrative Message 335/05, *Realignment and Renaming of the FSSG*, 22 July 2005, Available from <http://www.usmc.mil/maradmins/maradmin2000.nsf>; Internet; accessed on 1 November 2006.

accomplish these objectives, the bulletins further stated that the MLGs would include direct support, general support, and “forward” Combat Logistics Regiments (CLRs) and separate battalions. The direct support CLR would contain three direct support Combat Logistics Battalions (CLBs) aligned with the infantry regiments of the division, and a general support motor transport company. The general support CLR would contain the functionally-oriented supply, maintenance, and medical battalions and Combat Logistics Companies (CLCs) organized and equipped to support the Marine Air Wings and Air Stations. The CLR(Fwd) would contain those assets that were formerly under Headquarters and Service (H&S) Battalion, as well as a landing support company and the CLBs assigned to the Marine Expeditionary Units. Dental Battalion and the Engineer Support Battalion (ESB) would remain separate battalions directly subordinate to the MLG headquarters.<sup>51</sup> Recalling the initial reorganization guidance of DC, I&L, the reorganization reflected negligible gain in structure; the new units created in reorganization came from existing structure within the MLG.

Creating additional echelons and standing logistics units required planners to shift command positions and create regiments from battalions and battalions from companies. The three colonel-level commands within the MLG, the Brigade Service Support Group (BSSG), TSB, and Supply Battalion, became CLR(FWD), the direct support CLR, and the general support CLR, respectively. The supply battalions reverted to lieutenant colonel command, while three additional lieutenant colonel commands were created within the direct support CLR. Each of these direct support battalions were formed around the nucleus of the motor transport companies within TSB. TSB was thus deactivated, with its assets being spread throughout the direct support CLR to provide the nucleus of the regimental headquarters, general support transportation company, and each of the direct support CLBs. H&S Battalion was eliminated, with its lieutenant

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<sup>51</sup>The Commandant of the Marine Corps directed the renaming and reorganizing of the FSSG in the 5400 series of Marine Corps Bulletins. The series included separate directives that directed renaming of the FSSGs to MLG (2 September 2005) and separate bulletins for each MLG (1st MLG: 20 March 2006; 2d and 3d MLGs: 24 March 2005).

colonel command position filling a requirement within the DS CLR. The unique capabilities within H&S Battalion, such as military police, disbursing, legal services, and communications, were subsumed by the new CLR(Fwd). In reorganization, the FSSG, composed of seven functional battalions, three MSSGs and two separate CSSDs, became the MLG composed of three regiments with nine subordinate battalions, eight separate companies, and an additional two separate functional battalions. Figure 6 below depicts the reorganized 1st MLG.

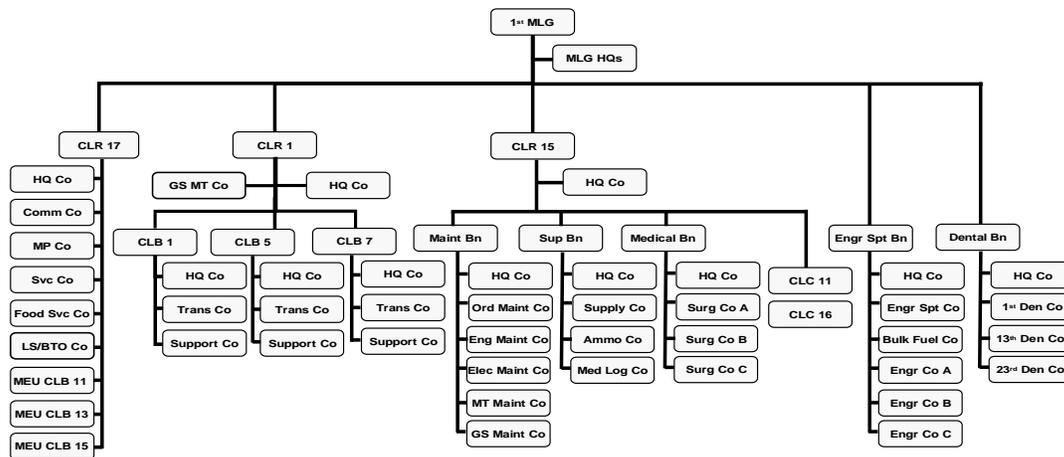


Figure 6. 1st Marine Logistics Group Organization

Source: US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Bulletin 5400, *1st Marine Logistics Group Organizational Structure* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 21 March 2006), Available from [http://www.i-mef.usmc.mil/mlg/info/images/MLGOrgStrct\(21Mar06\).jpg](http://www.i-mef.usmc.mil/mlg/info/images/MLGOrgStrct(21Mar06).jpg); Internet; accessed on 30 November 2006.

Based on the rationale for reorganization and the objectives stated in MCBUL 5400, Chapter Three will evaluate the reorganization and will render judgment regarding whether or not the reorganization meets its stated objectives. Going beyond the explicit objectives of reorganization, Chapter Three will attempt to uncover the implicit assumptions of reorganization and will explore the institutional culture within which reorganization took place. In doing so, the analysis will recall shortcomings identified by the EFCAT report to determine if the

reorganization addresses the problems identified within that report and will identify logistics gaps left either by the reorganization or in spite of the effort.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Introduction

You are never dedicated to something you have complete confidence in.

Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

Dedication requires a measure of doubt that generates critical inquiry and healthy skepticism. It is this spirit of healthy skepticism that enables critical analysis of the LCE reorganization. In assessing the LCE reorganization, this chapter reflects skepticism driven by the doubt that the LCE organization delivers on the stated objectives of enhancing the lethality and operational reach of the MAGTF. While the reorganization brings benefits to MAGTF logistics, the Marine Corps' organizational solution to the vexing problems of sustaining a rapidly moving, combined arms force still leaves numerous gaps in the logistics coverage of the MAGTF and reveals a questionable level of institutional discipline within the Marine Corps. As Peter Senge writes in *The Fifth Discipline*, "Lying behind all strategies are assumptions, which often remain implicit and untested. Frequently, these assumptions have internal contradictions."<sup>52</sup> LCE reorganization is one such strategy that offers little transparency into assumptions that inform what should be a guiding philosophy for logistics. Therefore, in critically assessing the reorganization, this chapter identifies the underlying assumptions of reorganization and the contradictions that result from those assumptions. The Herculean reorganization effort, however, is not without benefit. So, while this chapter relies on a context of healthy skepticism, it begins with an overview of the benefits that reorganization brings to MAGTF logistics.

### Fostering Trust and Confidence

Operating forces should be organized for warfighting then adapted for peacetime rather than vice versa.

*-Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, Warfighting*

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<sup>52</sup>Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Currency Doubleday, 1990), 316.

The most visible change that reorganization brought was the creation of standing multi-functional logistics headquarters at the regimental, battalion, and company level. These standing headquarters allow the MLG to realize the key tenets of reorganization, which are to establish habitual relationships with supported units, and to enhance the ability of the MLG to rapidly deploy in support of MEF-sized operations. Creating standing multi-functional units and headquarters stimulates significant progress in addressing the key EFCAT finding relating to lack of staff cohesion and training. While the ad hoc staff is the novice staff, those staffs that train together and have the opportunity to practice unit standard operating procedures (SOPs) are able to gain the requisite proficiency to move from novice to professional. As history often demonstrates, cohesion is a critical element of combat effectiveness, one that the EFCAT cited as missing in the ad hoc logistics units during OIF I. Creating standing multi-functional logistics headquarters makes great progress in addressing the deficiency in staff cohesion and training that the EFCAT report identified.

The EFCAT report also noted that the self-generated friction resulting from creating entirely new organizations for combat severely degraded the ability of logistics units to rapidly deploy.<sup>53</sup> Experience with Air Contingency MAGTF (ACM) exercises is consistent with this observation. To provide logistics support for the MEB-sized ACM, the MEFs historically relied on the formation of a CSSD that could rapidly composite and deploy on short notice. This unit was typically no more than a list of names and equipment, with no unit identity or no unit training to provide the foundation of unit cohesion critical to combat effectiveness. The difficulty associated with compositing logistics units to support MEB and smaller sized MAGTFs such as the ACM highlights the danger of relying on ad hoc task organization on even a relatively small scale. Creating standing multi-functional logistics units eliminates much of the self generated friction that resulted from forming a staff from throughout a battalion or perhaps the entire MLG, joining personnel, receiving equipment, and the numerous other administrative tasks associated

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<sup>53</sup>EFCAT, 1.

with standing up a new unit. As 1st FSSG's experience in OIF I demonstrates, units were still gaining personnel and equipment in spite of having five months to complete such tasks.<sup>54</sup> The combat logistics battalions, when properly staffed, are now organized with organic companies and companies mapped from other battalions that bring specialized capabilities to the CLB consistent with mission requirements. While it is nearly impossible to build complete standing functional units suitable for any contingency, the headquarters of those units are in place and training to become professional staffs vice spending up to eighty percent of valuable time on managing unit stand-up.<sup>55</sup>

As the staffs of the multi-functional battalions work internally to become cohesive and professional staffs, they also focus externally by establishing the relationships with other staffs that are also essential to combat effectiveness. For logistics units, the most important staff relationship is that which exists between itself and the supported unit. In establishing standing multi-functional units, the intent was to create a bridge to earning the trust and confidence of supported units through creating and maintaining habitual relationships. Logistics units that train as a team and integrate their training with supported units are essential to combat effectiveness.<sup>56</sup> Habitual relationships enable units to develop trust and confidence in each other, lead to implicit understanding that is essential to the Corps' maneuver warfare philosophy, and allow the supporting unit to minimize the shroud of uncertainty often associated with determining support requirements. The recent activities within I MEF reveal the benefits of habitual relationships, as units of CLR-1 work closely each day with the 1st Marine Division and its regiments, cementing the relationships that may ultimately allow the Marine Corps to realize the stated goal of increasing logistics responsiveness through LCE reorganization.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>56</sup>US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 4, *Logistics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 21 February 1997), 108.

## Assumptions-Contradictions-Gaps

The MLG is a tactical level command designed to provide support to a single division and wing-sized MEF.<sup>57</sup> While this fact is explicit in doctrine, the ability of the MLG to adequately support a MEF in combat is an implicit assumption that underlies the reorganization effort. The EFCAT report and the reality of events during OIF I undercut the validity of this assumption. During OIF I, the MLG had to grow to almost twice its normal size to support a MEF, albeit one that was heavily reinforced with a MEB and additional ground maneuver battalions. Although the MLG might be capable of supporting the MEF in a campaign that does not have the time and distance challenges of OIF I, it does not possess the ability to effectively support a MEF while maneuvering in contact over extended distances beyond the littoral. Theoretically, most failure results from a series of changes over time rather than a seminal event; the failure of MLG structure is no different.<sup>58</sup> The Marine Corps eliminated much of its logistics structure in the years following World War II, yet in spite of less capability, demands on logistics units have increased dramatically. More automatic weapons within line units and the prevalence of tanks and light armored vehicles with multiple weapon systems that have higher rates of fire result in larger ammunition expenditures. More vehicles in the Marine Divisions and other units, more demand for generator-produced electricity, and the growing length of lines of communication (LOCs) translate to larger demands for fuel. More and larger vehicles, generators, computers and the increasingly complicated weapons and communications systems generate increased demands for repair parts. Additional fuel, ammunition, and repair parts tax an already limited tactical distribution system. As van Crevald wrote, “The first prerequisite of any regular logistics system is, of course, an exact definition of requirements.”<sup>59</sup> For the MLG, requirements remain nebulous, expressed in generalities such as “provide logistics support beyond organic

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<sup>57</sup>US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reference Publication 5-12D (MCRP 5-12D), *Organization of Marine Corps Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 13 October 1998), 5-1.

<sup>58</sup>Senge, 22.

<sup>59</sup>Van Crevald, 18.

capability”<sup>60</sup> rather than specific definitions of logistics capabilities that can both guide logisticians in their duties and inform the expectations of supported units.

Based on the assumption that the MLG supports a MEF, Marine leadership must do a better job of defining the logistics requirements of the MEF and the capabilities of the MLG. For instance, the Army designed its Brigade Support Battalions (BSBs) to reduce the brigades’ reliance on higher headquarters and make them more independent and capable in an expeditionary environment. The BSBs are equipped with the assets to meet the brigades’ internal needs for fuel, ammunition, maintenance, supplies, and medical care.<sup>61</sup> As the senior logistician in the brigade, the BSB commander in an Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) must be able to transport one battalion of soldiers by truck and provide sustainment of the brigade for seventy-two hours of continuous operations.<sup>62</sup> As the experience of OIF I suggests, uncertainty continues to permeate capabilities and requirements; there remains a significant disparity between the two. Until the Corps clearly defines the expectations that will be placed on the MLG, the effects of reorganization on the MAGTF will continue to defy measurement.

In his guidance of September 2004, Lieutenant General Kelly decreed that LCE reorganization would be effected with no gain in structure.<sup>63</sup> Considering the objective to extend the operational reach of the MAGTF and the assumption that the MLG must support MEF-sized operations, the “zero-sum game” mentality that emerged from Lieutenant General Kelly’s guidance presented several internal contradictions with which the MLGs continue to contend. Standing up three multi-functional battalions from the capabilities and structure of the Transportation Support Battalion without adding necessary structure decentralized a significant portion of the MEF’s transportation capability. Reorganization thus abandons a key doctrinal

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<sup>60</sup>MCRP 5-12D, 5-1.

<sup>61</sup>Department of the Army, Field Manual (Interim) 4-90, Heavy Brigade Combat Team Logistics (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 15 March 2005), 1-4.

<sup>62</sup>Guy M. Jones, “Transformational Logistics: Solution or Shell Game?” *An Army at War: Change in the Midst of Conflict*, The Proceedings of the Combat Studies Institute Military History Symposium, ed. John J. McGrath (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, August, 2005), 351.

<sup>63</sup>Commander’s Round Table Read Ahead.

tenet of Marine Corps logistics, which is centralized control of logistics resources in an effort to facilitate the most effective use of scarce resources.<sup>64</sup> Though decentralizing capabilities is not necessarily a bad thing in theory, decentralizing most of the MEF's motor transport capability without compensating with additional structure created an alarming gap in the MAGTF's end-to-end distribution system. As Colonel Greg Dunlap, the Commanding Officer of 1st MLG's direct support CLR pointed out, the gap in the MEF's general support tactical distribution capability is the most visible weakness of reorganization and leaves the MEF without an organization assigned this vital mission.<sup>65</sup> In an effort to establish standing multi-functional logistics units that can rapidly deploy, the Corps spread its heavy motor transport assets so thin that the operational reach of the MAGTF was not enhanced, but seriously degraded.

Prior to reorganization, the now-deactivated TSB had the mission of providing general support transportation support to the MEF. After reorganization, the capability to perform this mission is dubious at best. Presumably, the general support capability remains in the direct support CLR's general support motor transport company. This unit, however, bears the burden of what Colonel Dunlap describes as "an unfortunate and confusing moniker."<sup>66</sup> The general support motor transport company has limited capability to support the direct support CLBs and Marine Wing Support Squadrons (MWSSs) while also providing general support distribution for the MEF. The company's placement within the direct support regiment seems to indicate it would be used to weight the logistics effort in support of the direct support CLBs or other maneuver units of the GCE rather than serving as a general support distribution capability. Built from the remains of TSB after forming three direct support companies as the nuclei of the CLBs, the company was created from remaining capabilities rather than an overarching purpose. It is neither an adequate general support nor a reinforcing distribution capability for the MEF. The preponderance of the

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<sup>64</sup>US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 4-1 (MCWP 4-1), *Tactical Level Logistics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 2-12.

<sup>65</sup>Colonel Gregory Dunlap, USMC, Quantico, VA, Interview by author, 1 November 2006,

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

MEF's tactical distribution capacity resides within the direct support CLBs, leaving the general support CLR with no distribution capability. The general support transportation company of the direct support CLR, therefore, is an inadequate solution to the MEF's tactical distribution problem.

If the general support transportation company fails to offer an adequate solution to the MEF's tactical distribution gap, reserve augmentation is an even less suitable option. Returning to doctrine, *MCDP 4* emphasizes logistical self-sufficiency within the MAGTF as being essential to the Corps expeditionary warfighting capability.<sup>67</sup> Given reorganization's stated objective of enhancing the rapid deployability of the MLG, relying on reserve augmentation as a matter of policy to complete the MAGTF's distribution nexus would severely undermine both the MEF's logistics self-sufficiency and the MLG's rapid deployability. Although an extremely valuable component of the total force, the reserve component is not designed, trained, or equipped for short or no-notice deployments with regular forces. Connecting these realities with the preemption strategy, the reserve component cannot serve as a default answer to the MEF's tactical distribution gap.

In addition to the distribution gap within the MEF, reorganization's implicit assumption that the base unit of employment will be the infantry regiment leaves a coverage gap in MAGTF logistics. With the direct support CLBs retaining a large portion of the MEF's motor transport lift capacity and establishing a habitual relationship with the infantry regiments of the division, there is limited distribution capability left to support other commands within the MEF. Although the regiments seem a logical place to establish the habitual relationships given the tendency to weight the regiments with combat power from throughout the division, there are instances where the MAGTF or division will employ other maneuver elements separate from the regimental combat teams. In many cases, these separate maneuver elements such as a light armored reconnaissance battalion, tank battalion, or artillery regiment, are often the division's heaviest consumers of

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<sup>67</sup>MCDP-4, 77.

logistics resources. Additionally, the MAW relies heavily on the MLG to push fuel and ammunition to its support squadrons to sustain logistics-dependent aviation operations; the MEF headquarters cannot move without significant support from the MLG. Supporting these units will force the MLG to task organize additional units from existing capabilities or commit direct support CLBs to support commands other than their habitually-assigned infantry regiments, potentially leaving the regimental commander in a lurch and undermining carefully cultivated staff relationships. While establishing habitual relationships has value, the MLG's focus on infantry regiments ignores the general support nature of the MLG's mission and leaves the most logistically demanding customers without the benefit of a habitually supporting CLB.

## **A Culture of Bureaucracy**

It is not more command and control we are after. Instead, we seek to decrease the amount of command and control that we need.

-MCDP-6, *Command and Control*

Perhaps the most basic assumption behind LCE reorganization is that reorganizing will improve the responsiveness of the MLG. Adding layers to the MAGTF support structure in the form of regimental headquarters potentially undermines the responsiveness of the MLG. Organizational theory holds that adding layers to an organization will result in added controls that slow the flow of information and thus impede organizational responsiveness. Business models hold particular relevance, as these models are constantly tested against the "bottom line."<sup>68</sup> Lessons derived from studying business hierarchies highlight the lesson that flattening structures nearly always results in increased responsiveness. In business, responsiveness is the primary metric. Therefore, in command and control structures, "flat is a must, not an option"<sup>69</sup> in order to achieve the level of responsiveness needed in a modern combat environment that rewards speed of decision and action and punishes slow response time that results from cumbersome command

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<sup>68</sup>Senge, 15.

<sup>69</sup>Douglas A. McGregor, *Transformation Under Fire: Revolutionizing How America Fights* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2003), 103.

structures. In an attempt to level the command responsibilities of colonels and align lieutenant colonels under the regimental structure to create a mentor relationship between colonels and lieutenant colonels, reorganization adds unnecessary layers in the support structure and misplaces general support capabilities under the CLR(FWD).<sup>70</sup> However, in keeping the Engineer Support Battalions separate from the regimental structure, Marine Corps leadership at least implicitly understands the effect that additional headquarters have on responsiveness. Theoretically, a CLB that requires support from a battalion within the CLR(FWD) or the general support CLR must route any request for capabilities or support through the regiment, the MLG headquarters, and yet another regiment before the appropriate unit receives the request. In the meantime, the request potentially suffers from bureaucratic inertia at every step. While inefficient and frustrating in garrison, such delays could prove perilous in combat. Organizational structure should find a place to accommodate the talent and experience of colonels in command billets, but it must also allow for as much lateral communication as possible in order to ensure that reorganization does not inadvertently undermine the responsiveness of the MLG.

The most egregious example of the lack of institutional discipline that gives rise to a culture of bureaucracy is not within the MLG, but the planning of the reorganization at the Deputy Commandant level. Deputy Commandants for Installations and Logistics, Plans, Policies and Operations, and Aviation each have responsibilities as advocates for the logistics, ground and aviation elements of the MAGTF, respectively. It is this system of advocacy based not on function, but on organization that prevented the DC I&L from facing the brutal reality that reorganization merely within the LCE was not enough to address the shortcomings of MAGTF logistics. Strictly adhering to “rigid internal divisions inhibits inquiry across divisional boundaries,” so in order to understand the truth behind any issue, one must examine all issues and interactions regardless of “parochial organizational boundaries.”<sup>71</sup> The organizational boundaries

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<sup>70</sup>Commander, First FSSG, Message (draft).

<sup>71</sup>Senge, 66.

that exist within the Marine Corps caused the DC I&L to change what he could, vice what he should. Conceding that the other Deputy Commandants concurred and even openly encouraged reorganization within the LCE, it was without risk that they did so, since reorganization left the rest of the MAGTF untouched. Instead of serving as an agent of change for MAGTF logistics, I&L remained within inappropriate and counterproductive bureaucratic boundaries created by MAGTF advocacy, and in doing so failed to adequately address the broader shortcomings of MAGTF logistics. Failure to get beyond the parochialism of advocacy left the LCE where it was before reorganization: under resourced and incapable of supporting the MEF without heavy reinforcement.

Enhancing deployability and establishing standing multi-functional units with established habitual relationships with supported units has the potential to increase the responsiveness of the LCE. But, given the assumptions and internal contradictions that drove reorganization, the potential seems greater that responsiveness will suffer as a result of reorganization. Moreover, the stated objectives of increasing the lethality of the MAGTF and increasing the operational reach of the MAGTF through reorganization remain elusive and so nebulous as to defy measurement. Having identified the gaps created by reorganization, Chapter Four will pose alternate organizational solutions in order make the LCE a more effective instrument of combat logistics for the MEF Commander.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Introduction

[R]ange is more to strategy than force.

T.E. Lawrence<sup>72</sup>

As one component of the Marine Corps' logistics modernization effort, the intent of LCE reorganization is not to exclude other elements of the MAGTF from consideration, but rather to begin within the LCE and expand the effort throughout the MAGTF.<sup>73</sup> The question then becomes, what should this expansion look like and how will it affect the other elements of the MAGTF? Having identified the benefits and shortcomings of LCE reorganization in Chapter Three, this chapter will put forth recommendations for how LCE reorganization should expand to the other elements of the MAGTF to create a MAGTF solution for logistics, vice merely a "rearranging of deck chairs" within the LCE. In positing this next step, it is crucial to maintain multi-functional logistics units with habitual relationships while addressing the gaps in command and control, logistics coverage, and distribution that remain in spite of, or because of, the reorganization. In arguing for a better logistics organization for the MAGTF, this chapter will propose an organizational solution in the context of the recent announcement to increase Marine Corps end strength by 24,000 Marines to a total end strength to 202,000. Organizational strategies, however, must begin with a guiding philosophy and explicit assumptions. This chapter therefore begins with the assumptions that should form the guiding principles for the logistics organization of the MAGTF.

### Logistics Structure: Assumptions and Objectives

Earlier studies on Marine Corps logistics structure included detailed accounts of the assumptions and intent behind forming the FSSG. The organization was founded on principles

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<sup>72</sup>S. L. A. Marshall, *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation* (Quantico, VA: The Marine Corps Association, January, 1980), 83.

<sup>73</sup>Mr. Mike Resnick, Logistics Modernization Transition Task Force, Quantico, VA, Interview by author, 1 November 2006,

which, though in some ways incongruous, remain the bedrock of logistics organization within the Marine Corps. The logistics principles upon which the FSSG was originally devised were based on exhaustive study and analysis. The recent reorganization did not include such analysis nor does there appear to have been a critical examination of the role of the LCE within the MAGTF. The mission of the MLG remains a statement of general purpose, but provides little clarity. Therefore, this section will propose the underlying principles that will form the basis of the author's recommended logistics structure, emphasizing the key determinants of logistics force structure: national military strategy, service warfighting philosophy, the role of the MLG, and the role of the commander.

Force structure decisions must begin with an assumption regarding the military strategy of the nation. For the United States, assumptions with regard to military strategy are not necessary since the current administration has demonstrated its commitment to the strategy of preemption. Preemption requires a military force that is rapidly deployable, offensive oriented, and can operate in austere environments with little existing support structure. The MLG structure must reinforce these tenets, not detract from them; therefore, the MLG must include rapidly deployable units that can support mobile, offensive combat in an expeditionary environment.

Force structure must also reflect the service's thinking regarding its warfighting philosophy and potential adversaries. The Corps' maneuver warfare philosophy, when considered in the context of the nature of the modern battlefield, requires agile, self-sufficient, combat units that can respond to rapidly changing conditions and exploit opportunity. Units that must habitually depend on their higher headquarters for logistics support are less responsive and pose a near constant burden on their higher headquarters. Without adequate logistics resources, combat units are more vulnerable as they are less able to adequately respond to the inherent uncertainty in warfare. Maneuver warfare on a dispersed battlefield demands combat formations that can be distributed over a wide area. Regiments and battalions with tactical mobility and durability and

the ability to respond to changing conditions and exploit transitory opportunities are the enablers of distributed maneuver warfare.

For logisticians, the most difficult adversaries are those that reside far from the littorals. Defeating these adversaries requires a logistics force structure that can support MAGTFs operating far from traditional support bases in the littorals. The MEF is currently optimized to operate in close proximity to these traditional support bases. However, while the stated objective of “increasing the operational reach of the MAGTF”<sup>74</sup> is poorly worded, it nonetheless demonstrates that the Corps recognizes the need for logistics units to be prepared for the logistically most demanding scenarios such as Desert Storm, OIF I or Korea. Logistics units must therefore not only be rapidly deployable, but also structured to provide combat units greater range, independence, and durability.

The next assumption concerns the MLG’s role within the MAGTF. An incongruity in the MLG’s role results from differing missions of the MLG relative to the division and wing. The MAW’s primary source of logistics is the MWSG; however, the primary logistics provider for the division is the MLG.<sup>75</sup> The MLG assumes a dual role mission of direct and general support relative to the division, while retaining only a general support role for the MAW, with the possible exception of the CLCs that provide support to air wing units and air stations. The role of the MLG should be to provide general support to the MEF and should therefore include only those capabilities that are of a general support nature. As the primary providers of logistics, all direct support units should belong to the commander of the supported unit, such as the wing and division commanders. The MLG must maintain its focus on providing general support logistics to the MEF or subordinate MAGTF with functional logistics units, while allowing the wing and division commanders the ability to allocate and manage the logistics resources that are critical to the functioning of combat units with multi-functional logistics units. The philosophy of

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<sup>74</sup>MCBUL 5400.

<sup>75</sup>MCWP 4-1, 2-13.

attempting to relieve combat commanders from the burden of logistics fails to recognize both the function of the commander and the role of logistics in combat units. Rather than being a burden to a commander, logistics resources give the combat unit independence and endurance. Logistics is no longer the business of the G-4s or MLG; it is the business of commanders.

The Marine Corps must change the paradigm of controlling the logistics resources of the division through staff officers. The MLG and wing commanders exercise command and control of their logistics assets primarily through subordinate commanders, the division and regimental commanders exercise command and control of such assets through their staffs. The Marine Corps chooses its best officers to command. As a result of a rigorous screening and selection process, commanders are usually the most talented and experienced officers in any command. Instead of relying on staff officers to control the logistics resources of the division, the division commander should be afforded the benefit of having logistics commanders within the division. Currently, there are none. As stated above, logistics is commander's business; logisticians are included in this calculus. Additionally, with current logistics command opportunities limited to the MLG and MAW, affording opportunities for logisticians to command logistics units organic to the division offers the additional benefit of growing a more diverse and well-rounded community of logisticians, which benefits the MAGTF and the Marine Corps. The Stanford study that precipitated the formation of the FSSG recognized the value of embedding logisticians within the division and wing, noting the well-roundedness that such embedding would engender in logistics officers.<sup>76</sup> Logisticians "commanding" logistics units vice "controlling" logistics support benefits both the division and the logistics community.

The solution for MAGTF logistics, therefore, is an organizational solution that is based on the following overarching principles:

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<sup>76</sup>Edwards et al., 157.

1. The MLG is the primary general support logistics provider for the MEF. The MLG will be organized in functional battalions of varying size in order to allow maximum flexibility and the ability to mass capabilities as appropriate.

2. The primary source of logistics support for division and wing units will be the organic direct support CLR and MWSG, respectively.

3. Direct support units will be multi-functional, rapidly deployable, and will maintain habitual relationships with supported units.

4. Logistics capabilities will be allocated to direct support units to afford the supported combat units tactical mobility, logistical endurance, and independence of action. Direct support logistics units will afford supported units all logistics capabilities habitually required for combat operations.

5. Logistics resources within the division, wing, and MLG will be controlled by commanders through commanders.

6. The logistics system of the MEF will be a complete system and will include adequate capabilities to support the MEF in an expeditionary environment, and will eliminate the traditional paradigm of allocating shortages based on priorities.

## **The Direct Support Combat Logistics Regiment of the Marine Division**

The first recommendation breaks the LCE-centric approach to solving the logistics problems that primarily involve sustaining division units. For the division to have the capabilities to conduct mobile and distributed operations, the units within the division require a more robust organic logistics capability. The solution proposed leverages the advantages of having standing multi-functional logistics units and addresses the lack of direct support capability to units other than the infantry regiments. The proposed combat logistics regiment of the Marine Division gives the division commander the logistics capabilities that are habitually required for combat operations on the modern battlefield, a philosophy consistent with the original founding

principles of the FSSG. Instead of merely transferring logistics capabilities from the MLG to the division, the solution involves shifting logistics resources within the division to place logistics capabilities in the hands of logistics unit commanders. Additionally, many of the logistics assets that reside within the division are often underutilized and therefore become idle logistics capacity within the MEF. Centralization of logistics resources has always been central to the FSSG philosophy as a means of contending with scarce logistics resources. The division, however, has remained somewhat immune from the effects of centralization of resources, distributing logistics resources throughout the division to give division units a robust internal logistics capability that potentially becomes excess logistics capacity within the division and MEF. The division's organic CLR, as depicted in Figure 7 below, therefore combines some existing capabilities of the division with some of the capabilities of the existing direct support CLR to create a direct support CLR that is relevant and responsive to the mission of the Marine Division.

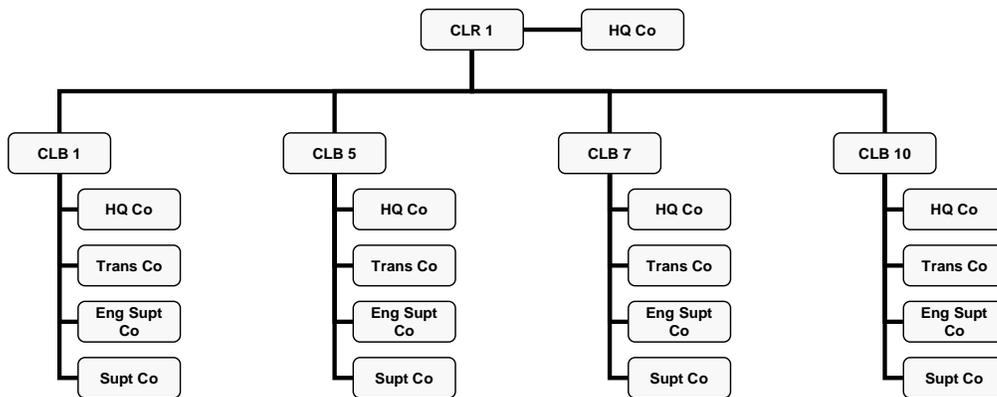


Figure 7. The Division Combat Logistics Regiment

The CLR consists of three direct support battalions and one general support battalion. The three direct support battalions provide direct support logistics to the infantry regiments and their attachments; the general support battalion is task organized to provide logistics support to

the artillery battalion, separate battalions, and the division headquarters. Each direct support CLB includes a headquarters company, a transportation support company, an engineer support company, and a support company, all permanently assigned to the battalion.

The transportation support company provides truck transport and limited landing support to the supported regiment and includes two truck platoons and a landing support platoon. One truck platoon consists of logistics vehicle systems (LVSs) and one truck platoon consists of seven ton medium tactical vehicles (MTVs), both with appropriate trailers for hauling cargo, containers and engineer equipment. While the LVS platoon comes from current MLG assets, the MTV platoon comes from the division's truck company. The equipment and personnel for the landing support platoon come from the MLG to provide limited landing support and helicopter support team (HST) capabilities to the division. The engineer support company includes material handling equipment, a limited horizontal construction capability, mobile electric power generation and repair capabilities and explosive ordnance disposal.

The engineer support company is created by taking the engineer support company of the division's combat engineer battalion (CEB) and dividing it into three platoons and doing the same to one of the engineer companies of the MLG's engineer support battalion (ESB). Taking the engineer support company from the combat engineer battalion (CEB) and moving some of the assets of the engineer support battalion to the division's CLR eliminates the duplication of logistics functions that currently exists between CEB and ESB. The CEB would relinquish its engineer support missions such as utilities and a portion of its horizontal construction capability to the engineer support company of the CLB. The CLB therefore assumes the logistics function of CEB and a portion of ESB's mission.

The support company includes a supply section that would ultimately serve as the primary source of supply for both the CLB and supported regiment and provide limited warehousing support to both the CLB and supported regiment. Personnel to staff the supply platoon come from both the supply battalion of the MLG and the supply sections of the infantry

regiments and battalions. The support company also includes a maintenance platoon that provides field maintenance on motor transport, engineer, infantry weapons and communications equipment. As with the supply platoon, maintenance personnel come from both the MLG and the infantry regiments. The support company possesses a medical platoon composed of personnel from the infantry regimental aid station and the MLG to provide Level I health care to the CLB and supported regiment. The medical platoon, when augmented by the MLG, becomes the Shock Trauma Platoon (STP) with a Forward Resuscitative Surgical Suite (FRSS) that provides limited Level II medical care to the regiment. The final logistics capability within the support company is the food service platoon, capable of providing food service support to both the CLB and supported regiment. The food service platoon is formed from the food service sections within the infantry and artillery regiments and separate battalions. The CLB's headquarters company provides command and control, light motor transport support, and limited logistics support for the battalion.

The division CLR's general support battalion provides task organized companies to support the artillery regiment and separate battalions of the division. This CLB (CLB 10 in Figure 7) includes a large truck company that includes the remains of the division's truck company not parceled to the other three CLBs, the LVSs from the tank, light armored reconnaissance, amphibious assault battalions and the artillery regiment, and any additional truck companies that might result from the end-strength increase plan for the Marine Corps. The engineer support company of the CLB subsumes the entire engineer platoon of the artillery regiment and also includes a bulk fuel platoon from the ESB. The support company mirrors the capabilities of the direct support CLBs, with personnel from the MLG and the headquarters battalion, artillery regiment, and separate battalions within the division.

As proposed, the division CLR is the primary logistics provider for the division and delivers direct support logistics to division units through multi-functional logistics units with habitual relationships to supported units. The CLR places the preponderance of the logistics

capabilities of the division under the control of logistics commanders and extends the coverage of the division to the separate battalions and artillery regiments. Although the MLG gives up some capabilities to create the four battalions and regimental headquarters of the CLR, most of the equipment and personnel needed to create the additional capabilities within the division CLR will come from within division units. The division CLR gives the ground combat element (GCE) commanders more logistics capabilities and greater control over those capabilities, making their units more independent, more durable, and more capable. Moreover, redistributing logistics capabilities within the division and committing them to the division CLR affords the opportunity to recover MLG resources that can be committed to the MLG's general support mission.

### The General Support Marine Logistics Group

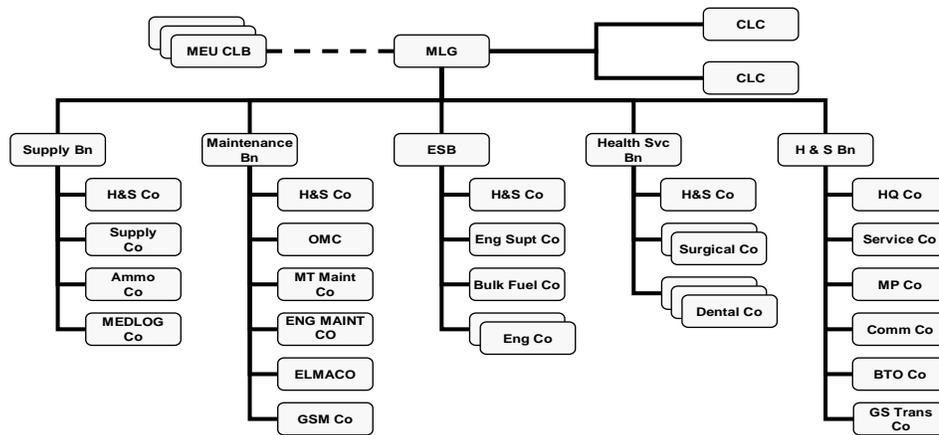


Figure 8. Proposed Marine Logistics Group Structure

As the general support logistics provider for the MEF, the proposed MLG is organized into functional battalions as revealed in Figure 8 above. Like the original FSSG, the functional arrangement allows the MLG commander to mass his capabilities in support of the MEF, or task organize his battalions into combat logistics battalions or companies in support of smaller MAGTFs or subordinate headquarters within the MEF. In each case, the proposed MLG retains

the two primary advantages of the functional battalion structure of the FSSG. The general support nature of the MLG requires additional transportation capabilities that are included in the proposed structure in order to afford the MEF a greater degree of self-sufficiency and address the end-to-end distribution gap and lack of general support transportation capability in the current MLG structure. The proposed MLG structure, when combined with the direct support CLR, represents a MAGTF solution, vice a LCE-centric solution for MAGTF logistics.

The proposed structure eliminates the regimental layer within the MLG while retaining the colonel command billets. Supply battalion is restored to a colonel command, while the CLR(FWD) is more appropriately renamed Headquarters and Support (H&S) Battalion and remains a colonel command. Eliminating the superfluous regimental layer flattens the organization to make the battalions more responsive to supported units, yet allows the MLG commander a manageable span of control with six battalions and two separate companies. Retaining the two command billets for colonels within the MLG allows the MLG to leverage the experience of senior logisticians as commanders and retains crucial command opportunities for the Corps' senior logisticians.

As a unit name, "Headquarters and Support Battalion" more appropriately captures the essence of the unit's dual functions. The battalion provides numerous general support capabilities, such as legal services, disbursing, postal, and retail exchange that units rely upon throughout the MEF. The battalion also provides the headquarters functions for the MLG, such as communications support for the MLG headquarters, military police support, and administrative and logistics support for the MLG headquarters. The CLR(Fwd) label attempts to capture an additional function of the unit, which is to deploy as the LCE in support of MEB-sized or special purpose MAGTFs. Central to this mission is the ability to conduct arrival and assembly operations for the MEF, hence the placement of the Beach and Terminal Operations (BTO) Company within the CLR(Fwd). However, experience indicates that in most cases the headquarters chosen to form the nucleus of a task-organized logistics unit will be a decision based

more as much on personality than unit designation. Most often, the MLG commander will choose his subordinate LCE commander from throughout the MLG based on his assessment of a commander's experience and abilities. Additionally, the unit's mission is much broader than arrival and assembly operations. H&S Battalion, therefore, is one of six general support battalions of the MLG with capabilities that all elements of the MAGTF rely upon. It may form the nucleus of a MAGTF Landing Force Support Party (LFSP), but any headquarters within the MLG can be task organized to serve this function. The fact that the Marine Corps commissioned the Center for Naval Analysis to conduct a study of the CLR(Fwd) reveals that an intellectually rigorous assessment did not precede the establishment of the unit. The CLR(Fwd) label betrays the unit's primary function; renaming the command more accurately reflects its role and recognizes the necessity to retain flexibility in employing the unit and task organizing throughout the MLG.

Perhaps the most troublesome implication of the LCE reorganization is that it leaves the MEF without a unit assigned with the mission to provide general support transportation. The proposed MLG structure moves the general support transportation company of the direct support CLR to Headquarters and Support Battalion and assigns the company the mission of providing general support transportation to the MEF. This assignment addresses the MEF's end-to-end distribution gap by assigning a unit to provide transportation support to the MEF headquarters, the MLG headquarters, and the direct support CLRs and MWSGs. Although the supply battalion may seem like the most logical place to assign the general support transportation company given the interrelationship of supply and transportation in the MAGTF distribution system, the unique nature of expeditionary operations requires the company to focus on more than distribution of supplies. Moreover, the general support transportation company must coordinate with both supply and engineer support battalion in carrying out its distribution mission. The company's placement adjacent to BTO Company in H&S Battalion acknowledges the linkage between motor transport and landing support capabilities that proves vital to conducting arrival and assembly operations in an expeditionary environment. Additionally, the air delivery platoon of BTO company provides

additional distribution capability to H&S Battalion. Similar to the many other general support logistics capabilities in H&S Battalion, distribution cuts across numerous logistics functions, and is the primary enabler for the MLG to sustain the combat power of a fast-moving, dispersed MEF. The distribution mission, therefore, falls to the commander of H&S Battalion of the MLG, who executes this crucial mission through his organic general support transportation company and the air delivery platoon of BTO company.

The Stanford Study on logistics structure noted, but stopped short of recommending, combining the medical and dental battalions underneath a single battalion headquarters.<sup>77</sup> This proposal combines the structures of the separate medical and dental battalions into a single battalion. Though the missions are distinct in garrison, deployed operations normally see the dental capabilities deployed as attachments to surgical companies. Combining the battalions acknowledges their interdependent relationship and achieves a small savings in Marine Corps personnel and equipment that must support the dental battalion. Such savings can be applied to meet the personnel and equipment needs of creating an additional CLB within the division CLR. The proposal also reduces the strength of the health service battalion by one surgical company to account for the personnel needed to man the medical platoons of the direct support CLBs in the division. The health service battalion is commanded by a Captain (US Navy) and includes a headquarters and service company, two dental companies, and two surgical companies. The health service battalion combines the capabilities of two battalions that are habitually employed together while deployed and reduces the staff overhead associated with maintaining separate battalions.

### **Implications for the MEU CLBs**

The current MLG structure misplaces the CLBs that provide support to the MEUs. The high visibility that MEU CLBs normally receive at MEF level and the unique nature of the unit's

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 37-38.

mission demand that the MLG commander ensure these CLB's are appropriately manned, equipped, and prepared to support the MEU. Additionally, the CLB's draw personnel and equipment from throughout the MLG, which demands the direct attention of the MLG commander. Accordingly, the MEU CLB's should be directly subordinate to the MLG commander when not assigned directly to the MEU commander.

As for the structure of the MEU CLB's, the proposed logistics structure for the MEU adheres to the guiding principles presented earlier in this chapter. With the division CLR and MWSG supporting the division and wing, respectively, these units would provide logistics capabilities to support the immediate needs of the ground and aviation combat elements. The battalion landing team (BLT) would therefore include a direct support Combat Logistics Company (CLC) composed of elements from the CLB that has an established habitual relationship with the BLT's parent regiment. The aviation combat element (ACE) likewise includes a supporting detachment from the MWSG. The MEU LCE consists of a CLB that would include general support capabilities from throughout the MLG necessary to support the MEU in an expeditionary environment. As the MEU's general support logistics provider, the LCE would be smaller than the current MEU CLB but would still be commanded by a lieutenant colonel to retain the experience of a senior logistics commander in the MEU. The proposed structure therefore places the MEU CLB's directly under the MEU commander and narrows the focus of the CLB's mission to providing general support logistics to the MEU vice serving as the primary logistics provider for the BLT.

This chapter recognizes Senge's admonition that successful strategies must be predicated on explicit guiding philosophies and assumptions. The logistics system of the MEF must include an MLG with a full range of functional capabilities while placing those logistics capabilities habitually required for combat in the hands of combat commanders. The proposed solution also places logistics under the direct control of logistics commanders in order to leverage the advantage of the Corps' development and selection process for commanders. With these guiding

principles, the proposed solution preserves the benefits gained from multi-functional logistics units with habitual relationships to supported units while addressing both the distribution and coverage gaps that resulted from reorganization. By fixing these gaps, the proposed solution moves the Marine Corps closer to its goals of improving logistics responsiveness and extending the operational reach of the MAGTF through logistics reorganization.

## Summary and Conclusions

Dynamic complexity exists when an action has one set of consequences locally and a very different set of consequences in another part of the system or when obvious interventions cause non-obvious consequences.<sup>78</sup> The Marine Corps' effort to reorganize its logistics structure demonstrates what can happen within a system with dynamic complexity. In reorganizing the logistics structure of the MEF, the Marine Corps took steps to solve one set of problems and created another set. Decentralizing the distribution assets of the MEF into several units within the direct support CLR undermined an already tenuous distribution system within the MEF by creating gaps in both coverage of units and in the end-to-end distribution to those units. The change increases deployability of logistics units and potentially enhances responsiveness by establishing habitual relationships, but given the unintended consequences of creating these benefits, one has to question whether the MEF is better or worse off as a result of the reorganization effort.

The effort is, of course, ongoing and iterative; the endstate is undetermined.<sup>79</sup> This fact underscores the need for logical and effective principles to form a guiding philosophy for what the Marine Corps intends to achieve through reorganization and what the role of the MLG will be within the MAGTF. The Solution Initiating Directive from I&L and Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) suggests that the present philosophy is inadequate. Increasing the operational reach of the MAGTF is a laudable objective, but extremely difficult to define and measure. "Increasing the lethality of the MAGTF" precludes precise meaning and embodies the vague and unclear language that the philosopher John Dewey railed against when he referred to such vagueness as the "aboriginal logical sin," from which "bad intellectual consequences"

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<sup>78</sup>Senge, 71-72.

<sup>79</sup>Resnick Interview.

usually follow.<sup>80</sup> Certainly, reorganizing the logistics structure of the MEF did not result in a sudden increase in combat power for the MEF. How does one define lethality? Relieving commanders of their logistics burdens and attempting to centralize all logistics assets within the MLG fails to recognize the power and purpose of logistics in a combat unit. The idea of logistics as a burden to the commander is anathema to combat logisticians. To be sure, command comes with many burdens; however, the burden of command is shared among the staff and subordinate commanders. But rather than being a burden, logistics is a critical enabler; a warfighting function that the combat commander must understand and integrate in his operations. The staff and subordinate logistics commander helps him do this. If properly organized, manned, equipped, and trained, logistics units embedded in combat units afford the combat commander a tremendous advantage. Emphasizing core competencies undermines the Marine Corps philosophy of approaching warfare as an integrated, multi-disciplinary endeavor. Focusing a unit on single core competencies creates overspecialization that the Marine Corps neither wants nor can afford.<sup>81</sup>

The long term solution for the logistics structure of the MEF must leverage existing advantages within the system while addressing the shortcomings. Standing multi-functional logistics units with habitual support relationships commanded by board-selected logistics commanders captures the most visible advantage of reorganization. The coverage and distribution gaps and lack of adequate organic logistics capability within division units require solutions. The ability of the Marine Corps to find and effect the right solution for the MAGTF rests with its ability to demonstrate a culture of discipline that emerges from disciplined thought. Returning to the lessons of *Good to Great*, Jim Collins reminds us that bureaucracy will emerge in order to compensate for a lack of discipline in an organization. The culture of bureaucracy, with its

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<sup>80</sup> John Dewey, *How We Think* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), 130.

<sup>81</sup>“Increase the lethality of the MAGTF” and “extending the operational reach of the MAGTF” are objectives for reorganization stated in Marine Corps Bulletin (MCBUL) 5400, *Reorganization of 1st Marine Logistics Group*, 21 March 2006. “Relieving other MAGTF elements of their logistics burdens” and “focus on core competencies” are included as endstates and expected outcomes in the Solution Initiating Directive. See Headquarters, US Marine Corps, Installations and Logistics, *US Marine Corps Logistics Modernization Operations Plan (Solution Initiating Directive)*, 21 June 2005, 37-38.

adherence to inappropriate and counterproductive organizational boundaries, prevents the Marine Corps from attaining the optimal solution for MAGTF logistics. Until the Corps embraces the Culture of Discipline and eschews the Culture of Bureaucracy, the service will remain with an inadequate and less than optimized logistics structure within the operating forces. Who bears the ultimate burden of a sub-optimized logistics structure?

Returning to the issue of operational reach, the stated objective of increasing the operational reach of the MAGTF through reorganization is poorly worded and creates a paradox for MAGTF logistics. The MEF is predominately concerned with warfighting at the tactical level. Increasing operational reach would require the Corps to assume Title X responsibilities it does not currently possess and may not want. Increasing tactical reach is a much more appropriate objective given the scope of the MEF. However, commanders that seek increased tactical reach often assume increased tactical risk. Logistics is one the primary mechanisms commanders use to mitigate such risk. Rather than allowing the MEF commander to more effectively mitigate such risk, reorganization adds to the risk by creating gaps in both distribution and coverage of the MAGTF. In the final analysis, the paradox of reorganization is that in attempting to mitigate the risk associated with extending tactical reach, reorganization actually creates new risks that will undermine rather than ensure success in future campaigns.

## **Recommendations for Further Study**

The logistics structure of the MAGTF is a case study in systems complexity. Reorganizing the structure has numerous implications both within and outside the MLG and MEF. How reorganization does and will affect the mission, roles, and structure within Marine Forces Reserve (MarForRes) is worthy of a separate study. MarForRes continues to maintain the functional alignment of its 4th MLG. This might be the optimal solution given the mission and role of 4th MLG; however, those roles and missions and the logistics structure of not only 4th MLG, but MarForRes all deserve a critical look. Narrowing the focus of the MLG to general

support logistics for the MEF might make the MLG more capable of assuming the responsibilities beyond its tactical focus. The Marine Logistics Command (MLC) is often the answer to meeting the service's logistics responsibilities in a theater of operations. If limited to providing general support logistics, would the MLG be able to assume the role of MLC? As mentioned earlier, reorganization is but one of six logistics modernization initiatives. I&L intends that reorganization will leverage or reinforce other logistics modernization initiatives, but there is little analysis behind this contention.<sup>82</sup> Once again considering system complexity and the interrelationship of these initiatives, I&L would benefit from a study to determine reorganization's effects, potential and realized, on the other logistics modernization initiatives. Finally, another intended outcome of reorganization is to serve as a bridge to the 2015 MAGTF and better support future warfighting concepts.<sup>83</sup> Precise definitions of the logistics requirements that emerge from future structure and concepts must precede a detailed study to determine the brutal reality of the reorganized MLG's relevance to future requirements. It is clear that no such exhaustive study or analysis preceded LCE reorganization.

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<sup>82</sup>Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 37.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

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