Reorganization of the Force Service Support Group

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Subject Area Logistics

Reorganization of the Force Service Support Group

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INTRODUCTION

The structure of the force service support group (FSSG) has long been under scrutiny. Current operations in the Middle East have driven the Marine Corps to restructure the FSSG into an organization capable of training and operating the way the Marine Corps fights. Doctrine states that logistics is an integral part of warfighting. Logistics provides the resources of combat power, brings those resources to the battle, and sustains them throughout the course of operation. MCDP 4 states that logistics is critical to the creation, maintenance, deployment, and employment of forces as well as to the redeployment, reconstitution, and regeneration of those forces after their employment.[1] Combat service support (CSS) plays a role in all levels of war to include strategic, tactical, and operational, so why has it taken so long to develop a structure that works across the board? With CSS being a vital asset to the success of the warfighter, the Marines Corps must develop a system with more structure geared to supporting the warfighter, which includes training and operating as they fight, maintaining a habitual direct

[1] United States Government as represented by the Secretary of the Navy: MCDP 4, Logistics, 1997. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1997.

support relationship with supported MEF units, improving the transition to combat footing, and maintaining the ability to task organize into multifunctional CSS organizations.

ORGANIZATION BEFORE OIF

Before OIF, the Marine Corps organized FSSG into functional battalions geared to a specific function of support. Support was tasked organized from these battalions and Marines and Sailors were pulled from these different battalions to create CSS units that would provide support to MEF units. The problem with this is commanders do not train with their Marines nor does the commander have the organic equipment to fulfill the mission. All these parts are required to work as one. While this lack of TO&E allows for tailoring of the CSS to the mission, the lack of a standing organization inhibits the ability to be responsive and deploy a cohesive CSS unit on short notice. It is difficult to imagine fielding a battalion sized infantry unit by pulling squads and platoons from across the division and assembling a staff that had never worked with each other. This method of sourcing a battalion would undergo considerable scrutiny and concern for its warfighting effectiveness. However, this is the manner in

which the Marine Corps assemble all CSSEs short of the FSSG itself.[2]

ORGANIZATION DURING OIF

During the planning for OIF, 1st FSSG recognized a need to restructure their functional battalions into a unit capable of providing support inland over long distances and supporting ground and air combat forces in Iraq. Brigadier General Usher recognized the need to have a more task organized structure to provide direct support CSS to 1st Marine Division, Task Force Tarawa, and 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. A general support CSS capability was also needed with a capability to echelon sustainment forward as the forces rapidly moved farther north.

"In this organization, CSS Group 11 (CSSG-11), with three CSS companies (CSSCs), provided mobile direct support CSS to each regimental combat team (RCT) in the 1st Marine Division, as well as providing a general support CSS capability via CSS Battalion 10 (CSSB-10). CSSB-22 provided similar mobile CSS to TF Tarawa. CSSB-13 provided direct support to the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. CSSG-15 provided the capability to echelon CSS forward to CSS areas

[2] Newsome, Garrison Organization That Mirrors Operational Employment: We Talk it, Now Let's do it- Restructuring of CSS Assets into BSSGs as their Principle Organization, 28 February 2002.

(CSSAs)in the vicinity of 3d Marine Aircraft Wing."[3] These units were developed under short notice, and many units were finalized in theater. This method of developing units on short notice demonstrates how unprepared the FSSG was in transitioning between peacetime and wartime organization. These units didn't have any prior relationships with Division or Wing. It is hard to develop a direct support or general support relationship with a supported unit when CSS units don't train together.

FUTURE ORGANIZATION

The proposed organization calls for streamlining of the FSSG HQ and four subordinate MSE(s). Each MSE will contain multiple functionally efficient battalions or companies designed to perform its mission in garrison and rapidly transition to a deployed CSS organization. BSR-1 will continue the mission of BSSG-1, the FSSG forward, while assuming command and control of the companies previously organized under H&S Battalion. This organization will give BSR-1 the capability required to execute its conventional mission of the MEF landing force support party with minimal augmentation. Additionally,

[3] Edward G. Usher "Brute force combat service support: 1st force service support group in operation Iraqi freedom." Marine Corps Gazette August 2003, 34-41.

BSR-1 will provide the same level of support to the FSSG staff as H&S Battalion.[4]

CSR-11, the direct support regiment, will continue to focus on supporting the 1st Marine Division. Each one of its three battalions will maintain a habitual relationship with an infantry regiment while the CSR maintains a habitual relationship with the Division CG and staff. The H&S Battalion Commander and staff will assume CSB-1. CSB-5 will be under the command of the 7th ESB Commander and CSB-7 will be commanded by the CSSG-1 Commander in 29 Palms, California. CSR-11 will be commanded by the former TSB Commander. CSR-15, the general support regiment commanded by the former Supply Battalion Commander will be organized with three battalions and two companies. The focus of CSR-15 will remain general support supply, maintenance, and level II medical. The two companies will provide intermediate supply and maintenance support to 3d MAW units in Yuma, Arizona and Miramar, California. The 1st Dental Battalion will remain as is.[5]

[4] Expeditionary Warfighting Template Road Ahead, 1st Force Service Support Group, 15 October 2004. Cited hereafter as "Warfighting Template"
[5] "Warfighting Template"

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The FSSG has undergone many changes in the last two years, some good and some bad. It looks like the support community is headed in the right direction with better relationships with division and wing units. The new plan calls for maintaining direct support and general support organizations to maintain the needed habitual relationships. Once these relationships are established and maintained the support community will be able to minimize T/O and T/E adjustments allowing for rapid transitions between peacetime and wartime organization. The result is a better support system geared toward training and operating the way the Marine Corps fights with better support for the warfighter.

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