

Reengineering Defense Transportation

By RONALD R. FOGLEMAN

Abrams tank rolling onto *Cape Isabel* during a deployment exercise.



C-5 Galaxy arriving in Germany to pick up food to be transported to St. Petersburg during Operation Provide Hope.

DOD (John McDowell)

U.S. Army (Jesse Seigal)

Summary

Contingency plans often fail to give due consideration to transportation and logistics. It is assumed that troops and equipment will get there when needed, and that ports, airheads, roads, and railways will be available and secure from interdiction. These assumptions are dangerous. Today much of the core airlifter fleet is degraded or nonoperational, merchant ships and their crews are dwindling, and commercial airlines are pulling out of the Civil Reserve Airlift Fleet. The U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) consolidated the efforts of the Military Sealift, Military Traffic Management, and Air Mobility Commands in times of war and peace. Like a single-stop travel agency, TRANSCOM is endeavoring to provide capabilities to deploy forces by various modes of transport from anywhere in the United States and to supply them with the wherewithal to win the next war.

The ability of Assyria in the 7th century B.C. to field 50,000-strong armies in deserts and mountains is attributed to smoothly operating staffs and logistics. Over the centuries the innovative commander has mastered the art of foraging with two effects: limiting the avenue of attack to those places where sustainment is found, and muting popular support by the local inhabitants when their crops are confiscated or burnt, cities pillaged, and families separated. General Erwin Rommel said that the first condition for armies to endure the strain of battle is to have ample stocks of weapons, ammunition, and fuel. He added that battles are decided by quartermasters, for even brave soldiers can do nothing without weapons. And weapons can accomplish nothing without ammunition, and weapons and ammunition are useless in mobile warfare unless vehicles have the fuel to haul them. Admiral Ernest King echoed a similar point

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C-17 Globemaster III
over the South
Carolina coastline.



U.S. Air Force (David McLeod)



U.S. Air Force (Val Gempis)

6th Infantry Division
troops arriving by CRAF
for Tandem Thrust '93.

when in frustration he said: "I don't know what the hell this logistics is that [General George] Marshall is always talking about, but I want some of it." Such historical vignettes should remind joint planners and commanders when preparing for war or a contingency to train to get where they are going and to be sustained when they get there.

Dangerous Assumptions

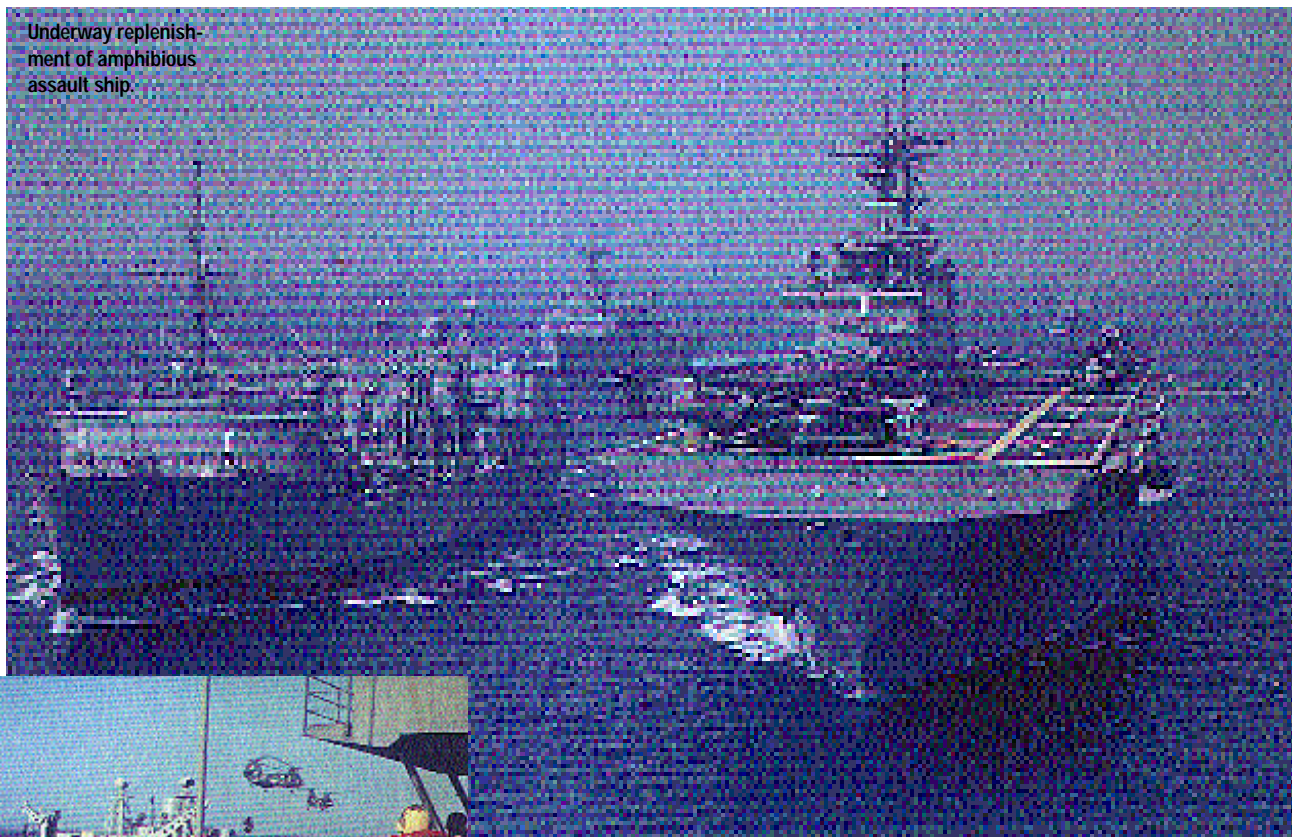
Having participated in a variety of wargames, exercises, and contingencies, it is clear to me that we frequently assume difficulties of deployment and sustainment, but bank on infrastructure—at home, en route, and in theater—to meet our requirements. We assume that we will know the location of every critical piece of equipment at all times and that the transportation assets needed to rapidly mobilize and sustain a force will be there in adequate numbers, ready for battle.

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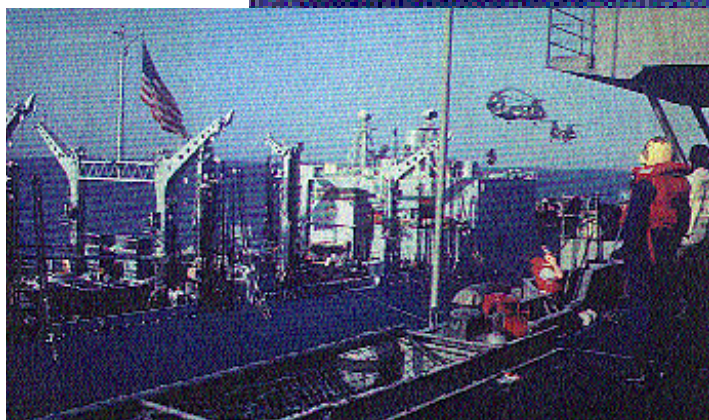
Such assumptions lead to complacency and sometimes to disaster. Many assumed that the C-141 aircraft designed in the 50s, built in the 60s, stretched in the 80s, and flown hard ever since would be there as our core airlifter. They overlooked that the size of equipment and the amount of supplies to be lifted have grown since the 50s, that we are not just postured for operations to large airfields in Western Europe, and that the majority of our forces will now be predominantly based in America. Some assumed that the U.S.-flag merchant marine fleet would still be there in sufficient numbers with the appropriate types of vessels to provide bulk sustainment for the Armed Forces. They assumed there would always be a pool of trained U.S. merchant mariners to man Fast Sealift Ships and Ready Reserve Force vessels. Others assumed that railheads, roads, cranes, and ports would always be ready to support surges accompanying major contingencies. Assumptions lull us into thinking that we will always be able to fly and sail to facilities that are well maintained, sized to handle the load, and immune from enemy attack.

I want to hang out a banner for everyone to read: *check your assumptions*. Don't conduct wargames with invalid Timed Phase Force Deployment Data and assume that all

Underway replenishment of amphibious assault ship.



Replenishment oiler *USS Kansas City* with *USS Ranger* in the Arabian Gulf.



U.S. Navy (Gregg Smeaza)

U.S. Navy (J.E. Westfall)

your forces will be there when needed. Accounts of employing forces that don't consider deploying and sustaining them are probably suspect. Discussions about long arm movements over maps without mention of railheads, roads, airports and airlift, sea-ports and sealift, the health of the civil transport sector, and access to key, capable international transportation facilities should be carefully scrutinized.

The System Today

When the President, through the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, asks if ports and airfields are secure, air superiority has been achieved, a ground offensive is ready to begin, or victory has been achieved,

he is actually asking about deployment and sustainment or, in other words, about strategic mobility. In the recent past a significant portion of the C-141 core airlifter fleet is grounded, a larger portion restricted from air refueling operations, and each aircraft limited to carrying only 74 percent of its designed load capacity. Both U.S.-flagged merchant marine fleet vessels and the Americans aboard them are declining in number with no improvement in sight. Commercial air carriers, under pressure to achieve profitability, have declined to participate in the Civil Reserve Airlift Fleet (CRAF) program to such an extent that we are not able to meet all CRAF stage II and III requirements. Today, the United States is withdrawing from overseas facilities which were once ready and available for global deployment and sustainment operations.

It is fortunate that the President, Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and CINCs, as well as many in the Congress, support strategic mobility programs like the C-17, sealift ship conversion and construction, and Ready Reserve Force expansion and maintenance. But there are some who suggest we



Freighter PVT Franklin J. Phillips delivering supplies to Kismayu, Somalia.

Joint Combat Camera (Terry Mitchell)



M109 howitzer moving onto a rail car at port of Beaumont, Texas.

U.S. Army (Jesse Seigal)

can't afford the mix of assets recommended by the congressionally mandated Mobility Requirements Study (MRS) which did not meet the warfighting requirements of the CINCs. Deploying forces with a low risk to lives was too expensive. Thus a compromise was struck: delay the closure of necessary forces by giving the enemy more time to lay land mines, seize key terrain, move tanks and equipment forward, sow harbors with mines, and attack U.S. and allied forces that may be present, and thereby reduce the cost of transportation.

Let me illustrate the importance of reevaluating planning. MRS assumed that in FY99 there would be a certain number of fully mission-capable C-141s (*which is now highly unlikely*), that there would be a fully supported CRAF program (*which is now in doubt*), that there would be a certain number of converted or constructed sealift ships (*which is now delayed*), and that a badly needed new C-17 core airlift program would be supported (*which is now under attack*). The study also pointed out that even after an expected 120 C-17s were built, a shortfall would exist (*which is as yet unaddressed*). Today MRS is undergoing further review.

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The Case for Change

One learns from a constant stream of articles and speeches that change is required, coming, or even here already. I couldn't agree more. But the distance between the United States and other regions of the world hasn't changed. The speed at which surface, sea, and airlift assets will travel isn't likely to change any time soon. And the need to rapidly respond, almost simultaneously, in many parts of the globe hasn't changed.

What is changing—really happening—is that America is returning to its origins as a *militia* nation. America has not historically maintained large standing forces, instead encouraging reliance on the Guard and Reserve, and avoiding international entanglements. After major wars, including the Cold War, administrations have sought to radically downsize the military by shifting resources to domestic priorities on the assumption that the remaining force structure is trained, deployable, sustainable, and capable of winning future wars—however *winning* is defined.

The U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) was established in 1987 with the idea that unity of effort in mobility is essential to ensuring joint combat effectiveness on the battlefield. It was not until Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm that TRANSCOM really came into its own. While successful, the experience proved what coaches have known for decades: you must practice the way you are going to play. That realization led to a 1993 DOD Directive which designates TRANSCOM as the single manager for defense transportation in both war and peace

by placing the Military Sealift, Military Traffic Management, and Air Mobility Commands under one combatant command and assigning strategic mobility (or common user) forces to an operational command.

TRANSCOM is taking its newly assigned responsibilities very seriously. The warfighting CINC's determine requirements for their respective theaters of operations. We, in turn, determine within the constraints of the existing defense transportation system whether these requirements can be met. If not, we work with the CINC's staff to minimize shortfalls and maximize opportunities for victory. In concert with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, military services, Department of Transportation, and commercial transportation sector, we will strongly advocate the need for and promote the acquisition of mobility assets to support our national military strategy.

With the current administration's call for reduced defense budgets while still maintaining the capability to achieve victory

when the Armed Forces are committed, we got a clear, unambiguous message: we can't continue to conduct business as usual, we can't afford it financially nor do the men and

women who are asked to go in harm's way deserve a transportation system that reduces their chance of victory—even of survival. In sum, a smaller force structure based predominantly in the United States which is not deployable or sustainable in a manner that allows us to win with what are considered acceptable losses is a hollow force.

Reengineering the System

To ensure military forces are successful despite declining defense budgets, TRANSCOM is hard at work charting a course for the defense transportation system into the next century. Change means more than total quality management or improving existing processes. It is investing the time and resources to reengineer the defense transportation system. The first task of a recently formed TRANSCOM initiatives team is to develop an *ought to be* defense transportation system as well as to provide a framework to get there. The team will work

with the Joint Transportation Corporate Information Management Center—which was recently chartered by DOD—to further refine plans to include detailed procedural, organizational, and technological reforms.

In retrospect one can see how in part the defense transportation system developed in both service and functional stovepipes. This has affected the ways in which requirements are identified, tasked, contracted, monitored, and billed to customers, and involves various automation systems used to run these processes—many of which originated centuries ago (if measured in technological years) and most of which don't talk with one another, even within a single headquarters.

Some ask why TRANSCOM is unable to provide services like the private sector. Why is it that in the marketplace there are local travel agents who, upon request, can book a flight to Florida, a ship for a cruise, a bus tour en route at intermediate stops, and a train trip to complete the journey—one agent for air, sea, road, and rail, and with only one bill? After sending parcels via a delivery service a toll free number is available to check on where the shipments are, anytime of day or night. If that can be done by private enterprise, why can't critical spare parts destined for a CINC's area of responsibility be located and arrival times determined in the DOD pipeline?

Reengineering the defense transportation system will give customers—the Armed Forces—the type of quality service offered by the private sector, or perhaps better. Soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and coastguardsmen—active and Reserve—as well as members of the civil service and the commercial transport industries, have ensured a strong and robust defense transportation system throughout our Nation's history. For those who today go in harm's way, TRANSCOM pledges to develop a new system that lives up to Winston Churchill's dictum: "Victory is the beautiful bright coloured flower. Transport is the stem without which it could never have blossomed."

JFQ

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