

# Army Sustainment Command (ASC) Serves as Single 'Face to the Field' — Interview With MG Robert M. Radin, ASC Commanding General (CG)

**A**SC is the U.S. Army's prime logistics support command, working to improve battlefield logistics and integrate sustainment support of our warfighters. With a network of more than 70 battalions and logistical support elements worldwide, ASC works to sustain transformation for an Army at war through rapid acquisition across the full spectrum of operations. MG Robert M. Radin, ASC CG, recently discussed ASC's mission and programs by answering questions posed by *Army AL&T* Magazine staff.

SPC Robert DeVitto and PFC Steven Beare, both cavalry scouts assigned to Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 4th Infantry Division (4ID), Multi-National Division (MND)-Baghdad, Iraq, hook a tow rope to a dead-lined High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV). The Soldiers towed the disabled vehicle to the nearby base for repair. ASC has positioned its repair assets within Southwest Asia (SWA) to provide efficient and responsive maintenance support. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Brent Williams, 1st BCT, 4ID Public Affairs.)

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**AL&T:** ASC is a relatively new command. Would you explain how you are organized to support both current and future logistics missions?

**Radin:** ASC's basic mission is to serve as the single "face to the field" for the Army Materiel Command [AMC], so we ensure that every aspect of the support provided through AMC is delivered on time to all locations and across a full range of operations. We act as an interface between combat units and the acquisition, logistics, and technology [AL&T] community. By the very nature of this mission, we are tied

directly to virtually all current logistics missions, and we are a key component of the planning process for future logistics missions.

As the command is presently structured, we have six basic core missions, which, taken together, form a matrix of logistics support:

- **Field Support.** We operate a network of seven field support brigades, as well as subordinate battalions, elements, and teams, which identify and resolve equipment support and sustainment problems and help

resolve materiel readiness issues for combatant commanders.

- **Materiel Management.** We have filled the gap created when the Army did away with division- and corps-level materiel management centers. We support the Army Force Generation [ARFORGEN] process by carrying out a variety of functions, to include issuing, maintaining, and managing Theater-Provided Equipment [TPE] in combat theaters, Predeployment Training Equipment at training sites, and Left-Behind Equipment [LBE] back at home stations.





An HMMWV is transported outside a new 6,000-square-foot auto body repair facility at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar. ASC operates a network of seven field support brigades to identify and resolve equipment support and sustainment problems and help resolve materiel readiness issues. The 401st AFSB officially opened the shop to increase vehicle restoration capabilities. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of Dustin Senger.)

- **Army Pre-Positioned Stocks (APS).** We maintain, account for, and manage combat-ready equipment and supplies, as well as stocks for humanitarian missions at land- and sea-based positions strategically located around the globe.
- **Reset.** The Army reset program's goal is to restore units to full combat capability, and our part in this is to perform reset activities at the field level and apply repair capabilities across command lines, which maximizes efficiency.
- **Contracting Services.** We manage contracts for combat service support, such as maintenance and property management, and deploy contingency contracting brigades and battalions to provide expeditionary contracting services for combat units.
- **Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP).** LOGCAP uses commercial companies to provide a wide range of support services — including dining facilities (DFACs), lodging, laundry, transportation,

recreational services, and much more — to forward-deployed forces in SWA and elsewhere. This is a high-dollar, high-visibility contract, and we are in the process of transitioning to a new phase — known as LOGCAP IV — that will involve using three companies to provide services under LOGCAP.

Of course, the one thing that's consistent in the Army is change, and that applies to ASC and our mission. Right now, the big change for us is the establishment of the Army Contracting Command [ACC]. As we establish ACC [Editor's Note: See related article on Page 31], some of the missions that I just listed may be transitioned or transformed, or we may even acquire new

missions. But I believe that our basic mission of providing that direct link to warfighters in the field will remain the same.

**AL&T:** ASC's global presence exists in 76 worldwide locations. How does ASC leverage its resources and capabilities to better support operational and tactical commanders?

**Radin:** The best way to illustrate this is to look at the present structure of our Army Field Support Brigades [AFSBs]. ASC has seven AFSBs, and they fit into three categories:

- Two of our AFSBs are forward-deployed in SWA, with facilities on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Qatar. Clearly, they are involved in providing frontline support to units actively involved in combat.
- Two of our AFSBs are also deployed overseas in Europe and Korea. They support U.S. forces that aren't currently involved in combat, but are still stationed in locations that are critical to projecting power and carrying out our Nation's overall military strategy.



LOGCAP is one of ASC's core missions and it uses commercial companies to provide a wide range of support services, including DFACs, to forward-deployed forces in SWA. Here, Soldiers from the 1st BCT, 41D, MND-Baghdad, leave the Forward Operating Base Falcon DFAC. (U.S. Army photo by SPC David Hodge, 1st BCT, 41D Public Affairs.)



MG Robert M. Radin, ASC CG, speaks with Blair Blaser, a Deere & Co. assembler, during a visit to the firm's Davenport (Iowa) Works. Close cooperation with industry is an essential element of ASC's mission, linking America's industrial base to Soldier needs on the battlefield. (Photo courtesy of Deere & Co.)

- Three of our AFSBs are located in the United States, and they are heavily involved in the ARFORGEN process, assisting in the rebuild of units that have returned from combat deployments and preparing them to redeploy when needed.

I mentioned seven AFSBs, but the question refers to 76 locations. That's the structure that reports to or supports our AFSBs, including Army Field Support Battalions, Logistics Support Elements, and Brigade Logistics Support Teams. We also have four Contracting Support Brigades [CSBs], which are presently located in Germany, Korea, Kuwait, and Fort Sam Houston, TX.

These ASC units give us a presence at every level. We try to align ourselves as the field Army is aligned. We can then get maximum leverage out of the resources we are provided, and provide more direct — and therefore better — support to commanders of both tactical and operational units.

**AL&T:** What have been ASC's most challenging tasks to date?

**Radin:** As I see it, our biggest challenge has been to change our command at the same speed that the Army is transforming. The close alignment with the field Army that I just mentioned means that we need to adjust constantly as the Army makes changes in its equipment, tactics, and base locations.

Because we do so much in so many different places, it can be difficult for us to document all of our processes and actions. However, we must do this to secure all the resources we need to support the warfighter. But because resources are limited, we also must demonstrate that we are good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Basically, it's about being a transformational command versus a legacy command — about becoming an organization that's ever-adapting and that can respond quickly to warfighter needs, as opposed to one that waits for orders from

above. To get there, we must drive through all the Army systems and gain recognition for what we do and how we do it.

It's also critical that we develop best practices and replicate them across all functions and locations within our enterprise. We must develop and enforce measures of excellence for all our contracts, and we must identify any shortcomings in our

own processes and get them corrected. ASC must become an organization dedicated to continuous improvement and lifelong learning — this is a

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challenge we all need to take on, each and every day.

To sum it up, it's not so much the individual tasks we've taken on that have proven challenging, although we've had to overcome some major challenges to get them done. Rather, it's the way we've had to approach them, as a new command with a new way of doing business, and with an obligation to support military forces that themselves are at war and transforming at the same time.

**AL&T:** What is something that is unique about ASC in accomplishing its mission?

**Radin:** ASC is a global command that bridges from the strategic

to the operational to the tactical levels. We act as a conduit of support. We have the ability to reach back to the Life Cycle Management Commands, the Research and Development Command, the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, and now to the newly formed ACC.

We can leverage any or all of those capabilities in support of Soldiers, regardless of where they are or what missions they are carrying out. It's important to note that this is a 2-way process: we deliver support,

but we also provide a direct line for feedback from the field. This shortens the time it takes to learn what weapons and equipment improvements are needed and speeds up the implementation of those improvements.

We're also set up to rapidly react to the ARFORGEN needs of commanders, whether those be in the area of LBE or reset. Because of the services we can provide to these commanders, they aren't encumbered with materiel management requirements as they go about the business of training their Soldiers and preparing them for the next deployment. That's a unique part of our mission, and I think it delivers great value to warfighting units.

**AL&T:** Would you give examples of how ASC provides direct support in SWA?

**Radin:** ASC is embedded with warfighters in SWA, and we leverage our presence to provide them with the direct logistical support they need to accomplish their combat missions.

We operate forward repair activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait that repair battle-damaged equipment; perform vehicle maintenance and upgrades, including the installation of add-on armor; provide critical materiel support, such as replacement wheel assemblies for vehicles; account for, maintain, and issue TPE; and synchronize and coordinate new equipment fielding and sustainment. We also have contracting specialists on the ground who contract for goods and services and minor construction at forward bases, and LOGCAP deputy program directors and staff who provide performance oversight of the LOGCAP contract. Our other tasks in theater include rebuilding and maintaining APS, and working with other organizations



A Soldier from the 172nd Stryker BCT closes the vehicle's hatch before moving the Stryker to a new location in Kuwait during the reset process. (U.S. Army photo by SPC Debrah Ledesma, 40th Public Affairs Detachment.)



Hundreds of combat-ready vehicles await loading aboard a large, medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ship en route to SWA. The vehicles will enable Army power projection and expeditionary operations. (U.S. Army photo by Charles W. Fick Jr.)

to accomplish the retrograde of weapons and equipment back to the United States.

This work goes on every day and involves thousands of military, civilian, and contractor personnel. It covers the full spectrum of ASC's overall mission, and pretty much encompasses the full spectrum of logistical support within a combat theater.

ASC must become an organization dedicated to continuous improvement and lifelong learning — this is a challenge we all need to take on, each and every day.

**AL&T:** Would you explain how ASC organizations are leveraging Lean Six Sigma [LSS] in their sustainment efforts, for example, in Korea?

**Radin:** The best example of our LSS effort in Korea is the sustainment of

APS-4 equipment and materiel in Northeast Asia. Faced with the challenge of limited funding and a growing requirement for maintenance of APS,

our team in Korea aggressively pursued LSS and made a commitment to continuous process improvement that is ongoing. They've cut the time taken to complete processes and found ways to make the best possible use of the resources provided to them.

Let me give you some examples. Prior to 2005, final inspection reject rates had climbed to more than 90 percent; that rate is now less than 1 percent. Overall cyclic maintenance times have been reduced by about 50 percent. The

process time for an M2A2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle has gone from 22 days down to 4 days, while the process time for an M1A1 Abrams tank has gone from 28 days down to 7 days.

APS in Korea has become a model sustainment operation in terms of creating the most efficient processes to get the work done. Now, the challenge to our command is replicating the success achieved in Korea at our other APS sites, as well as at maintenance facilities that perform similar missions. To do that, we're sharing the best practices developed in Korea through site visits, inspections, training films, written reports — any means we have at our disposal to capture the form and function of what was learned in Korea and apply it wherever else it might work. The same LSS principles that worked so well for APS in Korea can also be applied to the maintenance of TPE,



LBE, and reset equipment, so we're pursuing process improvements in those mission areas as well.

**AL&T:** What opportunities do you envision for your newly formed continuous improvement program?

**Radin:** The greatest potential for positive change within ASC rests with applying continuous improvement principles across the enterprise. To facilitate this, our inspection team and our auditors are linked with our LSS team. This means we can leverage the results of audits and inspections to effectively address any weaknesses in our numerous programs.

As a result, when we visit a site and check an operation against standards, we can immediately begin an improvement program. We can also document process improvements that have already occurred and learn how they can be replicated at other locations. Because continuous improvement is part of the inspection and audit process, we can put controls in

place to make sure we achieve the desired outcome and maintain it in the future without slipping back into old, inefficient ways of doing business.

Our overall goal is to use the continuous improvement and LSS tools to identify and prioritize the processes in need of improvement, and then attack those areas where we've identified weaknesses in a systemic manner.

**AL&T:** How do you feel your previous experience as the AMC G-3 and your assignments in SWA shape the goals you plan to achieve during your command of ASC?

**Radin:** My experiences in both of these positions have been instrumental in preparing me for my present job as ASC CG.

The greatest potential for positive change within ASC rests with applying continuous improvement principles across the enterprise.

The year in Kuwait as the C4 [Logistics] staff officer for the Combined Forces Land Component Command allowed me to understand the com-

plexities and priorities associated with operations in SWA, and to fully appreciate the challenging operational environment of that theater. It also gave me a firsthand look at the significant contributions made by our Department of

the Army [DA] civilians and contractors who've been forward-deployed.

My time as the AMC G-3 afforded me the opportunity to fully appreciate how the Army addresses funding challenges and apports its resources. Given what I've seen and learned about this process, I truly believe that ASC is well postured for the future. We need to understand the impact of our emerging missions on military readiness, and articulate that to AMC Headquarters and the Army staff to obtain the resources needed to carry out these critical missions.

**AL&T:** Efforts are underway to increase the number of AL&T Workforce members who are certified. What are your views on this and how do you plan to increase the number of certified workforce members in ASC?

**Radin:** Since ASC is an organization that primarily meets its mission requirements through contracting, it's absolutely critical that our entire workforce be familiar with contracting procedures and that our knowledge of those procedures be constantly updated through training and development programs.

We've learned that the key to a successful contract is to capture the needs covered



A contract worker services an HMMWV at ASC's 3rd Battalion, 401st AFSB in Afghanistan, one of a global network of sites providing AL&T support to troops in the field. (U.S. Army photo.)





Pictured here is an aerial view of 3rd Battalion, 401st AFSB in Afghanistan, one of a global network of forward-deployed ASC activities delivering AL&T capabilities to combat zones. (U.S. Army photo.)

by the contract in a clear, well-written statement of work [SOW]. Way too often, though, we rely on our acquisition workforce to identify those needs. At all levels and in all areas of the ASC enterprise, we must do a better job of articulating our requirements to our acquisition center. This will facilitate the contracting officer's ability to develop contractual vehicles that will achieve the desired outcome.

Another lesson we've learned is that it is critical to remain engaged in contract administration throughout the execution phase. Writing a good SOW is extremely important, but it's a wasted effort if you don't take the steps to ensure that the contract is executed as written. To do that, we need trained and qualified contracting officer representatives [CORs] who will provide contracting officers with the necessary feedback on contract performance. That way, we can be sure that the government is getting what it paid for.

It's only by recruiting, developing, and retaining a well-trained total force of Soldiers, DA civilians, and contractors that we can achieve what our Nation has asked us to do.

We shouldn't completely shift the burden of contract administration from units in the field to acquisition specialists, who are subject matter experts in acquisition but not necessarily in field logistics or other mission areas. The teaming of acquisition specialists with logistics specialists, and the continuous monitoring of contractor performance, is absolutely critical to the contracting process and to the overall success of ASC. Linking the two promotes the efficient delivery of contracted goods and services, and provides our command and the taxpaying public with the best value for the dollar.

I applaud the efforts of the 408th CSB in SWA, which has trained about 300 Soldiers and DA civilians as CORs. This has made a noticeable difference in contract performance and has increased understanding of the role played by contracting in the combat

theater. It's an excellent example of how we can use acquisition training programs to improve mission performance. My plan is to replicate this success elsewhere, just as I'd like to do with all successful efforts within ASC.

**AL&T:** Do you have anything further you'd like to add or discuss?

**Radin:** I'd like to recognize the tremendous contributions of our Soldiers, DA civilians, and contractors in supporting our Nation as we continue fighting the global war on terrorism. They provide this support at great personal sacrifice and usually with little or no fanfare. It's important that we all thank them for the support they've provided to our warfighters, and will continue to provide in the future.

It's only by recruiting, developing, and retaining a well-trained total force of Soldiers, DA civilians, and contractors that we can achieve what our Nation has asked us to do. They do very important work, and they do it very well. We must never take any member of this team for granted.