

Logistics Support “Seams” During Operations *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector*

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Here’s the complexity of this operation—you have kinetic effects in one Geographic Combatant Command (GCC), generated out of another GCC, partnered with a coalition, with resources from a third GCC, then NATO reinforced by international partners [that are] not a part of NATO.

—USEUCOM Chief of Staff, April 12, 2011



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U.S. Airmen prepare B-1B Lancer in support of Operation *Odyssey Dawn*

The collective and collaborative efforts of U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to support Operations *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector* from March to October 2011 represented a remarkable and challenging logistics undertaking for all of these organizations. Consequently, the experience offers a number of insights that can enhance our ability to prepare for, plan, and manage future joint endeavors. *Odyssey Dawn* took off so fast that the operation started as a “come as you are event,” without major force deployments from the continental United States and rapidly evolving staff structures and alignments. Most of the operational forces “belonged” to USEUCOM but were employed in support of, and by, USAFRICOM. This is not unusual in terms of how U.S. forces are assigned globally, but in this case, the forces also operated from USEUCOM’s area of responsibility (AOR). This ad hoc construct, compounded by the

and USAFRICOM operation centers carefully monitored events as international pressure mounted for action in support of the Libyan insurgency. The decision to engage kinetically took a relatively short time in political terms, particularly considering the complex political equities involved as well as the daunting operational considerations. *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector* introduced USAFRICOM for the first time as a geographic combatant command that faced committing armed assets to a United Nations–sanctioned operation. *Odyssey Dawn* transitioned to *Unified Protector* on March 31, 2011, and thus became a NATO- vice USAFRICOM-led operation.

Initial American forces included global strike assets from U.S. bases and forces forward positioned in Europe, both ashore and afloat. The commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa/U.S. Sixth Fleet, quickly amassed surface and subsurface capabilities that operated primarily in the USEUCOM AOR and within the boundaries set by the *Odyssey Dawn* joint operating area, which covered Libya and extended north into the

implications, leverage information-sharing technology with a broad array of organizations, and facilitate collaboration and full situational awareness of the activities of logistics planners. One simple but key tool for efficient coordination among support organizations was the use of Defense Connect Online (DCO), a virtual conferencing capability. Daily online collaboration sessions synchronized lines of effort and information sharing not only between the two involved combatant commands but also among the U.S. Transportation Command, USEUCOM, and USAFRICOM Service components; Defense Logistics Agency (DLA); and a multitude of other high-level agencies. The DCOs fostered constructive multidirectional discussions that minimized redundancy of effort, clarified roles and responsibilities, and resolved mission challenges.

One critical issue associated with crisis response or short “lead time” operations is the coordination of air routes including diplomatic clearances, logistical deconfliction with international partners, and other matters. One valuable enabler was use of Standard Theater Airlift Routes (STAR) during initial resupply operations. Similar in concept to a local bus circuit, the STAR consists of several preplanned air routes established for Europe-based C-130 aircraft to fly cargo to designated locations. A load is placed on a previously scheduled mission along the STAR and then removed at the required destination. A major advantage is the time saved by not having to apply for diplomatic clearances because routes are preapproved through each country of transit. Over time, the frequency of intratheater, *Unified Protector*–related movements declined, resulting in more capacity than requirements, and USEUCOM swiftly reverted to requirement-based missions.

Setting the Theater. Access, basing, and bed down, and reception, staging, onward-movement, and integration (RSO&I) are a few of the many key aspects of “setting the theater.” Our nation’s ability to respond to global crises and sustain operations depends on access agreements, overseas basing, and global en route infrastructure. The United States must work closely with its European Allies to support operations from European facilities. The ports and bases where U.S. forces are assigned in European nations (except Germany) are not sovereign U.S. territory, and thus all U.S. access, basing, and operations are

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shift to a NATO-led operation, added to the complexity and created a number of logistics issues that required close coordination, flexibility, and a pervasive cooperative spirit.

This article is intended to share logistics observations, insights, and lessons learned while supporting these operations. While many of the support concepts and creative “solutions” from *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector* were tailored specifically for those efforts, this is likely how almost all future logistics operations will be conducted. The major observations in this article revolve around three major themes: the no-notice nature of the initial efforts, complexity of the logistics enterprise, and issues associated with USEUCOM-USAFRICOM-NATO coordination. Many of the logistics techniques and procedures developed and used by USEUCOM, USAFRICOM, and NATO can offer insights for future logistics planning, doctrine, and execution.

Background

As events unfolded across Northern Africa in 2010 and early 2011, USEUCOM

Mediterranean Sea. The U.S. Navy immediately held an advantage over the Air Force for initial strike options during the planning phase. While in international waters, the Navy was not encumbered by restrictions on flying U.S. combat operations. U.S. Air Forces Europe, through 3rd Air Force (Air Forces Europe), supported 17th Air Force (Air Forces Africa) by flying missions with forward positioned aircraft. Within short order, additional nations joined the operation and forward basing was required. Libya’s distance from Central Europe dictated moving strike aircraft operations to locations further south and in the Mediterranean littorals.

Setting the Theater and Transfer to NATO

Initial Phase. During the initial startup of the operations, USEUCOM and USAFRICOM were able to employ existing logistics management capabilities at their command headquarters. The close coordination between the commands and the well-integrated staff processes enabled leaders to monitor operations and assess logistics requirements and

subject to host nation approval. There are generally bilateral agreements that stipulate limitations on operations and other restrictions to how host nation territory may be used.

As preparation to enforce the no-fly zone gathered momentum, USEUCOM became a lead for bed down and base support. This was no small task as there were 18 bases in eight European countries involved in *Unified Protector*. The simultaneous enhancement of 11 air bases for the large and quick influx of units and materiel required tremendous coordination across U.S. and allied forces throughout Europe. Of note was the extraordinary work done at Moron, Aviano, Souda Bay, and Sigonella to prepare for the arrival of forces to include increasing billeting, aircraft parking, and ammunition storage space. One primary example for the United States was Naval Air Station Sigonella, on the Italian island of Sicily. With its ample runway, parking space, and logistics support, Sigonella became prime real estate supporting *Unified Protector*. With seven nations operating from Sigonella, it truly became a multinational base.

Logistics and operational planners often fail to fully assess the impact of military operations on the environment around them. For example, one significant hurdle that surfaced in Sicily was the summer tourist season. The Sicilian economy relies

heavily on tourism, but all the hotels were filled with *Unified Protector* personnel. The hotel owners saw the operation as a one-time event, and tour operators represent repeat business. With hoteliers hesitant about evicting the military but concerned about their economy, joint logistics planners made a move to find additional billeting—and fast. Navy Seabees and Air Force civil engineers built a 500-person tent city literally from the ground up. The availability of prepositioned tents and the construction support (manpower and equipment) to build a tent city ended up being a critical factor in sustaining the campaign.

Transfer to NATO. NATO operations are normally supported by a multinational logistics organization known as a Joint Logistics Support Group (JLSG). These are generally tailored to support specific operations from a pool of voluntary on-call units from NATO member nations. In the case of *Unified Protector*, a JLSG was not deployed primarily due to the expected short duration of the mission. In the absence of the JLSG, the United States stood up a coalition support cell (CSC) in Naples, Italy; however, it was clear to most senior leaders that more representation was required from coalition partners. The cell had members from three combatant commands, the Joint Staff, Department of State,

and other nations on periodic conference calls, but it lacked staff officers with specific functional expertise, such as fuel coordination specialists, to properly forecast, compile, coordinate, and up-channel requirements to a central fuels coordinator. Most of the support coordination efforts simply consisted of the development of logistics agreements and arrangements, with the United States routinely serving as the lead agent for most commodities and capabilities. Establishment of routine logistics status reports required a significant amount of staff coordination.

Beans, Bullets, Oil—Keep It Coming

Food. The rapid buildup of naval units in the Mediterranean was unprecedented in recent history. Due to the Sixth Fleet being primarily a transient theater for the past 10 years with only a minimal afloat presence, the deployment of several ships to this theater created an immediate need to build up subsistence inventories to a level that could support the resulting increase of up to 700 percent of their normal demand. DLA Troop Support coordinated the procurement and receipt of an additional 80,000 food shipments to keep ship provisions on hand, including 13 emergency airlifts from the United States to Italy to supplement the extraordinary spike in demands. The



NATO E3A AWACS at
Trapani-Birgi, Italy

NATO



Airmen load C-5M Super Galaxy at Dover Air Force Base bound for Italy in support of Operation *Odyssey Dawn*

response by DLA Troop Support demonstrated its ability to assist quickly and effectively in challenging operations.

Ammunition. USEUCOM headquarters directed the staff to support USAFRI-COM in *Odyssey Dawn* “to the maximum amount possible,” and the Joint Munitions Office (JMO) began by providing theater asset postures for combat air and naval forces, advice on munitions infrastructure to support the many basing decisions needed, and additional staff assistance to USAFRI-COM and NATO nations.

Early in *Unified Protector*, it was apparent that precision-guided missile (PGM) expenditure rates would exceed the capacity of several participating nations. As support requirements were identified for our allied partners, the USEUCOM J4 JMO built the necessary coordinating mechanisms with USEUCOM J5, the Joint Staff, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and U.S. Service Headquarters to facilitate expedited Foreign Military Sales (FMS) deliveries. As it became evident that *Unified Protector* would be a longer operation than anticipated, it was clear that a more robust ammunition management and forecasting capability would be needed. USEUCOM was directed to manage PGM forecasting and resupply operations for all operation partners, with commitments from individual participating nations to provide forecasts of their requirements.

To manage the liaison and expediting work, USEUCOM J4 established a Munitions Coordination Cell to ensure all nations had the weapons required to fulfill their NATO taskings. Such close oversight helped ensure that no missions were cancelled due to lack of on-hand munitions. During the course of the operation, PGMs valued at over \$100 million were sold in over 50 FMS transactions to seven participating nations. Expediting the FMS purchases, the sourcing of specific variants from stocks in USEUCOM when possible and expediting their transportation to the applicable bases was essential to warfighters executing the air tasking orders.

USEUCOM’s experience with *Unified Protector* made it clear that future European air-to-ground combat operations would be heavily reliant on PGMs. In almost any combat support scenario, it is apparent that on-hand stocks for most nations and for forward deployed U.S. units will quickly become depleted. USEUCOM immediately issued command guidance to establish minimum stockage levels of PGMs to support NATO operations, engaged with the Joint Staff on various means by which to preposition PGMs in-theater in anticipation of possible contingency FMS requirements similar to the expedited sales needed, and requested that DSCA include PGMs in its newly restarted Special Defense Acquisition Fund to reduce the lead time for normal FMS deliveries needed for NATO nation resupply.

Fuel. From the onset of *Unified Protector*, it became immediately clear that sustaining the coalition with fuel would be one of the top logistics priorities and challenges. To accomplish this, the USEUCOM/USAFRICOM combined Joint Petroleum Office synchronized all fuel requirements throughout the Combined Joint Operating Area. A number of issues and challenges emerged during the course of operations including limited visibility of coalition requirements and resources, equipment maintenance problems, and specialized fuel requirements. For example, the fuel required by the MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicles was not readily available. USEUCOM had to arrange spot purchases of the fuel through DLA-Energy and reposition fuel handling equipment packages from other locations at a significant cost to cover this shortfall.

The bottom line to the above discussion is that all of the support required by the U.S. military and its NATO partners was provided on time and as needed to accomplish the mission. Many of the most challenging issues resulted from the unusual structure of the combined force that executed the operations and the short planning and coordination timeframes that will likely be the hallmark of future operations. Hard work, close coordination, and robust lines of communication will enable logisticians to support future operations effectively and efficiently despite

challenging environments and rapidly changing requirements.

Future Implications for Cross Logistics Operations

Communication. One of our biggest seams was communication between USEUCOM, USAFRICOM, and our coalition partners. Despite NATO being our longest-lived alliance, U.S. capabilities to share information are often limited, many times in ways that directly affect operations. The U.S. SIPRNET (Secret Internet Protocol Router Network) system worked well with USEUCOM and the Joint Staff, but it was challenging for our NATO partners to work with. During *Unified Protector*, the combined headquarters set up a classified email system using laptop computers in the USEUCOM and USAFRICOM Joint Operations Centers to communicate with NATO counterparts. Unfortunately, obtaining approval for transferring classified/sensitive information to our allies kept our Foreign Disclosure Officer extremely busy. This is an area where the logistics community in particular must develop information-sharing protocols and practice them both in exercises and in day-to-day operations to ensure that required information sharing is second nature to all concerned.

Coordination and Synchronization of Logistics. One of the most consistent lessons to emerge from every recent multinational military operation is the crucial role of a capability to synchronize and harmonize logistics efforts among all the participants. This includes other nations, coalitions, inter-agency partners, nongovernmental organizations, and in essence almost anyone involved in support operations. In *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector*, coordinating support across geographic combatant commands certainly posed challenges but also offered opportunities to think about how we will undertake such efforts in the future. Operations of this nature are much more likely in the years ahead. Coordination with NATO for integrated and synchronized support across national lines is another area where we must increase our collective proficiency. In terms of a NATO support organization, whether it is called a CSC or a JLSG, a “scalable” overarching logistics organization is critical at the outset of any NATO operation to help plan, coordinate, and synchronize coalition logistics efforts. Member nations are always going to provide a significant proportion of their

own logistical support, but such an organization will clearly facilitate improved ability to support the combined joint task force commander’s priorities—and offer better visibility of logistics challenges.

Planning. Short notice, “come as you are” events, and the increasing number of simultaneous small to medium actions, have dramatic logistics planning implications. Typically, under normal operating conditions, military logisticians receive well-defined materiel requirements and are often given adequate lead time to fill those requirements. The United States and NATO did not know how long *Unified Protector* would last, and due to this uncertainty the longer range logistics planning required to sustain the operation was challenging. In building sustainment plans, especially for PGM munitions, U.S. logistics planners attempt to work with expenditure projections for up to 90 days out. It greatly assisted the logistics planners when NATO authorized operations for up to 90 days and approved extensions in 90-day increments. This took the logistics planning requirement from a risky 4 to 5 days out to 3 months.

agreements to facilitate the rapid exchange of goods and services among coalition partners. One of our major efforts in future years should be to ensure that we do as much coordination and planning in advance as possible for operations involving multiple combatant commands, nations, coalitions, alliances, and non-Department of Defense entities—which is to say almost all future operations.

Conclusion

From a logistics perspective, Operations *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector* were remarkably successful, and at no time were the operations constrained by logistics shortfalls. At its conclusion, *Unified Protector* had 15 nations contributing air and naval forces operating from 18 locations throughout Europe. At the same time, the complexity of the operations and required coordination for sustainment presented significant challenges. Given the certainty that we will operate in organizations that will form in response to requirements, it is essential that we plan for and practice so that organizing and working as a cohesive team on short notice becomes

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Prepositioning and Access Agreements.

In the case of *Unified Protector*, the use of preexisting bases provided fast ramp-up of facilities and personnel during RSO&I. Robust airports and seaports with sufficient operational capacity, adequate fuel storage and distribution systems, and maintenance capability will always be critical enablers for military operations. During the operation, a number of European facilities were revalidated as having enduring strategic importance, including Sigonella, Souda Bay, and Moron. These installations and others will likely be needed again, yet there will be continued pressure in a reduced funding environment to not maintain them. Operations in support of Libya also made use of prepositioned assets in Europe, and the U.S. Government should carefully consider anticipated requirements across a variety of scenarios before reducing stocks based on resourcing constraints. Just as important as preexisting facilities and real estate are prearranged access agreements, fuel exchange agreements, expedited FMS procedures, diplomatic clearances, and acquisition cross-service

second nature for all participants. The professionalism and can-do attitude of all the players produced the highly successful outcomes we experienced, but we must do better. The ability to sustain “come as you are” military operations with nontraditional command relationships and continuously shifting members of the coalition is critical. While the team of USEUCOM, USAFRICOM, and NATO was collectively able to plan, source, and deliver, we must continue to reinforce the fact that “synchronization of logistics” is not just a catch phrase but an operational imperative. **JFQ**