Army Stryker infantry carrier vehicle rolls off C-17 cargo plane in India, February 1, 2021, in preparation for Yudh Abhyas, bilateral military exercise involving approximately 500 soldiers from Indian and U.S. armies (U.S. Army/Joseph Tolliver)

Army Sustainment Capabilities Instrumental to the Joint Force in the Indo-Pacific Region

By David Wilson

n an era of Great Power competition, it is critical that we be prepared for large-scale combat operations

Major General David Wilson, USA, is the Commanding General of 8th Theater Sustainment Command. (LSCO) and joint all-domain operations (JADO), where a joint integrated force is necessary to achieve assured victory against a peer or near-peer adversary. The U.S. Army's mission and role in the Pacific are commonly misunderstood by those outside the area of responsibility (AOR); however, the Theater Army provides a full range of unique capabilities that enables joint force operations throughout the Indo-Pacific region during LSCO and JADO.

The Department of Defense (DOD) continues to reinforce global posture through joint and combined training exercises, security cooperation activities,



Army paratroopers with 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, jump onto Kangaroo Drop Zone as part of simulated Joint Forcible Entry Operation during exercise Talisman Sabre 21, in Charters Towers, Queensland, Australia, July 28, 2021 (U.S. Marine Corps/Alyssa Chuluda)

and collaboration on transnational threats. Interstate strategic competition is the greatest risk to U.S. national security. While focusing on the Middle East for over 20 years, the U.S. military has lost its competitive edge over near-peer threats such as China and Russia due to their rapid military modernization across all domains. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III recently called for "integrated deterrence; coordinated operations on land, in air, on sea, in space and in cyberspace to regain our competitive advantage."1 World War II taught us that no one Service can win a war by itself. In fact, the last war fought in the Pacific required not only maritime capability but also air and land power. As

DOD looks at foreseeable conflict in the Pacific, the United States will require a joint and combined force to win a joint multi-domain battle. When thinking of the Pacific, the image of water implies movement and sustainment operations conducted in that domain. However, the capabilities required to open, set, and sustain the theater occur on land and are key to enabling the joint force to compete and win in the Indo-Pacific region. These required capabilities reside in the Theater Army, and this mission set is executed by the Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) along with joint logistics enterprise partners. Warfighters and enablers alike might be transported by air and maritime means, but even vessels and aircraft must

stop on land to be fueled, armed, and supported. Maintenance and personnel support occur on the land; it is from the land domain that we will sustain and directly enable the joint force.

Indo-Pacific Region

It is evident that competition activities are persistent across all domains in the Indo-Pacific, and the efforts of China and Russia have had a disruptive effect on the region. Despite these efforts, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USIN-DOPACOM) remains engaged with U.S. allies and partners in the region to set conditions for joint and diplomatic efforts. During his change of command in April 2021, the USINDOPACOM commander, Admiral John Aquilino, stated, "The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region for America's future and the priority theater for the Department of Defense." USINDOPA-COM is a highly complex AOR and presents a multilayered problem set when it comes to national security, with four of five national security threatsincluding China, Russia, North Korea, and violent extremist organizations-in the region. The USINDOPACOM AOR encompasses 36 nations, 5 of which are U.S. allied nations. USIN-DOPACOM, one of six geographical combatant commands, integrates five subordinate component commands-U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC); U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific; U.S. Pacific Fleet; Pacific Air Forces; and Special Operations Command Pacificas well as subunified commands in Korea and Japan into a joint integrated force to achieve national security objectives and protect national interests in the Indo-Pacific region. In an area that comprises approximately 90 percent sea and ocean, the Navy and Air Force stand out as obvious forces required for strategic success in the Pacific. However, the capabilities the Army provides to the joint force should never be underestimated, especially with the persistent potential for ground combat operations on the Korean Peninsula.²

U.S. Army Pacific

The Army is no stranger to the Pacific region; it has fought more campaigns in the Pacific than in any other theater of operations. Over 70 percent of personnel who served during World War II in the Pacific belonged to the Army.³ A centerpiece of the joint force in the Pacific is the Theater Army, whose role is to serve as the Army Service Component Command to the geographic combatant commander (GCC). As the USINDOPACOM's Theater Army, USARPAC executes four functions: execute the combatant commander's daily operational requirements, set the theater, set the joint operations area (JOA), and execute mission command of Army forces. In 2019, USARPAC

was certified by USINDOPACOM as a "4-Star Capable Joint Task Force Headquarters" for immediate response and small-scale operations.⁴ Approximately 80,000 Soldiers currently support the Theater Army in the Indo-Pacific region in multiple locations including Washington state, Alaska, Japan, Korea, and Hawaii. The Army provides over 50 percent of foundational capabilities to the GCC. The capabilities delivered through Army support to other Services under the command of the Theater Sustainment Command include:

- land-based air missile defense
- fire support
- base defense
- transportation
- fuel distribution
- general engineering
- intra-theater medical evacuation
- logistics management
- communications
- chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense
- explosive ordnance disposal.⁵

The integrated and coordinated capabilities the Army provides across commands and Services enable a joint integrated force ready to respond to crisis, compete, and win in conflict within the USINDOPACOM AOR. The TSC directly supports one of the four functions executed by the Army Service Component Command in the Indo-Pacific; the command's ability to set the theater is critical due to its mission to provide mission command for Army and joint operational sustainment organizations and integration and synchronization of strategic sustainment capabilities during joint all-domain operations. Doctrinally, the TSC is responsible for theater opening, distribution, and sustainment, which enable the operational reach, endurance, and freedom of action of the joint force.

Set the Theater

The Theater Army will play a pivotal role if the United States finds itself in conflict in the Pacific. Central to this effort will be 8th Theater Sustainment Command's (8TSC's) ability to assist USINDOPACOM in setting the theater. In doing so, the establishment of bilateral and multilateral agreements will be an essential task.⁶ Given the tyranny of distance, this will be an absolute must if the joint force is required to extend its operational reach, prolong endurance, and ensure freedom of action. Distance posed a challenge for both U.S. and Japanese forces during World War II and remains a challenge for forces and operations throughout the Indo-Pacific. Distances between islands throughout the Indo-Pacific create a problem set for the flow of logistics, the rapid projection of forces, and the sustainment of operations. The Theater Army's activities across the competition continuum and all phases of operations highlight the TSC as a critical player in the joint force. The Theater Army's execution of theater security cooperation activities and integration of operational contract support address and minimize some challenges associated with the tyranny of distance.

The Army is unique in that it is the Service with the capability and capacity to provide the combatant commander with the most support capability, including expeditionary contract support, for setting the theater.⁷ Shaping and setting the theater are continuous processes that begin at the national level and require activity by the whole of government and beyond the Army and the joint force. The Army and joint logistics enterprise (JLENT) partners play a major role in the mobilization and movement of forces, the posture of Army prepositioned stocks, and the enabling of rapid force projection in time of crisis, competition, or conflict. The Theater Sustainment Command is the principal agent for sustainment in the Theater Army and the only standing twostar logistics headquarters, responsible for theater opening, theater sustainment, and theater distribution in support of the Army and the joint force.

The JADO in the Pacific will require sustained operational momentum, a resilient and flexible distribution network, and forward-postured and forward-distributed sustainment forces and materiel. These requirements are all enabled through an integrated and synchronized joint sustainment network provided by the Army in support of the combatant commander. The TSC executes theater security cooperation activities throughout the Indo-Pacific region in support of their mission to set the theater. This mission is to promote U.S. interests and enable partner-nation capacity to provide U.S. access to infrastructure and information. Theater security activities are executed through senior leader engagements and the deployment of Soldiers in support of multinational and bilateral operations across the region. The execution of each activity establishes trust, fosters mutual understanding, and helps build partner capacity, all while shaping the theater for future operations.

Additionally, each activity assists in the development of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic agreements, which enable the access the joint force requires to set the theater. In 2014, General Vincent Brooks developed the Pacific Pathways program, which combines a series of partner-nation exercises into an integrated operation to build partnership capacity and readiness throughout the Pacific.⁸ Pacific Pathways is composed of annual Army partner exercises within the Pacific to include Khaan Quest, Cobra Gold, Keris Strike, Talisman Saber, Orient Shield, Hanuman Guardian, Salaknib, Yudh Abhyas, and the U.S.-China Disaster Management Exchange. These exercises increase multinational interoperability, assist in the development of a regional sustainment network, enable experimentation with new Army capabilities, and support the rebalance of forces forward in the Pacific. As Pacific Pathways evolves, the Army is preparing for persistent forward presence in the Pacific across all domains.9 We continue to leverage these engagements at all levels to build trust, identify common solutions to shared problems, and gain a richer understanding of our allies' and partners' initiatives as well as concerns.

In support of setting the Pacific theater, the 8TSC provides operational contract support (OCS) throughout the Indo-Pacific region, providing solutions to critical logistic requirements. OCS is an Army capability that delivers services and logistics when and where they are needed to support missions across the theater when requirements either exceed the sustainment capability on ground or when sustainment support has not been established. OCS provides supplies, services, and construction from commercial sources in support of joint operations. OCS supplies and services include:

- all classes of supply
- labor
- mortuary services
- laundry/showers/sanitation
- dining facility services
- transportation
- port operations
- billeting
- maintenance and repair.¹⁰

The 8TSC provides expeditionary and operational contract support as well. This capability is a combat multiplier for humanitarian relief operations, natural disaster response missions, combat operations, and other contingency operations. The use of expeditionary contract support expedites the delivery of services and supplies to the forces within the AOR yet also enables the joint force to use local facilities, resources, equipment, and labor; increases intra-theater responsiveness; and reduces strategic lift requirements.11 This unique capability is enabled by contracting support brigades that deploy contracting teams across the theater that are under the operational control of the TSC.

Army Watercraft Systems

The 8TSC maintains organic logistics supply vessels as part of the overall capability. This unique, often overlooked capability expands movement and maneuver within the littorals and enables the joint force to operate through fixed, degraded, and austere ports. Landing craft provide inter- and intra-theater transportation of personnel and materiel, delivering cargo from advanced bases and deep-draft ships to harbors, inland waterways, remote beaches, and unimproved coastlines. Joint logistics over-the-shore enablers discharge strategic sealift shifts when suitable ports are unavailable, while tugs aid in the safe maneuvering of vessels at ports, ocean and port/harbor towing, and salvage operations.

Set the Joint Operations Areas

As forces are projected and equipment is moved forward, the Army provides the GCC with a range of capabilities to set and support the JOA. In collaboration with joint partners, allies, and partner nations, the Army executes theater/ port opening, terminal operations, and joint reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (JRSOI) through the TSC. Setting the theater requires establishment and operation of ports of debarkation (PODs), aerial ports of debarkation, intermediate staging bases, and the theater distribution network, all of which enable the strategic flow of forces and sustainment into the combatant command AOR. The 8TSC works with units such as the 311th Signal Command to enable DOD network operations as well as network extension and reach-back for the entire joint force.

In the early days of World War II, supplies and commodities were moved across underdeveloped ports and shores, infrastructure was poor, equipment was aged, roads were unpaved, and there was no means to offload commodities on arrival at ports.¹² In 1943, the Basic Logistical Plan for Command Areas was developed by the Army and Navy and served as the plan for how to support joint forces in the Pacific, including the establishment of bases, seaports, and airfields.13 Additionally, in 1943, General Douglas MacArthur received engineer amphibian brigades and used them to move personnel, equipment, and supplies within Australia and to build ports throughout the Pacific.14 Because of their efficiency, the engineer amphibian brigades also assisted with port operations in the Southwest Pacific, executing 380 shore-to-shore and ship-to-shore operations and 148 joint and multinational combat landings.15

The numerous amphibious operations conducted during World War II by the Army highlight the capability that today's Army watercraft system provides the joint force in setting the JOA through the projection of forces and equipment. In World War II, Army amphibious operations were responsible for the transport of 4.5 million personnel and 3 million tons of commodities across the Pacific.¹⁶ Lessons from World War II have resulted in the Army's rapid port opening element capability, which can serve as the initial theater opening capability for the joint force for up to 60 days until relieved by follow-on forces. This capability is part of the Joint Task Force Port Opening described in Army Techniques Publication 3-93, *Theater Army*.¹⁷

The TSC plays a critical role in port opening, an essential task to set and open the theater. The TSC continuously synchronizes and integrates with strategic partners and host nations to identify existing infrastructure that can be used to facilitate theater opening in the event of crisis or conflict. Dive detachments organic to the TSC are used to conduct port surveys to determine the suitability of ports in preparation for port opening. Once a port is deemed suitable, the TSC employs its operational contract and engineer capabilities to procure, construct,



Army Soldiers, assigned to 1-21st Infantry Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, conduct battalion air assault exercise for platoon situational training exercise, on Oahu, Hawaii, May 24, 2022 (U.S. Army/Gary Singleton)



Marine Corps Corporal Cole Strain, High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems launcher chief with HIMARS platoon, Marine Rotational Force–Darwin, loads Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System into launcher before emergency fire mission during Exercise Koolendong, at Bradshaw Field Training Area, Northern Territory, Australia, August 29, 2021 (U.S. Marine Corps/Colton K. Garrett)

and repair required infrastructure when a host nation lacks appropriate resources to facilitate theater opening.

The 8TSC recently demonstrated this unique capability with the successful execution of the Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS) 3 Fix Forward operation at Subic Bay. APS gives the Army the capability to rapidly deploy and respond to any worldwide contingency by maintaining combat and combat support equipment and essential supply commodities aboard ship for rapid download and handoff to a unit on order of the Secretary of Defense. It allows the 8TSC to plan, integrate, and synchronize the storing of equipment around the globe to enable interoperability and strategic operations. By storing equipment to enable joint interoperability, APS reduces deployment timelines and improves sustainment capacity and capabilities while also increasing combat power to support contingency operations worldwide.

APS further enables the Theater Army's ability to rapidly deliver combat power over the shore, ensuring readiness and relevance in competition throughout the theater. The Theater Army and joint force use unique intra-theater sealift capabilities to move personnel, equipment, and supplies to the desired location via the littorals, inland waterways, and rivers. This capability extends operational reach and supports freedom of action to decisive action during unified land operations in the USINDOPACOM AOR.

The logistics civil augmentation program is the primary means to resource contracted sustainment support for joint operations.¹⁸ The TSC works in concert with U.S. Transportation Command to manage and operate all PODs.¹⁹ Military police and explosive ordnance detachments assigned to the TSC provide protection following the establishment of ports to ensure all PODs and lines of communication remain functional to support the setting of the JOA. Since Pacific theater sustainment is a joint effort, agencies such as the Defense Logistics Agency, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, the 402nd Army Field Support Brigade, and the U.S. Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force provide joint sustainment assets to support operations that enable land forces, as well as our allies and partners. One agency cannot solve the joint logistics competitive space in the Indo-Pacific AOR; it takes a joint logistics enterprise to build and stabilize the theater sustainment posture globally, as the Army is postured to support its allies and is ready to defend the freedom of the people with combat platforms postured in strategic areas.

Once ports are established and secured, the TSC facilitates JRSOI through the establishment of the theater gateway, which is established by human resource professionals known as the Theater Gateway Personnel Accountability Team. This team leverages several systems to manage accountability of personnel to ensure commanders maintain an accurate picture of force flow and combat power. The Deployed Theater Accountability System tracks the movement of military personnel throughout the theater to include entry, transit, and departure.²⁰ The Synchronized Predeployment and Operational Tracker maintains personnel accountability and visibility of all forward-deployed contractors authorized to accompany the force in real time. The TSC's role in port opening and theater gateway operations facilitates JRSOI and enables the rapid projection of the joint force into theater to respond to crisis or conflict. All of this happens through landbased operations executed by the TSC.

While JRSOI may seem like a minuscule task, the arrival, protection, accountability, flow, and support of personnel, equipment, and materiel throughout the Pacific are critical tasks executed by the TSC to ensure the GCC's operational requirements are met on time. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States developed a strategy to set the theater for future operations; however, transportation distribution resources were limited, there was a lack of appropriate facilities, and mountains of supplies were received and not prioritized or organized for distribution.²¹ These lessons from World War

II continue to illustrate the importance of a unity of effort during JRSOI in the region, which ensures the central coordination of the entire process.

Although JRSOI begins when personnel and equipment arrive at the POD, the theater must be set prior to JRSOI to ensure the distribution network, facilities, and support are in place to support the arrival of forces, equipment, and materiel. The TSC executes the following during JRSOI:

- establishes theater lines of communication and nodes
- identifies, assesses, and provides transportation
- controls facilities and infrastructure
- coordinates use of land transportation and DOD-controlled facilities
- synchronizes transportation reception activities
- executes common user land transportation responsibilities for peacetime land transportation
- executes movement control as designated by the GCC.²²

Through the execution of JRSOI, the TSC ensures the joint force has the required forces, equipment, and materiel at the right time and the right place in alignment with the GCC's operational requirements.

Sustainment Preparation

A key aspect of sustainment preparation of the theater is the theater logistics analysis as described by doctrine or the Theater Sustainment Posture Review (TSPR) developed by USARPAC for the Indo-Pacific region. The TSPR is the culmination of 7 months of analysis conducted by the 8TSC that enabled a granular review and analysis of sustainment across the Pacific to identify threats, capabilities, agreements, and gaps that would impact sustainment of the joint force, including alternatives and mitigating measures to counter potential risks to sustainment. The TSPR revealed several sustainment gaps that could potentially prevent the joint force from extending operational reach, endurance, and freedom of action during conflict. Subsequently, the information provided by the TSPR has led to an integrated effort by the JLENT to develop a focused plan to ensure sustainment of joint force operations as a part of the joint concept for contested logistics throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Sustainment Support Within the Theater

Sustainment support across the theater requires the integration and synchronization of all Services, multinational partners, host nations, and governmental and nongovernmental agencies. The partnerships strengthened through bilateral and multilateral exercises become imperative to the successful execution of support. We work together to execute sustainment and distribution within the theater alongside the expeditionary sustainment commands, sustainment brigades, combat sustainment support battalions, and JLENT partners.

The Theater Army is frequently tasked by the GCC to provide commonuser logistics (CUL) and support to other Services. CUL are materials or service support shared with or provided by two or more Services, DOD agencies, or multinational partners to another Service, DOD agency, non-DOD agency, and/or multinational partner in an operation.23 CUL generates significant sustainment support and eliminates redundant sustainment capability among multiple agencies through the assignment of CUL responsibility to the TSC. The TSC is often tasked with providing the following CUL:

- wartime classes I, II, III (B), IV, and IX in-theater receipt, storage, and issue
- medical evacuation
- transportation engineering
- financial management
- chemical ammunition support
- airdrop equipment/systems
- billeting, medical, and food service support.²⁴

The TSC is responsible for the theater distribution network that enables joint force operations. The distribution network is composed of four separate networks including physical, informational, financial, and communications. The theater distribution network is the center of gravity for joint force operations and is managed by the distribution management center within the TSC. The TSC serves as the distribution manager for the intra-theater segment of the distribution network and is typically assigned executive agency for surface distribution in the theater segment. The establishment of the distribution network is accomplished through parallel and collaborative planning and decentralized execution at echelon. During competition, the distribution network enables operational reach, endurance, and freedom of action and builds combat power. It is how sustainment is moved throughout the theater to meet the combatant commander's priorities and requirements. The management and operation of the distribution network require joint integration to ensure maximized throughput, optimized infrastructure, and centralized management.25 It is critical that the TSC works closely with strategic enablers to ensure the synchronization and seamless flow of sustainment from the strategic support area into theater. The establishment and operation of the intra-theater distribution network may be one of the TSC's most critical roles during competition due to the requirement to sustain the joint force during joint all-domain operations.

Conclusion

As we assess the state of the world and consider the uniqueness of the mission in the Indo-Pacific theater, and the Army continues to modernize in preparation for the next global war, the Theater Army continues to set the groundwork for future conflict in the Indo-Pacific through continuous operations, activities, and investments. It is crucial to remember and understand that the Theater Army provides a full range of unique capabilities that enables joint force operations throughout the Indo-Pacific during LSCO and JADO.

The Army's greatest strength in the AOR is its long history in the Pacific. In a 1948 speech to the House of Commons, Winston Churchill paraphrased Santayana when he said, "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." Throughout World War II, the Army learned several hard lessons, including the power of integration, access, posture, and presence in the Pacific. The U.S. military must continue to execute joint operations in the Pacific to understand how the capabilities of each Service can be integrated to achieve strategic advantages against near-peer competitors.

The TSC will remain critical to the support of the Theater Army and the joint force throughout the Pacific as it leverages theater security cooperation activities to gain access throughout the AOR to project and posture combat power forward to deter aggression and respond to conflict or crisis when the time arises. Although the next Indo-Pacific conflict may begin in the air or at sea, the importance of land power can never be minimized. To win the war, eventually we will have to own the land and put boots on the ground. The Theater Joint Force Land Component Command will be ready and postured for this mission, and the TSC will provide the unique foundational capabilities that the joint force will need to win in future LSCO and joint all-domain operations. JFQ

Notes

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