

22^d Marine Expeditionary Unit is resupplied on the march in Afghanistan, Operation *Rio Bravo*



Logistics and Support

It is no secret among professional military officers and senior leaders across the spectrum of America's Federal agencies that deploying and supporting operations are among the most challenging of all the tasks required to employ any instrument of national power—particularly the military instrument. Challenges are environmental and manmade, from

nontechnological to high-tech—from weather and solar activity disrupting transportation, navigation, and communications to suicide bombers, snipers, and bandits targeting convoys and distribution points.

Logistics is certainly not a modern invention, and supply lines are not modern contrivances. Hannibal marched elephants from Africa over



22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Keith A. Milles)

the Alps and fought a war of attrition for years, living off the Roman countryside. Conquistador supply lines stretched from South America to Spain, across rain forests and oceans. And Britain's sea lines extended to far-flung but powerful colonial garrisons in Hong Kong, India, and North America.

President George Washington recognized the need for (and difficulty

of achieving) reliable supply lines through hard experience in the French and Indian War and the Revolution. In 1776–1777, the Continental Army was well stocked with some supplies, such as gunpowder, but had tremendous shortages in uniforms, blankets, and footwear. Supplies for both the American militia and the British troops were imported from Europe, but the Americans were forced to run a blockade by the most powerful naval force of the era. One observer noted in late 1776, as the Army was driven back by advancing British redcoats, “If the War is continued thro the Winter, the British troops will be scared at the sight of our Men, for as they had never fought with Naked Men.”¹

After winning the battle for independence, President Washington made his famous first annual address on January 8, 1790, calling upon Congress early in his administration to adequately fund and supply a military for the fledgling United States of America in order to maintain its hard-won liberty:

To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.

A free people ought not only to be armed, but disciplined; to which end a uniform and well digested plan is requisite: And their safety and interest require that they should promote such manufactories, as tend to render them independent of others, for essential, particularly for military supplies.

*The proper establishment of the Troops which may be deemed indispensable, will be entitled to mature consideration. In the arrangements which may be made respecting it, it will be of importance to conciliate the comfortable support of the Officers and Soldiers with a due regard to economy.*²

Today, America's military supports humanitarian operations in Africa and, recently, international tsunami relief in the Pacific while deterring an invasion by North Korea and conducting simultaneous combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, among other interagency and international efforts in the war

on terror. These rapid but distant extended actions occur during a period of revolutionary military transformation, continual acquisition of new systems, and unprecedented threats posed by Islamic extremists armed with readily available weapons capable of creating global economic chaos and huge loss of innocent life. The necessity of and problems associated with logistics and support of troops have always been—and always will be—factors for commanders and statesmen. And today, logistic and interoperability issues complicate operations for first responders, allies, and the U.S. military alike. Thus, the *Joint Force Quarterly* staff designed this premiere “Logistics and Support” Forum to introduce a broad spectrum of strategic issues relating to a Department of Defense, interagency, and international audience that relies on but does not always consciously consider the necessity of support—the shaft that supports the tip of the spear. Although less experienced professionals might take the shaft for granted, all understand that without it, the spear is much less effective as a weapon or tool.

M.E. Krause

NOTES

¹ David Hackett Fisher, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 154–157; *Margaret Morris: Her Journal with Biographical Sketch and Notes*, ed., John W. Jackson, (Philadelphia, 1949), 55; Thomas Anburey, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1923), 1:102.

² George Washington, First Annual Message to Congress, New York City, January 8, 1790; available at <<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/union/state1.html>>. Transcriptions of Washington's message are adapted by the George Washington Papers Web site from *The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series*, ed., Dorothy Twohig, vol. 4 (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 543–549.