



Renovating Sustainment in LSCO

Logistics Clusters and Battlefield Geometry

■ *By CPT Erica Thompson*

The trains concept below is a depiction of currently used doctrine from Field Manual 4-0, Sustainment Operations, and the prototype concept for a light brigade combat team (LBCT) to illustrate the flow of commodities from the division support area down to the forward line of own troops (FLOT). The implementation of LBCT formations forces the flow of commodities from echelons above brigade to adapt to the new fight to provide efficient and mobile sustainment to infantry units, specifically in the jungle fight.

Despite the change in appearance and function, the new trains concept still follows the principles of echeloned sustainment from theater down to the FLOT. Where the brigade support area (BSA) used to hold the place of field trains, we now have the light logistics cluster (LLC) Blue, which serves as a rear cluster for the entirety of the light support area (LSA). Its capabilities include 72-hour field maintenance, the supply support activity, the food ration break point, and bulk water and fuel. The resupplies from the division sustainment support battalion (DSSB) to LLC Blue were then redistributed to LLC Red and LLC White for distribution forward to the combat logistics platoons, which now serve the function of the combat trains command post.

LLC Red and LLC White serve as our multi-class distribution clusters, which is comparable to sending a forward logistics element, or a mini BSA package, from the BSA to support the task forces (TFs) that have increased their distance from the sustainment assets. Their capabilities include bulk water, fuel, ammo distribution, and a split Role 2 to provide medical capabilities at both. By design, TFs conduct logistics packages (LOGPACs) with LLC Red/White based on commodities needed, and the LLCs pull their resupplies from LLC Blue, while the DSSB resupplies LLC Blue back to 100%.



The Economy of LLCs

The 225th Light Support Battalion (LSB) recently participated in Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC) 25-01 to validate the LBCT concept in a jungle environment. As the brigade conducted their training progression leading up to this rotation, the LSB support operations (SPO) team was able to work with TF S-4s to determine fuel and water estimates, Class IV requirements, and to anticipate Class V resupplies in conjunction with forecasted LOGPACs. These estimates were then communicated to the division sustainment brigade (DSB) to create a concept of support that aligned with the modernized trains concept to ensure seamless resupplies from the DSB to the LSB — not only in the configuration of an LSA that mimicked a BSA, but also as the LSB split into clusters that were displaced throughout the battlefield.

Following the three-cluster concept on the battlefield limits the amount of assets being aggregated in one location that can be targeted by the enemy. In the classic BSA formation, it is common to get enemy attacks frequently that aim to disrupt sustainment and cut off life support to the FLOT. Within these clusters, it becomes easier to (1) be less visible and maintain a smaller footprint that will not attract the enemy, and (2) provide redundancy

both in commodities and command and control (C2). This was tested during JPMRC 25-01 between LLC Red and LLC White multiple times. When one cluster received continuous contact, or displaced, and turned off scheduled LOGPACs, the next cluster picked up the weight of sustaining those TFs, became the C2 node, and continued scheduled missions. The communication process that was built through these iterations validated

the concept that sustainment does not have to stop entirely during the fight due to enemy attacks or displacement of sustainment elements.

Battlefield Geometry

The modifications to the sustainment flow and the requirements of a light brigade element have given LSBs the ability to become lighter and more mobile. Because of this, they can exist in multiple areas simultaneously to increase survivability while sustaining the fight in a wider scope. Using this advantage

makes it critical to maintain communication with the supported TFs while fighting from the synchronization matrix to ensure that the correct cluster provides the right supplies at the right time. Since TF requirements can instantly change, the supporting cluster can change just as quickly, depending on the necessary commodities and distances. As the fight progresses and the TFs close

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the distance to their objectives, the cluster concept provides the mobility for sustainment assets to rapidly maintain their proximity by displacing quickly, while never turning off sustainment capabilities all at once the way a BSA normally would in a displacement. Because of this, LSA displacement timelines can become more fluid and mold to the operating mission in a way that minimizes disruption and increases the lethality of your sustainment assets.

This concept also applies to the role of the DSB in the sustainment flow. At times, the layout of the clusters can ensure that the DSB is only linking with LLC Blue, minimizing time on ground and commodity requirements. It can affect the flexibility of the DSB to exercise multiple convoys to all three clusters in one day, which validates the clusters' ability to function as their own entities at any given time. Throughout the duration of JPMRC 25-01, we only planned for one resupply from the DSSB to go to all three clusters, which was not conducted due to an enemy attack. This had no detriment to the cluster's ability to continue sustainment. LLC Blue successfully resupplied LLC Red/White for the duration of the exercise, executing nine internal LSB resupplies.

To ensure the success of the resupplies coming from these distribution clusters, we conducted a daily logistics synchronization, which consisted of the SPO officer, Brigade S-4, TF S-4s, LSB company commanders, and enabler representatives. We fought from the synchronization matrixes at least 48 hours out and confirmed the commodities needed and locations for resupplies — the common understanding for this was that if nothing changed from that meeting, then nothing had changed. This allowed us to provide predictability to the TFs and for Alpha Company to ensure that we were prepared to sustain externally at any given time. We were also able to communicate any requirement changes to the DSB within 24 hours to maintain open lines of communication throughout the resupply chain.

The challenge that this concept brings is the increased responsibility and overhead of the TF S-4s and the SPO team. Without a forward support company commander

to forecast sustainment for their supported unit, the TF S-4 takes on the role of validating requirements and coordinating with the SPO officer, who has already forecasted the brigade's overall concept of support. By not having a senior sustainer in these line units, the margin for error depends entirely on the SPO officer's understanding of their supported unit's requirements, and on the TF S-4's understanding of the operational picture and how that picture influences the flow of sustainment.

Conclusion

The evolution of the LBCT sustainment model marks a significant shift in how the Army supports operations in complex, dispersed environments, specifically jungle environments. The execution of this model during JPMRC 25-01 highlights the adaptability and resilience of a more mobile and decentralized echeloned sustainment system. By dispersing sustainment assets into multiple, redundant clusters, the Army can significantly increase its ability to maintain operational momentum, even when faced with enemy disruptions and displacement requirements. As the Army adapts to new operational challenges, updating our doctrine and sustainment concepts is essential to maintaining strategic advantage and ensuring the success of our forces on the battlefield.

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Featured Photos

Top: CPL Devin Ramirez, a signal support specialist assigned to the 225th Light Support Battalion, 2nd Light Brigade Combat Team (Provisional), 25th Infantry Division, sets up camouflage coverage during the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center exercise at Dillingham Airfield, Oahu, Hawaii, Oct. 2, 2024. (Photo by SPC Abreanna Goodrich)

Bottom: Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Light Brigade Combat Team (Provisional), 25th Infantry Division, prepare for movement to Dillingham Airfield during the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center exercise at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Oct. 2, 2024. (Photo by SPC Abreanna Goodrich)