



Enabling Rapid Repair Capability at Echelon

■ *By COL Reginald M. (Garrette) Harris,
Hector Rodriguez, and Lara Orechovesky*

As we execute continuous modernization, maintenance complexities should be deliberately elevated over time, allowing Soldiers to execute rapid repair capability. At a basic level, newly fielded equipment must be Soldier-sustainable on the contested battlefield while still being accountable in systems of record from the joint strategic support area (JSSA) to the tactical edge.

As the Army executes one of the most significant reorganizations and technical innovations in its history, we must set the conditions necessary to understand the readiness of our formations in real-time and provide Soldiers with executable repair requirements at echelon. Currently, the maturation of enterprise sustainment is a deliberate, conditions-based process governed by the acquisition framework, making it outpaced by

modernization. This increases the risk of new equipment being absent from today's equipment status report and constrains a commander's ability to elevate maintenance or supply challenges to the Army's understanding. The capacity to rapidly provide overwhelming capability to Soldiers and formations in contact must be inherently balanced with sustainment to benefit Soldiers at the tactical edge. Within the continuous transformation framework, the Army must account for both programs of record (PORs) and non-PORs within existing enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Employing an adaptive sustainment framework, we lay the foundation to enable a simple and adaptive sustainment tail for the warfighter while providing commanders with a means to report total unit readiness.

Recognizing the increased threats our near-peer competitors pose, the Army is responding through significant innovation enhanced by industry.

Although it is imperative that we execute swiftly to retain our combat edge, we must acknowledge and address the challenges that accompany any innovation. In the past, technological change was extremely slow — technology our ancestors gained during their youth remained central even in older age. However, today's generations witness significant change multiple times in their lives. The high speed of innovation is a double-edged sword, providing profound opportunity to rapidly advance Soldier capability yet introducing challenges for the sustainment warfighting function.

Additionally, when capitalizing on the advancements available with increased commercial solutions, we must acknowledge and address the corresponding concepts surrounding obsolescence, velocity of obsolescence, and planned obsolescence. Velocity of obsolescence is the rate of speed at which an innovation and/or the competitive advantage of an innovation loses its value. As technology continues to become faster and cheaper, companies can quickly release products and grow their market. This increases the rate of innovation, which in turn accelerates obsolescence. Planned obsolescence is the strategy of building obsolescence into products by limiting consumer ability to repair a product or replace individual parts, or by

simply making it cheaper to buy new. Some people argue this is not just a corporate business practice but is driven by today's consumers and their desire for ever-evolving technology.

Accepting today's reduced product lifecycles to increase Soldier lethality is not a fundamental negative. However, to believe that sustainment remains unaffected and can continue to operate under existing models only serves to increase risk by reducing the Soldier's ability to sustain modernized capability.

Provisioning and maintenance must evolve in line with modernization. If not, we run the risk that Soldiers will be unable to execute repair capability or receive forward support.

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 4-33, Maintenance Operations, states that the "primary purpose of Army maintenance is to ensure unit readiness by maintaining weapon systems and equipment in a fully mission capable status for immediate and continuous employment in complex and highly lethal environments." The ERP systems, Global Combat Support System-Army (GCSS-Army) and the Logistics Modernization Program (LMP), are the driving factors behind Army equipment sustainment maintenance and logistics. Available at all echelons, GCSS-Army is the system of record for executing field maintenance in the Army. It makes Soldier requirements visible from the tactical edge back to the JSSA.

Without this accountability, Soldiers lack the necessary means to retain combat readiness through supply operations, maintenance management, and organic industrial base support for both hardware and software. Additionally, as authorized data sources for key reporting systems, such as unit status reports and Status of Resources and Training System reports, GCSS-Army and LMP must have accurate and reliable data. This is critical to providing Army senior leaders with the full spectrum of information required to make decisions involving unit readiness.

Although the primary focus appears to be modernization, key leaders recognize the corresponding need for a paradigm shift in sustainment. Assistant



SGT Caelib Gustafson, an M1A2 Abrams tank mechanic assigned to Comanche Company, 4th Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, helps guide the crane operator as they lower an engine into the body of an M1A2 Abrams tank at the Townsville Field Training Area, Townsville, Australia, Aug. 9, 2023. (Photo by SPC Charlie Duke)

Secretary of Defense for Sustainment Christopher J. Lowman unveiled a new Regional Sustainment Framework (RSF) aimed at generating a rapid readiness regeneration capability. Acknowledging the rigidity and vulnerability within the current sustainment strategy, the RSF looks to augment traditional strategies to improve readiness under a contested environment by bringing together existing and potential maintenance, repair, and overhaul capability and capacity closer to the forward point of need.

As new capability is rapidly fielded under modernization for use in large-scale combat operations (LSCO) and highly mobile environments, Soldiers must have the logistical capability to repair and/or replace equipment, regardless of whether it is POR. Current and projected fiscal constraints combined with recognition of overreliance on contractor logistics

support (CLS) are driving senior leader decisions to reduce CLS obligations. These factors make the need to increase Soldier self-sufficiency imperative.

Incorporating a temporary catalog of approved requirements can facilitate the accountability and reportability of a new capability. Additionally, leveraging integrated logistics support managers and rapid parts provisioning teams for urgent capability and mid-tier acquisition pathways provides an opportunity to address the challenges associated with sustainment upfront and early. This combination of resources from both acquisition and sustainment enterprises creates the best opportunity for informed discussions and data-driven decisions pertaining to overall capability sustainment strategy, be it field-level repair actions, provisioning requirements, or maintainer authorizations and skills. Applying this adaptive strategy across all

acquisition pathways mitigates short-term risk and lays the groundwork for an enterprise supply chain targeted at initial, critical requirements that can iterate to an enduring strategy should capabilities transition to POR.

In addition to employing a collective approach for modernization and sustainment, we must also consider implementing a simpler, more basic repair capability with initial fielding, allowing sustainment to keep pace with continuous transformation by reducing provisioning requirements before fielding. While the current process requires all field-level and sustainment-level maintenance actions to be accounted for in support of equipment fielding, the return on investment under modernization is quickly diminishing. Factoring in contested logistics and LSCO, the ability to provide simplified, rapid-repair capability at the tactical edge becomes more valuable than providing the full spectrum of two-level maintenance. As stated in ATP 4-33, “Maintenance conducted as far forward as possible is a combat multiplier central to operational success.” Shifting thought to an initial one-level maintenance concept focused on field-level and Soldier capability allows us to balance provisioning requirements with rapid fielding. As a result, the Soldier is afforded the tools, technical manuals, and key parts required to maintain readiness, even at the tactical edge, as well as the ability to report equipment readiness status, ensuring stakeholder visibility and prioritization of effort.

With primary emphasis in recent years on a rapid and/or adaptive acquisition framework to enhance Army readiness and combat effectiveness, we have inadvertently increased risk within the sustainment enterprise. Consequently, the sustainment warfighting function must evolve by generating an adaptive sustainment framework to meet the challenges of advancing technology and the changing character of warfare.

By acknowledging the mismatch between the pace of modernization and current sustainment processes, we allow ourselves to enable a targeted and more viable sustainment framework that minimizes risk to the warfighter. Additionally, accepting the rapid pace

of innovation and the likelihood that today’s products are not the enduring, repairable products of previous generations allows us to embrace a balanced approach to both acquisition and sustainment. Through early integration of an adaptive sustainment approach across the acquisition pathways, we not only lay the foundation for long-term strategy, but create a near-term mechanism for sustained readiness through Soldier-driven repair.

Shifting provisioning strategies to target critical requirements necessary to support prioritized capability for rapid repair at the tactical edge streamlines provisioning and pulls sustainment under continuous transformation. Incorporating POR and non-POR systems within GCSS-Army and LMP establishes a necessary foundation that empowers the warfighter with an effective sustainment tail; it also provides commanders with the ability to communicate overall unit readiness accurately. With a holistic understanding of unit readiness across the full spectrum of capability, the JSSA is postured to swiftly respond to maintenance and supply actions, ultimately ensuring the lethality, safety, and readiness of our operational force.

COL Reginald M. (Garrette) Harris serves as the director of plans and operations assistant chief of staff G-3/5, U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. He previously served as the deputy chief of staff of operations for U.S. Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, and most recently as the chief of staff for U.S. Army Cyber Command at Fort Eisenhower, Georgia. He has a Master of Arts degree in information technology management from Webster University and a Master of Science degree in national resource strategy from Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security.

Hector Rodriguez serves as the deputy director of plans and operations assistant chief of staff G-3/5, U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. He previously served as the 407th Army Field Support Brigade senior command representative for the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command at Fort Cavazos, Texas. He has a Master of Science degree in management and leadership from Texas A&M University Central Texas and a Master of Science degree in cyber-leadership from the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

Lara Orechovesky serves as the chief of operations for the G-3/5, U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. She previously served as the chief of current operations for the G-3/5, U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground. She has a Master of Science degree in operations research and statistics from Rensselaer Polytechnic University.