

# Joint Logistics: Shaping Our Future

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**T**he logistics capacity of the U.S. military today is unmatched; our nation's ability to project military power gives the joint warfighter unprecedented capabilities. However, a constantly changing operating environment and resource constraints demand that we optimize joint logistics to enhance our capabilities for tomorrow. We have the opportunity to significantly advance our systems, processes, and organizations to improve support to tomorrow's joint force commander (JFC), and we must seize it.

## **Joint Logistics: The What and the Why**

The necessity of joint logistics is widely accepted throughout the Department of Defense logistics community, and no one I know would disagree that the effective delivery of logistics support is essential to the JFC, our ultimate customer. However, I believe our current logistics systems reflect many inefficiencies, unnecessary redundancies, and process gaps that increase both risk and cost. Achieving harmony between and among Service- and agency-funded missions, systems, processes, and programs will resolve today's inefficiencies, but it poses a significant challenge. Overcoming that challenge can be enabled with a common agreement and understanding of the purpose of joint logistics and answering the questions "What is joint logistics?" and "Why do we need it?"

Joint logistics is the deliberate or improvised sharing of Service logistics resources to enhance synergy and reduce both redundancies and costs. We need joint logistics because (especially during initial expeditionary activity) the Services, by themselves, seldom have sufficient capability to independently support the JFC. By sharing, we can optimize the apportionment of limited resources to provide maximum capability to the supported commander. The overall purpose of joint logistics is to achieve logistics synergy—getting more out of our combined resources than they offer individually.

## **The Joint Logistics Environment**

The global war on terror, other threats to our security, frequent and diverse commitments across the globe, and complex interagency/multinational operations characterize the joint logistics environment. Future operations are likely to be distributed and to be conducted rapidly and simultaneously across multiple joint operational areas within a single theater or across boundaries of more than

**“Leaders win through logistics. Vision, sure. Strategy, yes. But when you go to war, you need to have both toilet paper and bullets at the right place at the right time. In other words, you must win through superior logistics.”**

Tom Peters, "Leadership Is Confusing As Hell,"  
*Fast Company*, March 2001

one geographic combatant command. In this environment, force projection operations give our nation the ability to close the gap between early entry and follow-on combat operations, and simultaneous stabilization and reconstruction operations. The requirement to integrate sustainment and force projection operations in a complex operating environment presents the greatest joint logistics challenge. This environment spans strategic, operational, and tactical levels, and provides the context in which we must deliver the "effect" expected by the JFC from joint logistics.

That effect is freedom of action, and it is delivered in the tactical level. The tactical level is where we should measure success, and operational readiness is the desired outcome. Sustained joint operational readiness enables freedom of action, and it results from the effective integration of all logistics capabilities. Logistics readiness achieved in the tactical level results from the cumulative efforts of Service, agency, and other logistics players across the entire joint logistics environment. There is a high price to pay in the tactical level for inefficiencies in the strategic or operational levels.

The United States' ability to project and sustain military power comes from the strategic level. This national

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system enables sustained military operations over time and leverages our most potent force multiplier: the vast capacity of our industrial base. At this level, modern, clearly defined, well-understood, and outcome-focused processes drive efficiencies across Service, agency, and commercial capabilities. Robust and efficient global processes combined with agile global force positioning are fundamental to joint logistics reform and to our ability to maintain global flexibility in the face of constantly changing threats.

The operational level is where the JFC synchronizes and integrates joint operational requirements with the national system. Here is where joint logistics must excel and where the ability to fully integrate logistics capabilities provides our greatest opportunities. The operational level is where the joint logistician must bridge Service, coalition, agency, and other organizational elements/capabilities, linking national and tactical systems, processes, and organizations to enable the freedom of action the JFC expects. The essence of joint logistics is in the operational level, and it is here that the joint logistics community should focus effort.

### **Strategic Relationships**

Effective joint logistics depends on clear roles, accountabilities, and relationships between the global players within the joint logistics domain. The collaborative network of relationships between these players should be based on the pre-eminence of the Services. By law, the Services are responsible to raise, train, equip, and maintain ready forces for the JFC, and they lie at the heart of this collaborative network. Service logistics components form the foundation of the joint logistics network and are responsible to maintain systems life-cycle readiness. Thus the Services act as defense systems readiness process owners, and they are the supported organizations for logistics readiness. In this capacity the Services focus on their product: logistics readiness at best value.

The Services and the Defense Logistics Agency share responsibilities as defense supply process owners. In that shared role, they are supporting organizations to the components of the joint force for logistics readiness. The Services and DLA are responsible for supply support and, supported by the distribution process owner (DPO), are focused on their product: perfect order fulfillment.

United States Joint Forces Command serves as the joint deployment process owner, and is the primary conventional force provider. In this role, USJFCOM, through its Service components, ensures the supported commander is provided with the forces needed to achieve national objectives. USJFCOM is responsible to coordinate and make recommendations for the global conventional force and, supported by the DPO, is focused on its product: perfect capability fulfillment.

United States Transportation Command serves as the defense DPO and is the supporting organization to DLA and the Services for the movement of sustainment, and to USJFCOM for the movement of forces. USTRANSCOM coordinates and synchronizes the defense distribution system and is focused on its product: time-definite delivery.

The JFC, through the Service components, is the ultimate customer of the joint logistics system. The JFC has authority over joint logistics resources in his/her area of responsibility and is the principal focus of the national organizations described above. These organizations have global responsibilities and form the backbone of joint logistics. They exist to provide and sustain logistically ready forces to the supported JFC. I view them as global providers, responsible for the end-to-end synchronization and coordination of processes that deliver outcomes to the supported JFC. These global organizations should constantly strive to improve their capabilities in concert with each other, integrating deployment/redeployment, supply, distribution, and readiness processes to ensure the supported commander receives both forces and logistics sustainment on time and where needed.

Because the Services lie at the heart of the joint logistics network, the joint logistics community (processes, systems, programs, organizations) should measure “value” from the perspective of the Service components of the JFC. Every logistics program, system, and initiative should be viewed within the framework of these critical strategic relationships and measured by its ability to support the effect we are expected to deliver.

### **Imperatives for Success**

The supported JFC expects joint logistics to give him or her freedom of action—to enable the effective execution of the mission, according to his or her timetable. The value of joint logistics is in its ability to sustain joint logistics readiness, and we can measure that value by how well we achieve three joint logistics imperatives: unity of effort, domain-wide visibility, and rapid and precise response. These imperatives are not goals in themselves, but they define the outcomes of a confederation of systems, processes, and organizations that are agile and effectively adapt to a constantly changing environment to meet the emerging needs of the supported JFC.

Unity of effort is the coordinated application of all logistics capabilities focused on the JFC’s intent, and it is the most critical of all joint logistics outcomes. Achieving unity of effort requires the optimal integration of joint, multinational, inter-agency, and non-governmental logistics capabilities. It is built around three enablers.

- **Appropriate organizational capabilities and authorities** provide the means to effectively and efficiently execute joint logistics.

**“The end for which a soldier is recruited, clothed, armed, and trained, the whole objective of his sleeping, eating, drinking, and marching is simply that he should fight at the right place and the right time.”**

Maj. Gen. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832

- **Shared awareness** across the logistics domain drives unity by focusing capabilities against the joint warfighter’s most important requirements. The effective integration of priorities, and the continuous optimization of those priorities in space and time, are key tasks requiring shared awareness.
- **Common measures of performance** drive optimization across processes supporting the JFC. Clearly defined joint logistics processes, well-understood roles and accountabilities of the players in the processes, and shared JFC metrics frame this enabler.

Domain-wide visibility is the ability to see the requirements, resources, and capabilities across the joint logistics domain. Three fundamental enablers frame the ability to achieve this imperative:

- **Connectivity**, offering access to the network 24 hours per day, 365 days per year and reaching globally—back, forward, and laterally—throughout the network to synchronize and coordinate efforts of supporting DoD agencies, interagency participants, multinational partners, host nations, contractors, and commercial sector participants is key.
- **Standard enterprise data architecture** is the foundation for effective and rapid data transfer and forms the fundamental building block to enable a common logistical picture and high logistical situational understanding, which in turn fosters warfighter confidence.
- **A global focus over the processes** that deliver support to the JFC is paramount to optimizing joint logistics. Logistics support to the joint force is global business, and any view of joint logistics that operates below this level will suboptimize processes and deliver less-than-acceptable readiness.

Rapid and precise response is defined by the ability of the supply chain to effectively meet the constantly chang-

ing needs of the joint force. Lack of key supplies (regardless of the reason for the lack) acts to undermine readiness and increase mission risk. The following performance measures indicate how well the supply chain is responding to the needs of the JFC:

- **Speed** is the core of responsiveness and, to the JFC, its most critical aspect. Ideally, all logistics would be immediately available all the time, but that is not possible. In measuring speed, we should focus our efforts on what is “quick enough,” while recognizing that not all supplies are equal in importance. Items that truly drive readiness deserve special treatment.
- **Reliability** is the ability of the supply chain to provide predictability, or time-definite delivery. When items are not immediately available, the joint logistics system must provide immediate and accurate estimates of delivery to enable the warfighter to make decisions regarding future mission options.
- **Visibility** provides rapid and easy access to order information. A sub-set of domain-wide visibility, this feature fundamentally answers the JFC’s questions, “Where is it?” and “When will it get here?”
- **Efficiency** is directly related to the supply chain’s footprint. At the tactical and operational levels, footprint can be viewed in terms of the resources needed to compensate for inefficiencies within the supply chain itself.

### **The Need for Joint Logistics**

Joint logistics exists to give the JFC the freedom of action necessary to meet mission objectives. We deliver this effect by integrating all logistics capabilities within the operational space, bridging the strategic sustainment base of our nation to the complex tactical environment in a way that optimizes logistics readiness. Through rigorous self-assessment, discussion, analysis, and collaboration, we can make significant progress towards improving our ability to deliver logistics readiness.

It is important, however, to continue to move forward with programs and initiatives that truly support joint logistics. We cannot wait to make decisions until every issue is resolved. Viewing initiatives through the lens of the imperatives above should offer a reasonable starting point for assessing an initiative’s value. The challenge of integrating Service and agency programs and systems not designed to holistically support joint operations cannot be overestimated. However, the importance of achieving this integration is paramount. We have a responsibility to the American people and the next generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen to do better—much better.

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