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THE CHALLENGE OF LOGISTICS:

AN OPEN LETTER

by

Captain Clarence O. Fiske, U.S. Navy

In conversation, a longtime friend of the Navy suggested to me the need to upgrade logistics so as to make it more attractive to line officers. He thought it worthwhile to highlight the recent increase of the rank levels of the Chief of Naval Material and the Vice Chief to four-star and three-star ranks, respectively, and felt the next logical step would be to upgrade the Service Force Commanders' job to three stars. He analyzed the general material condition of our naval forces and concluded that logistics performance would continue to hamper future combat effectiveness, especially sustained operations.

I, for one, would support his general thesis. Daily, from the mass of information that I read in the Directorate for Logistics in the Joint Staff and in the College of Naval Warfare, I have become increasingly aware that the combat readiness and effectiveness of our major operational commands is hampered by real logistical restraints.

The post-Southeast Asia era of evaluation is here, as evidenced by the Long-Range Logistics Manpower Policy Board, the Blue Ribbon Panel, and the Joint Logistics Review Board. These high-level efforts to focus on the problems of logistics and personnel are quite normal and represent the usual after-the-fact analysis that is paid to our management of major conflict situations. I believe it is an opportune time to provide something in this field that is constructive for the Navy.

The military services are highly sensitive to the role of logistics in both peace and wartime environments and are all endeavoring to encourage some of their best officers to pursue duty in the field. The Long-Range Logistics Manpower Policy Board saw fit to concern itself with the image of logistics. Most "top drawer" line naval officers of junior, middle, and senior ranks fully understand the virtue of command at sea, but view the assignment to duty in logistic billets anywhere as "Endsville." This low opinion of logistics is fairly pervasive throughout the Navy and has evolved over many years. Any change to this attitude will have to be generational and evolutionary in nature.

Fortunately for the Navy, the general lack of interest by line officers to seek challenging jobs in logistics, per se, has not seriously jeopardized overall Navy logistical support. In fact, naval support of combat operations in Southeast Asia has been quite excellent. Moreover, with a variety of forces, all having intrinsic mobility, the Navy enjoys an inherent logistic capability which continues to be appreciatively admired by the other services and our allies. Nevertheless, this valuable Navy characteristic does not seem to generate suitable pride of participation within our officer corps, particularly in line officers.

Moreover, this attitude of the line officer is inconsistent with the real world at sea. Every combatant commanding officer actually expends a good

part of every working day on logistic matters. It is seldom that the commanding officer of a ship or an aircraft squadron does not concern himself for the better part of each working day with such things as the best opportunity for replenishment or maintenance availability or tracing the progress of a vital spare part or estimating the credibility he can put into the operating effectiveness of the 3M program. In achieving these and other real logistic objectives, line officers tend to think of the commanding officer's logistic efforts as some unknown, unnamed, vague, and otherwise something else. There is a great habitual lack of identification between the word *logistics* and the many varied command actions which fall within its definition.*

It is my impression that there is a widespread superficial thought among naval officers that logistic problems are resolved in some obscure and distant staff, by supply officers, bureaucrats, or people at some unnamed support activity—all remote from line and command functions. In general, naval officers tend to view logistics as synonymous with supply, a staff function, and nothing could be further from the truth. Instead of seeking to remedy this state of affairs, we have retrogressed in

identifying Navy logistic functions factually. In the past, the now defunct Fleet Logistic Air Wings were a constant semantic reminder of naval logistic presence and mobility, as were the old bureaus, although they did not use logistics in their titles. It seems that we in the Navy have never used the word properly. Years ago the line engineering officer at sea thought of the Bureau of Engineering as his technical "papa san." He particularly noted that the Chief of the Bureau was an unrestricted line officer and that some outstanding officers did take the Operating Engineering PG course (like Adm. U.S.G. Sharp). Even in those days, logistics functions within the Engineering, Ordnance, and Aeronautic Bureaus were not so named. In time, the Chief's job became engineering duty only (EDO): the Bureau title disappeared, the career attractiveness to line officers atrophied, the supporting postgraduate school course disappeared, there was less direct Bureau interest and attention to operating than in building new ships—fleet maintenance seemed to suffer—and now today, competent operating engineering officers are in critical supply.

Such an evolution, taking place in all seagoing departments (and the addition of many new postgraduate courses since 1945) has camouflaged and confused sea-shore-sea subspecialty patterns for the younger officers, especially at that critical time in their careers when they must "elect" a subspecialty. Non-weapons or platform-type fields such as foreign relations, systems and operations analysis, and management are the postgraduate fields that portray attractive careers with glitter, glamour, and publicity. Against these, logistics does not appear very interesting. Yet, no future navy can do without it. Year by year logistics becomes more technical, more complex, and more necessary, quantitatively. All these aspects further complicate the "need-satisfaction" equation offered to young officers in

*JCS Pub. 1 defines logistics as:

The science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces. In its most comprehensive sense, those aspects of military operations which deal with: a. design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, and disposition of materiel; b. movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of personnel; c. acquisition or construction, maintenance, operation, and disposition of facilities; and d. acquisition or furnishing of services.

(For a more comprehensive description of logistics, see *Naval War College Review*, December 1970, "Evolution of the Concept of Logistics," by Lt. Col. G.W. Rider, USAF.)

relation to their decision to seek logistic experience. Many a naval officer has yet to learn a fundamental logistic principle: Logistics planning must be conducted on a concurrent, coordinated, and integrated basis with operations planning.

The logistics discipline needs more visibility, and more realism should be attached to it in our day-to-day operations. We should give logistics its due by elevating the term to the level of such prominent shipboard terms as operations, readiness, and administration. Ashore it must compete against programming, budgeting, or plans and policy. If the term logistics and its meaning were to be accepted realistically in the minds of all naval officers as a visible and major function of at-sea command in the Navy, then more promising officers would come to feel at home, competent, and would achieve career satisfaction with logistic billets afloat and ashore.

In this connection it is gratifying to note that the Chief of Naval Material affords logistics a prominent place in his organization. There is a Fleet Maintenance and Logistics Support Directorate in the Naval Ship Systems Command, an Assistant Commander for Logistics Fleet Support and an International Logistics Office in the Naval Air Systems Command, and a Deputy Chief of Naval Material for Logistic Support. While this is a step in the right direction, the generalist versus specialist syndrome that exists will still deter middle-grade officers from seeking duty in logistics-related jobs. This attitude would be dispelled as soon as a significant number of the early selectees for lieutenant commander through flag rank come from this type of background. The recent move to designate certain model desks or project managers as "major command" equivalents is also a step in the right direction. Clearly it is time for action, and this brings me to my final point before I get down to some sugges-

tions for improvement.

We must get away from the idea that necessary forces and assets will always be available to support an operation or plan. Greater emphasis must be placed on *capabilities* planning in the future. This is *requirements* planning, and our failure to plan around available assets is indicative of the weakness in so many of our current plans. We need good analysts—capabilities planners—who can look at what is available and then advise their commander on the prospects for the attainment of specified goals within existing logistical limitations. (This opens the door to another way to derive strategy, but that subject is best left to another paper.)

These are some of the things we can do now:

- *Realistic use of the word "logistics"*

- Retitle appropriate fleet commands and billets. Rename the present Service Forces "Logistic Forces."

- Identify logistic billets in major fleet and type commander staffs and designate them with "Logistic" in the new titles.

- Centralize supply, maintenance, medical, transportation, and construction functions under a Fleet or Force Logistics Officer. Despite our new Naval Training Command, we might even throw in relevant aspects of training!

- *Broaden the scope and utilization of our present logisticians*

From time to time, we should detail highly qualified line officers to detached tours within industries related to logistic management. This would provide a nucleus of talent for such industry-related jobs in the Navy as container operations, port and terminal operation, petroleum, transportation, construction industries, or public utilities and communications. Use of such a procedure would give the Navy a group of high performing officers, knowledgeable and proficient in broad logistical matters. From their ranks could be

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drawn selected individuals for further training and assignment to joint or combined duty in logistic billets and assignments as faculty members at the senior service colleges or in secretarial offices in DOD.

- *Highlight all commanding officer duties into the broad areas of activity such as operations, logistics, and administration*

Consider revising chapter 7 of Navy Regulations to identify current command tasks or responsibilities as logistic functions of the commander. Inclusion of such a paragraph in Navy Regulations would place logistic management and planning in a realistic context. It would ameliorate the erroneous conception that logistics is more a function of the supply specialty and Shore Establishment than a line sea-going management tool or task.

- *Seek more formal investment in acquiring experience in logistics*

Increase the opportunity for line officers and those with appropriate specialty designators to attend advanced management schools at Monterey and Harvard, or other comparable institutions such as logistic schools of the other services and our allies. This latter thought is right in line with CNO's latest Z-gram (Z-100), the PEP Program.

Develop a correspondence or reading list course based on joint logistic planning documents such as Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF) (JCS Pub. 2), Joint Logistics and Personnel Policy Guidance (JCS Pub. 3), Organization and Functions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS Pub. 4), and the Joint Operation Planning System (JOPS); the Unified Command Plan (UCP) and Joint Reporting System (JRS); and a selected bibliography of leading works by both military and civilian authors, such as those by Eccles and Dyer, and include pertinent DOD and Navy directives. For example, while every officer should thoroughly understand DOD Directive 5100.1, Functions of the Department of

Defense and Its Major Components, few have ever heard of it. Both the Regular and Reserve Navy would benefit from a better understanding of joint logistic planning in the environment of the unified command.

- *Accentuate using logistic expertise*

Assign a larger number of our graduates from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces to logistic management and planning billets within the Department of Defense and the Navy.

- *Reexamination of a logistic subspecialty, formal or informal*

Officers serving in supply, procurement, munitions, maintenance, and construction management positions are actively involved in building an equity in a logistic subspecialty. The Army formally certifies an officer as "Logistician of the Army" once certain training and duty assignments have been fulfilled. Perhaps we need a similar program in the Navy.

It may be worthwhile for our experts to look into the DOD Intelligence Career Development Program (DOD Directive 5010.10) to determine

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



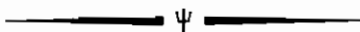
Capt. Clarence O. Fiske, U.S. Navy, has an extensive background in logistics and strategic planning. A naval aviator, he has served in the Fleet Logistics Air Wing (VR-2); the Military Airlift Com-

mand, the Capabilities Branch of the Logistics Directorate J-4(JCS), as Special Project Officer to Commander, Military Sealift Transportation Service, special consultant for five polar operations involving advance base construction, and on the staffs of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Atlantic Command. He holds a master's degree in political science, is a graduate of the General Line School and the College of Naval Warfare and at present he is the Head of the Military Strategy Study in the latter college.

whether there would be utility in a similar program for a logistics career pattern. It may well be that we could use an assured input of officers dedicated to a line logistics specialty career.

The net effect of these actions would be to reinforce the learning process of individual officers and substantiate a new emphasis on enhanced career advancement through duty assignments in logistic-related billets. In February 1969 Admiral Clarey stated, "... we have permitted, in recent years, hardware acquisitions to preoccupy our decision process at some real sufferance to the professional preparation of our people, upon whom our Navy's success is singu-

larly dependent as measured by its performance." It may well be that the best approach to our *people problem* related to logistics—as one career path—would be to order a few of the most promising officers and top performers from lieutenant commanders to captain to billets specifically identified as logistic in nature. The future progress of such officers by promotion and assignment to command is the best means of advertisement, readily understood by all, and should do much to destroy the "gut feeling" that duty in logistics is bad for a line career. I, for one, believe it can be both a *challenging* and *rewarding* career.



... Logistics considerations belong not only in the highest echelons of military planning during the process of preparation for war and for specific wartime operations, but may well become the controlling element with relation to timing and successful operation.

ADM Oscar C. Badger, USN, "Principles of Command and Logistics," U.S. Naval War College Information Service for Officers, December 1951