

A photograph showing several workers in military-style clothing working on a large piece of heavy machinery, likely a bulldozer. They are applying armor plates to the machine. The scene is outdoors, and there are various pieces of equipment and supplies visible, including a green gas cylinder and a yellow gas cylinder in the foreground.

Army Sustainment Command Delivers AL&T Capabilities to Field Forces

Charles W. Fick Jr.

Modular, expeditionary, and in the thick of the fight — that's the Army Sustainment Command (ASC). In less than 2 years, ASC has formed a global network of brigades, battalions, logistics support elements (LSEs), and brigade logistics support teams (BLSTs) to push readiness power forward.

AFSBS are charged with ARFORGEN execution and, when directed, contingency operational logistics support in theater operation. Here, contract workers apply armor to a bulldozer at an ASC field support operation in Southwest Asia, matching materiel and AL&T capabilities to the mission. (U.S. Army photo.)

“We see our role as ‘champions of the cause’ for responsive acquisition, logistics, and technology [AL&T] support to Soldiers and their leaders. Wherever there’s a need for AL&T, we’ll be there, ready to deliver effective solutions,” said Redding Hobby, ASC Executive Director for Field Support Operations.

From the outset, ASC has been evolutionary and, in some respects, revolutionary. Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) and emerging operational issues are driving dramatic change in the way our Army provides AL&T support to forces in the field.

Being in persistent conflict while also transforming to a modular, brigade-centric force requires creative solutions to entirely new challenges. Meeting the challenge are seven Army Field Support Brigades (AFSBs) and their subordinate elements, exercising command and control over more than

5,000 Soldiers, Army civilians, and contractors. In addition, many thousands of contract service providers add muscle to the mission.

AFSBs Provide AL&T Support

As concept becomes doctrine, AFSBs are charged with execution of ARFORGEN and, when directed, contingency operational logistics support in theater operation. Each AFSB is a small, mission-focused and highly modular organization built around a tailored modified table of organization and equipment and augmentation table of distribution and allowances structure assigned to the U.S. Army Materiel Command’s (AMC’s) ASC. Combining

assets from AMC and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for AL&T, AFSBs plan for and control all Army AL&T support of Army forces.

AFSBs leverage reachback capabilities to provide AL&T technical and call-forward support from the national sustainment base. By linking their supported units with the vast resources of AMC and its Life Cycle Management Commands (LCMCs), other defense agencies, laboratories, manufacturers, and service providers, AFSBs are the linchpins in modern sustainment.

Recent deployments of ASC’s BLSTs and LSEs with operational units have been invaluable. If a

We see our role as “champions of the cause” for responsive AL&T support to Soldiers and their leaders. Wherever there’s a need for AL&T, we’ll be there, ready to deliver effective solutions.



On the ground, AFSBs provide capabilities through battalions, LSEs, and BLSTs. Here, mechanics at Army Field Support Battalion-Northeast Asia, Camp Carroll, Korea, repair a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, part of the Army’s pre-positioned stock of combat-ready equipment. (U.S. Army photo by Galen Putnam.)

Soldier in the field has an issue with his or her ammunition, weapons, vehicles, communications, or clothing, help is close at hand. In one such recent event, a host-nation radio frequency management issue limited operational effectiveness. In short order, the issue passed from the field to the supporting AFSB, which resolved the issue quickly and soon had the fighting unit back up on the net.

Further cementing their ties to supported units, AFSBs deployed in contingency operations — when directed by their higher echelons — are aligned under the operational control of the Army’s regionally focused Theater Sustainment Commands or, in some cases, an Expeditionary Support Command.

By streamlining the old operational–strategic–tactical construct, ASC and its brigades are integrating and synchronizing capabilities across the board, while providing the AL&T element of ARFORGEN.

Employing organic and augmented capabilities to supported forces, AFSBs are the primary point of contact to the operational commander for AL&T support, including support critically important to emerging technologies and new equipment. Aligned to an Army Service Component Command, AFSBs serve as the bridge between the generating force and the operational force. ARFORGEN guides the entire ASC enterprise.

On the ground, AFSBs provide capabilities through battalions, LSEs, and

BLSTs. Forward-deployed LSEs and BLSTs can tap additional capabilities such as AL&T sustainment maintenance or external support maintenance contractors via individual experts or teams.

In unit-level motor pools, repair stations, and supply operations, LARs are at the heart of the entire ASC operation. Working side-by-side with Soldiers, LARs are part of the logistics assistance program, an integral part of ASC operations.

Fielding new equipment is always a logistics challenge that requires close contact with supported forces. When Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles were first fielded in combat zones, Soldiers made discoveries that warranted attention. Low-hanging wires in urban areas, for example, could be an impediment to safe MRAP operations. Soldiers contacted their BLST chief, who

contacted the AFSB, which immediately elevated the observation to the highest levels to expedite modification. Within weeks, the combined effects of integrated AL&T had an answer and retrofit kits were en route.

In another example of field support effectiveness, original equipment fire suppression bottles were found by Soldiers to have an awkward orientation. Quick action by ASC logisticians raised the issue rapidly up the chain and a solution was quickly applied to ensure Soldier safety and combat effectiveness.

Logistics Assistance Representatives (LARs)

In unit-level motor pools, repair stations, and supply operations, LARs are at the heart of the entire ASC operation. Working side-by-side with Soldiers at home stations and deployed locations, LARs are part of the logistics assistance program, an integral part of ASC operations.

Serving Soldiers worldwide, LARs are ideally placed to observe and report problems while working toward a solution. Forming a global network of logistics scouts, LARs raise issues to AFSBs, which feed directly into the sustaining base. Drawing on the LAR network, AL&T leaders and managers can identify trends and systemic issues faster than ever before. From the warfighters’ point of view, LARs are their “go-to guys” to get things fixed and keep them on line. With AFSBs, LSEs, and BLSTs as integral parts of warfighting units, trust and confidence is born of a common sense of purpose. One team yields a better understanding of issues and, therefore, more effective and safer Soldiers.

BLSTs are organized as a modular group of LARs based on the units they support. Divisional brigades and division combat aviation brigades get one type of BLST, while echelon-above-corps units get another.

Each BLST is embedded with the brigade it supports; when the BCT or other unit moves out, so does the BLST. This builds confidence in the commitment of AL&T support and also provides continuity. Wherever they are training or fighting, Soldiers can look up to see the LAR they’ve come to know and count on.

From the smallest forward operating base, BLST LARs and contract service providers can reach back into the AMC and AL&T toolbox to provide technical expertise and resolve maintenance and supply issues. The whole “face to the field” concept of ASC operations becomes the ground truth where BLST members are serving with the Soldiers they support.

AFSB commanders are centrally selected colonels, chosen to be senior



AFSBs leverage reachback capabilities to provide AL&T technical and call-forward support from the national sustainment base. Here, SSG Thomas Alexander, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge for the 3rd Battalion, 405th AFSB radio and communications security shop, Livorno, Italy, performs a quality assurance test on electronic gear while deployed to the Vicenza, Italy, Installation Materiel Maintenance Activity. (U.S. Army photo by Giovanni Comiati.)

ASC and AMC representatives in their respective regions. In addition to being the senior AL&T advisors to the Army Forces commander in their operational area, AFSB commanders are the single managers for integration and synchronization of the Army equipment accountability, maintenance, and redistribution effort to enhance and support the Army's peacetime mission and warfighting capability. It's a tall order, but essential to ARFORGEN success.

Connected at ASC headquarters at Rock Island, IL, the seven AFSBs contribute to a common operating picture, enabling both planners and support elements to get in front of AL&T requirements and, when emerging issues arise, to react swiftly and effectively. The aim is to be predictive to the maximum extent possible, providing fighting forces with solutions in advance of problems. While combat and contingency operations get the lion's share of

headlines, AFSBs are deeply involved in sustainment, the central part of ASC's mission.

CONUS-Based Sustainment

Sustainment is ARFORGEN-based. AFSBs provide the conduit that links the national sustainment base to deploying Army forces as they progress through the mobilization authority phase or as deployment expeditionary forces and contingency expeditionary forces enter the "available" force pool in the ARFORGEN strategy.

AFSBs provide a forward presence to ASC and AMC's LCMCs to assist in management of sustainment maintenance and installation field maintenance (in coordination with the Army Installation Management Command).

The CONUS-based sustainment AFSBs operate under the direct command and control of ASC when

performing their ARFORGEN mission. They provide mobilization and deployment support for forces deploying and may provide reinforcing support to Army forces conducting homeland security operations.

To test concepts and procedures, the 406th AFSB out of Fort Bragg, NC, recently conducted a deployment concept exercise of operations. The 406th sent defense support to civil authority teams in Columbia, SC, and Nashville, TN, to augment the Region IV Disaster

Coordination Element, and to Goose Creek, SC, to conduct a communications exercise. Brigades are continuing to train alongside civil authorities in support of homeland defense.

At posts, camps, and installations, ASC is setting the stage for expeditionary success. When Soldiers head into the fight, the men and women of ASC are right alongside them. Field support is a huge, ever-changing AL&T mission that is vital to ARFORGEN success. Across the board and around the world, AFSBs and their subordinate elements are adding the ring of truth to ASC's motto: On the Line.

CHARLES W. FICK JR. is a Public Affairs Specialist at ASC, Rock Island Arsenal. He was educated at Ohio University and the University of Oklahoma.