



The Capabilities of the Army Field Support Brigade's (AFSB's) Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology-Directorate (AL&T-D)

LTC Steven Van Riper

When your unit is preparing to deploy, is deployed, or is in any other phase of the Army Force Generation process, terms such as Operational Needs Statement (ONS), Joint Urgent ONS (JUONS), Rapid Equipping Force (REF), Forward Operational Assessment (FOA), Operator New Equipment Training (OPNET), and Field Level Maintenance NET (FLMNET), become a part of your daily vernacular. What can you do to understand this strange collection of acronyms? What about the inevitable fieldings, sustainment, and support strategy requirements? Is there a person or organization to help you complete the tasks associated with coordinating and synchronizing these efforts?

AFSBs round out the Materiel Enterprise at the operational level, providing tactical commanders logistical and sustainment support not typically provided by sustainment brigades or expeditionary sustainment commands. Here, a Fort Hood, TX, welder adds his skill to the Materiel Enterprise by repairing equipment undergoing field-level reset under the direction of ASC's 407th AFSB. (U.S. Army photo by Galen Putnam, ASC Public Affairs.)

The AFSB can help. AFSBs are assigned to the U.S. Army Sustainment Command (ASC) and perform a critical role as the U.S. Army Materiel Command's (AMC's) face to the field. They round out the Materiel Enterprise at the operational level, providing tactical commanders logistical and sustainment support not typically provided by sustainment brigades or expeditionary sustainment commands.

Each AFSB modified table of organization and equipment includes positions for one 51Z Acquisition Officer (O-5), one 51A Acquisition Officer (O-4), and one 51S Science and Technology (S&T) Officer (O-4). These three officers form the core of what is usually called the AL&T-D. This directorate's mission and core competencies vary from AFSB to AFSB depending on the operating environment, supported units, and command focus, but always include integration and synchronization with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for AL&T, program executive offices (PEOs), program managers (PMs), and warfighters to ensure that fielding, operational assessments, and other acquisition-centric activities are successful.

ONS and JUONS

Each command has slightly different processes for compiling, staffing, and forwarding ONS and JUONS, but your AFSB (CONUS or OCONUS) can assist in determining if another ONS or JUONS already exists that describes your capability gap, if technology exists that can satisfy your requirements, and if your ONS or JUONS contains the critical elements for acceptance. ONS and JUONS efforts are usually assigned to the S&T Officer (51S) in the AFSB. Submitting a technically correct ONS or JUONS is a critical step and will eliminate stop-and-go staff delays that could prevent your unit from receiving necessary equipment. Although every effort will be made to satisfy an ONS or JUONS



The AFSB's AL&T-D coordinates to ensure that FSRs assist in acceptance inspections and final issue of the equipment. Here, FSR Justin Fluegel explains the launch procedures for the ScanEagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicle to SGT Matthew Hayes, Headquarters Battery, 1-10 Field Artillery Battalion, at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Delta, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Brien Vorhees.)

Submitting a technically correct ONS or JUONS is a critical step and will eliminate stop-and-go staff delays that could prevent your unit from receiving necessary equipment.

as quickly as possible, it can sometimes take weeks to receive equipment that satisfies your requirement. If your need is urgent, consider using the REF.

REF

An alternative to the ONS or JUONS is the REF and its requirements tool: the Ten-Liner, a 10-line document. The REF, not to be confused with the Rapid Fielding Initiative, is an organization chartered to conduct pinpoint fieldings of critical equipment to deploying or deployed units to capture their very specific requirements. The S&T Officer can review the Ten-Liner and provide liaison with the REF.

After receiving the Ten-Liner, the REF will attempt to satisfy your requirements by using commercial-off-the-shelf

(COTS) or modified COTS systems or equipment. REF involvement provides a potential solution in a much shorter time than the "normal" acquisition process. The REF may request your participation in an FOA to record end user comments pertaining to the equipment's effectiveness. To assist your unit during an REF fielding and FOA, the AL&T-D can continue to liaison with the REF team and can act as a collection point for the FOA questionnaires.

In some cases, an REF fielded item is transitioned into a program of record (POR). This can happen when the FOA is exceptionally favorable or when demand becomes so large that REF management and funding becomes inadequate. When this occurs, the program is assigned to a PM, provided a

bona fide funding line, and subjected to the administrative requirements of the formal acquisition process. If an REF initiative achieves POR status, the AL&T-D can complement PM activities by synchronizing the fielding plan with operational commitments and schedules.

The Fielding Plan

From the gaining unit's perspective, the Fielding Plan is probably the most important component of the acquisition process. The gaining unit is really not interested in the challenges the PM faces with contracting, designing, producing, and delivering the new system. What the unit does care about is when it will be receiving the equipment and the quantity. Depending on processes within your higher headquarters and your assigned AFSB, the fielding plan may be a stand-alone document or distributed as an Operations Order (OPORD) or Fragmentary Order (FRAGO). Either way, the AL&T-D can provide vital input via normal staffing or through immediate communication to ensure unit fielding expectations and requirements are synchronized with the system's production rate, delivery schedule, and distribution

The AL&T-D can provide vital input via normal staffing or through immediate communication to ensure unit fielding expectations and requirements are synchronized with the system's production rate, delivery schedule, and distribution plan.

plan. The AL&T-D will coordinate with appropriate higher headquarters staff sections and the PM to ensure essential elements of the fielding plan (schedules, issue locations, gaining unit responsibilities, and transportation requirements) are included in the instructions provided to the receiving unit.

Fieldings seldom involve single-point distribution from a fully equipped warehouse or deprocessing site. They typically include several geographically dispersed fielding sites, differing levels of infrastructure, and varying quantities for issue. The AL&T-D and the PM can manage these fielding nuances and greatly simplify the process for the gaining unit. Additionally, the AL&T-D can assist with asset visibility and property accountability, ensuring PMs comply with all Property Book

Unit Supply Enhanced requirements for equipment issue and transfer. The AL&T-D can also coordinate to ensure Field Service Representatives (FSRs) are present to assist in acceptance inspections and final issue of the equipment. Leveraging the capabilities of the AL&T-D will ensure the fielding plan is synchronized with the unit's expectations and requirements.

NET

Second, if not equally important in terms of unit priorities, is NET. It seems obvious that NET, specifically OPNET or FLMNET, would be required as a unit receives new equipment, but some units do not synchronize NET with their daily tasks and battle rhythm. NET is an essential part of the fielding and must be done right the first time. Without NET, new equipment can easily become paper weights, motor pool "queens," or just labeled as "too hard to use" by Soldiers. The AL&T-D can ensure the NET is both efficient and effective by providing unit expectations, time available, and other unit-unique training requirements directly to the PM. The directorate can also provide the PM with unit training schedules or timelines that may necessitate changes to NET times and locations. The AL&T-D can verify that the NET plan is included in any OPORD or FRAGO that prescribes the fielding and will facilitate NET requirements, such as warehouse storage space, classroom coordination, housing, and instructor accountability. When conducting NET in a deployed environment, the AL&T-D can track instructor country clearance and call forward requests



John Arana (right), Staff Instructor II, Force Protection Industries Inc., teaches U.S. Navy PO2 Kevin Dixon, Provincial Reconstruction Team-Ghazni motor pool mechanic, FLMNET for the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Cougar at FOB Ghazni, Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo by TSgt Rebecca Corey.)



Panther Medium MRAP Vehicles await preparation for NET and follow-on issue to Soldiers in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of MAJ O'Neal A. Williams, 402nd AFSB S&T Officer.)

and arrange for housing and inter-/intra-theater transportation.

Challenges inevitably emerge during even the best planned NET events. The AL&T-D is capable of “running interference” with the PM to mitigate any problems that may arise. This unburdens the unit accepting the fielding and allows it to stay focused on the myriad of ongoing predeployment training activities that are no doubt occurring at the same time as the NET. Problems can be as trivial as a shortage of handouts or as serious as realizing the wrong software version is loaded into a new communications system. After a successful initial fielding and NET, the AL&T-D will begin working with your unit and PM to ensure an effective support strategy is implemented.

The Support Strategy

If the Program Management Office (PMO) has done its homework, your new gear should either be fully supported by field-level maintenance and the Army supply system, come with FSRs as part of a Contractor Logistics Support (CLS) program, or have a combination of Army maintenance

and FSR/CLS. If FSRs and CLS are involved, the AFSB can provide a great deal of assistance with tracking, managing, and general support of the FSRs and their unique tool and facility requirements. Since the AL&T-D is able to interface directly with your staff officers and the end user Soldiers, the support strategy will be tailored to your specific needs and operational environment. This interaction allows the AFSB to work with the PMO as the support strategy changes over time.

The AL&T-D in the AFSB provides a unique service. Having a basic understanding of the core competencies of the AL&T-D will allow commanders and staff officers to maximize their ability to effectively state operational requirements, choose the best fielding and training plans, and ensure proper transition to sustainment operations.

Leveraging the AFSB AL&T-D's capabilities will link your command with the Materiel Enterprise and enable successful AL&T activities.

Engage your AFSB as your battalion, brigade, or division is considering, or in the middle of, requirements generation, fieldings, or liaison with PEOs or PMs. Leveraging the AFSB AL&T-D's capabilities will link your command with the Materiel Enterprise and enable successful AL&T activities.

LTC STEVEN VAN RIPER serves in the 402nd AFSB as the Director of AL&T. He holds a B.S. in aeronautical engineering from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and an M.S. in aeronautical engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School. Van Riper is certified Level III in program management and Level II in systems planning, research, development, and engineering-systems engineering, and is a U.S. Army Acquisition Corps member.