

Interview With MG Jerome Johnson, Commanding General, U.S. Army Field Support Command

Michael J. Varhola

"Operational readiness rates, especially for low-density equipment items, are some of the highest we have ever seen," MG Johnson remarked. Here, Soldiers from Task Force Liberty, 3rd Infantry Division, provide overwatch at an Iraqi traffic control point outside Tikrit, Iraq, from their M3A3 Cavalry Fighting Vehicles. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Matthew Acosta.)

M G Jerome Johnson, Commanding General, U.S. Army Field Support Command (AFSC), Rock Island Arsenal, IL, discusses with *Army AL&T* Magazine his command's constantly evolving role in providing logistical support to U.S. warfighters around the world.

AL&T: As the Army transforms, the Army Materiel Command (AMC) and the Life Cycle Management Commands (LCMCs) have been leaders in spiraling technology to the Current Force. How has the AFSC helped to facilitate change while also meeting the Army's transformation initiatives and requirements?

Johnson: AFSC has been a leader in the Army's transformation. We are a

command that seeks change to meet the ever-evolving needs of the warfighter. I think we have been able to make an outstanding contribution to the Current Force through our core missions: field support, Army pre-positioned stocks, the Logistics Civilian Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) and Joint Munitions.

In addition, we have established Army Field Support Brigades [AFSBs] and

Battalions [AFSBns] in CONUS and around the world, including combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan. By bringing the LCMC concept of synchronizing acquisition, logistics and technology [AL&T] to the tactical level, we're pushing the capabilities forward and connecting directly on the battlefield and in geographic areas of responsibility. I see these new units as a key element of transformational logistics support.

We continue to receive positive and helpful feedback from commanders in the field and new missions keep coming our way. An organization's success is measured by how well it adds value and effectiveness to a process, and AFSC has been blazing the trail for innovative and effective ways of improving the distribution, deployment, employment and sustainment processes. I believe the new missions are a testament to our command's ability to transform and evolve.

As a practical matter, we have been integral in the Add-on-Armor (AoA) program and heavily involved in the Reset mission. In addition, we've taken on the challenge of overseeing installation property accountability for theater-provided equipment as well as in-theater refurbishment. In short, the AFSC's not just facilitating change, but leading the way for expeditionary logistics operations. Using your metaphor, AFSC is where the technology spiral connects with troops.

AL&T: During your presentation at the Acquisition Senior Leaders and AMC Commanders Conference in August 2005, you said that AFSC does not have a lot of organic capabilities and that it gets its capabilities from LCMCs and program executive offices (PEOs). Would you expand on this?

Johnson: By harnessing the full powers of AL&T, AFSC is the national

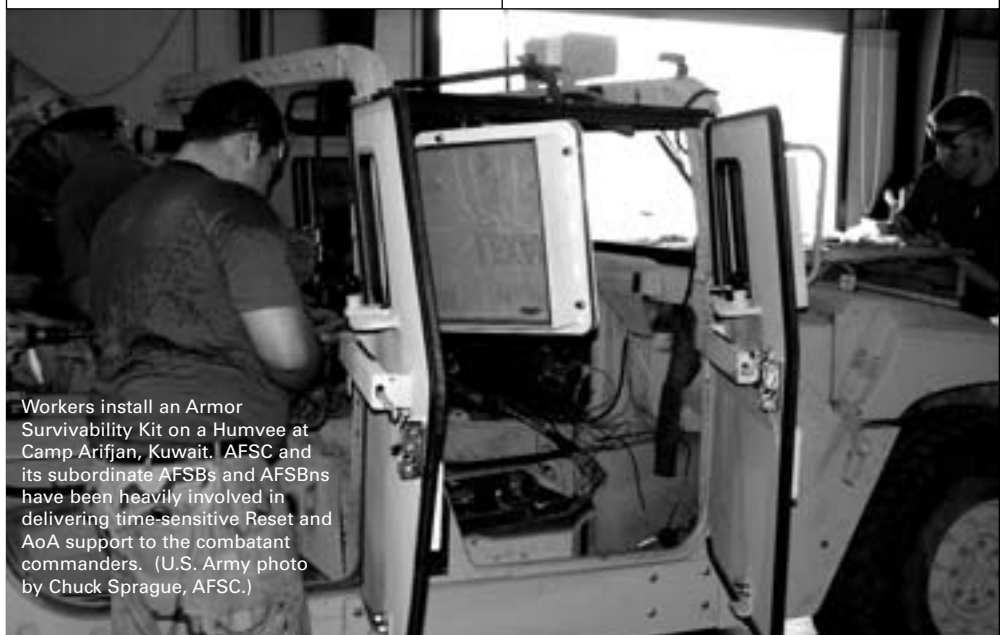
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integrator for warfighter support. We do this in large part through our Army Field Support Brigades and Battalions worldwide. They are the units where the Army's AL&T capabilities are synchronized with units in the field. Brigade staffs are relatively small, but are augmented by LCMC senior command representatives and logistics assistance representatives [LARs] from the LCMCs and others, including the Defense Logistics Agency. By linking operational commands on the battlefield to the national industrial and technical base, we are able to act quickly to deliver logistical solutions. For example, the AFSB commander in Iraq participates in Corps Support Command planning and execution, giving us a predictive picture of current and future operations. That commander and staff can

then reach back to the LCMCs to have solutions in place before they become problems. Likewise, the LARs serving with troops in the field identify and report trends and recommend solutions. The entire purpose is to focus and apply logistics capabilities as far forward as possible.

AL&T: You've said before that your number one priority is ammunition. As the AFSC commander, you oversee the Joint Munitions Command [JMC], which is doing something it has not done in the past — becoming involved in the requirements process. How is this progressing?

Johnson: We recognize that to support the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen in the field with the best, safest and highest quality munitions, it takes the synergized effort of our AL&T competencies. These are provided through the ammunition enterprise comprising the PEO Ammunition, U.S. Army Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center and JMC. As combatant commanders provide the services their munitions requirements to fight and win, we have to work diligently with HQDA to



Workers install an Armor Survivability Kit on a Humvee at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. AFSC and its subordinate AFSBs and AFSBns have been heavily involved in delivering time-sensitive Reset and AoA support to the combatant commanders. (U.S. Army photo by Chuck Sprague, AFSC.)



An M1A2 Abrams main battle tank receives an engine overhaul at the AFSBn in Kuwait. By pushing maintenance forward, AFSC is transforming logistics support on the battlefield. (U.S. Army photo by Chuck Sprague, AFSC.)

assessment through our continued refinement of the analytical data included in the Munitions Readiness Report [MRR]. The MRR is recognized as the overarching metric for ammunition readiness throughout the Army. These assessments provide the data needed at the HQDA level to support decisions on establishing requirements and prioritization of ammunition programs.

AL&T: In the short time since the LCMCs were formed, what kind of feedback have you gotten from combatant commanders regarding the AFSC's responsiveness in meeting Soldier warfighting requirements?

Johnson: Combatant commanders have experienced improved responsiveness in meeting Soldiers' needs. Operational readiness rates, especially for low-density equipment items, are some of the highest we have ever seen. Another

ensure that we understand the requirements and apply our knowledge to best meet the requirements — be they better technology, additional procurement or maintenance and pre-positioning.

We are increasingly involved in the requirements process by working with the HQDA G-3 and G-4 on the analysis piece. As part of that, we are undertaking our first Lean/Six Sigma project spearheaded to support the DA G-3.

As the Joint Munitions LCMC Commander, which aligns the JMC with PEO Ammunition, I ordered a process complexity analysis on the Ammunition Requirements Determination/Prioritization Process. This process has been identified as one of the primary challenges in ensuring that ammunition acquisition and logistics planning supports the most urgent

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Army needs across the entire life cycle. Previously, there was not a high confidence level in the requirement, and multiple requirements caused confusion. This ongoing analysis will identify alignment and linkages among process participant organizations, in turn building a longer-term road map for improvement, identifying short-term benefit opportunities and helping prioritize next steps.

Additionally, we are continuing to enhance our ammunition readiness

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example is the rapid response to the need for up-armored vehicles. In short order, we've had shops up and running in both Iraq and Afghanistan, delivering improved vehicles directly to troops in combat. Moving the capability forward saved time and money, especially in transport, and I believe it saved lives.

Similar forward-based activities are improving readiness in communications, weapons and the entire range of equipment and materiel. The AL&T community is transforming on a number of fronts. Establishing LCMCs is just one element of that transformation. We are doing a better



Contracted logistics and maintenance support actually improve combat readiness by freeing Soldiers to train and conduct operations. The AFSBs and AFSBns are enabling the AL&T community to push logistics and maintenance support to the tactical level, thereby increasing responsiveness and greatly reducing equipment downtime. (U.S. Army photo by Chuck Sprague, AFSC.)

job of accelerating and deploying research and development technologies to solve problems and we are integrating our AL&T capabilities more effectively under a single forward-deployed field support structure — the Army Field Support Brigade. It's all about breaking down the walls between traditional stovepipe support structures and functioning more as an AL&T team on the battlefield and at our training centers. The LCMCs are a critical piece of that support.

AL&T: What sort of benchmarks does the AFSC use to determine if combatant commanders and their Soldiers are satisfied with the level of logistics support they receive in the field?

Johnson: Like other senior

logisticians, I believe this is an area where we still have work to do. One of the field commander's important evaluation factors is tied to the Unit Status Reporting process. This is a well-established process and serves as a metric for AL&T support as well. Other relevant metrics are customer wait time and order ship time. We have a lot of capture points to assess the pipeline.

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The problem is that these are all lagging indicators. We are short on leading indicators that can help us anticipate support requirements as we replace mass with velocity in our logistics processes.

I know of no metrics or mechanisms that would enable anyone to document and take credit for any improvements the field sees in responsiveness. There are so many ongoing initiatives it would be unfair and inaccurate to attribute success in some discrete portion or the whole process to any one change, such as establishing LCMCs. The idea that combatant commanders have visibility of the end-to-end logistics system is a goal for all of us — a common operating picture which also is

yet to be achieved, but that we're working on diligently.

AL&T: As the AFSC moves forward to support a modular Army, will there be more reliance on contracted logistics and maintenance support and why?

Johnson: Even before Sept. 11, our Army was moving toward a modular Army with contracted logistics and maintenance support. Many of these duties in the past were done by Soldiers — cooking, cleaning, supply and vehicle maintenance. Soldiers were still required to maintain their skills in weapons training and other duties unique to the Soldier. Our LOGCAP operation has brought form and organization to what is the first sustained employment of contractors on the



MG Johnson confers with his logistics and maintenance support leaders during a recent trip to Southwest Asia. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of AFSC.)



Contract workers repair the suspension and hydraulics assembly on a cargo trailer at the AFSBn in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Chuck Sprague, AFSC.)

battlefield. By implementing the Army's move toward contracting Combat Service Support [CSS] and some Combat Support [CS] functions, we've helped make it possible for Soldiers to spend more time becoming better trained, more lethal warfighters. Our Soldiers are now faster, smarter and quicker; can move anywhere in the world; and can fight any type of battle. Let me also say the work that our contractors and maintenance support workers are doing is great and a testament to America's ability to sustain troops in combat.

AL&T: At the 2005 Acquisition Senior Leaders and AMC Commanders Conference, GEN Benjamin S. Griffin noted that the Special Operations community is doing a great job of fixing materiel in the field and attributed their success to the critical role noncommissioned officers (NCOs) play in the maintenance and sustainability process. Has the AFSC taken steps to strengthen the role of NCOs in its logistics, maintenance and sustainment processes?

mission. Our NCOs are on the ground in our field support brigades and battalions, ensuring that the equipment and materiel that reaches Soldiers is top-notch and combat-ready. They work in small groups, generally in a largely civilian and contractor environment, putting their stamp of approval on gear that's going into the hands of their comrades in combat. There's no more vital or challenging role than that. Our command sergeants major travel extensively to our installations and depots listening to what the workers, Soldiers and Army civilians have to say and deliver the messages to me. NCOs are my eyes and ears — and sometimes my conscience.



A worker removes armor plating on a Stryker vehicle at the Stryker Repair Facility in Qatar. The facility is managed by General Dynamics Land Systems under the direction of AFSBn Qatar. (U.S. Army photo by Chuck Sprague, AFSC.)

Johnson: Our NCOs are committed and have my backing to serve as representatives between our industrial operations/maintenance facilities and command headquarters. What NCOs do best is take care of Soldiers. I believe this is their core

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