

Ulchi Freedom Guardian

By Christopher Goulait

The Defense Logistics Agency Energy supported Ulchi Freedom Guardian 2015 before and during the cooperative South Korean exercise through training and fuel coordination.

DLA Energy Pacific at Korea provided U.S. and Republic of Korea forces familiarization training prior to Ulchi Freedom Guardian and fuel support throughout the multinational training exercise that took place Aug. 17 - 28.

Servicemembers augmenting forces involved in the exercise learned from DLA Energy Pacific at Korea's subject matter experts to get up to speed on their fuel-related duties. After training, augments provided additional capacity and talent to sustain continuous operations, manage distribution, perform quality analysis and monitor inventory processes, explained Air Force Capt. Andrew Gill, plans and operations officer for DLA Energy Pacific at Korea.

"Familiarization training includes DLA Energy's role in the Korean theater, defined objectives, command relationships vital to our mission and our responsibility to ensure United States Forces Korea can 'fight tonight,'" Gill said.

Once the Ulchi Freedom Guardian kicked off Aug. 17, DLA Energy's role shifted to fuel coordination.

"At first glance, our role appears deceptively simple: ensure warfighters have the right fuel in the right amounts at the right place at the right time," said Army Lt. Col. Wheeler Manning, commander of DLA Energy Pacific at Korea.

Fuel movements across the theater are coordinated to use every means of distribution available, including ocean tankers, pipelines, tank trucks and contingency contracts, Manning said.

"DLA Energy Pacific at Korea maintains a methodical balance between the science of forecasting requirements and the art of anticipating changes in demand signals to effectively manage bulk fuel operations," he added.

Though similar to another annual Korean-centered exercise, Key Resolve, Ulchi Freedom Guardian is unique in scope, Gill said.

"Ulchi Freedom Guardian serves as the capstone event for all service components to demonstrate their ability to defend the Republic of Korea in mutual cooperation with their ROK counterparts," he explained. "It's the largest computer-aided exercise in the world, and combines the intricate details of wartime planning with simulated real-time battle tracking for operational mission support."

A high turnover of service members, with many only serving for a year in Korea, also sets Ulchi Freedom Guardian apart. This requires ongoing mission analysis to validate plans and shape future mission support during each exercise, Gill said.

DLA Energy's role in this exercise is important because of the capabilities of the organization and the people that make that possible, Manning said.

"No other organization has the tools, experience and expertise that DLA Energy brings to the table," he said. "DLA Energy has the unmatched ability to leverage multiple capabilities to simultaneously support joint force requirements."

The agency's worldwide contracting and distribution network gives USFK the latitude to synchronize actions for the respective forces operating across the peninsula, Manning said.

The DLA Energy Pacific at Korea team also plays a role.

"Organizationally, DLA Energy brings incredible capabilities to bear, but its true strength lies in its incredible workforce," Manning said. "Composed primarily of active duty military, prior-service Department of Defense civilians and Korean national workers, DLA Energy Pacific at Korea is able to harness their passion, insight and inventiveness to create a team that is more than simply the sum of its parts." 



Marines parachute out of an MV-22B Osprey on Oshima Island, Okinawa, Japan, during exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian. DLA Energy supported the exercise through training and fuel coordination. Photo by Marine Lance Corporal Hernan Vidana