



DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY

LOGLINES

The Nation's Logistics Combat Support Agency

Volume 2026, Issue 2

WESTERN HEMISPHERE & HOMELAND DEFENSE

Out of time

DLA Disposition Services to demilitarize hundreds of missile silos operating since the 1970s

From the services to stadiums

DLA Troop Support's drone corridor delivers critical tech at lightning speed

Removing roadblocks

New DLA policies streamline police access to military equipment

Relieving pressure

DLA Weapons Support sustains a resilient maritime fleet one valve at a time.

WARFIGHTER ALWAYS!



Army Lt. Gen. Mark T. Simerly
Director, Defense Logistics Agency

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THE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Thank you for reading this latest edition of Loglines, the Defense Logistics Agency's professional journal dedicated to exploring the ideas, challenges, and innovations shaping defense logistics in a rapidly shifting global landscape.

Our theme for this issue is "Western Hemisphere and Homeland Defense." In today's contested environment, we face disruption in every domain, and at every level of warfare — even in the homeland. This edition of Loglines illustrates how DLA is addressing the challenges facing the homeland and meeting the mission.

In this installment, we learn how DLA Disposition Services is working with the Air Force to demilitarize hundreds of Minuteman III silos to clear the way for modern weapons systems. On another front, DLA Energy is working with suppliers domestically and around the globe to ensure our forces have the fuel they need to meet the mission.

DLA Weapons Support is prioritizing what the Navy considers to be a top maritime concern. Experts at the major subordinate command discuss their efforts to find solutions to make a vital piece of equipment more readily available.

The demand for Unmanned Aerial Systems and Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems has increased exponentially, including defending against potential threats at highly attended events, such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Members of the DLA Troop Support Construction and Equipment team discuss their work with a White House Task Force to award contracts to help host cities secure their sites.

Also, within these pages, we feature an article focusing on changes to rules for the Law Enforcement Support Office program. Our teammates at DLA Disposition Services explain how these changes will make it easier for law enforcement agencies throughout the country to access equipment to support their communities at little or no cost.

For our featured interview, we sit down with DLA Senior Enlisted Leader Army Command Sgt. Maj. Petra Casarez for a conversation about her military career and her experiences at this agency. The discussion leads to a new feature we're introducing called "Get to Know an NCO." For our first article, Air Force Tech. Sgt. Deron Cooke discusses how his work at DLA Troop Support's Clothing and Textiles supply chain provides him with a broader view of military logistics.

DLA understands clearly that the homeland is more than a platform from which we project combat power or generate readiness — it is truly a theater of operations. One thing you can be sure of, no matter where U.S. forces are — at home or abroad — DLA is there to provide what they need, when and where they need it.

Warfighter Always!

Mark T. Simerly
Lt. Gen, USA
Director, DLA

CONTENTS

1	REMOVING ROADBLOCKS Policy changes make the Law Enforcement Support Office program easier and more accessible to law enforcement departments.	21	RELIEVING PRESSURE DLA Weapons Support is working with the U.S. Navy to enhance maritime security and fleet readiness.
3	OUT OF TIME DLA Disposition Services is helping to retire the Minuteman III missile silos to make way for a new weapons system.	24	FUELING THE MILITARY'S OBJECTIVES A strategic placement of energy assets and fuel allows DLA Energy to ensure joint forces have the power to achieve their objectives.
5	SUPPLY CHAIN SYMPOSIUM Representatives from industry and government attended a two-day event hosted by the National Defense Industrial Association in partnership with DLA.	27	FOUR STAR Q&A USNORTHCOM and NORAD Commander Air Force Gen. Gregory Guillot discusses protecting the homeland and DLA's role in helping his command get the job done.
8	FORGING A UNIFIED FRONT DLA Distribution riggers put their work to the test by joining a joint airborne operation with the 148th Air Support Operations Squadron.	30	NEW COMMAND: ESTABLISHING A NEW DLA TEAM TO SUPPORT USNORTHCOM To meet the expanding and increasingly complex logistics demands across the Western Hemisphere, DLA is establishing a new team supporting U.S. Northern Command.
10	A CONVERSATION WITH THE SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER Army Command Sgt. Maj. Petra Casarez discusses how she supports her fellow NCOs and the agency's civilian employees.	31	HISTORY SPOTLIGHT Outsourcing logistics: DLA's evolving relationship with OMB Circular A-76.
13	GET TO KNOW AN NCO Air Force Tech. Sgt. Deron Cooke discusses how his experience at DLA Troop Support is helping him grow as a noncommissioned officer.	34	CAMPAIGN OF LEARNING <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DLA Dialogues — Podcasts 34• White papers 36• Warfighter Talk summary 50
14	GUEST ARTICLE – HONORING EXCELLENCE The Philip A. Connelly Program recognizes the best in Army culinary operations.	51	DLA NEWSWIRE News briefs from across the agency.
19	FROM THE SERVICES TO STADIUMS DLA Troop Support is helping to deliver drone support at lightning speed, including a major sporting event.	53	I AM DLA Darryl Melvin, DLA customer support representative at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for DLA Weapons Support (Columbus).

Removing roadblocks:

Policy changes make LESO easier and more accessible to law enforcement departments



By Jake Joy, DLA Disposition Services Public Affairs

If a town needs equipment to melt snow or dig ambulances out during a blizzard, local law enforcement agency may not have the means to purchase what they need on their own.

However, thanks to the Law Enforcement Support Office, law enforcement agencies throughout the country can access this equipment to support their communities at no cost.

The Defense Logistics Agency, which administers the LESO program through its DLA Disposition Services major subordinate command, is rolling out new rules that will make equipment easier to access and remove excess paperwork for law enforcement agencies.

An executive order released in April 2025 called for increasing the provision of excess federal equipment for law enforcement. One month later, DLA participated in discussions

between War Department, Justice Department, and Department of Homeland Security officials on how to support the mandate. DLA committed to developing a list of actionable recommendations.

LESO Western Team Lead John Williams said seven changes the agency eventually submitted to DOW combine a mix of participant feedback, the input of governor-appointed state coordinators who serve as liaisons between DLA and recipients, and agency leadership experience.

The first policy adoption came in August, prioritizing law enforcement requisitions above those of other DOW Special Programs. All property that DLA declares suitable for reuse enters a 42-day Reutilization, Transfer, and Donation, or RTD, process cycle. During the initial 14-day availability window, military units receive priority for reusing DOW items. However, special program recipients can also make their requests during that period, and their requisitions are fulfilled if

military units decline reuse. Among the early access group are several special programs including LESO, the Firefighter Property Program, Computers for Learning, Foreign Military Sales, the Civil Air Patrol, and others.

Williams said this policy adoption effectively makes law enforcement agencies the top contender for all releasable equipment the armed forces no longer need. Recent metrics from the DLA Disposition Services RTD team have already shown a significant jump in the percentage of successful LESO property requests.

Another big change, instituted in October, is the immediate title transfer of all noncontrolled commercially available property outside of certain Humvee models. Previously, when a used pickup truck, street sweeper or bulldozer was provided to law enforcement, DLA maintained ownership of the item for a full calendar year, during which LESO staff kept account of the equipment in the agency's inventory. The arrangement resulted in a

Members of the Perth Amboy Police Department in New Jersey use a mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicle that was sourced through the Defense Logistics Agency's Law Enforcement Support Office to free an ambulance that became stuck during an early 2026 snowstorm.

Photo courtesy of the Perth Amboy Police



paperwork burden for participants.

“Recipients had to maintain and track and inventory at the LEA level and the state level,” said LESO Branch Chief Brienne Hallifax. “This has been a very positive administrative change for them.”

The most recent policy implementation is the transfer of small arms ownership to law enforcement. In March, two small arms in possession of the Alpena County Sheriff's Office in Michigan became the first that DLA fully transferred to non-federal law enforcement. That effort was followed by the transfer of 17 small arms to Michigan's Clawson Police Department in April.

Larry Goerge is the LESO coordinator for Michigan. He works with more than 300 LESO participants across the state, including 166 departments currently in custody of federal small arms they've received through

the program. He said that he and other coordinators across the nation were very surprised and pleased when DLA spread word of the impending policy change.

“It's a huge benefit to our departments,” Goerge said. “They can now treat these weapons like they treat their own inventory they purchased. If they make modifications, if a weapon is damaged, there's no longer a reporting requirement. Ownership will save them a lot of time and administrative burden.”

There are about 40,000 small arms in LESO's inventory that are currently in the armories of participating departments. Goerge's program in Michigan is serving as a test bed for a larger policy rollout. He began registering law enforcement weapons in his state in 2022 and had a leg up on working with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for small arms requiring registration.

He said a lot of effort has gone into helping establish a transfer system that meets the federal government's requirements. At times it has been painful, but a more streamlined process is now emerging.

LESO administrators say progress is being made and Michigan helped provide proof of principle.

“Larry was active, responsive, motivated and easy to work with,” said LESO Eastern Team Lead Jake Collier. “He worked very hard to make sure all those small arms were registered correctly. He's ready to go.”

The LESO team conducts required program compliance reviews with every participating state every other year. While her office will focus on compliance standards, Hallifax said she hopes the policy changes, along with several potential changes, will allow DLA's specialists to spend less time in the field poring through inventories and more time on customer education.

That includes focusing more closely on generating awareness and participation, providing system access

training and troubleshooting, helping set up property want lists, and generally making the whole process more intuitive.

“Our customer isn't DOW,” Hallifax said, stressing LESO's constant need to conduct outreach and education. “They're not a traditional RTD customer, in the sense of being military that's used to some of our ‘DOW-isms.’ These are law enforcement agencies, whose primary responsibility is protecting and serving, not being property disposal specialists or logisticians. ... We're focused on helping get these LEAs over their hurdles to make it easy for them to be in our program.”

The history of LESO

Congress first authorized DLA to transfer excess military material to law enforcement in the early 90s, and additional legislation in 1997 established LESO to facilitate it.

In the nearly three decades since, DLA Disposition Services reverse logisticians and the LESO team have partnered to provide equipment originally valued at more than \$8 billion to thousands of participating agencies.

Most requests the agency receives through LESO are for non-controlled items, like personal clothing, office supplies, tools, and emergency response equipment that become the property of law enforcement at no cost.

A fraction of additional requests DLA processes are for controlled items, which have historically been loaned, closely monitored, and returned for demilitarization when no longer needed. Those items include tactical rolling stock, like Humvees or mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles, which make up less than 1% of transfers, and small arms, like pistols and rifles, which represent less than 2%.

In 2026, LESO transformation is underway. With the same vigor, the agency is adapting itself to predict and meet warfighter needs in contested combat logistics environments.

Out of time:

DLA Disposition Services to help retire Minuteman III

By Jake Joy, DLA Disposition Services Public Affairs

In late March, the U.S. Air Force announced that it broke ground in Utah on a launch silo prototype for the LGM-35A Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile. The site will provide design and construction validation for an expected 450 modular silos to replace Minuteman III, the mainstay land-based leg of the nation's nuclear triad since 1970.

Sentinel is expected to be operational by the early 2030s, and as new

silos come online in the years after, legacy facilities will need demilitarization — a War Department requirement overseen by the Defense Logistics Agency.

In recent years, DLA Disposition Services' Nate Tichenor has served as the agency's senior disposal advisor to the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, or AFNWC, developing potential demilitarization and property disposal plans for the eventual retiring of Minuteman III facilities and specialized equipment.

Initially, thousands of unique, non-cataloged components associated with Minuteman III lacked property book accountability, he said. Many types of highly specialized equipment found only in Minuteman III facilities had not been assigned National Stock Numbers during program development in the 1960s. Over time, Tichenor created Local Stock Numbers to help the Air Force establish positive control over its aging equipment.

After educating Air Force leadership on DOW demilitarization policy

Air Force courtesy image



Air Force graphic depiction of an LGM-35A Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile launch silo prototype that recently broke ground in Promontory, Utah. Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services employees will certify demilitarization efforts for hundreds of Minuteman III underground launch facilities that will be replaced by Sentinel in the coming years.

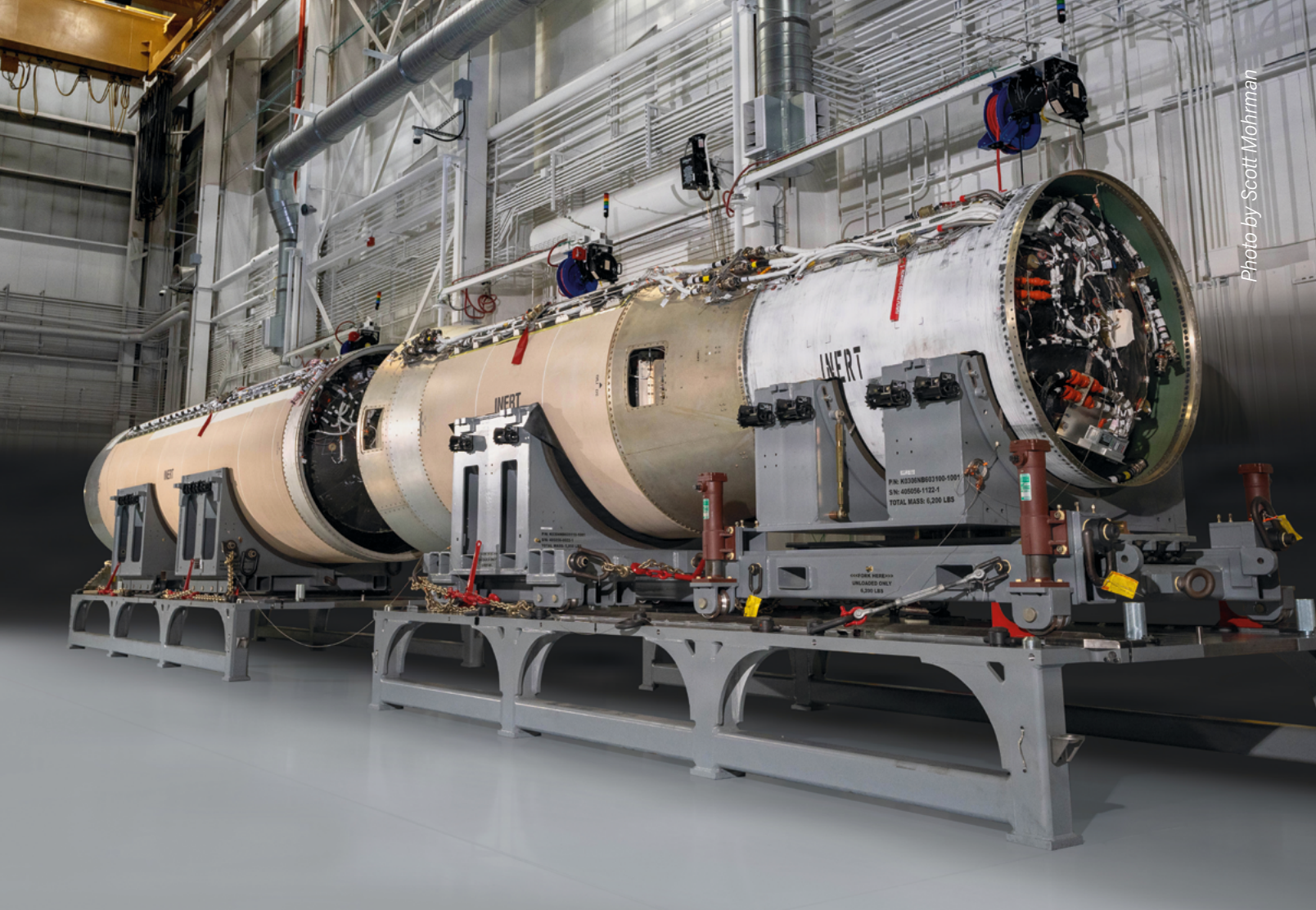


Photo by Scott Mohrman

An LGM-35A Sentinel test booster, including stages-one, -two and -three solid rocket motors and both interstage mechanisms, is assembled in this undated photo. The booster will be integrated with the missile's forward section to create the first fully assembled ground Sentinel test missile. This pathfinder test missile is essential for verifying the weapon system's design and preparing for the first Sentinel flight test, ensuring the future of our nation's strategic deterrence.

and validating a viable disposition framework through on-site visits, DLA Disposition Services delivered three recommendations for potential silo retirement paths for the Air Force to pursue.

Tichenor said the Air Force may seek DLA's assistance on securing a demilitarization waiver to bury the silos and all the unclassified Minuteman III equipment in place. If not, they will pursue traditional demilitarization, in which equipment is removed and transported to centralized locations where DLA property disposal specialists oversee and certify its destruction.

Whatever process the service selects, Tichenor said DLA will provide immediate and enduring assistance.

"DLA will have a hand in it, no matter what path they choose," Tichenor said. "We're at the start line. Once they choose a course of action, we're ready to execute and provide oversight for the duration."

The transition, once it begins, will likely take well over a decade, according to Air Force plans shared with DLA. The service wants to be prepared to sustain Minuteman III operations until as late as 2050.

In late April, Tichenor accompanied DLA Director Army Lt. Gen. Mark Simerly to Francis E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, to gain warfighter perspective on sustainment needs from Minuteman III tactical-level operators and maintainers. Simerly visited with personnel and

toured underground 90th Missile Wing launch, alert and control centers in the remote prairie, discussing replacement part and transportation challenges personnel must creatively overcome to keep the Minuteman III's half century-old systems humming.

Tichenor identified an additional future DLA task through discussions with on-site engineers and facilities maintainers: each silo stores thousands of gallons of underground fuel for facility backup generators that will need to be purged and potentially sold — two tasks DLA Disposition Services and DLA Energy are already well-positioned to handle.

"Until Sentinel is 100% online, we'll be involved until the end," Tichenor said.



Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment Michael Duffy, left, speaks during a fireside chat with Defense Logistics Agency Director Army Lt. Gen. Mark Simerly June 2, 2026 at the DLA Supply Chain Alliance and Symposium in Columbus, Ohio.

Supply chain symposium brings together industry partners, government leaders to discuss strengthening the industrial base

By Amy Perry and Dominique Shelton, DLA Weapons Support Public Affairs

The 2026 Defense Logistics Agency Supply Chain Alliance Symposium and Exhibition focused on discussing prominent topics from both the military and the industrial base: delivering readiness, building capabilities and enhancing logistics deterrence.

More than 1,300 representatives from industry and government entities attended the two-day event June 2-3 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, hosted by the National Defense Industrial Association in partnership with DLA.

Day 1

This annual event brings together leaders from across the War Department and vital industry programs, said

Navy Rear Adm. Julie Treanor, commander of DLA Weapons Support (Columbus).

“Your presence and active engagement here ensures we remain united, agile and ready to learn from and support one another in an increasingly complex global environment,” Treanor said. “Our shared commitment has never been more critical. The conversations we have here over the next two days will directly impact our ability

to reform acquisition, strengthen our supply lines, and rapidly field the resilient capabilities our warfighters need to win.”

The first day included a fireside chat between DLA Director Army Lt. Gen. Mark Simerly and Undersecretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment Michael P. Duffey. During the chat, Simerly posed questions about the revitalization efforts DOW is pursuing in the industrial base.

The department is working to better understand the supply chain, anticipate vulnerabilities, and break down barriers to promote competition and resilience in the industrial base, Duffey said, referencing a recent call to action to industry.

“We’ve got a team that’s working very hard on how we reduce the burden of the qualification and certification process,” he said. “I personally think that’s a major barrier to new entrants getting into the system. On the one hand, we need to ensure that the components and parts that we’re buying can be relied upon by the warfighter in the stressing use cases of battle. On the other hand, I’m concerned that we may be overengineering how we get to the level of confidence that we need, that a new entrant could provide as a qualified part or component to enter into the



Photo by Rob Wieland

Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services Director Michael Cannon shares expertise during a knowledge bar session at the 2026 Defense Logistics Agency Supply Chain Alliance Symposium and Exhibition, June 2-3, 2026, at the Greater Columbus Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

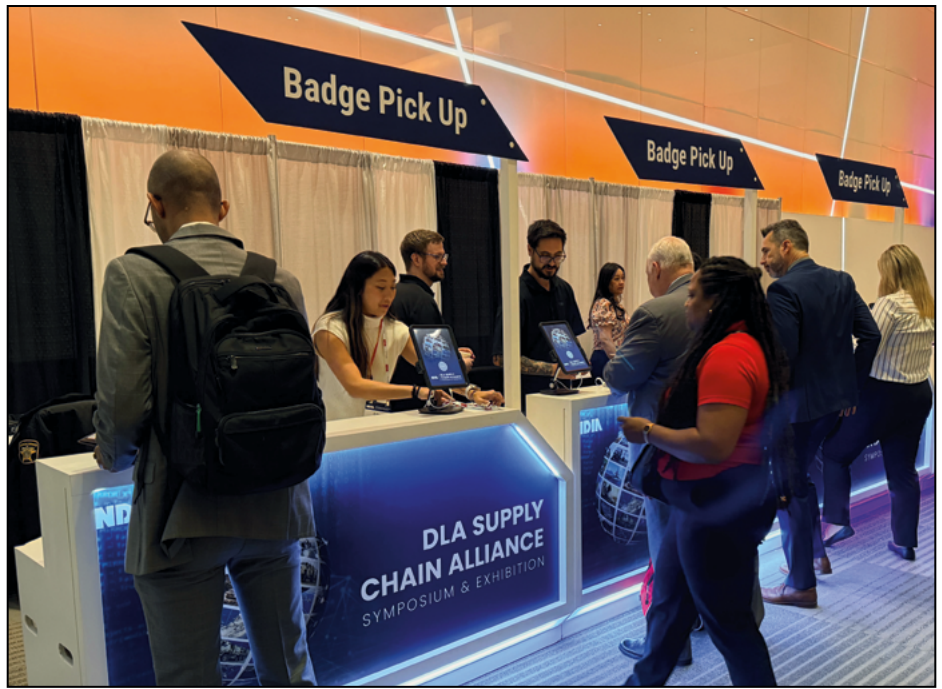


Photo by Nutan Chada

Participants pick up event badges as part of the more than 1,300 members of industry, government and the military attending the 2026 Defense Logistics Agency Supply Chain Alliance Symposium and Exhibition at the Greater Columbus Convention in Columbus, Ohio, June 2-3, 2026.

supply chain.”

The gains DLA has made in using artificial intelligence are essential, Duffey said, and he commended the work done to test the supply chain through bots and automation.

“I’ve been in the department for 20 years, and one of my big frustrations is that I always feel like we are a generation behind corporate America’s best business practices when it comes to leveraging information technology,” he said. “We’re immersed in information. The only way for us to effectively do our job is if we can assemble and leverage information in an effective way — in some cases artificial intelligence just does a better job.”

The duo also spoke about DLA’s revitalization of the national defense stockpile, the development of multi-year procurements to justify industry investment in surge capability, and empowerment of the defense industrial base, particularly with the small businesses that make up approximately 80% of the supplier base.

The first day of the conference also featured several knowledge bar discussions featuring senior leaders from

across DLA’s major subordinate commands on topics such as the national defense stockpile, the DLA Weapons Support transformation effort, the four supply chains within DLA Troop Support, critical mineral recovery and the importance of timely delivery and payments.

Army Lt. Gen. Gavin Lawrence, deputy commanding general of Army Materiel Command and former commander of DLA Troop Support, said this year’s conference theme captures the strategic reality the department faces.

“First, our adversaries are accelerating, adapting faster, building capabilities and closing gaps faster than at any point in recent history,” he said. “Second, in order to match and ultimately overmatch that pace, we must invest deliberately and urgently into our defense industrial base and supply chains. Without that foundation, we cannot scale to meet the demands of steady state operations, let alone the pressures of crisis or conflict.”

Day 2

The second day of the symposium



Attendees at the 2026 Defense Logistics Agency Supply Chain Alliance Symposium and Exhibition at the Greater Columbus Convention in Columbus, Ohio, talk with agency leadership as well as other industry partners.

shifted focus from defining challenges to forging actionable solutions.

“We’ve spent a lot of time discussing the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ — our shared challenges, the shifting global landscape and the strategic priorities of several services in the joint force,” said Air Force Brig. Gen. Patrick Launey, commander of DLA Weapons Support (Richmond), during his opening remarks. “But today, we’re going to focus on the ‘how.’ How do we take the fresh perspectives we gained yesterday and apply them to our daily operational challenges? How do we translate our collective capability, our innovative ideas, our relentless pursuit, our responsive sustaining strategies and concepts, and the generating of readiness and lethality for our warfighters? Because this is about them. It’s always about them.”

The second day included breakout sessions, networking opportunities and

a keynote address from Simerly.

DLA’s director compared the agency’s mission and its relationship with industry partners to a Korean phrase he learned during a tour of service in South Korea: “Katchi Kapschida,” which means “We go together.”

“When I think about the term ‘alliance’ here — supply chain alliance — it’s about going together every step of the way,” Simerly said. “In order for us to go together, we all need to understand where we’re going so that we can achieve those common goals together.”

Simerly emphasized that this partnership is woven into the fabric of the nation’s defense. Quoting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, Simerly said, “In every military option, we could not do our jobs without the men and women, across our country, who show up every day, around the clock, to a factory floor, a workshop, a laboratory, who

build the weapons and capabilities we need to project American combat power.”

The second day of the event featured specialized breakout sessions and knowledge bars designed to address specific industry challenges and opportunities. Breakout session topics included mitigating critical material risk, CMMC partnering for cyber readiness, open questions to the director of supplier operations, and a look at supplier pathways.

The knowledge bar series continued in the main exhibit hall, featuring informal, expert-led discussions on topics including: enhancing efficiency in distribution led by acting DLA Distribution Deputy Director Joseph Farris, end-to-end quality management led by DLA Energy experts, and an IT strategy session led by DLA Chief Information Officer Adarryl Roberts.

Forging a unified front: DLA Distribution riggers join joint airborne operation

By Dorie Heyer, DLA Distribution
Public Affairs

Army parachute riggers assigned to Defense Logistics Agency Distribution in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania, reached a readiness milestone: Putting their work to the test by executing a static line jump alongside airmen from the 148th Air Support Operations Squadron to showcase the rapid mobility and joint interoperability essential to Western Hemisphere and homeland defense missions.

After relying on external airborne operation support since 2018, the rigger section successfully restored its organic capabilities during a training evolution earlier this February.

Their core mission in support of rapid deployment and logistics: Maintaining all Federal Stock Class 1670 Aerial Delivery Equipment and related air items so they're serviced and ready to go. Since skills gained from past assignments are perishable, riggers must maintain their airborne operations capabilities.

"The progression from CH-47 Chinook operations into C-130 Hercules and UH-60 Black Hawk operations significantly increases our flexibility and operational adaptability," said Army Staff Sgt. Edwin Perez, a parachute rigger assigned to DLA Distribution Susquehanna who served as the primary jumpmaster for the operation. "Different aircraft platforms present

different procedures, timing and mission considerations, so expanding our proficiency allows DLA Distribution Susquehanna riggers to integrate into a wider range of mission sets and support requirements."

"Actively conducting airborne operations with multiple airframes and branches of service is vital in keeping us in touch with current trends, techniques and equipment," said Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 William Cook, a material management chief at DLA Distribution Susquehanna. "We depend on the professionalism, knowledge and expertise of our riggers to ensure that all the Federal Supply Code 1670 items shipped from DLA Distribution Susquehanna to the warfighter

"THE RIGGER MOTTO, 'I WILL BE SURE ALWAYS,' REPRESENTS THE LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIRED IN OUR PROFESSION."

— STAFF SGT. EDWIN PEREZ

are ready to contribute to the mission at hand."

Building on February's success, this April 30 operation at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, brought together DLA Distribution riggers, the Air Force's 148th ASOS — a subordinate unit of the 193rd Special Operations Wing — and a guest jumpmaster from the Army's 5th Special Forces Group.

"Training together builds the shared understanding and seamless

interoperability required for homeland defense missions," Cook said. "When a crisis occurs, it's often a joint force that's deployed that maximizes the strengths of multiple organizations. Our training aids in preparation for that type of multi-organizational effort."

This multi-agency airborne evolution emphasized collaboration. A Pennsylvania Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk crew provided air support and coordinated pre-mission communication, while the joint jumpmaster team ensured operations met rigorous special operations and current schoolhouse standards. For the DLA Distribution riggers managing the program, ground operations involved assisting airmen with limited jump

experience — a process that underscored fundamental training, meticulous preparation and seamless multi-branch integration.

"A unified posture depends on organizations being able to quickly integrate and operate effectively

together under pressure," Perez said. "Joint training events allow us to identify and solve friction points before they become problems during actual operations."

Starting the jump program from scratch meant that the DLA Distribution Susquehanna rigger team had to overcome complex logistical challenges to regain this capability.

Parachute packing operations are governed by a system of redundancy and oversight to ensure personnel

safety. Each parachute pack requires a three-person team: a packer, an in-process inspector and a final inspector. While junior enlisted soldiers may serve as packers, inspectors must be noncommissioned or warrant officers. All personnel are required to graduate from the Parachute Rigger Course at Fort Lee, Virginia, and must complete a certification process involving frequent practice, written exams and live packing. During the process, the packer works under constant observation and must pause at critical points outlined in the technical manual so the in-process inspector can verify the work is flawless. Only then is the command given to continue.

Accountability is finalized on a parachute log record, signed by both the packer and the in-process inspector as a guarantee that the parachute was packed exactly to standard. The final inspector then conducts a thorough exterior inspection before the parachute is ever issued to a jumper.

“The rigger motto, ‘I will be sure always,’ represents the level of

responsibility and accountability required in our profession,” Perez said. “When supporting partner forces during joint operations, trust becomes one of the most important factors. Personnel from other organizations are placing confidence in the riggers’ training, certification, attention to detail and professionalism each time they use

“WE DON’T JUST HOPE IT WORKS; WE ENSURE IT WORKS THROUGH A MULTI-LAYERED GAUNTLET OF PROFESSIONAL OVERSIGHT.”

— CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 WILLIAM COOK

equipment prepared by our team. That trust is earned through consistency, adherence to technical standards, and maintaining a culture centered on safety and accountability.”

“We don’t just hope it works; we ensure it works through a multi-layered gauntlet of professional oversight,” Cook added.

Typically, riggers arrive at a unit and integrate into an active operation where a separate staff section handles airborne planning, allowing the riggers to focus solely on packing and issuing

equipment. At DLA Distribution Susquehanna, the team had to establish all aspects organically without an existing operational framework.

“Getting the program to where it is today was a massive undertaking, primarily because of the sheer scope of what we had to rebuild from scratch,” Cook said.

To restore readiness, the unit executed a roadmap focused simultaneously on technical rigging proficiency, jumpmaster leadership and airborne operation planning. Riggers underwent rigorous

certifications for multiple parachute systems, completed technical inspections on existing inventory and recertified as inspectors. Simultaneously, the unit reconstructed its jumpmaster program by auditing records and conducting refresher training.

“From a homeland defense and rapid-response perspective, versatility matters,” Perez said. “Reestablishing these capabilities also reinforces confidence in the DLA Distribution Susquehanna rigger program and demonstrates that our team can safely and professionally execute airborne operations while maintaining the standards expected of Army riggers.”

Because there was no separate planning staff, riggers also assumed the responsibilities of airborne planners, coordinating aircraft, securing drop zones and managing medical coverage. The zero-defect nature of the airborne mission meant the team had to establish flawless operations across all three functional pillars before a single jumper could board an aircraft.

“Today, our fully restored program successfully packs parachutes and coordinates joint operations for units, representing a complete restoration of their organic airborne capabilities,” Cook said. “Seeing this team tackle this immense undertaking, all while pushing through red tape, is a testament to their absolute dedication to the airborne mission.”



Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 William Cook, a rigger assigned to Defense Logistics Agency Distribution Susquehanna, Pennsylvania, inspects equipment in preparation for a static line jump along with airmen from the 148th Air Support Operations Squadron, a subordinate unit of the 193rd Special Operations Wing, at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, April 30, 2026.

Photo by Dorrie Heyer

A conversation with DLA Senior Enlisted Leader Army Command Sgt. Maj. Petra Casarez



Courtesy photo

Defense Logistics Agency Senior Enlisted Leader Army Command Sgt. Maj. Petra Casarez works with a plasma cutter at the DLA Disposition Services training facility in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Army Command Sgt. Maj. Petra Casarez became the Defense Logistics Agency's senior enlisted leader in September 2025. In this interview, she discusses her military career, how she supports her fellow noncommissioned officers and the agency's civilian employees, and the energy she projects every day to keep the workforce motivated.

What made you decide to make military service your career?

I was very interested in working with vehicles, so I enlisted as a maintainer. I think I always knew that I wanted this to be my career. There are just so many possibilities. You're working with people, you're serving your country, and you have the opportunity to go to so many different places.

Every place I've been, when I'm there, feels like the best assignment ever. You can never get bored because you're

going to different places and doing different things. From my perspective, the U.S. Army, and the entire Department of War, is an absolutely magnificent organization to be part of.

The director said that part of your role is to be a bridge between commands, cultures and communities. What does that look like to you, and how have you built those bridges?

DLA is a huge, massive team. We have about 25,000 teammates all over the world, in different places with many different skills.

Obviously, there's no way for me to be everywhere, but I listen to the people. I'm the voice of the DLA team. I'm able to hear from others when I go places, and sometimes I hear things that the director wouldn't hear. Or somebody can say something to me, and I can look into it a bit further.

As a "green suiter," I'm the bridge between the DLA commands and the services. I have interactions externally as well as internally, so the bridge goes outside of DLA. That way, we don't just assume we know what the warfighter needs. We really, truly understand what they need to be able to win.

The Army NCO creed says, "My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind — accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my soldiers." What are you doing to prioritize these responsibilities?

I became an NCO almost 30 years ago. The creed is something you memorize when you become an NCO, but you're always told it's not just about the memorization of it. It has to be etched into your heart. It can't just be words; the true feeling of those words has to mean something. I think the "accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my soldiers" aren't separate. For me, I look at the welfare of the workforce. When you take care of people and you give them the tools and skills, then the mission is going to succeed every time.

At DLA, I can't just say "soldiers;" it has to be people. I also use the word "teammate." I don't care what uniform it is. It's not about what you wear; it's about the team.

NCOs are an important part of DLA's workforce. As the command's senior enlisted leader, how do they help the agency meet its mission?

The enlisted workforce is the heartbeat of the operation. We are the empaths who feel what's going on.

NCOs are like the blind-spot mirror in cars that beep when you're trying to change lanes and you didn't really look. They ask the questions and have that sensor.

I also think that we're not afraid to get to the point of friction and ask the hard questions. Or the opposite happens and an NCO will bring attention to people. They may not like it, but we think it's important that the person gets recognized when they're caught doing something good.

Because I and the other DLA leaders think NCOs are so important, I'm excited to announce a new section in every issue of Loglines. The first "Get to know an NCO" column highlighting one of our great NCOs from DLA Troop Support appears in this issue of Loglines.

How do you describe DLA's role in homeland defense and the Western Hemisphere? What are the priorities?

If you look at the [National Defense Strategy](#), the homeland is the priority. Before this, we looked at the homeland as power projection; we didn't necessarily look at it as a theater of operation.

Now the focus is on making sure that we are fully focused on our homeland; if we can't make sure that our homeland is secure and resilient, then we can't project anything.

DLA, as the nation's logistics combat support agency, is here also for things like natural disasters. It's not just about contingencies that are caused by enemies. It's also making sure that if there's any type of disaster — it could be a hurricane or earthquake or fire — we're always ready. We're like 911 for logistics. We must make sure we can support our partners in the Western Hemisphere and make sure they are really resilient. That shows our adversaries that it doesn't matter what happens, our team is here.

What's coming up for DLA that has you excited?

Contested logistics and everything that we're working on to combat those challenges. The recent exercises we've done, like Global Thunder and Keen Edge, let us hone our skills. You can see how that work has been paying off during recent operations in the U.S. Central Command area.

Contested logistics challenges have us look at the what-ifs and things like where we should use artificial intelligence, how we use predictive analytics, and where we can transform from being reactive to more predictive, agile and resilient. The Secretary of War wants peace through strength and deterrence, and logistics supports that deterrence. We want the enemy to look at us and say, "We don't want to go to war because DLA is going to make sure that the troops get what they need."

Speaking of being excited, you're known for your powerful "Woo!" at events. How did that become your catchphrase?

I worked at the Ordnance School at Fort Lee, and every day when we arrived and every night when we left, we'd always say, "Go Ordnance!" Our executive officer tried to make it energetic. We often had really rough, long days, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The training center didn't stop because we still had to bring in new soldiers.

We wanted to end each day with a bang. We might still have our masks on as we were leaving, and we'd say, "Go Ordnance! Woo!" It pumped us up. It was tough, but we got through, and it got us ready for the next day.

I've used it at the Army pre-command course. I've used it in different scenarios where there are senior leaders. I think it shocks people in a positive way. It puts a smile on their faces, and sometimes they can't believe that you did it or said it.

For me, it's about the energy. I love what I do, and I want



Courtesy photo

Defense Logistics Agency Senior Enlisted Leader Army Command Sgt. Maj. Petra Casarez, second from left, and Marine Capt. Curtiss Butler, center, visit the USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Aircraft Carrier to expand how the Defense Logistics Agency can support the Navy.

you to feel it and be a part of it. It's not about me; it's about us as a team. As a leader, your feelings are contagious. When I have a leader who's in a bad mood or sad or disappointed, then it makes me nervous and I'm walking on eggshells.

I think that "Woo!" is contagious in a good way. By Friday, I feel physically tired and my brain feels a little scrambled. But if I say the "Woo!" and you're excited and I see you smile, now I'm excited.

What's the one thing you want the DLA workforce to understand about how their work not only directly impacts the warfighter, but also supports national security?

I really want them to feel and understand that they are truly important.

I visited Richmond, Virginia, in January for the Keen Edge exercise, and we had a lot more snow than usual. The installation team worked all weekend to clear away that heavy, icy snow so when we drove in, we were able to report

to the operations center.

Their parking lot sits up high, and the team was so good that they not only cleared all the roads of the "snowcrete," but they also knew to clear the stairs from the parking lot to the main building. That could have been a death trap.

To me, that shows what DLA does. They knew that it was important that people get to the exercise. It was a notional exercise, but what if it wasn't? What if our adversary was attacking, or we were reacting to a national disaster or defending the homeland? They made sure that the team could drive on post, and they made sure that the steps from the parking lot to the building were clear.

It doesn't matter if you work at the installation or warehouse, everybody has such an important part. DLA works behind the scenes, but the results are before your eyes if you know where to look. They're a big part of generating America's combat power.

Editor's Note: This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Get to know an NCO: Air Force Tech. Sgt. Deron Cooke

My name is:

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Deron Cooke

What is your job at DLA?

I'm a materiel management enlisted career broadener at DLA Troop Support.

Can you explain what you do in that role?

The Air Force Career Broadening program selects experienced noncommissioned officers to gain expert-level logistics experience outside of their traditional assignment. Broadeners can be assigned across different DLA organizations, or they're embedded within the Air Force Materiel Command to learn how the military operates within the larger global supply chain.

At DLA Troop Support, I'm the first broadener who will rotate through all four supply chains. I'll be able to see the operational coordination, acquisition support, supply chain visibility, and all the other initiatives that DLA Troop Support performs.

How long have you been at DLA?

I was assigned to DLA in April 2025 as part of a three-year controlled tour for the broadening program.

When did you enlist in the Air Force?

I enlisted in March of 2019. I came through the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, down the road from DLA Troop Support. I did my technical training in Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, for materiel management.

What's one moment that stands out from your military career so far?

An Air Force unit operating in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility recently needed help with Class II (clothing) sustainment. The challenge was that Class II items typically are not pre-positioned overseas, and because they're normally not high-priority cargo, the traditional distribution sites were backlogged and not able to move them fast enough.

Since I'm with the Air Force, my supervisor at DLA Troop Support brought me on to help with coordination. The team was able to coordinate with U.S. Transportation Command experts, some third-party logistics providers, and even commercial carriers. We identified alternate routing solutions around bottlenecks within that distribution pipeline, and we were able to get the sustainment items over to the warfighters in a timely fashion.

What do you feel is the most important part of being a noncommissioned officer?

The most important thing is taking care of people. I believe leadership is ultimately about service, whether it's mentoring, supporting teammates, problem solving or helping others grow. We all have a responsibility to positively impact the people around us, and as an NCO, that responsibility becomes even greater because people look to you for guidance, professionalism and leadership every day.

How does your experience as an NCO contribute to DLA's mission?

As an NCO, I try to build strong relationships and communicate effectively to help connect the work being done here to directly support the warfighter. Sometimes, simply showing

appreciation and helping people understand the real-world effect of their work by saying, "Thank you for what you do for me," while standing there in uniform strengthens their morale. It reinforces how important their work truly is to the mission and what it means to them and the country.

The theme of this issue of Loglines is "Western Hemisphere and Homeland Defense." How does your role tie into this theme?

My role directly ties back to our commitment to defend the nation, whether foreign or domestic. To do that effectively, DLA is shifting from a reactive, just-in-time model to a more proactive and agile concept of "just enough" logistics.

This means moving our planning mentality closer to the warfighter, allowing us to anticipate needs ahead of the fight. Instead of waiting for the call, our goal is to have critical support already in place, ensuring our warfighters have what they need before they even have to ask. It's about being in the room where decisions are made, because we're seeing more and more that logistics is what wins fights.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I'm grateful for the opportunity to represent the Air Force within DLA Troop Support. This assignment has really shown me the amount of passion, expertise and effort that goes into supporting the warfighter behind the scenes every day, which I never had any indication of while in the operational Air Force. Working alongside the civilians here gives me a deeper appreciation for the critical role that DLA plays in supporting the military readiness across the globe.

Editor's Note: This interview was edited for length and clarity.



Photo by Army Sgt. Christian Dela Cruz

Army Staff Sgt. Danny Oquendo, a culinary specialist for the 10th Group Special Forces Group Field Feeding Team, prepares chicken wings for lunch service during the Connelly Competition at Pinon Canyon, Colorado, March 25, 2026. The Phillip A. Connelly Competition recognizes the Army's top field feeding teams for excellence in food service operations and their ability to sustain Soldiers in any environment.

Honoring excellence: Why the PAC program matters more than ever

Honoring excellence in Army field feeding: The Philip A. Connelly Program

By Army Capt. Brooke De Renzo

Every year, culinary specialists and food service teams across the U.S. Army take on a unique but crucial challenge: proving themselves in the Philip A. Connelly Program. More than a contest, the PAC Program is a transformative force in Army food service standards, ensuring excellence even in the most austere and demanding field environments.

DLA Fact: Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support supported the 58th Philip A. Connelly Awards Program by ensuring competing teams had the resources to showcase culinary excellence. During the planning phase, Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 George Davis, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shemika Harris, and DLA civilians Darryl Thomas and Stephen Whalen coordinated the availability of required unitized group rations.

Origins and mission: The spirit behind the competition

Established in 1968 and named after Master Sergeant Philip A. Connelly — a former president of the International Food Service Executives Association and a lifetime champion of military food service — the program was instituted to drive continuous improvement in Army culinary operations. Jointly sponsored by the National Restaurant Association and the Army's deputy chief of staff,



Army Sgt. Alejandro Barrera and Staff Sgt. Jmyus Reed, with the 10th Special Forces Group Field Feeding Team, serve food during lunch service as part of the Connolly Competition at Piñon Canyon, Colorado, March 25, 2026. The Phillip A. Connolly Competition evaluates Army Field Feeding teams on their ability to plan, prepare and serve meals while maintaining sanitation and operational efficiency in field environments.

and administered by the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence, the competition brings the Army’s best food service professionals together to demonstrate mastery, innovation and adaptability in both garrison and field kitchens.

The program’s mission statement, “the personification of food service excellence executed by field feeding teams resulting in the presentation of extremely gratifying dining experiences across all Army field environments,” encapsulates its focus on professionalism, technical skill and soldier support.

DLA Fact: DLA Troop Support’s Subsistence Supply Chain provides food support for the military all over the world. From individually packaged meals in a soldier’s ruck sack, to a ship’s galley, to full-service dining facilities on military installations, the Subsistence team at DLA Troop Support makes sure that service members around the world have the fuel they need to fight.

How the competition works: More than just cooking

Success in the PAC Program isn’t just about who can make the tastiest meal under pressure. The process itself is rigorous and comprehensive, designed to test technical skill, teamwork and a deep understanding of logistical operations.

This year’s competition highlighted the skill and creativity of 92G Culinary Specialists from installations around the world, who were evaluated on their ability to prepare mission-focused meals using operational feeding systems.

The evaluation unfolds in two main phases. In Phase I, units submit a detailed virtual packet, including a mission statement, historical summary, achievements, team profiles, operational plans and action photos from the field. This is followed by a virtual board review where evaluators quiz team members on a range of relevant topics to ensure they can apply military food service doctrine in practice.

DLA Fact: For the event, DLA Troop Support provided Unitized Group Rations — Heat and Serve for breakfast meals, along with UGR-A and UGR-Short Order for lunch service.

Required competition meals included:

- Breakfast: BF4 — dehydrated eggs, turkey sausage, corned beef hash
- Lunch: Menu 7 — Steak
- Short order: Menu 3 — smoked chicken wings

Phase II is the hands-on assessment when trained evaluators arrive at the unit’s home station for a full review. Here, teams are observed and rated on a series of critical areas: in-briefs, convoy operations, food and equipment security, setup times, and the practicalities of food preparation and service under field conditions. The checklist is thorough, covering everything from sanitation and nutrition



Photo by Army Sgt. Christian Dela Cruz

Army Spc. Joel Avilla, left, and Sgt. Alejandro Barrera, culinary specialists assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Field Feeding Team, prepare breakfast during the Connolly Competition at Piñon Canyon, Colorado, March 25, 2026. The Phillip A. Connolly Competition recognizes the Army's top field feeding teams for excellence in food service operations and their ability to sustain Soldiers in any environment.

standards to logistical efficiency and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing scenarios, mirroring wartime or training conditions.

DLA Fact: DLA Troop Support Subsistence provides military field rations known as meals, ready to eat, including kosher and halal meals, as well as unitized group rations for troops in the field. The team makes sure 1.5 million warfighters are fed each day

operational improvements, and ensuring that cooks are trained to deliver nutritional and safe meals whether in a modern dining facility or an expeditionary field environment.

DLA Fact: DLA Troop Support Subsistence offers equipment for preparing food in galleys, in dining facilities, and in the field. Field feeding equipment includes kitchen trailers, food sanitization centers and field stoves.

Field feeding, in particular, is a discipline with great importance. Soldiers in the field face unpredictable and often harsh circumstances that demand not only culinary expertise but also ingenuity, resourcefulness and a deep grasp of logistical and tactical considerations. Feeding soldiers in the field isn't simply about caloric intake. Good meals are a core building block for morale, a symbol that their well-being is valued, and a literal source of energy

for sustaining readiness in high-stakes training and combat environments.

The heightened focus on large-scale combat operations in recent years has only increased the PAC Program's importance. As the Army prepares for a potential future fight where supply lines can be disrupted, terrain is uncertain, and adaptability is everything, the ability to deploy field kitchens and deliver hot, healthy meals quickly can make a measurable difference in both morale and sustained combat effectiveness.

DLA Fact: Every year, the Subsistence team at DLA Troop Support starts working in the spring to make sure service men and women around the world have traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. Bringing that taste of home isn't a light lift — over 150,000 pounds of turkey and 124,000 pounds of beef were delivered in time for the 2025 holiday season.

Why the PAC Program matters: Training for real-world readiness

At its core, the PAC Program isn't about pageantry — it's about preparation. According to the Army Quartermaster Corps, the program's key objectives include raising the professionalism of Army culinary specialists, providing tangible recognition for excellence, driving measurable

Modernizing field feeding: Tools and technology

One of the keys to staying ahead in field feeding is embracing innovation and modernization. For years, the containerized kitchen has been the backbone of Army field feeding. This “kitchen in a box” is highly mobile and capable of producing upwards of 650 complete meals three times a day — an impressive feat that has kept countless training and combat operations supplied with hot food. With a preparation window of less than three hours, it embodies the Army’s can-do ethos.

But tomorrow’s battlefield will demand even more. Enter the expeditionary kitchen trailer, which represents a leap forward in agility, efficiency and effectiveness. Thanks to its consolidated design, the EKT reduces the number of vehicles and personnel needed for setup and operation, boosts tactical maneuverability, and slashes fuel and manpower requirements. In testing and field exercises, it has already shown promise in supporting LSCO and other future-oriented operations.

case in point: 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) setting the bar

No exploration of the PAC Program’s value would be complete without a spotlight on units that exemplify its standards. The 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) is one such standout.

Every year, the 10th SFG(A) Dining Facility PAC Team enters into the competition with one goal: to set the standard for excellence in Army culinary operations. With a full slate of rigorous daily training and support responsibilities — including high-profile field training like cold-weather training, special forces basic combat course support, and special operations mountain warfare training — this team manages a subsistence budget exceeding a million dollars annually and handles sophisticated logistics from containerized kitchens to tactical vehicles.

Despite persistent staffing shortages — maintaining exceptional standards with just 13 assigned personnel out of an authorized 37 — the team consistently provides reliable meal

service and executes complex field feeding support across the group. Their work during events — such as the 2025 Thanksgiving meal, where they served nearly 500 service members and their families — underscores both the operational and morale benefits of elite food service.

Crucially, their commitment to continual improvement goes beyond just winning awards. Coordinating with organizations like U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command, Army Food Advisors and industry partners, the team trains on cutting-edge gear like the EKT and experimental sanitation trailers, as well as advanced tracking and drone systems for supply management. This ensures their skills and technologies are on the leading edge.

Their approach: executing repeated full-scale rehearsals, participating in emerging technology training, collaborating with external experts, and prioritizing real-world readiness as much as competition performance. This relentless pursuit of mastery ensures that whatever the future battlefield demands, Army

Photo by Army Reserve Staff Sgt. David Cook



Army Sgt. Wesley Wolmart, assigned to the 731st Quartermaster Company, sets up a Mobile Kitchen Trailer during Phase II of the Philip A. Connelly Competition at Camp Santiago Joint Training Center, Puerto Rico, March 18, 2026.



Photo by Army Reserve Staff Sgt. David Cook

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Charles Hunter, Army Reserve Command G-4 food advisor, receives a meal prepared by soldiers assigned to the 731st Quartermaster Company during the evaluation operations portion of the Philip A. Connelly Competition at Camp Santiago Joint Training Center, Puerto Rico, March 19, 2026. The Department of the Army-level evaluation measures field feeding capabilities and ensures operational readiness, technical proficiency, and compliance with Army field feeding doctrine, food safety requirements and competition standards.

field feeding teams will be up to the challenge.

DLA Fact: By aligning logistics planning with culinary execution, DLA Troop Support continues to strengthen readiness and ensure warfighters worldwide receive reliable, high-quality field feeding support.

Why this all truly matters

So what's at stake in a food service competition? Far more than a ribbon or a medal. The PAC Program is a force multiplier for the entire Army. Here's why:

- **Operational readiness:** Well-trained field feeding teams are a cornerstone of sustained combat operations, enabling units to endure, adapt and win even when resources or supply lines are strained.
- **Morale and retention:** The tangible boost in morale delivered by a

hot, quality meal in tough conditions cannot be overstated. Feeling cared for sustains spirits, keeps teams focused and reinforces a sense of purpose in the ranks.

- **Innovation and adaptability:** PAC fosters innovation, whether it's learning to use new kitchen systems, optimizing logistics or developing procedures that translate to flexible real-world operations.
- **Professional development:** By elevating the profile and professionalism of culinary specialists, the competition provides a career-enhancing platform to help develop leaders who will shape future operations.
- **Army transformation:** As Army operations evolve, so do the demands on support roles. The PAC Program ensures that food service keeps pace, not simply surviving, but thriving, as a vital part of operational transformation.

The bottom line: The PAC Program is about building forces that can fight, win and recover, wherever and whenever needed. It recognizes and sharpens the skills that make that possible. As the 10th SFG(A) PAC Team demonstrates, the pursuit of field feeding excellence isn't just about being the best at mealtime. It's about standing ready for any challenge: anytime, anywhere.

Brooke C. De Renzo is a captain in the U.S. Army. She earned an Master of Arts in Urban and Public Affairs from the University of San Francisco, where she participated in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program. She is currently serving as the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment Commander for the Group Support Battalion at 10th Special Forces (Airborne).

From the services to stadiums: DLA Troop Support's drone corridor delivers critical tech at lightning speed

By Christian DeLuca, DLA Troop Support Public Affairs

As the demand for unmanned aerial systems and cutting-edge counter-drone defenses surges across military and domestic operations, the logistical challenge of procuring this rapidly evolving technology has never been more urgent.

At the heart of the effort to equip warfighters and federal agencies with this technology is the Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support's Construction and Equipment supply chain, which has established itself as the government's premier source for drone and counterdrone solutions.

"Our team recognized early on that the traditional acquisition process was simply too slow for the increased demand of this rapidly evolving

technology," said Marko Graham, Construction and Equipment's director of customer operations. "We responded by creating an ecosystem that pairs expert, hands-on guidance with preestablished, highly competitive contracting tools. The result is a streamlined pathway that cuts through red tape, getting secure equipment into the hands of operators in days rather than months."

Responding to a War Department directive to ensure U.S. dominance in unmanned systems, the Construction and Equipment team developed a two-pronged strategy to simplify procurement and accelerate delivery: the online Drone Corridor Marketplace and the creation of the Rapid Entry Autonomous Procurement Requirements team.

"Inexpensive, readily available drones have fundamentally changed

the way that war will be fought. They are as integral to readiness and lethality as any other piece of critical equipment on the battlefield," said John S. Cuorato Jr., Construction and Equipment's Fire and Marine division chief and REAPR team lead. "As the premier DOW source for UAS, C&E leadership determined we needed to go further to provide even more support to our customers. That meant forming the REAPR team to put a complete and total focus on UAS purchases."

"Customers demand an easy ordering platform for these commercial products. Creating the Drone Corridor offered the best avenue," he added.

The Drone Corridor is hosted on DLA's FedMall, an e-commerce site for federal agencies and state government partners. It provides a streamlined point-and-click platform for ordering systems from the DOW's Blue List of approved, secure technology.

The REAPR team's subject matter experts assist with more complex, customized systems, working with customers and suppliers to build and procure products that fulfill a variety of operational demands.

The secret to this agility is the Special Operational Equipment Tailored Logistics Support Program, which uses preestablished contracts with vendors to bypass lengthy procurement cycles.

"The SOE TLS Program is what allows us to move fast, get the best pricing and provide total support for customers," Cuorato said. "Orders are competed among the program's four SOE vendors, ensuring competitive



Photo by Army Spc. Ryan Dunn

Emergency response agencies from across North America gather in Seattle for Spectrum Cyclone, a communications training exercise designed to bolster preparedness ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support partnered with federal and state agencies to rapidly procure and deliver critical counter-unmanned aerial systems ahead of the global sporting event.

pricing. Regular SOE TLS Program orders are awarded in days or weeks. Ordering from FedMall can be days or hours to award.”

This capability is evident in its support of military commands across the globe engaged in contingency operations. Supporting current missions, DLA has awarded more than \$113.8 million in UAS and counter-UAS contracts, with an average time of just 72 hours from order to award.

This same rapid response was used to help protect the homeland. DLA is serving as an acquisition partner for a nearly \$250 million federal effort to equip law enforcement with counter-UAS technology for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which is expected to draw over 5 million attendees to U.S. matches.

Working with partners like the White House Task Force, the Department of Homeland Security, a Joint Interagency Task Force and the FBI, Construction and Equipment has awarded millions of dollars in contracts to help host states augment their security postures, including Kansas, \$2.5 million; Massachusetts, \$2.6



Photo by Marine Capt. Isaac Lamberth

Marine Corps Cpl. Calvin Burke, an intelligence specialist with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, activates a Skydio X2 small unmanned aerial system to survey the defensive line during a simulated assault at Glen Airfield, Queensland, Australia, July 2025. Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support's Rapid Entry Autonomous Procurement Requirements team and the online Drone Corridor Marketplace enable warfighters to rapidly procure War Department-approved systems to maintain readiness and overwatch capabilities on the modern battlefield.

million; New Jersey, \$7.6 million; and Pennsylvania, \$7.4 million. They have also awarded an additional \$100 million contract to DHS.

In a statement provided to DLA, the Kansas Highway Patrol lauded DLA's support and the speed of the acquisition.

“The Kansas Highway Patrol appreciates the Defense Logistics Agency's support in the rapid

procurement of counter-unmanned aerial system equipment. The malicious use of unmanned aerial systems, commonly known as drones, poses a growing threat to public safety. The expedited deployment of this equipment will strengthen law enforcement's ability to detect and mitigate these risks, particularly during FIFA World Cup events in the greater Kansas City area beginning in June 2026.”

The FIFA security missions had significant challenges including tight deadlines dictated by a manufacturing base building counter-UAS equipment to order. The Construction and Equipment team also developed a new process with DLA Finance and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service to accept funds from state governments, which were unable to use standard military funding procedures.

“It's fast, high-volume, high-visibility and critically needed,” Cuorato said. “The difference in mission just highlights our versatility. We are the program of choice for this equipment, and it is a tremendous source of pride to be able to take something that we do every day and apply it to protecting the homeland and American citizens as they enjoy this massive, international sporting event.”



Photo by Army Sgt. Collin Mackall

Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Pumala, a security force specialist assigned to the 704th Munitions Maintenance Squadron, prepares to engage an enemy unmanned aerial system during training in the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, Feb. 19, 2026. As the malicious drone threat grows across multiple domains, Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support's Construction and Equipment supply chain is ensuring U.S. military units and homeland defenders are equipped with cutting-edge counter-UAS technology at the speed of the threat.

Relieving pressure: Forging a resilient maritime fleet one valve at a time



Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7) conducts a replenishment at sea with Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Erie (CG 70) while underway in the Caribbean Sea, Feb. 3, 2026. U.S. military forces are deployed to the Caribbean in support of the U.S. Southern Command mission, Department of War-directed operations, and the president's priorities to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and protect the homeland in support of U.S. Southern Command.

By Cindy Pray and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Chris Gerber, DLA Weapons Support (Columbus)

Strengthening supply chains to enhance maritime security and fleet readiness is a tall order for Defense Logistics Agency Weapons Support that starts with a small-but-critical component: valves.

Understanding the challenge

Valves can be described as the unsung heroes of maritime technology, indispensable for the safe and efficient operation of naval vessels. From regulating the flow of essential fluids for propulsion and cooling systems to managing fire suppression and ballast control, their proper function is critical to mission success.

“Literally every weapon system we support takes a valve,” said Kirsten Riesbeck, a DLA Weapons Support supplier operations division chief. “Maintaining an agile and resilient valve supply chain, however, has proven to be a challenge — one we’re tackling head on.”

The challenge stems from a perfect storm of increased demand driven by an aging fleet and expansion goals, a diminished industrial base, and intricate manufacturing processes — all leading to a shortage of the essential shipbuilding components. At the heart of the challenge lies the Navy’s long-range 2023 Battle Force Ship Assessment and Requirement Report’s call for 381 battle-ready ships by the mid-2040s, a significant increase from the current 293. Compounding this, over

half of the Navy’s ships are more than 20 years old, requiring more frequent maintenance and replacement of parts.

In early 2025, a surge in cannibalization — the removal of parts from one piece of equipment on a unit to repair another piece of equipment on another unit — amplified the number of valve back orders across the fleet. While a common short-term fix, it highlighted growing pressure on the supply chain.

The valve manufacturing process itself adds another layer of complexity, requiring specialized tooling, specific materials and complex processes like casting and forging.

“Overall, valves are expensive items characterized by statistically significant demand surges, complex risk profiles, challenging acquisition



Photo by Navy Seaman Brendan Watt

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Gabriel Cook, assigned to the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), opens valves as part of equipment testing May 14, 2025.

execution, long lead times and declining on-time deliveries,” Riesbeck said. “Workforce constraints, capacity limitations, cast and forging bottlenecks, and overall complexity make valves one of the most closely monitored commodities in the Class IX supply chain.”

The nature of demand for many valve types further complicates efforts to maintain agility and supply chain resilience for repair parts, with a significant number being in low demand with highly variable ordering patterns, she added.

“For example, if a relief valve that costs \$115,000 per unit is only needed once every 15 years, maintaining on-hand inventory would not be fiscally responsible, and vendors are less likely to reconfigure their manufacturing lines for small, sporadic orders,” Riesbeck said.

She added that companies may decline to quote on certain valves, producing an industrial base saturated with orders from a finite number of vendors to provide the parts.

“It’s a demand surge not seen since the Cold War coupled with a 40-year decline in the industrial base, creating a challenge that cannot be ignored,” Riesbeck said.

Forging a resilient fleet

Recognizing the urgency, Riesbeck said DLA is prioritizing valves as a top maritime concern and is spearheading collaborative efforts with U.S. Navy leadership to find solutions.

In September 2025, DLA Weapons Support hosted the Maritime Industrial Base Program in Columbus, Ohio, to discuss the pressing challenges and explore potential investment areas. The MIB Program was established a

year earlier to lead the Navy’s efforts in revitalizing America’s shipbuilding and repair capabilities for its surface ships, aircraft carriers and submarines.

The MIB Program outlined three lines of effort for industrial base improvements: supplier development, workforce development and advanced manufacturing.

DLA Weapons Support is playing a role in this endeavor through several initiatives:

Strengthening supplier partnerships: DLA is proactively engaging with industry to overcome challenges and enhance the resilience of its supply chains. In 2025, the DLA Weapons Support’s Maritime Supplier Operations Vendor Engagement Team held 72 meetings to identify and address issues within the valve industry, which led to a reduction in back orders by nearly 30%. In addition to

these targeted engagements, the agency's contracting officers and integrated supply teams are collaborating with vendors to find and validate new subcontracting capabilities. In a recent success, DLA assisted a vendor in locating a new subcontractor for a specialized thermal spray used to coat valves and protect them from saltwater corrosion. This intervention not only resolved a production challenge but also improved the durability and reliability of essential maritime components, ultimately bolstering warfighter readiness.

Expanding the industrial base:

To enhance resilience and reduce dependency on a limited number of vendors, DLA is actively seeking to bring new suppliers into the fold. This includes a concerted effort to engage with small businesses nationwide, which are often sources of innovation and agility. Since October 2024, DLA Weapons Support has awarded 3,332 small-business contracts to the valve supplier base, including two new small-business vendors.

Adopting new contracting and repair strategies: The adoption of different contracting strategies has led to the creation of new long-term valve contracts. One notable success story is the motor operated pilot valve — a component of naval fire suppression systems. To address an ongoing back order, DLA Weapons Support teamed with the original equipment manufacturer to transition the work from the U.S. Navy to DLA and is establishing a

\$100 million long-term contract to prevent future readiness gaps.

Additionally, DLA Weapons Support and the Naval Sea Systems Command are collaborating to return work back to the Navy for repairable items. Shawn Cody, deputy director of DLA Weapons Support Maritime Supplier Operations, said returning certain valves for repair — especially those with large, expensive-to-manufacture housings — will save taxpayer dollars and reduce unnecessary back orders.

“We’ve seen positive churn and interest by NAVSEA leadership to identify what valves the Navy can begin in-house repair on,” he said. “We’ve already identified 152 valves so far that fit the criteria to be repaired.”

Harnessing advanced and additive manufacturing: DLA is also a player in the adoption of manufacturing technologies, managing the Joint Additive Manufacturing Model Exchange — a secure digital library for sharing 3D-model data across the DOW. As noted in the MIB Program’s 2025 Year in Review, NAVSEA has approved additively manufactured parts for standard supply channels, and DLA is now procuring these components for submarines. This advanced manufacturing is already making an impact, with material properties in some cases exceeding the baselines of traditional casting and forging. The MIB Program reports having printed over 450 submarine and ship parts, including valve components,

with next steps focused on qualifying more 3D-printed parts and scaling production.

Early signs of success

“These efforts are already yielding tangible successes for the fleet, including increased production capacity, reduced lead times and decreased overall costs,” Riesbeck said, noting a recent success.

“When the USS Iwo Jima Amphibious Readiness Group required a surge of valves for a major operation in January, we delivered. By leveraging our strengthened supplier relationships and streamlined processes, we successfully filled 33 valve requisitions for 63 units, ensuring the ARG was fully mission-capable for its deployment in South American waters,” she said.

A commitment to maritime security

DLA Weapons Support’s collaboration with the MIB Program underscores the agency’s commitment to U.S. Navy fleet readiness. Through strategic foresight and data-driven supply chain optimization, DLA is addressing immediate readiness gaps while developing a more resilient industrial base.

The integrated approach ensures sailors will have what they need to protect the nation’s interests and maintain maritime security across global points of presence, from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Reisbeck said.

“OVERALL, VALVES ARE EXPENSIVE ITEMS CHARACTERIZED BY STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DEMAND SURGES, COMPLEX RISK PROFILES, CHALLENGING ACQUISITION EXECUTION, LONG LEAD TIMES AND DECLINING ON-TIME DELIVERIES.”

— KIRSTEN RIESBECK

Fueling the military's objectives: DLA Energy's agile contracting powers missions in the Western Hemisphere



U.S. military aircraft park on the flight line of José Aponte de la Torre Airport in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, following military actions against Venezuela in support of Operation Absolute Resolve, Jan. 3, 2026. U.S. military forces are deployed to the Caribbean in support of the U.S. Southern Command mission, Department of War-directed operations, and the president's priorities to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and protect the homeland.

By Army Master Sgt. Thaddeus Harrington, DLA Energy Public Affairs

Thanks to strategy and advanced planning, Defense Logistics Agency Energy served as a silent engine behind operations Absolute Resolve and Southern Spear.

A strategic placement of energy assets and defense fuel support points allowed DLA Energy to make sure the joint forces maintained the operational reach and endurance necessary to achieve their objectives.

The operations triggered an increase in fuel requirements. To help secure U.S. interests, DLA Energy ensured a resilient and uninterrupted flow of energy to air, sea and ground forces. The multi-million-gallon effort required more than just DFSPs, tankers and refuelers, or contracts and vendors alone; it took the entire Joint Petroleum Enterprise to keep the military moving on its own terms, driven by strategic objectives rather than fuel limitations.

Agile procurement in action

The surge in fuel requirements served as a high-stakes proving ground, prompting a balancing act between established long-term agreements and the immediate spot buys necessary to sustain the mission, said Matthew Womer, a contracting officer at DLA Energy.

“The atmosphere at DLA Energy shifted,” Womer said. “The commencement of these operations instilled a heightened sense of purpose, as the direct impact of our procurement actions on real-world events became unmistakably clear.”

The immediate priority for DLA Energy's contracting and analysis teams was to establish supply chains for remote locations that lacked fuel infrastructure. The teams divided operations into two primary focus areas: the U.S. southern border and overseas locations. Along the border, contract specialist teams secured spot buys to enable systematic fuel ordering across

five new sites.

Simultaneously, the team spearheaded the task of establishing new supply chains in Panama and Trinidad. This required extensive market research to identify vendors that had the knowledge and capability to navigate local laws as well as adhere to U.S. regulations.

“Our primary challenge wasn't sourcing a massive amount of fuel; rather, it was the opposite,” Womer said. “Securing small, agile tank wagon loads, often less than 3,000 gallons at a time, to sustain troops directly on the front lines; this presented a unique set of difficulties.”

The need for small buys drove up per-gallon prices significantly, as fixed costs like transportation and administrative fees could not be distributed across hundreds of thousands of gallons, Womer said.

Applying the standard framework of tools to new operating locations, although not unique, still required intensive effort and careful execution,

he said. The reliance on diligent market research and rigorous vendor vetting successfully secured the necessary resources, ensuring uninterrupted logistical support for the warfighter.

Filling the tanks

The operations' success relied on the rapid positioning and strategic placement of fuel assets, rather than relying on U.S.-owned infrastructure, said Brian Schule, chief of inventory and distribution management for DLA Energy. The agency used contracts with vendors around the globe to supply the military's fuel needs.

"We make the mission happen regardless of any constraints, to make sure the warfighter gets fuel and we don't miss any sorties," Schule said.

DLA Energy's Direct Delivery Fuels Division worked with vendors in the Dominican Republic to meet daily fuel demands, creating a hub for the Air Force's "bed down" plan to stage tankers.

The timing of the operations presented a hurdle to overcome because it corresponded with storage tank maintenance at key locations and a tanker that unexpectedly entered

maintenance, Schule said. To cover this gap that could limit flying operations, the team pressed a commercial tanker into service in the area, along with other vessels to supplement coastal distribution.

Simultaneously, a commercial tanker chartered by the Military Sealift Command operated as a floating DFSP. Navigating to the Caribbean, the tanker delivered more than 22 million gallons of fuel, ensuring that naval forces could remain on station without the need to return to port, he said.

To bypass logistic bottlenecks caused by a tanker in maintenance, DLA Energy executed spot purchases and delivered the fuel directly to DFSPs. These spot buys delivered 3.8 million gallons of jet fuel just in time to support the surge.

A team from DLA Energy's Facility Sustainment Directorate worked around the clock to return a 2 million-gallon storage tank at DFSP Tampa and a 1 million-gallon storage tank to service at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa. With the tanks back in service, Schule said his team conducted resupply, ensuring warfighters had the fuel supplies needed to

complete their missions.

Managing the 'last tactical mile'

In the performance of military logistics, the final stretch — the "last tactical mile" — can determine a mission's outcome.

The last tactical mile is an interesting construct because, in DLA Energy's scope, that "mile" can mean thousands of miles of ocean or land, said Jason Hill, DLA Energy Liaison officer to U.S. Southern Command. To help bridge this gap, the agency uses existing mechanisms such as contracts and fuel cards, which are point-of-sale purchase cards that allow cardholders to buy fuel worldwide.

"DLA Energy will always do our best to fully support the warfighter," Hill said. "In the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility, this typically means establishing new fuel contracts to meet those requirements as close as possible to where the unit needs the fuel."

From global storage facilities to the engines of fighter jets and the hulls of naval vessels, DLA Energy proved useful during recent operations, ensuring critical resources reached their

Photo by Navy Seaman Spencer Staggs



The world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), left, conducts a replenishment at sea with Supply-class fast-combat support ship USNS Supply (T-AOE 6) while underway in the Caribbean Sea, Nov. 28, 2025. U.S. military forces are deployed to the Caribbean in support of the U.S. Southern Command.

destinations without interruption.

However, when Operation Southern Spear caused an increasing demand, existing contracts could not support the surge, Hill said. The agency pivoted, rapidly modifying contracts and implementing new ones to handle the influx of military assets, particularly in Puerto Rico.

Hill noted that total visibility of the supply chain allowed the agency to identify gaps before they had a chance to cause operational failures.

Helping establish a location for Air Force tankers in the Dominican Republic was particularly impactful to him, Hill said. With no existing fuel support points or contracts in the country, DLA Energy worked with local vendors to source over 30 million gallons of jet fuel to support Southern Spear. This allowed the Air Force to operate forward, removing the workload of flying fuel from the continental U.S. When the vendor faced inventory limitations, real-time coordination ensured a daily minimum flow that kept Air Force KC-135 tankers flying, Hill said.

At sea, logistics were even more complex, he added. DLA Energy used consolidated tankers to refuel at support points in the United States, transit to the Caribbean and conduct ship-to-ship transfers to U.S. Navy oilers.

These oilers then performed underway replenishments, stretching

a refueling hose line between ships to resupply vessels while moving at sea. This “floating supply chain” is governed by rigorous safety protocols and coordination, allowing the fleet to remain on station as long as the mission demanded, Hill said.

Homeland defense first

“Success is having stuff at the right place at the right time,” said Army Col. Alphonso Simmons Jr., commander of DLA Energy Americas. “We have to get comfortable with predictive logistics ... that is how we get in front of requirements that will eventually be executed.”

The Western Hemisphere is the No. 1 priority and DLA Energy Americas plays a key role in homeland defense, ensuring the right posture to sustain and support all things that happens here in the homeland, Simmons said.

While the operations’ technical execution happened in the air and at sea, the strategic energy oversight remained anchored at its headquarters in Houston.

DLA Energy Americas plays a role in ensuring the right posture to support national interests by supporting U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Transportation Command. Additionally, it partners with the Federal Emergency Management Agency

and contingency contractors to provide bulk petroleum support for disasters in the U.S.

To manage the surge, Simmons pushed his headquarters to continue to look up and out, focusing on strategic synchronization with higher headquarters and the USTRANSCOM while empowering his subordinate battalions to remain great at the tactical fight.

This management of the last tactical mile was not a matter of luck, but a shift toward what Simmons called predictive logistics to reduce the risks of contested logistics. Moving away from the just-in-time models of the past, DLA is increasingly using advanced data analytics to forecast needs before they become emergencies.

“There’s no way around the human dimension,” said Simmons. “No matter how much technology or digital products we build, you can’t get around the human dimension, there’s nothing like it.”

Simmons described a philosophy built on customer service and inter-agency synchronization. He noted that success was grounded in the ability of leaders to “come up on the net,” over-communicate and align their efforts toward a singular goal. To him, the most vital metric of success is not found on a spreadsheet, but in the collaborative spirit of the Joint Petroleum Enterprise.



Navy Chief Warrant Officer 4 Cesar Romero, assigned to Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8), oversees a fueling at sea evolution with Overseas Mykonos, Oct. 19, 2025. During recent military operations, Defense Logistics Agency Energy ensured the joint forces were fueled for their missions by strategically identifying fuel support points and supply chains for remote locations that lacked fuel infrastructure.

Photo by Navy Seaman Abraham Ramirez

Four Star Q & A

A discussion with the USNORTHCOM and NORAD Commander



Air Force Gen. Gregory Guillot is the commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command. In this interview, he discusses protecting the Western Hemisphere and speaks on his commands' relationship with the Defense Logistics Agency.

What is the operational relationship between USNORTHCOM and the Defense Logistics Agency? What are some of the most important ways DLA supports USNORTHCOM?

The operational relationship between U.S. Northern Command and the Defense Logistics Agency is defined by complete integration. DLA is the logistical backbone across all USNORTHCOM's primary lines of effort — Homeland Defense, Defense Support of Civil Authorities, and Theater Security Cooperation. Through embedded liaison officers, DLA is fully integrated into USNORTHCOM daily operations and future planning at every echelon. As USNORTHCOM confronts the reality of contested logistics, DLA serves as the vital link to the commercial industrial base, and its ability to rapidly surge resources ensures USNORTHCOM can sustain force projection.

The theme of this issue of Loglines is "Western Hemisphere and Homeland Defense." In your view, what is the most critical message for our readers regarding the interconnectedness of these two areas of focus?

USNORTHCOM works closely with adjacent combatant commands, allies and partners to ensure lines on a map don't create gaps and seams an adversary could exploit. USNORTHCOM views the Western Hemisphere as a single, interconnected theater with USSOUTHCOM. When competitors gain a foothold in the Caribbean or South America, they are positioning themselves to hold the U.S. at risk. By integrating operations across combatant commands, we create true "defense-in-depth" by defending at distance to mitigate threats before they reach our borders. If warfighters are operating seamlessly across the Americas, the Joint Logistics Enterprise must be equally seamless to secure supply chains and ensure logistics resilience. DLA's hemispheric perspective meets the needs of this reality.

As the Nation's Logistics Combat Support Agency, how can DLA support your vision of a "defended homeland"?

Within USNORTHCOM's Homeland Defense mission, DLA is a critical mechanism for securing the defense industrial base and logistical networks in the U.S.

Because DLA supports all combatant command and services, it possesses a holistic view of aggregate sustainment requirements. By leveraging its understanding of the commercial sector, DLA can actively illuminate supply chain risks, mitigate vulnerabilities that threaten global force projection, and proactively invest in the resilience required to operate in

a contested logistics environment. In conflict, DLA will be essential partners in our mission to sustain operations under duress, at great distances, and under harsh environmental conditions.

DLA's Strategic Plan emphasizes the need to win in a contested logistics environment. What elements of contested logistics do you find most important or unique for the USNORTHCOM area of responsibility?

The Department of War projects power from the homeland, yet it relies overwhelmingly on commercial and civilian infrastructure to operate. For USNORTHCOM, a contested environment doesn't just mean protecting supply lines in a distant theater; it's also contending with the reality that domestic ports, rail networks, energy grids, and the defense industrial base can be targets of kinetic and non-kinetic attacks. To win in this environment, securing commercial supply chains here at home is critical. DLA's ability to illuminate domestic vulnerabilities, build redundancy into civilian-military logistics networks, and ensure USNORTHCOM can simultaneously execute Homeland Defense and global force projection — even while under attack — is the linchpin to success.

From your perspective, what does "win in a contested logistics environment" mean for homeland defense and North America, and how is USNORTHCOM working with DLA to address these challenges?



Winning in a contested logistics environment means that even under multi-domain attack, friendly supply chains remain unbroken — ensuring we can simultaneously, one, dynamically defend the United States; two, sustain combat forces overseas; and three, support the daily needs of our citizens. USNORTHCOM works with DLA to achieve this reality by rigorously mapping operational requirements to identify and close gaps through joint advocacy, resourcing and investment. This partnership exists from the strategic level by embedding homeland defense requirements into critical Joint Logistics Enterprise forums like DLA's Set the Theater, Set the Globe conference, to the tactical level by stress-testing logistical resilience in Tier-1 integrated exercises like Vigilant Shield.

From your perspective, what are the primary logistical hurdles to sustaining persistent, all-domain awareness and defense in the High North (the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions of North America, including Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland)? What innovations in supply, distribution and infrastructure support do you need from DLA to ensure mission success in this extreme environment?

Sustaining persistent, all-domain awareness in the High North is fundamentally constrained by three hurdles: extended distances, the extreme seasonal weather and a lack of baseline infrastructure. Because local

commercial resources are not purpose-built to the needs of the Joint Force, every operation incurs a premium in cost and time. To defend the United States, USNORTHCOM must treat the Arctic not as a periphery, but as the “forward fight.”

DLA can drive innovation by rapidly injecting commercial off-the-shelf technologies into our formations, developing alternative energy distribution to power remote sensors, and pre-positioning winterized sustainment. Furthermore, because the Arctic extends across U.S. Northern Command, U.S. European Command and U.S. Pacific Command, DLA's ability to integrate requirements and posture resources trans-regionally will allow the DOW to turn this harsh environment from a logistical vulnerability into a strategic advantage.

DLA is expanding our footprint at your headquarters and establishing an O-6 DLA USNORTHCOM office, as well as embedding a permanent liaison officer in the Alaskan Command logistics office. As the commander of NORAD and USNORTHCOM, what do these embedded LNOs need to focus on to better support your mission?

This expanded footprint is a welcome development, and the establishment of an O-6 DLA USNORTHCOM office confirms DLA's commitment to resourcing homeland defense. With increased bandwidth, the office will do more than support current operations;

it will drive deliberate planning and shape exercise development and contingency response. Whether managing the massive logistical complexities of JTF-Southern Border's missions, modernizing the approach to sustainment in the High North, or supporting long-term air defense initiatives like the Golden Dome for America, DLA is a critical enabler and teammate. By embedding permanently, especially in challenging environments like Alaskan Command, DLA ensures the NORAD and USNORTHCOM can proactively mitigate sustainment challenges.

As NORAD, USNORTHCOM and DLA continue to integrate data-sharing platforms, what are your expectations for how this collaboration will enhance logistics readiness and supply chain resiliency against potential disruptions or attacks on our critical infrastructure?

The primary expectation for data integration with DLA is for logistics to be elevated from a secondary planning consideration to a primary driver of real-time decision-making. When providing strategic recommendations to national leadership during a crisis, I need a seamless, multi-classification common operating picture that overlays DLA's deep intelligence on the commercial industrial base directly with USNORTHCOM's warfighting requirements. By integrating this data, USNORTHCOM achieves decision advantage — being aware of disruptions to critical infrastructure instantly,



outpacing adversaries' decision cycle, and guaranteeing supply chain resiliency in a contested environment.

What keeps you up at night, and what does DLA need to do to help?

I sleep well knowing the professionals across NORAD and USNORTHCOM along with our many partners, such as DLA, understand the complexity of the environment in which we operate and show up every day giving their best. We are well-equipped and well-trained to handle the most operationally challenging situations. We prepare for the threat of simultaneous, multi-domain attacks — kinetic, cyber and space — by

defending critical infrastructure and ensuring force projection before a conflict even begins. I know DLA is ruthless in illuminating our supply chains to eliminate single points of failure before adversaries can exploit them. I know DLA is building redundancy so that when we take a hit, we don't break, whether that's in Alaska, Puerto Rico, or anywhere in between. DLA's "Warfighter Always" approach supports NORAD and USNORTHCOM as "We have the Watch."

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

The United States' adversaries operate across all domains, and they

recognize that to challenge the U.S. globally, they must disrupt our logistics locally. The relationship between NORAD, USNORTHCOM and DLA is crucial in countering that threat. Together, we are not just moving supplies; we are hardening the foundational power projection platform of the Department of War. Investments made now in data integration, commercial resilience, and hemispheric posture are exactly what will ensure the United States remains secure and our warfighters remain lethal, no matter what crisis arises.

Editor's Note: This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Sign at the entrance to North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command at Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

New command: Establishing a new DLA team to support USNORTHCOM

By Air Force Maj. Gen. David Sanford,
DLA Logistics Operations director

To meet the expanding and increasingly complex logistics demands across the Western Hemisphere, the Defense Logistics Agency established a new DLA U.S. Northern Command support command. The initiative embeds an O-6 commander at USNORTHCOM headquarters to create a direct, empowered link between DLA's enterprisewide logistics capabilities and USNORTHCOM's mission to defend the homeland and support civil authorities.

The DLA USNORTHCOM Support Command will enhance joint planning, accelerate the resolution of time-sensitive requirements, and ensure DLA's capabilities are fully integrated into USNORTHCOM operations. This alignment strengthens national security and improves the defense of the homeland in the face of emerging threats and crises.

A new era of integrated logistics

The security environment across the Western Hemisphere continues to evolve, presenting challenges that demand agile, synchronized and highly responsive logistics support. From large-scale natural disasters to the enduring imperative of homeland defense, USNORTHCOM requires a logistics partner capable of anticipating needs and delivering rapid, reliable solutions.

The DLA USNORTHCOM Support Command marks a significant step forward in integrating logistics expertise directly into operational and strategic decision-making. At the center of this effort is the commander of the DLA USNORTHCOM Support Command, Air Force Col. John "Gus" Gustafson, who serves as DLA's principal representative to USNORTHCOM.

This role is far more than a coordination function; it is a strategic partnership. The commander works with USNORTHCOM planners and operators as the critical bridge between them and DLA's global network of logistics experts, capabilities and resources. Gustafson will participate fully in

USNORTHCOM's governance, planning and execution processes, representing DLA across boards, bureaus, centers, cells and working groups. The role will also help shape agendas, introduce new initiatives, and ensure NORTHCOM requirements are incorporated into DLA's long-range planning efforts.

Looking toward the future

The establishment of the DLA USNORTHCOM Support Command is a forward-looking investment in the future of homeland defense logistics. By embedding an empowered O-6 commander within USNORTHCOM with capability to be augmented with other DLA employees as needed, DLA ensures its support is proactive, integrated and aligned with the command's most critical missions. This initiative strengthens joint operations, enhances national readiness, and reinforces the security and resilience of the U.S. for years to come in an area of responsibility that stretches from the Arctic Circle to the Southern Border.

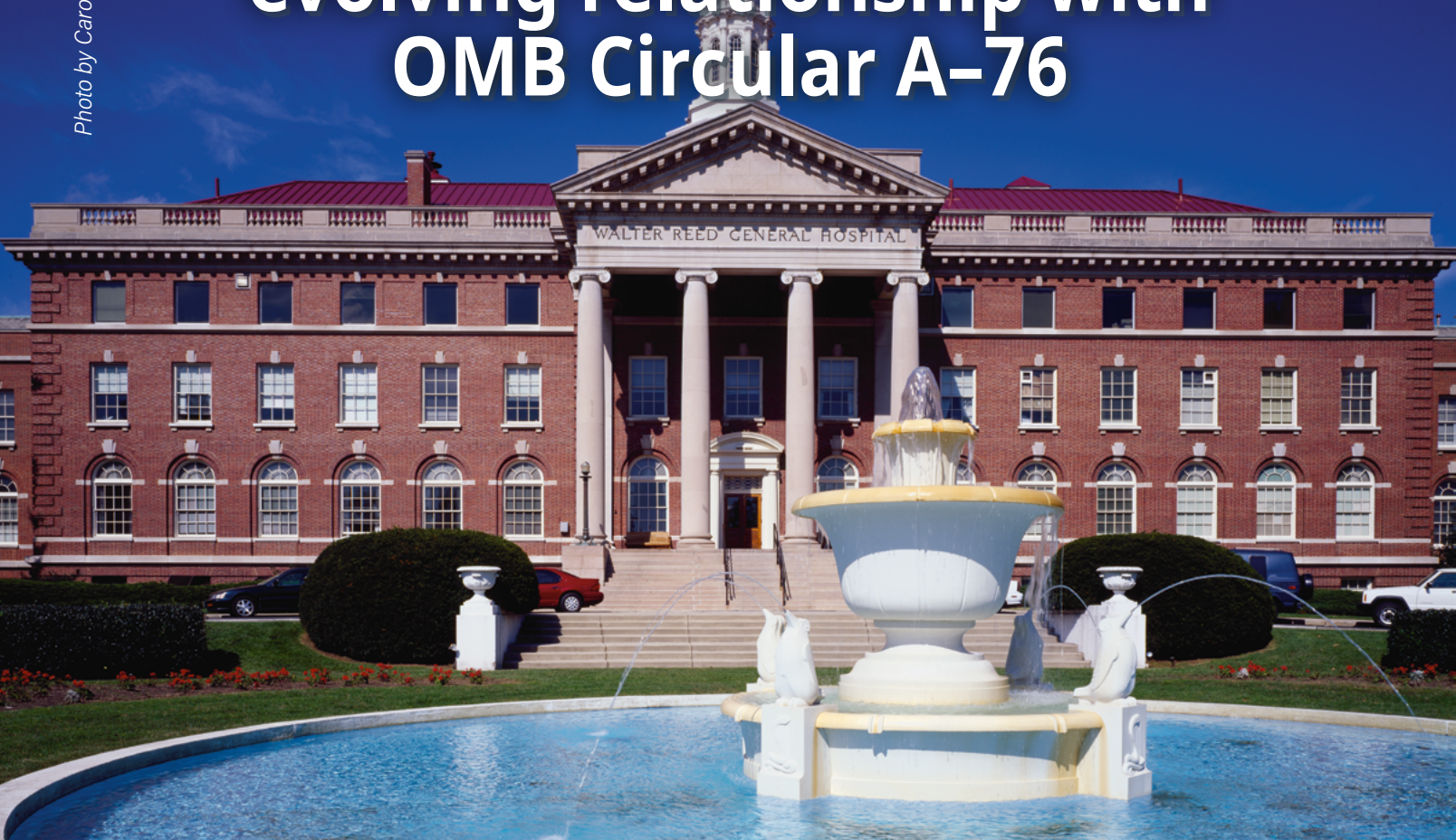


Air Force Gen. Gregory Guillot, commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, delivers a lecture to students, staff and faculty at the U.S. Naval War College onboard Naval Station Newport, Jan. 7, 2026. The lecture discussed the purpose of NORTHCOM and NORAD, as well as U.S. defensive strategies in the North American continent.

Photo by Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Connor Burns

Photo by Carol M. Highsmith

Outsourcing logistics: DLA's evolving relationship with OMB Circular A-76



The main hospital at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 2011, shortly before its closure. Challenges with contracts awarded under the OMB Circular A-76 process prompted Defense Logistics Agency and other Defense Department components, including Walter Reed, to pause public-private competitions.

OMB Circular A-76 is a federal policy issued by the Office of Management and Budget that dictates how executive agencies must determine whether recurring commercial activities should be performed by the private sector or by in-house government employees.

By Dr. Colin J. Williams, DLA Historian

The Defense Logistics Agency doesn't just interact with the defense industrial base; DLA is completely reliant on the services the base provides. More than 99.99% of the items DLA obtains and most

of the logistics services it provides come from American companies. This dependence stems from the federal government's longstanding policy not to compete with taxpayers. As mandated by law and governed by Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76, DLA performs functions that are inherently governmental and relies on free enterprise for the rest.

OMB Circular A-76 defines inherently governmental functions as intimately related to the public interest. If an activity doesn't concern the sovereignty, monetary transactions or property of the United States, it should be competed with civilian companies by

procedures outlined in the circular. While simple in concept, this policy is frequently viewed through defense reform lenses that make it complex in application. These reforms can be split into six phases over the years based on how DLA has related to public-private competitions.

A reliance on civilian companies resulted in DLA paying little heed to OMB Circular A-76 in its first phase from 1961 to 1981. Agency leaders weren't ignoring rules; instead, they thought the circular didn't apply. Caspar Weinberger forced them to reexamine this assumption after becoming President Ronald Reagan's

first defense secretary. The agency entered the second phase of its relationship with the circular by considering 100 minor missions. Out of an abundance of caution, it competed only 20, most of which remained in-house.

The Defense Department paused OMB Circular A-76 after the Cold War. With President George H. W. Bush looking to shrink the military, it made no sense to outsource activities scheduled to be abolished. While government workers lost jobs in this contraction, it was due more to Defense Secretary Dick Cheney's defense management review decisions than public-private competitions. In one example from this third phase

of DLA's relationship with the circular, DMRD 902 directed the agency to assume almost all distribution centers operated by the services. Those it didn't assume were closed, removing 5,500 people from the federal payroll.

DLA followed these consolidations with Defense Department base realignments and closures. Allowed to sit out the 1991 BRAC due to its participation in defense management review decisions, DLA couldn't escape the 1993 and 1995 rounds. In addition to merging supply centers, the two BRACs decreased agency distribution centers from 22 to 15, dropping the federal payroll by another 1,792 workers. Two production facilities also were eliminated. DLA's clothing

factory closed when what is now DLA Troop Support moved from southern to northern Philadelphia, and the agency's jewel bearings plant transferred to another part of the government. Not touched were two production missions DLA still retains: assembling kits and sewing flags.

It wasn't until well into the administration of President Bill Clinton that the Defense Department started pressuring components to reengage in public-private competitions. Agency leaders introduced DLA to the fourth phase of its OMB Circular A-76 relationship by competing a minor agency function. Unfortunately for those affected, mistakes and delays plagued this return. It took the agency four years to study 12 employees at the Bus and Taxi Service on Defense Supply Center Columbus, far exceeding the circular's limit of 18 months. In the end, the agency unnecessarily unnerved employees, failed to realize savings and received scathing criticism from the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General.

DSCC's Bus and Taxi Service competition began under President Clinton's second defense secretary, William Perry. It ended under the president's third defense secretary, William Cohen, who expanded Perry's privatization efforts. The new secretary's 1997 Defense Reform Initiatives Directives propelled DLA into the fifth phase of its relationship with OMB Circular A-76. Through callouts in the document, Cohen signaled that he wanted the agency to compete distribution services, disposition services, printing services, human resources services, installation support, cataloging and even parts of its acquisition portfolio. The Institute for Defense Analysis later calculated that these directives applied to 46% of agency employees.

DLA became skilled at public-private competitions in late 1990s. Deeming three distribution centers



Photo by Phil Stewart

A knuckle-boom crane grabs scrap aluminum containers for bailing at Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office in Crane, Indiana, sometime during October 1993. The Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service, which is now Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services, had to subject all of its 61 regional offices to Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76 public-private competitions in the mid-1990s.

Photo by Charles Moffet



The current Defense Logistics Agency Weapons Support (Columbus) headquarters building is under construction Aug. 10, 1997. DLA's first foray into Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76 public-private competitions after a post-Cold War hiatus examined its bus and taxi service at Defense Supply Center Columbus in Ohio.

inherently governmental, the agency competed the remaining 12. It outsourced seven, one which the agency later returned to government operation by proving federal employees could operate the site more efficiently than a for-profit company.

Other DLA business lines experienced less privatization. Of 61 Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service sites, only 10 were outsourced, and those only partially so. Two other activities, the Defense Automation and Production Service and DLA Human Resources Services, were classified as “most efficient organizations,” allowing them to stay under government operation as long they achieved promised savings. DAPS, a predecessor of today’s DLA Document Services, had to agree to a 27% reduction in personnel and 33% reduction in facilities. DHRS had to promise \$100 million in savings and \$250 million in cost avoidance. Meanwhile, DLA convinced the Defense Department that its cataloging functions were inherently governmental.

Suggestions that DLA contract out its contracting activity crossed a line not supported by OMB Circular A-76.

Similar aggressive use of public-private competitions began to attract scrutiny. Disagreements over savings led the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Government Accountability Office, and other watchdog organizations to write 300 reports on the circular from fiscal year 1997 to fiscal 2002. While not all negative, these reports revealed that OMB Circular A-76 discounted costs associated with running competitions, placing employees who were separated from service, and monitoring outsourced work.

Criticism turned to catastrophe under President George W. Bush’s second Pentagon boss, Robert Gates. Hospital consolidation in the national capital region combined with high numbers of wounded service members returning from the surge in Iraq overwhelmed the companies Walter Reed Army Medical Center had hired through public-private competitions to assist soldiers and their families. While not involved in this crisis, DLA was told in 2009 to pause the OMB Circular A-76 process. Its last major outsourcing had occurred two years earlier when it contracted out

installation management services at Defense Distribution San Joaquin, California.

DLA entered a sixth phase of its relationship with OMB Circular A-76 after the Walter Reed incident. Knowing the advantages and disadvantages of public-private competitions, leaders began considering the circular just one of several tools they could use to achieve savings.

In its first three decades, DLA’s leaders achieved efficiency by removing operators from logistics decision-making, expanding capital fund coverage, increasing competitive procurement, reducing items in the federal catalog, standardizing service-particular material and automating material management. Efficiency since the end of the Cold War came from the prime vendor model, which made a single company responsible for all items in a federal supply class. It also came from Business Systems Modernization, an agency-wide redesign that introduced new technology, resulted in more efficiencies through restructured supply centers, and centered acquisition professionals on outcome-oriented requirements.

While OMB Circular A-76 remains on the books today, DLA has largely shifted to less disruptive and ultimately more promising cost-saving techniques. Additive manufacturing, which relies on 3D printers, and robotic process automation, which automates repetitive tasks, potentially decreases the workforce naturally over time instead of abruptly due to outsourcing. Most work the agency contracts out today is white-collar labor well within the competencies of commercial consultancies. These contracts are cost and duration limited. Such prudence is to be expected from an agency that obtains most of its items and many of its services through contracts.

Campaign of Learning DLA Dialogues: From Factory to Foxhole.

The Defense Logistics Agency's podcast featured a number of guests, ranging from agency experts to the executive director for Regional Sustainment within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Sustainment. Episodes are available on the [Campaign of Learning website](#), [DVIDS](#) and [YouTube](#).

Joseph Brooks and Colin Williams

This episode of the Defense Logistics Agency's podcast spotlights the Regional Sustainment Framework and how forward-positioned logistics and maintenance strengthen readiness in contested environments.

Joseph Brooks, executive director for Regional Sustainment within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Sustainment, joins DLA Historian Colin Williams to discuss the evolution from centralized sustainment to regionally enabled capabilities.

Brooks and Williams point to the real-world benefits of forward repair. Enabling these capabilities directly improves readiness and resilience, yielding increased aircraft availability and significant time savings when vessels are maintained inside a combatant commander's area of responsibility rather than transiting back home.





Nancy Albertson and Don Helle

DLA is increasing its efforts to recover critical and strategic materials from military assets, transforming potential waste into valuable resources that bolster national security and warfighter readiness, say two DLA employees.

Nancy Albertson, a physical scientist with DLA Strategic Materials, and Don Helle, the R&D program manager for DLA Disposition Services, discuss the growing importance of material reclamation and highlight how such initiatives help secure vital supply chains against global vulnerabilities.

Both employees acknowledge that expanding reclamation efforts present challenges, including the need to modernize logistics systems and ensure adequate storage for recovered materials. Despite these hurdles, DLA remains committed to advancing its material recovery programs, reinforcing the nation’s defense industrial base and ensuring warfighter readiness.

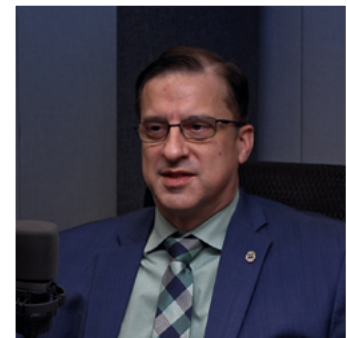
Jake Swantkowski

DLA’s support extends beyond the traditional warfighter, says Jake Swantkowski, chief of DLA’s Whole of Government Support Division. DLA provides a strategic advantage to the nation by supporting a wide array of federal agencies.

In this episode of DLA’s podcast, Swantkowski talks about how his 15-person team acts as the customer-facing link between DLA and its partners across the government, creating what he calls a “win-win-win” scenario.

“While DLA is primarily focused on the military services, the ability to support interagency partners allows DLA’s bulk buying power to really take shape and reduce costs,” Swantkowski says.

He says the other wins are lower costs for partner agencies compared to if they procured logistics on their own, and enhanced homeland defense and national security for the American public.



Air Force Col. Matthew York

DLA’s role in supporting the nation’s nuclear and space enterprises is a foundational component of strategic deterrence, says Air Force Col. Matthew York in DLA Dialogues. As the executive director of the Nuclear and Space Enterprise Support Office, York joins host Jake Boyer to discuss how DLA ensures warfighter readiness.

York describes NESO as a network of teams across DLA that communicates with the services, advises DLA leadership, and advocates for the resources needed to support the nuclear and space enterprises.

The concept of strategic deterrence can be defined as dissuading an adversary from taking action by convincing them the cost would be too high, York says.

He likens DLA’s contribution to the unseen part of an iceberg — the massive, behind-the-scenes support of acquisition, sustainment and distribution that ensures the visible elements of deterrence remain a credible threat.



Campaigning to win: DLA exercises to sustain the joint and combined force

By Army LTG Mark Simerly and Air Force Col Nicholas Petren

Introduction

We think, we develop, we train, we rehearse, we debrief, we rehearse again and again...to ensure that we cannot get it wrong.

— Air Force Gen Dan Caine, CJCS, 3 January 2026¹

We are all witness to the evolution of the character of war, including the increasing pace and lethality of high-end military operations, combined with the proliferation of low-cost short and long-range strike capabilities, cyber and cross-domain threats. In this environment, operational pace is dictated by logistics competence, and global logistics prowess remains a critical pillar of US military power projection. Unlike previous post-Cold War conflicts, however, some of our potential adversaries can credibly contest global sustainment. Specifically, a near-peer adversary could seek to sap the strength of the Joint Force by blunting Joint Logistics. Amid this strategic landscape, the Defense Logistics Agency is not standing still. Training to achieve mission success through the threats posed by our most capable strategic competitors and testing that training in realistic exercises integrated with Joint and Service headquarters is key to Agency readiness.

By transforming through exercise campaigning, DLA is building the culture and capabilities to sustain a war-winning Joint force during large scale combat operations.

Understanding the threat

For decades, most U.S. logistics activities were conducted in uncontested environments, but that strategic environment has changed. We are growing our capabilities, strengthening relationships with our allies and partners and coming at this challenge united, so logistics never becomes the weak link.

— Air Force Gen Randall Reed, USTRANSCOM Commander, 13 June 2025²

The Joint Logistics Enterprise (JLEnt) faces a multi-domain threat designed to disrupt, degrade, and destroy its ability to support the warfighter. Potential adversaries have studied the American way of war and understand today's complex global supply chains. Observations from ongoing combat in Eastern Europe and Southwest Asia provide key insights into the threats logistics forces and capabilities face on the modern battlefield, as well as their criticality to mission success.

The rapid proliferation of creative unmanned systems, such as the grenade-armed small first-person-view

drones used in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, of which 2-4 million are now produced annually by both sides at very low cost per item, are an evolving lethal threat.³ Tactical use of these small "drones" at scale, or covert infiltration to attack high value targets in the rear, can achieve cumulative strategic effects. Therefore, DLA and the broader logistics enterprise must act with agility to learn from ongoing combat operations and build resilience against the unmanned systems threat, from small quadcopters to loitering munitions such as the Russian Lancet, and to larger Geran or Shahed-type aerial systems capable of delivering heavier warheads at longer ranges.

Deliberate targeting of US and allied logistics capabilities in Southwest Asia in March and April of 2026 exhibited asymmetric weapons, including missiles and one-way attack unmanned aerial systems (UAS). While enemy regime forces lacked the capabilities to strategically degrade the US Joint Logistics Enterprise, commercially available technologies have lowered the cost of entry for precision strike capabilities. The threat in Southwest Asia offers further evidence of the need for US logistics units and nodes to be prepared for all domain threats. These threats range from low, slow, small, or swarming UAS, to larger long-range low-cost UAS, to cruise missile and ballistic missile threats, to determined targeted

Editor's Note: Army LTG Mark Simerly is the Director of the Defense Logistics Agency. Air Force Col Nicholas Petren is the military deputy for the DLA Logistics Operations Plans.

- 1 Peniston, Bradley, *How 'Absolute Resolve' harnessed 150 aircraft and more to launch a regime change in Venezuela*, Defense One, 3 January 2026, Retrieved from: <https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2026/01/inside-absolute-resolve-regime-change-assault-venezuela/410440/>.
- 2 Stefank, Jonathan, *Top U.S. military logistics general visits Japan during Indo-Pacific tour*, USINDOPACOM, 13 June 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/NEWS/News-Article-View/Article/4217024/top-us-military-logistics-general-visits-japan-during-indo-pacific-tour/>.
- 3 Institute for the Study of War, *Russian Drone Innovations are Likely Achieving Effects of Battlefield Air Interdiction in Ukraine*, 7 August 2025, Retrieved from: <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-drone-innovations-are-likely-achieving-effects-of-battlefield-air-inter->

cyberattacks. Further, the JLEnt must be resilient against a more capable opposing force in other theaters.

China poses a particularly significant and multifaceted challenge. Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) doctrine discusses targeting logistics as part of a broader approach of “systems destruction warfare”.⁴ In a crisis or conflict with China, the PLA’s offensive cyber-attacks could target “U.S. military C4ISR and logistics nodes, as well as critical infrastructure” globally to “disrupt US military operations and mobilization”.⁵ The fact that China is the world’s leading producer of small commercial drones should not go unnoticed. Furthermore, the “speed, scale, and quality” of the increase in Chinese PLA surface, maritime, and air launched ballistic and cruise missile capabilities pose a direct threat to friendly logistics nodes in theater.⁶ The US Intelligence Community assesses that “China is the most active and persistent cyber threat to U.S. Government, private-sector, and critical infrastructure networks.”⁷

Chinese government and military-sponsored cyber actor groups include volt typhoon, focused on critical infrastructure in the US power grid, flax typhoon, known for compromising internet-of-things devices, and salt typhoon, which is focused on US telecommunications networks.⁸

Returning to recent and ongoing

conflicts, the persistent focus on disrupting military logistics, supply chains, and supporting critical infrastructure reflects the centrality of logistics to any nation’s ability to sustain combat over a protracted conflict.

Logistics underpins global deterrence and power projection

I want to highlight the unsung heroes of warfare...our American logisticians and sustainment force. Those who quietly work every day behind the scenes to project and sustain America’s combat power.

– Air Force Gen Dan Caine, CJCS, 2 March 2026⁹

THE UNITED STATES MILITARY POSSESSES UNMATCHED GLOBAL LOGISTICS PROWESS. ... WHILE UNMATCHED, JOINT LOGISTICS PROWESS IS NOT UNCHALLENGED.

The United States military possesses unmatched global logistics prowess. This logistics power is drawn from the dynamic US economy, the defense industrial base, and the remarkable expertise within the military and civilian workforce of the Joint Logistics Enterprise. The JLEnt is “a cooperative coalition of key global logistics providers within and beyond

the Department of War.”¹⁰ Internal to the Department of War, the JLEnt consists of the military service’s logistics forces including their organic depots, the combatant command, Joint Staff, and Department of War logistics staffs, and combat support agencies. It takes capability from across the JLEnt to sustain any combatant command during combat operations. US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) plays a critical role regarding the deployment and distribution of forces, and DLA plays a central role regarding the strategic supply of the Joint Force. Supply and distribution are equally important variables in the equation that sustains Joint Force combat power generation.

DLA’s strategic management of nine supply chains, including aviation repair parts, land & maritime repair parts, petroleum products, subsistence, clothing & textiles, construction & engineering materiel, medical supplies, and strategic materials, connects the national industrial base military depots and tactical units consuming parts and material through USTRANSCOM distribution. Logistics excellence is the prerequisite for America’s global power projection. While unmatched, Joint logistics prowess is not unchallenged. DLA’s exercise campaign prepares DLA’s workforce to meet the challenge and succeed.

The DLA exercise campaign

The DLA exercise campaign is

[diction-in-ukraine/](#).

4 Engstrom, Jeffrey, *Systems Confrontation and System Destruction Warfare: How the Chinese People’s Liberation Army Seeks to Wage Modern Warfare*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif., 2018, Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1708.html, pp15-19.

5 US Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military & Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2025*, <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Dec/23/2003849070/-1/-1/1/ANNUAL-REPORT-TO-CONGRESS-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-IN-VOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2025.PDF>, pp.17-19.

6 US Department of War, *National Defense Strategy*, 23 January 2026, Retrieved from: <https://media.defense.gov/2026/Jan/23/2003864773/-1/-1/0/2026-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY.PDF>, p. 4.

7 Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *2026 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*, 14 March 2026, Retrieved from: <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/reports-publications/reports-publications-2026/4141-2026-annual-threat-assessment>, p16.

8 Congressional Research Service, *Salt Typhoon Hacks of Telecommunications Companies and Federal Response Implications*, 23 January 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12798>.

9 US Department of War, *Transcript: Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine Hold a Press Briefing*, 2 March 2026, Retrieved from: <https://www.war.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/4418959/secretary-of-war-pete-hegseth-and-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-gen-dan/>.

10 Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 4-0, Joint Logistics, 20 July 2023 Incorporating Change 1 - 22 May 2025, p x.

building contested logistics excellence in DLA and across the Joint Logistics Enterprise. DLA’s exercise campaign is designed to build competence through a series of exercises that progressively build in terms of realism, complexity, and integration.

The overarching objectives of the exercise campaign include 1) building DLA’s organizational resilience to sustain Joint Force success through the most likely and most dangerous contested scenarios, 2) improving the Joint campaign of exercises beyond DLA by increasing logistics realism while lowering the level of logistics abstraction, and 3) leveraging Joint exercises to optimize global logistics posture for resilience in a risk-informed manner. Lastly, while DLA is not a warfighting organization, an important outcome of the DLA exercise campaign is to ensure DLA headquarters and subordinate command staff are prepared to operate like a warfighting headquarters to ensure integration with supported commands at the pace of relevance. This represents a break from past practices, and requires substantive transformations in training, procedures, information flow, and organizational culture.

The exercise campaign focuses effort on DLA participation in key Joint exercises each fiscal year. This allows DLA to stress-test sustainment of operations across the globe through a range of prioritized and challenging scenarios. This year’s exercise campaign includes practicing homeland defense support for US Northern Command (NORTHCOM) during a high-end fight, sustaining the nuclear enterprise as US Strategic Command

(STRATCOM) demonstrated warfighting capacity in Exercise Global Thunder, detailed integration with US Pacific Command (PACOM) during multiple exercises including Keen Edge; and broad integration with USTRANSCOM during multiple exercises.¹¹ Additionally, DLA’s Regional Commands participate in numerous exercises with their supported combatant command, specifically US European Command (USEUCOM) and US Central Command (USCENTCOM).

It is useful to examine the exercise campaign through the lens of the transformational imperatives identified in DLA’s strategic plan: people, posture, precision, and partnerships. These imperatives illustrate the holistic dimensions addressed by DLA’s exercise campaign, as well as how the exercises further DLA’s overall transformational aims.

People: DLA’s ability to achieve mission success in a contested environment will always be the product of the determination and ingenuity of the civilian and military workforce. After studying the rapidly evolving threats and tactics, DLA leaders collaborate across the Joint Force to learn the most effective countermeasures, train personnel

because it is central to DLA’s mission as a Combat Support Agency.

For example, DLA organizations must be prepared to act effectively through communication disruptions and cyber-attacks, as noted during the threats section. Exercise events are the time to stress test communications primary-alternate-contingency-emergency (PACE) communications plans, continuity of operations plans, and alternate business practices. Cybersecurity is of paramount importance, given the fact that DLA’s information operations team defends against cyber-infiltration attempts daily. Each employee with a dla.mil account helps protect the domain by protecting their credentials and avoiding social engineering traps that could introduce malicious code. Integrating realistic cyberattacks at scale into the DLA exercise campaign is a must to put cyber-protection teams to the test, to familiarize the workforce with threat tactics, and to ensure operations will continue through alternate means should cyber effects degrade routine system access. Overcoming cyber threats is as much a training and knowledge building effort as a technical effort, therefore DLA’s people are the key.

Posture: Credible military options are predicated on a capable logistics posture, specifically in terms of time-relevance. In recognition of this fact, the FY26 National Defense Authorization Act created a new governance structure for contested logistics

integrated posture management led by the Deputy Secretary of War, the Vice Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commander of US Transportation Command. Major combatant

WHILE DLA IS NOT A WARFIGHTING ORGANIZATION, AN IMPORTANT OUTCOME OF THE DLA EXERCISE CAMPAIGN IS TO ENSURE DLA HEADQUARTERS AND SUBORDINATE COMMAND STAFF ARE PREPARED TO OPERATE LIKE A WARFIGHTING HEADQUARTERS TO ENSURE INTEGRATION WITH SUPPORTED COMMANDS AT THE PACE OF RELEVANCE.

on effective techniques and procedures, and incorporate those actions into DLA exercises. Operating through contestation must be anchored in DLA’s culture, as part of how the Agency does business,

11 NavyMed, NMRLC Sailor Supports Bilateral Exercise KEEN EDGE 26, 4 March 2026, Retrieved from: <https://www.med.navy.mil/Media/News/Article/4420625/nmrlc-sailor-supports-bilateral-exercise-keen-edge-26/>; US Strategic Command Public Affairs, U.S. Strategic Command opens exercise Global Thunder 26, 21 October 2025, Retrieved from: <https://www.stratcom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/4324963/us-strategic-command-opens-exercise-global-thunder-26/>.

command and Joint Force exercises offer unique opportunities to validate Joint logistics posture in support of combatant command operations and Service concepts of operation in contested environments. Agile, dispersed operations necessarily make achieving sufficient operational resilience in contested environments more complicated. Planners for DLA-managed supply chains will use exercise campaign events to test integration with joint logistics processes and identify opportunities to improve DLA or Joint logistics posture. Internal to DLA, the exercise campaign will inform DLA's stock positioning plans and force posture to ensure the Agency's global posture is optimized for affordable resilience as prioritized by strategic guidance.

Beyond considering logistics posture in terms of geographic array and disposition of forces and prepositioned supplies, joint exercises and/or wargames that focus on protracted conflict can examine the preparedness of the organic industrial base and defense industrial base to work effectively in combination to meet the production and sustainment demands of the Joint Force over months or years of Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO). For example, exercises or excursions should seek to understand the risks associated with primary, secondary, and tertiary global supply chain disruptions while the national industrial base seeks to surge to meet the demands of national mobilization.

Precision: The exercise campaign supports building decision support and mission command excellence among DLA leaders and staff. This includes establishing critical information flows and the optimal structure of boards, bureaus, cells, centers, and working

groups (B2C2WG) to rapidly recommend the best options and facilitate decisions by senior leaders. The structure of B2C2WG will enhance the accuracy and speed of decisions by leveraging cross-organizational expertise through a regular battle rhythm, not constrain DLA commanders with bureaucracy. Clarity in decision authority and focus on time relevance is

DLA MUST ACCELERATE INNOVATIVE INTEGRATION OF AI CAPABILITIES INTO PLANNING, BUSINESS PROCESSES, RISK MANAGEMENT, AND DEMAND FORECASTING TO BE SUFFICIENTLY PREDICTIVE TO SUSTAIN THE PACE OF OPERATIONS NECESSARY FOR JOINT FORCE VICTORY.

paramount. Cascading decisions down to the lowest appropriate echelon is the default as we build mission command competence in DLA.

During exercises, DLA practices with and improves new decision support tools that leverage a resilient data fabric. Leaders will use exercise events as milestones for leveraging emerging information systems to provide echelon-specific, decision-quality data. DLA must accelerate innovative integration of AI capabilities into planning, business processes, risk management, and demand forecasting to be sufficiently predictive to sustain the pace of operations necessary for Joint Force victory. The acquisition and production lead times for readiness-driving parts and supplies highlight the importance of anticipatory planning across defense supply chains. The tyrannies of distance and water in the Pacific theater exacerbate sustainment challenges, while hostile action could induce further friction into Joint Sustainment. DLA will leverage the exercise campaign events to develop and refine anticipatory sustainment planning tools and skills to ensure logistics is a key operational enabler, not

critical constraint. An important nuance is to leverage AI to accelerate, expand, and augment action, rather than to outsource critical thought to AI capabilities. Partnering with industry and allies will be important as we better understand risk and enhance decisions through data.

Partnerships: Practicing sustaining decisive combat power generation in collaboration with Allies & Partners

is key to dealing with the problem of simultaneity of demand across the enterprise, thereby effectively deterring or denying coordinated or opportunistic large-scale aggression in multiple theaters.¹² Exercising

sustainment integration identifies existing gaps and enables leaders to focus on critical areas to focus effort, such as progress on logistics data sharing and demand forecasting with Allies. To put this practice into action, DLA will incorporate opportunities to practice co-sustainment activities into summative exercise events as part of the fiscal year 2026 and 2027 exercise campaigns. During the exercises, DLA will capture any obstacles to the rapid integration that will enhance sustainment of the Joint and Combined force, then develop policy, procedural, or technical solutions to address the obstacles.

As DLA completes the exercise campaign for fiscal year 2026 and looks forward to 2027, a key objective will be to increase the breadth and depth of detailed planning and integration with Combatant Commands and the Military Services. This includes exercise planning to enhance the realism of expected service sustainment demands, greater depth of understanding regarding Service operational and logistics support concepts, and deliberate Agency-level integration during exercises. To improve integration at echelon and enhance

¹² *National Defense Strategy*, 2026, pp. 5, 13-14.

logistics realism during Combatant Command exercises, DLA’s Regional Commands will seek to partner in greater depth with Service Components. The military services comprise a large majority of Joint Logistics Enterprise, therefore increasing exercise integration will drive anticipatory precision through the supply chains.

The defense industrial base will determine whether we can deter our adversaries and if necessary, fight and win the wars of this generation and the next.

– Hon Michael P. Duffey,
Undersecretary of War for
Acquisition & Sustainment, 4
March 2026¹³

“Supercharge the Defense Industrial Base (DIB)” is Line of Effort 4 in the National Defense Strategy, which directs the department to “bolster our organic sustainment capabilities, grow nontraditional vendors, and partner with traditional DIB vendors... to reinvigorate and mobilize our great nation’s unrivaled creativity and ingenuity, re-spark our innovative spirit, and restore our industrial capacity.”¹⁴ Incorporating key partners from the National Industrial Base into the DLA exercise campaign is critical to understanding

plausible industry actions and obstacles to production surge. The insight from private sector leaders within key defense suppliers from the large, medium and small cap categories serves to enhance the government’s understanding of policy, contract, or commodity constraints facing suppliers. The interaction is mutually beneficial, as industry leaders garner enhanced understanding of the operational problems facing the JLEnt, which catalyzes creative solution development within the industrial base to close military gaps and mitigate risks.

Learning lessons & mitigating risk

Ultimately, the value of DLA exercises is determined by the internal readiness improvements garnered across our workforce and processes, by improving interoperability and integration across the JLEnt, and by informing integrated risk management for contested logistics posture across the Joint Force. The DLA exercise campaign provides an appropriate sense of urgency ahead of potential conflict, simulating the contested conditions that enable the Agency — and the broader JLEnt — to learn harsh lessons in a training environment. As such, the exercise campaign supports DLA’s strategic priorities to

set the globe, set the agency, and set the supply chains. The value of the exercise campaign was clear during DLA support to recent major combat operations in Southwest Asia, as DLA military and civilian leaders applied the skills learned during recent exercise events. At echelon, operations center staff were more practiced, teams better integrated, working groups were built, and integration with supported commands was more prepared. While much work remains to achieve the desired level of readiness, the lessons learned in exercises are already paying dividends on the battlefield.

By campaigning through exercises, DLA is operationalizing the War Department’s strategic approach of “Peace through Strength” by effecting transformational cultural change across the Agency. The exercise campaign reinforces DLA’s unique and critical role as a Combat Support Agency for all employees, while preparing DLA and Major Supporting Command HQ staff to function as a combat support headquarters. DLA leaders at all echelons must embrace the charge of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and through our exercise campaign, practice with our teams until we cannot get it wrong.



Photo by E.J. Hersom

A display shows Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle components at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington, D.C., May 2, 2018. The display accompanied a multi-national collection of evidence proving Iranian weapons proliferation in violation of United Nations resolutions 2216 and 2231.

13 Undersecretary of War, Acquisition & Sustainment, LinkedIn Post, *US Defense Industrial Base Revitalization Efforts with Michael Duffey*, 4 March 2026, Retrieved from: <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-7435394973090512898-SrFn>.

14 *National Defense Strategy*, 2026, p. 21.

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U.S. Airmen assigned to the 7th Bomb Wing perform pre-flight checks on a B-1B Lancer before it departs Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, Dec. 25, 2025.

US military footprint in the USSOUTHCOM AOR: WWII–Cold War posture and modern sustainment implications

Air Force Maj Gen David Sanford, Marine Corps Col LaBarron McBride, and Air Force Lt Col John Millard

Introduction

The Caribbean Basin region, containing land in both Central America and Northern South America, has long been strategically important to the United States. In order to protect its interests in the region, the U.S. has historically maintained a strong military presence in the basin, sustaining this presence by building a resilient logistics network that adapted its posture to fit the current operating environment. An examination of the U.S. military's footprint in this area, from the extensive build-up during World War II to the more constrained, access-based presence of the Cold War, reveals enduring logistical and geopolitical patterns. This paper provides a consolidated historical analysis of the U.S. military's posture in the region, arguing that this history offers critical lessons for contemporary challenges in basing, access, and sustainment within the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) area of responsibility. By assessing the evolution from permanent bases to flexible access, this analysis seeks to inform a

resilient sustainment strategy, particularly for the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) in its role supporting joint and interagency operations.

Background & historical posture

During World War II, the United States treated the Caribbean Basin as a defense-in-depth problem with strategic consequences beyond the hemisphere. The United States had to protect the Panama Canal, keep Allied shipping lanes open, defend vital energy and commodity flows, and create a reliable trans-Atlantic and inter-American movement network for aircraft and materiel. To meet those requirements, U.S. forces built a dense chain of airfields, naval operating sites, and logistics waypoints across the island arc and key littorals, and they organized joint command arrangements to coordinate air, sea, and ground defense.

After 1945, the United States drew down wartime garrisons but sustained a smaller set of enduring hubs—especially in Panama and Puerto Rico—while it relied increasingly on access-based arrangements to extend surveillance and operational reach. Cold War imperatives (Cuba, Soviet activity,

regional instability, and later transnational illicit networks) drove demand for persistent command and control, airlift, maritime domain awareness, and rapid crisis surge capacity, even as the political acceptability of large permanent bases declined.

Treaty-driven drawdowns reshaped posture late in the Cold War and afterward. The 1977 Torrijos–Carter Treaties set the conditions for Panama to assume control of the Canal and for the United States to close or transfer Canal Zone facilities by the end of 1999. In response, USSOUTHCOM shifted from a large, sovereign-like base complex to distributed access, forward presence, and partner-enabled operations. Modern sustainment in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility therefore depends less on massed, permanent stockpiles and more on resilient multi-node distribution, fuel and energy assurance, contracted services, and infrastructure and cyber resilience in a hurricane-prone operating environment.¹

Strategic through-line: Posture in the USSOUTHCOM AOR from WWII — Cold War

Across World War II and the Cold War, U.S. posture in the Caribbean and

Editor's Note: Air Force Maj Gen David Sanford is the director of Logistics Operations and the commander of Joint Regional Combat Support for the Defense Logistics Agency. At the time this paper was written, Air Force Lt Col John Millard was the director of DLA's Agency's Synchronization Operations Center, and Marine Corps Col LaBarron McBride was the chief of the Director's Action Group.

¹ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "The Panama Canal and the Torrijos–Carter Treaties," n.d., accessed April 1, 2026, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/panama-canal>.

adjacent Central/South American littorals consistently served four objectives: (1) protect the Panama Canal and its approaches; (2) secure hemispheric sea lines of communication and the Atlantic–Caribbean shipping network; (3) defend critical energy and commodity corridors (especially oil and bauxite flows) and the infrastructure that supported them; and (4) preserve rapid surge capacity for crisis response—ranging from anti-submarine warfare and air defense to evacuation, humanitarian assistance, and later counter-threat operations. This continuity of objectives matters for today’s planners: the region’s geography produces a few enduring choke points and transit corridors, but political and weather constraints push the United States toward flexible access and distributed sustainment rather than large permanent garrisons.

World War II footprint (1940–1945): Scale, structure, and key nodes

In 1940–1945, the United States built a layered network that combined command-and-control headquarters, naval operating bases, airfields, and logistics waypoints.² The September 2nd, 1940, Destroyers-for-Bases arrangement provided rent-free 99-year leases for U.S. facilities in multiple British Overseas Territories, which enabled a rapid wartime build-out of naval and air infrastructure across the island arc. U.S. planners then organized the theater through joint and service constructs—such as the U.S. Caribbean Defense Command (and associated Army, Navy,

and air components) and the Navy’s coastal/sea frontier structures—so that forces could integrate coastal defense, convoy escort, and anti-submarine warfare against the German U-boat threat.³

The resulting posture emphasized multiple rings of defense and support (Figure: 1⁴):

- Inner Ring: Panama Canal shield: the Canal Zone served as the command-and-control anchor and the primary fixed defense problem set (coastal artillery, air defense, air patrols, and base support). In January 1943, troop strength in Panama peaked at just over 67,000 personnel as the United States expanded layered defenses for the locks and approaches.⁵
- Middle Ring: Caribbean island chain and convoy support: the United States established or expanded operating bases and airfields in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and several British possessions to protect shipping lanes, stage air patrols,

and support convoy escort and anti-submarine warfare.

- Outer Ring: Northern South America and resource protection: the posture extended along key Atlantic corridors and into commodity routes connected to Venezuelan oil and other critical materials, with forward air and maritime patrols pushing outward to reduce the U-boat threat and protect sea lanes.
- Pacific Extension: Galápagos (Baltra/South Seymour): the United States operated a base (1941–1946) tied directly to protecting the western approaches to the Canal and extending early warning and patrol reach.

Key wartime nodes included the Panama Canal Zone; Trinidad’s operating complex at Chaguaramas and adjacent facilities (a major convoy, anti-submarine warfare, and logistics hub); Puerto Rico (air and naval facilities that supported eastern Caribbean patrol and staging); Guantánamo Bay (an enduring naval station and logistics way point); and a chain of sites across the Guianas and northeastern Brazil that supported ferry routes and South Atlantic air movement. Collectively, this architecture allowed the United States to move fuel, ammunition, construction materiel, and repair capacity forward while avoiding single-point failure in any one port or airfield.

Cold War footprint (1947–1991): Enduring hubs, surveillance, and political constraints

After 1945, the United States

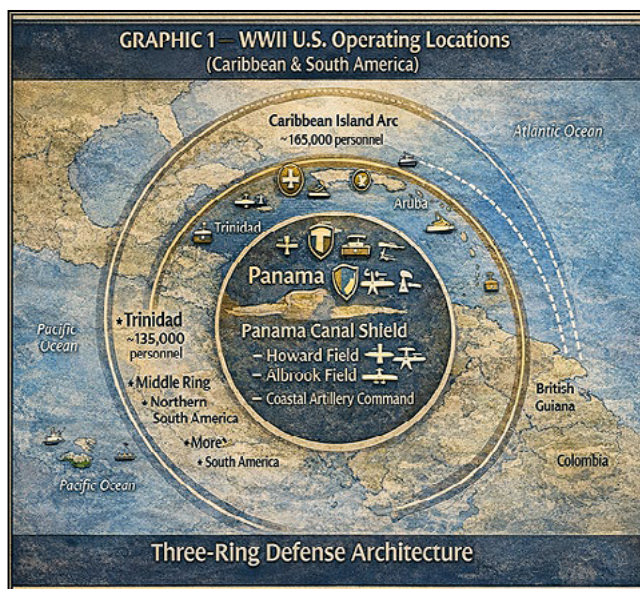


Figure: 1

2 Naval History and Heritage Command, “Destroyers for Bases Agreement, 1941,” n.d., accessed April 1, 2026, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/d/destroyers-for-bases-agreement-1941.html>.
 3 Naval History and Heritage Command, *Building the Navy’s Bases in World War II*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/b/building-the-navys-bases/building-the-navys-bases-vol-2.html>.
 4 Image generated by ChatGPT, January 26, 2026, OpenAI, prompt: “Develop a map-based infographic for WWII U.S. Operating Locations (Caribbean & South America) using the three-ring defense architecture, centered on the paper’s content.”
 5 U.S. Army South, “A Brief History,” n.d., accessed April 1, 2026, <https://www.arsouth.army.mil/About/History/>.

reduced wartime concentrations but retained a hub-and access posture that supported hemispheric defense and regional stability missions. Panama remained the center of gravity for decades, and the unified command lineage that became U.S. Southern Command traces directly to the World War II Caribbean defense structures. In 1963, the Department of Defense formally redesignated the U.S. Caribbean Command as U.S. Southern Command, reflecting the command’s growing focus on Central and South America.

During the Cold War, the United States used Panama-based infrastructure to enable airlift, training, surveillance, and rapid response across the region, while it relied on a smaller set of complementary hubs and access points (Figure: 2⁶). Puerto Rico served as a major operating platform— with Naval Station Roosevelt Roads providing deep-water port and airfield capacity that supported fleet operations, regional staging, and mission support.⁷ Guantánamo Bay remained a persistent U.S. naval presence and logistics node throughout the Cold War and beyond; the 1934 treaty framework reaffirmed the lease and defined termination conditions. Across the period, political sensitivities and sovereignty concerns shaped how the United States balanced permanence with access, pushing many activities toward rotational presence, exercises, and host nation agreements rather than expansion of U.S.-owned basing.⁸

Post-Cold War transition: From “bases” to “access.”

Late-Cold War and post-Cold War policy decisions accelerated the shift from permanent basing to distributed access. The 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties established a transition timeline that culminated in Panama’s assumption of full control of the Canal on 31 December 1999 and the closure or transfer of major U.S. facilities in the former Canal Zone.⁹ As the United States reduced its Panama footprint, USSOUTHCOM leaned more heavily on cooperative arrangements, rotational presence, and selective operating locations to sustain regional awareness and respond to crises without recreating a large base complex.

Today, USSOUTHCOM describes Cooperative Security Locations in Aruba-Curaçao and Comalapa, El Salvador as strategic, cost-effective sites that extend the reach of detection and monitoring aircraft and support multinational counter-threat operations. These sites illustrate the modern model: tenant

activities on existing airfields, enabled by agreements, and designed for rapid surge rather than permanent mass.¹⁰

Modern implications: What planners should expect for USSOUTHCOM and DLA

History indicates that sustainment in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility succeeds when planners treat the region as a network problem rather than a single-base problem. World War II demonstrated the value of multiple nodes, redundant routes, and logistics depth; the Cold War demonstrated the political limits of permanence and the value of hubs that can scale for crisis. Modern requirements reinforce both lessons:

- Build a distributed, multi-node sustainment architecture: plan for resilient logistics hubs (fuel + port + airfield + communications) with pre-identified alternates to avoid dependence on any single island, port, or airfield.
- Treat energy as a pacing function: prioritize bulk fuel access, storage, quality assurance, and movement options (sealift and commercial lift) because air and maritime operations fail first when fuel becomes constrained.
- Harden logistics for severe weather and infrastructure fragility: the Atlantic hurricane season (June–November) routinely disrupts ports, power, and airfields, which makes redundant routes, mobile power/water, and rapid airfield repair capacity

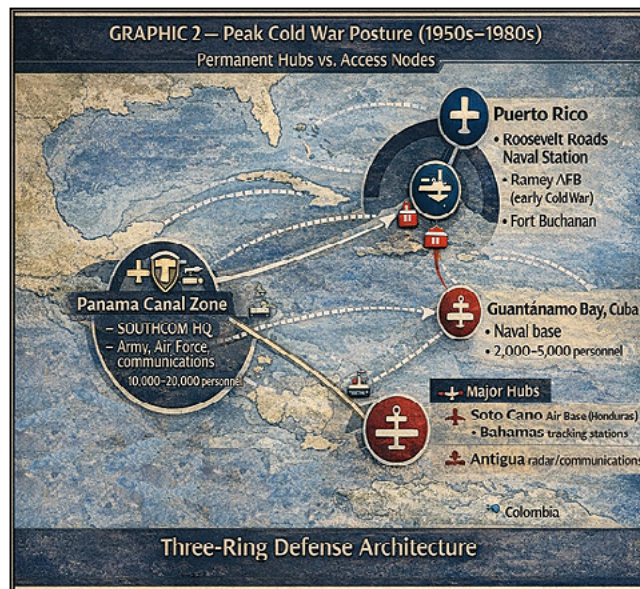


Figure: 2

6 Image generated by ChatGPT, January 26, 2026, OpenAI, prompt: “Develop a map-based infographic for Peak Cold War Posture (1950s-1980s) using the permanent hubs versus access nodes, centered on the paper’s content.”
 7 U.S. Department of the Navy, BRAC Program Management Office, “Former Naval Station Roosevelt Roads,” n.d., accessed April 1, 2026, <https://www.bracpmo.navy.mil/BRAC-Bases/Southeast/Former-Naval-Station-Roosevelt-Roads/>.
 8 U.S. Southern Command, “History,” n.d., accessed April 1, 2026, <https://www.southcom.mil/About/History/>.
 9 Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, “The Panama Canal and the Torrijos-Carter Treaties,” n.d., accessed April 1, 2026, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/panama-canal>.
 10 U.S. Southern Command, “Cooperative Security Locations,” n.d., accessed April 1, 2026, <https://www.southcom.mil/Commanders-Priorities/Counter-Threats/Cooperative-Security-Locations/>.

essential.¹¹

- Use contracts and partnerships to create operational effects: pre-negotiate port services, material handling equipment, host-nation storage, and emergency construction/repair contracts to compress time-to-operate and reduce U.S.-only stockpiles.
- Compete for information advantage in logistics: modern sustainment depends on end-to-end visibility, demand forecasting, vendor risk mapping, and cyber-resilient logistics information technology to detect disruption early and redirect flows.
- Design for dual-use legitimacy: posture sustainment to support both contingency operations and humanitarian assistance/disaster response (water, shelter, medical, power), which improves political sustainability and partner buy-in across the region.

Recommendations: The way ahead

This paper recommends that the U.S. military should utilize the historical pattern of “hub plus access” to guide modern sustainment planning. This would allow the U.S. military to build a resilient network that can scale rapidly for crisis while remaining politically sustainable for day-to-day engagement. Following the historical patterns shown in USSOUTHCOM during the twentieth century, planners should prioritize actions that reduce time-to-operate, increase route redundancy, and improve fuel and distribution continuity during severe weather and infrastructure disruption.

- Adopt a USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility distributed sustainment architecture built around three to five resilient logistics hubs (fuel, port, airfield, communications, and warehousing) with pre-identified alternates and spokes enabled by cooperative security locations and partner-nation agreements.
- Execute a regional contracting and access playbook: pre-negotiate contingency contracts for bulk fuel supply and storage, port services, airfield support, inland transport, cold chain services, and rapid construction and repair to compress time-to-operate.
- Harden sustainment for severe weather: build continuity plans for fuel farms and power generation, pre-stage mobile power and water, runway repair kits, and containerized critical supplies to support both crisis response and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.
- Exercise the concept: integrate Defense Logistics Agency Distribution expeditionary capabilities with USSOUTHCOM and Joint Task Force tasking in annual wargames and hurricane-season response drills to validate timelines, throughput, and authorities.
- Improve logistics sensing and forecasting: map vendor and infrastructure risk across the area of responsibility and integrate predictive analytics for fuel, medical, and critical consumables demand under surge scenarios.

Conclusion

The historical trajectory of the U.S. military presence in the Caribbean Basin

offers a clear and compelling blueprint for modern sustainment strategy. The deliberate evolution from the sprawling, multi-ringed defense architecture of World War II to the more politically astute “hub-and-access” model of the Cold War was not a sign of retreat, but a strategic adaptation to new realities. This history demonstrates that a distributed, multi-layered, and adaptable network, not concentrated stockpiles, achieves logistical resilience in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility.

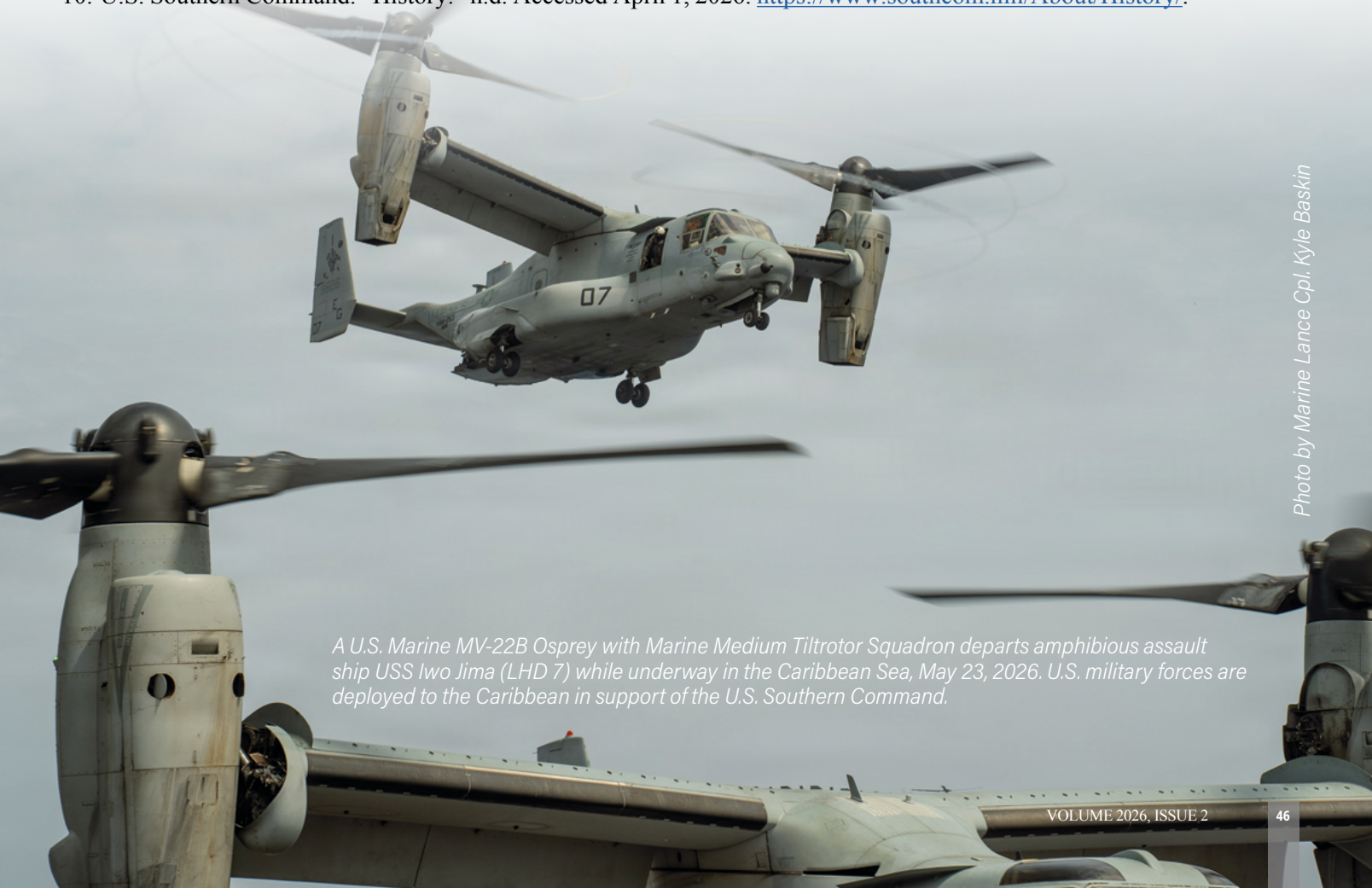
For the Defense Logistics Agency, this historical lesson translates into a direct and urgent strategic imperative. The requirements to protect vital sea lanes, ensure resource flow, and enable rapid crisis response remain, but the methodology must adapt. Relying on a few large, centralized depots is a fragile strategy in a region prone to political shifts and severe weather events.

DLA is moving forward to formalize and invest in building this network-based sustainment model in collaboration with NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM. By developing a web of smaller, resilient sustainment hubs at key partner nations and Cooperative Security Locations, leveraging robust contingency contracts, and pre-positioning critical assets hardened against natural disasters, DLA can build a logistics enterprise that is scalable in a crisis, politically sustainable in peacetime, and ultimately capable of ensuring operational success across this critical region. This approach is not merely a recommendation; it is the logical and necessary culmination of over eighty years of strategic learning.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, “NOAA Predicts Above-Normal 2025 Atlantic Hurricane Season,” May 22, 2025, <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/noaa-predicts-above-normal-2025-atlantic-hurricane-season>.

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A U.S. Marine MV-22B Osprey with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron departs amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7) while underway in the Caribbean Sea, May 23, 2026. U.S. military forces are deployed to the Caribbean in support of the U.S. Southern Command.

Photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Kyle Baskin

Logistics posture as deterrence: The role of distribution networks in homeland defense

By Army BG Kevin Cotman, Joseph Faris,
and Army LTC James Marley

The Joint Force can no longer assume uncontested sustainment. As laid out in the Department of War's 2026 National Defense Strategy, homeland defense is the top priority of the United States, requiring critical infrastructure and population protection, as well as the ability to generate, project and sustain combat power. This responsibility extends beyond operational forces to the systems that enable them, including the global distribution network that delivers material, fuel and equipment to sustain operations. As the operating environment becomes more contested and adversaries gain the ability to disrupt supply chains and lines of communication, the Joint Force can no longer assume sustainment will be available when and where it is needed. Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Distribution's posture must be treated as a strategic decision, requiring DLA, in coordination with the Joint Force, to balance efficiency and readiness to ensure combat power can be sustained under pressure and adversary action deterred.

The distribution network

DLA Distribution operates as a deliberately designed network of specialized nodes, each optimized for a specific sustainment function while contributing to a broader global system. The network is structured across strategic, industrial, forward-positioned and

expeditionary distribution vertices, each aligned to a distinct role in generating, regenerating, sustaining and extending combat power. While each location performs a primary function, all sites retain the ability to deliver material wherever required, enabling the Joint Force to operate across distance. This combination of functional specialization and global reach allows the network to balance efficiency, responsiveness and resilience in support of operational requirements.

Strategic distribution centers

DLA Distribution's Strategic Distribution Centers (SDC), located in California and Pennsylvania, serve as the primary hubs of the distribution network, designed to generate combat power through speed and scale. These nodes rapidly process and move material to operational forces, driving global distribution from the homeland. SDCs support the Joint Force by delivering material across all combatant commands, regardless of geographic alignment. Facilities such as DLA Distribution Susquehanna, Pennsylvania, illustrate the scale required to sustain global operations, utilizing extensive infrastructure designed for high-volume throughput. These hubs are physically located in specific regions but operate as globally integrated nodes that build and project combat power across multiple theaters. The value of SDCs lies not in proximity, but in throughput.

Industrial distribution centers

DLA Distribution's Industrial Distribution Centers are designed to support service maintenance and sustainment activities, aiding the Joint Force in regenerating combat power. IDCs provide the material required to support repair cycles, overhaul processes and enable long-term equipment readiness within depot and industrial base operations. They support service-level maintenance organizations, ensuring weapon systems are returned to operational status efficiently and at scale. These centers also operate as part of the broader global network and retain the ability to deliver material beyond their primary mission. The role of IDCs extends beyond maintenance support to sustain long-term readiness by ensuring critical equipment is repaired, restored and returned to service.

Combatant Command distribution centers

DLA Distribution's Combatant Command Distribution Centers (CCDC) position critical material closer to operational forces, supporting rapid response and sustaining combat power in theater. CCDCs store repair parts and other classes of supply to support forward operations and reduce response times. They support combatant commands by providing immediate access to material within the operational environment. Forward positioning increases responsiveness but introduces higher

Editor's Note: Army BG Kevin Cotman is the commanding general for Defense Logistics Agency Distribution. Joseph Faris is the acting deputy commander at DLA Distribution. Army LTC James Marley is part of the DLA Distribution Commanders Action Group.

costs associated with storage, infrastructure and transportation, requiring close coordination with the services to ensure proper material placement. These centers are aligned to specific theaters and operate as part of a globally integrated network capable of supporting multiple combatant commands. This distributed approach creates complexity for adversaries by complicating targeting and reducing single points of failure, while strengthening CCDC's ability to sustain support to the Joint Force under contested conditions across assigned and additional combatant commands.

Expeditionary distribution capability

A key force multiplier for DLA Distribution is an expeditionary capability that allows the network to extend forward when fixed infrastructure is unavailable or insufficient. This capability enables the rapid establishment of distribution nodes in support of conflict and domestic operations. Expeditionary hubs support the Joint Force by bridging gaps between strategic movement and operational sustainment at key transition points. Employment is based on minimum operational conditions, including security and access to strategic and theater transportation networks. This capability provides flexibility to adapt distribution posture as requirements evolve, even in suboptimal conditions. Expeditionary distribution ensures the network can extend, adapt and continue to support the warfighter across global and domestic operations.

Joint Logistics Enterprise integration

The effectiveness of the distribution network is driven by its design and its integration with the broader Joint Logistics Enterprise (JLEnt). DLA Distribution relies on strategic transportation to move material from the homeland into operational theaters, enabling the initial projection

of sustainment in support of the Joint Force. This movement is primarily executed through U.S. Transportation Command, which provides air and surface lift to deliver material across the globe. These programs and contracts support rapid delivery of material ranging from high-priority repair parts to large and complex equipment.

Once material arrives in theater, theater-provided transportation assumes responsibility for onward movement, which is coordinated through the Theater Sustainment Command. This critical handoff links strategic distribution with delivery to the point of need. The speed and effectiveness of this transition directly affect operational forces' ability to receive and employ material.

Understanding this relationship is essential for planners and decision-makers. DLA operates as part of a larger system that depends on coordination across multiple organizations and echelons. The ability to project and sustain combat power depends on distribution capacity and on how effectively the JLEnt integrates strategic movement, theater sustainment and final delivery. As threats evolve and operational demands increase, the distribution network adapts to contested conditions and relies on resilience and integration to sustain support.

Distribution in a contested homeland defense environment

The operating environment for the Joint Force is evolving. Adversaries have demonstrated the ability to disrupt supply chains, contest lines of communication and target critical infrastructure once considered secure. The ability to generate and sustain combat power from the homeland can no longer be assumed. DLA Distribution operates under pressure, across extended distances, and in conditions where access and timing are uncertain.

Distance and time become

operational factors in this environment. The ability to move material across strategic distances and transition it into theater sustainment systems affects the tempo of operations. Disruptions in distribution impact the Joint Force's ability to generate and sustain combat power at distance. Distribution networks respond rapidly to maintain continuity of support as demand becomes less predictable and timelines compress.

These conditions require a deliberate approach to network design. Concentrating capability in fewer locations can improve efficiency and throughput but increases vulnerability to disruption. Distributing material and capability across multiple nodes enhances resilience and survivability but introduces complexity and cost. The challenge is to design a network built to sustain operations in a contested environment despite anticipated disruptions, while balancing efficiency and resilience.

Posture shapes perception. A distribution network with sufficient capacity, global reach, and resilience signals that the Joint Force can sustain combat power under pressure. This reduces perceived vulnerabilities and limits opportunities for adversaries to disrupt operations or exploit gaps in sustainment. This challenge becomes more pronounced within the context of homeland defense. The same network that enables global force projection must also support domestic response and operate in a contested environment that extends beyond traditional theaters of war. Distribution posture becomes a critical factor, shaping how the Joint Force sustains operations and how it deters adversary action through demonstrated capacity and resilience.

Optimization and readiness: A deliberate tradeoff

DLA Distribution operates within a system that balances efficiency with readiness, two objectives inherently in tension. In this context, optimization

refers to concentrating workload to maximize efficiency, increasing throughput, and reducing cost by aligning material and processes to the most effective locations within the network. This approach promotes predictable performance and maximizes the use of available resources. A readiness-focused posture prioritizes flexibility, redundancy and the ability to respond to uncertain and rapidly changing operational requirements. This often requires distributing material across multiple locations, maintaining surge capacity and accepting inefficiencies to preserve options for the Joint Force. Unlike optimized networks, readiness-driven networks must operate under conditions where demand is unclear and timing is

uncertain.

Balancing these competing demands requires deliberate choices about risk, posture and priorities. Investments in readiness may not always produce immediate or measurable returns, but they generate the capacity to respond when optimized systems are stressed or disrupted. Excessive optimization can reduce resilience by concentrating capability and increasing vulnerability to disruption. Understanding this tradeoff is essential for the Joint Force. DLA Distribution posture is not simply a function of efficiency or cost, but a reflection of how the War Department prioritizes readiness, risk and its ability to sustain combat power under contested conditions. This balance

directly influences the Joint Force’s ability to project and sustain combat power, reinforcing credibility and shaping adversary decision-making. This requires a shared understanding across the Joint Force, as decisions that prioritize efficiency or readiness will directly shape risk, cost, and the ability to sustain operations in conflict.

Conclusion

Homeland defense is increasingly defined by the capacity to generate, project and sustain combat power under contested conditions. The distribution network is a deliberately designed enterprise that enables the Joint Force to operate across distance, maintain readiness, and respond to uncertainty. Understanding this network structure and how it integrates with the broader Joint Logistics Enterprise is essential for planners and decision-makers. Strategic throughput hubs, industrial support centers, forward-positioned distribution nodes and expeditionary capabilities form a layered system that generates, regenerates, sustains and extends combat power.

The DLA Distribution network design must inform operational art as the operating environment becomes more contested. Decisions regarding where to position material, how to structure the network, and how to balance efficiency with readiness influence the Joint Force’s ability to sustain operations and respond to disruption. These strategic choices shape operational outcomes. Logistics posture credibility contributes directly to deterrence. A network that can endure disruption, adapt to changing conditions and sustain the force under pressure reinforces the Joint Force’s ability to project power and maintain advantage. The requirement is clear: The distribution network must be designed to endure stress and sustain operations as conditions degrade, with distribution posture remaining a deliberate choice, not an optimized outcome.

DLA graphic

EFFICIENCY VS. READINESS TRADE OFF



EFFICIENCY	READINESS
(Optimized-focused Posture)	(Readiness-focused Posture)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidated Workload • Reduced Costs • High Throughput • Predictable Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed Capability • Increased Flexibility • Redundancy & Survivability • Unpredictable Demand Response

RISK: EMPHASIS ON ONE WILL HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON THE OTHER

USSTRATCOM: Sustaining the force is top imperative

Sustaining the force is a top operational imperative for U.S. Strategic Command, and the Defense Logistics Agency is an indispensable partner in achieving it, said Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Lutton, deputy commander of USSTRATCOM, during a Warfighter Talk in March.

Lutton described USSTRATCOM's unique mission to DLA employees, explaining that almost two-thirds of its force is on alert at all times. Their six Unified Command Plan responsibilities that support the War Department's top priority of defending the U.S. homeland include strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, joint electromagnetic spectrum operations, global strike, missile threat assessment and nuclear command, control and communications.

The command's forces are spread globally, creating sustainment challenges, he said. This geographic spread means operating in extreme and fluctuating weather conditions.

He also discussed the critical link between sustainment and modernization across the nuclear enterprise. He used the example of weapon systems: As USSTRATCOM fields new systems like the Sentinel ICBM and the Columbia-class submarine, it must simultaneously sustain the legacy Minuteman III and Ohio-class systems until the new platforms are fully operational.

"Operationalizing and fielding that modern force is inherently linked to sustaining that force and is inherently linked to delivering a deterrent force for our nation," he said.

Lutton said strategic deterrence allows the joint force the ability to conduct joint operations around the globe.

— Kristen Wong, DLA Headquarters Public Affairs



Photo by Jaquan P. Turnbow

Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Lutton, deputy commander of U.S. Strategic Command, speaks during a Warfighter Talk at the McNamara Headquarters Complex at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, March 31, 2026.

PARTNERSHIPS DRIVE COST SAVINGS ON CRITICAL AIRCRAFT COMPONENT

Coordination between Defense Logistics Agency Weapons Support, service program offices, and industry partners ensured fair pricing for a critical aircraft component, strengthening readiness across multiple platforms while protecting taxpayer dollars and reinforcing DLA's focus on partnerships.

A cost analysis and negotiation effort led by Amy Shimko, a pricing division cost and price analyst, and Christy Oakley, a programs division contracting officer and negotiator — both within the Procurement Process Support Directorate — resulted in \$203,193.50 in savings on the matrix assembly, a high-priority item identified by the Nuclear and Space Enterprise Support Office.

The matrix assembly supports the F-16 Fighting Falcon, CH-53 Sea Stallion, B-2 Spirit and MH-53E Sea Dragon aircraft and plays a role in engine performance to help prevent overheating that could ground the aircraft.

“The matrix assembly is a cross-platform critical item,” Shimko said. “This matrix is a single point of failure component; if the matrix fails, the aircraft is grounded.”

The effort began after proposed pricing did not align with procurement history, prompting a detailed review of cost elements, Shimko added.

“Because the procurement involved multiple vendor or contractor tiers, the analyst had to ‘peel back the onion’ to isolate the true baseline cost of the part,” Shimko said.

Her colleague Oakley concurred. “Our roles functioned as a seamless partnership between data analysis and tactical execution,” She said.

Using that analysis and the procurement history, Oakley approached negotiations with a focus on pricing objectives within the cost and price analysis along with the pricing behavior tied to order quantities found within the procurement history.

“I noticed a strong correlation between our order volume and the unit price,” Oakley said. “Basically, the more we bought, the better the deal got.”

By Natalie Skelton, DLA Weapons Support (Richmond)
Public Affairs

DLA HOLDS FIRST SPACE FORCE INTEGRATION DAY

Space may be the final frontier, but the Defense Logistics Agency and the U.S. Space Force marked a new beginning in their partnership as both organizations met at DLA's headquarters for their first integration day April 24.

“We're really excited about this opportunity to sit down with you to better understand the Space Force's challenges, especially from a logistics standpoint, and identify actions that we can take to help mitigate those challenges,” DLA Director Army Lt. Gen. Mark Simerly said during his opening remarks.

Both the Space Force and DLA are in a transformation cycle driven by many common elements, Simerly said, including the increased reliance upon the space domain and the growing risk within it.

“Part of that risk is also driving our change across all domains, and that's this contested logistics environment where our opponents understand that they can combat us by disconnecting us from our ability to sustain the fight,” Simerly said.

Both organizations signed an interagency

agreement in 2024 to align supply requirements, and the DLA director noted that the Space Force's requirements are somewhat different than the other services.

Since signing the 2024 agreement, DLA and the Space Force have been working on domestically producing the propellant hydrazine, preparing for contested logistics scenarios and sustaining high fulfillment rates in support of Space Force missions, said Assistant Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Installations and Logistics Kathryn Kolbe.

“Space launch, and space in general, is vital to the warfighter. But space launch is our mechanism to provide that support to the warfighter, so it's extremely important that we look at alternative means to create resiliency in our supply chains that we all have concerns about together,” Kolbe said.

DLA plans on holding integration days with the Space Force annually, and there are other meetings throughout the year with the service and various levels of agency leadership.

By Nancy Benecki, DLA Headquarters Public Affairs

DLA NEWSWIRE

MILLION DOLLARS SAVED, READINESS IMPROVED WITH VEHICLE OBTAINED THROUGH DLA DISPOSITION SERVICES

Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Fire and Emergency Services recently strengthened its response capabilities and saved taxpayer money by obtaining a command and communications vehicle through Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services.

The vehicle, reused at no cost through DLA's excess property stocks, is an all-in-one unit with a normally hefty price tag. It will enable incident commanders to coordinate Southern California operations more effectively by providing a centralized space for communications systems, mapping and planning tools.

Camp Pendleton Deputy Fire Chief Peter Korodini said planned upgrades include installing radios, satellite communications and equipment to print large-scale incident maps.

"We were shopping around, and a trailer of that size and capability is roughly \$1.2 to \$1.4 million," Korodini said, adding that the department expects to invest between \$100,000 to \$125,000 to outfit the vehicle for their specific needs.

Korodini said the acquisition allows for improved operational readiness for the department, which provides all-hazards response, including structural and wildland firefighting, hazardous materials response, technical rescue and emergency medical services to the

base and nearby civilian communities, as well as the Cleveland National Forest.

"It's going to be predominantly used for wildland fires," Korodini said. "We get approximately 250-plus wildland fires a year, and five to seven of them are significant fires where we're out there for three, four or five days. ... It allows our command staff to work out of a consistent environment, not outside in the elements."

To save additional money, Korodini said firefighters within the department will perform much of the vehicle upgrade work themselves and expect to have the vehicle in service by the end of 2026.

"We have folks that are very well-versed in communications and radio installations," he said. "They live and breathe everything communications."

Korodini said the partnership with DLA Disposition Services has been longstanding and beneficial, with a DLA Disposition Services field office located on the installation.

"They're right there on the base, literally right down the street from the fire station," Korodini said. "We have a really good relationship. It's a great service and saves us a ton of money."

By Jeff Landenberger, DLA Disposition Services
Public Affairs

JOINT PETROLEUM COURSE UNITES MILITARY BRANCHES IN FUEL LOGISTICS

The Joint Petroleum Course highlights ongoing collaboration between military branches to ensure energy lethality across the War Department's fuel logistics operators.

Established in 2022, the formal agreement between the Defense Logistics Agency Energy and the Petroleum and Water Executive Development program has turned Fort Lee, Virginia, into the central hub for Army, Navy and Marine Corps energy education.

Under the partnership, Fort Lee provides training support locations, including classrooms and information technology infrastructure, while DLA Energy serves as the integrated material manager and educational lead.

Tommy Grais, course manager for the Petroleum Warrant Officers Course, said this dynamic gives students a distinct advantage.

"This situation provides a bonus to our students as DLA Energy educators help provide clarity and insights into the roles and responsibilities within DLA Energy," Grais said.

This integrated approach benefits petroleum operators at every stage of their military careers.

"Having DLA Energy in the middle of this educational hub is critical to ensuring the supported services have access to the best educational partners," said Reed Hudgins, director of the Petroleum Water and Energy Department. "DLA Energy is the most crucial partner in that mix."

Douglas R. Thomas Jr, the joint petroleum training program manager with DLA Energy, described the joint petroleum operations course as both art and science.

The art, he explained, lies in building communication networks to bridge the gaps between the different training, equipment and terminology used by various service branches. The science focuses on precise logistics, ensuring the right amount of fuel arrives at the exact time and place it is needed, without spills or shortages.

To date, the course has graduated 676 students.

By Ebony Gay, DLA Energy Public Affairs



I AM DLA

My name is:

Darryl Melvin

I am:

The DLA customer support representative for the 18th Airborne Corps and 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for DLA Weapons Support (Columbus).

Briefly describe your job in a sentence:

As a customer support representative, I connect the warfighters to the total capability of DLA, ensuring they have the right parts, equipment and sustainment support required on time, every time.

How long have you worked for DLA?

I have been working for DLA for 11 years now.

What does a day in your life look like?

A day in my life looks like going around to visit warfighters, answering requests for information and assisting with requirements units have encountered as it pertains to replacement parts required for their weapon systems. I engage with senior leaders, senior maintenance techs and sustainers about parts that may influence warfighters across the globe and their operational readiness rates to prevent a particular part or parts from becoming a systemic issue so warfighters in other units aren't affected. I send units' RFIs up to the DLA Weapon Support headquarters for situational awareness and for headquarters' assistance with resolving the parts issues by reaching out to vendors and original equipment manufacturers in hopes to resolve parts replacement issues in a timely fashion.

What is your favorite aspect about working for DLA?

My favorite aspect is knowing what I do daily has a direct impact on the warfighter, which could be in here in the U.S. or abroad. Behind every requisition submitted, every part required, every shipment, there's a service member at the end of a weapon, deploying, training or responding to a mission that they've been tasked to do. So being part of that logistics pipeline and helping to remove friction points for warfighters in real time is what I enjoy the most.

What are your best memories of working here?

The best memories come from the real-time impact of DLA support on readiness. I recently watched warfighters ramp up to go out the door to support a real-world mission. Knowing that they had the parts required so their weapon systems will function properly forward is what inspires me to continue to do this. It reinforces that this is not just logistics; it's readiness, it's survivability and it's mission success.

How exactly does your role support the warfighter?

My role is to bridge the gap between operational demand and sustainment capabilities. I work directly with the commanders, staff officers, sustainers and logisticians to anticipate their requirements. I help get ahead of supply chain issues and ensure DLA is postured to support the steady state operation and surge conditions as well.

How does your role support the National Defense Strategy's priority of homeland defense and the Western Hemisphere?

I ensure forces are ready to respond, whether it be to natural disasters, humanitarian assistance missions, Defense Support of Civil Authorities operations or rapid deployment requirements across the region.

Is there anything you'd want your co-workers to know about you or your position?

Being a DLA customer support representative here at Fort Bragg, an area where I served on active duty for 19 years of my 26-year Army career, is probably the best job and position I could ever hope for. I understand what it means to rely on a support system like DLA. Now I get a chance to make sure those systems show up when it matters the most, whether that's in combat, a crisis or just support here at home.

Photo by Nutan Chada



Darryl Melvin

Darryl Melvin is the DLA customer support representative for the 18th Airborne Corps and 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for DLA Weapons Support (Columbus).