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DOD developing new logistics architecture

Goal: Improving supply chains

BY FRANK TIBONI

The Defense Department will release a new logistics enterprise architecture next month as part of its effort to connect 3,000 computer supply systems so managers can more easily order goods and troops can receive them more quickly.

The Enterprise Integrated Data Environment, which is part of DOD's overall logistics architecture and will be completed by June, will help officials in the military and the Defense Logistics Agency manage implementation of logistics systems. It will tie systems together by giving users a common interface for exchanging logistics information across the military, said Gary Jones, acting assistant deputy undersecretary of Defense for logistics systems modernization.

"This has to be a success," Jones said.

DOD officials hired Science Applications International Corp. and **EWSolutions**, a systems integrator based in Chicago, to help create the framework.

To build the data architecture, company officials started by following certain steps developed through their work with government and commercial clients, such as defining requirements of the architecture. They then chose commercial software that would meet key objectives, including scalability and performance, **said David Marco, the company's president.**

Top logistics generals, testifying before Congress last week, stressed the need for a logistics architecture and common computer protocols to help solve the many problems troops encountered when ordering and delivering clothing, ammunition, water, food and parts during last year's invasion of Iraq.

The military does not require new supply systems — just connections among existing ones, said Lt. Gen. Claude Christianson, the Army's deputy chief of staff for logistics, during a March 30 hearing of the House Armed Services Committee's Readiness Subcommittee.

He said DOD officials need to define an architecture and adopt information technologies used in industry to track supplies. The military is conducting pilot tests of such technologies, including radio frequency identification devices, which recognize goods in shipping containers by scanning electronic tags on them, and software embedded in logistics systems that sense when supplies are running low and automatically orders more.

DOD has been able to improve logistics since the first Persian Gulf war, but it still lags behind industry standards. The private sector generally has a one- to two-day average for domestic deliveries and two to four days for international ones. ■

Bandwidth proves logistical headache

The logistics problems the military experienced during Operation Iraqi Freedom mainly involved communications and distribution.

Personnel in the Middle East could not get enough bandwidth to buy materiel online, and fast-moving troops did not always receive the goods because they had moved on from the place where they ordered them, said Lt. Gen. Claude Christianson, the Army's deputy chief of staff for logistics.

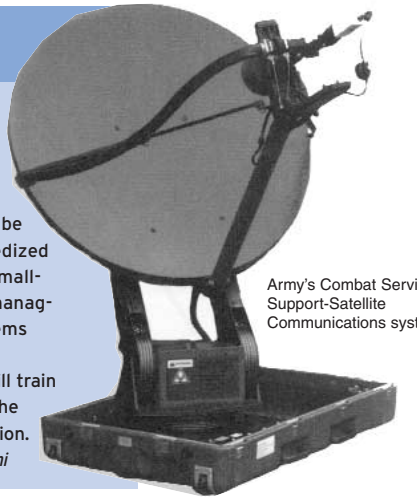
To help solve the problem, Army officials shifted $165 million in the logistics budget last fall to buy commercial satellite communications so that troops entering Iraq this spring and summer can order and receive supplies more quickly, Christianson said.

One result is the Army's new Combat Service Support-Satellite Communications system, which provides logisticians and medical personnel with more bandwidth and easier methods of ordering and delivering supplies.

The $50,000 system comes in two boxes and can be assembled in 15 to 30 minutes. It consists of a ruggedized notebook computer and satellite dish called a very small-aperture terminal, said Lt. Col. Earl Noble, product manager for the service's Defense Wide Transmission Systems program at Fort Monmouth, N.J.

This spring and summer, the 3rd Infantry Division will train with the system before it deploys to Iraq. A year ago, the 3rd Infantry and 1st Marine divisions led the Iraqi invasion.

-Frank Tiboni



Army's Combat Service Support-Satellite Communications system

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