

Sharing Resources

Between Government Agencies

by George K. Hughes

Despite the continuous increase in operational tempo across the U.S. government, there has not been a proportional increase of resources. In fact, the level of uncertainty over resource availability in most departments and agencies continues to grow while they are being tasked to accomplish more with less. One approach to dealing with this reality is to consider the capabilities and expertise that already reside within the U.S. government and to share those capabilities among departments. Sharing commonly needed resources, instead of spending money on the development of redundant capabilities or contracting for services, could save time and money and build a more experienced team. The purpose of this article is to provide examples of how U.S. government departments and agencies might utilize Department of Defense (DoD) organizations and equipment to ensure effective execution of assigned missions within a resource-constrained environment. This article will also highlight the different types of agreements used for coordinating the sharing of resources, discuss actions that can assist a request's approval, and emphasize the benefits of resource-sharing from both the borrower and lender perspective. The first step, however, is to determine what DoD capabilities can support and enable the missions of other departments and agencies.

Strategic Enablers

Each department of the U.S. government has unique duties, responsibilities, and missions; however, each also has requirements in common with other departments—mainly logistical—that it must address when planning programs and operations. Along these lines of commonality exist opportunities to fill capability gaps with DoD organizations and equipment. Many organizations are familiar with and use assets from strategic enablers such as the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) that provides support to joint, U.S. government, and Secretary of Defense-approved multinational and nongovernmental logistics requirements,¹ and the Defense Logistics

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Agency (DLA) that provides support to DoD, civilian agencies, and foreign nations with receipt, storage, and issue of materiel.² For example, during the response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa in 2014–2015, USTRANSCOM and DLA enabled the rapid deployment of personnel, equipment, and unique capabilities, such as distribution and contract teams, across the joint operational area.³ Additionally DLA has historically provided support to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, as it did during relief efforts in response to Hurricane Sandy.⁴

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Operational Resources

DoD also has operational and tactical sustainment organizations that can add operational reach and longevity to government operations at a significantly lower cost than developing or contracting for new sustainment capabilities. No matter the department or agency, when a mission includes operating in a foreign or remote area, providing logistical support is a high priority. Since many organizations do not have the organic capability to logistically support themselves, they often contract for logistics support or share space on an existing installation. If neither of these options is available, however, assistance could be requested from DoD to provide support from one of the following organizations:

- U.S. Air Force Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force. This emergency force provides civil engineer teams capable of providing support to as many as 2,500 personnel. It performs contingency missions that include site surveys, expeditious

construction, base camp and operations establishment, utility system installation, and emergency services, and it has been used to support both military and civil authorities in war and peace operations, including providing civil engineering assistance during hurricane recovery.⁵

- U.S. Air Force Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Engineer Squadron. This squadron provides a flexible airfield and operating-site heavy construction and repair capability, along with many special capabilities that allow for support as needed. It is capable of self-sufficient construction and heavy repair of operating sites in any environment and is designed to deploy worldwide.⁶
- U.S. Air Force Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources. This program is flexible and responsive in deploying a variety of systems to support operations and has the capability to accommodate transportation, housing, mess, aircraft maintenance, airfield lighting, power, water, sewage, heating, cooling, medical, and civil engineering needs.⁷ By design, these packages have everything necessary to support a deployed force in the most austere environments. Personnel can construct and supply an operational airfield or forward operating location to support any operation, including combat and humanitarian missions, within three weeks.⁸
- U.S. Navy Expeditionary Combat Command. The mission of this command is to execute combat, combat support, and combat service support missions across the full spectrum of naval, joint, and combined operations that enable access from and on the sea.⁹ A U.S. government department or agency might request and receive sustainment support from a naval

construction force, a naval expeditionary logistics support group, or a construction battalion maintenance unit. A naval construction force has the capability to support U.S. government operations through its ability to construct border outposts, expeditionary camps, bridges, roads, and munitions storage facilities. The force also has the capability to perform airfield and port damage repair. A naval expeditionary logistics support group may support personnel upon their arrival into an area of operations at a seaport or airport of embarkation. The group provides services that include a full spectrum of cargo handling operations, such as break-bulk cargo capability, air cargo handling, port and terminal operations, freight terminal operations, and ordnance handling and distribution. Finally, a construction battalion maintenance unit, more commonly known as Seabees, is also fully capable of constructing a forward operating location to support U.S. government personnel at any austere site.

- U.S. Army Theater Support Commands (TSC). TSCs serve as the Army’s single integrator of logistics support within a theater of operations. TSCs have subordinate sustainment brigades consisting of combat sustainment support battalions that have diverse capabilities, including transportation, supply storage and distribution, fuel and water storage and distribution, and maintenance. Depending on its needs, a U.S. government department or agency could request support from a TSC for transportation, supply, or maintenance support.
- U.S. Army Force Provider Sets. These modular sets of equipment are basically a “base in a box.” The U.S. Army has sets for 50, 150, or 600 people. Each set comes

with tents, cots, kitchen, laundry, shower, latrines, air conditioners/heaters for tents, power generation, cold weather kit, water reuse, morale/welfare/recreation, and a chapel. The Army stores these sets in Korea, Italy, Kuwait, and Charleston, SC. Current sets have the latest operational energy initiatives and consume less water and fuel than earlier models. Rigid wall shelters are available, if needed, instead of tents. Either the Army or contractors can assist an organization with set-up, and either personnel from the requesting department or agency or contractors can operate the equipment. Once the mission is complete, the requesting department or agency would return the equipment to the Army and pay DoD for funds to reset the equipment to operating standard. Multiple federal agencies used these sets during the recent response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa.

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Tactical Resources

At the tactical level, DoD can assist with ammunition storage, medical aid stations, and other tactical tasks, as well as provide specific equipment and personnel trained to provide field services. These services include field sanitation, laundry and shower, food preparation, fuel storage and distribution, water purification and distribution, operation of material handling equipment, air drop/sling load operations, and medical planning. Specific pieces of equipment that can be requested are power generators,

reverse osmosis water purification units, and liquid storage containers. Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) is another tactical capability that can be requested from DoD. DoD has numerous types of EOD units that can provide support both separate from and in conjunction with law enforcement. Possible missions are destruction of captured munitions or clearance of space to build an operating site. As with any law enforcement activity in which DoD resources are used, coordination via legal channels must be done to ensure compliance with U.S. Code.

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Requesting Resources

U.S. government departments and agencies are authorized by The Economy Act (31 U.S.C. § 1535) to enter into agreements for supplies and services from one another.¹⁰ Any non-DoD department or agency can request support from DoD. A request depends on the availability of funding, the support being available from the provider, and the request being more convenient and economical than commercial support.¹¹ Once these criteria have been met, a U.S. government department or agency requiring support can send a request through its Executive Decision Authority to the Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for review and approval. Once the letter requesting support is approved at OSD, it will be forwarded to the supporting agency for further coordination. But before a request is made, the requestor should with his or her legal office determine if an

agreement with DoD is already in place. Before entering into an agreement, it is also important to understand the purpose and desired outcomes to ensure the correct agreement type is used. Two of the most common agreements for coordinating the sharing of resources are memorandums of agreement (MOA) and interagency agreements (IAA).

Memorandums of agreement establish authorities and limitations between DoD and other departments and agencies of the U.S. government when DoD provides resources, both materiel and manpower, to non-DoD elements. The executive decision authorities for DoD and the requesting department or agency both sign the MOA.¹² While there is no directed format for these documents, an accepted practice is to set forth the details of the MOA in paragraphs addressing the purpose, background, and major points of the agreement. Keep in mind that because MOAs do not involve payment, a reimbursable agreement requires an inter-service support agreement (DD Form 1144).¹³

An IAA allows for reimbursement for services and resources. It sets the relationship among the different parties and identifies the authority permitting the agreement and the action, period, and type. IAAs are the government-wide, standard form for all reimbursable agreements, including agreements between agencies and agreements within agencies.¹⁴ One example of this agreement is the Reutilization, Transfer and Donation Program, where federal agencies can receive items from DoD that DoD declares as excess.¹⁵

Approval of Requests

Of course, DoD has a finite amount of resources and has its own demanding missions and operations, so DoD might not be able to support a request for assistance. To increase the chance of its request being approved a requesting department or agency should:

- Communicate with all stakeholders. When making a request, include everyone with a stake in the decision. Ensure your executive decision authority is aware of the request and why the request is being made. Include any office that might be losing resources due to your request to reduce friction and get your entire team behind the request. Include the office that will be responsible for the requested resources to ensure its input is incorporated into the request. Finally, make sure you involve DoD to ensure you comply with its standard for requests and include all required information.
- Be proactive and plan early. Most DoD resources are allocated to support ongoing and planned operations, so the earlier a request is made, the easier it is for DoD to program in the request with its other operations. Keep in mind that resources are allocated based on priorities, so include the priority of the operation the requested resources will support and the criticality of that operation. Additionally, include all relevant information, such as where the requested resources will be utilized, how accountability will be maintained while in your possession, how long they will be required, and the plan to integrate them into the operation.
- Provide feedback on the usefulness of the shared resources. Providing feedback to DoD confirms that the resources were used and shows how the resources benefited the user and government interests. Providing quantitative and qualitative data to DoD will help ensure continued support.

Benefits of Resource Sharing

In addition to the obvious benefits of saving time and money by sharing existing resources, there are other benefits to this approach. The biggest benefit is the collaboration of experts from multiple departments across the U.S. government, building a more capable whole-of-government team. Sharing resources brings together diverse perspectives on problem-solving, which can lead to creative solutions. Another benefit is the broadening opportunities for personnel to interact with different agencies and different operations. Finally, sharing resources across different departments maximizes resources, increases the security of the DoD supply chain, and results in a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Conclusion

The number of programs and operations taken on by U.S. agencies continues to increase even while agency resource allocation continues to fluctuate. In today's resource-constrained environment, it makes sense to leverage the assets of multiple governmental agencies to ensure efficiency and reduce waste when planning and executing operations. Through resource sharing, departments and agencies can save time and money and build a more capable whole-of-government team. **IAJ**

NOTES

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