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**DEVELOPING A NATO CAPABILITY – A CASE STUDY: JOINT
LOGISTIC SUPPORT GROUP**

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Abstract:

Due to the consistent security environment deterioration, NATO has shifted its focus in capability development, focusing on Collective defence. Military forces that will participate in Collective defence, including the National defence forces, need to maintain a high level readiness posture now and in the future, both for domestic operations and for missions abroad. The build-up of the Joint Logistic Support Group (JLSG) command structure was defined as one of the most important projects. The main purpose for creating and utilizing the JLSG is to enable greater cooperation in logistics across NATO, optimize the logistic footprint for any given NATO operation, and reduce the overall expense of logistics to NATO and the contributing nations. The JLSG is an organization that supplements and eases the burden on national logistics, increases the overall unity of effort, and achieves greater economy of effort by optimizing the available forces and creating a single logistics command that can support the JTF commander. The most obvious advantage of this capability is the fact that the JLSG could be a single headquarters that can coordinate and synchronize all logistics functions throughout an entire Joint Operations Area (JOA). people.

Key words: Joint Logistic Support Group (JLSG); NATO Capability; NATO Logistic; Joint Support Element Command (JSEC); Standing Joint Logistic Support Group (SJLSG); Logistic support

1. Introduction

The requirements for the logistic support in multinational operations are not totally different than those for classic operations, as we know them at the present moment. But what differentiates them for sure, is the multinational framework that incorporates the military actions, the multiculturalism of tactics, techniques and procedures by which NATO and non-NATO member states, that participate in the multinational operation, understand to provide the logistic support to their own troops, as well as the different roles accepted to be fulfilled by one country or another (Lead Nation for Logistics, Specialized Role Nation, Host Nation Support, etc).

The requirements for logistic support in multinational operations bring forward the managerial facet (organization and planning) of activities conducted by the planning and leadership bodies, in order to generate and equip the forces, as well as to provide for them a level of logistic support that allows them to sustain themselves in the theatre of operations, for a specified period of time; subsequently, after the support system (support lines) has been realized, the forces will have their material and services needs filled, in accordance with the consumption rate and the individuals' needs.

From this point of view is very clear that the requirements for an integrated logistic support highlight the necessity of building a new NATO capability – Joint Logistic Support Group (JLSG).

For those without a lot of joint or multinational experience in a NATO environment, the Joint Logistics Support Group (JLSG) can seem foreign. Even for those who do have experience in



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those environments, the situation is much the same. The JLSG concept has been around since 2010, but is fairly new to many logisticians. In addition, the JLSG has been employed very little in real-world scenarios, which leads many to wonder what exactly it is, how it can be employed, and how effective it can be.

The JLSG is a uniquely NATO concept. It is built around the idea that a single unit, made up of different nations and services, will provide logistics command and control to a joint, multinational force. The JLSG, in most cases, will also have the support of both contractors and a host nation. The JLSG Commander is responsible for synchronizing the national support elements, the contractors deployed in theatre and deconflicting the use of the key infrastructure with the local authorities to avoid any competition with the International Community.

2. JLSG as a NATO Capability

MILITARY CAPABILITY – the ability to provide an operational effect required by the operational standards specific to an environment, in a specified time and to sustain that effect for a specified period of time; it is provided by a system consisting of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership development, Personnel, Facilities, Interoperability (DOTMLPFI) readiness, deployability.

a. The purpose of the JLSG

The main purpose for creating and utilizing the JLSG is to enable greater cooperation in logistics across NATO, optimize the logistic footprint for any given NATO operation, and reduce the overall expense of logistics to NATO and the contributing nations. While not yet completely proven in major combat operations, the JLSG seeks to gain these advantages by employing a JLSG made up of a core staff element with augmentation, as well as a host of subordinate units provided by various troop contributing nations, to collectively support a joint and multinational force. It is a given that no single nation can effectively and efficiently support its forces (and possibly others) in a NATO operation. Without a single headquarters to coordinate and streamline logistics in a particular area of operations, there is often significant redundancy and wasted effort when nations try to go at it alone.

The JLSG is meant to be the answer to those problems; it is an organization that supplements and eases the burden on national logistics, increases the overall unity of effort, and achieves greater economy of effort by optimizing the available forces and creating a single logistics command that can support the JTF commander. The JLSG, if utilized as planned, can also enhance the coordinated use of the existing logistics infrastructure, make the best use of national expertise to support the whole force, use common logistics funding more efficiently, and perhaps most importantly, provide the JTF commander a single, accurate, and timely logistical picture for the entire area of operations.

The effectiveness of the JLSG is further enhanced by utilizing several modes of multinational logistics, such as logistic lead nation, logistic role specialist nation, and multinational integrated logistic units, or multinational logistic units.

b. What is JLSG?

Allied Joint Publication AJP-4.6, Edition C, Version 1, ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR THE JOINT LOGISTIC SUPPORT GROUP, which has been approved by the nations in the Military Committee Joint Standardization Board, was promulgated December 2018. It provides the NATO level 2 doctrine for the conduct of the Joint Logistic Support Group from preparation to



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termination. AJP-4.6(C) builds on the principles described in AJP-4(B) ‘Allied Joint Doctrine for Logistics’. The agreement of nations to use this publication is recorded in STANAG 2230.

This doctrine which covers the JLSG provides joint commanders and staffs with a common framework for the command, responsibilities, and coordination of the JLSG. The doctrine is not overly prescriptive and admits that differences in operations will force the structure and use of the JLSG to be flexible. *AJP-4.6 defines the JLSG as a joint, force generated, deployable logistic capability that provides command and control of assigned logistical forces from the theater to tactical levels in support of a joint task force (JTF) made up of NATO members, partners, and non-NATO nations.*

In most cases, the JLSG supports the component commands by providing common services and support to meet their requirements through the use of a combination of its assigned forces, host-nation support, and contracts. In addition, the JLSG is capable of supporting deployment, operational-level sustainment, and redeployment of the force. In essence, the JLSG is a sustainment brigade on steroids that not only supports its Army counterparts, but also supports the air and maritime components, supports deployment and redeployment, and serves as an intermediary between the national support elements (NSEs) and the tactical forces assigned to the JTF. Ultimately, the size and composition of the JLSG in any particular operation is determined by the overall size of the JTF it supports.

The JLSG contributes to conducting joint operational logistic support of the joint function ‘sustainment’ in accordance with the logistic principles. The JLSG structure will be determined as part of operations planning process (OPP) in order to achieve economies of scale whilst maintaining effective operational level logistics support. The JLSG will enable greater cooperation, optimize the operational logistic footprint, reducing the overall expense of logistics to NATO and the nations through:

- coordinating the joint force’s collaboration on logistics, with the exception of medical support with: nations; partners; the host nations; logistic lead nations; logistic role specialist nations, international organizations; non-governmental organizations; and contractor support;
- enhancing overall logistic command and control (C2);
- improving resources prioritization to better meet commander COM JTF’s operational objectives;
- enabling effective economies of scale and reduce costs;
- optimizing resource management in order to avoid accumulation and competition for resources;
- enhancing collective negotiating power from a contracting perspective;
- enhancing logistic information flow and assessment;
- improving operational asset visibility for COM JTF;
- allowing tailoring of national support elements (NSEs) to produce an optimized logistic footprint;
- making best use of specific national logistic expertise and hardware;
- enhancing coordinated use of logistic infrastructure;
- integrating logistic support provided by NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA).
- using common funding more efficiently;
- enabling coordinated and efficient deployment, relief in place and redeployment operations.

Whilst the JLSG will conduct operations with reference to all of the principles of logistics,



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the following paragraphs identify those that will have the greatest impact on JLSG establishment and operations.

- **Readiness:** A JLSG HQ and assigned units should be held at the appropriate levels of readiness, to meet assigned functions and timeframe as directed by Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The JLSG HQ core staff element, permanently manned, should provide the foundational logistic expertise and resources necessary to conduct reconnaissance and plan, manage and coordinate activation of the JLSG and the remainder of its HQ;
- **Scalability:** The overall construct of the JLSG and its HQ must be capable of supporting the scale and logistic complexity of operations with a system that can be adapted to the mission. This is best enabled through scalability and is highly dependent upon the willingness of nations to contribute ready and trained forces to integrate into the JLSG structures;
- **Modularity:** A modular approach to sourcing the JLSG is an essential means of enabling scalability and readiness, and can be determined by the characteristics of the force and geography. The modular structure includes organizational templates and building blocks of functions that may be quickly enhanced, moved or removed as the requirements of an operation change. Modularity increases flexibility and reduces standing costs when generating a JLSG.
- **Tailored spectrum of a joint logistic support group:** The spectrum of the JLSG may range from the JLSG HQ core staff element in a basic coordination/liaison function to a fully augmented JLSG HQ and subordinate units (enablers) to deliver the full spectrum of support to the operations planning process and deployed force. The JLSG structure is determined as part of the OPP in order to achieve effective and efficient operational-level logistic support, reception, staging and onward movement (RSOM) and rearward movement staging and dispatch (RMSD), and may vary throughout the operation.

c. JLSG sourcing

A JLSG is constructed from three sources to deliver operational-level logistics:

➤ **JLSG HQ core staff element.** The core staff element (CSE) should comprise permanent and dedicated subject matter experts (SMEs), including a command element, planning and functional staff to address the spectrum of support functions. It will require and plan for HQ real life support and communication and information systems (CIS). The CSE provides COM JTF and COM JLSG with a trained and prepared capability to contribute to operational-level planning, the reconnaissance team and the ability to deploy on operations. It will provide a nucleus around which to effectively integrate augmentees. Finally, it will be able to insert enabling units in its inventory. Currently, the JLSG HQ CSE is organic to both the NATO Command Structure and the NATO Force Structure. The CSE is the initial manning element of a JLSG HQ.

➤ **JLSG HQ augmentation.** In order to achieve full operational capability, there is a need for additional manning through augmentation tailoring the JLSG HQ to the needs of the operation. SHAPE is responsible, in conjunction with the JTF HQ and especially the nations for coordinating augmentation of the JLSG HQ. The COM JLSG is responsible to exercise and train JLSG HQ staff to enable rapid activation of a fully capable HQ. If manning augmentation is achieved by appointing a framework nation, the framework nation will assume the responsibility for managing/coordinating/administering augmentation of the JLSG HQ, supported by SHAPE as necessary. The agreement of nations to fill the JLSG augmentees posts not only enables the JLSG to meet its directed responsibilities but it is also an opportunity for TCNs to engage in and influence the



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planning, coordination and execution of multinational logistics for the operation. Augmentation will be capability based, subject to the size, type and context of operation with augmentees suitably trained, ready and prepared.

➤ *Units and resources.* National and multinational units, HNS and other resources are assigned to COM JLSG to enable and execute operational-level logistic support. These capabilities should be early identified within force generation process, adequately trained and available to the required notice to move and could be provided by contractors, other government departments and, in exceptional circumstances, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and international organizations (IO). Units and resources under the authority of COM JLSG, enable activities such as: movement and transportation; maintenance; military engineering support to logistics; supply and services support; real-life support; medical support; and CIS.

A generic JLSG HQ structure is presented in figure 1.

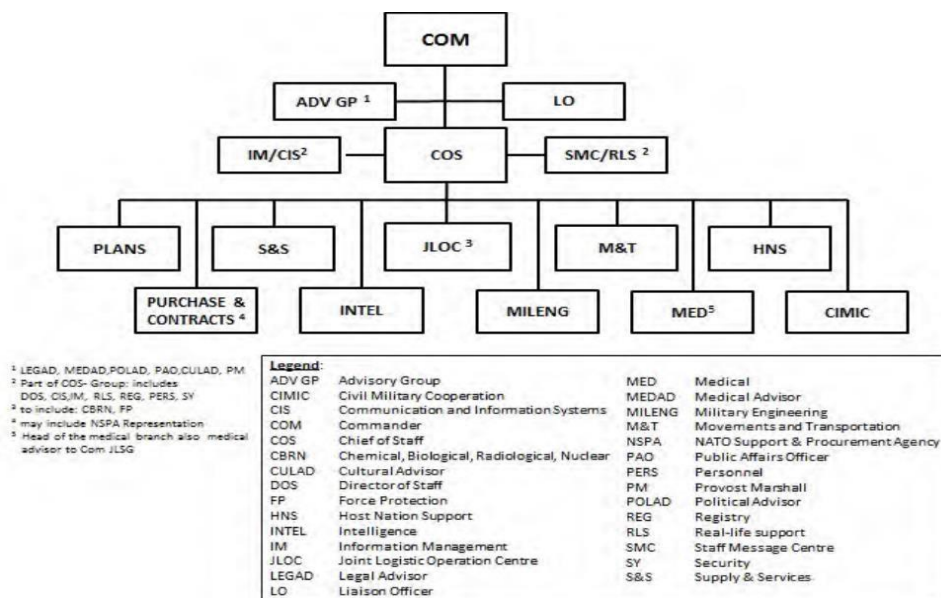


Fig. 1: Generic JLSG HQ structure

In order to support a variety of NATO missions and a multitude of nations, the structure of the JLSG must be incredibly flexible. It must be both tailorable and scalable to the specific operation. In smaller operations with few nations and limited joint requirements, the idea of the JLSG is easily executable. The challenge arises when the operation becomes more complex, the amount of nations involved increases, and the amount of support required by the air and maritime components increases. The proposed structure of the JLSG, however, lends itself to the robust responsibility it is tasked with in that type of scenario. In a perfect scenario, the JLSG not only has its headquarters section and its own internal support battalion, but also enough capability to operate a theater logistics base (TLB), operate one or more forward logistics bases (FLBs), execute distribution, and support the full spectrum of deployment and redeployment operations.

The structure of the JLSG will be modular, operation specific and tailored to meet the logistic framework of the operation and likely threats. The generic JLSG structure is shown at figure 2.



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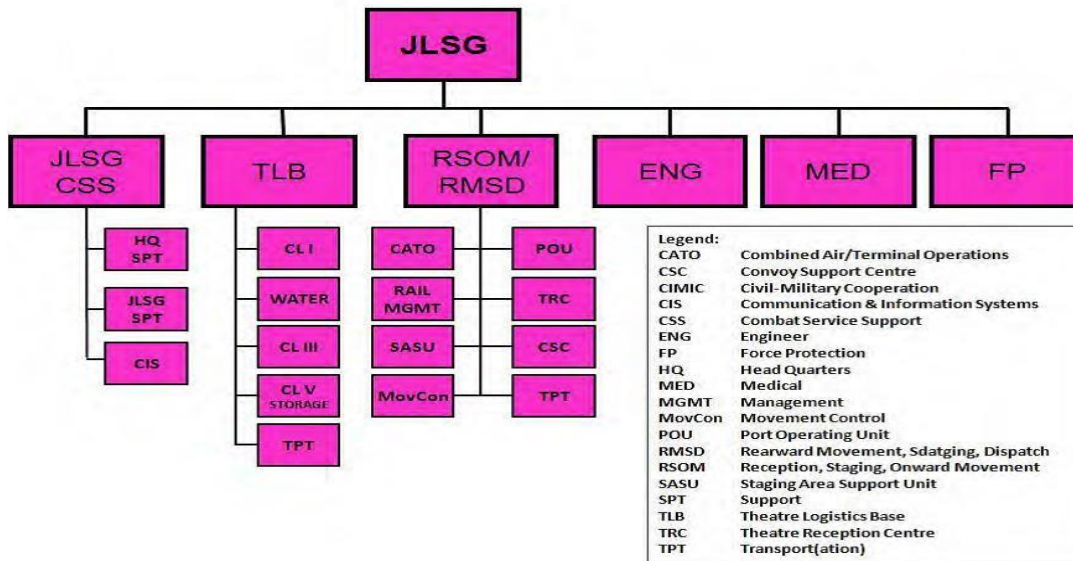


Figure 2: Generic JLSG structure

In addition to those "traditional" logistics functions and assets, the JLSG is designed to provide command and control to a host of engineer capabilities and advanced medical capabilities. In many cases, the JLSG also plays a significant role in coordinating, scheduling, and monitoring both host nation and contractor support. Host nation and contractor support can be incredible force multipliers when the JLSG doesn't have the assigned forces it might normally have.

d. Where are the JLSGs?

Currently, there are four JLSGs. The two "tactical" JLSGs, which are the focus of this paper, are at NATO Joint Force Command HQ in Brunssum, Belgium, and at NATO Joint Force Command HQ in Naples, Italy. They are each composed of a core staff element of about 25 personnel. That staff is augmented by approximately 95 additional personnel when "activated." Those additional personnel come from various other NATO or national HQs, including the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs), or from troop contributing nations depending on agreements made during force generation.

These two JLSGs are further supported by the newest NATO headquarters, the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC), and its JLSG, which became initially operational capable (IOC) in Ulm, Germany, in September 2019. The JSEC, which is essentially the rear area command during operations, will have the wartime mission of accelerating, coordinating, and safeguarding the movement of allied follow-on forces across European borders. The JLSG within the JSEC will, in turn, be primarily responsible for NATO's reception, staging and onward movement (RSOM) mission. This could ease the burden on a "tactical" JLSG in some situations.

The fourth JLSG, also known as the Standing JLSG (SJLSG), is also starting to build capacity and is located at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. It will eventually move to Ulm, Germany, to be co-located with the JSEC. The SJLSG will be a predominantly non-deployable static and strategic level headquarters. At present, the SJLSG's mission as described in AJP-4, Allied Joint Doctrine for Logistics is to enable the responsive deployment and employment of NATO forces by conducting enduring, continuous, and proactive planning and enabling activities.

In addition, the SJLSG is responsible for the execution of joint logistics in support of NATO High Readiness Forces, including the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTf). That mission



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was defined before the creation of the JSEC and its JLSG under the NATO Command Structure Adaptation, and it has yet to be written in NATO doctrine how the SJLSG mission (and perhaps others) will change to accommodate the new structure. While it is a bit unclear about what the future holds for the SJLSG's mission, it is clear that the actual structure and composition of a "tactical" JLSG HQ will differ from operation to operation, and its success is largely dependent on it having the manning, expertise and subordinate units to execute its mission.

e. How does a "tactical" JLSG work?

In most cases, a single "tactical" JLSG will deploy into an area of operations and set up its headquarters in a location deemed most advantageous by the commander. Sometimes that is near a significant aerial or sea port of debarkation; other times it is a geographically centered location that supports the overall distribution plan. What is likely is that the JLSG headquarters will be co-located with the main logistics base (TLB) in the theater. The TLB serves as the main storage point and hub of distribution for most, if not all, equipment and supplies coming into a theater. From there, the JLSG has the best overview of the logistics situation and can provide the best command and control of its available assets. Some of the JLSG subordinate units will also be located at the TLB, but it is likely some of them will also be dispersed to other locations in order to facilitate the most effective and efficient flow of equipment and supplies, and to provide services, to the components.

In the most basic sense, logistics in NATO is a national responsibility. But, as mentioned before, very few nations, if any, can execute that mission all on their own. That is why the JLSG exists and why different modes of multinational logistics are employed. In a generic area of operations, the JLSG is responsible for monitoring and executing the logistics mission in the joint logistics support area (JLSA). This area is also called the joint logistics support network (JLSN) in the latest version of AJP-4 and AJP-4.6.

The JLSA (or JLSN) encompasses everything from the ports of debarkation down to the logistics elements belonging to the component commands. Nations send their equipment and supplies from home bases to the entry points within the theater and ultimately to a TLB. In most cases, the NSEs maintain some level of control of that material until it is needed. Then the JLSG assumes the responsibility for distributing when necessary. Other times, the NSEs turn over equipment and supplies to the JLSG once they enter theater. This is especially applicable when a nation is providing a common supply to all participating nations.

Once equipment and supplies from the nations reach the TLB, along with the materials and supplies provided by the host nation, it is up to the JLSG to manage their storage and distribution. In order to create a more effective distribution network, and at times shorten the lines of communication, the JLSG can set up forward logistics elements (FLEs). These sites are closer to the customer locations and give the JLSG more flexibility when executing its mission. These FLEs can be in addition to or co-located with the logistics elements of the components, such as a forward logistics site (FLS) for the maritime component or a deployed operating base (DOB) for the air component.

Either way, once the JLSG gets the right equipment and supplies to the components, whether it is at an FLS, DOB, or other location, the components are responsible for executing the remainder of the distribution mission. Of course, there are times when the JLSG can utilize its assets to throughput down to a lower level, but it isn't all that common. In addition, there are also times when the NSEs can bypass the JLSG and the TLB and deliver directly to the necessary component. This is especially common when a nation only has a small contingent within a particular component providing a specialized service that requires less common equipment and supplies. In this situation, whether the JLSG is directly involved or not, it is critical for all parties involved to coordinate and



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synchronize as much as possible to avoid confusion or a redundancy of effort.

f. JLSG’s challenges

Throughout various exercises, there were several challenges that the staff of the JLSG faced. Some of these challenges were associated with a lack of overall experience, some could be attributed to the construct of the exercise, but there were some that could be common to any JLSG in any given scenario. It was also evident that there could be some "natural" challenges to the JLSG simply because of the way it is designed to be manned and utilized.

The first major challenge the JLSG faces is manning. This is a challenge associated with how the JLSG was designed. The 25-man core staff element is only a fraction of what is required to actually man and run the JLSG in a real-world situation. The bulk of the staff is actually made up of 95 augmented personnel. In a perfect world, all 95 billets would be filled by fully qualified personnel and this wouldn't be an issue. But it might be a stretch to think that can really happen, especially since there isn't necessarily a plan for where all 95 personnel will come from. It is likely some will come from other national or NATO HQs, or that other troop contributing nations will pony up personnel, but nothing is guaranteed. In a large scale crisis, some nations and NATO HQs may not have the willingness to give up personnel to man the JLSG. Without a full staff, the JLSG could struggle to accomplish its massive mission.

The second major challenge is again related to how the JLSG is doctrinally designed to operate, and it involves the command, control, and coordinating relationships. Some of this challenge is related to the relationships recommended by doctrine, while some of it is related to having a good understanding of what those relationships actually mean. It is important to note that NATO doctrine uses the term "degrees of authority" when discussing the level of command or control that a headquarters has over its subordinate units.

Some of those levels differ from what the other nations use, so therein lies part of the challenge itself. In any case, nations never give full command and control of their forces to a NATO commander. Instead, nations will delegate only operational command (OPCOM) or operational control (OPCON). In the case of the JLSG, it is designed to be under the OPCON of a JTF HQ. The same goes for the units subordinate to the JLSG.

However, in reality, it isn't as simple as that. Just because the doctrine says that is the relationship that should exist, that doesn't mean it is always the case. Nations often send forces with caveats that can tie the hands of commanders. Some caveats won't allow units to accept certain tasks, go certain places, or allow their forces to be re-task organized even if it is all for the good of the overall mission. From a logistics perspective, this can really hamstring a commander.

The next set of challenges has more to do with the execution side of things. The first such challenge is the reporting processes. There must be clear procedures and guidelines, as well as formats and timelines. This may seem like common sense, but in a NATO environment where units come together never having worked together before, this could get overlooked. Plus, differences in language and standard operating procedures exacerbate the situation. Therefore, it is important to either put these processes in orders during planning or codify them with all key players during the initial stages of an operation.

The second execution challenge revolves around the recognized logistics picture (RLP). According to AJP-4, the JTF J4 is responsible for development and maintenance of the RLP. The same publication states that the JLSG, along with the troop contributing nations, component commands, and host nation, contributes to the RLP. In AJP-4.6, the JLSG is given the responsibility to contribute to the RLP in accordance with the direction and guidance of the JTF commander. So, from a doctrinal perspective, it is the JTF J4's responsibility to develop and maintain the RLP with



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support from others. However, during some exercises, the JTF J4 assumed the JLSG would manage the RLP.

An extension of this challenge is the fact that interoperability of information systems is largely non-existent in a multinational environment. This makes the problem of providing a clear RLP even more difficult, especially when it creates a redundancy of effort for subordinate units who have to transfer data and information into whatever format the higher command wants, which is very likely not the same format their system provides.

3. Conclusions

JLSG is a NATO deployable, operational-level logistic organization in charge of coordinating and conducting the operational logistic support using operation-assigned national, host nation and/or commercial resources. The operational logistic support includes the coordination and the execution of all activities linked to the NATO force deployment, sustainment and redeployment.

Multiple Troop Contributing Nations, Transit Nations and Host Receiving Nations provide the supply of forces, materiel and medical support to Alliance Operations and Missions concurrently. It is JLSG's role to coordinate the optimization of Logistics solutions between nations, to ensure that Logistics is delivered in the most effective and efficient manner. JLSG provides an important capability to Alliance, by coordinating Logistics preparation and readiness, and unifying credible capabilities to project and sustain NATO forces in support of strategic goals and objectives.

JLSG has the ability to provide an operational effect required by the operational standards specific to an environment, in a specified time and to sustain that effect for a specified period of time, respecting the DOTMLPFI model.

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