

Logistics



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FOREWORD

Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 4, *Logistics*, describes the theory and philosophy of military logistics as practiced by the United States Marine Corps. It provides all Marines a conceptual framework for the understanding and practice of effective logistics. The Marine Corps' view of logistics is based on our common understanding of the nature of war and on our warfighting philosophy as described in MCDP 1, *Warfighting*.

Our doctrine recognizes that logistics is an integral part of warfighting. Logistics provides the resources of combat power, brings those resources to the battle, and sustains them throughout the course of operations. Our approach to logistics recognizes that war is conducted in an environment of complexity, fluidity, disorder, and uncertainty and seeks to provide the commander with the physical means to win in this environment. Our logistic capabilities extend our operational limits, allowing

us to anticipate requirements while remaining flexible, adaptable, and responsive to changing conditions in the battlespace.

Chapter 1 is based upon the assumption that in order to develop an effective philosophy of logistics, we must first develop a realistic understanding of the nature of logistics. Based upon this understanding, chapter 2 discusses the theoretical aspects of logistics. Building upon the conclusions of the preceding chapters, chapter 3 describes the basic approach of the Marine Corps to logistics.

MCDP 4, *Logistics*, does not supersede any current doctrinal publication. It provides the authoritative basis for the subsequent development of logistic doctrine, education, training, equipment, procedures, and organization. *Logistics* affords no specific techniques or procedures for logistic activities; rather, it offers broad guidance which requires judgment in its application. Other publications in the logistics series of Marine Corps warfighting publications provide specific tactics, techniques, and procedures.

Marine Corps logistic doctrine applies across the full spectrum of conflict from peacekeeping or humanitarian assistance operations on one hand to general war on the other. Furthermore, this publication pertains equally to small-unit leaders and senior commanders. Since logistics is an essential component of any military activity, this publication is meant to guide

Marines at all levels of command in both the operating forces and the supporting establishment.

C. C. KRULAK
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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Logistics

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Chapter 1

The Nature of Logistics

“Throughout the struggle, it was in his logistic inability to maintain his armies in the field that the enemy’s fatal weakness lay. Courage his forces had in full measure, but courage was not enough. Reinforcements failed to arrive, weapons, ammunition and food alike ran short, and the dearth of fuel caused their powers of tactical mobility to dwindle to the vanishing point. In the last stages of the campaign they could do little more than wait for the Allied advance to sweep over them.”¹

—Dwight Eisenhower

“As we select our forces and plan our operations, . . . [w]e must understand how logistics can impact on our concepts of operation. . . . Commanders must base all their concepts of operations on what they know they can do logistically.”²

—A. M. Gray, Jr.

To conduct logistics effectively, we must first understand its fundamental nature—its purpose and its characteristics—as well as its relationship to the conduct of military operations. This understanding will become the basis for developing a theory of logistics and a practical guide to its application.

WHAT IS LOGISTICS?

Logistics is the science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces.³ Logistics provides the resources of combat power, positions those resources on the battlefield, and sustains them throughout the execution of operations. Logistics encompasses a wide range of actions and the relationships among those actions, as well as the resources that make those actions possible. These actions are all given purpose and definition by the larger art of war, of which logistics is a critical and inseparable part.

Actions that fall into the category of logistics are both humble and magnificent, include both the simple and the complex, and range in size from the tiny to the gargantuan. They include the serving of a single meal, the effective distribution of tens of thousands of separate spare parts, and the movement of vast armadas from one corner of the globe to another. The common thread that unites these otherwise disparate activities is their