
Initial Support or Initial Shock

By

Lieutenant Commander Gary G. Geilenfeldt, SC, USN

INITIAL SUPPORT POLICY

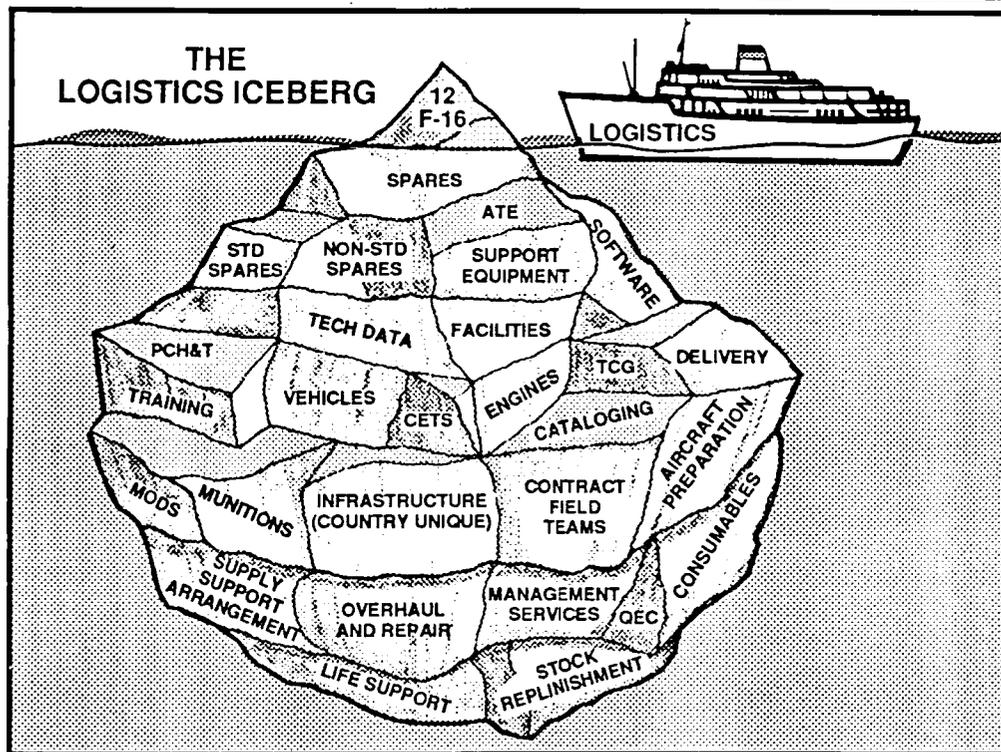
“No defense articles or defense services may be sold or leased to any country or international organization under the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) unless the President finds that the furnishing of articles or services to such country or international organization will strengthen the security of the U.S. and promote world peace.”¹ There are certain logical conclusions that one may derive from the preceding statement: 1) That the delivery of defense commodities must result in the effective operation of the systems transferred; 2) that effective operations of systems would include all aspects for sustainability of major weapons, i.e., realistic maintenance and operations concepts, appropriate training, a viable logistics infrastructure, etc.; and finally 3) that the country receives, in a timely manner, the necessary components, accessories, and other additives that would permit the country to perform the basic functions to initiate and continue support activities. Normally, the sale of material through FMS is made only when the DOD has made plans to assure logistics support for the expected service life of the equipment. Therefore, both initial support and follow-on support should be considered at the time when a major system is sold. Although this article will focus on the various aspects of initial support, the reader should keep in mind that regardless of how well an end item is supported initially, follow-on support, although not a glamorous job is, as Paul Harvey would say, “the rest of the story.”

THE INITIAL SUPPORT ICEBERG

The big picture and total cost of initial support is not easy to conceptualize. First, one must know or at least generally understand what is meant by the terms “initial support” and what comprises such support. Initial support is defined as all the necessary support items, training, and services required to deliver and operate a major weapon system or piece of equipment during the initial support period which is generally twelve to twenty-four months.

“OK,” you say, “I understand that definition and although I’m not a rocket scientist, it appears to make sense. What else is there? I just want a couple of F-16s to go along with my AEGIS Destroyers and Abrams Tanks. Push the button and send the planes.” Well, a picture is worth a thousand words (and maybe a few more), and I refer you to the F-16 iceberg illustration below. Although you might think you just want a couple of planes to sit on the runway—there are a few more details to be considered. Maybe it would be nice to have some suitable facilities, a couple of hangers, and perhaps a runway. Does it snow in your country and are you going to wait for the snow to melt before you fly? Trained pilots to fly the planes would also be useful, as would some spare parts, test equipment, repair facilities, munitions, and the list goes on and on. It should now be apparent that the aircraft you want is truly just the tip of the iceberg, and since grounded aircraft could ruin your whole day, you are probably now a little more concerned. But wait! You have an idea, “Just give me the planes provisioned exactly like good old Uncle Sam provisions them.” Case closed, right!—Well not exactly; lets talk about the term you just brought up.

¹DOD 5105.38-M, *Security Assistance Management Manual*, paragraph 20201.



PROVISIONING

Provisioning is the process of determining the range and quantity of spares and repair parts required to support and maintain a system through its initial period of operation. The determination of spares requirements for all levels of maintenance (Organization, Intermediate, and Depot) is usually accomplished at the inventory control points, i.e., U.S. Army Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs), U.S. Navy Inventory Control Points (ICPs), and U.S. Air Force Air Logistics Centers (ALCs). These requirements are based on technical guidance and maintenance factors which are provided by a wide range of other activities.

Normally decisions on provisioning requirements are made when the U.S. initially brings a weapon system into its inventory. In general, these same decisions will be used to determine initial spare parts support when the system is subsequently sold under FMS. Concurrent Spare Parts (CSP) accompany each system sale to provide the basic in-country supply system; and the basis for CSP is usually the provisioning we have done for ourselves, as modified by the actual consumption of parts during the operation of the weapon system.

As you are probably already aware, one of the primary reasons U.S. weapons systems are deemed desirable is that they function effectively because they have been provisioned correctly. Since we make the majority of our provisioning decisions when the system is initially brought into our inventory, it only stands to reason that all decisions will not be correct. Such factors as reliability, maintainability, and level of repair will change as usage statistics become available and are accumulated on a given system. The basic data base created during the original provisioning model is continually updated to reflect this actual usage. But your usage may not be the same, and the location of your repair facilities relative to your operational forces will surely be different than ours. Your ability to repair damaged equipment will not be the same as ours and these factors will affect the initial support you will require. This leads us to the concept of "definitization"—a term which considers previous provisioning decisions but also incorporates specific needs and requirements of the purchasing country.

DEFINITIZATION

Definitization is the process by which the provisioning requirements for U.S. needs is adjusted to accommodate a purchasing country's needs. One of the blocks in the logistics iceberg is unique country infrastructure which often affects our original provisioning decisions. If you don't have the ability to repair an item and must return it to the U.S. for repair, your in-country stocks will have to be higher to allow for transportation and handling lead time. "What," you might ask "is this in-country stock?"

Every country has varying numbers of operating bases and supply depots which stock certain amounts of materiel. Additionally, the depots may or may not have the ability to perform maintenance on the high cost repair parts. The level of training of the personnel at the repair depot directly influences the ability to make repairs, along with the investment in special tools and test equipment which may be required to repair the item.

These concepts affect another block on the logistics iceberg entitled "overhaul and repair." The capability to overhaul certain components and perform repairs is a critical question which must be answered in the definitization process.

Similarly, training does not just involve pilots, but is also the training of personnel at all levels to insure that total initial support is provided. Obviously F-16 aircraft maintenance personnel must be trained. Not so obvious, however, is the requirement to train maintenance personnel in the ground support arena. Supply personnel utilizing the U.S. logistics system must also receive the training necessary to follow the applicable procedures.

Also, modifications are occasionally incorporated into a particular system and repercussions in parts support may result. Critical support equipment on the ground and similar equipment installed in the plane must also be addressed. Just as the on-board computer in your car must be calibrated, so must the on-board aircraft electronic systems be tested. In order to accomplish this, automated test equipment (ATE) must be available. Qualified personnel must run and maintain the ATE. By now you have probably guessed that there are numerous questions which must be asked and answered with knowledgeable in-country personnel to insure a total initial support package.

IN CONCLUSION

Whether Air Force, Army, or Navy weapon system initial support is to be provided to an FMS customer, a multitude of organizations and players will become involved. Successful initial support generally involves all of the areas illustrated in the "logistics iceberg." One must also understand that these many areas must be integrated into the whole initial support effort and that changes to one area will effect required changes in many of the other areas. The goal in definitization is to provide initial support at a reasonable cost using the best possible calculations of projected needs. We could simply provide the country the same decisions that we have made for ourselves, but this might cause a degradation of overall logistics support. Since each country's national security is also in the best interest of the United States, it behooves the USG to provide the best possible initial support. Initial support sounds so simple but the initial shock is that it is not.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Commander Gary G. Geilenfeldt has been an instructor at DISAM since August 1988 and holds an B.S. in Business Administration and an M.S. in Business Education from Mankato State University. Prior to his DISAM assignment Lieutenant Commander Geilenfeldt served as the Commissioning Supply Officer aboard the USS THOMAS S. GATES, the first "Ticonderoga" class cruiser built in Bath, Maine. [Editorial Note. The USS THOMAS S. GATES was the 5th "Ticonderoga" class cruiser constructed, the first 4 were built in Mississippi.]