Overreliance: Logistics Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan

The U.S. Army has used logistics contractors during military operations extensively since the first conflicts during the colonial era. This tradition continues in contemporary times, which tend to be marked by an overreliance by the armed forces on civilian contractors. The resulting lack of balance has had a rather mixed impact on current combat operations. To illustrate the point I will focus primarily on the case of logistics contractors, also known as combat service support contractors. I shall evaluate the Army’s use of the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) contracts during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF). Next, I will address the question whether the Army should retain the core capabilities that were provided by LOGCAP during OIF and OEF. Further, I shall underscore the fact that logistics contractors are a vital component of the total Army force structure and a valued part of the Department of Defense’s balanced approach to providing logistics services. And, in a time of decreasing force structure in the Army and budget constraints, LOGCAP will remain an important part of the Army, the Joint services, and other governmental agencies for the foreseeable future. Last but not least, I shall propose remedies to balance the contractor component of the total Army force.

Since ancient times, camp followers have played an integral role in supporting armies on the march by providing them with food and additional manpower. These crowds of men, women, and children consisted of the wives and families of soldiers, as well as merchants, tradesmen, slaves, servants, and prostitutes, all following the army and functioning within its framework. Camp followers were responsible for cooking,
laundry, nursing, and sexual services without which armies could not function in the field,¹ as well as selling food and drink, hauling equipment, and laboring at blacksmithing, carpentry, and other trades.² The armies of the ancient Greek city-states, made up primarily of citizen soldiers and their slaves, did not always closely regulate the number and kind of camp followers who traveled with them to war. There have been very detailed records that describe women and non-combatants traveling with Greek armies dating back to the Peloponnesian Wars from 431 to 404 BC.³

Camp followers of the Roman armies consisted primarily of calones, the soldiers' slaves and servants, and lixae, who likely worked as foragers and laborers.⁴ The Romans were far more restrictive about the types of noncombatants, particularly women, who could accompany their armies; soldiers tended to carry more gear and perform more menial duties themselves. Despite these regulations, the permanent garrisons of the early empire eventually grew into towns and cities as civilians flocked to these sites, eager to sell goods and services to the troops.⁵

A vital element of supplying and maintaining an army, camp followers occasionally proved more directly decisive in combat. At the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, the sudden appearance of the Scottish camp followers over a hill resembled advancing reinforcements, turning the English army's retreat into a rout.⁶ In more modern European warfare, the number of camp followers grew dramatically with the increasing size of armies.⁷ Women continued to play a critical role in the provision and upkeep of the world’s armed forces, from the tross and schutheiss of the 16th century landsknecht mercenaries to the vivandieres and cantanieres of the early modern French armies and the soldaderas of the Mexican military.⁸
During the 1600’s, as the Japanese military setup camps in their western provinces in preparation for war, traders from the nearby towns came and set up shops, not only for everyday commodities, but for European and other imported goods. These camp followers were followed by inn keepers, restaurant owners and eventually prostitutes. During the Thirty Years War in central Europe, from 1618 to 1648, there were a large number of camp followers and women; these two classes in some cases amounted to more than three or four times the number of troops in the field. These camp followers not only attended the cooking, washing and mending, but on the march also carried all baggage for which there was no room in the baggage-train. They also raised livestock, bargained for the exchange of booty and offered nursing care to the wounded. At times camp followers could also be relatives of the soldiers so that, after battle, in camp and on the march, they attempted to maintain a family atmosphere, or at least a domestic arrangement of sorts for such soldiers.

In the mid-18th century, logistics contractors were mostly enterprising individuals who followed U.S. military supply trains and provided goods and services on an as-needed basis, rather than according to long-term contracts. Among those followers "belonging to the army" were wives and children of enlistees, servants, slaves, and volunteers representing at any given time up to 50 percent of the army's numerical strength. Many were retainers who as "attendants" performed support functions such as cooking and scavenging. Regardless of their specific attributes and motivations, these camp followers, male and female alike, regularly interacted with rank-and-file combatants in forming a heterogeneous national community with a common mission, the winning of American independence.
During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress established guidelines that regulated the activities of sutlers, which were officially contracted purveyors of food and drink within the camp. The army’s leadership in its turn sought to achieve some level of control over what sort of women could enter the encampment, forbidding the admission of prostitutes and women of ill-repute. Female domestics and soldiers’ wives, however, continued to accompany their men along the road to war. General Washington and other commanding officers also did their best to create a functional framework for these women within the army, who, despite their help, were often a nuisance to an army on the march. The Civil War witnessed more women, such as the famous “Angel of the Battlefield”, Clara Barton, working as nurses and continuing to assist in other duties within Union and Confederate camps. Eventually there was a change within American armies to a more bureaucratic form of supply, in which direct government provision became the standard for resupplying their Soldiers. As a matter of fact, private civilian contractors, the descendants of the sutlers and vivandieres, would continue to play key roles in the armies of America and the rest of the world, even as the wives, prostitutes, and other non-official camp followers gradually disappeared from the battlefield.

Presently, the Army’s over reliance on logistics contractors on today’s battlefield may have a negative effect on its ability to maintain certain internal logistics capabilities in the future, especially skill sets that require long lead times to develop within the Army. There is also a concern about the use of logistics contractors during high intensity combat operations. Will logistics contractors provide the support required by combatant commanders when the Army is on the move? Will they require significant security assets to protect them since they cannot protect themselves? During offensive combat
operations the Army may find itself in a situation where logistics contractors suddenly depart the battlefield and leave the Army to fill the gaps in support.

As previously noted, there has been a long and important historical tradition of innovative civilians supporting U.S. military operations and this relationship has been even more beneficial in recent times. In fact, in 2002, the Government Accounting Office stated that outsourcing noncombat functions has saved the military about 20% in personnel costs.17 The benefits of using contractors on the battlefield are further supported by the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan in their final report that was submitted to Congress in August 2011. The document states that for larger, prolonged contingencies that would require recruiting and hiring additional civilian personnel or increasing military-force strength to meet support needs, contractors are generally more cost effective when employing lower wage local- or third-country nationals (LNs, TCNs). It further states that in Iraq about 60% of contractor personnel performed life- and installation-support work and the vast majority of these personnel were not U.S. citizens. The comparatively low pay and benefits for LNs and TCNs enable contractors to be less costly than government employees in such settings. The same advantages apply to skilled workers and the report also states that when contractors rely on U.S. citizens to perform jobs that require specialized skills, contractor and federal civilian personnel costs are roughly comparable.18

Additionally, the Army has consistently had a 1:5 to 1:6 civilian to military ratio of contractors on the battlefield during most major U.S. wars, at least until recently where the ratio has increased to 1:1 during the conflict in the Balkans, and during OIF/OEF; however the increased number of contractors in the Balkans was due to a force cap for
deployed Soldiers at that time. Also, as the number of deployed contractors continues to increase, Army logistics units have remained approximately 17-23% of the total Army operating force (Table 1).

Table 1. Contractor Ratio Over Time

Moreover, while the media spotlight has focused on private security operations in Iraq, logistics contractors - about 50,000 in 2006- comprised the largest population of private sector workers deployed in that country. Another 20,000 contractors provided support and maintenance services for weapon systems. In Afghanistan in October 2010, there were over 26,000 logistics contractors in theater.
To gain a better understanding of contractors on the battlefield, I will discuss the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP), which is a capabilities based program regulated by the Department of the Army, and how it has shaped and will shape the future of logistics contractors in combat. LOGCAP is designed to augment the force by providing a civilian service capability to meet externally driven operational requirements for rapid contingency augmentation support. LOGCAP plans for and executes contracted logistics support in conjunction with the Army field support brigade and contracting support brigade. It was initially designed to fill a logistics capabilities gap that existed in the Army prior to 11 September 2001.

LOGCAP has 27 regionally aligned contingency plans that support combatant commanders as they prepare and execute a full spectrum of military operations from humanitarian and disaster relief to offensive combat operations (Table 2). LOGCAP provides an array of support and services to include supply operations and field services. In particular, it provides water production and distribution; bulk fuel operations; laundry and bath; food service; sanitation to include hazardous waste; billeting and facilities management; and the operation of Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) facilities. LOGCAP also provides medical services; maintenance; transportation and movement control operations; engineering and construction; signal and communications support; fire protection; power generation and distribution; and when required, transportation support for the movement of equipment out of theater.

LOGCAP was established by the Army in 1985 as a means to (1) preplan for the use of contractor support in contingencies or crises and (2) take advantage of existing
Table 2. LOGCAP Regional Support Plans

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civilian resources in the U.S. and overseas to augment active and reserve forces.

LOGCAP I was a single award, Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) task order contract that was awarded to Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR). Initially, the concept was that each Army component of a unified command would individually plan and contract for its own logistics and engineering services. An example of a unified command is the U.S. Central Command whose area of responsibility includes southwest Asia. In 1992, the concept was changed to a single, centrally managed planning and services contract. Although it originated in the Army, LOGCAP is available to the other services.25

The Army used the LOGCAP contract in December 1995 to augment its forces that were part of the Bosnian peacekeeping mission.26 Since that time, there have been three additional LOGCAP programs (LOGCAP II, III, and IV). It is important to note,
here, that the Army’s acquisition strategy for LOGCAP I, II, and III was to award the contract to only one qualified bidder. One qualified bidder should not be mistaken for a single bidder which means a sole source or only one bidder. There were several bidders competing for the first three LOGCAP contracts, and the Army awarded each of the first three contracts based on the most capable corporation.

LOGCAP II was a single award, IDIQ task order contract awarded to DynCorp in 1997 and used in 2001 in support of military operations in Panama, Columbia, Ecuador, Haiti, East Timor and Philippines. LOGCAP III, valued at over $10 billion in 2010, was a single award, IDIQ task order contract that was awarded to KBR in 2001 and it was used in support of military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Djibouti, Jordan, Kenya, Uzbekistan and Georgia; although the majority of LOGCAP III funding, $8.9 billion, supported military operations in Iraq. LOGCAP IV, valued at over $3.2 billion, is the most current contract being used by the Army and it is a multi-award IDIQ task order contract awarded to KBR, DynCorp, and Fluor Corporation in 2007. The Army’s strategy for LOGCAP IV was to use a multi-award IDIQ to reduce the risk of any possible mission failures from a single source providing all of the required services. To date, LOGCAP IV has supported military operations in Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bahrain, Oman and Africa. In 2010, LOGCAP IV funding for Iraq was valued at $538 million and in Afghanistan it was valued at $2.5 billion.

The increased use of logistics contractors on today’s battlefield is due primarily to four factors: 1) a reduction of active duty and reserve component logistics force structure from previous Total Army Analysis (TAA); 2) an increase in the Department of Defense and other governmental agencies requirements for logistics support; 3) an
increase in technologically advanced weapon systems; and 4) the effects of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular Number A-76, which reinforces that government personnel shall perform inherently governmental activities.\textsuperscript{32}

The Total Army Analysis (TAA) process is used by the Headquarters, Department of the Army to determine organizational authorizations. TAA develops the total requirements and then the authorizations defining the force structure that the Army must build, raise, provision, sustain, maintain, train and resource to meet the Secretary of Defense, Army senior leadership, and combatant commanders’ requirements. TAA is the process that takes us from the Army of today to the Army of the future.\textsuperscript{33} During the TAA process prior to 2001, significant reductions were made to the logistics force structure in the active Army. The result of these changes not only reduced the Army’s total logistics capability, but it also moved 70\% of the logistics force structure into the Army Reserves and Army National Guard.

In addition, during OIF and OEF, the Army was the executive agent for the Department of the Defense for logistics support to the other military services, the State Department, and other governmental agencies. These additional logistics requirements were not added into the current force structure and, as stated previously, LOGCAP was used to fill this logistics requirements gap. Also, the chance of building back logistics force structure into future TAAs is considerably low due to the current fiscal environment, which includes a slow recovering economy; a nation tired and weary from 12 years of war; and the reduction of the Army’s total force structure and budget. In fact, the Army currently has 522,000 soldiers on active duty and there are plans to reduce that number to 490,000 soldiers in the near future, and possibly reduce the number
even further to as low as 420,000 soldiers at the final end state. It is highly unlikely, under these circumstances, that the Army senior leadership will consider adding logistics capability when they are, in fact, reducing the number of combat soldiers from their total force structure.

With respect to the A-76 policy, an inherently governmental duty is one in which the American people expect the government and/or military to perform in support of the nation's interests; a duty of such importance that only the government can be held responsible for its success or failure. The use of U.S. Army infantry soldiers to conduct offensive combat operations is an inherently governmental duty. Moreover, the use of logistics soldiers to support combat forces during military operations is also an inherently governmental duty, although there are many instances at echelons above a brigade where Army senior leadership can and have used large numbers of contractors to augment logistics forces to fill a capabilities gap. OMB Circular Number A-76 allows for logistics contractors to be used in support of the Army when it is cost effective to do so. This is certainly the case in OIF and OEF where there was a necessity for an increased use of contractors to support military operations.

Logistics support to combatant commanders has varying requirements depending on the phase of the operation. Joint Publication 3-0 identifies six phases of an operation to help commanders and their staffs visualize, design, and plan an operation or campaign and define requirements in terms of forces and resources. A phase is a definitive stage of an operation or campaign, regardless of the size, during which forces and capabilities have similar or mutually supporting activities that share a common purpose. Phase 0 (Shape) is designed to dissuade or deter adversaries and
assure friends, as well as set conditions for the contingency plans. Phase 1 (Deter) deters an adversary from undesirable actions because of friendly capabilities and the will to use them. Phase 2 (Seize Initiative) seeks to seize the initiative through decisive use of military force. Phase 3 (Dominate) focuses on breaking the enemy's will to resist or, in noncombat situations, to control the operational environment. Phase 4 (Stabilize) is typically characterized by a shift in focus from sustained combat operations to stability operations. And lastly, Phase 5 (Enable Civil Authority) is primarily characterized by military support to a legitimate civilian government.34

U.S. policy on the use of contractors is outlined in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report, dated February 2010. In the document the Secretary of Defense says that the services provided by contractors will continue to be valued as part of a balanced approach and that the QDR properly considers both mission requirements and overall return. In keeping with the Administration’s goal of reducing the government’s dependence on contractors, the Department of Defense introduced its in-sourcing initiative in the FY 2010 budget. It also states that over the next five years the Department will reduce the number of support service contractors to their pre-2001 level of 26% of the total Army workforce from their current level of 39% of the workforce and, in the future, if there is a requirement to increase the number of employees they will be replaced by Department of the Army civilians. These efforts will help establish a balanced total workforce of military, government civilians, and contractor personnel that more appropriately aligns public and private-sector functions, and results in better value for the taxpayer.35
In addition, Army Regulation 715-9 identifies Department of the Army (DA) policy for planning and managing operational contract support in contingency operations. It specifically addresses contract support integration planning, requirements development, and contractor management in contingency operations. The Army senior leadership acknowledges the importance of contractors on the battlefield. Field Manual 100.21 states that the recent reductions in military structure, coupled with high mission requirements and the unlikely prospect of full mobilization, mean that to reach a minimum of required levels of support, deployed military forces will often be significantly augmented with contractor support. I believe this is the new reality and in the future I expect there will continue to be an increase in logistics contractors to support the war fighter.

On today’s battlefield we witness a great professionalization of outside support functions. There are several types of contractors that offer an array of support and services to the military. The Army identifies five types of contractors: Type I provide forces for offensive operations; Type II provide advisory and training services; Type III provide non-lethal aid and assistance such as combat service support; Type IV provide military-industrial high-tech services; and Type V are civilian security companies that provide armed employees to protect people, places, and things. As mentioned, I will focus on Type III contractors that provide combat service support.

Logistics contractors today provide more complex services in support of longer deployments. They provide life-cycle support, to include highly skilled technicians, for the maintenance of weapon systems and other crucial equipment. They provide American, host-nation and third-country national skilled and unskilled workers that
provide routine goods and services on forward deployed bases which free up soldiers to conduct their wartime mission. Further, they provide base and direct support. The former consists of services provided to military forces on a base, such as water production and distribution, recreational services or laundry services. Direct support is services or support provided to the military off the base camp, such as providing transportation and maintenance support directly to combat units in forward positions.

There were no LOGCAP issues that had a negative impact on the combatant commander’s mission success during both OIF and OEF. In fact, I would say that LOGCAP met or exceeded supported unit expectations. There were, however, LOGCAP challenges vice failures. I classify failures as an adverse issue that impacted the mission and in the case of contract logistics support during OIF and OEF there were no such failures. However, there were serious challenges with getting the requirements right for the LOGCAP III contract during the initial stages of OIF in 2001. During this time, units did not understand their actual requirements for contractor support and as a result they constantly changed them. Conversely, each time the unit changed the requirement the contract had to be renegotiated which eventually resulted in cost overruns.

The problem with units not properly identifying their contractor requirements would have been solved with the help of a properly trained Contracting Officer Representatives (COR) at the unit level. A COR is designated by the commander to provide oversight of their contracts. They are trained and appointed by a contracting officer from the contracting support brigade and are only allowed to execute authorities that have been delegated to them by a contracting officer. A trained COR can assist the
commander in identifying the right requirements, up front, for contract support and help write and submit the proposal. These problems have since been corrected and now each brigade has a COR that is much better prepared to support the warfighter.

As a whole, LOGCAP III and IV contract support were successful in both Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of operation. LOGCAP leadership successfully developed a logistics capability that provided commanders the flexibility to surge or drawdown their forces as required to support their mission. Furthermore, LOGCAP made great strides in its ability to assist units on how the their process works; it improved its ability to help commanders define their requirements for contract support; and it successfully provided standard services at the times and frequencies required by its supported units. In addition, the army field support brigades and contracting support brigade have collected historical data and costs to better inform and assist Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs), such as the U.S. Army Central Command, and tactical units with the preparation of their Independent Government Cost Estimates, which is an estimate of the resources and the costs of those resources that a prudent contractor will incur to provide the goods and/or services. ASCCs are the senior Army component in support of a combatant commander and they provide mission command of all Army operations and units in the combatant commander’s area of responsibility. LOGCAP also successfully developed a checklist to assist ASCCs with their legal reviews and other requirements before their proposals went before a Joint Acquisition Review Board (JARB) or Coalition Acquisition Review Board (CARB).

The support provided by LOGCAP was essential to the success of U.S forces in Iraq and Afghanistan but there are four logistics capabilities that Army senior leaders
should consider retaining in the active Army: 1) both ground and surface transportation (Army Shipping); 2) a bulk petroleum distribution capability; 3) water production and distribution; and 4) a theater opening capability. These capabilities need to be maintained in the active Army because of the vulnerability of logistics contractors in an unsecure and hostile environment. In addition, they are needed because the deployment timelines for logistics contractors may take longer than required to support military operations during Phase 0 and Phase 1 of a deployment. These essential capabilities are also needed to support an Army on the move and relying solely on contract support during this type of combat operation could have an adverse impact on mission success.

As stated previously, the purpose of this paper was to evaluate the Army’s use of LOGCAP contracts and to determine whether the Army should retain the core capabilities that were provided by LOGCAP during OIF and OEF. Based on my finding, I would say, yes, the Army should retain LOGCAP’s core capabilities because these capabilities currently do not exist in the active Army in the quantities needed to support the combatant commander’s contingency operations. Additionally, this relationship was developed out of necessity due to a reduced logistics capability in the active Army that was designed into the force structure through past TAAs. It is also important to note that although the use of logistics contractors has, in many instances, saved the Army money, the overuse of contracted logistics services has degraded the active Army’s expertise in some areas. Two good examples of the Army’s diminishing expertise are in mission command of surface transportation and bulk petroleum distribution capability.
Army senior leadership should consider, when appropriate, building a transportation group and a petroleum group back into the active Army force structure. A transportation group would be able to provide oversight of all U.S. Army shipping operations as well as logistics-over-the-shore operations. A petroleum group would give the active Army the ability to lay bulk petroleum pipeline when contractors are unable to deploy into theater. In addition, the Army should build back water capability and additional ground transportation structure into divisional units to support military operations forward on the battlefield where logistics contractors are more vulnerable; possibly under the command of a division level combat sustainment support battalion. Lastly, the Army should develop and maintain a theater opening unit that can rapidly deploy and provide a Reception Staging Onward Movement and Integration (RSOI) capability at both an air or sea port of debarkation. An active duty RSOI capability would be needed to support contingency plans in support of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), especially during the first phases of an operation before contractors arrive in theater.

In the interim, the Army senior leadership will have to assume risk with respect to logistics support during Phase 0 and Phase 1 of contingency operations, especially during operations where the Army is on the move. LOGCAP was capable of supporting contingency operations during the initial phases of an operation during LOGCAP III, but this type of early logistics support is not built into the services provided by LOGCAP IV. If LOGCAP IV will be required to support contingency operations during the initial phases of a contingency operation, then changes will have to be made to regulatory
requirements and laws to allow combatant commanders the ability to tailor services as required.

There is also concern that the expertise acquired by logistics contract companies during the past 12 years of war may be diminished significantly once the industry starts to consolidate due to reductions in government contracts. The Army cannot afford to lose this expertise. To ensure that this knowledge is retained, Army senior leadership should either build back logistics capability into future TAAs or consider creating a warm-base of logistics contract services that can be maintained during periods of reduced conflict. An example of a warm-base contract would be the Army’s contract with civilian airline companies. The Army pays the airlines a retainer to provide for the movement of Soldiers in support of possible contingency operations. Maybe the Army senior leadership should consider developing a LOGCAP retainer with civilian companies to provide services for up to 30, 60, or 90 days in support of possible contingency operations, until the Army can provide these services internally themselves. Possibly pay one company to retain certain logistics capabilities in support of contingency operations in the Pacific and another company to retain logistics capabilities in support of contingency operations in Southwest Asia.

The Army may also want to consider consolidating some of its logistics support contracts under one contractor management program. An example would be to consolidate the management and oversight functions of the Enhanced Army Global Logistics Enterprise (EAGLE) support services contract with LOGCAP. The Office of the Secretary of Defense/ Defense Procurement Acquisition Policy granted approval of the EAGLE acquisition strategy on 9 Mar 12. EAGLE, with an annual installation logistics
requirement valued at over $35.5 million, provides services to garrisons and installations\(^1\). EAGLE’s services include equipment maintenance and transportation, mail, supply chain and inventory management, and warehousing and storage.\(^2\) This consolidation will reduce duplicate support, lower costs, and gain efficiencies by consolidating contractor services under one centralized, single integrator, led by a logistics expert as opposed to a contracting specialist.

In conclusion, the Army has always had an important relationship with contractors. Today, LOGCAP continues to play a vital role as part of the Army’s total force structure, especially in the current fiscal environment where the Army has scarce personnel and funding resources. And, as the Army moves forward, LOGCAP will continue to receive requirements to provide nation building support to the Department of Defense and other governmental agencies. As it stands now, LOGCAP provides security services and linguists, as well as dogs in support of the combatant commander’s Theater Security Cooperation Plan. In the future LOGCAP will remain the most viable solution to filling the logistics capabilities gaps for the Department of Defense. Additionally, LOGCAP could provide additional services in support of the combatant commander or State Department; support such as providing water and electricity to cities without having troops on the ground. In the end, contractors have always and will always be a force multiplier for the Army and LOGCAP will be at the forefront, providing needed logistics support to the warfighter. Furthermore, the total Army force must be balanced and this includes the use of contractors. To achieve this goal we must end our overreliance on LOGCAP and modify the dominant model.


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