

DCMA Combat Support Mission is Evolving but Stronger Than Ever

by Ms. Julia Wyant, Chief, Public Affairs, DCMA Headquarters

If you happen to be at DCMA Headquarters and start a conversation with an action officer working in the Combat Support Center (CSC), the first thing he or she will tell you is, “This is not your father’s combat support agency.” How true! The war on terrorism has magnified the Agency’s support of contingency operations threefold since its designation as a Combat Support Agency in March of 2000, and the evolution is very much a work in progress.

According to Mrs. Connie Short, CSC director, the combat support mission has expanded from 30 people on six-month deployments in the early days of the millennium to an ongoing requirement for 95 people every six months for support to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines and other contingency areas. “Defining the requirements, finding out exactly what they need, then building our resources

around the

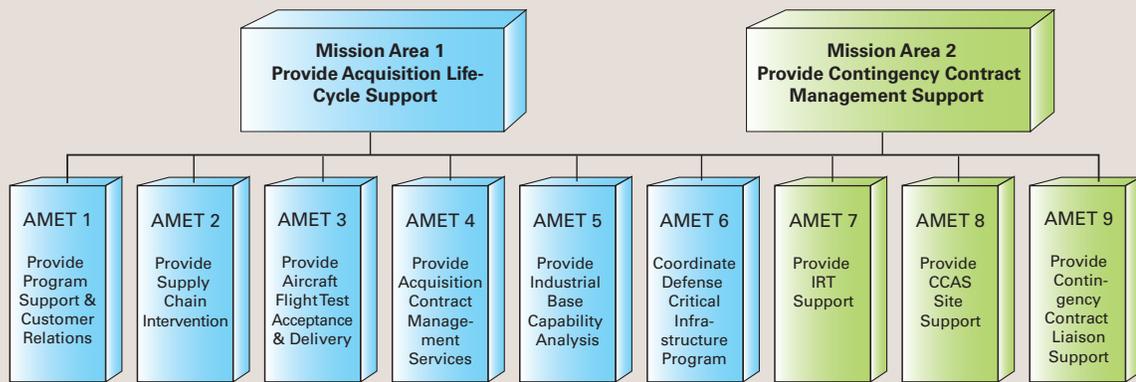
requirements — all the while they keep changing — is the biggest challenge,” Mrs. Short said. Air Force Col. Jamie Adams, DCMA chief of staff, agrees: “The key is that we need to build our resources around the requirements, and the requirements keep changing.”

CSC Performs Three Functions of Combat Support

How is DCMA managing what is becoming a fast-growing list of combat support requirements? The CSC is the heart of the operation, performing three separate and equally important functions. “First, we have a group that does a lot of planning with the Combatant Commands [COCOMs] in preparing us for the next September 11, invasion of Iraq or other major event that happens,” Mrs. Short said. “They also run the Agency Mission Essential Task List [AMETL] to ensure that the processes are in place.” A second group within the CSC handles the force deployment functions. “They work hand-in-hand with



From left: Mr. Mike Cutler, CSC action officer; Mrs. Connie Short, CSC director; Mr. Art Rivera, CSC action officer; and Mr. Herman Gladney, CSC Joint Training System specialist in a CSC planning meeting. (DCMA staff photo)



Our CSA Mission: What we Do

DCMA Human Resources and deal with the rosters and the deployment scheduling of available military personnel, civilians and reservists.” The third group manages the command and control activities, which include the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), the Crisis Action Team (CAT) and oversight of the Staff Duty Officer (SDO) functions.

The CSC also manages the Agency’s Emergency-Essential (E-E) positions, which provide contingency contract administration services support to our combat forces deployed overseas. These permanent positions are located at various DCMA contract management offices (CMOs) throughout the continental U.S. and require periodic 179-day deployments overseas to support our military forces engaged in combat or crisis situations, specifically, the U.S. Central Command area of operations. For more information about E-E positions, contact the DCMA Service Team at (614) 692-6122 or CSO-DCMA@hr.dla.mil. E-E vacancies are posted on the DCMA Web site: http://www.dcma.mil/DCMAHQ/dcma-hr/e-e_jobs.htm and the Defense Logistics Agency.

Liaison Officers Coordinate Planning With the COCOMs

DCMA Director Maj. Gen. Darryl A. Scott approved the Agency’s AMETL in January 2005. “The AMETL captures those mission-essential tasks that are the very core mission of the Agency,”

said Mr. John Parker, CSC program analyst. The AMETL is formatted so that the combatant commanders can read it and understand what DCMA can do for them. “The AMETL is how we tell the combatant commanders what DCMA is all about,” Mrs. Short said. The joint war-fighting community and the six other combat support agencies have all captured their capabilities in this format, according to Mr. Parker. “They try to eliminate as many variables as possible so that they can understand what we really do.” Of the nine AMETL tasks, the CSC is responsible for three — AMET 7, 8 and 9. “We provide an initial response team, contingency contract management, CCAS [Contingency Contract Administrative Services] site support and liaison with the COCOMs,” Mr. Parker said. “Those three AMETs fall within the CSC.”

DCMA’s designation as a combat support agency in March 2000 represented a significant expansion of the role it performed as a command under the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). Contracting personnel were being deployed to contingency operations back in the 1990s. “However, DLA was giving the marching orders,” according to Mr. Mike Cutler, a CSC action officer, “and everything we did in the various exercises was given to DLA as lessons learned. When we became an Agency, we did not bring with us the capability that DLA had for exercising and working with the deployed customer.” Mr. Marcus Berry, another CSC

(Top) The Agency Mission Essential Task List (AMETL) outlines those tasks that are essential to DCMA’s ability to perform its assigned missions. This listing results from a mission analysis and provides the supporting documentation from which training requirements and training objectives are derived and includes the tasks against which the Agency’s ability to accomplish its mission through established performance standards will be evaluated and assessed.

The War on Terrorism has magnified the Agency's support of contingency operations threefold since its designation as a Combat Support Agency in March of 2000.

action officer, agrees. "I think the culture of the Agency associates combat support with CCAS." For years DCMA has used deployable teams to augment the contract management office (CMO) staffs in order to conduct missions in a theater of operations. The teams allow DCMA to provide the full range of contract support services to the customers without disrupting the already heavy workflow of the CMOs. CCAS teams have supported nearly every major contingency operation, including: the Persian Gulf, Rwanda, Haiti, Somalia, Surinam, Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania as well as the present operations in Iraq, the Philippines and Afghanistan. But combat support entails much more than CCAS teams.

DCMA has liaison officers at all of the COCOMs to accomplish AMET 9. CSC Action Officer Mr. Art Rivera says the reasons for AMET 9 — Provide Contingency Contract Liaison Support — are twofold: "In addition to the war-fighting COCOMs understanding our processes and capabilities, we also must understand what those requirements are relative to providing CCAS support on the battlefield, as well as our number one mission — providing the sustainment supply chain and industrial base capabilities that the warfighters need to understand." He continued, adding, "Liaison officers are assigned to the commands to help us help the COCOMs. With the CSC and the liaison officers, there's an effort to work and plan with the combatant commands, the Joint Staff and the warriors that is above and beyond CCAS."

A challenge for DCMA planners is that the COCOMs don't normally forecast their contingency contracting requirements. "That's right," Mr. Berry said. "So, not only are we trying to understand the customer's requirements, we're trying to shape the way that they define those requirements." If DCMA can reach the next level of coordination with the COCOMs,

they will be able to "leapfrog forward to the next contingency and estimate what they think they're going to need for contingency contracting, rather than wait until the last minute," Mr. Berry noted. According to Mrs. Short, DCMA is working toward this end, but "we're not there yet."

Force Deployment is a Huge Challenge

Stability of deployments has vastly improved under Mrs. Short's watch. When she came into the position, military personnel assigned to DCMA were redeploying to the theater of operations within as few as 90 days of their return from the war zone. "Col. Adams and I decided, basically, that we had to change the operations tempo," she said. "Our goal was to give returning members 12 months at home before redeployment unless they volunteered to return early. If a decision has to be made to send somebody back in nine months versus 12 months, I don't make it. It goes up the chain of command, and it becomes an Agency decision." The stability was largely achieved through the development of a deployment process. "We have a database that everybody gets their information inputted into," Mrs. Short said, "and based on your entry-on-duty date and your specialty [e.g., contract administration, quality assurance, property management], we make the decision on who gets deployed when."

"Getting the right people in the right places with the right skills — all of it is a challenge," Col. Adams said. "The biggest hurdle right now for the Agency is our limited resources. We had a lot more flexibility when we were deploying 30 people and we had an eligible Agency population of 100 to 150, including volunteers. But now that we are deploying approximately 100 people every six months, we don't have the flexibility with the resources that we had in the past." In addition, the requirements are constantly changing. "One day,

“All 11,000 people in this Agency need to know that what they are doing does matter. What you are doing does count, and what you’re doing is in support of the warriors.”

they need a contracting specialist in Baghdad,” Col. Adams noted. “The next day they don’t need them there. They need them somewhere else.” In response, Mrs. Short and her CSC planners are changing the processes to give credibility to the requirements and give the commanders on the ground the latitude to build their teams with the people they get. “We have requested that DCMA International District provide us with quarterly validated requirements, which then go through me, through Col. Adams and up through the front office,” Mrs. Short said. “The commanders on the ground can’t go out and hand-pick folks. But with the cadre of people I’m sending over there, they can build and rearrange based on their requirements.”

Training is another big challenge. Deploying personnel attend Basic Contingency Operations Training (BCOT), which provides survival skills including first aid, weapons familiarization for the military, field hygiene and the use of protective equipment. “But we don’t train our people to do what we’re doing in country,” Col. Adams said.

“BCOT mitigates the risk factor for those personnel whose day-to-day work is in

a hostile area. What we do in theater is an operational concept versus what we do here in the United States, which is systems acquisition support. They are two entirely different things.” To increase the effectiveness of DCMA staff working on the battlefield, the CSC staff is determining what training courses are needed. For example, DCMA does a lot of cost plus award fee service contracts, so a class on that subject may be useful for those about to deploy. “We will see what classes we need to develop,” Mrs. Short said. “Then, we will create a requirement and go to the Defense Acquisition University to put classes together that cover this subject matter.” Mrs. Short is also gathering information from people who recently served on contingency operations about what they did day-to-day. From that, her team will write standard operating procedures when necessary.

Command and Control has Changed

At the core of DCMA’s combat support command and control capability is the SDO. The military members performing this duty provide DCMA Headquarters and the District offices with a 24/7 capability. Early on, the Headquarters SDO function was handled among the staff of the CSC. When Mrs. Short joined the team, she changed it so that every military member assigned to DCMA Headquarters would share the duties and responsibilities on a rotational basis. Mrs. Sandi Bennett, CSC action officer, says that it is up to the integrity of the uniformed officers to take care of the scheduling. “If they can’t make it, they call someone else and pass the critical information to the other.” The SDO is provided with a book of information on whom to call or what to do if certain issues come up. A classified telephone is also included in the duty officer’s kit bag.

According to Mrs. Short, the Headquarters CSC and the District operations, called Contingency



(Above) From left: Combat Support Center personnel Air Force Col. Jamie Adams, chief of staff, DCMA Headquarters, and Ms. Sandi Bennett, contingency planner, DCMA Headquarters (DCMA staff photo)

“The requirements are constantly changing. One day, they need a contracting specialist in Baghdad. The next day they ... need them somewhere else.”

Support Operations Centers, interact frequently throughout each day. “Our force deployment role demands that kind of relationship,” she said. “We are constantly working with all three Districts on validation of requirements, training issues, after-action reports — everything involving force deployment. Plus, the Headquarters and each District have a COOP and a CAT as part of all of this.” She explained, “The COOP is the plan for what happens if the balloon goes up and we have to vacate this building — where people go, who goes, who stays at home — all of those nitty-gritty details.” Mr. Dave Hartnett works hand-in-hand with the Headquarters directorates to get that done. “In addition, he also goes out to East and West Districts to oversee what they have,” Mrs. Short said, checking that their COOP is feasible and they have been exercising it and that they haven’t missed anything.

As part of the COOP, DCMA Headquarters and the three Districts also have CATs. “The purpose of the CAT is to become, in the event of a contingency, the eyes and ears for the DCMA director and deputy director,” Mrs. Bennett said. “We stand it up immediately, as soon as the event happens, and it operates 24/7.” DCMA stood up its first CAT immediately after 9/11 and again for the invasion of Iraq. In its initial hours, the 9/11 CAT focused on two main areas: accounting for all DCMA staff and determining how the Agency could best support its military customers. In the 9/11 attacks, DCMA lost 27-year employee Mr. Herb Homer, a passenger aboard United Airlines Flight 175 that crashed into the south tower of New York’s World Trade Center. After the Iraq invasion, the CAT was eventually stood down.

The CATs are a shared responsibility with all of the DCMA Headquarters and District office

directorates contributing personnel. “Right now, we are working to get ours stood up, trained and prepared so that if anything happens, we are ready to go,” Mrs. Short said. “We will be issuing an official tasking inviting all of the two-letter directors to identify CAT members who we can train and be ready to staff the CAT.” However, these individuals cannot be the same ones who may have to relocate

“The AMETL is how we tell the combatant commanders what DCMA is all about.”

to a COOP facility. “In the event of a contingency, your CAT team may be sitting here at Headquarters,” Mrs. Bennett said. “However, our entire senior leadership and key contingency staff members may be located in Richmond or another site.” Mrs. Bennett is also looking to the Navy Reserve for help. “We want to have the third shift run by a Navy Reserve unit that we plan to train,”

she said. “By putting reservists in that timeframe, we eliminate the need to task others for these additional duties.”

So, what is the greatest challenge for the five-year-old Combat Support Agency? “The culture of DCMA associates the combat support function with CCAS,” Mr. Cutler said. “And the fact of the matter is, it is an Agency-wide effort that supports the war-fighting community. The industrial specialist who goes into his California office and dives into his workload with contractors to ensure that they deliver the product or service on time is supporting the combatant commanders, according to the planning team members.”

“We’re not delivering it straight to the guy or gal fighting the war, but it gets there eventually,” Mr. Berry said. “The challenge is to educate not only the combatant command but also our own folks. All 11,000 people in this Agency need to know that what they are doing does matter. What you are doing does count, and what you’re doing is in support of the warriors. So, yeah, there are challenges, but are we a Combat Support Agency? Absolutely!” he said.