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“Prime Vendor Support” - The Wave of the Future

By / par Colonel Darryl Bradley

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ABSTRACT

Prime Vendor Support – The Wave of the Future

The paper will demonstrate that prime vendor support is an effective method of distributing supplies in peacetime and sustainment of equipment in the 21st Century. Prime vendor was initially implemented by the Defense Philadelphia Supply Center in 1993, and required customers to change from the old ways of doing business. This method has proved to reduce inventory costs, improved readiness rates, and improved timely delivery of supplies to the customers. However, many commanders feel that “we should train as we fight,” and not use civilian to manage and delivery repair parts.

The paper begins with a look at the evolution of prime vendor support and how it is used to support the US Army’s AH-64D Apache Longbow aircraft and pharmaceutical supplies in the medical treatment facilities in Army Medical Department (AMEDD). The paper further examines and demonstrates that prime vendor support is a force multiplier on the battlefield and essential in joint and combined operations. The paper concludes that the prime vendor support is the wave of the future in the distribution of supplies, reducing cost, warehouse inventory, and providing sustainment in the 21st Century.

Prime Vendor Support – The Wave of the Future

By Darryl Michael Bradley

“When we call upon the soldier of the 21st century to face new threats, he must be ready, trained in the right doctrine with the right weapons, and support with the right systems.”

— Honorable Paul Hoepfer¹
Asst Sec of the Army for Acquisition,
Logistics and Technology

INTRODUCTION

The distribution of supplies in battle has been critical to the warfighter since the beginning of war, and logisticians have been challenged with “how do we do business smarter” as we move into the 21st Century. Better logistics planning is needed to deal with and meet the various contingencies that are confronting US military forces and allied powers. Additionally, the impact of technology will continue to influence every aspect of the logistics process.

Since the Vietnam Era and Gulf War, the national defense logistics system has depended on massive inventories of unique items produced under stringent military specifications.² They used leveraged buying power to receive substantial discounts on stock that were held in government warehouses until there were requisition by customers.³ The requisition system assumed that holding inventory in warehouses would provide customers with an acceptable service

¹ Honorable Paul J. Hoepfer, “Army and Industry: Synergy for 21st Century Success,”

² William J. Kenny, “Acquisition Best Practices,” The Electronic College of Process Innovation, 1995.

³ Kenny, 3.

and the lowest delivered cost. In reality, the process was slow, prone to error, and expensive. Many customers routinely waited beyond the required delivery date (RDD) and were charged with high surcharges. Lowest price did not always produce the quality the end user expected and other left them wanting more. They wanted their requisitions filled quickly and replenishments with assurance of quality.

The inability to manage supplies and the initiatives of *Joint Vision 2010*, prompted the Defense Philadelphia Supply Center (DPSC) to seek other ways of doing business. In 1980, DPSC began focusing on the advantages of best commercial practice to support the initiatives of *Joint Vision 2010*. The Department of Defense (DOD) was stressing commercial practice, and DPSC began to see how they could make it work. They initiated prime vendor support as a method to distribute supplies for supporting critical weapons systems and distributing pharmaceutical supplies. This new method of distribution and sustainment required customers to change and acquire confidence in this program.

In an article “Prime Program Helps Save Time, Money,” (*Government Computer News*, Jul 1996), Air Force Colonel George O’Neal noted, “that the Prime Vendor initiative is tied into the same world-class practices that have been adopted within the commercial sector.”⁴ It has demonstrated considerable savings throughout the industry in terms of reduced infrastructure, reduced inventory, and requirements by tapping into an already robust distribution marketplace.”⁵

⁴ Drew Robb, “Prime Program Helps Depots Save Time, Money,” *Government Computer News*, April 2001; Vol 20 No 9, 1.

⁵ Robb, 1.

This concept has proved major cost savings in this approach; both cost reductions and cost avoidance.

With ongoing force structure reductions and budget cuts, coupled with the procurement of advanced weapon systems, prime vendor is essential in the distribution of supplies and sustainment of joint and combined operations. The support units will be able to provide a seamless support that is required to sustain Force XXI and the Army After Next (AAN).

It is the aim of this essay to demonstrate that prime vendor support is an essential method of supply distribution and is the wave of the future for supporting the forces of the 21st Century. To accomplish this aim, the essay will address the effectiveness of prime vendor support for the US Army's advanced AH-64D Longbow and pharmaceutical supplies. Additionally, the paper will address how prime vendor support will be a force multiplier on the battlefield and increase military effectiveness.

The essay will conclude that the use of prime vendor support is the wave of the future for supply distribution as the Army moves into Force XXI and AAN.

EVOLUTION OF PRIME VENDOR SUPPORT

Combat Service Support Transformation is essential to realization of the Objective Force concept. Logistics efficiencies are necessary to support the very challenging sustainment time/distance/volume/weight/physiology paradigm. The Combat Service Support Transformation will encompass both advanced capabilities and new logistical concepts.⁶

Concepts for the Objective Force
Army White Paper, 2001

In 1993, the Department of Defense (DOD) adopted an entirely new approach to the procurement of readily available items, and introduced prime vendor support as a concept of supporting the AH-64D Apache Longbow aircraft and pharmaceutical products. This concept is where a single commercial distributor serves as the major provider of products to various customers within a geographical region or zone.⁷ This program was established to maximize dwindling budget dollars and to reduce inventory and associated cost.⁸ Prime vendor takes full advantage of private sector distribution capabilities and electronic data processing to supply the DOD customers. The prime vendor buys inventory from a variety of suppliers and the inventory is stored in commercial warehouses. The vendor supplies commercially available items under a contractual agreement established by DPSC and the vendors.⁹ This program provides the vendor's full-line of products normally provided on a single truck within 48 hours, and will arrange to deliver to a particular installation chosen within a zone. Special and emergency deliveries are also available and the program is tailored to meet the customer's need. The alliance between DPSC

⁶ Department of the Army, "Concepts for the Objective Force," Army White Paper, 2001.

⁷ J.W. Holding Group and Associates, Inc., "What is Prime Vendor," <http://www.jwholding.com/whatpv.html>, 25 Nov 2002.

⁸ Defense Logistics Agency-Pacific, "The Prime Vendor Program," <http://www.pacific.dla.mil/dlap/archives>, 25 Nov 2002

⁹ Katherine M. Peters, "Leading the Business Revolution," Government Executive Magazine, Aug 1998.

and the prime vendor is paramount to the success of the program, and must be maintained in order to provide the maximum level of support required in time of peacetime as well as in time of conflict.

The benefits of prime vendor support include (1) reduction in the cost of ownership; (2) continuous upgrades and modernization; (3) single point accountability; (4) performance-based contracting and reduced levels of supportability; (5) guaranteed readiness; (6) improved material availability rates; (7) reduced total system inventory; (8) modernization through spares over the entire life-cycle; (9) use technology refresh to provide increased capability; and (10) optimization of existing resources. modernization though spares over the entire lifecycle.

This approach frees up resources over time through elimination of excess capability, and promotes improvements in efficiency because a single provider integrates support and enhancement. The prime vendor establishes and executes appropriate contracts with major vendors, suppliers, Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), system integrators, and government best providers.

WAVE OF THE FUTURE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES

Prime vendor support eliminates the layering of supplies at multiple echelons and shifts inventory, inventory management, transportation, and personnel costs from the Government to commercial firms.¹⁰ Prime vendor support programs take advantage of the experience of

¹⁰ Velocity Management Team, "Prime Vendor: Velocity Management at DLA,"

commercial vendors, whose profit-based business practices demand lean inventories and rapid deliveries. These concepts have allowed the Department of Defense (DOD) to achieve significant annual savings and revolutionize logistics support of the retail customer.

According to Lieutenant General Glission, Commander, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), in the article “Defense Agency Capitalize on Technology” (*American Forces Press Service*) “prime vendor contracting a win-win situation because it eliminates the middle bureaucracy and puts customers directly in touch with vendors.”¹¹ It also stimulates market competition, resulting in better prices and services for Department of Defense.¹²

“It gets us out of the old look that we had – of warehouses full of stuff, and people always asking, ‘Why are you stocking it when it’s available on the commercial market?’”¹³

Additionally, many of the military high-tech weapons are procured with contractor support, and prime vendor support is used to provide sustainment through the life cycle of the equipment. A prime example is the Army’s AH-64D Apache Longbow aircraft and the use of prime vendor support, which will be discussed further in this paper.

The prime vendor program has also been used extensively to provide troops with combat clothing and food at military facilities. Under the Subsistence Prime Vendor Program, contractors

¹¹ Paul Stones, “Defense Logistics Agency Capitalizes on Technology,” [American Forces Press Service](#)

¹² Stones, 3.

¹³ Stones, 3.

assume responsibility for inventory management and transporting food to military facilities, much the way a supplier supports a restaurant.¹⁴ Troop issued subsistence activities on CONUS installations have seen their missions dramatically reduced and on-post food distribution through the installation logistics center has ceased. Personnel served by dining facilities are provided fresher products with brand names.¹⁵

Prime vendor has also been modified to manage military clothing issue at the Army's initial entry training bases and in the military clothing stores. Because military clothing is unique and not produced commercially, DLA was required to tailor contracts to ensure enough clothing would be in stock at contractor-owned and operated facilities to meet military needs.

It has been recognized that the use of prime vendor support for the distribution of supplies may also have the potential to generate significant cost savings. According to General William Tuttle, US Army, retired, president of Logistics Management Institute, based in Washington, D.C., the Army can cut logistics costs by up to 20 percent by using civilian contractors.¹⁶ Although the amount of actual savings produced by privatizing support and logistics services is debatable, even the most conservative estimates indicate that DOD can save a significant amount of its total obligation authority by contracting out most of its support functions and a large part of its logistics manpower. Because of the contractors' production volume in their chosen niche, they are more likely to achieve economies of scale in the delivery of their particular good or service.¹⁷ This results in lower total per-unit costs. Consequently,

¹⁴ Katherine M. Peters, 1.

¹⁵ Velocity Management Team, 1

contractors can price their services more cheaply than the armed services that seek to maintain logistics capability in all areas. With the savings generated by the use of cost competitive contractors, the armed services will have more funds available to allocate to their war-fighting missions and procurement of advanced weapons.

The use of prime vendor support for logistics support may also positively influence certain military personnel issues.¹⁶ During a period of force reductions and an increased requirement for Special Forces soldiers, the use of prime vendor support can help to preserve combat capabilities by reducing the number of uniformed personnel dedicated to nonwar-fighting activities. The number of contractors generally is not included in the calculation of force-level totals in various peacekeeping activities or operations other than war. Hence, they can serve as a means for circumventing these totals while allowing the DOD to remain compliant with international agreements.

The overall use of prime vendor support is essential to joint and combined operation, and presents the theater commander with a variety of advantages and opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable. The presence of prime vendor and commercial contractors in theater brings direct access to the resources of that contractor. Unlike the armed services, a contractor firm typically limits the range of its activities. This allows the contractor to develop a set of well defined and highly specialized capabilities that may be of a higher quality than the service's

¹⁶ Lourdes A. Castillo, "Waging War with Civilians," 2.

¹⁷ Castillo, 2.

¹⁸ Stephen P. Ferris, "Contractors Underway," [The Future of Naval Logistics?](#)

organic capability. The ability of the contractor to specialize in certain functions may allow the development of truly outstanding capabilities in those areas by the contractor.

Use of Prime Vendor Support in the US Army

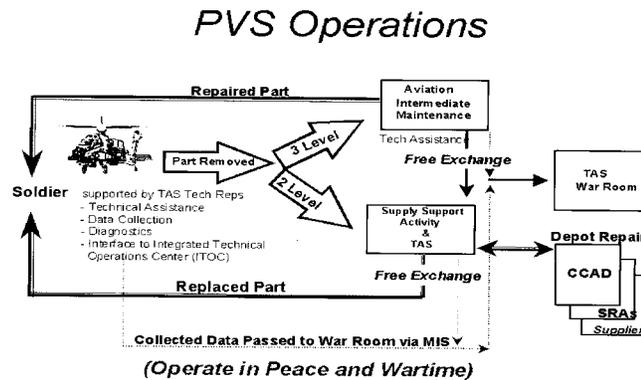
Since the introduction of advanced helicopters, the US Army has been confronted with maintaining an adequate inventory of repair parts to maintain its fleet of aircraft. Additionally, they have integrated several maintenance initiatives to improve the operational readiness rates and provide an effective force of attack helicopters to the warfighter. These challenges have been burdensome and many aviation commanders have worked soldiers extended hours meet the readiness goals required of their aircraft types.

In 1999, the US Army began using prime vendor as a support method to provide logistical sustainment for the AH-64D Apache Longbow aircraft. This aircraft was the first to be supported by prime vendor beginning at the McDonnell Douglas assembly plant and later during the unit training program (UTP) for newly activated units at Fort Hood, Texas.

The prime vendor support concept is a contractor logistics support approach that seeks to leverage the best commercial logistics practices to reduce operating costs while improving readiness.¹⁹ This program uses one prime vendor (DynCorps Aviation Services) to enhance maintenance and supply functions for Apache helicopters. The prime vendor support is the

¹⁹ Honorable Paul J. Hoeper, "Army and Industry: Synergy for 21st Century Success," Dinner Address to Association of the United States Army, Jun 1998, 4.

concept of contracting directly with an original equipment manufacturer.²⁰ The manufacturer then provides nose-to-tail and wholesale supply support for an entire weapons system.²¹ Below is an illustration how prime vendor supports the AH-64D Apache Longbow aircraft in peacetime and war. Additionally, the diagram illustrates the flow of parts from the field to the repair facility.



The AH-64D Apache Longbow prime vendor support includes an Apache field support team consisting of technical specialists for maintenance support of the Apache, and support operations specialists to assist in streamlining the logistics support and acquisition process to the unit. Contractors for aviation unit maintenance provide maintenance/supply support to Aviation Unit Maintenance (AVUM) units as per the contracts that are written with the following principles and considerations:

- Contractors will be deployable under all operational scenarios.
- Contractor will be located with aviation maintenance companies during peacetime and in the area of operations during deployments.
- During deployments, contractors will live and work in field conditions comparable to those for the support Army forces.

²⁰ Apache Prime Vendor Support, “Privatization Brings Increased Performance at Reduced Costs,” Vol 4, No 2, Mar/Apr 1999.

²¹ Apache Prime Vendor Support, 1.

- Force protection is the responsibility of the commander

According to Lieutenant General Paul J. Kern, Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Research, Development & Acquisition), that “Team Apache Systems (TAS) would eliminate the need for government personnel and facilities to acquire, manage, store and distribute spare parts, and would interface directly with, and provide repair parts to, the soldier at the retail level.”²²

The Army is also pursuing a similar, parallel initiative, for support of the M109 (Paladin) family of vehicles (FOV). According to the plan, this program will streamline, reengineer, and consolidate M109 FOV to provide total life-cycle logistics support. The fleet manager will be responsible for the FOV logistics and technical and engineering support by competitively selecting the best qualified responsible for all technical resources from training to field maintenance and, therefore, contractor all spares parts modernization.²³ Soldiers in the field will continue to take care of day-to-day maintenance, and perform operator and unit level maintenance on the vehicle. A minimum of 10 percent savings is needed to award the contract to a prime vendor and the US Army expects to save 20 to 30 percent in life cycle sustainment support costs through the prime vendor program.

Finally, because of the professional experience and specialized knowledge of contractors, fewer total individuals are required for the delivery of logistics support. This reduces the size of

²² Apache Prime Vendor Support,

²³ William M. Gavora, “Prime Vendor Support – The Wave of the Future,” Army Logistician Magazine, Jan/Feb 1999, 71.

the overall logistics footprint of any given operation and also enhances both the agility and responsiveness of its logistics system and reduces processing time.

This concept of support for the US Army's critical weapons systems would solve many problems that units are currently faced with, and would significantly improve operational readiness rates.

Medical Prime Vendor Support

In keeping with the initiatives of *Joint Vision 2010*, the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) has made a major change in how it manages medical supplies. Instead of relying on military depots to store and dispense supplies to medical activities, AMEDD adopted prime vendor support method to deliver supplies when and where they are needed.

In March 1992, DPSC established a task force to radically change radically the business practices for the wholesale management of medical supplies in DOD.²⁴ This program works the same as the AH-64D Apache Longbow prime vendor support. A medical prime vendor is a single distributor of brand-specific medical supplies. The prime vendors provide next-day delivery.²⁵ The medical prime vendor program provides for procurement, and delivery of a full range of commercial brand-specific pharmaceuticals supplies to a group of medical treatment facilities (MTF's) in specific geographical regions.²⁶ The Army Medical Department (AMEDD) pays a

²⁴ Tom Cardella, "Medical Prime Vendor," Army Logistician Magazine, Jan/Feb 1999, 1.

²⁵ Tom Cardella, 1.

²⁶ Tom Cardella, 1.

civilian vendor to store and maintain certain supplies that in the past were maintained by a medical activity.

Today, Medical Prime Vendor Program is still growing and has reduced product procurement times to 24 hours. The pharmaceutical program covers over 24,000 items, the medical and surgical supplies program includes over 180,000 items, and more to be added for equipment. This program has enabled the medical treatment facilities inventories to be reduced by up to 85 percent, and has resulted in a drastic reduction in the total delivered cost of medical materiel. Additionally, prime vendor has slashed administrative costs, reduced inventory supplies from 60 to about 27 days and saved taxpayers about \$88.5 million.²⁷

In an audit by the DOD Inspector General, May 1996, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) wholesale medical inventories of MTFs have decreased significantly since the medical prime vendor program began in 1993. Those reductions were attributed to the ability of MTFs to order smaller quantities, more frequently, because prime vendors can deliver medical supplies from available prime vendor stock within 24 hours.

Additionally, customers stated that they were very satisfied with the prime vendor program and that most of the desired benefits have been achieved, particularly in the area of pharmaceuticals. They further stated that prime vendors maintain a broader range of items that can be delivered within 24 hours, at reduced material cost.²⁸

²⁷ Paul Stones, 1.

Force Multiplier Effect

Prime vendor support and the use of a commercial contractor to distribute supplies is an effective force-multiplier on the battlefield. The prime vendor method can bridge gaps that occur before military support resources can be mobilized and brought into the theater of operations. The use of prime vendor will enable the commercial vendor to deliver commodities when no Host Nation Support (HNS) agreements exist or when HNS agreements do not provide the needed supplies or services. In the initial stages of a conflict, supplies and services provided through prime vendor improves response time and frees strategic airlift and sealift for other priorities.²⁹ Contractor support drawn from in-theater resources can augment existing support capabilities to provide a new source for critically needed supplies and services, thereby reducing dependence on the continental United States (CONUS)-based support system. When force structure limitations are imposed on an operation, contractor support through prime vendor gives the commander the flexibility of increasing his combat power by substituting combat units for military support units. This force-multiplier effect permits the Joint Task Force Commander to have sufficient support in the theater, while strengthening his fighting capability. At the conclusion of operations, contractors can facilitate early redeployment of military personnel.

DOWNSIDE OF PRIME VENDOR SUPPORT

There are several reasons why many leaders and logisticians may argue against the use of prime vendor support as a method of providing logistical support. They believe that “logistical

²⁸ Department of Defense, Audit Report, Office of the Inspector General, Report No. 96-109, May 1996.

support should be supplied from only the greensuiters,” and without the use of commercial contractors. Others feel that the US Army may fall into a false sense of security and question whether or not contractors will be there when needed. Many cite the famous tree-cutting incident in Korea in August 1976 as an indication of how civilian support on the battlefield may work.³⁰ That incident caused an increase in the alert status of Defense Readiness Condition (DEFCON) 3, and as a result hundreds of Department of the Army (DA) civilians who had replaced military depot maintenance and supply workers requested immediate transportation out of Korea.³¹

Additionally, there are many challenges and uncertainties resulting from the presence of contractors in a theater of operation. Probably, the main issue from an operational standpoint is the need for unqualified vendor reliability. Will contractors be able to keep their employees in theater when the bullets begin to fly or will they demand to be repatriated?

Second, civilian contractors, regardless of their utility, are not interchangeable with their well-trained military counterparts. In times of heightened force-protection levels, contractors requiring to make daily distribution delivery would require armed military escorts throughout the area of operations. Allotting soldiers to these force-protection missions would take away from the manpower required by the unit.

²⁹ Department of the Army, “Contractors as a Force Multiplier,” FM 100-21, Chapter 1.

³⁰ Eric Orsini and Gary T. Bublitz, “Contractors on the Battlefield: Risks on the Road Ahead?” 2.

³¹ Eric Orsini and Gary T. Bublitz, 2.

Last, contractors are not soldiers, and they cannot be specifically and deliberately exposed to the same risks as soldiers. They must be protected. This involves issues such as legal status, personal firearms, security, battlefield location, and nuclear-biological-chemical (NBC) protection.

Risks and Support of Using Contractors

The legal status of contractors is important when considering whether to use prime vendor to support combat operations. Under the laws of land warfare, contractors are neither combatants nor noncombatants.³² They occupy a special niche called "civilians authorized to accompany the force."³³ Contractor personnel cannot be targeted deliberately for military action. However, the function they are supporting can be. If the function is targeted and contractor personnel are killed or wounded, the law of land warfare regards them as legitimate collateral casualties.

Additionally, contractors cannot engage in activities inconsistent with their status. They must perform duties that are outlined in their contract and not perform any purely military functions. They cannot participate in attacks on the enemy, nor can they occupy defensive positions to secure the unit perimeter. Combatants are uniquely privileged to conduct war. In doing so, they can knowingly and deliberately kill opposing soldiers. If a soldier kills during warfare and subsequently is captured, he can be held only as a prisoner of war. A civilian who kills during warfare and subsequently is captured can be held, tried, and punished as a criminal.

As long as contractor personnel do not violate their legal status, they are entitled to prisoner-of-war status if they are captured.

Contractors cannot perform functions in direct support of hostile operations. As contractors provide ever-increasing support to the Army, this constraint becomes increasingly important. However, it is extraordinarily difficult to determine the limits of this constraint. A system contractor employee who travels to the area of operations to perform minor technical maintenance on a weapon system that is still operational and capable of performing its intended mission may be violating the constraint against support to hostile operations. On the other hand, the same person performing the same maintenance on the same item in a maintenance facility in a safe area may not be in violation of the constraint.

As indicated above, contractors cannot provide their own security; therefore, commanders must provide security for contractors. This means that soldiers must protect contractor personnel. During Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, the threat level was such that the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) contractor required a military escort nearly all the time; at various times, as many as 12 to 18 marines or soldiers were assigned to escort duty.³⁴ This is a significant issue in determining the overall cost of contractor support, and it reinforces the fact that contractors do not and cannot replace the uniformed force structure.

Finally, everyone in an area of operations is equally vulnerable to nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) threats, and everyone requires the same minimum-essential protection. There are

³⁴ David L. Young, 11.

costs, both in equipment and in training, associated with preparing contractor personnel to survive NBC attacks. Contractors always have supported the military and will continue to do so in the future. As contractor use becomes more institutionalized, more and more functions will be contracted out.³⁵ Commanders and their planning staffs must be prepared to received significant support from contractors in all military operations and under virtually all conditions.

CONCLUSION

The use of prime vendor support has begun to revolutionize the logistical support system, and has changed the way the national defense has done business for many years. Prime vendor support has been a challenge and requires a shift in the old way of doing business. The program is a reality in the distribution of supplies and the sustainment of critical weapons system.

Additionally, prime vendor compliments the US Army's initiatives and experiences during the recent years have shown that aviation units are dependent upon the augmentation and expertise that is gain from the contractor. This program has grown significantly in the recent years since it was introduced into 1993, and has produced significantly reduced warehousing space and costs, inventory, and improved operational readiness rates of the AH-64D Apache Longbow. In particular, it has been successful in the newly activated Longbow battalions in CONUS and Korea. Operational readiness rates have increased and commanders have a better feel about the reliability of the aircraft in conflict. Additionally, prime vendor support is a method of support for ensuring that our advanced weapons systems are supported by the manufactory through the life cycle of the contract.

³⁵ Joe A. Fortner, 1.

The implementation of prime vendor into AMEDD has also been successful. This program has proven to reduce costs, inventory, and order ship time from the vendor to the medical treatment facilities. Additionally, prime vendor has made a significant difference in how the AMEDD conducts its business and they are able to project adequate supplies for peacetime deployments.

The prime vendor support method has worked well. However, the use of contractor and civilian in this concept has many concerns and issues that must be resolved before it is totally implemented into the defense supply system. The legal concerns with civilian on the battlefield and the protection that is required to maintain their presence during conflicts must be fully researched and understood by all parties. Additionally, the presence of civilian would be another burden on the commander and they must be willing to provide security and protection from NBC threats.

The Department of Defense will need to example the complexity of contracting a distribution system that will work in time of conflict. Ethics demands contractors and their employees understand what they are signing up to do. It demands they be trained to survive and accomplish their tasks in hostile environments so as not to put themselves at unnecessary risk.

Additionally, there are certain inherently Government functions, such as airworthiness certification, that the Government is prohibited from contracting out. All of these requirements,

however, would greatly reduce the alleged dollars savings now being attributed to contracting out support services and supply distribution.

The continued success of prime vendor requires a bold and comprehensive transformation. This program fits well within the Army's logistics vision, and has the potential to reach all levels and fits well within the initiatives of *Joint Vision 2010*. Prime vendor support is the wave for the future, and an exciting distribution concept that promises new and efficient ways to effectively provide the seamless support require for the forces of the 21st Century.

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