# The New NRF and its Logistics Concept

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***Foreword***

In this article we are going to deal not only with the Logistic Concept developed for NRF 16 but also with the general aspects of the new role of Logistics in view of the actual strategic environment.

***Background***

The new missions of the Alliance are radically different from those it faced during the Cold War. NATO has been involved in out-of-area operations for over a decade, underscoring the need for deployable and sustainable forces. Recent Strategic Guidance describes the evolving security environment as being complex and global, and subject to unforeseeable developments. The Alliance is therefore forced to develop modern, highly capable forces to respond to this new environment. Forces that are fully deployable, sustainable and interoperable, able to operate across the full spectrum of conflicts and crises for extended periods of time beyond Alliance territory and at strategic distance. This results – inter alia – to a call for improvements in strategic lift, intra-theatre airlift and multinational logistics support.

***The role of Logistics in Operations***

Logistics must be able to support the full range of NATO Missions. Logistics support capabilities are the most critical for many of the types of operations that NATO may undertake, and in particular those belonging to NRF. As an operational enabler, logistics has two main functions. First, effective logistics enables the Forces to project and sustain military power over extended lines of communications into a distant operational area. Second, logistics should be recognized not only as a supporting capability to combat forces, but also as an equal creator of non-lethal operational effects, during disaster relief and throughout the whole spectrum of mission types, particularly in operations that are heavily dependent on logistics capabilities. In short, a force multiplier.

***Emerging issues***

But we are not Alice in Wonderland! In fact, the recent NRF experiences have taught the lessons. Despite clear intents of Allied leaders in setting specific goals (NRF among others), that initiative has not, however, achieved consensus, and some nations remain adamantly reluctant. In fact, the most significant weak links in the NRF

to date have been with strategic airlift, air-to-ground surveillance, aerial refueling, combat support and combat service support. As far as the Logistics Command and Control is concerned, the most evident issue lays with the availability and capability of an operational Joint Logistics Support Group. In large measure, these failures are directly linked with the declining defense budgets of most NATO member states. In this regard, the words of NATO Secretary General are clear indicators: "Participation in the NRF is something like a reverse lottery: if your numbers come up, you actually loose money!..."

***Mind the Gap!***

This is not a joke related to the London Underground. We are here talking about the capabilities gap that we face anytime we deal with NRF Force List. In fact, the logistics concept for a generic NRF mission would need a complete JLSG HQ at Joint level, a Logistic Liaison Detachment at CC level (one for each component), the usual Combat Service Support organization at tactical level, and the inevitable National Support Elements. In this regard, readers are reminded that military logistics is twofold: the Operational Logistics and the Real Life Support. Of course, our main concerns are related to the Operational Logistics, the one that have to support the manouvre and be tailored to Mission assigned and Commander's intent.

***NRF 16***

As far as the NRF 16 logistics concept is concerned, there is no good news! We are back at the starting point. To date we are missing the entire JLSG and details of the logistics organization of the Combat units. Not to speak about the Medical assets. In addition, we have to call to mind that our subordinate Brigade is a multinational one and therefore more complex and difficult to support. In this regards, Troop Contributing Nations are warmly invited to negotiate either bilateral or multilateral agreements in order to simplify the logistics support to their units and the overall logistic footprint of NRF 16, but this process takes a long lapse of time. Of course, the detailed logistics concept for NRF 16, which will be developed in details during the Logistics Conference that will be held in Naples this month (November 2010), will take in due consideration all the requirements and capabilities needed to support the various possible tasks for NRF 16 and also the Nations' willing to bear their related burdens, in both terms: funding and forces.

***Conclusions***

Unfortunately, there is little room for optimism. It seems to the writer that Contributing Nations are pretending to play their role in the participation in the NRF Force Pool, keeping in the back of their minds an unbeatable extrasensory perception, and of course, making a sure bet on that.