

A Quick Guide to Getting Your Supplies in the Iraqi Theater

Lessons Learned from the Theater's Only Corps Distribution Center

MAJOR BRIAN MCMURRY

"Hey, I ordered some stuff and I haven't received it yet. Someone told me it's in the Corps Distribution Center."

Logistics in an asymmetric environment is different than it was on a linear battlefield. The primary difference in today's asymmetric environment such as Operation Iraqi Freedom is that logisticians are more concerned about managing distribution (the flow of supplies) instead of managing stocks (stockpiles). At the tactical level, higher-level logistics and distribution theory does not mean a lot when you order Bradley track or night sights for weapons, and you needed it yesterday. After a year of serving as the support operations officer for the 319th Corps Support Battalion and officer in charge of the Iraqi Theater's only strategic logistics hub — the Corps Distribution Center (CDC), I have witnessed and learned a lot about how cargo and unit requisitions move on the modern battlefield. After all, there is much to be learned from processing about 1.17 billion pounds of cargo from the more than 90,000 trucks that have transited across the Iraqi theater. The first place any search for parts or items requisitioned should be your unit level logistics (ULLS) clerk or local supply support activity/forward distribution point warehouse. However, if this fails, having a rudimentary understanding of how cargo moves through the Iraqi theater enroute to its final location can and will provide extremely useful.

The Iraqi Corps Distribution Center serves as the hub or point of entry and disbursement of all supply items minus ammunition and blood. Daily, the CDC will average 250 forty-foot trailers averaging 20 short tons of cargo per truck.

In raw numbers, this is approximately 1 million pounds of cargo processed per day with various assortment of air force pallets (463L), 20ft milvans, 40ft milvans and major assemblies (e.g. engines). The CDC in Iraq serves more than 15 supply support activities, 10 repair facilities, eight major forward operating bases and more than 160,000 Soldiers. Busy operation? You bet. With so much daily activity is there a margin of error? The answer is yes, and at the time of this writing, the CDC averaged less than 10 percent error rate, down from 30 percent from OIF I.

We have all been victim to the "where is my stuff" stand-offs with bosses who wanted items yesterday. Getting what you want in Iraq is a little different than at one of the larger military installations such as Fort Hood or Fort Bragg. For starters, the mere fact that lines of communications (road networks) have more similarities to scenes from "Mad Max" than Interstate 70 indicates cargo will move a little slower. But knowing how to track cargo and how to insure your cargo has the right identification is more

important than the actual conditions of road networks. Cargo into Iraq essentially enters via two modes, road network from Kuwait or air movements from CONUS, Kuwait, or Germany. When shipments arrive into Iraq, they will enter into a distribution hub. For OIF II, there was one hub located in Balad, Iraq (Logistics Support Area – Anaconda). Future OIFs will most likely have more than one distribution node.

Regardless of where these distribution centers are located they all track cargo the same. The primary means of receiving, sorting, cross loading (from one stake and platform trailer to another stake and platform trailer) and onward moving cargo is by Department of Defense Activity Address Codes (DoDAACs).

Know your Zip Code to Success

Like your mailing address at home, in the Iraqi Theater, supply items are distributed based on a customer unit's DoDAAC. The DoDAAC is essentially your zip code; if correct you will get your cargo, if not you will be subjugated to "frustrated cargo" purgatory. A DoDAAC is a unique six-position, alphanumeric code assigned to identify a specific unit, activity or organization that has the authority to requisition and/or receive materiel. The first position designates the particular service/agency element of ownership. The DoDAAC serves as the mailing address for sustainment stocks. Items are identified and moved onward primarily by the requesting unit's DoDAAC. One of the most common mistakes or shortfalls in terms of moving cargo is a missing or erroneous DoDAAC. When items come in without a DoDAAC, they will most likely end up in a "frustrated cargo" area to wait final disposition from CDC expeditors. Know your DoDAAC; and before you deploy check to see if your DoDAAC is registered. You can check your TAC addresses on the Internet by going to <https://day2k1.daas.dla.mil/daasinq/dodaac.asp>.

Getting the Shipping Instruction Right the First Time

The old adage an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure...while passé is very appropriate. Correctly documented cargo will have either a military shipping label (MSL) (See Illustration 1) or a material release order (MRO) (See Illustration 2). It is not unusual to have cargo/parts to have several bar code labels on the exterior package. Many times the bar code labels serve only the original equipment manufacture (OEM) purpose. However, this can cause problems as they populate a box or freight that is already heavily labeled even more marked.

There really isn't a way to prevent this, just understand that not all bar code labels are created equal. In order to understand



Illustration 1

unique number used to identify a requisition. The document number consists of 14 alphanumeric positions. This number is comprised of three elements. For MILSTRIP transactions, the following three elements are used:

- (1) Requisitioner (DoDAAC).
- (2) Julian Date - A four-digit code that represents the date. The first position shows the last numeric position of the calendar year and the last three positions of the numeric consecutive day.
- (3) Serial Number - A four-position, alphanumeric code assigned by the PBO or requisitioning STAMIS of record (ULLS or SARSS). The serial numbers are assigned daily at the discretion of the PBO. (DOD 4000.25-1.M, MILSTRIP, Appendix B7, page B7-1).

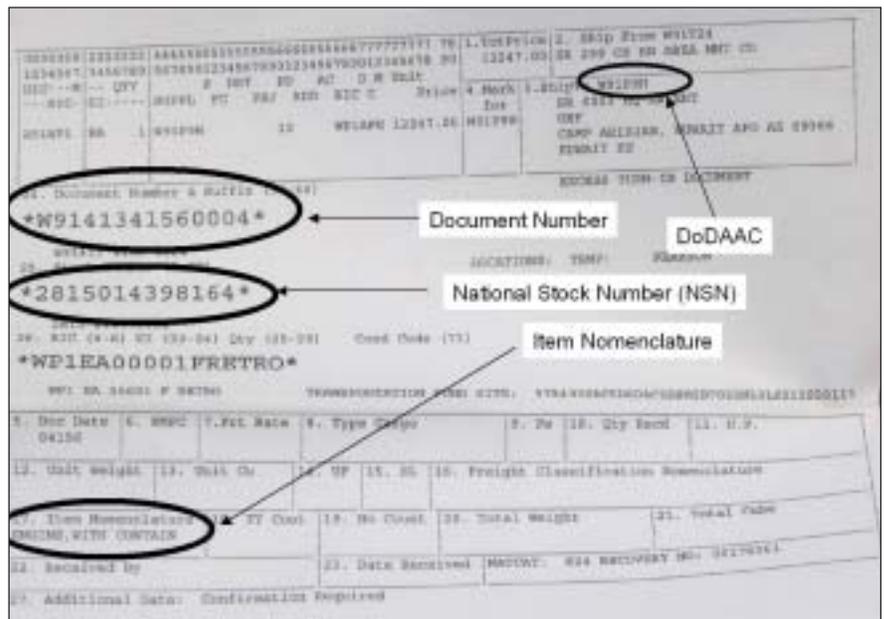
Ship Shape.

Most of us just order items and expect that it will somehow find your location. If all goes correctly, the item will get to the customer without complication. However, shipments do get delayed and items can be temporarily “frustrated.” Experience shows me that “frustrated” cargo (i.e. temporarily halted) is due to cargo not having a MSL, MRO or incorrect DoDAAC on the cargo. In the past this would have resulted in “dead” cargo. In that, the original requisitioner would not have gotten his cargo. If applied, the single most important item on a shipment is a radio frequency identification tag (RF ID Tag). Greater than 90 percent of cargo shipped from the United States enroute to Iraq has a RF Tag. The RF ID Tag, if properly documented (burned) has content level data. Content level data lists document numbers, DoDAAC of the consignee (original requester of cargo), transportation control number, and national stock number of the items ordered. The true value of the RF ID tag is that it provides passive in-transit visibility capability. Anyone who has established an in-transit visibility (ITV) account can see where their request if the cargo is shipped with an RF ID tag and the tag is created “burned” correctly. The RF ID tag is passive because, visibility is attained when a RF ID Tag passes by an electronic reader known as

distribution you have to understand the MSL’ology and MRO’ology. These two items represent the physical representation of distribution and cargo (parts) flow. The MSL is critical to transporters/shippers because it contains the transportation control number (TCN). The TCN is a 17-digit number used to track and control the movement of equipment and supplies during transport. The TCN for each shipment is unique and not duplicated. For shipments other than SEAVANs and personal property, the 17-character TCN is essentially a four-part number composed of a DoDAAC, Julian date, serial number, and suffix. The first three parts of the TCN for Military Standard Requisition and Issue Procedures (MILSTRIP) shipments are normally the requisition number, found on such documents as the DD Form 1348-1A (Issue Release/Receipt Document), DD Form 1149 (Requisition and Invoice/Shipping Document), or a contract. The TCN paints a picture of where the cargo originated from and/or where it is going — or at least where it was containerized or palletized. Instructions for the TCN are found in DOD Regulation 4500.32-R, Military Standard Transportation And Movement Procedures (MILSTAMP). For the laymen, the TCN can be useful for tracking a shipment or cargo. Often, (not always) the TCN assumes the document number of the item requisitioned through the supply channels with three extra characters such as XXX.

The MRO is important primarily due to the document number. The document number is a

Illustration 2



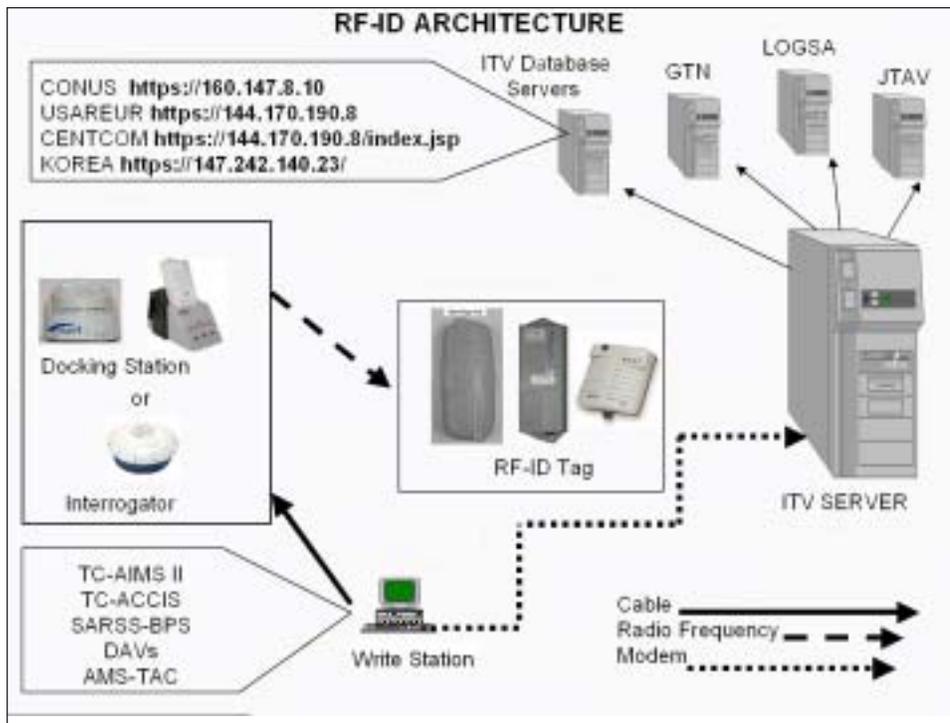


Illustration 3

interrogator that sends and receives radio wave signals to/from the RF ID tag and interrupts the content level data on the RF ID tag. Once an RF ID tag transits past an interrogator, information from the RF ID tag is read and the interrogator synchronizes this information and passes it via satellite to one of ITV servers worldwide. For those deployed in support of OIF the ITV server resides in Germany. The link to the website to establish an account is and check requisitions that have been shipped is <https://144.170.190.8> An easy to follow diagram on how and where ITV servers get there information on cargo is depicted in Illustration 3.

RF ID Architecture

The point behind the explanation of RF ID technology is not to make the unfamiliar into experts but rather inform that there is a very good way to track shipments in transit. However, it is important that RF ID tags are not full-proof. RFID tags do fall off, batteries wear out, tags and at times are loaded with incomplete or no data. When properly formatted (“burned”) correctly, RF ID technology is extremely useful in tracking shipments and cargo in-transit.

Remember, any given day there are millions of requisitions and shipments in transit to operations in Kuwait, Iraq, and

Afghanistan. The following checklist represents a synopsis of what has been written about in this article. The first checklist represents the actions your unit should take prior to requisitioning your first item for operations in the CENTCOM AOR. The second checklist represents what you should find out and be able to provide once your shipment becomes “frustrated cargo.”

Checklist 1 - Checklist prior to requisitioning items for use in CENTCOM AOR.

ITEM ACTION

1. What is your deployment DoDAAC? (It will most likely not be your garrison DoDAAC.)

a. Don’t have one? Request document number of the requisition. See your battalion S4.

b. Have a deployment DoDAAC? Consult <https://day2k1.daas.dla.mil/aasing/dodaac.asp>

- (1) What is the TAC 1 address?
- (2) What is the TAC 2 address?

2. If possible, check to see who your local supply support activity or forward distribution point will be and their DoDAAC. All items will come into the warehouse prior to delivery to you as the customer.

3. Check with DISCOM or COSCOM DoDAAF Manager — are you on the route

plan for delivery?

4. If you can influence the packaging of cargo, insist on a standard military shipping label and RF ID tag, and record the RF ID tag number.

5. Sign up for USAREUR ITV access <https://144.170.190.8>

Checklist 2 - For searching for “frustrated” cargo once in CENTCOM AOR.

1. Check your servicing SSA to see if they have received the item.

2. Check your shipment (s) for these numbers:

- Document number of the requisition,
- Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RF Tags),
- Pallet ID Number,
- Document Number – 14 Digits,
- Transportation Control Number (TCN) - 17 Digits,

Consignee (Ship to DODAAC) for Iraq usually starts with W91 (Army) and has 3 more digits, and the

Container Number.

2. Check what type pack is your shipment(s):

- a. 20-40 Container
- b. 463L (Air Force) Pallet
- c. Wooden (Skid) Pallet
- d. Multi-Pack
- e. Major Assembly Shipping

Container

f. Special Pack (Crate)

3. Is this cargo part of a unit move or is replenishment stock?

4. Who shipped the cargo? Include Contact Information.

5. Who built the pack? Include Contact Information.

6. Who is supposed to receive the pack (Shipment)? Include contact information.

7. Where did the cargo (shipment) originate from?

8. What was the destination of the cargo (shipment)?

Major Brian M. McMurry currently serves as the support operations officer and Corps Distribution Center OIC for the 319th Corps Support Battalion, 13th Corps Support Command, which deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom from January 2004 to January 2005.
