

Gulf War Air Power Survey: Logistics And Support (Volume 3 of 6)

Office of Air Force History, U.S. Air Force



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This report discusses logistics in the Persian Gulf War as it applies to all military operations and in particular to air operations. Simply put, how did the United States equip its forces for Desert Shield and Desert Storm? Logistics also includes functions for maintaining an air base and support services. These aspects of logistics will be covered in the two parts of this volume. One of the simpler, but nonetheless comprehensive, definitions of logistics was documented by Baron Antoine Henri Jomini subsequent to the Napoleonic Wars, when he defined logistics as the "practical art of moving armies." A Joint Chiefs of Staff definition expands on Jomini's version, expressing logistics as The science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces. In its most comprehensive sense, those aspects of military operations which deal with: a. design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, and disposition of materiel; b. movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of personnel; c. acquisition, or construction, maintenance, operation, and disposition of facilities; and d. acquisition or furnishing of services. * The Gulf War encompassed all of these aspects of logistics, and did so on a grand scale. One of the main reasons for success in this conflict was the ability of the U.S. military to respond logistically-to move, beddown, and sustain the combat forces. The primary focus of our survey was to examine airpower application in a theater devoid of prior operational presence. This unique environment presented airpower managers with severe challenges to assure efficient and effective application of combat force. We examine the state of logistics prior to the conflict, the characteristics of planning, the efforts to put combat and support elements in place, the support of air operations during combat; and in particular, how planners envisioned the role of logistics in supporting air forces to achieve Coalition objectives and execute military strategy.

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