



Flatbed and heavy equipment transport vehicles with the 1st Sustainment Brigade, 1st Theater Sustainment Command, Third Army, are lined up as part of the Durable Express convoy. These convoys travel to eight out of the twenty-one Retrograde Property Assistance Team yards to load and transport retrograde cargo out of Iraq as part of the Responsible Drawdown of Iraq and the Build-up of Afghanistan as part of Nickel II. Nickel II is the U.S. Army's largest logistical operation since World War II.

Third Army

A world class logistics company

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The Responsible Drawdown of Iraq and the Build-up in Afghanistan has been nicknamed Nickel II, an allusion to Gen. George S. Patton's repositioning of Third Army during World War II. Not since then has the American military undertaken such a shift of priorities.

"President Obama's guidance is to draw-down forces in Iraq to 50,000 [Troops] and Build-up Forces in Afghanistan by 30,000," said Brig. Gen. John O'Connor, chief of logistics for Third Army. Brig. Gen. O'Connor is charged with balancing the capabilities and requirements for both Iraq and Afghanistan.

People of the Army's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, the Air Force's Aerial Movement Command, U.S. Army

Central Command's Deployment Distribution Operations Center, U.S. Air Force's Central Command, U.S. Naval Force's Central Command, the Responsible Reset Task Force and the rest of the military materiel enterprise, made Operation Nickel II possible.

The operation culminated at the end of August, when the Responsible Drawdown of Iraq had withdrawn more than 67,000 Troops (bringing the new total in Iraq below 50,000, which is in accordance with President Obama's guidance). In addition, 18,000 vehicles left Iraq and were returned to the U.S.

"From a logistical perspective, this is one of the most complicated and dynamic set of maneuvers and deployments in military history," Brig. Gen. O'Connor said.

"Here in Kuwait, we act as the center of gravity for all things logistics," he said. "Our job is to

orchestrate this complex operation, integrating and prioritizing the movements of people and equipment through multiple information databases and systems to make sure we have accountability, visibility, and oversight in support of our Warfighters."

One of the information centers used for such oversight is the Combined Operational Intelligence Center, a NASA-like, mission-control center located in Third Army's area of operations.

The information brought together at the command COIC allows for the deliberate, accountable, cost-effective shift of everything involving the Responsible Drawdown of Iraq.

However, even with the most sophisticated information systems, getting Servicemembers and supplies from Iraq into Afghanistan raises a number of issues, not the least of

which is distance.

There are two primary routes Third Army uses to get supplies from Iraq to Afghanistan, both go around Iran. (The most direct way to get from Baghdad to Kabul is through Iran, but it is off limits due to the country's sensitive relationship with the U.S.)

To effectively execute the in-theater logistics-management mission, Third Army produces a holistic view of the daily status of logistical events in the COIC for Lt. Gen. William G. Webster, Third Army's commanding general, and dozens of other key leaders. The daily status includes assessments of progress and actionable information.

This holistic logistics view is the Third Army - Theater Common Operating Picture, which consolidates, analyzes, validates, assimilates, and presents the volume of data found in a variety of divergent formats and is obtained from the multitude of sources required to produce the total operating picture.

"This particular system is essentially an Oracle database that ties together all of our automation systems," Brig. Gen. O'Connor said.

One of the primary feeds in A-TCOP is the Army War Reserve Depot System. AWRDS is an automated information system capable of building and maintaining databases containing Army War Reserve stocks and other equipment data. The AWRDS system uses bar-code and Radio-Frequency Identification technology to collect



Third Army retrograde Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles await transport as part of the Responsible Drawdown of Iraq and the Build-up in Afghanistan as part of Nickel II. Nickel II is the U.S. Army's largest logistical operation since World War II.

equipment data and track and maintain changes in cargo configurations.

Brig. Gen. O'Connor described the four-step process Third Army uses to assess what to do with equipment.

"Consume what's already there, redistribute assets within Iraq and Afghanistan (or one of the other 20 countries we oversee), transfer equipment to other governments through foreign military sales or excess defense article transfers and turn equipment over to the Defense Logistics Agency for reutilization," he said.

Third Army has moved from keeping a logistics stockpiling model to lowering their logistical footprint as close to 'zero' as possible.

"We are attempting to consume all that we can within the theater," Brig. Gen. O'Connor said. "We are gauging our consumption rates

with stock objectives ... this includes consumables like rations, fuel, ammunition, and repair parts."

The race to move all this equipment began in March and peaked Aug. 31 after the end of combat operations in Iraq.

"The actual plan we are executing now is constantly being updated as we maintain our flexibility. We are still in contact and need to ensure that we 'right size' to maintain what's needed on the ground for the remaining forces in Iraq," Brig. Gen. O'Connor said.

Third Army leadership continually balances the needs of Afghanistan with their responsibilities in Iraq.

"Nothing is done in a vacuum — at least nothing successful," he said. "The plan is always being updated based on lessons learned."



Third Army retrograde humvees await transport as part of the Responsible Drawdown of Iraq and the Build-up in Afghanistan as part of Nickel II.