

FOCUS ON:

Warfighter Support Enhancement

LNOs essential to fueling the fight



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Whether it's a pair of F-15s taking off or a convoy of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles heading off base in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, without fuel they are useless. In Afghanistan, fuel is especially critical to the brave men and women who take the stand everyday to defeat terrorism. Providing fuel support here is extremely challenging. There's no country in the world more difficult, remote, or land-locked.

One of the keys to DLA Energy Middle East's success in fueling that fight is strategically placed petro-

leum liaison officers in Afghanistan, U. S. Central Command headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., and at International Security Assistance Forces headquarters.

These five liaisons, or LNOs, stationed at Bagram Air Base, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, NATO Headquarters at Joint Force Command Brunssum, Netherlands, and Tampa, Fla., provide crucial support to Afghanistan fuel operations and also function as the eyes and ears of DLA Energy Middle East.

"Providing fuel to Afghanistan has never before been pushed to the limit as it has been over the last five

Trucks travel the treacherous Salang Pass, a primary fuel route into Afghanistan, in May. Five Defense Logistics Agency Energy Middle East liaison officers at Bagram Air Base, the embassy in Kabul, NATO headquarters in the Netherlands and U.S. Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Fla., provide crucial support to Afghanistan fuel operations. Photo by Air Force Col. Larry Cox.

Left, aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln transits the Arabian Sea while conducting flight operations. The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group is deployed in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility and is supported by Defense Logistics Agency Energy Middle East. DLA Energy liaison officers in the region provide combatant commanders with critical real-time information to enhance warfighter decision making and support. Photo by Seaman Adam Randolph.

months [August-December]. Numerous fuel delays due to increased demand for fuel and transportation challenges have shown the true importance of these LNOs as they provide support to the combatant commander, ensuring no disruption to fuel support for the warfighter,” said DLA Energy Middle East Deputy Director Ron Black.

The holy month of Ramadan, Pakistan flooding, rail congestion on the Northern Distribution Network and impediments at the Pakistan/Afghanistan border crossing are some of the issues the LNOs assisted commanders with.

Fuel is a simple concept of supply and demand. It works the same way in Afghanistan as it does in Nashville, Tenn.

In Afghanistan, the supply portion of the equation is the difficult piece. DLA Energy Middle East has multiple fuel suppliers, transportation contractors, defense fuel support points and commercial storage locations operating in conjunction with a quality oversight contractor used to fuel U.S. forces. In an average month, DLA Energy Middle East suppliers provide more than 30 million gallons of aviation and ground fuel to 10 locations throughout Afghanistan. These locations act as a hub and spoke system to push fuel to 204 forward operating bases in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan. So where do the LNOs fit in to the supply chain, and why are they so important?

Despite the logistical challenges and thirst for real-time information, DLA Energy Middle East LNOs stationed in Afghanistan at Bagram Air Base and the U.S. Embassy in Kabul ensure accurate and timely information is passed through the chain of command to allow time-sensitive operational decisions.

Just normal operations right?

Not so much. When on-hand inventory and capacity concerns reach the combatant commander level, things get exciting. Fuel supply disruptions outside the control of DLA Energy or the U.S. government caused concern over the past months, but the LNOs proved their true



value in the process. The LNOs on the ground worked directly with fuel suppliers for DLA Energy Middle East, Joint Sustainment Command-Afghanistan and NATO leadership to gather and disseminate accurate information to dispel rumors and calm fuel concerns. Additionally, the DLA Energy Middle East LNO stationed at USCENTCOM in Tampa was able to correlate and relay accurate real-time information to leadership at the USCENTCOM level and within DLA Energy.

Ensuring information flow, whether good or bad, is one of the most important, deliberate steps a leader can take to calm the rumor mill and gain control of the situation.

These LNOs enabled the commander of DLA Energy Middle East to communicate a strategic fuel support forecast and subsequent recovery plan. Without these critical updates and information flow, chaos would have ensued, and the information battle would have been lost before it started.

“The LNOs are a critical enabler in providing real-time information to the warfighter, NATO, CENTCOM and DLA Energy, ensuring consistent petroleum support throughout the AOR,” said Army Col. Thomas Kelly, DLA Energy Middle East commander.

“The LNO position comes with a great deal of responsibility. And he or she faces many challenges; however, the fruits of LNO’s labor cannot be denied,” echoed Black. 