



Chinese Military Launches Largest-Ever Joint Logistics Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: In December, the People's Liberation Army held “Joint Logistics Force 2018B” (联勤力量2018B), its largest-ever joint logistics exercise, involving 37 PLA units and civilian companies scattered across five provinces and two municipality-level cities. A video report on the exercise shown during December 19 edition of *Military Report*, a regular program on Chinese state television, outlined the purpose and some of the missions undertaken as part of the exercise. The Chinese military is improving its ability to rapidly mobilize units to move intra-regionally, resupply forces engaged in combat—particularly air defense forces—and to evacuate and treat casualties. A component of the exercise highlighted across Chinese media coverage was cooperation with civilian companies for logistical support.

China's package delivery industry is well developed, due to the explosion in demand from the growth of e-commerce, and PLA logisticians are well aware of the benefits such civilian supply networks could provide in a conflict. On 23 October 2017, the PLA Air Force's Logistics Department signed Strategic Cooperation agreements (战略合作协议) with China Railway Express, China Post Express, SF Express, Deppon Logistics, and JD Logistics. These are massive companies with networks of warehouses and fleets of planes. JD Logistics, for example, is part of China's largest online marketplace.

Video of the December logistics exercise showed SF Express using one of its transport jets to move cargo for the PLA. Deppon Logistics, another commercial transport company, was shown providing ground transport support. Civilian companies working together with military units refueled transport aircraft (such as the Y-8) and used drones to locate simulated casualties.

At lower levels, local civilian companies' facilities can also play a role. Video of the exercise showed gasoline pumping lines set up on highway access roads to allow several trucks in a convoy to fill up simultaneously. Presumably, these have been set up at multiple points so that supplies can be moved by road without needing to stop for long periods and wait in line. Previous reporting (see: “Local Companies Provide Logistics Support During PLA Joint Exercise,” *OE Watch*, December 2018) indicated that similar set up have been used partnering with civilian gas stations. This type of “military-local” (军地) cooperation falls under the broader framework of Military-Civil Fusion (军民融合; also translated as Civil-Military Integration), a major focus area for Chinese military modernization and capability improvement plans.

The exercise not only tested military-local cooperation, but also between military services (particularly the Air Force and Army) and acted as a test of China's reforms of its military logistics system. In September 2016, the Joint Logistic Support Force (联勤保障部队) was created under the Central Military Command to replace the General Logistics Department.

Reporters for the PLA's official newspaper, as noted in the accompanying excerpted article, observed a component of the exercise under the Zhengzhou Joint Service Center, in the capital of Henan Province in Central China. Zhengzhou is home to one of the PLA's five Joint Logistic Support Centers (联勤保障中心), one for each of China's five theater commands (战区). These are subordinate to the Joint Logistic Support Base (武汉联勤保障基地) in Wuhan, Hubei province. Their joint nature means that they must be ready to resupply all of China's military services and respond to enemy attacks. Chinese state television also showed what appear to be missile containers being brought out of hardened underground facilities. Another component included simulated cratering of runways and repairs by logistics support force and air force personnel.

One of the PLA's main modernization goals is the “achievement of essential mechanization by 2020.” These exercises are a useful reminder that for the PLA mechanization is not simply about moving from motorized infantry to mechanized units, but also mechanization and informatization of its logistics support system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



A Shaanxi Y-8 transport at Zhuhai Airshow 2012.

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“Since the reform of the joint logistics force, the Zhengzhou Joint Service Center has accelerated the upgrading of the joint security system and promoted the security model from the military’s independent guarantee to the military integration guarantee.”

Source: “Military Report (《军事报道》),” CCTV, 19 December 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV5FRXa9HnA>

Yesterday “Joint Logistics Force 2018B” [联勤力量2018B], the largest exercise since the establishment of the Joint Logistics Support Force was simultaneously launched across five provinces and two municipalities and involving 37 military and civilian forces.

This exercise focused on urban air defense and cross-regional support operations. Field medical teams drawn from the Central Theater Command General Hospital began by departing an airport in Hubei [Province] in an Air Force transport aircraft. Mobile support forces were also transported by railway and trucks to predetermined assembly areas. Field gas stations, and medical and food maintenance supply points were jointly set up by the military and local companies in expressway service areas to replenish troops transiting between regions. In the command center, the commander used a joint command situational awareness system to direct the exercise in real time. Following the mission instructions, the senior staff for ordnance, supply, transportation etc, issued orders to the participating troops

Ding Shichao [丁士超], a Logistics staff officer said: “It was issued to the troops in a list-based manner. On the one hand, it reduced the working hours of the staff officers of the organs. In addition, the troops saw it at a glance and knew who and where to protect them.”

During the drill, our air defense units were attacked by the enemy, equipment was damaged and the support personnel immediately deployed to provide equipment radar equipment and ground-to-air missiles to the air defense units. The repair team and the air force station jointly repaired the airport runway, and the fuel supply team quickly refueled military transport aircraft...

Zhao Xiaoguang [赵晓光], representative of a civilian logistics company said: “After receiving the requirements, we needed to coordinate our crews’ mission schedules, as well with the air field to [receive cargo] and then rapidly transport it.

In order to explore the military integration security system, the participating forces also mobilized local suppliers, logistics, catering, firefighting and other forces to build a rapid replenishment chain for military and civilian integration, regional integrated replenishment network, and serial cooperation zones.

Source: “37支军地力量异地同步探索联训联保新模式 (37 Dispersed Military and Civilian Forces Simultaneously Begin Testing a New Model of Joint Training and Logistics Support),” PLA Daily, 29 December 2018. http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilization/2018-12/29/content_4833175.htm

The airport oil support team and the air force station jointly fueled the aircraft, and the local logistics companies and the joint logistics force jointly opened the supply station. The field medical center used drones and all-terrain ambulances to search for the wounded... 37 military forces were synchronized Exploring a new mode of joint military and military integration in the wartime.

Since the reform of the joint logistics force, the Zhengzhou Joint Service Center has accelerated the upgrading of the joint security system and promoted the security model from the military’s independent guarantee to the military integration guarantee. The center adopts the method of “base guarantee and mobile security linkage, joint logistics and service, military and local integration” to carry out joint training and joint insurance, covering “safety, supply, rescue, transportation, repair, prevention” and other protection categories. Force support capabilities.

The center actively researches and explores the military-civilian integration guarantee model of “backbone in the army, the main body is in the people”, mobilizes local logistics, catering, fire fighting and other forces to participate in the protection, and builds a rapid supply chain and regional integration of “funding, transportation and supply”. The supply network and the joint defense cooperation zone have accumulated experience for mobilizing local forces to participate in joint logistics support during wartime.