

Abstract

Husbanding Service Providers (HSPs) play a critical role in supporting the Navy's mission. Foreign ports worldwide do not have organic U.S. Navy assets, and therefore the U.S. Navy must contract out all port services. The U.S. Navy, which has a worldwide presence, especially in areas of interest, must use these HSPs whenever ships pull into foreign ports. HSPs provide all of the services needed by naval ships while in foreign port such as collection, holding, and transfer (CHT) removal and force protection. In the current peacetime environment, relying on HSPs does not present any major logistical challenges. During a time of major theater conflict, however, the logistical challenges of relying exclusively on HSPs can quickly mount to the point where foreign port visits are no longer feasible, and therefore the U.S. Navy's mission is adversely affected. The purpose of this research is to identify what logistical implications may arise while working with HSPs during a major theater conflict, specifically in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility (AOR). After identifying and analyzing the logistical implications, recommendations and courses of action are presented in an effort to provide senior military strategists with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions regarding HSP supply networks.

Methods

- This study followed the seven stages of an interview inquiry model. Little research on this topic has been conducted. Thus, interviewing subject matter experts (SMEs) was the primary source of information.
- Researchers drew from their own experiences as supply officers, who have seen firsthand U.S. Navy's dealings with HSPs, to begin formulating questions to ask SMEs.
- Questions asked were derived from personal experience, and were a starting point for discussions with SMEs. The knowledge of SMEs provided the basis for this research.
- Semi-structured interview techniques allowed interviewees to respond freely and thoroughly to researchers' questions.
- Interviewees are SMEs from a diverse group spanning multiple disciplines, including military strategists, contracting officers (KOs), contracting officer's representatives (CORs), and military sealift command (MSC) professionals. Personal connections with professors and other U.S. Navy supply officers provided a roster of potential candidates.
- Following standard guidelines for in-depth qualitative interviewing, questions asked during interviews were used as a guide to stimulate conversation between the researchers and SMEs to gain as much information as possible.

Results

Implications

- Limited resources available for HSPs and subcontractors with which to service an increased number of U.S. Navy ships
- Limited capacity of FLC and PACFLT and how this impacts the ability of HSPs to carry out their duties for an increased number of ships
- Vetting processes for HSPs and subcontractors established by the FLC HSP contract and how ambiguous standards of security measures could lead to disastrous results
- Lack of robust force protection experience, equipment, and personnel available from HSPs for increased force protection requirements
- Refusal of HSPs to perform their contractual duties due to potential political and economic pressures from adversaries of the United States
- Refusal of HSPs to perform their contractual obligations due to potential losses in revenue
- Refusal of HSPs to accept Off Ship Bill Pay as an acceptable form of payment
- Increased difficulty with communications, making the responsibilities of all parties involved, including HSPs, more difficult

Top Five Solutions Identified

1. Provide organic capabilities created by the U.S. Navy. This solution has the potential to solve multiple implications discovered and will require the U.S. Navy to know in advance where it plans to preposition assets and personnel. This would also assist military planners.
2. Increase diplomacy with host nations. This solution offers benefit and helps solve numerous problems. Building relationships with allies is critical, especially with countries the U.S. plans to use during a major theater conflict. Having more countries as allies would increase flexibility for the U.S. military.
3. Integrate logistics into annual war game exercises. Managing port calls is a strenuous process and doing so during a major conflict would only increase the difficulty. Integrate CORs and KOs into annual exercises, simulate poor communications with ships, and train SUPPOs to expedite port calls in such an environment.
4. Refine Push Logistics. The more streamlined operations are for ships, the easier it would be for ships to get the needed support without communication.
5. Take a closer look at the way HSPs perform their vetting processes. Knowing who is working for HSPs and their backgrounds is critical for the safety of U.S. military personnel. A random audit of their vetting processes and researching their sub-contractors would be beneficial to ensuring safety.