



Leo P. Hirrel. *Supporting the Doughboys: US Army Logistics and Personnel during World War I.* Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2017. Illustrations. 172 pp. n.p., paper, ISBN 978-1-940804-32-3.

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Although the American army is arguably the world's most powerful fighting force, it ascended to superpower status only after decades of reform and two world wars. In this book, Leo P. Hirrel explains the essentiality of military logistics during the First World War in transforming the US Army. He argues that by contributing to the Allied efforts, the army stretched its newly minted Quartermaster Corps to the breaking point. By the end of 1918, shortages of personnel, draft animals, motor vehicles, and transatlantic shipping threatened General John J. Pershing's plans for 1919. The book explains how despite these constraints, as well as the newness of modern warfare and its unprecedented demands on transportation and supply, the American logisticians of World War I accomplished a "remarkable feat" (p. 121).

Hirrel provides a readable survey of American World War I logistics from mobilization to armistice and redeployment. The general theme of the book is that despite the army's prewar indifference to logistics, the crucible of expeditionary operations during World War I forced the military to prioritize sustainment, eventually crystalizing processes and procedures that contributed to the Allied triumph. The success of the American logisticians not only enabled the establishment of an in-

dependent American army in France but also established precedents that streamlined mobilization, deployment, and sustainment for the US Army in the Second World War and during the Cold War.

From a bird's-eye view of army logistics during World War I, Hirrel highlights the general themes and turning points of how the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) found solutions to sustainment problems on the home front and in France. The protagonists are senior logistics leaders who led major bureaus and commanded support organizations during the war. In the book, Generals James Harbord and Johnson Hagood serve as Pershing's trustworthy problem solvers, forming the Services of Supply (SOS) and using their exemplary leadership skills to maximize the workforce and the resources available to the AEF in Europe.

Supporting the Doughboys builds on works of army logistics, including Erna Risch, James A. Huston, and Phyllis A. Zimmerman, all of whom have contributed to the historical conversation about US Army logistics. The book draws from these secondary sources and some primary sources to present a well-written and readable synopsis of a much larger subject. While it does not break any new historiographical ground about World War I

army logistics, it succeeds in presenting a succinct overview from 1914 to 1920. Considering the intended audience, army logisticians and other senior military officers, the monograph serves as an excellent text to familiarize military professionals with the history of World War I sustainment and with details concerning lessons to be learned from the AEF.

The author skillfully describes the American support efforts in the larger context of Allied operations. Although Pershing stubbornly refused to subordinate all American troops under French or British command, he realized that the American army needed to link into the Allied logistics network to sustain combat operations in 1917 and 1918. This logistical interdependence with coalition partners is called "interoperability" in the military today and is a highly prioritized practice, especially with allied partners in Europe and South Korea. The book explains this not only by providing the American perspective on rail, field feeding, and port operations but also by explaining the actions of the British and French, allies who were developing their sustainment practices during the war.

The manuscript leaves the reader wanting more detail, especially concerning the sections that are discussed in brief. One example is the interesting page about African American soldiers in the SOS. Considering black soldiers' important role in logistics, a larger portion of the book could have detailed the accomplishments of African American doughboys. Black troops served mostly in service and support roles, in difficult and thankless jobs. They volunteered in large numbers and served despite the segregation and discrimination they faced in the military. The book includes several anecdotes that humanize the American logistics experience. One story reveals how an army officer, a grocer before the war, showed initiative by acquiring an abandoned French mill, hiring local workers, and transforming the derelict building into a chocolate factory. The same major later

opened a macaroni factory and successfully improved the quantity and quality of battlefield rations with fresh chocolate and pasta. Episodes like these explain how despite American unpreparedness at the beginning of the war, the army was able to find creative solutions to most of its shortfalls.

The AEF was the forerunner of the modern US Army and the birthplace of the logistics principles that characterize army sustainment today. Hirrel illustrates how tenuous the American support network was at the end of 1918 and how close US Army logistics came to collapse prior to the German surrender. He argues that "the Army entered the First World War still with an inadequate sustainment structure until the demands of the war finally completed the maturation process" (p. xiii). Certainly, *Supporting the Doughboys* has proven the crucial importance of the Quartermaster Corps, the SOS, and the soldier logisticians in winning the Allied victory in World War I.

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