

Expanded version of DSS enhances

By Jessica Walter, APR, DDC Public Affairs

Members of a Defense Distribution Center support team returned from Bahrain March 14 after implementing a system designed to increase global asset visibility and automate the distribution process for supplies sent to the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman.

According to project manager Rob Mears of DDC's Navy operations support team, the pilot, scheduled to continue through spring, will assess the benefits of using a specialized version of DDC's distribution and warehouse management system in a fast-paced Navy beach detachment replenishment environment.

The DDC team worked alongside the Truman's beach detachment crewmembers in Bahrain to install technology that allows near real time visibility of the cargo as it is checked in at the military air terminal.

Before the DDC team arrived, the Truman's beach detachment members were manually transcribing requisition numbers as cargo arrived then entering the data into a spreadsheet and sending it to the people who needed the information by e-mail.

"With our system, Navy beach detachment personnel can simply scan the barcodes on items as they arrive for processing and the detailed requisition data from those barcodes will go directly into DSS," explained Mears.

DSS is the Distribution Standard System – the same distribution and warehouse management tool used across DDC's global network of distribution centers.

"After talking with the Navy about what information they need and how they use it, we were able to modify some of the input features in DSS to streamline the process to better support their

needs and also allow them greater visibility of their supplies as they travel through the supply chain," Mears said.

Debbie Norman of the Naval Supply Systems Command said the system has been helpful to the Navy. "DSS allows us to capture additional ITV [in-transit visibility] date stamps in last mile operations."

According to Navy Cmdr. Mike Hansen, a joint logistics and planning officer for DDC, that data from DSS is available over a secure Web site. He says this can be very beneficial for Navy customers because they can see what they have and where it is.

"Knowing the status of supplies in transit is central for effective decision-making," said Hansen, "and as long as they have Internet access and the proper information security mechanisms, the personnel aboard the ship can watch as items are processed on the floor, increasing the speed of the information flow."

The Navy considers the greater availability of data to be a key advantage. "DSS Web access provides the Navy with broader use of DSS at lower costs," commended Norman.

During the pilot, the DDC team helped process more than 16 air pallets of freight as well as other items arriving from commercial small parcel carriers. Some of the items the team processed included replacement parts for jet engines, electronics, and other sustainment items.

"Supplying a ship carrying 5,500 people with an operating airport is more than a significant undertaking. It requires the well managed, highly visible, unimpeded flow of sustainment materials," described Hansen. "This flow must be reliable, on-



Members of the Defense Distribution Center's Navy operations support team provide training on the use of barcode scanners while testing an enhanced version of DDC's warehouse system with the USS Harry S. Truman's beach detachment in Bahrain in March. From left to right, DDC's Rob Mears, Deborah Norman of the Naval Supply Systems Command, DDC's Dave Olenick, and Navy Storekeeper Chief Aldith Gray of the USS Harry S. Truman's beach detachment.



Navy Cmdr. Mike Hansen, a joint logistics and planning officer for the Defense Distribution Center, works with Navy Storekeeper Chief Aldith Gray of the USS Harry S. Truman's Bahrain beach detachment to process pallets of supplies using an enhanced version of DDC's warehouse management system in March.

in-transit visibility for USS Truman

time, and its status made available as soon as possible.”

Members of the DDC support team were very pleased with the results of the pilot’s initial phase and are continuing to work with the Navy to refine and identify future uses of the expanded DSS capability. “This pilot was central to helping us see how we can continue to modify our system so it can be effective at other Navy beach detachment locations overseas,” said Mears.

He added, “The pilot in Bahrain also showed us that we can deploy DSS in virtually any location around the world.”

World-wide function is a critical capability for the DSS system as DDC continues striving to become the single distribution services provider for the Department of Defense anywhere in the world and under any condition.

“Our customers deserve the best we can offer and DSS and our global DLA [Defense Logistics Agency] network plays an essential role,” said Joe Cassel, Director of the Defense Logistics Agency’s Information Operations Division in New Cumberland, Pa., that supports DDC.

“DDC has demonstrated the significant flexibility of DSS to support Navy logistics operations big and small. Further, this USS Truman pilot project in particular has given us great insight into how best to design global IT [information technology] support for forward-deployed sailors and Marines in the future,” he added.

DDC has already deployed the enhanced version of DSS at each of DDC’s distribution centers serving Navy customers, providing distribution support to more than 150 Navy ships.

The next step, according to Mears, is to install the system at

Navy-operated Material Processing Centers. “Our Information Technology division will identify an equipment package that includes everything they need to run DSS at those locations,” said Mears.

The kit includes hand-held scanners, radio frequency technology, computers, printers and other equipment. Mears also said that training will be provided to Navy personnel who will be using the system.

DDC Navy operations support team leader Dave Olenick says his group’s work is far from done. Olenick, along with Mears, is also working with the Navy to research other potential uses for the system.

“Our Navy customers operate in a unique environment,” Olenick said. “In some cases, you only have a day or two – or sometimes just a couple of hours – to resupply a ship, so we need to do whatever we can to reduce the number of steps in the distribution process.”

He added, “We’re looking at any changes that could help the Navy in these types of situations that require rapid turnover,” he explained.

The successful development and implementation of the expanded version of DSS, according to Olenick, was a product of collaboration among experts at many organizations including the Navy Supply Information Systems Activity, the Naval Supply Systems Command, the Navy’s Commander of Fleet Industrial Supply Centers and associated component sites, the Defense Logistics Agency Information Technology offices in New Cumberland, Pa., and Ogden, Utah, as well as Defense Distribution Center headquarters.



A pilot conducted in March by the Defense Distribution Center used an enhanced version of DDC’s distribution and warehouse management system to give Navy customers greater visibility of supplies making their way to the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman. (U.S. Navy photo)



Pictured above is a cargo sorting and staging area at Defense Distribution Depot Norfolk, Va., where an expanded version of the Defense Distribution Center’s distribution and warehouse management system is used to streamline the distribution process. The new system has been deployed to all DDC sites serving Navy customers.