

Signal life in the logistics lane

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Every Signal Soldier should have an understanding of the logistics system employed with the Regiment.

The Sustainment Automation Support Management Office supports all logistics automation systems, or Standard Army Management Information Systems within a brigade. In simplest terms, the SASMO is a collage of different military occupational specialties, clustered together, to provide both technical and functional support for those systems and the logisticians that use them. The recently changed acronym for years was known as "CS-SAMO" or "Combat Service Support Automations Management Office" until "Combat Service Support" was replaced by "Sustainment" in Field Manual 4-0. Table 1 shows a list of supported systems, their functional areas, class of supply supported (if applicable) and the MOS that applies to that system for support and/or operation.

The size of a SASMO section is

directly dependent on the type of unit being supported. The numbers can range from a section four to more than 20. For example, the Army evaluation task force has four Soldiers, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division has 10 Soldiers; and both 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division have 18 Soldiers. In a deployed environment the SASMO typically interfaces with a communications-electronics command logistics assistance representative to request support for specific systems. The SASMO may also work directly with system a field support representative, depending on the urgency of support required.

In garrison these same support entities still exist, but may not be as readily accessible (except for major exercises or significant system failures). Regardless of LAR or FSR availability, there are still installation or division level entities that exist to support logistics automation functions, such as Army field support battalions or

installation SASMOs, division command maintenance evaluation and training teams, and of course SASMOs in sister brigades. For system defects



SASMO Soldier orienting a directional grid antenna for a Combat Service Support Automated Information System.

<i>System</i>	<i>Functional Area</i>	<i>MOS</i>
AIT	Unit Inventory Management	92Y
BCS3	Logistics Tracking/Reporting	92A, Any
CAISI	Wireless LAN extension	25B
MC4	Medical Records Management/Class VIII	68G, 25B
MROCS	Warehouse Inventory Management	25B, 92A
MTS	Logistics/Movement Tracking	92A, Any
PBUSE	Supply Ordering/Class II	92Y
SAAS-MOD	Ammunition Supply/Tracking/Class V	89A
SAMS-E	Maintenance Management/ Class IX	92A
SARSS1	Materiel Requisition Hub	92A
TC-AIMS II	Transportation	88N
VSAT	Point of Presence	25B

Table 1: STAMIS functional area and MOS mapping

and other problems that require escalation to the product/program manager, the Software Engineering Center-Lee Sustainment Support System for the Single Interface to the field help desk, functions as a gateway for strategic reach back to system developers.

MOS Stir-Fry

Signal warrant officers assigned to the SASMO are currently MOS 251A. On almost every technical forum and mailing list, there is at least one grievance from a technical Signal expert on an aspect of logistics automation that just does not meet the standard. CW4 William Winkler, who is the Signal warrant officer personnel developer, recently reminded that same 251A (Information Systems Technician) community that 42% of the slots for the MOS are actually SASMO slots, created and funded by Combined Arms Support Command. SASMO technicians typically serve as the officer-in-charge, and generally serve in CW2 or CW3 slots. This means that almost half of the graduating warrants will be detailed into positions not views as career enhancing slots.

As a new 251A, entering the SASMO can seem overwhelming. Besides the demanding information technology and leadership skills required doing the job, the 251A comes into the section typically knowing little about section operations. The logistics world is a diverse and dynamic environment with its own language and culture. Learning the logistics lingo is a critical part of the steep learning curve necessary to logistics operations. Adding to the problem is an array of new systems, each having its own distinct configuration requirements. This provides a challenge to even the most talented Signal leader. However, with time, self study, and a lot of coaching and mentoring from the senior logistics staff in the support operations section, a new 251A can gain the logistics knowledge required to Signal logisticians in accomplishing their varied missions.

There are no management tools fielded with any systems that the SASMO supports. Although this may seem to be a downfall, it is actually a beneficial. The SASMO gains a lot of creative freedoms in implementing different aspects of network management, information assurance, and information management. This fosters an environment of learning and exploration, in an effort to find the best way to perform management functions with limited resources. Every MOS in the SASMO benefits from this type of freedom since there is an abundance of overlap in most systems the SASMO supports.

The systems interface with either the Combat Service Support - Very Small Aperture Terminal or Combat Service Support Automated Information Systems Interface. Regardless of MOS, Soldiers in the section must be familiar with networking basics.

One of the most significantly positive aspects of SASMO is the simplicity of the network architecture. For instance the CSS-VSAT is a nearly completely automatic Ku-band satellite terminal that provides IP network transport. It fits in four transit cases that load comfortable into

a small utility vehicle. It can be set up in about 20 minutes and even comes with voice over Internet protocol phones that can call other CSS-VSAT VoIP phones. The best part about CSS-VSAT is that it is usable by people who have no experience with satellite equipment or IP networking. Even when it breaks, CSS-SATCOM has a large contingent of support contractors who always respond within 24 hours to fix a terminal.

The CAISI is another great example of a simplified network capability. It provides local range extension for ethernet, and can be configured with a laptop and a 14-slide, screenshot-by-screenshot presentation. While these technologies may be elementary to a 251A, the miracle of these incarnations of the technology is that our 92A, 88N, 68G, 92Y, and 25B MOS Soldiers can all employ them effectively.

A SASMO technician is stretched to evolve beyond our Signal expertise. Supported Soldiers come from every MOS and functional area that the STAMIS requires, including that supply, maintenance, ammunition, medical administration, or movement. The SASMO technician is required to develop creative ways to keep those Soldiers from suffering professional atrophy as a result of being assigned to SASMO. Not only did we not know anything about the non-Signal MOS Soldiers, but often they were mid-career Soldiers. Agreements with various other shops led to finding more senior mentors from within the SPO, or just releasing them for school. An assortment of solutions added to a unique brand of professional development. This was a challenge that SASMO Soldiers met with enthusiasm.

Hope for the Future

Even with admittedly exceptional support, the logistics community makes available, the simplified systems architecture, and the broadening opportunities, SASMO still has room for improvement. There are several significant goals driving the future.

SASMO-oriented training

Often, we face a technical problem having received the same training as an operator for a system, only with a lot less experience on the system. This assumes that knowledge of the processes or information manipulation performed by the system is not necessary to fully understand the problem. Requirements documents for systems acquisition should be modified to mandate SASMO-oriented training that focuses on learning how to operate the system first, then how to remediate system-specific problems. Currently, almost no training exists that specifically teaches troubleshooting or demonstrates an engineer-level perspective of the system. These are both skill sets the SASMO has to develop on the job.

Enterprise Management at the local level
One tool missing from the STAMIS architecture is an

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enterprise management solution that can be administered at the local level. Something like a Windows Server on each CSS-VSAT put together in a brigade combat team to form a domain would provide centralized management of user accounts, operating system updates, virus definition updates, and even disaster recovery capabilities, all at the SASMO level. As it is, all user accounts are local to each computer, and all software and virus definition updates are manually completed on each computer. We know how to set this up, and we could locally procure all the necessary hardware and software, but as tightly as the STAMIS software itself is configuration/managed, it is desirable that the next generations of the systems are better integrated with each other.

Personnel

Often the SASMO does not get personnel selection priority. Our commands tended to select personnel with a focus on operations sections, leaving the SASMO lacking people with the experience needed to function as sustainment to operations. This type of staffing methodology succeeds only under the most ideal conditions and

leaves customers exposed in the event of catastrophic system failure. Operations only continue within the capacity of sustainment, and we hope future commands realize this and invest personnel resources accordingly.

SASMO Career Management

Our training experience includes the one-month resident SASMO course at Fort Lee, Va., in the case of CW2 Richards and both of us have been to New Equipment Training ("System Training" in Acquisition terminology). But the nature of SASMO makes the eight-month 251A Warrant Officer Basic Course overkill, and the one-month SASMO course lacking. We also do not know whether our next assignment will be SASMO or not. If it is, then we can continue developing in this half-logistics, half-Signal specialty. When we return to our MOS roots, then we will be far less prepared than our contemporaries who spent time in pure Signal positions.

The Medical Service Corps branch has a warrant MOS 670A or health services maintenance technician that performs a SASMO-like role for the Army Medical Department. That MOS is managed in the role for an entire career. If a 251A spends the majority of his or her career in SASMO, it is

reasonable to integrate into the Acquisition process at some point, either in technology development or system design phases (Pre-Milestone A).

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CW2 James Richards was appointed in 2006 and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science from Cornell University, as well as the CISSP certification. He started his career as a Signal Officer in 2002, serving as the G3 Automations Branch Chief for the 311th Signal Command, then as a network engineer for the 261st Signal Brigade. In 2009, he served as a WAN/LAN Technician for the Victory CAN sites in Iraq. Most recently, he was assigned as SASMO for 5th Brigade, 1st Armored Division, and is currently assigned as SASMO for 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division. 

ACRONYM QuickScan

AIT - Automatic Identification Technology
BCS3 - Battle Command Sustainment Support System
CAISI - Combat Service Support Automated Information Systems Interface
CASCOM - Combined Arms Support Command
CSSAMO - Combat Service Support Automation Management Office
FM - Field Manual
FSR Field Support Representative
IP - Internet Protocol
IT - Information Technology
LAR - Logistics Assistance Representative
MC4 - Medical Communications for Combat Casualty Care
MOS - Military Occupational Specialty
MROCS - Materiel Release Order Control System
MTS - Movement Tracking System
PBUSE - Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced

SAAS-MOD - Standard Army Ammunition System - Modernization
SAMS-E - Standard Army Maintenance System - Enhanced
SARSS1 Standard Army Retail Supply System
SASMO - Sustainment Automation Support Management Office
SATCOM - Satellite Communications
SEC-Lee - Software Engineering Center - Lee
SPO - Support Operations
STAMIS - Standard Army Management Information Systems
TC-AIMS II - Transportation Coordinator's Automated Information for Movement System II
TDY - Temporary Duty
VoIP - Voice Over Internet Protocol
VSAT - Very Small Aperture Terminal