

New detachment brings DLA closer to Okinawa customers

By Scott Woosley

A detachment from Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka, Japan, began operations April 16 to provide distribution support to military customers on the Island of Okinawa.

The detachment initially stocked more than 6,000 commonly used items for Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps units and other Department of Defense organizations located on the island.

“From a customer’s perspective, this is a great thing,” said Guy Sanchez, DDYJ’s deputy for operations. “Our materiel stocked on the island is meant to significantly reduce customer wait time for Okinawa activities, while at the same time reducing the money spent on premium transportation to get high-priority materiel to the island.”

According to Sanchez, the detachment also provides a walk-through service for customers. For example, if a customer needs a particular item quickly, and the detachment has it on hand, that customer can come to the detachment with the requisition for the item and leave with it in-hand.

The Marine Corps requested that a facility be established on Okinawa after seeing what a similar

Warehouse supervisor Ako Hirobumi, left, and Takanaga Hitoshi, right, conduct an inventory audit at the Okinawa Detachment of Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka, Japan.



Marine Cpl. Reginald Thomas, foreground, and Lance Cpl. Timothy Gray, both of 3rd Supply Battalion, Camp Foster, Okinawa, drop the sides of a truck so materiel can be unloaded at the Consolidated Issue Facility on Camp Foster. The Marines and the issue facility are customers of the Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka, Japan, detachment on Okinawa.



Norvel Burton, front, Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin, Calif., and William Ray, Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pa., update item information in the distribution and warehouse management system. Burton and Ray, both distribution process workers assigned to the Deployable Distribution Center, helped establish operations for the new detachment on Okinawa.

facility accomplished during a demonstration in Korea in 2007.

According to Lt. Col. Nick Spignesi, who commands 3rd Supply Battalion, one of the detachment's primary customers on Okinawa, it used to take more than a week for parts to arrive because the requisitions often had to be routed through a Defense Distribution Center site in California.

"This capability increases the readiness of III Marine Expeditionary Force," said Spignesi, who visited the DDC's Deployable Distribution Center during its evaluation at Osan Air Base in April 2007. "This means that if a piece of equipment is down, we can potentially have it back up and running within a day."

More than half of the items stocked by the detachment are based on Marine Corps demand forecasts. The Corps is the largest U.S. military presence on Okinawa, but the detachment will stock items to support the other services as well.

The detachment expects the number of items they stock to increase as they demonstrate how they can reduce delivery times and cost.

"It's important for us to show that we can make a difference for the customer," Sanchez added. "Once we establish that we provide them the materiel they need and that we can be flexible about getting it to them, then we can take on more items and expand our services, saving even more time and taxpayer dollars."

DDC's deployable team helped set up the facility the detachment uses. The deployable center's staff was on Okinawa for an assessment of their capabilities. They had to establish a facility for their own use, so the decision was made to use the same facility that the detachment would use and to just turn it over to the detachment's staff when the assessment was complete. As a result,

the detachment's personnel assumed a fully functional facility.

Setting up the detachment required a significant effort from the Defense Distribution Center's Information Technology team too.

Specialists from the IT section, who were part of the deployable center, set up the network, firewalls and the work stations for the detachment's work force. The IT specialists ran communications lines throughout the facility—an existing warehouse on Camp Kinser, one of the Marine Corps' many installations located around the island.

The IT section also provided experts to train the detachment staff on the use of the distribution and warehouse management system used throughout the Defense Logistics Agency.

Additionally, the IT staff ensured storage space was properly positioned and labeled and that the information in the system was accurate.

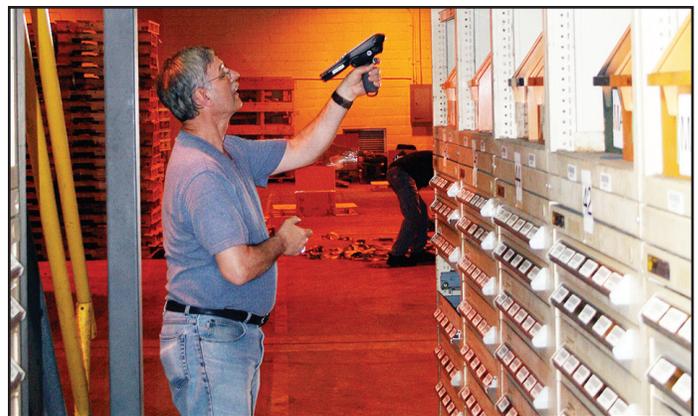
"Making sure the locations are labeled properly ensures employees can accurately store and find items," said Tom Downs Jr., one of DDC's IT specialists who deployed to Okinawa to help get the detachment up and running. "The faster we can get the stock to our customers, the easier their mission becomes."

The establishment of the detachment on Okinawa means that DDYJ now has two satellite facilities to support Department of Defense customers in the Western Pacific. DDYJ's other detachment is co-located with the Naval base at Sasebo, Japan.

"The Marine Corps provided the space for the detachment and they provided the technical expertise about how things are done on the island," said Cmdr. Paul Bourgeois, DDYJ's commander. "The detachment will make a significant, lasting benefit to not only the Marines but all the services on Okinawa."

The establishment of a detachment on Okinawa continues DLA's commitment to extend DLA services closer to its customer, the war fighter.

"The (Okinawa) detachment provides a joint solution to distribution issues on Okinawa," Spignesi added. "This is DLA continuing to grow to support customer needs."



Tom Downs, Jr., a supply systems analyst from Defense Distribution Center headquarters, scans labels to verify the quantity of items in storage bins. Downs deployed to Okinawa, Japan with the Deployable Distribution Center and helped set up the detachment in Okinawa.