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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**TITLE:** A MARINE CORPS LOGISTICIAN EXAMINES LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES  
THAT PREVENT THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF LOGISTICS SUPPORT IN THE  
AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL ARMY

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** A Marine Corps Logistician Examines Logistical Challenges that Prevent the Full Implementation of Logistics Support in the Afghanistan National Army

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**Thesis:** While logistics is one of the most difficult military functions for partner nations to master, in particular in the area of sustainment, this paper argues that proper selection and preparation of personnel is vital to mitigate the effects of corruption and patronage, and will give the Afghan National Army the quality of logistics sustainment it clearly requires.

**Discussion:** As the withdrawal of U.S combat and coalition forces continues and Afghanistan assumes full responsibility for its future security, logistics remains institutionally immature and ineffective. There are several areas that are inhibiting logistics sustainment to fully mature and preventing Afghanistan from assuming full responsibility in the future. The recruiting pool for combat forces, much less the supporting forces is minimal given the literacy rate in Afghanistan. Prior to 2012, little to no training was provided for support personnel before being assigned to their respective units. A quasi form of policies and procedures has been in place within the Afghan logistics community since the Soviet invasion; this system remains corrupt and inefficient for a developing ANA. Personal and collective experiences along with perspectives from Afghans show that there are severe deficiencies within the ANA logistics sustainment system that will need continued focus. Developing a sufficient logistics capability has had a low priority relative to the build-up of combat forces in Afghanistan. Afghan soldiers continue to lack proficiency in the model logistics sustainment systems developed by U.S. and coalition forces. This is partially due to the dependence upon the U.S to push equipment and supplies to supported units; this mindset is slowly diminishing with continued advising. The operational link between tactical logistics and strategic level support lacks communication and is rife with corruption. The Afghan logistics sustainment system is designed to succeed; friendships and hoarding are two primary reasons for the failure of this current system. Although Afghan forces have been able to conduct and sustain limited combat operations with little to no support from U.S. and coalition forces, it remains a challenge for ANSF to sustain long-term operations.

**Conclusion:** For many reasons that are out of the control of U.S and coalition forces, the Afghan logistics sustainment system does not operate effectively or efficiently. A long-term sustainment plan that begins at the Ministry of Defense (MOD) needs to not only be codified into doctrine and reinforced at the operational and tactical level, but also the Afghan MOD needs to take a systematic approach to build logistics and support units that have the capability and capacity to support combat operations. The MOD must concentrate its efforts on building the 18,900 logistics and support personnel required to achieve sustained combat effectiveness while the U.S. and coalition forces provide advisors and trainers to formerly develop these forces. Senior government logisticians must deal with plans and policies while senior military logisticians must focus on procedures and execution. All of the tools are in place in order for Afghanistan to take the lead responsibility for its security in the future; what they choose to do with it is up to them.

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## Preface

This paper will address the effectiveness of coalition forces' ability to implement an enduring logistics system for the Afghan National Army (ANA). Specifically, it examines challenges that United States (U. S.) and coalition forces confronted while training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces over the last five years. There are conflicting thoughts on whether the U.S. has been successful with implementing a long-term, functioning logistics system in foreign militaries post-conflict. There is a disparity among political leaders, senior military leaders, and personnel training and attempting to implement logistics in foreign units. As the level of direct involvement decreases, the perception of success increases.

I researched and authored this paper in order to gain a better understanding as to the difficulties that the U. S. and coalition forces have faced while training, assisting, and advising Afghan forces. I believe this paper is relevant to logisticians serving in the U.S. military today and will minimize challenges during future post-war nation building. Logisticians from all services will learn from successes, challenges, and mistakes made by U. S. and coalition forces during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM regarding realistic timelines and objectives. In the paper, I attempt to argue that U.S. and coalition forces did not prepare for the lack of discipline, corruption, and illiteracy of the ANA before training their logistics personnel.

Many well-written articles from senior military logisticians are used to frame the problem and document the challenges they faced during their time in Afghanistan. Furthermore, I referenced assessments that the U.S. Department of Defense conducted; these assessments enabled me to understand the connection between political and military leaders in regards to objectives. Also, I was able to draw on my own experiences from Afghanistan while training an ANA logistics unit in all functions of logistics.

*Because of my wartime experience, I am insistent on the point that logistics know-how must be maintained, that logistics is second to nothing in importance in warfare, that logistic training must be widespread and thorough..."*

-VADM Robert B. Carney, USN

## Introduction

One must understand the history and culture of Afghanistan even before the question is asked: Why are they not implementing the tactics, techniques, and procedures being taught by coalition forces? Afghanistan is a country that was at war twenty-five years before the United States arrived in 2001. Some of the high ranking officers in the Afghan National Army (ANA) are very educated, while many junior officers and enlisted members are not. The majority of the ANA is built from illiterate personnel that do not have the intelligence or training on modern equipment aside from cellular phones. The illiteracy that runs rampant throughout the ANA does not make those soldiers ineffective in conducting combat operations, but makes it very difficult for those soldiers in support positions, in particular, logistics, to maintain the required support needed for soldiers to conduct those operations effectively.

This paper will discuss problems that Afghanistan faces with regards to logistics sustainment from the governmental level to the tactical level of war. Problems identified in this paper will be presented from personal experiences, collective experiences, and an Afghan perspective. Corruption, patronage, and illiteracy are rampant in Afghan culture and prevent Afghan Security Forces from successful, long-term sustainment. When selecting and preparing logistics professionals to train and advise, it is vital that U.S. and coalition forces thoroughly screen and rigorously train personnel in order to give the ANA the quality logistics sustainment they clearly require.

The Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General has concluded as of December 2014, the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) have proven their ability to conduct combat operations. The problem that has held the ANSF is their ability to sustain these combat operations and remain effective in supporting combat troops. Poor and incomplete logistics policies are a major factor in the ANSF's ability to provide effective logistics support to its troops at all levels. Moreover, military leaders have failed to properly project and plan for logistics support that allows its troops to conduct combat operations to their full potential. This failure in planning has led to a degraded force that carries out sustained operations. The logistics issues are deficient at all levels, from conducting basic repairs to equipment to the disposal of equipment that is beyond repair.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Training Mission-Afghanistan in November 2009 directed that NATO forces provide training to the ANA and Afghanistan Air Force (AAF). At the onset this was a fairly simple mission: train and advise leaders of the ANA and AAF in order to enable them to sustain themselves upon the departure of coalition forces. What was not taken into account was the culture of the personnel being trained. Coalition forces quickly learned that the ANSF are, for the most part, illiterate and corrupt. Furthermore, the leadership style of the ANSF is a top-down, leader centric organization where each level of command is informed when making decisions. The United States military calls this micro-management, when decisions are not made unless they are approved, reviewed, and signed off on. There is no centralized command and decentralized control within the ANSF; it is centralized command and control. This style of leadership makes it difficult to get missions accomplished. One can attribute this to the corruption that is inherent within the ANSF; where

in the United States there is trust among soldiers, there is a high level of distrust within the ANSF.

Logistics is one of the most difficult functions for partner nations to master, but the U. S. finds sustainment as one of the most important. A combat unit is only as good as the support it receives; without proper sustainment a combat unit becomes quickly ineffective. Lessons from Afghanistan show that logistics systems within this society woefully lack discipline and commitment and are rife with corruption and patronage. This is not just about changing a system; it is about changing a culture, it is about changing a cultural norm. How do we train advisors to not only change a system, but also to change attitudes and cultures?

### Background

Prior to U.S. and coalition forces arriving in Afghanistan the ANA did not provide formal training for those serving in support related jobs, such as human resources, logistics, and finance. Combat service support Kandaks (equivalent to an Army battalion) are manned with personnel that are barely able to count rifles, much less large inventory stockages; this makes it difficult for them to provide critical support to combat units. Afghanistan's doctrine is built from a Soviet based doctrine; this doctrine is very strict and does not allow for staff officers to have input to a commander's decision.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet doctrine the Afghans follow only allows for staff officers to execute what is tasked by commanders. This type of doctrine stifles the staff officers' ability to gain "buy in" on the orders that are given; thus, execution in assigned tasks is not effective.

The Afghan MOD has had little oversight on logistics execution within its country. The MOD has historically had trouble with planning, programming, and successfully expending its budget in order to support logistical requirements. The MOD's ability to provide continuous and close oversight in logistics sustainment makes it difficult to allow the system to be independent

and sustainable. There is a wide gap between the ANSF's operational support needs and the government's ability to meet those needs. The MOD is not involved in providing for and supporting a system that enables its combat forces to remain effective in the future.

Since the involvement of U.S. and coalition forces in training and advising roles, the focus has been on combat forces and their ability to face the Taliban insurgency. Furthermore, the Afghan's MOD is concerned with the correct amount of combat forces to face this threat, giving a relatively low priority to the building of supporting forces. This lack of concern for supporting units quickly made the combat forces ineffective. It was not until 2010 that the MOD realized the importance of supporting units and the instrumental role they play in future long-term success. The shift of U.S. and coalition forces from training combat forces to logistical training and advisors was the focus of future Afghan development.

#### Pre-U.S./Coalition Force Logistics System

There are two types of logistics replenishment systems that the U.S. uses to support its troops both in garrison and combat environments: push and pull, or a hybrid of the two. The push logistics system uses a report as the requesting document or anticipates demand based on consumption rates.<sup>2</sup> This type of system is top down, centrally controlled; the downfall to this type of system is too much or not enough supplies are distributed to the supported unit. The other type of system is pull logistics; in this type of system it requires the supported unit to submit a support request. This system provides only what the supported unit requests; this type of system is less responsive, but more efficient than the push system.<sup>3</sup>

The ANA has historically been a push type of logistics replenishment system, which is in line with its culture of inherent distrust amongst its personnel. Any supported unit did not have to justify what it needed; it was just given to the unit based off of its standard consumption rate.

This type of system encompassed all aspects of logistics including fuel, water, and food. The problem with this is that the supported units were not receiving the correct amount of logistics they needed based off of actual consumption rates, therefore leaving units short on many supplies. Logisticians are not trusted to establish or adjust allocations at anything but the highest level. This push logistics system does not support a growing ANSF to combat the insurgency occurring in Afghanistan while coalition troops are present, nor is it capable of supporting a country that needs to operate on its own without coalition forces present.

Afghan National Army units and supply depots are used to getting supplies pushed to them from coalition forces, therefore, seeing no need to forecast logistics requirements. The MOD has a process in place to requisition all types of repair parts, the form MOD 14. This form allows ANA to request repair through its chain of command based on actual consumption rates, not projected or calculated rates. There are many problems with utilizing the form MOD 14 from personnel capabilities to prioritization. If units have logistics personnel capable of filling out and submitting the form MOD 14, the chances of it working its way through the system in a timely manner are unlikely. A supporting unit's first priority is to fulfill the request; if unable to fulfill the request it must endorse the request and submit to the next level. The flaw in this process is that it is based off of a first come first served basis, not operational necessity. Furthermore, personalities play a huge role in the fulfillment of these requests; if the requester is friends or family with the providing unit's fulfiller then the request will become a priority. This process sounds very similar to the U.S. system, but corruption makes it very different.

A foreign concept for the ANA at any supporting unit is the reconciliation and feedback given to the supported units. Whether a request is filled or not, there is no time line or required delivery date (RDD) associated with it, even if the unit has specified a delivery date. These

issues along with others surrounding the form MOD 14 gives the impression that it is unreliable and unresponsive, when in fact it works smoothly if done correctly. Even with the shortfall of equipment that the Afghan supply system has, improved communication from the strategic down to the tactical level will lend credence to the system.

The Afghan supply system lacks many of the required materials to sustain its forces; this shortage is primarily in repair components required for vehicle maintenance.<sup>4</sup> The Afghan MOD has lacked the ability to forecast these critical repair parts, even though it has available funding to procure them. Afghanistan must rely heavily on international vendors to procure items; these items are available within the international community. Inventory management is severely lacking for two reasons: the literacy required to conduct the inventory and the historical absence of any record keeping. Even when parts are procured in a timely manner and properly accounted for, distribution remains an issue due to corruption and inability to deliver on time. Furthermore, many of the repair parts needed for exchange on equipment are not accomplished due to lack of training of maintenance personnel. CNA predicts this to be an issue until 2018.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to 2008, the Afghan national logistics infrastructure was not fully capable of sustaining the ANSF below the operational level effectively. The structure of the logistics sustainment system is developed in a logical way and is designed to support all commands at the national, regional, and tactical levels. Although the sustainment system in place was able to support commands to an extent, the command and control system lacked integration between supporting and supported units. This lack of communication makes it very difficult to coordinate and execute logistics tasks.<sup>6</sup> Improper coordination, lack of responsiveness, and disregard of operational priorities adversely affects all units using the sustainment system. The paper-based requisition system that is in place only made the communications more difficult and even less

responsive to the combat unit's needs. A computer based system will be useless without proper training; moreover, the illiteracy among the ANSF makes it almost impossible to implement this type of system.

#### Post-U.S./Coalition Force Logistics System

The current MOD requisition process in place for all military units is in line with the western style process. The MOD has established an Army Logistics Command that has the overall responsibility to support ANA units. At the strategic level, the logistics command has three national logistics depots directly under its charge. These three supply depots are in direct support to six operational level Regional Logistics Support Commands (RLSC). These geographically spread RLSCs are responsible for the support of all tactical military units throughout Afghanistan. The primary function of the RLSC is to provide a centralized management point for distribution of materials. The key to this command structure is the RLSC and its ability to cross-level requirements from the tactical level and requisition those requirements from the strategic level. Establishing the last RLSC in July 2012 allowed the full transition of operational logistics from the command and control of Corps commanders to these various centers.

The breakdown in cross-leveling these requirements and properly filling requirements is a cultural set-back. RLSCs usually have supplies on hand to fulfill requests, but will hoard supplies until national depots deliver items. Hoarding supplies is common throughout the Afghan supply system.<sup>7</sup> The RLSCs do not take into consideration the operational necessity of the requests they receive. This lagging logistics system severely inhibits progression for organizations to currently operate with coalition forces present and will prevent organizations from operating independently in the foreseeable future. Logistics development in the MOD has

been secondary to the development of combat forces; the concept of support and sustainment must be at the forefront if Afghanistan is to take the lead security responsibility in its own defense.

The Afghan National Army in-transit visibility systems are in place to track equipment at the national level. The development of the Core Information Management System (CORE-IMS) in 2006 facilitated the tracking of items, while the National Asset Visibility (NAV) system has been in place since 2001 to track by unit transactions of vehicles, munitions, and communications equipment.<sup>8</sup> These systems are able to track inventory at the national level, but do not provide a tracking mechanism from the national level to the end-user. Training with the ANA has been provided by the U.S. on tracking of equipment from issue to disposal, but challenges lie ahead with the increase of equipment units are receiving. Further refinement in asset visibility will improve the efficiency that is lacking in the logistics system.

#### Personal Experience

During my seven-month deployment to Helmand Province, Afghanistan May – December 2010, I served as the Logistics Officer for a Marine Infantry Battalion; 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, 3d Marine Division. One of my primary responsibilities was to provide logistics training and assistance to the 1<sup>st</sup> Kandak, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 215<sup>th</sup> Corps (1-1-215) Logistics Officer and his logistics team. The 1-1-215 was a Kandak level logistics team that was responsible for providing logistics support to four separate subordinate units throughout the Helmand Province. My task was to ensure the proper training of the 1-1-215 in all aspects of tactical level logistics from vehicle repair and recovery, providing fuel, food, water, and convoy support.

The 1-1-215 headquarters logistics section was fully manned per its Tashkil, the Afghan version of the United States Marine Corps' table of organization (T/O); they had the requisite

personnel to conduct all mission essential tasks assigned. The 1-1-215 logistics officer, Major Hamid, started out as a Lieutenant in the ANA as an infantryman, with no logistics experience in distributing supplies; he worked his way up to the rank of Major assigned to support battalion sized units as a logistician. Major Hamid found it very difficult to perform his assigned duties without assistance from the Marines. Major Hamid's level of education in supporting higher level operations was very limited and not commensurate with his rank and position. Major Hamid never attended any formal training throughout his career designed to prepare him for his current billet. Furthermore, Major Hamid never received leadership training in order to make him an effective leader within his logistics section. This lack of both education in leadership and formal education hinders him from effectively supporting his subordinate units.

The 1-1-215 relied very heavily on support that my battalion and its supporting units could provide. Shortly after arriving in Afghanistan my team and I had to assess the state of the 1-1-215 and devise a plan that was in line with not only the goals of our Battalion Commander, but also the goals of the brigade commander. The assessment consisted of partnering Marines with our brigade counterpart, observing them for three weeks. During this time we insisted they conduct various missions to support their subordinate units. These missions included the resupply of fuel, food, and water; furthermore, it was a foreign concept for the logistics officer to visit his subordinate logistics soldiers for no other reason than to assess their statuses. During our assessment it was concluded that the logistics team from the brigade understood its mission, but was not capable of accomplishing it without support from the U.S. The brigade's non-mission capable status needed to be overcome before my battalion left Afghanistan in December 2010. With a very difficult road ahead, my team and I understood what we needed to do. Without building rapport with the brigade's logistics team our mission was sure to fail; we spent

many nights becoming familiar with the soldiers while analyzing the strengths and weaknesses among their team.

My team and I identified tasks that the ANA was least deficient in and began to train and advise them to a level of competence in order to build confidence; many tasks were performed concurrently. The task which required the least amount of training was ammunition categorization and tracking; I assigned a Corporal to complete this task. By June 15, 2010, after approximately one month in country the ANA was able to categorize and account for its ammunition making the brigade mission capable in this area; this can be contributed to the ANA soldiers' capability within the ANA ammunition section. This level of effort was not common by other ANA soldiers within the brigade, making it difficult to train. As the seven month deployment continued my team was only able to improve the ANA logistics section to mission capable in ammunition, vehicle recovery capabilities, and repair parts tracking. Other areas of food, water, and fuel distribution remained non-mission capable, partially due to the brigade's logistics section's ability to forecast requirements coupled with the level of distrust among their supported units. When any of these items were requested, they were scrutinized by each member of the ANA logistics section.

It was challenging for the ANA to recognize that logistics was a key driver in attaining combat readiness. First Lieutenant Elan Greenberg served as my Assistant Logistics Officer during our deployment. As then, First Lieutenant Greenberg states: "The ANSF did not understand the value of 'push' logistics vs. 'pull' logistics. They would run a supply yard and allow individual positions to come and take what they needed themselves. They did not anticipate supply shortfalls or identify reorder points. They did not push supplies to their forces."<sup>9</sup> Many of the issues associated with the 1-1-215 were due to its recent activation, for

many members of the ANA logistics team were new to their supporting roles. The 1-1-215 was officially activated in April 2010; it became the newest Corps within the ANA.<sup>10</sup>

### Collective Experience

At the operational level, ANA personnel have had difficulties independently acquiring and distributing materials to sustain their combat forces. Poor logistical processes and doctrine coupled with illiteracy within the ANA have prevented the acquisition and distribution process from formerly being implemented. Coalition forces have worked tirelessly to train and advise personnel at the operational level on proper procedures that will prove to be successful if followed. The ANA currently has a paper-based system in place to request any type of logistics support; this concept is foreign to U. S. forces, which have computer based systems. Training and advisor teams are finding it difficult to implement a logistics system that is predictable and responsive. Colonel John Ferrari, Deputy Commander for Programs NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan states: "Unless you were in back in 1985, you're not going to recognize it,"; "But it's not about us, because we're going to leave. It's about learning their rules and regulations and putting in a system they want and they can keep."<sup>11</sup> Although not perfect, having a semi-workable logistics system in place provides advisor teams a foundation from which to build.

Coalition training and advisor teams have focused on establishing a national logistics system that will sustain the force. The establishment of this system is designed to be a building block that the ANA logistics units can mirror in order to provide timeliness and effective support. The main focus of the training teams is to ensure that the right leadership is in place from the positions of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and above. Although there has been a push to find the right personnel to manage logistics systems, equipment needs to remain very

basic. This process is a step approach; introducing modern equipment and technology into the system will further complicate personnel given their education and literacy level.

At first the focus was on training, equipping, and fielding the ANSF with the requisite number of personnel to meet the immediate needs of combating the Taliban insurgency. Training and advisor teams soon realized that this approach, although important and needed, would not remain effective until logistics were coordinated at all levels. Training, equipping, and providing personnel to the forces were not enough to sustain the ANSF long-term, but were essential to establishing some form of a foundation to work from. Logistics training and advisor teams are just as important, if not more important to building a force that had the ability to ensure security within Afghanistan.

The original logistics system U.S. and coalition forces are implementing is mirrored from the way the U.S. supports its combat forces regardless of location: a distribution-based logistics system. The issue with building a logistics system that mirrors or is close to how the U.S. conducts logistics is the amount of personnel trained and devoted to executing the system. In 2013, the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) submitted a report to Congress assessing the ANSF, the report concluded that current logistics and support force level is 37,200 personnel, but calculated to increase to 56,100 through calendar year 2018.<sup>12</sup> This 18,900 increase in trained logistics and support personnel is the biggest increase to the ANSF, 12,400 more than any other unit within the ANSF. This calculation is the target number of personnel to provide the necessary logistics sustainment across the ANA specifically. The report submitted by the CNA concluded that “the ANA needs fewer combat battalions, but substantially more logistics and support forces in order to sustain combat operations.”<sup>13</sup>

In order for the ANA to be successful in proving logistics sustainment there needs to be enough logistics support personnel in relation to combat units. Historically the U.S. Army dedicates 36 percent of its forces to logistics support Military Occupational Specialties (MOS); this ratio is also known as tooth-to-tail. Currently the ANA is structured at only 26 percent of its Army to perform logistics support roles.<sup>14</sup> This percentage has proven to be successful in the U.S. and is recommended in order for long-term success of the ANA. The ANA's low percentage of logistics support forces relative to combat forces can be partially attributed to an immature logistics system that was an afterthought when increasing ANA force structure. U.S. and coalition forces must prove to the ANSF that change to its logistics system is required to be successful; proving this is an upward battle.

#### Afghanistan Perspective

During the initial stages of U.S. and coalition forces logistics training and advising of the ANSF, reluctance ran rampant throughout the tactical, operational, and strategic level. The cultural norm was already in place and working "well enough" to support its combat units. This false sense of security is built on current operations, not looking into the future of the security in Afghanistan and missions they will be required to sustain. A senior advisor for the ANA, Lieutenant Colonel Steven Valeski, conducted a handover with the former senior advisor discussing the way forward for the ANA; he was surprised to see the lack of "buy-in" from senior ANA leaders. The ANA's General Staff/Chief of Logistics stated: "Okay, we will do what the coalition wants, but when you leave, we are going back to the way we used to do it."<sup>15</sup> This message was clearly communicated to U.S logistics personnel and echoed thoughts of many logisticians within the ANA.

Though the ANA did not believe it needed a new means of conducting logistics sustainment operations, the change was inevitable. The sooner that ANA soldiers at all levels realized that their logistics system was going to need to be revised the easier the transition would become. The ANA leadership, to an extent, would not necessarily need the U.S. logistics system to be effective, but they did need a better system. What type of logistics sustainment would be right for the ANA? The system that the U.S. and coalition forces must develop must take into consideration the capabilities of the Afghans. The ANA leadership understood the obstacles in front of them, such as illiteracy, corruption, and the lack of fundamentals in technology. Overcoming illiteracy and educating soldiers in technology are obstacles that are easier to overcome than corruption.

Literacy training is a foundation for any country's military and police forces. In November 2010, Afghanistan implemented literacy training at the national level; in 2011 compulsory literacy training was developed for both the ANA and ANP. This effort was strongly supported by and mainly implemented by the NATO Mission-Afghanistan. Recruits are required to take a placement test; nine out of ten failed due to illiteracy and innumeracy. The training center's goal is to bring all recruits to a functional literacy level three as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) standard. The UNESCO standard is defined as "being able to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute, and use printed written materials associated with varying contexts."<sup>16</sup>

The ANA has gone one step further in ensuring its NCOs and those soldiers slated to serve in critical career fields have pre-literacy training prior to being assigned permanently to a unit. In 2012, the ANA established the Darulaman Literacy Center in Kabul, Afghanistan in order to ensure that soldiers are prepared for these critical careers. The center is able to house up

to 800 soldiers at any one time, graduating approximately 200 a week.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, train the trainer programs have been established to ensure that the ANA will be capable of training its own personnel once U.S. and coalition forces leave Afghanistan. Literacy in Afghanistan is being addressed vigorously by the MOD, but corruption remains an issue that is more difficult to deal with.

Corruption continues to be an issue that the Afghan government continues to address, but within Afghanistan it seems to be a social practice. U.S. and coalition involvement in Afghanistan has reduced corruption over time by exposing overt instances that impede professional practices. Bribery is the most accepted form of corruption within the Afghan government; sixty-eight percent of Afghan citizens accept forms of bribery as a “top-up” to a low salary.<sup>18</sup> This form of corruption affects organizations within the ANSF by undermining the process that is designed on operational necessity. Bribery overcomes operational priorities of units, leaving those most in need lower in priority when bribery is not present. In order for the logistics sustainment system to work properly, bribery must be eliminated.

Afghanistan as a country poses a greater problem to logistics sustainment; road networks and lines of communication are not developed, making it difficult to provide logistics to supported units. Many of the roads throughout the country are mere dirt roads that are flanked by levies on each side. Although these road networks are passable, they quickly become impassable during adverse weather conditions. Adverse weather does not only affect combat operations but it also creates a longer operational pause for combat troops who require resupply. The MOD understands issues related to the road networks, but is unwilling to budget for and allocate funds to improve them. It would be ideal to have a series of road networks throughout the country that ties cities with military units enabling the movement of logistical support. The

Taliban insurgency's willingness to destroy road networks will impede any efforts the MOD conducts to repair and improve them.

To overcome both adverse weather conditions on the current road networks and the reluctance of the MOD to build new ones, the ANA has conducted air-delivery resupply missions throughout the country. The biggest issue in conducting air-delivery missions is they are conducted with contracted air support. The AAF is incapable of providing logistical support via air assets.<sup>19</sup> This contracted air-delivery system is currently effective with U.S. and coalition forces present; most of these deliveries are not coordinated by ANSF. These air-deliveries are expensive and require a significant amount of coordination to execute properly; unlike traditional ground resupply, air-delivery has a greater margin of error. The MOD does not have the funding available to continue air-delivery after the departure of U.S. and coalition forces. It is crucial for U.S. and coalition forces to provide contracting advisors that will assist the Afghan government to sustain some form of air-delivery support, working within a limited budget.

#### ANA Current Logistics Capability

As the transition continues for the ANSF to take the lead responsibility for its own security it becomes apparent that there are shortfalls to overcome. As of November 2013, only nineteen brigades were capable of sustaining themselves for forty-eight hours, out of those only six were able to sustain themselves for ninety-six hours. The inability to support for longer than these times is due to lack of logistics personnel to man support billets and the ability for those personnel to forecast logistics requirements.<sup>20</sup> As the ANA has taken the lead in many tactical level operations, there has been a notable increase in its ability to support operations. Coalition forces have allowed ANA support personnel to plan and coordinate independently during operations with little input. These operations have not always been successful, but lessons

learned and feedback from coalition forces prove to increase proficiency in future operations. With each failure of a combat operation due to lack of a supporting unit's ability to properly provide required materials, supporting units corrected deficiencies to improve support. This self-recognition of failure is the best approach in developing supporting relationships and roles.

Afghanistan National Security Forces have had pockets of success conducting large scale joint operations. During August of 2013, Operation SEMOURGH was conducted, a multi-week operation that included all components of the ANSF from the MOI and MOD. The objectives of this operation were to clear a valley of insurgents and secure a district center so humanitarian supplies and voter registration materials could be delivered.<sup>21</sup> The Afghans were able to plan and lead the operation while successfully supporting the operation with their own logistics and supply chains. Although this operation was a success, the U.S. Army's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was required to support the ANSF with air-delivery missions facilitating the retrograde of personnel and equipment.

### Recommendations

As the U.S. and coalition forces continue to withdraw forces from Afghanistan, reducing the number of combat forces will have less impact than reducing the amount of logistics support advisors. The MOD must take a systematic approach in building the correct number of critical support units with well trained and educated personnel. As the ANSF continues to increase in size, the MOD must take into consideration increasing critical support billets to ensure a well-balanced supported/supporting relationship. The MOD must be capable of conducting its own planning, budgeting, management, and oversight of sustainment functions for the ANSF.

Civilian and military experts alike will be required to maintain a training and advising presence within the MOD to codify plans, policies, and procedures that will enable success long

after the departure of U.S. and coalition forces. In 2013, CNA concluded in its report to Congress that “the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the MOD face considerable set of challenges, including inadequate long-range planning; a lack of staff development and training; poor logistics; a lack of a professional civil service; pervasive corruption; inadequate budget, accounting, and cost-control systems; and low levels of budget execution.”<sup>22</sup> CNA is confident that these challenges will remain well beyond the departure of U.S. and coalition forces.

The ability for the MOI and MOD to build a literate force must be the focus while growing the ANSF; as of August 2013, 48,854 personnel in the ANSF were enrolled in some level of literacy training.<sup>23</sup> Continuing to build a literate force will only strengthen the future of Afghanistan’s success. According to a Central Intelligence (CIA) report conducted in June 2014 only 43.1 percent of males over the age of fifteen can read and write.<sup>24</sup> In the long-term for Afghanistan as a whole, improving literacy in the ANSF will not only make it a professional force, but it will also contribute to Afghanistan’s overall community development and promote positive change within the country.

Along with increasing the ANSF and its capacity to provide security and perform support functions, developing literacy is important. The ANA must have the ability to train those that are literate on new equipment in order to sustain its force. One of the issues with training those with the ability to repair basic or specialized equipment is retaining them after they have been trained. Many soldiers in the ANA that are trained on repairing equipment leave the Army and transfer into the civilian population using the skills they learned. Many open up repair businesses earning more money than serving in the Army.<sup>25</sup>

Building a logistical support and sustainment system within Afghanistan that can sustain the MOD long-term will continue to be a challenge. U.S. and coalition forces have been

conducting logistics training and advising for the last seven years with regards to logistics from the tactical to the strategic level. Reluctance of the personnel within the ANSF along with cultural norms has delayed the acceptance of new logistics systems. Known distrust and corruption among ANSF and MOD personnel make implementing a western style logistics system based off of trust and desire to do the right thing difficult. U.S. and coalition forces must implement a system that is right for Afghanistan, not what is right for the U.S. and the coalition. Understanding that the culture in Afghanistan is unlike the western style, culture needs to be the guide to implementing a new logistics system. The Afghans do not take quick action on tasks or requests; they allow time to take its course and if that means longer timelines, then that is what they adhere to. The U.S. and coalition forces need to not convince them that a solution is correct, but guide and mentor them to an appropriate solution for them.

Once a fully capable logistics sustainment system is implemented, corruption needs to be eliminated for it to work properly. Bribery and other forms of corruption such as friendships and family ties will only impede full implementation of any system introduced. The U.S. must understand that corruption is socially acceptable and take measures to overcome it. The only way to prove that corruption prevents proper system functionality is to demonstrate to the Afghans the system without it. When the Afghans are able to relate a combat unit's success directly to a system without corruption, overcoming corruption will be achievable.

U.S. and coalition forces must select advisor teams that can provide sound guidance and mentorship to the Afghans at all levels. Advisor training for individuals and teams deployed to Afghanistan must continue to conduct cross-cultural training in order to understand the environment. The CNA assessment concluded in 2014 that "Selecting the right advisors is critical. In addition to professional expertise, advisors need to bring with them personal qualities

such as maturity; empathy for counterparts; and a willingness to work in demanding and sometimes dangerous environments. Such attributes cannot be taught—they must be identified beforehand within the pool of potential advisors.”<sup>26</sup> The focus of advising the Afghans needs to concentrate on their areas of friction, the operational and strategic levels. Concentration at these levels will be the most effective for long-term success.

### Conclusion

Many U.S. government and military officials have asked if Afghanistan will be capable of taking responsibility for its own security after the withdrawal of coalition forces. Almost every report to Congress from military leaders to independent organizations that have examined the progress in transitioning Afghanistan to an independent state has concluded that this is unlikely. The Achilles heel of the ANSF continues to be in the arena of long-term logistical support and sustainment. In order for the MOD to ensure its military is able to execute combat and support missions it needs to review, revise if necessary, and codify its plans, programs, and policies into doctrine.

Reports have proven that given the state of the ANA, less combat units are required, but substantially more supporting units are needed.<sup>27</sup> Support advisors at all levels will be required to continue to mentor and train personnel in all aspects of support careers to include intelligence, logistics, and financial management. The operational tempo of the ANA will only increase with the departure of U.S. and coalition forces; without the presence of these forces the ANA must cover a larger area to combat the Taliban insurgency. Furthermore, like the U.S. military, the ANA is not only growing in personnel size, but also vehicles being acquired by the MOD are larger and more technologically advanced than those in the past. This poses a serious problem to

an already deficient logistics capability; Afghan soldiers must now deliver greater amounts of fuel more frequently to sustain combat operations.

Unimproved road networks will continue to pose challenges for combat service support units. No matter what type of logistics replenishment system is implemented and maintained in Afghanistan, it will be seriously limited due to the conditions of the road networks. In order for support operations to be successful the Afghan government must invest time and money to either repair and build road networks or an internal air-delivery capability to sustain its forces. Enhancing the road networks throughout Afghanistan invites corruption among local tribes and villages. The Taliban have demonstrated in the past they have the ability to convince the local population to provide money in order for the roads to not be destroyed.<sup>28</sup>

Selecting the correct advisors at this point in Afghanistan is crucial to both the success of Afghanistan and U.S. national interests. The role of the advisor is transitioning from explaining and demonstrating how to accomplish tasks to supervising and providing balanced feedback on tasks performed. The focus of advisors must be on building institutional capacities and capabilities within the Afghan MOD. Afghanistan will remain institutionally immature and ineffective if advisor teams are not completely committed to transitioning the security responsibility solely to the Afghans. In order to mature the Afghan MOD as a whole, it will take more than military advisors. The U.S. government needs to remain committed in developing Afghan strategic plans, policies, and procedures codifying them into doctrine. Government specialist from the Defense logistics Agency (DLA) that are thoroughly intimate with implementing plans and policies must be the focus for the U.S. over the next few years. Procedures in executing those plans and policies needs to be the executed by senior military logisticians.

Afghanistan will continue to be an enduring mission for years to come for the international community. For the foreseeable future the Afghan government will require support in the areas of logistics sustainment, intelligence, and planning. The active Taliban insurgency coupled with the literacy rate in Afghanistan, independence may never occur. Lessons from Afghanistan show that logistics systems within this society woefully lack discipline and commitment and are rife with corruption and patronage. This is not just about changing a system; it is about changing a culture, it is about changing a cultural norm. Advisors selected to train personnel from host nation countries need to be thoroughly vetted and committed to the long-term success of the nation they are providing their services to.

The recommendations presented in this paper, if followed, will enable Afghanistan to maintain an effective, long-term logistics sustainment system that will reduce the presence and involvement of U.S. and coalition forces. Focusing on building a literate force coupled with formal education and training for support personnel will enhance a functional logistics sustainment system, creating a more capable and dependable force. By selecting and preparing the correct civilian and military logistics professionals as trainers and advisors Afghanistan will quickly advance towards logistical independence. Furthermore, it needs to be said that no matter what U.S and coalition forces do to improve logistics sustainment in Afghanistan, alleviating corruption, patronage, and illiteracy may be impossible, but must be attempted.

Appendix A: Summary of calculated ANSF Force Levels in the 2015 to 2018 Timeframe

Table 2. Summary of calculated ANSF force levels in the 2015 to 2018 timeframe

Force type	Current force level	Calculated force level	Change
Afghan Uniformed Police and Afghan Anti-Crime Police	97,500	104,000	6,500
Afghan Local Police	30,000	29,100	(900)
Afghan Customs and Border Police	23,900	27,300	3,400
Afghan National Civil Order Police	14,600	0	(14,600)
ANP support (logistics and medical)	3,200	3,200	0
ANA infantry battalions	70,100	60,300	(9,800)
ANA combat support battalions	11,500	10,000	(1,500)
ANA national swing force (Mobile Strike Force)	4,500	4,500	0
ANA headquarters (brigade and above)	22,500	25,000	2,500
ANA logistics and support	37,200	56,100	18,900
ANA Special Operations Forces	11,900	11,900	0
Afghan Air Force and Special Mission Wing	7,800	7,700	(100)
Recruits and students (ANA and ANP)	19,300	18,700	(600)
Recruiting and training staff (ANA and ANP)	15,600	15,600	0
Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior staff	12,400	0	(12,400)
<b>Total forces</b>	<b>382,000</b>	<b>373,400</b>	<b>(8,600)</b>

<sup>8</sup> This includes the 352,000 personnel approved in the ANSF Plan of Record and an additional 30,000 Afghan Local Police. By comparison, our figures include a base force of 344,300 plus 29,100 Afghan Local Police (for a total of 373,400 ANSF).

Appendix B: Afghan National Army Regional Logistics Capabilities

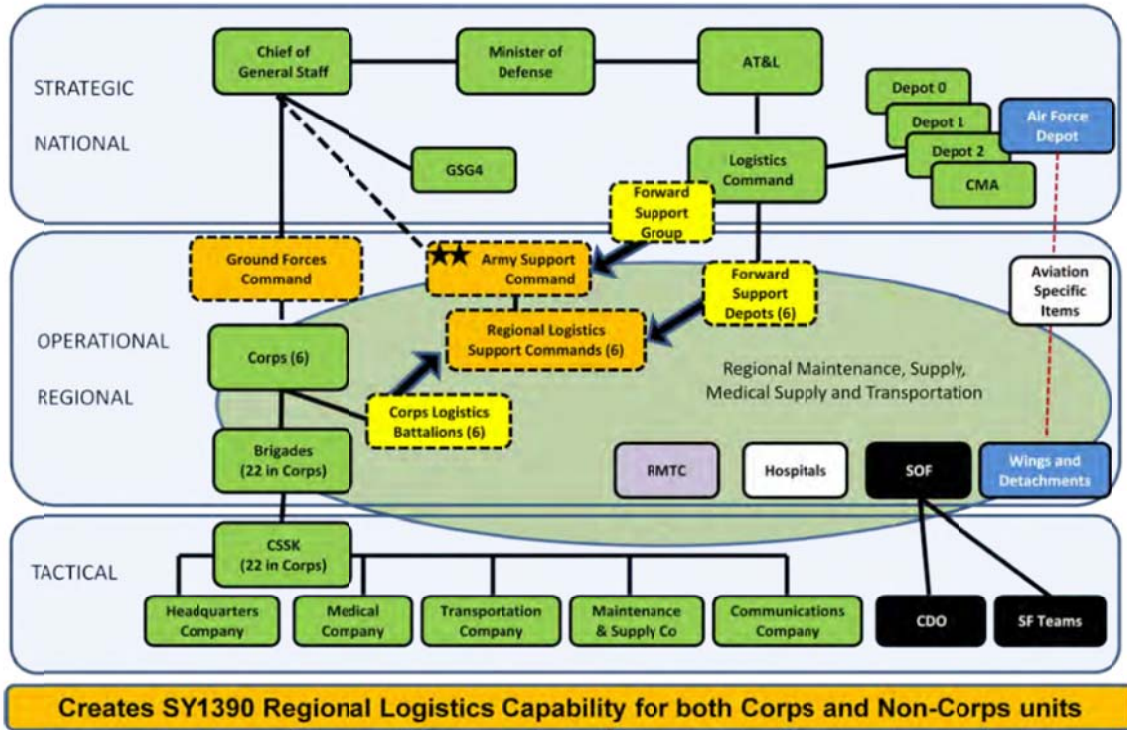
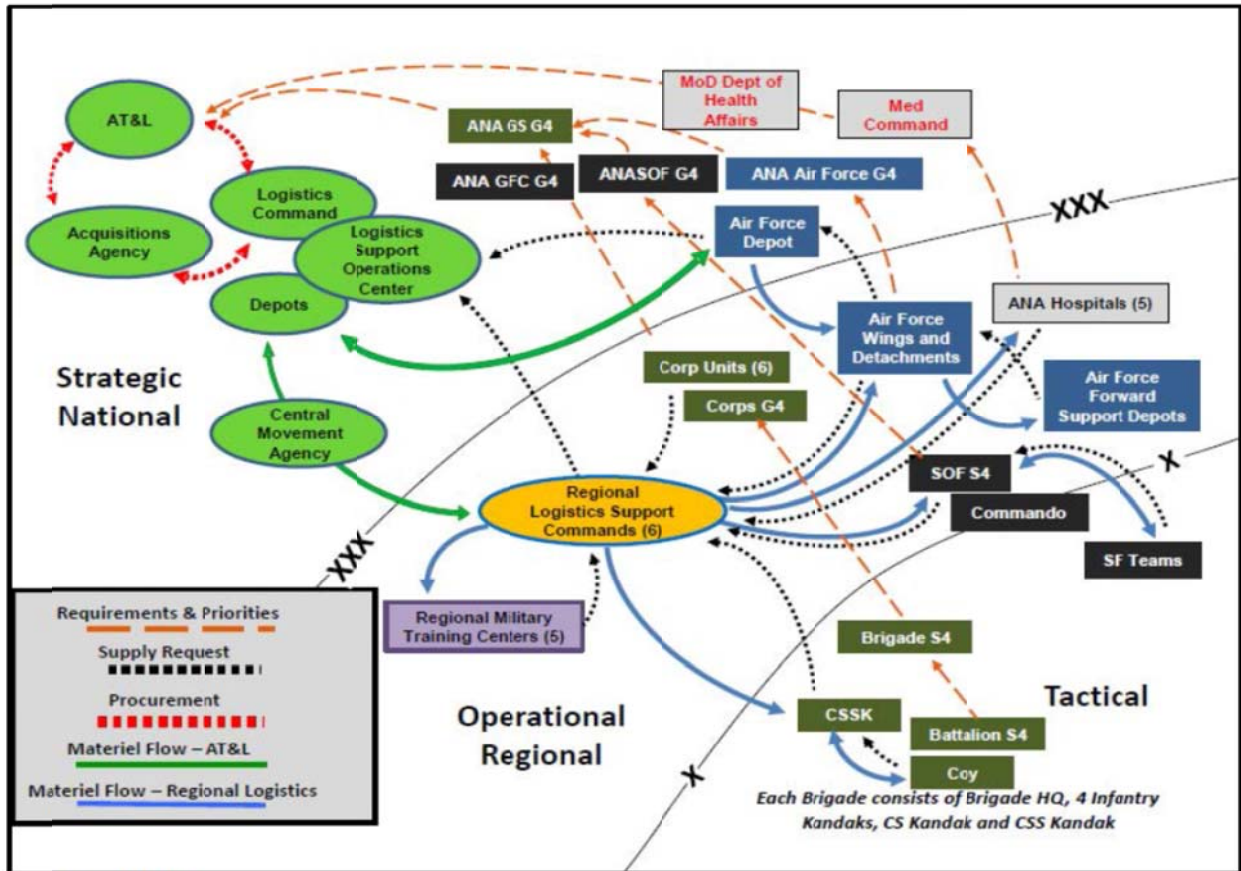


Figure 13. ANA Logistics Support Concept



Source: NTM-A

Appendix D: Afghan National Army Current Force Structure, Compared to U.S. Army Forces

Table 26. Types of forces in the current ANA force structure, compared to historical U.S. Army forces

Category	ANA troops today	% of total ANA	% of historical U.S. Army forces
Combat units	86,100	59	33 (25 – 39)
Headquarters staffs	22,500	15	25 (16 – 38)
Logistics and life support	37,200	26	43 (36 – 57)
<b>Total</b>	<b>145,800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## Notes

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- <sup>4</sup> Jonathan Schroden, Catherine Norman, Jerry Meyerle, Patricio Asfura-Heim et al. 2014. *Independent Assesment of Afghan National Security Forces*. Independent Study, Washington D.C.: Center for Naval Anaysis, 152
- <sup>5</sup> Schroden, 153
- <sup>6</sup> Defense Department, Inspector General. December 2011. *Assesment of U.S. Government and Coalition Efforts to Develop the Logistics Sustainment Capability of the Afghan national Army (Report No. DODIG-2012-028)*. CRS Report for Congress, Alexandria, Virginia: Inspector General Department of Defense, 41
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- <sup>12</sup> Schroden, 26
- <sup>13</sup> Schroden, 143
- <sup>14</sup> Schroden, 126
- <sup>15</sup> Valeski, Lieutenant Colonel Steven. June 2012. "ANA Logistics System Getting to Afghan Right." *Military Review*, 2
- <sup>16</sup> DOD. November 2013. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*. CRS Report for Congress, Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 42
- <sup>17</sup> DOD, 43
- <sup>18</sup> United Nations Office of Drug and Crime. 2012. *Corruption in Afghanistan: Recent Patterns and Trends*. Survey, New York, New York: United Nations office of Drug and Crime, 5

- <sup>19</sup>Cordesman, Anthony H. November 2010. *Afghan National Security Forces What it will Take to Implement the ISAF Strategy*. Staff Study, Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 119, 210
- <sup>20</sup> DOD, 77
- <sup>21</sup> DOD, 4
- <sup>22</sup> Schroden, 165
- <sup>23</sup> DOD, 42
- <sup>24</sup> Agency, Central Intelligence. 2014. *World FactBook*. Washington D.C., June 14.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>
- <sup>25</sup> Schroden, 153
- <sup>26</sup> Schroden, 183
- <sup>27</sup> Schroden, 26
- <sup>28</sup> Butsky, Chris. 2012. *Cultural factors and how they shape military sustainment and transition operations in a theater of war*. PhD Thesis, Toledo, Ohio: University of Toledo.

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