

Postal Operations in the Human Resources Operations Branch

BY FIRST LIEUTENANT TROY A. DANEK,
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 MARIBEL APONTE,
AND SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ERIC A. NITZEL

The 43d Sustainment Brigade's human resources operations branch projected postal support requirements and ensured that postal elements properly supported the uplift of forces.

While deployed to Afghanistan, the 43d Sustainment Brigade was one of two sustainment brigades responsible for providing logistics, personnel services, and health services support for regional command (RC) operations. The 43d Sustainment Brigade was responsible for RC South, RC Southwest, and RC West, and the 82d Sustainment Brigade (until December 2010) and the 101st Sustainment Brigade (after December 2010) were responsible for RC North, RC East, and RC Central.

The 43d Sustainment Brigade relied on its human resources operations branch (HROB) to help provide postal operations support for its RCs. The HROB is an embedded element within a sustainment brigade support operations (SPO) section. Field Manual (FM) 1-0, Human Resources Support, explains the HROB's mission in this way:

The HROB has the mission to plan, coordinate, integrate, and assess the placement and operations of HR [human resources] elements executing the personnel accountability, casualty, and postal operations functions. This includes providing technical guidance and assistance to supported G-1/AGs [adjutant generals] and S-1s in the personnel accountability, casualty, and postal mission. As part of the SPO, the HROB has the responsibility to coordinate the execution of non-HR related sustainment in support of HR operations.

Postal Operations at Kandahar Airfield

FM 1-0 states, "The mission of the military postal system is to operate as an extension of the United States Postal Service (USPS) consistent with public law and federal regulations beyond the boundaries of U.S. sovereignty and provide postal services for all DoD [Department of Defense] personnel and U.S.

contractors where there is no USPS available."

During the 43d Sustainment Brigade's deployment, postal support at Kandahar Airfield (KAF), RC South, and RC West was provided by a combination of postal platoons assigned to the HR company and contracted civilian workers. The HR company provided mission command and technical support for postal platoons that provided postal support to units at KAF and forward operating bases within their assigned areas of operations through satellite Army post offices (APOs).

Three postal platoons provided support for KAF and 10 satellite APOs throughout RC South and RC West. Responsibilities of the postal platoons included—

- Directing daily postal operations at the KAF APO, to include receiving, processing, and dispatching outgoing mail for onward movement.

Soldiers work together to provide postal support inside the satellite Army post office at Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan.



- ❑ Receiving, processing, and distributing incoming intratheater mail to supported locations, including mail for special services.
- ❑ Preparing mail for pickup by unit mail clerks at KAF.
- ❑ Conducting mobile postal support missions to supported locations that were not serviced by satellite APOs.

When the 43d Sustainment Brigade's HROB arrived in Afghanistan, the biggest challenges it encountered were planning and projecting postal support requirements, ensuring that the emplacement of postal elements at KAF and throughout RC South and RC West properly supported the uplift of forces, and ensuring that postal elements were properly resourced to accomplish their missions. Resourcing postal platoons with the necessary equipment, supplies, and facilities to accomplish their missions was another challenge in Afghanistan.

Initiatives undertaken in coordination with the sustainment brigade's special troops battalion included upgrading the APO storage yard to increase mail storage capacity and acquiring an additional facility at KAF for sorting and storing mail. Other initiatives executed in coordination with the HR company included working with the expeditionary sustainment command and the human resources sustainment center postal operations

Soldiers at the Kandahar Airfield Army post office break down a pallet of incoming mail while other Soldiers wait to sort the mail for distribution.



division to resource postal platoons with required postal equipment. This equipment included Integrated Retail Terminal computers and postage validation imprinter machines to replace the Pitney Bowes postage meters being used at satellite APO locations.

Planning Postal Requirements

The HROB used the military decisionmaking process and the rapid decisionmaking and synchronization process to ensure that the enduring HR principle of responsiveness was maintained.

According to FM 1-0, HR responsiveness includes the “ability to meet ever-changing requirements on short notice and to apply HR support to meet changing circumstances during current and future operations. It involves identifying, accumulating, and maintaining sufficient resources, capabilities, and relevant information to enable commanders to make rapid decisions.”

This was critical because, as a result of the force cap on Afghanistan, no additional requests for forces were submitted to meet the rules of allocation, which called for one postal platoon to serve 6,000 personnel.

Planning and projecting postal support requirements involved analyzing the increases in supported populations expected at locations in RC South and RC West

and determining the best method of providing postal support to these locations. Key elements of this process included identifying locations where supported populations were expected to increase and determining whether or not the current method of postal support in place at that location would be adequate.

Often, locations with large increases in supported populations already had established satellite APOs, so the outcomes of this process involved recommendations for improvement, such as augmenting the location with additional postal Soldiers or adding storage capacity to support increased mail volumes.

In several instances, planning and projecting postal support requirements was needed for emerging locations lacking established methods of postal support. In these cases, planning to establish postal support included considerations of available space,

This new facility was erected to serve as the Shin-dand Airbase, Afghanistan, satellite Army post office.



required facilities and storage capacity, methods of mail delivery, and resourcing personnel to man the satellite APO. These processes involved coordination with U.S. Forces–Afghanistan engineers, the sustainment brigade engineer planning cell, and forward operating base mayors for available space.

Planning and projecting postal support also involved the production of letters of justification and design intent layouts to detail requirements for postal support facilities, mail volume projections based on expected supported populations to determine mail storage requirements, and coordination with the HR company to determine the best method of re-allocating postal Soldiers to support the new locations.

Establishing a New Satellite APO

Establishing a new satellite APO can be a lengthy process, depending on how big the project is. The letter of justification for the project needs to address these specific requirements:

- The detailed project justification, including the need for or purpose of the project.
- The facility requirements in accordance with Department of Defense Postal Manual 4525.6–M, Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom Postal Operations Manual.
- Internet connectivity.
- Mail storage capacity.
- Mail transportation.
- Expected start date of construction.
- The impact on the mission if the request is not granted.

For KAF, the site must be approved by the U.S. base camp planning board. A location plan must be submitted to the planning board. This plan will consist of a site

map created using computer-aided design and drafting or Microsoft PowerPoint or, instead, a satellite or aerial photo showing the exact layout of the camp with the project location noted. It must be easy to identify where on the base the project will be located. The site map is a close-up picture of the site to show the project footprint in relation to its surroundings.

All of the 43d Sustainment Brigade HROB's efforts ensured that postal support was positioned correctly and resourced adequately throughout RC South and RC West to support the uplift of forces accomplished during the 43d Sustainment Brigade's deployment. These challenges were inherent in the role of the HROB as defined by FM 1–0, which is to provide technical guidance and resources to HR organizations and ensure that they have the capability to provide the required HR support as directed in the HR concept of support.

FIRST LIEUTENANT TROY A. DANEK IS THE S–1 OF THE 43D SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION, 43D SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE. HE IS A GRADUATE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICER BASIC COURSE, THE POSTAL OPERATIONS COURSE, AND THE POSTAL SUPERVISOR COURSE.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 MARIBEL APONTE IS ASSIGNED TO THE 43D SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY.

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ERIC A. NITZEL IS ASSIGNED TO THE 43D SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY.