



Coalition soldiers inventory an initial shipment of supplies, called “Warlord,” for the 205th Corps, Afghan National Army, Jan. 13, 2014, at Camp Hero, Kandahar, Afghanistan. (Photo by Cpl. Mariah Best)

Warlord Tiger Team

Regional Command South in Afghanistan established a team to assist the Afghan National Army in preparing to provide its own logistics.

■ By Chief Warrant Officer 2 Courtney S. Townes

The old English proverb, “For want of a nail, the kingdom was lost,” neatly summarizes the challenge faced by the Afghan National Army (ANA). The ANA has significantly improved its capabilities in the past five to six years. But, although the ANA seems to be doing well operationally, it is still challenged by logistics—specifically class IX (repair parts) management. To address this shortcoming, the Regional Command (RC) South Afghan National Security Forces

(ANSF) development cell formed a “tiger team” to address its class IX management issues.

The Problem

The 201st Brigade Support Battalion’s supply team identified three specific challenges. The first was that the ANA logisticians had no understanding of bin labeling concepts, the minimum/maximum theory, or how to optimize use of space.

Second, the ANA used an analog supply chain management system

that did not capture demand history or provide a common operational picture. With no common operational picture, leaders at the corps and division levels had no way to make sound logistics decisions.

Third, ANA leaders were overwhelmed by the number of Ministry of Defense (MoD) Form 14s, which are used to requisition and issue parts. As a result, the MoD Form 14s were not processed and the ANA just pushed whatever parts they had available.

These problems were compounded by a lack of fundamental understanding of class IX management that resulted in stockpiles of unused and unwanted parts while critical parts remained in a short supply across the ANA.

The Tiger Team

RC South learned that a major foreign military sales push of class IX parts was scheduled for the ANA in December 2013—a push called “Warlord.” The ANSF development cell was concerned that the push would not benefit the ANA without some consolidated training on spare parts management.

To address these challenges, the ANSF in RC South assembled the Warlord Tiger Team (WTT), of which I was a member, to help the ANA with its logistics issues. The team comprised Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment.

The WTT’s goal was to train ANA noncommissioned officers and senior logisticians on how to manage class IX parts. Our training objective was to have the Afghans develop a methodical process for storing and issuing parts.

Under the supervision of the security force assistance teams already assigned to the training brigade, the WTT acted as a mobile training team, directly training Afghan forces. Feedback from each brigade’s assistance team revealed a need to remove some excess parts from the brigade footprint. The hope was that if we could help remove this excess and show results during the Warlord delivery, the ANA forces would develop confidence in their supply system.

CSSK Training

On Oct. 17, 2013, the WTT began training the ANA 205th Corps’ combat service support kandaks (battalions) (CSSKs). We planned to visit all four 205th Corps brigades in RC South. The plan was

to build the ANA’s confidence in the system and prepare the ANA to receive the Warlord push by constructing warehouse bin locations and teaching the concepts of stock control management, including the use of minimum and maximum reorder points.

The WTT taught the CSSKs systematic reorder point processes in order to sustain the ANA fleet. Although it was clear that training was required for this to be successful, training by itself would not work. It took U.S. Soldiers working shoulder to shoulder with the ANA soldiers in order to understand the ANA’s analog methods and create applicable training. Actions spoke volumes, so the WTT, with help from some 3rd Brigade Combat Team engineers, went to work.

The team constructed shelves and bins for repair parts and made cards to mark which parts would go where. We also helped the CSSKs physically move parts from excessive piles onto marked shelves.

The first order of business was to develop the programs of instruction for this mission. To do this, the WTT partnered with the team from Engilty, a contractor who has been teaching the Afghans about logistics for the past 12 years. Each WTT member was taught the prescribed program of instruction before moving to his mission location.

After arriving at a forward operating base, the WTT partnered with logistics security forces assistance team members to resource materiel requirements and identify specific training requirements for the CSSKs. The WTT’s main teaching themes were class IX management, bin label concepts, and class IX management practices.

Class IX Management

The class IX management training focused on the importance of minimum and maximum reorder points. This concept allowed warehouse managers to replenish their class IX repair parts. The U.S. Army has the

benefit of the Standard Army Retail Supply System and other software programs to automate these processes, but we had to teach its Afghan partners to do this manually.

The stock record account was used to account for stock and collect demand data. Students also learned methods for gathering demand data during their warehouse operations in order to compute valid demand rates. This was a new management process for Afghan logisticians. Once this method was applied, it provided the managers with the capability to manage countless stock records and forecast demands.

Bin Label and Stock Locator Concept

The WTT taught the bin label and stock locator concept as a mechanism to ensure parts were where they were needed. Having parts in place prior to inventories allowed the ANA soldiers to understand and have confidence in using the minimum/maximum theory. These methods helped ANA logisticians understand how to order specific items and the importance of replenishing authorized stockage list (ASL) items.

Applying these methods allowed the ANA soldiers to have a sound understanding of what parts needed to go where and why. These methods were implemented to allow the ANA soldiers to determine the optimal order level quantities and to set their safety levels at each stock location so their ASL never reached a zero balance.

Management Practices

The WTT created and implemented management practices known as the issue ledger and the class IX master ledger, which gave ANA leaders visibility of what was on hand and what was on requisition. This allowed the ANA to have a logistics common operational picture for class IX parts for the first time.

The WTT established an efficient way to inventory class IX repair

parts. The class XI master ledger documents all ASL items issued or distributed to customers. It is used daily and reconciled weekly, giving leaders visibility of all supplied class IX and highlighting redundant parts pushed from higher echelons.



Coalition soldiers unload an initial “Warlord” shipment of supplies for the 205th Corps, Afghan National Army, Jan. 13, 2014, at Camp Hero, Kandahar, Afghanistan. (Photo by Cpl. Mariah Best)

Evaluating Success

It is too early to tell if the training was successful. However, the WTT saw some improvements when the ANA soldiers built shelves and bins and then labeled them. We saw them correctly store parts as they came in.

We also realized the training must be reinforced. Hopefully, as our combat forces return home, logisticians will continue to have opportunities to train, teach, and advise our Afghan partners on how to become more efficient in class IX management and other logistics functions.

Star Students

As part of the WTT, we had an opportunity train brigade soldiers at the lowest levels; however, this capability will decrease with time as the number of U.S. forces remaining in Afghanistan decreases. Knowing this, the ANSF development cell tasked the WTT with identifying “star students” to provide the train-

ing in the absence of U.S. forces.

Following the guidance from the ANSF development cell, we identified as star students those who were engaged and excited about the class. These students took special interest and ensured the WTT understood

not only the U.S. way but also the ANA way. Approximately four soldiers from each brigade were identified as stars; they were the ones who took time to teach our concepts to the other ANA soldiers in the class and ensured that leaders within their organizations were engaged and believed in a common goal.

These students were recognized at the end of class in front of their leaders and peers as stellar soldiers who have ability to train the trainer if needed within their brigade. The WTT also left a leader’s book that had each student’s profile, annotating with two stars if they were stellar. In this way, we trained some trainers who could be called upon to retrain if necessary. The book was left with each brigade’s S-4.

Adopting ANA Ways

The WTT took on this project not only to teach the U.S. way but also to adapt ANA solutions. As part of our

training strategy, we applied their learning methods to our training program.

We learned that the ANA had all their class IX parts in a consolidated area. With this, they were able to maximize their locations, store like items in containers, and use a daily issue log book. They called this book their property book, and it contained all transactions conducted as part of their warehouse operations. This book was very detailed and maintained only at the company level.

The property book was used for class IX items coming from higher headquarters, on hand balances, modifications to inventory, and current issue logs. Even though the ANA soldiers had no automation, they were still able to have visibility of what they maintained at the company level. As the WTT got more involved in their operations, it enhanced their concepts, educated key leaders, and built the ANA soldiers’ confidence.

By having the technical experience, the team was able to facilitate and develop the ANA soldiers’ skills in class IX management. Class IX management skills are vital to improving proper logistics effectiveness and mission readiness. Working with an analog supply system was a humbling experience that provided increased awareness of how important class IX management is within the U.S. Army.

The WTT rectified the ANA’s deficiency in class IX management and established a successful partnership between U.S. and Afghan soldiers through teamwork, self-confidence, trust, and friendship.

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