

# The S-4 in a Provincial Reconstruction Team

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**A**n officer assigned to serve as the S-4 of a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) must be able to operate in a joint environment, run full-spectrum logistics operations, train and develop an S-4 staff section during the 3-month train-up to deployment, and lead that staff in austere conditions. He must be a first lieutenant or captain, and he needs experience in two of the following duty positions: platoon leader in a forward support company (FSC) or executive officer, movement control officer, or assistant staff officer in a brigade support battalion. He must be adaptable and highly motivated, and he must possess great organizational skills.

However, no handbook or field manual is currently available to assist the junior logisticians who are chosen for this assignment. This article will attempt to partially fill this gap by discussing what a PRT is, its mission, organization, and training, and the various roles played by the PRT S-4.

## PRT Mission

A PRT is an interim civil-military organization designed to operate in semipermissive environments, usually following open hostilities. The PRT is intended to improve stability in a given area by helping to build the host-nation government's legitimacy and its effectiveness in providing security and essential services for its citizens.

PRTs are a key component of the "build" portion of the clear-hold-build model of counterinsurgency that the Army is currently employing. In Afghanistan, PRTs are typically responsible for one province within a regional command. According to the International Security Assistance Force PRT mission statement, PRTs "will assist The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform (SSR) and reconstruction efforts." Currently, 27 PRTs are operated by various nations in Afghanistan.

Joint operations are essential to the success of each PRT operated by the United States, as demonstrated by the evolution of the PRT from an autonomous Army

civil affairs mission to the robust joint operation of today. PRTs have pulled together the combined resources of the Army, Navy, Air Force, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State, and Department of Agriculture to make the PRT the most flexible and capable civil-military operation in the fight.

Before the PRT, these U.S. Government agencies were susceptible to inadvertently duplicating each other's efforts. The new PRT model has created synergy across this spectrum of agencies and allowed each to maximize its strengths and more effectively support civil-military operations.

## PRT Composition

Approximately 80 military and 2 or 3 civilian personnel are assigned to each U.S. PRT. The command team is led by either an Air Force lieutenant colonel or a Navy commander; the PRT commander's branch of service will coincide with the branch of the enlisted personnel in the S-1, S-4, S-6, and information operations staff sections. This allows the PRT commander a working foundation from which to build his staff's standard operating procedures (SOPs). It also allows bottom-up refinement by staff members, who can filter information and present it to the PRT commander in a format that is most suitable for him.

To ensure seamless communication between the battlespace owner and the PRT command team, the S-3, S-4, and first sergeant positions are active-duty Army personnel. Both the S-3 and the first sergeant come from a combat arms background. Their understanding of stability operations in a full-spectrum environment facilitates a smooth insertion of PRT operations into the battlespace owner's operations matrix. The S-3 and the first sergeant also bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the train-up process.

Before their PRT deployment, very few of the Air Force or Navy personnel assigned to a PRT mission have conducted ground maneuvers in a combat environment. Their predeployment training is largely guided by the PRT training teams at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. However, tactics, techniques, and procedures are the individual PRT's responsibility, and the S-3 and

the first sergeant are the spearhead of this important aspect of a successful train-up and, more importantly, the overall deployment. The S-4 should use his understanding of the Army logistics system to tie the PRT into the logistics flow of the support system within the PRT's area of operations.

Each PRT is assigned a force-protection infantry platoon that is provided by the National Guard. This allows the PRT freedom of maneuver when it arrives in an area of operations, without having to task the battlespace owner to provide security from his manpower. A three-man team of Air Force engineers is also assigned to each PRT and is pivotal to the reconstruction efforts within the province. Civil affairs teams are attached to each PRT to facilitate communication among the local spheres of influence and the host-nation government and the PRT in order to shape "the way forward" with an Afghan perspective.

Finally, the PRT is assigned three civilian personnel from the Department of State, the Agency for International Development, and the Department of Agriculture. These civilians bring many resources with them, in particular training and experience in country development with an international focus. They also offer a fresh perspective on the mission and help tailor the mission to ensure that all measures and resources are used to maximize the scope and effectiveness of each project within the province.

### **PRT Logistics**

As with all organizations, the PRT logistics section is responsible for procuring, maintaining, and transporting materiel and personnel to ensure that the PRT accomplishes its mission. Although it encompasses those aspects of military operations that deal with design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, disposition of materiel, feeding, clothing, facilities management, and health service support, the PRT S-4's execution differs from the conventional S-4's execution of the same functions in notable ways. The key differences are the staff assigned to the PRT logistics section and the level of involvement in each support area required by the PRT S-4.

The PRT S-4 is assigned three sections: support, supply, and maintenance. The support section is authorized one E-7 services noncommissioned officer (NCO) and three junior enlisted Soldiers. The supply section is authorized one E-6 supply sergeant and one junior enlisted Soldier. The maintenance section is authorized one E-6, one E-5, and one junior enlisted Soldier. Although this makeup may appear comparable to a conventional S-4 section, it is important to note that the PRT S-4 staff is composed of either Air Force or Navy personnel who have not previously operated within the Army logistics system.

### **PRT Train-Up**

Although training is conducted for the S-4 staff during predeployment training to familiarize the various S-4 personnel with Army logistics systems, it is not sufficient. The PRT train-up focuses on ensuring that all personnel can shoot, move, and communicate. It is imperative that the PRT S-4 create an environment that is conducive to training each section on the systems and regulations that they will use to accomplish the logistics mission. SOPs must be developed immediately to ensure adherence to Army logistics regulations.

Investing time in developing each section from the start is the key to a successful deployment. Before arriving at Camp Atterbury, each PRT S-4 should contact his counterpart operating in the area of operations to which he will deploy. This will allow the incoming S-4 to gain a better understanding of the operating environment in which he and his staff will function. More importantly, by gathering information on lessons learned from his counterpart in the theater, the incoming S-4 can develop an initial task organization and key tasks for the logistics sections.

For example, the PRT liaison officer from the logistics section will conduct PRT Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced (PBUSE) and supply support activity operations from the supporting airbase. The individual chosen for this assignment will work separately from the PRT and with limited supervision. Through correspondence with his in-theater PRT S-4 counterpart, the incoming PRT S-4 can gather and analyze this information, allowing him to properly select and prepare the liaison officer for his upcoming mission.

Overall, the various components of the military have many similarities in how they conduct logistics. Across the Armed Forces, the supply section acquires, manages, receives, stores, and issues all classes of supply required to equip and sustain the force. Included in those duties are determining requirements for the unit and forwarding requests up through channels to the appropriate issuing authority. However, the systems used to manage these tasks are very different. By working with the PRT S-3, the PRT S-4 can schedule blocks of instruction on the training calendar and resource facilities to conduct additional PBUSE training for the supply section.

While at Camp Atterbury, multiple equipment and supply issues, from weapons to clothing and equipment, will surface. Each of these issues should be used as a training exercise for the supply section and taken as an opportunity to refine or develop supply SOPs. These hands-on training opportunities will allow the PRT S-4 to develop his personnel and instill in them the Army command supply discipline approach to equipment management.

Accountability of supplies and equipment under the Army command supply discipline program is typically

more rigorous and unforgiving than the other services. It is imperative that not only the supply section but all PRT members understand this and the consequences of not adhering to the standard. Bringing the first sergeant in to assist in the training and implementation of supply procedures developed by the S-4 will greatly increase the effectiveness of the supply program within the PRT.

### **PRT Logistics in the Field**

Transportation requirements within the PRT include the movement of personnel, equipment, and supplies to support the concept of operations. Other transportation duties include resourcing additional military, commercial, and multinational capabilities (including motor, rail, air, and water modes) available to the PRT and understanding the process of requesting those transportation assets. The PRT does not have a designated transportation section, so the S-4 manages transportation.

If the PRT is collocated with an FSC, the S-4 can coordinate with the FSC commander to conduct joint logistics convoys. PRTs do not have palletized load system vehicles and are incapable of conducting robust logistics convoys. Since the PRT does not have a transportation platoon leader, the S-4 is responsible for leading logistics convoys for the PRT.

Maintainers in all branches of the military are charged with keeping vehicles and equipment in a serviceable, operational condition, returning them to service, and updating and upgrading their capabilities. The main focus during train-up for the maintenance section should therefore be on using the Standard Army Maintenance System-Enhanced (SAMS-E). Use of SAMS-E is crucial to the success of the maintenance section, allowing the section to generate and read key reports, such as the not-mission-capable report (better known as the 026 report).

When collocated with an FSC, the PRT S-4 should coordinate with the FSC commander to have the PRT's equipment information entered and managed by an FSC clerk. This will greatly increase maintenance productivity within the PRT since the PRT has only three mechanics. In addition to training personnel on PBUSE and SAMS-E, the train-up process should also include having the NCOs in charge in the maintenance and supply sections open a Logistics Information Warehouse account. This will provide the support NCO staff members with a tool that can be used for personal development and resource management. PRT S-4 sections that find success downrange attribute their success to developing and implementing SOPs early and getting the right training to the right people.

PRT missions embody the full-spectrum operations environment. This is due to the nature of the mission and the composition of the PRT. A PRT includes infantry, civil affairs, information operations (IO),

engineer, information technology, and communications components. To ensure that all sections are supported in a timely and accurate manner, the PRT S-4 should maintain an open dialog with each section and conduct accurate logistics estimates. Each section has its own mission within the PRT, so opening up a dialog with the section leaders can help the PRT S-4 to more effectively contribute to the success of the PRT. In addition to engaging section leaders, the PRT S-4 will work closely with the S-3 and the first sergeant to ensure mission readiness for future missions.

### **Supporting Voting**

Voting is a good example of a mission that requires the PRT S-4 to conduct logistics estimates and solicit requirements from the various staff sections. By corresponding with the various staff sections, the PRT S-4 will learn if the IO section will need more handheld radios, which it distributes through the civil affairs team, to deliver the IO message. More radio airtime must be approved for purchase to ensure maximum effectiveness of the IO campaign. The S-2 and the infantry platoon leader will highlight historical data to explain the need for an increase in the unit basic load during this operation. The S-3 will request the status of class IV (construction and barrier materials) for the polling sites and the distribution plan to send to higher headquarters.

Although this example offers insight into the scope of the various logistics requirements encountered in support of the PRT, it is more typical that the various sections will be pulling in different directions, as opposed to this example of a common mission across the board.

Since the first PRT was established in Afghanistan in 2003 and the concept was extended to Iraq in 2005, PRTs have played a significant role in U.S. and coalition operations. An assignment as a PRT S-4 offers junior officers a great opportunity to develop their skills while supporting our Nation's stability efforts in Southwest Asia.

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