

# What “Shona ba Shona” Means to Army Logistics

BY CAPTAIN MICHAEL D. ANDERSEN

By helping to train Afghan logisticians, an Ordnance Soldier fulfills his desire to have a direct and positive impact on Afghan National Army operations.

**L**ong after the withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan ends, the effect the United States has had on the country will still be significant. The world will measure the United States and its Army by the legacy left behind, good or bad. Afghanistan presents a world of opportunity for Army logistics. This includes the opportunity not only to train and assist in building the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) to take over but also to teach and mentor the Afghans in basic logistics principles and discipline.

## First Deployment

I first deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom VI as a wheeled vehicle mechanic. Although I was happy in my work, I felt that I was not having the direct impact that I had imagined during predeployment training. Then Sergeant First Class Louis Steinke, my platoon sergeant, became the local representative for Operation Crayon. Through this program, I was able to travel to various places around northern Afghanistan and deliver school supplies and basic hygiene items to the Afghan people. However, despite delivering thousands of pounds of supplies, I felt as though I was missing something important.

On 4 July 2010, General David Petraeus said, “To our Afghan partners: We will do all that we can to help you build a country free of the fear of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, a country in which all citizens can live in peace with one another and provide for themselves and their families.” He also mentioned working shoulder to



*Soldiers show Afghan personnel how to fill out supply forms.*

shoulder, or “shona ba shona” in the Dari language, with our Afghan partners.

## Finding Fulfillment

During my second deployment to Afghanistan, this time as the operations officer in a modular Quartermaster company, I figured out what had been missing from my first deployment experience. The 240th Quartermaster Supply Company was doctrinally structured to provide support to nondivisional units within the area of operations, including routine operations such as running a supply support activity (SSA), class I (subsistence) operations, class III (petroleum, oils, and lubricants) operations, and a water purification platoon.

*A Soldier teaches an Afghan National Army soldier how to check the oil level in his vehicle.*

As is generally the case with logistics units in this asymmetric conflict, we found ourselves adapting to the current mission and taking on non-traditional roles. One of those roles, supporting the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) partnership training, brought the company to embrace the shona ba shona mentality.

Directed from higher echelons and supported by the 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (our higher headquarters), the company took on a variety of missions supporting ANSF partnership training.

In one location, we had Soldiers conducting a driver's training course for an ANA logistics unit. What started initially as a one-time train-the-trainer class transformed into a flourishing training academy.

In another case, Army logistics Soldiers skilled in materials-handling equipment (MHE) trained their Afghan counterparts in all aspects of an MHE operation. The Soldiers taught the Afghan trainees proper preventive maintenance checks and services and the importance of taking care of their equipment. Every day, the Soldiers came prepared to cover important topics ranging from proper ground-guiding procedures and safe forklift operations to loading pallets of supplies onto trucks for delivery.

In another location, the company's automated logistical specialists (military occupational specialty 92A) taught, coached, and mentored the Afghanistan National Police at one of their provincial supply points. Our Soldiers recognized the Afghan forces' need to establish a command supply discipline program that enabled the Afghan Police to have accurate inventories and historical records in order to see trends and plan ahead for future missions.

The 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion also helped the Afghan National Police to implement a trusted agent program in which each element that was supported by the supply point designated a trusted agent who was responsible for all transactions. This program aided U.S. Soldiers in identifying Afghan personnel involved in the supply chain and training them in supply principles.

Lastly, the company had the opportunity to send two representatives to be part of an operational mentor and liaison team for an ANA logistics battalion. The two senior leaders were assigned to mentor the battalion S-3 and S-4 sections. They helped the battalion to draw all of its organizational equipment and taught its soldiers



hand receipt procedures and the principles of property accountability. The two mentors also conducted classes on the military decisionmaking process for the ANA battalion's senior officers and trained the junior officers in troop-leading procedures.

The ANA battalion successfully completed its training, deployed to its area of responsibility and is providing first-class logistics support to ANA forces.

The lasting impact of our efforts was the puzzle piece missing from my first deployment to Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, the supplies that I helped to distribute during that first deployment helped children with their education or provided basic necessities, but for how long? The training in basic logistics functions and principles that the 240th Quartermaster Supply Company gave to Afghan forces will be used and passed down to other Afghan soldiers long after we are gone. Essentially, we have provided the ANA with an opportunity to become self-sufficient in providing seamless and professional logistics—the cornerstone for any military organization.

From water purification to property accountability and stewardship, Army logisticians have a vast range of training opportunities to offer the Afghanistan National Army. From my experience, the Afghan soldiers have been receptive and eager to learn but only from Soldiers who are genuine and sincere in their training efforts. I believe the Army has so many excellent logistics programs that could benefit the ANA. It remains to be seen how many of us are willing to work shona ba shona to make it happen.

**CAPTAIN MICHAEL D. ANDERSEN IS A PRIOR ENLISTED SOLDIER WHO TRANSITIONED TO THE ORDNANCE OFFICER CORPS THROUGH THE GREEN-TO-GOLD PROGRAM. HE HOLDS A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN GEOGRAPHY WITH A MINOR IN MILITARY SCIENCE FROM WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY. HE IS A GRADUATE OF THE INFANTRY AND ORDNANCE BASIC OFFICER LEADER COURSES.**