



A delivery truck parks along the Khyber Pass outside of Forward Operating Base Torkham, Afghanistan. The heavily decorated truck is known as a jingle truck because of the sound it makes when in movement. Fewer jingle trucks are being used to transport supplies in the Afghanistan Transportation Network because they often require reconfiguration in order to properly load the assets, requiring additional time and resources and causing costly delays. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Darian George)

Establishing the Afghanistan Transportation Network

Using local tribal elders as an integral part of the Afghanistan Transportation Network helps ensure its success.

■ By Capt. Warren R. Crocker

Developing partnerships with coalition forces, local communities, and influential business leaders to strengthen Iraq's trucking industry and reduce the number of coalition convoys was successful during Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. Using the Iraqi Transportation Network as a model, the 3rd Sustainment

Brigade has helped prove that the concept is the optimal transportation choice in Afghanistan, especially as the country transitions to self-sustainment.

The host nation-led trucking company, the Afghanistan Transportation Network (ATN), has become the go-to choice across Regional Commands South and Southwest

and National Support Element West. In December 2012, the 3rd Sustainment Brigade assumed responsibility for sustainment and retrograde operations in these three regions of Afghanistan.

With that came the responsibility for the day-to-day control of the ATN. After assuming these responsibilities, the brigade oversaw more

than 5,500 ATN missions covering more than 703,000 miles and accomplishing 99 percent of deliveries by the required delivery date. During these missions, approximately 40,000 U.S. Soldiers remained off the road and out of harm's way.

ATN Establishment

The ATN concept began in October 2009 with the primary intent of moving various supplies throughout the Combined Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan and relieving coalition forces from convoy duties. The overarching goal was to establish a network to secure a long-haul supply distribution system throughout Afghanistan.

The brigade developed relationships with tribal elders and community leaders to form an Afghan-owned and -operated transportation system. These Afghan companies have created opportunities for increased economic expansion, entrepreneurship, and skills training for the people of Afghanistan.

The Army, with the assistance of the Marine Corps, established a means of vetting proposed elders and Afghan drivers to facilitate the transportation of cargo and assets among forward operating bases within Regional Commands South and Southwest and National Support Element West.

Using elder engagement teams that promote the program, the contractors who administer the ATN contract identify elders and community leaders who are interested in partnering with the U.S. government. Once the elders and community leaders are identified and vetted, they are either accepted or denied entry to the ATN program. The purpose of the vetting process is to ensure that individuals permitted to access FOBs in support of the ATN contract pose minimal risk to the U.S. government and its coalition partners.

Mission Success

A transportation mission is considered a success when it arrives at

its destination by the date specified on the transportation movement release (TMR) with zero pilferage or damage to the cargo. By ensuring the success of each mission, the elders and drivers can maintain good business relationships with the U.S. government.

The elders, with assistance from the contractor, teach each driver about the importance of driver safety, the

ment the cargo is uploaded until it is downloaded. The 3rd Sustainment Brigade and its CSSBs are available 24/7 to meet the needs of the customers. Soldiers and customers rely on the brigade's ability to logistically and methodically mitigate any potential for error.

The impressive statistics of the ATN are easily quantified, and the

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need to remain vigilant, and the importance of continual communication between the elders and the U.S. government. To ensure safe passage, the elders use their community influence to collect information on the designated routes their trucks travel.

Should pilferage or damage occur, the contractor and elder are held financially responsible. Up to the time I left the theater, fewer than 10 occurrences of pilferage occurred, and in each case, the elder, through his network of connections and affiliations, recovered 100 percent of the missing items.

CSSB Support

The day-to-day inner workings of the ATN is directly attributed to the combat sustainment support battalion's (CSSB's) multifunctional abilities. The CSSB receives all TMRs from customers, screens all information for accuracy, and then processes requests so contractors can allocate the appropriate assets to meet the customers' needs.

After a CSSB releases the TMRs to the contractor, the CSSB's job is far from complete. It must track the progress of the mission from the mo-

long-term benefits have far-reaching economic effects. The establishment of ATN routes can easily turn into enduring local distribution networks that connect communities and villages across the many provinces, promoting economic development.

The economic implications of a defined transportation network, when paired with established businesses and communities, will aid in a more robust import and export market promoting community and business development.

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