



*Spc. Kayla Vines works at a Standard Army Retail Supply System station to re-enter stock into the Army supply system. (Photo by 1st Sgt. Johnny McMullins)*

## Retrograde Sort Yard Operations

At the Bagram Airfield retrograde sort yard, the 803rd Quartermaster Company collected, retrograded, redistributed, and disposed of excess Army materiel.

■ By Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tanya Leupp

The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Materiel Recovery Element (CMRE) was developed to recover military equipment and excess materiel from Afghanistan and return it to the Army supply system. Retrograde sort yards (RSYs) and forward retrograde elements (FREs) played a critical role in this mission.

In August 2014, the 803rd Quartermaster Company assumed re-

sponsibility of the Bagram Airfield (BAF) RSY. The BAF RSY was the main retrograde hub for Regional Commands North, East, and Capital and supported up to three additional FREs located in northern and eastern Afghanistan.

The RSY accepted excess non-property book items from units, sorted them, determined their disposition, and then shipped the items to be returned to the Army supply

system. Additionally, they provided a wash rack, drain and purge services, crating and palletizing, and customs inspections.

The BAF RSY had five main sections in support of the CMRE mission: sort, demilitarization and recovery (DEMIL), processing, shipping, and transportation.

### Sort Section

The sort section was responsible

for receiving and sorting all materials that were turned into the RSY. During the 803rd Quartermaster Company's time in Afghanistan, 766 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of materiel and equipment were received in the yard. Soldiers assigned to the sort section examined the contents of each container received, identified individual items, and sorted them by type into labeled tri-wall containers.

Durable class II (clothing and individual equipment) and class VII (major end items) were staged for movement to the redistribution property assistance team (RPAT) yard. Class V (ammunition) items were secured in the DEMIL section. Class IX (repair parts) items were moved to the processing section. Other types of items that were separated included metals, plastics, wires, straps, hazardous materials, and radio frequency identification tags.

The sort section was also responsible for ensuring that all containers received in the yard were emptied and prepared for reutilization and shipping. This often involved removing paneling, lighting, and other installed comfort items from containers that were previously used as offices or workshops.

### DEMIL Section

The DEMIL section of the RSY was responsible for the security, recovery, and demilitarization of any sensitive items received in the RSY. The DEMIL section of the RSY worked hand in hand with logistics assistance representatives from life cycle management commands, such as the TACOM Life Cycle Management Command, Communications-Electronics Command, Aviation and Missile Command, and Joint Munitions Command to recover sensitive and high-dollar items managed by their respective sources of supply.

### Processing Section

The processing section of the RSY used the Standard Army Retail Supply System (SARSS) to reintroduce

class IX and select class II parts back into the Army supply system. When items were received in the processing section, they were sorted by national stock number and researched in the Federal Logistics Data log.

The SARSS team looked at catalog information such as nomenclature, class of supply, price, source of supply, acquisition advice code, shelf-life code, and recoverability code. After the processor determined that an item should be returned to the supply system, he used a SARSS workstation to bring the item to record.

All items were entered into SARSS as "found on installation." A materiel release order was generated from SARSS and attached to the items. The items were then staged for verification by stock control personnel. Once stock control verified that the national stock number, quantity, and condition code were accurate, they moved the item to the proper tri-wall container or designated area for shipment to the disposition location.

During the 803rd Quartermaster Company's deployment, the processing section produced 2,692 materiel release orders, putting \$12.68 million worth of class IX items back into the supply system.

### Shipping Section

Once the items went through the processing section, they were staged in the shipping section. The shipping section of the RSY managed the cleaning and customs clearance of items being shipped from the RSY. The shipping section manually cleaned all dirt and debris off items and their packaging and staged them for customs inspection.

After customs approval, the items were moved into the appropriate TEU for shipment to Kuwait or the United States. During the deployment, 19.3 TEUs of equipment were sent to Kuwait and 18 TEUs of equipment were shipped to the United States to be reentered into the Army supply system.

### Transportation Section

The primary duty of the RSY's transportation section was to move items to their final destination at the RPAT yard or Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Disposition Services. The transportation noncommissioned officer-in-charge submitted transportation movement releases to the empty container control point and DLA Disposition Services to remove empty containers from the yard.

Movements from the RSY were often limited by the number of licensed operators, equipment constraints during the drawdown, and DLA Disposition Services' hours of operation. Coordination was required with all involved agencies to ensure no unnecessary backlog was created.

### Yard Security

Physical security of the RSY was a top priority for the BAF RSY leaders and required staffing of both entry and exit control points. With excess retrograde materiel and equipment passing through the yard on a daily basis, the RSY established standard operating procedures that allowed units to sign for items or additional equipment.

Additional systems were put in place to allow units to access the yard when accompanied by RSY members. The Soldiers at the access control points were responsible for ensuring that all customers and containers of the yard were logged in when they entered and exited.

### Support From Other Units

A platoon from the 354th Medical Logistics Company (MEDLOG) was assigned to the BAF RSY to sort and dispose of class XIII (medical materiel). The platoon processed \$24.7 million of expendable and nonexpendable medical supplies and equipment during its seven-month deployment. The BAF MEDLOG team, consisting of 11 personnel, redistributed more than \$5.4 million of supplies and equipment to more than 60 units in theater.

The team worked with the 45th Sustainment Brigade and U.S. Forces—



*Spc. Samuel Lansdon clears a reusable triple-wall cardboard container, also known as a kicker box, for sorting. (Photo by 1st Sgt. Johnny McMullins)*

Afghanistan to advertise available medical supplies to organizations such as the Afghan Ministry of Health and the Kabul Embassy. Through these efforts, the MEDLOG platoon provided \$1.9 million worth of medical supplies for local hospitals and for medical training for Afghans.

The yard was also augmented with two noncommissioned officers from the 956th Movement Control Team. Their responsibilities included requesting unit line numbers for the movement of full containers requiring shipment outside of Afghanistan, supporting container movement at the flight line, and maintaining accountability of all RSY containers in the Integrated Booking System-Container Management Module and in daily reports to RSY leaders. When the movement control team redeployed in September 2014, its responsibilities were turned over to 803rd Quartermaster Company.

### Contractor Support

Contractors assigned to the RSY under a Logistics Civil Augmentation Program performance work statement worked alongside members of the 803rd Quartermaster

Company in the sort, processing, DEMIL, shipping, and transportation sections. The civilian company operated the drain and purge section and a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning section within the yard.

Contractors purged hydraulic fluids, oils, and refrigerants from equipment and parts locally so that items could be turned into DLA Disposition Services directly from the yard. Contractors also staffed the RSY's onsite wash rack and crating and palletizing stations to handle the cleaning and packaging of large items.

### Class II Warehouse

The BAF RSY also offered a unique service for the units stationed at BAF: the class II warehouse. During the sort process, expendable class II items, such as printer cartridges, notebooks, shipping envelopes, cleaning supplies, and binders, were set aside for the yard's class II warehouse. These supplies were kept in shipping containers inside the entry gate of the yard.

Department of Defense personnel could browse the warehouse and sign for needed supplies. The 803rd Quartermaster Company issued over

\$1.7 million worth of class II items to units at BAF during a three-month period alone.

### Transition to the FRE

During September and October 2014, the yard transitioned from a fully staffed RSY to a forward retrograde element (FRE) in support of Operation Resolute Support. Under Operation Resolute Support, the BAF FRE is now managed by two Department of the Army civilians and a team of contractors. With a smaller footprint and smaller workforce than the RSY, the BAF FRE is still responsible for all retrograde and disposal operations.

Key tasks managed by the 803rd Quartermaster Company during the transition to Operation Resolute Support included providing new letters of technical direction to the contractor, training the contractors on tasks previously managed by the military (including access control and container management), reducing the footprint of the yard (including making changes to the work and office areas), and conducting technical inspections and turnover of equipment to contractor management.

RSYs and FREs in Afghanistan have directly contributed to the CMRE mission to responsibly redistribute and properly dispose of property across the Combined Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan. The BAF RSY and the 803rd Quartermaster Company recovered tens of millions of dollars' worth of valuable equipment and returned it to the Army supply system. The actions and coordination of the RSY Soldiers and contract staff demonstrated their dedication to fiscal responsibility of the Army's assets.

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