

The 204th BSB's Logistics Training Advisory Team in Afghanistan

The 204th Brigade Support Battalion's logistics training advisory team established several programs to help them train Afghan Uniformed Police in logistics operations.

By First Lieutenant Adam D. Stear

The logistics training advisory team (LTAT) mission within the 204th Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) in Afghanistan began as an answer to a problem identified while observing the security forces assistance teams' (SFATs') missions. SFATs did not have the logistics experience necessary to meet all of the training needs of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

Partnering with ANSF has become more than simply teaching the aspects of combat and policing to Afghan National Army and the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) units respectively. The partnering mission has expanded past training for tactical operations and now includes training to support tactical operations.

The 204th BSB recruited the expertise of one of its company commanders, who had successfully served in Iraq on a military transition team tasked to ensure that the Iraqi police were self-sustaining and effective on all levels, including logistics.

About the Team

The BSB assembled a small team of logistics subject-matter experts (SMEs). The initial team consisted of nine personnel: an officer-in-charge, a noncommissioned officer-in-charge, a maintenance adviser, a fuel adviser, a supply adviser, a medical adviser, a communications adviser, and two logistics advisers. The SMEs were recruited from four different BSB companies. Additions to the team were made later in the deployment bringing the LTAT personnel to 13 SMEs.

Sustainment Excellence Day

The 204th BSB LTAT focused on the AUPs because of the close proximity of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Walton, where the 204th BSB was located, to Kandahar City, where most of the AUPs resided and worked.

The idea was to familiarize the AUPs with vehicle and weapons maintenance contractors who could help them maintain their equipment and, in turn, their combat effectiveness. The LTAT planned training days each week, on which different police substations (PSSs) would come to

FOB Walton to receive training in basic logistics-related tasks while their weapons and vehicles (primarily AK-47s and Ford Rangers) would receive a technical inspection and service. When the AUPs were finished with their training, they would depart with their weapons serviceable and with new fluids and filters in their vehicles. Once the plan was implemented, this became known as a sustainment excellence day (SED).

Partner Development Training

As the SEDs progressed, another need was identified. The Army traditionally assigns SME "partners" to the AUP units to teach them how to be effective police. However, these partners focused very little on logistics operations (the best practices for requesting, receiving, issuing, tracking, and storing materiel), which are important in enabling the AUP to become self-sufficient. A partner's primary mission is to ensure that the AUP units are training and learning police tasks and tactics, and partners often overlook training in logistics.

The LTAT identified the need for basic education in sustainment for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partners and created a class, called Partner Development Training (PDT), to teach the ISAF partners about AUP logistics. This class provided participants with a basic knowledge of logistics and answered related questions that came up for the students in the field while they worked with AUPs. PDT, by design, was a temporary solution to the lack of Afghan logistics experience within the ISAF partners' ranks. Once key PSS partners attended PDT, it transitioned from a once a week operation to an as-needed class that the battlespace owners could request for new partners or other ISAF personnel who needed to receive a class in AUP logistics.

Site Assistance Visits

In order to measure the effectiveness of the training efforts from SED and PDT, the LTAT began coordinating visits to the AUP PSSs throughout Kandahar City. These site assistance visits (SAVs) eventually became a joint

effort between the SFAT of the Provincial Headquarters (the PSSs higher headquarters) in Kandahar City and the LTAT. The LTAT linked up with the Provincial Headquarters SFAT when it visited each PSS and talked to the PSS chief about logistics operations in order to identify weaknesses in the training given through SED and PDT. The idea was to identify “kinks in the armor” in order to make the LTAT training more effective and relevant.

Logistics SMEs in the Provincial Headquarters SFAT

The 204th BSB LTAT also deliberately placed other personnel to assist the Provincial Headquarters SFAT. Four logistics SMEs were placed at the Provincial Headquarters. Two noncommissioned officer (NCO) SMEs were partnered with the Afghan logistics personnel at the Provincial Headquarters. These SMEs provided much needed assistance to the Afghan logistics personnel responsible for supplying all of the AUPs in the Kandahar City area of operations.

Another NCO was sent to the Provincial Headquarters to assist with property tracking and accountability. This NCO was a key player in accounting for equipment that was on the property book. Once the Provincial Headquarters had established property accountability, it created and reinforced the property accountability standard for all

PSSs under it. Finally, a SME from S-6 was sent to the Provincial Headquarters to ensure that it had continuous communications. With the SMEs in place with the Provincial Headquarters SFAT, Kandahar City AUP logistics was setup and on the road to success.

Results of Lines of Effort

The results of the SED, PDT, SAV, and the Provincial Headquarters SFAT lines of effort were groundbreaking for the 204th BSB LTAT. SED was very beneficial to the battlespace owners because it was difficult for the ISAF partners to coordinate deliberate training opportunities with the AUPs, who often experienced a high operating tempo. SED took the time-consuming preparation factor out of training basic logistics tasks by researching, developing, and delivering effective training. The variety of classes that the LTAT facilitated through SED included vehicle preventative maintenance checks and services (PMCS), generator PMCS, basic first aid, basic marksmanship, AK-47 PMCS, improvised explosive device (IED) familiarization, counter-IED training, mine sweeping training, basic driver’s training, and basic radio communications. This gave the AUPs and ISAF partners a wide range of classes to choose from to meet their training needs.

Contractors from Alpha Omega Services provide basic maintenance for Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) weapons during a sustainment excellence day. They also conducted basic classes for the AUPs on how to properly maintain their weapons.





During “sustainment excellence day” training, two local contractors conduct basic maintenance checks on an Afghan Uniformed Police vehicle.

To go a step further, the LTAT identified three classes from SED as classes the AUPs could use to practice training other AUPs: basic first aid, vehicle and generator PMCS, and basic radio communications. With those classes, the LTAT identified AUP instructors when they arrived for SED training. The AUP instructors were given the opportunity to teach in front of their subordinates to reinforce the knowledge and gain the experience of instructing. The prerequisite for instructors was either that they had been to SED before or they had been to the AUP NCO Academy. Some PSS chiefs also insisted on being instructors, which the LTAT enthusiastically welcomed and encouraged.

Between August 2011 and March 2012, the LTAT conducted SEDs at FOB Walton for 894 AUPs. Of those, 500 were taught by AUP instructors. The LTAT inspected or repaired 468 weapons and serviced 135 vehicles (including some high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles). All AUPs participated in the vehicle PMCS and first aid classes, 534 participated in the basic radio communications class, 270 participated in the AK-47 PMCS class, 497 participated in the small arms range, 405 participated in counter-IED training, and 23 participated in mine sweeping training.

Operational readiness rates remained steady during the SED time, ranging from 94.3 percent to 98.8 percent for AK-47s and from 87.7 percent to 89.7 percent for Ford Rangers. The Provincial Headquarters also worked diligently with the PSSs and their higher headquarters to increase the on-hand numbers for AK-47s (in addition to

other AUP weapons) and Ford Rangers to the authorized amounts. AK-47s on hand increased from 1,373 to 1,590 and Ford Rangers on hand increased from 135 to 156. The Provincial Headquarters also issued several new Ford Rangers to the PSSs, increasing those numbers further.

The PDT results were a challenge to measure. However, the LTAT was able to train 46 ISAF partners from 12 different PSSs and multiple ANSF representatives from the battlespace owners. The class was a great asset to incoming personnel who were unfamiliar with the AUP logistics system. It also familiarized the ISAF partners with different Afghan Ministry of Interior forms they would be required to use for logistics transactions within the PSSs as well as through the Provincial Headquarters. PDT established a baseline for Afghan logistics for the partners who had little experience with logistics.

SAVs provided valuable insight and quality control for the products and efforts the 204th BSB LTAT created to assist in filling the gaps within AUP logistics in Kandahar City. It also was beneficial to the Provincial Headquarters personnel because it gave them an opportunity to evaluate and assist their subordinates with tactical and logistics standards and operations. The SAVs typically rotated through 2 of the 17 PSSs within Kandahar City each week.

Push Versus Pull Logistics

Challenges lie ahead with regard to partnering ISAF with ANSF in order to help the Afghans become self-sufficient. Through partnering, ISAF has been leading

ANSF away from its prior “push” system of logistics that it learned from the Russians during their time in Afghanistan. In a push system, the higher headquarters receives the bulk of supplies and then distributes items based on what it decides its subordinates need.

ISAF has introduced and is continuing to assist in establishing a “pull” system of logistics. In a pull system the subordinate units send requests for supplies to higher headquarters in order to pull supplies from their higher unit. The higher unit must track, meet, and forecast for the logistics needs of its subordinates.

Establishing a pull system has been difficult to achieve because of corruption that sometimes exists in which supplies are hoarded and used for personal or professional gain. SFAT 10 and the 204th BSB LTAT have worked to show the AUPs at the Provincial Headquarters how to accurately track and forecast (based on consumption rates) through methods and techniques currently used by ISAF. One example of a line of effort is fuel consumption tracking. It begins at the lowest level with the AUP driver. Each driver keeps a mileage log and tracks fuel for his assigned vehicle. The usage log is turned into the PSS logistics officer who compiles the information from every driver. This information is submitted to the Provincial Headquarters monthly for fuel accountability. By having the consumption reports, the Provincial Headquarters AUP logistics officer can then accurately track and forecast fuel for that PSS.

“Buy In” Factor

The “buy in” factor is crucial for the Afghan populous to prosper after ISAF decreases its presence in Afghanistan. The Afghans need to accept ownership of and responsibility for the systems ISAF has been teaching them; they need to take pride in their systems. The systems that ISAF is trying to establish within ANSF are critical for its success. Continued assistance is needed, but only until ANSF is able to take the lead in every aspect of its society.

The efforts that the LTAT has made to help the AUPs become self-sustaining are based on a simple principle: Teaching the Afghans to be self-sustaining will serve them longer than if we sustain them. The team has made efforts toward this principle by teaching AUPs the basic knowledge needed to sustain their equipment. The LTAT facilitates classes (to give them the knowledge) and links the AUPs with contractors who service their equipment (to give them a way to sustain their equipment). This principle is the doctrinal cornerstone to partnering that leads the way to the ANSF becoming self-sustaining.

Security of ISAF and ANSF

When the LTAT hosts the ISAF partners and their ANSF counterparts at FOB Walton for training, it accepts a certain level of risk for the opportunity to increase the AUPs’ professionalism. ISAF and ANSF have

been attacked by enemies disguised as ANSF personnel. Before AUPs are allowed on FOB Walton, their partners must enter them into the Biometrics Automated Toolset (BAT) system at least 1 day before the training. When they arrive at FOB Walton’s entry control point, AUPs also go through a screening process involving retinal scans that are conducted using the Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment (HIIDE). The HIIDE retinal scan recognizes an enemy screened at the entry control point if he has been entered into the BAT system from a previous crime. The BAT and HIIDE systems are the primary tools used to defend against attacks that would significantly undermine the LTAT efforts to better facilitate and grow partnering relationships between ANSF and ISAF.

With the ISAF decrease drawing near, ANSF logistics needs more effort. Although a logistics focus is present, it needs to become a more deliberate operation for commanders. ISAF partners that are entering Afghanistan need to be trained and familiar with the Afghan logistics system. They also should receive cultural awareness training before they are partnered with ANSF. It is important for incoming partners to establish a good relationship with the ANSF with whom they work.

SFATs with embedded logistics SMEs placed at key Afghan logistics hubs (such as the Provincial Headquarters) are crucial to reinforcing logistics tracking and forecasting. The SMEs would then encourage the Provincial Headquarters AUP logistics officers to reinforce their expectations to the subordinate PSSs through SAVs.

Continuing LTAT-type efforts through consolidated training by conducting SEDs will show the AUPs how to save time and train effectively and efficiently. The ultimate goal of SED should be that either the AUPs take the class format and establish it at their PSSs, the AUPs take over leading training at a consolidated training area, or a combination of both.

With the length of deployments transitioned to 9 months and force reductions through 2014, little time is available to ensure that ANSF will be self-sustaining when the majority of ISAF departs. However, the LTATs and SFATs have a plan for preparing the Afghan populous as well as the ANSF to function on their own and are working toward that end.

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