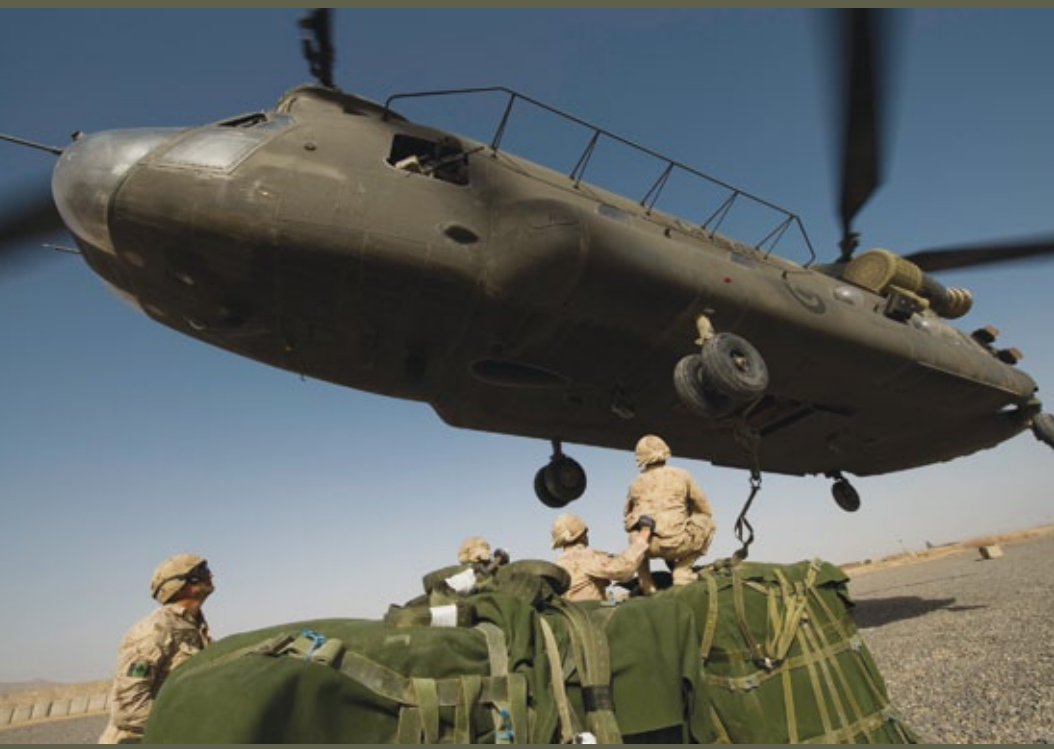
The Army Lessons Learned Centre

DISPATCHES

LESSONS LEARNED FOR SOLDIERS

Combat Service Support in Afghanistan



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Dispatches are targeted at disseminating information and increasing the knowledge of the soldiers and leaders across the Canadian Army and the Canadian Forces. The discussion is a snapshot of relatively current issues or procedures in a specific operating environment. *Dispatch* articles may not reflect doctrine, but articulate evolving ideas based on the recent operational experiences of our deployed forces. The information contained within this *Dispatch* is UNCLASSIFIED but sensitive in nature and distribution should be controlled.

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LESSONS LEARNED FOR SOLDIERS

Combat Service Support

in Afghanistan

DIRECTOR LAND SERVICE SUPPORT (DLSS) INSIGHTS

The Army has been conducting operations in Afghanistan since 2002. Throughout our involvement and seminal experience in this campaign, our combat service support (CSS) soldiers and their leaders have faced numerous challenges, achieved many successes and performed superbly through exceptional leadership, initiative, innovation, adaptability and dedication. They provided sustainment from forward operating bases, main operating bases, forward support groups and makeshift echelons. They did so by road and air, night or day, seven days a week. Whether part of the National Support Element or embedded within the battle group, the Provincial Reconstruction Team, or the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team, CSS soldiers of all ranks learned key lessons and made observations that needed to be captured.

This edition of *Dispatches* is the first specifically covering the CSS experience in southern Afghanistan. It aims to provide an overview of the most important lessons and observations during our mission in Kandahar Province. It also serves to give insight into the many challenges and successes experienced throughout this campaign and will hopefully spark further discussion both within and outside the CSS community.

I would like to thank the many contributors and authors from our three service battalions, the Army G4 staff, and the CSS community in general. I hope that you will find herein an insight into the findings and relevant recommendations, observations, issues and concerns of our CSS community experience in Kandahar Province.

Servitium Nulli Secundus!

C.A. Mathé
Colonel
Director Land Service Support

DIRECTOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED CENTRE

The Commander of the Army and Commander LFDTS (now CADTC) recognized the important requirement to capture the main lessons identified and lessons learned from the Army's experience participating in full spectrum operations in Afghanistan, before our collective memory fades. As such, they directed that a series of Dispatches be dedicated to capturing the major lessons from our Kandahar operations by Corps and Capability. The Royal Canadian Artillery Corps published the first of the series in 2011. This edition of Dispatches is the third in the series and is dedicated to capturing the main lessons of CSS while operating in southern Afghanistan. CSS was required to operate in conditions that crossed the full spectrum of conflict. The insights offered in this review of CSS capture some of that experience and are crucial to ensure that the Army moves forward with purpose based on the lessons we have learned from operations.

R.A. Puddister
Lieutenant-Colonel
Director

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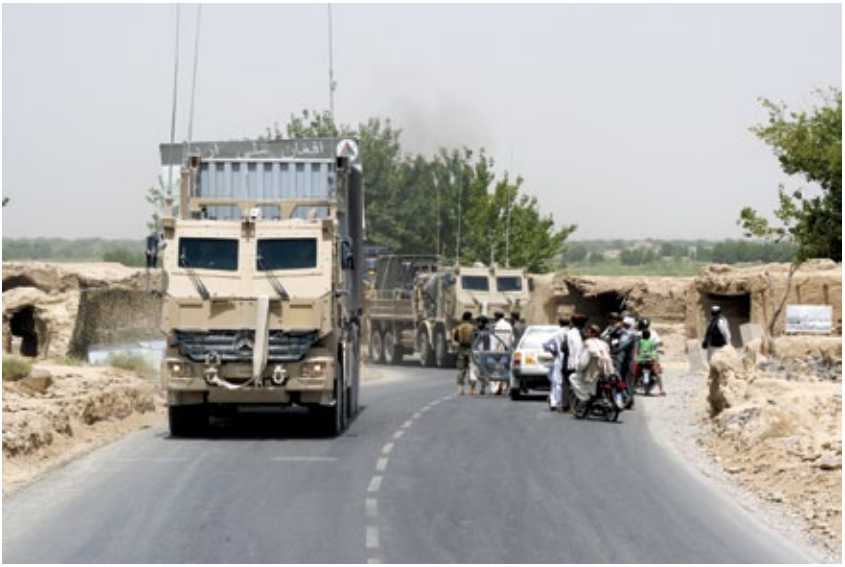
INTRODUCTION

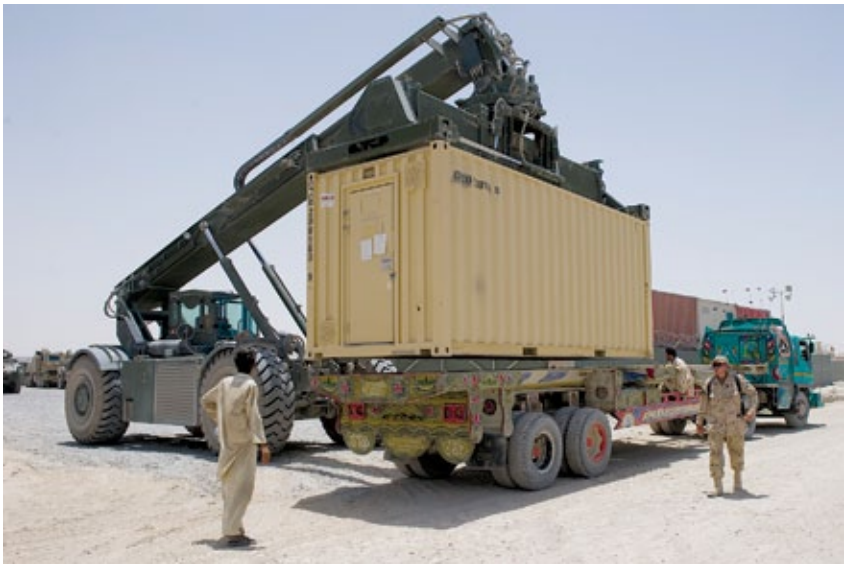
The sustainment doctrine outlined in B-GL-300-004/FP-001 *Sustainment of Land Operations* provides a clear framework of the activities required to process and deliver goods and services from the strategic level to the operational level to the tactical level. In a non-contiguous multinational environment such as southern Afghanistan, friction and challenges can present themselves when applying this doctrine. Current support doctrine calls for a joint task force support component (JTFSC) to support a joint task force (JTF) and for dedicated component-specific support organizations such as service battalions (Svc Bns) for the land component as well as mission support flights (MSFs) for the air component and forward logistics sites (FLSs) for the maritime component to deploy for the provision of combat service support (CSS) to their respective elements. In Kandahar, the National Support Element (NSE) fit in the space between the doctrinal JTFSC and the current Army Svc Bn, not just as a land force second-line organization but as a task force (TF) level resource providing support to the brigade headquarters (HQ), battle group (BG), Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT), Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (KPRT), brigade troops (artillery, civil–military cooperation, and psychological operations), All-Source Intelligence Cell (ASIC), air wing and TF engineers. While the JTFSC is the currently evolving doctrinal structure for the provision of third-line CSS to a JTF, in the resource-constrained environment in which the Canadian Forces (CF) is likely to operate in the foreseeable future, the JTF Afghanistan (Afg) NSE construct, providing second- and limited third-line support may be a potential model for future CSS organizations in a counter insurgency (COIN) mission or other similar asymmetric land-centric operations.



Source: Combat Camera IS2011-1022-13 by Sgt Matthew McGregor

The unit structure and personnel strength of JTF (Afg) NSE evolved throughout the six years of the mission in Kandahar. Initially, the NSE structure was based upon an amalgamation of theatre, formation and unit support elements created to support relatively static combat operations conducted from Camp Julien in Kabul. Following the decision to move to Kandahar under the International Security Assistance Force in 2005, this structure was migrated to the Kandahar Airfield (KAF) with little modification. It quickly became clear that this amalgamation was not ideally suited to support the mission in the Kandahar area of operations (AO). Consequently, there was a need to re-evaluate and modify the NSE structure to support more mobile fighting units in a much higher threat level and complex environment. The evolution of the NSE structure continued throughout the mission to meet the ever-changing requirements and challenges of that theatre. This experience only reinforced the lesson that there is not one single structure or approach to providing CSS that will work for all missions and that, as a mission transitions in its nature, so too must the structure. Doctrinal structures serve to provide a good starting point, but a continuous, solid and informed assessment of the mission environment and support requirements is absolutely necessary in order to develop CSS unit's structures that are properly enabled to support their dependencies on operations.

The CSS mission in Kandahar was a success; however, the experience was not without its challenges. The CSS community rose to meet those challenges and support each TF as the mission evolved. That was in large part due to the fact that CSS leaders at all levels did their best to create an adaptive learning culture that recognized the importance of observing, learning and implementing changes in an effort to improve our overall efficiency and effectiveness. In reviewing the numerous lessons learned emerging from operations, the topics discussed in the following sections stand out as being particularly relevant for the conduct of similar operations in the future.



Source: Combat Camera AR2011-0232-02 by Cpl Patrick Drouin

TERMINOLOGY

The following definitions are important to an understanding of this issue of *Dispatches*:

Administration. The provision and implementation of regulations and procedures related to the management of an organization in support of the accomplishment of its mission.

Combat Service Support. The support provided to combat forces, primarily in the fields of administration and logistics.

Logistics. The science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces. In its most comprehensive sense, the aspects of military operations that deal with:

- design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation and disposal of materiel;
- transportation of personnel;
- acquisition, construction, maintenance, operation and disposition of facilities;
- acquisition or furnishing of services; and
- medical and health service support.

Support. The administrative and logistic aid provided to a formation, to a unit or to an individual.

Sustainability. The ability of a force to maintain the necessary level of combat power for the duration required to achieve its objective.

Sustainment. The ability of a nation or a force to maintain effective military power to achieve desired effects.

CSS CONSIDERATIONS IN AN EVER-CHANGING AREA OF OPERATIONS

From 2006 to 2011, the CF conducted COIN operations in southern Afghanistan. By definition, COIN infers operating in a complex environment where the insurgency mixes in with the local civilian population. The AO can be rural, suburban or urban, and it is asymmetric in that there are no clearly defined battle areas. The traditional forward edge of the battle area, combat zone and communications zones simply do not exist independently; rather, they are blended together into a complex and dynamic environment.

To say that the CSS elements that were deployed to southern Afghanistan operated in a complex environment during this timeframe would be a colossal understatement. The Canadian AO was constantly evolving, not only during the course of the campaign or between rotations of BGs and JTF HQ's, but even within rotations, as COIN operations were conducted and modified to meet the ever-evolving insurgent threat.

The AO expanded, contracted, re-expanded, increased in density, reoriented and eventually was handed over. This continuous evolution would have both obvious, and sometimes not so obvious, effects on CSS elements. Each change in the AO had a significant impact on the ability of in-place forces to maintain support, given that available assets were for the most part fixed, while new and expanding requirements to support operations in accordance with the commander's priorities inevitably put considerable strain on the logistical support chain.

Source: Combat Camera IS2008-7401 by Cpl Adam Thomson

An RG-31 leads a convoy operation preparing to depart a forward observation base in southern Afghanistan.

Collaborative Planning. Within the CF operational planning process (OPP), integrated planning between staff functions (the general staff), is stressed during formalized training and courses; however, collaborative planning, specifically planning between units, is often less formalized and more ad hoc. In an ever-evolving AO, the collaborative planning process becomes a more significant requirement. As lines of communication (LOC) change and tactical infrastructure (TI) is built, torn down or handed over, CSS planners from the formation G4 staff, the NSE and the BG must become involved early in the planning process so that they can manage their limited resources and advise on the best method to employ them. Additionally, CSS elements must liaise with the ASIC, engineer squadron and signals squadron to ensure that the CSS plan is completely integrated with the tactical plan, engineer support plan and signals plan.

As none of the above plans can function independently, they must be coordinated and synchronized. CSS elements must ensure that they receive information sufficient to define requirements in terms of the amount of materiel required to build, stock and sustain TI in order to effectively plan for their ability to support their build/teardown while continuing to sustain current operations.

Expansion/Contraction of Tactical Infrastructure. The continuous expansion and contraction of TI and the associated terrain footprint places significant pressure on the NSE and on CSS elements integral to manoeuvre units. With limited resources being stretched to support these new TI builds, key resources would have to be shared or prioritized between units. In addition, as the number of forward operating bases (FOBs) increases, so too does the requirement for certain specialist positions, such as postal clerks, weapons technicians and ammo techs, and for high-value, low-density equipment such as wreckers and forklifts. While a decentralized approach to support of manoeuvre units and the execution of COIN operations is often preferable, it also requires a greater number of CSS personnel and equipment resources, which may not always be available as a result of deployment ceilings placed on the TF or the inability of the CF to force generate additional CSS units and personnel. To address the concern of proper resource allocation and prioritization, NSE CSS dets were established at the FOBs, patrol bases (PBs) and strong points (SPs), which enabled the NSE to more effectively extend its support to the BG sub-units and reduced some of the strain on the BG admin company. This also enabled the logistics operations centre (Log Ops) to better manage limited CSS resources on the ground in order to obtain the desired effect. By retaining command and control (C2) through the CSS Det Comd, the NSE was better able to meet the sustainment requirements for all occupants of the TI. BG sub-units received direct support from the NSE Det located within the TI, which was used as a staging area for short-term operations at the sub-unit or BG level. During delivery operations, the NSE CSS Det was responsible for receiving the incoming convoy operations, referred to as combat logistics patrols, locally contracted transportation, known as "jingle trucks," or aerial deliveries to break down the shipment and control the distribution of sustainment commodities inside the FOB/PB. This system maintained accountability of items delivered to TF sub-units.

> *"The continual increase in the footprint the task force occupies in the AO must be balanced with the ability to support expansion. The increasing scope of tactical infrastructure causes a considerable impact on sustainment to the TF when additional support resources are not allocated […] the addition of several small combat outposts and sub-district police stations put a very significant strain on the availability of [resources]. The replenishment of the new TI and the servicing of equipment […] require more resources. This factor must be considered when planning to further expand the AO. The NSE's very limited resource availability will not be able to absorb continued and indefinite expansion."*
>
> —Post Operations Report Summary NSE Roto 5

CSS C2. Effective C2 of CSS resources was critical to supporting the expanding AO. A close working relationship with the BG ensured that augmented support for deliberate operations was provided and any other deficiencies in support were addressed. The CSS planning paradigm was supporting lines of operations instead of functions (ie, transport, supply) to reduce stove-piped support. Log Ops was critical to coordinating convoy operations, air replenishment, and tracking convoys that operated throughout the large AO, which often strained the available communications systems. The direct C2 by the NSE of the logistical elements, the convoys, and the static CSS nodes in FOBs was essential in order to manage the effective and efficient provision of the required resources and effects.

Impacts on Services. Specifically, with the expansion of the AO, the impact on services must be clearly understood. For example, when new TI was built, it was extremely desirable to have fresh food services for several reasons (eg, force protection and morale). To have fresh rations in a new TI may have required a reduction of services for all others or, in the worst case scenario, a complete cessation of this service in other locations. While fresh food is a simple, readily available example, this can be extrapolated to include specific types of maintenance services, transportation services and other contracted services. The CSS planners must focus not just on the second order effects but also on the third, fourth and even deeper effects of their decisions.

Methods of Sustainment. There are various methods of sustainment described in CSS doctrine, including direct delivery, commodity points, and delivery points. Operating in a continuously evolving AO requires that CSS planners not become rigid in their approach or attempt to apply CSS doctrine too dogmatically. In Afghanistan, the NSE used many methods of sustainment, such as convoy operations, commodity points (user pickup at KAF), fixed wing aviation support (pallet delivery system), Canadian contracted air transport (CCAT), rotary wing assets (Canadian and allied) and contracted services, such as jingle trucks. The proper and measured use of all of those tools was critical to the success of the NSE in Kandahar.

Source: Combat Camera IS2009-3071-03 by MCpl Angela Abbey

An M18MTV and a Kamov 32 helicopter contracted by the NSE depart from the KAF conducting re-supply operations in the Canadian AO.

The ultimate goal of CSS units is to provide sustainment forward in the most timely and effective manner possible, but CSS cannot become overly reliant or dependant on one method of delivery. This was highlighted with the aerial delivery of goods via the CCAT program. During one month, the CCAT was conducting resupply missions to almost every BG TI one or two times per week and became the primary method of resupplying these units. In the following weeks however, CCAT services to the TI were significantly reduced as a result of increased threat, which necessitated a change in support concept. CSS practitioners must remain flexible in their concepts and understand and employ all possible means available to them—while at the same time understanding their limitations and vulnerabilities—in order to deliver the required sustainment effect.

Establishment of CSS Nodes and Links. As the Kandahar AO expanded, ground lines of communication were stretched while the operational tempo remained and involved a significant percentage of combat troops. CSS detachments were deployed to FOBs to act as sustainment nodes from which smaller dependencies were linked. The CSS nodes often supported PBs, SPs or planned operations. This system was essential to effectively supporting a decentralized BG in high tempo operations. Instead of supporting each PB or SP directly from KAF, these nodes allowed for a build-up of materiel in forward locations and decreased the impact of delays along the tenuous ground LOC. A forward logistics group (FLG) could be pushed out to a CSS node in order to further augment a manoeuvre unit during a specific operation to shorten LOCs and provide more responsive support. These CSS nodes were located in a secure forward area that allowed for resupply and maintenance to be conducted close to where the units were operating and reduced unnecessary travel through high threat areas. Ideally, supply and maintenance detachments were located in the CSS node and were not tied to manoeuvre units.

Source: Combat Camera IS2010-3035-1by Cpl Shiloh Jamison

Supply technicians at these nodes were responsible for maintaining the inventory of goods, ordering resupplies, and directing incoming supplies to the proper units. The tracking and effective control of inventory was critical to preventing too much accumulation of stocks and the associated expansion of the infrastructure footprint. Vehicle technicians with the necessary special tooling and parts to conduct second-line work were also located in the FOBs, which allowed for the completion of second-line repairs forward, thereby reducing unnecessary movement of vehicles rearward through the expanding AO. C2 of those nodes was often executed by an officer or WO from the NSE, although at times that was complicated by the issue of real estate ownership of the node or PB. The NSE was not resourced with enough force protection elements to protect TI, and the task when performed required soldier technicians to be taken away from their

primary function of supporting the manoeuvre units to provide perimeter security and general camp duties. Similarly, the manoeuvre units (BG, OMLT, etc) were not resourced enough to be able to absorb having a significant portion of their combat forces tied to TI protection duties. The CSS nodes proved to be valuable, but their establishment always came with a cost, and that cost needed to be carefully weighed against the benefit gained before establishing a potentially unsustainable node.

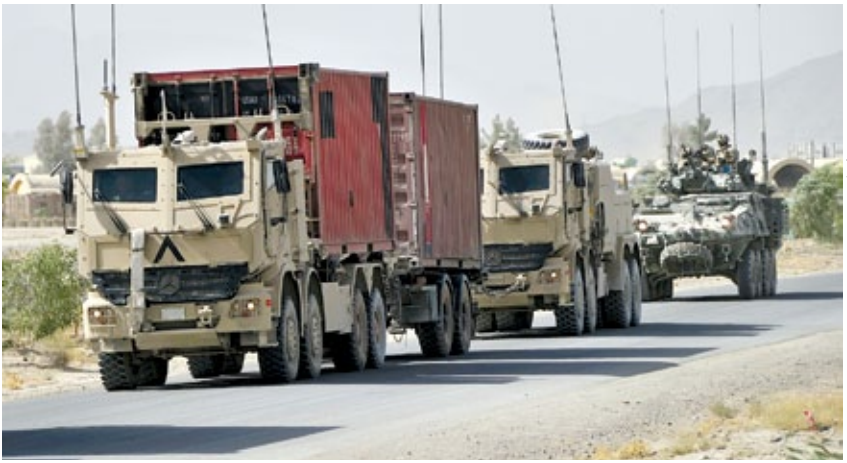
> *"The NSE does not have resources "on the shelf" waiting to be tasked. Each and every soldier has a role to play and must leave his/her primary duty when additional tasks are assigned. When soldier-technicians are taken away from their primary role, there are vehicles [that] are not repaired, vehicles [that] are not being driven, stores stay on shelves, food is not being served and aircraft are not being offloaded."*
>
> —Post-Operations Report Summary NSE Roto 5

Introduction of New Capabilities. With an expanding AO linked to changing threats, new capabilities were continuously deployed into theatre. Whether it was Leopard 2A6s, the expedient route opening capability (EROC), RG-31s, new variants or upgrades of light armoured vehicles (LAVs) or small components such as new clothing, new radios, or something as significant as adding an entire new unit (Air Wing), there were considerable impacts on CSS operations. In some cases, the new capabilities drove minor modifications to the in-place concept of support, while in other cases their support initiated a complete review and complete re-write of the concept of support. Regardless of the scope of the new capability being added, CSS planners needed to be involved from the outset to ensure the support concept was viable over the long term. Failure to do so could have had significant effects, including shortages of critical parts, inefficiencies in providing support, and duplication of effort.

Numerous times when a new capability was introduced into theatre, there was not sufficient expertise within the NSE or manoeuvre units to maintain or support the new equipment. In order to ensure that the new capabilities could be maintained, technical assistance visits (TAVs) and field service representatives (FSRs) were usually employed, and sometimes embedded, within theatre units, although there were often limitations on where they could be employed and under what risk/force protection scenarios. While the TAVs and FSRs were invaluable for the introduction and initial support of the capabilities, CSS elements could at times become overly reliant on those individuals to the detriment of support to operations. Regardless of whether a TAV or FSR deploys into theatre to support the introduction of a new capability, it remains imperative that the in-place force, and future rotations in Canada, are trained on the equipment and the training is institutionalized.

Availability of Spare Parts. When new systems were deployed into theatre, it was often conducted in a rapid manner in order to get the equipment into the hands of soldiers as soon as possible. Special tooling, equipment and spare parts were sent into theatre with the new capability, but often the parts were not catalogued and materiel accountability was lost. Despite the spares being somewhere in Afghanistan, their exact location was not known because they were not in the Canadian Forces Supply System (CFSS). As part of initial fielding, all spare parts need to be catalogued and built into the CFSS, not only because it ensures materiel accountability for the proper governance of material, but also because the inability to locate required parts results in increased equipment downtime and a detrimental impact on operational capability.

Combined CSS Efforts. With an expansive AO in a multinational environment, CSS practitioners need to consider all resources potentially available to them to deliver the necessary effect. The theatre G4 staff and NSE are not limited to their own internal resources but can look at leveraging support services from allied nations and flanking formations to achieve economies of effort in providing support. For example, when a number of nations utilized a common airport of disembarkation (APOD) as a support area, there were often numerous convoys moving from the APOD to other AOs, including passing through the Canadian AO. Such convoys presented opportunities for the movement of supplies without committing NSE resources and should be taken and used whenever possible. An allied nation convoy could be utilized to drop off materiel as it traveled through the Canadian AO and conducted rest stops at a Canadian owned FOB/PB/TI. In order to ensure an understanding of how to make maximum use of those resources, efforts must be made to have CSS staff develop an understanding of multinational logistics through formal courses and, if at all possible, exchange/visit opportunities with future in-place allied forces. In understanding the concept of operations of allied nations, invaluable personal and professional ties can be forged and leveraged to mutual advantage.



Source: Combat Camera AR2011-0386-063 by MCpl Dan Shumlanski

CONCEPT OF SUPPORT

Because of the nature of COIN, a larger AO, and a diversity of manoeuvre and static units within Kandahar, the development of a concept of support for theatre was a complex and intricate process. While the following paragraphs are not meant to serve as a comprehensive review of the theatre concept of support, they will provide some key highlights and deductions that could be of use for the development of concepts of support for future missions in similar operating environments.

First Line Support – Battle Group. During the first BG rotation, which commenced in January 2006, all CSS assets and functions were centralized within the NSE. This was a legacy issue of the concept of support that existed for Operation ATHENA in Kabul where the majority of Canadian elements were co-located within a single camp and operated in a limited AO. Almost immediately after the move from Kabul to KAF, it became clear that the BG would no longer be operating within a small AO and that doing so without its own integral echelon would severely stretch NSE capabilities. Several times during this initial tour, while supporting the BG in operations, the NSE deployed every available vehicle outside of KAF in order to support operations with no reserve capability

to address emergency resupply concerns. In order to continue to provide effective first-line support, the NSE tasked-tailored echelons for each unique BG operation. While that proved to be an extremely effective method to provide first-line CSS support, it put a significant strain on the NSE resources and was not sustainable over the long term.

Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM) subsequently conducted a mission support review which identified a requirement to re-establish an integral echelon within the BG. While not the size of a full administration company of the type typically found in an infantry unit, this increase of integral CSS assets provided the BG with a transportation platoon, a maintenance platoon, and an HQ element. This allowed the BG additional flexibility to support their operations without relying on the NSE. The most effective means of employing those assets was found to be decentralization (use of the doctrinal A1 echelon) in order to support independent CSS operations. Despite the success of the ad hoc BG echelon, it is recommended that in future deployments all manoeuvre elements be deployed with a full administration company to provide a first-line planning and execution capability and an organization to increase materiel accountability.

First-Line Support – KPRT. While not a traditional manoeuvre element, the KPRT had its own first-line support element. Based at Camp Nathan Smith (CNS) in Kandahar City, its dispersal from the brigade support area (BSA) at KAF required that an organization be established to provide the first-line support to its operations. The establishment of an NSE detachment in CNS to provide first-line support for the KPRT was critical in providing the sustainment support that the NSE could not provide from KAF.

First-Line Support – KAF-Based Elements. All KAF-based elements had limited first-line support capabilities but heavily relied on the NSE for augmentation. In the semi-static environment of KAF, this arrangement was a logical solution to provide necessary economies of effort and resources in theatre.

Second- and Third-Line Support. The NSE provided the majority of second- and third-line support to all elements in theatre. As has been previously discussed, limited resources within the NSE can create issues where any built-in redundancy can be quickly eliminated. However, there are some capabilities resident in the NSE that cannot be provided by a lead mounting area and must be attached in from outside the Canadian Army (CA). Two of these will be discussed further in this document, specifically the Canadian Contractors Augmentation Plan (CANCAP) and the Canadian Forces Personal Support Agency (CFPSA). Additional resources used to offset the workload on CSS personnel and resources included TAVs, FSRs, and CCATs. Those surges in CSS capability were invaluable, especially when introducing key pieces of equipment such as the Armoured Heavy Support Vehicle System (AHSVS) and Leopard 2A6M main battle tanks.

Host Nation Support. While doctrinally linked with a more permissive environment such as a United Nations peacekeeping mission, host nation (HN) support is another viable option to augment Canadian CSS capabilities. Even in Afghanistan, there were several agencies that could be force multipliers. The most well known within theatre was the use of locally contracted transportation—jingle trucks that were used to transport low risk, low dollar value items forward. Jingle trucks were extremely successful in reducing the number of daily NSE convoys, which allowed more military assets to be allocated to support higher risk operations and helped to reduce the amount of threat that NSE soldiers were exposed to during road movement. HN support was also used for local purchasing to simplify things such as equipment rental and local labour. Locally employed personnel (LEP) provided general duty support and influenced a positive effect on COIN operations because they stimulated the local economy with wages and new skill sets.

Contracting. Contracting and contracting management became an integral part of the CSS matrix. Within the NSE, a contract management cell (CMC) was utilized to execute contracting support within the AO, focusing on the provision of goods and/or services contracts that were beyond the $5K limit of local purchase authority and where no standing offer agreements (SOAs) were available. In addition, this included the management of real life support (RLS) contracts for units in the AO as well as NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) contracts for RLS on KAF. The CMC was also the theatre technical authority for the CANCAP contract and for CCAT.

The CF contract management expertise is an extremely narrow field and is one that must continue to grow in order to meet the governmental regulations that are still in effect on deployed operations. A concerted effort must be made to increase the contracting capability of CF members so that they can effectively manage and execute various contracts needed to augment the CSS requirements. Personnel managing contracts must be familiar with both CF and Government of Canada requirements as well as with how to work within the local community.

Materiel Accountability. As in any high tempo combat operation, maintaining materiel accountability in Afghanistan was a constant challenge. Due to the speed of deployment, the constant evolution of the AO and the lack of a BG administration company, materiel accountability quickly degraded. Accurate materiel accountability is extremely important and a true force multiplier in that it provides commanders with confidence by showing them what is available and that they have the required balance of materiel on hand to support operations. Failure to maintain accurate visibility on material holdings results in an increased workload on all levels of staff, complete inefficiencies in the theatre supply chain (double ordering, double handling of parts, wasted time and effort) and, in a worst-case scenario, the inability to support an operation because of an error in forecasting.

Specialists in areas such as POL, spare parts, and ammo are essential to making accurate forecasts and preventing shortages. They are also important to ensuring that the proper scaling is implemented. Accurate tracking and reporting of materiel, equipment, and commodities allows for forecasting instead of reacting and ensures replenishment is available when required.

Sub-unit commanders must maintain strict verification procedures and specialist officers such as quarter masters must ensure stocktaking and equipment verifications occur and that losses are immediately reported. Materiel accountability efforts are often one of the first things that suffer when operational tempo becomes high; however, significant time and effort is often required to re-establish accuracy of accounts. Prompt reporting of losses ensures that replacements can be ordered and arrive more quickly and also ensures that the required administrative efforts to maintain accurate supply accounts remain manageable.

While the management of day-to-day materiel accountability is the responsibility of CSS staff, it must be a command imperative to enforce. A lack of materiel visibility could hinder a commander's operational plan; therefore, a commander must enforce the requirement for this accountability. Without engagement from commanders, materiel accountability is quickly ignored and takes a significant amount of time, effort and resources to regain.

Maintenance "Pit Stop." With the limited forward resources of the NSE and the high operational tempo of the manoeuvre units, maintaining armoured vehicles could become an issue. One method developed to assist this was the establishment of the maintenance "pit stop." This approach was based on home leave travel assistance (HLTA) periods where a sub-sub unit or a section would bring back a vehicle to maintenance company

lines in KAF in order to have approximately three weeks to conduct repairs and inspections while the BG manning was reduced. While not always a possibility, it provided tangible benefits.

Retrograde. Returning vehicles or supplies no longer needed in theatre is always a challenge. Delivery of supplies forward is usually done effectively; however, a capacity to return unneeded supplies from a FOB/APOD to Canada can present challenges. This can result in an increased inventory (and footprint) within a FOB or APOD, which often makes space and physical security of the items an issue. In addition, when there is too much inventory, it frequently becomes difficult to find specific items. CSS staff had to develop new standard operating procedures (SOPs) and pay specific attention to materiel that needed to leave theatre. These items cannot simply be ignored and have to be actively managed in order to retain materiel accountability, get repair parts returned and, generally, to maintain the flow of the supply chain.

FORCE GENERATION

The JTF (Afg) BG was based on a standard infantry battalion with other elements of combat arms and combat support arms as required to fulfil the mission. The organizational structure of the elements was well defined with personnel and equipment. Force generating an NSE was inherently more complicated, as the troops-to-task ratio and equipment could not be numerically defined and substantiated. Additionally, no single Canadian organization fulfilled the first- and second-line CSS and administrative support roles that were provided to the TF BG and other Canadian elements in Afghanistan.

Current CSS doctrine states that when a BG is deployed as part of a coalition, a Svc Bn does not provide the second-line support. Instead, a forward support group (FSG) is generated that provides the BG with second-line support and, in some cases, first-line support as well. This FSG is taken from a portion of the Svc Bn residing in the same location as the force generating Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group. Traditionally, the Svc Bn command structure remains in Canada. In addition, typically augmentees from outside the Lead Mounting Area (LMA) are required to meet the additional support requirements. To put this requirement into perspective, the currently envisioned Force 2013 FSG is 280 personnel; however, by later rotations, the NSE in Afghanistan was approximately 500 personnel, including CANCAP and CFPSA personnel.

The deployed JTF-Afg NSE was commanded by a lieutenant-colonel and included an HQ, the FSG now organized as functional CSS companies, CANCAP, CFPSA, the CMC, camp services for the provision of real life support and a force protection platoon (a Primary Reserve element).

Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E). An FSG is force generated from a Regular Force Svc Bn. While separate from the Svc Bn, it still derives significant support from the force generating Svc Bn for infrastructure, vehicles, stores and equipment to provide a realistic training environment. Once the FSG has deployed, the Svc Bn is left with the responsibility to account for the stores, recondition the vehicles and redistribute the equipment within the functional companies.

The FSG was a CSS organization with only supply, maintenance and transport support with personnel from the force generating Svc Bn. In addition, for the Afghanistan NSE, there was a requirement for personnel and skill sets not normally found within the Svc Bn, and consequently there were additions to the FSG TO&E.

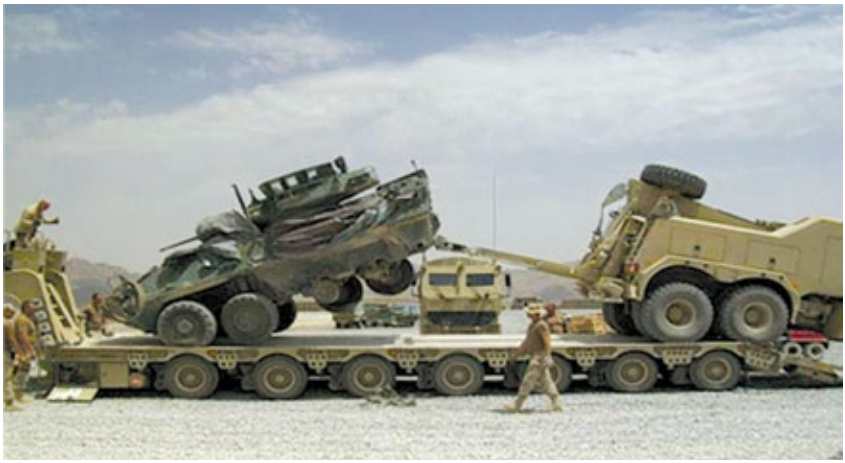
The currently envisioned Force 2013 Svc Bn addresses some of the shortfalls of the TO&E establishment by standardizing the FSG of the Svc Bns. The FSG is acknowledged as a flexible organization that will be able to be responsive to future national or international operations. The FSG shadow CQ remains with the Svc Bn to provide oversight and custody of the Svc Bn equipment used for training.

There is some risk, as Force 2013 Svc Bn has been tailored for the Svc Bns to provide specific support. For example, 1 Svc Bn will have the additional technicians to support the Leopard tanks. However, there are insufficient additional personnel to provide support for ongoing operations in a hostile environment. As well, centralizing the technicians with a single Svc Bn means it will be impossible for 5 Svc Bn to provide integral internal support when it is tasked for a deployment with tanks.

Augmented Positions. The Svc Bns and force-generating bases did not have sufficient personnel to fill the JTF (Afg) NSE TO&E (excluding CANCAP and CFPSA personnel). Augmentation from the other CF organizations, including other environments and the Reserves, was required. There was often no standardized training for soldiers augmented from places other than hard Army bases. That was sometimes complicated by poor unit tracking mechanisms for the individual battle task standards (IBTS) training and the sometimes questionable quality of training provided. It caused time to be spent on redundant IBTS training to guarantee the Level 1 and 2 standards. Essentially, the NSE started from scratch with the soldiers who had little or no experience in the army and who would be expected to operate in a high tempo and hostile environment and while facing the threat intrinsic to land-based operations.

Because of manning restrictions, it is unlikely that the future NSE will have sufficient personnel to fill the TO&E for multiple successive deployments. Augmentees are necessary to fill the voids. It must be expected that soldiers coming from other elements and higher headquarters will be lacking the training. Upon arrival of the augmentees, the FSG will need to evaluate standards and levels of training and take corrective action.

Training. Prior to deployment to Operation ATHENA, all NSE personnel participated in at least one collective training event with the TF BG. The quality of training received during pre-deployment training greatly improved as the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre (CMTC) adapted to the changing tactical situation in theatre. There were significant



Source: Author

deficiencies with the managed readiness training fleet (MRTF) vehicle and equipment suite including equipment issue scale (EIS) shortfalls, serviceability issues, lack of specialized tooling, lack of spares, the absence of certain vehicle platforms and the timely movement between Land Force Areas (LFA). These deficiencies resulted in technicians and operators' skills being developed and tested during the relief in place (RIP) in theatre rather than prior to deployment and extensive continuation training being conducted throughout the tour. Continued use of the reverse TAV, where personnel currently in theatre return to Canada, during the collective training events leverage on current operations and experience with sufficient lead time to address training deficiencies using in-country specialists and should continue.

NSE Real Time Support During Training. This challenge was faced by every NSE during the TF collective training events, and it affected their ability to train effectively and leverage the many valuable training opportunities. As CMTC continued to improve its training plan for the deploying TF, the MAPLE GUARDIAN exercises saw better-scaled second-line holdings of general and technical stores, spare parts and combat supplies, giving deploying supply technicians and mobile support equipment operators better opportunities for practicing tactical replenishment on the simulated battlefields of Wainwright, Alberta, or Fort Irwin, California. In future, non-deploying personnel from the Svc Bns should be tasked to provide real time support during the road to high readiness, including support during the collective training exercises. Any shortages of personnel should be remedied through CFTPO taskings.

Introduction of New Equipment. The composition of the NSE was guided by the ever-evolving tactical situation. New major equipment and weapons systems (M777, Leopard 2A6M, AHSVS, EROC, etc) were introduced over the five-year operation. These were often rapidly put into service, and some of the specialty trades and support equipment did not exist in sufficient depth to satisfy the support requirements. The use of contracted FSRs was necessary to fill in the gaps.

Continual operations in a hostile environment could garner increased public sympathy and support for the safety of the soldier. Historically, this has translated into fast-tracking the purchase and fielding new and increased equipment necessitating the use of FSRs. The inflow of equipment into theatre will require judicious use of all resources to ensure seamless introduction to the end user. Training aids need to be available for use in training prior to deployment.

Despite the challenges presented by force generating an ad hoc CSS unit, every NSE successfully met the needs of its BG and used its experiences to continuously improve successive deployments. The lessons learned in Afghanistan by the serving CSS soldiers and technicians have enhanced the capabilities of all Svc Bns, filling their ranks with the leadership and experiences that can only be developed in a high tempo operational environment.

OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL SUSTAINMENT IN A COMPLEX/ ASYMMETRIC ENVIRONMENT

Since the Second World War, the CA has gained almost 70 years of experience in CSS. The operations were predominately peace support operations (PSO) under the auspices of the UN or NATO. The recent operations in Afghanistan have demonstrated a shift in the nature of conflicts. The CSS community was faced with the full spectrum of conflict—from non-combat operations to full kinetic war-fighting operations. This section will discuss how the CA has evolved from the traditional CSS support doctrine to capably sustaining the BG in a complex and asymmetric environment.

Security in a Fluid AO. In a non-contiguous AO, adjacent subordinate units do not share boundaries. Subordinate units receive a distinct AO, and the unassigned portions of the battlespace are under the responsibilities of the higher HQ. Advances in technology have greatly affected the nature of operations; specifically, it has led to a rapidly increasing, non-linear, multi-dimensional battlespace. As a result, soldiers are often dispersed within the AO and thus are regularly not under observance or control of friendly forces. The latter was a problem that CSS soldiers faced during the operations in JTF (Afg).

In the contemporary battlefield, there is often no rear area, and operations are therefore conducted in a fluid AO. The operations in JTF (Afg) have shown the impact on sustainment and force protection due to the lack of secure LOC and the lack of "protected" rear areas. This drastically affected how the CSS units executed their tasks, which consequently influenced the training that personnel received prior to deployment. Particularly, CSS soldiers had to have combat skills, weapons systems and armoured vehicles as escorts as well as proper communications in order to correctly defend themselves.

To the maximum extent possible, sustainment support was provided to Canadian elements by the NSE through their CSS detachments located at the FOB or PB using three main methods of delivery. The NSE retained C2 of the CSS detachment; however, it was attached TACON for local defence and security purposes. This continually developing concept ensured that the NSE maintained control of the maintenance and supply capabilities that permitted the forward delivery of combat supplies and other commodities to support short-term intense operations.

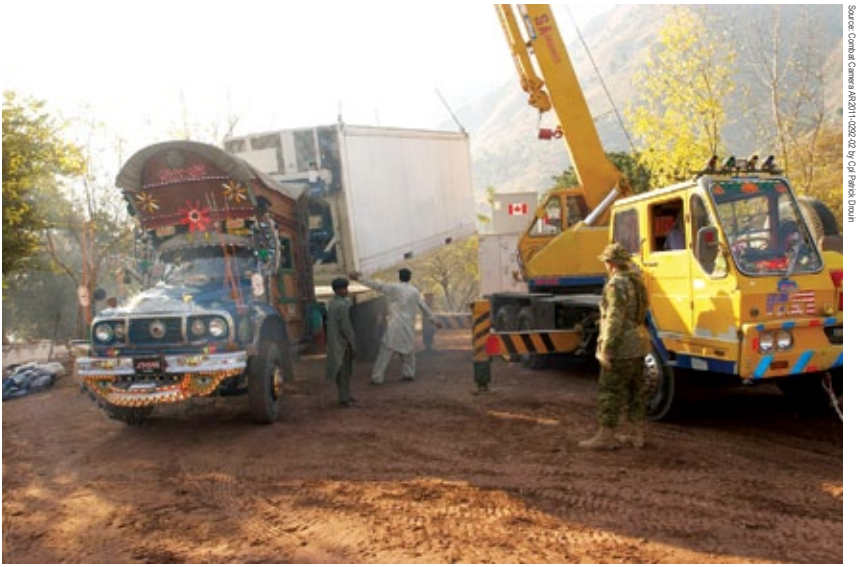
Sustainment Planning. The NSE was responsible for the sustainment planning cycle and used the best delivery method to maximize support (materiel, equipment and personnel) and minimize military vehicles on the road. The NSE liaised with other coalition forces for use of their resources such as American air assets and the Dutch trailers to initially transport the Leopards out to the FOB when the TF had insufficient resources.

The following were the three primary methods of delivery:

Convoy Operations. This was the primary method of delivery. These were planned and executed by the NSE using resources from supply, transport and the NSE's force protection platoon. A typical convoy operation was composed of one or more vehicles utilizing the container handling unit (CHU) or flat rack system, sea containers containing sustainment items including mail and ammunition, and limited administrative troop carrying capability. Communication with the "owners" of the battle space was maintained throughout, each convoy being a deliberate operation and providing an intelligence capability. Timing, destination and route (to the greatest extent possible) were varied to minimize potential enemy action. An integral force protection platoon ensured that the escort of CSS resources was uninterrupted by competing tactical priorities.

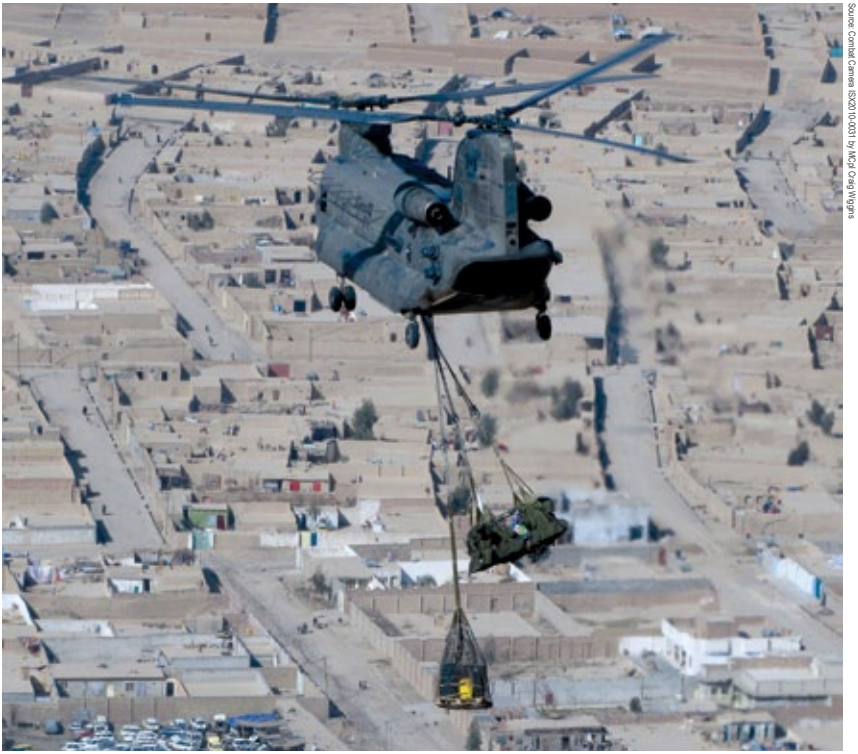
Source: Combat Camera AR2011-0326-03 by Cpl Patrick Drouin

Locally Contracted Transportation. The jingle trucks were the locally contracted trucks and drivers that provided a method of delivery for low-risk push replenishment of Class I, III and IV stores without protection or escort. This process allowed for sufficient stocks to be placed forward in support of BG short-term operations.



Source: Combat Camera AR2011-0292-02 by Cpl Patrick Drouin

Rotary Air. Rotary wing support was a capability that continually developed. The capability was greatly enhanced with the addition of the Canadian Air Wing, thus reducing reliance on the American assets. During Roto 7, aviation assets were contracted through CCATs and mission essential material was transported more frequently. This reduced the density and frequency of road-bound convoys. Furthermore, sling-loaded combat supplies were also projected forward to assist in the sustainment of sub-unit operations.



Source: Combat Camera ISX2010-0031 by MCpl Craig Wiggins

Role of Log Ops. NSE Log Ops was responsible for the sustainment planning cycle. Based on the Plans Officer's consumption projections, Op Stock items such as ammunition, bulk fuel, combat rations and bottled water sustainment could be planned to employ the full range of delivery methods. The Log Ops replenishment planning cell maximized the use of an extensive multi-modal sustainment framework for the transportation of materiel, equipment and personnel. Each method of delivery or mode of transportation was exploited to its maximum potential and, once the limits of each mode were intimately understood, worked to minimize the number of military vehicles on the road.

NSE Force Protection Platoon. The use of an integral FP platoon, solely dedicated to sustainment operations, ensured that the escort of CSS resources could continue uninterrupted by competing tactical priorities. The FP platoon was force-generated by combat arms units of the Reserve Force and embedded in the NSE S&T company. A mobile force whose local defence capabilities were enhanced by the introduction of the RG31 fleet, the FP section commander would be employed as convoy commander and be responsible for all security-related issues associated with the convoy. This would include route security, alternate route selection, defence of the convoy and intelligence gathering. Tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) continued to be developed by the FP platoon throughout the rotation by means of detailed battle procedure and rehearsals.

In conclusion, the asymmetric nature of the operational environment found in Afghanistan necessitated flexibility and adaptability within the doctrinal framework in order to provide support to an environment where the battlespace consisted of non-contiguous areas of operations. The concentration of NSE CSS assets forward supplemented the limited BG CSS assets and was critical to the BG success.

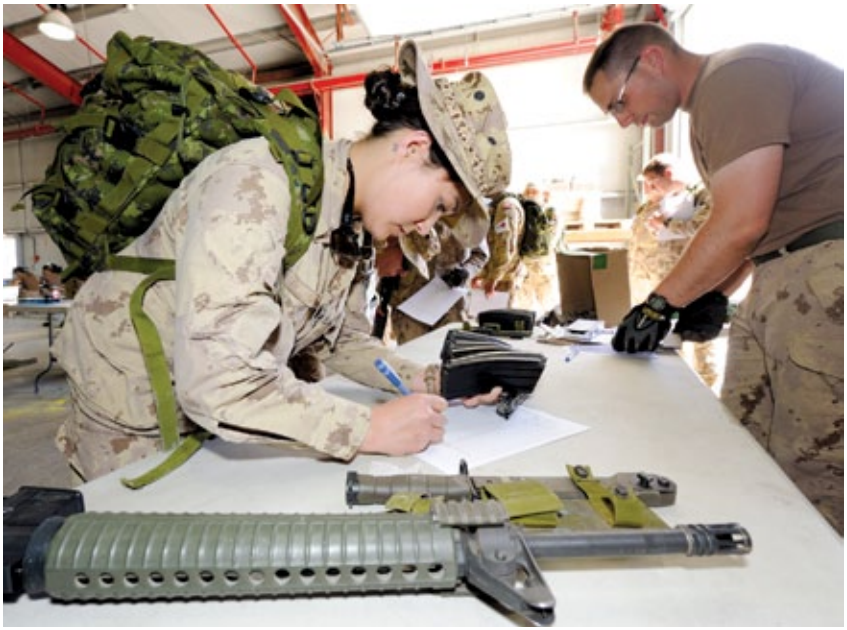
THE IMPORTANCE OF A WEAPONS CATCH TEAM

As a responsible and accountable military, it is essential that all weapons and equipment are tracked and managed very carefully. When military members are deployed into a theatre of operations, CSS personnel must accurately track their weapons as they transition from mounting unit to the final destination to conduct operations. A requirement was quickly identified to achieve the goal of tracking weapons to prevent the loss of control and accountability. The solution to that was to form weapons catch teams to intercept and track the weapons as they moved in and out of theatre. The finite details of a weapons catch team can be found in the CF publication A-LM-007 (CF Supply Manual), but the following paragraphs quickly outline why the changes were made.

Afghanistan forced the CSS community to constantly adjust TTPs and apply its doctrinal principles in non-conventional ways. Like the BG, the NSE was constantly forced to rethink how it conducted business, and controlling weapons in and out of theatre was a key adjustment. The initial directives that were given to supply techs had to be modified and adapted in a very short timeframe to ensure proper weapons management. As a result, a weapons catch team was put into place that gave subsequent NSEs the ability to exercise tighter control from the time troops departed Canada to the time they returned from theatre.

Before the weapons catch team methodology was initiated, weapons were simply packed and sent by air. An OPI was assigned to accompany these weapons and carry the appropriate documentation required for its transition into theatre. Upon arrival, this OPI was responsible for the eventual distribution of the weapons to the individuals.

Once the system of utilizing a weapons catch team was initiated, supply techs from the LMA were responsible for sending the weapons into theatre before the troops even departed. This involved tracking and controlling over 2,500 weapons as they moved from Canada into theatre and back again. To make matters even more complicated, soldiers



Source: Combat Camera IS2011-1024-19 by Sgt Matthew McGregor

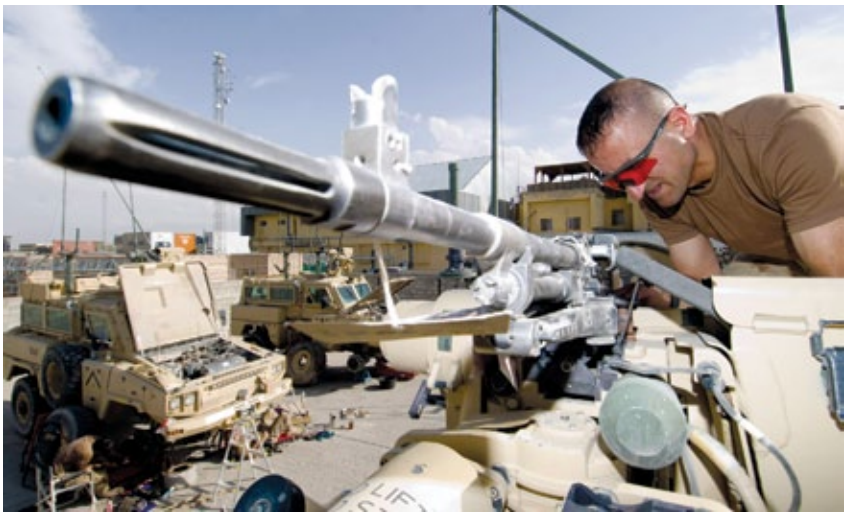
returning to Canada were diverted for a number of days as a result of a third location decompression (TLD). With a catch team in place on both sides of the ocean, the tracking of weapons as they transitioned through different locations was much smoother.

Many rotations have utilized the weapons catch team, and its effectiveness to accurately track weapons in and out of theatre has proven invaluable. Modifications have already been made to the CF Supply Manual (A-LM-007) to standardize the procedures for future deployments. As future deployments will have their own unique guidelines and challenges, the weapons catch teams will have to adapt accordingly to protect and control the movement of personal weapons. As new programs of material management make their entry into the supply world over the coming years, it will be necessary to integrate them into the weapons catch team method of tracking. The professionalism and ability of supply techs to adapt will ensure that the needs of all customers are met.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE VISIT (TAV)

A TAV consists of military or civilian teams (or any combination of both) who deploy into theatre to provide short-term technical or other specialist expertise. It can also serve in a surge capacity to backfill critical shortages during HLTA or when weapons or vehicles need more manpower to be combat effective. In 2010, the CF deployed 311 TAVs into Afghanistan with a total bill of 1,074 personnel. By having specialist members brought in for specific tasks, it allowed the TF to continue to concentrate on the mission and provide key support to operations. TAVs also reduce the workload on all members during a deployment and play a key role in reducing fatigue and mental overload.

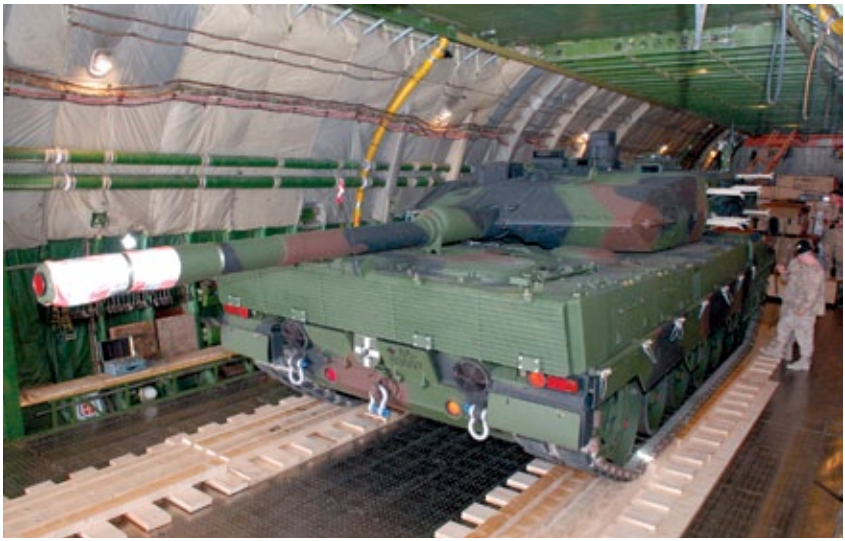
Before a TAV is initiated, it is crucial to consider all in-theatre resources. Although the vast majority of TAVs brought into theatre were deemed a success, this was not always the case. In 2010, a TAV was brought overseas for the newly acquired installation kit electronic equipment (IKEE) to be installed on the Coyotes. Although highly motivated, the team ran into several difficulties, including a lack of specialized equipment in theatre and the complexity of the Coyote's weapons systems. The team did not meet its goals in the timeline provided, which demonstrated that the plans drawn up in Canada were far different from the reality in Afghanistan.



Source: Combat Camera AT2011-0062-03 by MCpl Rory Wilson

TAVs played an important role in ensuring that members on deployment were able to overcome complex technical issues beyond the normal mission scope or pre-deployment technical training. It was crucial to have a realistic time estimate completed and a detailed schedule in place before the members deployed. In order to maximize their effectiveness, TAV members must receive pre-deployment training adapted to the task that they will be carrying out. A recce before deployment would ensure that they could come back to Canada and readjust their plans or equipment before they went back to do the job.

TAVs also played a critical role in introducing new technologies into theatre. With the arrival of Canadian Chinooks and the newly acquired Leopard 2A6M, their ability to be put into operations quickly and effectively was attributed not only to the hard work and dedication of the supporters on the ground but also to the critical assistance provided by the TAVs. Balancing factors such as team size, synchronization with theatre assets, and operational tempo ensure that the proper team is deployed to make optimum use of such scarce resources.



Source: Combat Camera AR2007-TI03-01 by MCpl Bruno Turcotte

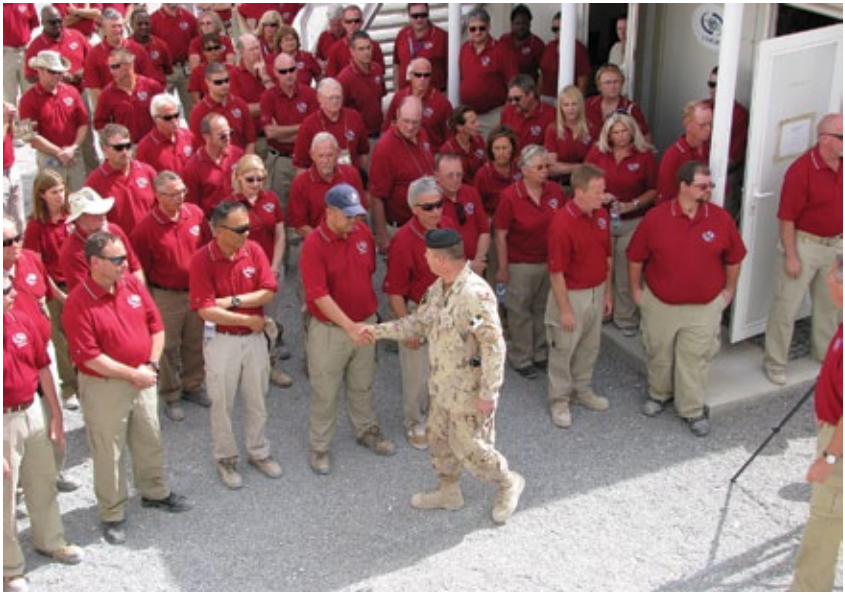
CANADIAN FORCES CONTRACTOR AUGMENTATION PROGRAM (CANCAP)

During the 1990's, the CF found itself stretched to the limit. The Army, for example, had been reduced from four brigade groups to three while at the same time the number, intensity and location of missions increased. During the same period, the Force Reduction Program created a significant reduction in many of the support trades with a resulting impact on the level of experience within said trades.

In order to maintain a necessary focus on its remaining core capabilities and to enhance its operational flexibility, the CF developed and implemented an innovative and highly successful program to augment its ability to provide logistical support. The Canadian Forces Contractor Augmentation Program (CANCAP) was designed to meet the strategic goal of ameliorating the conditions caused by the FRP and the simultaneous increase in operational tempo. The aim was to create an additional capability that could be activated on a provisional basis as required to relieve the stress on the already-strained military structure, particularly during prolonged operations.

Under the aegis of this program, contractors are now used to bridge the gap in the following primary areas designated for augmentation:

- food services;
- material management & distribution;
- communications;
- accommodations; and
- power & water supply.



Source: Author

NSE Roto 10 RSM thanking members of CANCAP

CANCAP is able to be involved from the very outset of an operation and encompasses tasks that range from camp construction to sustainment and replenishment. The use of CANCAP has freed up military personnel to be employed where their military skill sets are most required and therefore also allows military support forces to concentrate on their primary role of support to war-fighting.

The approval authority for employment and funding of CANCAP is the Chief of Defence Staff. CEFCOM (now CJOC) J4 Logistics, as the NDHQ Coordinator for CANCAP services, is responsible for initiating the staffing process. J4 Log at NDHQ is the military representative and is responsible for initiating the process. Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) and the Director General Procurement Services (D Proc S) oversee the process. Putting the contract in place, requisitioning the necessary proposals and working out the necessary administrative details was all achieved at NDHQ in Ottawa. However, it proved difficult once in Afghanistan to make required changes to the statement of work (SOW) when the closest PWGSC support office was in another country.

In theatre, the CO of the NSE or the National Command & Support Element (NCSE) was responsible to the JTF commander for all operational-level support. The CMC worked directly for the CO NSE/NCSE and was responsible for administrative and contractual matters related to CANCAP. The contractors' project manager also reported directly to the CO NSE/NCSE and worked closely with the CMC on managing contractual issues.

The primary reference document for all of those groups is the CANCAP Task Order. It is comprised of contractual terms and a SOW. While the contractor was highly effective at carrying out items clearly articulated in the SOW, items outside the scope required a change order, which can be time consuming and have a negative impact on operations while waiting for the change to be approved. The contractor has to have a degree of flexibility and a capacity to react in a timelier manner, and the CMC must have the ability to locally approve items outside the SOW.

The CMC was comprised of an officer commanding (Major), a 2IC (Capt) and a group of military quality assurance inspectors or technical authorities—typically one for each primary area of responsibility as indicated on the SOW, which is part of the task order. Also on the team were auditors who were responsible for ensuring that services were being provided in accordance with the SOW and that the invoices submitted matched the work being delivered.

Contractors are considered non-combatants and their service contracts normally preclude the contractor from being armed or from engaging the services of security contractors. For that reason, contractors are typically restricted to the boundaries of their camp. However, that adversely affects the contractors' ability to deliver everything that is laid out in the SOW. For example, while CANCAP is responsible for B vehicle maintenance in its entirety, in Afghanistan it was not always able to maintain B fleet vehicles operating outside the wire.

In some cases, in order for CANCAP personnel to complete all of their assigned tasks, force protection needed to be provided and drawn from uniformed CF personnel. In essence, they are brought into theatre to free up uniformed personnel for higher priority work but end up cancelling out the manpower savings through security concerns. At the most basic level, an adjustment needs to be made in order to address the security concern for contractors, and there are several possible COAs worthy of further exploration:

- increase the NSE force D&S manning to include dedicated security for CANCAP personnel who need to travel outside the wire in order to complete tasks;

- allow a narrowly defined exemption for the hiring of private security for CANCAP personnel who need to travel outside the wire in order to complete tasks; or

- reassess what jobs CANCAP personnel are needed to do and, if it amounts to a manpower savings, migrate certain tasks back to uniformed personnel.

The CF should continue to seek innovative solutions to meet ever-changing operational commitments abroad, but by and large CANCAP has been a success story, as it has permitted uniformed personnel to focus on core military tasks. Every deployment will produce its own challenges. However, CANCAP will be able to build on the experience and knowledge gained during its time in Afghanistan and will be thus better prepared to be an integral part of future deployments around the globe.

CANADIAN FORCES PERSONNEL SUPPORT AGENCY (CFPSA)

The role of CFPSA on a deployed operation is to deliver welfare programs and services to enhance the quality of life of deployed task force members, including CANCAP employees. In Afghanistan, that section was responsible for fitness, travel and recreation (FS&R) activities, barber services at KAF, CNS, Camp Mirage (CM) and various FOBs and, finally, travel arrangements associated with HLTA. In addition, a retail section was responsible for the provision of retail services to KAF, CNS, CM and the various FOBs. Stocking was driven largely by the suggestions of those using the services. CFPSA also organized and supervised special events such as the CANCON shows, Team Canada visits and Christmas activities. They also oversaw the equitable distribution of welfare items and amenities to members in theatre.

If anything, the service provided by CFPSA in Afghanistan during the Kandahar mission may have inflated expectations as to what is routinely available. Moreover, there were instances of CFPSA personnel arriving in theatre before their service facilities were available. Since CFPSA personnel are deployed to perform specific functions, they cannot be reassigned in the same manner as uniformed personnel; for example, a fitness instructor with no gym to work in cannot simply be reassigned to work in a CANEX.

It is therefore important to include an estimate of what CFPSA support will be required during the earliest possible stages of theatre activation but to have a clear-cut picture in place. That will ensure that CFPSA staff can arrive in theatre to marry up with their tasks and/or facilities rather than arrive and wait.

In certain situations, it may be necessary to resort to a scaled-back version of the support that was so readily available during the CF's time in Kandahar. To that end, it is also necessary to manage the expectations of deploying personnel regarding CFPSA's services.

SUMMARY

The CSS personnel and structure of JTF (Afg) evolved throughout the six-year deployment in Kandahar. The CSS element was a hybrid structure whose design was based partly on doctrine, partly on identified requirements, and partly on manning restrictions. This *Dispatches* is a snapshot of the CSS methodologies employed by the CF in Kandahar. It highlighted some of the more notable experiences of the CSS in an asymmetric and evolving threat, which represent a model that should be reviewed and adapted for future CF operations in similar environments.