

# Special Operations Forces Logisticians: Bridging the Gap

The 528th Sustainment Brigade trained logisticians from around the services to use Army logistics information systems required to supply special operations forces in Afghanistan.

By Chief Warrant Officer 3 Alex M. Ocasio

**T**oday's Department of Defense (DOD) operations are more joint than ever before. This structure is most evident in the U.S. Special Operations Command which relies on the joint services to maximize DOD's special operations capability. Despite operating jointly on the ground, gaps still exist between service-specific systems. One example is found in Afghanistan where Army, Navy, and Marine Corps special operations forces operate predominately in an Army ground environment.

In Afghanistan, Army logistics information systems (LISs) are the primary automation tools used for resupplying forces and ensuring that their equipment remains operationally ready at all times. This requires Marine Corps and Navy logistics personnel to use unfamiliar LISs yet provide an acceptable level of logistics support.

## The Cross-Service Challenge

In this Army-centric logistics environment, SOF logisticians have to bridge the gap between service-specific logistics systems. Without Army logistics support personnel to support SOF units, our sister services may not be as effective as they could be in accomplishing mission requirements.

Our sister services' role in the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan (CJSOTF–A) is important. In the CJSOTF–A, they operate in a special operations task force (SOTF) capacity, where they are responsible for supporting the war efforts in their command's area of responsibility. Each command is responsible not only for coordinating its tactical efforts but also for supporting logistics sustainment of its assigned forces.

The fact that the Navy's LISs are completely different from the Army's LISs has been a challenge for Navy and Marine Corps logisticians in SOTFs. In response, the 528th Sustainment Brigade, Special Operations (Airborne), developed a new training program

for Marine Corps and Navy personnel to help better integrate the services' logistics organizations into the Army logistics environment in Afghanistan.

## The Commanders' Intent

In Afghanistan's vast logistics arena, the commanders decided to focus on training tasks that provide the most value to mission support and that generate the largest margin of failures when personnel are not properly trained. The training was intended to address the lack of general technical knowledge of the systems required for interacting with supported supply support activities (SSAs).

The 528th Sustainment Brigade commander and the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) 4 commander worked together to develop the best way ahead to prepare NSW 4 personnel for their upcoming deployment. This collaboration resulted in the development of a two-phased program that provided predeployment and in-theater assistance support.

Both the predeployment and in-theater assistance training provided SOF joint-force logisticians with the experience and assistance they needed to understand Army LISs, supply functions, policies, and procedures. The training addressed LIS functional areas, including the Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced (PBUSE) and the Standard Army Maintenance System–Enhanced (SAMS–E). SOF logisticians must master these functional areas in order to achieve the highest level of technical proficiency, maintain a fully mission capable equipment status, and sustain the SOTFs in Afghanistan.

## Phase I: Predeployment Training

The predeployment training consisted of three segments, including an LIS training course, a logistics support workshop, and practical training with logistics personnel.

**LIS training course.** The first segment of Phase I

was a 40-hour LIS training course supported by the Sustainment Automation Support Management Office (SASMO) of the Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) G-4. The course provided training on SAMS-E and both levels of PBUSE (supply room and property book office [PBO]). These systems are used to create, submit, and track requisitions in support of organizational supply and equipment requirements. Supply personnel also use them to manage their maintenance programs and accountability requirements for the organization's property.

**Logistics support workshop.** The second segment of Phase I was a half-day workshop supported by senior logisticians from the 528th Sustainment Brigade. The workshop included logistics training research enablers, including the Logistics Information Warehouse, the Army Integrated Logistics Analysis Program, and the Radio Frequency In-Transit Visibility Portal. Training also covered Department of the Army forms and publications, interactions with the SSA, and reconciliation processes and procedures between SSAs and their supported units. The workshop culminated in an open forum on Army logistics systems, procedures, and functions.

**Practical training.** Phase I culminated in a 2-day practical training event to familiarize trainees with the daily operational requirements of the systems.

Based on the type of LIS and functional area training that trainees received during the first segment, they were aligned with the motor pool, the supply room, or the PBO. A trainee who received SAMS-E training was aligned with maintenance personnel. One who received PBUSE (supply room) training was aligned with supply room personnel. And, one who received PBUSE (PBO) training was aligned with PBO personnel. This training provided hands-on experience with LIS and the focused functional area.

## Phase II: In-Theater Support

Phase II, the in-theater support program, assists, integrates, and completes the predeployment training program. The intent of this phase is to ensure that personnel arriving in theater start their deployments with the data and settings needed to do their jobs.

The in-theater support program provides a theater-entry support team to guide the SOF joint-force logisticians in using Army LIS processes and procedures. This support team is made up of 528th Sustainment Brigade personnel who are specialists in the three LISs and functional areas that the SOF logisticians had trained on during the predeployment phase.

During October 2012, a team of three personnel from the 528th Sustainment Brigade successfully conducted the first iteration of phase II. This training took 8 to 10 days for each sister service to complete and was provided to NSW4 and Marine Corps Forces Spe-



*Special operations forces train on Army logistics information systems during predeployment training.*

cial Operations Command (MARSOC) 82-2 personnel at six different locations throughout Afghanistan (three sites for NSW4 and three sites for MARSOC 82-2). During this training, the sustainment brigade personnel provided assistance on LIS processes and procedures.

The joint forces are very receptive and are looking forward to the additional support the 528th Sustainment Brigade will provide while it is deployed.

The 528th Sustainment Brigade has sponsored eight iterations of predeployment training and one deployment in support of phase II since the inception of the program in December 2011. The program is responsible for educating and assisting a combined total of 42 personnel between MARSOC 82-2 and NSW 4. By providing better trained logisticians who are able to transition with less difficulty to an Army-based logistics structure, this effort is bridging the gap for our SOF forces projected to support the CJSOTF-A mission.

---

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Alex M. Ocasio is the senior supply systems technician of the 528th Sustainment Brigade, Special Operations (Airborne). He holds an associate's degree from Excelsior College and is currently working towards a B.S. degree. He is a graduate of the Warrant Officer Advanced Course, Joint Logistics Course, Support Operations Course Phase II, and the Jumpmaster Course.