

Supply Chain Management

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Having the supplies necessary to perform your job is important. Nowhere is supply chain management more of a critical factor than the military, the artillery is no exception. Having supplies delivered on time and as demanded Organization such as United Nations (UN), North American Treaty Organization (NATO), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) are all connected through both their government and their militaries. Standards that exist across them in regard to equipment are important for the use of military. The standardization of equipment within NATO allows for military's to use such equipment in an interchangeable way. This allows for equipment to be used between allied countries without lag time. The policies that exist can influence contracting as companies that specialize in the specification that are used by NATO countries. It also allowed for the interchangeability of people due to such standardizations. Member of allied countries can be loaned to other countries to assist in the procurement process and the subsequent time it can take to train people on new equipment or new policies for operation. If a country is being added to an organization it will take time for them to procure equipment that is of the same standards and to bring it's training around to the standard.

The supply line in a war can make or break an army. The inability to get supplies to troops can affect everything. Combat readiness is based on having the equipment needed. The war in Afghanistan has been raging strong for a number of years. One would then assume that the supply line is a closely guarded convoy to ensure that front line soldiers are receiving the required goods. The United States has created a contract that funds the use of contractor to move supplies across Afghanistan without American military escort of any kind. Just this contract for the supply line alone is worth 2.16 billion dollars. (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010)

The movement of supplies within Afghanistan has long been contended as extremely difficult. It is a landlocked country with hostile geography. "Unlike Iraq, which has access to the Persian Gulf and is bordered by several U.S. allies, Afghanistan is landlocked between countries with unstable security, impenetrable geographic barriers, and governments hostile to the United States. The most direct route to redeploy goods and materiel from Iraq to Afghanistan runs through Iran and is therefore unusable. To the north, the government in Turkmenistan has refused to allow U.S. supply routes to pass through the country." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010) This has left the American to look into moving goods in a non-traditional way; the contract is called Host Nation Trucking. The contract is overseen by the Department of Defense and has strict rules of how goods are to be moved. They are timelines that are set out to ensure the steady flow of goods to smaller forward operating bases and the security that the contracts use to protect their cargo must be of certain calibre. All that being said when the contract is awarded the primary contractor is fully responsible for the safety of the driver and cargo.

"A typical convoy of 300 supply trucks going from Kabul to Kandahar, for example, will travel with 400 to 500 guards in dozens of trucks armed with heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010) This movement of trucks accounts for 70% of the American supply line goods being moved around the country. This contract out of such a major portion of movement of goods around the country can be considered a positive for the American military itself since this allowed for troops to be more focused on counterinsurgency. The weight of the potential threat has been shifted to Afghan nationals. The government has regulations on the licenses that are given out to private security companies. "The military directly employs a significant number of unlicensed private security contractors for use as guards at its forward operating bases." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010) This shows the lip service that is given to the regulations; the military is ignoring its own directives. This gives little incentive for private contractors to bother to follow any of the regulations. Apathy towards such policies when it's suited

gives no clout to what the military force is trying to do to help Afghanistan. Instead it shows that rules only apply when it's convenient. This continued indifference allows for corruption to take place.

Even for those that in charge of overseeing the contracting there is little that they can do from their locations in Afghanistan as they never go outside the wire. "Contracting officers relied exclusively on reports from the 484th and the HNT prime contractors for information regarding whether the contractors were in compliance with the contract." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010) Neither the 484th Joint Movement Control Battalion nor the primary contracts for Host Nation Trucking were ever actually on the roads to witness if the subcontractors reports held any validity to them; contracts are handed out only to be subcontracted and then usually further subcontracted. Security for the contracts which is to be carried out by the contractor themselves is also subcontracted out several times down. This make it hard to follow were the money that is being poured into convoy security it actually headed.

Terrorism is a wide reaching term that can cover a lot of things. In the case of Afghanistan it is applied to the Taliban. The movement of good from Kabul to Kandahar moves through areas that are controlled by warlords, or strongmen, commanders, and militia leaders; depending on which name they choose to use. These people have a strong hold over the areas in which they operate. "When HNT contractors self-reported to the military that they were being extorted by warlords for protection payments for safe passage and that these payments were "funding the insurgency," they were largely met with indifference and inaction." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010) This indifference allows for significant amount of money to exchange hands for the supply chain to continue. Private security has reported along with Host Nation Trucking contractors that much of the money that is spend moving supplies around the country are paid out to Afghan officials and frequent government extortion along the road. The amounts range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 in monthly bribes to nearly every

Afghan governor, police chief and local military unit whose territory the company passed.

(Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010)

The level of corruption that can exist in such large amounts of money being extorted from the American's will have a significant effect on the civilian population within Afghanistan. The private security contracts that exist are undermining the ability for the American to effectively gain the trust of the civilian population. The security forces that are defending the NATO supply line are firing wildly into the civilian towns and hamlets as they drive by regardless of if they are taking any type of threat as a deterrent for anyone to attack them. (Associated Press, 2010) This undermines the operations that are in place to help the civilian population. "These Afghans fear the Americans will leave behind an Afghan government too weak to do its work, and strongmen without any popular support." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010) There is continued mistrust since the civilian population knows that security convoys are protecting the supply line that the American's need. "Public anger is directed at the Afghan government and coalition forces, making it more difficult for the U.S. and others to convince locals that they should look to them for protection rather than the Taliban." (Associated Press, 2010) The money that is being paid both in bribes and to protection forces for the supply line only exist due to the presence of outside military forces; the civilians are then reasonable in their apprehension in welcoming the foreign forces.

Civilian mistrust will continue since the convoys will continue for now. The corruption of the government shows itself in many lights. "The gunmen who allegedly shot Suleiman at a gas station turned out to be Afghan police from neighboring Zhari district moonlighting as convoy security guards, said Abrahams. They were turned over to the Zhari police chief and "are back on the street," he said." (Associated Press, 2010) This type of action undermines the ability for the police force to effectively do their jobs which in turn affects the military's job. The military seems to have the impossible task of

policing the security that follow along with the supply line. As security falls into the hands of the contractors the military has little ability to curb the actions. The only action that is available to take away the contract and NATO's accreditation to work as security for the contracted convoys. This threat is mostly groundless and never been followed through on. (Associated Press, 2010) The primary contractors of the Host Nation Trucking have been open and candid about the bribes that are being paid out to ensure the safe passage of equipment. As they have never seen how the security of the convoys is managed in person they work solely on the subcontractors who self-report to the primary contractors. Since reports are unverifiable the actions continue on in the same vein. The logistic units that are involved are not combat units and do not leave the wire. Their only mission while in Afghanistan is to ensure that supplies reach their intended location. "Under normal circumstances, contractors do not volunteer to the government that they might be breaking the law; in this case, HNT contractors repeatedly did just that. Their reports fell on deaf ears." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010) Logistics cannot police what is done about the contracts they merely overlook the reports because the supply chain needs to continue. "Their jobs were to make sure the goods got to where they needed to go." (Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2010)

The military is held to a standard in North American; both in the United States and Canada we are proud of our military on the whole. This does not exempt the armed forces from having its share of problems. As public freedom of speak reigns supreme the is public criticism when actions are taken that the public have deemed to be grotesque or a breach of that oath that is taken to serve their country. As in the general public not everyone within the military are upstanding citizens; we tend to stand out due to our visible nature. While the atrocities of war are never hidden for those whose countries remain in a perpetual status of war we in North America have been extremely lucky to have been blessed with so such horrors. We in North America really only see such actions of violence through the reporting that is done.

Contractors are a large part of many militaries. We have contractors who teach us courses and who work beside us in battle. Those that teach us tend to be former military that come back because there are always too many jobs and not enough people. They have experience and knowledge which is logical to pass on to others. Contractors can play an important role in helping the military.

In the case of Host Nation Trucking there are a lot of problems. Paying locals off to ensure that supplies are moved throughout the country when corruption is rampant seems beyond belief. The inability to control the supply line can be a dangerous thing. When corruption is already rampant and those who look to extort money out of know that regardless of everything else the supplies that they are carrying need to get to the locations it will become an understand that money is never a concern. In the case of Afghanistan being to some the remote locations is both dangerous for the nationals who are doing the driving for the supply line but also dangerous for the troops since if supplies don't arrive they won't have supplies to be combat effective.

All the money that is exchanging hands to ensure safe passage is moving through to really unknown sources. When the money isn't paid supply trucks are reported to take fire for most of the trip usually resulting in both death and delays. This also will lose the hearts and mind of the people in which the NATO forces are trying to help. When private contractors are reported to be firing blindly into towns the population tends to feel less like working with allied forces. Money is being exchanged and the national private companies grow in power and armaments. When a population is nervous about the shifts in power they are likely to be unconcerned with what is happening on a national level and are more like to be concerned with the effect on their daily life. Power in lots of places boils down to who ever had the most money tends to have the most power; this means that when paying for security the balance of power is being shifted. The allowance for power to be shifted means that nationals are not going to do much to support anything that is likely to not be a long term solution. Foreign national

militaries are unlikely to be a long term solution; especially when they are helping to shift power away from the government.

The precarious situation that the military rests in is its inability to manage the supply line. The supply line is critical and it had been contracted out. Forces being spread so thin is what had causes such a unwarrantable situation. The ability of the military to control supply routes could help to bring more stability to the region. It is also important for the military to set out the criteria that is necessary to be followed and then have the man power and ability to ensure that the regulations that are set out are being followed. This type of stability could help to improve the civilian population's daily life and give the credibility to both the military and to the government that the regulations that are in place are being enforced. Allowing for either the military or private contractor to use unlicensed contracts only furthers the problem of stability. The regulations are created to help but working in direct violation does nothing but undermine credibility.

Managing the supply line is a life-threatening situation. To not have control over the supply line can be detrimental to any mission. The use of Host Nation Trucking in Afghanistan was brought in in good faith to provide employment to the area but that realities of the situation sometimes leave the military exposed from lack of equipment.

Works Cited

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