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# NOTE TO FILE—COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT IN THE ANA: 1ST BRIGADE, 205 CORPS TAKES ANOTHER GIANT STEP

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## Major David Yurczyszyn and members of TF 3-08 Kandak 5 OMLT

Soldiers must have water, food, ammunition, spare parts and fuel if they are to achieve their mission, so an army with inadequate combat service support (CSS) is an army in deep trouble.

After some two and a half years of capacity-building with Canadian mentorship, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the Afghan National Army's 205 Corps (known familiarly as 1–205) has its headquarters and its infantry kandaks up to or approaching full operational capability. The next step is delivering supplies and services to troops in the field.

All through 2008, soldiers of the Canadian Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) mentored Kandak 5—a battalion-sized ANA unit stationed at Camp Hero, near Kandahar Airfield—to provide 1-205 with CSS. Until recently, however, Kandak 5 did not seem ready to deploy outside the wire on one of the basic support tasks in this theatre: supplying a forward operating base (FOB).

Kandak 5's Commanding Officer and Operations Officer used the month of December 2008 to plan the delivery of logistic support as far forward in the battlespace as required. The kandak's leadership and soldiers then put together a forward support group—a composite company-sized element—and deployed it in support of *Operation ATAL 47*, conducted by 1–205 in the Zharey District of Kandahar Province. This was the first time 1–205 planned and executed such a sustainment concept in support of a mission.

### The Planning Phase

Planning is the first step of any successful mission, the phase where every bit of information is analyzed and every possible scenario is covered. Over three days in December 2008, Kandak 5 Operations Officer, Major Talib, and his planning staff—with a little mentorship from the OMLT—developed two courses of action. They presented both to their Commanding Officer and the Brigade Commander, using sand models to demonstrate the options they had developed.

The winning plan proposed a forward support group (FSG), led by Major Talib and the kandak's Regimental Sergeant Major, to go to the FOB with a “reach-back capability”—a team assigned to return to Camp Hero for emergency resupply requirements. The highly motivated soldiers of Kandak 5 knew they would be delivering a level of CSS their brigade had yet to see. If successful, this mission would be the model for all future 1–205 sustainment and logistics operations.

### Moving Out

The trip to the FOB was done in convoys, with elements of Kandak 5 leading the way. Both convoys arrived without incident, with all equipment and stores intact. Upon arrival, the soldiers of the FSG set themselves up in a way that made the most efficient use of the ground and the area defences allotted to them. Major Talib gathered his troops and briefed them on their camp and security routine, and then reported to the Brigade Tactical Operations Centre. With the camp set-up and settling into its routine, Major Talib could get a good picture of his assets and the mission tasks that might fall out of the orders he received from the Brigade. He set the FSG's battle rhythm and established a command post from which all communications traffic and orders would flow.

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The call back to his Commanding Officer was a proud moment for Major Talib, who reported that Kandak 5 was ready to begin its mission, but required more firewood and spare parts to complete the tasks already pouring in. This problem was thoroughly war-gamed during the planning process, so the kandak commander (working with the Senior OMLT Mentor) was ready to get his maintenance and warehouse officers—also working with a mentor—started on gathering equipment and stores. In hours, an emergency resupply convoy was heading down the road to the forward element, where the shipment would be promptly relayed to the FSG. The efficiency of this procedure confirmed to all leaders that Kandak 5 had a rock-solid plan that covered all eventualities.



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## The Execution Phase

Kandak 5's subunits were deployed to demonstrate the resources and capabilities a brigade CSS unit has to offer when deployed as a major player in the battlespace.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) had two taskings critical to the sustainment of 1-205 Brigade, and consequently, to mission success. First was security: HHC would provide camp security for all vehicles and equipment in the Kandak 5 compound, and force protection for elements of the FSG required to deploy into the battlespace to recover vehicles and casualties. HHC was also responsible for stocking and distributing the brigade's maintenance load of ammunition, rations, fuel and firewood. HHC's officers and non-commissioned members would settle for nothing less than strict security and proper supply discipline for goods destined for kandaks at the front.

The Maintenance Company area was large enough for a primary workshop and an equipment collection point (ECP) for vehicles recovered from operations. Technicians from Maintenance Company used a contact truck to visit forward positions to repair and service vehicles and equipment.

The Medical Officer and his team quickly established a medical centre to support the

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entire mission, a Unit Aid Station for Kandak 5 soldiers, and a casualty collection point (CCP) for all kandaks involved in the operation. Forward-deployed kandaks would move their casualties to the CCP, where Kandak 5's medical team would perform triage and send them on to the most appropriate medical facility.

To make all this happen, the soldiers of Transport Company became key players as they were tasked to haul the brigade maintenance load of food, stores, wood, ammunition, fuel and other necessities to the FOB and other destinations in the mission area. As soon as the stores were delivered, Transport Company was tasked to return to Camp Hero for truckloads of clothing, food, and winter relief supplies for distribution in the final stages of the operation to the people of Senjaray. The delivery of humanitarian assistance by the soldiers of Kandak 5 was paramount to the success of the mission. It was also yet another complex task the whole brigade could see Kandak 5 execute flawlessly.

Throughout *Operation ATAL 47*, information flowed back and forth between Brigade Headquarters and the front line. Kandak 5's Communications Company monitored all Brigade transmissions, operated the Brigade Command Post equipment and radios around the clock, and provided the Brigade Commander with a signaller. With all these brigade-level tasks, Communications Company also played a large role within Kandak 5, as Major Talib was running a Command Post of his own to monitor and control support provided by the FSG.

Major Talib, Kandak 5's Operations Officer, mounted the vehicles for one of the most important tasks of *Op ATAL 47*: counting and loading the humanitarian aid supplies for the town of Senjaray, and deploying to deliver them. The distribution of food, blankets, clothing and other household items to the local people was conducted as a sign of good faith, and to boost confidence in the ANA and the Government of Afghanistan. Major Talib identified the area where the distribution would be done, and briefed the Brigade Commander. After discussion, the chain of command gave Major Talib the green light to set the plan in motion.

The plan called for Afghan national security forces—army and police—to patrol with the Canadian battle group and OMLT from Task Force Kandahar and prepare a safe, secure site in Senjaray for the distribution of relief stores to the villagers. This task was completed in excellent form, creating stories and memories that will live for years.

## Final Thoughts

The people of Afghanistan are best served by their own security forces. With support from the Government of Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police continue to expand their capabilities to meet the security needs of the citizens of Afghanistan. *Operation ATAL 47* was a giant step in the right direction.

With the deployment of a Forward Support Group in a brigade-level operation, Kandak 5 broke new ground for the Afghan National Army, which continues to develop its professional skills. Kandak 5's mission on *Operation ATAL 47* pushed 1–205's combat service support capabilities to the next level, while the soldiers of Kandak 5 proved themselves a major asset to 205 Corps, on the leading edge of sustainment and logistics in the ANA.

As the capabilities of Afghanistan's national security forces continue to evolve, so does the Afghans' ability to take care of their own security and determine their own destiny as a nation.