

Logistics Moving the Seeds of a Brighter Future (UNJLC's Second Year in Afghanistan)



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Introduction

By the end of its six-month mandate in Afghanistan, the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC),¹ an inter-agency emergency response coordination mechanism administered by the World Food Programme (WFP),² had accomplished its goals. It had supported humanitarian logistics planners in their efforts throughout the 2001/2002 Afghan winter and addressed cross-border and in-theatre logistics bottlenecks. However, four months after the fall of the Taliban regime, the scale of the humanitarian crisis remained significant and the need for another year of operations was clear. The UNJLC, which had never been deployed for longer than six-months, was asked on an extraordinary basis to continue its operations for one more year.

The Afghan UNJLC team lead by David Kaatrud, Logistics Chief of WFP and Head of UNJLC, debated the impact that this precedent might have on the future of the UNJLC. How would another year of UNJLC operations test the relevance of this response concept in a protracted emergency? Could the UNJLC successfully implement its exit strategy - a smooth yet firm withdrawal from Afghanistan by March 2003? Without further ado, a much reduced but committed team³ prepared for the challenges of the forthcoming Afghan winter in what would later be known as “Phase II” of the UNJLC Afghanistan operation.

Business as Usual

During this second phase, the UNJLC continued to assist the humanitarian community in responding to the Afghanistan emergency.⁴ Given the importance of regional transit points for the flow of goods into Afghanistan, the UNJLC continued to monitor and gauge capacity of key logistics nodes in neighbouring countries. Piero Terranera, Regional Coordinator for the Afghan JLC Operation, outlined the new issues, “After the 2001/2002 winter, the bottlenecks had shifted. Emphasis was less on the border corridors and much more on the internal infrastructure such as secondary roads, mountain passes, interior airfields, etc. and we followed suit.”

To meet continued demand for information by the humanitarian community, the UNJLC maintained an updated website on a range of issues including road conditions, assessment and

¹ See Appendix A for a short description of the UNJLC concept.

² United Nations frontline agency in the fight against global hunger.

³ Between the UNJLC’s two phases, its international staff was reduced from 27 to 12.

⁴ In late March 2002, to assist the Afghan interim government, the UN Security Council established and funded the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) for one year. The UNJLC became part of one of UNAMA’s two pillars: the one dealing with humanitarian reconstruction and rehabilitation.

repair initiatives, fuel, security, Coalition and ISAF⁵ activity, air services, weather conditions, and warehousing. It continued to lead infrastructure projects⁶ and initiatives⁷ and remained engaged in situation assessments providing recommendations. UN agencies continued to receive logistics services such as cargo handling at various airfields and transportation arrangements within the country.⁸ However, as Terranera emphasised, “Although we never stopped tackling administrative and operational hurdles on behalf of the humanitarian community, the distinctive feature of our Phase II operation was our increasing involvement in the country’s most strategic initiatives.”

Winterisation Strategy

The Launch

The merciless Afghan winter and the level of complexity of the on-going humanitarian relief effort were the reasons for the one-year extension of the UNJLC (Exhibit 1). Typically, from November onwards large parts of the country were cut off from the outside world. To avoid a return to full-scale air operations and ensure maximum use of surface transportation before the winter season, as early as June 2002 UNJLC focused the attention of the humanitarian community on the upcoming winter through a winterisation strategy workshop. The aim was to instill a more organised approach than that taken in the winter of 2001/2002 after the end of the war for which agencies had had little time to prepare.

At the Kabul winterisation workshop held in mid-July 2002, a common operational strategy for the 2002/2003 winter was discussed. The workshop, attended by over 25 participants from the major UN agencies (WFP, UNHCR⁹, UNICEF¹⁰, WHO¹¹, UNAMA etc), donors (USAID¹²) and NGOs, helped identify priority needs and key interventions to be carried out by the main humanitarian actors.¹³ “During the two-day workshop we identified those external and internal corridors and routes vital for the humanitarian effort, discussed their

⁵ The UN International Security Assistance Force was mandated to assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas.

⁶ For example, primary road network and river control assessments.

⁷ Organised regular Road Task Force meetings in Kandahar, Kabul, Mazar-e-Sherif, and Hirat.

⁸ For example, UNJLC assisted the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the transportation arrangements for their forthcoming seed distribution (1,100 MT) programme in the Western Area.

⁹ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.

¹⁰ The United Nations Children’s Fund is dedicated to promoting children and their rights.

¹¹ The World Health Organization is the UN agency dedicated to attaining the highest levels of health for people.

¹² The United States Agency for International Development is a government agency that provides foreign assistance and humanitarian aid worldwide.

¹³ See Appendix A for a short description of the actors in this case.

future use and potential bottlenecks/blockages,” said Terri Toyota, Head of UNJLC Kabul. “It was a difficult exercise as almost nobody from the previous winter was still in the country and in many cases there had been no overlap between people moving out and coming in. What was worst was the fact that since the 2001/2002 winter intervention had been an emergency, there was almost no reporting or transfer of experience at the organisational level.” With little institutional memory to capitalise on, the participants relied on personal experience to outline their strategy.

The Strategy

To ensure adequate delivery of aid during the winter season, a three-pronged strategy was developed involving pre-positioning of aid, ensuring corridor accessibility and developing contingency airlift capacity. “Pre-positioning of aid – strategic placement of food or non-food items (NFIs) accessible to recipients for distribution throughout the winter months - was the most cost-effective option,” explained Toyota. This strategy was to be carried out in conjunction with minor road interventions to ensure access to pre-positioning sites before the onset of winter. For pre-positioning to be effective it was necessary to identify adequate storage facilities for the relief items in critical locations. Where pre-positioning was not viable due to population movement, road accessibility for aid convoys was to be ensured through interventions on critical routes before and during the winter season. Due to inherently high costs, airlift operations were to be used only as a life-saving measure in exceptional circumstances. In the interest of cost containment a combined strategy encompassing elements of the first two strategies was adopted.

By early October, the UNAMA-led Winterisation Operational Task Force composed of representatives of the UN agencies and government officials had prepared a National Action Plan for the winter. The combined effects of winter - physical isolation, lack of access to basic social services, high food insecurity, shelter needs and poverty¹⁴ - were expected to affect large segments of the population. As such, the overarching concerns of the winter preparedness programme addressed by the Plan were: food security, population movements, urban preparedness, accessibility and the nomad population (Exhibit 2).

The stock planning exercise of the humanitarian agencies had to take into account the needs and constraints of the various regions (Exhibit 3). Pre-positioning was selected for all regions except the Central Highlands where data on the projected number and location of beneficiaries was unreliable. In addition, physical constraints were also factored in. “For example, the road network in the North-East of the country is not only complex but also extremely difficult to clear and ‘unstable’,” explained Toyota. “The risk of avalanches and snow slides are high as most routes run adjacent to mountains.” As she observed, “The main issue in Kabul and provinces was shelter given the return of over one million returnees. In the Central Highlands people lacked access to basic supplies during the harsh winter months.” It was estimated that in total about 2.6 million people would be “at risk” due to food and shelter deficits (Exhibit 4). They fell into three broad categories: those in the rural areas cut off due to snow or other seasonal physical obstacles (approx. 1.3 million people) and in need of food; returnees and internally displaced without means or moving into vulnerable areas (over

¹⁴ As a result of a high rate of reintegration of refugees and returnees estimated up to 1.6 million.

270,000 people); and specific urban groups who lived outdoors or in dilapidated public buildings (700,000 people) or with inadequate shelter and in need of food (360,000 people).

Terranera recapped UNJLC's contribution to the winterisation process, "Alongside the humanitarian agencies, we were involved in the overall planning, pre-positioning of goods, preparation of winter stocks inventory, and status reports on road projects and road conditions. We also fulfilled our information brokerage function by posting all winterisation information on the UNJLC website."

The Stakeholders

To raise awareness of logistics-related winterisation issues among the donor community a donor conference was organised in Kabul in early August.¹⁵ "To realise the option of pre-positioned food and NFIs we had to ensure timely donor support in terms of funding and provision of commodities," stressed Toyota. "This and similar efforts helped us in securing donor commitment. However, it still took an awful long time before we actually received the first instalments for some of our planned activities."

The UNJLC winterisation initiative enjoyed the full support of government authorities, notably the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to which President Karzai appointed Minister Haneef Atmar who was to report to him directly on the planning and progress of the campaign. At the provincial level, the UNJLC took the time to meet with the local authorities to explain the latest winterisation and road rehabilitation efforts underway across the country.

Both the US-led Coalition and the Multinational Force, ISAF, participated in the development of collaborative winterisation plans with the UN agencies and government authorities. They provided practical assistance to complement the UN and government-planned activities.¹⁶

Infrastructure Viability

The access component of the winterisation action plan included three important elements: rehabilitation of key roads, rehabilitation of key airstrips, and road and airstrip snow clearance. To ensure the viability of roads, the UNJLC organised inter-agency missions to critical areas to review and confirm road conditions, identify locations for base camps and workshops, confirm snow clearing plans, and identify any shortfalls of current plans. UNJLC Kabul co-chaired the weekly Road Task Force meetings focused primarily on winter road access. The UNJLC satellite offices (Exhibit 5) identified high priority interventions (e.g. priority snow clearing stretches) that were of key significance for economic and humanitarian reasons. The satellite offices also acted as focal points for the receipt of snow clearing and main base camp operations proposals. To support operations, UNJLC Hirat translated Russian

¹⁵ Attended by MPW, MRRD, USAID, European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), Russia's Emergency Response Team (EMERCOM), ISAF, UNOPS, World Bank, IOM, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNAMA, WFP, Coalition and Russian and Dutch Embassy.

¹⁶ The Coalition provided weather forecasts and satellite imaging of critical areas while the ISAF assisted the UNJLC efforts by providing handling services for humanitarian cargo.

military maps of those routes requiring snow clearance while UNJLC Kabul developed a detailed Operations Guide for snow clearing activities as well as base camp management. "At times we assisted in the purchase of relevant equipment (e.g. snow removal) and spare parts, including selection, inspection and monitoring activities," recounted Toyota.

As early as September 2002 the UNJLC identified airstrips within the Western Area that would require snow clearance during the winter period. As for road clearance, it catalogued mechanical assets and identified machinery to be utilised for major passes. In respect of mechanical operators, it identified their availability within the private and public sector and identified gaps to be addressed through training. A key element was the use of a range of humanitarian actors to implement the intervention programme. This included engaging a significant number of NGOs. In the event of an NGO proposal remaining unfunded, the UNJLC together with UNOPS¹⁷ and MRRD collaborated on the snow clearance activities.

Toyota explained, "We were forced to review our snow clearance methodology that implied wide usage of snow removal equipment as a result of delayed donor funding and inflated NGO proposals. In any case, limited mechanical expertise, lack of spare parts and fast-moving supplies made sophisticated, western-style equipment of questionable value." In mid-November it was decided to proceed with a community-based cash-for-work programme involving labour-based contracts (3,000 labourers) and minimal equipment.¹⁸ Snow clearing equipment was to be used only in those areas where passes were not suitable for manual labour. To ensure that snow clearing teams could act as escorts through snow covered areas, humanitarian convoys were requested to contact the responsible UNJLC offices indicating their route. To coordinate and guide the efforts, the UNJLC and UNOPS contracted three international snow experts.

The new methodology expedited the contracting and procurement process. Low skilled labourers were provided with basic outfits (heavy coats, boots, gloves, eyewear, shovels and pick axes). Its impact on the local communities was two-fold: it provided an infusion of cash to rural areas and maintained access to entire populations throughout the winter with important psychological consequences. Toyota elaborated, "People in remote areas really appreciate contact in the winter. As long as the routes are kept open they can visit relatives, do not feel isolated, out of work. The programme gave the local population that bit of hope necessary to make them stay in their villages instead of migrating to the cities. Moreover, by remaining in their villages they could properly prepare for the next agricultural season" (Exhibit 6).

The shift to labour-intensive snow clearing resulted in the immediate participation of local authorities (MRRD), hence facilitating the hand-over of subsequent winter preparedness activities. "Inadvertently we moved to building a simple sustainable system easily replicable by the authorities in subsequent years," explained Toyota. All snow clearance items were to become property of the MRRD and contracting local manual labour at two dollars a day was a

¹⁷ United Nations Office of Project Services is an arm of the United Nations that provides project-management services to other UN Agencies.

¹⁸ Funded primarily by DFID (UK Department for International Development), USAID and SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency); monitored and administered by MRRD, UNOPS and UNJLC using 15 Kamaz trucks with blades, two Maskegs and two snowmobiles provided by WFP.

system that the Ministry could replicate after the departure of humanitarian organisations. The UNJLC assisted in the formalisation of the system using the data from interested NGOs' and the snow clearing teams' reporting system. A database on the volume of traffic, centimetres of snowfall and labour required to be maintained and used in subsequent years was created.

Kaatrud summarised, "Thanks to our preparatory work, the operation of the humanitarian community was effective and efficient as long lead times and reliance on fragile corridors and mountain passes prone to blockage with the first winter snows were systematically avoided. Forward planning enabled the humanitarian community to provide assistance to some 3.4 million beneficiaries, well beyond the estimated 2.6 million vulnerable people at risk." (Exhibit 7)

Nation-Building

During the second phase of operations, the UNJLC shifted significantly from its core activities. In addition to supporting capacity-building efforts and coordinating the country's road rehabilitation projects it was drawn into two major non-humanitarian projects which contributed to nation-building in Afghanistan. Kaatrud explained:

"As time wore on, we exposed ourselves to a serious mission creep. Government and institutions had 'disappeared' and there was an acute need to fill the logistics vacuum. By responding to these gaps, in certain aspects we began to suffer from our success since after a while everything became a logistics problem.

However, our role and participation was a deliberate and conscious one. Before engaging in any new activity we first assessed the potential benefits and risks of political and economic failure for humanitarian logistics operations. Concerning activities related to nation-building it was felt that a successfully elected and empowered government could lead to a peaceful and secure environment for humanitarian operations. Furthermore, the speedy introduction of a new currency was viewed as providing the requisite stable financial environment for cost-efficient humanitarian logistics operations. Consequently, we decided to provide substantial support to the country's transition process¹⁹ and UNAMA's essential nation-building efforts."

The Loya Jirga Process

On 5 December 2001 an agreement was reached in Bonn (Germany) between the US, the UN and the Afghan tribal factions on the political future of the nation. The interim government that came into effect on 22 December 2001 had the responsibility, within the next six months, to establish an Emergency *Loya Jirga*, or Grand Tribal Council (Exhibit 8). This emergency council, composed of representatives of the diverse Afghan ethnic groups, had a mandate to

¹⁹ Including the disarmament process started in July with the collection and storage of weapons by local factions in Mazar-e-Sherif.

prepare the country for a Constitutional *Loya Jirga* within two years. The UN agencies, under the auspices and leadership of UNAMA, were to assist the government in the process.

As the *Loya Jirga* approached and logistics bottlenecks began to emerge, the UNJLC was asked by donors to assist. The UNJLC supported the three steps of the *Loya Jirga* process culminating in the main gathering in Kabul in June 2002. It provided both air and general logistics assistance through UNJLC Kabul, it seconded three technical staff to the *Loya Jirga* Aviation Support Operations Centre (ASOC) managed by UNOPS and planned the delivery of hardware such as tents and furniture to the regional election centres. "During the second phase initiated in mid-May, we loaded and dispatched 500 tents, donated by UNICEF, from Kabul to the major towns around Afghanistan," said Toyota. In addition the UNJLC was involved in the selection and security of the election and gathering sites. "In Hirat, we helped UNAMA in the organisation of the election centres (infrastructure and election observers)," said Terranera.

The second round of elections in the regions' districts involved on-site logistics support (e.g. at the Olympic Stadium complex of Mazar-e-Sherif) and the movement of over 3,000 delegates and successful candidates. "One of our main contributions to the process was the ferrying of VIPs, key personnel and candidates around the country and to the capital Kabul," confirmed Toyota. "Our three technical staff seconded to the ASOC assisted UNAMA in the planning and movement of observers and *Loya Jirga* staff/cargo at regional and district levels using the six helicopters and four aircraft chartered by UNAMA." Upon completion of Step 2 of the elections, 1,153 *Loya Jirga* candidates were flown into Kabul from all over the country for the six-day *Loya Jirga* Grand Council of 11 June 2002. "In just two days, a total of 55 missions were organised moving candidates from Jalalabad, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sherif, Puli Alam, Bamyan, Hirat, Ghazni and Kunduz to Kabul," recounted Toyota. To enable the movement of candidates from the airport to the *Loya Jirga* site, UNJLC Kabul facilitated the hiring of transportation for UNAMA.

From the logistics perspective, the last step of the *Loya Jirga* process began on 18 June with the announcement of President Hamid Karzai's full cabinet. "Once the elections were over we did everything again in reverse," explained Toyota. Between 19 and 20 June, the UNJLC organised the return of the 1,500 delegates from Kabul to the provinces, demobilised the main *Loya Jirga* as well as the area offices and ensured the recovery of equipment. "In preparation for this last stage we had reviewed the inventory of equipment distributed and defined procedures for the collection procedure," said Toyota. "In addition, as per ISAF recommendations, we ensured the donation of the *Loya Jirga* furniture to schools."

Currency Exchange Exercise²⁰

On 4 September 2002 President Karzai announced the introduction of a new Afghan currency. The new currency aimed to break away from dollarisation and ensure and encourage the

²⁰ Over the last 30 years the old afghani had lost 99.9% of its value. About 60% of the notes circulating in 2002 had been printed in the past six years. Some warlords had illicitly printed notes as a mean to finance their operations while others such as General Dostum, Dr. Rabbani and the Jumbesh Party had created their own currency. In early 2002, two planeloads of new notes, equal to one thousand old notes were delivered to the Central Afghanistan Bank to replace the multiple (3+) currencies in circulation.

usage of local currency in domestic transactions. As stated by President Karzai, the symbolic and economic value of the redenomination were of great importance to the country's national and political unity. However, the changeover to the new currency had to be implemented within a two month period.

The government faced a multitude of challenges and operational constraints in the currency exchange exercise. First and foremost it had to persuade the Afghan population to trade 1,000 afghanis for a 1 unit note of an untested, new currency. The redenomination exercise involved high collection and distribution costs (approximately US\$5-6 million). Notes had to be transported by air and road across the country including remote, insecure and high altitude areas during autumn and winter when access was made difficult by rain and snow. This represented a huge logistical challenge for the authorities given the country's war-shattered infrastructure and limited transportation means.²¹ The verification and destruction of the old money, a necessity to avoid its re-circulation, constituted another source of concern.

The UNJLC was heavily involved in the planning and execution of the currency exchange process. It assisted the Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) with the receipt of related cargo (currency and equipment) at various airports. It also seconded UNJLC staff to the Central Bank and supplied a Logistics Coordinator to the Currency Exchange Task Force. "In Hirat, by late October, more than hundred billion old afghanis were destroyed and replaced by the new currency," confirmed Terranera. By the end of that month at least one Exchange Point (EP) was established in each province. By mid-December the currency exchange operation entered its final stage: the new afghan currency was made available from 47 designated EPs and 500 exchange windows²² served by a minimum of 12 persons. The EPs were equipped with a safe storage area (vault facility), note counting machines, invalidation equipment, tellers, and banknote handling equipment (Exhibit 9). The operation was completed on schedule on 2 January 2003 when the old bank notes ceased to be legal tender.

Terranera noted, "Although the actual verification task was carried out by some 180 UN/NGOs observer volunteers, the UNJLC ended up doing the bulk of the work. We were involved in the whole chain from receipt and air transport of the new currency, the deployment of the equipment and the initiation of the EPs, air transport of the observers/inspectors, to recording and destruction of the notes. Over and over again we picked up responsibilities that did not 'fit' neatly into any box."

Infrastructure Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation of the road infrastructure provided the necessary growth conditions for the agricultural economy and thereby contributed to improving local food security. UNJLC's work on the assessment of the country's road network to identify priority rehabilitation projects began as early as March 2002 and continued through the summer in preparation for winter. To ensure continuity in relief operations, the UNJLC kept a vigilant eye on priority routes, vigorously pursued the implementation of key interventions and helped coordinate the road rehabilitation process. At a subsequent stage it coordinated the survey and execution of

²¹ The Central Bank disposed only of two trucks, frequently out of use.

²² In Kabul, Hirat, Mazar-e-Sherif, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Kunduz and Gardez and their respective sub-areas.

most secondary road works. It also helped set up and chaired some of the regional Road Task Forces composed of donors, government authorities (MPW,²³ MRRD, Military), and the UN.

By July 2002, many local and international NGOs had filed their road reconstruction proposals with the UNJLC offices. To meet donor requirements, the UNJLC assisted some NGOs with the restructuring of their project proposals and performed the critical prioritisation function. The UNJLC then actively lobbied the donor community to fund repair work on critical routes. "Our efforts and solicited advice aimed to avoid duplication of funding on the same road sectors and to ensure the coverage of important stretches before the winter," said Toyota.

To facilitate the effective implementation of priority road rehabilitation projects, the UNJLC entered into a partnership with UNOPS, for example, collaborating to create and distribute CD-Roms of the UNOPS 'Technical Manual for the Rehabilitation of Feeder Roads Using Labour-Based Methods' in English and Dari amongst the humanitarian community.

Capacity Building

To maximise the sustainability of its interventions, the UNJLC integrated and trained local government personnel in its activities. In addition to weaving capacity building aspects into its daily operations, the UNJLC conducted and facilitated a number of training sessions. From mid-November to mid-December 2002, a series of six three-day River Engineering workshops were conducted for some 150 local engineers from government and NGOs in the capital and three other cities. These sessions were delivered by an expert seconded from Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SHA)²⁴ and were aimed at Afghan engineers involved in road rehabilitation projects. "Through these sessions we managed to demonstrate the importance of slowing down a river as a means to better protect roads and banks against erosion," explained Terranera. Following the success of these sessions, the UNJLC facilitated similar courses in provincial capitals by the workshops' trained and certified engineers to their peers. Under the auspices of the UNJLC, SHA developed the River Engineering Manual which was then translated into Dari and Pushtun.

In response to an increasing number of car accidents and to reinforce safe driving habits, the UNJLC coordinated a series of training sessions in Hirat and Kabul for UN drivers. This inter-agency effort included security and first-aid components as well as general training on driving rules, 4X4 handling, road trip procedures, essential mechanics and maintenance. "The training courses in Hirat provided a basic level of instruction to all UN drivers in the area," said Terranera. "As a sign of appreciation, agencies requested the organisation of a refresher course and participation was extended to NGOs."

The UNJLC also participated in training sessions organised for humanitarian operators on issues such as warehousing management and customs procedures. "We delivered the module on international passenger/vehicle/cargo crossing procedures in the Termez-Hairaton Border Crossing Training courses organised by other UN agencies and emphasised the importance of

²³ Ministry of Public Works.

²⁴ Supports international organisations involved in humanitarian activities through secondments.

better paper workflow on delivery schedules,” recounted Terranera. “The discussions that followed were of great interest as they touched upon possible discrepancies between current practices and international regulations.”

The UNJLC Phase Out

The decision to close down the UNJLC on 31 March 2003 was reaffirmed to the Afghan authorities in November 2002. Kaatrud explained, “The UNJLC was due to close down at the end of the second winter, hence much later than originally envisaged. The proposed date was viewed as much too early by the authorities who lobbied actively for its extension.” But Kaatrud was confident that this lead time was sufficient for the handover process and the establishment of viable inter-agency logistics coordination structures: “We have to remember that the UNJLC is primarily a response facility and therefore we must ensure that we do not remain activated much beyond the emergency phase.”

To ensure continuity in the implementation of residual UNJLC activities, responsibilities had to be transferred to a suitable national or international entity. “By March 2003 our counterpart ministries did not yet have the appropriate structure or staff in place to handle the activities,” explained Terranera. “It had been hard for them to identify and attract qualified people to cover key positions. To avoid leaving a hole behind us, many activities were transferred to UNAMA until final handover could be eventually effected to relevant government entities. The process was managed through an MoU that covered the handover modalities for residual UNJLC logistics activities, including transfer of assets and field staff.”

Future of the UNJLC

Reflecting on the final 18 months of intense UNJLC activity, Kaatrud observed how the UNJLC had not only continued to change and adapt to new operational obstacles as they arose, but had also anticipated major bottlenecks, as evident in the winterisation planning activities. As logistics problems had shifted inside the country, so had UNJLC activities. After carefully weighing the value of each proposed new activity in Afghanistan in terms of improving humanitarian logistics operations, the UNJLC had again proven its ability to adjust to the specifics of each emergency (Exhibit 10). The UNJLC had responded effectively in this highly politicised crisis to the point of significantly supporting key government functions during the *Loya Jirga* and currency exchange processes. By carrying out its core function the UNJLC had also helped the humanitarian community realise substantial savings. But had this nimble, open-ended and adaptable mechanism been prone to mission creep?

Kaatrud weighed the merits of the current UNJLC setup in terms of its institutionalisation process, acceptance by diverse stakeholders, and fund-raising efforts. The UNJLC is meant to augment operational humanitarian agencies’ logistics capacities and therefore is particularly careful not to undermine agency efforts, including their visibility. For it to be sustainable, the UNJLC’s low profile approach had to be balanced with adequate recognition from key stakeholders that the facility was a provider of value-added services. Despite the limited visibility, substantial progress had been made on its institutionalisation process. In January

2003 the IASC had endorsed the UNJLC Activation Guidelines which provided a protocol for launching a UNJLC. But Kaatrud, who had masterminded the UNJLC concept, could already see a wider mandate and role for the UNJLC. The possible conflict in Iraq highlighted the need for direct involvement in emergency logistics contingency planning. But was the UNJLC concept destined to evolve continuously or was it possible and desirable to identify and fix its boundaries?

Exhibit 1
Winter in Afghanistan

4X4 driver in difficulty



Snow clearing labourers



Aid Pre-positioning at villages



Muskeg in storm



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Exhibit 2*Snapshot of the National Action Plan***1. Food Security**

The primary target populations for winter assistance were those living in remote inaccessible areas, including rural settlers and reintegrated returnees. These populations numbered over 172,000 families or over one million individuals. WFP was to preposition nearly 50,000 MT of food (wheat/cereals, pulses and vegetable oil) in this area.

2. Population Movements

The main focus of the winterisation activities was to respond to displacement caused by winter weather as well as reduced road accessibility.

3. Urban Preparedness

The objective of the urban winter preparedness plan was to ensure that the families who lived or would come to live in urban places during the winter were prepared for it without experiencing loss of life, malnutrition and irreversible depletion of their assets. As such, two categories of families were identified: those living in derelict houses and those living in open spaces or substandard tents, or anticipated to return to areas so late that they could not construct houses or shelters. While people in the first category were to be helped by the replacement of existing substandard tents with winterised tents, provision of blankets, stoves and fuel, the others were to move into public buildings. Essential primary shelter materials²⁵ items were to be distributed to some in the first category.

4. Access

Roads had to be kept open to facilitate the passage of humanitarian assistance. In some areas, basic road works were a prerequisite to snow-clearing activities. The plan for maintaining access throughout the winter had six main components: 1) emergency road works, 2) snow clearing of roads and airstrips (including Kabul airport), 3) procurement and transportation of equipment (including equipment coming from abroad), 4) workshops and base camps, 5) avalanche control²⁶ and 6) capacity building (of heavy equipment operators, maintenance procedures, etc) for this and future winter operations.

The access component of the plan included the funding of labour-intensive road works, identification of capable implementing NGOs, and provision of specific roadwork machinery to assist the otherwise labour-based methodology. Six strategically placed workshops and approximately 10 base camps were to be established to house, repair, pre-position and maintain the heavy equipment.

5. Nomads

The Nomads (Kuchis) were a very vulnerable group, not only during the cold season.

25 Plastic sheeting, tents, blankets, stoves and appropriate fuel, doors/doorframes and window frames.

26 A proactive means of disaster preparedness, avalanche control was to monitor and manage the accumulation of snow along key passages to prevent an emergency situation.

Exhibit 3
Number and Type of Beneficiaries

Type	No of people	Description of beneficiaries	Geographical area
Food beneficiaries	1,900,000	Isolated rural population, reintegrated returnees, urban destitute, expected returnees, internally displaced & reallocatees	Central Area, Kabul, Badahshan, Baghlan, Sar-I Pul, Samanghan, Faryab, Balkh, Badghis & Ghor.
Shelter non-food beneficiaries	720,000 - 750,000	New returnees & displaced, urban destitute, protection cases & extremely vulnerable individuals (handicapped, elderly, single-female headed families)	Bamyan, Kabul and provinces, Southern Area, urban Kandahar, Hirat
Access	N/A	Same as above	Central Highlands, Ghor, Badahshan, Badghis
The Kuchis	300,000– 400,000	The Kuchi nomads	The South and Southwest

Source: "Winter Preparedness Plan 2002-2003", October 2002, prepared by UNAMA and MRRD.

Exhibit 4
Breakdown of Shelter Beneficiaries

NFI	Number of beneficiaries	Requirements
Tents	201,000	17,820
Blankets	880,000	250,048
Plastic sheeting	624,000	102,520
Mineral coal	427,000	17,774 (MT)
Stoves	427,000	71,069
Window frames	72,000	24,000
Door/door frames	72,000	12,000
Beams	72,000	60,000

Source: "Winter Preparedness Plan 2002-2003", October 2002, prepared by UNAMA and MRRD.

Exhibit 5
Afghanistan Crisis: UNJLC Offices March 2002-March 2003²⁷



²⁷ In July, the UNJLC ended its representation at the Coalition headquarters in Tampa, Florida.

Exhibit 6
Newspaper Extract

AFGHANISTAN: Focus on the battle to keep winter roads open

YAKAWLANG, 29 January (IRIN) 2003 - Several hundred men with shovels will make the life of a 22-year-old Afghan shopkeeper and hundreds like him a lot easier this year. Every winter the village of Yakawlang in the central highlands of Afghanistan is cut off for several months by snow blocking passes where the road climbs to over 3,500 m.

But thanks to international initiatives, the roads in this part of the country will be cleared and remain open throughout winter for the first time in memory. "It will make such a difference - sometimes the road would be closed for three months and we could not get food or supplies until it went away," Jamshid, a shopkeeper, told IRIN in Yakawlang.

It is not uncommon to see roads blocked by snow several metres high in this region. The drive from Bamian to Yakawlang is treacherous at the best of times during the long winter, with the road covered in sheets of ice and snow. Even with chains strapped to tyres for additional grip, vehicles can often be seen sliding off the road.

But now help is at hand. Coordinated by the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC), the winter roads programme will see the UN and NGOs work to keep remote routes open, which is vital to the reconstruction process and delivery of humanitarian aid.

"Basically, we've gone out to communities and contracted local people in villages along routes. It varies from US \$1 to US \$2 a day. So far we've contracted about 2,000 throughout the country, but we will be likely to contract 3,000 overall," the head of UNJLC, Terri Toyota, told IRIN in the capital, Kabul.

Toyota added that the scheme operated primarily in the central highlands and the west and that there are a couple of teams - probably a few hundred people in the northwest - around Feyzabad and Badakhshan.

In Bamian, Guillaume Limal, the regional coordinator for the French NGO Solidarites, told IRIN his team had five high passes to keep clear. It will employ hundreds of local men on a cash-for-food or -work basis, each man receiving either \$2 or 14 kg of wheat for a day's work. "Keeping the roads open will be a huge benefit for medical emergencies, commerce, trade and transport, and it also helps reconstruction," Limal said.

"This programme is significant because, psychologically, it is very important to know that your country does not close down from three to six months of the year. One sign of stability and security is that it stays accessible and stays part of the marketplace throughout the whole year," Toyota said.

The Solidarites team is also marking the route with coloured poles so drivers do not stray into the minefields which the roads often run through. But when the snow has gone, the massive job of reconstructing Afghanistan's roads will still remain.

Afghan Deputy Transport Minister Abdul Hadi Mohseni maintained that all 20,000 km of Afghanistan's roads could be classified as destroyed after two decades of war and neglect. "All over the world, transport is the most important thing. It is like the blood in your veins: if it stops you will die. And if transport stops there will be chaos," Mohseni told IRIN in Kabul.

Exhibit 6 (Cont'd)

While the major highways, such as the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat route, will be reconstructed over the next two years with \$180 million from the United States, Japan and Saudi Arabia, Mohseni was also keen to see the minor roads asphalted. However, this would require further international aid and maybe tolls in the future. "We need foreign help for financial and engineering work - building the roads we can do ourselves. The people of Afghanistan are very hard-working and will volunteer for the reconstruction of roads."

Mohseni said he hoped one day to be able to make the 500 km trip from Kabul to Kandahar, where he went to university, in less than five hours. At present, the bone-shaking, suspension-wrecking journey can take up to 15 hours due to the state of the road.

In the provinces, many smaller roads have already been reconstructed using local labour. Mercy Corps²⁸ representative in Afghanistan, Anita Anastacio, told IRIN it had to be involved in a number of road rehabilitation projects because local communities kept telling them these were priorities.

"It connects communities and opens up markets for trade, and has provided jobs for communities at a time when they were trying to get back on their feet," Anastacio said, adding that poor roads and transport added to the price of goods at a time when many people were struggling to afford basics.

The Mercy Corps programme manager, Jorg Denker, said the organisation kept things as local as possible, doing things such as contracting local donkey owners rather than the truck companies so that many needy local people could benefit from the work.

Thanks to one of its projects, the trip between Taloqan and Eshkamesh in the northeast, which used to take five hours, had now been halved. "In an emergency, two hours can save a life," Denker told IRIN in Kabul.

But for Jamshid and the residents of the remote central region normally cut off from the rest of Afghanistan by snow, the work on the roads will be a life-saver of another kind. Instead of living in isolation they will be able to carry on their businesses, which is a giant step forward on the road to returning to normalcy.

UNITED NATIONS

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN)

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]

²⁸ Mercy Corps is a not-for-profit organisation with headquarters in the United States and Scotland that helps alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities.

Exhibit 7*Food and NFIs Distribution Figures (1 December 2002 to 2 February 2003)*

	Distributed
Food (MT)	209,125
Tents (units)	35,047
Blankets (units)	1,518,694
Plastic Sheets (units)	168,148
Stoves (units)	291,655
Coal (MT)	31,259
Kerosene (ML)	2,132,062
Total beneficiary population	3,432,711

Source: National Winter Preparedness Plan 2002-2003, Quantitative Report (Part 2).

Exhibit 8*Loya Jirga Process*

The first step to convening the Emergency *Loya Jirga* was the selection of some 1,050 representatives from the country's 381 districts. The process began with the first series of local meetings around the country during which elders and respected members of the community selected those who would represent them at the regional level in the next series of meetings. Each district selected at least one member and additional members from the larger districts were chosen according to population estimates. A further 450 non-elected delegates from a variety of backgrounds were appointed by the Commission responsible for the coordination of the *Loya Jirga* process. 160 seats, i.e., 11% of total seats, were allotted to women. In the second step, each of the district councils elected those who would participate in the *Loya Jirga* using a secret ballot. The third and final phase consisted of the appointment of the country's head of state, the key cabinet ministers of the transitional government, and members of the Supreme Court by the 1,500 delegates chosen by the districts and the Commission. The new government hence elected would serve until parliamentary elections in 2004.

Exhibit 9

*Currency Conversion Programme: 7/10/2002 – 2/01/2003*²⁹
Facts & Figures

Human, Financial and Operational Resources

- US\$ 26 m budget (US\$ 9m in donations)
- 2,500 Afghan bank personnel involved
- 500 Afghan security personnel involved
- 25 international experts involved
- 180 UN/NGO observers involved
- 7 DAB Area Coordination Centres
- 47 Exchange Windows
- 200 Money traders
- Assistance provided by UN/UNAMA, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, UK and US

Implementation

- 800 million new banknotes (1 new afghani corresponded to 1000 old aghanis) of different denominations printed by companies in Germany and Sweden with similar security features as the Euro and shipped to Kabul
- 4,000 MT of old bank notes collected, destroyed equal to 18 trillion old afghanis (approx. US\$ 450m), 98% of circulating afghanis
- 16 billion new afghanis issued (approx. US\$ 750m)
- Public information and awareness campaign

Timeframe

- Three months of active planning and preparation
- 2.5 months of implementation
- 1.5 months for termination/closure

Exchange rate (January 2003)

- 1US\$=47 afghanis



²⁹ Initially proposed for 7/12/02.

Exhibit 10
Timeline of Events

2001	
5 December	Bonn Agreement on the political future of Afghanistan
22 December	Interim Government came into effect
2002	
30 March	End of UNJLC's first mandate (Phase I)
April	First step of <i>Loya Jirga</i> process began The Afghan Interim government decided to procure a new, redenominated local currency.
Mid May	Second step of the <i>Loya Jirga</i> process began
22 May	UNJLC organised a meeting in Hirat to increase exposure of <i>Loya Jirga</i> issues amongst the humanitarian community.
12 June	Third and last step of the <i>Loya Jirga</i> process began
18 June	Election of President Karzai and the ministerial cabinet
19-20 June	Return of <i>Loya Jirga</i> delegates to their provinces
14-15 July	UNJLC Winterisation Workshop
6 August	Donor Winterisation Conference
16 August	First delivery of the new currency, Kabul.
14 September	Karzai announced the introduction of the new Afghan currency
5 October	National Action Plan for Winterisation
6 October	President Karzai's press conference at DAB Kabul to inform of the launch of the currency exchange process.
7 October	The launch of the new currency
Mid October	Emergency Preparedness Workshop among UN Agencies and NGOs
November-December	A series of six three-day River Engineering workshops conducted by UNJLC
November	Pre-positioning of food and NFIs completed by humanitarian organisations
19 November	Change in snow clearance methodology
2003	
2 January	End of the currency exchange programme.
31 January	The UNJLC Activation Protocol endorsed by the IASC
February	The UNJLC Network set up in the Middle East to respond to an eventual conflict in Iraq
31 March	The UNJLC Afghan operations closed down

Appendix A UNJLC

What is the UNJLC?

The concept of a UN Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) was born out of the humanitarian response to the 1996 Easter Zaire crisis, which demanded intensified coordination and pooling of logistics assets among UNHRC, WFP and UNICEF. The concept was applied to subsequent UNJLC interventions in Somalia, Kosovo, East Timor, Mozambique, Bhuj and Afghanistan. In March 2002, the UNJLC was institutionalised as a UN humanitarian response mechanism, under the aegis of WFP, by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC-WG).

The UNJLC's mission is to complement and coordinate the logistics capabilities and cooperating humanitarian agencies during large-scale emergencies. The UNJLC is not a new agency but a facility which is activated when intensified field-base inter-agency logistics coordination is required. Once mobilised, the UNJLC seeks the widest possible participation among humanitarian logistics actors and facilitates the interface with non-humanitarian entities such as the military.

What is the Logistics Support Function of the UNJLC?

The UNJLC aims to collectively identify and eliminate logistics bottlenecks of common interest to the humanitarian community to avoid wasteful competition among agencies. Related to this, the UNJLC plans, prioritises and de-conflicts relief movements when available infrastructure capacity is limited. Through this process the UNJLC advises on the most efficient transport modes and performs movement control functions. The UNJLC also frames logistics-related policy issues affecting humanitarian logistics operations.

What Kind of Information is Provided by the UNJLC?

The UNJLC acts as a platform for gathering, collating, analysing and disseminating information required by agencies to optimise logistics planning and management. This involves two basic information categories: Pipeline/Commodity Tracking, including agency stock positions; and Logistics Support Information, such as humanitarian logistics installations and assets, status of corridors and border crossings, customs and infrastructure assessment. The UNJLC has GIS (Geographical Information System) and mapping capabilities. A variety of dissemination mechanisms are employed, including inter-agency meetings, bulletins and CD-ROMs. A generic website (www.unjlc.org) is maintained housing general reference information and deployment-specific materials.

When is a UNJLC Demobilised?

UNJLCs are envisaged as a temporary bolster during the response phase of an emergency. As such, no UNJLC is activated without a clearly defined exit strategy. Prior to demobilization, the UNJLC ensures appropriate inter-agency logistics coordination mechanisms are in place. Similarly, the UNJLC aims to improve agency and government logistics management capabilities through selective logistics capacity building activities.

Source: UNJLC Flyer.

Appendix B
List of Actors

ASOC	Aviation Support Operations Centre operated by UNOPS.
DAB	Da Afghanistan Bank.
DFID	United Kingdom's Department for International Development is the UK government department responsible for promoting development and the reduction of poverty.
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office's mandate is to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union.
EMERCOM	Russia's Emergency Response Team.
FAO	Established in 1945, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization has the mandate to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living, improve agricultural productivity, and better the condition of rural populations.
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee is composed of UN humanitarian agencies and representatives of 200-250 humanitarian NGOs.
ICRC	Established in 1863, the International Committee of Red Cross's mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance.
IOM	International Organization for Migration is the leading international organisation working with migrants and governments to provide humane responses to migration challenges.
ISAF	The establishment of the UN International Security Assistance Force was part of the Bonn agreement (5 December 2001) in support of the Afghan interim government. ISAF was mandated to assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas until the constitution and functioning of new Afghan security and armed forces.
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency extends technical assistance for national development and human resources development as a part of Japan's Official Development Assistance programmes.
MPW	The Afghan Ministry of Public Works.
MRRD	The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.
SHA	Swiss Humanitarian Aid is an instrument of the Humanitarian Aid of the Swiss Confederation for direct activities and in support of international organisations through secondment.
SIDA	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency is the Swedish government agency for bilateral international development cooperation.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development is an independent government agency that conducts foreign assistance and humanitarian aid to advance the political and economic interests of the United States.
UNAMA	In late March 2002, UN New York established and funded the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) as a means to assist the interim government. As a result all UN activities had to be coordinated through UNAMA. Consequently, the UNJLC technically became part of one of UNAMA's pillars, the one dealing with humanitarian issues.
UNHCR	Established in 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is dedicated to leading and coordinating international action to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.
UNICEF	Established in 1946, the United Nations Children's Fund advocates the protection of children's rights, helps them meet their basic needs and expands their opportunities to reach their full potential.

Appendix B (Cont'd)

UNOPS	The United Nations Office of Project Services is an arm of the United Nations that provides project-management services in every field where the UN has a mandate.
WFP	Set up in 1963, the World Food Programme is the United Nations' frontline agency in the fight against global hunger.
WHO	Established in 1948, the World Health Organization is the UN agency dedicated to attaining the highest levels of health for all people.

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