The United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC): The Afghanistan Crisis

This case was written by Ramina Samii, Research Associate and Luk N. Van Wassenhove, the Henry Ford Chaired Professor of Manufacturing at INSEAD. It is intended to be used as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

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Introduction

On 25 September 2001 as a result of consultation among humanitarian organisations the decision to activate the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) was taken. “The September 11 events upset our plans. We had to immediately interrupt work on the UNJLC field operations manual and to initiate action in Afghanistan,” said David Kaatrud, Chief Logistics WFP3 and Head of the UNJLC. Lacking flyaway kits, tools and trained staff, the UNJLC was asked, as it had been in the past, to coordinate the UN’s humanitarian effort mobilised in response to the Afghanistan crisis (Exhibit 1).

Kaatrud hoped that the UNJLC could facilitate the humanitarian community’s efforts to save the lives of the 7 million Afghans dependent on international aid. Knowing the region and the complexity of the situation, he recognised that the relief effort would be large. It would also be hindered by significant logistical bottlenecks, given the limited infrastructure in the region. As such, the relief effort would require intensified logistics coordination. But could a UNJLC-like mechanism limit itself to logistics coordination? What would happen if the requirements were higher and the emergency lasted longer than the envisaged six-month work plan? Would the operation’s exit strategy, i.e., getting through the 2001/2 winter, be respected? Would UNJLC have the credibility and resources to adequately respond to the challenge? Convinced that the best response to such a complex scenario was an Inter-Agency coordinating platform, Kaatrud was ready to lead the most challenging UNJLC deployment to date and to shape it as events unfolded.

The Ramp-Up

The UNJLC operations in response to the Afghanistan crisis were started in late September 2001 out of WFP headquarters in Rome. As all international staff had been evacuated from Afghanistan because of the hostilities in early October 2001, a UNJLC was established in Islamabad, Pakistan. “At the initial stage, the division of labour between the Rome and Islamabad UNJLCs was clear,” said Kaatrud. “The UNJLC in Rome was to coordinate strategic4 logistics planning issues, while the UNJLC in Islamabad would concentrate on the regional5 logistics issues.” Given the long-term presence of UN Agencies in the region over

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1 See Appendix A for a short description of the actors in this case.
2 The mission of the UNJLC is to complement and coordinate the logistics capabilities of cooperating humanitarian agencies. In March 2001 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the policy-making organ of the humanitarian agencies, endorsed the Joint Logistics Centre (JLC) concept. However, it was not before March 2002 that the UNJLC concept was formalized by the IASC as a response facility under the custodianship of the World Food Programme (WFP).
3 The World Food Programme is the UN Agency dedicated to battle world hunger.
4 Movement of supplies from world-donors into the crisis region or humanitarian warehouses (e.g. Dubai).
5 Movement of goods from the crisis region into Afghan region.
the years, it was decided that the UNJLC would be in charge of logistics coordination and not actual management of logistics assets, such as warehousing, trucks or aircraft.

Commenting on the establishment and operations of the Islamabad office, Piero Terranera, Regional Coordinator for the Afghan UNJLC operation said, “The office had to be expanded very quickly as it soon became clear that we would be dealing with more issues than simple airlifts.” Regardless, it took one month to staff the UNJLC Islamabad. “The problem is that the UNJLC is not an organisation and consequently it does not have its own budget and administration,” continued Terranera. “In addition, when our Afghan operations began, the UNJLC was not even recognised as a formal humanitarian response mechanism. This recognition came only towards the end of our first mandate in March 2002.” To jump-start operations, the UNJLC relied on WFP’s administrative support and fundraising mechanisms. Terranera recounted, “To secure office space in Islamabad, I had to piggyback on the facilities of the Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) set up by OCHA6.” Lack of harmonised and emergency administrative procedures among the involved UN Agencies was another source of delay.

To man the office, the UNJLC leveraged WFP’s stand-by arrangements with seven partners including the Swiss Government, Canadem,7 and DFID8 for possible secondments. “This created some confusion among the humanitarian organisations,” said Terranera. “They believed that the UNJLC was a WFP facility. We had to reinforce the message that the UNJLC is not a WFP initiative and that we depend on the goodwill of all humanitarian UN Agencies as well as NGOs9 for UNJLC staffing.”

Although the participating UN Agencies recognised the complexity of the emergency and the need for a coordinating platform, most UN organisations in Afghanistan were not aware of the UNJLC concept and had to be convinced of its utility. Terranera explained, “Logisticians across the organisations understood the power of the concept but field staff with no incentive to cooperate were far from enthusiastic.”

Compared to the previous UNJLC deployments in which agencies were asked to volunteer staff time (e.g. two days a week) to the facility, in the Afghanistan crisis, the UNJLC established dedicated funds to cover the costs of full-time secondments. “There are limitations to the volunteering approach,” explained Kaatrud. “For UNJLC to be a convincing Inter-Agency facility there is a need to attract qualified logisticians from the different agencies. However the initiative is doomed as long as it results in the detrimental reduction of an agency’s logistics capabilities and capacity. For the first time during the Afghan crisis we actually financed secondments, hence augmenting the overall humanitarian logistics capability.” At the height of operations, the UNJLC offices had attracted 30 seconded10 staff.

6 The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance mobilises and coordinates the efforts of the international community to meet humanitarian crises.
7 Canadem is a civilian stand-by mechanism for the UN and other international agencies conducting field operations.
8 UK’s Department for International Development.
9 Non-Governmental Organisations.
10 Including four to six week on-the-job training opportunities.
from WFP\textsuperscript{11}, UNICEF\textsuperscript{12}, WHO\textsuperscript{13}, UNHCR\textsuperscript{14}, IOM\textsuperscript{15} and OCHA. This was its best achievement in the short history of the facility.

As it had no cargo of its own to move, the UNJLC established a neutral, regular forum to discuss logistics issues, task scarce resources, and set priorities. According to Terranera, “It was only after the UNJLC had proved its capability to formulate logistics procedures and provide logistics information, support, and expertise that it gained the respect and credibility of field operators as a useful, honest and neutral broker.” Despite the slow ramp-up, it introduced robust systems to support the coordination activities and operations of humanitarian organisations. It quickly proved to be in a position to fill in the gaps, and to facilitate, as well as enhance and increase humanitarian outreach.

Coordination of strategic and regional airlifts was the primary mandate of the UNJLC. It compiled an inventory of available assets (military aircraft and planes chartered by UN Agencies or provided by donors), capacity and agency requirements. Taking into account humanitarian priorities, it assigned assets to agencies or advised on pooling of assets for long-range strategic and regional airlifts within the Afghan theatre. “The purpose of the UNJLC,” Kaatrud clarified, “was not to interfere with an organisation’s well-established chartering arrangements. While respecting an individual agency’s logistics systems, we sought to coordinate their efforts for greater synergies and efficiency.” It was common practice for agencies to charter airplanes separately without coordinating with each other. The UNJLC aimed to ensure that excess aircraft capacity was efficiently used. Terranera explained:

“For example an agency could not justify chartering an entire aircraft for a small load. Our objective was to match eventual overcapacity with outstanding transport requests. To perform satisfactorily, we required timely and accurate information, and inputs from each agency in terms of their assets, requirements and activities. As a result, we became the repository of information regarding agency strategic airlifts into the region.”

UNJLC Islamabad managed a number of satellite UNJLCs set up in the region. Kaatrud explained, “The UNJLC offices served as logistics information collection nodes as well as coordinating bodies for local, joint logistics activities.” The day-to-day task of these satellite offices was to identify bottlenecks affecting the humanitarian effort as a whole and to assist the collective response to the impediments. By the end of November, UNJLC offices were operating out of Italy (Rome), Pakistan (Islamabad, Quetta and Peshawar), the US (Tampa, the Coalition headquarters), Iran (Mashad), Tajikistan (Dushanbe), Uzbekistan (Tashkent and Termez) as well as Afghanistan (Exhibit 2).

\textsuperscript{11} Less than half were from WFP, the lead agency, making it a truly Inter-Agency initiative.
\textsuperscript{12} The United Nations Children’s Fund is dedicated to promoting children and their rights.
\textsuperscript{13} World Health Organization’s mission is the attainment of the highest possible level of health for all people.
\textsuperscript{14} The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.
\textsuperscript{15} The International Organization for Migration’s mission is to provide humane responses to migration challenges.
Corridor Logistics and Operational Bottlenecks

International staff were evacuated from Afghanistan soon after the events of September 11 (Exhibit 3). It was not before 14 November, after the fall of Mazar-e-Sherif, the first city attacked by the US-led Coalition, that UN personnel returned to Afghanistan on day trips. Staff evacuation, coupled with the geographical constraints of a landlocked country like Afghanistan, made humanitarian cargo dependent on the bordering countries’ transport corridors. The initial set of logistical bottlenecks facing the humanitarian community was thus related to these overland corridors and border crossing points into Afghanistan. The main operational constraint was security as there were daily bombing raids by the US-led Coalition and continued hostilities between the different factions of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban.

“A lot of food was trucked into the country by WFP before the beginning of the hostilities,” recounted Adrian Van der Knaap, UNJLC Field Coordinator. “Throughout the bombing campaign, to reach both Northern Alliance and Taliban-controlled cities, WFP trucked in relief items using locally-hired trucks.” As a result WFP had a good knowledge of existing routes as well as the logistics situation and constraints in the region. Its network of local staff and transport operators provided an excellent source of up-to-date information, which assisted the UNJLC in identifying principal bottlenecks and analysing available logistics capacity. “Apart from analysing corridor capacities and concentrating on border crossing points, the UNJLC ensured that agencies would not build up too much stock on any one corridor,” explained Kaatrud. “At one instant, agencies were unknowingly purchasing tarpaulin and tents in Pakistan. We were able to encourage them to put more stocks in Iran.”

Access to the country was interrupted several times due to the closure of the southern corridor through Quetta, Pakistan,\(^\text{16}\) making the two main northern corridors of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan crucial. The Turkmenabad corridor in Turkmenistan, which had been so important during the last decade’s droughts and war, consisted of a desert road. Just 30km before Afghanistan, the tarmac ended and this road became dirt, making this vital corridor\(^\text{17}\) also the most expensive way to truck relief into the country, in light of its vulnerability to weather conditions. With the first rainfalls it became unviable. The second corridor was the Termez corridor in Uzbekistan. “This represented a viable alternative to the Turkmenabad corridor as it had a river port, rail connections and a bridge over the river,” recounted Van der Knaap. “In addition, the roads on both sides of the border (connected by the Amu Darhya bridge) were asphalted and in good condition.” However, after Mazar-e-Sherif and Hairaton were captured by the Taliban in 1998, this corridor was closed down by the Uzbek government.

Without clear signals from the Uzbek government about when it would open the river border, humanitarian organisations worked on their contingency plans for eventual northern access via Termez. UNHCR and UNICEF stockpiled food and non-food items in their existing

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\(^{16}\) The general reluctance of transporters to release drivers until the safe return of those already in Afghanistan further aggravated the situation.

\(^{17}\) During the first months of the war, 50,000 metric tonnes per month of food and non-food used this corridor.
warehouses and increased local staff in Termez and Tashkent, while WHO and UNFPA\textsuperscript{18} prepared for small interventions.

“Initially we had only one UNJLC office in Uzbekistan. The Tashkent office had a lobbying, representation and project management function,” said Kaatrud. “Almost overnight the Uzbek authorities found themselves in the midst of intense military activity and were flooded by humanitarian organisations, cargo and journalists. A UNJLC in Termez was needed to provide an interface between local authorities and humanitarian effort on logistics-related issues at key border crossing points.”\textsuperscript{19}

In late October, the Uzbek President gave assurances that his country would fully support the humanitarian aid effort for Afghanistan and that the UN could make full use of the airport and river port facilities in Termez to store aid cargo and transfer goods into northern Afghanistan. The UNJLC negotiated an agreement with the Uzbek Border and Port Authorities about transporting humanitarian cargo by barge to Afghanistan. It was agreed that only humanitarian cargo clearly marked as such and authorised by the UNJLC was to travel on the barges. In addition, UN staff had to receive the cargo on the Afghan side and had to be responsible for its transportation and distribution to the beneficiaries.

After the fall of Mazar-e-Sherif on 9 November, the Termez river crossing was opened by barge. On 14 November the first UN cargo carrying UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP relief items and international staff crossed the Amu Darhya River. UNJLC, in agreement with the UN Agencies, established and executed a system for the prioritising and scheduling barge cargo.

After restoring barge transportation, the UNJLC concentrated its efforts on the bridge crossing. It was important to increase the overall capacity of the Termez crossing point, especially after the fall of Mazar-e-Sherif. The Uzbek and Afghan authorities officially opened the ‘Friendship Bridge’ between the two countries on 9 December 2001. Two days later, international staff moved back into Afghanistan and set up base in Mazar-e-Sherif. Rail traffic transporting relief goods resumed soon after. In collaboration with OCHA, an agreement was prepared with the Uzbek government stipulating the modalities of humanitarian cargo in transit to Afghanistan and the responsibilities of both signatories: the Uzbek government and the UN. To facilitate the flow of relief items, the UNJLC finalised clearance procedures with the Uzbek customs authority for shipments transiting Termez.

“The Uzbek authorities did not know the Oxfams\textsuperscript{20} and CAREs\textsuperscript{21} of this world,” elaborated Van der Knaap. “Once the bridge opened, we helped them screen and certify NGOs. We ensured that well-known NGOs got the same treatment and benefits as UN Agencies. As a result of our involvement we became the government’s focal point for the transportation of humanitarian cargo into Afghanistan.” Van der Knaap summarised, “At the end of the day everyone was happy with our intervention. Journalists based in Termez had their story. The

\textsuperscript{18} The United Nations Population Fund is dedicated to improving access to and quality of reproductive healthcare.

\textsuperscript{19} Including the extension of the agreed principles to NGOs.

\textsuperscript{20} The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief's mission is to find solutions to poverty and suffering worldwide.

\textsuperscript{21} Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere is dedicated to fighting global poverty.
Uzbek government was seen as cooperating with the UN. The NGOs managed to get their cargo into the country and across into Afghanistan. The UN was pleased with its coordination efforts and results.”

Kaatrud commented on the UNJLC targeted intervention and exit strategy:

“Once surface transport resumed between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, load capacity became higher than humanitarian requirements. The logistics bottleneck had disappeared and with it the need for intensified coordination. After the establishment of an efficient local Inter-Agency logistics coordination structure, the UNJLC had completed its mission in Termez and the satellite office was closed.”

**Deconflicting: Interface with the Military**

Contrary to natural disaster-related emergencies, it was vital in the Afghan crisis that the humanitarian community have no visible contact and would not be confused with the combatant military force, the US-led Coalition. While the UN had a policy for dealing with military forces in the event of natural disasters, at the time of the Afghanistan emergency, it was still elaborating a specific policy for complex conflict environments. Kaatrud explained, “UNJLC contributed to the process by working closely with the concerned UN offices. It assisted in the development of workable policies during the response phase for logistics-related activities.” On 20 November, UN headquarters approved the guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) for humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan and conferred the coordination and ‘deconflicting’ role to the UNJLC. Kaatrud explained this concept: “One of the main challenges for humanitarian operations in a military environment is to ‘deconflict’ the activities of the humanitarians and military, who are both trying to make use of limited infrastructure, such as airfields, warehouses and transport corridors.”

In December 2001, the ISAF, a UN Security Council-mandated multinational peacekeeping force, was deployed in Kabul with a mission to establish a secure base for the Afghan transitional government. As a result, the UNJLC’s coordinating role between the humanitarian community and the military forces operating in the country (e.g. the Coalition and CJCMOTF) expanded to include this peacekeeping force. As Kaatrud said:

“The UNJLC was the focal point for two very different, distinct military entities: the Coalition and the ISAF. Coordination with the Coalition force, the combatant force in control of common services, assets and transportation infrastructure such

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22 The use of MCDA was envisaged for strategic airlift, in-theatre airlift, Air Traffic Control (ATC), tunnel, road, bridge, and airfield repair, road monitoring, aircraft handling equipment, and snow removal equipment and operations.

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

24 The Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force was the Coalition’s coordinating body between UN Agencies, ISAF and NGOs.
as airports, offloading cargo equipment and airport warehouses in Afghanistan, was an operational necessity given the need to deconflict asset use. Our relationship with the ISAF, a peacekeeping mission relegated only to Kabul and its districts, was different from the Coalition given the fact that they were a UN-mandated force.

As a result of the hostilities, the Afghan airspace was closed to humanitarian air operations and was under the de facto control of the Coalition. In December 2001, through intense negotiations with the Coalition forces, the UNJLC opened up the Afghanistan airspace for humanitarian air operations and assisted in the coordination of air cargo movements. Soon after, it addressed the problem of limited landing spots for humanitarian cargo with the Coalition at the Kabul airport. To establish an understanding and facilitate dialogue between the Coalition and humanitarian agencies, it organised a special briefing session for the Coalition civil affairs personnel to explain how humanitarian organisations operate and are organised. The UNJLC satellite offices carried out liaison duties on logistics issues with the Coalition’s civil affairs offices in the provinces, the Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Centres (CHLC). With a view to bridging the gap between the humanitarian community and the Coalition on operational issues, the UNJLC maintained a liaison presence with the Coalition in Tampa, Florida.

“To ensure distinction between military and humanitarian action as well as for security purposes, we agreed that aircraft carrying humanitarian cargo should be painted white,” explained Terranera. “You may recall the food airdrop campaign carried out by US Air Force in ‘visible’ regions of Afghanistan. They lacked coordination with humanitarian organisations.” Through its liaison officer in Tampa the UNJLC managed to phase out the initiative, making the case that humanitarian aid was moving in sufficient quantities.

Upon receipt of a strategic airlift request into the region from Europe, UNJLC would inform and coordinate with the Coalition headquarters in Tampa. Concerned with the establishment of safe and efficient operations within Afghanistan, especially during the bombing campaign, the UNJLC deconflicted humanitarian flights into Afghanistan with the Coalition. To avoid both accidents and misunderstandings between military and humanitarian use, it prepared standard operating procedures for airport staff. Information on airfield conditions and air safety issues received from Coalition sources was duly shared with the humanitarian agencies. Following the fall of Kabul in mid November, requests for regional and strategic air transport increased exponentially. Between November 2001 and June 2002, the UNJLC flew 1,609 metric tonnes (MT) of humanitarian cargo into the region for a total of no less than 17 different agencies and organisations. Military airlifts were also arranged to transport communications equipment and vehicles from the WFP-managed UN Humanitarian Response Depot in Brindisi, Italy into Dubai, UAE.

In coordination with the UNJLC representative in Tampa, UNJLC Rome engaged in the difficult and sensitive process of declassifying certain information and data that was useful and relevant to humanitarian logistics planners. The unclassified information helped the UNJLC and other agencies carry out a range of humanitarian logistics planning activities.

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25 953 MT of non-food items, 464 MT of food items and 192 MT of medical items.
As early as January 2002, the Coalition and the ISAF were involved in rehabilitating the civil infrastructure (repairing roads, runways, bridges, schools, clinics, electricity and water systems, etc). As these activities needed to be coordinated with UN Agencies, the UNJLC set up procedures and structures to facilitate military-UN-NGO dialogue and discussions.

The UNJLC was concerned with air security even after the end of the hostilities. “We were informed that Mazar-e-Sherif was going to become an uncontrolled airfield with no qualified air traffic control (ATC) staff and virtually no ground handling capability as of 1 April 2002,” said Terranera. The US Air Force unit providing ATC and other services at the Mazar-e-Sherif airfield had decided to withdraw, taking all its equipment with it. “It was with a view to ensure the provision of basic equipment and expertise to allow for the continuation of air operations at Mazar-e-Sherif that we approached the ICAO,” continued Terranera. It was agreed that two US Air Force ATC personnel would remain at Mazar-e-Sherif on a temporary basis to assist with the transition to host nation responsibility. “However, no air traffic controllers remained behind,” said Terranera. “Moreover as a result of the US withdrawal, the airfield ended up with limited ground handling capability. Only cargo that could be unloaded manually could be airlifted into Mazar-e-Sherif.” After further representations and provision of detailed information by UNJLC Tampa, Canada provided a mobile military ATC unit as temporary assistance to the Afghan civil aviation authorities.

Regional Logistics Bottlenecks

“As soon as it was safe to do so and after the fall of each major city, humanitarian organisations moved further inland and set up shop,” said Kaatrud. “Our first office in Afghanistan was in Mazar-e-Sherif. After the unexpected fall of the capital, UNJLC Kabul was established followed by UNJLC Hirat. Thanks to our field presence we immediately started to post basic logistics information, such as local airfield, trucking and warehouse capacity on our website, in an effort to help logistics personnel in each agency better plan their operations.” On 27 March the last UNJLC office in Afghanistan, UNJLC Kandahar, was established. This satellite office assisted the humanitarian organisations and interim government and was a go-between for the CHLCs and UN Agencies in transport, logistics and rehabilitation-related activities.

Trucking

By February 2002 the trucking situation in Hirat had deteriorated. The city’s truck companies were unionised and their representative body had a monopoly position in the market. To secure access to truck capacity humanitarian agencies had bid up the price of transport. A cartel had been formed and prices for the transportation of cargo, which had more than tripled over the last six months, had sharply raised operational costs of humanitarian organisations. With the help of a transport expert seconded by DFID, the UNJLC engaged in a technical study on the Afghan transport sector with particular focus on the trucking industry and key inputs, such as fuel. Based on the data resulting from this study, UNJLC Hirat arranged a

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26 The International Civil Aviation Organization ensures a safe and orderly growth of civil aviation worldwide.
meeting between representatives of different agencies and the director of the Department of Transport to discuss the rationalisation and reduction of transport prices. According to official data, more trucks were available on the Hirat market than needed, making increased prices unjustifiable. To resolve the issue, the UNJLC presented a transport price proposal intended for use by all agencies. “The proposal we had prepared envisaged a price grid similar to what was, at that time, employed in Mazar-e-Sherif and the northern region,” said Kaatrud. “We actually managed to break the cartel and put an end to tariff hikes by threatening to bring in a UN trucking fleet and publishing transport rates on our website. The transporters agreed to review their rates downwards, aligning them to the pre-conflict 2001 rates. Our intervention saved the humanitarian community millions of dollars.”

**Warehousing**

The warehouse situation in some Afghan cities was a recurring concern as demand often exceeded available storage capacity. For example in April 2002, although most of the stored items in Hirat were to be distributed, the UNJLC signalled the need for additional storage tents, forewarnig agencies planning to stock items in the city of the lack of storage capacity. To address this type of bottleneck, the UNJLC undertook a series of activities. It often brokered exchange agreements between agencies in need of and those with storage facilities. It coordinated sharing of storage space. It also liaised with the Coalition and government authorities to speed up the transfer of warehouses to those humanitarian organisations in need and committed to their rehabilitation.

**Air Operations**

To coordinate the movement of critical non-food items throughout the region, the UNJLC set up a cargo planning and prioritisation system. This processed agency cargo requests and prepared load plans for the WFP's fleet of regional aircraft. Between November 2001 and June 2002, the UNJLC tasked and coordinated flights into the Afghan region on behalf of 28 entities. A total of 2,772 MT of humanitarian cargo was transported.27

The UNJLC also provided key logistics support to UNICEF’s *Back-To-School Campaign* delivering and distributing stationary items and books. “We met extensively with UNICEF’s logistics planning team to plan the operation,” explained Terranera. “The campaign heavily relied upon us for the arrangement of airlifts and in-country warehousing.”

**Infrastructure Network and Security Issues**

As humanitarian agencies re-entered and penetrated Afghanistan, the country’s fragile infrastructure of primary and secondary roads emerged as the chief bottleneck. “Things really never got easier,” said Van der Knaap. “As soon as the security situation improved, with a potentially positive impact on food and non-food items distribution, humanitarian effort was faced with the arrival of the first snowfalls and the deterioration of road conditions.” In early February, for example, avalanches on the road between Mazar-e-Sherif and Kabul temporarily

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27 2,343 MT of non-food items, 143 MT of food items, and 285 MT of medical items.
blocked the corridor between Kabul and the northern part of the country. The UNJLC continually posted information on road accessibility and snow clearing activities on its website.

In early March 2002 the UNJLC called a meeting between the representatives of the major UN Agencies. “The purpose of that meeting was to develop a strategy to implement needed road rehabilitation projects without further delay,” said Kaatrud. “Road conditions had further deteriorated as a result of heavy military, humanitarian and commercial traffic coupled with heavy rains and snowfalls.” It was agreed that UNJLC would embark on infrastructure survey projects, and the findings of these would enable the humanitarian community to approach donors for the most urgent repair interventions (Exhibit 4).

Between March and April 2002 the UNJLC completed the infrastructure assessment on Afghan road conditions and traffic capacity.28 This survey helped identify, quantify and prioritise repairs necessary to ensure sustainable traffic of humanitarian cargo. UNJLC Hirat, Mazar-e-Sherif and Kabul compiled the logistics inputs of humanitarian agencies and created a road repair database. UNJLC Mazar-e-Sherif set up a database to match major infrastructure asset improvement projects in the northern region with donor funding. UNJLC Hirat finalised the database by indicating the stage of the projects (planned, ongoing and completed) and arranged for its distribution to the involved UN Agencies and NGOs. Subsequently the UNJLC organised meetings with donors and military forces interested in rehabilitation works (hospitals, schools, roads, etc.) and facilitated interaction between agencies and donors.

Infrastructure and administrative bottlenecks were not the only impediments to humanitarian relief efforts. For example, trucking out of Pakistan (Peshawar and Quetta) stopped several times due to insecurity and the reluctance of drivers to travel into Afghanistan. Security concerns were not only related to military and warlord activities but also to the existence of landmines and unexploded ordinance. UNJLC was involved in the demining operations in the western Region by facilitating the airlift of explosives and essential demining equipment to Hirat.

“We were aware of the UNHCR’s plans to facilitate the spontaneous return of refugees from Iran and Pakistan as well as internally displaced people to their places of origin,” said Terranera, “so we recommended and prioritised the rehabilitation of infrastructure facilities that called for immediate and rapid interventions.” Given the security issues and road blockades, the UNJLC was also involved in organising protected truck convoys for refugee movement.

On 25 March 2002, just before the end of the UNJLC’s first mandate, a powerful earthquake, measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale, hit the northern district of Nahrin in the Baghlan Province. “UNJLC Mazar-e-Sherif was immediately requested to coordinate logistics activities of the Coalition, local authorities, UN Agencies and NGOs,” said Kaatrud. “Relief operations which started immediately were significantly hampered by mined roads.” The UNJLC was involved in the response to the second earthquake that hit Nahrin District a fortnight later. With an epicentre 150km north of Kabul and a magnitude of 5.8 on the Richter scale, the earthquake completely destroyed previously damaged villages and infrastructure.

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28 This assessment was carried out with the help of a road-engineering expert seconded by the Swiss Disaster Relief, Berne.
Information and Brokerage Platform

Throughout the Afghan crisis requests for information and data analysis by the humanitarian logistics planners was enormous. One of the UNJLC’s raison d’être was to convey appropriate information to support humanitarian logistics planners. As early as October 2001, the UNJLC had developed a website (www.unjlc.org) dedicated to the Afghan crisis. It contained information on strategic and regional airlift schedules, operational procedures, and capacities as well as indicative costs of air charters, road and rail transport from Europe to the region. “With time, our website became more and more comprehensive,” said Kaatrud. The systematic feedback received from the visitors to the site was one of the main elements influencing its development and content. As a consolidated information platform, the site ended up forewarning and forearming the humanitarian community with invaluable information scattered amongst various agencies as well as UNJLC’s primary sources. Kaatrud continued, “To ensure wider usage, the website information was conveyed to users without connectivity through CD ROMs.”

The UNJLC website provided information on bottlenecks for humanitarian activities. “For instance, in December, we started to cover information on trucking fuel,” said Terranera. “We were prompted to do so as a result of shortage experienced in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.” The mass purchase of fuel by military authorities had restricted its availability to the point that refuelling was almost impossible in Dushanbe. The UNJLC website included a section dedicated to current and expected trucking fuel prices and supply, depot capability, status of pump stations, and any agency activity.

The UNJLC worked on Afghanistan airspace issues of common concern. With the withdrawal of the Taliban and the rehabilitation and clearance of the airfields from mines, the number of regional airlift destinations within Afghanistan increased. It posted information on the status and usability of these airfields by humanitarian aircraft. It also provided information on UNHAS passenger and commercial airline schedules.

The UNJLC website provided the contact details of the logistics personnel of the various agencies and contained information regarding the status of agency as well as donor activity. Over time, it became a reliable source of updated information on the Afghan economy, exchange rate, fuel prices, size, price and availability of trucks in the region, transport rates, price of daily labour, and cargo information (duties, clearing prices, and procedures in various neighbouring countries). It included corridor infrastructure (airfield, road, port, rail, barge, bridge bottlenecks, conditions, and capacity and status) and in-country information (regional stock position of food and selected non-food items). Regarding warehousing, it compiled and posted a list of warehouse and storage facilities (capacity, need for repair) including planned ones per location.

In partnership with the US government, the UNJLC website carried extensive weather forecasts, status reports as well as information on the impact of adverse weather on

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29 The UN Humanitarian Air Service was operated by WFP.

30 Such as the Turkmenistan Airlines’ weekly passenger service between Dushanbe and Kabul and Iran’s Mahan Airlines’ twice-weekly passenger and freight service between Tehran and Kabul, both initiated in April.
humanitarian activity. In the UNJLC weekly bulletin, agencies were advised on the impact of heavy rain, snow, avalanches and drought on the viability of roads, bridges and rivers. “I recall that in early December 2001, the water level of the Nizhni Pyanj River at the Tajikistan border dropped, restricting the use of barges with 90cm draft,” said Terranera. “In our bulletin, we raised the issue and recommended the use of barges with a maximum draft of 50cm.” Eventually to improve the river crossing, the German government provided funds for the purchase of small self-propelled barges with minimum draft that were capable of carrying two trucks. They also funded port facilities upgrades and ferry repair.

The UNJLC went beyond the simple provision of information. It was often a member of assessment teams such as the one dealing with the fuel storage facilities in Hairaton, Afghanistan. It supported agency activity by identifying needs and helping to prepare funding proposals for donor consideration. Its nodal position allowed it to flag and anticipate problems. It often went a step further by proposing solutions or getting directly involved in resolving them. “We entered into negotiations with local customs, rail and port authorities to tackle issues related to customs clearance procedures, visa requirements, and transit of humanitarian cargo and personnel from the bordering countries of Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan into Afghanistan,” said Terranera. The UNJLC was often involved in drafting and brokering tariff and fee agreements with port and railway authorities as well as transport companies.

The UNJLC in the Coming Year

On 26 March 2002 Kaatrud was on a flight from Dushanbe to Kabul. He had just taken the decision to demobilise the UNJLC regional satellite offices in Central Asia and to reinforce the UNJLC’s presence in Afghanistan. Kaatrud reflected, “The UNJLC concept had just been institutionalised by the IASC. Surely many in the humanitarian community had appreciated our work during the 2001/2 winter and considered the Afghanistan experience a true success as well as a quantum leap in logistics information management and coordination. In addition, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator had just requested for us to stay another year to continue addressing the humanitarian situation through another winter.”

The UNJLC free services had been equally appreciated by UN Agencies and NGOs, small and large. The website in particular, started almost haphazardly, had grown organically in the field, unravelling its full potential. With a request to continue the UNJLC services for another year, Kaatrud wondered whether in the envisaged second phase only the humanitarian community would benefit from the UNJLC’s services. True that in large fluid situations such as Afghanistan, dramatic shifts in emergency operations were common and that the UNJLC, designed to respond to these unexpected events, had performed above everybody’s expectations. But, given the difficult reintegration stage the country was going through, what role would the UNJLC assume vis-à-vis the new interim government? And once again, would the UNJLC have the resources for a wider mandate? If so, what were the risks of a mission creep?31

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31 See Exhibit 5 for some pictures.
**Exhibit 1**

*Timeline of the Genesis of the UNJLC Concept*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>East Zaire Crisis: first ad hoc activation of the UNJLC concept on the outbreak of the civil war in Zaire with the movement of over 1 million Rwandan refugees. UNJLC processed information and managed common logistics resources and operations for the three main UN operational agencies: WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>OCHA organized an Inter-Agency meeting of the agency Heads of logistics. A first attempt towards the formalisation of the UNJLC concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Somalia Floods: air and surface asset coordination between WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1999</td>
<td>Balkan Crisis: a UNJLC was set up in Skopje, Macedonia until the return of the refugees to Kosovo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 1999</td>
<td>East Timor Crisis: a UNJLC-like service – comprehensive common logistics assets - was provided by WFP to some 40 humanitarian organisations for a period of three months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td>Mozambique Floods: the UNJLC coordinated and managed regional airlifts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2001</td>
<td>Mozambique Floods: same as above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2001</td>
<td>Bhuj Earthquake: the UNJLC was activated too late and with too few resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2001</td>
<td>Endorsement of the concept by the IASC. It requested WFP to formalise the UNJLC concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2001</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2001</td>
<td>Afghanistan Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2002</td>
<td>Institutionalisation of UNJLC concept by IASC.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 2
Afghanistan Crisis: UNJLC Offices
October 2001-March 2002
**Exhibit 3**
Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Preparatory Phase</th>
<th>Military Actions and Deconflicting</th>
<th>In-Theatre Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2001</td>
<td>• 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;: Terrorist attacks in New York and Washington</td>
<td>• Coalition attacks Afghanistan (radar installations in Mazar-e-Sherif)</td>
<td>• International staff evacuated from Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;: UNJLC Rome activated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2001</td>
<td>• UNJLC established in Islamabad, Pakistan with satellite units in the surrounding countries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC website created</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Closed corridors (Uzbek and Pakistani) and poor road conditions make access to Afghanistan difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• End October: Uzbek government gives full support to humanitarian efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2001</td>
<td>• Positioning of goods by humanitarian organisations in Termez, Uzbekistan</td>
<td>• 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;: Fall of Mazar-e-Sherif</td>
<td>• First UNJLC established in Mazar-e-Sherif followed by Kabul and Hirat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC negotiations with Uzbek authorities to open up of the border</td>
<td>• Mid November: Fall of Kabul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC assists Uzbek government in NGO screening</td>
<td>• 20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;: UN Secretary General approves guidelines for MCDA in Afghanistan and confers coordination to UNJLC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;: First UN cargo and international staff transit from Uzbek by barge</td>
<td>• UNJLC coordinates strategic and regional airlifts with military forces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLCs operating from Italy (Rome), Pakistan (Islamabad, Quetta, Peshawar), US (Tampa), Iran (Mashad), Tajikistan (Dushanbe), Uzbekistan (Tashkent, Termez)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2001</td>
<td>• 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;: Uzbek and Afghan authorities open “Friendship Bridge” Rail traffic resumes after repair of the railway line to Hairat (Afghanistan)</td>
<td>• ISAF deployed in Kabul and surrounding areas</td>
<td>• 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;: International personnel move back to Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UN and Uzbek authorities sign an agreement on the modalities of humanitarian cargo in transit to Afghanistan and spell out the responsibilities of each signatory</td>
<td>• UNJLC opens up the Afghan humanitarian airspace</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC addresses landing spot issue for humanitarian cargo at Kabul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exhibit 3 (Cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Preparatory Phase</th>
<th>Military Actions and Deconflicting</th>
<th>In Theatre Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2002</td>
<td>• UNJLC works with Coalition to establish efficient air operations</td>
<td>• Rehabilitation work initiated by ISAF and Coalition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC creates a platform to facilitate dialogue between military-UN-NGO actors for rehabilitation of civil infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2002</td>
<td>• Kandahar opens to UN flights</td>
<td>• Transport cartel formed in Hirat dissolved through a series of negotiations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Snowfall impacts road accessibility (e.g. avalanche on the road between Mazar-e-Sherif and Kabul)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC assists UNICEF with its Back to School Campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC assists UNHCR in the return of displaced people and refugees from Iran and Pakistan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2002</td>
<td>• 26th: Regional UNJLC satellites in Central Asia demobilised</td>
<td>• 25th: Earthquake (Richter 6.0) hits the northern district of Nahir. UNJLC Mazar-e-Sherif coordinates the logistics for the relief operations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 27th: Last UNJLC office opens in Kandahar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• UNJLC calls a meeting of UN Agencies to develop a road rehabilitation strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2002</td>
<td>• 1st: Mazar-e-Sherif becomes an uncontrolled airfield upon departure of US forces</td>
<td>• Second earthquake (Richter 5.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Canada provides temporary assistance for the Mazar-e-Sherif air base</td>
<td>• UNJLC completes two infrastructure assessments: transport sector, road conditions and traffic capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Warehousing capacity becomes a constraint in Hirat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exhibit 4
UNJLC Road Survey
North Sector: Mazar-e-Sherif – Hairaton (Heyratan)
Exhibit 5
Selected Photos from UNJLC Website

The Main Road

A problem along the road …

Almost safe …

Almost there …

UNJLC worker dressed as the locals

Food distribution
## Appendix A
### List of Actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Organisation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canadem</td>
<td>Canadem is a roster of Canadians skilled in human rights, peace building, democratisation, administration-logistics, security, reconstruction, etc. It serves as a civilian stand-by mechanism for the UN and other international agencies conducting field operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere is dedicated to fighting global poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJCMOTF</td>
<td>Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force was set up as a coordinating body between UN Agencies, ISAF and NGOs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHLC</td>
<td>Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Centres were the civil affairs arm of the Coalition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development is the UK government department responsible for promoting development and the reduction of poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICAO</td>
<td>International Civil Aviation Organization aims to ensure the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation throughout the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration is the leading international organisation working with migrants and governments to provide humane responses to migration challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>The establishment of the UN International Security Assistance Force was part of the Bonn Agreement (December 5, 2001) in support of the Afghan Interim Government. ISAF was mandated to assist in maintaining security for Kabul and its surrounding areas until the constitution and functioning of a new Afghan security and armed forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance mobilises and coordinates the efforts of the international community to meet the needs of those exposed to human suffering in disasters and emergencies. During the Afghan crisis a number of Inter-Agency mechanisms, such as the Military-Civil Defence Unit and the Humanitarian Information Centre were housed in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxfam</td>
<td>Oxford Committee for Famine Relief is a development, relief, and campaigning organisation dedicated to finding lasting solutions to poverty and suffering around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>The United Nations Populations Fund is dedicated to improving access to and the quality of reproductive health care, upon request of developing countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>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 worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>Set up in 1963, World Food Programme is the United Nations' frontline agency in the fight against global hunger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>Established in 1948, World Health Organization is the UN Agency dedicated to attaining the highest levels of health for all people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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