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**Executive Board  
Third Regular Session**

**Rome, 20–24 October 2003**

## **EVALUATION REPORTS**

### **Agenda item 6**

*For information\**



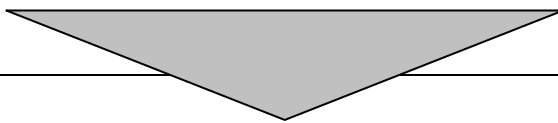
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## **INFORMATION NOTE ON THE REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS JOINT LOGISTICS CENTRE OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN**

\* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions, 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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# Note to the Executive Board



**This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) operation in Afghanistan is a critical step in the evolution of the UNJLC concept. The scale and longevity of UNJLC Afghanistan, and the fact that this operation ultimately resulted in formalization of the concept in the United Nations system, warrant a comprehensive review to derive lessons and best practices to improve future deployments.
2. The UNJLC concept originated in the humanitarian response to the 1996 Eastern Zaire crisis. In March 2001 it was endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC/WG), which requested WFP to develop the concept, activation process, terms of reference and preparation of the UNJLC Field Operations Manual. The events of 11 September 2001 accelerated activation of UNJLC in Afghanistan; the suddenness of the crisis meant that there was little time for balanced preparation and set-up, so the project can be considered as a pilot JLC. The concept was formalized in March 2002; approval of its activation protocol was given in November 2002.
3. The review was undertaken by external consultants through the Dutch firm Royal Haskoning, with WFP oversight through the Office of Evaluation (OEDE) in cooperation with OTL and UNJLC.

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## THE PROCESS

4. The three-phase review was based on a participatory approach. In phase 1, "Preparatory/Documentary: Headquarters", documents were reviewed and interviews were held with United Nations agencies at the headquarters level. In phase 2, "Learning from Action: the Field", carried out in Afghanistan and Pakistan, techniques such as after-action review were used to capture knowledge and lessons. Phase 3, "Identifying lessons: the Report", produced a detailed technical report and a summary report containing lessons from the experience in Afghanistan and recommendations to improve UNJLC activities in future deployments. Both are available from OEDE.

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## UNJLC ACTIVATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING

5. In late September 2001, IASC/WG invited WFP to lead activation of the Afghanistan UNJLC to coordinate inter-agency logistics. WFP and UNJLC prepared special operation (SO) 10130 to fund the first phase from October 2001 to March 2002. The main activities were development of an information system, identification of logistical bottlenecks, coordination of airlifts and cooperation with the military in using the limited infrastructure. UNJLC later moved into internal surface logistics. During this phase, UNJLC operated under the aegis of the United Nations Operational Task Force (OTF), which reported to the Crisis Management Group (CMG). UNJLC rarely reported to both, because there was insufficient clarity about its logistical tasks.
6. In March 2002, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established to support formation of a new Afghan Government. In consultation with the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), UNAMA requested UNJLC to stay until March 2003 to assist humanitarian operations through another winter. IASC/WG was



informed and agreed with the continuation, even though it was not included in the decision process. Funds for phase 2 were secured through SO 10163; activities included information supply and civil/military coordination. The subsequent workplan addressed road and infrastructure repairs, logistical support for the Loya Jirga election process, winterization and the currency-conversion project. In phase 2, UNJLC reported to the UNAMA Pillar 2, which absorbed the HC function. In practice there was little contact with UNJLC, which worked largely independently. Official reporting systems did not work well, so UNJLC was not fully integrated into the United Nations structure.

## Major Achievements

7. UNJLC's information activities included collection, analysis and dissemination of logistics data such as airlift schedules, clearance procedures, infrastructure, availability and prices of transport, maps, weather forecasts, movements and stocks of food and non-food items. UNJLC coordinated the massive airlifts of non-food items and opened air corridors in Afghanistan through negotiation with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).
8. Several bottlenecks were cleared by negotiating an agreement with the Uzbek authorities on transport of humanitarian cargo across the Termez bridge and in barges crossing the Amudar'ya river. UNJLC was instrumental in negotiating transport-rate ceilings in Herat and provided logistics planning support for UNICEF in their back-to-school programmes.
9. UNJLC maintained contacts with ISAF in providing common air services and using transport infrastructures. In the Winterization Project, UNJLC initiated the July 2002 workshop to discuss supply strategies, supported the Winterization Operational Task Force, assisted in preparing the National Action Plan for Winter, coordinated information and helped to procure snow-clearance equipment.
10. As part of capacity building, UNJLC organized workshops on river engineering and border crossing/customs procedures, prepared the River Engineering Manual and trained agencies in logistics coordination. With regard to nation building, UNJLC provided logistics support for the Loya Jirga elections, the currency-conversion programme, the UNAMA disarmament project at Mazar-i-Sharif and response to earthquakes in the north. At the end of the operation, UNJLC implemented a plan to transfer logistics activities to United Nations agencies and local authorities.

## Major Findings

11. During the activation phase and the first months of the UNJLC operation, assignment of logistics staff from other agencies started slowly; financial resources from the SO became available only after two months, so the scope of initial activities had to be limited. The UNJLC concept was not well known to other United Nations agencies and partners; some tasks were not clear, especially in relation to the core tasks of the agencies and the distinction between coordination and operational tasks. Some opposition from the United Nations Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan (UNOCHA) was reported. Activation of phase 2 did not follow the draft guidelines, and the decision-making process was not fully transparent. During phase 2 the agencies were increasingly involved in their core tasks, and the need for common logistics services was significantly reduced as the situation in Afghanistan normalized after the emergency phase.
12. All agencies consider that major added values of UNJLC were coordination of airlift operations and efficiency in bringing goods into the country under difficult conditions. The Civil/Military Cooperation activity carried out on behalf of the United Nations community



for ending conflict and sharing logistics assets was crucial for the humanitarian intervention. UNJLC was at first involved in tasking individual aircraft, but was later only involved in coordinating air-cargo operations.

13. Efforts to remove transport bottlenecks were successful in some cases, such as obtaining passage at the Hairaton border-crossing point, negotiating transport tariffs in Herat and negotiating with the Government on warehouse facilities in the north.
14. UNJLC's information management received mixed reviews. The agencies supported the principle of common logistics information, but most of them needed only information related to their core task; they saw no advantage in aggregating information. The UNJLC web site was not accessible to all users in the field, so CD-ROMs were used to improve the situation; but they often arrived late, and information was not up-to-date. The bulletins were not widely distributed. UNJLC logistics maps were generally regarded as very useful.
15. In phase 2, UNJLC worked on capacity-building and training in river and road engineering, warehouse management, airport cargo handling and logistics coordination. Most UNJLC activities were taken over by United Nations agencies and local partners. UNJLC Afghanistan terminated its activities at the end of March 2003. The initial terms of reference did not include a clear exit strategy, even though the generic terms of reference state that after return to more normal conditions following a large-scale emergency, transition should be anticipated and an exit strategy established.
16. As custodian of UNJLC, WFP provided support in administration, finance, human resources and procurement. The strict regulations for support services were applied, but were not always suitable for dealing with emergency conditions; UNJLC activities were seriously hampered as a result. The structure led to frequent complaints and friction: UNJLC complained about delays in hiring personnel, procuring equipment and paying salaries; WFP complained about matters such as incorrect procedures and insufficient or incorrect supporting documents for travel and salary payments.
17. The stakeholders interviewed stressed the need for UNJLC to be neutral and independent of WFP, an arrangement which they felt would contribute to efficient implementation of their tasks.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE UNJLC ACTIVITIES IN FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS**

18. UNJLC should be established promptly, and rapidly provided with adequate human and financial resources. It should have a short predetermined duration in the first phase of an emergency crisis, focusing on reducing conflicts and clearing bottlenecks. Its mandate and terms of reference should be clear and communicated promptly to United Nations agencies at the Headquarters and field levels. Trained staff should be seconded by United Nations agencies within 72 hours of the start of a UNJLC project.
19. UNJLC should have clear and unambiguous reporting lines, and a single chain of command to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.
20. UNJLC should be as small and simple as possible and should use a modular system to meet the requirements of an emergency situation. For each deployment, scale and functions should be clearly defined and a decision made regarding involvement in operational tasks.
21. UNJLC and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) should operate in the same office to facilitate the tasking of aircraft. The relationship between UNJLC and UNHAS should be defined in detail.



22. UNJLC should endeavour to remain independent of WFP to strengthen its neutral position during humanitarian interventions. Rotating the UNJLC chief position among United Nations agencies could be considered.
23. UNJLC should consult United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the field about their information requirements to decide on system design and timeliness. It should ensure easy access to its website and provide internet connections in the field as needed. Information should be frequently updated throughout the project. Cooperation with the Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) is essential for efficient sharing of information, databases and resources. Location on the same premises is the best solution.
24. As UNJLC custodians, WFP country offices should provide support services. WFP should review support procedures to identify ways of reducing the burden on staff and improving the level of support. An option is to increase WFP staff temporarily, with the costs borne by the UNJLC SO budget. Waivers may be needed to reduce the recruitment and procurement periods needed to meet UNJLC logistics requirements for emergency support; they should be agreed prior to project activation or immediately afterwards.
25. There is a need for clarity in the United Nations community regarding UNJLC's role in complex emergencies. During the initial phases of new deployments, a workshop should be given for all partners to explain and agree on the role of UNJLC to increase understanding of the concept.



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## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CMG	Crisis Management Group
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
IASC/WG	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
OEDE	Office of Evaluation
OTF	Operational Task Force
OTL	Logistics Service
SO	Special operation
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNJLC	United Nations Joint Logistics Centre
UNOCHA	United Nations Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan

