
Logistical Experts Advise and Assist the Honduran Armed Forces in Establishing a Support Structure

By

MAJ Arturo De Los Santos, Jr., OD, USA, CW3 Jorge F. Rangel, OD, USA, CW3 Jorge A. Martinez, QM, USA, and CW3 Juan M. Convers, OD, USA

INTRODUCTION

The wide spectrum of military assistance provided to Honduras includes a unique group of Army professionals that assists the Armed Forces in their development of a more efficient logistics doctrine. The U.S. Army Security Assistance Command has assembled a team referred to as the Logistics Extended Training Service Specialist team (LOG ETSS), assigned to the U.S. Army Security Assistance Training Management Organization (SATMO), Fort Bragg, NC. This team provides a vital link that communicates the U.S. commitment to maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship between our Armed Forces. Under the administrative control of the United States Military Group (USMILGP) Honduras, the Log ETSS team consists of three senior Warrant Officer experts in maintenance, supply, and munitions management, as well as a field grade officer team chief.

Established in 1990 at the request of the Honduran Armed Forces (HOAF), the Log ETSS has been and continues to be instrumental in the development of a viable logistical system that supports both U.S. and HOAF objectives. Congruently, the Log ETSS contributes both technical expertise on logistics support matters and reinforcement of U.S. command interests, such as respect for human rights and responsibilities of the Armed Forces in a developing democracy.

MISSION

The Log ETSS team acts as principal advisors to the Honduran Armed Forces with primary emphasis in the Honduran Army (HOAR). The team provides technical expertise in maintenance, supply and munitions management, with emphasis on two main priorities—standardization and self-sufficiency. Additionally, the team supports the HOAF in other significant actions such as the development of a highly visible project for the Army, the Technical School.

As specified by the HOAF, the main area of responsibility for the Log ETSS is to assist the Honduran Army in development of a logistical support structure. The structure must provide all units with a standardized method of operation using the most cost effective means and having the greatest impact on sustainment of battalion level operations.

Increased attention to the Central American region during the 1980s provided millions of dollars of U.S. Military Assistance in the form of equipment, munitions, and other supplies then needed to support the Honduran Armed Forces. Equipment arrived in great numbers for the HOAF, creating an abundance of material but little in the form of training needed to maintain these complex systems in a developing Army. As the focus on the region declined, the Armed Forces were left to deal with an extended structure that required ever increasing resources to maintain. Additional factors, such as declining rates of U.S. military aid to the

region, limited budgets, and lack of badly needed human resources, left the Honduran military in need of a new logistical structure.

To achieve this logistical support structure, the Log ETSS developed a two year plan that would address those priorities deemed most important in accomplishing the goals established by the HOAF. The plan focused on advising in the implementation of procedures that were cost effective and when possible that would not involve the use of scarce money resources. Many additional considerations were also taken into account such as lack of trained personnel, differences in the HOAR support structure, command objectives, and resource allocation. The plan included HOAF participation that ensured command emphasis and development of objectives that would encourage standardization and self-sufficiency.

The team set out initially to assess Honduran Army units; based on those results, a logistical plan was drafted which contained four basic processes; *assessment, analysis, seminars, and instruction.*

The *assessment* phase concentrated on visits to the majority of HOAR units. A total of 75 percent of all battalions were visited to familiarize the team with the HOAR method of operation and to determine their overall status and how it related to the established support structure. In the *supply* area key findings reflected lack of knowledge of storage procedures as well as weak documentation of support issues and reordering of supplies. In the *maintenance* area the findings were more serious and numerous reflecting badly needed attention in areas of preventive maintenance, equipment repair, tools, and trained mechanics. The area of *munitions* management required special attention due to its control sensitivity and an unfortunate accident in 1993 in which one bunker accidentally detonated causing serious damage to the unit's structures and a loss of a significant amount of class V material. The focus of the assessment visit reflected these concerns and revealed storage problems due to lack of space, incompatible munitions, lack of accountability procedures, and relaxed control procedures.



These soldiers are inspecting ammunition under the supervision of CW2 Convers, a member of the LOG ETSS Team.

With the information obtained during these assessment visits, each team member began the *analysis* phase which consisted of prioritizing the information obtained to present a general profile of those actions requiring immediate attention. In conjunction with HOAF staff, the key areas of support were addressed to ensure the objective of standardization and self-sufficiency was attainable with the procedures to be implemented. In this phase, meetings took place among team members, HOAF staff, USMILGP staff, and various unit commanders to ensure active involvement of Host Nation representatives. The purpose was dual; first, ensure that participating personnel learned the methodology employed in the assessment phase; and second, ensure full commitment of the HOAR leadership to achieving the stated objectives.

The results of the analysis phase yielded the following objectives for each of the specific areas:

SUPPLY

- Establishment of control and exact accountability of all classes of supply with emphasis on class II, IV, and IX.
- Establishment of regulatory guidance to ensure efficient supply operations, with focus on control and security of all material.
- Establishment of documentation to support previous two objectives.
- Standardization of all supply actions.

MAINTENANCE

- Establishment of control, preventive maintenance methodologies, and exact accountability of maintenance material.
- Establishment of regulatory guidance to ensure efficient maintenance operations with focus on providing units with mission capable transportation.
- Establishment of documentation to support previous two objectives.
- Standardization of all maintenance actions.

MUNITIONS

- Establishment of control and exact accountability of munitions by lot number.
- Establishment of regulatory guidance to ensure proper accountability, storage, maintenance, and security of all class V material.
- Establishment of documentation to support previous two objectives.
- Standardization of all ammunition operations.

With these objectives, the next phase of presenting the information to unit's key personnel was developed.

The *seminar* phase was designed to give all necessary information to begin the implementation of the aforementioned objectives. All battalion and brigade S4s, and key

logistical personnel were presented with a logistical seminar to prepare their respective units for the upcoming changes. During the seminar, team members presented key information pertaining to the next step of the logistical plan—the instructional phase. In addition to logistical personnel, unit commanders were consulted to ensure the instructional phase would not interfere with normal unit operations. During the instructional phase, it would be important for the unit's key personnel to attend the approved training; they would act as a catalyst in implementing the logistical plan. Once coordinated, the schedule of instruction received its final approval. The instructional phase challenged the team, for it required extensive travel and long hours of planning; however, it was during this phase that the Log ETSS provided its most significant contribution.



Honduran soldiers from an artillery battalion at Choluteca upon completion of Log ETSS Seminar.

The *instructional* phase provided all key personnel with the skills necessary to implement an efficient support operation. The goals of each one of the approved objectives were broken down into critical tasks further supported by individual lessons that achieved the desired results. Although broken down to its most basic functions, the focus of the training faced many variables that required careful consideration.

Timing was important because many of the soldiers in training were scheduled to terminate their obligatory time in service. Additionally, during this period of implementation the Armed Forces were in the process of introducing a new idea in its recruitment process—that of the volunteer Army. Although not fully implemented, the volunteer force initiative would place additional training demands on each unit, and would inevitably cause initial turbulence in maintaining personnel strengths.

The effect of this action impacted on the effectiveness of the training presented. In many cases those soldiers soon to leave the Army were the ones receiving the training so the effectiveness of that particular soldier was limited. However, as the phase progressed and the HOAR adjusted to its new recruitment environment shortcomings were fixed satisfactorily.

During the instructional phase the Log ETSS team visited key locations to present the information necessary to fix the support system of the HOAR. Well over 350 soldiers were trained to include personnel from various professional development schools like the Command and General Staff College, various unit commanders, personnel from the Honduran Navy, and other personnel. The effort was monumental, and received the enthusiastic support of unit commanders. The next phase would return to the assessment phase now in a more evaluative mode to assess the unit with its new procedures—a process that is currently underway.

Various lessons were learned from the established logistical plan: first, timetables initially set were not as accurate as expected; second, the annual change in leadership (January and February) of battalions, brigades, and other staff created confusion since those involved in the development of the plan were now in other locations and positions; third, continued shortage of personnel did not allow for optimal implementation of key initiatives such as specific management by individual soldiers of a logistical section; and fourth, a change in the high command of the Armed Forces brought about a change in command climate that resulted in new priorities.

On the positive side, efforts to standardize the support system have created a renewed interest in logistics and how the plan can help the unit achieve exceptional results: soldiers trained demonstrate a capability for increased responsibility not developed before; units are now delegating more to their subordinates; most key officers are aware of formats and normal procedures to implement in their functions; the logistical plan yielded the basis for development and ultimate approval of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that will now guide the HOAR in its logistical operations. (This SOP is also under consideration for implementation by the Honduran Navy and Air Force.)

Another key aspect of the Log ETSS involvement in the HOAF support structure is in its assistance in the development of the first Honduran Army Technical School. Designed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the Technical School will provide an important link in the training support of technical skills within the HOAR, as well as a prime incentive for voluntary service.

The institution represents a significant U.S. investment in foreign military assistance. With a dual purpose in mind, the school will train HOAR personnel, and also will teach certain skills to civilian personnel in support of the HOAF, ultimately returning technical skills to the civilian sector, an initiative that supports both U.S. and Honduran interests.

Recently completed, the school's structure mirrors the most modern U.S. instructional facilities. Complete to its last detail, it presents a true accomplishment for the U.S. Corps of Engineers yielding a facility that clearly reflects the "new face" of the HOAR. Its main focus will be to train soldiers in a variety of technical fields, with concentration on automotive repair, welding and other metallurgical skills, and small arms repair. Included in its curriculum will be other courses such as the logistical supervisors course, first aid, ammunition maintenance, drivers training, and communications equipment repair.

Scheduled to begin operations in September 1996, the school will receive additional U.S. support in the form of Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) to teach the various technical skills to Honduran instructors. A comprehensive plan is currently ongoing to support the smooth and efficient inauguration of the facility. Lesson plans, equipment installation, and other technical and administrative functions will be assessed by the Log ETSS, MTTs, and an allied trades Senior Warrant Officer who will act as principal advisor to the Technical School's director. Currently, the Log ETSS is involved in the initial development and translation of the various technical lesson plans provided by Aberdeen Proving Grounds (APG) various instructional

shops. To assist in ensuring a flawless start, the Log ETSS escorted the School's Director and some of its key staff to APG, Maryland, to help orient the director in the visualization of the HOAR Technical School.

The mission of the Log ETSS not only encompasses logistical advisory support in the various "traditional" areas, but also in specific areas that need critical attention within the HOAF.

Examples of these actions include (not all inclusive):

- **Munitions Support** - Advisory and participatory support in destruction of all unserviceable munitions; classification of explosive material found along Honduras' borders; classification of confiscated class V material; special projects such as design of cost effective ammunition storage facilities; and assistance in the Organization of American States demining operation.
- **Supply Services Support** - Advisory and participatory support in procedures required to conduct wall to wall inventories; automation of supply stocks; and automated program developments to incorporate issue, receipt, and reordering capabilities.
- **Maintenance Support** - Advisory and participatory support in all echelons of maintenance; weapons repair; and communication equipment repair.

CONCLUSION

The Log ETSS reflects the high quality of soldiers the Security Assistance Organization sends in support of U.S. objectives abroad. The special skills needed to operate in foreign and complex environments make these teams a unique group of highly trained specialists who not only gain in the teaching process but who also leave indelible marks in the Host Nation's Armed Forces. Whether it be via close friendships or through sporadic contact, the presence of the Log ETSS provides the assistance requested and by far exceeds the monetary investment of the Host Nation's Armed Forces.

The Log ETSS in Honduras has provided a key link in the modernization of the HOAF logistical support structure. Team members have acclimatized to their environment and aside from the hardship of unaccompanied tours, continue to provide key support to our Honduran counterparts. All members, fluent in Spanish, continue to bind and become a part of the HOAF by participating in formal and informal functions. Additionally the Log ETSS provides active assistance to the Honduran Navy and Air Force.

The Log ETSS represents the U.S. Armed Forces and helps implement its objectives. In addition to being the forward presence of the security assistance management organization it is also the forward presence of the various branches of the U.S. Army. In combination, the team represents the versatility and high caliber of personnel found only in the U.S. Armed Forces.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MAJ Arturo De Los Santos is the current chief of the Log ETSS team. He is a graduate of the Ordnance Basic and Advanced Courses, CAs3, and the Logistical Executive Development Course. Maj De Los Santos holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish from Framingham College and a master's degree in Logistics Management from the Florida Institute of Technology. Maj De Los Santos has been involved in security assistance since 1995. **CW3 Jorge F. Rangel** is the current Maintenance Technical Advisor. CW3 Rangel is a graduate of the Warrant Officer' Basic and Advanced Courses. He holds a bachelor's degree in Business

Administration from Western New England College. Mr. Rangel has been involved in security assistance since 1994. **CW3 Jorge A. Martinez** is the current Supply Systems Technical Advisor. CW3 Martinez is a graduate of the Warrant Officer' basic course, and the Logistics Management Development Course. He holds a bachelor's degree in Information Systems Management from the University of Maryland. **CW2 Juan M. Convers** is the current ammunition technical advisor. He is a graduate of the Warrant Officer' Basic Course. He holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Mckendree College and a master's degree in Business Administration from the Florida Institute of Technology. He's been involved in security assistance since 1992.