The Battalion S-1 Section in Large-Scale Combat Operations

News From the Combat Training Centers

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The ability to overcome challenges and accomplish any mission remains a hallmark of the American Soldier. To instill this mindset, Soldiers and leaders have streamlined processes to account for conditions associated with large-scale combat operations (LSCO). For the battalion S-1 section, this happens typically from the comfort of the office in the form of personnel actions, finance actions, customer service, strength management, etc., focusing on the shop and working close to counterparts. However, when operating in a combat environment, S-1 personnel are challenged to adapt their processes. To overcome these challenges, leaders should consider doctrine, integrate S-1 personnel into planning, thoughtfully position personnel and equipment to optimize operations, and properly integrate with other warfighting functions.

The primary responsibilities of S-1 personnel in a tactical environment are casualty operations and personnel accountability; these responsibilities are in addition to regular operations. A standard battalion modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) usually authorizes a Combat Service Support Automated Information Systems Interface (CAISI) for the battalion S-1 personnel. Enabling the establishment of a Nonsecure Internet Protocol Router Network (NIPRNET) connection when linked to a very small aperture terminal (VSAT), allows them to accomplish these tasks. Field Manual (FM) 1-0, *Human Resources Support*, states that CAISI can be connected to either the brigade S-1 section's VSAT, typically collocated with the field trains command post (FTCP), or to the one belonging to the forward support company at the unit maintenance command post, typically collocated with the combat trains command post (CTCP).[1] The S-4 personnel are usually also authorized a CAISI on their MTOE and share command posts at both locations with the S-1 personnel. The presence of two CAISIs allows one for each location and enhances communication flow and reporting between nodes. The frequency of movement in the battalion's scheme of maneuver informs the S-1 and S-4 sections how frequently they will need to disconnect and reconnect the CAISIs. This is why it is important to establish a fully developed primary, alternate, contingency, emergency (PACE) plan with a shared understanding of which communication platforms will be used to send and receive information while tearing down, while on the move, or during set up.

When deciding where to position personnel assigned to the S-1 section, leaders should consider the strengths and weaknesses of the section's Soldiers. FM 1-0 states that the S-1 section is typically located at the CTCP, but it does not specify the placement of all the nodes that could be advantageous.[2] Placing S-1 Soldiers at key locations not only ensures that the S-1 section receives the information necessary to allow the commander to make decisions about personnel, but also significantly increases the efficiency of personnel operations. The battalion aid station is a key location because casualties are normally brought to this point for treatment. Although they track the personnel who are seen, S-1 Soldiers' primary focus is treatment. Therefore, having an S-1 Soldier located at the aid station would eliminate reporting delays and ensure reports are sent forward for casualty packet processing. Because the FTCP is typically collocated with the brigade S-1 section at the brigade support area, having an S-1 Soldier located there would be the most effective way to ensure casualty packets are submitted within the three-hour timeline,

as defined in FM 1-0.[3] Finally, placing an S-1 Soldier at the main command post is an effective way to ensure battle tracking is done and running estimates are up to date. These estimates are critical to step three of course of action development in the military decision-making process (MDMP) to ensure units maintain an appropriate combat power ratio against enemy forces.[4] Without casualty information being updated to reflect current operating strength, commanders could potentially make maneuver decisions that would place the unit on the wrong end of the combat ratio. As a result, commanders could be unknowingly taking a much greater risk, unnecessarily increasing the number of casualties and losing the tactical advantage.

Integrating and working with other warfighting functions provides information on where personnel are located across the area of operations. S-1 personnel should work with the medical officer to provide casualty estimates, which would highlight the level of risk associated with the given operation and ensure that proper medical assets are available to provide support. Sustainment assets by classes of supply are ordered and allocated based on a unit's requests and on-hand quantities in the logistics status. Ensuring the S-4 section knows the number of personnel dispersed across various locations is important, as units do not always have the ability to report this information to the S-4 section from their locations. Accurate headcounts ensure running estimates can be maintained on classes of supplies and adequate amounts of food, water, and ammunition are calculated per Soldier. This task is even more important as the unit receives attachments that may or may not depend on the gaining unit for sustainment support. Receiving the number of personnel within the attached unit from the S-1 section allows the S-4 section to properly project needed supplies for attachments so that resources on hand are not depleted for organic units. Understanding command and support relationships ensures unity of effort when transmitting information and ordering classes of supply.

When properly planned, S-1 section functions in LSCO can be efficient and effective. Key leaders should consider the positioning of personnel and equipment relative to the battalion's command post nodes to ensure the appropriate S-1 personnel can support casualty operations and personnel accountability. By doing so, staff are postured to provide timely, relevant information to commanders in support of accomplishing missions.

Endnotes

1. FM 1-0, *Human Resources Support*, 1 April 2014, paragraph 2-42.

2. Ibid., paragraph 2-48.

3. Ibid., paragraph 4-114.

4. FM 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, 5 May 2014, Chapter 8.