

# ***NEWS FROM THE CTC***

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## **Brigade Maintenance Meeting**



**For Decisive Action**

**MAJ Carey E. Way**

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## **Brigade Maintenance Meeting for Decisive Action**

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### **Executive Summary**

This article is intended for all units conducting home station training to prepare themselves for a combat training center (CTC) rotation and combat. The author discusses how to conduct maintenance meetings in a time-constrained and high operations tempo (OPTEMPO) environment. MAJ Way explains the key outcomes from an effective meeting, the recommended attendees, and a recommended agenda along with discussion points. Furthermore, not only will the conduct of an effective meeting assist in the overall maintenance of the organization, it will also diminish wasted time from conducting one improperly.

The most lethal and ready brigade combat teams (BCTs) in the Army come to the National Training Center (NTC) to experience realistic and challenging training against a determined opposing force (OPFOR) in the harsh Mojave Desert. As the brigade focuses on the simultaneous execution of offensive, defensive, and stability tasks, they must not lose sight of endurance task such as maintenance. An effective maintenance management system is a combat multiplier and a BCT with an effective maintenance management program has a decided advantage throughout a rotation and undoubtedly in combat.

In a garrison environment, the battalions/squadrons will conduct a weekly maintenance meeting and a brigade level meeting once a month. At NTC, the maintenance meetings are daily due to the pace of operations. Rotational training units (RTU) have the meetings in a time-constrained environment. Maintenance managers must avoid meetings without clear objectives, where people show up unprepared, and decisions are not made or are not clear at the end of the meeting. The leaders attending the maintenance meeting must create options for the commanders to generate and regenerate combat power to accomplished assigned missions, therefore, the maintenance meeting has to be more than going line-by-line through the equipment status report (ESR).

Every BCT has a unique way to conduct a maintenance meeting but there are key outcomes from an effective meeting:

1. Commander's guidance is used and priorities are set for their maintenance program.
2. Battalion representatives arrive to the meeting ready to create shared understanding and solve problems.
3. The Maintenance meeting agenda drives situational understanding at the brigade and battalion level.
4. The meeting's endstate is an accurate projection of combat power created through maintenance, commander's solutions, enablers and support operations.

### **Commanders Guidance**

Commanders set priorities and communicate priorities through their guidance. Due to the pace of operations, it is common for subordinate battalion maintenance managers to arrive to a maintenance meeting with information on non-mission capable (NMC) or fully mission capable (FMC) combat systems but no understanding of how to prioritize maintenance for the next fight. A shift or change in priorities could provide a greater overall return; the maintenance managers must be able to take appropriate actions or make recommendations to the commander (ATP 4-33). Knowing the requirements based on commander's guidance will assist maintenance managers in creating solutions to meet combat power objectives. The best practice is to ensure the subordinate maintenance managers understand the commander's priorities by executing a battalion maintenance meeting prior to the brigade's maintenance meeting. The battalion representative is then ready to fight for support.

### **Battalion Representation**

The meeting must create shared understanding and solve problems. To do this, the brigade must have the right battalion leaders and maintenance managers in the brigade maintenance meeting. An observation at NTC is that often the field train command post (FTCP) representative attend the brigade maintenance meeting instead of the battalion executive officers (BN XO). FTCP representatives will have a current equipment status report (ESR) but lack an understanding of combat power requirements, future projections, authority to approve cross leveling of equipment or control substitutions, and cannot communicate the risk their commanders are willing to accept. Below is a recommended attendee roster based on brigade maintenance meeting observations:

### Recommended Attendees

- Brigade Combat Team Executive Officer (BCT XO)
- Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) Commander
- Support Operations Officer (SPO)
- BCT Logistics Officer (S4)
- Battalion Executive Officers (BN XO)
- Forward Support Company (FSC) Commanders
- FSC Maintenance Officers
- Task Force (TF) Maintenance Techs
- TF Maintenance Non-commissioned Officer (NCOs)
- SPO Senior Ordnance Ground Maintenance Warrant Officer (SPO MATO)
- Supply Support Activity (SSA) Accountable Officer
- Maintenance Control Officers (MCO)
- Direct Support Electrical Systems Test Systems (DSESTS) Representative (if applicable)
- Sustainment Automation Support Management Office (SASMO)
- Logistics Management Specialist (LMS)
- Army Materiel Command (AMC) Logistics Assistance Representative (LAR)
- Field Service Representative (FSR)

Each attendee at the maintenance meeting must have a clear purpose for being there (see agenda discussion points, pg. 6). The attendees need to deliver benefits that can be efficiently achieved in a meeting. The brigade has the meeting to save time and should avoid including attendees that will not contribute to building or regenerating combat power.

### **The Agenda**

The meeting agenda must drive situational understanding at the brigade and battalion/squadron level. BCTs arrive to NTC with a garrison 7-minute drill for the maintenance meeting and quickly realize that it is not practical for the environment. Many units will abandon the agenda all together and strictly focus on the ESR. This practice seems reasonable to the brigade's maintenance warrant

officers but is inefficient for a commander. Units can easily spend two hours before gaining an understanding of the combat power and projections. The brigade maintenance meeting is a battle drill that should be conducted in one hour. All BN XOs and warrant officers should arrive with anticipated maintenance requirements, updated statuses, analysis of the ESR, proper identification and diagnosis of maintenance faults, and class IX requirements. With the informed BN XOs and discussion points on the agenda, the brigade can expect at the end of the meeting to have:

- Maintenance managers and key maintenance personnel have a clear picture of who is conducting what actions, when these actions must occur, and who will be responsible for each action (i.e. report receipt or FMC status)
- All maintenance resources allocated to improve combat power
- An accurate ESR, current combat power and projections for the next 24 and 48 hours

Below is an example agenda to help get the most out of a maintenance meeting for a BCT conducting decisive actions:

**Brigade Maintenance Meeting Agenda (A Way)**

- 1. Roll call (SPO)**
- 2. Opening comments (BDE XO, BSB Commander)**
- 3. Priorities for maintenance (BDE XO)**
  - a. By systems
  - b. By battalion
- 4.**

**Battalion SITREP**  
(Each battalion XO by order of priority)

  - 4a. Current priorities for maintenance**  
"My battalion priorities for maintenance is M2, M2, M3 and M88"
  - 4b. Combat slant by system**
    - 1)"I am 22/28 on M1s and project to be 20/28 in the next 24 hours"
    - 2)"I am 33/40 on M2s and project to be 35/40 in the next 24 hours"
    - 3)"I am 3/3 on BFIST, no change in the next 24 hours"
    - 4)"I am 4/4 on M88, no change in the next 24 hours"
  - 4c. Controlled Substitutions:**  
"Since our last meeting we have executed a controlled substitution of a wiring harness from bumper #A23 to B11. The fault has been moved to A23 and it is annotated on the ESR"
  - 4d. VSAT Status:**  
"My VSAT is non-mission capable due to a loose widget"
  - 4e. DSESTS Jobs:**  
"I have 4 LRUs currently in DSESTS. I expect to get two LRUs from DSETS in the next 24 hrs. I will be turning in two HPDUs to DSESTS in the next 24 hrs."
  - 4f. 5988-E Turn-in**  
"In the last 24 hours, we have issued 124 5988-Es and we have received 25 5988-Es back."
  - 4g. What assistance do you need?**  
(SASMO, Parts distribution, LAR, FSR, etc.)

## **Brigade Maintenance Meeting Agenda (Continued)**

### **5. ESR Review (Brigade SR Maintenance Tech):**

(By-line discussion of combat systems on the ESR)

### **6. DSESTS Review:**

1. Jobs ready for pickup today
2. Jobs expected in the next 24 hrs.

### **7. SSA Accountable Officer Review: (SSA Tech)**

- a. "We have had \_\_\_ MROs in the last 24 hrs."
- b. "We have executed \_\_\_ Picks in the last 24 hrs."
- c. "The brigade has conducted \_\_\_ Walk-ups in the last 24 hrs."
- d. "Across the brigade we have \_\_\_ Post-Good Receipts (PGR) outstanding."
- e. Review of CLIX parts on-hand or at the next level for pacing items

### **8. Sustainment Automation Support Management Office (SASMO)**

- a. Report status of Logistics Information Systems (LIS) repairs
- b. Report which units SASMO will support in the next 24 hrs

### **9. Brigade Logistics Support Team (BLST) Logistics Management Specialist (LMS)**

- a. Brief long lead parts AMC is working
- b. Priorities for LAR and FSR support; where and when those enablers will be deployed

### **10. Support Operations (SPO)**

- a. Reparable Management and turn-in status
- b. GCCS-Army Execution Management and ZPARK clearing/status
- c. Brief back of all requests for information (RFIs) and any issues that arose during the maintenance meeting that need to be resolved.

### **11. Alibis**

### **12. BDE XO**

- a. Closing comments
- b. Time, place and method/medium of the next maintenance meeting

### **13. BSB Commander Closing Comments**

This agenda is an example; BCTs should tailor their tactical maintenance meeting to meet their organizations requirements while deployed.

Without an effective agenda with key discussion points units have very little hope of completing a structured meeting on time. It is common for commanders attending the brigade maintenance



meeting to leave early. This agenda example works because the commander(s) can have an assessment of projected combat power within the first 15 minutes.

### **Agenda Discussion Points:**

- **The brigade's priorities for maintenance** up front helps focus the meeting. It is important to revisit priorities at each meeting because maintenance priorities can change during each phase and sub- phase of a tactical operation.



- **The battalion situation report (SITREP)** is a '2 minute drill' update from each battalion XO. This SITREP gives maintenance managers a bottom-line up front (BLUF) of the battalion combat slant, actions taken, and support required from staff, enablers and SPO.
- **The ESR review** provides the BN XOs and maintenance warrant officers the opportunities to discuss NMC faults, status updates, and systems they are troubleshooting.
- **DSESTS** representative at the maintenance meeting is a great way to validate backshop workloads. The DSESTS representative can also make recommendations to units troubleshooting combat systems.
- **The SSA accountable officer** provides a valuable update as he is tracking parts available in the forward SSA, rear SSA and homestation SSA. In addition, the SSA accountable officer can discuss post goods receipts of customer deliveries to ensure maintenance managers are closing the loop on supply/CLIX transactions.
- **The BLST** support is critical to achieving maintenance objectives at NTC as they bring technical expertise from Army Materiel Command organizations. The BCT often underutilizes or even overlooks the BLST during the brigade maintenance meeting. The SPO must work with the BLST on the prioritization, integration, and synchronization of their assets during the meeting. The BLST is there to talk support to units, discuss materiel solutions for long lead parts, and gain an understanding of fault trends due to parts failures or training deficiencies.
- **The SPO** is responsible for all brigade maintenance management (ATP 4-90). They should provide updates and recommend solutions throughout the meeting. The SPO representative should also discuss the distribution plan, execution management/ZPARK activity, and act as the scribe and brief back all RFIs and any issues that arose during the maintenance meeting that need to be resolved.

**Identifying someone as the scribe will avoid the team getting to the end of the meeting only to realize that no one was taking notes on the action items presented.**

## **Endstate**

The meeting endstate is an accurate projection of combat power created through maintenance, commander's solutions, enablers and support operations. The SITREP provided an assessment of combat power and by the end of the maintenance meeting solutions should have been developed to improve on the projections or set realistic expectations based on logistics, mission variables, mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available and civil considerations (METT-TC). The BSB Commander and BDE XO should have enough information to assess situations and make decisions.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of the brigade's maintenance meeting is to create options for the commander as maintenance manager's work to build and regenerate combat power. BCTs at NTC are operating in a time-constrained environment and must improve upon techniques to allocate resources to achieve operational readiness goals. Success depends on BN XOs and maintenance managers arriving prepared to contribute to an effective and efficient maintenance process to create shared understanding about the situation. A good maintenance meeting is a combat multiplier as sustainers work to prolong endurance to allow commanders to retain and exploit the initiative across decisive actions.